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Epigrams on Sappho

and other famous

Greek Lyric Poetesses

ENGLISHED BY

G. R. WOODWARD, M. A.

(SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF GONVILLE
AND CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE)

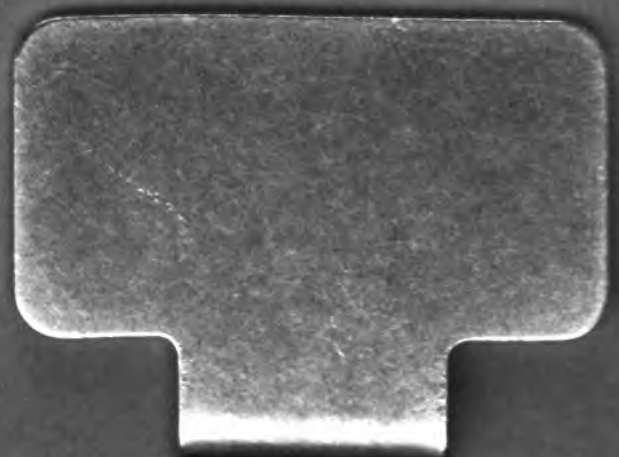
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ON THE NINE LYRIC MUSES

ANTIPATER OF THESSALONICA : ix, 26

NAME we here our poetesses,
Hymners of celestial glees :
Helicon and Macedonian
Mount Pieria fed them-- these ;
MOIRO and PREXILLA, also
That she-Homer, ANYTE :
SAPPHO, glory of the fair-hair'd
Lesbian femininity :
FAMOUS TELESILLA, ERINNA,
And CORINNA, who in song
Swell'd the praises of Athena,
And her shield, in warfare strong :
NOSSIS, too, with honied anthem ;
MYRTIS with euphonious lay :
Makers all of folio volumes,
Pages, bound to last for ay.
Nine the heavenly Muses' number ;
And to Nine our world gave birth,
Fount of never-dying pleasure
To the mortal tribes of earth.

ON SAPPHO (*The Poetess*)

TVLLIVS LAVREAS : vij, 17

Passing by my tomb that stands,
Stranger, on Æolic lands,
Let it not of me be said,
'Mitylenè's songster 's dead.'
This my sepulchre, by aid
Of the hand of mortal made,
Will, as such, decay and rot,
And be speedily forgot.
But if any man peruses
Me, the darling of the Muses,
From whose garden flowers divine
I have ta'en for my own Nine,
He shall know that I have scapèd
Hadès' halls in darkness drapèd;
Nor shall sun arise but 'twill
Tell of Sappho's lyric skill.

ANTIPATER OF SIDON : iv, 66

When, wonder-struck, Mnemosyné
Heard Sappho's honey-tone,
'And doth mankind possess [quod she]
A Tenth Muse of their own?'

ANON. ix, 186

Hither to the sacred ground,
Bright-eyed Hera's fane renown'd!
Lesbian lasses, to and fro
Twirl the light fantastic toe:
There appoint a seemly dance.
There let Sappho, to advance
Hera's praise, with golden lyre
Handled ably, lead the quire.
Happy in glad minuet,
Hearing Sappho man might bet
That Kalliopé's own voice
Tuned the music sweet and choice.

PLATO : ix, 596

Nine Muses : as say some. But then,
How scantily, ay the while!
Lo! Sappho made their number Ten,
The Muse of Lesbos Isle.

PINUTES : vij, 16

Sappho's bones [her voice is mute]
Lie within this portal:
But her wisdom and argute
Poems are immortal.

ANTIPATER : vij, 15

SAPPHO'S GRAVE. My Muse out-classes
As much that of other lasses
As doth Homer's work out-span
That of any other man.

ANTIPATER OF SIDON : vij, 14

ÆOLIAN soil, in thee doth Sappho rest,
A mortal Muse, with ix immortals, blest,
Nurseling of Venus and of Love, with whom
Persuasion twined a wreath of fadeless bloom,
To Hellas joy, and glory o'er thy head.
Ye Fates, whose distaff spins the triple thread,
Why wove ye not this minstrel endless days,
Whose gifts are deathless Heliconian lays?

ON NOSSIS

NOSSIS : vij, 718

HO! stranger. If thy barque is bound
For Mitylenè, much renown'd
For bonny dances : which fair place
Fired Sappho, flower of every grace,
Speak thus : The land of Lokri here
Hath borne one, to the Muses dear,
A match for Sappho's self; and say,
Her name is Nossis. Now, away!

ON ERINNA

ANON. vij, 12

THee, already chaunting choice
Swan-like song with honied voice,
And prepared to child ere long
Yet more spring-time of sweet song,
Fate, the mistress of the reel,
And of threaded spinning-wheel,
Drive thee o'er death's waters wide,
Where, Erinna, shades abide.
But thy noble labours give
Token that thou still dost live,
Blending now thy song divine
With Pierian Muses Nine.

ASKLEPIADES : vij, 11

ERinna's honied work here see ;
Not much, but else how could it be
From maid of nineteen years? Yet it
Is stronger verse than oft is writ.
And, but for early death, my share
Of fame had been beyond compare.

LEONIDAS OF MELEAGER : vij, 13

THat bee among the poet throng,
Erinna, maiden child of song,
While sipping of the Muses' flowers,
Death grabb'd her for his bridal bowers.
For-sooth in wisdom spake the maid,
'Thou 'rt envious of me, Death,' she said.

ANTIPATER : vij, 713

OF few words was Erinna ;
Not many were her lays :
Yet hath that little won her
The Muses' wreath of bays.

She therefore is not fallen
Out of remembrance, no :
Nor hid by plume and shadow
Of sable night below.

But we new poetesses,
Un-number'd as the sand,
Inherit, fir, oblivion,
And wither, all the band.

For better is one swan-song,
However short a thing,
Than all your jays a-jangling
Among the clouds in Spring.

ON DORICHA

POSEIDIPPOS : xiiij, 596

DOricha, thy bones inurn'd
Long ago to dust are turn'd,
And the braid that bound thy locks,
And thy myrrh-bescented smocks,
In the flesh when thou didst fling
Arm around his neck, and cling
Close to fair Charaxos' side,
Revelling on till matin tide.
But the white leaves of thy pet
Ode on Sappho live on yet,
And will live on, to proclaim
Thy right honourable name,
Which here Naukratis will keep,
Long as courser o'er the deep
Shall drop anchor, as erewhile,
On the shoal-lagoons of Nile.



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¶ But 120 copies of this booklet have been
printed, whereof this bears the Number 83





