

The Georgics

By

Virgil

29 BC

THE GEORGICS

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GEORGIC 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.

O universal lights

Most glorious! ye that lead the gliding year
Along the sky, Liber and Ceres mild,
If by your bounty holpen earth once changed
Chaonian acorn for the plump wheat-ear,
And mingled with the grape, your new-found gift,
The draughts of Achelous; and ye Fauns
To rustics ever kind, come foot it, Fauns
And Dryad-maids together; your gifts I sing.

And thou, for whose delight the war-horse first
Sprang from earth's womb at thy great trident's stroke,
Neptune; and haunter of the groves, for whom
Three hundred snow-white heifers browse the brakes,
The fertile brakes of Ceos; and clothed in power,
Thy native forest and Lycean lawns,
Pan, shepherd-god, forsaking, as the love
Of thine own Maenalus constrains thee, hear
And help, O lord of Tegea! And thou, too,
Minerva, from whose hand the olive sprung;
And boy-discoverer of the curved plough;
And, bearing a young cypress root-uptorn,
Silvanus, and Gods all and Goddesses,
Who make the fields your care, both ye who nurse
The tender unsown increase, and from heaven
Shed on man's sowing the riches of your rain:
And thou, even thou, of whom we know not yet
What mansion of the skies shall hold thee soon,
Whether to watch o'er cities be thy will,
Great Caesar, and to take the earth in charge,
That so the mighty world may welcome thee
Lord of her increase, master of her times,
Binding thy mother's myrtle round thy brow,
Or as the boundless ocean's God thou come,
Sole dread of seamen, till far Thule bow
Before thee, and Tethys win thee to her son

With all her waves for dower; or as a star
Lend thy fresh beams our lagging months to cheer,
Where 'twixt the Maid and those pursuing Claws
A space is opening; see! red Scorpio's self
His arms draws in, yea, and hath left thee more
Than thy full meed of heaven: be what thou wilt-
For neither Tartarus hopes to call thee king,
Nor may so dire a lust of sovereignty
E'er light upon thee, howso Greece admire
Elysium's fields, and Proserpine not heed
Her mother's voice entreating to return-
Vouchsafe a prosperous voyage, and smile on this
My bold endeavour, and pitying, even as I,
These poor way-wilder'd swains, at once begin,
Grow timely used unto the voice of prayer.

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. See how from Tmolus comes
The saffron's fragrance, ivory from Ind,
From Saba's weakling sons their frankincense,
Iron from the naked Chalybs, castor rank
From Pontus, from Epirus the prize-palms
O' the mares of Elis.

Such the eternal bond

And such the laws by Nature's hand imposed
On clime and clime, e'er since the primal dawn
When old Deucalion on the unpeopled earth
Cast stones, whence men, a flinty race, were reared.
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.

Pray for wet summers and for winters fine,
Ye husbandmen; in winter's dust the crops
Exceedingly rejoice, the field hath joy;
No tilth makes Mysia lift her head so high,
Nor Gargarus his own harvests so admire.
Why tell of him, who, having launched his seed,
Sets on for close encounter, and rakes smooth
The dry dust hillocks, then on the tender corn
Lets in the flood, whose waters follow fain;
And when the parched field quivers, and all the blades
Are dying, from the brow of its hill-bed,
See! see! he lures the runnel; down it falls,
Waking hoarse murmurs o'er the polished stones,
And with its bubblings slakes the thirsty fields?
Or why of him, who lest the heavy ears
O'erweigh the stalk, while yet in tender blade
Feeds down the crop's luxuriance, when its growth
First tops the furrows? Why of him who drains
The marsh-land's gathered ooze through soaking sand,

Chiefly what time in treacherous moons a stream
Goes out in spate, and with its coat of slime
Holds all the country, whence the hollow dykes
Sweat steaming vapour?

But no whit the more

For all expedients tried and travail borne
By man and beast in turning oft the soil,
Do greedy goose and Strymon-haunting cranes
And succory's bitter fibres cease to harm,
Or shade not injure. The great Sire himself
No easy road to husbandry assigned,
And first was he by human skill to rouse
The slumbering glebe, 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;
Shook 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 wont 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.

Now to tell

The sturdy rustics' weapons, what they are,
Without which, neither can be sown nor reared
The fruits of harvest; first the bent plough's share
And heavy timber, and slow-lumbering wains
Of the Eleusinian mother, threshing-sleighs
And drags, and harrows with their crushing weight;
Then the cheap wicker-ware of Celeus old,
Hurdles of arbut, and thy mystic fan,
Iacchus; which, full tale, long ere the time
Thou must with heed lay by, if thee await
Not all unearned the country's crown divine.
While yet within the woods, the elm is tamed
And bowed with mighty force to form the stock,
And take the plough's curved shape, then nigh the root
A pole eight feet projecting, earth-boards twain,
And share-beam with its double back they fix.
For yoke is early hewn a linden light,
And a tall beech for handle, from behind

To turn the car at lowest: then o'er the hearth
The wood they hang till the smoke knows it well.
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. Many myself have seen
Steep, as they sow, their pulse-seeds, drenching them

With nitre and black oil-lees, that the fruit
Might swell within the treacherous pods, and they
Make speed to boil at howso small a fire.
Yet, culled with caution, proved with patient toil,
These have I seen degenerate, did not man
Put forth his hand with power, and year by year
Choose out the largest. 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.

Us too behoves Arcturus' sign observe,
And the Kids' seasons and the shining Snake,
No less than those who o'er the windy main
Borne homeward tempt the Pontic, and the jaws
Of oyster-rife Abydos. When the Scales
Now poisoning 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;

Thee, too, Lucerne, the crumbling furrows then
Receive, and millet's annual care returns,
What time the white bull with his gilded horns
Opens the year, before whose threatening front,
Routed the dog-star sinks. But if it be
For wheaten harvest and the hardy spelt,
Thou tax the soil, to corn-ears wholly given,
Let Atlas' daughters hide them in the dawn,
The Cretan star, a crown of fire, depart,
Or e'er the furrow's claim of seed thou quit,
Or haste thee to entrust the whole year's hope
To earth that would not. Many have begun
Ere Maia's star be setting; these, I trow,
Their looked-for harvest fools with empty ears.
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.
Five zones the heavens contain; whereof is one
Aye red with flashing sunlight, fervent aye
From fire; on either side to left and right
Are traced the utmost twain, stiff with blue ice,

And black with scowling storm-clouds, and betwixt
These and the midmost, other twain there lie,
By the Gods' grace to heart-sick mortals given,
And a path cleft between them, where might wheel
On sloping plane the system of the Signs.
And as toward Scythia and Rhipaeon heights
The world mounts upward, likewise sinks it down
Toward Libya and the south, this pole of ours
Still towering high, that other, 'neath their feet,
By dark Styx frowned on, and the abysmal shades.
Here glides the huge Snake forth with sinuous coils
'Twixt the two Bears and round them river-wise-
The Bears that fear 'neath Ocean's brim to dip.
There either, say they, reigns the eternal hush
Of night that knows no seasons, her black pall
Thick-mantling fold on fold; or thitherward
From us returning Dawn brings back the day;
And when the first breath of his panting steeds
On us the Orient flings, that hour with them
Red Vesper 'gins to trim his his 'lated fires.
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.
Oft too with oil or apples plenty-cheap
The creeping ass's ribs his driver packs,
And home from town returning brings instead
A dented mill-stone or black lump of pitch.
The moon herself in various rank assigns
The days for labour lucky: fly the fifth;
Then sprang pale Orcus and the Eumenides;
Earth then in awful labour brought to light

Coeus, Iapetus, and Typhoeus fell,
And those sworn brethren banded to break down
The gates of heaven; thrice, sooth to say, they strove
Ossa on Pelion's top to heave and heap,
Aye, and on Ossa to up-roll amain
Leafy Olympus; thrice with thunderbolt
Their mountain-stair the Sire asunder smote.
Seventh after tenth is lucky both to set
The vine in earth, and take and tame the steer,
And fix the leashes to the warp; the ninth
To runagates is kinder, cross to thieves.

Many the tasks that lightlier lend themselves
In chilly night, or when the sun is young,
And Dawn bedews the world. By night 'tis best
To reap light stubble, and parched fields by night;
For nights the suppling moisture never fails.
And one will sit the long late watches out
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? Many a time,
When now the farmer to his yellow fields
The reaping-hind came bringing, even in act
To lop the brittle barley stems, have I
Seen all the windy legions clash in war

Together, as to rend up far and wide
The heavy corn-crop from its lowest roots,
And toss it skyward: so might winter's flaw,
Dark-eddying, whirl light stalks and flying straws.
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; he with flaming brand
Athos, or Rhodope, or Ceraunian crags
Precipitates: then doubly raves the South
With shower on blinding shower, and woods and coasts
Wail fitfully beneath the mighty blast.
This fearing, mark the months and Signs of heaven,
Whither retires him Saturn's icy star,
And through what heavenly cycles wandereth
The glowing orb Cyllenian. 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.
But when from regions of the furious North
It lightens, and when thunder fills the halls
Of Eurus and of Zephyr, all the fields
With brimming dikes are flooded, and at sea
No mariner but furls his dripping sails.
Never at unawares did shower annoy:
Or, as it rises, the high-soaring cranes
Flee to the vales before it, with face
Upturned to heaven, the heifer snuffs the gale
Through gaping nostrils, or about the meres
Shrill-twittering flits the swallow, and the frogs
Crouch in the mud and chant their dirge of old.

Oft, too, the ant from out her inmost cells,
Fretting the narrow path, her eggs conveys;
Or the huge bow sucks moisture; or a host
Of rooks from food returning in long line
Clamour with jostling wings. Now mayst thou see
The various ocean-fowl and those that pry
Round Asian meads within thy fresher-pools,
Cayster, as in eager rivalry,
About their shoulders dash the plenteous spray,
Now duck their head beneath the wave, now run
Into the billows, for sheer idle joy
Of their mad bathing-revel. Then the crow
With full voice, good-for-naught, inviting rain,
Stalks on the dry sand mateless and alone.
Nor e'en the maids, that card their nightly task,
Know not the storm-sign, when in blazing crock
They see the lamp-oil sputtering with a growth
Of mouldy snuff-clots.

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.
Distinct in clearest air is Nisus seen
Towering, and Scylla for the purple lock
Pays dear; for whereso, as she flies, her wings
The light air winnow, lo! fierce, implacable,
Nisus with mighty whirr through heaven pursues;
Where Nisus heavenward soareth, there her wings
Clutch as she flies, the light air winnowing still.
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.

But if the headlong sun
And moons in order following thou regard,
Ne'er will to-morrow's hour deceive thee, ne'er
Wilt thou be caught by guile of cloudless night.
When first the moon recalls her rallying fires,
If dark the air clipped by her crescent dim,
For folks afield and on the open sea
A mighty rain is brewing; but if her face
With maiden blush she mantle, 'twill be wind,
For wind turns Phoebe still to ruddier gold.
But if at her fourth rising, for 'tis that
Gives surest counsel, clear she ride thro' heaven
With horns unblunted, then shall that whole day,
And to the month's end those that spring from it,
Rainless and windless be, while safe ashore
Shall sailors pay their vows to Panope,
Glaucus, and Melicertes, Ino's child.

The sun too, both at rising, and when soon
He dives beneath the waves, shall yield thee signs;
For signs, none trustier, travel with the sun,
Both those which in their course with dawn he brings,

And those at star-rise. When his springing orb
With spots he pranketh, muffled in a cloud,
And shrinks mid-circle, then of showers beware;
For then the South comes driving from the deep,
To trees and crops and cattle bringing bane.
Or when at day-break through dark clouds his rays
Burst and are scattered, or when rising pale
Aurora quits Tithonus' saffron bed,
But sorry shelter then, alack I will yield
Vine-leaf to ripening grapes; so thick a hail
In spiky showers spins rattling on the roof.
And this yet more 'twill boot thee bear in mind,
When now, his course upon Olympus run,
He draws to his decline: for oft we see
Upon the sun's own face strange colours stray;
Dark tells of rain, of east winds fiery-red;
If spots with ruddy fire begin to mix,
Then all the heavens convulsed in wrath thou'lt see-
Storm-clouds and wind together. Me that night
Let no man bid fare forth upon the deep,
Nor rend the rope from shore. But if, when both
He brings again and hides the day's return,
Clear-orbed he shineth, idly wilt thou dread
The storm-clouds, and beneath the lustral North
See the woods waving. What late eve in fine
Bears in her bosom, whence the wind that brings

Fair-weather-clouds, or what the rain South
Is meditating, tokens of all these
The sun will give thee. Who dare charge the sun
With leasing? He it is who warneth oft
Of hidden broils at hand and treachery,
And secret swelling of the waves of war.
He too it was, when Caesar's light was quenched,
For Rome had pity, when his bright head he veiled
In iron-hued darkness, till a godless age
Trembled for night eternal; at that time
Howbeit earth also, and the ocean-plains,
And dogs obscene, and birds of evil bode
Gave tokens. Yea, how often have we seen
Etna, her furnace-walls asunder riven,
In billowy floods boil o'er the Cyclops' fields,
And roll down globes of fire and molten rocks!
A clash of arms through all the heaven was heard
By Germany; strange heavings shook the Alps.
Yea, and by many through the breathless groves
A voice was heard with power, and wondrous-pale
Phantoms were seen upon the dusk of night,
And cattle spake, portentous! streams stand still,
And the earth yawns asunder, ivory weeps
For sorrow in the shrines, and bronzes sweat.
Up-twirling forests with his eddying tide,
Madly he bears them down, that lord of floods,

Eridanus, till through all the plain are swept
Beasts and their stalls together. At that time
In gloomy entrails ceased not to appear
Dark-threatening fibres, springs to trickle blood,
And high-built cities night-long to resound
With the wolves' howling. Never more than then
From skies all cloudless fell the thunderbolts,
Nor blazed so oft the comet's fire of bale.
Therefore a second time Philippi saw
The Roman hosts with kindred weapons rush
To battle, nor did the high gods deem it hard
That twice Emathia and the wide champaign
Of Haemus should be fattening with our blood.
Ay, and the time will come when there anigh,
Heaving the earth up with his curved plough,
Some swain will light on javelins by foul rust
Corroded, or with ponderous harrow strike
On empty helmets, while he gapes to see
Bones as of giants from the trench untombed.
Gods of my country, heroes of the soil,
And Romulus, and Mother Vesta, thou
Who Tuscan Tiber and Rome's Palatine
Preservest, this new champion at the least
Our fallen generation to repair
Forbid not. To the full and long ago
Our blood thy Trojan perjuries hath paid,

Laomedon. Long since the courts of heaven
Begrudge us thee, our Caesar, and complain
That thou regard'st the triumphs of mankind,
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.

GEORGIC II

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