

every day. He upbraids his friend who has not sent him a word of comfort "Sic meos amores?" This was Catullus' last verse. But though he died prematurely he cannot be placed "among the inheritors of unfilled renown". His modest book of verse his "lepidus libellus" contains some of the most genuine poetry not only in Latin but in all literature. In all the realms of gold none has a better claim to his fief than Catullus. Johnson's epitaph on Goldsmith would apply admirably to him. "Indeed he touched nothing which he did not adorn. The best love poem the best elegy, the best epithalamium, and some of the best light verse and epigrams in Latin belong to him. His fame rests not on his exposition of a philosophy of life, not of some personal interpretation of nature, not on the creation of character but on the unalloyed quality of his lyrical inspiration and on the sincerity with which he has expressed his emotions and experiences. His was not the analytical nature of a Browning, the moral preoccupation of a Wordsworth or of Tennyson, the decorative temperament of Keats. The most kindred spirit is Shelley—the Shelley naturally of the shorter poems. This affinity is visible also in certain technical aspects of their art. Like Shelley Catullus makes a very sparing use of epithets. There is a primitive directness, a fiery intensity of inspiration which is impatient of decorative effects and finds expression in activity in verbs. Catullus' own description of the mountain torrent gushing out from the rocks could very well be taken as the symbol of his inspiration. In his first poem to Clodia there are only three adjectives two of which are perfectly homely. Most of his poems are lightning couriers of emotion all sinews with not an ounce of superfluous flesh. Not that when he wishes he cannot vie with the best in the more obvious technique of art in pictorial and sound effects, in verbal felicities, accuracy of description and observation. A few instances would suffice. Listen to the lion crashing through the undergrowth

*Vadit, fremit, refringit virgulta pede vago.*

or to the clapping of hands and the shrill sound of cymbals at the Bacchic orgy

*Plangebant aliae proceris tympana palmis  
Aut tereti tenuis tinnitus aere ciebant.*

The passage in which the Fates are described weaving the destinies of men cannot be surpassed for brevity and accuracy,

*Laeva colum molli lana retinebat amictum*

The ponderous finality of the closing of the tombstone contrasted with the brief succession of mortal days is admirably brought out in

*Soles occidere et redire possunt  
Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux  
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.*

These and many others are beautiful and precious examples of art but they do not constitute the essential Catullus—the Catullus that still means so much to us after the lapse of more than nineteen hundred years. What endears him to us is his frank portrayal with all its light and shadows of a human soul.

*Poor splendid wings so, frayed and soiled and torn!  
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with quick light tears!  
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,  
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers  
Like joy-bells crossed with death bells in our ears!  
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire  
That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire  
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,  
But left more sweet than roses to respire,  
Catullus, our sad, bad glad mad brother's name?*

*Ne immemores simus.*

*Ad Caietanum Rymo de eius Vineae*

*Chara tuo Domino laetissima Vineae, circum  
Undique palmitibus compta racemiferis:  
O quibus ipse tuas commendem laudibus uvas,  
Quae haustus dant pressae poculae nectarei?  
Suave merum, quo non aliud pretiosius ullum,  
Exanimesque suo robore vivificans.  
Non equidem credo tam dulcem hausisse liquorem  
Ipsam hominum regem caelicolumque Jovem.  
O fragrans vinum, generosi munera Bacchi,  
Tu mundi vita es, te sine cuncta rigent.  
Tu facis hinc plures me ex tempore dicere versus,  
Cunctipotensque rapis limen ad aethereum.  
Vae siccis tamen et gelidae poteribus undae!  
Dura Deus vobis omnia proposuit.  
O tu docte Redi, vini gnarissime cantor,  
Hoc tam dulce tuis insere carminibus.  
Insere: degustans (polles acri ipse palato)  
Reiectis reliquis, huic dabis imperium.  
Vinea chara nimis salve! Nix, frigora, nimbi  
Numquam te laedant, saeva nec ira Jovis.*

JOSEPH ZAMMIT  
(BRIGHELLA)