Archilochus

The spear’s my bread, the spear’s my wine,
The spear’s my couch when I would dine.

Mimnermus

1
What would Life, what Pleasure, be,
Golden Love, withouten thee?
May I die when none of these
Charms me—shy love-passages,
Suasive love-gifts, the love-bed,
Flow’r’s of youth for man or maid;
For once let Eld an entrance win,
Who makes us foul outside and in,
Then Care frets heart unceasingly
And Sun no more delighteth eye;
Hated of child, despised of wife,
Ill hap is his that hath long life.

2
Harm not thou thy fellow-men,
Sojourner nor citizen,
And take thy fling; hard neighbours still
Will speak of thee, some well, some ill.
Mimnermus

3

I sweat and tremble when I see
The glad and glorious flow’ring-time
Of the good men that grew with me,
And wish it longer; youth’s dear prime
Lasts as long as dreams a-dreaming;
O’erhead hangs Age, hard, cheap, ill-seeming,
Age that dims what Prowess lit,
And blinds our eyes and blunts our wit.

~

Sappho

1

TO APHRODITE

[A Fragment]

Come, Love, and mix with dainty cheer
In cups of gold Thy heav’ny wine,
And pour out for our comrades here,
Thy comrades and mine.

1: The wine is perhaps metaphorical and the poem introductory to the Book of Wedding-Songs; if so, the comrades are the brides and bridegrooms.
Sappho

2

TO MNASIDICA

[A Fragment]

Let dainty fingers, Dica mine,
With wreathen dill thy love-locks twine:
For that which is with flowers gay,
Favour never saith it nay;
But she will turn away her head
From all that goes ungarlanded.

3

The Moon is gone
And the Pleiads set,
Midnight is nigh;
Time passes on,
And passes; yet
Alone I lie.

Solon

No wealth of silver or of gold,
Of horses, mules, or fields of wheat,
Surpasseth his whose goods all told
Are ease of belly, sides, and feet;
That 's riches; nothing more than this
Goes with dead men down to Dis:
Death will come whate'er you pay,
And aches and age will have their way.

[ 3 ]
Alcaeus

I

[A Fragment]

Let's drink; why wait till lights come in?
The day hath but an inch to run;
Lad, take the great cups from the bin,
For Semelê's immortal Son
Gave wine our rising cares to quell;
Be our cups mix'd two parts to one,
And chase each other round pell-mell.

2

[A Fragment]

Douse thy weasand well in wine,
The Dog will soon be o'er the line;
Now the Summer 's at his worst,
And all the world 's athirst.
The artichoke 's a-blowing now
And cricket sings atop the bough;
Now woman wears her sauciest mien,
But man grows languishing and lean;
For Sirius brings a sapless drouth
On knees as well as mouth.

1 The cups of wine are drunk like our loving-cups, that is they are handed round for each guest to take a drink. It was not usual in Alcaeus' day to drink wine neat, nor to carouse before evening. Great cups were reserved for great occasions.
2 Sirius is the chief star in the constellation of the Great Dog; the date is about the 15th July. The flowering of the artichoke was with the Greeks a sign of the approach of the Dog-days.

[ 4 ]
Athenian Drinking-Song

I
[by Alcaeus?]

From the shore your course survey
To see if you 've the skill to make it;
Once the sailor 's under weigh,
Whate'er the wind his sail must take it.

Cleobulus

A RIDDLE

The father 's one, the sons a dozen
Who each twice-thirty daughters cherish
Whereof each white has one black cousin,
All immortal, yet they perish.

Ibycus

Love once more looks tenderly
From beneath dark eyelashes,
And with his magic manifold
Will cast me, as he did of old,
Into the snare whence none may fly;
I swear that these assaults of his
Give me to quake like an old champion-horse
That yet again must pull the chariot to the course.

Cleobulus: Year, months, days, nights; riddles were one of the forms of after-dinner entertainment; the poem is rather doubtfully ascribed.
Demodocus

The Chians are crooks, not two straight to one wry 'un,
But all—except Procles, and he is a Chian.

Theognis

1
'T is truth, too much wine 's bad; don't blink it:
But if with knowledge men will drink it,
Wine 's not so bad as some would think it.

2
Play on, my soul; soon other men
Will see the day;
And I shall be a dead man then,
And mix'd with clay.

3
Poor fools are they that drink not wine
When the Dog-Star 's o'er the line.

4
The fairest thing 's uprightness, health the best,
To have our heart's desire the pleasantest.

Demodocus: The translation omits 'Thus also spake Demodocus'.

[ 6 ]
Theognis

5
To Cynus
If that thou love me and thy heart be true,
Love me not with thy lips but through and through:
Either be purely mine or make an end;
One-tongue-two-minds is better foe than friend.

6
To get and breed a man is easier done
Than to put sense into him; to devise
Means to make bad men good and blockheads wise
Is past our practice; if the leech had won
Pow’r o’er ill nature or infatuate wit,
He’d earn high wages for the good he’d do us;
For could good sense be made and put into us,
A good man’s son would ne’er go to the devil,
He’d be taught better. Nay, the truth of it
Is that, by teaching, good ne’er comes of evil.

7
Friends are many o’er cup and platter,
Few when it comes to things that matter.

8
Sons of men, take my advice,
While thoughts are brave and youth’s in flower,
That’s the time to enjoy your dower;
Heav’n gives none his heyday twice,
But ugly Age all heads doth bare,
And Death was never known to spare.

6 Probably by a later hand. 8 By a later hand.

[ 7 ]
Theognis

9
With evil spirits twain man’s drinking’s curst,
Dire Drunkenness and strength-destroying Thirst:
My way, good friend, betwixt them winds about;
I’ll neither drink too much nor go without.

10
No man, once he’s underground
And lodg’d with dim Persephone,
Has joy of flute’s or zither’s sound
Or of the Wine-God’s charity:
While legs are light and head unshaking,
That’s my time for merrymaking.

11
No wine is pledg’d me now; nigh my sweet Nell
There sitteth one not near so good as I;
‘His health in water’ is her father’s cry:
And so she weeps her way home from the well,
Thither where I so oft have kiss’d her hair
And she made love’s own music in mine ear.

12
To be in drink when others are out is a sin,
But it’s sin to be out when others are in.

10 By a later hand. 11 No name is given in the Greek. It is supposed to have been the custom to drink confusion to a man in water.
Theognis

13

For joy of youth I play; the time will come
When, underground, far from the lovely light,
I, good man though I be, shall lie stone-dumb,
And see no more for ever and a night.

Anacreon

1

Boy, bring the jug; I want a wet;
Five parts wine, and water ten:
I mean to play the toper; yet
Topers can be gentlemen.

* * *

Let's give this barbarous boozing up,
This clamorous after-dinner clatter,
And take a mild and modest cup
'Twixt pretty songs on themes that matter.

2

Whose after-supper tattle 's ever bent
On fights and frays, he 's not the friend I choose;
But he that minds him of true merriment
And mingleth Aphrodite with the Muse.

1 It is not certain that these stanzas ran continuously.
2 mingleth Aphrodite: sings not-too-proper songs.
Anacreon

3

My jowl's gone gray, gone bare my head,
My teeth are old, and fair youth fled:
Sweet life has but a span to go,
And oftentimes I cry me woe
For fear of what Death has for me;
Dire's his dark hold, and rough will be
The road thither; but worst of all,
Once down, I'm down beyond recall.

4

To a Disdainful Woman

Thracian filly, tell me why
You look askance when I come nigh,
And flee unkind, as though I knew
Nought of how to manage you?

Should it please me, truth to tell,
I could bridle you right well,
And take and ride you hand on rein
Up the course and down again;

And if instead you graze your fill
And frisk it in the meadow still,
'Tis but because a man like me
Knows how long to leave you free.

4 The last two lines are partly conjectural.

[ 10 ]