

Heroides / The Heroines, by Ovid, translated by Grant Showerman

I. PENELOPE TO ULYSSEUS

[1] This missive your Penelope sends to you, O Ulysses, slow of return that you are – yet write nothing back to me; yourself come! Troy, to be sure, is fallen, hated of the daughters of Greece; but scarcely were Priam and all Troy worth the price to me.¹ O would that then, when his ship was on the way to Lacedaemon, the adulterous lover had been overwhelmed by raging waters! Then had I not lain cold in my deserted bed, nor would now be left alone complaining of slowly passing days; nor would the hanging web be wearying now my widowed hands as I seek to beguile the hours of spacious night.

[11] When have I not feared dangers graver than the real? Love is a thing ever filled with anxious fear. It was upon you that my fancy ever told me the furious Trojans would rush; at mention of the name of Hector my pallor ever came. Did someone begin the tale of Antilochus laid low by the enemy, Antilochus was cause of my alarm; or, did he tell of how the son of Menoetius fell in armour not his own,² I wept that wiles could lack success. Had Tlepolemus' with his blood made warm the Lycian spear,³ in Tlepolemus' fate was all my care renewed. In short, whoever it was in the Argive camp that was pierced and fell, colder than ice grew the heart of her who loves you.

[23] But good regard for me had the god who looks with favour upon chaste love. Turned to ashes is Troy, and my lord is safe. The Argolic chieftains have returned, our altars are a-smoke⁴; before the gods of our fathers is laid the barbarian spoil. The young wife comes bearing thank-offering for her husband saved; the husband sings of the fates of Troy that have yielded to his own. Righteous elder and trembling girl admire; the wife hangs on the tale that falls from her husband's lips. And someone about the board shows thereon the fierce combat, and with scant tracing of wine pictures forth all Pergamum: "Here flowed the Simois; this is the Sigeian land; here stood the lofty palace of Priam the ancient. Yonder tented the son of Aeacus; yonder, Ulysses; here, in wild course went the frightened steeds with Hector's mutilated corpse."

[37] For the whole story was told your son, whom I sent to seek you; ancient Nestor told him, and he told me. He told as well of Rhesus' and Dolon's fall by the sword, how the one was betrayed by slumber, the other undone by guile. You had the daring – O too, too forgetful of your own! – to set wily foot by night in the Thracian camp, and to slay so many men, all at one time, and with only one to aid! Ah yes, you were cautious, indeed, and ever gave me first thought! My heart leaped with fear at every word until I was told of your victorious riding back through the friendly lines of the Greeks with the coursers of Ismarus.

[47] But of what avail to me that Ilion has been scattered in ruin by your arms, and that what once was wall is now level ground – if I am still to remain such as I was while Troy endured, and must live to all time bereft of my lord? For other Pergamum has been brought low; for me alone it still stands, though the victor dwell within and drive there the plow with the ox he took as spoil. Now are fields of corn where Troy once was, and soil made fertile with Phrygian blood waves rich with harvest ready for the sickle; the half-buried bones of her heroes are struck by the curvèd share, and herbage hides from sight her ruined palaces. A victor, you are yet not here, nor am I let know what causes your delay, or in what part of the world hard-heartedly you hide.

[59] Whoso turns to these shores of ours his stranger ship is plied with many a question ere he go away, and into his hand is given the sheet writ by these fingers of mine, to render up should he but see you anywhere. We have sent to Pylos, the land of ancient Nestor, Neleus' son; the word brought back from Pylos was nothing sure.⁵ We have sent to Sparta, too; Sparta also could tell us nothing true. In what lands are you abiding, or where do you idly tarry? Better for me, were the walls of Phoebus still standing in their place – ah me inconstant, I am wroth with the vows myself have made! Had they not fallen, I should know where you were fighting, and have only war to fear, and my plaint would be joined with that of many another. But now, what I am to fear I know not – yet none the less I fear all things, distraught, and wide is the field lies open for my cares. Whatever dangers the deep contains, whatever the land, suspicion tells me are cause of your long delay. While I live on in foolish fear of things like these, you may be captive to a stranger love – such are the hearts of you men! It may be you even tell how rustic⁶ a wife you have –

one fit only to dress fine the wool. May I be mistaken, and this charge of mine be found slight as the breeze that blows, and may it not be that, free to return, you will to be away!

[81] As for me – my father Icarius enjoins on me to quit my widowed couch, and ever chides me for my measureless delay. Let him chide on – yours I am, yours must I be called; Penelope, the wife of Ulysses, ever shall I be. Yet is he bent by my faithfulness and my chaste prayers, and of himself abates his urgency. The men of Dulichium and Samos, and they whom high Zacynthus bore – a wanton throng – come pressing about me, suing for my hand. In your own hall they are masters, with none to say them nay; my heart is being torn, your substance spoiled. Why tell you of Pisander, and of Polybus, and of Medon the cruel, and of the grasping hands of Eurymachus and Antinous, and of others, all of whom through shameful absence you yourself are feeding fat with store that was won at cost of your blood? Irus the beggar, and Melanthius, who drives in your flocks to be consumed, are the crowning disgrace now added to your ruin.

[97] We number only three, unused to war – a powerless wife; Laertes, an old man; Telemachus, a boy. He was of late all but waylaid and taken from me, while making ready, against the will of all of them, to go to Pylos. The gods grant, I pray, that our fated ends may come in due succession – that he be the one to close my eyes, the one to close yours! To sustain our cause are the guardian of your cattle and the ancient nurse, and, as a third, the faithful ward of the unclean sty; but neither Laertes, unable as he is to wield arms now, can sway the sceptre in the midst of our foes – Telemachus, indeed, so he live on, will arrive at years of strength, but now should have his father's aid and guarding – nor have I strength to repel the enemy from our halls. Do you yourself make haste to come, haven and altar of safety for your own! You have a son – and may you have him ever, is my prayer – who in his tender years should have been trained by you in his father's ways. Have regard for Laertes; in the hope that you will come at last to close his eyes, he is withstanding the final day of fate.

[115] As for myself, who when you left my side was but a girl, though you should come straightway, I surely shall seem grown an aged dame.

1. Homer is Ovid's direct source for this letter. Tennyson's Ulysses is of interest in connection with it.
2. Patroclus in the armour of Achilles.
3. Tlepolemus was slain by Sarpedon, king of Lycia.
4. The past rises vividly in her mind.
5. If this refers to Telemachus' journey, Ovid has forgotten his Homer, or disregards it; for in the *Odyssey* (2, 373) Telemachus goes without his mother's knowledge.
6. Rustica is frequent in the *Herodies*. It suggests "rustic," "countryfied," "simple," "homely," "unsophisticated," but may be rendered well by no single word.

II. PHYLLIS TO DEMOPHOON

[1] I, your Phyllis, who welcomed you to Rhodope, Demophoon, complain that the promised day is past, and you not here. When once the horns of the moon should have come together in full orb, our shores were to expect your anchor – the moon has four times waned, and four times waxed again to her orb complete; yet the Sithonian wave brings not the ships of Acte.¹ Should you count the days – which we count well who love – you will find my plaint come not before its time.

[9] Hope, too, has been slow to leave me; we are tardy in believing, when belief brings hurt. Even now my love is loath to let me think you wrong me. Oft have I thought the gusty breezes of the south were bringing back your white sails. Theseus I have cursed, because methought he would not let you go; yet mayhap 'tis not he that has stayed your course. At times have I feared lest, while you were holding toward the waters of the Hebrus, your craft had been wrecked and engulfed in the foaming wave. Oft, bending the knee in prayer that you fare well – ah, base, base man! – have I venerated the gods with prayer or with burning of holy incense; oft, seeing in sky and on sea that the winds were favouring, have I said to myself: "If he do fare well, he is on the way." In a word, all things soever that hinder those in haste to come, my faithful love has tried to image forth, and my wit has been fertile in the finding of causes. But you delay long your coming; neither do the gods by whom you swore bring you back to me, nor does love of mine move your return. Demophoon, to the

winds you gave at once both promised word and sails; your sails, alas! have not returned, your promised word has not been kept.

[27] Tell me, what have I done, except not wisely love? – and by the very fault I might well have won you for my own. The one crime which may be charged to me is that I took you, O faithless, to myself; but this crime has all the weight and seeming of good desert. The bonds that should hold you, the faith that you swore, where are they now? – and the pledge of the right hand you placed in mine, and the talk of God that was ever on your lying lips? Where now the bond of Hymen promised for years of life together – promise that was my warrant and surety for the wedded state? By the sea, all tossed by wind and wave, over which you had often gone, over which you were still to go; and by your grandsire – unless he, too, is but a fiction – by your grandsire, who calms the windwrought wave, you swore to me; yes, and by Venus and the weapons that wound me all too much – one weapon the bow, the other the torch; and by Juno, the kindly ward of the bridal bed; and by the mystical rites of the goddess who bears the torch. Should all the many gods you have wronged take vengeance for the outrage to their sacred names, your single life would not suffice.

[45] Yes, and more, in my madness I even refitted your shattered ships – that the keel might be firm by which I was left behind! – and gave you the oars by which you were to fly from me. Ah me, my pangs are from wounds wrought by weapons of my own! I had faith in your wheedling words, and you had good store of them; I had faith in your lineage, and in the names it shows; I had faith in your tears – or can these also be taught to feign; and are these also guileful, and ready to flow where bidden? I had faith, too, in the gods by whom you swore. To what end, pray, so many pledges of faith to me? By any part of them, however slight, I could have been ensnared.

[55] I am stirred by no regret that I aided you with haven and abiding-place – only, this should have been the limit of my kindness! Shamefully to have added to my welcome of the guest the favours of the marriage-bed is what I repent me of – to have pressed your side to my own. The night before that night I could wish had been the last for me, while I still could have died Phyllis the chaste. I had hope for a better fate, for I thought it my desert; the hope – whatever it be – that is grounded in

desert, is just.

[63] To beguile a trustful maid is glory but cheaply earned; my simple faith was worthy of regard. I was deceived by your words – I, who loved and was a woman. May the gods grant that this be your crowning praise! In the midst of your city, even among the sons of Aegeus, go let yourself be statued, and let your mighty father² be set there first, with record of his deeds. When men shall have read of Sciron, and of grim Procrustes, and of Sinis, and of the mingled form of bull and man, and of Thebes brought low in war, and of the rout of the two-framed Centaurs, and of the knocking at the gloomy palace of the darksome god – after all these, under your own image let be inscribed these words:

**THIS IS HE WHOSE WILES BETRAYED THE HOSTESS THAT
LOVED HIM.**

[75] Of all the great deeds in the long career of your sire, nothing has made impress upon your nature but the leaving of his Cretan bride. The only deed that draws forth his excuse, that only you admire in him; you act the heir to your father's guile, perfidious one. She – and with no envy from me – enjoys now a better lord, and sits aloft behind her bridled tigers³; but me, the Thracians whom I scorned will not now wed, for rumour declares I set a stranger before my countrymen. And someone says: "Let her now away to learned Athens; to rule in armour-bearing Thrace another shall be found. The event proves well the wisdom of her course." Let him come to naught, I pray, who thinks the deed should be condemned from its result. Ah, but if our seas should foam beneath your oar, then should I be said to have counselled well for myself, then well for my countrymen; but I have neither counselled well, nor will my palace feel your presence more, nor will you bathe again your wearied limbs in the Bistonian wave!

[91] Ever to my sight clings that vision of you as you went, what time your ships were riding the waters of my harbour, all ready to depart. You dared embrace me, and, with arms close round the neck of her who loved you, to join your lips to mine in long and lingering kisses, to mingle with my tears your own, to complain because the breeze was favouring to your sails, and, as you left my side, to say for your last words: "Phyllis, remember well, expect your own Demophoon!"

[99] And am I to expect, when you went forth with thought never to see me more? Am I to expect the sails denied return to my seas? And yet I do expect – ah, return only, though late, to her who loves you, and prove your promise false only for the time that you delay!

[103] Why entreat, unhappy that I am? It may be you are already won by another bride, and feel for her the love that favoured me but ill; and since I have fallen from out your life, I feel you know Phyllis no more. Ah me! if you ask who I, Pyllis, am, and whence – I am she, Demophoon, who, when you had been driven far in wanderings on the sea, threw open to you the havens of Thrace and welcomed you as guest, you, whose estate my own raised up, to whom in your need I in my plenty gave many gifts, and would have given many still; I am she who rendered to you the broad, broad realms of Lycurgus, scarce meet to be ruled in a woman's name, where stretches icy Rhodope to Haemus with its shades, and sacred Hebrus drives his headlong waters forth – to you, on whom mid omens all sinister my maiden innocence was first bestowed, and whose guileful hand ungirdled my chaste zone! Tisiphone was minister at that bridal, with shrieks,⁴ and the bird that shuns the haunts of men chanted her mournful note; Allecto was there, with little serpents coiled about her neck, and the lights that waved were torches of the tomb!

[121] Heavey in soul, none the less do I tread the rocks and the thicket-covered strand, where'er the sea view opens broad before my eyes. Whether by day the soil is loosed by warmth, or whether constellations coldly shine, I look ever forth to see what wind doth sweep the straits; and whatever sails I see approaching from afar, straightway I augur them the answer to my prayers. I rush forth to the waters, scarce halted by the waves where first the sea sends in its mobile tide. The nearer the sails advance, the less and less the strength that bears me up; my senses leave me, and I fall, to be caught up by my handmaids' arms.

[131] There is a bay, whose bow-like lines are gently curved to sickle shape; its outmost horns rise rigid and in rock-bound mass. To throw myself hence into the waves beneath has been my mind; and, since you still pursue your faithless course, so shall it be. Let the waves bear me away, and cast me up on your shores, and let me meet your eyes

untomb'd! Though in hardness you be more than steel, than adamant, than your very self, you shall say: "Not so, Phyllis, should I have been followed by thee!" Oft do I long for poison; oft with the sword would I gladly pierce my heart and pour forth my blood in death. My neck, too, because once offered to the embrace of your false arms, I could gladly ensnare in the noose. My heart is fixed to die before my time, and thus make amends to tender purity. In the choosing of my death there shall be but small delay.

[145] On my tomb shall you be inscribed the hateful cause of my death. By this, or by some similar verse, shall you be known:

DEMOPHOON 'T WAS SENT PYLLIS TO HER DOOM; HER GUEST
WAS HE, SHE LOVED HIM WELL.

HE WAS THE CAUSE THAT BROUGHT HER DEATH TO PASS;
HER OWN THE HAND BY WHICH SHE FELL.

1. Attica.
2. Theseus.
3. After Theseus' desertion of her, Ariadne wedded to Bacchus, whose tigers and car she drives.
4. A Fury, instead of Juno, patroness of marriage.

III. BRISEIS TO ACHILLES

[1] From stolen Briseis is the writing you read, scarce character'd in Greek by her barbarian hand.¹ Whatever blots you shall see, her tears have made; but tears, too, have none the less the weight of words.

[5] If 'tis right for me to utter brief complaint of you, my master and my beloved, of you, my master and my beloved, will I utter brief complaint. That I was all too quickly delivered over to the king at his demand is not your fault – yet this, too, is your fault; for as soon as Eurybates and Talthybius came to ask for me, to Eurybates was I given over, and to Talthybius, to go with them.² Each, casting eyes into the face of other, inquired in silence where now was the love between us. My going might have been deferred; a stay of my pain would have eased my heart. Ah me! I had to go, and with no farewell kiss; but tears without end I shed, and

rent my hair – miserable me, I seemed a second time to suffer the captive’s fate!

[17] Oft have I wished to elude my guards and return to you; but the enemy was there, to seize upon a timid girl. Should I have gone far, I feared I should be taken in the night, and delivered over a gift to some one of the ladies of Priam’s sons.

[21] But grant I was given up because I must be given – yet all these nights I am absent from your side, and not demanded back; you delay, and your anger is slow. Menoetius’ son himself,³ at the time I was delivered up, whispered into my ear: “Why do you weep? But a short time,” he said, “will you be here.”

[25] And not to have claimed me back is but a slight thing; you even oppose my being restored, Achilles. Go now, deserve the name of an eager lover! There came to you the sons of Amyntor and Telamon – the one near in degree of blood, the other a comrade – and Laertes’ son; in company of these I was to return. Rich presents lent weight to their wheedling prayers: twenty ruddy vessels of wrought bronze, and tripods seven, equal in weight and workmanship; added to these, of gold twice five talents, twice six coursers ever wont to win, and – what there was no need of! – Lesbian girls surpassing fair, maids taken when their home was overthrown; and with all these – though of a bride you have no need – as bride, one of the daughters three of Agamemnon. What you must have given had you had to buy me back from Atrides with a price, but you refuse as a gift! What have I done that I am held thus cheap by you, Achilles? Whither has fled your light love so quickly from me?

[43] Or can it be that a gloomy fortune still weighs the wretched down, and a gentler hour comes not when woes have once begun? The walls of Lyrnesus I have seen laid in ruin by your soldier band – I, who myself had been great part of my father’s land; I have seen fall three who were partners alike in birth and in death – and the three had the mother who was mine; I have seen my wedded lord stretched all his length upon the gory ground, heaving in agony his bloody breast. For so many lost to me I still had only you in recompense; you were my master, you my husband, you my brother. You swore to me by the godhead of your seaborne mother,

and yourself said that my captive's lot was gain – yes, that though I come to you with dowry, you may thrust me back, scorning with me the wealth that is tendered you! Nay, 'tis even said that when tomorrow's dawn shall have shone forth, you mean to unfurl your linen sails to the cloud-bringing winds of the south.

[59] When the monstrous tale fell on my wretched and terror-stricken ears, the blood went from my breast, and with it my senses fled. You are going – ah me, wretched! – and to whom do you leave me, O hardened of heart? Who shall afford me gentle solace, left behind? May I be swallowed up, I pray, in sudden yawning of the earth, or consumed by the ruddy fire of careering thunderbolt, e'er that, without me, the seas foam white with Phthian oars, and I am left behind to see your ships fare forth! If it please you now to return to the hearth of your fathers, I am no great burden to your fleet. As captive let me follow my captor, not as wife my wedded lord; I have a hand well skilled to dress the wool. The most beautiful by far among the women of Achaea will come to the marriage-chamber as your bride – and may she come! – a bride worthy of her lord's father,⁴ the grandchild of Jove and Aegina, and one whom ancient Nereus would welcome as his grandson's bride.⁵ As for me, I shall be a lowly slave of yours and spin off the given task, and the full distaff shall grow slender at the drawing of my threads. Only let not your lady be harsh with me, I pray – for in some way I feel she will not be kind – and suffer her not to tear my hair before your eyes, while you lightly say of me: “She, too, once was mine.” Or, suffer it even so, if only I am not despised and left behind – this is the fear, ah woe is wretched me, that shakes my very bones!

[83] What do you still await? Agamemnon repents him of his wrath, and Greece lies prostrate in affliction at your feet. Subdue your own angry spirit, you who subdue all else! Why does eager Hector still harry the Danaan lines? Seize up your armour, O child of Aeacus – yet take me back first – and with the favour of Mars rout and overwhelm their ranks. For me your anger was stirred, through me let it be allayed; and let me be both the cause and the measure of your gloomy wrath. Nor think it unseemly for you to yield to prayer of mine; by the prayer of his wedded wife was the son of Oeneus roused to arms.⁶ 'Tis only a tale to me, but to you well known. Reft of her brothers, a mother cursed the hope and head

of her son. There was war; in fierce mood he laid down his arms and stood apart, and with unbending purpose refused his country aid. Only the wife availed to bend her husband. The happier she! – for my words have no weight, and fall for naught. And yet I am not angered, nor have I borne myself as wife because oft summoned, a slave, to share my master's bed. Some captive woman once, I mind me, called me mistress. "To slavery," I replied, "you add a burden in that name."

[103] None the less, by the bones of my wedded lord, ill covered in hasty sepulture, bones ever to be held sacred in my eyes; and by the brave souls of my three brothers, to me now spirits divine, who died well for their country, and lie well with it in death; and by your head and mine, which we have laid each to each; and by your sword, weapon well known to my kin – I swear that the Mycenaean has shared no couch with me; if I prove false, wish never to see me more! If now I should say to you: "Most valiant one, do you swear also that you have tasted no joys apart from me!" you would refuse. Yes, the Danaï think you are mourning for me – but you are wielding the plectrum, and a tender mistress holds you in her warm embrace! And does anyone ask wherefore do you refuse to fight? Because the fight brings danger; while the zither, and night, and Venus, bring delight. Safer is it to lie on the couch, to clasp a sweetheart in your arms, to tinkle with your fingers the Thracian⁷ lyre, than to take in hand the shield, and the spear with sharpened point, and to sustain upon your locks the helmet's weight.

[121] Once the deed of renown, rather than safety, was your pleasure, and glory won in warring was sweet to you. Or can it be that you favoured fierce war only till you could make me captive, and that you praise lies dead, overcome together with my native land? Ye gods forbend! and may the spear of Pelion go quivering from your strong arm to pierce the side of Hector! Send me, O Danaï! I carry many kisses mingled with my message. I shall achieve more than Phoenix, believe me, more than eloquent Ulysses, more than Teucer's brother!⁸ It will avail something to have touched your neck with the accustomed arms, to have seen you and stirred your recollection by the light of my bosom. Though you be cruel, though more savage than your mother's waves, even should I keep silence you will be broken by my tears.

[135] Even now – so may Peleus your father fill out his tale of years, so may Pyrrhus take up arms with fortune as good as yours! – have regard for anxious Briseis, brave Achilles, and do not hard-heartedly torment a wretched maid with long drawn out delay! Or, if your love for me has turned to weariness, compel the death of her whom you compel to live without you! And, as you now are doing, you will compel it. Gone is my flesh, and gone my hope in you. If I am left by that, I shall go to rejoin my brothers and my husband – and ‘twill be no boast for you to have bid a woman die. And more, why should you bid me die? Draw the steel and plunge it in my body; I have blood to flow when once my breast is pierced. Let me be stricken with that sword of yours, which, had the goddess not said nay, would have made its way into the heart of Atreus’ son!

[149] Ah, rather save my life, the gift you gave me! What you gave, when victor, to me your foe, I ask now from you as your friend. Those whom ‘twere better you destroyed, Neptunian Pergamum affords; for matter for your sword, go seek the foe. Only, whether you make ready to speed on with the oar your ships, or whether you remain, O, by your right as master, bid me come!

1. Briseis was a captive from Lyrnesus, in Mysia. Iliad IX is the basis of this letter.
2. Agamemnon forced Achilles to give up Briseis. Achilles having refused to aid the Greeks, Agamemnon sent an embassy to him, but the offended warrior scorned his advances.
3. Patroclus.
4. Peleus, son of Aeacus, son of Jupiter and Aegina.
5. Thetis, mother of Achilles, was daughter of Nereus.
6. The story of Meleager, who slew his mother Althea’s brother, and was cursed by her. Refusing to aid his country in the war that followed the killing of the Calydonian bar, he was turned from his purpose by his wife Cleopatra.
7. Because Orpheus was a Thracian.
8. Ajax. The three were the delegation sent by Agamemnon to offer to make amends.

IV. PHAEDRA TO HIPPOLYTUS

[1] With wishes for the welfare which she herself, unless you give it her, will ever lack, the Cretan maid greets the hero whose mother was an Amazon. Read to the end, whatever is here contained – what shall reading of a letter harm? In this one, too, there may be something to pleasure you; in these characters of mine, secrets are borne over land and sea. Even foe looks into missive writ by foe.

[7] Thrice making trial of speech with you, thrice hath my tongue vainly stopped, thrice the sound failed at first threshold of my lips. Wherever modesty may attend on love, love should not lack in it; with me, what modesty forbade to say, love has commanded me to write. Whatever Love commands, it is not safe to hold for naught; his throne and law are over even the gods who are lords of all. ‘Twas he who spoke to me when first I doubted if to write or no: “Write; the iron-hearted one will yield his hand.” Let him aid me, then, and, just as he heats my marrow with his avid flame, so may he transfix your heart that it yield to my prayers!

[17] It will not be through wanton baseness that I shall break my marriage-bond; my name – and you may ask – is free from all reproach. Love has come to me, the deeper for its coming late – I am burning with love within; I am burning, and my breast has an unseen wound. As the first bearing of the yoke galls the tender steer, and as the rein is scarce endured by the colt fresh taken from the drove, so does my untried heart rebel, and scarce submit to the first restrains of love, and the burden I undergo does not sit well upon my soul. Love grows to be but an art, when the fault is well learned from tender years; she who yields her heart when the time for love is past, has a fiercer passion. You will reap the fresh first-offerings of purity long preserved, and both of us will be equal in our guilt. ‘Tis something to pluck fruit from the orchard with full-hanging branch, to cull with delicate nail the first rose. If nevertheless the white and blameless purity in which I have lived before was to be marked with unwonted stain, at least the fortune is kind that burns me with a worthy flame; worse than forbidden love is a lover who is base. Should Juno yield me him who is at once her brother and lord, methinks I should prefer Hippolytus to Jove.

[37] Now too – you will scarce believe it – I am changing to pursuits I did not know; I am stirred to go among wild beasts. The goddess first for me now is the Delian, known above all for her curved bow; it is your choice that I myself now follow. My pleasure leads me to the wood, to drive the deer into the net, and to urge on the fleet hound over the highest ridge, or with arm shot forth to let fly the quivering spear, or to lay my body upon the grassy ground. Oft do I delight to whirl the light car in the dust of the course, twisting with the rein the mouth of the flying steed; now again I am borne on, like daughters of the Bacchic cry driven by the frenzy of their god, and those who shake the timbrel at the foot of Ida's ridge,¹ or those whom Dryad creatures half-divine and Fauns two-horned have touched with their own spirit and driven distraught. For they tell me of all these things when that madness of mine has passed away; and I keep silence, conscious 'tis love that tortures me.

[53] It may be this love is a debt I am paying, due to the destiny of my line, and that Venus is exacting tribute of me for all my race. Europa – this is the first beginning of our line – was loved of Jove; a bull's form disguised the god. Pasiphaë my mother, victim of the deluded bull,² brought forth in travail her reproach and burden. The faithless son of Aegeus followed the guiding thread, and escaped from the winding house through the aid my sister gave.³ Behold, now I, lest I be thought too little a child of Minos' line, am the latest of my stock to come under the law that rules us all! This, too, is fateful, that one hose has won us both; your beauty has captured my heart, my sister's heart was captured by your father. Theseus' son and Theseus have been the undoing of sisters twain – rear ye a double trophy at our house's fall!

[67] That time I went to Eleusis, the city of Ceres, would that the Gnosian land had held me back! It was then you pleased me most, and yet you had pleased before; piercing love lodged in my deepest bones. Shining white was your raiment, bound round with flowers your locks, the blush of modesty had tinged your sun-browned cheeks, and, what others call a countenance hard and stern, in Phaedra's eyes was strong instead of hard. Away from me with your young men arrayed like women! – beauty in a man would fain be striven for in measure. That hardness of feature suits you well, those locks that fall without art, and the light dust upon your handsome face. Whether you draw rein and curb the resisting neck of

your spirited steed, I look with wonder at your turning his feet in circle so slight; whether with strong arm you hurl the pliant shaft, your gallant arm draws my regard upon itself, or whether you grasp the broad-headed cornel hunting-spear. To say no more, my eyes delight in whatsoe'er you do.

[85] Do you only lay aside you hardness upon the forest ridges; I am no fit spoil for you campaign. What use to you to practise the ways of girded Diana, and to have stolen from Venus her own due? That which lacks its alternations of repose will not endure; this is what repairs the strength and renews the wearied limbs. The bow – and you should imitate the weapons of your Diana – if you never cease to bend it, will grow slack. Renowned in the forest was Cephalus, and many were the wild beasts that had fallen on the sod at the piercing of his stroke; yet he did not ill in yielding himself to Aurora's love. Oft did the goddess sagely go to him, leaving her aged spouse.⁴ Many a time beneath the ilex did Venus and he⁵ that was sprung of Cinyras recline, pressing some chance grassy spot. The son of Oeneus, too, took fire with love for Maenalian Atalanta; she has the spoil of the wild beast as the pledge of his love. Let us, too, be now first numbered in that company! If you take away love, the forest is but a rustic place. I myself will come and be at your side, and neither rocky covert shall make me fear, nor the boar dreadful for the side-stroke of his tusk.

[105] There are two seas that on either side assail an isthmus with their floods, and the slender land hears the waves of both. Here with you will I dwell, in Troezen's land, the realm of Pittheus; yon place is dearer to me now than my own native soil. The hero son of Neptune is absent now, in happy hour, and will be absent long; he is kept by the shores of his dear Pirithous.⁶ Theseus – unless, indeed, we refuse to own what all may see – has come to love Pirithous more than Phaedra, Pirithous more than you. Nor is that the only wrong we suffer at his hand; there are deep injuries we both have had from him. The bones of my brother he crushed with his triple-knotted club and scattered o'er the ground; my sister he left at the mercy of wild beasts. The first in courage among the women⁷ of the battle-axe bore you, a mother worthy of the vigour of her son; if you ask where she is – Theseus pierced her side with the steel, nor did she find safety in the pledge of so great a son. Yes, and she was not even wed to

him and taken to his home with the nuptial torch – why, unless that you, a bastard, should not come to your father’s throne? He has bestowed brothers on you, too, from me, and the cause of rearing them all as heirs has been not myself, but he. Ah, would that the bosom which was to work you wrong, fairest of men, had been rent in the midst of its throes! Go now, reverence the bed of a father who thus deserves of you – the bed which he neglects and is disowning by his deeds.

[129] And, should you think of me as a stepdame who would mate with her husband’s son, let empty names fright not your soul. Such old-fashioned regard for virtue was rustic even in Saturn’s reign, and doomed to die in the age to come. Jove fixed that virtue was to be in whatever brought us pleasure; and naught is wrong before the gods since sister was made wife by brother. That bond of kinship only holds close and firm in which Venus herself has forged the chain. Nor need you fear the trouble of concealment – it will be easy; ask the aid of Venus! Through her our fault will be covered under name of kinship. Should someone see us embrace, we both shall meet with praise; I shall be called a faithful stepdame to the son of my lord. No portal of a dour husband will need unbolting for you in the darkness of night; there will be no guard to be eluded; as the same roof has covered us both, the same will cover us still. Your wont has been to give me kisses unconcealed, your wont will be still to give me kisses unconcealed. You will be safe with me, and will earn praise by your fault, though you be seen upon my very couch. Only, away with tarrying, and make haste to bind our bond – so may Love be merciful to you, who is bitter to me now! I do not disdain to bend my knee and humbly make entreaty. Alas! where now are my pride, my lofty words? Fallen! I was resolved – if there was aught love could resolve – both to fight long and not to yield to fault; but I am overcome. I pray to you, to clasp your knees I extend my queenly arms. Of what befits, no one who loves takes thought. My modesty has fled, and as it fled it left its standards behind.

[156] Forgive me my confession, and soften your hard heart! That I have for sire Minos, who rules the seas, that from my ancestor’s hand comes hurled the lightning-stroke, that the front of my grandsire, he who moves the tepid day with gleaming chariot, is crowned with palisade of pointed rays – what of this, when my noble name is prostrate under love? Have

pity on those who have gone before, and, if me you will not spare, O spare my line! To my dowry belongs the Cretan land, the isle of Jove – let my whole court be slaves to my Hippolytus!

[165] Bend, O cruel one, your spirit! My mother could pervert a bull; will you be fiercer than a savage beast? Spare me, by Venus I pray, who is chiefest with me now. So may you never love one who will spurn you; so may the agile goddess wait on you in the solitary glade to keep you safe, and the deep forest yield you wild beasts to slay; so may the Satyrs be your friends, and the mountain deities, the Pans, and may the boar fall pierced in full front by your spear; so may the Nymphs – though you are said to loathe womankind – give you the flowing water to relieve your parching thirst!

[175] I mingle with these prayers my tears as well. The words of her who prays, you are reading; her tears, imagine you behold!

1. The votaries of Cybele, Great Mother of the Gods.
2. The gods caused the animal to see in her his own kind.
3. The story of the Minotaur and the Labyrinth.
4. Tithonus.
5. Adonis.
6. The king of the Lapithae, Theseus' companion on the expedition to Hades, aided by him in the war against the Centaurs.
7. Antiope, sister of Hippolyte, is here meant; but the usual story made Hippolyte Hippolytus' mother.
8. Palmer makes Hippolytus the antecedent of quem.

V. OENONE TO PARIS

[1] Will you read my letter though? or does your new wife forbid? Read – this is no letter writ by Mycenaean hand! It is the fountain-nymph Oenone writes, well-known to the Phrygian forests – wronged, and with complaint to make of you, you my own, if you but allow.

[5] What god has set his will against my prayers? What guilt stands in my way, that I may not remain your own? Softly must we bear whatever

suffering is our desert; the penalty that comes without deserving brings us dole.

[9] Not yet so great were you when I was content to wed you – I, the nymph-daughter of a mighty stream. You who are now a son of Priam – let not respect keep back the truth! – were then a slave; I deigned to wed a slave – I, a nymph! Oft among our flocks have we reposed beneath the sheltering trees, where mingled grass and leaves afforded us a couch; oft have we lain upon the straw, or on the deep hay in a lowly hut that kept the hoar-frost off. Who was it pointed out to you the coverts apt for the chase, and the rocky den where the wild beast hid away her cubs? Oft have I gone with you to stretch the hunting-net with its wide mesh; oft have I led the fleet hounds over the long ridge. The beeches still conserve my name carved on them by you, and I am read there OENONE, characterized by your blade; and the more the trunks, the greater grows my name. Grow on, rise high and straight to make my honours known! O poplar, ever live, I pray, that art planted by the marge of the stream and hast in thy seamy bark these verses:

IF PARIS' BREATH SHALL FAIL NOT, ONCE OENONE HE DOTHTH
SPURN,

THE WATERS OF THE XANTHUS TO THEIR FOUNT SHALL
BACKWARD TURN.

O Xanthus, backward haste; turn, waters, and flow again to your fount!
Paris has deserted Oenone, and endures it.

[33] That day spoke doom for wretched me, on that day did the awful storm of changed love begin, when Venus and Juno, and unadorned Minerva, more comely had she borne her arms, appeared before you to be judged. My bosom leaped with amaze as you told me of it, and a chill tremor rushed through my hard bones. I took counsel – for I was no little terrified – with grandams and long-lived sires. 'Twas clear to us all that evil threatened me.

[41] The firs were felled, the timbers hewn; your fleet was ready, and the deep-blue wave received the waxèd crafts. Your tears fell as you left me – this, at least, deny not! We mingled our weeping, each a prey to grief; the elm is not so closely clasped by the clinging vine as was my neck by your embracing arms. Ah, how oft, when you complained that you were kept

by the wind, did you comrades smile! – that wind was favouring. How oft, when you had taken your leave of me, did you return to ask another kiss! How your tongue could scarce endure to say “Farewell!”

[53] A light breeze stirs the sails that hang idly from the rigid mast, and the water foams white with the churning of the oar. In wretchedness I follow with my eyes the departing sails as far as I may, and the sand is humid with my tears; that you may swiftly come again, I pray the sea-green daughters of Nereus – yes, that you may swiftly come to my undoing! Expected to return in answer to my vows, have you returned for the sake of another? Ah me, ‘twas for the sake of a cruel rival that my persuasive prayers were made!

[61] A mass of native rock looks down upon the unmeasured deep – a mountain it really is; it stays the billows of the sea. From here I was the first to spy and know the sails of your bark, and my heart’s impulse was to rush through the waves to you. While I delayed, on the highest of the prow I saw the gleam of purple – fear seized upon me; that was not the manner of your garb. The craft comes nearer, borne on a freshening breeze, and touches the shore; with trembling heart I have caught the sight of a woman’s face. And this was not enough – why was I mad enough to stay and see? – in your embrace that shameless woman clung! Then indeed did I rend my bosom and beat my breast, and with the hard nail furrowed my streaming cheeks, and filled holy Ida with wailing cries of lamentation; yonder to the rocks I love I bore my tears. So may Helen’s grief be, and so her lamentation, when she is deserted by her love; and what she was first to bring on me may she herself endure!

[77] Your pleasure now is in jades who follow you over the open sea, leaving behind their lawful-wedded lords; but when you were poor and shepherded the flocks, Oenone was your wife, poor though you were, and none else. I am not dazzled by your wealth, nor am I touched by thought of your palace, nor would I be called one of the many wives of Priam’s sons – yet not that Priam would disdain a nymph as wife to his son, or that Hecuba would have to hide her kinship with me; I am worthy of being, and I desire to be, the matron of a puissant lord; my hands are such as the sceptre could well beseem. Nor despise me because once I pressed with you the beechen frond; I am better suited for the purpled

marriage-bed.

[89] Remember, too, my love can bring no harm; it will beget you no wars, nor bring avenging ships across the wave. The Tyndarid run-away is now demanded back by an enemy under arms; this is the dower the dame brings proudly to your marriage-chamber. Whether she should be rendered back to the Danai, ask Hector your brother, if you will, or Deiphobus and Polydamas; take counsel with grave Antenor, find out what Priam's self persuades, whose long lives have made them wise. 'Tis but a base beginning,² to prize a stolen mistress more than your native land. Your case is one that calls for shame; just are the arms her lord takes up.

[99] Think not, too, if you are wise, that the Laconian will be faithful – she who so quickly turned to your embrace. Just as the younger Atrides cries out at the violation of his marriage-bed, and feels his painful wound from the wife who loves another, you too will cry. By no art may purity once wounded be made whole; 'tis lost, lost once and for all. Is she ardent with love for you? So, too, she loved Menelaus. He, trusting fool that he was, lies now in a deserted bed. Happy Andromache, well wed to a constant mate! I was a wife to whom you should have clung after your brother's pattern; but you – are lighter than leaves what time their juice has failed, and dry they flutter in the shifting breeze; you have less weight than the tip of the spear of grain, burned light and crisp by ever-shining suns.

[113] This, once upon a time – for I call it back to mind – your sister³ sang to me, with locks let loose, foreseeing what should come: “What art thou doing, Oenone? Why commit seeds to sand? Thou art ploughing the shores with oxen that will accomplish naught. A Greek heifer is one the way, to ruin thee, thy home-land, and thy house! Ho, keep her far! A Greek heifer is coming! While yet ye may, sink in the deep the unclean ship! Alas, how much of Phrygian blood it hath aboard!”

[121] She ceased to speak; her slaves seized on her as she madly ran. And I – my golden locks stood stiffly up. Ah, all too true a prophetess you were to my poor self – she has them, lo, the heifer has my pastures! Let her seem how fair soever of face, none the less she surely is a jade;

smitten with a stranger, she left behind her marriage-gods. Theseus – unless I mistake the name – one Theseus, even before, had stolen her away from her father’s land.⁴ Is it to be thought she was rendered back a maid, by a young man and eager? Whence have I learned this so well? You ask. I love. You may call it violence and veil the fault in the word; yet she who has been so often stolen has surely lent herself to theft. But Oenone remains chaste, false though her husband prove – and, after your own example, she might have played you false.

[135] Me, the swift Satyrs, a wanton rout with nimble foot, used to come in quest of – where I would lie hidden in covert of the wood – and Faunus, with hornèd head girt round with sharp pine needles, where Ida swells in boundless ridges. Me, the builder of Troy, well known for keeping faith, loved, and let my hands into the secret of his gifts. Whatever herb potent for aid, whatever root that is used for healing grows in all the world, is mine. Alas, wretched me, that love may not be healed by herbs! Skilled in an art, I am left helpless by the very art I know.

[153] The aid that neither earth, fruitful in the bringing forth of herbs, nor a god himself, can give, you have the power to bestow on me. You can bestow it, and I have merited – have pity on a deserving maid! I come with no Danaï, and bear no bloody armour – but I am yours, and I was your mate in childhood’s years, and yours through all time to come I pray to be!

1. She taunts Paris with fear of Agamemnon and Menelaus.
2. Of his career as a prince, after his recognition.
3. Cassandra.
4. Theseus and Pirithous had carried away Helen in her early youth.

VI. HYPsipyle TO JASON

[1] You are said to have touched the shores of Thessaly with safe-returning keel, rich in the fleece of the golden ram. I speak you well for your safety – so far as you give me chance; yet of this very thing I should have been informed by message of your own. For the winds might have failed you, even though you longed to see me, and kept you from

returning by way of the realms I pledged to you¹; but a letter may be written, howe'er adverse the wind. Hypsipyle deserved the sending of a greeting.

[9] Why was it rumour brought me tidings of you, rather than lines from your hand? – tidings that the sacred bulls of Mars had received the curving yoke; that at the scattering of the seed there sprang forth the harvest of men, who for their doom had no need of your right arm; that the spoil of the ram, the deep-gold fleece the unsleeping dragon guarded, had nevertheless been stolen away by your bold hand. Could I say to those who are slow to credit these reports, “He has written me this with his own hand,” how proud should I be!

[17] But why complain that my lord has been slow in his duty? I shall think myself treated with all indulgence, so I remain yours. A barbarian poisoner, so the story goes, has come with you, admitted to share the marriage-couch you promised me. Love is quick to believe; may it prove that I am hasty, and have brought a groundless charge against my lord! Only now from Haemonian borders came a Thessalian stranger to my gates. Scarce had he well touched the threshold, when I cried, “How doth my lord, the son of Aeson?” Speechless he stood in embarrassment, his eyes fixed fast upon the ground. I straight leaped up, and rent the garment from my breast. “Lives he?” I cried, “or must fate call me too?” “He lives,” was his reply. Full of fears is love; I made him say it on his oath. Scarce with a god to witness could I believe you living.

[31] When calm of mind returned, I began to ask of your fortunes. He tells me of the brazen-footed oxen of Mars, how they ploughed, of the serpent's teeth scattered upon the ground in way of seed, of men sprung suddenly forth and bearing arms – earth-born peoples slain in combat with their fellows, filling out the fates of their lives in the space of a day. He tells of the dragon overcome. Again I ask if Jason lives; hope and fear bring trust and mistrust by turns.

[39] While he tells the details of his story, such are the eagerness and quickness of his speech that of his own nature he reveals the wounds that have been dealt me. Alas! where is the faith that was promised me? Where the bonds of wedlock, and the marriage torch, more fit to set

ablaze my funeral pile? I was not made acquainted with you in stealthy wise; Juno was there to join us when we were wed, and Hymen, his temples bound with wreaths. And yet neither Juno nor Hymen, but gloomy Erinys, stained with blood, carried before me the unhallowed torch.

[47] What had I with the Minyae, or Dodona's pine?² What had you with my native land, O helmsman Tiphys? There was here no ram, sightly with golden fleece, nor was Lemnos the royal home of old Aeëtes. I was resolved at first – but my ill fate drew me on – to drive out with my women's ban the stranger troop; the women of Lemnos know – yea, even too well – how to vanquish men.³ I should have let a soldiery so brave defend my cause.

[55] But I looked on the man in my city; I welcomed him under my roof and into my heart! Here twice the summer fled for you, here twice the winter. It was the third harvest when you were compelled to set sail, and with your tears poured forth such words as these: "I am sundered from thee, Hypsipyle; but so the fates grant me return, thine own I leave thee now, and thine own will I ever be. What lieth heavy in thy bosom from me – may it come to live, and may we both share in its parentage!"

[63] Thus did you speak; and with tears streaming down your false face I remember you could say no more.

[65] You are the last of your band to board the sacred Argo.⁴ It flies upon its way; the wind bellies out the sail; the dark-blue wave glides from under the keel as it drives along; your gaze is on the land, and mine is on the sea. There is a tower that looks from every side upon the waters round about; thither I betake myself, my face and bosom wet with tears. Through my tears I gaze; my eyes are gracious to my eager heart, and see farther than their wont. Add thereto pure-hearted prayers, and vows mingled with fears – vows which I must now fulfil, since you are safe.

[75] And am I to absolve these vows – vows but for Medea to enjoy? My heart is sick, and surges with mingled wrath and love. Am I to bear gifts to the shrines because Jason lives, though mine no more? Is a victim to fall beneath the stroke for the loss that has come to me?

[79] No, I never felt secure; but my fear was ever that your sire would look to an Argolic city for a bride to his son. 'Twas the daughters of Argolis I feared – yet my ruin has been a barbarian jade! The would I feel is not from the foe whence I thought to see it come. It is neither by her beauty nor by her merits that she wins you, but by the incantations she knows and the baneful herbs she cuts with enchanted knife. She is one to strive to draw down from its course the unwilling moon, and to hide in darkness the horses of the sun; she curbs the waters and stays the down-winding streams; she moves from their places the woods and the living rocks. Among sepulchres she stalks, ungirded, with hair flowing loose, and gathers from the yet warm funeral pyre the appointed bones. She vows to their doom the absent, fashions the waxen image, and into its wretched heart drives the slender needle – and other deeds 'twere better not to know. Ill sought by herbs is love that should be won by virtue and by beauty.

[95] A woman like this can you embrace? Can you be left in the same chamber with her and not feel fear, and enjoy the slumber of the silent night? Surely, she must have forced you to bear the yoke, just as she forced the bulls, and has you subdued by the same means she uses with fierce dragons. Add that she has her name writ in the record of your own and your heroes' exploits, and the wife obscures the glory of the husband. And someone of the partisans of Pelias imputes your deeds to her poisons, and wins the people to believe: "This fleece of gold from the ram of Phrixus the son of Aeson did not seize away, but the Phasian girl, Aeëtes child." Your mother Alcimede – ask counsel of your mother – favours her not, nor your sire, who sees his son's bride come from the frozen north. Let her seek for herself a husband – from the Tanais, from the marshes of watery Scythia, even from her own land of Phasis!

[109] O changeable son of Aeson, more uncertain than the breezes of springtime, why lack your words the weight a promise claims? My own you went forth hence; my own you have not returned. Let me be your wedded mate now you are come back, as I was when you set forth! If noble blood and generous lineage move you – lo, I am known as daughter of Minoan Thoas! Bacchus was my grandsire; the bride of Bacchus, with crown-encircled brow, outshines with her stars the lesser constellations. Lemnos will be my marriage portion, land kindly-natured to the

husbandman; and me, too, you will possess among the subjects my dowry brings.

[119] And now, too, I have brought forth; rejoice for us both, Jason! Sweet was the burden that I bore – its author had made it so. I am happy in the number, too, for by Lucina's kindly favour I have brought forth twin offspring, a pledge for each of us.⁵ If you ask whom they resemble, I answer, yourself is seen in them. The ways of deceit they know not; for the rest, they are like their father. I almost gave them to be carried to you, their mother's ambassadors; but thought of the cruel stepdame turned me back from the path I would have trod. 'Twas Medea I feared. Medea is more than a stepdame; the hands of Medea are fitted for any crime.

[129] Would she who could tear her brother limb from limb and strew him o'er the fields be one to spare my pledges?⁶ Such is she, such the woman, O madman swept from your senses by the poisons of Colchis, for whom you are said to have slighted the marriage-bed with Hypsipyle! Base and shameless was the way that mad became your bride; but the bond that gave me to you, and you to me, was chaste. She betrayed her sire; I rescued from death my father Thoas.⁷ She deserted the Colchians; my Lemnos has me still. What matters aught, if sin is to be set before devotion, and she has won her husband with the very crime she brought him as her dower?

[139] The vengeful deed of the Lemnian women I condemn, Jason, I do not marvel at it; passion itself drives the weak, however powerless, to take up arms. Come, say, what if, driven by unfriendly gales, you had entered my harbours, as 'twere fitting you had done, you and your companion, and I had come forth to meet you with my twin babes – surely you must have prayed earth to yawn for you – with what countenance could you have gazed upon your children, O wretched man, with what countenance upon me? What death would you not deserve as the price of your perfidy? And yet you yourself would have met with safety and protection at my hands – not that you deserved, but that I was merciful. But as for your mistress – with my own hand I would have dashed my face with her blood, and your face, that she stole away with her poisonous arts! I would have been Medea to Medea!

[151] But if in any way just Jupiter himself from on high attends to my prayers, may the woman who intrudes upon my marriage-bed suffer the woes in which Hypsipyle groans, and feel the lot she herself now brings on me; and as I am now left alone, wife and mother of two babes, so may she one day be reft of as many babes, and of her husband! Nor may she long keep her ill-gotten gains, but leave them in worse hap – let her be an exile, and seek a refuge through the entire world! A bitter sister to her brother, a bitter daughter to her wretched sire, may she be as bitter to her children, and as bitter to her husband! When she shall have no hope more of refuge by the sea or by the land, let her make trial of the air; let her wander, destitute, bereft of hope, stained red with the blood of her murders! This fate do I, the daughter of Thoas, cheated of my wedded state, in prayer call down upon you. Live on, a wife and husband, accursed in your bed!

1. As her marriage portion.
2. The Argo, with whose building Dodona in Thessaly had to do.
3. The women of Lemnos had once slain all the men in the island as a measure of revenge against their husbands, who had taken Thracian women in their stead.
4. Built at the instigation of Athena.
5. Nebrophonus and Euneus, according to Apollodorus; according to Hyginus, Euneus and Deiphilus.
6. So Medea had done with Absyrtus, to delay her father's pursuit of Jason and herself.
7. She had saved her father from the general massacre of the men of Lemnos.

VII. DIDO TO AENEAS

[1] Thus, at the summons of fate, casting himself down amid the watery grasses by the shallows of Maeander, sings the white swan.¹

[3] Not because I hope you may be moved by prayer of mine do I address you – for with God's will adverse I have begun the words you read; but because, after wretched losing of desert, of reputation, and of purity of body and soul, the losing of words is a matter slight indeed.

[7] Are you resolved none the less to go, and to abandon wretched Dido,² and shall the same winds bear away from me at once your sails and your promises? Are you resolved, Aeneas, to break at the same time from your moorings and from your pledge, and to follow after the fleeting realms of Italy, which lie you know not where? and does new-founded Carthage not touch you, nor her rising walls, nor the sceptre of supreme power placed in your hand? What is achieved, you turn you back upon; what is to be achieved, you ever pursue. One land has been sought and gained, and ever must another be sought, through the wide world. Yet, even should you find the land of your desire, who will give it over to you for your own? Who will deliver his fields to unknown hands to keep? A second love remains for you to win, and a second Dido; a second pledge to give, and a second time to prove false. When will it be your fortune, think you, to found a city like to Carthage, and from the citadel on high to look down upon peoples of your own? Should your every wish be granted, even should you meet with no delay in the answering of your prayers, whence will come the wife to love you as I?

[23] I am all ablaze with love, like torches of wax tipped with sulphur, like pious incense placed on smoking altar-fires. Aeneas my eyes cling to through all my waking hours; Aeneas is my heart through the night and through the day. 'Tis true he is in ingrate, and unresponsive to my kindnesses, and were I not fond I should be willing to have him go; yet, however ill his thought of me, I hate him not, but only complain of his faithlessness, and when I have complained I do but love more madly still. Spare, O Venus, the bride of thy son; lay hold of thy hard-hearted brother, O brother Love, and make him to serve in thy camp! Or make him to whom I have let my love go forth – I first, and with never shame for it – yield me himself, the object of my care!

[35] Ah, vain delusion! the fancy that flits before my mind is not the truth; far different his heart from his mother's. Of rocks and mountains were you begotten, and of the oak sprung from the lofty cliff, of savage wild beasts, or of the sea – such a sea as even now you look upon, tossed by the winds, on which you are none the less making ready to sail, despite the threatening floods. Whither are you flying? The tempest rises to stay you. Let the tempest be my grace! Look you, how Eurus tosses the rolling

waters! What I had preferred to owe to you, let me owe to the stormy blasts; wind and wave are juster than your heart.

[45] I am not worth enough – ah, why do I not wrongly rate you? – to have you perish flying from me over the long seas. ‘Tis a costly and a dear-bought hate that you indulge if, to be quit of me, you account it cheap to die. Soon the winds will fall, and o’er the smooth-spread waves will Triton course with cerulean steeds. O that you too were changeable with the winds! – and, unless in hardness you exceed the oak, you will be so. What could you worse, if you did not know of the power of raging seas? How ill to trust the wave whose might you have so often felt! Even should you loose your cables at the persuasion of calm seas, there are none the less many woes to be met on the vasty deep. Nor is it well for those who have broken faith to tempt the billows. Yon is the place that exacts the penalty for faithlessness, above all when ‘tis love has been wronged; for ‘twas from the sea, in Cytherean waters, so runs the tale, that the mother of the Loves, undraped, arose.

[61] Undone myself, I fear lest I be the undoing of him who is my undoing, lest I bring harm to him who brings harm to me, lest my enemy be wrecked at sea and drink the waters of the deep. O live; I pray it! Thus shall I see you worse undone than by death. You shall rather be reputed the cause of my own doom. Imagine, pray, imagine that you are caught – may there be nothing in the omen! – in the sweeping of the storm; what will be your thoughts? Straight will come rushing to your mind the perjury of your false tongue, and Dido driven to death by Phrygian faithlessness; before your eyes will appear the features of your deceived wife, heavy with sorrow, with hair streaming, and stained with blood. What now can you gain to recompense you then, when you will have to say: “‘Tis my desert; forgive me, ye gods!” when you will have to think that whatever thunderbolts fall were hurled at you?

[73] Grant a short space for the cruelty of the sea, and for your own, to subside; your safe voyage will be great reward for waiting. Nor is it you for whom I am anxious; only let the little Iulus³ be spared! For you, enough to have the credit for my death. What has little Ascanius done, or what your Penates, to deserve ill fate? Have they been rescued from fire

but to be overwhelmed by the wave? Yet neither are you bearing them with you; the sacred relics which are your pretext never rested on your shoulders, nor did your father. You are false in everything – and I am not the first your tongue has deceived, nor am I the first to feel the blow from you. Do you ask where the mother of pretty Iulus is? – she perished, left behind by her unfeeling lord! This was the story you told me – yes, and it was warning enough for me! Burn me; I deserve it! The punishment will be less than befits my fault.

[87] And my mind doubts not that you, too, are under condemnation of your gods. Over sea and over land you are now for the seventh winter being tossed. You were cast ashore by the waves and I received you to a safe abiding-place; scarce knowing your name, I gave to you my throne. Yet would I had been content with these kindnesses, and that the story of our union were buried! That dreadful day was my ruin, when sudden downpour of rain from the deep-blue heaven drove us to shelter in the lofty grot. I had heard a voice; I thought it a cry of the nymphs – ‘twas the Eumenides sounding the signal for my doom!

[97] Exact the penalty of me, O purity undone! – the penalty due Sychaeus.⁴ To absolve it now I go – ah me, wretched that I am, and overcome with shame! Standing in shrine of marble is an image of Sychaeus I hold sacred – in the midst of green fronds hung about, and fillets of white wool. From within it four times have I heard myself called by a voice well known; ‘twas he himself crying in faintly sounding tone: “Elissa, come!”

[103] I delay no longer, I come; I come thy bride, thine own by right; I am late, but ‘tis for shame of my fault confessed. Forgive me my offence! He was worthy who caused my fall; he draws from my sin its hatefulness. That his mother was divine and his aged father the burden of a loyal son gave hope he would remain my faithful husband. If ‘twas my fate to err, my error had honourable cause; so only he keep faith, I shall have no reason for regret.

[111] The lot that was mine in days past still follows me in these last moments of life, and will pursue to the end. My husband fell in his blood before the altars in his very house, and my brother possesses the fruits of

the monstrous crime; myself am driven into exile, compelled to leave behind the ashes of my lord and the land of my birth. Over hard paths I fly, and my enemy pursues. I land on shores unknown; escaped from my brother and the sea, I purchase the strand that I gave, perfidious man, to you. I established a city, and lay about it the foundations of wide-reaching walls that stir the jealousy of neighbouring realms. Wars threaten; hardly can I rear rude gates to the city and make ready my defence. A thousand suitors cast fond eyes on me, and have joined in the complaint that I preferred the hand of some stranger love. Why do you not bind me forthwith, and give me over to Gaetolian Iarbas? I should submit my arms to your shameful act. There is my brother, too, whose impious hand could be sprinkled with my blood, as it is already sprinkled with my lord's. Lay down those gods and sacred things; your touch profanes them! It is not well for an impious right hand to worship the dwellers in the sky. If 'twas fated for you to worship the gods that escaped the fires, the gods regret that they escaped the fires.

[133] Perhaps, too, it is Dido soon to be mother, O evil-doer, whom you abandon now, and a part of your being lies hidden in myself. To the fate of the mother will be added that of the wretched babe, and you will be the cause of doom to your yet unborn child; with his own mother will Iulus' brother die, and one fate will bear us both away together.

[139] "But you are bid to go – by your god!" Ah, would he had forbidden you to come; would Punic soil had never been pressed by Teucrian feet! Is this, forsooth, the god under whose guidance you are tossed about by unfriendly winds, and pass long years on the surging seas? 'Twould scarce require such toil to return again to Pergamum, were Pergamum still what it was while Hector lived. 'Tis not the Simois of your fathers you seek, but the waves of the Tiber – and yet, forsooth, should you arrive at the place you wish, you will be but a stranger; and the land of your quest so hides from your sight, so draws away from contact with your keels, that 'twill scarce be your lot to reach it in old age.

[149] Cease, then, your wanderings! Choose rather me, and with me my dowry – these peoples of mine, and the wealth of Pygmalion I brought with me. Transfer your Ilion to the Tyrian town, and give it thus a happier lot; enjoy the kingly state, and the sceptre's right divine. If your soul is

eager for war, if Iulus must have field for martial prowess and the triumph, we shall find him foes to conquer, and naught shall lack; here there is place for the laws of peace, here place, too, for arms. Do you only, by your mother I pray, and by the weapons of your brother, his arrows, and by the divine companions of your flight, the gods of Dardanus – so may those rise above fate whom savage Mars has saved from out your race, so may that cruel war be the last of misfortunes to you, and so may Ascanius fill happily out his years, and the bones of old Anchises rest in peace! – do you only spare the house which gives itself without condition into your hand. What can you charge me with but love? I am not of Phthia,⁵ nor sprung of great Mycenae, nor have I had a husband and a father who have stood against you. If you shame to have me your wife, let me not be called bride, but hostess; so she be yours, Dido will endure to be what you will.

[169] Well do I know the seas that break upon African shores; they have their times of granting and denying the way. When the breeze permits, you shall give your canvas to the gale; now the light seaweed detains your ship by the strand. Entrust me with the watching of the skies; you shall go later, and I myself, though you desire it, will not let you to stay. Your comrades, too, demand repose, and your shattered fleet, but half refitted, calls for a short delay; by your past kindnesses, and by that other debt I still, perhaps, shall owe you, by my hope of wedlock, I ask for a little time – while the sea and my love grow calm, while through time and wont I learn the strength to endure my sorrows bravely.

[181] If you yield not, my purpose is fixed to pour forth my life; you can not be cruel to me for long. Could you but see now the face of her who writes these words! I write, and the Trojan's blade is ready in my lap. Over my cheeks the tears roll, and fall upon the drawn steel – which soon shall be stained with blood instead of tears. How fitting is your gifts in my hour of fate! You furnish forth my death at a cost but slight. Nor does my heart now for the first time feel a weapon's thrust; it already bears the wound of cruel love.

[191] Anna my sister, my sister Anna, wretched sharer in the knowledge of my fault, soon shall you give to my ashes the last boon. Nor when I have been consumed upon the pyre, shall my inscription read: ELISSA,

WIFE OF SYCHAEUS; yet there shall be one the marble of my tomb
these lines:
FROM AENEAS CAME THE CAUSE OF HER DEATH, AND FROM
HIM THE BLADE;
FROM THE HAND OF DIDO HERSELF CAME THE STROKE BY
WHICH SHE FELL.

1. The song preceding death.
2. Ovid has the fourth book of the Aeneid in mind as he composes this letter.
3. Another name for Ascanius, the son of Aeneas.
4. Dido's husband in Tyre.
5. The home of Achilles.

VIII. HERMIONE TO ORESTES

[1] Pyrrhus, Achilles' son, in self-will the image of his sire, holds me in
durance against every law of earth and heaven. All that lay in my power I
have done – I have refused consent to be held; farther than that my
woman's hands could not avail. "What art thou doing, son of Aeacus? I
lack not one to take my part!"¹ I cried. "This is a woman, I tell thee,
Pyrrhus, who has a master of her own!" Deaf to me than the sea as I
shrieked out the name of Orestes, he dragged me with hair all disarrayed
into his palace. What worse my lot had Lacedaemon been taken and I
been made a slave, carried away by the barbarian rout with the daughters
of Greece? Less misused by the victorious Achaeans was Andromache
herself, what time the Danaän fire consumed the wealth of Phrygia.²

[15] But do you, if your heart is touched with any natural care for me,
Orestes, lay claim to your right with no timid hand. What! should anyone
break open your pens and steal away your herds, would you resort to
arms? and when your wife is stolen away will you be slow to move? Let
your father-in-law Menelaus be your example, he who demanded back
the wife taken from him, and had in a woman righteous cause for war.
Had he been spiritless, and drowsed in his deserted halls, my mother
would still be wed to Paris, as she was before.

[23] Yet make not ready a thousand ships with bellying sails, and hosts of Danaän soldiery – yourself come! Yet even thus I might well have been sought back, nor is it unseemly for a husband to have endured fierce combat for love of his marriage-bed. Remember, too, the same grandsire is ours, Atreus, Pelops' son, and, were you not husband to me, you would still be cousin.³ Husband, I entreat, succour your wife; brother, your sister! Both bonds press you on to your duty.

[31] I was given to you by Tyndareus, weighty of counsel both for his life and for his years; the grandsire was arbiter of the grandchild's fate. But my father, it might be said, had promised me to Aeacus' son, not knowing this; yet my grandsire, who is first in order, should also be first in power. When I was wed to you, my union brought harm to none; if I wed with Pyrrhus, I shall deal a wound to you. My father Menelaus, too, will pardon our love – he himself succumbed to the darts of the wingèd god. The love he allowed himself, he will concede to his daughter's chosen; my mother, loved by him, will aid with her precedent. You are to me what my sire is to my mother, and to the part which once the Dardanian stranger played, Pyrrhus now plays. Let him be endlessly proud because of his father's deeds; you, too, have a sire's achievements of which to boast. The son of Tantalus was ruler over all, over Achilles himself. The one was but a part of the soldier band; the other was chief of chiefs. You, too have ancestors – Pelops, and the father of Pelops; should you care to count more closely, you could call yourself fifth from Jove.⁴

[49] Nor are you without prowess. The arms you wielded were hateful – but what were you to do? – your father placed them in your hand. I could wish that fortune had given you more excellent matter for courage; but the cause that called forth your deed was not chosen – it was fixed. The call you none the less obeyed; and the pierced throat of Aegisthus stained with blood the dwelling your father's blood had reddened before.⁵ The son of Aeacus assails your name, and turns your praise to blame – and yet shrinks not before my gaze. I burst with anger, and my face swells with passion no less than my heart, and my breast burns with the pains of pent-up wrath. Has anyone in hearing of Hermione said aught against Orestes, and have I no strength, and no keen sword at hand? I can weep, at least. In weeping I let pour forth my ire, and over my bosom course the tears like a flowing stream. These only I still have, and still do I let them

gush; my cheeks are wet and unsightly from their neverending found.

[65] Can it be some fate has come upon our house and pursued it through the years even to my time, that we Tantalid women are ever victims ready to the ravisher's hand? I shall not rehearse the lying words of the swan upon the stream, nor complain of Jove disguised in plumage.⁶ Where the sea is sundered in two by the far-stretched Isthmus, Hippodamia⁷ was borne away in the car of the stranger; she of Taenarus, stolen away across the seas by the stranger-guest from Ida, roused to arms in her behalf all the men of Argos. I scarcely remember, to be sure, yet remember I do. All was grief, everywhere anxiety and fear; my grandsire wept, and my mother's sister Phoebe, and the twin brothers, and Leda fell to praying the gods above, and her own Jove. As for myself, tearing my locks, not yet long, I began to cry aloud: "Mother, will you go away, and will you leave me behind?" For her lord was gone. Lest I be thought none of Pelops' line, lo, I too have been left a ready prey for Neoptolemus!

[83] Would that Peleus' son had escaped the bow of Apollo!⁸ The father would condemn the son for his wanton deed; 'twas not of yore the pleasure of Achilles, nor would it be now his pleasure, to see a widowed husband weeping for his stolen wife. What wrong have I done that heaven's hosts are against me? or what constellation shall I complain is hostile to my wretched self? In my childhood I had no mother; my father was ever in the wars – though the two were not dead, I was reft of both. You were not near in my first years, O my mother, to receive the caressing prattle from the tripping tongue of the little girl; I never clasped about your neck the little arms that would not reach, and never sat, a burden sweet, upon your lap. I was not reared and cared for by your hand; and when I was promised in wedlock I had no mother to make ready the new chamber for my coming. I went out to meet you when you came back home – what I shall say is truth – and the face of my mother was unknown to me! That you were Helen I none the less knew, because you were most beautiful; but you – you had to ask who your daughter was!

[101] This one favour of fortune has been mine – to have Orestes for my wedded mate; but he, too, will be taken from me if he does not fight for his own. Pyrrhus holds me captive, though my father is returned and a victor – this is the boon brought me by the downfall of Troy! Yet my

unhappy soul has the comfort, when Titan is urging aloft his radiant steeds, of being more free in its wretchedness; but when the dark of night has fallen and sent me to my chamber with wails and lamentation for my bitter lot, and I have stretched myself prostrate on my sorrowful bed, then springing tears, not slumber, is the service of mine eyes, and in every way I can I shrink from my mate as from a foe. Oft I am distraught with woe; I lose sense of where I am and what my fate, and with witness hand have touched the body of him of Scyrus; but when I have waked to the awful act, I draw my hand from the base contact, and look upon it as defiled. Oft, instead of Neoptolemus the name of Orestes comes forth, and the mistaken word is a treasured omen.

[117] By our unhappy line I swear, and by the parent of our line, he who shakes the seas, the land, and his own realms on high; by the bones of your father, uncle to me, which owe it to you that bravely avenged they lie beneath their burial mound – either I shall die before my time and in my youthful years be blotted out, or I, a Tantalid, shall be the wife of him sprung from Tantalus!

1. A legal allusion: a vindex was one who undertook the defence of a person seized for debt.
2. Andromache's son Astyanax was thrown from the walls.
3. Frater is often so used.
4. Jupiter, Tantalus, Pelops, Atreus, Agamemnon, Orestes – really sixth.
5. During Agamemnon's absence, Aegisthus won Clytemnestra's heart, and the two compassed the king's death. After seven years of reigning, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra were slain by her son Orestes.
6. The story of Leda and the swan.
7. Pelops won her in the race with Oenomaus, her father, whose death he compassed by tampering with Oenomaus' charioteer Myrtilus.
8. Apollo directed the arrow of Paris which wounded Achilles in the heel, his only vulnerable part.

IX. DEIANIRA TO HERCULES

[1] I render thanks that Oechalia has been added to the list of our honours; but that the victor has yielded to the vanquished, I complain.

The rumour has suddenly spread to all the Pelasgian cities – a rumour unseemly, to which your deeds should give the lie – that on the man whom Juno’s unending series of labours has never crushed, on him Iole has placed her yoke. This would please Eurystheus,² and it would please the sister of the Thunderer; stepdame³ that she is, she would gladly know of the stain upon your life; but ‘twould give no joy to him for whom, so ‘tis believed, a single night did not suffice for the begetting of one so great.

[11] More than Juno, Venus has been your bane. The one, by crushing you down, has raised you up; the other has your neck beneath her humbling foot. Look but on the circle of the earth made peaceful by your protecting strength, wherever the blue waters of Nereus wind round the broad land. To you is owing peace upon the earth, to you safety on the seas; you have filled with worthy deeds both abodes of the sun.⁴ The heaven that is to bear you, yourself one bore; Hercules bent to the load of the stars when Atlas was their stay. What have you gained but to spread the knowledge of your wretched shame, if a final act of baseness blots your former deeds? Can it be you that men say clutched tight the serpents twain while a tender babe in the cradle, already worthy of Jove? You began better than you end; your last deeds yield to your first; the man you are and the child you were are not the same. He whom not a thousand wild beasts, whom not the Stheneleian foe, whom not Juno could overcome, love overcomes.

[27] Yet I am said to be well mated, because I am called the wife of Hercules, and because the father of my lord is he who thunders on high with impetuous steeds. As the ill-mated steer yoked miserably at the plough, so fares the wife who is less than her mighty lord. It is not honour, but mere fair-seeming, and brings dole to us who bear the load; would you be wedded happily, wed your equal. My lord is ever absent from me – he is better known to me as guest than husband – ever pursuing monsters and dreadful beasts. I myself, at home and widowed, am busied with chaste prayers, in torment lest my husband fall by the savage foe; with serpents and with boars and ravening lions my imaginings are full, and with hounds three-throated hard upon the prey. The entrails of slain victims stir my fears, the idle images of dreams, and the omen sought in the mysterious night. Wretchedly I catch at the uncertain murmurs of the

common talk; my fear is lost in wavering hope, my hope again in fear. Your mother is away, and laments that she ever pleased the potent god, and neither your father Amphitryon is here, nor your son Hyllus; the acts of Eurystheus, the instrument of Juno's unjust wrath, and the long-continued anger of the goddess – I am the one to feel.

[47] Is this too little for me to endure? You add to it your stranger loves, and whoever will may be by you a mother. I will say nothing of Auge betrayed in the vales of Parthenius, or of thy travail, nymph sprung of Ormenus; nor will I charge against you the daughters of Teuthras' son, the throng of sisters from whose number none was spared by you.⁵ But there is one love – a fresh offence of which I have heard – a love by which I am made stepdame to Lydian Lamus.⁶ The Meander, so many times wandering in the same lands, who oft turns back upon themselves his wearied waters, has seen hanging from the neck of Hercules – the neck which found the heavens but slight burden – bejewelled chains! Felt you no shame to bind with gold those strong arms, and to set the gem upon that solid brawn? Ah, to think 'twas these arms that crushed the life from the Nemean pest, whose skin now covers your left side! You have not shrunk from binding your shaggy hair with a woman's turban! More meet for the locks of Hercules were the white poplar. And for you to disgrace yourself by wearing the Maeonian zone, like a wanton girl – feel you no shame for that? Did there come to your mind no image of savage Diomede, fiercely feeding his mares on human meat? Had Busiris seen you in that garb, he whom you vanquished would surely have reddened for such a victor as you. Antaeus would tear from the hard neck the turban-bands, lest he feel shame at having succumbed to an unmanly foe.

[73] They say that you have held the wool-basket among the girls of Ionia, and been frightened at your mistress' threats. Do you not shrink, Alcides, from laying to the polished wool-basket the hand that triumphed over a thousand toils; do you draw off with stalwart thumb the coarsely spun strands, and give back to the hand of a pretty mistress the just portion she weighed out? Ah, how often, while with dour finger you twisted the thread, have your too strong hands crushed the spindle! Before your mistress' feet and told of the deeds of which you should now say naught – of enormous serpents, throttled and coiling their lengths about your infant hand; how the Tegeaeon boar has his lair on cypress-bearing

Erymanthus, and afflicts the ground with his vast weight. You do not omit the skulls nailed up in Thracian homes, nor the mares made fat with the flesh of slain men; nor the triple prodigy, Geryones, rich in Iberian cattle, who was one in three; nor Cerberus, branching from one trunk into a three-fold dog, his hair inwoven with the threatening snake; nor the fertile serpent that sprang forth again from the fruitful wound, grown rich from her own hurt; nor him whose mass hung heavy between your left side and left arm as your hand clutched his throat; nor the equestrian array that put ill trust in their feet and dual form, confounded by you on the ridges of Thessaly.

[101] These deeds can you recount, gaily arrayed in a Sidonian gown? Does not your dress rob from your tongue all utterance? The nymph-daughter of Jardanus⁷ has even tricked herself out in your arms, and won famous triumphs from the vanquished hero. Go now, puff up your spirit and recount your brave deeds done; she has proved herself a man by a right you could not urge. You are as much less than she, O greatest of men, as it was greater to vanquish you than those you vanquished. To her passes the full measure of your exploits – yield up what you possess; your mistress is heir to your praise. O shame, that the rough skin stripped from the flanks of the shaggy lion has covered a woman's delicate side! You are mistaken, and know it not – that spoil is not from the lion, but from you; you are victor over the beast, but she over you. A woman has borne the darts blackened with the venom of Lerna, a woman scarce strong enough to carry the spindle heavy with wool; a woman has taken in her hand the club that overcame wild beasts, and in the mirror gazed upon the armour of her lord!

[119] These things, however, I had only heard; I could distrust men's words, and the pain hit on my senses softly, through the ear – but now my very eyes must look upon a stranger-mistress⁸ led before them, nor may I now dissemble what I suffer! You do not allow me to turn away; the woman comes a captive through the city's midst, to be looked upon by my unwilling eyes. Nor comes she after the manner of captive women, with hair unkempt, and with becoming countenance that tells to all her lot; she strides along, sightly from afar in plenteous gold, apparelled in such wise as you yourself in Phrygia. She looks straight out at the throng, with head held high, as if 'twere she had conquered Hercules; you might think

Oechalia standing yet, and her father yet alive. Perhaps you will even drive away Aetolian Deianira, and her rival will lay aside the name of mistress, and be made your wife. Iole, the daughter of Eurytus, and Aonian Alcides will be basely joined in shameful bonds of Hymen. My mind fails me at the thought, a chill sweeps through my frame, and my hand lies nerveless in my lap.

[137] Me, too, you have possessed among your many loves – but me with no reproach. Regret it not – twice you have fought for the sake of men. In tears Achelous gathered up his horns on the wet banks of his stream, and bathed in its clayey tide his mutilated brow; the half-man Nessus sank down in lotus-bearing Euenus, tingeing its waters with his equine blood.⁹ But why am I reciting things like these? Even as I write comes rumour to me saying my lord is dying of the poison from my cloak. Alas me! what have I done? O wicked Deianira, why hesitate to die?

[147] Shall thy lord be torn to death on midmost Oeta, and shalt thou, the cause of the monstrous deed, remain alive? If I have yet done aught to win the name of wife of Hercules, my death shall be the pledge of our union. Thou, Meleager, shalt also see in me a sister of thine own! O wicked Deianira, why hesitate to die?

[153] Alas, for my devoted house! Agrius sits on the lofty throne¹⁰; Oeneus is reft of all, and barren old age weighs heavy on him. Tydeus my brother is exiled on an unknown shore¹¹; my second brother's life hung on the fateful fire¹²; our mother drove the steel through her own heart. O wicked Deianira, why hesitate to die?

[159] This one thing I deprecate, by the most sacred bonds of our marriage-bed – that I seem to have plotted for your doom. Nessus, stricken with the arrow in his lustful heart, “This blood,” he said, “has power over love.” The robe of Nessus, saturated with poisonous gore, I sent to you. O wicked Deianira, why hesitate to die?

[165] And now, fare ye well, O aged father, and O my sister Gorge, and O my native soil, and brother taken from thy native soil, and thou, O light that shinest to-day, the last to strike upon mine eyes; and thou my lord, O fare thou well – would that thou couldst! – and Hyllus, thou my son,

farewell to thee!

1. The Trachiniae of Sophocles dramatizes the Deianira story, and Apollodorus contains it. See also Ovid, Metam. ix. 1-273, and Seneca, Hercules Oetaeus.
2. Who imposed the twelve labours on Hercules at the instigation of Juno.
3. Jupiter was the father of Hercules by Alcmene.
4. Farthest east and west.
5. There were fifty of them, and their father Thespius wished for fifty grandchildren of Hercules.
6. Hercules was the lover of Omphale, or Iardanis (v. 103), queen of Lydia, sold to her by Hermes as a slave.
7. Omphale.
8. Iole.
9. His poisoned blood is in the robe she sends to Hercules.
10. Agrius drove out Oeneus his brother after Meleager's death.
11. By Oeneus, for slaying a brother.
12. Meleager perished when his mother Althea, in revenge for his slaying her brother, finally burned the brand on whose preservation the Fates had said his life depended.

X. ARIADNE TO THESEUS

[1] Gentler than you I have found every race of wild beasts; to none of them could I so ill have trusted as to you. The words you now are reading, Theseus, I send you from that shore from which the sails bore off your ship without me, the shore on which my slumber, and you, so wretchedly betrayed me – you, who wickedly plotted against me as I slept.

[7] 'Twas the time when the earth is first besprinkled with crystal rime, and songsters hid in the branch begin their plaint. Half waking only, languid from sleep, I turned upon my side and put forth hands to clasp my Theseus – he was not there! I drew back my hands, a second time I made essay, and o'er the whole couch moved my arms – he was not there! Fear struck away my sleep; in terror I arose, and threw myself headlong from my abandoned bed. Straight then my palms resounded upon my breasts, and I tore my hair, all disarrayed as it was from sleep.

[17] The moon was shining; I bend my gaze to see if aught but shore lies there. So far as my eyes can see, naught to they find but shore. Now this way, and now that, and ever without plan, I course; the deep sand stays my girlish feet. And all the while I cried out “Theseus!” alone the entire shore, and the hollow rocks sent back your name to me; as often as I called out for you, so often did the place itself call out your name. The very place felt the will to aid me in my woe.

[25] There was a mountain, with bushes rising here and there upon its top; a cliff hangs over from it, gnawed into by deep-sounding waves. I climb its slope – my spirit gave me strength – and thus with prospect broad I scan the billowy deep. From there – for I found the winds cruel, too – I beheld your sails stretched full by the headlong southern gale. As I looked on a sight methought I had not deserved to see, I grew colder than ice, and life half left my body. Nor does anguish allow me long to lie thus quiet; it rouses me, it stirs me up to call on Theseus with all my voice’s might. “Whither doest fly?” I cry aloud. “Come back, O wicked Theseus! Turn about thy ship! She hath not all her crew!”

[37] Thus did I cry, and what my voice could not avail, I filled with beating of my breast; the blows I gave myself were mingled with my words. That you at least might see, if you could not hear, with might and main I sent you signals with my hands; and upon a long tree-branch I fixed my shining veil – yes, to put in mind of me those who had forgotten! And now you had been swept beyond my vision. Then at last I let flow my tears; till then my tender eyeballs had been dulled with pain. What better could my eyes do than weep for me, when I had ceased to see your sails? Alone, with hair loose flying, I have either roamed about, like to a Bacchant roused by the Ogygian god, or, looking out upon the sea, I have sat all chilled upon the rock, as much a stone myself as was the stone I sat upon. Oft do I come again to the couch that once received us both, but was fated never to show us together again, and touch the imprint left by you – ‘tis all I can in place of you! – and the stuffs that once grew warm beneath your limbs. I lay me down upon my face, bedew the bed with pouring tears, and cry aloud: “We were two who pressed thee – give back two! We came to thee both together; why do we not depart the same? Ah, faithless bed – the greater part of my being, oh, where is he?”

[59] What am I to do? Whither shall I take myself – I am alone, and the isle untilled. Of human traces I see none; of cattle, none. On every side the land is girt by sea; nowhere a sailor, no craft to make its way over the dubious paths. And suppose I did find those to go with me, and winds, and ship – yet where am I to go? My father’s realm forbids me to approach. Grant I do glide with fortunate keel over peaceful seas, that Aeolus tempers the winds – I still shall be an exile! ‘Tis not for me, O Crete composed of the hundred cities, to look upon thee, land known to the infant Jove! No, for my father and the land ruled by my righteous father – dear names! – were betrayed by my deed¹ when, to keep you, after your victory, from death in the winding halls, I gave into your hand the thread to direct your steps in place of guide – when you said to me: “By these very perils of mine, I swear that, so long as both of us shall live, thou shalt be mine!”

[75] We both live, Theseus, and I am not yours! – if indeed a woman lives who is buried by the treason of a perjured mate. Me, too, you should have slain, O false one, with the same bludgeon that slew my brother; then would the oath you gave me have been absolved by my death. Now, I ponder over not only what I am doomed to suffer, but all that any woman left behind can suffer. There rush into my thought a thousand forms of perishing, and death holds less of dole for me than the delay of death. Each moment, now here, now there, I look to see wolves rush on me, to rend my vitals with their greedy fangs. Who knows but that this shore breeds, too, the tawny lion? Perchance the island harbours the savage tiger as well. They say, too, that the waters of the deep cast up the mighty seal! And who is to keep the swords of men from piercing my side?

[89] But I care not, if I am but not left captive in hard bonds, and not compelled to spin the long task with servile hand – I, whose father is Minos, whose mother the child of Phoebus, and who – what memory holds more close – was promised bride to you! When I have looked on the sea, and on the land, and on the wide-stretching shore, I know many dangers threaten me on land, and many on the waters. The sky remains – yet there I fear visions of the gods! I am left helpless, a prey to the maws of ravening beasts; and if men dwell in the place and keep it, I put no trust in them – my hurts have taught me fear of stranger-men.

[99] O, that Androgeos were still alive, and that thou, O Cecropian land, hadst not been made to atone for thy impious deeds with the doom of thy children!² and would that thy upraised right hand, O Theseus, had not slain with knotty club him that was man in part, and in part bull; and I had not given thee the thread to show the way of thy return – thread oft caught up again and passed through the hands led on by it. I marvel not – ah, no! – if victory was thine, and the monster smote with his length the Cretan earth. His horn could not have pierced that iron heart of thine; thy breast was safe, even didst thou naught to shield thyself. There barest thou flint, there barest thou adamant; there hast thou a Theseus harder than any flint!

[111] Ah, cruel slumbers, why did you hold me thus inert? Or, better had I been weighed down once for all by everlasting night. You, too, were cruel, O winds, and all too well prepared, and you breezes, eager to start my tears. Cruel the right hand that has brought me and my brother to our death, and cruel the pledge – an empty word – that you gave at my demand! Against me conspiring were slumber, wind, and treacherous pledge – treason three-fold against one maid!

[119] Am I, then, to die, and, dying, not behold my mother's tears; and shall there be no one's finger to close my eyes? Is my unhappy soul to go forth into stranger-air, and no friendly hand compose my limbs and drop them on the unguent due? Are my bones to lie unburied, the prey of hovering birds of the shore? Is this the entombment due to me for my kindnesses? You will go to the haven of Cecrops; but when you have been received back home, and have stood in pride before your thronging followers, gloriously telling the death of the man-and-bull, and of the halls of rock cut out in winding ways, tell, too, of me, abandoned on a solitary shore – for I must not be stolen from the record of your honours! Neither is Aegeus your father, nor are you the son of Pittheus' daughter Aethra; they who begot you were the rocks and the deep!

[133] Ah, I could pray the gods that you had seen me from the high stern; my sad figure had moved your heart! Yet look upon me now – not with eyes, for with them you cannot, but with your mind – clinging to a rock all beaten by the wandering wave. Look upon my locks, let loose like

those of one in grief for the dead, and on my robes, heavy with tears as if with rain. My body is a-quiver like standing corn struck by the northern blast, and the letters I am tracing falter beneath my trembling hand. 'Tis not for my desert – for that has come to naught – that I entreat you now; let no favour be due for my service. Yet neither let me suffer for it! If I am not the cause of your deliverance, yet neither is it right that you should cause my death.

[145] These hands, wearied with beating of my sorrowful breast, unhappy I stretch toward you over the long seas; these locks – such as remain – in grief I bid you look upon! By these tears I pray you – tears moved by what you have done – turn about your ship, reverse your sail, glide swiftly back to me! If I have died before you come, 'twill yet be you who bear away my bones!

1. Her aid to Theseus in his slaying of the Minotaur her brother, and his escape from the Labyrinth.
2. Androgeos, Ariadne's brother, was accidentally killed at Athens.

XI. CANACE TO MACAREUS

[1] If aught of what I write is yet blotted deep and escapes your eye, 'twill be because the little roll has been stained by its mistress' blood. My right hand holds the pen, a drawn blade the other holds, and the paper lies unrolled in my lap. This is the picture of Aeolus' daughter writing to her brother; in this guise, it seems, I may please my hard-hearted sire.

[7] I would he himself were here to view my end, and the deed were done before the eyes of him who orders it! Fierce as he is, far harsher than his own east-winds, he would look dry-eyed upon my wounds. Surely, something comes from a life with savage winds; his temper is like that of his subjects. It is Notus, and Zephyrus, and Sithonian Aquilo, over whom he rules, and over thy pinions, wanton Eurus. He rules the winds, alas! but his swelling wrath he does not rule, and the realms of his possession are less wide than his faults. Of what avail for me through my grandsires' names to reach even to the skies, to be able to number Jove among my kin? Is there less deadlines in the blade – my funeral gift! – that I hold in

my woman's hand, weapon not meet for me?

[21] Ah, Macareus, would that the hour that made us two as one had come after my death! Oh why, my brother, did you ever love me more than brother, and why have I been to you what a sister should not be? I, too, was inflamed by love; I felt some god in my glowing heart, and knew him from what I sued to hear he was. My colour had fled from my face; wasting had shrunk my frame; I scarce took food, and with unwilling mouth; my sleep was never easy, the night was a year for me, and I groaned, though stricken with no pain. Nor could I render myself a reason why I did these things; I did not know what it was to be in love – yet in love I was.

[33] The first to perceive my trouble, in her old wife's way, was my nurse; she first, my nurse, said: "Daughter of Aeolus, thou art in love!" I blushed, and shame bent down my eyes into my bosom; I said no word, but this was sign enough that I confessed. And presently there grew apace the burden of my wayward bosom, and my weakened frame felt the weight of its secret load. What herbs and what medicines did my nurse not bring to me, applying them with bold hand to drive forth entirely from my bosom – this was the only secret we kept from you – the burden that was increasing there! Ah, too full of life, the little thing withstood the arts employed against it, and was kept safe from its hidden foe!

[45] And now for the ninth time had Phoebus' fairest sister risen, and for the tenth time the moon was driving on her light-bearing steeds. I knew not what caused the sudden pangs in me; to travail I was unused, a soldier new to the service. I could not keep from groans. "Why betray thy fault?" said the ancient dame who knew my secret, and stopped my crying lips. What shall I do, unhappy that I am? The pains compel my groans, but fear, the nurse, and shame itself forbid. I repress my groans, and try to take back the words that slip from me, and force myself to drink my very tears. Death was before my eyes; and Lucina denied her aid – death, too, were I to die, would fasten upon me heavy guilt – when leaning over me, you tore my robe and my hair away, and warmed my bosom back to life with the pressure of your own, and said: "Live, sister, sister O most dear; live, and do not be the death of two beings in one! Let good hope give thee strength; for now thou shalt be thy brother's bride. He who made thee

mother will also make thee wife.”

[63] Dead that I am, believe me, yet at your words I live again, and have brought forth the reproach and burden of my womb. But why rejoice? In the midst of the palace hall sits Aeolus; the sign of my fault must be removed from my father’s eyes. With fruits and whitening olive-branches, and with light fillets, the careful dame attempts to hide the babe, and makes pretence of sacrifice, and utters words of prayer; the people give way to let her pass, my father himself gives way. She is already near the threshold – my father’s ears have caught the crying sound, and the babe is lost, betrayed by his own sign! Aeolus catches up the child and reveals the pretended sacrifice; the whole palace resounds with his maddened cries. As the sea is set a-trembling when a light breeze passes o’er, as the ashen branch is shaken by the tepid breeze from the south, so might you have seen my blanching members quiver; the couch was a-quake with the body that lay upon it. He rushes in and with cries makes known my shame to all, and scarce restrains his hand from my wretched face. Myself in my confusion did naught but pour forth tears; my tongue had grown dumb with the icy chill of fear.

[83] And now he had ordered his little grandchild thrown to the gods and birds, to be abandoned in some solitary place. The hapless babe broke forth in wailings – you would have thought he understood – and with what utterance he could entreated his grandsire. What heart do you think was mine then, O my brother – for you can judge from your own – when the enemy before my eyes bore away to the deep forests the fruit of my bosom to be devoured by mountain wolves? My father had gone out of my chamber; then at length could I beat my breasts and furrow my cheeks with the nail.

[93] Meanwhile with sorrowful air came one of my father’s guards, and pronounced these shameful words: “Aeolus sends this sword to you” – he handed me the sword – “and bids you know from your desert what it may mean.” I do know, and shall bravely make use of the violent blade; I shall bury in my breast my father’s gift. Is it presents like this, O my sire, you give me on my marriage? With this dowry from you, O father, shall your daughter be made rich? Take away afar, deluded Hymenaeus, thy wedding-torches, and fly with frightened foot from these nefarious halls!

Bring for me the torches ye bear, Erinyes dark, and let my funeral pyre blaze bright from the fires ye give! Wed happily under a better fate, O my sisters, but yet remember me though lost!

[107] What crime could the babe commit, with so few hours of life? With what act could he, scarce born, do harm to his grandsire? If it could be he deserved his death, let it be judged he did – ah, wretched child, it is my fault he suffers for! O my son, grief of thy mother, prey of the ravening beasts, ah me! torn limb from limb on thy day of birth; O my son, miserable pledge of my unhallowed love – this was the first of days for thee, and this for thee the last. Fate did not permit me to shed o’er thee the tears I owed, nor to bear to thy tomb the shorn lock; I have not bent o’er thee, nor culled the kiss from thy cold lips. Greedy wilds beasts are rending in pieces the child my womb put forth.

[119] I, too, shall follow the shades of my babe – shall deal myself the stroke – and shall not long have been called or mother or bereaved. Do thou, nevertheless, O hoped for in vain by thy wretched sister, collect, I entreat, the scattered members of thy son, and bring them again to their mother to share her sepulchre, and let one urn, however scant, possess us both! O live, and forget me not; pour forth thy tears upon my wounds, nor shrink from her thou once didst love, and who loved thee. Do thou, I pray, fulfil the behests of the sister thou didst love too well; the behest of my father I shall myself perform!

XII. MEDEA TO JASON

[1] And yet¹ for you, I remember, I the queen of Colchis could find time, when you besought that my art might bring you help. Then was the time when the sisters who pay out the fated thread of mortal life should have unwound for aye my spindle. Then could Medea have ended well! Whatever of life has been lengthened out for me from what time forth has been but punishment.

[7] Ah me! why was the ship from the forests of Pelion ever driven over the seas by strong young arms in quest of the ram of Phrixus? Why did we Colchians ever cast eye upon Magnesian Argo, and why did your

Greek crew ever drink the water of the Phasis? Why did I too greatly delight in those golden locks of yours, in your comely ways, and in the false graces of your tongue? Yet delight too greatly I did – else, when once the strange craft had been beached upon our sands and brought us her bold crew, all unanointed would the unremembering son of Aeson have gone forth to meet the fires exhaled from the flame-scorched nostrils of the bulls; he would have scattered the seeds – as many as the seeds were the enemy, too – for the sower himself to fall in strife with his own sowing! How much perfidy, vile wretch, would have perished with you, and how many woes been averted from my head!

[21] ‘Tis some pleasure to reproach the ungrateful with favours done. That pleasure I will enjoy; that is the only delight I shall win from you. Bidden to turn the hitherto untried craft to the shores of Colchis, you set foot in the rich realms of my native land. There I, Medea, was what here your new bride is; as rich as her sire is, so rich was mine. Hers holds Ephyre,² washed by two seas; mine, all the country which lies along the left strand of the Pontus e’en to the snows of Scythia.

[29] Aeëtes welcomes to his home the Pelasgian youths, and you rest your Greek limbs upon the pictured couch. Then ‘twas that I saw you, then began to know you; that was the first impulse to the downfall of my soul. I saw you, and I was undone; nor did I kindle with ordinary fires, but like the pine-torch kindled before the mighty gods. Not only were you noble to look upon, but my fates were dragging me to doom; your eyes had robbed mine of their power to see. Traitor, you saw it – for who can well hide love? Its flame shines forth its own betrayer.

[39] Meanwhile the condition is imposed that you press the hard necks of the fierce bulls at the unaccustomed plow. To Mars the bulls belonged, raging with more than mere horns, for their breathing was of terrible fire; of solid bronze were their feet, wrought round with bronze their nostrils, made black, too, by the blasts of their own breath. Besides this, you are bidden to scatter with obedient hand over the wide fields the seeds that should beget peoples to assail you with weapons born with themselves; a baneful harvest, that, to its own husbandman. The eyes of the guardian that know not yielding to sleep – by some art to elude them is your final task.

[51] Aeëtes has spoken; in gloom you all rise up, and the high table is removed from the purple-spread couches. How far away then from your thought were Creusa's dowry-realm, and the daughter of great Creon, and Creon the father of your bride! With foreboding you depart; and as you go my moist eyes follow you, and in faint murmur comes from my tongue: "Fare thou well!" Laying myself on the ordered couch within my chamber, grievously wounded, in tears I passed the whole night long; before my eyes appeared the bulls and the dreadful harvest, before my eyes the unsleeping serpent. On the one hand was love, on the other, fear; and fear increased my very love. Morning came, and my dear sister,³ admitted to my chamber, found me with loosened hair and lying prone upon my face, and everywhere my tears. She implores aid for your Minyae. What one asks, another is to receive; what she petitions for the Aesonian youth, I grant.

[67] There is a grove, sombre with pine-trees and the fronds of the ilex; into it scarce can the rays of the sun find way. There is in it – there was, at least – a shrine to Diana, wherein stands the goddess, a golden image fashioned by barbaric hand. Do you know the place? or have places fallen from your mind along with me? We came to the spot. You were the first to speak, with those faithless lips, and these were your words: "To thy hand fortune has committed the right of choosing or not my deliverance, and in thy hand are the ways of life and death for me. To have power to ruin is enough, if anyone delight in power for itself; but to save me will be greater glory. By our misfortunes, which thou hast power to relieve, I pray, by thy line, and by the godhead of thy all-seeing grandsire the sun, by the three-fold face and holy mysteries of Diana, and by the gods of that race of thine – if so be gods it have – by all these, O maiden, have pity upon me, have pity on my men; be kind to me and make me thine for ever! And if it chance thou dost not disdain a Pelasgian suitor – but how can I hope the gods will be so facile to my wish? – may my spirit vanish away into thin air before another than thou shall come a bride to my chamber! My witness be Juno, ward of the rites of wedlock, and the goddess in whose marble shrine we stand!"

[89] Words like these – and how slight a part of them is here! – and your right hand clasped with mine, moved the heart of the simple maid. I saw

even tears – or was there in the tears, too, part of your deceit? Thus quickly was I ensnared, girl that I was, by your words. You yoke together the bronze-footed bulls with your body unharmed by their fire, and cleave the solid mould with the share as you were bid. The ploughed fields you sow full with envenomed teeth in place of seed; and there rises out of the earth, with sword and shield, a warrior band. Myself, the giver of the charmèd drug, sat pallid there at sight of men all suddenly arisen and in arms; until the earth-born brothers – O deed most wonderful! – drew arms and came to the grapple each with each.

[101] Then, lo and behold! all a-bristle with rattling scales, come the unsleeping sentinel, hissing and sweeping the ground with winding belly. Where then was your rich dowry? Where then your royal consort, and the Isthmus that sunders the waters of two seas? I, the maiden who am now at last become a barbarian in your eyes, who now am poor, who now seem baneful – I closed the lids of the flame-like eyes in slumber wrought by my drug, and gave into your hand the fleece to steal away unharmed. I betrayed my sire, I left my throne and my native soil; the reward I get is leave to live in exile! My maidenly innocence has become the spoil of a pirate from overseas; beloved mother and best of sisters I have left behind.

[113] But thee, O my brother, I did not leave behind as I fled! In this one place my pen fails. Of the deed my right hand was bold enough to do,⁴ it is not bold enough to write. So I, too, should have been torn limb from limb – but with thee! And yet I did not fear – for what, after that, could I fear? – to trust myself to the sea, woman though I was, and now with guilt upon me. Where is heavenly justice? Where the gods? Let the penalty that is our due overtake us on the deep – you for your treachery, me for my trustfulness!

[121] Would the Stymplegades had caught and crushed us out together, and that my bones were clinging now to yours; or Scylla the ravening submerged us in the deep to be devoured by her dogs – fit were it for Scylla to work woe to ingrate men! And she who spews forth so many times the floods, and sucks them so many times back in again – would she had brought us, too, beneath the Trinacrian wave! Yet unharmed and victorious you return to Haemonia's towns, and the golden fleece is laid

before your fathers' gods.

[129] Why rehearse the tale of Pelias' daughters, by devotion led to evil deeds – of how their maiden hands laid knife to the members of their sire?⁵ I may be blamed by others, but you perforce must praise me – you, for whom so many times I have been driven to crime. Yet you have dared – O, fit words fail me for my righteous wrath! – you have dared to say: “Withdraw from the palace of Aeson's line!” At your bidding I have withdrawn from your palace, taking with me our two children, and – what follows me evermore – my love for you. When, all suddenly, there came to my ears the chant of Hymen, and to my eyes the gleam of blazing torches, and the pipe poured forth its notes, for you a wedding-strain, but for me a strain more tearful than the funeral trump, I will filled with fear; I did not yet believe such monstrous guilt could be; but all my breast none the less grew chill. The throng pressed eagerly on, crying “Hymen, O Hymenaeus!” in full chorus – the nearer the cry, for me the more dreadful. My slaves turned away and wept, seeking to hide their tears – who would be willing messenger of tidings so ill? Whatever it was, 'twas better, indeed, that I not know; but my heart was heavy, as if I really knew, when the younger of the children, at my bidding, and eager for the sight, went and stood at the outer threshold of the double door. “Here, mother, come out!”⁶ he cries to me. “A procession is coming, and my father Jason leading it. He's all in gold, and driving a team of horses!” Then straight I rent my cloak and beat my breast and cried aloud, and my cheeks were at the mercy of my nails. My heart impelled me to rush into the midst of the moving throng, to tear off the wreaths from my ordered locks; I scarce could keep from crying out, thus with hair all torn, “He is mine!” and laying hold on you.

[159] Ah, injured father, rejoice! Rejoice, ye Colchians whom I left! Shades of my brother, receive in my fate your sacrifice due; I am abandoned; I have lost my throne, my native soil, my home, my husband – who alone for me took the place of all! Dragons and maddened bulls, it seems, I could subdue; a man alone I could not; I, who could beat back fierce fire with wise drugs, have not the power to escape the flames of my own passion. My very incantations, herbs, and arts abandon me; naught does my goddess aid me, naught the sacrifice I make to potent Hecate. I take no pleasure in the day; my nights are watches of bitterness, and

gentle sleep is far departed from my wretched soul. I, who could charm the dragon to sleep, can bring none to myself; my effort brings more good to any one else soever than to me. The limbs I saved, a wanton now embraces; 'tis she who reaps the fruit of my toil.

[175] Perhaps, too, when you wish to make boast to your stupid mate and say what will pleasure her unjust ears, you will fashion strange slanders against my face and against my ways. Let her make merry and be joyful over my faults! Let her make merry, and lie aloft on the Tyrian purple – she shall weep, and the flames⁷ that consume her will surpass my own! While sword and fire are at my hand, and the juice of poison, no foe of Medea shall go unpunished!

[183] But if it chance my entreaties touch a heart of iron, list now to words – words too humble for my proud soul! I am as much a suppliant to you as you have often been to me, and I hesitate not to cast myself at your feet. If I am cheap in your eyes, be kind to our common offspring; a hard stepdame will be cruel to the fruitage of my womb. Their resemblance to you is all too great, and I am touched by the likeness; and as often as I see them, my eyes drop tears. By the gods above, by the light of your grandsire's beams, by my favours to you, and by the two children who are our mutual pledge – restore me to the bed for which I madly left so much behind; be faithful to your promises, and come to my aid as I came to yours! I do not implore you to go forth against bulls and men, nor ask your aid to quiet and overcome a dragon; it is you I ask for, - you, whom I have earned, whom you yourself gave to me, by whom I became a mother, as you by me a father.

[199] Where is my dowry, you ask? On the field I counted it out – that field which you had to plough before you could bear away the fleece. The famous golden ram, sightly for deep flock, is my dowry – the which, should I say to you “Restore it!” you would refuse to render up. My dowry is yourself – saved; my dowry is the band of Grecian youth! Go now, wretch, compare with that your wealth of Sisyphus! That you are alive, that you take to wife one who, with the father she brings you, is of kingly station, that you have the very power of being ingrate – you owe to me. Whom, hark you, I will straight – but what boots it to foretell your penalty? My ire is in travail with mighty threats. Whither my ire leads,

will I follow. Mayhap I shall repent me of what I do – but I repent me, too, of regard for a faithless husband’s good. Be that the concern of the god who now embroils my heart! Something portentous, surely, is working in my soul!

1. Medea begins suddenly, as if in answer to a refusal of Jason to listen to her plea.

Euripides wrote a *Medea*, and was followed by Ennius, Accius, and Ovid himself, whose play is lost, and Seneca. In this letter Ovid draws from Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* III and IV.

2. Corinth.

3. Chalciope.

4. The dismemberment of her brother Absyrtus.

5. At the persuasion of Medea, who wished to avenge Jason, they attempted the rejuvenation of their father by dismembering and boiling him in a supposed magic cauldron.

6. They were still in the palace. Palmer, who reads *lassus* and *abi*, pictures Medea and her son in the street.

7. Creusa and her father will really be consumed in the fire, with the palace.

XIII. LAODAMIA TO PROTESILAUS

[1] Greetings and health Haemonian Laodamia sends her Haemonian lord,¹ and dsires with loving heart they go where they are sent.

[3] Report says you are held in Aulis by the wind.² Ah, when you were leaving me behind, where then was this wind? Then should the seas have risen to stay your oars; that was the fitting time for the floods to rage. I could have given my lord more kisses and laid upon him more behests; and many are the things I wished to say to you. But you were swept headlong hence; and the wind that invited forth your sails was one your seamen longed for, not I; it was a wind suited to seamen, not to one who loved. I must needs loose myself from your embrace, Protesilaus, and my tongue leave half unsaid what I would enjoin; scarce had a time to say that sad “Farewell!”

[15] Boreas came swooping down, seized on and stretched your sails, and my Protesilaus soon was far away. As long as I could gaze upon my lord, to gaze was my delight, and I followed your eyes ever with my own; when I could no longer see you, I still could see your sails, and long your sails detained my eyes. But after I descried no more either you or your flying sails, and what my eyes rested on was naught but only sea, the light, too, went away with you, the darkness rose about me, my blood retreated, and with failing knee I sank, they say, upon the ground. Scarce your sire Iphiclus, scarce mine, the aged Acastus, scarce my mother, stricken with grief, could bring me back to life with icy-cold. They did their kindly task, but it had no profit for me. 'Tis shame I had not in my misery the right to die!

[20] When consciousness returned, my pain returned as well. The wifely love I bore you has torn at my faithful heart. I care not now to let my hair be dressed, nor does it pleasure me to be arrayed in robes of gold. Like those who he of the two horns is believed to have touched with his vine-leafed rod, hither and thither I go, where madness drives.³ The matrons of Phylace gather about, and cry to me: "Put on they royal robes, Laodamia!" Shall I, then, go clad in stuffs that are saturate with costly purple, while my lord goes warring under the walls of Ilion? Am I to dress my hair, while his head is weighed down by the helm? Am I to wear new apparel while my lord wears hard and heavy arms? In what I can, they shall say I imitate your toils – in rude attire; and these times of war I will pass in gloom.

[43] Ill-omened Paris, Priam's son, fair at cost of thine own kin, mayst thou be as inert a foe as thou wert a faithless guest! Would that either thou hadst seen fault in the face of the Taenarian wife, of she had taken no pleasure in thine! Thou, Menelaus, who dost grieve o'ermuch for the stolen one, ah me, how many shall shed tears for thy revenge! Ye gods, I pray, keep from us the sinister omen, and let my lord hang up his arms to Jove-of-Safe-Return! But I am fearful as oft as the wretched war comes to my thoughts; my tears come forth like snow that melts beneath the sun. Ilion and Tenedos and Simois and Xanthus and Ida are names to be feared from their very sound. Nor would the stranger have dared the theft if he had not power to defend himself; his own strength he well knew. He

arrived, they say, sightly in much gold, bearing upon his person the wealth of Phrygia, and potent in ships and men, with which fierce wars are fought – and how great a part of his princely power came with him? With means like these were you overcome, I suspect, O Leda's daughter, sister to the Twins; these are the things I feel may be working the Danaäns woe.

[65] Of Hector, whoe'er he be, if I am dear to you, be ware; keep his name stamped in ever mindful heart! When you have shunned him, remember to shun others; think that many Hectors are there; and see that you say, as oft as you make ready for the fight: "Laodamia bade me spare herself." If it be fated Troy shall fall before the Argolic host, let it also fall without your taking a single wound! Let Menelaus battle, let him press to meet the foe; to seek the wife from the midst of the foe is the husband's part. Your cast is not the same; do you fight merely to live, and to return to your faithful queen's embrace.

[79] O ye sons of Dardanus, spare, I pray, from so many foes at least one, lest my blood flow from that body! He is not one it befits to engage with bared steel in the shock of battle, to present a savage breast to the opposing foe; his might is greater for in love than on the field. Let others go to the wars; let Protesilaus love!

[85] I confess now, I would have called you back, and my spirit strove; but my tongue stood still for fear of evil auspice. When you would fare forth from your paternal doors to Troy, your foot, stumbling upon the threshold, gave ill sign. At the sight I groaned, and in my secret heart I said: "May this, I pray, be omen that my lord return!" Of this I tell you now, lest you be too forward with your arms. See you make this fear of mine all vanish to the winds!

[93] There is a prophecy, too, that marks someone for an unjust doom – the first of the Danaäns to touch the soil of Troy. Unhappy she who first shall weep for her slain lord! The gods keep you from being too eager! Among the thousand ships let yours be the thousandth craft, and the last to stir the already wearied wave! This, too, I warn you of: be last to leave your ship; the land to which you haste is not your father's soil. When you return, then speed your keel with oar and sail at once, and on your own

shore stay your hurried pace.

[103] Whether Phoebus be hid, or high above the earth he rise, you are my care by day, you come to me in the night; and yet more by night than in the light of day – night is welcome to women beneath whose necks an embracing arm is placed. I, in my widowed couch, can only court a sleep with lying dreams; while true joys fail me, false ones must delight.

[109] But why does your face, all pale, appear before me? Why from your lips comes many a complaint? I shake slumber from me, and pray to the apparitions of night; there is no Thessalian altar without smoke of mine; I offer incense, and let fall upon it my tears, and the flame brightens up again as when wine has been sprinkled o'er.⁴ When shall I clasp you, safe returned, in my eager arms, and lose myself in languishing delight? When will it be mine to have you again close joined to me on the same couch, telling me your glorious deeds in the field? And while you are telling them, though it delight to hear, you will snatch many kisses none the less, and will give me many back. The words of well-told tales meet ever with such stops as this; more ready for report is the tongue refreshed by sweet delay.

[123] But when Troy rises in my thoughts, I think of the winds and sea; fair hope is overcome by anxious fear, and falls. This, too, moves me, that the winds forbid your keels to fare forth – yet you make ready to sail despite the seas. Who would be willing to return homeward with the wind saying nay? Yet you trim sail to leave your homes, though the sea forbids! Neptune himself will open up no way for you against his own city. Whither your headlong course? Return ye all to your own abodes! Whither your headlong course, O Danaäns? Heed the winds that say you nay! No sudden chance, but God himself, sends that delay of yours. What is your quest in so great a war but a shameful wanton? While you may, reverse your sails, O ships of Inachus! But what am I doing? Do I call you back? Far from me be the omen of calling back; may caressing gales second a peaceful sea!

[137] I envy the women who dwell in Troy, who will thus behold the tearful fates of them they love, with the foe not far away. With her own hand the newly wedded bride will set the helmet upon her valiant

husband's head, and give into his hands the Dardanian arms. She will give him his arms, and the while she gives him arms will receive his kisses – a kind of office sweet to both – and will lead her husband forth, and lay on him the command to return, and say: “See that you bring once more those arms to Jove!” He, bearing fresh in mind with him the command of his mistress, will fight with caution, and be mindful of his home. When safe returned, she will strip him of his shield, unloose his helm, and receive to her embrace his wearied frame.

[149] But we are left uncertain; we are forced by anxious fear to fancy all things befallen which may befall. None the less, while you, a soldier in a distant world, will be bearing arms, I keep a waxen image to give back your features to my sight; it hears the caressing phrase, it hears the words of love that are yours by right, and it receives my embrace. Believe me, the image is more than it appears; add but a voice to the wax, Protesilaus it will be. On this I look, and hold it to my heart in place of my real lord, and complain to it, as if it could speak again.

[159] By thy return and by thyself, who art my god, I swear, and by the torches alike of our love and our wedding-day, I will come to be thy comrade whithersoever thou dost call, whether that which, alas, I fear, shall come to pass, or whether thou shalt still survive. The last of my missive, ere it close, shall be the brief behest: if thou carest ought for me, then care thou for thyself!

1. Homer, *Il.* ii. 695 ff., refers to the story of Protesilaus, and Euripides uses it in his *Protesilaus*. Compare also Hyginus, *Fab.* ciii.
2. With the rest of the Greek fleet, which was under divine displeasure because Agamemnon had killed a stag in the grove of Diana.
3. The Bacchic frenzy.
4. The final flare when the fire at the altar is quenched.

XIV. HYPERMNESTRA TO LYNCEUS

[1] Hypermnestra sends this letter to the one brother left of so many but now alive – the rest of the company lied dead by the crime of their brides. Kept close in the palace am I, bound with heavy chains; and the cause of

my punishment is that I was faithful. Because my hand shrank from driving into your throat the steel, I am charged with crime; I should be praised, had I but dared the deed. Better be charged with crime than thus to have pleased my sire; I feel no regret at having hands free from the shedding of blood. My father may burn me with the flame¹ I would not violate, and hold to my face the torches that shone at my marriage rites; or he may lay to my throat the sword he falsely gave me, so that I, the wife, may die the death my husband did not die – yet he will not bring my dying kips to say “I repent me!” She is not faithful who regrets her faith. Let repentance for crime come to Danaus and my cruel sisters; this is the wonted event that follows on wicked deeds.

[17] My heart is struck with fear at remembrance of that night profaned with blood, and sudden trembling fetters the bones of my right hand. She you think capable of having compassed her husband’s death fears even to write of murder done by hands not her own!

[21] Yet I shall essay to write. Twilight had just settled on the earth; it was the last part of day and the first of night. We daughters of Inachus² are escorted beneath the roof of great Pelasgus,³ and our husbands’ father⁴ himself receives the armed brides of his sons. On every side shine bright the lamps girt round with gold; unholy incense is scattered on unwilling altar-fires; the crowd cry “Hymen, Hymenaeus!” The god shuns their cry; Jove’s very consort has withdrawn from the city of her choice! Then, look you, confused with wine, they come in rout amidst the cries of their companions; with fresh flowers in their dripping locks, all joyously they burst into the bridal chambers – the bridal chambers, their own tombs! – and with their bodies press the couches that deserve to be funeral beds.

[33] And now, heavy with food and wine they lay in sleep, and deep repose had settled on Argos, free from care – when round about me I seemed to hear the groans of dying men; nay, I heard indeed, and what I feared was true. My blood retreated, warmth left my body and soul, and on my newly-wedded couch all chill I lay. As the gentle zephyr sets a-quiver the slender stalk of grain, as wintry breezes shake the poplar leaves, even thus – yea even more – did I tremble. Yourself lay quiet; the wine I had given you was the wine of sleep.

[43] Thought of my violent father's mandates struck away my fear. I rise, and clutch with trembling hand the steel. I will not tell you aught untrue: thrice did my hand raise high the piercing blade, and thrice, having basely raised it, fell again. I brought it to your throat – let me confess to you the truth! – I brought my father's weapon to your throat; but fear and tenderness kept me from daring the cruel stroke, and my chaste right hand refused the task enjoined. Rending the purple robes I wore, rending my hair, I spoke with scant sound such words as these: "A cruel father, Hypermnestra, thine; perform thy sire's command, let thy husband there go join his brethren! A woman am I, and a maid, gentle in nature and in years; my tender hands ill suit fierce weapons. But come, while he lies there, do like as the brave sisters – it well may be that all have slain their husbands! Yet had this hand power to deal out murder at all, it would be bloody with the death of its own mistress. They have deserved this end for seizing on their uncle's realms; we, helpless band, must wander in exile with our aged, helpless sire. Yet suppose our husbands have deserved to die – what have we done ourselves? What crime have I committed that I must not be free from guilt? What have swords to do with me? What has a girl to do with the weapons of war? More suited to my hands are the distaff and the wool."

[67] Thus I to myself; and while I utter my complaint, my tears follow forth the words that start them, and from my eyes fall down upon your body. While you grope for my embrace and toss your slumberous arms, your hand is almost wounded by my blade. And now fear of my father seized on me, and of my father's minions, and of the light of dawn; I drove away your sleep with these words of mine: "Rise up, away, O child of Belus,⁵ the one brother left of so many but now alive! This night unless you haste, will be forever night to you!" In terror you arise; all sleep's dullness flies away; you behold the strenuous weapon in my timorous hand. You ask the cause. "While night permits," I answer, "fly!" While the dark night permits, you fly, and I remain.

[79] 'Twas early morn, and Danaus counted o'er his sons-in'-aw that lay there slain. You alone lack to make the crime complete. He bears ill the loss of a single kinsman's death, and complains that too little blood was shed. I am seized by the hair, and dragged from my father's feet – such reward my love for duty won! – and thrust in gaol.

[85] Clear it is that Juno's wrath endures from the time the mortal maid became a heifer, and the heifer became a goddess.⁶ Yet it is punishment enough that the tender maid was a lowing beast, and, but now so fair, could not retain Jove's love. On the banks of her sire's stream the new-created heifer stood, and in the parental waters beheld the horns that were not her own; with mouth that tried to complain, she gave forth only lowings; she felt terror at her form, and terror at her voice. Why rage, unhappy one? Why gaze at thyself in the water's shadow? Why count the feet thou hast for thy new-created frame? Thou art the mistress of great Jove, that rival to be dreaded by his sister – and must quiet thy fierce hunger with the leafy branch and grassy turf, drink at the spring, and gaze astonished on thine image there, and fear lest the arms thou bearest may wound thyself! Thou, who but now wert rich, so rich as to seem worthy even of Jove, liest naked upon the naked ground. Over seas, and lands, and kindred⁷ streams dost thou course; the sea opens a way for thee, and the rivers, and the land. What is the cause of thy flight? Why doest thou wander over the long seas? Thou wilt not be able to fly from thine own features. Child of Inachus, whither doest thou haste? Thou followest and fliest – the same; thou art thyself guide to thy companion, thou art companion to thy guide!

[107] The Nile, let flow to the sea through seven mouths, strips from the maddened heifer the features loved of Jove. Why talk of far-off things, told me by hoary eld? My own years, look you, give me matter for lament. My father and my uncle are at war; we are driven from our realms and from our home; we are cast away to the farthest parts of earth. Of the number of the brothers but a scantest part remains. For those who were done to death, and for those who did the deed, I weep; as many brothers as I have lost, so many sisters also have I lost.⁸ Let both their companies receive my tears! Lo, I, because you live, am kept for the torments of punishment; but what shall be the fate of guilt, when I am charged with crime for deeds of praise, and fall, unhappy that I am, once the hundredth member of a kindred throng, of whom one brother only now remains?

[123] But do thou, O Lynceus, if thou carest aught for thy sister, and art worthy of the gift I rendered thee, come bear me aid; or, if it pleases thee, abandon me to death, and, when my body is done with life, lay it in secret

on the funeral pile, and bury my bones moistened with faithful tears, and let my sepulchre be graved with this brief epitaph: “Exiled Hypermnestra, as the unjust price of her wifely deed, has herself endured the death she warded from her brother!”

[131] I would write more; but my hand falls with the weight of my chains, and very fear takes away my strength.

1. Of the marriage-altar.
2. Inachus, Io, Epaphus, Libya, Belus, Danaus – was their descent.
3. King of Argos.
4. Aegyptus.
5. Belus, Aegyptus, Lynceus.
6. The story of Io, daughter of the river Inachus.
7. Oceanus, father of all streams, was father of Inachus, Io’s father.
8. The scholiast to Euripides’ Hec. 886 says Lynceus avenged his brothers by slaying the guilty wives.

XV. SAPPHO TO PHAON 1

[1] Tell me, when you looked upon the characters from my eager right hand, did your eye know forthwith whose they were – or, unless you had read their author’s name, Sappho, would you fail to know whence these brief words come?

[5] Perhaps, too, you may ask why my verses alternate, when I am better suited to the lyric mode. I must weep, for my love – and elegy is the weeping strain; no lyre is suited to my tears.

[9] I burn – as burns the fruitful acre when its harvests are ablaze, with untamed east-winds driving on the flame. The fields you frequent, O Phaon, lie far away, by Typhoean Aetna; and I – heat not less than the fires of Aetna preys on me. Nor can I fashion aught of song to suit the well-ordered string; songs are the labour of minds care-free! Neither the maids of Pyrrha charm me now, nor they of Methymna, nor all the rest of the throng of Lesbian daughters. Naught is Anactorie to me, naught Cydro, the dazzling fair; my eyes joy not in Atthis as once they did, nor in

the hundred other maids I have loved here to my reproach; unworthy one, the love that belonged to many maids you alone possess.

[21] You have beauty, and your years are apt for life's delights – O beauty that lay in ambush for my eyes! Take up the lyre and quiver – you will be Apollo manifest; let horns but spring on your head – you will be Bacchus! Phoebus loved Daphne, and Bacchus, too, loved the Gnosian maid, and neither one nor other knew the lyric mode; yet for me the daughters of Pegasus dictate sweetest songs; my name is already sun abroad in all the earth. Not greater is the praise Alcaeus wins, the sharer in my homeland and in my gift of song, though a statelier strain he sounds. If nature, malign to me, has denied the charm of beauty, weigh in the stead of beauty the genius she gave. I am slight of stature, yet I have a name fills every land; the measure of my name is my real height. If I am not dazzling fair, Cepheus' Andromeda was fair in Perseus' eyes, though dusky with the hue of her native land. Besides, white pigeons oft are mated with those of different hue, and the black turtle-dove, too, is loved by the bird of green.² If none shall be yours unless deemed worthy of you for her beauty's sake, then none shall be yours at all.

[41] Yet, when I read you my songs, I seemed already beautiful enough; you swore 'twas I alone whom speech forever graced. I would sing to you, I remember – for lovers remember all – and while I snag you stole kisses from me. My kisses too you praised, and I pleased in every way – but then above all when we wrought at the task of love. Then did my playful ways delight you more than your wont – the quick embrace, the jest that gave spice to our sport, and, when the joys of both had mingled into one, the deep, deep languor in our wearied frames.

[51] Now new prey is yours – the maids of Sicily. What is Lesbos now to me? I would I were a Sicilian maid.³ Ah, send me back my wanderer, ye Nisaeen matrons and Nisaeen maids, nor let the lies of his bland tongue deceive you! What he says to you, he had said before to me. Thou too, Erycina, who doest frequent the Sicanian mountains – for I am thine – protect thy singer, O lady! Can it be my grievous fortune will hold the ways it first began, and ever remain bitter in its course? Six natal days had passed for me, when I gathered the bones of my father, dead before his time, and let them drink my tears. My untaught brother was caught in

the flame of harlot love, and suffered loss together with foul shame; reduced to need, he roams the dark blue seas with agile oar, and the wealth he cast away by evil means once more by evil means he seeks.⁴ As for me, because I often warned him well and faithfully, he hates me; this has my candour brought me, this my duteous tongue. And as if there were lack of things to weary me endlessly, a little daughter⁵ fills the measure of my cares.

[71] Last cause of all are you for my complaint. My craft is not impelled by a propitious gale. Lo, see, my hair lies scattered in disorder about my neck, my fingers are laden with no sparkling gems; I am clad in garment mean, no gold is in the strands of my hair, my locks are scented with no gifts of Araby. For whom should I adorn myself, or whom should I strive to please? He, the one cause for my adornment, is gone. Tender is my heart, and easily pierced by the light shaft, and there is ever cause why I should ever love – whether at my birth the Sisters declared this law and did not spin my thread of life with austere strand, or whether tastes change into character, and Thalia, mistress of my art, is making my nature soft. What wonder if the age of first down has carried me away, and the years that stir men’s love? Lest thou steal him in Cephalus’ place, I ever feared, Aurora – and so thou wouldst do, but that thy first prey holds thee still. Him should Phoebe behold, who beholds all things, ‘twill be Phaon she bids continue in his sleep; him Venus would have carried to the skies in her ivory car, but that she knows he might charm even her Mars. O neither yet man nor still boy – meet age for charm – O ornament and great glory of thy time, O hither come; sail back again, O beauteous one, to my embrace! I do not plead for thee to love, but to let thyself be loved.

[97] I write, and my eyes let fall the springing tears like drops of dew; look, how many a blot obscures this place! If you were so resolved to leave my side, you could have gone in more becoming wise. You might at least have said to me: “O Lesbian mistress, fare you well!” You did not take with you my tears, you did not take my kisses; indeed, I felt no fear of the pangs I was to suffer. You have left me nothing, nothing except my wrong; and you – you have no token of my love to put you in mind of me. I gave you no behests – nor would I have given any, save not to be unmindful of me. O by our love – and may it never far depart! – and by the heavenly Nine who are my deities, I swear to you, when someone said

to me: “Your joys are flying from you!” for a long time I could not weep, and could not speak! Tears failed my eyes, and words my tongue; my breast was fast frozen with icy chill. After my grief had found itself, I felt no shame to beat my breast, and rend my hair, and shriek, not otherwise than when the loving mother of a son whom death has taken bears to the high-built funeral pile his empty frame. Joy swells my brother Charaxus’ heart as he sees my woe; he passes before my eyes, and passes again; and, purposing to make the cause of my grief appear immodest, he says: “Why does she grieve? Surely her daughter lives!” Modesty and love are not at one. There was no one did not see me; yet I rent my robe and laid bare my breast.

[123] You, Phaon, are my care; you, my dreams bring back to me – dreams brighter than the beautiful day. In them I find you, though in space you are far away; but not long enough are the joys that slumber gives. Often I seem with the burden of my neck to press your arms, often to place beneath your neck my arms. I recognize the kisses – close caresses of the tongue – which you were wont to take and wont to give. At times I fondle you, and utter words that seem almost the waking truth, and my lips keep vigil for my senses. Further I blush to tell, but all takes place; I feel the delight, and cannot rule myself.

[135] But when Titan shows his face and lights up all the earth, I complain that sleep has deserted me so soon; I make for the grotts and the wood, as if the wood and the grotts could aid me – those haunts were in the secret of my joys. Thither in frenzied mood I course, like one whom the maddening Enyo has touched, with hair flying loose about my neck. My eyes behold the grotts, hanging with rugged rock – grotts that to me were like Mygdonian marble; I find the forest out which oft afforded us a couch to lie upon, and covered us with thick shade from many leaves – but I find not the lord both of the forest and myself. The place is but cheap ground; he was the dower that made it rich. I have recognised the pressed-down grass of the turf I knew so well; the sod was hollowed from our weight. I have laid me down and touched the spot, the place you rested in; the grass I once found gracious has drunk my tears. Nay, even the branches have laid aside their leafage, and no birds warble their sweet complaint; only the Daulian bird, most mournful mother who wreaked unholy vengeance on her lord, laments in son Ismarian Itys. The bird

sings of Itys, Sappho sings of love abandoned – that is all; all else is silent as midnight.

[157] There is a sacred spring, bright and more transparent than any crystal – many think a spirit dwells therein – above which a watery lotus spreads its branches wide, a grove all in itself; the earth is green with tender turf. Here I had laid my wearied limbs and given way to tears, when there stood before my eyes a Naiad. She stood before me, and said: “Since thou art burning with unrequited flame, Ambracia is the land thou needs must seek. There Phoebus from on high looks down on the whole wide stretch of sea – of Actium, the people call it, and Leucadian. From here Deucalion, inflamed with love for Pyrrha, cast himself down, and struck the waters with body all unharmed. Without delay, his passion was turned from him, and fled from his tenacious breast, and Deucalion was freed from the fires of love. This is the law of yonder place. Go straightway seek the high Leucadian cliff, nor from it fear to leap!”

[173] Her warning given, she ceased her speech, and vanished; in terror I arose, and my eyes could not keep back their tears. I shall go, O nymph, to seek out the cliff thou toldst of; away with fear – my maddening passion casts it out. Whatever shall be, better ‘twill be than now! Breeze, come – bear me up; my limbs have no great weight. Do thou, too, tender Love, place thy pinions beneath me, lest I die and bring reproach on the Leucadian wave! Then will I consecrate to Phoebus my shell, our common boon, and under it shall be writ one verse, and a second:
SAPPHO THE SINGER, O PHOEBUS, HATH GRATEFULLY
BROUGHT THEE A ZITHER:

TOKEN WELL SUITED TO ME, TOKEN WELL SUITED TO THEE.

[185] Yet why do you send me to the shores of Actium, unhappy that I am, when you yourself could turn back your wandering steps? You can better help my state than the Leucadian wave; both in beauty and in kindness you will be a Phoebus to me. Or, if I perish, O more savage than any cliff or wave, you can endure the name of causing my death? But how much better for my bosom to be pressed to yours than headlong to be hurled from the rocks! – the bosom, Phaon, of her whom you were wont to praise, and who so often seemed to you to have the gift of genius. Would I were eloquent now! Grief stops my art, and all my genius is halted by

my woes. My old-time power in song will not respond to the call; my plectrum for grief is silent; mute for grief is my lyre. Lesbian daughters of the wave, ye who are to wed and ye already wed, ye Lesbian daughters, whose names have been sung to the Aeolian lyre, ye Lesbian daughters whom I have loved to my reproach cease thronging to me more to hear my shell! Phaon has swept away all that ye loved before – ah, wretched me, how nearly I came then to saying “my Phaon”! Accomplish his return; your singer, too, will then return. My genius had its powers from him; with him they were swept away.

[207] But do my prayers accomplish aught, or is his churl’s heart moved? or is it cold and hard, and do the zephyrs bear away my idly falling words? Would that the winds that bear away my words might bring your sails again; this deed were fitting for you, tardy one, had you a feeling breast. If you intend return, and are making for your stern the votive gift, why tear my heart with delay? Weigh anchor! Venus who rose from the sea makes way on the sea for her lover. The wind will speed you on your course; do you but weigh anchor! Cupid himself will be helmsman, sitting upon the stern; himself with tender hand will spread and furl the sail. But if your pleasure be to fly afar from Pelasgian Sappho – and yet you will find no cause for flying from me – ah, at least let a cruel letter tell me this in my misery, that I may seek my fate in the Leucadian wave!

1. This epistle is not in P, G, or any MS. earlier than P or G, and is not in Plan. In the MSS. which do contain it, it is either annexed or prefixed to the whole. Hein. placed it after XIV because of the presence of some verses from it in that position in two MSS. of excerpts from a ninth or tenth century archetype.

The Sappho-Phaon story seems to have been well known by the fourth century B.C. The authorship of this letter has been disputed, but is generally conceded to be Ovid’s.

2. The parrot. Compare Amores II. vi. 16.

3. The Parian Marble says that Sappho really was exiled and went to Sicily. Her troubles were of a political nature.

4. Probably as a pirate. He ransomed the courtesan Rhodopis from Egypt, and was reproved by Sappho in a poem.

5. Cleis.

XVI. PARIS TO HELEN

[1] I, son of Priam, send you, Leda's daughter, this wish for welfare – welfare that can fall to me through your gift alone.

[3] Shall I speak, or is there no need to tell of a flame already known, and is my love already clearer than I could wish? I should indeed prefer to keep it hid, until the time came when my joy could be unmixed with fears, but I can ill disguise; for who could conceal a fire that ever betrays itself by its own light? If, none the less, you look for me to add word to fact – I am on fire with love! There you have the words that bring the message of my heart. Pardon, I entreat, my having confessed, and do not read the rest with face that is hard, but with one that suits your beauty.

[13] Long now have I had cheer, for your welcoming my letter begets the hope that I also may be likewise welcomed. What the mother of Love, who persuaded me to this journey, has fixed upon, I deeply hope may be, and that she has not promised you to me in vain; for at divine behest – lest you sin unawares – I sail hither, and no slight godhead favours my undertaking. The prize I seek indeed is great, but I ask naught that is not my due; you have been promised for my marriage-chamber by her of Cythera. With her for pilot, from the Sigeon strand I have sailed in Pherecleon stern the dubious paths of the far-stretching flood. It is she who has given me gentle breezes and favouring wind – of a surety she has dominion over the sea, for she rose from the sea. May she still favour me, and calm my heart's tide as she calmed the wave's; and bring my bows to their desired haven.

[27] My passion for you I have brought; I did not find it here. It is that which was the cause of so long a voyage, for neither gloomy storm has driven me hither, nor a wandering course; Taenaris is the land toward which my ships were steered. Nor think I cleave the seas with a keel that carries merchandise – what goods I have, may the gods only keep for me! Nor am I come as one to see the sights of Grecian towns – the cities of my own realm are wealthier. It is you I come for – you, whom golden Venus has promised for my bed; you were my heart's desire before you were known to me. I beheld your features with my soul ere I saw them

with my eyes; rumour, that told me of you, was the first to deal my wound.

[39] Yet¹ it is not strange if I am prey to love, as 'tis fitting I should be, stricken by darts that were sped from far. Thus have the fates decreed; and lest you try to say them nay, listen to words told faithfully and true. I was still in my mother's bosom, tardy of birth; her womb already was duly heavy with its load. It seemed to her in the vision of a dream that she put forth from her full womb a mighty flaming torch. In terror she rose up, and told the dread vision of opaque night to ancient Priam; he told it to his seers. One of the seers sang that Ilion would burn with the fire of Paris – that was the torch of my heart, as now has come to pass!

[51] My beauty and my vigour of mind, though I seemed from the common folk, were the sign of hidden nobility. There is a place in the woody vales of midmost Ida, far from trodden paths and covered over with pine and ilex, where never grazes the placid sheep, nor the she-goat that loves the cliff, nor the wide-mouthed, slowly-moving kine. From there, reclining against a tree, I was looking forth upon the walls and lofty roofs of the Dardanian city, and upon the sea, when lo! it seemed to me that the earth trembled beneath the tread of feet – I shall speak true words, though they will scarce have credit for truth – and there appeared and stood before my eyes, propelled on pinions swift, the grandchild of mighty Atlas and Pelione – it was allowed me to see, and may it be allowed to speak of what I saw! – and in the fingers of the god was a golden wand. And at the self-same time, three goddesses – Venus, and Pallas, and with her Juno – set tender feet upon the sward. I was mute, and chill tremors had raised my hair on end, when “Lay aside thy fear!” the winged herald said to me; “thou art the arbiter of beauty; put an end to the strivings of the goddesses; pronounce which one deserves for her beauty to vanquish the other two!” And, lest I should refuse, he laid command on me in the name of Jove, and forthwith through the paths of ether betook him toward the stars.

[73] My heart was reassured, and on a sudden I was bold, nor feared to turn my face and observe them each. Of winning all were worthy, and I who was to judge lamented that not all could win. But, none the less, already then one of them pleased me more, and you might know it was

she by whom love is inspired. Great is their desire to win; they burn to sway my verdict with wondrous gifts. Jove's consort loudly offers thrones, his daughter, might in war; I myself waver, and can make no choice between power and the valorous heart. Sweetly Venus smiled: "Paris, let not these gifts move thee, both of them full of anxious fear!" she says; "my gift shall be of love, and beautiful Leda's daughter, more beautiful than her mother, shall come to thy embrace." She said, and with her gift and beauty equally approved, retraced her way victorious to the skies.

[89] Meanwhile – I suppose because fate had turned to prosper me – I am found by well approved signs to be a child of the royal line. The son, after long time, is taken back to his home, the house is glad, and Troy adds this day, too, to its festivals. And as I long for you, so women have longed for me; alone, you can possess the object of many women's prayers! And not only have the daughters of princes and chieftains sought me, but even the nymphs have felt for me the cares of love. Whose beauty was I to admire more than Oenone's? – after you, the world contains none more fit than she to be bride to Priam's son. But I am weary of all of them, Tyndaris, since hope was made mine of winning you. It was you that filled my vision as I waked, and you my soul saw in the night, when eyes lie overcome in peaceful slumber. What will you be face to face, you who won me yet unseen? I was fired with love, though here, far away, was the flame. I could not longer cheat myself of the hope of you, but started on the dark blue path to seek the object of my vows.

[107] The Trojan groves of pine are felled by the Phrygian axe, and whatsoever tree will serve on the billowy seas; the steeps of Gargara are spoiled of their lofty woods, and far-stretched Ida gives up to me unnumbered beams. The oak is bent to make the frame for the speedy ship, and the curving keel is woven with the ribbed sides. We add the yards, and the sails that hang to the mast; the hook-shaped stern, too, receives its painted gods; on the one which carries me stands painted – and, with her, tiny Cupid – the goddess who is sponsor for your wedding me. After the last hand has been laid to the ships, and all is complete, forthwith I am eager to sail the Aegean main – but my father and lady mother hold me back from my purpose with their prayers, and with fond words delay the journey I propose. My sister Cassandra, too, all as she was, with hair let loose, when my vessels were eager now to spread the sail, cried out:

“Whither thy headlong course? Thou wilt bring conflagration back with thee! How great the flames thou seekest over these waters, thou dost not know!” A truthful prophetess was she; I have found the fires of which she spoke, and flames of fierce love rage in my helpless breast!

[127] I sail forth from the harbour, and with favouring winds disembark upon your shores, O nymph of Oebalus’ line. Your lord receives me as befits a guest – this, too, an act not without the counsel and approval of the gods! He showed me, of course, whatever in all Lacedaemon was worthy to be shown and sightly to be seen; but I was eager to behold your much-praised charms, and there was nothing else by which my eyes could be held. When I did look on them, I was astonished mute, and felt new cares swelling big in my inmost breast. Features like those, as near as I recall, were Cytherea’s own when she came to be judged by me. If you had come to that contest together with her, the palm of Venus would have come in doubt! Fame has indeed made great heralding of you, and there is no land that knows not of your beauty; no other among fair women has a name like yours – nowhere in Phrygia, nor from the rising of the sun!

[145] Will you believe me when I say this, too? – your glory is less than the truth, and fame has all but maligned your charms; I find more here than the goddess promised me, and your glory is exceeded by its cause. And so Theseus rightly felt love’s flame, for he was acquaint with all your charms, and you seemed fit spoil for the great hero to steal away,² when, after the manner of your race, you engaged in the sports of the shining palaestra, a nude maid mingled with nude men. His stealing you away, I commend; my marvel is that he ever gave you back. So fine a spoil should have been kept with constancy. Sooner would this head have left my bloody neck that you have been dragged from marriage-chamber of mine. One like you, would ever these hands of mine be willing to let go? One like you, would I, alive, allow to leave my embrace? If you must needs have been rendered up, I should first at least have taken some pledge from you; my love for you would not have been wholly for naught. Either your virgin flower I should have plucked, or taken what could be stolen without hurt to your virgin state.

[163] Only give yourself to me, and you shall know of Paris’ constancy; the flame of the pyre alone will end the flames of my love. I have placed

you before the kingdoms which greatest Juno, bride and sister of Jove, once promised me; so I could only clasp my arms about your neck, I have held but cheap the prowess that Pallas would bestow. And I have no regret, nor shall I ever seem in my own eyes to have made a foolish choice; my mind is fixed and persists in its desire. I only pray, O worthy to be sought with such great toils! that you will not allow my hopes to fall to earth. I am no seeker after marriage ties with the nobly born, while myself of lowly line, nor will you find it disgrace, believe me, to be my wife. A Pleiad,³ if you will search, you will find in our line, and a Jove, to say naught of our ancestry since their time; my father wields the sceptre over Asia, land than which none other has more wealth, with bounds immense, scarce to be traversed. Unnumbered cities and golden dwellings you will see and temples you would say fit well their gods. Ilium you will look upon, and its walls made strong with lofty towers, reared to the tunefulness of Phoebus' lyre.⁴ Why tell you of our thronging multitudes of men? Scarce does that land sustain the dwellers in it. In dense line the Trojan women will press forward to meet you, and our palace halls will scarce contain the daughters of Phrygia. Ah, how often will you say: "How poor is our Achaia!" One household, any one you choose, will show a city's wealth.

[189] And yet let me not presume to look down upon your Sparta; the land in which you were born is rich for me. But a niggard land is Sparta, and you deserve keeping in wealth; with fairness such as yours this place is not in accord. Beauty like yours it befits to enjoy rich adornment without end, and to wanton in ever new delights. When you look on the garb of the men of our race, what garb, think you, must be that of the daughters of Dardanus? Only be compliant, and do not disdain a Phrygian for your lord, you who were born in rural Therapnae. A Phrygian, and born of our blood, was he who now is with the gods, and mingles water with the nectar for their drinking. A Phrygian was Aurora's mate⁵; yet he was carried away by the goddess who sets the last bound to the advance of night. A Phrygian, too, Anchises, with whom the mother of the winged loves rejoices to consort on Ida's ridge. Nor do I think that Menelaus, when you compare our beauty and our years, will find higher place in your esteem than I. I shall at least not give you a father-in-law who puts to flight the clear beams of the sun, and turns away from the feast his affrightened steeds⁶; nor has Priam a sire who is stained with blood from

the murder of his bride's father, or who marks the Myrtoan waters with his crime⁷; nor does ancestor of mine catch at fruits in the Stygian wave, or seek for water in the midst of waters.⁸

[213] Yet what avails me this, if one sprung from them possesses you, and Jove perforce is father-in-law to this house?⁹ Ah, crime! Throughout whole nights that unworthy husband possesses you, enjoying your embrace; but I – I look on you only when at last the board is laid, and even this time brings many things that pain. May our enemies have such repasts as often I endure when the wine has been set before us! I regret my being a guest, when before my eyes that rustic lays his arms about your neck. I burst with anger and envy – for why should I not tell everything? – when he lays his mantle over your limbs to keep you warm. But when you openly give him tender kisses, I take up my goblet and hold it before my eyes; when he holds you closely pressed, I let my gaze fall, and the dull food grows big within my unwilling mouth. Many a time I have let forth groans; and you – ah, mischief that you are! – I have marked you unable to keep from laughing when I groaned. Oft I would have quenched the flame of love in wine, but it grew instead, and drinking was but fire upon the fire. That I may miss the sight of much, I recline with head turned from you; but you yourself straightway recall my eyes again.

[235] What I shall do, I know not; I suffer when I look upon these things, but I suffer more when I lack the sight of your face. In whatever way I am allowed and have the power, I struggle to conceal my madness; but none the less the love I cover up appears. And I am not deceiving you; you are aware what wounds are mine – you are aware! And would that they were known to you alone! Ah, how often at the coming of my tears I have turned away my face, lest that man should ask the reasons why I wept! Ah, how often, when in wine, I have told the tale of some amour, speaking straight to your face each single word, and have given you hint of myself under the made-up name! I was the real lover – if you do not know. Nay, indeed, that I might be able to use more froward speech, not once alone have I feigned I was in wine.

[249] You bosom once, I remember, was betrayed by your robe; it was loose, and left your charms bare to my gaze – breasts whiter than pure

snows, or milk, or Jove when he embraced your mother. While I sat in ecstasy at the sight – I changed to have my goblet in hand – the twisted handle fell from my fingers. If you had bestowed kisses on your child Hermione, I forthwith snatched them with joy from her tender lips. And now I would sing of old amours, lying careless on my back; and again I would nod, making signs I should have kept hid. The first of your companions, Clymene and Aethra, I lately ventured to approach with flattering words; who said naught else than that they were afraid, and left me in the midst of my entreaties.

[263] Ah, might the gods make you the prize in a mighty contest, and let the victor have you for his couch! – as Hippomenes bore off, the prize of his running, Schoeneus' daughter, as Hippodamia came to Phrygian embrace, as fierce Hercules broke the horns of Achelous while aspiring to thy embraces, Deianira. My daring would have boldly made its way in the face of conditions such as these, and you would know well how to be the object of my toils. Now nothing is left me but to entreat you, beautiful one, and to embrace your feet, so you suffer it. O honour, O present glory of the twin brethren, O worthy of Jove to husband were you not the child of Jove – either I shall return to the haven of Sigeum with you as my bride, or here, an exile, be covered with Taenarian earth! It is not slightly that my breast has been pierced, only by the arrow's point; my wound is deep – to the very bones! This – for I recall it – was what my truthful sister prophesied – that I should be transfixed by a heavenly dart. Do not, O Helen, despise a love ordained by fate – so may you find the gods gracious to your prayers!

[283] Many things indeed come to my mind; but, that we may say more face to face, welcome me to your couch in the silent night. Or do you feel shame and fear to violate your wedded love, and to be false to the chaste bonds of a lawful bed? Ah, too simple – nay, too rustic – Helen! do you think that beauty of yours can be free from fault? Either you must change your beauty, or you must needs not be hard; fairness and modesty are mightily at strife. Jove's delight, and the delight of Venus, are in stealthy sins like these; such stealthy sins, indeed, gave you Jove for sire. If power over character be in the seed, it scarce can be that you, the child of Jove and Leda, will remain chaste. Be chaste, nevertheless – but when my Troy shall hold you; and let your guilt, I beg, be with me alone. Let our

sin now be one the hour of marriage will correct – if only what Venus promised me is not in vain!

[299] But even your husband presses you on to this – by deed, if not by word. That his guest may find no bar to theft, he absents himself. He could find no time more suited for him to see the realms of Crete – O husband marvellously shrewd! “I enjoin upon you in my stead the care of my affairs, and of our guest from Ida,” he said, making ready to depart. I call you witness; you neglect the injunction of your absent lord; you are not caring for your guest at all. Do you hope, Tyndaris, that so senseless a man as this can know well the riches of your beauty? You are deceived – he does not know; if he thought great the possessions that he holds, he would not entrust them to an outlander. Though neither my words should move you, nor my ardour, I am driven to take the advantage he himself gives – or I shall be foolish, even to surpassing him, if I let so safe a time go idly by. Almost with his own hands he has brought your lover to you; profit by the behests of your artless lord!

[317] You lie alone through the long night in a companionless couch; in a companionless bed I, too, lie alone. Let mutual delights join you to me, and me to you; brighter than mid of day will that night be. Then I will swear to you by whatever gods you choose, and bind myself by my oath to observe the rites of your choice; then, if confidence does not beguile me, with a plea in person I will make you wish to seek my realms. If you feel shame and fear lest you seem to have followed me, I myself will meet this charge without you; for I will imitate the deed of Aegeus’ son and of your brothers. You can be touched by no examples nearer than these. Theseus stole you away, and they the twin daughters of Leucippus; I shall be counted fourth among such examples. The Trojan fleet is ready, equipped with arms and men; soon oar and breeze will make swift our way. Like a great queen you will make your progress through the Dardanian towns, and the common crowd will think a new goddess come to earth; wherever you advance your steps, flames will consume the cinnamon, and the slain victim will strike the bloody earth. My father and my brothers and my sisters, with their mother, and all the daughters of Ilion, and Troy entire, will bring you gifts. Ah me! I am telling you scarce any part of what will be. You will receive more than my letter tells.

[341] And do not fear lest, if you are stolen away, fierce wars will follow after us, and mighty Greece will rouse her strength. Of so many who have been taken away before, tell me, has any one ever been sought back by arms? Believe me, that fear of yours is vain. In the name of Aquilo the Thracians took captive Erechtheus' child, and the Bistonian shore was safe from war; Pegasaean Jason in his new craft carried away the Phasian maid, and the land of Thessaly was never harmed by Colchian band. Theseus, too, he who stole you, stole Minos' daughter; yet Minos called the Cretans ne'er to arms. The terror in things like these is wont to be greater than the danger itself, and where 'tis our humour to fear, we shame to have feared too much.

[353] Imagine none the less, if you wish, that a great war is set on foot – I, too, have power, and my weapons, too, are deadly. Nor is the resource of Asia less than that of your land; in men is that country rich, and richly abounds in horses. Nor will Menelaus, Atreus' son, have spirit more than Paris, or be esteemed before him in arms. While yet almost a child, I slew the enemy and got back our herds, and from the exploit received the name I bear¹⁰; while yet almost a child, I overcame young men in varied contest, and among them Ilioneus and Deiphobus; and, lest you think me not to be feared but in the thick of the fight, my arrow is fixed in any spot you choose. Can you bespeak for him such deeds of first young manhood? can you claim for the son of Atreus skill like mine? If you should claim for him everything, could you give him Hector for a brother? He alone will have the might of unnumbered warriors! My powers you do not know, and my prowess you have never seen. You do not know the man whose bride you are to be.

[371] Either, then, you will be demanded back with no tumult of war, or the Doric camp will yield to my soldiery. Nor yet would I disdain to take up arms for such a bride. Great prizes stir great strife. And you, besides, if the whole world shall content for you, will attain to fame among men, forever more! Only, take hope, cast off your fears, and leave this place, for the gods are with us; exact with full confidence the promised boon.

1. Of 39-142, Palmer says: "The question of authorship of these verses is bound up with that of the authorship of 21. 13-248. Their date has been a subject of much discussion: many critics have held that they were written

so late as the revival of letters . . . Internal evidence seems to point to a date not more than a generation later than that of the composition of the Epistles 16-21: and the general correctness of the versification speaks for an author with an instinctive, not an acquired, feeling for Ovidian verse.”

2. Theseus and Pirithous carried her off, and Castor and Pollux rescued her.

3. Electra, mother of Dardanus, son of Jove.

4. Apollo with his music caused the walls to rise for Laomedon.

5. Tithonus, son of Laomedon.

6. Referring to Atreus and his serving to Thyestes his own sons.

7. Pelops, who compassed the death of Oenomaus in the famous race.

8. Tantalus.

9. Menelaus' wife was daughter of Jove and Leda.

10. Alexandros, protector of men (the shepherds).

XVII. HELEN TO PARIS

[1] Now that your letter has profaned my eyes, the glory of writing no reply has seemed to me but slight. You have dared, stranger, to violate the sacred pledge of hospitality, and to tamper with the faith of a lawful wife! Of course it was for this that the Taenarian shore received you into its haven when tossed on the windy tides, and that, come though you were from another race, our royal home did not present closed doors to you – for this, that wrong should be the return for kindness so great! You who so entered, were you guest, or were you enemy?

[11] I doubt not that, just though it is, this complaint of mine is called rustic in your judgment. Let me by all means be rustic, only so I forget not my honour, and the course of my life be free from fault. If I do not feign a gloomy countenance, nor sit with stern brows grimly bent, my good name is nevertheless clear, and thus far I have lived without reproach, and no false lover makes his boast of me. For this I wonder the more what confidence inspires your enterprise, and what cause has given you hope to share my couch. Because the Neptunian hero¹ employed violence with me, can it be that, stolen once, I seem fit to be stolen, too, a second time? The blame were mine, had I been lured away; but seized, as I was, what could I do, more than refuse my will? Yet he did not reap

form his deed the fruitage he desired; except my fright, I returned with no harm. Kisses only, and few, the wanton took, and those despite my struggles; father than that, he possesses naught of mine. Such villainy as yours would not have been content with this – ye gods do better by me! he was not a man like you. He gave me back untouched, and moderation lessened his blame; the youth repented of his deed, 'tis plain. Did Theseus repent but for Paris to follow in his steps, lest my name should sometime cease from the lips of men? Yet I am not angered – for who grows offended with a lover? – if only what you profess is not pretended love. For I doubt of this too – not that I lack ground for confidence, or that my beauty is not well known to me; but that quick belief is wont to bring harm upon a woman, and your words are said to lack in faith.

[41] You say that others yield to sin, and the matron is rare that is chaste. Who is to keep my name from being among the rare? For, as to my mother's seeming to you a fit example, and your thinking you can turn me, too, by citing it, you are mistaken there, since she fell through being deceived by a false outside; her lover was disguised by plumage.² For me, if I should sin I can plead ignorance of nothing; there will be no error to obscure the crime of what I do. Her error was well made, and her sin redeemed by its author. With what Jove shall I be called happy in my fault?

[51] But you boast your birth, your ancestry, and your royal name. This house of mine is glorious enough with its own nobility. To say naught of Jove, forefather of my husband's sire, and all the glory of Pelops, Tantalus' son, and of Tyndareus, Leda makes Jove my father, deceived by the swan, false bird she cherished in her trusting bosom. Go now, and loudly tell of remote beginnings of the Phrygian stock, and of Priam with his Laomedon! Them I esteem; but he who is your great glory and fifth from you, you will find is first from our name.³ Although I believe the sceptres of your Troy are powerful, yet I think these of ours not less than they. If indeed this place is surpassed in riches and number of men, yours at nay rate is a barbarous land.

[65] Your letter, to be sure, promises gifts so great they could move the goddesses themselves; but, were I willing to overstep the limit of my honour, yourself would have been a better cause of fault. Either I shall

hold forever to my stainless name, or I shall follow you rather than your gifts; and if I do not scorn them, it is because those gifts are ever most welcome whose giver makes them precious. It is much more than you love me, that I am the cause of your toils, that your hope of me has led your over waters so wide.

[75] What you do now when our board has been spread, oh, shameless one! I also note, though I try to feign – when now you look on me, wanton, with those bold eyes which my own can scarcely meet when they assail me, and now sigh, and now again take up the goblet nearest me, and yourself, too, drink from the part where I have drunk. Oh, how often have I noted the covert signals you made with your fingers, how often those from your almost speaking brows! And oft I have been in terror lest my husband see it, and have reddened at the signs you did not well conceal. Oft in lowest murmur, or, rather, with no sound at all, I have said: “He has no shame for anything!” and this word of mine was not false. On the round surface of the table, too, I have read beneath my name, which had been writ with the tracing of wine: I LOVE. I could not believe you, none the less, and signified it with my eyes – ah me, already I have learned that thus one may speak! These are the blandishments, had I been disposed to sin, by which I could be bent; by these my heart could be taken prisoner. Your beauty, too, I confess, is rare, and a woman might well wish to submit to your embrace; but let another be happy without reproach rather than my honour fall before a stranger’s love. Learn from my example how to live without the fair; there is virtue in abstinence from what delights. How many youths, think you, desire what you desire, and yet are wise? Or are you, Paris, the only one with eyes? You see no more clearly: your daring is only more rash; nor have you more spirit, but less of modesty.

[103] I would the time of your swift keel’s coming had been when my maiden hand was sought by a thousand suitors; had I seen you, of the thousand you would have been the first. My husband himself will pardon this judgment of mine. YOU come late – to joys already seized on and possessed; your hope has been tardy; what you seek, another has. Grant, none the less, that I longed to become your bride at Troy, even so think not Menelaus holds me against my will. Cease, I pray, to pluck with your words at my faltering heart, and do not give pain to her you say you love;

but allow me to keep the lot that fortune has given, and do not covet to my shame the spoil of my honour.

[115] You say Venus gave her word for this; and that in the vales of Ida three goddesses presented themselves unclad before you; and that when one of them would give you a throne, and the second glory in war, the third said: “The daughter of Tyndareus shall be your bride!” I can scarce believe that heavenly beings submitted their beauty to you as arbiter: and, grant that this is true, surely the other part of your tale is fiction, in which I am said to have been given you as reward for your verdict. I am not so assured of my charms as to think myself the greatest gift in the divine esteem. My beauty is content to be approved in the eyes of men; the praise of Venus would bring envy on me. Yet I attempt no denial; I am even pleased with the praises of your report – for why should my words deny what I much desire? Nor be offended that I am over slow to believe in you; faith is wont to be slow in matters of great moment.

[131] My first pleasure, then, is to have found favour in the eyes of Venus; the next, that I seemed the greatest prize to you, and that you placed first he honours neither of Pallas nor of Juno when you had heard of Helen’s parts. So, then, I mean valour to you, I mean a far-famed throne! I should be or iron, did I not love such a heart. Of iron, believe me, I am not; but I fight against my love for one who I think can hardly become my own. Why should I essay with curvèd plough to furrow the watery shore, and to follow a hope which the place itself denies? I am not practised in the theft of love, and never yet – the gods are my witnesses – have I artfully made sport of my lord. Even now, as I entrust my words to the voiceless page, my letter performs an office all unwonted. Happy they who are no novices! I, ignorant of the world, dream that the path of guilt is hard.

[147] My very fear is a burden, I am in confusion even now, and think that the eyes of all are on my face. Nor do I think so groundlessly; I have caught the evil murmurs of the crowd, and Aethra has brought back certain words to me. But you – do you feign, unless you choose rather to desist! Yet why should you desist? – you have the power to feign. Keep on with your play, yet secretly! Greater, yet not the greatest, freedom is given me by Menelaus’ absence. He is away, to be sure, on a far journey, for so his affairs compelled; he had great and just cause for his sudden

setting forth – or so it seemed to me. ‘Twas I, when he was doubting whether to go, that said: “Go, but see that you return as soon as may be!” Glad at the omen, he kissed me, and, “Look you to my affairs, and to the household, and to our guest from Troy,” he says. I scarce could hold my laughter; and, while I struggled to keep it back, could say to him nothing except “I will.”

[163] Yes, he has spread sail for Crete with favouring winds; but think not for this that everything may be as you choose! My lord is away, but in such wise that he guards me, even though away – or know you not that monarchs have far-reaching hands? My fame, too, is a burden to me; for, the more you men persist in your praise of me, the more justly does he fear. The glory that is my delight, just now is a bane as well, and it were better I had cheated fame. Nor let his absence cause you to wonder that I have been left here with you; my character and way of life have taught him trust. My face makes him fearful, my life makes him sure; he feels secure in my virtue, my charms rouse his fear.

[175] You urge on me that opportunity freely offered should not be wasted, and that we should profit by the obliging ways of a simple husband. I both desire it and am afraid. So far my will is not determined; my heart is wavering in doubt. Both my lord is away from me, and you are without companion for your sleep, and your beauty takes me, and mine in turn you; the nights, too, are long, and we already come together in speech, and you – wretched me! – are persuasive, and the same roof covers us. May I perish if all things do not invite me to my fall; and yet some fear still holds me back! What you basely urge on me, would that you could in honour compel me to! You should have cast out by force the scruples of my rustic heart. Wrong sometimes brings gain even to those themselves who suffer it. In this way, surely I could have been compelled to happiness.

[189] While it is new, let us rather fight against the love we have begun to feel. A new-kindled flame dies down when sprinkled with but little water. Uncertain is the love of strangers; it wanders, like themselves, and when you expect nothing to be more sure, ‘tis gone. Hypsipyle is witness, witness is the Minoan maid, both mocked in their unacknowledged marriage-beds. You, too, faithless one, they say have abandoned your

Oenone, beloved for many years. Nor yet do you yourself deny it; and, if you do not know, to inquire into all concerning you has been my greatest care. Besides, though you should long to remain constant in love, you have not the power. The Phrygians are even now unfurling your sails; while you are speaking with me, while you are making ready for the hoped-for night, already the wind to bear you homeward will be here. In their mid course you will abandon joys yet full of freshness; away with the winds will go your love of me.

[205] Of shall I follow as you urge, and look upon the Pergamum your praise, and be a bride of the grandchild of Laomedon? I do not so despise the heraldings of the winged talk of men that I would let it fill the earth with my reproach. What will Sparta find to say of me, what all Achaia, what other peoples, what your Troy? What will Priam think of me, what Priam's wife, and all your many brothers and their Dardanian wives? You, too, how will you be able to hope that I shall keep faith and not be troubled by your own example? Whatever stranger shall have entered the harbours of Ilion will be the cause of anxious fears for you. You yourself, how often in anger will you say to me: "Adulteress!" forgetful that your own reproach is linked with mine! You will be at the same time the censor and the author of my fault. Ere that, I pray, may earth lie heavy o'er my face!

[221] But you say I shall enjoy the wealth of Ilion and a life of all things rich, and shall have gifts more splendid even than your promise; yes, purple and precious webs will be given me, and I shall be rich with heaped-up weight of gold! Forgive me if I say it – your gifts are not worth so much; I know not how, my land itself still holds me back. Who will succour me on Phrygian shores if I meet with harm? Where shall I look for brothers, where for a father's aid? All things false Jason

promised to Medea – was she the less thrust forth from the house of

Aeson? There was no Aeëtes to receive the scorned maid home, no mother Idyia, no sister Chalciopé. Naught like this do I fear – but neither did Medea fear! Fair hope is often deceived in its own augury. For every ship tossed now upon the deep, you will find that the sea was gentle as it left the harbour.

[237] The torch, too, starts my fears – the bloody torch your mother brought forth in vision before the day of her travail; and I shrink at the words of the seers who they say forewarned that Ilion would burn with Pelasgian fire. And, just as Cytherea favours you, because she was victorious and has a twofold trophy won from the verdict you gave, so I fear those two that – if your boast be true – lost their causes by your judging; and I do not doubt that, should I follow you, war would be set on foot. Through swords, ah me! our love will have to make its way. Or did Hippodamia of Atrax compel Haemonia's men to declare fierce war on the Centaurs – and do you think that Menelaus and my twin brethren and Tyndareus will be slow to act in such righteous wrath?

[251] As for your loud vaunting and talk of brave deeds, that face belies your words. Your parts are better suited for Venus than for Mars. Be the waging of wars for the valiant; for you, Paris, ever to love! Bid Hector, whom you praise, go warring in your stead; 'tis the other campaigning befits your prowess. That prowess, were I wise or something bolder, I would employ; employed it will be by whatever maid is wise – or I perchance, forgetting modesty, shall learn wisdom and, overcome by time, yield in tardy surrender.

[261] You ask that we speak of these things in secret, face to face. I know what it is you court, and what you mean by speech with me; but you are over hasty, and your harvest is still in the green. This delay perhaps may be friendly to your wish.

[265] Thus far now; let the writing that shares the secret of my heart now stay its furtive task, for my hand is wearied. The rest let us say through my companions Clymene and Aethra, the two who attend and counsel me.

1. Theseus.
2. Leda and the swan.
3. Helen, Jove ; Paris, Priam, Laomedon, Ilus, Tros, Erichthonius, Dardanus, Jove. The usual pedigree makes Jove seventh from Paris.

XVIII. LEANDER TO HERO

[1] He of Abydos sends to you, Maid of Sestos, the greetings he would rather bring, if the waves of the sea should fall.¹ If the gods are kindly toward me, if they favour me in my love, you will read with unwilling eye these words of mine. But they are not kindly; for why do they delay my vows, nor suffer me to haste though the well-known waters? You yourself see how the heavens are blacker than pitch, and the straits turbid with winds, and how the hollowed ships can scarce set sail upon them. One seaman only, and he a bold one – he by whom this letter is brought to you – has put out from the harbour; I had embarked with him, but that, as he loosed the cables from the prow, Abydos all was looking down on him. I could not evade my parents, as before, and the love we wish to keep hid would have come to light.

[15] Forthwith writing these words, “Go, happy letter!” I said; “soon she will reach forth for thee her beautiful hand. Perchance thou wilt even be touched by her approaching lips as she seeks to break thy bands with her snowy tooth.” Speaking such words as these in lowest murmur, the rest I let my right hand say upon the sheet. But ah! how much rather would I have it swim than write, and eagerly bear me through the accustomed waves! It is more fit, I grant, for plying the stroke upon the tranquil deep; yet also apt minister of what I feel.

[25] It is now the seventh night, space longer than a year to me, that the troubled sea has been boiling with hoarse-voiced waters. If in all these nights I have had sleep soothe my breast, may I be long kept from you by the raging deep! Sitting upon some rock, I look sadly on your shores, carried in my thoughts to where in body I cannot go. Nay, my vision even sees – or thinks it sees – lights waking in the topmost of your tower. Thrice have I laid down my garments upon the dry sand; thrice, naked have I tried to enter on the heavy way – the swollen billows opposed the bold attempts of youth, and their waters, surging upon me as I swam, rolled over my head.

[37] But thou, most ungentle of the sweeping winds, why art thou bent on waging war with me? It is I, O Boreas, if thou dost not know, and not the waves, against whom thou ragest! What wouldst thou do, were it not that

love is known to thee? Cold as thou art, canst thou yet deny, base wind that of yore thou wert aflame with Actaeon fires?¹ If, when eager to seek thy joys, someone were to close to thee the paths of air, in what wise wouldst thou endure it? Have mercy on me, I pray; be mild, and stir a more gentle breeze – so may the child of Hippotes² lay upon thee no harsh command.

[47] Vain is my petition; my prayers are met by his murmurings, and the waves tossed up by him he nowhere curbs. Now would that Daedalus could give me his daring wings – though the Icarian strand is not far hence! Whatever might be I would endure, so I could only raise into air the body that oft has hung upon the dubious wave.

[53] Meantime, while wind and wave deny me everything, I ponder in my heart the first times I stole to you. Night was but just beginning – for the memory has charm for me – when I left my father’s doors on the errand of love. Nor did I wait, but, flinging away my garments, and with them my fears, I struck out with pliant arm upon the liquid deep. The moon for the most shed me a tremulous light as I swam, like a duteous attendant watchful over my path. Lifting to her my eyes, “Be gracious to me, shining deity,” I said, “and let the rocks of Latmos rise in thy mind! Endymion will not have thee austere of heart. Bend, O I pray, thy face to aid my secret loves. Thou, a goddess, didst glide from the skies and seek a mortal love; ah, may it be allowed me to say the truth! – she I seek is a goddess too. To say naught of virtues worthy of heavenly breast, beauty like hers falls to none but the true divine. After the beautiful face of Venus, and thine own, there is none before hers; and, that thou mayst not need to trust my words, look thou thyself! As much as all the stars are less than thy bright fires when thy silvery gleam goes forth with pure rays, so much more fair is she than all the fair. If thou dost, doubt it, Cynthia, thy light is blind.”

[75] These words I spake, or words at least not differing much from these, and was borne along in the night through waters that made way before my stroke. The wave was radiant with the image of the reflected moon, and there was a splendour as of day in the silent night; no note came anywhere to my ears, no sound but the murmur of the waters my body thrust aside. The Halcyons only, their hearts still true to beloved Ceyx, I

heard in what seemed to my some sweet lament.

[83] And now my arms grow tired below the shoulder-joint, and with all my strength I raise myself aloft on the summit of the waters. Beholding, far off, a light, "It is my love shines in yonder flame," I cried; "it is my light yon shores contain!" And straight the strength came back to my wearied arms, and the wave seemed easier to me than before. To keep me from the chill of the cold deep, love lends his aid, hot in my eager breast. The nearer I approach, and the nearer draw the shores, and the less of the way remains, the greater my joy to hasten on. When in truth I can be seen as well as see, by your glance you straightway give me heart, and make me strong. Now, too, I strain in my course to pleasure my lady, and toss my arms in the stroke for you to see. Your nurse can scarce stay you from rushing down into the tide – for I saw this, too, and you did not cheat my eye. Yet, though she held you as you went, she could not keep you from wetting your foot at the water's edge. You welcome me with your embrace, share happy kisses with me – kisses, O ye great gods, worth seeking across the deep! –and from your own shoulders you strip the robes to give them over to me, and dry my hair all dripping with the rain of the sea.

[105] For the rest – night knows of that, and ourselves, and the tower that shares our secret, and the light that guides me on my passage through the floods. The joys that that dear night may no more be numbered than the weeds of the Hellespontic sea; the briefer the space that was ours for the theft of love, the more we made sure it should not idly pass.

[111] And now Aurora, the bride of Tithonus, was making ready to chase the night away, and Lucifer had risen, forerunner of the dawn; in haste we ply our kisses, all disorderly, complaining that the night allows brief lingering. So, tarrying till the nurse's bitter warnings bid me go, I leave the tower and make for the chilly shore. We part in tears, and I return to the Maiden's sea,³ looking ever back to my lady while I can. Believe me, it is true: going hence, I seem a swimmer, but, when I return, a shipwrecked man. This too, is true, will you but believe: toward you, my way seems ever inclined; away from you, when I return, it seems a steep of lifeless water. Against the wish of my heart I regain my own land – who

could believe? Against the wish of my heart I tarry now in my own town.

[125] Ah me! why are we joined in soul and parted by the wave; two beings of one mind, but not of one land? Either let your Sestos take me, or my Abydos you; your land is as dear to me as mine is dear to you. Why must my heart be troubled as oft as the sea is troubled? Why must the wind, slight cause, have power to hinder me? Already the curving dolphins have learned our loves, and I think the very fishes know me. Already my accustomed path through the waters is well trod, like to the road pressed on by many a wheel. That there was no other way open than this was my complaint before; but now, because of the winds, I complain that this way, too, has failed. The sea of Athamas' child is foaming white with immense billows, and scarcely safe is the keel that remains in its own harbour; such were these waters, I judge, when first they got from the drowned maid the name they bear. This place is of evil fame enough for the loss of Helle, and, though it spare me, its name reproaches it.

[143] I envy Phrixus, whom the ram with gold in its woolly fleece bore safely over the stormy seas; yet I ask not the office of ram or ship, if only I may have the waters to cleave with my body. I need no art; so only I am allowed to swim, I will be at once ship, seaman, passenger! I guide myself neither by Helice, nor by Arctos, the leading-star of Tyre; my love will none of the stars in common use. Let another fix his eyes on Andromeda and the bright Crown, and upon the Parrhasian Bear that gleams in the frozen pole; but for me, I care not for the loves of Perseus, and of Liber and Jove, to point me on my dubious way. There is another light, far surer for me than those, and when it leads me through the dark my love leaves not its course; while my eyes are fixed on this, I could go to Colchis or the farthest bounds of Pontus, and where the ship of Thessalian pine held its course; and I could surpass the young Palaemon in my swimming, and him whom the wondrous herb made suddenly a god.⁴

[161] Often my arms grow heavy from the unceasing stroke, and scarce can drag their weary way through the endless floods. When I say to them: "No slight reward for toil shall be yours, for soon you shall have my lady's neck to hang about," forthwith they take on strength, and stretch forward to the winning of their prize, like the swift steed let go from the

Elean starting-chamber.⁵ And so I myself keep eyes on the love that burns me, and guide myself by you, maid worthy rather of the skies. For worthy of the skies you are – yet tarry still on earth, or tell me where I also may find a way to the gods above! You are here, yet your wretched lover has but small part in you, and when the sea grows turbid my heart is turbid, too. Of what avail to me that the billows are not broad that sunder us? Is this brief span of waters less an obstacle to me? I almost would that I were distant from you the whole world, so that my hopes were far removed, together with my lady. Now, the nearer you are, the nearer is the flame that kindles me, and hope is always with me, not always she I hope for. I can almost touch her with my hand, so near is she I love; but oft, alas! this “almost” starts my tears. What else than this was the catching at elusive fruits, and pursuing with the lips the hope of a retreating stream?⁶

[183] Am I, then, never to embrace you except when the wave so wills, and shall no tempest see me happy? and, though nothing is less certain than the wind and wave, must winds and water ever by my hope? And yet it still is summer. What when the seas have been assailed by the Pleiad, and the guardian of the Bear, and the Goat of Olenos? Either I know not how rash I am, or even then a love not cautious will send me forth on the deep. And, lest you deem I promise this because the time is not yet come, I will give you no tardy pledge of what I promise. Let the sea be swollen still for these few nights, and I shall essay to cross despite the waves; either happy daring shall leave me safe, or death shall be the end of my anxious love! Yet I shall pray to be cast up on yonder shores, and that my shipwrecked limbs may come into your haven; for you will weep over me, and not disdain to touch my body, and you will say: “Of the death he met, I was the cause!”

[201] You are hurt, no doubt, by this omen of my death, and my letter in this part stirs your displeasure. I cease – no more complain; but, that the sea, too, may end its anger, add, I beseech, your prayers to mine. I need a brief space of calm until I cross to you; when I shall have touched your shore, let the storm rage on! Yonder with you is an apt ship-yard for my keel, and in no waters rests my bark more safe. There let Boreas shut me in, where tarrying is sweet! Then will I be slow to swim, then will I be ware, nor cast revilement on the unhearing floods again, nor complain

that the sea is rough when I fain would swim. Let me be stayed alike by the winds and your tender arms, and let there be double cause to keep me there!

[215] When the storm permits, I shall make use of the oarage of my arms; do you only keep ever the beacon-light where I shall see! Meanwhile, my letter in my stead be with you throughout the night. I pray to follow it myself with least delay!

1. Orithyia of Athens.
2. Aeolus.
3. Helle.
4. Glaucus, the fisherman who ate of a curious grass in which fish were swimming as if in water: Met. xiii. 905 ff.
5. At Olympia.
6. Tantalus.

XIX. HERO TO LEANDER

[1] That I may enjoy in very truth the greeting you have sent in words, Leander, O come! Long to me is all delay that defers our joys. Forgive me what I say – I cannot be patient for love! We burn with equal fires, but I am not equal to you in strength; men, methinks, must have stronger natures. As the body, so is the soul of tender women frail – delay but a little longer, and I shall die!

[9] You men, now in the chase, and now husbanding the genial acres of the country, consume long hours in the varied tasks that keep you. Either the market-place holds you, or the sports of the supple wrestling-ground, or you turn with bit the neck of the responsive steed; now you take the bird with the snare, now the fish with the hook; and the later hours you while away with the wine before you. For me who am denied these things, even were I less fiercely aflame, there is nothing left to do but love. What there is left, I do; and you, O sole delight of mine, I love with even greater love than could be returned to me! Either with my dear nurse I whisper of you, and marvel what can keep you from your way; or, looking forth upon the sea, I chide the billows stirred by the hateful wind, in words almost your own; or, when the heavy wave has a little laid aside

its fierce mood, I complain that you indeed could come, but will not; and while I complain tears course from the eyes that love you, and the ancient dame who shares my secret dries them with tremulous hand. Often I look to see whether your footprints are on the shore, as I the sand would keep the marks impressed on it; and, that I may inquire about you, and write to you, I still am asking if anyone has come from Abydos, or if anyone is going to Abydos. Why tell how many times I kiss the garments you lay aside when making ready to stem the waters of the Hellespont?

[33] Thus, when the light is done and night's more friendly hour has driven out day and set forth the gleaming stars, straightway I place in the highest of our abode my watchful lamps, the signals to guide you on the accustomed way. Then, drawing with whirling spindle the twisted thread, with woman's art we beguile the slow hours of waiting.

[39] What, meanwhile, I say through so long a time, you ask? Naught but Leander's name is on my lips. "Do you think my joy has already come forth from his home, my nurse? Or are all waking, and does he fear his kin? Now do you think he is putting off the robe from his shoulders, and now rubbing the rich oil into his limbs?" She signs assent, most likely; not that she cares for my kisses, but slumber creeps upon her and lets nod her ancient head. Then, after slightest pause, "Now surely he is setting forth on his voyage, " I say, "and is parting the waters with the stroke of his pliant arms." And when I have finished a few strands and the spindle has touched the ground, I ask whether you can be mid way of the strait. And now I look forth, and now in timid tones I pray that a favouring breeze will give you an easy course; my ears catch at uncertain notes, and at every sound I am sure that you have come.

[55] When the greatest part of the night has gone by for me in such delusions, sleep steals upon my wearied eyes. Perhaps, false one, you yet pass the night with me, though against your will; perhaps you come, though yourself you do not wish to come. For now I seem to see you already swimming near and now to feel your wet arms about my neck, and now to throw about your dripping limbs the accustomed coverings, and now to warm our bosoms in the close embrace – and many things else a modest tongue should say naught of, whose memory delights, but whose telling brings a blush. Ah me! brief pleasures these, and not the

truth; for you are ever wont to go when slumber goes. O more firmly let our eager loves be knit, and our joys be faithful and true! Why have I passed so many cold and lonely nights? Why, O tardy loiterer, are you so often away from me? The sea, I grant, is not yet fit for the swimmer; but yesternight the gale was gentler. Why did you let it pass? Why did you fear what was not to come? Why did so fair a night go by for naught, and you not seize upon the way? Grant that like chance for coming be given you soon; this chance was the better, surely, since 'twas the earlier.

[77] But swiftly, you may say, the face of the storm-tossed deep was changed. Yet you often come in less time, when you are in haste. Overtaken here, you would have, methinks, no reason to complain, and while you held me close no storm would harm you. I surely should hear the sounding winds with joy, and should pray for the waters never to be calm. But what has come to pass, that you are grown more fearful of the wave, and dread the sea you before despised? For I call to mind your coming once when the flood was not less fierce and threatening – or not much less; when I cried to you: “be ever rash with such good fortune, lest wretched I may have to weep for your courage!” Whence this new fear, and whither has that boldness fled? Where is that mighty swimmer who scorned the waters?

[91] But no, be rather as you are than as you were wont to be before; make your way when the sea is placid, and be safe – so you are only the same, so we only love each other, as you write, and that flame of ours turn not to chill ashes. I do not fear so much the winds that hinder my vows as I fear that like the wind your love may wander – that I may not be worth it all, that your perils may outweigh their cause, and I seem a reward too slight for your toils.

[99] Sometimes I fear my birthplace may injure me, and I be called no match, a Thracian maid, for a husband from Abydos. Yet could I bear with greater patience all things else than have you linger in the bonds of some mistress's charms, see other arms clasped round your neck, and a new love end the love we bear. Ah, may I rather perish than be wounded by such a crime, may fate overtake me ere you incur that guilt! I do not say these words because you have given sign that such grief will come to me, or because some recent tale has made me anxious, but because I fear

everything – for who that loved was ever free from care? The fears of the absent, too, are multiplied by distance. Happy they whom their own presence bids know the true charge, and forbids to fear the false. Me wrongs imaginary fret, while the real I cannot know, and either error stirs equal gnawings in my heart. O, would you only come! Or did I only know that the wind, or your father – at least, no woman – kept you back! Were it a woman, and I should know, I should die of grieving, believe me; sin against me at once, if you desire my death!

[119] But you will not sin against me, and my fears of such troubles are vain. The reason you do not come is the jealous storm that beats you back. Ah, wretched me! with what great waves the shores are beaten, and what dark clouds envelop and hide the day! It may be the loving mother of Helle has come to the sea, and is lamenting in downpouring tears the drowning of her child¹ – or is the step-dame, turned to a goddess of the waters, vexing the sea that is called by her step-child's hated name?² This place, such as 'tis now, is aught but friendly to tender maids; by these waters Helle perished, by them my own affliction comes. Yet, Neptune, wert thou mindful of thine own heart's flames, thou oughtst let no love be hindered by the winds – if neither Amymone, nor Tyro much bepraised for beauty, are stories idly charged to thee, nor shining Alcyone, and Calyce, child of Hecataeon, nor Medusa when her locks were not yet twined with snakes, nor golden-haired Laodice and Celaeno taken to the skies, nor those whose names I mind me of having read.³ These, surely, Neptune, and many more, the poets say in their songs have mingled their soft embraces with thine own. Why, then, dost thou, who hast felt so many times the power of love, close up with whirling storm the way we have learned to know? Spare us, impetuous one, and mingle thy battles out upon the open deep! These waters, that separate two lands, are scant. It befits thee, who art mighty, either to toss about the mighty keel, or to be fierce even with entire fleets; 'tis shame for he god of the great sea to terrify a swimming youth – that glory is less than should come from troubling any pond. Noble he is, to be sure, and of famous stock, but he does not trace his line from the Ulysses thou dost not trust. Have mercy on him, and save us both! It is he who swims, but he limbs of Leander and all my hopes hang on the selfsame wave.

[151] My lamp has sputtered, see! – for I am writing with it near – it has

sputtered and given us favouring sign. Look, nurse is pouring drops into auspicious fires.⁴ “To-morrow,” she says, “we shall be more,” and herself drinks of the wine. Ah, do make us more, glide over the conquered wave, O you whom I have welcomed to all my inmost heart! Come back to camp, deserter of your ally love; why must I lay my limbs in the mid space of my couch? There is naught for you to fear! Venus’ self will smile upon your venture; child of the sea, the paths of the sea she will make smooth. Oft am I prompted myself to go through the midst of the waves, but ‘tis the wont of this strait to be safer for men. For why, though Phrixus and Phrixus’ sister both rode this way, did the maiden alone give name to these wide waters?

[165] Perhaps you fear the time may fail you for return, or you may not endure the effort of the twofold toil. Then let us both from diverse ways come together in mid sea, and give each other kisses on the waters’ crest, and so return again each to his own town; ‘twill be little, but more than naught! Would that either this shame that compels us to secret loving would cease, or else the love that fears men’s speech. Now, two things that ill go together, passion and regard for men, are at strife. Which I shall follow is in doubt; the one becomes, the other delights. Once had Jason of Pagasae entered Colchis, and he set the maid of the Phasis in his swift ship and bore her off; once had the lover from Ida come to Lacedaemon, and he straight returned together with his prize. But you, as oft as you seek your love, so oft you leave her, and whene’er ‘tis peril for boats to go, you swim.

[181] Yet, O my young lover, though victor over the swollen waters, so spurn the sea as still to be in fear of it! Ships wrought with skill are overwhelmed by the wave; do you think your arms more powerful than oars? What you are eager for, Leander – to swim is the sailor’s fear; ‘tis that follows ever on the wreck of ships. Ah, wretched me! I am eager not to persuade you to what I urge; may you be too strong, I pray, to yield to my admonition – only so you come to me, and cast about my neck the wearied arms oft beaten by the wave!

[191] But, as often as I turn my face toward the dark blue wave, my fearful breast is seized by some hidden chill. Nor am I the less perturbed by a dream I had yesternight, though I have cleared myself of its threat by

sacrifice. For, just before dawn, when my lamp was already dying down, at the time when dreams are wont to be true, my fingers were relaxed by sleep, the threads fell from them, and I laid my head down upon the pillow to rest. There in vision clear I seemed to see a dolphin swimming through the wind-tossed waters; and after the flood had cast it forth upon the thirsty sands, the wave, and at the same time life, abandoned the unhappy thing. Whatever it may mean, I fear; and you – nor smile at my dreams, nor trust your arms except to a tranquil sea! If you spare not yourself, spare the maid beloved by you, who never will be safe unless you are so! I have hope none the less that the waves are broken and peace is near; do you cleave their paths while placid with all your might! Meanwhile, since the billows will not let the swimmer come, let the letter that I send you soften the hated hours of delay.

1. Nephele, mother of Phrixus and Helle.
2. Ino, second wife of Helle's father Athamas.
3. "Such learned enumerations of the love adventures of the gods appear to have been a form of poetry cultivated by the Alexandrians." Purser, in Palmer p. 475.
4. She drops water into the flame of the lamp, either to clear the wick or to honour the omen.

XX. ACONTIUS TO CYDIPPE

[1] Lay aside your fears! here you will give no second oath to your lover; that you have pledged yourself to me once is enough.¹ Read to the end, and so may the languor leave that body of yours; that it feel pain in any part is pain to me!

[5] Why do your blushes rise before you read? – for I suspect that, just as in the temple of Diana, your modest cheeks have reddened. It is wedlock with you that I ask, and the faith you pledged me, not a crime; as your destined husband, not as a deceiver, do I love. You may recall the words which the fruit I plucked from the tree and threw to you brought to your chaste hands; you will find that in them you promise me what I pray that you, maiden, rather than the goddess, will remember, I am still as fearful as ever, but my fear has grown keener than it was; for the flame of my love has waxed with being delayed, and taken on strength, and the

passion that was never slight has now grown great, fed by long time and the hope that you had given. Hope you had given; my ardent heart put trust in you. You cannot deny that this was so – the goddess is my witness. She was there and, present as she was, marked your words, and seemed, by the shaking of her locks, to have accepted them.

[21] I will give you leave to say you were deceived, and by wiles of mine, if only of those wiles my love be counted cause. What was the object of my wiles but the one thing – to be united with you? The thing you complain of has power to join you to me. Neither by nature nor by practice am I so cunning; believe me, maid, it is you who make me skilful. It was ingenious Love who bound you to me, with words – if I, indeed, have gained aught – that I myself drew up. In words dictated by him I made our betrothal bond; Love was the lawyer that taught me knavery. Let wiles be the name you give my deed, and let me be called crafty – if only the wish to possess what one loves be craft!

[33] Look, a second time I write, inditing words of entreaty! A second stratagem is this, and you have good ground for complaint. If I wrong you by loving, I confess I shall wrong you for ever, and strive to win you; though you shun my suit, I shall ever strive. With the sword have others stolen away the maids they loved; shall this letter, discreetly written, be called a crime? May the gods give me power to lay more bonds on you, so that your pledge many nowhere leave you free! A thousand wiles remain – I am only perspiring at the foot of the steep; my ardour will eave nothing unessayed. Grant 'tis doubtful whether you can be taken; the taking shall at least be tried. The issue rests with the gods, but you will be taken none the less. You may evade a part, but you will not escape all the nets which Love, in greater number than you think, has stretched for you.

[47] If art will not serve, I shall resort to arms, and you will be seized and borne away in the embrace that longs for you. I am not the one to chide Paris for what he did, nor any one who, to become a husband, has been a man.² I, too – but I say nothing! Allow that death is fit punishment for this theft of you, it will be less than not to have possessed you. Or you should have been less beautiful, would you be wooed by modest means; 'tis by your charms I am driven to be bold. This is your work – your work, and that of your eyes, brighter than the fiery stars, and the cause of my

burning love; this is the work of your golden tresses and that ivory throat, and the hands which I pray to have clasp my neck, and your comely features, modest yet not rustic, and feet which Thetis' own methinks could scarcely equal. If I could praise the rest of your charms, I should be happier; yet I doubt not that the work is like in all its parts. Compelled by beauty such as this, it is no cause for marvel if I wished the pledge of your word.

[65] In fine, so only you are forced to confess yourself caught, be, if you will, a maid caught by my treachery. The reproach I will endure – only let him who endures have his just reward. Why should so great a charge lack its due profit? Telamon won Hesione, Briseis was taken by Achilles; each of a surety followed the victor as her lord. You may chide and be angry as much as you will, if only you let me enjoy you while you are angry. I who cause it will likewise assuage the wrath I stirred, let me but have a slight chance of appeasing you. Let me have leave to stand weeping before your face, and my tears have leave to add their own speech; and let me, like a slave in fear of bitter stripes, stretch out submissive hands to touch your feet! You know not your own right; call me! Why am I accused in absence? Bid me come, forthwith, after the manner of a mistress. With your own imperious hand you may tear my hair, and make my face livid with your fingers. I will endure all; my only fear perhaps will be lest that hand of yours be bruised on me.

[85] But bind me not with shackles nor with chains – I shall be kept in bonds by unyielding love for you. When your anger shall have had full course, and is sated well, you will say to yourself: “How enduring is his love!” You will say to yourself, when you have seen me bearing all: “He who is a slave so well, let him be slave to me!” Now, unhappy, I am arraigned in my absence, and my cause, though excellent, is lost because no one appears for me.

[93] This further – however much that writing of mine was a wrong to you, it is not I alone, you must know, of whom you have cause to complain. She of Delos was not deserving of betrayal with me; if faith with me you cannot keep, keep faith with the goddess. She was present and saw when you blushed at being ensnared, and stored away your word in a remembering ear. May your omens be groundless! Nothing is more

violent than she when she sees – what I hope will not be! – her godhead wronged. The boar of Calydon will be my witness – fierce, yet so that a mother³ was found to be fiercer than he against her own son. Actaeon, too, will witness, once on a time thought a wild beast by those with whom himself had given wild beasts to death; and the arrogant mother, her body turned to rock, who still sits weeping on Mygdonian soil.⁴

[107] Alas me! Cydippe, I fear to tell you the truth, lest I seem to warn you falsely, for the sake of my plea; yet tell it I must. This is the reason, believe me, why you oft lie ill on the eve of marriage.⁵ It is the goddess herself, looking to your good, and striving to keep you from a false oath; she wishes you kept whole by the keeping whole of your faith. This is the reason why, as oft as you attempt to break your oath, she corrects your sin. Cease to invite forth the cruel bow of the spirited virgin; she still may be appeased, if only you allow. Cease, I entreat, to waste with fevers your tender limbs; preserve those charms of yours for me to enjoy. Preserve those features that were born to kindle my love, and the gentle blush that rises to grace your snowy cheek. May my enemies, and any who would keep you from my arms, so fare as I when you are ill! I am alike in torment whether you wed, or whether you are ill, nor can I say which I should wish the less; at times I waste with grief at thought that I may be cause of pain to you, and my wiles the cause of your wounds. May the false swearing of my lady come upon my head, I pray; mine be the penalty, and she thus be safe!

[129] Nevertheless, that I may not be ignorant of how you fare, now here, now there, I oft walk anxiously in secret before your door; I follow stealthily the maid-slave and the lackey, asking what change for good your sleep has brought, or what your food. Ah me, wretched, that I may not be the one to carry out the bidding of your doctors,⁶ and may not stroke your hands and sit at the side of your bed! and again wretched, because when I am far removed from you, perhaps that other, he whom I least could wish, is with you! He is the one to stroke those dear hands, and to sit by you while ill, hated by me and by the gods above – and while he feels with his thumb your throbbing artery, he oft makes this the excuse for holding your fair, white arm, and touches your bosom, and, it may be, kisses you. A hire like this is too great for the service given!

[143] Who gave you leave to reap my harvests before me? Who laid open the road for you to enter upon another's hopes? That bosom is mine! mine are the kisses you take! Away with your hands from the body pledged to me! Scoundrel, away with your hands! She whom you touch is to be mine; henceforth, if you do that, you will be adulterous. Choose from those who are free one whom another does not claim; if you do not know, those goods have a master of their own. Nor need you take my word – let the formula of our pact be recited; and, lest you say 'tis false, have her read it herself! Out with you from another's chamber, out with you, I say! What are you doing there? Out! That couch is not free! Because you, too, have the words of a second pact, the twin of mine, your case will not on that account be equal with mine. She promised herself to me, her father her to you; he is first after her, but surely she is nearer to herself than her father is. Her father but gave promise of her, while she, too, made oath – to her lover; he called men to witness, she a goddess. He fears to be called false, she to be called forsworn also; do you doubt which – this or that – is the greater fear? In a word, even grant you could compare their hazards, regard the issue – for she lies ill, and he is strong. You and I, too, are entering upon a contest with different minds; our hopes are not equal, nor are our fears the same. Your suit is without risk; for me, repulse is heavier than death, and I already love her whom you, perhaps, will come to love. If you had cared for justice, or cared for what was right, you yourself should have given my passion the way.

[171] Now, since his hard heart persists in its unjust course, Cydippe, to what conclusion does my letter come? It is he who is the cause of your lying ill and under suspicion of Diana; he is the one you would forbid your doors, if you were wise. It is his doing that you are facing such dire hazards of life – and would that he who causes them might perish in your place! If you shall have repulsed him and refused to love on the goddess damns, then straightway you – and I assuredly – will be whole. Stay your fears, maiden! You will possess abiding health, if only you honour the shrine that is witness of your pledge; not by slain oxen are the spirits of heaven made glad, but by good faith, which should be kept even though without witness. To win their health, some maids submit to steel and fire; to others, bitter juices bring their gloomy aid. There is no need of these; only shun false oaths, preserve the pledge you have given – and so yourself, and me! Excuse for past offence your ignorance will supply –

the agreement you read had fallen from your mind. You have but now been admonished not only by word of mine, but as well by those mishaps of health you are wont to suffer as oft as you try to evade your promise. Even if you escape these ills, in child-birth will you dare pray for aid from her light-bringing⁷ hands? She will hear these words – and then, recalling what she has heard, will ask of you from what husband comes those pangs. You will promise a votive gift – she knows your promises are false; you will make oath – she knows you can deceive the gods!

[197] ‘Tis not a matter of myself; the care I labour with is greater. It is concern for your life that fills my heart. Why, but now when your life was in doubt, did your frightened parents weep with fear, whom you keep ignorant of your crime? And why should they be ignorant? – you could tell your mother all. What you have done, Cydippe, needs no blush. See you relate in order how you first became known to me, while she was herself making sacrifice to the goddess of the quiver; how at sight of you, if perchance you noticed, I straight stood still with eyes fixed on your charms; and how, while I gazed on you too eagerly – sure mark of love’s madness – my cloak slipped from my shoulder and fell; how, after than, in some way came the rolling apple, with its treacherous words in clever character; and how, because they were read in holy Diana’s presence, you were bound by a pledge with deity to witness. For fear that after all she many not know the import of the writing, repeat now again to her the words once read by you. “Wed, I pray,” she will say, “him to whom the good gods join you; the one you swore should be, let be my son-in-law. Whoever he is, let him be our choice, since he was Diana’s choice before!” Such will be your mother’s word, if only she is a mother.

[219] And yet, see that she seeks out who I am, and of what ways. She will find that the goddess had you and yours at heart. An isle once thronged by the Corycian nymphs is girdled by the Aegean sea; its name is Cea. That is the land of my fathers; nor, if you look with favour on high-born names, am I to be charged with birth from grandsires of no repute. We have wealth, too, and we have a name above reproach; and, though there were nothing else, I am bound to you by Love. You would aspire to such a husband even though you had not sworn; now that you have sworn, even though he were not such, you should accept him.

[229] These words Phoebe, she of the darts, bade me in my dreams to write you; these words in my waking hours Love bade me write. The arrows of the one of them have already wounded me; that the darts of the other wound not you, take heed! Your safety is joined with mine – have compassion on me and on yourself; why hesitate to aid us both at once? If you shall do this, in the day when the sounding signals⁸ will be given and Delos be stained with votive blood,⁹ a golden image of the blessed apple shall be offered up, and the cause of its offering shall be set forth in verses twain:

BY THIS IMAGE OF THE APPLE DOTH ACONTIUS DECLARE
THAT WHAT ONCE WAS WRITTEN ON IT NOW HATH HAD
FULFILMENT FAIR.

[241] That too long a letter may not weary your weakened frame, and hat it may close with the accustomed end: fare well!

1. In the temple of Diana at Delos, Acontius threw before Cydippe an apple inscribed: “I swear by the sanctuary of Diana that I will wed Acontius,” which she read aloud, thus inadvertently pledging herself.
2. “Vir” is used in two senses – “husband” and “man of courage.”
3. Meleager, whose mother Althaea’s anger was inspired by Diana.
4. Niobe, with the children of whom she boasted, was slain by Diana and Apollo. A “weeping Niobe” rock was pointed out in Mygdonia, a province of Phrygia.
5. The day was often postponed.
6. Administer the prescriptions.
7. A frequent epithet of Diana.
8. For the beginning of the ceremony.
9. The sacrifices attendant upon Acontius’ marriage to Cydippe.

XXI. CYDIPPE TO ACONTIUS

[1] All fearful, I read what you wrote without so much as a murmur, lest my tongue unwittingly might swear by some divinity. And I believe you would have tried to snare me a second time, did you not know, as you yourself confess, that one pledge from me was enough. I should not have read at all; but had I been hard with you, the anger of the cruel goddess might have grown. Though I do everything, though I offer duteous

incense to Diana, she none the less favours you more than your due, and, as you are eager for me to believe, avenges you with unforgetting anger; scarce was she such toward her own Hippolytus.¹ Yet the maiden goddess had done better to favour the years of a maiden like me – years which I fear she wishes few for me.

[13] For the languor clings to me, for causes that do not appear; worn out, I find no help in the physician's art. How thin and wasted am I now, think you, scarce able to write this answer to you? and how pale the body I scarce can raise upon my arm? And now I feel an added fear, lest someone besides the nurse who shares my secret may see that we are interchanging words. She sits before the door, and when they ask how I do within, answers, "She sleeps," that I may write in safety. Presently, when sleep, the excellent excuse for my long retreat, no longer wins belief because I tarry so, and now she sees those coming whom not to admit is hard, she clears her throat and thus gives me the sign agreed upon. Just as they are, in haste I leave my words unfinished, and the letter I have begun is hid in my trembling bosom. Taken thence, a second time it fatigues my fingers; how great the toil to me, yourself can see. May I perish if, to speak truth, you were worthy of it; but I am kinder than is just or your deserve.

[31] So, then, 'tis on your account that I am so many times uncertain of health, and 'tis for your lying tricks that I am and have been punished? Is this the reward that falls to my beauty, proud in your praise? Must I suffer for having pleased? If I had seemed misshapen to you – and would I had! – you would have thought ill of my body, and now it would need no help; but I met with praise, and now I groan; now you two with your strife are my despair, and my own beauty itself wounds me. While neither you yield to him nor he deems him second to you, you hinder his prayers, he hinders yours. I myself am tossed like a ship which steadfast Boreas drives out into the deep, and tide and wave bring back, and when the day longed for by my parents dear draws nigh, at the same time unmeasured burning seizes on my frame – ah me, at the very time of marriage cruel Persephone knocks at my door before her day! I already am shamed, and in fear, though I feel no guilt within, lest I appear to have merited the displeasure of the gods. One contends that my affliction is the work of chance; another says that my destined husband finds not favour with the

gods; and, lest you think yourself untouched by what men say, there are also some who think you the cause, by poisonous arts. Their source is hidden, but my ills are clear to see; you two stir up fierce strife and banish peace, and the blows are mine!

[55] Tell me now, and deceive me not in your wonted way: what will you do from hatred, when you harm me so from love? If you injure one you love, 'twill be reason to love your foe – to save me, I pray you, will to wish my doom! Either you care no longer for the hoped-for maid, whom with hard heart you are letting waste away to an unworthy death, or if in vain you beseech for me the cruel goddess, why boast yourself to me? – you have no favour with her! Choose which case you will; you do not wish to placate Diana – you have forgotten me; you have no power with her – 'tis she has forgotten you!

[65] I would I had either never – or not at that time – known Delos in the Aegean waters! That was the time my ship set forth on a difficult sea, and I entered on a voyage in ill-omened hour. With what step² I came forth! With what step I started from my threshold! The painted deck of the swift ship – with what step I trod it! Twice, none the less, my canvas put about before an adverse wind – ah, senseless that I am, I lie! – a favouring wind was that! A favouring wind it was that brought me back from my going, and hindered the way that had little happiness for me. Ah, would it had been constant against my sails – but it is foolish to complain of fickle winds.

[77] Moved by the fame of the place, I was in eager haste to visit Delos, and the craft in which I sailed seemed spiritless. How oft did I chide the oars for being slow, and complain that sparing canvas was given to the wind! And now I had passed Myconos, now Tenos and Andros, and Delos gleamed³ before my eyes. When I beheld it from afar, “Why doest thou fly from me, O isle?” I cried; “Art thou afloat in the great sea, as in days of yore?”

[85] I had set foot upon land; the light was almost gone, and the sun was making ready to take their yokes from his shining steeds. When he has likewise called them once more to their accustomed rising, my hair is dressed at the bidding of my mother. With her own hand she sets gems

upon my fingers and gold in my tresses, and with her own hand places the robes about my shoulders. Straightway setting forth, we greet the deities to whom the isle is consecrate, and offer up the golden incense and the wine; and while my mother stains the altars with votive blood, and piles the solemn entrails on the smoking altar-flames, my busy nurse conducts me to other temples also, and we stray with wandering step about the holy precincts. And now I walk in the porticoes, now look with wonder on the gifts of kings, and the statues everywhere; I look with wonder, too, on the altar built of countless horns,⁴ and the tree that stayed the goddess in her throes,⁵ all things else that Delos holds – for memory would not serve, nor mood allow, to tell of all I looked on there.

[103] Perhaps, thus gazing, I was gazed upon by you, Acontius, and my simple nature seemed an easy prey. I return to Diana's temple, with its lofty approach of steps – ought any place to be safer than this? – when there is thrown before my feet an apple with this verse that follows – ah me, now again I almost made oath to you! Nurse took it up, looked in amaze, and “Read it through!” she said. I read your treacherous verse, O mighty poet! At mention of the name of wedlock I was confused and shamed, and felt the blushes cover all my face, and my eyes I kept upon my bosom as if fastened there – those eyes that were made ministers to your intent. Wretch, why rejoice? or what glory have you gained? or what praise have you won, a man, by playing on a maid? I did not present myself before you with buckler in hand, like Penethesilea on the soil of Ilion; no sword-girdle, chased with Amazonian gold, was offered you for spoil by me, as by some Hippolyte.⁶ Why exult if your words deceived me, and I, a girl of little wisdom, was taken by your wiles? Cydippe was snared by the apple, an apple snared Schoeneus' child⁷; you now of a truth will be a second Hippomenes! Yet had it been better for you – if that boy really held you captive who you say has certain torches – to do as good men are wont, and not cheat your hope by dealing falsely; you should have won me by persuasion, not taken me whether or no!

[129] Why, when you sought my hand, did you not think worth declaring those things that made your own hand worth my seeking? Why did you wish to compel me rather than persuade, if I could be won by listening to your suit? Of what avail to you now the formal words of an oath, and the tongue that called on present deity to witness? It is the maid that swears,

and I have taken no oath with that; it alone can lend good faith to words. It is counsel and the prudent reasoning of the soul that swear, and, except the bonds of the judgment, none avail. If I have willed to pledge my hand to you, exact the due rights of the promised marriage-bed; but if I have given you naught but my voice, without my heart, you possess in vain but words without a force of their own. I took no oath – I read words that formed an oath; that was no way for you to be chosen to husband by me. Deceive thus other maids – let a letter follow an apple! If this plan holds, win away their great wealth from the rich; make kings take oath to give their thrones to you, and let whatsoever pleases you in all the world be yours! You are much greater in this, believe me, than Diana's self, if your written word has in it such present deity.

[151] Nevertheless, after saying this, after firmly refusing myself to you, after having finished pleading the cause of my promise to you, I confess I fear the anger of Leto's cruel daughter and suspect that from her comes my body's ill. For why is it that, as oft as the sacraments for marriage are made ready, so oft the limbs of the bride-to-be sink down in languor? Thrice now has Hymenaeus come to the altars reared for me and fled, turning his back upon the threshold of my wedding-chamber; the lights so oft replenished by his lazy hand scarce rise again, scarce does he keep the torch alight by waving it. Oft does the perfume distil from his wreathèd locks, and the mantle he sweeps along is splendid with much saffron. When he has touched the threshold, and sees tears and dread of death, and much that is far removed from the ways he keeps, with his own hand he tears the garlands from his brow and casts them forth, and dries the dense balsam from his glistening locks; he shames to stand forth glad in a gloomy throng, and the blush that was in his mantle passes to his cheeks.

[169] But for me – ah, wretched! – my limbs are parched with fever, and the stuffs that cover me are heavier than their wont; I see my parents weeping over me, and instead of the wedding-torch the torch of death is at hand. Spare a maid in distress, O goddess whose joy is the painted quiver, and grant me the health-bringing aid of thy brother! It is shame to thee that he drive away the causes of doom, and that thou, in contrast, have credit for my death. Can it be that, when thou didst wish to bathe in shady pool, I without witting cast eyes upon thee at thy bath? Have I passed thy altars by, among those of so many deities of heaven?⁸ Has thy

mother been scorned by mine?⁹ I have sinned in naught except that I have read a false oath, and been clever with unpropitious verse.

[183] Do you, too, if your love is not a lie, offer up incense for me; let the hands help which harmed me! Why does the hand which is angered because the maiden pledged you is not yet yours so act that yours she cannot become? While still I live you have everything to hope; why does the cruel goddess take from me my life, your hope of me from you?

[189] Do not believe that he whose destined wife I am lays his hand on me to fondle my sick limbs. He sits by me, indeed, as much as he may, but does not forget that mine is a virgin bed. He seems already, too, to feel in some way suspicion of me; for his tears oft fall for some hidden cause, his flatteries are less bold, he asks for few kisses, and calls me his own in tones that are but timid. Nor do I wonder he suspects, for I betray myself by open signs; I turn upon my right side when he comes, and do not speak, and close my eyes in simulate sleep, and when he tries to touch me I throw off his hand. He groans and sighs in his silent breast, for he suffers my displeasure without deserving it. Ah me, that you rejoice and are pleased by that state of my will! Ah me, that I have confessed my feelings to you? If my tongue should speak my mind, 'twere you more justly deserved my anger – you, for having spread the net for me.

[207] You write for leave to come and see me in my illness. You are far from me, and yet you wrong me even from there. I marvelled why your name was Acontius; it is because you have the keen point that deals a wound from afar.¹⁰ At any rate, I am not yet well of just such a wound, for I was pierced by your letter, a far-thrown dart. Yet why should you come to me? Surely but a wretched body you would see – the mighty trophy of your skill. I have wasted and fallen away; my colour is bloodless, such as I recall to mind was the hue of that apple of yours, and my face is white, with no rising gleam of mingled red. Such is wont to be the fairness of fresh marble; such is the colour of silver at the banquet table, pale with the chill touch of icy water. Should you see me now, you will declare you have never seen me before, and say: “No arts of mine e'er sought to win a maid like that.” You will remit me the keeping of my promise, in fear lest I become yours, and will long for a goddess to forget it all. Perhaps you will even a second time make me swear, but in contrary wise, and will

send me words a second time to read.

[227] But none the less I could wish you to look upon me, as you yourself entreated – to look upon the languid limbs of your promised bride! Though your heart were harder than steel, Acontius, you yourself would ask pardon for my uttered words.¹¹ Yet, that you be not unaware, the god who sings the fates at Delphi is being asked by what means I may grow strong again. He, too, as vague rumour whispers now, complains of the neglect of some pledge he was witness to. This is what the god says, this his prophet, and this the verses I read – surely, the wish of your heart lacks no support in prophetic verse! Whence this favour to you? – unless perhaps you have found some new writing the reading whereof ensnares even the mighty gods. And since you hold bound the gods, I myself follow their will, and gladly yield my vanquished hands in fulfilment of your prayers; with eyes full of shame held fast on the ground, I have confessed to my mother the pledge my tongue was trapped to give. The rest must be your care; even this, that my letter has not feared to speak with you, is more than a maid should do. Already have I wearied enough with the pen my weakened members, and my sick hand refuses longer its office. What remains for my letter, if I say that I long to be united with you soon? nothing but to add: FAREWELL.

1. The chaste favourite of the goddess, courted by Phaedra, who compassed his death because of his refusal. See iv.
2. Eager and spirited.
3. The Greek islands are masses of limestone.
4. A great wonder in its time; built by Apollo of the horns of his sister's sacrificial victims.
5. Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana.
6. Penthesilea and Hippolyte were queens of the Amazons; the former was slain by Achilles at Troy, the latter's sword-belt was won by Heracles as his sixth labour, and she was given by him in marriage to Theseus for his aid.
7. Atalanta, who lost the race by stopping for the golden apples dropped by Hippomenes.
8. A reference to Oeneus, whose neglect of Diana caused the coming of the Calydonian boar.
9. Niobe's boast of her children to Leto.

10. *Akontion*, a javelin, *iaculum*.

11. *i.e.* pray for the remission of my oath.

END