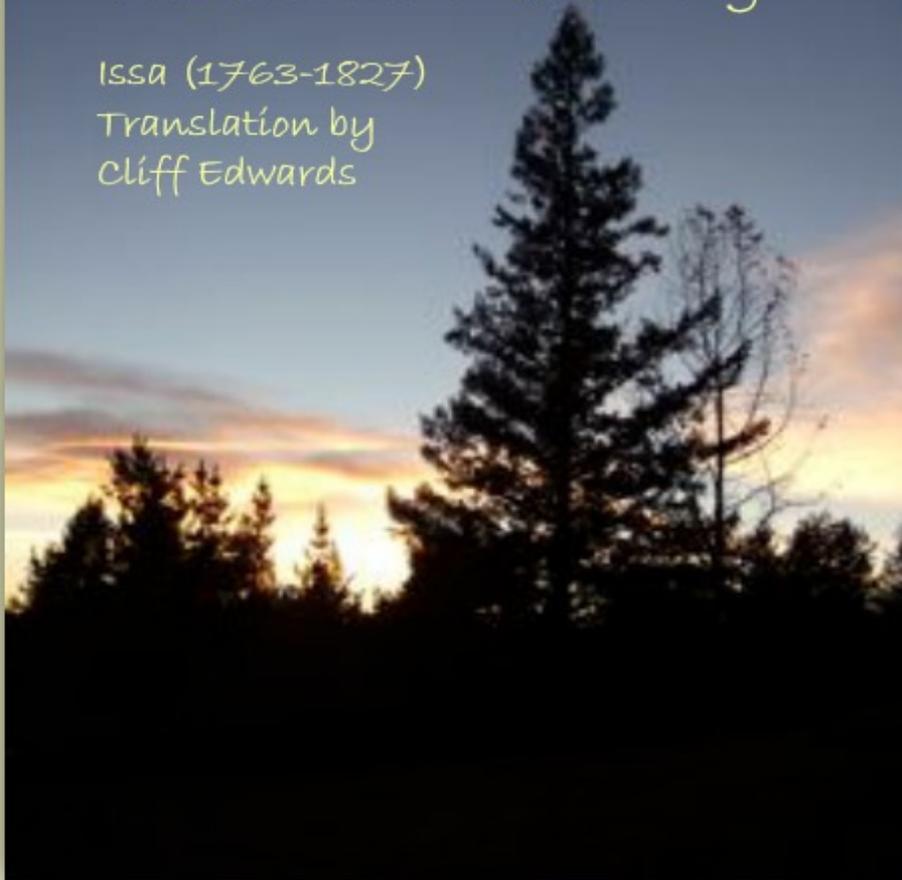


Pine tree I planted
See how it is aging too
The autumn evening

Issa (1763-1827)

Translation by
Cliff Edwards



This weekend is the Autumnal Equinox. From now on the nights will be longer and the days shorter. But I can't say that summer is really over because the garden is still producing abundantly. At the moment our kitchen is filled with tomatoes in the process of being canned. And of course there is the lingering issue of the persimmons!

A few weeks ago in a Friday Reflection I quoted an Issa haiku which urged us to remember that the story of the fruit we were enjoying began with “a stranger’s grandparent” planting the seed. I urged readers of the contemporary “Persimmon Gang” to come out of the closet and share the various ways in which they were planting seeds for the future. The response was amazing! Dozens of e-mails came in almost immediately. I wish there was space to share them all but I can assure you each one was carefully read and greatly appreciated. Some of you have urged me to give something of the flavor of those responses.

I will start with two people who have spent much of their life in public service, one as a County Supervisor and the other as a District Attorney. One had a longtime record of protecting redwood forests but when his first grandchild was born he started planting fruit trees. *“I want my grandchildren to eat this fruit long after I am dust.”* He remembered that he thought of his own grandfather when he, as a child, would eat an apple from the tree his grandfather planted many years before. The other friend is carefully collecting stories that his parents and grandparents shared with him about their early years. He is going to give his grandchildren those stories as Christmas presents.

The greatest number of e-mails concerned trees. *“We are planting Cypress and Redwood. We know we will never see the mature trees but hope that our grandkids will.”* There were many, many

variations on that theme. People planted trees in memory of friends and family who had died and in honor of children as they were born. Just to be on the safe side several planted two trees at the birth of each child and grandchild! One person brought a flat of seedlings for us to plant at Starcross.

Poignant emails came from those taking grandchildren to lend-a-hand to help those who hunger, or lack shelter, or safety. Those children will likely respond to humanitarian needs all their lives.

Some of the most tender stories for me came from educators. A renowned Canadian cellist with hundreds and hundreds of students wrote;

"I love my students, they are not all talented but they each have huge potential to give to the world. I think it is my job, not just to teach music, but to help each one reach beyond themselves and to make a richer contribution according to their individual talent."

Well, I could go on for many pages but I think you get the point that the "Persimmon Gang" is active and functioning! In many different ways the readers of these reflections are planting seeds for the future and I find that incredibly hopeful in this often fractured world.

Just to bring this back to Issa's persimmon haiku, I will close with a contribution from my old friend Cliff Edwards, a very popular professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Virginia

Commonwealth University. He has introduced thousands of students to the spiritual aspects of haiku and art. He tells me that persimmon trees grow wild in Virginia —and I think so do his former students. One of them, with a Native American heritage, expressed her grandfather's concept of the unity of all life with this haiku;

The old tradition:

We eat hanging persimmons

The fox gets wind falls.

OK, everybody keep planting those seeds! And thank you for enriching my life with your experiences. Oh, and if perchance you see a fox, tell him or her we left some persimmons on the ground.

Brother Toby