Some Greek Poems of
Love & Beauty
SOME GREEK POEMS OF
LOVE AND BEAUTY

being a selection from
the Little Things of Greek Poetry
made & translated into English

by

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To
E·J·E
Preface

English verse-translations of many of these poems have been made before. While I was making mine, I refrained from looking at others; but this will not have prevented the seeming plagiarisms of subconscious reminiscence and fortuitous similarity. If I am accused of phrase-lifting, I plead either that I didn’t mean to or that I couldn’t help it. We all aim at the semblance of inevitability, and sometimes what seems inevitable, is. To the reader who asks why I have left out this and that, I would say, first that the choice was mine not his, secondly that it seemed folly to attempt to translate where another’s version was part of English literature, and thirdly that there are some delightful little Greek poems which will not go into verse, and yet are too slight to bear rendering into prose.

A few of these translations have been printed before, that of Theocritus’ Distaff in the Cambridge Review, one or two in the Lyra Graeca of the Loeb Classical Library (Heinemann), and those of the Sappho fragments in Sappho Revocata (Peter Davies). Excepting these and a few which were written in 1929, all are the work of the summer of 1935. Much of my present Introduction has been adapted from that of a selection which was published as Some Greek Love-Poems by Mr Peter Davies some years ago.

Among the many kind friends on whom I have tried these verses before having them printed I must thank here Robert Gittings, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Harris Rackham, Nelly Smith-Dampier, Eustace Tillyard, James Vince, and the reader of the University Press. They all will forgive me, I know, for not always taking their advice.

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J. M. E.
When I lived I sought no wings,  
    Schemed no heaven, planned no hell,  
But, content with little things,  
    Made an earth, and it was well.  

Richard Middleton, Pagan Epitaph