

# The Drum Wave Island And Other Verses

OF THE CHINA COAST

By B. N.

“AS LIGHT AS LEAF ON LINDEN.” Langlande

HONGKONG:

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1904

These selected poems provided by Valery Garrett  
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**Read the Intro to Ms. Garrett on the last page of this document**

**Click these links for more about Gulangyu & Amoy**

<http://amoymagic.mts.cn/discovergulangyu1.htm> (in China)

<http://amoymagic.com/discovergulangyu1.htm> (outside China)

## FINALE

When the last Amoy pomelo's eaten  
And the last Amoy oyster is sped,  
When the last Amoy tiger is beaten  
From out of his cavern and dead;  
When the last Amoy sugar-cane's vanished  
And the last of the Oolong is drunk,  
When the Tan and the Ng clans are banished,  
And the great Amoy joss-rock is sunk;

When each coolie, at work and at leisure,  
Lets his pigtail hang down on his back,  
When the horrible music they treasure  
Has ceased to put sleep on the rack;  
When they've learnt not to speak through their noses,  
And they've no longer Eight Tones but One,  
When each house smells of attar of roses  
And not—as they always have done!

When Typhoid is never more heard of  
And water is drinkably pure,  
When there's not any Plague to be scared of,  
And Dengue has also a cure;  
When hushed is the humming mosquito  
And crickets no longer annoy,  
This place may be 'perfectly sweet,' —oh,  
But 'twill be no longer Amoy!

## GOODBYE

Passing away, the smoke behind us drifting,  
The engine's thud suggests the loss we rue—  
Measured and slow, in strain like this uplifting:  
Good-bye, and best of luck—to Kolongsu!

Gazing behind, dim grows the shore and dimmer,  
And thoughts we foster creep into the gaze,  
For something makes the fleeting scene to glimmer  
With-long-drawn-memories-of happy days.

The rest has vanished, Lam Tai Bu still lingers,  
Yet it too flickers, falters, out of sight,  
Like the last tingle fading from the fingers,  
When one-clasped hands—and bade a last Good-Night.

Good-bye the path that never seemed to tire  
Along the beaches of that little isle,  
When the sun set, a shining ball of fire,  
Leaving the West sky—crimson—for a while!

Good-bye our strayings on Amoy's old island  
Toward Tiger-Temple, 'neath a kindly sun,  
And Koan Jit Tai, o'er rocky path and byland—  
Dear idle wanderings!—All of them—are done.

Good-bye the friends, the staunch, the true and trusty,  
Those we once loved and those who love us still,  
In these hot climbs even Friendship may grow rusty,  
Now clear—distinct,—now faded—like yon hill!

But never mind. A difference comes at parting,  
And many praises to Yourself are due,  
Just now the thought 'to return no more' is smarting:  
Good-night,—and best of luck—to Kolongsu!

**IN KOLONGSU**  
*(Rondeau)*

In Kolongsu the leaves were green,  
And, high above the houses seen,  
    Gray rocks hung passive in the glare,  
    For, loftier still, with brilliance rare  
The Sun displayed a glorious mien.

The sea flashed in a moving sheen  
Our island and Amoy between,  
    A gentle breeze just stirred the air  
    In Kolongsu.

Far, far removed were winters keen  
From gardens where the Summer queen  
    For ever reigned, for ever dear,  
    And flowers, flowers everywhere,  
Bring back to mind these days serene,  
    In Kolongsu.

## DRUM WAVE ISLAND

The waves come on with an oily sweep, but plunge with a  
thunderous blow,  
Like a big drum banged by a sturdy hand, certain, and full, and  
slow.

And Westward from the Drum Wave Island the evening sky's  
aglow.

The deep sea heaves from the distant line, livid, and cold, and  
gray,  
The rocks that strove to resist its coarse are beaten and whelmed  
in spray.  
And the shore where once the rice fields ended bewails the  
Coming sway.

The glory fades from the Western sky, stirred by a parting  
wind,  
The light deserts these dull dim hills; what is there left  
behind?  
Darkness, and dreary changelessness, and mournfulness resigned.

The sky and the sea are blotted out, they fade in a mist  
of tears,  
For a rain-cloud meets the dying day, and his tale in pity  
hears,  
And the Warrior of the South's Pagoda<sup>1</sup> stealthily disappears.

The waves fall down with a roaring crash, though they rose on a  
soundless flow,  
For Chhan Be<sup>2</sup> in Kolongsu<sup>3</sup> feels the Sea's severest blow,  
Booms out like a drum to skilful hand, measured, and deep,  
and slow.

1. *Chinese*: Lam Tai Bu, a tall hill S.E. of Amoy

2. *Literally* 'End of the Fields.'

3. *Literally* 'Drum Wave Island.'

## Introduction to Ms. Valery Garrett

British born Valery Garrett has lived in Hong Kong for over thirty years. She has written nine books and many articles on Chinese antiques and traditional Chinese dress, and lectures frequently at home and overseas. Her tenth book, due out early 2007, is *The Art of Chinese Dress*, pub Tuttle and covers the history of Chinese dress from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. All her books are available from amazon.com.

Valery has served as consultant for museums and collections around the world, and her personal collection of Chinese clothing was acquired and exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, as well as other museums in Asia and Australia. She is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong.

## Valery Discovers “Gulangyu Poems”

“I suppose that being British, and living in what was a British colony, Hong Kong, since 1973 has made me curious about the lives of earlier westerners in China. So when Dragonair launched their service to Amoy (Xiamen), a one-time Treaty Port, back in 1989, Richard, my husband, and I were quick to plan a visit.

“Xiamen was all I hoped for and more. We were even more thrilled by Gulangyu and the western mansions there which were still preserved. Even the ones being renovated were built in the same style of brickwork. Gulangyu impressed me so much that I later wrote an article on it for Dragonair's in-flight magazine (August 1995).

“The island reminded me of Shamian in Guangzhou (Canton) another western enclave from 1862 to the mid 20th C. My book on the history of Canton has a lengthy chapter on Shamian: "Heaven is High, the Emperor Far Away: Merchants and Mandarins in Old Canton", pub Oxford University Press, 2002.

“In 1990 when I was on a visit to Singapore, I came upon a small book of poetry, entitled *The Drum Wave Island and Other Verses*, by B.N. published in Hong Kong in 1904. The poems clearly show the love the unknown author had for his temporary home on Gulangyu and the local people there. It captivated him then, as it still does for us today.”

Valery Garrett, July 12, 2006

Click Link to Purchase Valery's books on Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0195864263/102-9460537-7448123?v=glance&n=283155>

**Valery Garrett Books Available on Amazon:**

Heaven is High and the Emperor Far Away:  
Merchants and Mandarins in Old Canton  
April 2002

Chinese Dragon Robes (Images of Asia)  
February 25, 1999

A Collector's Guide to Chinese Dress Accessories  
July 1, 1997

A Guide to Buying Antiques: Arts & Crafts in Hong Kong  
October, 1996

Chinese Clothing: an Illustrated Guide  
March 1, 1994

Mandarin Square: Mandarins and their Insignia (Images of Asia)  
March 14, 1991

Traditional Chinese Clothing: in Hong Kong and South China,  
1840-1980 (Images of Asia)  
March 1, 1988

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**Amoy Magic Websites**

<http://amoymagic.mts.cn/main.htm> (in China)  
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