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S26
THE POEMS OF SAPPHO
Who shall strike the wax of mystery from those priceless amphorae, and give to the unsophisticated nostrils of the average reader the ravishing bouquet of wine pressed in a garden in Mitylene, twenty-five centuries ago?—MAURICE THOMPSON

THEN to me so lying awake a vision
   Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I, too,
   Full of the vision,

   Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
   Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
   Saw the reluctant

   Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
   Shone Mitylene.

—SWINBURNE
'Ω θεοι, τίς ἄρα Κύπρις, ἡ τίς ἰμερος,
τούδε ἑυπηφάτο.

—SOPHOCLES
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Hither now, O Muses, leaving the golden
House of God unseen in the azure spaces,
Come and breathe on bosom and brow and kindle
Song like the sunglow;

Come and lift my shaken soul to the sacred
Shadow cast by Helicon’s rustling forests,
Sweep on wings of flame from the middle ether,
Seize and uplift me;

Thrill my heart again with the lyric fervor,
Ravish mouth and throat with immortal kisses,
Till I yield in passionate song the very
Breath of my body.
MUSAGETES

Come with Musagetes, ye Hours and Graces,
Dance around the team of swans that attend him
Up Parnassus' heights to his holy temple,
High on the hill top;
Come, ye Muses, too, from the shades of Pindus,
Let your songs, that echo on winds of rapture,
Wake the lyre he tunes to the sweet inspiring
Sound of your voices.
LOVE'S BANQUET

If Panormus, Cyprus, or Paphos hold thee,
Either home of Gods or the island temple,
Hark again and come at my invocation,
Goddess benignant;

Come, O Kypris, gracefully fair, and smiling
Serve in golden cups thy delicate nectar,
Mixed with keen delight that will swiftly kindle
Love in our bosoms;

Thus the bowl was filled for the feast in Paphos,
Long ago, and taking the burnished ladle,
Hermes poured the wine for the Gods who lifted
Reverent beakers;

High they held their goblets and made libation,
Spilling wine as pledge to the Fates and Hades,
Quaffing deep and binding their hearts to Eros,
Lauding thy servant;

So tonight with those that I love around me,
Lifting all a cup to drain and replenish,
Bid us drink, who sigh for thy thrill ecstatic,
Passion's full goblet;

Grant me this, O Kypris, and ever grateful,
I will bring thee many gifts for thy altar,
Doves, a tender kid, and the drip of rarest
Lesbian vintage;

For a delicate taste is mine and truly
Love must shine for me with the sun's own splendor,
Since my dream must ever upon perfection
Tremble elusive.
MOON AND STARS

When the moon at full on the sill of heaven
Lights her beacon, flooding the earth with silver,
All the shining stars that about her cluster
Hide their fair faces;

So when Anactoria's beauty dazzles
Sight of mine, grown dim with the joy it gives me,
Gorgo, Atthis, Gyrinno, all the others
Fade from my vision.
ANACTORIA

Peer of Gods to me is the man, the cherished
One who fondly hears, as he sits beside thee,
Accents sweet of thy lips the silence breaking,
With love's low laughter;

Tones that make the heart in my bosom flutter,
For if I, the space of a moment even,
Near to thee come, any word I would utter
Instantly fails me;

Vain my stricken tongue would a whisper fashion,
Subtly under my skin runs fire ecstatic,
Straightway mists surge dim to my eyes and leave them
Reft of their vision;

Echoes ring in my ears; a trembling seizes
All my body bathed in soft perspiration;
Pale as grass I grow in my passion's madness,
Like one insensate;

But must I dare all, since to me unworthy
Comes a bliss that even a God might envy;
Aphrodite, strengthen my heart, I pray thee,
Now she is near me!
THE ROSE

If it pleased the whim of Zeus in an idle
Hour to choose a queen for the flowers, he surely
Would have crowned the rose for its regal beauty,
Deeming it peerless;

By its grace are valley and hill embellished,
Earth is made a shrine for the lover's ardor,
Dear it is to flowers as the charm of lovely
Eyes are to mortals;

Joy and pride of plants, and the garden's glory,
Beauty's blush it brings to the cheek of meadows,
Draining fire and dew from the dawn for rarest
Color and odor;

Softly breathed, its scent is a plea for passion;
When it blooms to welcome the kiss of Kypris;
Sheathed in fragrant leaves its tremulous petals
Laugh in the zephyr.
APHRODITE

APHRODITE, subtle of soul and deathless,
Daughter of God, weaver of wiles, I pray thee
Neither with care, dread Mistress, nor with anguish,
Slay thou my spirit!

But in pity hasten, come now if ever
From afar of old when my voice implored thee,
Thou hast deigned to listen, leaving the golden
House of thy father,

With thy chariot yoked, and with doves that drew thee,
Fair and fleet around the dark earth from heaven,
Dipping snowy wings down the azure distance,
Through the mid-ether;

Very swift they came; and thou, gracious Vision,
Leaned with face that smiled in immortal beauty,
Leaned to me and asked, “What misfortune threatened?
Why I had called thee?”

“What my frenzied heart craved in utter yearning,
Whom its wild desire would persuade to passion?
What disdainful charms, madly worshipped, slight thee?
Who wrongs thee, Sappho?”

“She that fain would fly, she shall quickly follow,
She that now rejects, yet with gifts shall woo thee,
She that heeds thee not, soon shall love to madness,
Love thee, the loth one!”

Come to me now, thus, Goddess, and release me
From distress and pain; and all my distracted
Heart would seek, do thou, once again fulfilling,
Still be my ally!
SUMMER

Slumber streams from quivering leaves and silence
Hushes all in the sultry heat of summer;
Breathless swoons the air with the apple blossom's
Delicate odor;

From the shade of branches that droop and cover
Shallow trenches winding about the orchard,
Restful comes, and cool to the sense, the flowing
Murmur of water.
THE GARDEN OF THE NYMPHS

All around through the apple boughs in blossom
Murmur cool the breezes of early summer,
And from leaves that quiver above me gently
Slumber is shaken;

Drowsily I hear through the drooping frondage
Ceaseless silver murmur of water falling
In the grotto cool of the Nymphs, the sacred
Haunt of Immortals;

Rills that flash from many a mossy crevice,
Trickling down the sides, and over the jutting
Rock to drip with gurgle hushed in the limpid
Depths of the basin;

Here recline the Nymphs at the hour of twilight,
Back in shadows dim of the cave, their weary
Eyes with slumber closing, up to their supple
Waists in the water;

Sheltered once by ferns I espied them binding
Tresses long, the shimmer of gold and purple;
Just beyond the lingering gleam their bodies
Roseate glistened;

Languidly they girdled their loins with garlands,
Linked with leaves luxuriant breast and shoulder,
For their brows they made a fetter of roses
Fresh from the garden;

She of golden hair was the Nymph Euxanthis,
They of purple tresses, Iphis and Io;
How they laughed, relating at length their ease in
Evading the Satyr.
APHRODITE'S DOVES

When the drifting gray of the vesper shadow
Dimmed their upward path through the midmost azure,
And the length of night overtook them distant
Far from Olympus;

Far away from splendor and joy of Paphos,
From the voice and smile of their peerless Mistress,
Back to whom their truant wings were in rapture
Speeding belated;

Chilled at heart and grieving they drooped their pinions,
Circled slowly, dipping in flight toward Lesbos,
Down through dusk that darkened on Mitylene,
Over the temple;

Over slopes that gleamed in the fading sunset,
Flying toward my home in the olive orchard,
Ever down, on wearier pinion nearing
Sadly the dark earth;

Soon they gained the tile of my roof and rested,
Slipped their heads beneath their wings while I watched them
Sink to sleep and dreams in the warm and drowsy
Night of midsummer.
ANACREON'S SONG

Golden-throned Muse, sing the song that in olden days was sung of love and delight in Teos, in the goodly land of the lovely women; strains that in other years the hoary bard with the youthful fancy set to mirthful stir of flutes, when the dancing nymphs that poured the wine for the poet's banquet mixed it with kisses;

Sing the song while I, in the arms of Atthis, seal her lips to mine with a lover's fervor, breathe her breath and drink her sighs to the thrill of music ecstatic.
THE DAUGHTER OF CYPRUS

Dreaming I spake with the Daughter of Cyprus,
Heard the languor soft of her voice, the blended
Suave accord of tones interfused with laughter,
Low and desireful;

Dreaming saw her dread ineffable beauty,
Saw through texture fine of her clinging tunic
Blush the fire of flesh, the rose of her body,
Radiant, blinding;

Saw through filmy meshes the melting lovely
Flow of line, the exquisite curves, whence piercing
Rapture reached with tangible touch to thrill me,
Almost to slay me;

Saw the gleaming foot, and the golden sandal
Held by straps of Lydian work thrice doubled
Over the instep’s arch and up the rounded
Amorous ankle;

Saw the charms that shimmered from knee to shoulder,
Hint of hues than milk or the snowdrift whiter,
Secret grace, the shrine of the soul of passion,
Glows that consumed me;

Saw the gathered mass of her amber tresses,
In the wind, escape from the clasping fillet,
Float and shine as clouds in the sunset splendor,
Mists in the dawn fire;

Saw the face immortal, and daring greatly,
Raised my eyes to hers of unfathomed azure,
Drank their vast desire, their limitless longing,
Swooned and was nothing.
THE DISTAFF

Come, ye dainty Graces and lovely Muses,
Rosy-armed and pure and with fairest tresses,
Come from groves on Helicon's hill where murmur
Founts that are holy;

Come with dancing step and with choric voices,
Gather near and view my ivory distaff,
Gift from Cos my brother Charaxus brought me,
Sailing from Egypt;

Sailing back from indolent lands to Lesbos,
From the seven mouths of the mighty river
Up the blue Ægean, the island-dotted
Ocean of Hellas;

Choicest wool alone will I spin for fabrics,
Winding reel with threads for the cloths as fleecy,
Soft and fine as those that the Asian traders
Bring us from Sardis;

While I weave my thought shall engird the giver,
Whether here, or sailing the sea, or resting
Still at Naucratis with the dark Egyptian
Girl that enchants him.
THE SLEEP WIND

Softer than mist on the emerald water,
Over the sea, shod with sandals of shadow,
Comes the warm sleep wind from Pergamos bearing
Garlands of fragrance;

Comes the sweet wind by the still hours attended,
Touching tired lids on the shores dim with distance,
Hastening swift toward the headland of Lesbos,
Toward Mitylene;

Swift from the east where the first star enkindles
On the dusk afar its fire as a beacon,
Shining serene till the darkness will deepen
Others to splendor;

And the sweet wind from the water approaches,
Leaving that star to the waves that are purple,
While the faint sounds on the hillside grow fainter,
And in the silence,

With its fond thrill for the heart, comes the gladsome
Return with the night of all things that morning
Ruthlessly parted, the child to its mother,
Lover to lover.
LONELINESS

All are gone, and wearing my crown of roses,
Now alone my feet again seek the little
Circle of seats that we vowed to the Muses,
Facing the surges;

Where the carved Satyrs that stand at the portal,
Guarding broad steps to the refluent ripple,
Blow from their double pipes dithyrambs deathless,
Songs all unuttered;

Empty each seat where my rivals acclaimed me,
Poets with names on the marble engraven,
Over whose curve blooms the apple tree drifting
Perfume and petals;

Gone are Gyrinno and fair Telesippa,
Anactoria, woman divine; Atthis,
Subtlest of soul; proud Damophyla, Dika,
Maids of the Muses;

Pensive now they seek their homes in the city,
There to dream of songs of mine while the languid
Slaves untwine, and lift from tresses they loosen,
Flowers that have faded;

But I linger still, and my glances follow
Petals whirled by winds to sea like the sudden
Grief that sweeps my thoughts to the long forgetting
Years that shall miss me;

Yet my songs shall live for me and forever,
Men, I think, will always remember, hearing
Strains of mine pierce time with the olden rapture,
Ever hereafter.
LONG AGO

Long ago beloved, thy memory, Atthis,
Saddens still my heart as the slowly creeping
Twilight deepens down on the sea, and weary
Winds that have wandered

Over groves of myrtle at distant Sardis
Waft forgotten passion on breaths of perfume;
Long ago, how madly I loved thee, Atthis,
Faithless, light-hearted

Loved one, mine no more, who lovest another
More than me; the silent flute and the faded
Garlands haunt the heart of me thou forgettest,
Long since thy lover.
EPITHALAMIA
THRENODES
HYMENAIOS

Artisans, raise high the roof beam,
Tall is the bridegroom as Ares,
Taller by far than the tallest,
O Hymenæus!

Yes, towering over his fellows,
As over men of all other
Lands towers the Lesbian singer,
O Hymenæus!

Well-favored, too, is the maiden,
Eyes that are sweeter than honey,
Comely in face and in figure,
O Hymenæus!

For there was never another
Virgin in loveliness like her,
By Aphrodite so honored,
O Hymenæus!

O happy bridegroom, the wedding
Comes to the point of completion;
Thou hast the maid of thy choosing,
O Hymenæus!

See how a paleness suffuses
Over her exquisite features,
Passion's benign premonition,
O Hymenæus!

Go to the couch unreluctant,
Rejoicing and sweet to the bridegroom;
He in his turn is rejoicing,
O Hymenæus!

May Hesperus lead thee, and Hera,
She whom tonight that ye honor,
Silver-throned Goddess of marriage,
O Hymenæus!
BRIDAL SONG

Bride, that goest to the bridal chamber
In the dove-drawn car of Aphrodite,
   By a band of dimpled Loves surrounded;

Bride, of maidens all the fairest image
Mitylene treasures of the Goddess,
   Rosy-ankled Graces
   Are thy playmates;

Bride, O fair and lovely, thy companions
Are the gracious hours that onward passing
   For thy happy footsteps
   Scatter garlands;

Bride, that blushing like the sweetest apple
On the very branch’s end, so strangely
   Overlooked, ungathered
   By the gleaners;

Bride, that like the apple that was never
Overlooked but out of reach so plainly,
   Only one thy rarest
   Fruit may gather;

Bride, that into womanhood has ripened
For the harvest of the bridegroom only,
   He alone shall taste thy
   Hoarded sweetness.
EPITHALAMIUM

Vesper is here! behold
Faint gleams that welcome shine!
Rise from the feast, O youths,
And chant the words divine!

Before the porch we sing
The hymeneal song;
Vesper is here, O youths,
The star we waited long!

We lead the festal groups
Across the bridegroom's porch;
Vesper is here, O youths,
Wave high the bridal torch!

Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!
The virgin fair has come;
Unlatch the door and lead
Her timid footsteps home.

Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!
Straight as a tender tree;
Fond as a folding vine
Thy bride will cling to thee.
PIERIA'S ROSE

Pale death shall come, and thou and thine shall be,
    Then and thereafter, to all memory
Forgotten as the wind that yesterday
Blew the last lingering apple buds away;

For thou hadst never that undying rose
To grace the brow and shed immortal glows,
Pieria's fadeless flower that few may claim
To wreathe and save thy unremembered name;

And even on the fields of Dis unknown,
Obscure among the shadows and alone,
Thy flitting shade shall pass uncomforted
Of any heed from all the flitting dead;

But no one maid, I think, beneath the skies,
At any time shall live and be as wise,
In truth, as I am; for the Muses Nine
Have made me honored and their gifts are mine;

And men, I think, will never quite forget
My songs or me; so long as stars shall set
Or sun shall rise, or hearts feel love's desire,
My voice shall cross their dreams, a sigh of fire.
LAMENT FOR ADONIS

Ah, for Adonis!
See, he is dying,
Delicate, lovely,
Slender Adonis.

Ah, for Adonis!
Weep, O ye maidens,
Beating your bosoms,
Rending your tunics.

O Cytherea,
Hasten, for never
Loved thou another
As thy Adonis.

See, on the rosy
Cheek with its dimple,
Blushing no longer,
Thanatos' shadow.

Save him, O Goddess,
Thou, the beguiler,
Omnipotent, holy,
Stay the dread evil.

Ah, for Adonis!
No more at vintage
Time will he come with
Bloom of the meadows.

Ah, for Adonis!
See, he is dying,
Fading as flowers
With the lost summer.
THE STRICKEN FLOWER

Think not to look again as once of yore,
   Atthis, upon my love; for thou no more
Wilt find secure upon its stem the flower
Thy guile left slain and bleeding in that hour;

So ruthless shepherds crush beneath their feet
The drooping flower that feels the summer heat,
The hyacinth whose purple heart is found
Left bruised and dead to darken on the ground.
DEATH

Death is an evil; so the Gods decree,
So they have judged, and such must rightly be
Our mortal view; for they who dwell on high
Had never lived, had it been good to die.

And so the poet's house should never know
Of tears and lamentation any show;
Such things befit not us who deathless sing
Of love and beauty, gladness and the spring.

No hint of grief should ever lurk above
Our dreams of endless beauty, lasting love;
For they reflect the joy inviolate,
Eternal calm that fronts whatever fate.

Cleis, my darling, grieve no more, I pray!
Let wandering winds thy sorrow bear away,
And all our care; my daughter, let thy smile
Shine through thy tears and gladden me the while.
PERSEPHONE

I saw a tender maiden plucking flowers,
Once, long ago, in the bright morning hours;
And then from heaven I saw a sudden cloud
Fall swift and dark, and heard her cry aloud;

Again I looked, but from my open door
My anxious eyes espied the maid no more;
The cloud had vanished, bearing her away
To underlands beyond the smiling day.
PARTHENEIA

DIDAKTIKA
Do I long for maidenhood?
Do I long for days
When upon the mountain slope
I would stand and gaze
Over the Ægean's blue
Melting into mist,
Ere with love my virgin lips
Cercolas had kissed?

Maidenhood, O maidenhood,
Whither hast thou flown?
To a land beyond the sea
Thou hast never known.
Maidenhood, O maidenhood,
Wilt return to me?
Never will my bloom again
Give its grace to thee.

Now the autumn days are near,
Youth and summer fled,
Shepherd hills are far away,
Cercolas is dead;
Mitylene's marble courts
Echo with my name;
Maidenhood, we never dreamed,
Long ago, of fame.
I shall be ever maiden,
   Ever the little child,
In my passionate quest for the lovely,
   By earth's glad wonder beguiled;

I shall be ever maiden,
   Standing in soul apart,
For the Gods give the secret of beauty
   Alone to the virgin heart.
CLEIS

DAUGHTER of mine so fair,
With a form like a golden flower,
Wherefore thy pensive air
And the dreams in the myrtle bower?

Clei's, beloved, thy eyes
That are turned from my gaze, thy hand
That trembles so, I prize
More than all the Lydian land;

More than the lovely hills
With the Lesbian olive crowned;
Tell me, darling, what ills
In the gloom of thy thought are found?

Daughter of mine, come near
And thy head on my knees recline;
Whisper and never fear,
For the beat of thy heart is mine!

Sweet mother, I can turn
With content to my loom no more,
My bosom throbs, I yearn
For a youth that my eyes adore;

Lykas of Eresus,
Whom I knew when a little child;
My heart by Love is thus
With the sweetest of pain beguiled.
ASPIRATION

I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky,
   I do not dream to do almighty things;
So small a singing bird may never soar so high,
   And beat the azure fire with baffled wings;

I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky,
   I do not dream by any chance to share
With deathless Gods the bliss of heaven they deny
   To men behind the sapphire veil of air.
HERO OF GYARA

I taught Hero of Gyara, the swift runner,
Swifter far was she than Atalanta,
When through glimmer of her clinging garment
Blushed the fleeting contour of her limbs;

I taught Hero of Gyara, the swift runner,
Lovelier was she than Atalanta,
When the straining vision of the suitor
Saw her beauty mock impending death;

I taught Hero of Gyara, the swift runner,
All the singing numbers of Terpander,
Metres of Archilochus and Alcman,
And my melic verse that glows supreme;

I taught Hero of Gyara, the swift runner,
Sapphics with their triple surge of music,
Melting in the final verse Adonic,
Like a wave that falls in shining foam.
COURAGE

Faint not in thy strong heart!
Nor downcast stand apart;
Beyond the reach of daring will there lies,
In truth, no prize.

Faint not in thy strong heart!
Through temple, field and mart,
Courage alone the guerdon from the fray
May bear away.
Ares said he would drag Hephestus by force From Poseidon's palace Deep down in the sea, Where he had fashioned The cunning throne With the secret chains.

He presented the throne, Forsooth, as a gift To the queen of heaven, But Hera soon found For revenge on her Who cast him swift From the home of Gods.

For secure in the clasp Of its chains of gold She was held imprisoned, The prey of his guile, And Hephestus knew By him alone Could the queen be freed.

But the great God of war Made boast of his strength, He would bring the forger Of metals and tricks On high to release Hera and end Her enraged despair.

Ares said he would drag Hephestus by force, But was made to waver And flee when assailed With a blazing brand By the dark God Of the underworld.
GOLD

GOLD is the son of Zeus,
Immortal, bright;
No moth or worm may eat it,
No rust tarnish.

So are the Muse's gifts
The offspring fair,
That merit from high heaven
Youth eternal.
Gnomics

I

My ways are quiet, none may find
My temper of malignant kind,
For one should check the words that start
When anger spreads within the heart.

II

Who from my hands what I can spare
Of gifts accept the largest share,
Those are the very ones who boast
No gratitude and wrong me most.

III

He who in face and form is fair
Must needs be good the Gods declare,
But he whose thought and act are right
Will soon be equal fair to sight.

IV

Beauty of youth is but the flower
Of spring whose pleasure lasts an hour,
But worth that knows no mortal doom
Is like the amaranthine bloom.
PRIDE

Pride not thyself upon a ring,
   Or any trinket thing
Of fleeting value, dross or gold.

Wealth, lacking worth, is no safe friend,
   Though both to life may lend,
In just proportion, joy untold.
LETO AND NIOBE

Leto and Niobe were friends full dear,
    The Goddess and the woman, they were one
In that maternal love that men revere,
Love that endures when other loves are done.

But Niobe with all a mother's pride,
Artless and foolish, would not be denied,
And boasted that her children were more fair
Than Leto's lovely children of the air.

The proud Olympians vowed revenge for this,
Irate Apollo, angered Artemis;
They slew her children, heedless of her moan,
And with the last her heart was turned to stone.
THE DYE

FROM Scythian wood they brew
The dye whose yellow hue
Turns gold the lovely hair
Of Lesbians fair;

So, Zanthis, slave of mine,
Shall dip the fleeces fine,
And dye the robes I made
A saffron shade.
EROTIKA
DITHYRAMBS
INVOCATION

COME, shell divine, be vocal now for me!
Respond as when to Lesbos from the sea
Came drifting with a melody of fire,
The head of Orpheus and his sounding lyre;

For I would sing of passion, and apart,
Offer thee, Kypris, homage of my heart;
O Goddess, from thy golden house awhile
Descend to me, and hear my prayer, and smile!

Calliope, queen of the tuneful throng,
Come, too, and be the Muse of melic song,
For in my heart I feel the urge to sing,
And in my veins the ecstasy of Spring!
EROS

From the gnarled branches of the apple trees
The heavy petals, lifted by the breeze,
Fluttered on puffs of odor fine and fell
In the clear water of the garden well;

And some a bolder zephyr blew in sport
Across the marble reaches of my court,
And some by sudden gusts were wafted wide
Toward sea and city, down the mountain side;

Lesbos seemed Paphos, isled in rosy glow,
Green olive hills, the violet vale below,
The air was azure fire and o'er the blue
Still sea the doves of Aphrodite flew;

My dreaming eyes saw Eros from afar
Coming from heaven in his mother's car,
In purple tunic clad, and at my heart
The God was aiming his relentless dart;

He whom fair Aphrodite called her son,
She, the adored, she, the imperial one,
He passed as winds that shake the soul, as pains
Sweet to the heart, as fire that warms the veins;

He passed and left my limbs dissolved in dew,
Relaxed and faint, with passion quivered through,
Exhausted with spent thrills of dread delight,
A sudden darkness rushing on my sight.
PASSION

Now Love shakes my soul, a mighty
Wind from the high mountain falling
Full on the oaks of the forest;

Now, limb-relaxing, it masters
My life and implacable thrills me,
Rending with anguish and rapture;

Now my heart, paining my bosom,
Pants with desire as a mænad
Mad for the orgiæc revel;

Now under my skin run subtle
Arrows of flame, and my body
Quivers with surge of emotion;

Now long importunate yearnings
Vanquish with surfeit my reason,
Fainting my senses forsake me.
APHRODITE'S PRAISE

O Sappho, why art thou ever
Singing with praises the blessed
Queen of the heaven?

Why does the heart in thy bosom
Ever revert in its yearning
Throb to the Goddess?

Why are thy senses unsated
Ever in quest of elusive
Love that is deathless?

Ah, gracious Daughter of Cyprus,
Never can I as a mortal
Tire of thy service;

Thou art the breath in my body,
The blood in my veins, and the glowing
Pulse of my bosom;

Omnipotent, burning, resistless,
Thou art the passion that shaking
Masters me ever;

Thou art the crisis of rapture
Relaxing my limbs, and the melting
Ebb of emotion;

Bringing the tears to my lashes,
Sighs to my lips, in the swooning
Excess of passion;

O golden-crowned Aphrodite,
Grant I shall ever be grateful,
Sure of thy favor;

Worthy the lot of thy priestess,
Supreme in the song that forever
Rings with thy praises.
THE FIRST KISS

And down I set the cushion
Upon the couch that she,
Relaxed supine upon it,
Might give her lips to me;

As some enamored priestess
At Aphrodite's shrine,
Entranced I bent above her
With sense of the divine;

She had, by nature nubile,
In years a child, no hint
Of any secret knowledge
Of passion's least intent;

Her mouth for immolation
Was ripe, and mine the art,
And one long kiss of passion
Deflowered her virgin heart.
I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!
My blood was flame that thrilled to passion's throe,
Now long neglect has quenched the olden fire,
And blight of drifting years effaced desire.

I loved you, Atthis—joy of long ago—
Love shook my soul as winds on forests blow,
This burning heart, that dared exhaust delight,
Unsated strove and maddened through the night.

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!
With pain whose surge I felt to anguish grow,
Suffered the storms that waste the heart and leave
A desert shore where seas but break to grieve.

I loved you, Atthis—spring of long ago—
Swift to Andromeda I saw you go,
Then I, as keen despair its shadow cast,
O'er my deserted threshold, sobbing, passed.

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!
The thought of me is hateful now, I know,
And all the lavish tenderness of old
Has gone from me and left my bosom cold.

I loved you, Atthis—dream of long ago—

How the fond words, impassioned music low,
Sustain the sigh of love's divine regret
No length of time can make the heart forget.
LAUDATION

Less soft a Tyrian robe
Of texture fine,
Less delicate a rose
Than flesh of thine;

Whiter thy breast than snow
That virgin lies,
And deeper than the blue
Of seas thy eyes;

More golden than the fruit
Of orange trees,
Thy locks that floating lure
The wanton breeze;

Less fine of silver string
Apollo’s lyre,
Less sweet than thy low laugh
That wakes desire.
THE SACRIFICE

Upon a cushion soft
My limbs I place,
My every garment doffed
For deeper grace;
From burning doves embalmed
In baccharis,
The scented fumes have calmed
Me like a kiss.

Beyond the little shrine
That tripods light,
I pledge with holy wine
An image white;
Anadyomene,
Than foam more fair,
When from the ravished sea
She rose to air.

Daughter of God, accept
These gifts of mine!
Last night my body slept
In arms divine;
These sated lips and eyes,
That erstwhile sued,
Accord this sacrifice
In gratitude.
LEDA

ONCE on a time
They say that Leda found
Beneath the thyme
    An egg upon the ground;

And yet the swan
    She fondled long ago
Was whiter than
    Its shell of peeping snow.
Violet-weaving Sappho, pure and lovely,
Softly smiling Sappho, I would utter
Something that my secret hope has cherished,
Did no painful sense of shame deter me.

Sappho

Had the impulse of thy heart been honest,
It had urged no evil supplication;
Shame had not abashed thy eyes before me,
And thy words had done thee no dishonor.

Alcaeus

Softly smiling Sappho, longing bids me
Tell thee all that in my heart lies hidden.

Sappho

Have no fear, Alcæus, to offend me!
Thy emotion stirs my heart to pity.

Alcaeus

I desire thee, violet-weaving Sappho,
Love thee madly, softly smiling Sappho!

Sappho

Hush, Alcæus! thou must choose a younger
Comrade for thy couch, for I would never
Join thy years to mine—the Gods forbid it—
Youth and ardent fire to age and ashes.
THE CRETAN DANCE

As the moon in all her splendor
Slowly rose above the forest,
Silent stood the Cretan women
Round the altar;

Girdled close their clinging tunics
Were of white transparent fabric,
Tracing every curve and lissome
Of their bodies;

With revering eyes uplifted
To the round and rising planet,
Soon its drifting beams of silver
Lit their faces;

Soft and clear its sphere effulgent,
As it rose above the treetops,
Steeped in pale unearthly glamor
All the landscape;

When the argent glimmer rested
On the altar piled with garlands,
And its glow unveiled the marble
Aphrodite,

Linking hands, the Cretan women
Moving gracefully with metric
Steps began to dance a measure
To the Goddess;

All so light their feet unsandalled
Pressed the velvet grass in treading,
That they scarcely bruised its tender
Blooming verdure;

Slowly turning in a circle
To the east, their voices chanted
In a plaintive tone the sacred
Ithyphallics;
Then they paused, their steps retracing
Toward the west, and answered strophe
By antistrophe with choric
   Tones accordant;

With the aftersong epodic,
Standing all before the altar,
Lo, the hymn in praise of Paphos
   Was completed.
THE LOVE OF SELENE

Across the still sea's moonlit wave
Selene came,
Softly to seek the Latmian cave,
   Her breast aflame

With secret passion's ruthless throe,
   Her scruples done,
And burning with desire to know
   Endymion.
ALCAÆUS

COUNTLESS are the cups thou drainest
In thy hymns to Dionysos,
O Alcaeus!

War and wine alone thou singest;
Wherefore not of Aphrodite,
0 Alcaeus?

Spacious halls are thine where many
Trophies hang in Ares' honor,
O Alcaeus!

Brazen shields and shining helmets,
Plates of brass, Chalcidian broad-swords,
O Alcaeus!

When with winter roars the Thracian
Blast across the leafless forest,
O Alcaeus!

Thou dost heap the fire and banish
Care with many a tawny goblet,
O Alcaeus!

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HYPORCHEME

Thus contend the maidens
    In the cretic dance,
Rosy arms that glisten,
    Eyes that glance;

Cheeks as fair as blossoms,
    Parted lips that glow,
With their plaintive voices
    Chanting low;

With their plastic bodies
    Swaying to the flute,
Moving with the music
    Never mute;

Gracefully the votive
    Figures they unfold,
While the vesper heaven
    Turns to gold.
LARICHUS

While charming maids weave garlands for thy brows,
Larichus, bring the pledge for this carouse,
Like gracious Ganymede, brother mine,
And from thy brimming beaker pour the wine.

Thy slender limbs are brown with sylvan grace,
Young Hylas smiles in mischief from thy face,
These maids of mine, beloved and loving me,
My dreams have made thy Nymphs to sport with thee.

I heard fair Mitylene's praises cease
O'er Lykas, Menon, and Dinnomenes,
And hail thy beauty worthy of the prize,
Cupbearer to the council of the wise.

No noble youth the prytaneum holds,
Whose graceful form the purple tunic folds,
Can match with thee when on affairs of state
All Lesbos gathers with the wise and great.
GIRL FRIENDS
Prelude

Deftly on my little
Seven-stringed barbitos,
Now to please my girl friends,
Songs I set to music;

Maidens fair, companions
Of the Muses, listen,
For my mind shall never
Change to you I cherish;

Chanted in a plaintive
Old Ionic measure,
All the songs I give you
Quiver with emotion.
ANDROMEDA

WHAT bucolic maiden
Now thy heart bewitches,
Andromeda, ever
Fickle in thy love?

Round her awkward ankles
She has not the faintest
Sense of art to draw her
Long ungraceful tunic;

Yet her favor makes thee,
Andromeda, surely
For thy sweet and changing
Love a fair requital;

May the Goddess prosper
Thy discriminating
Taste for beauty, daughter
Of Polyanax!
EUNEICA

Aphrodite's handmaid,
Bright as gold thou camest,
Tender woven garlands
Round thy tender neck;

Sweet as soft Persuasion,
Lissome as the Graces,
Shy Euneica, lovely
Girl from Salamis;

Slender thou as Syrinx,
As the waving reed-nymph,
Once by Pan, the God of
Summer winds, deflowered;

On thy lips whose tremor
Seems to plead for pity,
Mine shall rest and linger
Like the mouth of Pan

On the mouth of Syrinx,
When his breath that filled her
Blew through all her body
Music of his love.
GORGO

Gorgo, I am weary
Of thy love's insistence,
Thou to me appearest
An ill-favored child;

Though I am than Gello
Fonder still of virgins
Never yet has feeling
Moved my heart for thee;

Yesternight I knew not
What to do, for pity
Stirred me to compassion,
Seeing thee implore;

Harassed by alternate
Yielding and refusal,
I was half persuaded
Then to grant thy prayer;

At my door thy presence
Lingers like a shadow,
Vain wouldst thou reproach me
With appealing eyes;

Dost thou think by constant
Proofs of thy devotion,
Slowly my unyielding
Will to wear away?

Gorgo, I am weary
Of thy love's insistence,
And my strength exhausted
Grants thy wish at last.
SET, O Dica, garlands on thy lovely
Glinting mass of fine and golden tresses,
Sprays of dill with fingers soft entwining
While I stand apart to better judge;

Those who have fair wreaths about the forehead,
Breathing brentcheian odor to the senses,
Ever first find favor with the Graces
Who from wreathless suppliants turn away;

O my Mnasidica, thou art shapely,
With the flowing curves of Aphrodite,
Eyes the color of her azure ocean
Washing wide on Cyprus' languid shore;

In thy every movement grace unconscious
Sways the rhythmic poem of thy body,
Charming with elusive undulation
Like a splendid lily in the wind;

As I stand apart to judge the better
And admire what roses add to beauty,
All thy rays of loveliness are blended
Till they make me thrill with swift desire.
TELESIPPA

Sleep thou in the bosom
     Of thy tender girl friend,
Telesippa, gentle
Maiden from Miletus!

Like twin petals shyly
Closing to the darkness,
Dewy on your drooping
Lids shall fall her kisses;

While her arms enfold you,
On your drowsy senses
Shall her soft caresses
Seal delicious languor;

Warm from her desireful
Heart the flush of passion
On your cheek unconscious
Of her kiss shall deepen;

All the night of springtime,
Sleepless while you slumber,
She shall lie and quiver
With her love's mad longing.
GYRINNO

Now the silver crescent
Of the moon has vanished,
With the golden Pleiads
Drifting down the west;

It is after midnight
And the time is passing,
Hours we pledged to passion
And I sleep alone;

Anger ill becomes thee,
For thy heart is tender,
And a sweet submission
Ever in thy eyes;

Art thou still relentless,
Wilful one, annulling
All thy protestations
In the fervid past?

Can it be, Gyrinno,
That I am forgotten,
Dost thou love another,
Even now, perchance?

Ah, my tears are falling,
Yet in my despairing
Mood I lie and listen
For thy furtive step;

For the lightest rustle
Of thy flowing garment,
For thy sweet and panting
Whisper at the door;

Now the moon has vanished
With the golden Pleiads,
It is after midnight
And I sleep alone.
MEGARA

Thou burnest us, Megara,
With thy passions wild,
Bringing from Panormus
Such unbridled fires;

Thou burnest us, a supple
Flow of tortured flame,
Raging, biting, searing,
Lawless of the will;

Thou burnest us, Megara,
Love must know reserve,
Curbing power to keep it
Keener for restraint.
ERINNA

Haughtier than thou, O fair Erinna,
I have never met with any maiden;

Such a careless scorn as thine for passion
Proves a dire affront to Aphrodite;

When with soft desire she wounds thy bosom,
Thou shalt know love's pain and doubly suffer;

Keep the gifts I gave thee, long rejected;
Fabrics for thy lap from near Phocea,

Babylonian unguents, scented sandals,
And the costly mitra for thy tresses;

Tripods made of brass to flank the altar
With the ivory figure of the Goddess,

Where the sacrificial fumes from sacred
Flames shall rise to gladden and appease her,

In the hour when at her call thy fervid
Breast and mouth to mine shall be relinquished.
It was when the sunset
Burned with saffron fire,
And Apollo's coursers
Turned below the hills,

That on Mitylene's
Marble bridge we met,
Gongyla, thou golden
Maid of Colophon;

Like the breath of morning
Or a breeze from sea,
Fresh thy beauty smote me,
Fragrant of the north;

Started by thy vision,
Transports half divine
Flooded veins and bosom,
Shook me with desire;

Soon the kinder sunglow
Of Æolic lands
Melted all the futile
Snows about thy heart.
DAMOPHYLA

COLD of heart and strangely Diffident to passion
Wisdom’s vigil leaves thee, Proud Damophyla;

Sapphics thou hast written, Verses in my metre,
With a skill surpassing In the melic art;

Love’s divine enchantment Thou art fain to banish,
Like the virgin Huntress Long by thee adored;

Molded by thy tunic Every arching contour
Of her chaste and noble Form I dream to see;

Even view her stepping From the leafy covert
Down the misty valley, Stately as a stag;

Long I sued but found thee Deaf to all entreaty,
Till one summer twilight Listless in the heat;

Soothed by slumber’s languor, And my low and tender Voice that breathed a pæan In the praise of love;

Loth to yield yet vanquished, As I knelt beside thee, All thy long resistance To my kiss succumbed.
ANAGORA

ANAGORA, fairest
Spoil of fateful battle,
Babylonian temples
Knew thy luring song;

Wrested from barbaric
Captors for thy beauty,
Thou wert made a priestess
At Mylitta's shrine;

Once these flexile fingers
Clasped in mine so closely,
Neath the temple's arches
Thrummed the tabor soft;

Thou hast taught me secrets
Of the cryptic chambers,
How the zonahs worship
In the burning East;

Rapture that my wildest
Dreaming never pictured,
Arts of love that charmed me,
Subtle, new and strange;

Hearken to my earnest
Prayer, O Aphrodite!
May the night be doubled
Now for our delight.
PHAON
PHILOMEL.

PHILOMEL in my garden,
    Messenger sweet of springtide,
    From the bough of the olive tree utter
     Tidings ecstatic;

Linger long on thy olden
Note as in days remembered,
    Ere the boatman that knew Aphrodite
     Ravished my vision;

Fatal glamor of beauty,
Beauty of Gods made mortal,
    Ah, before its delight I am ever
     Fearful of heaven;

Spring in breeze and the blossom,
Grasses and leaves and odors,
    On my heart with the breath of a vanished
     April is shaken;

Shaken with thrill and regret of
Lost caresses and kisses,
    Anactoria’s memory, Atthis
     Never forgotten;

Philomel in my garden,
Messenger sweet of springtide,
    From the bough of the olive tree utter
     Tidings ecstatic.
GOLDEN PULSE

GOLDEN pulse grew on the shore,
Ferns along the hill,
And the crimson roses bore
Bees to drink their fill;

Bees that from the meadows bring
Wine of melilot,
Bearing it on golden wing
To the garden grot;

But to me, neglected flower,
Phaon will not see,
Passion brings no crowning hour,
Honey nor the bee.
THE SWALLOW

D aughter of Pandion, lovely
Swallow that veers at my window,
Swift on the flood of the sunshine
   Darting thy shadow;

What is thy innocent purpose,
Why dost thou hover and haunt me?
Is it a kinship of sorrow
    Brings thee anear me?

Must thou forever be tongueless,
Flying in fear of Tereus,
Must he for Itys pursue thee,
    Changed to a lapwing?

Tireless of pinion and never
Resting on bush or the branches,
Close to the earth, up the azure,
    Over the treetops;

After thy wing in its madness
Follows my glance, as a flitting
Child on the track of its mother
    Hastens in silence;

Daughter of Pandion, lovely
Swallow that veers at my window,
Hast thou a message from Cyprus
    Telling of Phaon?
SHE wrapped herself in linen woven close,  
    Stuffs delicate and fine of thread as those  
The dark Nile traders for our bartering  
From Egypt, Crete and near Phocca bring;  

Love lent her feet the wings of winds to reach,  
    Whose tread stirred not the shingle of the beach,  
My marble court, and breathless bid me know  
My lover’s sails across the harbor blow;  

He seemed to her, as to himself he seems,  
Like some bright God long treasured in her dreams;  
She saw him standing at his galley’s prow,  
My Phaon, mine, in Mitylene now!

TIDINGS
HESPERUS

Hesperus shines
Low on the eastern sea,
Off toward the Asian land;

Over gray lines
Of mist that hide from me
The waves that sweep the sand;

Fair vesper fire,
Fairest of stars, the light
Benign of secret bliss;

Star of desire,
Bringing to me with night
Dreams and my Phaon's kiss.
DAWN

J ust now the golden-sandalled Dawn
Peered through the lattice of my room;
Why must thou go so soon, my Phaon?

Last night I met thee at the shore,
A thousand hues were in the sky;
The breeze from Cyprus blew, my Phaon!

I drew to cool thy heated brow
My kerchief dripping from the sea;
Why hadst thou sailed so far, my Phaon?

Far up the narrow mountain paths
We heard the shepherds fluting home;
Like some white God thou seemed, my Phaon!

And through the olive trees we saw
The twinkle of my vesper lamp;
Wilt kiss me now as then, my Phaon?

Nay, loosen not with gentle force
The clasp of my restraining arms;
I will not let thee go, my Phaon!

See, deftly in my trailing robe
I spring and draw the curtain close;
Is it not night again, my Phaon?
THE FAREWELL

Beloved, stand face to face,
And, lifting lids, disclose to me the grace,
The ardent fire that lingers yet and lies
Reflected in thy eyes;

Phaon, my sole beloved,
Stand not to my mad passion all unmoved,
O let, ere thou to far Panormus sail,
One hour of love prevail;

Dear ingrate, give me yet
Thy breath like odor from a cassolet,
Thy smile, the clinging touch of lips and heart
To thrill me, ere we part;

Phaon, I yearn and seek
But thee alone, and what I feel must speak
In all these fond and wilful ways of mine,
O mortal, made divine!

My girl friends now no more
Hang their sweet gifts of garlands at my door;
Dear maids, with all your vanished witchery,
Ye now are naught to me;

Phaon, thy galley rides
Within the harbor's mouth and waits the tides
And favoring winds, far to the west to fly
And leave me here to die;

The brawny rowers lean
To bend long-stroking oars, and changing scene
And other loves than mine shall soon efface
This last divine embrace;

Phaon, the lifting breeze!
See, at thy feet I kneel and clasp thy knees;
Go not, go not! O hear my sobbing prayer,
And yield to my despair!
DARK-EYED SLEEP

Dark-eyed Sleep, child of Night,
Come in thy dusky garment to my couch,
And with thy soothing touch,
Cool as the vesper breeze,
   Grant that I may forget;

Bestow serene release,
   A taste of rest that comes with endless sleep;
Lure off the haunting dreams,
The dire Eumenides
   That torture my repose;

For I would live a space,
   Though Phaon has forsaken me, nor yet
Be found on shadow fields
Among the lilies tall
   Of pale Persephone.
THE CLIFF OF LEUCAS

A far-seen cliff
Stands in the western sea,
Toward Cephallenian lands;

Apollo's temple crowns
Its jutting crest,
And at its base
The foaming surges beat;

Its leap has power
To cure the pangs
Of unrequited love;

Thither pale lovers go,
With anguished hearts,
To dare the deep and quench
Love's fierce consuming flame;

Urged to the edge
By maddening desire,
I, too, shall fling myself
Imploring thee,
Apollo, lord and king!

Into the chill
Embraces the sea,
Less cold than thine, O Phaon,
I shall fall,
Fall with the flutter of a wounded dove;

And I shall rise
Indifferent forever to love's dream,
Or find below
The sea's eternal voice,
Eternal peace.
EPIGRAMS
TIMAS

This is the dust of Timas! Here enurned
Rest the dear ashes where so lately burned
Her spirit’s flame; she perished, gentle maid,
Before her bridal day and now a shade,
Silent and sad, she evermore must be
In the dark chamber of Persephone.
When life had faded with the flower and leaf,
Each girl friend sweet, in token of her grief,
Resigned her severed locks with bended head,
Beauty’s fair tribute to the lovely dead.
THE PRIESTESS OF ARTEMIS

Maidens, that pass my tomb with laughter sweet,
   A voice unresting echoes at your feet;
Pause, and if any would my story seek,
Dumb as I am, these graven words will speak;
Once in the vanished years it chanced to please
Arista, daughter of Hermocleides,
To dedicate my life in virgin bliss
To thee, revered of women, Artemis!
O Goddess, deign to bless my grandsire's line,
For Saon was a temple priest of thine;
And grant, O Queen, in thy benefic grace,
Unending fame and fortune to his race.
PELAGON

Above the lowly grave of Pelagon,
Ill-fated fisher lad, Meniscus' son,
His father placed as sign of storm and strife
The weel and oar, memorial of his life.
NEW POEMS
[FOUNT RECENTLY IN EGYPT]
CHARAXUS

KYPRIS, hear my prayer to thee and the Nereids!
Safely bring the ship of my brother homeward,
Bring him back unharmed to the heart that loves him,
Throbbing remorseful;

Fair Immortal, banish from mind, I pray thee,
Every discord's hint that of yore estranged us,
Grant that never again dissension's hateful
Anger shall part us;

May he never in days to come remember
Keen reproach of mine that had grieved him sorely,
Words that broke my very heart when I heard them
Uttered by others;

Words that wounded deep, and recurring often,
Bowed his head with shame at the public banquet,
Where my scorn, amid festal joy and laughter,
Sharpened the covert

Jests that stung his pride and assailed his folly,
Slave-espoused when he, a Lesbian noble,
Might have won the fairest in Mitylene,
Virgins the noblest;

Open slurs that linked his name with Doricha,
Lovely slave that Xanthes had sold in Egypt,
She whose wondrous charms the wealth of Charaxus
Ransomed from bondage;

Now that he is gone and my anger vanished,
Deep remorse and grief for the pain I gave him
Pierce my heart, and fear of loss that is anguish
Darkens the daylight.
THE REBUKE

Therefore thou wouldst mingle with those and grieve me,
Idlers famed that feast with the wanton lovely,
Bidding thy friends farewell, and still in anger
Swift to reproach me;

May thy heart grow ashen to every pleasure,
Throb with pain for all the insolence spoken,
For my mind is not in the mood to pardon
Even a loved one!
FAIR indeed to some is a file of horsemen,
Fair a host on foot or a fleet of galleys,
But to me the fairest thing on the somber
Earth is my dear one!

Strange is this to none, for when once, of old time,
Virile beauty dazzled the eyes of Helen,
Best she chose the man in whose heart the Trojan
Honor had perished;

Then forgotten even were child and parent,
Erst so dear, and driven by love she yielded
All for rapture felt in the fleeting moment,
   All for her lover;

For a fickle thing is the will of woman,
When she lightly dreams of the olden ardor;
So, too, Anactoria, you no longer
   Think of the absent;

Far from her, think not of the one whose beaming
Face and step beloved I would rather near me,
Rather see than Lydia’s hosts and splendid
   Chariots passing;

Well we know that never may come to mortal
Fortune’s best in life, but to pray a share in
Vanished joy is better far than to have it
   Fade from remembrance.
THE TEMPEST

When the tempest lashes the waves and mighty
Blasts of wind bring fear to the heart of the sailor,
Swift he casts his goods in the sea and turning
Beaches his galley;

As for me, I pray I may never venture
Over waters tossed by the storm to distant
Lands and throw my precious bales in the ocean,
Rather than perish;

But if wrathful Nereids should rise around me,
In their flowing emerald robes receiving
Gifts from me, O grant they may guide me safely
Back to the harbor!
THE RETURN

Bring to me in dream, beneficent Hera,
Her entrancing form that the Grecian heros
Saw appear, a boon of the Gods entreated,
After Troy's ruin;

When they first rowed out of the swift Scamander,
Homeward bound, and baffled by storm, they offered
Prayer to thee, and mighty Zeus, and the lovely
Child of Dione;

So I pray thee now, O Queen, as in olden
Days for grace in doing the things of beauty,
Pure and lovely things with the maids I cherish
In Mitylene;

Those I often taught, in the festal circle,
Songs of mine and led through the choric dances;
And from lands afar to my own returning,
Goddess, befriend me!

As the weary Greeks in their galleys leaving
Ilium, their labor done, with thy favor,
So be kind to me as I cross the waters
Homeward to Lesbos.
AND thus I in answer; "O gentle maidens, You will evermore remember in after Years the time of youth and our life together, Glowing and blissful;"

"For the things we did were the pure and lovely, Many things, and now that you leave the city, Long my heart must throb with the pain of parting, Keen with love's sorrow!"
SUPPLICATION

Swiftly come, O hasten back, I implore you,
Gongyla, more sweet to me than a rosebud,
Come to my embrace in your robe that shimmers
White to your ankle;

Ceaselessly my yearning flutters around you,
Flutters so, the very glimpse of your garment
Thrills my heart, and I rejoice that it yields me
Fleeting emotion;

Once I murmured petulant words to Kypris,
Though, for this, her favor I pray to lose not,
But beseech her even now for the maiden
Loved as no other!
THE WHISPER

It is no surprise that some may reproach you,
Envious that we are again together,
That you come as fond and dear as of old time,
Come when you should not;

For we two, in all the ways that we wander,
Ever whisper, each to the other, softly;
"Is there maid on earth that would fain be far from
One that she loved so?"
Pain of longing wrings the heart in my bosom,
Pain of loss, and grief for the days that blending
Kiss and song with dreams of an endless summer,
Came not to sever;

For I saw you then as I always see you,
Rather like a nymph than a mortal maiden,
Fair as Helen was in her golden beauty,
    Leda's white daughter;

So you seemed, as fair as the fairest woman,
When I wove with yearning for you the garland,
Hyacinth and rose, that hung in the purple
    Dusk at your doorway.
At this has not returned, the days drift by,
And all my hope is gone and I would die;
With tears she left me, saying, "Sappho, though
I suffer much to leave thee, I must go!"

And I replied; "If thou must go away,
Start on thy journey happily today;
Remember me, and how thy vestal grace,
A gift divine, was first in my embrace!"

"And if thou shouldst forget in years to come,
I will remind thee, though my lips are dumb,
How fond we were, and beautiful, and how
Love was our only dream as even now;"

"And how thy beauty brightened with the glows
Of countless wreaths of violet and rose,
And woven to the whim of thy desire
Around thy neck and on thy heart as fire;"

"And how upon thy couch and fair to me,
With fruit and nectar near to freshen thee,
Thou didst anoint thy body, languid yet,
With odor from thy costly cassolet;"

"And how we offered pensively when all
The consecrating rites had lost their thrall,
Deep in the sacred grove at day's decline,
White doves and flowers at Aphrodite's shrine."
THE FRIEND AT SARDIS

Atthis, our Mnasidica dwells afar,
   At Sardis, where the shores of Asia are,
And often of her life with us she dreams
When the pale moon across the ocean gleams;

And she remembers how she listened long,
Enraptured with the beauty of thy song,
And thought thee like some glorious and fair
Goddess that had descended from the air;

But now among the Lydian girls she shines
As when the star-encircled moon reclines,
With light increasing on the sea and high
O'er dewy lands that deep in roses lie;

Ah, Atthis, when she thinks of thee, desire
Runs through her shaken heart like subtle fire,
And borne from far upon the breeze we hear
Her olden cry of passion wafted clear;

And well we know to her the fragrance brings
The memory of love, and darkness sings
With many whispers of the past that we
Lose not across the heart-dividing sea.
ABLUTION

Thus drowsy Atthis, laughing at my door;
"Sappho, I vow that I will kiss no more
Thy lips, and every loveliness, if thou
Shouldst still refuse to bare thy beauty now!"

"O from thy bed unloosen every charm
Of all thy strength beloved in limb and arm,
And doff thy robe and bathe thee as the white
Lily that leaves the river for the light;"

"And Cleïs shall be near thee, at thy call,
And let a saffron raiment on thee fall,
While we, thy girl friends, in a vestal throng,
Shall wreathe thy hair while thirsting for thy song."
LASSITUDE

For all too long I brooded by the sea,
   And Gongyla, my love, she questioned me,
Pleading that I should let my girl friends know
The shadow of the dream that saddened so;

And I replied; "The Messenger divine
Of Gods was here; O Lord," I said, "be thine
The grace to heed, for in my heart I miss
The poignant thrill and love has lost its bliss;"

"And death is in the thought that brings my sigh,
And I would seek the dewy fields that lie
Beyond the world with thee and know no tears,
As Agamemnon once in vanished years."
HERE END THE POEMS OF SAPPHO TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY JOHN MYERS O'HARA AND TWO HUNDRED TWENTY COPIES WERE PRINTED BY SMITH AND SALE IN THE MONTH OF JUNE MDCCCCXXIV

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