

To the Bust of the Pompeian Cœlia

By Leila Macdonald

ALAS, my Cœlia, that your grace
Could not prevail on ardent Death
To spare your sweet perfumed breath,
The youthful glories of your face.

But still you smile :
Your beauty, never conquered yet,
Disdains the tears of men's regret.

Across your curved and rosy ears,
How fair the curling ringlets fell,
And kissed your bosom's snowy swell—
Olympus to your lover's tears.

We wonder now,
Within your body's rounded grace
What woman's soul found resting-place ?

And in what flowered path of bliss
Did the stern Fates direct your feet ?
Where only youth and beauty meet,
And every bower conceals a kiss ?

Ah, happy maid !
That bowed your head to Love's command,
The fairest mistress in the land.

What

What murmur in the summer air,
 What gentle tread of sandalled feet,
 What silken rustle through the street,
 When maidens to the bath repair.
 They smiling stand,
 Throw off the veilings of their grace,
 And court the waters' cool embrace.

At the fair banquet's joyous hour,
 'Mid scent, and song, and whirling dance,
 You bought men's worship with a glance ;
 Like shaded fire, its languorous power.
 Ah, cruel eyes !
 Hyperion, when his Sun arose,
 No brighter glories could disclose.

Or, at the Goddess' awful shrine,
 With shrouded head and trembling knees,
 The shuddering music of your pleas
 Strove vainly for the ears divine.
 Pleas, who shall say,
 For children's smiles ; for lover's kiss ;
 For all that makes a woman's bliss ?

The radiant waters rise and meet,
 And gather on the tideless shore ;
 But Cœlia's footsteps sound no more,
 And silence crowds the eager street.
 The widowed bay
 Through glowing day and scented night
 Mourns for her city of delight.

Alas,

Alas, my Cœlia, you, whose grace
Has perished with the silent Time,
Accept this homage of a rhyme,
Paid to where stone reflects your face.
For stone may show
Not all Vesuvius could eclipse
The sunshine of your smiling lips.