

Vergil, *Georgics*

English translation by J. B. Greenough(1908)

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Abridged from about 2400 to 1337 lines by Steven Marx

Book I

What makes the cornfield smile; beneath what star
Maecenas, it is meet to turn the sod
Or marry elm with vine; how tend the steer;
What pains for cattle-keeping, or what proof
Of patient trial serves for thrifty bees;--
Such are my themes.

...

In early spring-tide, when the icy drip
Melts from the mountains hoar, and Zephyr's breath
Unbinds the crumbling clod, even then 'tis time;
Press deep your plough behind the groaning ox,
And teach the furrow-burnished share to shine.
That land the craving farmer's prayer fulfils,
Which twice the sunshine, twice the frost has felt;
Ay, that's the land whose boundless harvest-crops
Burst, see! the barns. But ere our metal cleave
An unknown surface, heed we to forelearn
The winds and varying temper of the sky,
The lineal tilth and habits of the spot,
What every region yields, and what denies.
Here blithelier springs the corn, and here the grape,
There earth is green with tender growth of trees
And grass unbidden.

...

Up then! if fat the soil, let sturdy bulls
Upturn it from the year's first opening months,
And let the clods lie bare till baked to dust
By the ripe suns of summer; but if the earth
Less fruitful just ere Arcturus rise

With shallower trench uptilt it--'twill suffice;
There, lest weeds choke the crop's luxuriance, here,
Lest the scant moisture fail the barren sand.
Then thou shalt suffer in alternate years
The new-reaped fields to rest, and on the plain
A crust of sloth to harden; or, when stars
Are changed in heaven, there sow the golden grain
Where erst, luxuriant with its quivering pod,
Pulse, or the slender vetch-crop, thou hast cleared,
And lupin sour, whose brittle stalks arise,
A hurtling forest. For the plain is parched
By flax-crop, parched by oats, by poppies parched
In Lethe-slumber drenched. Nathless by change
The travailing earth is lightened, but stint not
With refuse rich to soak the thirsty soil,
And shower foul ashes o'er the exhausted fields.
Thus by rotation like repose is gained,
Nor earth meanwhile unearned and thankless left.
Oft, too, 'twill boot to fire the naked fields,
And the light stubble burn with crackling flames;
Whether that earth therefrom some hidden strength
And fattening food derives, or that the fire
Bakes every blemish out, and sweats away
Each useless humour, or that the heat unlocks
New passages and secret pores, whereby
Their life-juice to the tender blades may win;
Or that it hardens more and helps to bind
The gaping veins, lest penetrating showers,
Or fierce sun's ravening might, or searching blast
Of the keen north should sear them.

...

Well, I wot,
He serves the fields who with his harrow breaks
The sluggish clods, and hurdles osier-twined
Hales o'er them; from the far Olympian height
Him golden Ceres not in vain regards;
And he, who having ploughed the fallow plain
And heaved its furrowy ridges, turns once more

Cross-wise his shattering share, with stroke on stroke
The earth assails, and makes the field his thrall.

...

The great Sire himself
No easy road to husbandry assigned,
And first was he by human skill to rouse
The slumbering soil, whetting the minds of men
With care on care, nor suffering realm of his
In drowsy sloth to stagnate. Before Jove
Fields knew no taming hand of husbandmen;
To mark the plain or mete with boundary-line--
Even this was impious; for the common stock
They gathered, and the earth of her own will
All things more freely, no man bidding, bore.
He to black serpents gave their venom-bane,
And bade the wolf go prowl, and ocean toss;
Shooed from the leaves their honey, put fire away,
And curbed the random rivers running wine,
That use by gradual dint of thought on thought
Might forge the various arts, with furrow's help
The corn-blade win, and strike out hidden fire
From the flint's heart. Then first the streams were ware
Of hollowed alder-hulls: the sailor then
Their names and numbers gave to star and star,
Pleiads and Hyads, and Lycaon's child
Bright Arctos; how with nooses then was found
To catch wild beasts, and cozen them with lime,
And hem with hounds the mighty forest-glades.
Soon one with hand-net scourges the broad stream,
Probing its depths, one drags his dripping toils
Along the main; then iron's unbending might,
And shrieking saw-blade,--for the men of old
With wedges went to cleave the splintering log;--
Then divers arts arose; toil conquered all,
Remorseless toil, and poverty's shrewd push
In times of hardship. Ceres was the first
Set mortals on with tools to turn the sod,
When now the awful groves 'gan fail to bear

Acorns and arbutes, and her wonted food
Dodona gave no more. Soon, too, the corn
Gat sorrow's increase, that an evil blight
Ate up the stalks, and thistle reared his spines
An idler in the fields; the crops die down;
Upsprings instead a shaggy growth of burrs
And caltrops; and amid the corn-fields trim
Unfruitful darnel and wild oats have sway.
Wherefore, unless thou shalt with ceaseless rake
The weeds pursue, with shouting scare the birds,
Prune with thy hook the dark field's matted shade,
Pray down the showers, all vainly thou shalt eye,
Alack! thy neighbour's heaped-up harvest-mow,
And in the greenwood from a shaken oak
Seek solace for thine hunger.

...

Many the precepts of the men of old
I can recount thee, so thou start not back,
And such slight cares to learn not weary thee.
And this among the first: thy threshing-floor
With ponderous roller must be levelled smooth,
And wrought by hand, and fixed with binding chalk,
Lest weeds arise, or dust a passage win
Splitting the surface, then a thousand plagues
Make sport of it: oft builds the tiny mouse
Her home, and plants her granary, underground,
Or burrow for their bed the purblind moles,
Or toad is found in hollows, and all the swarm
Of earth's unsightly creatures; or a huge
Corn-heap the weevil plunders, and the ant,
Fearful of coming age and penury.
Mark too, what time the walnut in the woods
With ample bloom shall clothe her, and bow down
Her odorous branches, if the fruit prevail,
Like store of grain will follow, and there shall come
A mighty winnowing-time with mighty heat;
But if the shade with wealth of leaves abound,
Vainly your threshing-floor will bruise the stalks

Rich but in chaff

....

So, by fate impelled,
Speed all things to the worse, and backward borne
Glide from us; even as who with struggling oars
Up stream scarce pulls a shallop, if he chance
His arms to slacken, lo! with headlong force
The current sweeps him down the hurrying tide.

...

When the Scales
Now poising fair the hours of sleep and day
Give half the world to sunshine, half to shade,
Then urge your bulls, my masters; sow the plain
Even to the verge of tameless winter's showers
With barley: then, too, time it is to hide
Your flax in earth, and poppy, Ceres' joy,
Aye, more than time to bend above the plough,
While earth, yet dry, forbids not, and the clouds
Are buoyant. With the spring comes bean-sowing;

...

But if the vetch and common kidney-bean
Thou'rt fain to sow, nor scorn to make thy care
Pelusiac lentil, no uncertain sign
Bootes' fall will send thee; then begin,
Pursue thy sowing till half the frosts be done.
Therefore it is the golden sun, his course
Into fixed parts dividing, rules his way
Through the twelve constellations of the world.

...

Hence under doubtful skies forebode we can
The coming tempests, hence both harvest-day
And seed-time, when to smite the treacherous main
With driving oars, when launch the fair-rigged fleet,
Or in ripe hour to fell the forest-pine.
Hence, too, not idly do we watch the stars--
Their rising and their setting--and the year,
Four varying seasons to one law conformed.

If chilly showers e'er shut the farmer's door,
Much that had soon with sunshine cried for haste,
He may forestall; the ploughman batters keen
His blunted share's hard tooth, scoops from a tree
His troughs, or on the cattle stamps a brand,
Or numbers on the corn-heaps; some make sharp
The stakes and two-pronged forks, and willow-bands
Amerian for the bending vine prepare.
Now let the pliant basket plaited be
Of bramble-twigs; now set your corn to parch
Before the fire; now bruise it with the stone.
Nay even on holy days some tasks to ply
Is right and lawful: this no ban forbids,
To turn the runnel's course, fence corn-fields in,
Make springes for the birds, burn up the briars,
And plunge in wholesome stream the bleating flock.

...

By winter fire-light, shaping with keen blade
The torches to a point; his wife the while,
Her tedious labour soothing with a song,
Speeds the shrill comb along the warp, or else
With Vulcan's aid boils the sweet must-juice down,
And skims with leaves the quivering cauldron's wave.
But ruddy Ceres in mid heat is mown,
And in mid heat the parched ears are bruised
Upon the floor; to plough strip, strip to sow;
Winter's the lazy time for husbandmen.
In the cold season farmers wont to taste
The increase of their toil, and yield themselves
To mutual interchange of festal cheer.
Boon winter bids them, and unbinds their cares,
As laden keels, when now the port they touch,
And happy sailors crown the sterns with flowers.
Nathless then also time it is to strip
Acorns from oaks, and berries from the bay,
Olives, and bleeding myrtles, then to set
Snares for the crane, and meshes for the stag,
And hunt the long-eared hares, then pierce the doe

With whirl of hempen-thonged Balearic sling,
While snow lies deep, and streams are drifting ice.

What need to tell of autumn's storms and stars,
And wherefore men must watch, when now the day
Grows shorter, and more soft the summer's heat?
When Spring the rain-bringer comes rushing down,
Or when the beards of harvest on the plain
Bristle already, and the milky corn
On its green stalk is swelling? ...
Oft too comes looming vast along the sky
A march of waters; mustering from above,
The clouds roll up the tempest, heaped and grim
With angry showers: down falls the height of heaven,
And with a great rain floods the smiling crops,
The oxen's labour: now the dikes fill fast,
And the void river-beds swell thunderously,
And all the panting firths of Ocean boil.
The Sire himself in midnight of the clouds
Wields with red hand the levin; through all her bulk
Earth at the hurly quakes; the beasts are fled,
And mortal hearts of every kindred sunk
In cowering terror

...

Before all
Worship the Gods, and to great Ceres pay
Her yearly dues upon the happy sward
With sacrifice, anigh the utmost end
Of winter, and when Spring begins to smile.
Then lambs are fat, and wines are mellowest then;
Then sleep is sweet, and dark the shadows fall
Upon the mountains. Let your rustic youth
To Ceres do obeisance, one and all;
And for her pleasure thou mix honeycombs
With milk and the ripe wine-god; thrice for luck
Around the young corn let the victim go,
And all the choir, a joyful company,
Attend it, and with shouts bid Ceres come

To be their house-mate; and let no man dare
Put sickle to the ripened ears until,
With woven oak his temples chapleted,
He foot the rugged dance and chant the lay.

Aye, and that these things we might win to know
By certain tokens, heats, and showers, and winds
That bring the frost, the Sire of all himself
Ordained what warnings in her monthly round
The moon should give, what bodes the south wind's fall,
What oft-repeated sights the herdsman seeing
Should keep his cattle closer to their stalls.
No sooner are the winds at point to rise,
Than either Ocean's firths begin to toss
And swell, and a dry crackling sound is heard
Upon the heights, or one loud ferment booms
The beach afar, and through the forest goes
A murmur multitudinous. By this
Scarce can the billow spare the curved keels,
When swift the sea-gulls from the middle main
Come winging, and their shrieks are shoreward borne,
When ocean-loving cormorants on dry land
Besport them, and the hern, her marshy haunts
Forsaking, mounts above the soaring cloud.
Oft, too, when wind is toward, the stars thou'lt see
From heaven shoot headlong, and through murky night
Long trails of fire white-glistening in their wake,
Or light chaff flit in air with fallen leaves,
Or feathers on the wave-top float and play.

...

So too, after rain,
Sunshine and open skies thou mayst forecast,
And learn by tokens sure, for then nor dimmed
Appear the stars' keen edges, nor the moon
As borrowing of her brother's beams to rise,
Nor fleecy films to float along the sky.
Not to the sun's warmth then upon the shore
Do halcyons dear to Thetis ope their wings,

Nor filthy swine take thought to toss on high
With scattering snout the straw-wisps. But the clouds
Seek more the vales, and rest upon the plain,
And from the roof-top the night-owl for naught
Watching the sunset plies her 'lated song.

...

Soft then the voice of rooks from indrawn throat
Thrice, four times, o'er repeated, and full oft
On their high cradles, by some hidden joy
Gladdened beyond their wont, in bustling throngs
Among the leaves they riot; so sweet it is,
When showers are spent, their own loved nests again
And tender brood to visit. Not, I deem,
That heaven some native wit to these assigned,
Or fate a larger prescience, but that when
The storm and shifting moisture of the air
Have changed their courses, and the sky-god now,
Wet with the south-wind, thickens what was rare,
And what was gross releases, then, too, change
Their spirits' fleeting phases, and their breasts
Feel other motions now, than when the wind
Was driving up the cloud-rack. Hence proceeds
That blending of the feathered choirs afield,
The cattle's exultation, and the rooks'
Deep-throated triumph

...

Here where the wrong is right, the right is wrong,
Where wars abound so many, and myriad-faced
Is crime; where no meet honour hath the plough;
The fields, their husbandmen led far away,
Rot in neglect, and curved pruning-hooks
Into the sword's stiff blade are fused and forged.
Euphrates here, here Germany new strife
Is stirring; neighbouring cities are in arms,
The laws that bound them snapped; and godless war
Rages through all the universe; as when
The four-horse chariots from the barriers poured
Still quicken o'er the course, and, idly now

Grasping the reins, the driver by his team
Is onward borne, nor heeds the car his curb.

Book 2

Thus far the tilth of fields and stars of heaven;
Now will I sing thee, Bacchus, and, with thee,
The forest's young plantations and the fruit
Of slow-maturing olive. Hither haste,
O Father of the wine-press; all things here
Teem with the bounties of thy hand; for thee
With viny autumn laden blooms the field,
And foams the vintage high with brimming vats;
Hither, O Father of the wine-press, come,
And stripped of buskin stain thy bared limbs
In the new must with me.

First, nature's law
For generating trees is manifold;
For some of their own force spontaneous spring,
No hand of man compelling, and possess
The plains and river-windings far and wide,
As pliant osier and the bending broom,
Poplar, and willows in wan companies
With green leaf glimmering gray; and some there be
From chance-dropped seed that rear them, as the tall
Chestnuts, and, mightiest of the branching wood,
Jove's Aesculus, and oaks, oracular
Deemed by the Greeks of old. With some sprouts forth
A forest of dense suckers from the root,
As elms and cherries; so, too, a pigmy plant,
Beneath its mother's mighty shade upshoots
The bay-tree of Parnassus. Such the modes
Nature imparted first; hence all the race
Of forest-trees and shrubs and sacred groves
Springs into verdure. Other means there are,
Which use by method for itself acquired.
One, sliving suckers from the tender frame

Of the tree-mother, plants them in the trench;
One buries the bare stumps within his field,
Truncheons cleft four-wise, or sharp-pointed stakes;
Some forest-trees the layer's bent arch await,
And slips yet quick within the parent-soil;
No root need others, nor doth the pruner's hand
Shrink to restore the topmost shoot to earth
That gave it being. Nay, marvellous to tell,
Lopped of its limbs, the olive, a mere stock,
Still thrusts its root out from the sapless wood,
And oft the branches of one kind we see
Change to another's with no loss to rue,
Pear-tree transformed the ingrafted apple yield,
And stony cornels on the plum-tree blush.

...

Nor is the method of inserting eyes
And grafting one: for where the buds push forth
Amidst the bark, and burst the membranes thin,
Even on the knot a narrow rift is made,
Wherein from some strange tree a germ they pen,
And to the moist rind bid it cleave and grow.
Or, otherwise, in knotless trunks is hewn
A breach, and deep into the solid grain
A path with wedges cloven; then fruitful slips
Are set herein, and--no long time--behold!
To heaven upshot with teeming boughs, the tree
Strange leaves admires and fruitage not its own.
Nor of one kind alone are sturdy elms,
Willow and lotus, nor the cypress-trees
Of Ida; nor of self-same fashion spring
Fat olives, orchades, and radii
And bitter-berried pausians, no, nor yet
Apples and the forests of Alcinous;
Nor from like cuttings are Crustumian pears
And Syrian, and the heavy hand-fillers.
Not the same vintage from our trees hangs down,
Which Lesbos from Methymna's tendril plucks.
Vines Thasian are there, Mareotids white,

These apt for richer soils, for lighter those:
Psithian for raisin-wine more useful, thin
Lageos, that one day will try the feet
And tie the tongue: purples and early-ripes,
And how, O Rhaetian, shall I hymn thy praise?
Yet cope not therefore with Falernian bins.
Vines Aminaeon too, best-bodied wine,
To which the Tmolian bows him, ay, and king
Phanaeus too, and, lesser of that name,
Argitis, wherewith not a grape can vie
For gush of wine-juice or for length of years.

...

Now for the native gifts of various soils,
What powers hath each, what hue, what natural bent
For yielding increase. First your stubborn lands
And churlish hill-sides, where are thorny fields
Of meagre marl and gravel, these delight
In long-lived olive-groves to Pallas dear.
Take for a sign the plenteous growth hard by
Of oleaster, and the fields strewn wide
With woodland berries. But a soil that's rich,
In moisture sweet exulting, and the plain
That teems with grasses on its fruitful breast,
Such as full oft in hollow mountain-dell
We view beneath us--from the craggy heights
Streams thither flow with fertilizing mud--
A plain which southward rising feeds the fern
By curved ploughs detested, this one day
Shall yield thee store of vines full strong to gush
In torrents of the wine-god; this shall be
Fruitful of grapes and flowing juice like that
We pour to heaven from bowls of gold, what time
The sleek Etruscan at the altar blows
His ivory pipe, and on the curved dish
We lay the reeking entrails. If to rear
Cattle delight thee rather, steers, or lambs,
Or goats that kill the tender plants, then seek
Full-fed Tarentum's glades and distant fields,

Or such a plain as luckless Mantua lost
Whose weedy water feeds the snow-white swan:
There nor clear springs nor grass the flocks will fail,
And all the day-long browsing of thy herds
Shall the cool dews of one brief night repair.
Land which the burrowing share shows dark and rich,
With crumbling soil--for this we counterfeit
In ploughing--for corn is goodliest; from no field
More wains thou'lt see wend home with plodding steers;
Or that from which the husbandman in spleen
Has cleared the timber, and o'erthrown the copse
That year on year lay idle, and from the roots
Uptorn the immemorial haunt of birds;
They banished from their nests have sought the skies;
But the rude plain beneath the ploughshare's stroke
Starts into sudden brightness. For indeed
The starved hill-country gravel scarce serves the bees
With lowly cassias and with rosemary;

...

Dost ask if loose or passing firm it be--
Since one for corn hath liking, one for wine,
The firmer sort for Ceres, none too loose
For thee, Lyaeus?--with scrutinizing eye
First choose thy ground, and bid a pit be sunk
Deep in the solid earth, then cast the mould
All back again, and stamp the surface smooth.
If it suffice not, loose will be the land,
More meet for cattle and for kindly vines;
But if, rebellious, to its proper bounds
The soil returns not, but fills all the trench
And overtops it, then the glebe is gross;
Look for stiff ridges and reluctant clods,
And with strong bullocks cleave the fallow crust.

...

All these rules
Regarding, let your land, ay, long before,
Scorch to the quick, and into trenches carve
The mighty mountains, and their upturned clods

Bare to the north wind, ere thou plant therein
The vine's prolific kindred. Fields whose soil
Is crumbling are the best: winds look to that,
And bitter hoar-frosts, and the delver's toil
Untiring, as he stirs the loosened glebe.
But those, whose vigilance no care escapes,
Search for a kindred site, where first to rear
A nursery for the trees, and eke whereto
Soon to translate them, lest the sudden shock
From their new mother the young plants estrange.
Nay, even the quarter of the sky they brand
Upon the bark, that each may be restored,
As erst it stood, here bore the southern heats,
Here turned its shoulder to the northern pole;
So strong is custom formed in early years.
Whether on hill or plain 'tis best to plant
Your vineyard first inquire. If on some plain
You measure out rich acres, then plant thick;
Thick planting makes no niggard of the vine;
But if on rising mound or sloping hill,
Then let the rows have room, so none the less
Each line you draw, when all the trees are set,
May tally to perfection.

...

Shouldst haply of the furrow's depth inquire,
Even to a shallow trench I dare commit
The vine; but deeper in the ground is fixed
The tree that props it, aesculus in chief,
Which howso far its summit soars toward heaven,
So deep strikes root into the vaults of hell.
It therefore neither storms, nor blasts, nor showers
Wrench from its bed; unshaken it abides,
Sees many a generation, many an age
Of men roll onward, and survives them all,
Stretching its titan arms and branches far,
Sole central pillar of a world of shade.
Nor toward the sunset let thy vineyards slope,
Nor midst the vines plant hazel; neither take

The topmost shoots for cuttings, nor from the top
Of the supporting tree your suckers tear;
So deep their love of earth; nor wound the plants
With blunted blade;

...

Best sow your vineyards when in blushing Spring
Comes the white bird long-bodied snakes abhor,
Or on the eve of autumn's earliest frost,
Ere the swift sun-steeds touch the wintry Signs,
While summer is departing. Spring it is
Blesses the fruit-plantation, Spring the groves;
In Spring earth swells and claims the fruitful seed.
Then Aether, sire omnipotent, leaps down
With quickening showers to his glad wife's embrace,
And, might with might commingling, rears to life
All germs that teem within her; then resound
With songs of birds the greenwood-wildernesses,
And in due time the herds their loves renew;
Then the boon earth yields increase, and the fields
Unlock their bosoms to the warm west winds;
Soft moisture spreads o'er all things, and the blades
Face the new suns, and safely trust them now;
The vine-shoot, fearless of the rising south,
Or mighty north winds driving rain from heaven,
Bursts into bud, and every leaf unfolds.

...

For the rest, whate'er
The sets thou plantest in thy fields, thereon
Strew refuse rich, and with abundant earth
Take heed to hide them, and dig in withal
Rough shells or porous stone, for therebetween
Will water trickle and fine vapour creep,
And so the plants their drooping spirits raise.

...

Now while yet
The leaves are in their first fresh infant growth,
Forbear their frailty, and while yet the bough
Shoots joyfully toward heaven, with loosened rein

Launched on the void, assail it not as yet
With keen-edged sickle, but let the leaves alone
Be culled with clip of fingers here and there.
But when they clasp the elms with sturdy trunks
Erect, then strip the leaves off, prune the boughs;
Sooner they shrink from steel, but then put forth
The arm of power, and stem the branchy tide.
Hedges too must be woven and all beasts
Barred entrance, chiefly while the leaf is young
And witless of disaster; for therewith,
Beside harsh winters and o'erpowering sun,
Wild buffaloes and pestering goats for ay
Besport them, sheep and heifers glut their greed.
Nor cold by hoar-frost curdled, nor the prone
Dead weight of summer upon the parched crags,
So scathe it, as the flocks with venom-bite
Of their hard tooth, whose gnawing scars the stem.

...

Therefore to Bacchus duly will we sing
Meet honour with ancestral hymns, and cates
And dishes bear him; and the doomed goat
Led by the horn shall at the altar stand,
Whose entrails rich on hazel-spits we'll roast.
This further task again, to dress the vine,
Hath needs beyond exhausting; the whole soil
Thrice, four times, yearly must be cleft, the sod
With hoes reversed be crushed continually,
The whole plantation lightened of its leaves.
Round on the labourer spins the wheel of toil,
As on its own track rolls the circling year.

Soon as the vine her lingering leaves hath shed,
And the chill north wind from the forests shook
Their coronal, even then the careful swain
Looks keenly forward to the coming year,
With Saturn's curved fang pursues and prunes
The vine forlorn, and lops it into shape.
Be first to dig the ground up, first to clear

And burn the refuse-branches, first to house
Again your vine-poles, last to gather fruit.
Twice doth the thickening shade beset the vine,
Twice weeds with stifling briars o'ergrow the crop;
And each a toilsome labour. Do thou praise
Broad acres, farm but few. Rough twigs beside
Of butcher's broom among the woods are cut,
And reeds upon the river-banks, and still
The undressed willow claims thy fostering care.
So now the vines are fettered, now the trees
Let go the sickle, and the last dresser now
Sings of his finished rows; but still the ground
Must vexed be, the dust be stirred, and heaven
Still set thee trembling for the ripened grapes.

Not so with olives; small husbandry need they,
Nor look for sickle bowed or biting rake,
When once they have gripped the soil, and borne the breeze.
Earth of herself, with hooked fang laid bare,
Yields moisture for the plants, and heavy fruit,
The ploughshare aiding; therewithal thou'lt rear
The olive's fatness well-beloved of Peace.

Apples, moreover, soon as first they feel
Their stems wax lusty, and have found their strength,
To heaven climb swiftly, self-impelled, nor crave
Our succour. All the grove meanwhile no less
With fruit is swelling, and the wild haunts of birds
Blush with their blood-red berries. Cytisus
Is good to browse on, the tall forest yields
Pine-torches, and the nightly fires are fed
And shoot forth radiance.

...
Oh! all too happy tillers of the soil,
Could they but know their blessedness, for whom
Far from the clash of arms all-equal earth
Pours from the ground herself their easy fare!
What though no lofty palace portal-proud

From all its chambers vomits forth a tide
Of morning courtiers, nor agape they gaze
On pillars with fair tortoise-shell inwrought,
Gold-purpled robes, and bronze from Ephyre;
Nor is the whiteness of their wool distained
With drugs Assyrian, nor clear olive's use
With cassia tainted; yet untroubled calm,
A life that knows no falsehood, rich enow
With various treasures, yet broad-acred ease,
Grottoes and living lakes, yet Tempes cool,
Lowing of kine, and sylvan slumbers soft,
They lack not; lawns and wild beasts' haunts are there,
A youth of labour patient, need-inured,
Worship, and reverend sires: with them from earth
Departing justice her last footprints left.

...

Happy, who had the skill to understand
Nature's hid causes, and beneath his feet
All terrors cast, and death's relentless doom,
And the loud roar of greedy Acheron.
Blest too is he who knows the rural gods,
Pan, old Silvanus, and the sister-nymphs!
Him nor the rods of public power can bend,
Nor kingly purple, nor fierce feud that drives
Brother to turn on brother, nor descent
Of Dacian from the Danube's leagued flood,
Nor Rome's great State, nor kingdoms like to die;
Nor hath he grieved through pitying of the poor,
Nor envied him that hath. What fruit the boughs,
And what the fields, of their own bounteous will
Have borne, he gathers; nor iron rule of laws,
Nor maddened Forum have his eyes beheld,
Nor archives of the people. Others vex
The darksome gulfs of Ocean with their oars,
Or rush on steel: they press within the courts
And doors of princes; one with havoc falls
Upon a city and its hapless hearths,
From gems to drink, on Tyrian rugs to lie;

This hoards his wealth and broods o'er buried gold;
One at the rostra stares in blank amaze;
One gaping sits transported by the cheers,
The answering cheers of plebs and senate rolled
Along the benches: bathed in brothers' blood
Men revel, and, all delights of hearth and home
For exile changing, a new country seek
Beneath an alien sun. The husbandman
With hooked ploughshare turns the soil; from hence
Springs his year's labour; hence, too, he sustains
Country and cottage homestead, and from hence
His herds of cattle and deserving steers.
No respite! still the year o'erflows with fruit,
Or young of kine, or Ceres' wheaten sheaf,
With crops the furrow loads, and bursts the barns.
Winter is come: in olive-mills they bruise
The Sicyonian berry; acorn-cheered
The swine troop homeward; woods their arbutus yield;
So, various fruit sheds Autumn, and high up
On sunny rocks the mellowing vintage bakes.
Meanwhile about his lips sweet children cling;
His chaste house keeps its purity; his kine
Drop milky udders, and on the lush green grass
Fat kids are striving, horn to butting horn.
Himself keeps holy days; stretched o'er the sward,
Where round the fire his comrades crown the bowl,
He pours libation, and thy name invokes,
Lenaeus, and for the herdsmen on an elm
Sets up a mark for the swift javelin; they
Strip their tough bodies for the rustic sport.
Such life of yore the ancient Sabines led,
Such Remus and his brother: Etruria thus,
Doubt not, to greatness grew, and Rome became
The fair world's fairest, and with circling wall
Clasped to her single breast the sevenfold hills.
Ay, ere the reign of Dictator's king, ere men,
Waxed godless, banqueted on slaughtered bulls,
Such life on earth did golden Saturn lead.

Nor ear of man had heard the war-trump's blast,
Nor clang of sword on stubborn anvil set.
But lo! a boundless space we have travelled o'er;
'Tis time our steaming horses to unyoke.

Book 3

If eager for the prized Olympian palm
One breed the horse, or bullock strong to plough,
Be his prime care a shapely dam to choose.
Of kine grim-faced is goodliest, with coarse head
And burly neck, whose hanging dewlaps reach
From chin to knee; of boundless length her flank;
Large every way she is, large-footed even,
With incurved horns and shaggy ears beneath.

...

Meantime, while youth's delight
Survives within them, loose the males: be first
To speed thy herds of cattle to their loves,
Breed stock with stock, and keep the race supplied.
Ah! life's best hours are ever first to fly
From hapless mortals; in their place succeed
Disease and dolorous eld; till travail sore
And death un pitying sweep them from the scene.
Still will be some, whose form thou fain wouldst change;
Renew them still; with yearly choice of young
Preventing losses, lest too late thou rue.
Nor steeds crave less selection; but on those
Thou think'st to rear, the promise of their line,
From earliest youth thy chiefest pains bestow.
See from the first yon high-bred colt afield,
His lofty step, his limbs' elastic tread:
Dauntless he leads the herd, still first to try
The threatening flood, or brave the unknown bridge,
By no vain noise affrighted; lofty-necked,
With clean-cut head, short belly, and stout back;
His sprightly breast exuberant with brawn.
Chestnut and grey are good; the worst-hued white

And sorrel.

...

These points regarded, as the time draws nigh,
With instant zeal they lavish all their care
To plump with solid fat the chosen chief
And designated husband of the herd:
And flowery herbs they cut, and serve him well
With corn and running water, that his strength
Not fail him for that labour of delight,
Nor puny colts betray the feeble sire.
The herd itself of purpose they reduce
To leanness, and when love's sweet longing first
Provokes them, they forbid the leafy food,
And pen them from the springs, and oft beside
With running shake, and tire them in the sun,
What time the threshing-floor groans heavily
With pounding of the corn-ears, and light chaff
Is whirled on high to catch the rising west.
This do they that the soil's prolific powers
May not be dulled by surfeiting, nor choke
The sluggish furrows, but eagerly absorb
Their fill of love, and deeply entertain.
To care of sire the mother's care succeeds.
When great with young they wander nigh their time,
Let no man suffer them to drag the yoke
In heavy wains, nor leap across the way,
Nor scour the meads, nor swim the rushing flood.
In lonely lawns they feed them, by the course
Of brimming streams, where moss is, and the banks
With grass are greenest, where are sheltering caves,
And far outstretched the rock-flung shadow lies.

...

But, yeaning ended, all their tender care
Is to the calves transferred; at once with marks
They brand them, both to designate their race,
And which to rear for breeding, or devote
As altar-victims, or to cleave the ground
And into ridges tear and turn the sod.

The rest along the greensward graze at will.
Those that to rustic uses thou wouldst mould,
As calves encourage and take steps to tame,
While pliant wills and plastic youth allow.
And first of slender withies round the throat
Loose collars hang, then when their free-born necks
Are used to service, with the self-same bands
Yoke them in pairs, and steer by steer compel
Keep pace together. And time it is that oft
Unfreighted wheels be drawn along the ground
Behind them, as to dint the surface-dust;
Then let the beechen axle strain and creak
'Neath some stout burden, whilst a brazen pole
Drags on the wheels made fast thereto. Meanwhile
For their unbroken youth not grass alone,
Nor meagre willow-leaves and marish-sedge,
But corn-ears with thy hand pluck from the crops.
Nor shall the brood-kine, as of yore, for thee
Brim high the snowy milking-pail, but spend
Their udders' fullness on their own sweet young.

...

Ay, therefore 'tis they banish bulls afar
To solitary pastures, or behind
Some mountain-barrier, or broad streams beyond,
Or else in plenteous stalls pen fast at home.
For, even through sight of her, the female wastes
His strength with smouldering fire, till he forget
Both grass and woodland. She indeed full oft
With her sweet charms can lovers proud compel
To battle for the conquest horn to horn.
In Sila's forest feeds the heifer fair,
While each on each the furious rivals run;
Wound follows wound; the black blood laves their limbs;
Horns push and strive against opposing horns,
With mighty groaning; all the forest-side
And far Olympus bellow back the roar.
Nor wont the champions in one stall to couch;
But he that's worsted hies him to strange climes

Far off, an exile, moaning much the shame,
The blows of that proud conqueror, then love's loss
Avenged not; with one glance toward the byre,
His ancient royalties behind him lie.

...

Nay, every race on earth of men, and beasts,
And ocean-folk, and flocks, and painted birds,
Rush to the raging fire: love sways them all.
Never than then more fiercely o'er the plain
Prowls heedless of her whelps the lioness:
Nor monstrous bears such wide-spread havoc-doom
Deal through the forests; then the boar is fierce,
Most deadly then the tigress: then, alack!
Ill roaming is it on Libya's lonely plains.
Mark you what shivering thrills the horse's frame,
If but a waft the well-known gust conveys?
Nor curb can check them then, nor lash severe,
Nor rocks and caverned crags, nor barrier-floods,
That rend and whirl and wash the hills away.
Then speeds amain the great Sabellian boar,
His tushes whets, with forefoot tears the ground,
Rubs 'gainst a tree his flanks, and to and fro
Hardens each wallowing shoulder to the wound.
What of the youth, when love's relentless might
Stirs the fierce fire within his veins? Behold!
In blindest midnight how he swims the gulf
Convulsed with bursting storm-clouds! Over him
Heaven's huge gate thunders; the rock-shattered main
Utters a warning cry; nor parents' tears
Can backward call him, nor the maid he loves,
Too soon to die on his untimely pyre.

...

Enough of herds. This second task remains,
The wool-clad flocks and shaggy goats to treat.

...

First, for the sheep soft pencotes I decree
To browse in, till green summer's swift return;
And that the hard earth under them with straw

And handfuls of the fern be littered deep,
Lest chill of ice such tender cattle harm
With scab and loathly foot-rot. Passing thence
I bid the goats with arbutle-leaves be stored,
And served with fresh spring-water, and their pens
Turned southward from the blast, to face the suns
Of winter, when Aquarius' icy beam
Now sinks in showers upon the parting year.
These too no lightlier our protection claim,
Nor prove of poorer service, howsoe'er
Milesian fleeces dipped in Tyrian reds
Repay the barterer; these with offspring teem
More numerous; these yield plenteous store of milk:
The more each dry-wrung udder froths the pail,
More copious soon the teat-pressed torrents flow.
Ay, and on Cinyps' bank the he-goats too
Their beards and grizzled chins and bristling hair
Let clip for camp-use, or as rugs to wrap
Seafaring wretches. But they browse the woods
And summits of Lycaeus, and rough briers,
And brakes that love the highland: of themselves
Right heedfully the she-goats homeward troop
Before their kids, and with plump udders clogged
Scarce cross the threshold. Wherefore rather ye,
The less they crave man's vigilance, be fain
From ice to fend them and from snowy winds;
Bring food and feast them with their branchy fare,
Nor lock your hay-loft all the winter long.
But when glad summer at the west wind's call
Sends either flock to pasture in the glades,
Soon as the day-star shineth, hie we then
To the cool meadows, while the dawn is young,
The grass yet hoary, and to browsing herds
The dew tastes sweetest on the tender sward.
When heaven's fourth hour draws on the thickening drought,
And shrill cicadas pierce the brake with song,
Then at the well-springs bid them, or deep pools,
From troughs of holm-oak quaff the running wave:

But at day's hottest seek a shadowy vale,
Where some vast ancient-timbered oak of Jove
Spreads his huge branches, or where huddling black
Ilex on ilex cowers in awful shade.

Then once more give them water sparingly,
And feed once more, till sunset, when cool eve
Allays the air, and dewy moonbeams slake
The forest glades, with halcyon's song the shore,
And every thicket with the goldfinch rings.

...

If wool delight thee, first, be far removed
All prickly boskage, burrs and caltrops; shun
Luxuriant pastures; at the outset choose
White flocks with downy fleeces. For the ram,
How white soe'er himself, be but the tongue
'Neath his moist palate black, reject him, lest
He sully with dark spots his offspring's fleece,
And seek some other o'er the teeming plain.

...

Nor be thy dogs last cared for; but alike
Swift Spartan hounds and fierce Molossian feed
On fattening whey. Never, with these to watch,
Dread nightly thief afold and ravening wolves,
Or Spanish desperadoes in the rear.
And oft the shy wild asses thou wilt chase,
With hounds, too, hunt the hare, with hounds the doe;
Oft from his woodland wallowing-den uprouse
The boar, and scare him with their baying, and drive,
And o'er the mountains urge into the toils
Some antlered monster to their chiming cry.

Learn also scented cedar-wood to burn
Within the stalls, and snakes of noxious smell
With fumes of galbanum to drive away.
Oft under long-neglected cribs, or lurks
A viper ill to handle, that hath fled
The light in terror, or some snake, that wont
'Neath shade and sheltering roof to creep, and shower

Its bane among the cattle, hugs the ground,
Fell scourge of kine. Shepherd, seize stakes, seize stones!
And as he rears defiance, and puffs out
A hissing throat, down with him! see how low
That cowering crest is veiled in flight, the while,
His midmost coils and final sweep of tail
Relaxing, the last fold drags lingering spires.
Then that vile worm that in Calabrian glades
Uprears his breast, and wreathes a scaly back,
His length of belly pied with mighty spots--
While from their founts gush any streams, while yet
With showers of Spring and rainy south-winds earth
Is moistened, lo! he haunts the pools, and here
Housed in the banks, with fish and chattering frogs
Crams the black void of his insatiate maw.
Soon as the fens are parched, and earth with heat
Is gaping, forth he darts into the dry,
Rolls eyes of fire and rages through the fields,
Furious from thirst and by the drought dismayed.
Me list not then beneath the open heaven
To snatch soft slumber, nor on forest-ridge
Lie stretched along the grass, when, slipped his slough,
To glittering youth transformed he winds his spires,
And eggs or younglings leaving in his lair,
Towers sunward, lightening with three-forked tongue.

Of sickness, too, the causes and the signs
I'll teach thee. Loathly scab assails the sheep,
When chilly showers have probed them to the quick,
And winter stark with hoar-frost, or when sweat
Unpurged cleaves to them after shearing done,
And rough thorns rend their bodies. Hence it is
Shepherds their whole flock steep in running streams,
While, plunged beneath the flood, with drenched fell,
The ram, launched free, goes drifting down the tide.
Else, having shorn, they smear their bodies o'er
With acrid oil-lees, and mix silver-scum
And native sulphur and Idaean pitch,

Wax mollified with ointment, and therewith
Sea-leek, strong hellebores, bitumen black.
Yet ne'er doth kindlier fortune crown his toil,
Than if with blade of iron a man dare lance
The ulcer's mouth ope: for the taint is fed
And quickened by confinement; while the swain
His hand of healing from the wound withholds,
Or sits for happier signs imploring heaven.
Aye, and when inward to the bleater's bones
The pain hath sunk and rages, and their limbs
By thirsty fever are consumed, 'tis good
To draw the enkindled heat therefrom, and pierce
Within the hoof-clefts a blood-bounding vein.

...

With quick knife check the mischief, ere it creep
With dire contagion through the unwary herd.
Less thick and fast the whirlwind scours the main
With tempest in its wake, than swarm the plagues
Of cattle; nor seize they single lives alone,
But sudden clear whole feeding grounds, the flock
With all its promise, and extirpate the breed.

...

Hence die the calves in many a pasture fair,
Or at full cribs their lives' sweet breath resign;
Hence on the fawning dog comes madness, hence
Racks the sick swine a gasping cough that chokes
With swelling at the jaws: the conquering steed,
Uncrowned of effort and heedless of the sward,
Faints, turns him from the springs, and paws the earth
With ceaseless hoof: low droop his ears, wherefrom
Bursts fitful sweat, a sweat that waxes cold
Upon the dying beast; the skin is dry,
And rigidly repels the handler's touch.
These earlier signs they give that presage doom.
But, if the advancing plague 'gin fiercer grow,
Then are their eyes all fire, deep-drawn their breath,
At times groan-laboured: with long sobbing heave
Their lowest flanks; from either nostril streams

Black blood; a rough tongue clogs the obstructed jaws.

...

See!

From Stygian darkness launched into the light
Comes raging pale Tisiphone; she drives
Disease and fear before her, day by day
Still rearing higher that all-devouring head.
With bleat of flocks and lowings thick resound
Rivers and parched banks and sloping heights.
At last in crowds she slaughters them, she chokes
The very stalls with carrion-heaps that rot
In hideous corruption, till men learn
With earth to cover them, in pits to hide.
For e'en the fells are useless; nor the flesh
With water may they purge, or tame with fire,
Nor shear the fleeces even, gnawed through and through
With foul disease, nor touch the putrid webs;
But, had one dared the loathly weeds to try,
Red blisters and an unclean sweat o'erran
His noisome limbs, till, no long tarriance made,
The fiery curse his tainted frame devoured.

Book 4

Of air-born honey, gift of heaven, I now
Take up the tale. Upon this theme no less
Look thou, Maecenas, with indulgent eye.
A marvellous display of puny powers,
High-hearted chiefs, a nation's history,
Its traits, its bent, its battles and its clans,
All, each, shall pass before you, while I sing.
Slight though the poet's theme, not slight the praise,
So frown not heaven, and Phoebus hear his call.

First find your bees a settled sure abode,
Where neither winds can enter (winds blow back
The foragers with food returning home)
Nor sheep and butting kids tread down the flowers,

Nor heifer wandering wide upon the plain
Dash off the dew, and bruise the springing blades.
Let the gay lizard too keep far aloof
His scale-clad body from their honied stalls,
And the bee-eater, and what birds beside,

...

But let clear springs and moss-green pools be near,
And through the grass a streamlet hurrying run,
Some palm-tree o'er the porch extend its shade,
Or huge-grown oleaster, that in Spring,
Their own sweet Spring-tide, when the new-made chiefs
Lead forth the young swarms, and, escaped their comb,
The colony comes forth to sport and play,
The neighbouring bank may lure them from the heat,
Or bough befriend with hospitable shade.

...

And let green cassias and far-scented thymes,
And savory with its heavy-laden breath
Bloom round about, and violet-beds hard by
Sip sweetness from the fertilizing springs.
For the hive's self, or stitched of hollow bark,
Or from tough osier woven, let the doors
Be strait of entrance; for stiff winter's cold
Congeals the honey, and heat resolves and thaws,
To bees alike disastrous; not for naught
So haste they to cement the tiny pores
That pierce their walls, and fill the crevices
With pollen from the flowers, and glean and keep
To this same end the glue, that binds more fast
Than bird-lime or the pitch from Ida's pines.

...

When now the golden sun has put
Winter to headlong flight beneath the world,
And oped the doors of heaven with summer ray,
Forthwith they roam the glades and forests o'er,
Rifle the painted flowers, or sip the streams,
Light-hovering on the surface. Hence it is
With some sweet rapture, that we know not of,

Their little ones they foster, hence with skill
Work out new wax or clinging honey mould.
So when the cage-escaped hosts you see
Float heavenward through the hot clear air, until
You marvel at yon dusky cloud that spreads
And lengthens on the wind, then mark them well;
For then 'tis ever the fresh springs they seek
And bowery shelter: hither must you bring
The savoury sweets I bid, and sprinkle them,
Bruised balsam and the wax-flower's lowly weed,
And wake and shake the tinkling cymbals heard
By the great Mother: on the anointed spots
Themselves will settle, and in wonted wise
Seek of themselves the cradle's inmost depth.

But if to battle they have hied them forth--
For oft 'twixt king and king with uproar dire
Fierce feud arises, and at once from far
You may discern what passion sways the mob,
And how their hearts are throbbing for the strife;
Hark! the hoarse brazen note that warriors know
Chides on the loiterers, and the ear may catch
A sound that mocks the war-trump's broken blasts;
Then in hot haste they muster, then flash wings,
Sharpen their pointed beaks and knit their thews,
And round the king, even to his royal tent,
Throng rallying, and with shouts defy the foe.

...

As with kings,
So too with people, diverse is their mould,
Some rough and loathly, as when the wayfarer
Scapes from a whirl of dust, and scorched with heat
Spits forth the dry grit from his parched mouth:
The others shine forth and flash with lightning-gleam,
Their backs all blazoned with bright drops of gold
Symmetric: this the likelier breed; from these,
When heaven brings round the season, thou shalt strain
Sweet honey, nor yet so sweet as passing clear,

And mellowing on the tongue the wine-god's fire.

But when the swarms fly aimlessly abroad,
Disport themselves in heaven and spurn their cells,
Leaving the hive unwarmed, from such vain play
Must you refrain their volatile desires,
Nor hard the task: tear off the monarchs' wings;
While these prove loiterers, none beside will dare
Mount heaven, or pluck the standards from the camp.
Let gardens with the breath of saffron flowers
Allure them, and the lord of Hellespont,
Priapus, wielder of the willow-scythe,
Safe in his keeping hold from birds and thieves.

...

And I myself, were I not even now
Furling my sails, and, nigh the journey's end,
Eager to turn my vessel's prow to shore,
Perchance would sing what careful husbandry
Makes the trim garden smile; of Paestum too,
Whose roses bloom and fade and bloom again;
How endives glory in the streams they drink,
And green banks in their parsley, and how the gourd
Twists through the grass and rounds him to paunch;
Nor of Narcissus had my lips been dumb,
That loiterer of the flowers, nor supple-stemmed
Acanthus, with the praise of ivies pale,
And myrtles clinging to the shores they love.
For 'neath the shade of tall Oebalia's towers,
Where dark Galaesus laves the yellowing fields,
An old man once I mind me to have seen--
From Corycus he came--to whom had fallen
Some few poor acres of neglected land,
And they nor fruitful' neath the plodding steer,
Meet for the grazing herd, nor good for vines.
Yet he, the while his meagre garden-herbs
Among the thorns he planted, and all round
White lilies, vervains, and lean poppy set,
In pride of spirit matched the wealth of kings,

And home returning not till night was late,
With unbought plenty heaped his board on high.
He was the first to cull the rose in spring,
He the ripe fruits in autumn; and ere yet
Winter had ceased in sullen ire to rive
The rocks with frost, and with her icy bit
Curb in the running waters, there was he
Plucking the rather faint hyacinth, while he chid
Summer's slow footsteps and the lagging West.
Therefore he too with earliest brooding bees
And their full swarms o'erflowed, and first was he
To press the bubbling honey from the comb;
Lime-trees were his, and many a branching pine;
And all the fruits wherewith in early bloom
The orchard-tree had clothed her, in full tale
Hung there, by mellowing autumn perfected.
He too transplanted tall-grown elms a-row,
Time-toughened pear, thorns bursting with the plum
And plane now yielding serviceable shade
For dry lips to drink under: but these things,
Shut off by rigorous limits, I pass by,
And leave for others to sing after me.

Come, then, I will unfold the natural powers
Great Jove himself upon the bees bestowed,

...

Alone of all things they receive and hold
Community of offspring, and they house
Together in one city, and beneath
The shelter of majestic laws they live;
And they alone fixed home and country know,
And in the summer, warned of coming cold,
Make proof of toil, and for the general store
Hoard up their gathered harvesting. For some
Watch o'er the victualling of the hive, and these
By settled order ply their tasks afield;
And some within the confines of their home
Plant firm the comb's first layer, Narcissus' tear,

And sticky gum oozed from the bark of trees,
Then set the clinging wax to hang therefrom.
Others the while lead forth the full-grown young,
Their country's hope, and others press and pack
The thrice repured honey, and stretch their cells
To bursting with the clear-strained nectar sweet.
Some, too, the wardship of the gates befalls,
Who watch in turn for showers and cloudy skies,
Or ease returning labourers of their load,
Or form a band and from their precincts drive
The drones, a lazy herd.

How glows the work!
How sweet the honey smells of perfumed thyme

...

The love of getting planted in their breasts
Goads on the bees, that haunt old Cecrops' heights,
Each in his sphere to labour. The old have charge
To keep the town, and build the walled combs,
And mould the cunning chambers; but the youth,
Their tired legs packed with thyme, come labouring home
Belated, for afar they range to feed
On arbutes and the grey-green willow-leaves,
And cassia and the crocus blushing red,
Glue-yielding limes, and hyacinths dusky-eyed.
One hour for rest have all, and one for toil:
With dawn they hurry from the gates--no room
For loiterers there: and once again, when even
Now bids them quit their pasturing on the plain,
Then homeward make they, then refresh their strength:
A hum arises: hark! they buzz and buzz
About the doors and threshold; till at length
Safe laid to rest they hush them for the night,
And welcome slumber laps their weary limbs.

But from the homestead not too far they fare,
When showers hang like to fall, nor, east winds nigh,
Confide in heaven, but 'neath the city walls

Safe-circling fetch them water, or essay
Brief out-goings, and oft weigh-up tiny stones,
As light craft ballast in the tossing tide,
Wherewith they poise them through the cloudy vast.

This law of life, too, by the bees obeyed,
Will move thy wonder, that nor sex with sex
Yoke they in marriage, nor yield their limbs to love,
Nor know the pangs of labour, but alone
From leaves and honied herbs, the mothers, each,
Gather their offspring in their mouths, alone
Supply new kings and pigmy commonwealth,
And their old court and waxen realm repair.
Oft, too, while wandering, against jagged stones
Their wings they fray, and 'neath the burden yield
Their liberal lives: so deep their love of flowers,
So glorious deem they honey's proud acquist.
Therefore, though each a life of narrow span,
Ne'er stretched to summers more than seven, befalls,
Yet deathless doth the race endure, and still
Perennial stands the fortune of their line,
From grandsire unto grandsire backward told.

Moreover, not Aegyptus, nor the realm
Of boundless Lydia, no, nor Parthia's hordes,
Nor Median Hydaspes, to their king
Do such obeisance: lives the king unscathed,
One will inspires the million: is he dead,
Snapt is the bond of fealty; they themselves
Ravage their toil-wrought honey, and rend amain
Their own comb's waxen trellis. He is the lord
Of all their labour; him with awful eye
They reverence, and with murmuring throngs surround,
In crowds attend, oft shoulder him on high,
Or with their bodies shield him in the fight,
And seek through showering wounds a glorious death.

Led by these tokens, and with such traits to guide,

Some say that unto bees a share is given
Of the Divine Intelligence, and to drink
Pure draughts of ether; for God permeates all--
Earth, and wide ocean, and the vault of heaven--
From whom flocks, herds, men, beasts of every kind,
Draw each at birth the fine essential flame;
Yea, and that all things hence to Him return,
Brought back by dissolution, nor can death
Find place: but, each into his starry rank,
Alive they soar, and mount the heights of heaven.

If now their narrow home thou wouldst unseal,
And broach the treasures of the honey-house,
With draught of water first toment thy lips,
And spread before thee fumes of trailing smoke.
Twice is the teeming produce gathered in,
Twofold their time of harvest year by year,
Once when Taygete the Pleiad uplifts
Her comely forehead for the earth to see,
With foot of scorn spurning the ocean-streams,
Once when in gloom she flies the watery Fish,
And dips from heaven into the wintry wave.

...

So sang I of the tilth of furrowed fields,
Of flocks and trees, while Caesar's majesty
Launched forth the levin-bolts of war by deep
Euphrates, and bare rule o'er willing folk
Though vanquished, and essayed the heights of heaven.
I Virgil then, of sweet Parthenope
The nursling, wooed the flowery walks of peace
Inglorious, who erst trilled for shepherd-wights
The wanton ditty, and sang in saucy youth
Thee, Tityrus, 'neath the spreading beech tree's shade.