Long Ago

BIBELOT SERIES

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I give this June day
to Mr. Gordon Bottomley
the inside of this
book. Michael Field

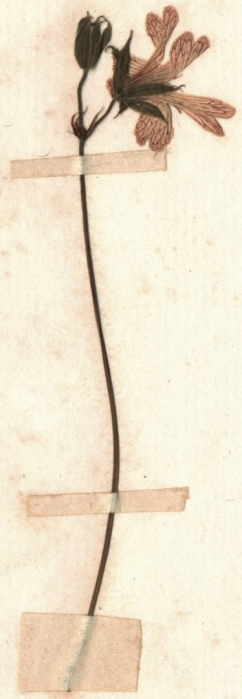
June 5, 1908

The Bibelot Series.

LONG AGO

πάλαι πότα

Ἠράμαν μὲν ἔγω σέθεν, Ἄτθι, πάλαι πότα



"A great while since, a long, long time ago"

LONG AGO

By

Michael Field

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PREFACE

WHEN, *more than a year ago, I wrote to a literary friend of my attempt to express in English verse the passionate pleasure Dr. Wharton's book had brought to me, he replied: "That is a delightfully audacious thought—the extension of Sappho's fragments into lyrics. I can scarcely conceive anything more audacious."*

In simple truth all worship that is not idolatry must be audacious; for it involves the blissful apprehension of an ideal; it means in the very phrase of Sappho—

Ἔγων δ' ἐμαύτᾳ
τοῦτο σύνοιδα·

Devoutly as the fiery-bosomed Greek turned in her anguish to Aphrodite, praying her to accomplish her heart's desires, I have turned to the one woman who has dared to speak unfalteringly of the fearful mastery of love, and again and again the dumb prayer has risen from my heart—

σὺ δ' αὔτα
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

Δεῦρο δηὖτε Μοῖσαι, χρύσιον λίποισαι.

HITHER *now, Muses! leaving golden seats,*
Hither! Forsake the fresh, inspiring wells,
Flee the high mountain lands, the cool retreats
Where in the temperate air your influence dwells,
Leave your sweet haunts of summer sound and rest,
Hither, O maiden choir, and make me blest.

LONG AGO

I

Αὐτὰρ ὀραῖαι στεφανηπλόκευν·

THEY *plaited garlands in their time;*
They knew the joy of youth's sweet prime,
Quick breath and rapture:
Theirs was the violet-weaving bliss,
And theirs the white, wreathed brow to kiss,
Kiss, and recapture.

They plaited garlands, even these;
They learnt Love's golden mysteries
Of young Apollo;
The lyre unloosed their souls; they lay
Under the trembling leaves at play,
Bright dreams to follow.

They plaited garlands—heavenly twine!
They crowned the cup, they drank the wine
Of youth's deep pleasure.
Now, lingering for the lyreless god—
Oh yet, once in their time, they trod
A choric measure.

II

Ὀφθάλμοις δὲ μέλαις νύκτος ἄωρος·

COME, *dark-eyed Sleep, thou child of Night,*
Give me thy dreams, thy lies;
Lead through the horny portal white
The pleasure day denies.

O bring the kiss I could not take
From lips that would not give;
Bring me the heart I could not break,
The bliss for which I live.

I care not if I slumber blest
By fond delusion; nay,
Put me on Phaon's lips to rest,
And cheat the cruel day!

III

Μήτ' ἔμοι μέλι μήτε μέλισσα·

OH, *not the honey, nor the bee!*
Yet who can drain the flowers
As I? Less mad, Persephone
Spoiled the Sicilian bowers
Than I for scent and splendour rove
The rosy oleander grove,
Or lost in myrtle nook unveil
Thoughts that make Aphrodite pale.

Honey nor bee! the tingling quest
Must that too be denied?
Deep in thy bosom I would rest,
O golden blossom wide!
O poppy-wreath, O violet-crown,
I fling your fiery circlets down;
The joys o'er which bees murmur deep
Your Sappho's senses may not steep.

Honey! clear, soothing, nectarous, sweet,
On which my heart would feed,
Give me, O Love, the golden meat,
And stay my life's long greed—
The food in which the gods delight
That glistens tempting in my sight!
Phaon, thy lips withhold from me
The bliss of honey and of bee.

IV

Χρύσεοι δ' ἐρέβινθοι ἐπ'ἀϊόνων ἐφύοντο·

WHERE *with their boats the fishers land*
Grew golden pulse along the sand;
It tangled Phaon's feet—away
He spurned the trails, and would not stay;
Its stems and yellow flowers in vain
Withheld him: can my arms detain
The fugitive? If that might be,
If I could win him from the sea,
Then subtly I would draw him down
'Mid the bright vetches; in a crown
My art should teach him to entwine
Their thievish rings, and keep him mine.

V

Οἷαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν οὔρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος

AS *on the hills the shepherds tread*
A hyacinth down, and witherèd
The purple flower
Is pressed to earth, and broken lies,
Its virgin stem no more to rise
In summer hour;
And death comes stealing with the dew
That yester evening brought anew
A fresher growth and fragrant grace,
Ere footsteps crushed the grassy place:

So underneath thy scorn and pride
My heart is bowed, and cannot hide
How it despairs.
O Phaon, weary is my pain;
The tears that from my eyelids rain
Ease not my cares;
My beauty droops and fades away,
Just as a trampled blossom's may.
Why must thou tread me into earth—
So dim in death, so bright at birth?

VI

Πάρθενον ἀδύφωνον·

ERINNA, *thou art ever fair,*
Not as the young spring flowers,
We who have laurel in our hair—
Eternal youth is ours.
The roses that Pieria's dew
Hath washed can ne'er decline;
On Orpheus' tomb at first they grew,
And there the Sacred Nine,
'Mid quivering moonlight, seek the groves
Guarding the minstrel's tomb;
Each for the poet that she loves
Plucks an immortal bloom.
Soon as my girl's sweet voice she caught,
Thither Euterpe sped,
And, singing too, a garland wrought
To crown Erinna's head.

VII

Μὴ κίνη χέραδας·

STIR *not the shingle with thy boat,*
It groans beneath the keel;
Still on the senseless waters float,
Until thy heart can feel;

Keep to Ægean tracts of fair,
Invulnerable sea;
The land cries out in pain to bear
One who from love is free.

Yea, linger 'mid the barren foam,
Ungreeted, out of reach
Of those who watch the sailor home
On Mitylene's beach.

Oh, I forget that Love's own Queen
Is called the Ocean-born;
Forth from the wine-dark waves, first seen,
She sprang in grace forlorn:

Forget that once across the sea,
Thou, with thy swinging oar,
Did'st row the goddess mightily,
Careless of coin, to shore.

She gave thee beauty—love's delight
Would give thee. Sail away!
Learn from the natal waves her might,
Then joyous seek the bay.

VIII

Ἔγω δὲ φίλημ' ἀβροσύναν, καί μοι τὸ λάμπρον
ἔρος . . . . ἀελίω καὶ τὸ κάλον λέλογχεν·

WITH *love nor languorous nor vain,*
I prize, in their degrees,
The perfect odour, the red fruit
Ungathered on the trees;
The broidered strap of Lydian work
That Gorgo's foot doth deck,
The strings of tender garlands twined
About her tender neck:
The feel of fine-wove linen
When the limbs spring to pass
In lightsome dance bare-footed
Trampling the blooms of grass;
The pressure of the cushion,
The golden goblet bright,
The bubbles of the wine-draught—
Each thrills me with delight:
For each of them brings honour,
Being delicate to sense,
To the beauty of the body,
And to Love's omnipotence.
Love has to me the splendour,
The glory of the sun;
And the least action 'neath his eye
Must be divinely done.

IX

. . . Ἐμεθεν δ' ἔχεισθα λάθαν·
. . . Ἤ τιν' ἄλλον
[μᾶλλον] ἀνθρώπων ἔμεθεν φιλησθα·

THOU *hast not parted from the sun,*
Thou art not dead,
Numbered with fickle ghosts as one
By Hermes led.

Thou still hast breath and memory,
Can'st seek and yearn;
Yet wholly thou forgettest me,
Or I discern

The truth—thou lov'st another more
Assuageless pain!
Betake thee to Oblivion's shore!
Wilt thou profane

Love's wine by drinking twice the draught
Of that red tide
We lifted to our lips and quaffed
When side by side?

To thee let Lethe's drowsing wave
Its solace give!
I, one bright memory to save,
Will weep and live.

X

Τί με Πανδίονις ὦ ἄρανα χελιδών·

AH, *Procne, wherefore dost thou weary me?*
Thus flitting out and flitting in,
Thou show'st the restlessness of one love-slighted:
And yet, Pandion's daughter, thou did'st win
Thy Tereus. Though he loved too well
Dumb Philomel,
Tease not the air with this tumultuous wing!
Hast thou no passion for unbosoming?
Such misery
Befits the breast that love hath ne'er delighted;
Thou to thy Thracian boy wert once united. . .
Ah, lovely Procne, wherefore weary me?

XI

Ἄβρα δηὖτε παχήᾳ σπόλᾳ ἀλλόμαν·

DREAMLESS *from happy sleep* I *woke,*
On me the piercing sunlight broke,
I *drank the laughter of the breeze*
Divine, O Cypris, from thy seas,
Then lithely in thick robe I sprang;
To me it seemed my body sang—

"*Death is an evil.*" *Phaon bent*
Above his nets, magnificent.
"*The wise immortals never die.*"
Phaon grew conscious I stood by;
And, oh! to bury in thy wave,
Lethe, one day, the glance he gave!

XII

Ἦρος ἄγγελος ἱμερόφωνος ἀήδων·

SPRING'S *messenger we hail,*
The sweet-voiced nightingale;
She sings where ivy weaves
Blue berries with dark leaves.

Beside each forest-root
The lilies freshly shoot,
Narcissi crown the grass,
Bees hum, and toil, and pass.

The glades are soft with dew,
The chestnuts bud anew,
And fishers set their sails
To undelusive gales.

The shepherd's pipe is heard,
The villages are stirred
To shout the wine-god's praise,
And jest in rural ways.

Then breaks the piercing note
From Philomel's wild throat,
Passion's supremest pain
That may not hope again.

Zeus sends the gracious Spring,
And must her herald sing
In kindly-bowered retreat
Only of love's defeat?

Ah, woe is me! I learn,
When light and flowers return,
Love's anguish, cark and care;
Its infinite despair

Comes back, and makes me mad,
Telling how all is glad:
Then swell the throb, the wail,
The want, O nightingale!

XIII.

Σὺ δὲ στεφάνοις, ω Δίκα, περθέσθ' ἐράταις φόβαισιν
ὄρπακας ἀνήτοιο συνέρραις' ἀπάλαισι χέρσιν·
εὐάνθεα γὰρ πέλεται καὶ χάριτες μάκαιρα
μᾶλλον προτέρην· ἀστεφανώτοισι δ' ἀπυστρέφονται·

DICA, *the Graces oft incline*
To watch thy fingers' skill
As with light foliage they entwine
The aromatic dill:
Then seek the fount where feathery,
Young shoots and tendrils creep,
For samphire and for rosemary
Climb thou the marble steep,
Turn to the reed-bed by the stream
For pansies' dark and yellow gleam,
And midmost of thy blossoms set
Narcissus with white coronet.

To clothe thy life with brilliancy
And honour is to give
Joy to the gods; they love to see
How pleasantly men live;
They love the crowned and fragrant head,
But turn their face away
From those who come ungarlanded,
For none delight as they
In piercing, languorous, spicy scent,
And thousand hues in lustre blent:
Such sacrifice, O Dica, bring!
Thy garland is a beauteous thing.

XIV

Τὸ μέλημα τοὐμόν·

ATTHIS, *my darling, thou did'st stray*
A few feet to the rushy bed,
When a great fear and passion shook
My heart lest haply thou wert dead;
It grew so still about the brook,
As if a soul were drawn away.

Anon thy clear eyes, silver-blue,
Shone through the tamarisk-branches fine;
To pluck me iris thou had'st sprung
Through galingale and celandine;
Away, away, the flowers I flung
And thee down to my breast I drew.

My darling! Nay, our very breath
Nor light nor darkness shall divide;
Queen Dawn shall find us on one bed,
Nor must thou flutter from my side
An instant, lest I feel the dread,
Atthis, the immanence of death.

XV

Χρυσοφάη θεράπαιναν Ἀφροδιτάς·

No *angry voice is heard*
  In *Aphrodite's train;*
Rude *speech, it is averred,*
  Meets *there with high disdain.*

Beside *her golden throne*
  Reproaches *have no place;*
Complaint *or amorous moan*
  Will *scarcely win her grace:*

But *she for hours will hold*
  Persuasion *at her feet,*
Her *handmaid bright as gold,*
  Than *honey-bee more sweet;*

And *listen how her voice*
  As *water flows along,*
Making *the ear rejoice,*
  So *like it is to song,*

So *voluble, so sure*
  To *win and subjugate;*
Yet *mortals, who endure*
  Love's *torments, rail and hate,*

Detract, *and show their spleen,*
  Unmindful *of the maid*
Who, *dear to Love's own Queen,*
  Their *impotence can aid:*

For, *soon as on their tongue*
  Is *laid her beauteous speech,*
Their *rage, their taunts are flung*
  Aside, *and they beseech.*

No *maiden is so coy*
  Or *heartless as to spurn*
Tones *that invite to joy,*
  That *sway, encourage, yearn;*

And *Aphrodite smiles,*
  Beholding *with what speed*
Her *servant's suasive wiles*
  On *human lips succeed.*

XVI

Δεῦτέ νυν ἁβραι Χάριτες, καλλίκομοί τε Μοῖσαι·

DELICATE *Graces, come,*
And charm my days,
With purest loveliness and smiles
And gracious ways;
For what were life without the spell
And mirth that in your presence dwell,
When with linked arms, fresh-blushing, ye
Stray from the Cyprian deity!

Ye fair-haired Muses, come,
And bless my days,
With holy ecstasy and might
Of deathless lays;
For what were life without the glow,
The joy that crownèd poets know,
When ye descend your mountain ground,
And wake the cithara's full sound!

XVII

Πλήρης μὲν ἐφαίνετ' ἁ σελάννα,
αἱ δ' ὡς περὶ βῶμον ἐστάθησαν·

A. Παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποισ' οἴχη;
B. Οὐκέτι ἥξω πρὸς σέ, οὐκέτι ἥξω·

THE *moon rose full: the women stood*
As though within a sacred wood
Around an altar—thus with awe
The perfect, virgin orb they saw
Supreme above them; and its light
Fell on their limbs and garments white.
Then with pale, lifted brows they stirred
Their fearful steps at Sappho's word,
And in a circle moved around,
Responsive to her music's sound,
That through the silent air stole on,
Until their breathless dread was gone,
And they could dance with lightsome feet,
And lift the song with voices sweet.
Then once again the silence came:
Their lips were blanched as if with shame
That they in maidenhood were bold
Its sacred worship to unfold;
And Sappho touched the lyre alone,
Until she made the bright strings moan.
She called to Artemis aloud—
Alas, the moon was wrapt in cloud!—

" Oh, whither art thou gone from me?
Come back again, virginity!
For maidenhood still do I long,
The freedom and the joyance strong
Of that most blessèd secret state
That makes the tenderest maiden great.
O moon, be fair to me as these,
And my regretful passion ease;
Restore to me my only good,
My maidenhood, my maidenhood!"
She sang: and through the clouded night
An answer came of cruel might—
"To thee I never come again."
O Sappho, bitter was thy pain!
Then did thy heavy steps retire,
And leave, moon-bathed, the virgin quire.

XVIII

Τὸν δ' ἐπιπλάζοντες ἄμοι φέροιεν
καὶ μελεδώναις·

BOREAS, *leave thy Thracian cave,*
Cross the grey, up-tossing wave;
With thy lips, rough-bearded, swell
All the voices of thy shell.
Chase the wheat-producing mist,
That the teeming furrows kissed;
With thy morning breath drive forth
Every dense cloud of the north;
Let thy chilly blasts prevail,
Make the shivering olive pale,
Hold the sailor in the bay,
Sweep distress and care away!
Let thy winds, wide-wandering, bleak,
Dry the tears on Sappho's cheek!
Buffeting with gusts, constrain
Woes of love to quit my brain:
Bind them on thy pinions strong,
Bear them on thy course along.
Come, stern god, and set me free;
Rival Eros' tyranny!
Then, exultant, I will praise,
Now at banquets, now in lays,
Thee, fierce Thracian, gentle grown,
And thy mighty godhead own.

XIX

Δέδυκε μὲν ἀ σελάννα
καὶ Πληΐαδες, μέσαι δέ
νύκτες, παρὰ δ' ἔρχετ' ὥρα,
ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω·

WHEN *longing on my couch I lay,*
The moon shone clear above the bay,
And whether Heaven's queen,
With her dread power,
Did come me and my love between,
Whether in Dian's holy air he chilled,
I know not: the sweet hour
Is unfulfilled.

Athwart the grove the Pleiades
Beamed clear — a lovely cluster these.
I mused how it befell
That Sterope
Loved her Oenomaus so well
She flitted from her shining sisters' side,
And in obscurity
Became his bride.

O blessèd, secret, shamèd one!
Now e'en the Pleiades are gone;
Now is it full midnight:
Thus should I be
Hid in the tomb from all men's sight!
O Hades, take this heart, these limbs that yearn,
Yea, I will give them thee,
Ash for thine urn!

Bethink thee, love, time passes by,
A little while before we die
Is Aphrodite's own.
And what were life
Without the mystery of her zone,
Her rosy altars, and her heavenly fires.
Warm, to assuage the strife
Of vain desires?

The moon is gone, yet he delays,
The stars are set, but Sappho stays;
And can it be that death,
Jealous, hath sped
To suck from me my Phaon's balmy breath?
I stifle in my heart the funeral moan:
I do not weep the dead;
I lie alone.

XX

Ταῖσι [δὲ] ψῦχρος μὲν ἔγεντο θῦμος,
παρ δ' ἴεισι τὰ πτέρα. . .

I SANG *to women gathered round;*
Forth from my own heart-springs
Welled out the passion; of the pain
I sang if the beloved in vain
Is sighed for — when
They stood untouched, as at the sound
Of unfamiliar things,
Oh, then my heart turned cold, and then
I dropt my wings.

Trembling I seek thy holy ground,
Apollo, lord of kings;
Thou hast the darts that kill. Oh, free
The senseless world of apathy,
Pierce it! — for when
In poet's strain no joy is found,
His call no answer brings,
Oh, then my heart turns cold, and then
I drop my wings.

All flocks are Pan's; the groves resound
To Orpheus' golden strings;
As swan that, secret, shrills the note
Triumphant from Apollo's throat,
My muse, from men
Her holy raptures would confound,
Turns to the woods and springs,
Whene'er my heart grows cold, and when
I drop my wings.

Or by the white cliff's cypress mound,
My music wildly rings;
I watch the hoar sails on the track
Of moonlight; they are turning back;
Night falls; and when
By maiden-arms to be enwound
Ashore the fisher flings,
Oh, then my heart turns cold, and then
I drop my wings.

XXI

Βροδοπάχεες ἅγναι Χάριτες, δεῦτε Δίος κόραι·

YE *rosy-armed, pure Graces, come,*
  Daughters of Zeus, be near!
Oh, wherefore have my lips been dumb
  So long in silence drear?

And why have I so cheerless been,
  So sorrowful and wild?
It was because ye were not seen,
  Because ye had not smiled.

Although his prayer the Muses bless,
  The poet doth require
That ye, in frolic gentleness,
  Should stand beside his lyre.

Ne'er will he mortal ear delight,
  Nor care-vex'd spirit ease;
Except he sing with ye in sight,
  Rose-flushed among the trees.

XXII

Αἵ με τιμίαν ἐπόησαν ἔργα
τὰ σφὰ δοῖσαι·

THEY *bring me gifts, they honour me,*
  Now I am growing old;
And wondering youth crowds round my knee,
  As if I had a mystery
  And worship to unfold.

O gather round me, golden youth,
  For justly ye divine
I am your prophetess forsooth,
And ye shall learn love's very truth
  Who to my lyre incline.

To me the tender, blushing bride
  Doth come with lips that fail;
I feel her heart beat at my side,
And cry—"Like Ares in his pride,
  Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!"

And to the doubting boy afraid
  Of too ambitious bliss
I whisper—"None is like thy maid,
And I her fond heart will persuade
  To feel thou feelest this."

Or if Persephone should take
From me some maid full dear,
While friends their lamentations make,
I rise, and for the lover's sake
I praise her loud and clear.

Ye bring me gifts, ye honour me
For music and for rhyme;
And if at last my soul sings free,
It is that once I stood, as ye,
Dumb in youth's golden clime.

XXIII

Φαίνεται μοι κῆνος·

LIFT, lover, thy long-shadowed eyne!
Why should thy sleepless lids decline,
Thy breast so deeply sigh?
Seek we the shade of yonder pine,
'Neath which the river flows;
There we the sweet flower-test will try
For healing of thy woes.

Thou mourn'st thy maiden's faith is gone;
Stoop for fair-leaved telephilon;
Woe, if the petals cleave!
But see! sharp-struck thy palms upon,
They leap, they burst, as shoots a star.
Alcæus, lo! thou must believe
This sign of Love-afar.

XXIV

Ψάπφοι, τί τὰν πολύολβον Ἀφρόδιταν;

WHY *should I praise thee, blissful Aphrodite?*
Wrong hast thou wrought
Thy Sappho, thy flower-weaving one, who brought
The fair, white goat, and poured the milky bowl,
Using thy mighty,
Malignant craft to baulk me of my goal;
Through all my days
And starless nights I crown thee with my lays:
Why should I praise,
Why should I praise thee, blissful Aphrodite?

Why should I praise thee, blissful Aphrodite?
Thou dost not guide,
Rather with conflict dire my mind divide;
For me the trembling boy grows honey-pale,
While for the mighty
Fervours of Phaon's breast, without avail,
My mad heart prays.
Win him, O Queen, who shunned to seek my gaze!
Then will I praise,
Then will I praise thee, blissful Aphrodite.

XXV

Ω τὸν Ἄδωνιν·

AH *for Adonis! So*
The virgins cry in woe:
Ah, for the spring, the spring,
And all fleet blossoming—
The delicate and slight
Anemones, rose-bright,
With buds flushed in and out,
Like Aphrodite's pout
When she is soft and coy;
Ah for the mortal boy,
Who would not hold her dear,
And now is dying here!

Ah for Adonis! Show,
Ye virgins, what ye know!
The white narcissi breathe
Between the grass, and sheathe
Their fragrance as they die;
From the low bushes nigh,
Mimosa's golden dust
A little later must
Be squandered on decay:
And can the fair youth stay,
When every lovely bloom
Goes to obscuring doom?

Ah for Adonis! No,
He must to Hades go:
A goddess may not keep
Safe from the mortal sleep
Those limbs and those young eyes;
Nor can her frantic cries
Recall one transient grace
Secure Immortals trace
In things of earthly mould.
Ungirt and sable-stoled
She wanders through the glades,
And tears her heavenly braids.

Ah for Adonis! Throw
All flowers that quickly grow
And perish on his bed!
He will come back, though dead,
When spring returns, and fill
Cythera's arms until
He must again depart,
Again her bosom smart.
O virgins, joy is sent,
And soon with sorrow blent;
All we have loved is made
To re-appear, and fade.

XXVI

Γέλλως παιδοφιλωτέρα·

Not Gello's self loves more than I
The virgin train, my company.
No thought of Eros doth appal
Their cheeks; their strong, clear eyes let fall
No tears; they dream their days will be
All laughter, love, serenity,
And violet-weaving at my knee—

Subtle Mnasidica in shape
As firm as the unripened grape,
Dica with meeting eyebrows sleek,
And Gorgo of the apple-cheek,
With that young, dove-eyed creature come
From Telos, whose soft lips are dumb;
The golden bees about them hum.

Dica put forth her hand to reach
The blue sea-holly on the beach
Last night. I drew the child away;
She knew not where the love-charm lay,
And from the fatal fibre let
Her hand relax; but by his net
One stood she never can forget.
Ah me, and Gorgo too is pale!
Fell Cypris, if thou must prevail,
Mingle no madness in love's wine;
That these should e'er as Sappho pine,
Goddess, forbid! The little thing
From Telos must be taught to sing;
The rest to Hymen's portals bring!

XXVII

Εὐμορφοτέρα Μνασιδίκα τᾶς ἀπάλας Γυρίννως·

MNASIDICA *in form and gait*
Eclipses her ill-favoured mate
Gyrinna; when I call,
I tremble lest the girl appear
Whose very shadow on the wall
Repulses me, and when I hear
Her rude, slow step I shake with fear.

Her gesture has no rhythmic law;
She knows not how her dress to draw
About her ankles thin;
And let the luckless child take care
Firmly her chiton-brooch to pin,
For, oh, she must not ever dare
To leave her flabby shoulder bare!

But when Mnasidica doth raise
Her arm to feed the lamp I gaze
Glad at the lovely curve;
And when her pitcher at the spring
She fills, I watch her tresses swerve
And drip, then pause to see her wring
Her hair, and back the bright drops fling.

And now she leaves my maiden train!
Those whom I love most give me pain:
Why should I love her so?
Gyrinna hath a gentle face,
And the harmonious soul, I know,
Not very long can lack the trace,
O Aphrodite, of thy grace.

XXVIII.

. . . Ἔγω δὲ κήν' ὄττω τις ἔραται·

LOVE, *fatal creature, bitter-sweet,*
For my Alcæus I entreat.
Should I not plead? To wasting fires
A secret prey I live,
Yet, Eros, that which he desires
I cannot give.

Who shall deliver him? Lo, I,
For love of whom he soon will die,
Weep through the starry night oppressed
That he should love in vain.
Ah, can another mortal breast
Learn Sappho's pain!

When once his feet to me did stray,
He would forget the homeward way;
And when he gazed I turned to greet
The grace within his eyes;
With love it is such joy to meet
In any guise.

To him, O heavenly Muses, come!
He cannot live if he be dumb.
Leave me awhile. O let him feel
His heart set free in song;
Hasten, for ye alone can heal
A lover's wrong.

XXIX

Σκιδναμένας ἐν στήθεσιν ὄργας
μαψυλάκαν γλῶσσαν πεφύλαχθαι·

WHEN *through thy breast wild wrath doth spread*
And work thy inmost being harm,
Leave thou the fiery word unsaid,
Guard thee; be calm.

Closed be thy lips: where Love perchance
Lies at the door to be thy guest,
Shall there be noise and dissonance?
Quiet were best.

Apollo, when they do thee wrong,
Speechless thou tak'st the golden dart:
I will refrain my barking tongue,
And strike the heart.

XXX

Πόλυ πάκτιδος ἁδυμελεστέρα, χρύσω χρυσοτέρα·

THINE *elder that I am, thou must not cling*
To me, nor mournful for my love entreat:
And yet, Alcæus, as the sudden spring
Is love, yea, and to veiled Demetia sweet.

Sweeter than tone of harp, more gold than gold
Is thy young voice to me; yet, ah, the pain
To learn I am beloved now I am old,
Who, in my youth, loved, as thou must, in vain.

XXXI

Ἄκακος

NAY, *I have no experience of ill;*
Within my heart there is no drop of gall;
I joy and weep, and never of my will
On boy or maiden let a shadow fall.

No wrongs I nurse, no injury requite,
Though unbeloved, lovers are all my theme,
And Cyprus' daughter smiles on me at night
Through Hades' mournful myrtles in a dream.

XXXII

. . . Ἀλλά τις οὐκ ἔμμι παλιγκότων
ὄργαν, ἀλλ' ἀβάκην τὰν φρέν' ἔχω . . .

NOT *for revenge!—one shaft alone*
From Sappho's hand, in ire, hath flown;
Love smote: the arrow from my heart
I drew, and bent the string
For Phaon's breast; he felt no smart,
With me remains the sting;
And I am weaponless, apart
From that too wildly wasted dart.

XXXIII

Ταῖς κάλαις ὔμμιν [τὸ] νόημα τῶμον
οὐ διάμειπτον·

MAIDS, *not to you my mind doth change;*
Men I defy, allure, estrange,
Prostrate, make bond or free:
Soft as the stream beneath the plane
To you I sing my love's refrain;
Between us is no thought of pain,
Peril, satiety.

Soon doth a lover's patience tire,
But ye to manifold desire
Can yield response, ye know
When for long, museful days I pine,
The presage at my heart divine;
To you I never breathe a sign
Of inward want or woe.

When injuries my spirit bruise,
Allaying virtue ye infuse
With unobtrusive skill:
And if care frets ye come to me
As fresh as nymph from stream or tree,
And with your soft vitality
My weary bosom fill.

XXXIV

Οὔ τι μοι ὔμμες.

"SING *to us, Sappho!" cried the crowd,*
And to my lyre I sprang;
Apollo seized me, and aloud
Tumultuous I sang.
I did not think of who would hear;
I knew not there were men who jeer;
Nor dreamed I there were mortals born
To make the poet's heart forlorn.

There is a gift the crowd can bring,
A rapture, a content;
Pierian roses scarcely fling
So ravishing a scent
As that with which the air is stirred
When hearts of heavenly things have heard—
Sigh, and let forth the odour steal
Of that which in themselves they feel.

But now no subtle incense rose;
I heard a hostile sound
And looked—oh, scornfuller than those
'Mong men I ne'er have found.
I paused: the whistling air was stilled;
Then through my chords the godhead thrilled,
And the quelled creatures knew their kind
Ephemeral through foolish mind.

They saw their ghosts in Hades' grove
A dismal, flitting band;
They felt they were shut out from love
And honour in their land;
For never in the Muses' strain
Of them memorial would remain;
And spell-bound they received the curse
Of the great King's derided verse.

XXXV

Αλλα, μὴ μεγαλύνεο δακτυλίω πέρι·

COME, Gorgo, put the rug in place,
And passionate recline;
I love to see thee in thy grace,
Dark, virulent, divine.
But wherefore thus thy proud eyes fix
Upon a jewelled band?
Art thou so glad the sardonyx
Becomes thy shapely hand?

Bethink thee! 'Tis for such as thou
Zeus leaves his lofty seat;
'Tis at thy beauty's bidding how
Man's mortal life shall fleet;
Those fairest hands — dost thou forget
Their power to thrill and cling?
O foolish woman, dost thou set
Thy pride upon a ring?

XXXVI

Διὸς παῖς ὁ χρυσός, κεῖνον οὐ σῆς οὐδὲ κὶς δάπτει,

YEA, *gold is son of Zeus: no rust*
Its timeless light can stain;
The worm that brings man's flesh to dust
Assaults its strength in vain:
More gold than gold the love I sing,
A hard, inviolable thing.

Men say the passions should grow old
With waning years; my heart
Is incorruptible as gold,
'Tis my immortal part:
Nor is there any god can lay
On love the finger of decay.

XXXVII

πότνια αὔως.

QUEEN *Dawn, in immortality doth bask*
Tithonus; youth for him thou did'st not ask;
He lives in never-fading age apart:
Dione's child, less careful in her joy,
Spent her wild passion on a mortal boy,
Then watched him dying with a broken heart.

O Queen of Love, I blame thee not;
The sweet things of a mortal's lot
Are these: to win the rapture and to lose;
To learn the morrow brings not back to-day;
To bind the cup with roses while we may,
To drink, or die athirst if we refuse.

XXXVIII

Πέρροχος, ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδος ὁ Λέσβιος ἀλλοδάποισιν·

He towers 'mong men of other lands,
The Lesbian singer; he commands
Praise of the Dorian soldier-bands.

He fathomed well what men require:
He knew the pang of dumb desire;
Three strings he added to his lyre.

Terpander, who from man hath ta'en
Passion's unextricated pain,
Forever o'er his race shall reign!

XXXIX

Εμεθεν δ' ἔχεισθα λάθαν·

Me thou forgettest: thou alone of all
I love the sweet hours failest to recall;
My shell grew vocal for thee once—the spot
Thronged by fond echoes thou rememberest not.

With my dead lovers memory is not dead;
On me they call from many a violet-bed
Of the still country; or in cloudy throng
Fill the wide meads with my remembered song.

Though I should meet them in the shadows, wet
With Lethe, they would give me welcome yet;
There would be flicker of a smile beneath
Their wan, memorial twines of myrtle-wreath.

Regret—it is the lover's, poet's sign;
Of Zeus and Memory the sacred Nine
Themselves are offspring; each enduring strain
Springs from the issues of an ancient pain.

'Tis for his dead girl-love Apollo weaves
His poet's crown of deathless laurel-leaves;
By Ladon's river long must slowly bleed
Pan's heart ere music permeate his reed.

But thou who, walking under evening skies,
Can'st see the stars, can'st see the clear moon rise,
Unmindful how 'neath her low orb we stood
As by an altar in the olive-wood—

Oblivion guard thy tomb! Ah, witless sting!
They cannot be forgotten whom I sing;
For this thy brief forgetfulness of me
Thou shalt have everlasting infamy.

XL

Οὐκ οἶδ' ὅττι θέω · δύο μοι τὰ νοήματα·

SISTERS *doom-weaving, dread,*
Ye Moirai incorruptibly austere
From cradle to the bier,
By whom the goings of our life are led,

I strive not, nor complain,
And what ye will accomplish with no sigh,
For surely I should die
If my own guidance issued from my brain.

I know not what to do,
Divided is my mind 'twixt love and hate;
Perplexity so great
Can reach no end, and finds not its own clue.

Alcæus trembles while
He runs dark fingers o'er the golden lyre;
His lifted eyes require
With looks of fervent pain my tardy smile.

On Mitylene's shore,
Coiling his nets about the lovely head,
Goes Phaon with free tread:
Remembering this, I hear the plaint no more.

And thus from all delight
My weary breast is severed day by day;
I find not any way
Of peace, until, O daughters of the night,

I think how, as ye sing,
All is decided: then my doubts grow still;
Your undiverted will
Concludes my wild suspense and wavering.

XLI

ἢ ωσπερ Σαπφώ, ὅτι τὸ ἀποφνήσκειν
κακόν· οἱ θεοὶ γὰρ οὕτω κεκρίκασιν·
απέθνησκον γὰρ ἄν·
Aristotle, "Rhetoric." ii. 23.

ϝέσπερε, πάντα φέρεις, ὕσα φαίνολις ἐσκέδας' αὔως·

DEATH *is an evil: had it been a boon,*
Ah, then how soon
Would the Immortals die!
But never do the blessèd ones grow weary
Of the sweet joys of breath:
'Tis Aphrodite's sigh—
"Ah for Adonis!"—makes the young spring dreary;
Lover from mortal lover severeth,
And parting is the bitterness of death.

Yet silver Hesperus is fairer far
Than any star,
Sweet Hesperus that brings
What morning scattered; and I know not whether
It be not best to lose
Awhile life's precious things
For joy of sharing them afresh together;
They who would meet again to part must choose:
The hour of evening every bliss renews.

XLII

Χαίροισα νύμφα, χαιρέτω δ' ὁ γάμβρος·

SHE *comes, and youthful voices*
On Hymen praise confer;
She comes, and she rejoices,
Rejoice with her,
O bridegroom! Let her see
Thy brave felicity.

She comes, with shining blushes
Of unalloyed delight;
Her very chaplet flushes,
Its buds as bright
With vermeil glow and grace
As is her veilèd face.

She comes, and brings the treasure
Of virgin years apart;
She comes to do thy pleasure
With all her heart;
She knows what joy divine
She keeps to make it thine.

Could Hebe at the table
Of Heaven, her cup of gold
Mixed with delights, be able
Such bliss to hold
And pour, as she, thy bride,
Can offer at thy side?

She comes, with leaping torches,
With song and merriment;
She sweeps between thy porches,
On thee intent,
As gay as Iris when
She bears glad news to men.

She comes in state, resplendent
As unshorn field of wheat;
And like a vine-branch pendent
With clusters sweet,
She is endowed to bless
With bounteous loveliness.

She is to thee the bearer
Of triumph and of fame;
Be in her mirth a sharer!
For it were shame
If thou, through fear, wert slow
Thine ecstasy to show.

She comes, thy hope fulfilling;
O happy bridegroom, see,
How gracious and how willing
She comes to thee.
Rejoice! Oh, be not dumb!
Rejoice, for she is come!

XLIII

Αμφί δὲ [ὕδωρ] ψῦχρον κελάδει δι' ὕσδων
μαλίνων, αἰθυσσομένων δὲ φύλλων
κῶμα καναρρεῖ·

COOL *water gurgles through*
The apple-boughs, and sleep
Falls from the flickering leaves,
Where hoary shadows keep
Secluded from man's view
A little cave that cleaves
The rock with fissure deep.

Worshipped with milk and oil,
There dwell the Nymphs, and there
They listen to the breeze,
About their dewy hair
The clustered garlands coil,
Or, moving round the trees,
Cherish the roots with care.

There reign delight and health;
There freshness yields the palm
To musical refrain;
For never was such calm,
Such sound of murmuring stealth,
Such solace to the brain,
To weariness such balm.

Even a lover's pains,
Though fiercely they have raged,
Here find at last relief:
The heart by sorrow aged
Divinely youth regains;
Tears steal through parchèd grief:
All passion is assuaged.

XLIV

Οὐ' τι μοι ὕμμες·

NOUGHT *to me! So I choose to say:*
We meet, old friends, about the bay;
The golden pulse grows on the shore—
Are not all things as heretofore
Now we have cast our love away?

Men throng us; thou art nought to me,
Therefore, indifferent, I can see
Within thine eyes the bright'ning grace
That once thou gavest face to face;
'Tis natural they welcome thee!

Nought to me, like the silver ring,
Thy mislaid, worthless gift. Last spring,
As any careless girl, I lost
The pin, yet, by the tears it cost,
It should have been worth cherishing.

Nought, nought! and yet if thou dost pass
I grow as summer-coloured grass,
And if I wrap my chiton round,
I know thine ear hath caught the sound,
Although thou heedest not, alas!

Nought to me! Wherefore dost thou throw
On me that glittering glance, as though,
Friend, I had ever done thee wrong,
When the crowd asks me for the song,
"Atthis, I loved thee long ago?"

XLV

. . . Ὅττινας γάρ
εὖ θέω, κῆνοί με μάλιστα σίνον-
ται . . .

AH *friends, who altered grow,*
No rancour shall ye sow
Within my simple mind:
I ponder on the days when ye were kind.

In summer drouth we tread
A torrent's whitened bed,
And love to recollect
How here the deep, cold waters rushed uncheckt.

The oleander-rose
Its flushing light still throws
Across the stony track;
And all the fertilizing founts well back.

We see by the ravine
The seats of shady green
That drew us to the bank:
Sacred the channel where athirst we drank.

I will not then refuse
On those sweet years to muse
Before ye loved me less,
O friends, or sought to injure and distress.

Ill-favoured now ye seem,
But I of you will dream
As of a beauty gone
That once the lingering sunshine looked upon.

XLVI

Ἄλλαν μὴ καμεστέραν φρένα·

"FOOL, *faint not thou!"* *I laughed in blame*
Of Larichus, pale in the flame
Of Hymen's torches: while, alas,
I feel my senses swoon,
Or quicken with delight
At Nature's simplest boon:
Unmoved I cannot pass
The fine bloom of the grass,
Or watch the dimpling shadows on the white,
Vibrating poplar with unshaken frame.

"Faint not," I said — and yet my breath
Comes sharp as I were nigh to death
If suddenly across the grove
The lovely laugh I hear,
Or catch the lovely speech
Of one who makes a peer
Of the blest gods above
The man she deigns to love.
O Anactoria, wast thou born to teach
Sappho how vainly she admonisheth?

"Faint not" — the poet must dare all;
Me no experience shall appal,
No pang that can make shrill my song:
Though Atthis, hateful, flit
From my fond arms, and by
Andromeda dare sit,
I will not let my strong
Heart fail, will bear the wrong,
With piercing accents for Adonis cry,
Or thrice on perished Timas vainly call.

"Faint not," I said. Would'st thou be great,
Thou must with every shock vibrate
That life can bring thee; seek and yearn;
Feel in thyself the stroke
Of love, although it rive
As mountain-wind an oak;
Let jealous passion burn
If Rhodope must turn
To other love; and laugh that age should strive
The ardours of thy bosom to abate.

XLVII

Οὐ γάρ ἦν ἑτέρα παῖς, ὦ γάμβρε, τοιαύτα·

No other girl—O bridegroom, thou art right—
Is like to thine;
The snowiest swan gives not such keen delight,
Sailing in shine
Of spacious Asian mere, as she
Moving in her simplicity.

No other girl is like her; is she cold—
So sweet and dumb?
Nay, Aphrodite's handmaid bright as gold
Shall she become,
And thou shalt hear her honeyed voice
Summon thee softly to rejoice.

She has been kept for thee, I know not how;
As, undescried,
A blushing apple on the topmost bough,
Heaven kept thy bride
A fragrant, rare, inviolate thing
For season of thy cherishing.

Clasp the belovèd form, a golden flower
Pliant and frail;
Kiss the dropt eyelids till Love's genial power
The eyes unveil,
And Cleïs lift to thee the grace,
Candour, and gladness of her face.

She knows thy wedding comes to thy desire;
She will secure
From winds that buffet thee, from storms that tire,
A haven sure;
And, inexperienced in ill,
Keep from thy breast the thoughts that kill.

There is none like her, like thy girl, thine own;
And, bridegroom, see!
Honouring Hera of the silver throne,
She turns to thee.
Sappho, with solitary eyes, afar
Will watch the rising of eve's fairest star.

XLVIII

Ἄστερες μὲν ἀμφὶ κάλαν σελάνναν
ἂψ ἀποκρύπτοισι φάεννον εἶδος,
ὄππότα πλήθοισα μάλιστα λάμπῃ
γᾶν . . . .
. . . ἀργυρία·

The stars about the moon
Hide their bright face as soon
As she from circle fair
Lights up all earth and air
With silver, so that field,
Grove, terrace lie revealed
In the cold splendour, bare
Of darkness as at noon.

The Pleiades that shone
Before she rose are gone;
Sweet Hesperus, the pride
Of nuptial eventide,
Is now obscure and pale;
And straightway pine and fail
The planets at her side
That she has looked upon.

Erinna, loved of yore,
Loved ever more and more,
O queen of women, bright
As the pure orb of night,
When thou art with my maids
Their lesser beauty fades
In thy triumphant light;
They are not as before.

What makes thee gracious, dread
As Dian's maidenhead;
Why with thy nineteen years
Hast thou on earth no peers;
Wherefore do lovers guess
That thou can'st heal and bless;
And why do Sappho's tears
Fall thick upon thy head?

Ah, child, I know the spell:
It is that, when my shell
Grows vocal to me, thou
Alone hast knowledge how
My heart within me fares;
No other being shares
The secret hope, the vow
That in my bosom dwell.

Thou can'st, though young, reveal
To mortals what they feel,
If Cyprus' daughter deign
In dream to ease their pain;
A poet, thou dost share
Gently each inner care,
And timid hearts in vain
From thee their wounds conceal.

This makes thy presence seem
As the full moon's supreme;
Men recognize the sign,
And hail thee as divine,
As one who will live on,
When all the stars are gone,
That for a moment shine,
Then perish in the beam.

XLIX

Ὅτα πάννυχος ἄσφι κατάγρει·

WHEN *my dear maidens lie*
Each on her bed,
When all night long sleep holds
Their eyes, and softly folds
Their busy hands that ply
The wheel, or spread
The linen on the grass,
While hours of sunshine pass:

Thus when they lie and dream
Of happy things,
The golden age reburns;
When youth to slumber turns
Beneath the Cynthian beam
Again it brings
To life such bliss and glow
As vanished long ago.

Ah, once to lie awake
Seemed sweet to me!
Now I who even have prayed
That night might be delayed,
Yea, doubled for my sake,
Sigh wearily,
Watching my maids, where they
Together breathe till day.

L

Κεῖνον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε Μοῦς', ἔνισπες
ὕμνον, ἐκ τᾶς καλλιγύναικος ἐσθλᾶς
Τήιος χώρας ὃν ἄειδε τερπνῶς
πρέσβυς ἀγαυός·

MUSE *of the golden throne, my griefs assuage—*
Not with fresh gift of verse—
A listener at thy knees I would remain,
So thou rehearse
To me that strain
Sung by the poet-sage,
Manful, and crisp, and free,
Of so undaunted style,
It can command
And move to clemency
The tyrant, yet the terse,
Clear song one feels the while,
Ah, once was fashioned in a goodly land
Of women fair,
With voices soft as wood-doves' through the air.

O Muse, 'tis for Anacreon's lyre I sigh:
Thou knowest how
'Neath the twin burthen of desire and song
My heart doth bow;
But he was strong
Dark Eros to defy,
And my tossed bosom oft
Turns to his sweet refrain
Of sunny truth,
Jocund, melodious, soft—
"Dear life hath bliss enow,

Despite of age and pain,
To give us temper of eternal youth,
Hath it not, friend?"
Sappho smiles credence till the music end.

The reverend elder! Ah, how sweetly he
Was wont to sing in those
Plane-shaded noons of lovely, common things,
Idalia's rose,
Or the soft wings
Of that bright bird that she
Bartered for just a hymn
Straight from the poet's lips,
And breathed alone
To her amid her dim,
Dusk myrtles. Oh, she chose
A favour to eclipse
All heavenly honour unto mortals shown
Who gave her dove
To win from Teos' bard one song of love.

Ah me! how deftly could he handle such
Rare token from the sky;
Around the tender, glistening iris-neck
He loved to tie
His odes, and check
The pinions with a touch;
Triumphant as a man
O'er the fond goddess coy,
Nathless her bliss
He prized, and with love's span
Measured time wantonly—
"Wealth will not bring you joy;
Toil not for that; win the beloved's kiss!"
Counselled the bold
Guardian of life, and squanderer of his gold.

Love him, ye bards, who would not even resign
In age the poet's thrill,
To whom his lyre through the slow, lingering night
Was never still
From whispering quite.
O feed his tomb with wine,
And let joy penetrate
The darkness, ivy-leaved,
That guards his breast
Whom Eros made so great
A lord o'er human ill
That, his full term achieved
Of years, he kept youth with him for his guest,
As a broad tree
Feels the sap course through its antiquity.

LI

. . . . ἔσσα γεραιτέρα·

DEEP *in my mirror's glossy plate*
Sweet converse oft I had
With beauty's self, then turned, elate,
To make my lovers glad;
But now across the quivering glass
My lineaments shall never pass:
Let Aphrodite take the thing
My shadow is dishonouring.

Ah, fond and foolish, thou hast set
Aside the burnished gold,
But Phaon's eyes reflect thee yet
A woman somewhat old!
He watched thee come across the street
To-day in the clear summer heat;
And must he not perforce recall
How the sun limned thee on the wall?

I sigh — no sigh her bosom smote
Who waited 'mid the crowd
Impatient for his ferry-boat,
An aged woman bowed
And desolate, till Phaon saw,
Turned swiftly, and with tender awe
Rowed her across, his strength subdued
To service of decrepitude.

Beneath a beggar's sorry guise,
O laughter-loving Queen,
Thy servant still must recognise
A goddess—pace and mien.
He loved thee in thy fading hair,
He felt thee great in thy despair,
Thy wide, blue, clouded eyes to him
Were beautiful, though stained and dim.

Daughter of Cyprus, take the disk
That pride and folly feeds;
Like thee the glorious chance I risk,
And in time's tattered weeds,
Bearing of many a care the trace,
Trusting the poet's nameless grace,
Stand unabashed, serene, and dumb,
For Love to worship, if he come.

LII

Ἔγων δ' ἐμαύτᾳ
τοῦτο σύνοιδα·

CLIMBING *the hill a coil of snakes*
Impedes Tiresias' path; he breaks
His staff across them—idle thrust
That lays the female in the dust,
But dooms the prophet to forego
His manhood, and, as woman, know
The unfamiliar, sovereign guise
Of passion he had dared despise.

Ah, not in the Erinnys' ground
Experience so dire were found
As that to the enchanter known
When womanhood was round him thrown:
He trembled at the quickening change,
He trembled at his vision's range,
His finer sense for bliss and dole,
His receptivity of soul;
But when love came, and, loving back,
He learnt the pleasure men must lack,
It seemed that he had broken free
Almost from his mortality.

Seven years he lives as woman, then
Resumes his cruder part 'mong men,
Till him indignant Hera becks
To judge betwixt the joys of sex,

For the great Queen in wrath has heard
By her presumptuous lord averred
That, when he sought her in his brave,
Young godhead, higher bliss he gave
Than the unutterable lure
Of her veiled glances could procure
For him, as balmy-limbed and proud
She drew him to Olympia's cloud.

"In marriage who hath more delight?"
She asks; then quivers and grows white,
As sacrilegious lips reveal
What woman in herself must feel—
And passes an avenging hand
Across his subtle eyelids bland.

Deep-bosomed Queen, fain would'st thou hide
The mystic raptures of the bride!
When man's strong nature draweth nigh
'Tis as the lightning to the sky,
The blast to idle sail, the thrill
Of springtide when the saplings fill.
Though fragrant breath the sun receives
From the young rose's softening leaves,
Her plaited petals once undone
The rose herself receives the sun.

Tiresias, ere the goddess smite,
Look on me with unblinded sight,
That I may learn if thou hast part
In womanhood's secluded heart:
Medea's penetrative charm
Own'st thou to succour and disarm,
Hast thou her passion inly great
Heroes to mould and subjugate?

Can'st thou divine how sweet to bring
Apollo to thy blossoming
As Daphne; or, as just a child
Gathering a bunch of tulips wild,
To feel the flowery hill-side rent
Convulsive for thy ravishment?

Thou need'st not to unlock thine eyes,
Thy slow, ironic smile replies:
Thou hast been woman, and although
The twining snakes with second blow
Of golden staff thou did'st assail,
And, crushing at a stroke the male,
Had'st virtue from thy doom to break,
And lost virility re-take—
Thou hast been woman, and her deep,
Magnetic mystery dost keep;
Thou hast been woman, and can'st see
Therefore into futurity:
It is not that Zeus gave thee power
To look beyond the transient hour,
For thou hast trod the regions dun,
Where life and death are each begun;
Thy spirit from the gods set free
Hath communed with Necessity.
Tilphusa's fountain thou may'st quaff
And die, but still thy golden staff
Will guide thee with perceptive hand
Among the Shades to understand
The terrors of remorse and dread,
And prophesy among the dead.

LIII

Τίφ σ', ὦ φιλε γάμβρε, κάλως ἐϊκάσδω;
δρπακι βραδίνῳ σε κάλιστ' ἐϊκάσδω.

DEAR *bridegroom, it is spring; the boughs rejoice,*
The earth once more has merriment and voice,
The bees cling to the fluted columbine
Or jonquil, too desirous to be brief;
The ground is fertile, and the anise-leaf
Is green for garlands where the sunbeams shine.

Dear bridegroom, whereto shall I liken thee?
Most like to a soft shoot thou seem'st to me,
Full of the sap and pressure of the year;
Supple thou art and healthful, and the gifts
Of life are bright within thee; no one lifts
Like thee the quoit, or steeds like thine can rear.

Thou hast the brows of Peleus' godlike son,
Thou hast his yellow hair, and thou art one
Who deed for deed could match him in the fray.
Heroic is thy strain! O youth, the verse
Of Homer, winged and solemn, might rehearse
Thine acts, thy beauty. Why wilt thou delay?

For thee thy bride her forehead-shading tress
Shears off and gives to Fate. Around her press
The kindly Hours that make the meadows bloom
And set the fostering airs of April free;
While golden Cypris more to hearten thee
With her own hand prepares thy marriage-room.

LIV

. . . Τάδε νῦν ἑταίραις
ταῖς ἔμαισι τέρπνα κάλως ἀείσω·

ADOWN *the Lesbian vales,*
When spring first flashes out,
I watch the lovely rout
Of maidens flitting 'mid the honey-bees
For thyme and heath,
Cistus, and trails
Of myrtle-wreath:
They bring me these
My passionate, unsated sense to please.

In turn, to please my maids,
Most deftly will I sing
Of their soft cherishing
In apple-orchards with cool waters by,
Where slumber streams
From quivering shades,
And Cypris seems
To bend and sigh,
Her golden calyx offering amorously.

What praises would be best
Wherewith to crown my girls?
The rose when she unfurls
Her balmy, lighted buds is not so good,
So fresh as they
When on my breast
They lean, and say
All that they would,
Opening their glorious, candid maidenhood.

To that pure band alone
I sing of marriage-loves;
As Aphrodite's doves
Glance in the sun their colour comes and goes:
No girls let fall
Their maiden zone
At Hymen's call
Serene as those
Taught by a poet why sweet Hesper glows.

LV

Ὑμεν' Ὑμήναον·
Ὦ τὸν Ἀδώνιον·

O HYMEN *Hymenæus,*
Come in thy yellow shoes,
With crimson marjoram about thy head:
Assembled see us!
Shaking thy torch, diffuse
A pinewood richness; let thy welcome tread
Beat on the ground. Unkindly day is fled.
Ah for Adonis! Hymen, hear
The cry of those around the bier;
Keen is thy bliss, and frail our growth,
And we are wronged if thou art loath
To visit us with thine exultant cheer.

O Hymen Hymenæus,
Soft glows the evening-star,
The loveliest in the heavens and thy delight:
Thou must not flee us!
The bridegroom from his car
Descends, he has his shining girl in sight,
His door is wreathed. Young god, it is the night!
Ah for Adonis! To the tree
And herb sweet life returns, but we
In unstirred winter must grow numb,
Except we feel youth's stir and hum
As flocks of children gather at our knee.

O *Hymen Hymenæus,*
Thou hast ambrosial breath;
We love the grave, sweet fashion of thy suit—
Espousing, free us
From the harsh rape of death;
And we funereal discord will confute
With silver laughter and with Lydian flute.
Io, Io! thou comest, and no word
Of threnody near thee is heard;
Thou linkest in a living joy
This virgin and this noble boy:
For time's defeat thy blessing is conferred.

LVI

Λάτω καὶ Νιόβα μάλα μὲν φίλαι ἦσαν ἕταιραι·

LETO *and Niobe were friends full dear:*
Then were they foes
As only those
Can be who once were near
Each to the other's heart,
Who could not breathe apart,
Nor shed a lonely tear.

Leto and Niobe were virgins then,
Nor knew the strange,
Deep-severing change
That comes to women when
Elected, raised above
All else, they thrill with love,
The love of gods or men.

From forth seven-gated Thebes Amphion sped,
And by his side
Bore off as bride
Fair Niobe; more dread
The wooer who unknown
From thunder-guarded throne
Rose her shy friend to wed.

And when they met once more Leto had borne
With willing pain
To Zeus her twain
On Delos' beach, forlorn.
But Niobe, elate
With her more bounteous fate,
Heard of the two with scorn:

For she had nine fair sons, nine daughters fair,
And this she told
With comment bold,
And jeered at Leto's pair.
Ah, shameless were the taunts,
Unbearable her vaunts,
And over-weening air.

Apollo and his sister both divine,
Insulted, fierce,
With darts to pierce
The Theban brood combine;
Then girls and boys sink dead
As pitiless o'erhead
The vengeful archers shine.

And Niobe in anguish sees her own
Injurious friend
Aside commend
The deed — and makes no moan:
'Tis not her stricken flock,
Hate's violating shock
Turns her fond heart to stone.

Leto and Niobe — ah! — once were friends
Youth's tender way,
Together lay,
Quarrelled, and made amends;
Though clinging children fall
Around, this to recall
Maternal grief transcends.

LVII

Αὕτα δὲ σὺ Καλλιόπα·

A. Παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποισ' οἴχῃ;
B. Οὐκέτι ἥξω πρὸς σέ, οὐκέτι ἥξω·

My shell is mute; Apollo doth refuse
My prayers; I turn to thee, O mother muse,
Who fled'st the buoyant brood
Of crested Helicon,
In secret by a mortal to be wooed,
Yet still, august, keepest thy golden snood:
My maidenhood, my maidenhood is gone.

Clio, ah! thou thyself did'st find it sweet
To feel thy lover's heart against thee beat,
To let Œagrus teach
Love's tender, human ways,
No more with thy two arms to strive to reach
The sky, to hear a trembling man beseech,
And give him favour, prompting, and dispraise.

'Twas sweet to clasp thy child, nor did'st thou shrink
To bear him to thy virgin haunts to drink
Of Aganippe's spring,
Alas, what ailed thee then?
While delicate girl-muses in a ring
Sang softly to thy babe thou could'st not sing —
Thy maidenhood would never come again.

Mute thou did'st hide him 'mid the devious bowers,
Till he stopped playing with the purple flowers
One April, and began
To hum a happy prate

That through the little, bosky hollows ran,
And brought the shepherd and the husbandman,
The doe and stag, the lioness and her mate.

But when a Mænad, breathing quick beneath
Her nebris, watched the child with sharpened teeth,
Did'st feel the poet's fate
Down Hebrus to be hurled?
Mother, did'st thou forebode how for her great,
Her lyrical enchanters lies in wait
The execrating, fascinated world?

Regret not, glorious lady of the style,
That thou did'st learn how nations travail, while
Thy heart throbbed with a king's,
And from Antissa's tomb
The fate and falling of all lovely things;
Thy scroll unwraps the ages; Moira brings
To thee the tattered tissue of her loom.

Yet sometimes, sitting by the sacred well,
Thou call'st to mind the heart-delighting spell
Apollo cast on thee
In thy strong, virgin days,
When thou wert close to sunshine and to tree;
What ails thee in thyself, Calliope?
With thee no more the hamadryad plays:

The blowing Hours of thy still form afraid
Bring thee no more the branch, the vine, the blade;
They love the hands that smite
The full-stringed barbiton
That we may never touch again aright:
No living creature may we more delight;
Our maidenhood, our maidenhood is gone.

LVIII

Ὦ κάλα, ὦ χαρίεσσα

WHAT *are these roses like? Oh, they are rare,*
So balmy pink
I will not shrink
Them to the Graces to compare,
When in gay dance the laughing triad link,
When the round, lifted arms are bare,
And just about
The elbows' pout
The warm flesh glows
Into a flower, incomparable rose:
Such fluctuating stealth
Of light doth interfuse
Their virgin health,
In its soft buoyance, as indues
You, O ye roses, with your heavenly hues.

LIX

'Αϊπάρθενος ἔσσομαι'

NIGHT *fell: Selene proud and pale*
Rose and put on her archèd veil,
And lifting to her brow the crescent small,
The firm, young curve she deigns to wear,
Went forth into the silent air,
And noiseless brought her white team from the stall.

Cold was her figure, and her breast
Secure and hard; her eyes confessed
No yearning; she was whole from love, and strong
With undivided mind. Thus she
In her complete virginity
Austerely brilliant urged her steeds along;

Until she came where Latmos sent
Its rocks into her path; she bent
To see how she should guide the wheels aright,
When, just where gentler darkness made
A cave apparent by its shade,
The loveliest mortal form grew on her sight.

She dropt the reins, the horses reared
In tumult as the hand that steered
Their course grew impotent—a moment's change!
As her intact and tranquil life
Was devastated by a strife
She could not master, tyrannous and strange.

Fear fell upon her, and the wild
Revolt of chastity beguiled,
Of pureness grown a passion against fate;
Yet an inevitable joy,
As her slant chariot toward the boy
Rolled down, o'ercame her fierce recoil and hate.

He had flung by his shepherd's dress,
And in the grace of weariness
Lay simple, calm, and happy, unaware
The flashing beauty of his form
Was filling the soft clouds with storm,
And tempting Thia's stately child to bare

Her face and worship. Oh, she drooped
Her long wings round her, as she stooped
Close to his cheek, his eyes, his very breath!
But ere, in that profound eclipse,
She brake the fountain of her lips
O'er her beloved, in swoon as deep as death

She laid him; then securely spent
Her virgin frenzy innocent,
Then took her maiden pleasure unespied;
And, sealing the dark cavern where
He lay asleep, resumed her care,
With steady hand her steeds through heaven to guide.

But nightly from Meander's stream
Southward she turns her snowy team
Behind the further slope of Latmos' height,
Pierces unseen a mountain-rift,
Then climbs the air, effulgent, swift,
And fills the lovely river-bed with light.

LX

Φαῖσι δή ποτα Λήδαν ὑακινθίνων
[ὑπ' ἀνθέων] πεπυκαδμένον
ειρην ὠΐον.

SHE *loved the perfumed inlet; in the spring*
The swans were wont to sail to her and sing—
Leda, there was a bird of lustrous wing!
And there one day she found, 'tis said,
An egg hid in the hyacinth-bed.

She stooped, and looked down at it with delight
And wonder; 'twas so much, ah, much more white
Than any ever seen before, and right
Against the purple buds was prest
As in a very blossom-nest.

She watched the leafy clusters as they grew,
And smelt the flowers, and with her fingers drew
The arching stalks together, from men's view
To hide the egg, and kept about
The spot till every bunch was out,

And deep in bloom the glistering thing was laid.
"But soon," she thought, "the crowded flowers will fade!"
And, as she peered down anxious, from the shade
A lovely, laughing child looked up
With lips just parted from a cup

Of nectarous blossom-honey that still dript.
How white were the soft limbs, as Leda stript
The cradle of its guardian leaves, and clipt
The gracious child, and understood
Her god had given her motherhood!

Thus Zeus did for his heavenly girl provide
A safe retreat; and she grew up beside
The hyacinths and the swans who should be bride
To Paris, and distract and bless
The whole world with her loveliness.

LXI

χελίνη

THERE *is laughter soft and free*
'Neath the pines of Thessaly,
Thrilling echoes, thrilling cries
Of pursuit, delight, surprise;
Dryope beneath the trees
With the Hamadryades
Plays upon the mountain-side:
Now they meet, and now they hide.

On the hot and sandy ground,
Crumbling still as still they bound,
Crouches, basks a tortoise; all
But the mortal maiden fall
Back in trepidation; she
Takes the creature on her knee,
Strokes the ardent shell, and lays
Even her cheek against its blaze,

Till she calms her playmates' fear;
Suddenly beside her ear
Flashes forth a tongue; the beast
Changes, and with shape released
Grows into a serpent bright,
Covetous, subduing, tight
Round her body backward bent
In forlorn astonishment.

With their convoluted strain
His upreaching coils attain
Full ascendency — her breast
By their passion is compressed
Till her breath in terror fails;
'Mid the flicker of the scales,
Half she seems to hear, half sees
How each frighted comrade flees.

And alone beneath the pine,
With the serpent's heavy twine
On her form, she almost dies:
But a magic from his eyes
Keeps her living, and entranced
At the wonder that has chanced,
As she feels a god within
Fiery looks that thrill and win.

'Tis Apollo in disguise
Holds possession of his prize.
Thus he binds in fetters dire
Those for whom he knows desire;
Mortal loves or poets — all
He must dominate, enthrall
By the rapture of his sway,
Which shall either bless or slay.

So she shudders with a joy
Which no childish fears alloy,
For the spell is round her now
Which has made old prophets bow
Tremulous and wild. An hour
Must she glow beneath his power,
Then a dryad shy and strange
Through the firs thereafter range.

For she joins the troop of those
Dedicate to joy and woes,
Whom by stricture of his love
Leto's son has raised above
Other mortals, who, endowed
With existence unallowed
To their fellows, wander free
Girt with earth's own mystery.

LXII

Οἱ γὰρ θέμις ἐν μουσοπόλων οἰκίᾳ θρῆνον εἶναι·
οὐκ ἄμμι πρέπει τάδε.

My daughter, when I come to die
Thou shalt not rend thy garb nor cry:
Though Hades smite the door,
Apollo is within,
He whose pure footsteps on the floor
Would make thy grief and wailing breath a sin.

Nay, lamentation must not dwell
Within a poet's house — the spell,
The loveliness of word
And healing sound ordain
That in our chambers may be heard
No dissonant, untempered cries of pain.

For joy it is that makes the heart
Grow lyrical, and joy has part
In each regret and pang
Avowed in noble verse;
Of love, the bitter-sweet, I sang
Because I owned a glory in its curse.

Distress befits not us who praise
The Healer, golden-browed, and raise
A pæan to his might
Of gladness and of youth;
From him who overcame the night
Issues life's passionate, assuaging truth.

Mortals, fore-doomed, must pass away:
O Cleïs the beloved, why stay
Shut in the dark, and spend
Vain hours of sodden gloom
Because my life has reached its end,
And mourners pour libations at my tomb?

Why from the happy fields in sloth
Withdraw thy feet, as thou wert loth
That thought of me should mix
With sun and living air;
Why must the melancholy Styx
Flow round the pleasures we were wont to share?

My child, I give the grave small thought,
For I have sung and loved, and nought
Can make the years obscure
In which I drew warm breath;
My dark-leaved laurels will endure,
And I shall walk in grandeur till my death.

LXIII

Ἄγε δη χέλυ δῖά μοι
φωνάεσσα γένοιο·

GROW vocal to me, O my shell divine!
I cannot rest;
Not so doth Cypris pine
To raise her love to her undinted breast
When sun first warms the earth, as I require
To roll the heavy death from my recumbent lyre.

O whilom tireless voice, why art thou dumb?
To-day I stood
Watching the Mænads come
From a dark fissure in the ilex-wood
Forth to the golden poplars and the light;
My tingling senses leapt to join that concourse bright.

Passed is the crowd, passed with his buoyant flute
The Evian King:
My plectrum still is mute
Of beauty, of the halcyon's nest, of spring;
Though deep within a vital madness teems,
And I am tossed with fierce, disjointed, wizard dreams.

Apollo, Dionysus passes by,
Adonis wakes,
Zephyr and Chloris sigh:
To me, alas, my lyre no music makes,
Though tortured, fluttering toward the strings I reach,
Mad as for Anactoria's lovely laugh and speech.

For thou — where, in some balmy, western isle
Each day doth bring
Seed-sowing, harvest smile,
And twilight drop of fruit for garnering,
Where north wind never blows — dost dwell apart,
Keeping a gentle people free from grief of heart.

Sun-god, return! Break from thine old-world bower,
Thy garden set
With the narcissus-flower
And purple daphne! To thy chariot get,
Glorious arise as on thy day of birth,
And spread illuminating order through the earth.

I scan the rocks: O sudden mountain-rill,
That sure hast heard
His footsteps on the hill,
Leaping from crag to crag to bring me word —
Lapse quiet at my feet; I hear along
My lyre the journeying tumult of an unbreathed song.

LXIV

Τῷ γριπεῖ Πελάγωνι πατὴρ ἐπέθηκε Μενίσκος
κύρτον καὶ κώπαν, μνᾶμα κακοζοΐας·

ABOVE a fisher's tomb
Were set his withy basket and his oar,
The tokens of his doom,
Of how in life his labour had been sore:
A father put them up above his son,
Meniscus over luckless Pelagon.

Phaon, thou dost consort
With the same breezes, and thy sails uncoil
At evening in the port
For midnight vigil and for perilous toil,
And, having set thy willow-plaited snare,
Forth on the open waters thou dost fare.

For wretched is thy lot,
And yet thou dost refuse my love, my fame,
Disdainful, heeding not
That thou could'st be immortal as my name;
My praises thy memorial would become,
When in the songless country I am dumb.

Instead, before thy grave
Unknown, a stranger may some pity feel,
Finding how near the wave
Thou sleepest underneath thine oar and weel,
Poor trophies of hard life: his steps gone by,
Beside the sea thou wilt forgotten lie.

LXV

πολυΐδριδι

PROMETHEUS *fashioned man,*
Then ruthful, pitying
His creature when the snowy storms began
To numb, the frost to harass and to cling,

Toward the sun's golden wheel
He clomb, and, as the blaze
Burned past, taught of Athene, sprang to steal
A scintillating fragment from the rays.

With wisdom-guided torch
Dipped in the heavenly flame
Back he returned to each unlighted porch,
And filled the homes with joy where'er he came.

Zeus marked the flickering brand,
And earthward bent to urge
Two countervailing evils through the land;
One was the fever with its fiery scourge;

One was Pandora's face,
Her smiles and luring feet —
"Woman," he said, "shall scorch man's petty race,
And fill his senses with insidious heat."

But, Phaon, tremble thou
Whom beauty cannot fire,
Who livest with no rage upon thy brow,
Unstricken by complaint or by desire.

Remember what thou art,
Think of the wrath above,
Scathless to stand is not a mortal's part:
O fool, accept the furious curse of love!

LXVI

Καμ μὲν τετύλαν κασπολέω·

WE sat and chatted at our ease
Upon a wayside tomb,
When from a little grove of trees
Came Gorgo in her bloom:
Her head against my knee she prest,
And seemed to listen to the rest,
Then, looking up, said straight to me —
"Phaon is gone to Sicily."

Scarcely her insult might I hear,
For little Atthis spoke —
"A gourd! The fruit-seller is near,
O Gorgo." And they broke
Away. I looked across the town;
Ere I could set the cushion down
At home, and sob out all my woe,
How very far I had to go!

Gone! Is he gone? Persephone,
Leave him not lips that kiss!
Swift! draw him earthward down to thee,
Where he may mourn and miss
The fluttering motion of his boat,
The joy of the free life afloat,
And stretch ungrasping hands to reach
Eunica's figure on the beach.

Ah fool, to think love's pain could leap
Through bloodless shadows cold!
I set the pillow down, and deep
In its striped, wrinkling fold
Pour out my rage; while he to-night
Leans, softly-cushioned for delight,
And, with the wine-cup in his hand,
Turns some gay singer to command.

Apollo, thou alone can'st bring
To Phaon's feeble breast
The fire unquenchable, the sting,
Love's agony, love's zest.
Thou need'st not curse him nor transform;
Give him the poet's heart of storm
To suffer as I suffer, thus
Abandoned, vengeful, covetous.

LXVII

Καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι·
. . . ἀλλὰ πὰν τόλματον,

Dim is the rich-wrought broidery
Athwart the Golden Throne,
Cypris no more in dreams I see
When I am lying lone:
But Atthis loved of yore
Returns, and all my hungry, sore,
Death-stricken senses close round her once more.

Of one, once loved, long dead,
My plectrum fain would speak;
But a vague chorus haunts my head,
Confused, I yearn and seek.
O lyre, what is thy theme?
At nightfall I have heard a team
Of swans so deathward chaunting breast the stream.

They feel in their deep-feathered wings
Tremblings to soar and dive;
For all the faintness that death brings
They are so much alive,
Borne by a mighty gale
Of verse, triumphantly they sail
The great choir-master of their race to hail.

I must dare all, yea, I can grope
Through Hades in desire
To hear thee on thy mountain-slope,
My King, draw from thy lyre
My bosom's stricken cry:
Conjure, tempt, hearten me to die—
Apollo, give me the great hours gone by!

LXVIII

Ὄπταις ἄμμε.

THOU *burnest us; thy torches' flashing spires,*
Eros, we hail!
Thou burnest us, Immortal, but the fires
Thou kindlest fail:
We die,
And thine effulgent braziers pale.

Ah, Phaon, thou who hast abandoned me,
Thou who dost smile
To think deserted Lesbos rings with thee,
A little while
Gone by
There will be muteness in thine isle.

Even as a god who finds his temple-flame
Sunken, unfed,
Who, loving not the priestess, loves the fame
Bright altars spread,
Wilt sigh
To find thy lyric glory dead?

Or will Damophyla, the lovely-haired,
My music learn,
Singing how Sappho of thy love despaired,
Till thou dost burn,
While I,
Eros! am quenched within my urn?

Μνάσασθαί τινά φαμι καὶ ὕστερον ἄμμεων·

O FREE *me, for I take the leap,*
Apollo, from thy snowy steep!
Song did'st thou give me, and there fell
O'er Hellas an enchanter's spell;
I heard young lovers catch the strain:
For me there is the hoary main;
I would not hear my words again.

Ah, lord of speech, well dost thou know
The incommunicable woe
Finds not in lyric cry release,
Finds but in Hades' bosom peace;
And therefore on thy temple-ground
Thou pointest lovers to the mound
Set high above the billows' sound.

Though in unfathomed seas I sink,
Men will remember me, I think,
Remember me, my King, as thine;
And must I take a shape divine
As thine immortal, let me be
A dumb sea-bird with breast love-free,
And feel the waves fall over me.

NOTE

THE *archaic head of Sappho reproduced on the cover of this volume is taken from a nearly contemporary vase, inscribed with her name, which is now in Paris, the property of Prince Czartoryski (De Witte, Antiquités conservées à l'Hotel Lambert, pl. 3).*

The frontispiece is reproduced from a figure of Sappho, seated and reading, on a vase in the museum at Athens. [*Dumont et Chaplain, Céramiques, pl. 6.*] *Part of her name* Σ Α Γ *is given. The manuscript in her hands has been read as follows:* θεοί, ἠερίων ἐπέων ἄρχομαι ἄγγ[ελος] ν[έων] ὕ[μ]ν[ων. *The date of this vase is about 420 B. C. Through the kindness of Mr. Murray of the British Museum I have been enabled to select these illustrations.*

The Greek text followed is that of Bergk in his Poetæ Lyrici Græci.

I take this opportunity of expressing my indebtedness to Dr. Wharton's Sappho, A Memoir and Translation, *a work which will be found of the highest value by those who desire to obtain a vivid impression of the personality, the influence, and the environment of the poet.*

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

	PAGE
Hither now, Muses! leaving golden seats	7
They plaited garlands in their time	11
Come, dark-eyed Sleep, thou child of Night	12
Oh, not the honey, nor the bee	13
Where with their boats the fishers land	14
As on the hills the shepherds tread	15
Erinna, thou art ever fair	16
Stir not the shingle with thy boat	17
With love nor languorous nor vain	18
Thou hast not parted from the sun	19
Ah, Procne, wherefore dost thou weary me	20
Dreamless from happy sleep I woke	21
Spring's messenger we hail	22
Dica, the graces oft incline	24
Atthis, my darling, thou did'st stray	25
No angry voice is heard	26
Delicate Graces, come	28
The moon rose full: the women stood	29
Boreas, leave thy Thracian cave	31
When longing on my couch I lay	32
I sang to women gathered round	34
Ye rosy-armed, pure Graces, come	36
They bring me gifts, they honour me	37
Lift, lover, thy long-shadowed eyne	39
Why should I praise thee, blissful Aphrodite	40
Ah for Adonis! So	41
Not Gello's self loves more than I	43
Mnasidica in form and gait	44
Love, fatal creature, bitter-sweet	45
When through thy breast wild wrath doth spread	46
Thine elder that I am, thou must not cling	47
Nay, I have no experience of ill	48
Not for revenge!—one shaft alone	49

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

	PAGE
Maids, not to you my mind doth change	50
"Sing to us, Sappho!" cried the crowd	51
Come, Gorgo, put the rug in place	53
Yea, gold is son of Zeus: no rust	54
Queen Dawn, in immortality doth bask	55
He towers 'mong men of other lands	56
Me thou forgettest: thou alone of all	57
Sisters doom-weaving, dread	58
Death is an evil: had it been a boon	59
She comes, and youthful voices	60
Cool water gurgles through	62
Nought to me! So I choose to say	63
Ah friends, who altered grow	64
"Fool, faint not thou!" I laughed in blame	65
No other girl — O bridegroom, thou art right	67
The stars about the moon	69
When my dear maidens lie	71
Muse of the golden throne, my griefs assuage	72
Deep in my mirror's glossy plate	75
Climbing the hill a coil of snakes	77
Dear bridegroom, it is spring; the boughs rejoice	80
Adown the Lesbian vales	81
O Hymen Hymenæus	83
Leto and Niobe were friends full dear	85
My shell is mute; Apollo doth refuse	87
What are these roses like? Oh, they are rare	89
Night fell: Selene proud and pale	90
She loved the perfumed inlet; in the spring	92
There is laughter soft and free	94
My daughter, when I come to die	97
Grow vocal to me, O my shell divine	99
Above a fisher's tomb	101
Prometheus fashioned man	102
We sat and chatted at our ease	103
Dim is the rich-wrought broidery	105
Thou burnest us; thy torches' flashing spires	106
O free me, for I take the leap	107

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