



“Before you departed...”

My Wife's Admonishment

You go abroad to seek wealth because we are poor.
 In your sojourn, do not sow your wild oats.
 Before you departed, I enjoined you to remember
 You have a wife and children at home.
 Please work diligently and be frugal with money.
 Two years hence, return home to sweep your ancestors' tombs.
 Remember, our backs are bare;
 Not half a cup of rice can be scooped from the pot.
 All our housewares are worn and torn;
 Our house is dilapidated.
 Your gambling has driven us us to poverty.
 In tears, I beg you to repent.
 You are fortunate to have an elder brother to pay your head tax.
 Always remember your gratitude to him.

Xin Hai Year (1911)

From 1909-1923, some of the newly arrived Chinese immigrants were detained in cells in the Federal Immigration Detention Hospital in Victoria, BC while government officers sorted out their paperwork.

When the building was being demolished in 1977, Dr. David Chuenyan Lai recovered wall fragments with poems dated 1911 and 1919 written on them. Early Chinese immigrants expressed their first experience in Canada—their aspirations for the new land, thoughts of family and homeland, and sorrows and anger over their treatment.

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