

THE LAMENT FOR ADONIS.
FROM THE GREEK OF BION OF SMYRNA.

Of the slaying of Adonis the Spring by the Black Boar of Winter. Nature the Mother laments him, bewailing the fate of her Beloved.

The immemorial Tragedy of Love, and of the Doom of the year—Death ever pursuing Life—is here shown.

THE LAMENT FOR ADONIS.



For dead Adonis now be my bewailing :
Oh, beautiful Adonis ! he is dead !
The Loves lament Adonis now ; all lone is
The Cyprian ; she rises in her railing
All somberly ; she sleeps in goodlihead
Of purple now no more : for dead Adonis
She strikes her breasts : nay, Venus : be it known
To the wide world thou wailest lost Adon.

I wail Adonis, and the Loves accord
To wail with me ; in the mountains he is lain
Lowly ; a tusk, a snowy tusk, hath gored
His snowy thigh : in his last dying pain
Faintly he sobs, to Cytherea's woe,
As black blood trickles down the flesh of snow.
Dull grow the eyes beneath his lids ; the rose
Faieth his lip, and with the rose doth flit
The kiss that Venus clingingly bestows,
Sweet to her, though he dies ; he hath not wit
Aught of her kiss, but dies unknowing it.

I wail Adonis : all the Loves despair.
Ah, cruel, cruel is the hurt that is
In Adon's thigh! Alas! greater than his
The wound the Cytherea's breast doth bear.
Around him are his faithful hounds at moan,
With Oread nymphs bewailing; and the zone
Of Aphrodite's locks is loosed : she roves,
Unsandalled, sad, unkempt, the oaken groves.
And brambles pluck her as she goes, to cull
Her sacred blood, who, shrilling-wailing by,
Is hurtled through the valleys dreary-dull.
On her Assyrian Lord shrill-piercingly
She calls, wailing her stripling-love anew :
Around his belly black blood gushes high—
Adonis' paps grow crimson from his thigh ;
His snow-pure breasts take on their purple hue.

Woe! woe! to Cytherea. In her wailing
Mingle the Loves ; her beauteous boy has passed
From her ; with him her radiant shape must go.
Soft was her glory until Adonis' failing!
With Adon's dying might no longer last
The Cyprian's joyous splendour : woe! ah, woe!
Now all the oakenshaws and mountains mourn
Adonis : woe! ah, woe! and rivers gush
For pain of Aphrodite, and the hill-born
Springs weep Adon, sorrowful blossoms blush,
As through the cities and the woody verges
Goes Cytherea chanting mourning-dirges.

Woe! woe! to Cytherea. Fair Adon
Is dead: and Echo 'Fair Adon is dead'
Replies. Who had stayed griefless that had known
Venus' most lamentable love? She knows
The irrevocable wound, the blood that flows
Red on his paling thigh. With arms outspread.
She whispers: Adon, stay! Stay, Adon mine,
O hapless! that one last time I may hold thee!
That one last time my circling arms may fold thee
That so my lips may intermix with thine.
Stir, my Adonis, feebly as thou mayst,
Grant me, for this last time, to be embraced
Of thee: nay, kiss me even while there dwells
Breath in thee still, till from thy soul there wells
Thy spirit into my lips, into my heart,
And I have sucked thine essence to mine own,
Thy sweet love-core, to be treasured even as part
Of thee, since thou must fly me, mine Adon.
Far dost thou fly, even to Acheron,
My Adonis, and its hard and bitter King;
I, hapless Goddess, live, nor may I flee
Whither thou flee'st! Take then, Persephone,
My lover, since to thee each beauteous thing
Must fare! Alas! What is my strength to thine?
I stay all comfortless; stark grief is mine
Exhaustlessly. I fear thee. And I moan
—Woe to me! He is dead!—for mine Adon.
Ah! Dost thou die, my thrice-desirable?
Then, as a dream, desire hath fled away;

Venus is widowed ; in my house today
The Loves are idle, there is no more spell
In the zone of Aphrodite ! What could spur
Thy rashness to the chase ? Why didst thou dare
To strive with beasts, who wast so heavenly-fair ?
So Venus wailed, and the Loves wailed with her.

Woe ! Woe ! to Venus : fair Adon is dead ;
Her tears vie with the stream that flow from him flows :
The earth grows flowered ; from her tears doth spread
The anemone, and from his blood the rose.

I wail Adon ; the fair Adon is slain !
O Cyprian ! No more bewail thy swain
In the oakenshaws. There is a fair couch spread ;
Yea ! For Adonis is a leafy bed
Awaiting. In this bed of thine is lain
Adonis ; fair as ever, being dead ;
As though he slept, Adonis' goodlihead
Still lingers. Lay him in the tender raiment
Wherein erewhile he slept ; wherein he sped
In holy slumbers through the night's betrayalment
Embedded goldenly with thee : pine yet
After the sorrowful Adonis. Be
The crowns, the blossoms, cast on him ! they fret
To fading, yea ! all fade to death since he
Died. Scatter nard and myrtle leaves upon him !
Cast myrrh on him ! may all soft odours die

With Adon's scent! the purple vestures don him
—The delicate Adonis! Wailingly
The weeping Loves surround him, for his sake
Shorn of their locks: one with his feet doth break
His arrows; and beneath his feet one flings
His bow to trample; one tears up his quiver
All fully-feathered: one's hand would deliver
Adonis' foot of its sandal; another brings
Water in golden ewers; one doth mind him
To bath Adonis' thighs, and one behind him
Brings air unto Adonis with his wings.

For Cytherea wail the Loves: all torches
Are quenched by Hymenæus at their porches;
Tattered the nuptial-wreath. Hymen is sung.
Is sung no more. O Hymen! Woe! ah, woe!
The wail arises: and the Graces tongue
The lamentable 'Woe! ah, woe! Adon!'
Cinyras' son they wail; more grief they know
Even than Hymenæus; and they tell
Each unto each, in a more shrilly tone
Than Dione's Daughter's: 'Beautiful Adon
Is dead!' 'Adon! Adon!' the Muses' spell
Rises: in vain they call; he may not know
Return; with Proserpine he still must dwell.
O Cytherea! Cease today thy woe:
Leave thy lamentings, for new griefs shall swell
In a new year; anew thy tears shall flow.