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THE ODES OF PINDAR

Translated by

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so logic

NEMEA 4

The best healer for struggles of pain, after the issue is clear,
is happiness; and wise songs,
daughters of the Muses, stroke one with hands of gentleness.
Not warm water even laps in such ease
the body as praise molded to the lyre's measure.
The story of things done outlives the act
when, by the Graces' assent, — EVX
the lips lift it up out of the deep heart.

Let this be the proem of the hymn I cast
for Zeus, child of Kronos, for Nemea
and Timasarchos' wrestling; may it find favor in
the established tower of the Aiakidai, light of fair salvation
to all

strangers. And if Timokritos, your father, still went warm
in the sun's blaze, over and again with intricacy
of lyre playing, leaning upon this melody,
he would have chanted the splendor of his son's success;

the chain of garlands from the games at Kleonai
brought home; and from shining
Athens the magnificent; at Thebes of the seven gates,
where beside the bright tomb of Amphitryon
the Kadmeians with good will circled him with flowers
for Aigina's sake. Friend among friends, he came
to the city of his hosts, to look
upon the rich court of Herakles,

with whom mighty Telamon long ago sacked
Troy, slew the Meropes
and the armed ghastly giant Alkyones—

NEMEA 6

There is one
race of men, one race of gods; both have breath
of life from a single mother. But sundered power
holds us divided, so that the one is nothing, while for the
other the brazen sky is established
their sure citadel forever. Yet we have some likeness in great
intelligence, or strength, to the immortals,
though we know not what the day will bring, what course
after nightfall
destiny has written that we must run to the end.

For witness
even now, behold how his lineage works in Alkimidas.
It is like cornfields that exchange their estate,
now in their year to yield life to men from their level spaces
while again they lie fallow to gather strength. He came
home from the lovely games at Nemea,
a boy contestant; and steering this destiny from God
he shows now
as one not ill-starred in his quest of prizes for wrestling,

laying his feet in the steps that are his by blood
of his grandfather, Praxidamas.
He was Olympionician and first
brought home to the Aiakidai from Alpheus the olive
branches,
and went five times garlanded at the Isthmos,
thrice at Nemea, to abate forgetfulness
fallen upon Sokleidas, mightiest
of the sons of Hagesimachos.

For these three
have come home, bearing prizes; their achievement reached
the uttermost;

and it was these who knew the struggle also. By God's grace,
boxing has brought forth no one house to possess
more garlands in any corner of all Hellas. I hope,
high though my speech be, it strikes the mark squarely,
as from a bow drawn true. My Muse, steer me the flight
of these my words
straight and glorious. For men pass,

but the songs
and the stories bring back the splendor of their deeds.
And the Bassidai have no dearth, their race is bespoken of
old,

as on long voyages they have come with a freight of praise,
for the gardeners of the Muses

giving occasion to hymns for the sake of high deeds.

Kallias also, of the blood of this same stock,
at sacred Pytho, his hands bound in the thongs,
won victory

and pleased the children of Lato of the gold hair,

and beside Kastalia at nightfall
was brightened in acclamation of the Graces.

The tireless bridge of the sea, at the two-year games
of the dwellers-about, where an ox is slaughtered,
glorified him in Poseidon's precinct.

And on a time the Lion's parsley
shaded his victor's brows in the dark glen
of Phleious under the primeval mountains.

Wide are the ways
from all sides, for the tellers of tales
to glorify this splendid island; for the Aiakidai
have made mighty its destiny, showing forth great things
done in valor,

NEMEA 7

Eleithyia, seated beside the grave, wise Muses,
child of almighty Hera, bringer of children to birth, listen:
without you

we look not on daylight nor on black evening, receive not
for our own your sister of the young glorious limbs, Hebe.
The breath of life that all draw is not the same;
one thing or another tied to a destiny checks it. By your
means

the son also of Thearion, Sogenes, predominant
for prowess, is made glorious in song for the five-contests.

He lives in the city that loves singing, city of the Aiakidai
of the crashing spears; with favor they guide a spirit like
theirs, hardy in the struggle.

If a man be fortunate and win, he casts the delight
of his cause in the Muses' stream; even high strength,
lacking song, goes down into the great darkness.

There are means to but one glass that mirrors deeds of
splendor;

by the shining waters of Memory
is found recompense for strain in poetry that rings far.

επιεικὴν ἀποπέλας

Wise men have learned of the third day's wind to come;
their greed does not bemuse them.

Rich man and poor move side by side toward the limit
of death. I think the tale
of Odysseus is greater than his deeds, all through the grace of
Homer.

Upon his lies and the winged intelligence
there is a kind of majesty; genius persuasive in speech de-
ceives us; blind

ISTHMA 4

Multitudinous are the ways the gods have given,
O Melissos, to follow in song the achievements of you and
yours,

such crafty strength did you show at the Isthmos,
in which, flowering forever, the race of Kleonimos,
with God favoring, have gone to the mortal end of life;
except that the changing winds
burst forth variously to drive all men at will.

From the beginning they have been men of honor in Thebes,
friends of strangers in neighbor cities, free of vaunting
pride; in all testimonies borne on the winds among men
for unfailing reputation of those that are gone
and the living also, they have come to the uttermost goal; in
the height of virtue
by pride of blood they touch the pillars of Herakles.

Further than this no man can drive his strength.
These were skilled in horsemanship;
they were pleasing in the sight of Ares the brazen.
But in the space of one day the bitter
snowstorm of battle made desolate
that blessed hearth of four men.
Now once more it is as when, after the winter darkness, the
months change
and earth flowers again in the crimson of roses

by the gods' behest. And the shaker of the earth, who dwells
in Onchestos
and the sea bridge beside the ramparts of Korinth,
granting this song of acclamation to their race,

rouses as from its bed their ancient glory
for splendid things achieved. It had fallen asleep; but, waken-
ing now, it waxes to brilliance,
shining forth as the dawn star among others.

Beside the hills of Athens it had heralded the chariot victory,
and in the games of Adrastos at Sikyon it granted
such drifting leaves of song among men of that generation;
nor did they keep their curved chariot from the communal
games
of all the Hellenes, but strove joyously with lavish expense
on horses.
Silence of obscurity descends on those who will not endeavor,

but even among strivers there may be darkness of luck
before they come to the utmost goal. ^{21x}
The gifts of chance are various and they change.
Also the skill of small men
has thrown the stronger by stealth of sudden attack. Witness
the might of Aias that he himself slaughtered
by dead of night with the thrust of his own sword,
and has got reproach among the sons of the Hellenes who
went to Troy.

Yet Homer has glorified him beyond other men,
and straightened the story of his valor in the rhapsode's
magic words to charm all men thereafter.
A thing said walks in immortality ^{x x}
if it has been said well; and over the fruitful earth and across
the sea
fares the light that dies never of splendid deeds.

May the Muses give me gracious aid to light such a beacon
of song
for Melissos also, a garland for the scion of Telesiadas
worthy his pankratiast's strength. For daring of heart,