

BELLARIA (II)



Saturnalia, Antoine-Francois Callet, 1783

'Bellaria' means 'sweets, dainties', and in these hard times Classics for All will try to lighten the mood and put a spring in the step by posting delicious extracts from ancient literature, the original text followed by a translation or translations, and very occasionally with explanatory notes.

Responding to Literary Review's annual 'Bad Sex' Awards, Classics for All responds with 'Good Sex' awards—good for Ovid, anyway, in this case. Obviously Corinna was up for it, and it is nice to be appreciated, but was that it? Note Marlowe said that he kissed her (l. 25). Not in the Latin she didn't. Even he noticed something missing.

GOOD SEX AWARD (2)

An Afternoon with Ovid

aestus erat, mediamque dies exegerat horam;
adposui medio membra levanda toro.
pars adaperata fuit, pars altera clausa fenestrae,
quale fere silvae lumen habere solent,
5 qualia sublucent fugiente crepuscula Phoebos,
aut ubi nox abiit, nec tamen orta dies.
illa verecundis lux est praebenda puellis,
qua timidus latebras speret habere pudor.

ecce, Corinna venit, tunica velata recincta,
10 candida dividua colla tegente coma,
qualiter in thalamos famosa Semiramis isse
dicitur, et multis Lais amata viris.
deripui tunicam; nec multum rara nocebat,
pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegi;
15 quae cum ita pugnaret, tamquam quae vincere nollet,
victa est non aegre prodicione sua.
ut stetit ante oculos posito velamine nostros,
in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit:
quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!
20 forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!
quam castigato planus sub pectore venter!
quantum et quale latus! quam iuvenale femur!
singula quid referam? nil non laudabile vidi,
et nudam pressi corpus ad usque meum.
25 cetera quis nescit? lassique requievimus ambo.
proveniant medii sic mihi saepe dies.

Ovid *Amores* 1.5



North Wall fresco, Triclinium of Casti Amanti, Pompeii

Translated by Christopher Marlowe (1582)

In summer's heat and mid-time of the day
To rest my limbs upon a bed I lay,
One window shut, the other open stood,
Which gave such light as twinkles in a wood,
5 Like twilight glimpse at setting of the sun
Or night being past, and yet not day begun.

Such light to shamefaced maidens must be shown,
Where they may sport, and seem to be unknown.
Then came Corinna in a long loose gown,
10 Her white neck hid with tresses hanging down:
Resembling fair Semiramis going to bed
Or Laïs of a thousand wooers sped.
I snatched her gown, being thin, the harm was small,
Yet strived she to be covered therewithal.
15 And striving thus as one that would be cast,
Betrayed herself, and yielded at the last.
Stark naked as she stood before mine eye,
Not one wen in her body could I spy.
What arms and shoulders did I touch and see,
20 How apt her breasts were to be pressed by me?
How smooth a belly under her waist saw I?
How large a leg, and what a lusty thigh?
To leave the rest, all liked me passing well.
I clinged her naked body, down she fell.
25 Judge you the rest: being tired she bad me kiss.
Jove send me more such afternoons as this.



This is an extract selected for you as part of Classics for All's 'Bellaria' series to cheer us up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The full series of weekly instalments may be found on our website classicsforall.org.uk/bellaria/