

PRAEBVERAT dictis Tritonia talibus aures  
 carminaque Aonidum iustamque probaverat iram;  
 tum secum: "laudare parum est, laudemur et ipsae  
 numina nec sperni sine poena nostra sinamus."  
 Maeoniaeque animum fatis intendit Arachnes, 5  
 quam sibi lanificae non cedere laudibus artis  
 audierat. non illa loco nec origine gentis  
 clara, sed arte fuit: pater huic Colophonius Idmon  
 Phocaico bibulas tinguebat murice lanas;  
 occiderat mater, sed et haec de plebe suoque 10  
 aequa viro fuerat; Lydas tamen illa per urbes  
 quaesierat studio nomen memorabile, quamvis  
 orta domo parva parvis habitabat Hypaepis.  
 huius ut adspicerent opus admirabile, saepe  
 deseruere sui nymphae vineta Timoli, 15  
 deseruere suas nymphae Pactolides undas.  
 nec factas solum vestes, spectare iuvabat  
 tum quoque, cum fierent: tantus decor adfuit arti,  
 sive rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbes,  
 seu digitis subigebat opus repetitaque longo 20  
 vellera mollibat nebulas aequantia tractu,  
 sive levi teretem versabat pollice fusum,

seu pingebat acu; scires a Pallade doctam.  
 quod tamen ipsa negat tantaque offensa magistra  
 "certet" ait "mecum: nihil est, quod victa re- 25  
 cusem!"

Pallas anum simulat: falsosque in tempora canos  
 addit et infirmos, baculo quos sustinet, artus.  
 tum sic orsa loqui "non omnia grandior aetas,  
 quae fugiamus, habet: seris venit usus ab annis.  
 consilium ne sperne meum: tibi fama petatur 30  
 inter mortales faciendae maxima lanas;  
 cede deae veniamque tuis, temeraria, dictis  
 supplice voce roga: veniam dabit illa roganti."  
 adspicit hanc torvis inceptaque fila relinquit  
 vixque manum retinens confessaque vultibus iram 35  
 talibus obscuram resecuta est Pallada dictis:  
 "mentis inops longaque venis confecta senecta,  
 et nimium vixisse diu nocet. audiat istas,  
 si qua tibi nurus est, si qua est tibi filia, voces;  
 consilii satis est in me mihi, neve monendo 40  
 profecisse putes, eadem est sententia nobis.  
 cur non ipsa venit? cur haec certamina vitat?"  
 tum dea "venit!" ait formamque removit anilem  
 Palladaque exhibuit: venerantur numina nymphae  
 Mygdonidesque nurus; sola est non territa virgo, 45  
 sed tamen erubuit, subitusque invita notavit  
 ora rubor rursusque evanuit, ut solet aer  
 purpureus fieri, cum primum Aurora movetur,  
 et breve post tempus candescere solis ab ortu.

TRITONIA had listened to this tale, and had approved of the muses' song and their just resentment. And then to herself she said: "To praise is not enough; let me be praised myself and not allow my divinity to be scouted without punishment." So saying, she turned her mind to the fate of Maeonian Arachne, who she had heard would not yield to her the palm in the art of spinning and weaving wool. Neither for place of birth nor birth itself had the girl fame, but only for her skill. Her father, Idmon of Colophon, used to dye the absorbent wool for her with Phocaeen purple. Her mother was now dead; but she was low-born herself, and had a husband of the same degree. Nevertheless, the girl, Arachne, had gained fame for her skill throughout the Lydian towns, although she herself had sprung from a humble home and dwelt in the hamlet of Hypaepa. Often, to watch her wondrous skill, the nymphs would leave their own vineyards on Timolus' slopes, and the water-nymphs of Pactolus would leave their waters. And 'twas a pleasure not alone to see her finished work, but to watch her as she worked; so graceful and deft was she. Whether she was winding the rough yarn into a new ball, or shaping the stuff with her fingers, reaching back to the distaff for more wool, fleecy as a cloud, to draw into long soft threads, or giving a twist with practised thumb to the graceful spindle, or

embroidering with her needle: you could know that Pallas had taught her. Yet she denied it, and, offended at the suggestion of a teacher ever so great, she said: "Let her but strive with me; and if I lose there is nothing which I would not forfeit."

Then Pallas assumed the form of an old woman, put false locks of grey upon her head, took a staff in her hand to sustain her tottering limbs, and thus she began: "Old age has some things at least that are not to be despised; experience comes with riper years. Do not scorn my advice: seek all the fame you will among mortal men for handling wool; but yield place to the goddess, and with humble prayer beg her pardon for your words, reckless girl. She will grant you pardon if you ask it." But she regarded the old woman with sullen eyes, dropped the threads she was working, and, scarce holding her hand from violence, with open anger in her face she answered the disguised Pallas: "Doting in mind, you come to me, and spent with old age; and it is too long life that is your bane. Go, talk to your daughter-in-law, or to your daughter, if such you have. I am quite able to advise myself. To show you that you have done no good by your advice, we are both of the same opinion. Why does not your goddess come herself? Why does she avoid a contest with me?" Then the goddess exclaimed: "She has come!" and throwing aside her old woman's disguise, she revealed Pallas. The nymphs worshipped her godhead, and the Mygdonian women; Arachne alone remained unafraid, though she did turn red, for a sudden flush marked her unwilling cheeks and again faded: as when the sky grows crimson when the dawn first appears, and after a little while when the sun is up it pales again. Still she persists in her

perstat in incepto stolidaeque cupidine palmae 50  
 in sua fata ruit; neque enim Iove nata recusat  
 nec monet ulterius nec iam certamina differt.  
 haud mora, constituunt diversis partibus ambae  
 et gracili geminas intendunt stamine telas:  
 tela iugo vincta est, stamen secernit harundo, 55  
 inseritur medium radiis subtemen acutis,  
 quod digiti expediunt, atque inter stamina ductum  
 percusso paviunt insecti pectine dentes.  
 utraque festinant cinctaeque ad pectora vestes  
 brachia docta movent, studio fallente laborem. 60  
 illic et Tyrium quae purpura sensit aenum  
 textitur et tenues parvi discriminis umbrae;  
 qualis ab imbre solent percussis solibus arcus  
 inficere ingenti longum curvamine caelum;  
 in quo diversi niteant cum mille colores, 65  
 transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit:  
 usque adeo, quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima  
 distant.  
 illic et lentum filis immittitur aurum  
 et vetus in tela deducitur argumentum.  
 Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mavortis in arce 70  
 pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem.  
 bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis  
 augusta gravitate sedent; sua quemque deorum  
 inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago;  
 stare deum pelagi longoque ferire tridente 75  
 aspera saxa facit, medioque e vulnere saxi  
 exsiluisse fretum, quo pignore vindicet urbem;  
 at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,  
 dat galeam capiti, defenditur aegide pectus,  
 percussamque sua simulat de cuspidate terram 80  
 edere cum bacis fetum canentis olivae;  
 mirarique deos: operis Victoria finis.  
 ut tamen exemplis intellegat aemula laudis,  
 quod pretium speret pro tam furialibus ausis  
 quattuor in partes certamina quattuor addit, 85  
 clara colore suo, brevibus distincta sigillis:  
 Threiciam Rhodopen habet angulus unus et Haemum,  
 nunc gelidos montes, mortalia corpora quondam,  
 nomina summorum sibi qui tribuere deorum;  
 altera Pygmaeae fatum miserabile matris 90  
 pars habet: hanc Iuno victam certamine iussit  
 esse gruem populisque suis indicere bellum;  
 pinxit et Antigonem, ausam contendere quondam  
 cum magni consorte Iovis, quam regia Iuno  
 in volucrum vertit, nec profuit Ilium illi 95  
 Laomedonve pater, sumptis quin candida pennis  
 ipsa sibi plaudat crepitante ciconia rostro;  
 qui superest solus, Cinyran habet angulus orbem;  
 isque gradus templi, natarum membra suarum,  
 amplectens saxoque iacens lacrimare videtur. 100  
 circuit extremas oleis pacalibus oras  
 (is modus est) operisque sua facit arbore finem.  
 Maeonis elusam designat imagine tauri  
 Europam: verum taurum, freta vera putares;  
 ipsa videbatur terras spectare relictas 105  
 et comites clamare suas tactumque vereri  
 adsilientis aquae timidasque reducere plantas.  
 fecit et Asterien aquila luctante teneri,

challenge, and stupidly confident and eager for victory, she rushes on her fate. For Jove's daughter refuses not, nor again warns her or puts off the contest any longer. They both set up the looms in different places without delay and they stretch the fine warp upon them. The web is bound upon the beam, the reed separates the threads of the warp, the woof is threaded through them by the sharp shuttles which their busy fingers ply, and when shot through the threads of the warp, the notched teeth of the hammering slay tap it into place. They speed on the work with their mantles close girt about their breasts and move back and forth their well-trained hands, their eager zeal beguiling their toil. There are inwoven the purple threads dyed in Tyrian kettles, and lighter colours insensibly shading off from these. As when after a storm of rain the sun's rays strike through, and a rainbow, with its huge curve, stains the wide sky, though a thousand different colours shine in it, the eye cannot detect the change from each one to the next; so like appear the adjacent colours, but the extremes are plainly different. There, too, they weave in pliant threads of gold, and trace in the web some ancient tale.

Pallas pictures the hills of Mars on the citadel of Cecrops<sup>1</sup> and that old dispute over the naming of the land. There sit twelve heavenly gods on lofty thrones in awful majesty, Jove in their midst; each god she pictures with his own familiar features; Jove's is a royal figure. There stands the god of ocean, and with his long trident smites the rugged cliff, and from the cleft rock sea-water leaps forth; a token to claim the city for his own. To herself

<sup>1</sup> Ovid here confuses the Acropolis with the Areopagus. See Herod., VIII. 55; Apollodorus, III. 14, 1.

the goddess gives a shield and a sharp-pointed spear, and a helmet for her head; the aegis guards her breast; and from the earth smitten by her spear's point upsprings a pale-green olive-tree hanging thick with fruit; and the gods look on in wonder. Victory crowns her work. Then, that her rival may know by pictured warnings what reward she may expect for her mad daring, she weaves in the four corners of the web four scenes of contest, each clear with its own colours, and in miniature design. One corner shows Thracian Rhodope and Haemus, now huge, bleak mountains, but once audacious mortals who dared assume the names of the most high gods. A second corner shows the wretched fate of the Pygmaean queen, whom Juno conquered in a strife, then changed into a crane, and bade her war upon those whom once she ruled. Again she pictures how Antigone once dared to set herself against the consort of mighty Jove, and how Queen Juno changed her into a bird; Ilium availed her nothing, nor Laomedon, her father; nay, she is clothed in white feathers, and claps her rattling bill, a stork. The remaining corner shows Cinyras bereft of his daughters; there, embracing the marble temple-steps, once their limbs, he lies on the stone, and seems to weep. The goddess then wove around her work a border of peaceful olive-wreath. This was the end; and so, with her own tree, her task was done.

Arachne pictures Europa cheated by the disguise of the bull: a real bull and real waves you would think them. The maid seems to be looking back upon the land she has left, calling on her companions, and, fearful of the touch of the leaping waves, to be drawing back her timid feet. She wrought Asterie, held by the struggling eagle; she wrought Leda,

fecit olorinis Ledam recubare sub alis; 110  
 addidit, ut satyri celatus imagine pulchram  
 Iuppiter inplerit gemino Nycteida fetu,  
 Amphitryon fuerit, cum te, Tirynthia, cepit,  
 aureus ut Danaen, Asopida luserit ignis,  
 Mnemosynen pastor, varius Deoida serpens.  
 te quoque mutatum torvo, Neptune, iuvenco 115  
 virgine in Aeolia posuit; tu visus Enipeus  
 gignis Aloidas, aries Bisaltida fallis,  
 et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater  
 sensit equum, sensit volucem crinita colubris  
 mater equi volucris, sensit delphina Melanthe: 120  
 omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum  
 reddidit. est illic agrestis imagine Phoebus,  
 utque modo accipitris pennas, modo terga leonis  
 gesserit, ut pastor Macareida luserit Issen,  
 Liber ut Erigonen falsa deceperit uva, 125  
 ut Saturnus equo geminum Chirona creavit.  
 ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo,  
 nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos.  
 Non illud Pallas, non illud carpere Livor  
 possit opus: doluit successu flava virago 130  
 et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes,  
 utque Cytoriaco radium de monte tenebat,  
 ter quater Idmoniae frontem percussit Arachnes.  
 non tulit infelix laqueoque animosa ligavit  
 guttura: pendentem Pallas miserata levavit 135  
 atque ita "vive quidem, pende tamen, inproba"  
 "lexque eadem poenae, ne sis secura futuri,  
 dicta tuo generi serisque nepotibus esto!"  
 post ea discedens sucis Hecateidos herbae  
 sparsit: et extemplo tristi medicamine tactae 140  
 defluxere comae, cum quis et naris et aures,  
 fitque caput minimum; toto quoque corpore parva est:  
 in latere exiles digiti pro cruribus haerent,  
 cetera venter habet, de quo tamen illa remittit  
 stamen et antiquas exercet aranea telas. 145

beneath the swan's wings. She added how, in a satyr's image hidden, Jove filled lovely Antiope with twin offspring; how he was Amphitryon when he cheated thee, Alcmena; how in a golden shower he tricked Danaë; Aegina, as a flame; Mnemosyne, as a shepherd; Deo's daughter, as a spotted snake. Thee also, Neptune, she pictured, changed to a grim bull with the Aeolian maiden; now as Enipeus thou dost beget the Aloidae, as a ram deceivedst Bisaltis. The golden-haired mother of corn, most gentle, knew thee as a horse; the snake-haired mother of the winged horse knew thee as a winged bird; Melanthe knew thee as a dolphin. To all these Arachne gave their own shapes and appropriate surroundings. Here is Phoebus like a countryman; and she shows how he wore now a hawk's feathers, now a lion's skin; how as a shepherd he tricked Macareus' daughter, Isse; how Bacchus deceived Erigone with the false bunch of grapes; how Saturn in a horse's shape begot the centaur, Chiron. The edge of the web with its narrow border is filled with flowers and clinging ivy intertwined.

Not Pallas, nor Envy himself, could find a flaw in that work. The golden-haired goddess was indignant at her success, and rent the embroidered web with its heavenly crimes; and, as she held a shuttle of Cytorian boxwood, thrice and again she struck Idmonian Arachne's head. The wretched girl could not endure it, and put a noose about her bold neck. As she hung, Pallas lifted her in pity, and said: "Live on, indeed, wicked girl, but hang thou still; and let this same doom of punishment (that thou mayst fear for future times as well) be declared upon thy race, even to remote posterity." So saying, as she turned to go she sprinkled her with

the juices of Hecate's herb; and forthwith her hair, touched by the poison, fell off, and with it both nose and ears; and the head shrank up; her whole body also was small; the slender fingers clung to her side as legs; the rest was belly. Still from this she ever spins a thread; and now, as a spider, she exercises her old-time weaver-art.