

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

GEORGIC IV

Of air-born honey, gift of heaven, I now
Take up the tale. Upon this theme no less
Look thou, Maecenas, with indulgent eye.
A marvellous display of puny powers,
High-hearted chiefs, a nation's history,
Its traits, its bent, its battles and its clans,
All, each, shall pass before you, while I sing.
Slight though the poet's theme, not slight the praise,
So frown not heaven, and Phoebus hear his call.
First find your bees a settled sure abode,
Where neither winds can enter (winds blow back
The foragers with food returning home)
Nor sheep and butting kids tread down the flowers,
Nor heifer wandering wide upon the plain
Dash off the dew, and bruise the springing blades.
Let the gay lizard too keep far aloof
His scale-clad body from their honied stalls,
And the bee-eater, and what birds beside,
And Procne smirched with blood upon the breast
From her own murderous hands. For these roam wide
Wasting all substance, or the bees themselves
Strike flying, and in their beaks bear home, to glut
Those savage nestlings with the dainty prey.
But let clear springs and moss-green pools be near,
And through the grass a streamlet hurrying run,

Some palm-tree o'er the porch extend its shade,
Or huge-grown oleaster, that in Spring,
Their own sweet Spring-tide, when the new-made chiefs
Lead forth the young swarms, and, escaped their comb,
The colony comes forth to sport and play,
The neighbouring bank may lure them from the heat,
Or bough befriend with hospitable shade.
O'er the mid-waters, whether swift or still,
Cast willow-branches and big stones enow,
Bridge after bridge, where they may footing find
And spread their wide wings to the summer sun,
If haply Eurus, swooping as they pause,
Have dashed with spray or plunged them in the deep.
And let green cassias and far-scented thymes,
And savory with its heavy-laden breath
Bloom round about, and violet-beds hard by
Sip sweetness from the fertilizing springs.
For the hive's self, or stitched of hollow bark,
Or from tough osier woven, let the doors
Be strait of entrance; for stiff winter's cold
Congeals the honey, and heat resolves and thaws,
To bees alike disastrous; not for naught
So haste they to cement the tiny pores
That pierce their walls, and fill the crevices
With pollen from the flowers, and glean and keep
To this same end the glue, that binds more fast

Than bird-lime or the pitch from Ida's pines.
Oft too in burrowed holes, if fame be true,
They make their cosy subterranean home,
And deeply lodged in hollow rocks are found,
Or in the cavern of an age-hewn tree.
Thou not the less smear round their crannied cribs
With warm smooth mud-coat, and strew leaves above;
But near their home let neither yew-tree grow,
Nor reddening crabs be roasted, and mistrust
Deep marish-ground and mire with noisome smell,
Or where the hollow rocks sonorous ring,
And the word spoken buffets and rebounds.

What more? When now the golden sun has put
Winter to headlong flight beneath the world,
And oped the doors of heaven with summer ray,
Forthwith they roam the glades and forests o'er,
Rifle the painted flowers, or sip the streams,
Light-hovering on the surface. Hence it is
With some sweet rapture, that we know not of,
Their little ones they foster, hence with skill
Work out new wax or clinging honey mould.
So when the cage-escaped hosts you see
Float heavenward through the hot clear air, until
You marvel at yon dusky cloud that spreads
And lengthens on the wind, then mark them well;
For then 'tis ever the fresh springs they seek

And bowery shelter: hither must you bring
The savoury sweets I bid, and sprinkle them,
Bruised balsam and the wax-flower's lowly weed,
And wake and shake the tinkling cymbals heard
By the great Mother: on the anointed spots
Themselves will settle, and in wonted wise
Seek of themselves the cradle's inmost depth.

But if to battle they have hied them forth-
For oft 'twixt king and king with uproar dire
Fierce feud arises, and at once from far
You may discern what passion sways the mob,
And how their hearts are throbbing for the strife;
Hark! the hoarse brazen note that warriors know
Chides on the loiterers, and the ear may catch
A sound that mocks the war-trump's broken blasts;
Then in hot haste they muster, then flash wings,
Sharpen their pointed beaks and knit their thews,
And round the king, even to his royal tent,
Throng rallying, and with shouts defy the foe.
So, when a dry Spring and clear space is given,
Forth from the gates they burst, they clash on high;
A din arises; they are heaped and rolled
Into one mighty mass, and headlong fall,
Not denselier hail through heaven, nor pelting so
Rains from the shaken oak its acorn-shower.
Conspicuous by their wings the chiefs themselves

Press through the heart of battle, and display
A giant's spirit in each pigmy frame,
Steadfast no inch to yield till these or those
The victor's ponderous arm has turned to flight.
Such fiery passions and such fierce assaults
A little sprinkled dust controls and quells.
And now, both leaders from the field recalled,
Who hath the worser seeming, do to death,
Lest royal waste wax burdensome, but let
His better lord it on the empty throne.
One with gold-burnished flakes will shine like fire,
For twofold are their kinds, the nobler he,
Of peerless front and lit with flashing scales;
That other, from neglect and squalor foul,
Drags slow a cumbrous belly. As with kings,
So too with people, diverse is their mould,
Some rough and loathly, as when the wayfarer
Scapes from a whirl of dust, and scorched with heat
Spits forth the dry grit from his parched mouth:
The others shine forth and flash with lightning-gleam,
Their backs all blazoned with bright drops of gold
Symmetric: this the likelier breed; from these,
When heaven brings round the season, thou shalt strain
Sweet honey, nor yet so sweet as passing clear,
And mellowing on the tongue the wine-god's fire.
But when the swarms fly aimlessly abroad,

Disport themselves in heaven and spurn their cells,
Leaving the hive unwarmed, from such vain play
Must you refrain their volatile desires,
Nor hard the task: tear off the monarchs' wings;
While these prove loiterers, none beside will dare
Mount heaven, or pluck the standards from the camp.
Let gardens with the breath of saffron flowers
Allure them, and the lord of Hellespont,
Priapus, wielder of the willow-scythe,
Safe in his keeping hold from birds and thieves.
And let the man to whom such cares are dear
Himself bring thyme and pine-trees from the heights,
And strew them in broad belts about their home;
No hand but his the blistering task should ply,
Plant the young slips, or shed the genial showers.

And I myself, were I not even now
Furling my sails, and, nigh the journey's end,
Eager to turn my vessel's prow to shore,
Perchance would sing what careful husbandry
Makes the trim garden smile; of Paestum too,
Whose roses bloom and fade and bloom again;
How endives glory in the streams they drink,
And green banks in their parsley, and how the gourd
Twists through the grass and rounds him to paunch;
Nor of Narcissus had my lips been dumb,
That loiterer of the flowers, nor supple-stemmed

Acanthus, with the praise of ivies pale,
And myrtles clinging to the shores they love.
For 'neath the shade of tall Oebalia's towers,
Where dark Galaesus laves the yellowing fields,
An old man once I mind me to have seen-
From Corycus he came- to whom had fallen
Some few poor acres of neglected land,
And they nor fruitful' neath the plodding steer,
Meet for the grazing herd, nor good for vines.
Yet he, the while his meagre garden-herbs
Among the thorns he planted, and all round
White lilies, vervains, and lean poppy set,
In pride of spirit matched the wealth of kings,
And home returning not till night was late,
With unbought plenty heaped his board on high.
He was the first to cull the rose in spring,
He the ripe fruits in autumn; and ere yet
Winter had ceased in sullen ire to rive
The rocks with frost, and with her icy bit
Curb in the running waters, there was he
Plucking the rathe faint hyacinth, while he chid
Summer's slow footsteps and the lagging West.
Therefore he too with earliest brooding bees
And their full swarms o'erflowed, and first was he
To press the bubbling honey from the comb;
Lime-trees were his, and many a branching pine;

And all the fruits wherewith in early bloom
The orchard-tree had clothed her, in full tale
Hung there, by mellowing autumn perfected.
He too transplanted tall-grown elms a-row,
Time-toughened pear, thorns bursting with the plum
And plane now yielding serviceable shade
For dry lips to drink under: but these things,
Shut off by rigorous limits, I pass by,
And leave for others to sing after me.

 Come, then, I will unfold the natural powers
Great Jove himself upon the bees bestowed,
The boon for which, led by the shrill sweet strains
Of the Curetes and their clashing brass,
They fed the King of heaven in Dicte's cave.

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

Plant firm the comb's first layer, Narcissus' tear,
And sticky gum oozed from the bark of trees,
Then set the clinging wax to hang therefrom.
Others the while lead forth the full-grown young,
Their country's hope, and others press and pack
The thrice repured honey, and stretch their cells
To bursting with the clear-strained nectar sweet.
Some, too, the wardship of the gates befalls,
Who watch in turn for showers and cloudy skies,
Or ease returning labourers of their load,
Or form a band and from their precincts drive
The drones, a lazy herd. How glows the work!
How sweet the honey smells of perfumed thyme
Like the Cyclopes, when in haste they forge
From the slow-yielding ore the thunderbolts,
Some from the bull's-hide bellows in and out
Let the blasts drive, some dip i' the water-trough
The sputtering metal: with the anvil's weight
Groans Etna: they alternately in time
With giant strength uplift their sinewy arms,
Or twist the iron with the forceps' grip-
Not otherwise, to measure small with great,
The love of getting planted in their breasts
Goads on the bees, that haunt old Cecrops' heights,
Each in his sphere to labour. The old have charge
To keep the town, and build the walled combs,

And mould the cunning chambers; but the youth,
Their tired legs packed with thyme, come labouring home
Belated, for afar they range to feed
On arbutus and the grey-green willow-leaves,
And cassia and the crocus blushing red,
Glue-yielding limes, and hyacinths dusky-eyed.
One hour for rest have all, and one for toil:
With dawn they hurry from the gates- no room
For loiterers there: and once again, when even
Now bids them quit their pasturing on the plain,
Then homeward make they, then refresh their strength:
A hum arises: hark! they buzz and buzz
About the doors and threshold; till at length
Safe laid to rest they hush them for the night,
And welcome slumber laps their weary limbs.
But from the homestead not too far they fare,
When showers hang like to fall, nor, east winds nigh,
Confide in heaven, but 'neath the city walls
Safe-circling fetch them water, or essay
Brief out-goings, and oft weigh-up tiny stones,
As light craft ballast in the tossing tide,
Wherewith they poise them through the cloudy vast.
This law of life, too, by the bees obeyed,
Will move thy wonder, that nor sex with sex
Yoke they in marriage, nor yield their limbs to love,
Nor know the pangs of labour, but alone

From leaves and honied herbs, the mothers, each,
Gather their offspring in their mouths, alone
Supply new kings and pigmy commonwealth,
And their old court and waxen realm repair.
Oft, too, while wandering, against jagged stones
Their wings they fray, and 'neath the burden yield
Their liberal lives: so deep their love of flowers,
So glorious deem they honey's proud acquist.
Therefore, though each a life of narrow span,
Ne'er stretched to summers more than seven, befalls,
Yet deathless doth the race endure, and still
Perennial stands the fortune of their line,
From grandsire unto grandsire backward told.
Moreover, not Aegyptus, nor the realm
Of boundless Lydia, no, nor Parthia's hordes,
Nor Median Hydaspes, to their king
Do such obeisance: lives the king unscathed,
One will inspires the million: is he dead,
Snapt is the bond of fealty; they themselves
Ravage their toil-wrought honey, and rend amain
Their own comb's waxen trellis. He is the lord
Of all their labour; him with awful eye
They reverence, and with murmuring throngs surround,
In crowds attend, oft shoulder him on high,
Or with their bodies shield him in the fight,
And seek through showering wounds a glorious death.

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

If now their narrow home thou wouldst unseal,
And broach the treasures of the honey-house,
With draught of water first toment thy lips,
And spread before thee fumes of trailing smoke.
Twice is the teeming produce gathered in,
Twofold their time of harvest year by year,
Once when Taygete the Pleiad uplifts
Her comely forehead for the earth to see,
With foot of scorn spurning the ocean-streams,
Once when in gloom she flies the watery Fish,
And dips from heaven into the wintry wave.
Unbounded then their wrath; if hurt, they breathe
Venom into their bite, cleave to the veins
And let the sting lie buried, and leave their lives
Behind them in the wound. But if you dread

Too rigorous a winter, and would fain
Temper the coming time, and their bruised hearts
And broken estate to pity move thy soul,
Yet who would fear to fumigate with thyme,
Or cut the empty wax away? for oft
Into their comb the newt has gnawed unseen,
And the light-loathing beetles crammed their bed,
And he that sits at others' board to feast,
The do-naught drone; or 'gainst the unequal foe
Swoops the fierce hornet, or the moth's fell tribe;
Or spider, victim of Minerva's spite,
Athwart the doorway hangs her swaying net.
The more impoverished they, the keenlier all
To mend the fallen fortunes of their race
Will nerve them, fill the cells up, tier on tier,
And weave their granaries from the rifled flowers.
Now, seeing that life doth even to bee-folk bring
Our human chances, if in dire disease
Their bodies' strength should languish- which anon
By no uncertain tokens may be told-
Forthwith the sick change hue; grim leanness mars
Their visage; then from out the cells they bear
Forms reft of light, and lead the mournful pomp;
Or foot to foot about the porch they hang,
Or within closed doors loiter, listless all
From famine, and benumbed with shrivelling cold.

Then is a deep note heard, a long-drawn hum,
As when the chill South through the forests sighs,
As when the troubled ocean hoarsely booms
With back-swung billow, as ravening tide of fire
Surges, shut fast within the furnace-walls.
Then do I bid burn scented galbanum,
And, honey-streams through reeden troughs instilled,
Challenge and cheer their flagging appetite
To taste the well-known food; and it shall boot
To mix therewith the savour bruised from gall,
And rose-leaves dried, or must to thickness boiled
By a fierce fire, or juice of raisin-grapes
From Psithian vine, and with its bitter smell
Centaury, and the famed Cecropian thyme.
There is a meadow-flower by country folk
Hight star-wort; 'tis a plant not far to seek;
For from one sod an ample growth it rears,
Itself all golden, but girt with plenteous leaves,
Where glory of purple shines through violet gloom.
With chaplets woven hereof full oft are decked
Heaven's altars: harsh its taste upon the tongue;
Shepherds in vales smooth-shorn of nibbling flocks
By Mella's winding waters gather it.
The roots of this, well seethed in fragrant wine,
Set in brimmed baskets at their doors for food.
But if one's whole stock fail him at a stroke,

Nor hath he whence to breed the race anew,
'Tis time the wondrous secret to disclose
Taught by the swain of Arcady, even how
The blood of slaughtered bullocks oft has borne
Bees from corruption. I will trace me back
To its prime source the story's tangled thread,
And thence unravel. For where thy happy folk,
Canopus, city of Pellaeon fame,
Dwell by the Nile's lagoon-like overflow,
And high o'er furrows they have called their own
Skim in their painted wherries; where, hard by,
The quivered Persian presses, and that flood
Which from the swart-skinned Aethiop bears him down,
Swift-parted into sevenfold branching mouths
With black mud fattens and makes Aegypt green,
That whole domain its welfare's hope secure
Rests on this art alone. And first is chosen
A strait recess, cramped closer to this end,
Which next with narrow roof of tiles atop
'Twixt prisoning walls they pinch, and add hereto
From the four winds four slanting window-slits.
Then seek they from the herd a steer, whose horns
With two years' growth are curling, and stop fast,
Plunge madly as he may, the panting mouth
And nostrils twain, and done with blows to death,
Batter his flesh to pulp i' the hide yet whole,

And shut the doors, and leave him there to lie.
But 'neath his ribs they scatter broken boughs,
With thyme and fresh-pulled cassias: this is done
When first the west winds bid the waters flow,
Ere flush the meadows with new tints, and ere
The twittering swallow buildeth from the beams.
Meanwhile the juice within his softened bones
Heats and ferments, and things of wondrous birth,
Footless at first, anon with feet and wings,
Swarm there and buzz, a marvel to behold;
And more and more the fleeting breeze they take,
Till, like a shower that pours from summer-clouds,
Forth burst they, or like shafts from quivering string
When Parthia's flying hosts provoke the fray.

Say what was he, what God, that fashioned forth
This art for us, O Muses? of man's skill
Whence came the new adventure? From thy vale,
Peneian Tempe, turning, bee-bereft,
So runs the tale, by famine and disease,
Mournful the shepherd Aristaeus stood
Fast by the haunted river-head, and thus
With many a plaint to her that bare him cried:
"Mother, Cyrene, mother, who hast thy home
Beneath this whirling flood, if he thou sayest,
Apollo, lord of Thymbra, be my sire,
Sprung from the Gods' high line, why barest thou me

With fortune's ban for birthright? Where is now
Thy love to me-ward banished from thy breast?
O! wherefore didst thou bid me hope for heaven?
Lo! even the crown of this poor mortal life,
Which all my skilful care by field and fold,
No art neglected, scarce had fashioned forth,
Even this falls from me, yet thou call'st me son.
Nay, then, arise! With thine own hands pluck up
My fruit-plantations: on the homestead fling
Pitiless fire; make havoc of my crops;
Burn the young plants, and wield the stubborn axe
Against my vines, if there hath taken the
Such loathing of my greatness." But that cry,
Even from her chamber in the river-deeps,
His mother heard: around her spun the nymphs
Milesian wool stained through with hyaline dye,
Drymo, Xantho, Ligea, Phyllodoce,
Their glossy locks o'er snowy shoulders shed,
Cydippe and Lycorias yellow-haired,
A maiden one, one newly learned even then
To bear Lucina's birth-pang. Clio, too,
And Beroe, sisters, ocean-children both,
Both zoned with gold and girt with dappled fell,
Ephyre and Opis, and from Asian meads
Deiopea, and, bow at length laid by,
Fleet-footed Arethusa. But in their midst

Fair Clymene was telling o'er the tale
Of Vulcan's idle vigilance and the stealth
Of Mars' sweet rapine, and from Chaos old
Counted the jostling love-joys of the Gods.
Charmed by whose lay, the while their woolly tasks
With spindles down they drew, yet once again
Smote on his mother's ears the mournful plaint
Of Aristaeus; on their glassy thrones
Amazement held them all; but Arethuse
Before the rest put forth her auburn head,
Peering above the wave-top, and from far
Exclaimed, "Cyrene, sister, not for naught
Scared by a groan so deep, behold! 'tis he,
Even Aristaeus, thy heart's fondest care,
Here by the brink of the Peneian sire
Stands woebegone and weeping, and by name
Cries out upon thee for thy cruelty."
To whom, strange terror knocking at her heart,
"Bring, bring him to our sight," the mother cried;
"His feet may tread the threshold even of Gods."
So saying, she bids the flood yawn wide and yield
A pathway for his footsteps; but the wave
Arched mountain-wise closed round him, and within
Its mighty bosom welcomed, and let speed
To the deep river-bed. And now, with eyes
Of wonder gazing on his mother's hall

And watery kingdom and cave-prisoned pools
And echoing groves, he went, and, stunned by that
Stupendous whirl of waters, separate saw
All streams beneath the mighty earth that glide,
Phasis and Lycus, and that fountain-head
Whence first the deep Enipeus leaps to light,
Whence father Tiber, and whence Anio's flood,
And Hypanis that roars amid his rocks,
And Mysian Caicus, and, bull-browed
'Twixt either gilded horn, Eridanus,
Than whom none other through the laughing plains
More furious pours into the purple sea.
Soon as the chamber's hanging roof of stone
Was gained, and now Cyrene from her son
Had heard his idle weeping, in due course
Clear water for his hands the sisters bring,
With napkins of shorn pile, while others heap
The board with dainties, and set on afresh
The brimming goblets; with Panchaian fires
Upleap the altars; then the mother spake,
"Take beakers of Maconian wine," she said,
"Pour we to Ocean." Ocean, sire of all,
She worships, and the sister-nymphs who guard
The hundred forests and the hundred streams;
Thrice Vesta's fire with nectar clear she dashed,
Thrice to the roof-top shot the flame and shone:

Armed with which omen she essayed to speak:
"In Neptune's gulf Carpathian dwells a seer,
Caerulean Proteus, he who metes the main
With fish-drawn chariot of two-footed steeds;
Now visits he his native home once more,
Pallene and the Emathian ports; to him
We nymphs do reverence, ay, and Nereus old;
For all things knows the seer, both those which are
And have been, or which time hath yet to bring;
So willed it Neptune, whose portentous flocks,
And loathly sea-calves 'neath the surge he feeds.
Him first, my son, behoves thee seize and bind
That he may all the cause of sickness show,
And grant a prosperous end. For save by force
No rede will he vouchsafe, nor shalt thou bend
His soul by praying; whom once made captive, ply
With rigorous force and fetters; against these
His wiles will break and spend themselves in vain.
I, when the sun has lit his noontide fires,
When the blades thirst, and cattle love the shade,
Myself will guide thee to the old man's haunt,
Whither he hies him weary from the waves,
That thou mayst safelier steal upon his sleep.
But when thou hast gripped him fast with hand and gyve,
Then divers forms and bestial semblances
Shall mock thy grasp; for sudden he will change

To bristly boar, fell tigress, dragon scaled,
And tawny-tufted lioness, or send forth
A crackling sound of fire, and so shake of
The fetters, or in showery drops anon
Dissolve and vanish. But the more he shifts
His endless transformations, thou, my son,
More straitlier clench the clinging bands, until
His body's shape return to that thou sawest,
When with closed eyelids first he sank to sleep."

So saying, an odour of ambrosial dew
She sheds around, and all his frame therewith
Steeps throughly; forth from his trim-combed locks
Breathed effluence sweet, and a lithe vigour leapt
Into his limbs. There is a cavern vast
Scooped in the mountain-side, where wave on wave
By the wind's stress is driven, and breaks far up
Its inmost creeks- safe anchorage from of old
For tempest-taken mariners: therewithin,
Behind a rock's huge barrier, Proteus hides.
Here in close covert out of the sun's eye
The youth she places, and herself the while
Swathed in a shadowy mist stands far aloof.
And now the ravening dog-star that burns up
The thirsty Indians blazed in heaven; his course
The fiery sun had half devoured: the blades
Were parched, and the void streams with drougthy jaws

Baked to their mud-beds by the scorching ray,
When Proteus seeking his accustomed cave
Strode from the billows: round him frolicking
The watery folk that people the waste sea
Sprinkled the bitter brine-dew far and wide.
Along the shore in scattered groups to feed
The sea-calves stretch them: while the seer himself,
Like herdsman on the hills when evening bids
The steers from pasture to their stall repair,
And the lambs' bleating whets the listening wolves,
Sits midmost on the rock and tells his tale.
But Aristaeus, the foe within his clutch,
Scarce suffering him compose his aged limbs,
With a great cry leapt on him, and ere he rose
Forestalled him with the fetters; he nathless,
All unforgetful of his ancient craft,
Transforms himself to every wondrous thing,
Fire and a fearful beast, and flowing stream.
But when no trickery found a path for flight,
Baffled at length, to his own shape returned,
With human lips he spake, "Who bade thee, then,
So reckless in youth's hardihood, affront
Our portals? or what wouldst thou hence?"- But he,
"Proteus, thou knowest, of thine own heart thou knowest;
For thee there is no cheating, but cease thou
To practise upon me: at heaven's behest

I for my fainting fortunes hither come
An oracle to ask thee." There he ceased.
Whereat the seer, by stubborn force constrained,
Shot forth the grey light of his gleaming eyes
Upon him, and with fiercely gnashing teeth
Unlocks his lips to spell the fates of heaven:
 "Doubt not 'tis wrath divine that plagues thee thus,
Nor light the debt thou payest; 'tis Orpheus' self,
Orpheus unhappy by no fault of his,
So fates prevent not, fans thy penal fires,
Yet madly raging for his ravished bride.
She in her haste to shun thy hot pursuit
Along the stream, saw not the coming death,
Where at her feet kept ward upon the bank
In the tall grass a monstrous water-snake.
But with their cries the Dryad-band her peers
Filled up the mountains to their proudest peaks:
Wailed for her fate the heights of Rhodope,
And tall Pangaea, and, beloved of Mars,
The land that bowed to Rhesus, Thrace no less
With Hebrus' stream; and Orithyia wept,

Daughter of Acte old. But Orpheus' self,
Soothing his love-pain with the hollow shell,
Thee his sweet wife on the lone shore alone,
Thee when day dawned and when it died he sang.

Nay to the jaws of Taenarus too he came,
Of Dis the infernal palace, and the grove
Grim with a horror of great darkness- came,
Entered, and faced the Manes and the King
Of terrors, the stone heart no prayer can tame.
Then from the deepest deeps of Erebus,
Wrung by his minstrelsy, the hollow shades
Came trooping, ghostly semblances of forms
Lost to the light, as birds by myriads hie
To greenwood boughs for cover, when twilight-hour
Or storms of winter chase them from the hills;
Matrons and men, and great heroic frames
Done with life's service, boys, unwedded girls,
Youths placed on pyre before their fathers' eyes.
Round them, with black slime choked and hideous weed,
Cocytus winds; there lies the unlovely swamp
Of dull dead water, and, to pen them fast,
Styx with her ninefold barrier poured between.
Nay, even the deep Tartarean Halls of death
Stood lost in wonderment, and the Eumenides,
Their brows with livid locks of serpents twined;
Even Cerberus held his triple jaws agape,
And, the wind hushed, Ixion's wheel stood still.
And now with homeward footstep he had passed
All perils scathless, and, at length restored,
Eurydice to realms of upper air

Had well-nigh won, behind him following-
So Proserpine had ruled it- when his heart
A sudden mad desire surprised and seized-
Meet fault to be forgiven, might Hell forgive.
For at the very threshold of the day,
Heedless, alas! and vanquished of resolve,
He stopped, turned, looked upon Eurydice
His own once more. But even with the look,
Poured out was all his labour, broken the bond
Of that fell tyrant, and a crash was heard
Three times like thunder in the meres of hell.
'Orpheus! what ruin hath thy frenzy wrought
On me, alas! and thee? Lo! once again
The unpitying fates recall me, and dark sleep
Closes my swimming eyes. And now farewell:
Girt with enormous night I am borne away,
Outstretching toward thee, thine, alas! no more,
These helpless hands.' She spake, and suddenly,
Like smoke dissolving into empty air,
Passed and was sundered from his sight; nor him
Clutching vain shadows, yearning sore to speak,
Thenceforth beheld she, nor no second time
Hell's boatman brooks he pass the watery bar.
What should he do? fly whither, twice bereaved?
Move with what tears the Manes, with what voice
The Powers of darkness? She indeed even now

Death-cold was floating on the Stygian barge!
For seven whole months unceasingly, men say,
Beneath a skyey crag, by thy lone wave,
Strymon, he wept, and in the caverns chill
Unrolled his story, melting tigers' hearts,
And leading with his lay the oaks along.
As in the poplar-shade a nightingale
Mourns her lost young, which some relentless swain,
Spying, from the nest has torn unfledged, but she
Wails the long night, and perched upon a spray
With sad insistence pipes her dolorous strain,
Till all the region with her wrongs o'erflows.
No love, no new desire, constrained his soul:
By snow-bound Tanais and the icy north,
Far steppes to frost Rhipaeon forever wed,
Alone he wandered, lost Eurydice
Lamenting, and the gifts of Dis ungiven.
Scorned by which tribute the Ciconian dames,
Amid their awful Bacchanalian rites
And midnight revellings, tore him limb from limb,
And strewed his fragments over the wide fields.
Then too, even then, what time the Hebrus stream,
Oeagrian Hebrus, down mid-current rolled,
Rent from the marble neck, his drifting head,
The death-chilled tongue found yet a voice to cry
'Eurydice! ah! poor Eurydice!'

With parting breath he called her, and the banks
From the broad stream caught up 'Eurydice!'"
So Proteus ending plunged into the deep,
And, where he plunged, beneath the eddying whirl
Churned into foam the water, and was gone;
But not Cyrene, who unquestioned thus
Bespake the trembling listener: "Nay, my son,
From that sad bosom thou mayst banish care:
Hence came that plague of sickness, hence the nymphs,
With whom in the tall woods the dance she wove,
Wrought on thy bees, alas! this deadly bane.
Bend thou before the Dell-nymphs, gracious powers:
Bring gifts, and sue for pardon: they will grant
Peace to thine asking, and an end of wrath.
But how to approach them will I first unfold-
Four chosen bulls of peerless form and bulk,
That browse to-day the green Lycaean heights,
Pick from thy herds, as many kine to match,
Whose necks the yoke pressed never: then for these
Build up four altars by the lofty fanes,
And from their throats let gush the victims' blood,
And in the greenwood leave their bodies lone.
Then, when the ninth dawn hath displayed its beams,
To Orpheus shalt thou send his funeral dues,
Poppies of Lethe, and let slay a sheep
Coal-black, then seek the grove again, and soon

For pardon found adore Eurydice

With a slain calf for victim."

No delay:

The self-same hour he hies him forth to do

His mother's bidding: to the shrine he came,

The appointed altars reared, and thither led

Four chosen bulls of peerless form and bulk,

With kine to match, that never yoke had known;

Then, when the ninth dawn had led in the day,

To Orpheus sent his funeral dues, and sought

The grove once more. But sudden, strange to tell

A portent they espy: through the oxen's flesh,

Waxed soft in dissolution, hark! there hum

Bees from the belly; the rent ribs overboil

In endless clouds they spread them, till at last

On yon tree-top together fused they cling,

And drop their cluster from the bending boughs.

So sang I of the tilth of furrowed fields,

Of flocks and trees, while Caesar's majesty

Launched forth the levin-bolts of war by deep

Euphrates, and bare rule o'er willing folk

Though vanquished, and essayed the heights of heaven.

I Virgil then, of sweet Parthenope

The nursling, wooed the flowery walks of peace

Inglorious, who erst trilled for shepherd-wights

The wanton ditty, and sang in saucy youth

Thee, Tityrus, 'neath the spreading beech tree's shade.