Virgil

ECLOGUE V ("Daphnis")

MENALCAS
Why, Mopsus, being both together met,
You skilled to breathe upon the slender reeds,
I to sing ditties, do we not sit down
Here where the elm-trees and the hazels blend?

MOPSUS
You are the elder, 'tis for me to bide
Your choice, Menalcas, whether now we seek
Yon shade that quivers to the changeful breeze,
Or the cave's shelter. Look you how the cave
Is with the wild vine's clusters over-laced!

MENALCAS
None but Amyntas on these hills of ours
Can vie with you.

MOPSUS
What if he also strive
To out-sing Phoebus?

MENALCAS
Do you first begin,
Good Mopsus, whether minded to sing aught
Of Phyllis and her loves, or Alcon's praise,
Or to fling taunts at Codrus. Come, begin,
While Tityrus watches o'er the grazing kids.

MOPSUS
Nay, then, I will essay what late I carved
On a green beech-tree's rind, playing by turns,
And marking down the notes; then afterward
Bid you Amyntas match them if he can.

MENALCAS
As limber willow to pale olive yields,
As lowly Celtic nard to rose-buds bright,
So, to my mind, Amyntas yields to you.
But hold awhile, for to the cave we come.

MOPSUS
"For Daphnis cruelly slain wept all the Nymphs—
Ye hazels, bear them witness, and ye streams—
When she, his mother, clasping in her arms
The hapless body of the son she bare,
To gods and stars unpitying, poured her plaint.
Then, Daphnis, to the cooling streams were none
That drove the pastured oxen, then no beast
Drank of the river, or would the grass-blade touch.
Nay, the wild rocks and woods then voiced the roar
Of Afric lions mourning for thy death.
Daphnis, 'twas thou bad'st yoke to Bacchus' car
Armenian tigresses, lead on the pomp
Of revellers, and with tender foliage wreathe
The bending spear-wands. As to trees the vine
Is crown of glory, as to vines the grape,
Bulls to the herd, to fruitful fields the corn,
So the one glory of thine own art thou.
When the Fates took thee hence, then Pales' self,
And even Apollo, left the country lone.
Where the plump barley-grain so oft we sowed,
There but wild oats and barren darnel spring;
For tender violet and narcissus bright
Thistle and prickly thorn uprear their heads.
Now, O ye shepherds, strew the ground with leaves,
And o'er the fountains draw a shady veil—
So Daphnis to his memory bids be done—
And rear a tomb, and write thereon this verse:
‘I, Daphnis in the woods, from hence in fame
Am to the stars exalted, guardian once
Of a fair flock, myself more fair than they.’”

MENALCAS

So is thy song to me, poet divine,
As slumber on the grass to weary limbs,
Or to slake thirst from some sweet-bubbling rill
In summer’s heat. Nor on the reeds alone,
But with thy voice art thou, thrice happy boy,
Ranked with thy master, second but to him.
Yet will I, too, in turn, as best I may,
Sing thee a song, and to the stars uplift
Thy Daphnis—Daphnis to the stars extol,
For me too Daphnis loved.

MOPSUS

Than such a boon
What dearer could I deem? the boy himself
Was worthy to be sung, and many a time
Hath Stimichon to me your singing praised.

MENALCAS

‘In dazzling sheen with unaccustomed eyes
Daphnis stands rapt before Olympus’ gate,
And sees beneath his feet the clouds and stars.
Wherefore the woods and fields, Pan, shepherd-folk,
And Dryad-maidens, thrill with eager joy;
Nor wolf with treacherous wile assails the flock,
Nor nets the stag: kind Daphnis loveth peace.
The unshorn mountains to the stars up-toss
Voices of gladness; ay, the very rocks,
The very thickets, shout and sing, ‘A god,
A god is he,’ Menalcas, ‘Be thou kind,
Propitious to thine own.’ Lo! altars four,
Twain to thee, Daphnis, and to Phoebus twain
For sacrifice, we build; and I for thee
Two beakers yearly of fresh milk afoam,
And of rich olive-oil two bowls, will set;
And of the wine-god’s bounty above all,
If cold, before the hearth, or in the shade
At harvest-time, to glad the festal hour,
From flasks of Ariusian grape will pour
Sweet nectar. Therewithal at my behest
Shall Lyctian Aegon and Damoetas sing,
And Alphesiboeus emulate in dance
The dancing Satyrs. This, thy service due,
Shalt thou lack never, both when we pay the Nymphs
Our yearly vows, and when with lustral rites
The fields we hallow. Long as the wild boar
Shall love the mountain-heights, and fish the streams,
While bees on thyme and crickets feed on dew,
Thy name, thy praise, thine honour, shall endure.
Even as to Bacchus and to Ceres, so
To thee the swain his yearly vows shall make;
And thou thereof, like them, shalt quittance claim.”

MOPSUS

How, how repay thee for a song so rare?
For not the whispering south-wind on its way
So much delights me, nor wave-smitten beach,
Nor streams that race adown their bouldered beds.

MENALCAS

First this frail hemlock-stalk to you I give,
Which taught me “Corydon with love was fired
For fair Alexis,” ay, and this beside,
“Who owns the flock?—Meliboeus?”

MOPSUS

But take you
This shepherd’s crook, which, howso hard he begged,
Antigones, then worthy to be loved,
Prevailed not to obtain—with brass, you see,
And equal knots, Menalcas, fashioned fair!
ECLOGUE X ("Gallus")

This now, the very latest of my toils,
Vouchsafe me, Aréthusa! needs must I
Sing a brief song to Gallus—brief, but yet
Such as Lycoris' self may fitly read.

Who would not sing for Gallus? So, when thou
Beneath Sicanian billows glidest on,
May Doris blend no bitter wave with thine,
Begin! The love of Gallus be our theme,
And the shrewd pangs he suffered, while, hard by,
The flat-nosed she-goats browse the tender brush.
We sing not to deaf ears; no word of ours
But the woods echo it. What groves or lawns
Held you, ye Dryad-maidens, when for love—
Love all unworthy of a loss so dear—

Gallus lay dying? for neither did the slopes
Of Pindus or Parnassus stay you then,
No, nor Aonian Aganippe. Him
Even the laurels and the tamarisks wept;
For him, outstretched beneath a lonely rock,
Wept pine-clad Maenalus, and the flinty crags
Of cold Lycaeus. The sheep too stood around—
Of us they feel no shame, poet divine;
Nor of the flock be thou ashamed: even fair
Adonis by the rivers fed his sheep—

Came shepherd too, and swine-herd footing slow,
And, from the winter-acorns dripping-wet
Menalcas. All with one accord exclaim:
“From whence this love of thine?” Apollo came;
“Gallus, art mad?” he cried, “thy bosom’s care

Another love is following.” Therewithal
Silvanus came, with rural honours crowned;
The flowering fennels and tall lilies shook
Before him. Yea, and our own eyes beheld
Pan, god of Arcady, with blood-red juice

Of the elder-berry, and with vermilion, dyed.
“Wilt ever make an end?” quoth he, “behold

Love recks not aught of it: his heart no more
With tears is sated than with streams the grass,
Bees with the cytisus, or goats with leaves.”

“Yet will ye sing, Arcadians, of my woes
Upon your mountains,” sadly he replied—
“Arcadians, that alone have skill to sing.
O then how softly would my ashes rest,
If of my love, one day, your flutes should tell!

And would that I, of my own fellowship,
Or dresser of the ripening grape had been,
Or guardian of the flock! for surely then,
Let Phyllis, or Amyntas, or who else,
Bewitch me—what if swart Amyntas be?

Dark is the violet, dark the hyacinth—
Among the willows, ’neath the limber vine,
Reclining would my love have lain with me,
Phyllis plucked garlands, or Amyntas sung.
Here are cool springs, soft mead and grove, Lycoris;

Here might our lives with time have worn away.
But me mad love of the stern war-god holds
Armed amid weapons and opposing foes.
Whilst thou—Ah! might I but believe it not!—
Alone without me, and from home afar,

Look’st upon Alpine snows and frozen Rhine.
Ah! may the frost not hurt thee, may the sharp
And jagged ice not wound thy tender feet!
I will depart, re-tune the songs I framed
In verse Chalcidian to the oaten reed
Of the Sicilian swain. Resolved am I

In the woods, rather, with wild beasts to couch,
And bear my doom, and character my love
Upon the tender tree-trunks: they will grow,
And you, my love, grow with them. And meanwhile

I with the Nymphs will haunt Mount Maenalus,
Or hunt the keen wild boar. No frost so cold
But I will hem with hounds thy forest-glades,
Parthenius. Even now, methinks, I range
O’er rocks, through echoing groves, and joy to launch

Cydonian arrows from a Parthian bow.—
As if my madness could find healing thus,
Or that god soften at a mortal’s grief!
Now neither Hamadryads, no, nor songs
Delight me more: ye woods, away with you!

No pangs of ours can change him; not though we
In the mid-frost should drink of Hebrus’ stream,
And in wet winters face Sithonian snows,
Or, when the bark of the tall elm-tree bole
Of drought is dying, should, under Cancer’s Sign,
In Aethiopian deserts drive our flocks.
Love conquers all things; yield we too to love!”

These songs, Pierian Maids, shall it suffice
Your poet to have sung, the while he sat,
And of slim mallow wove a basket fine:
To Gallus ye will magnify their worth,
Gallus, for whom my love grows hour by hour,
As the green alder shoots in early Spring.
Come, let us rise: the shade is wont to be
Baneful to singers; baneful is the shade
Cast by the juniper, crops sicken too
In shade. Now homeward, having fed your fill—
Eve’s star is rising—go, my she-goats, go.