

**VIRGIL**

THE BUCOLICS

AND

ECLOGUES

Virgil

**The Bucolics and Eclogues**

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## Содержание

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| ECLOGUE I                         | 5  |
| ECLOGUE II                        | 9  |
| ECLOGUE III                       | 11 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 15 |

# Virgil

## The Bucolics and Eclogues

### ECLOGUE I MELIBOEUS TITYRUS

#### MELIBOEUS

You, Tityrus, 'neath a broad beech-canopy  
Reclining, on the slender oat rehearse  
Your silvan ditties: I from my sweet fields,  
And home's familiar bounds, even now depart.  
Exiled from home am I; while, Tityrus, you  
Sit careless in the shade, and, at your call,  
"Fair Amaryllis" bid the woods resound.

#### TITYRUS

O Meliboeus, 'twas a god vouchsafed  
This ease to us, for him a god will I  
Deem ever, and from my folds a tender lamb  
Oft with its life-blood shall his altar stain.  
His gift it is that, as your eyes may see,  
My kine may roam at large, and I myself  
Play on my shepherd's pipe what songs I will.

#### MELIBOEUS

I grudge you not the boon, but marvel more,  
Such wide confusion fills the country-side.  
See, sick at heart I drive my she-goats on,  
And this one, O my Tityrus, scarce can lead:  
For 'mid the hazel-thicket here but now  
She dropped her new-yeaned twins on the bare flint,  
Hope of the flock- an ill, I mind me well,  
Which many a time, but for my blinded sense,  
The thunder-stricken oak foretold, oft too  
From hollow trunk the raven's ominous cry.

But who this god of yours? Come, Tityrus, tell.

### **TITYRUS**

The city, Meliboeus, they call Rome,  
I, simpleton, deemed like this town of ours,  
Whereto we shepherds oft are wont to drive  
The younglings of the flock: so too I knew  
Whelps to resemble dogs, and kids their dams,  
Comparing small with great; but this as far  
Above all other cities rears her head  
As cypress above pliant osier towers.

### **MELIBOEUS**

And what so potent cause took you to Rome?

### **TITYRUS**

Freedom, which, though belated, cast at length  
Her eyes upon the sluggard, when my beard  
'Gan whiter fall beneath the barber's blade-  
Cast eyes, I say, and, though long tarrying, came,  
Now when, from Galatea's yoke released,  
I serve but Amaryllis: for I will own,  
While Galatea reigned over me, I had  
No hope of freedom, and no thought to save.  
Though many a victim from my folds went forth,  
Or rich cheese pressed for the unthankful town,  
Never with laden hands returned I home.

### **MELIBOEUS**

I used to wonder, Amaryllis, why  
You cried to heaven so sadly, and for whom  
You left the apples hanging on the trees;  
'Twas Tityrus was away. Why, Tityrus,  
The very pines, the very water-springs,  
The very vineyards, cried aloud for you.

## TITYRUS

What could I do? how else from bonds be freed,  
Or otherwhere find gods so nigh to aid?  
There, Meliboeus, I saw that youth to whom  
Yearly for twice six days my altars smoke.  
There instant answer gave he to my suit,  
"Feed, as before, your kine, boys, rear your bulls."

## MELIBOEUS

So in old age, you happy man, your fields  
Will still be yours, and ample for your need!  
Though, with bare stones o'erspread, the pastures all  
Be choked with rushy mire, your ewes with young  
By no strange fodder will be tried, nor hurt  
Through taint contagious of a neighbouring flock.  
Happy old man, who 'mid familiar streams  
And hallowed springs, will court the cooling shade!  
Here, as of old, your neighbour's bordering hedge,  
That feasts with willow-flower the Hybla bees,  
Shall oft with gentle murmur lull to sleep,  
While the leaf-dresser beneath some tall rock  
Uplifts his song, nor cease their cooings hoarse  
The wood-pigeons that are your heart's delight,  
Nor doves their moaning in the elm-tree top.

## TITYRUS

Sooner shall light stags, therefore, feed in air,  
The seas their fish leave naked on the strand,  
Germans and Parthians shift their natural bounds,  
And these the Arar, those the Tigris drink,  
Than from my heart his face and memory fade.

## MELIBOEUS

But we far hence, to burning Libya some,  
Some to the Scythian steppes, or thy swift flood,  
Cretan Oaxes, now must wend our way,

Or Britain, from the whole world sundered far.  
Ah! shall I ever in aftertime behold  
My native bounds- see many a harvest hence  
With ravished eyes the lowly turf-roofed cot  
Where I was king? These fallows, trimmed so fair,  
Some brutal soldier will possess these fields  
An alien master. Ah! to what a pass  
Has civil discord brought our hapless folk!  
For such as these, then, were our furrows sown!  
Now, Meliboeus, graft your pears, now set  
Your vines in order! Go, once happy flock,  
My she-goats, go. Never again shall I,  
Stretched in green cave, behold you from afar  
Hang from the bushy rock; my songs are sung;  
Never again will you, with me to tend,  
On clover-flower, or bitter willows, browse.

### **TITYRUS**

Yet here, this night, you might repose with me,  
On green leaves pillowed: apples ripe have I,  
Soft chestnuts, and of curdled milk enow.  
And, see, the farm-roof chimneys smoke afar,  
And from the hills the shadows lengthening fall!



## ECLOGUE II

### ALEXIS

The shepherd Corydon with love was fired  
For fair Alexis, his own master's joy:  
No room for hope had he, yet, none the less,  
The thick-leaved shadowy-soaring beech-tree grove  
Still would he haunt, and there alone, as thus,  
To woods and hills pour forth his artless strains.  
"Cruel Alexis, heed you naught my songs?  
Have you no pity? you'll drive me to my death.  
Now even the cattle court the cooling shade  
And the green lizard hides him in the thorn:  
Now for tired mowers, with the fierce heat spent,  
Pounds Thestilis her mess of savoury herbs,  
Wild thyme and garlic. I, with none beside,  
Save hoarse cicadas shrilling through the brake,  
Still track your footprints 'neath the broiling sun.  
Better have borne the petulant proud disdain  
Of Amaryllis, or Menalcas wooed,  
Albeit he was so dark, and you so fair!  
Trust not too much to colour, beauteous boy;  
White privets fall, dark hyacinths are culled.  
You scorn me, Alexis, who or what I am  
Care not to ask- how rich in flocks, or how  
In snow-white milk abounding: yet for me  
Roam on Sicilian hills a thousand lambs;  
Summer or winter, still my milk-pails brim.  
I sing as erst Amphion of Circe sang,  
What time he went to call his cattle home  
On Attic Aracynthus. Nor am I  
So ill to look on: lately on the beach  
I saw myself, when winds had stilled the sea,  
And, if that mirror lie not, would not fear  
Daphnis to challenge, though yourself were judge.  
Ah! were you but content with me to dwell.  
Some lowly cot in the rough fields our home,  
Shoot down the stags, or with green osier-wand  
Round up the straggling flock! There you with me  
In silvan strains will learn to rival Pan.  
Pan first with wax taught reed with reed to join;  
For sheep alike and shepherd Pan hath care.  
Nor with the reed's edge fear you to make rough  
Your dainty lip; such arts as these to learn  
What did Amyntas do?— what did he not?  
A pipe have I, of hemlock-stalks compact

In lessening lengths, Damoetas' dying-gift:  
'Mine once,' quoth he, 'now yours, as heir to own.'  
Foolish Amyntas heard and envied me.  
Ay, and two fawns, I risked my neck to find  
In a steep glen, with coats white-dappled still,  
From a sheep's udders suckled twice a day-  
These still I keep for you; which Thestylis  
Implores me oft to let her lead away;  
And she shall have them, since my gifts you spurn.  
Come hither, beauteous boy; for you the Nymphs  
Bring baskets, see, with lilies brimmed; for you,  
Plucking pale violets and poppy-heads,  
Now the fair Naiad, of narcissus flower  
And fragrant fennel, doth one posy twine-  
With cassia then, and other scented herbs,  
Blends them, and sets the tender hyacinth off  
With yellow marigold. I too will pick  
Quinces all silvered-o'er with hoary down,  
Chestnuts, which Amaryllis wont to love,  
And waxen plums withal: this fruit no less  
Shall have its meed of honour; and I will pluck  
You too, ye laurels, and you, ye myrtles, near,  
For so your sweets ye mingle. Corydon,  
You are a boor, nor heeds a whit your gifts  
Alexis; no, nor would Iollas yield,  
Should gifts decide the day. Alack! alack!  
What misery have I brought upon my head!-  
Loosed on the flowers Siroces to my bane,  
And the wild boar upon my crystal springs!  
Whom do you fly, infatuate? gods ere now,  
And Dardan Paris, have made the woods their home.  
Let Pallas keep the towers her hand hath built,  
Us before all things let the woods delight.  
The grim-eyed lioness pursues the wolf,  
The wolf the she-goat, the she-goat herself  
In wanton sport the flowering cytisus,  
And Corydon Alexis, each led on  
By their own longing. See, the ox comes home  
With plough up-tilted, and the shadows grow  
To twice their length with the departing sun,  
Yet me love burns, for who can limit love?  
Ah! Corydon, Corydon, what hath crazed your wit?  
Your vine half-pruned hangs on the leafy elm;  
Why haste you not to weave what need requires  
Of pliant rush or osier? Scorned by this,  
Elsewhere some new Alexis you will find."

**ECLOGUE III**  
**MENALCAS**  
**DAMOETAS**  
**PALAEMON**

**MENALCAS**

Who owns the flock, Damoetas? Meliboeus?

**DAMOETAS**

Nay, they are Aegon's sheep, of late by him  
Committed to my care.

**MENALCAS**

O every way  
Unhappy sheep, unhappy flock! while he  
Still courts Neaera, fearing lest her choice  
Should fall on me, this hireling shepherd here  
Wrings hourly twice their udders, from the flock  
Filching the life-juice, from the lambs their milk.

**DAMOETAS**

Hold! not so ready with your jeers at men!  
We know who once, and in what shrine with you-  
The he-goats looked aside- the light nymphs laughed-

**MENALCAS**

Ay, then, I warrant, when they saw me slash  
Micon's young vines and trees with spiteful hook.

### **DAMOETAS**

Or here by these old beeches, when you broke  
The bow and arrows of Damon; for you chafed  
When first you saw them given to the boy,  
Cross-grained Menalcas, ay, and had you not  
Done him some mischief, would have chafed to death.

### **MENALCAS**

With thieves so daring, what can masters do?  
Did I not see you, rogue, in ambush lie  
For Damon's goat, while loud Lycisca barked?  
And when I cried, "Where is he off to now?  
Gather your flock together, Tityrus,"  
You hid behind the sedges.

### **DAMOETAS**

Well, was he  
Whom I had conquered still to keep the goat.  
Which in the piping-match my pipe had won!  
You may not know it, but the goat was mine.

### **MENALCAS**

You out-pipe him? when had you ever pipe  
Wax-welded? in the cross-ways used you not  
On grating straw some miserable tune  
To mangle?

### **DAMOETAS**

Well, then, shall we try our skill  
Each against each in turn? Lest you be loth,  
I pledge this heifer; every day she comes  
Twice to the milking-pail, and feeds withal  
Two young ones at her udder: say you now

What you will stake upon the match with me.

### **MENALCAS**

Naught from the flock I'll venture, for at home  
I have a father and a step-dame harsh,  
And twice a day both reckon up the flock,  
And one withal the kids. But I will stake,  
Seeing you are so mad, what you yourself  
Will own more priceless far- two beechen cups  
By the divine art of Alcimedon  
Wrought and embossed, whereon a limber vine,  
Wreathed round them by the graver's facile tool,  
Twines over clustering ivy-berries pale.  
Two figures, one Conon, in the midst he set,  
And one- how call you him, who with his wand  
Marked out for all men the whole round of heaven,  
That they who reap, or stoop behind the plough,  
Might know their several seasons? Nor as yet  
Have I set lip to them, but lay them by.

### **DAMOETAS**

For me too wrought the same Alcimedon  
A pair of cups, and round the handles wreathed  
Pliant acanthus, Orpheus in the midst,  
The forests following in his wake; nor yet  
Have I set lip to them, but lay them by.  
Matched with a heifer, who would prate of cups?

### **MENALCAS**

You shall not balk me now; where'er you bid,  
I shall be with you; only let us have  
For auditor- or see, to serve our turn,  
Yonder Palaemon comes! In singing-bouts  
I'll see you play the challenger no more.

### **DAMOETAS**

Out then with what you have; I shall not shrink,  
Nor budge for any man: only do you,  
Neighbour Palaemon, with your whole heart's skill-  
For it is no slight matter-play your part.

### **PALAEMON**

Say on then, since on the greensward we sit,  
And now is burgeoning both field and tree;  
Now is the forest green, and now the year  
At fairest. Do you first, Damoetas, sing,  
Then you, Menalcas, in alternate strain:  
Alternate strains are to the Muses dear.

### **DAMOETAS**

"From Jove the Muse began; Jove filleth all,  
Makes the earth fruitful, for my songs hath care."

### **MENALCAS**

"Me Phoebus loves; for Phoebus his own gifts,

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