

PINDAR.

Pindar is an empty name to all but Greek scholars. We have no reputation in literature comparable to his, which is so ill supported in English translation. The most diligent and believing student will not find one glance of the Theban eagle in West and his colleagues, who have attempted to clothe the bird with English plumage. Perhaps he is the most untranslatable of poets, and though he was capable of a grand national music, yet did not write sentences, which alone are conveyed without loss into another tongue. Some of our correspondents, who found aid and comfort in Mr. Thoreau's literal prose translations of Anacreon and of Æschylus, have requested him to give versions of the Olympic and Nemean Odes; and we extract from his manuscripts a series of such passages as contain somewhat detachable and presentable in an English dress.

SECOND OLYMPIC ODE. — 109.

Elysium.

Equally by night always,
 And by day, having the sun, the good
 Lead a life without labor, not disturbing the earth
 With violent hands, nor the sea water,
 For a scanty living; but honored
 By the gods, who take pleasure in fidelity to oaths,
 They spend a tearless existence;
 While the others suffer unsightly pain.
 But as many as endured threefold
 Probation, keeping the mind from all
 Injustice, go the way of Zeus to Kronos' tower,
 Where the ocean breezes blow around
 The island of the Blessed; and flowers of gold shine,
 Some on the land from dazzling trees,
 And the water nourishes others;
 With garlands of these they crown their hands and hair;
 According to the just decrees of Rhadamanthus;
 Whom Father Kronos, the husband of Rhea
 Having the highest throne of all, has ready by himself as
 his assistant judge.
 Peleus and Kadmus are regarded among these;
 And his mother brought Achilles, when she had
 Persuaded the heart of Zeus with prayers;
 Who overthrew Hector, Troy's
 Unconquered, unshaken column, and gave Cynus
 To death, and Morning's Æthiop son.

OLYMPIC V. — 34.

Always around virtues labor and expense strive toward a
work
Covered with danger; but those succeeding seem to be
wise even to the citizens.

OLYMPIC VI. — 14.

Dangerless virtues,
Neither among men, nor in hollow ships,
Are honorable; but many remember if a fair deed is done.

OLYMPIC VII. — 100.

Origin of Rhodes.

Ancient sayings of men relate,
That when Zeus and the Immortals divided earth,
Rhodes was not yet apparent in the deep sea;
But in salt depths the island was hid.
And Helius* being absent no one claimed for him his lot;
So they left him without any region for his share,
The pure god. And Zeus was about to make a second
drawing of lots
For him warned. But he did not permit him;
For he said that within the white sea he had seen a certain
land springing up from the bottom,
Capable of feeding many men, and suitable for flocks.
And straightway He commanded golden-filleted Lachesis
To stretch forth her hands, and not contradict
The great oath of the gods, but with the son of Kronos
Assent, that to the bright air being sent by his nod,
It should hereafter be his prize. And his words were fully
performed,
Meeting with truth. The island sprang from the watery
Sea; and the genial Father of penetrating beams,
Ruler of fire-breathing horses, has it.

OLYMPIC VIII. — 95.

A man doing fit things
Forgets Hades.

* The Sun.

OLYMPIC X. — 59.

Hercules names the Hill of Kronos.

He named the Hill of Kronos, for before nameless,
 While CEnomaus ruled, it was moistened with much snow,
 And at this first rite the Fates stood by,
 And Time, who alone proves
 Unchanging truth.

OLYMPIC X. — 85.

Olympia at Evening.

With the javelin Phrastor struck the mark;
 And Eniceus cast the stone afar,

Whirling his hand, above them all,
 And with applause it rushed
 Through a great tumult;
 And the lovely evening light
 Of the fair-faced moon shone on the scene.

OLYMPIC X. — 109.

Fame.

When, having done fair things, O Agesidamus,
 Without the reward of song, a man may come
 To Hades' rest, vainly aspiring
 He obtains with toil some short delight.
 But the sweet-voiced lyre,
 And the sweet flute, bestow some favor;
 For Zeus' Pierian daughters
 Have wide fame.

THE FOURTEENTH OLYMPIC ODE.

To Asopichus, of Orchomenos, on his Victory in the Stadic Course.

O ye, who inhabit for your lot the seat of the Cephisian
 Streams, yielding fair steeds, renowned Graces,
 Ruling bright Orchomenos,
 Protectors of the ancient race of Minyæ,
 Hear, when I pray.

For with you are all pleasant
 And sweet things to mortals;
 If wise, if fair, if noble,
 Any man. For neither do the gods,
 Without the august Graces,
 Rule the dance,
 Nor feasts; but stewards
 Of all works in heaven,
 Having placed their seats
 By golden-bowed Pythian Apollo,
 They reverence the eternal power
 Of the Olympian Father;
 August Aglaia, and song-loving
 Euphrosyne, children of the mightiest god,
 Hear now, and Thalia loving-song,
 Beholding this band, in favorable fortune
 Lightly dancing; for in Lydian
 Manner meditating,
 I come celebrating Asopichus,
 Since Minya by thy means is victor at the Olympic games.
 Now to Persephone's*
 Black-walled house go Echo,
 Bearing to his father the famous news;
 That seeing Cleodamus thou mayest say,
 That in renowned Pisa's vale
 His son crowned his young hair
 With plumes of illustrious contests.

FIRST PYTHIAN ODE. — 8.

To the Lyre.

Thou extinguishest even the spear-like bolt
 Of everlasting fire. And the eagle sleeps on the sceptre of
 Zeus,
 Drooping his swift wings on either side,
 The king of birds.

— 25.

Whatever things Zeus has not loved
 Are terrified, hearing
 The voice of the Pierians,
 On earth and the immeasurable sea.

PYTH. II. — 159.

A plain-spoken man brings advantage to every government.

* Cleodamus, the father of the hero, was dead.

To a monarchy, and when the
Impetuous crowd, and when the wise rule a city.

As a whole, the third Pythian Ode, to Hiero, on his victory in the single-horse race, is one of the most memorable. We extract first the account of

Esculapius.

As many therefore as came suffering
From spontaneous ulcers, or wounded
In their limbs with glittering steel,
Or with the far-cast stone,
Or by the summer's heat o'ercome in body,
Or by winter, relieving he saved from
Various ills; some cherishing
With soothing strains,
Others having drunk refreshing draughts, or applying
Remedies to the limbs, others by cutting off he made erect.
But even wisdom is bound by gain,
And gold appearing in the hand persuaded even him with
its bright reward,
To bring a man from death
Already overtaken. But the Kronian, smiting
With both hands, quickly took away
The breath from his breasts;
And the rushing thunderbolt hurled him to death.
It is necessary for mortal minds
To seek what is reasonable from the divinities,
Knowing what is before the feet, of what destiny we are.
Do not, my soul, aspire to the life
Of the Immortals, but exhaust the practicable means.

In the conclusion of the ode the poet reminds the victor, Hiero, that adversity alternates with prosperity in the life of man, as in the instance of

Peleus and Cadmus.

The Immortals distribute to men
With one good two
Evils. The foolish therefore
Are not able to bear these with grace,
But the wise, turning the fair outside.

But thee the lot of good fortune follows,
For surely great Destiny

Looks down upon a king ruling the people,
 If on any man. But a secure life
 Was not to Peleus, son of Æacus,
 Nor to godlike Kadmus,
 Who yet are said to have had
 The greatest happiness
 Of mortals, and who heard
 The song of the golden-filleted Muses,
 On the mountain, and in seven-gated Thebes,
 When the one married fair-eyed Harmonia,
 And the other Thetis, the illustrious daughter of wise-
 counselling Nereus.
 And the gods feasted with both;
 And they saw the royal children of Kronos
 On golden seats, and received
 Marriage gifts; and having exchanged
 Former toils for the favor of Zeus,
 They made erect the heart.
 But in course of time
 His three daughters robbed the one
 Of some of his serenity by acute
 Sufferings; when Father Zeus, forsooth, came
 To the lovely couch of white-armed Thyone.
 And the other's child, whom only the immortal
 Thetis bore in Phthia, losing
 His life in war by arrows,
 Being consumed by fire excited
 The lamentation of the Danaans.
 But if any mortal has in his
 Mind the way of truth,
 It is necessary to make the best
 Of what befalls from the blessed.
 For various are the blasts
 Of high-flying winds.
 The happiness of men stays not a long time,
 Though fast it follows rushing on.

Humble in humble estate, lofty in lofty,
 I will be; and the attending dæmon
 I will always reverence in my mind,
 Serving according to my means.
 But if heaven extend to me kind wealth,
 I have hope to find lofty fame hereafter.
 Nestor and Lycian Sarpedon —
 They are the fame of men —
 From resounding words which skilful artists
 Sung, we know.

For virtue through renowned
 Song is lasting.
 But for few is it easy to obtain.

PYTH. IV. — 59.

Origin of Thera,

Whence, in after times, Libyan Cyrene was settled by Battus. Triton, in the form of Eurypylus, presents a clod to Euphemus, one of the Argonauts, as they are about to return home.

He knew of our haste,
 And immediately snatching a clod
 With his right hand, strove to give it
 As a chance stranger's gift.
 Nor did the hero disregard him, but leaping upon the shore,
 Stretching hand to hand,
 Received the mystic clod.
 But I hear it sinking from the deck,
 Go with the sea brine
 At evening, accompanying the watery sea.
 Often indeed I urged the careless
 Menials to guard it, but their minds forgot.
 And now in this island the imperishable seed of spacious
 Libya
 Is spilled before its hour.

PYTH. V. — 87.

Apollo.

He bestowed the lyre,
 And he gives the muse to whom he wishes,
 Bringing peaceful serenity to the breast.

PYTH. VIII. — 136.

Man.

(Σκιᾶς ὄντα ἄνθρωποι.) The phantom of a shadow are men.

PYTH. IX — 31.

Hypseus' Daughter Cyrene.

He reared the white-armed child Cyrene,
 Who loved neither the alternating motion of the loom,
 Nor the superintendence of feasts,
 With the pleasures of companions;
 But with javelins of steel,
 And the sword, contending,
 To slay wild beasts;
 Affording surely much
 And tranquil peace to her father's herds;
 Spending little sleep
 Upon her eye-lids,
 As her sweet bed-fellow, creeping on at dawn.

PYTH. X. — 33.

The Height of Glory.

Fortunate and celebrated
 By the wise is that man,
 Who conquering by his hands, or virtue
 Of his feet, takes the highest prizes
 Through daring and strength,
 And living still sees his youthful son
 Deservedly obtaining Pythian crowns.
 The brazen heaven is not yet accessible to him.
 But whatever glory we
 Of mortal race may reach,
 He goes beyond, even to the boundaries
 Of navigation. But neither in ships, nor going on foot,
 Couldst thou find the wonderful way to the contests of the
 Hyperboreans.

THIRD NEMEAN ODE. — 32.

To Aristoclidēs, Victor at the Nemean Games.

If, being beautiful,
 And doing things like to his form,
 The child of Aristophanes
 Went to the height of manliness; no further
 Is it easy to go over the untravelled sea,
 Beyond the pillars of Hercules.

NEM. III. — 69.

The Youth of Achilles.

One with native virtues
Greatly prevails; but he who
Possesses acquired talents, an obscure man,
Aspiring to various things, never with fearless
Foot advances, but tries
A myriad virtues with inefficient mind.

Yellow-haired Achilles, meanwhile, remaining in the house
of Philyra,
Being a boy played
Great deeds; often brandishing
Iron-pointed javelins in his hands,
Swift as the winds, in fight he wrought death to savage
lions;
And he slew boars, and brought their bodies
Palpitating to Kronian Centaurus,
As soon as six years old. And all the while
Artemis and bold Athene admired him,
Slaying stags without dogs or treacherous nets;
For he conquered them on foot.

NEM. IV. — 66.

Whatever virtues sovereign destiny has given me,
I well know that time creeping on
Will fulfil what was fated.

NEM. V. — I.

The kindred of Pytheas, a victor in the Nemean games, had wished to procure an ode from Pindar for less than three drachmæ, asserting that they could purchase a statue for that sum. In the following lines he nobly reproves their meanness, and asserts the value of his labors, which, unlike those of the statuary, will bear the fame of the hero to the ends of the earth.

No image-maker am I, who being still make statues
Standing on the same base. But on every
Merchant-ship, and in every boat, sweet song
Go from Ægina to announce that Lampo's son,
Mighty Pytheas,
Has conquered the pancratic crown at the Nemean games.

NEM. VI. — 1.

The Divine in Man.

One the race of men and of gods ;
 And from one mother
 We all breathe.
 But quite different power
 Divides us, so that the one is nothing,
 But the brazen heaven remains always
 A secure abode. Yet in some respect we are related,
 Either in mighty mind or form, to the Immortals ;
 Although not knowing
 To what resting place
 By day or night, Fate has written that we shall run.

NEM. VIII. — 44.

The Treatment of Ajax.

In secret votes the Danaans aided Ulysses ;
 And Ajax, deprived of golden arms, struggled with death,
 Surely, wounds of another kind they wrought
 In the warm flesh of their foes, waging war
 With the man-defending spear.

NEM. VIII. — 68.

The Value of Friends.

Virtue increases, being sustained by wise men and just
 As when a tree shoots up with gentle dews into the liquid
 air.
 There are various uses of friendly men ;
 But chiefest in labors ; and even pleasure
 Requires to place some pledge before the eyes.

NEM. IX. — 41.

Death of Amphiaraus.

Once they led to seven-gated Thebes an army of men, not
 according
 To the lucky flight of birds. Nor did the Kronian,

Brandishing his lightning, impel to march
 From home insane, but to abstain from the way.
 But to apparent destruction
 The host made haste to go, with brazen arms
 And horse equipments, and on the banks
 Of Ismenus, defending sweet return,
 Their white-flowered bodies fattened fire.
 For seven pyres devoured young-limbed
 Men. But to Amphiarus
 Zeus rent the deep-bosomed earth
 With his mighty thunder-bolt,
 And buried him with his horses,
 Ere being struck in the back
 By the spear of Periclymenus, his warlike
 Spirit was disgraced.
 For in dæmonic fears
 Flee even the sons of gods.

MEM. X. — 153.

Castor and Pollux.

Pollux, son of Zeus, shared his immortality with his brother Castor, son of Tyndarus, and while one was in heaven, the other remained in the infernal regions, and they alternately lived and died every day, or, as some say, every six months. While Castor lies mortally wounded by Idas, Pollux prays to Zeus, either to restore his brother to life, or to permit him to die with him, to which the god answers,

Nevertheless, I give thee
 Thy choice of these; if indeed fleeing
 Death and odious age,
 You wish to dwell on Olympus,
 With Athene and black-speared Mars;
 Thou hast this lot.
 But if thou thinkest to fight
 For thy brother, and share
 All things with him,
 Half the time thou mayest breathe, being beneath the earth,
 And half in the golden halls of heaven.
 The god thus having spoken, he did not
 Entertain a double wish in his mind.

And he released first the eye, and then the voice,
Of brazen-mitred Castor.

FIRST ISTHMIAN ODE. — 65.

Toil.

One reward of labors is sweet to one man, one to another,
To the shepherd, and the plougher, and the bird-catcher,
And whom the sea nourishes.
But every one is tasked to ward off
Grievous famine from the stomach.

ISTH. II. — 9.

The Venality of the Muse.

Then the muse was not
Fond of gain, nor a laboring woman;
Nor were the sweet-sounding
Soothing strains
Of Terpsichore, sold,
With silvered front.
But now she directs to observe the saying
Of the Argive, coming very near the truth,
Who cried, "Money, money, man,"
Being bereft of property and friends.

ISTH. VI. — 62.

Hercules' Prayer concerning Ajax, son of Telamon.

If ever, O father Zeus, thou hast heard
My supplication with willing mind,
Now I beseech thee with prophetic
Prayer, grant a bold son from Eribœa
To this man my fated guest;
Rugged in body
As the hide of this wild beast
Which now surrounds me, which, first of all
My contests, I slew once in Nemea, and let his mind agree.
To him having thus spoken, Heaven sent
A great eagle, king of birds,
And sweet joy thrilled him inwardly.