

A Vision of Sappho

Of the Persons of the Play, beholding
How they lived whose moods I here have fancied.

These responsive verses (need I prompt you?)
Are the broken lines of two fond mortals
Who were lovers once in Mitylene,
When the lyric heart and fervid beauty,
With the pure mind so restrained, so eager,
Flamed the perfect poise in men and women
And the arts they wrought with such transcendence.

Whether you play Cigarette or Fanchon,
Carmen or Camille or sad Maslova,
All the actor's genius comes to aid you,—
Ardor, temperament, and understanding,—
Till the mimic words have breath and being,
Color, form and voice and melting motion,
And the very person lives before us
By that subtle witchery. I pray you
Lend this volume something of that talent
For interpretation rare and generous;
So my Sappho shall emerge transfigured,—
Fair, impassioned, witty, and most loving,—
From these pages when you have endowed her
With the gracious bearing of a woman
And the last fine unaccounted something,
Like the lyric touch that one despairs of!

Well, the rain holds up; the fog has lifted
From the dripping trees; the wooded gorge lies
Washed a bluer purple, ledge and summit,
Where the clouds still hang in lawny patches
To the peaks and shoulders of the mountains.
The familiar earth returns with sunlight,
And our day-dream vanishes in hill-mist.

No, not quite! Hark from the sombre shadows
That serene note, how it pleads and falters,
Stops and hesitates and half recovers
That lost measure from the full June chorus!
Not a wood-thrush? Then beyond all reason
You believe the Pan-pipes still at moments
Loose their burden to the winds of summer,
And their master haunts the mighty forest,
Lonely shore and rocky-bedded hill stream,
Still enamored of his own wild music
And bewildered by a sad strange wonder
At our modern ways? And from that piping
Something plaintive runs across the joyance
Of this woodland music with a cadence