THEOCRITUS , LANG ANDREW, BION OF SMYRNA И ДР.

# THEOCRITUS, BION AND MOSCHUS, RENDERED INTO ENGLISH PROSE

Theocritus

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**Theocritus**

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# Содержание

# Theocritus
# Theocritus, Bion and Moschus

**TO**

**ERNEST MYERS**

**’Εκ Μοισᾶν ξεινήιον**

# LIFE OF THEOCRITUS

## (From Suidas)

Theocritus, the Chian. But there is another Theocritus, the son of Praxagoras and Philinna (see Epigram XXIII), or as some say of Simichus. (This is plainly derived from the assumed name Simichidas in Idyl VII.) He was a Syracusan, or, as others say, a Coan settled in Syracuse. He wrote the so-called *Bucolics* in the Dorian dialect. Some attribute to him the following works: —*The Proetidae*, *The Pleasures of Hope* (Ἐλπίδες), *Hymns*, *The Heroines*, *Dirges*, *Ditties*, *Elegies*, *Iambics*, *Epigrams*. But it known that there are three Bucolic poets: this Theocritus, Moschus of Sicily, and Bion of Smyrna, from a village called Phlossa.

# LIFE OF THEOCRITUS
# ΘΕΟΚΡΙΤΟΥ ΓΕΝΟΣ

### (Usually prefixed to the Idyls)

Theocritus the Bucolic poet was a Syracusan by extraction, and the son of Simichidas, as he says himself, *Simichidas*, *pray whither through the noon dost thou dray thy feet*? (Idyl VII). Some say that this was an assumed name, for he seems to have been snub-nosed (σιμός), and that his father was Praxagoras, and his mother Philinna. He became the pupil of Philetas and Asclepiades, of whom he speaks (Idyl VII), and flourished about the time of Ptolemy Lagus. He gained much fame for his skill in bucolic poetry. According to some his original name was Moschus, and Theocritus was a name he later assumed.

# THEOCRITUS AND HIS AGE

At the beginning of the third century before Christ, in the years just preceding those in which Theocritus wrote, the genius of Greece seemed to have lost her productive force. Nor would it have been strange if that force had really been exhausted. Greek poetry had hitherto enjoyed a peculiarly free development, each form of art succeeding each without break or pause, because each – epic, lyric, dithyramb, the drama – had responded to some new need of the state and of religion. Now in the years that followed the fall of Athens and the conquests of Macedonia, Greek religion and the Greek state had ceased to be themselves. Religion and the state had been the patrons of poetry; on their decline poetry seemed dead. There were no heroic kings, like those for whom epic minstrels had chanted. The cities could no longer welcome an Olympian winner with Pindaric hymns. There was no imperial Athens to fill the theatres with a crowd of citizens and strangers eager to listen to new tragic masterpieces. There was no humorous democracy to laugh at all the world, and at itself, with Aristophanes. The very religion of Sophocles and Aeschylus was debased. A vulgar usurper had stripped the golden ornaments from Athene of the Parthenon. The ancient faith in the protecting gods of Athens, of Sparta, and of Thebes, had become a lax readiness to bow down in the temple of any Oriental Rimmon, of Serapis or Adonis. Greece had turned her face, with Alexander of Macedon, to the East; Alexander had fallen, and Greece had become little better than the western portion of a divided Oriental empire. The centre of intellectual life had been removed from Athens to Alexandria (*founded* 332 B.C.) The new Greek cities of Egypt and Asia, and above all Alexandria, seemed no cities at all to Greeks who retained the pure Hellenic traditions. Alexandria was thirty times larger than the size assigned by Aristotle to a well-balanced state. Austere spectators saw in Alexandria an Eastern capital and mart, a place of harems and bazaars, a home of tyrants, slaves, dreamers, and pleasure-seekers. Thus a Greek of the old school must have despaired of Greek poetry. There was nothing (he would have said) to evoke it; no dawn of liberty could flush this silent Memnon into song. The collectors, critics, librarians of Alexandria could only produce literary imitations of the epic and the hymn, or could at best write epigrams or inscriptions for the statue of some alien and luxurious god. Their critical activity in every field of literature was immense, their original genius sterile. In them the intellect of the Hellenes still faintly glowed, like embers on an altar that shed no light on the way. Yet over these embers the god poured once again the sacred oil, and from the dull mass leaped, like a many-coloured frame, the genius of Theocritus.

To take delight in that genius, so human, so kindly, so musical in expression, requires, it may be said, no long preparation. The art of Theocritus scarcely needs to be illustrated by any description of the conditions among which it came to perfection. It is always impossible to analyse into its component parts the genius of a poet. But it is not impossible to detect some of the influences that worked on Theocritus. We can study his early ‘environment’; the country scenes he knew, and the songs of the neatherds which he elevated into art. We can ascertain the nature of the demand for poetry in the chief cities and in the literary society of the time. As a result, we can understand the broad twofold division of the poems of Theocritus into rural and epic idyls, and with this we must rest contented.

It is useless to attempt a regular biography of Theocritus. Facts and dates are alike wanting, the ancient accounts (p. ix) are clearly based on his works, but it is by no means impossible to construct a ‘legend’ or romance of his life, by aid of his own verses, and of hints and fragments which reach us from the past and the present. The genius of Theocritus was so steeped in the colours of human life, he bore such true and full witness as to the scenes and men he knew, that life (always essentially the same) becomes in turn a witness to his veracity. He was born in the midst of nature that, through all the changes of things, has never lost its sunny charm. The existence he loved best to contemplate, that of southern shepherds, fishermen, rural people, remains what it always has been in Sicily and in the isles of Greece. The habits and the passions of his countryfolk have not altered, the echoes

of their old love-songs still sound among the pines, or by the sea-banks, where Theocritus 'watched the visionary flocks.'

Theocritus was probably born in an early decade of the third century, or, according to Couat, about 315 B.C., and was a native of Syracuse, 'the greatest of Greek cities, the fairest of all cities.' So Cicero calls it, describing the four quarters that were encircled by its walls, – each quarter as large as a town, – the fountain Arethusa, the stately temples with their doors of ivory and gold. On the fortunate dwellers in Syracuse, Cicero says, the sun shone every day, and there was never a morning so tempestuous but the sunlight conquered at last, and broke through the clouds. That perennial sunlight still floods the poems of Theocritus with its joyous glow. His birthplace was the proper home of an idyllic poet, of one who, with all his enjoyment of the city life of Greece, had yet been 'breathed on by the rural Pan,' and best loved the sights and sounds and fragrant air of the forests and the coast. Thanks to the mountainous regions of Sicily, to Etna, with her volcanic cliffs and snow-fed streams, thanks also to the hills of the interior, the populous island never lost the charm of nature. Sicily was not like the overcrowded and over-cultivated Attica; among the Sicilian heights and by the coast were few enclosed estates and narrow farms. The character of the people, too, was attuned to poetry. The Dorian settlers had kept alive the magic of rivers, of pools where the Nereids dance, and uplands haunted by Pan. This popular poetry influenced the literary verse of Sicily. The songs of Stesichorus, a minstrel of the early period, and the little rural 'mimes' or interludes of Sophron are lost, and we have only fragments of Epicharmus. But it seems certain that these poets, predecessors of Theocritus, liked to mingle with their own composition strains of rustic melody, *volks-lieder*, ballads, love-songs, ditties, and dirges, such as are still chanted by the peasants of Greece and Italy. Thus in Syracuse and the other towns of the coast, Theocritus would have always before his eyes the spectacle of refined and luxurious manners, and always in his ears the babble of the Dorian women, while he had only to pass the gates, and wander through the fens of Lysimeleia, by the brackish mere, or ride into the hills, to find himself in the golden world of pastoral. Thinking of his early years, and of the education that nature gives the poet, we can imagine him, like Callicles in Mr. Arnold's poem, singing at the banquet of a merchant or a general —

> 'With his head full of wine, and his hair crown'd,
> Touching his harp as the whim came on him,
> And praised and spoil'd by master and by guests,
> Almost as much as the new dancing girl.'

We can recover the world that met his eyes and inspired his poems, though the dates of the composition of these poems are unknown. We can follow him, in fancy, as he breaks from the revellers and wanders out into the night. Wherever he turned his feet, he could find such scenes as he has painted in the idyls. If the moon rode high in heaven, as he passed through the outlying gardens he might catch a glimpse of some deserted girl shredding the magical herbs into the burning brazier, and sending upward to the 'lady Selene' the song which was to charm her lover home. The magical image melted in the burning, the herbs smouldered, the tale of love was told, and slowly the singer 'drew the quiet night into her blood.' Her lay ended with a passage of softened melancholy —

> 'Do thou farewell, and turn thy steeds to Ocean, lady, and my pain I will endure, even as I have declared. Farewell, Selene beautiful; farewell, ye other stars that follow the wheels of Night.'

A grammarian says that Theocritus borrowed this second idyl, the story of Simaetha, from a piece by Sophron. But he had no need to borrow from anything but the nature before his eyes. Ideas change so little among the Greek country people, and the hold of superstition is so strong, that

betrayed girls even now sing to the Moon their prayer for pity and help. Theocritus himself could have added little passion to this incantation, still chanted in the moonlit nights of Greece: [1]

> 'Bright golden Moon, that now art near to thy setting, go thou and salute my lover, he that stole my love, and that kissed me, and said, "Never will I leave thee." And, lo, he has left me, like a field reaped and gleaned, like a church where no man comes to pray, like a city desolate. Therefore I would curse him, and yet again my heart fails me for tenderness, my heart is vexed within me, my spirit is moved with anguish. Nay, even so I will lay my curse on him, and let God do even as He will, with my pain and with my crying, with my flame, and mine imprecations.'

It is thus that the women of the islands, like the girl of Syracuse two thousand years ago, hope to lure back love or avenged love betrayed, and thus they 'win more ease from song than could be bought with gold.'

In whatever direction the path of the Syracusan wanderer lay, he would find then, as he would find now in Sicily, some scene of the idyllic life, framed between the distant Etna and the sea. If he strayed in the faint blue of the summer dawn, through the fens to the shore, he might reach the wattled cabin of the two old fishermen in the twenty-first idyl. There is nothing in Wordsworth more real, more full of the incommunicable sense of nature, rounding and softening the toilsome days of the aged and the poor, than the Theocritean poem of the Fisherman's Dream. It is as true to nature as the statue of the naked fisherman in the Vatican. One cannot read these verses but the vision returns to one, of sandhills by the sea, of a low cabin roofed with grass, where fishing-rods of reed are leaning against the door, while the Mediterranean floats up her waves that fill the waste with sound. This nature, grey and still, seems in harmony with the wise content of old men whose days are waning on the limit of life, as they have all been spent by the desolate margin of the sea.

The twenty-first idyl is one of the rare poems of Theocritus that are not filled with the sunlight of Sicily, or of Egypt. The landscapes he prefers are often seen under the noonday heat, when shade is most pleasant to men. His shepherds invite each other to the shelter of oak-trees or of pines, where the dry fir-needles are strown, or where the feathered ferns make a luxurious 'couch more soft than sleep,' or where the flowers bloom whose musical names sing in the idyls. Again, Theocritus will sketch the bare beginnings of the hillside, as in the third idyl, just where the olive-gardens cease, and where the short grass of the heights alternates with rocks, and thorns, and aromatic plants. None of his pictures seem complete without the presence of water. It may be but the wells that the maidenhair fringes, or the babbling runnel of the fountain of the Nereids. The shepherds may sing of Crathon, or Sybaris, or Himeras, waters so sweet that they seem to flow with milk and honey. Again, Theocritus may encounter his rustics fluting in rivalry, like Daphnis and Menalcas in the eighth idyl, 'on the long ranges of the hills.' Their kine and sheep have fed upwards from the lower valleys to the place where

> 'The track winds down to the clear stream,
> To cross the sparkling shallows; there
> The cattle love to gather, on their way
> To the high mountain pastures and to stay,
> Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,
> Knee-deep in the cool ford; for 'tis the last
> Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells
> On Etna,.
> .. glade,
> And stream, and sward, and chestnut-trees,

[1] This fragment is from the collection of M. Fauriel; *Chants Populaires de le Grèce*.

End here; Etna beyond, in the broad glare
Of the hot noon, without a shade,
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare;
The peak, round which the white clouds play.' [2]

Theocritus never drives his flock so high, and rarely muses on such thoughts as come to wanderers beyond the shade of trees and the sound of water among the scorched rocks and the barren lava. The day is always cooled and soothed, in his idyls, with the 'music of water that falleth from the high face of the rock,' or with the murmurs of the sea. From the cliffs and their seat among the bright red berries on the arbutus shrubs, his shepherds flute to each other, as they watch the tunny fishers cruising far below, while the echo floats upwards of the sailors' song. These shepherds have some touch in them of the satyr nature; we might fancy that their ears are pointed like those of Hawthorne's Donatello, in 'Transformation.'

It should be noticed, as a proof of the truthfulness of Theocritus, that the songs of his shepherds and goatherds are all such as he might really have heard on the shores of Sicily. This is the real answer to the criticism which calls him affected. When mock pastorals flourished at the court of France, when the long dispute as to the merits of the ancients and moderns was raging, critics vowed that the hinds of Theocritus were too sentimental and polite in their wooings. Refinement and sentiment were to be reserved for princely shepherds dancing, crook in hand, in the court ballets. Louis XIV sang of himself —

'*A son labeur il passe tout d'un coup*,
*Et n'ira pas dormir sur la fougere*,
*Ny s'oublier aupres d'une Bergere*,
*Jusques au point d'en oublier le Loup*.' [3]

Accustomed to royal goatherds in silk and lace, Fontenelle (a severe critic of Theocritus) could not believe in the delicacy of a Sicilian who wore a skin 'stripped from the roughest of he-goats, with the smell of the rennet clinging to it still.' Thus Fontenelle cries, 'Can any one suppose that there ever was a shepherd who could say "Would I were the humming bee, Amaryllis, to flit to thy cave, and dip beneath the branches, and the ivy leaves that hide thee"?' and then he quotes other graceful passages from the love-verses of Theocritean swains. Certainly no such fancies were to be expected from the French peasants of Fontenelle's age, 'creatures blackened with the sun, and bowed with labour and hunger.' The imaginative grace of Battus is quite as remote from our own hinds. But we have the best reason to suppose that the peasants of Theocritus's time expressed refined sentiment in language adorned with colour and music, because the modern love-songs of Greek shepherds sound like memories of Theocritus. The lover of Amaryllis might have sung this among his ditties —

Χελιδονάκι θα γενω, σ' τα χείλη σου να καττώ
Να σε φιλήσω μια και δυό, και πάλε να πετάξω

'To flit towards these lips of thine, I fain would be a swallow,
To kiss thee once, to kiss thee twice, and then go flying homeward.' [4]

In his despair, when Love 'clung to him like a leech of the fen,' he might have murmured —

[2] *Empedocles on Etna*.

[3] Ballet des Arts, dansé par sa Majesté; le 8 janvier, 1663. A Paris, par Robert Ballard, MDCLXIII.

[4] These and the following ditties are from the modern Greek ballads collected by MM. Fauriel and Legrand.

> Ἠθελα να εἴμαι σ' τα βουνα, μ' αλάφια να κοιμοῦμαι
> Και το δικον σου το κορμι να μη το συλλογιοῦμαι
>
> 'Would that I were on the high hills, and lay where lie the stags, and no more was troubled with the thought of thee.'

Here, again, is a love-complaint from modern Epirus, exactly in the tone of Battus's song in the tenth idyl —

> 'White thou art not, thou art not golden haired,
> Thou art brown, and gracious, and meet for love.'

Here is a longer love-ditty —

> 'I will begin by telling thee first of thy perfections: thy body is as fair as an angel's; no painter could design it. And if any man be sad, he has but to look on thee, and despite himself he takes courage, the hapless one, and his heart is joyous. Upon thy brows are shining the constellated Pleiades, thy breast is full of the flowers of May, thy breasts are lilies. Thou hast the eyes of a princess, the glance of a queen, and but one fault hast thou, that thou deignest not to speak to me.'

Battus might have cried thus, with a modern Greek singer, to the shade of the dead Amaryllis (Idyl IV), the 'gracious Amaryllis, unforgotten even in death' —

> 'Ah, light of mine eyes, what gift shall I send thee; what gift to the other world? The apple rots, and the quince decayeth, and one by one they perish, the petals of the rose! I send thee my tears bound in a napkin, and what though the napkin burns, if my tears reach thee at last!'

The difficulty is to stop choosing, where all the verses of the modern Greek peasants are so rich in Theocritean memories, so ardent, so delicate, so full of flowers and birds and the music of fountains. Enough has been said, perhaps, to show what the popular poetry of Sicily could lend to the genius of Theocritus.

From her shepherds he borrowed much, – their bucolic melody; their love-complaints; their rural superstitions; their system of answering couplets, in which each singer refines on the utterance of his rival. But he did not borrow their 'pastoral melancholy.' There is little of melancholy in Theocritus. When Battus is chilled by the thought of the death of Amaryllis, it is but as one is chilled when a thin cloud passes over the sun, on a bright day of early spring. And in an epigram the dead girl is spoken of as the kid that the wolf has seized, while the hounds bay all too late. Grief will not bring her back. The world must go its way, and we need not darken its sunlight by long regret. Yet when, for once, Theocritus adopted the accent of pastoral lament, when he raised the rural dirge for Daphnis into the realm of art, he composed a masterpiece, and a model for all later poets, as for the authors of *Lycidas*, *Thyrsis*, and *Adonais*.

Theocritus did more than borrow a note from the country people. He brought the gifts of his own spirit to the contemplation of the world. He had the clearest vision, and he had the most ardent love of poetry, 'of song may all my dwelling be full, for neither is sleep more sweet, nor sudden spring, nor are flowers more delicious to the bees, so dear to me are the Muses.'.. 'Never may we be sundered, the Muses of Pieria and I.' Again, he had perhaps in greater measure than any other poet the gift of the undisturbed enjoyment of life. The undertone of all his idyls is joy in the sunshine and in existence. His favourite word, the word that opens the first idyl, and, as it were, strikes the keynote, is αδύ, *sweet*. He finds all things delectable in the rural life:

> 'Sweet are the voices of the calves, and sweet the heifers' lowing; sweet plays the shepherd on the shepherd's pipe, and sweet is the echo.'

Even in courtly poems, and in the artificial hymns of which we are to speak in their place, the memory of the joyful country life comes over him. He praises Hiero, because Hiero is to restore peace to Syracuse, and when peace returns, then 'thousands of sheep fattened in the meadows will bleat along the plain, and the kine, as they flock in crowds to the stalls, will make the belated traveller hasten on his way.' The words evoke a memory of a narrow country lane in the summer evening, when light is dying out of the sky, and the fragrance of wild roses by the roadside is mingled with the perfumed breath of cattle that hurry past on their homeward road. There was scarcely a form of the life he saw that did not seem to him worthy of song, though it might be but the gossip of two rude hinds, or the drinking bout of the Thessalian horse-jobber, and the false girl Cynisca and her wild lover Æschines. But it is the sweet country that he loves best to behold and to remember. In his youth Sicily and Syracuse were disturbed by civil and foreign wars, wars of citizens against citizens, of Greeks against Carthaginians, and against the fierce 'men of Mars,' the banded mercenaries who possessed themselves of Messana. But this was not matter for his joyous Muse —

> κείνος δ' ού πολέμους, ού δάκρυα, Πανα δ' έμελπε,
> και βούτασ έλίγαινε και άείδων ενόμευε
>
> 'Not of wars, not of tears, but of Pan would he chant, and of the neatherds he sweetly sang, and singing he shepherded his flocks.'

This was the training that Sicily, her hills, her seas, her lovers, her poet-shepherds, gave to Theocritus. Sicily showed him subjects which he imitated in truthful art. Unluckily the later pastoral poets of northern lands have imitated *him*, and so have gone far astray from northern nature. The pupil of nature had still to be taught the 'rules' of the critics, to watch the temper and fashion of his time, and to try his fortune among the courtly poets and grammarians of the capital of civilisation. Between the years of early youth in Sicily and the years of waiting for court patronage at Alexandria, it seems probable that we must place a period of education in the island of Cos. The testimonies of the Grammarians who handed on to us the scanty traditions about Theocritus, agree in making him the pupil of Philetas of Cos. This Philetas was a critic, a commentator on Homer, and an elegiac poet whose love-songs were greatly admired by the Romans of the Augustan age. He is said to have been the tutor of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who was himself born, as Theocritus records, in the isle of Cos. It has been conjectured that Ptolemy and Theocritus were fellow pupils, and that the poet may have hoped to obtain court favour at Alexandria from this early connection. About this point nothing is certainly known, nor can we exactly understand the sort of education that was given in the school of the poet Philetas. The ideas of that artificial age make it not improbable that Philetas professed to teach the art of poetry. A French critic and poet of our own time, M. Baudelaire, was willing to do as much 'in thirty lessons.' Possibly Philetas may have imparted technical rules then in vogue, and the fashionable knack of introducing obscure mythological allusions. He was a logician as well as a poet, and is fabled to have died of vexation because he could not unriddle one of the metaphysical catches or puzzles of the sophists. His varied activity seems to have worn him to a shadow; the contemporary satirists bantered him about his leanness, and it was alleged that he wore leaden soles to his sandals lest the wind should blow him, as it blew the calves of Daphnis (Idyl IX) over a cliff against the rocks, or into the sea. [5] Philetas seems a strange master for Theocritus, but, whatever the qualities of the teacher, Cos, the home of the luxurious old age of Meleager, was a beautiful school. The island was

[5] See Couat, *La Poesie Alexandrine*, p. 68 *et seq.*, Paris 1882.

one of the most ancient colonies of the Dorians, and the Syracusan scholar found himself among a people who spoke his own broad and liquid dialect. The sides of the limestone hills were clothed with vines, and with shadowy plane-trees which still attain extraordinary size and age, while the wine-presses where Demeter smiled, 'with sheaves and poppies in her hands,' yielded a famous vintage. The people had a soft industry of their own, they fashioned the 'Coan stuff,' transparent robes for woman's wear, like the ὑδάτινα βράκη, the thin undulating tissues which Theugenis was to weave with the ivory distaff, the gift of Theocritus. As a colony of Epidaurus, Cos naturally cultivated the worship of Asclepius, the divine physician, the child of Apollo. In connection with his worship and with the clan of the Asclepiadae (that widespread stock to which Aristotle belonged, and in which the practice of leechcraft was hereditary), Cos possessed a school of medicine. In the temple of Asclepius patients hung up as votive offerings representations of their diseased limbs, and thus the temple became a museum of anatomical specimens. Cos was therefore resorted to by young students from all parts of the East, and Theocritus cannot but have made many friends of his own age. Among these he alludes in various passages to Nicias, afterwards a physician at Miletus, to Philinus, noted in later life as the head of a medical sect, and to Aratus. Theocritus has sung of Aratus's love-affairs, and St. Paul has quoted him as a witness to man's instinctive consent in the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God. These strangely various notices have done more for the memory of Aratus than his own didactic poem on the meteorological theories of his age. He lives, with Philinus and the rest of the Coan students, because Theocritus introduced them into the picture of a happy summer's day. In the seventh idyl, that one day of Demeter's harvest-feast is immortal, and the sun never goes down on its delight. We see Theocritus

> κουπω ταν μεσάταν όδον ανυμες, ουδε το σαμα
> άμιν το Βρασίλα κατεφαίνετο —

when he 'had not yet reached the mid-point of the way, nor had the tomb yet risen on his sight.' He reveals himself as he was at the height of morning, at the best moment of the journey, in midsummer of a genius still unchecked by doubt, or disappointment, or neglect. Life seems to accost him with the glance of the goatherd Lycidas, 'and still he smiled as he spoke, with laughing eyes, and laughter dwelling on his lips.' In Cos, Theocritus found friendship, and met Myrto, 'the girl he loved as dearly as goats love the spring.' Here he could express, without any afterthought, an enthusiastic adoration for the disinterested joys, the enchanted moments of human existence. Before he entered the thronged streets of Alexandria, and tuned his shepherd's pipe to catch the ear of princes, and to sing the epithalamium of a royal and incestuous love, he rested with his friends in the happy island. Deep in a cave, among the ruins of ancient aqueducts, there still bubbles up, from the Coan limestone, the well-spring of the Nymphs. 'There they reclined on beds of fragrant rushes, lowly strown, and rejoicing they lay in new stript leaves of the vine. And high above their heads waved many a poplar, many an elm-tree, while close at hand the sacred water from the nymph's own cave welled forth with murmurs musical' (Idyl VII).

The old Dorian settlers in Syracuse pleased themselves with the fable that their fountain, Arethusa, had been a Grecian nymph, who, like themselves, had crossed the sea to Sicily. The poetry of Theocritus, read or sung in sultry Alexandria, must have seemed like a new welling up of the waters of Arethusa in the sandy soil of Egypt. We cannot certainly say when the poet first came from Syracuse, or from Cos, to Alexandria. It is evident however from the allusions in the fifteenth and seventeenth idyls that he was living there after Ptolemy Philadelphus married his own sister, Arsinoë. It is not impossible to form some idea of the condition of Alexandrian society, art, religion, literature and learning at the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus. The vast city, founded some sixty years before, was now completed. The walls, many miles in circuit, protected a population of about eight hundred thousand souls. Into that changing crowd were gathered adventurers from all the known

world. Merchantmen brought to Ptolemy the wares of India and the porcelains of China. Marauders from upper Egypt skulked about the native quarters, and sallied forth at night to rob the wayfarer. The king's guards were recruited with soldiers from turbulent Greece, from Asia, from Italy. Settlers were attracted from Syracuse by the prospect of high wages and profitable labour. The Jewish quarters were full of Israelites who did not disdain Greek learning. The city in which this multitude found a home was beautifully constructed. The Mediterranean filled the northern haven, the southern walls were washed by the Mareotic lake. If the isle of Pharos shone dazzling white, and wearied the eyes, there was shade beneath the long marble colonnades, and in the groves and cool halls of the Museum and the Libraries. The Etesian winds blew fresh in summer from the north, across the sea, and refreshed the people in their gardens. No town seemed greater nor wealthier to the voyager, who (like the hero of the Greek novel *Clitophon and Leucippe*) entered by the gate of the Sun, and found that, after nightfall, the torches borne by men and women hastening to some religious feast, filled the dusk with a light like that of 'the sun cut up into fragments.' At the same time no town was more in need of the memories of the country, which came to her in well-watered gardens, in landscape-paintings, and in the verse of Theocritus.

It is impossible to give a clearer idea of the opulence and luxury of Alexandria and her kings, than will be conveyed by the description of the coronation-feast of Ptolemy Philadelphus. This great masquerade and banquet was prepared by the elder Ptolemy on the occasion of his admitting his son to share his throne. The entertainment was described (in a work now lost) by Callixenus of Rhodes, and the record has been preserved by Atheneaus (v. 25). The inner pavilion in which the guests of Ptolemy reclined, contained one hundred and thirty-five couches. Over the roof was placed a scarlet awning, with a fringe of white, and there were many other awnings, richly embroidered with mythological designs. The pillars which sustained the roof were shaped in the likeness of palm-trees, and of *thyrsi*, the weapons of the wine-god Dionysus. Round three outer sides ran arcades, draped with purple tissues, and with the skins of strange beasts. The fourth side, open to the air, was shady with the foliage of myrtles and laurels. Everywhere the ground was carpeted with flowers, though the season was mid-winter, with roses and white lilies and blossoms of the gardens. By the columns round the whole pavilion were arrayed a hundred effigies in marble, executed by the most famous sculptors, and on the middle spaces were hung works by the painters of Sicyon and tapestry woven with stories of the adventures of the gods. Above these, again, ran a frieze of gold and silver shields, while in the higher niches were placed comic, tragic, and satiric sculptured groups 'dressed in real clothes,' says the historian, much admiring this realism. It is impossible to number the tripods, and flagons, and couches of gold, resting on golden figures of sphinxes, the salvers, the bowls, the jewelled vases. The masquerade of this winter festival began with the procession of the Morning-star, Heosphoros, and then followed a masque of kings and a revel of various gods, while the company of Hesperus, the Evening-star followed, and ended all. The revel of Dionysus was introduced by men disguised as Sileni, wild woodland beings in raiment of purple and scarlet. Then came scores of satyrs with gilded lamps in their hands. Next appeared beautiful maidens, attired as Victories, waving golden wings and swinging vessels of burning incense. The altar of the God of the Vine was borne behind them, crowned and covered with leaves of gold, and next boys in purple robes scattered fragrant scents from golden salvers. Then came a throng of gold-crowned satyrs, their naked bodies stained with purple and vermilion, and among them was a tall man who represented the year and carried a horn of plenty. He was followed by a beautiful woman in rich attire, carrying in one hand branches of the palm-tree, in the other a rod of the peach-tree, starred with its constellated flowers. Then the masque of the Seasons swept by, and Philiscus followed, Philiscus the Corcyraean, the priest of Dionysus, and the favourite tragic poet of the court. After the prizes for the athletes had been borne past, Dionysus himself was charioted along, a gigantic figure clad in purple, and pouring libations out of a golden goblet. Around him lay huge drinking-cups, and smoking censers of gold, and a bower of vine leaves grew up, and shaded the head of the god. Then hurried by a crowd of priests and priestesses, Maenads,

Bacchantes, Bassarids, women crowned with the vine, or with garlands of snakes, and girls bearing the mystic *vannus Iacchi*. And still the procession was not ended. A mechanical figure of Nysa passed, in a chariot drawn by eighty men, among clusters of grapes formed of precious stones, and the figure arose, and poured milk out of a golden horn. The Satyrs and Sileni followed close, and behind them six hundred men dragged on a wain, a silver vessel that held six hundred measures of wine. This was only the first of countless symbolic vessels that were carried past, till last came a multitude of sixteen hundred boys clad in white tunics, and garlanded with ivy, who bore and handed to the guests golden and silver vessels full of sweet wine. All this was only part of one procession, and the festival ended when Ptolemy and Berenice and Ptolemy Philadelphus had been crowned with golden crowns from many subject cities and lands.

This festival was obviously arranged to please the taste of a prince with late Greek ideas of pictorial display, and with barbaric wealth at his command. Theocritus himself enables us in the seventeenth idyl to estimate the opulence and the dominion of Ptolemy. He was not master of fertile Aegypt alone, where the Nile breaks the rich dank soil, and where myriad cities pour their taxes into his treasuries. Ptolemy held lands also in Phoenicia, and Arabia; he claimed Syria and Libya and Aethiopia; he was lord of the distant Pamphylians, of the Cilicians, the Lycians and the Carians, and the Cyclades owned his mastery. Thus the wealth of the richest part of the world flowed into Alexandria, attracting thither the priests of strange religions, the possessors of Greek learning, the painters and sculptors whose work has left its traces on the genius of Theocritus.

Looking at this early Alexandrian age, three points become clear to us. First, the fashion of the times was Oriental, Oriental in religion and in society. Nothing could be less Hellenic, than the popular cult of Adonis. The fifteenth idyl of Theocritus shows us Greek women worshipping in their manner at an Assyrian shrine, the shrine of that effeminate lover of Aphrodite, whom Heracles, according to the Greek proverb, thought 'no great divinity.' The hymn of Bion, with its luxurious lament, was probably meant to be chanted at just such a festival as Theocritus describes, while a crowd of foreigners gossiped among the flowers and embroideries, the strangely-shaped sacred cakes, the ebony, the gold, and the ivory. Not so much Oriental as barbarous was the impulse which made Ptolemy Philadelphus choose his own sister, Arsinoë, for wife, as if absolute dominion had already filled the mind of the Macedonian royal race with the incestuous pride of the Incas, or of Queen Hatasu, in an elder Egyptian dynasty. This nascent barbarism has touched a few of the Alexandrian poems even of Theocritus, and his panegyric of Ptolemy, of his divine ancestors, and his sister-bride is not much more Greek in sentiment than are those old native hymns of Pentaur to 'the strong Bull,' or the 'Risen Sun,' to Rameses or Thothmes.

Again, the early Alexandrian was what we call a 'literary' age. Literature was not an affair of religion and of the state, but ministered to the pleasure of individuals, and at their pleasure was composed. [6] The temper of the time was crudely critical. The Museum and the Libraries, with their hundreds of thousands of volumes, were hot-houses of grammarians and of learned poets. Callimachus, the head librarian, was also the most eminent man of letters. Unable, himself, to compose a poem of epic length and copiousness, he discouraged all long poems. He shone in epigrams, pedantic hymns, and didactic verses. He toyed with anagrams, and won court favour by discovering that the letters of 'Arsinoë,' the name of Ptolemy's wife, made the words ἰον Ηρας, the violet of Hera. In another masterpiece the genius of Callimachus followed the stolen tress of Queen Berenice to the skies, where the locks became a constellation. A contemporary of Callimachus was Zenodotus, the critic, who was for improving the Iliad and Odyssey by cutting out all the epic commonplaces which seemed to him to be needless repetitions. It is pretty plain that, in literary society, Homer was thought out of date and *rococo*. The favourite topics of poets were now, not the tales of Troy and Thebes, but the amorous adventures of the gods. When Apollonius Rhodius

[6] See Couat, *op. cit.* p. 395.

attempted to revive the epic, it is said that the influence of Callimachus quite discomfited the young poet. A war of epigrams began, and while Apollonius called Callimachus a 'blockhead' (so finished was his invective), the veteran compared his rival to the Ibis, the scavenger-bird. Other singers satirised each others' legs, and one, the Aretino of the time, mocked at king Ptolemy and scourged his failings in verse. The literary quarrels (to which Theocritus seems to allude in Idyl VII, where Lycidas says he 'hates the birds of the Muses that cackle in vain rivalry with Homer') were as stupid as such affairs usually are. The taste for artificial epic was to return; although many people already declared that Homer was the world's poet, and that the world needed no other. This epic reaction brought into favour Apollonius Rhodius, author of the *Argonautica*. Theocritus has been supposed to aim at him as a vain rival of Homer, but M. Couat points out that Theocritus was seventy when Apollonius began to write. The literary fashions of Alexandria are only of moment to us so far as they directly affected Theocritus. They could not make him obscure, affected, tedious, but his nature probably inclined him to obey fashion so far as only to write short poems. His rural poems are ειδύλλια, 'little pictures.' His fragments of epic, or imitations of the epic hymns are not

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– not full and sonorous as the songs of Homer and the sea. 'Ce poète est le moins naïf qui se puisse rencontrer, et il se dégage de son oeuvre un parfum de naïveté rustique.' [7] They are, what a German critic has called them, *mythologischen genre-bilder*, cabinet pictures in the manner called *genre*, full of pretty detail and domestic feeling. And this brings us to the third characteristic of the age, – its art was elaborately pictorial. Poetry seems to have sought inspiration from painting, while painting, as we have said, inclined to *genre*, to luxurious representations of the amours of the gods or the adventures of heroes, with backgrounds of pastoral landscape. Shepherds fluted while Perseus slew Medusa.

The old order of things in Greece had been precisely the opposite of this Alexandrian manner. Homer and the later Homeric legends, with the tragedians, inspired the sculptors, and even the artisans who decorated vases. When a new order of subjects became fashionable, and when every rich Alexandrian had pictures or frescoes on his walls, it appears that the painters took the lead, that the initiative in art was theirs. The Alexandrian pictures perished long ago, but the relics of Alexandrian style which remain in the buried cities of Campania, in Pompeii especially, bear testimony to the taste of the period. [8] Out of nearly two thousand Pompeian pictures, it is calculated that some fourteen hundred (roughly speaking) are mythological in subject. The loves of the gods are repeated in scores of designs, and these designs closely correspond to the mythological poems of Theocritus and his younger contemporaries Bion and Moschus. Take as an example the adventure of Europa: Lord Tennyson's lines, in *The Palace of Art* are intended to describe *picture*—

'Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne:
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one hand grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.'

The words of Moschus also seem as if they might have derived their inspiration from a painting, the touches are so minute, and so picturesque —

'Meanwhile Europa, riding on the back of the divine bull, with one hand clasped the beast's great horn, and with the other caught up her garment's purple

[7] Couat, p. 434.

[8] See Helbig, *Campenische Wandmalerie*, and Brunn, *Die griechischen Bukoliker und die Bildende Kunst.*

> fold, lest it might trail and be drenched in the hoar sea's infinite spray. And her deep robe was blown out in the wind, like the sail of a ship, and lightly ever it wafted the maiden onward.'

Now every single 'motive' of this description, – Europa with one hand holding the bull's horn, with the other lifting her dress, the wind puffing out her shawl like a sail, is repeated in the Pompeian wall-pictures, which themselves are believed to be derived from Alexandrian originals. There are more curious coincidences than this. In the sixth idyl of Theocritus, Damoetas makes the Cyclops say that Galatea 'will send him many a messenger.' The mere idea of describing the monstrous cannibal Polyphemus in love, is artificial and Alexandrian. But who were the 'messengers' of the sea-nymph Galatea? A Pompeian picture illustrates the point, by representing a little Love riding up to the shore on the back of a dolphin, with a letter in his hand for Polyphemus. Greek art in Egypt suffered from an Egyptian plague of Loves. Loves flutter through the Pompeian pictures as they do through the poems of Moschus and Bion. They are carried about in cages, for sale, like birds. They are caught in bird-traps. They don the lion-skin of Heracles. They flutter about baskets laden with roses; round rosy Loves, like the cupids of Boucher. They are not akin to 'the grievous Love,' the mighty wrestler who threw Daphnis a fall, in the first idyl of Theocritus. They are 'the children that flit overhead, the little Loves, like the young nightingales upon the budding trees,' which flit round the dead Adonis in the fifteenth idyl. They are the birds that shun the boy fowler, in Bion's poem, and perch uncalled (as in a bronze in the Uffizi) on the grown man. In one or other of the sixteen Pompeian pictures of Venus and Adonis, the Loves are breaking their bows and arrows for grief, as in the hymn of Bion.

Enough has perhaps been said about the social and artistic taste of Alexandria to account for the remarkable differences in manner between the rustic idyls of Theocritus and the epic idyls of himself and his followers Moschus and Bion. In the rural idyls, Theocritus was himself and wrote to please himself. In the epic idyls, as in the Hymn to the Dioscuri, and in the two poems on Heracles, he was writing to please the taste of Alexandria. He had to choose epic topics, but he was warned by the famous saying of Callimachus ('a great book is a great evil') not to imitate the length of the epic. [9] He was also to shun close imitation of what are so easily imitated, the regular recurring *formulae*, the commonplace of Homer. He was to add minute pictorial touches, as in the description of Alcmena's waking when the serpents attacked her child, – a passage rich in domestic pathos and incident which contrast strongly with Pindar's bare narrative of the same events. We have noted the same pictorial quality in the *Europa* of Moschus. Our own age has often been compared to the Alexandrian epoch, to that era of large cities, wealth, refinement, criticism, and science; and the pictorial *Idylls of the King* very closely resemble the epico-idyllic manner of Alexandria. We have tried to examine the society in which Theocritus lived. But our impressions about the poet are more distinct. In him we find the most genial character; pious as Greece counted piety; tender as became the poet of love; glad as the singer of a happy southern world should be; gifted, above all, with humour, and with dramatic power. 'His lyre has all the chords'; his is the last of all the perfect voices of Hellas; after him no man saw life with eyes so steady and so mirthful.

About the lives of the three idyllic poets literary history says little. About their deaths she only tells us through the dirge by Moschus, that Bion was poisoned. The lovers of Theocritus would willingly hope that he returned from Alexandria to Sicily, about the time when he wrote the sixteenth idyl, and that he lived in the enjoyment of the friendship and the domestic happiness and honour which he sang so well, through the golden age of Hiero (264 B.C.) No happier fortune could befall him who wrote the epigram of the lady of heavenly love, who worshipped with the noble wife of Nicias under the green roof of Milesian Aphrodite, and who prophesied of the return of peace and of song to Sicily and Syracuse.

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[9] The *Hecale* of Callimachus, or Theseus and the Marathonian Bull, seems to have been rather a heroic idyl than an epic.

# THEOCRITUS

## IDYL I

*The shepherd Thyrsis meets a goatherd, in a shady place beside a spring, and at his invitation sings the Song of Daphnis. This ideal hero of Greek pastoral song had won for his bride the fairest of the Nymphs. Confident in the strength of his passion, he boasted that Love could never subdue him to a new question. Love avenged himself by making Daphnis desire a strange maiden, but to this temptation he never yielded, and so died a constant lover. The song tells how the cattle and the wild things of the wood bewailed him, how Hermes and Priapus gave him counsel in vain, and how with his last breath he retorted the taunts of the implacable Aphrodite.*

*The scene is in Sicily.*

*Thyrsis.* Sweet, meseems, is the whispering sound of yonder pine tree, goatherd, that murmureth by the wells of water; and sweet are thy pipings. After Pan the second prize shalt thou bear away, and if he take the horned goat, the she-goat shalt thou win; but if he choose the she-goat for his meed, the kid falls to thee, and dainty is the flesh of kids e'er the age when thou milkest them.

*The Goatherd.* Sweeter, O shepherd, is thy song than the music of yonder water that is poured from the high face of the rock! Yea, if the Muses take the young ewe for their gift, a stall-fed lamb shalt thou receive for thy meed; but if it please them to take the lamb, thou shalt lead away the ewe for the second prize.

*Thyrsis.* Wilt thou, goatherd, in the nymphs' name, wilt thou sit thee down here, among the tamarisks, on this sloping knoll, and pipe while in this place I watch thy flocks?

*Goatherd.* Nay, shepherd, it may not be; we may not pipe in the noontide. 'Tis Pan we dread, who truly at this hour rests weary from the chase; and bitter of mood is he, the keen wrath sitting ever at his nostrils. But, Thyrsis, for that thou surely wert wont to sing *The Affliction of Daphnis*, and hast most deeply meditated the pastoral muse, come hither, and beneath yonder elm let us sit down, in face of Priapus and the fountain fairies, where is that resting-place of the shepherds, and where the oak trees are. Ah! if thou wilt but sing as on that day thou sangest in thy match with Chromis out of Libya, I will let thee milk, ay, three times, a goat that is the mother of twins, and even when she has suckled her kids her milk doth fill two pails. A deep bowl of ivy-wood, too, I will give thee, rubbed with sweet bees'-wax, a twy-eared bowl newly wrought, smacking still of the knife of the graver. Round its upper edges goes the ivy winding, ivy besprent with golden flowers; and about it is a tendril twisted that joys in its saffron fruit. Within is designed a maiden, as fair a thing as the gods could fashion, arrayed in a sweeping robe, and a snood on her head. Beside her two youths with fair love-locks are contending from either side, with alternate speech, but her heart thereby is all untouched. And now on one she glances, smiling, and anon she lightly flings the other a thought, while by reason of the long vigils of love their eyes are heavy, but their labour is all in vain.

Beyond these an ancient fisherman and a rock are fashioned, a rugged rock, whereon with might and main the old man drags a great net for his cast, as one that labours stoutly. Thou wouldst say that he is fishing with all the might of his limbs, so big the sinews swell all about his neck, grey-haired though he be, but his strength is as the strength of youth. Now divided but a little space from the sea-worn old man is a vineyard laden well with fire-red clusters, and on the rough wall a little lad watches the vineyard, sitting there. Round him two she-foxes are skulking, and one goes along the vine-rows to devour the ripe grapes, and the other brings all her cunning to bear against the scrip, and vows she will never leave the lad, till she strand him bare and breakfastless. But the boy is plaiting a pretty locust-cage with stalks of asphodel, and fitting it with reeds, and less care of his scrip has he, and of the vines, than delight in his plaiting.

All about the cup is spread the soft acanthus, a miracle of varied work, [10] a thing for thee to marvel on. For this bowl I paid to a Calydonian ferryman a goat and a great white cream cheese. Never has its lip touched mine, but it still lies maiden for me. Gladly with this cup would I gain thee to my desire, if thou, my friend, wilt sing me that delightful song. Nay, I grudge it thee not at all. Begin, my friend, for be sure thou canst in no wise carry thy song with thee to Hades, that puts all things out of mind!

## The Song of Thyrsis

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*! Thyrsis of Etna am I, and this is the voice of Thyrsis. Where, ah! where were ye when Daphnis was languishing; ye Nymphs, where were ye? By Peneus's beautiful dells, or by dells of Pindus? for surely ye dwelt not by the great stream of the river Anapus, nor on the watch-tower of Etna, nor by the sacred water of Acis.

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

For him the jackals, for him the wolves did cry; for him did even the lion out of the forest lament. Kine and bulls by his feet right many, and heifers plenty, with the young calves bewailed him.

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

Came Hermes first from the hill, and said, 'Daphnis, who is it that torments thee; child, whom dost thou love with so great desire?' The neatherds came, and the shepherds; the goatherds came: all they asked what ailed him. Came also Priapus, —

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

And said: 'Unhappy Daphnis, wherefore dost thou languish, while for thee the maiden by all the fountains, through all the glades is fleeting, in search of thee? Ah! thou art too laggard a lover, and thou nothing availest! A neatherd wert thou named, and now thou art like the goatherd:

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

'For the goatherd, when he marks the young goats at their pastime, looks on with yearning eyes, and fain would be even as they; and thou, when thou beholdest the laughter of maidens, dost gaze with yearning eyes, for that thou dost not join their dances.'

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

Yet these the herdsman answered not again, but he bare his bitter love to the end, yea, to the fated end he bare it.

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

Ay, but she too came, the sweetly smiling Cypris, craftily smiling she came, yet keeping her heavy anger; and she spake, saying: 'Daphnis, methinks thou didst boast that thou wouldst throw Love a fall, nay, is it not thyself that hast been thrown by grievous Love?'

*Begin ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

But to her Daphnis answered again: 'Implacable Cypris, Cypris terrible, Cypris of mortals detested, already dost thou deem that my latest sun has set; nay, Daphnis even in Hades shall prove great sorrow to Love.

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

'Where it is told how the herdsman with Cypris – Get thee to Ida, get thee to Anchises! There are oak trees – here only galingale blows, here sweetly hum the bees about the hives!

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

'Thine Adonis, too, is in his bloom, for he herds the sheep and slays the hares, and he chases all the wild beasts. Nay, go and confront Diomedes again, and say, "The herdsman Daphnis I conquered, do thou join battle with me."

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

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[10] Or reading Αἰολικόν=Aeolian, cf. Thucyd. iii. 102.

'Ye wolves, ye jackals, and ye bears in the mountain caves, farewell! The herdsman Daphnis ye never shall see again, no more in the dells, no more in the groves, no more in the woodlands. Farewell Arethusa, ye rivers, good-night, that pour down Thymbris your beautiful waters.

*Begin*, *ye Muses dear*, *begin the pastoral song*!

'That Daphnis am I who here do herd the kine, Daphnis who water here the bulls and calves.

'O Pan, Pan! whether thou art on the high hills of Lycaeus, or rangest mighty Maenalus, haste hither to the Sicilian isle! Leave the tomb of Helice, leave that high cairn of the son of Lycaon, which seems wondrous fair, even in the eyes of the blessed. [11]

*Give o'er*, *ye Muses*, *come*, *give o'er the pastoral song*!

'Come hither, my prince, and take this fair pipe, honey-breathed with wax-stopped joints; and well it fits thy lip: for verily I, even I, by Love am now haled to Hades.

*Give o'er*, *ye Muses*, *come*, *give o'er the pastoral song*!

'Now violets bear, ye brambles, ye thorns bear violets; and let fair narcissus bloom on the boughs of juniper! Let all things with all be confounded, – from pines let men gather pears, for Daphnis is dying! Let the stag drag down the hounds, let owls from the hills contend in song with the nightingales.'

*Give o'er*, *ye Muses*, *come*, *give o'er the pastoral song*!

So Daphnis spake, and ended; but fain would Aphrodite have given him back to life. Nay, spun was all the thread that the Fates assigned, and Daphnis went down the stream. The whirling wave closed over the man the Muses loved, the man not hated of the nymphs.

*Give o'er*, *ye Muses*, *come*, *give o'er the pastoral song*!

And thou, give me the bowl, and the she-goat, that I may milk her and poor forth a libation to the Muses. Farewell, oh, farewells manifold, ye Muses, and I, some future day, will sing you yet a sweeter song.

*The Goatherd*. Filled may thy fair mouth be with honey, Thyrsis, and filled with the honeycomb; and the sweet dried fig mayst thou eat of Aegilus, for thou vanquishest the cicala in song! Lo here is thy cup, see, my friend, of how pleasant a savour! Thou wilt think it has been dipped in the well-spring of the Hours. Hither, hither, Cissaetha: do thou milk her, Thyrsis. And you young she-goats, wanton not so wildly lest you bring up the he-goat against you.

[11] These are places famous in the oldest legends of Arcadia.

# IDYL II

*Simaetha, madly in love with Delphis, who has forsaken her, endeavours to subdue him to her by magic, and by invoking the Moon, in her character of Hecate, and of Selene. She tells the tale of the growth of her passion, and vows vengeance if her magic arts are unsuccessful.*

*The scene is probably some garden beneath the moonlit shy, near the town, and within sound of the sea. The characters are Simaetha, and Thestylis, her handmaid.*

Where are my laurel leaves? come, bring them, Thestylis; and where are the love-charms? Wreath the bowl with bright-red wool, that I may knit the witch-knots against my grievous lover, [12] who for twelve days, oh cruel, has never come hither, nor knows whether I am alive or dead, nor has once knocked at my door, unkind that he is! Hath Love flown off with his light desires by some other path – Love and Aphrodite? To-morrow I will go to the wrestling school of Timagetus, to see my love and to reproach him with all the wrong he is doing me. But now I will bewitch him with my enchantments! Do thou, Selene, shine clear and fair, for softly, Goddess, to thee will I sing, and to Hecate of hell. The very whelps shiver before her as she fares through black blood and across the barrows of the dead.

Hail, awful Hecate! to the end be thou of our company, and make this medicine of mine no weaker than the spells of Circe, or of Medea, or of Perimede of the golden hair.

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

Lo, how the barley grain first smoulders in the fire, – nay, toss on the barley, Thestylis! Miserable maid, where are thy wits wandering? Even to thee, wretched that I am, have I become a laughing-stock, even to thee? Scatter the grain, and cry thus the while, "Tis the bones of Delphis I am scattering!'

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

Delphis troubled me, and I against Delphis am burning this laurel; and even as it crackles loudly when it has caught the flame, and suddenly is burned up, and we see not even the dust thereof, lo, even thus may the flesh of Delphis waste in the burning!

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

Even as I melt this wax, with the god to aid, so speedily may he by love be molten, the Myndian Delphis! And as whirls this brazen wheel, [13] so restless, under Aphrodite's spell, may he turn and turn about my doors.

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

Now will I burn the husks, and thou, O Artemis, hast power to move hell's adamantine gates, and all else that is as stubborn. Thestylis, hark, 'tis so; the hounds are baying up and down the town! The Goddess stands where the three ways meet! Hasten, and clash the brazen cymbals.

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

Lo, silent is the deep, and silent the winds, but never silent the torment in my breast. Nay, I am all on fire for him that made me, miserable me, no wife but a shameful thing, a girl no more a maiden.

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

Three times do I pour libation, and thrice, my Lady Moon, I speak this spell: – Be it with a friend that he lingers, be it with a leman he lies, may he as clean forget them as Theseus, of old, in Dia – so legends tell – did utterly forget the fair-tressed Ariadne.

*My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love*!

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[12] Reading, καταδήσομαι. Cf. Fritzsche's note and Harpocration, s.v.

[13] On the word ραμβος, see Lobeck, *Aglaoph.* p. 700; and 'The Bull Roarer,' in the translator's *Custom and Myth*.

Coltsfoot is an Arcadian weed that maddens, on the hills, the young stallions and fleet-footed mares. Ah! even as these may I see Delphis; and to this house of mine, may he speed like a madman, leaving the bright palaestra.

*My magic wheel*, *draw home to me the man I love*!

This fringe from his cloak Delphis lost; that now I shred and cast into the cruel flame. Ah, ah, thou torturing Love, why clingest thou to me like a leech of the fen, and drainest all the black blood from my body?

*My magic wheel*, *draw home to me the man I love*!

Lo, I will crush an eft, and a venomous draught to-morrow I will bring thee!

But now, Thestylis, take these magic herbs and secretly smear the juice on the jambs of his gate (whereat, even now, my heart is captive, though nothing he recks of me), and spit and whisper, "Tis the bones of Delphis that I smear.'

*My magic wheel*, *draw home to me the man I love*!

And now that I am alone, whence shall I begin to bewail my love? Whence shall I take up the tale: who brought on me this sorrow? The maiden-bearer of the mystic vessel came our way, Anaxo, daughter of Eubulus, to the grove of Artemis; and behold, she had many other wild beasts paraded for that time, in the sacred show, and among them a lioness.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

And the Thracian servant of Theucharidas, – my nurse that is but lately dead, and who then dwelt at our doors, – besought me and implored me to come and see the show. And I went with her, wretched woman that I am, clad about in a fair and sweeping linen stole, over which I had thrown the holiday dress of Clearista.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

Lo! I was now come to the mid-point of the highway, near the dwelling of Lycon, and there I saw Delphis and Eudamippus walking together. Their beards were more golden than the golden flower of the ivy; their breasts (they coming fresh from the glorious wrestler's toil) were brighter of sheen than thyself Selene!

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

Even as I looked I loved, loved madly, and all my heart was wounded, woe is me, and my beauty began to wane. No more heed took I of that show, and how I came home I know not; but some parching fever utterly overthrew me, and I lay a-bed ten days and ten nights.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

And oftentimes my skin waxed wan as the colour of boxwood, and all my hair was falling from my head, and what was left of me was but skin and bones. Was there a wizard to whom I did not seek, or a crone to whose house I did not resort, of them that have art magical? But this was no light malady, and the time went fleeting on.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

Thus I told the true story to my maiden, and said, 'Go, Thestylis, and find me some remedy for this sore disease. Ah me, the Myndian possesses me, body and soul! Nay, depart, and watch by the wrestling-ground of Timagetus, for there is his resort, and there he loves to loiter.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

'And when thou art sure he is alone, nod to him secretly, and say, "Simaetha bids thee to come to her," and lead him hither privily.' So I spoke; and she went and brought the bright-limbed Delphis to my house. But I, when I beheld him just crossing the threshold of the door, with his light step, —

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

Grew colder all than snow, and the sweat streamed from my brow like the dank dews, and I had no strength to speak, nay, nor to utter as much as children murmur in their slumber, calling to their mother dear: and all my fair body turned stiff as a puppet of wax.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

Then when he had gazed on me, he that knows not love, he fixed his eyes on the ground, and sat down on my bed, and spake as he sat him down: 'Truly, Simaetha, thou didst by no more outrun mine own coming hither, when thou badst me to thy roof, than of late I outran in the race the beautiful Philinus:

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

'For I should have come; yea, by sweet Love, I should have come, with friends of mine, two or three, as soon as night drew on, bearing in my breast the apples of Dionysus, and on my head silvery poplar leaves, the holy boughs of Heracles, all twined with bands of purple.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

'And if you had received me, they would have taken it well, for among all the youths unwed I have a name for beauty and speed of foot. With one kiss of thy lovely mouth I had been content; but an if ye had thrust me forth, and the door had been fastened with the bar, then truly should torch and axe have broken in upon you.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

'And now to Cypris first, methinks, my thanks are due, and after Cypris it is thou that hast caught me, lady, from the burning, in that thou badst me come to this thy house, half consumed as I am! Yea, Love, 'tis plain, lights oft a fiercer blaze than Hephaestus the God of Lipara.

*Bethink thee of my love*, *and whence it came*, *my Lady Moon*!

'With his madness dire, he scares both the maiden from her bower and the bride from the bridal bed, yet warm with the body of her lord!'

So he spake, and I, that was easy to win, took his hand, and drew him down on the soft bed beside me. And immediately body from body caught fire, and our faces glowed as they had not done, and sweetly we murmured. And now, dear Selene, to tell thee no long tale, the great rites were accomplished, and we twain came to our desire. Faultless was I in his sight, till yesterday, and he, again, in mine. But there came to me the mother of Philista, my flute player, and the mother of Melixo, to-day, when the horses of the Sun were climbing the sky, bearing Dawn of the rosy arms from the ocean stream. Many another thing she told me; and chiefly this, that Delphis is a lover, and whom he loves she vowed she knew not surely, but this only, that ever he filled up his cup with the unmixed wine, to drink a toast to his dearest. And at last he went off hastily, saying that he would cover with garlands the dwelling of his love.

This news my visitor told me, and she speaks the truth. For indeed, at other seasons, he would come to me thrice, or four times, in the day, and often would leave with me his Dorian oil flask. But now it is the twelfth day since I have even looked on him! Can it be that he has not some other delight, and has forgotten me? Now with magic rites I will strive to bind him, [14] but if still he vexes me, he shall beat, by the Fates I vow it, at the gate of Hell. Such evil medicines I store against him in a certain coffer, the use whereof, my lady, an Assyrian stranger taught me.

But do thou farewell, and turn thy steeds to Ocean, Lady, and my pain I will bear, as even till now I have endured it. Farewell, Selene bright and fair, farewell ye other stars, that follow the wheels of quiet Night.

[14] Reading καταδήσομαι. Cf. line 3, and note.

# IDYL III

*A goatherd, leaving his goats to feed on the hillside, in the charge of Tityrus, approaches the cavern of Amaryllis, with its veil of ferns and ivy, and attempts to win back the heart of the girl by song. He mingles promises with harmless threats, and repeats, in exquisite verses, the names of the famous lovers of old days, Milanion and Endymion. Failing to move Amaryllis, the goatherd threatens to die where he has thrown himself down, beneath the trees.*

Courting Amaryllis with song I go, while my she-goats feed on the hill, and Tityrus herds them. Ah, Tityrus, my dearly beloved, feed thou the goats, and to the well-side lead them, Tityrus, and 'ware the yellow Libyan he-goat, lest he butt thee with his horns.

Ah, lovely Amaryllis, why no more, as of old, dust thou glance through this cavern after me, nor callest me, thy sweetheart, to thy side. Can it be that thou hatest me? Do I seem snub-nosed, now thou hast seen me near, maiden, and under-hung? Thou wilt make me strangle myself!

Lo, ten apples I bring thee, plucked from that very place where thou didst bid me pluck them, and others to-morrow I will bring thee.

Ah, regard my heart's deep sorrow! ah, would I were that humming bee, and to thy cave might come dipping beneath the fern that hides thee, and the ivy leaves!

Now know I Love, and a cruel God is he. Surely he sucked the lioness's dug, and in the wild wood his mother reared him, whose fire is scorching me, and bites even to the bone.

Ah, lovely as thou art to look upon, ah heart of stone, ah dark-browed maiden, embrace me, thy true goatherd, that I may kiss thee, and even in empty kisses there is a sweet delight!

Soon wilt thou make me rend the wreath in pieces small, the wreath of ivy, dear Amaryllis, that I keep for thee, with rose-buds twined, and fragrant parsley. Ah me, what anguish! Wretched that I am, whither shall I turn! Thou dust not hear my prayer!

I will cast off my coat of skins, and into yonder waves I will spring, where the fisher Olpis watches for the tunny shoals, and even if I die not, surely thy pleasure will have been done.

I learned the truth of old, when, amid thoughts of thee, I asked, 'Loves she, loves she not?' and the poppy petal clung not, and gave no crackling sound, but withered on my smooth forearm, even so. [15]

And she too spoke sooth, even Agroeo, she that divineth with a sieve, and of late was binding sheaves behind the reapers, who said that I had set all my heart on thee, but that thou didst nothing regard me.

Truly I keep for thee the white goat with the twin kids that Mermnon's daughter too, the brown-skinned Erithacis, prays me to give her; and give her them I will, since thou dost flout me.

My right eyelid throbs, is it a sign that I am to see her? Here will I lean me against this pine tree, and sing, and then perchance she will regard me, for she is not all of adamant.

Lo, Hippomenes when he was eager to marry the famous maiden, took apples in his hand, and so accomplished his course; and Atalanta saw, and madly longed, and leaped into the deep waters of desire. Melampus too, the soothsayer, brought the herd of oxen from Othrys to Pylos, and thus in the arms of Bias was laid the lovely mother of wise Alphesiboea.

And was it not thus that Adonis, as he pastured his sheep upon the hills, led beautiful Cytherea to such heights of frenzy, that not even in his death doth she unclasp him from her bosom? Blessed, methinks is the lot of him that sleeps, and tosses not, nor turns, even Endymion; and, dearest maiden, blessed I call Iason, whom such things befell, as ye that be profane shall never come to know.

[15] He refers to a piece of folk-lore.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.