THE IDYLLS OF THEOCRITUS.

IDYLL I.

A talk between a goat-herd and a shepherd leads up to the "Song of Daphnis." Daphnis had vowed eternal constancy to his first love, a Nymph; whereupon Aphrodite made him love a strange maiden; but, sooner than break his vow, he let this passion waste him to his death.

THYSRIS.

Sweet is the whispering, friend goat-herd, of yonder pine
Low-lisping its song by the spring, and sweet that piping of thine.
Pan's is the peerless voice; thou art second to him alone.
If the horned he-goat be his choice, by thee is the she-goat won:
If the prize of the Forest-lord be the she-goat, thy song's wage
Is a kid, and sweet on the board is her flesh, till the milking-age.

GOAT-HERD.

Nay, shepherd, 'tis thou art the wonder: more sweet is the sound of thy singing
Than the echoing laughter yonder of the stream from the cliff's brow springing.
If the Queens of Song Divine bear off the ewe for their prize, [10
Yet the stall-fed lamb shall be thine: but and if it be good in their eyes
With the guerdon-lamb to content them, the ewe thy song shall crown.

THYSRIS.

For the Nymphs' sake, goat-herd, consent even here to sit thee down,
Here, where the slant-sloped knoll and the tamarisks wait for thee,
And to waken the wood-pipe's soul. Thy goats shall be tended of me.
THEOCRITUS.

Goat-herd.

O shepherd, I dare not in heat of the noontide, I dare not raise
The strain; for I fear to meet great Pan in his wrath: from the chase
Forwearied then, doth he lay him down to his rest, and grim
Is the wrath that is ambushed aye by the quivering nostrils of him.
Nay then—for Daphnis' pain hath been sung, O Thyris, of thee,
And the Mount of the Pastoral Strain hast thou higher ascended than we—
Hither, and let us recline beneath yon elm, that shades
The front of the Garden-god's shrine, and the cell of the Fountain-maids,
Where the shepherds' seats curve round 'neath the oaks. If thou wilt
sing now
As when Chromis of Libya found what a lord of song wast thou,
Thrice shalt thou with my good will milk the mother of twins, my pride:
Two pails will the milk of her fill when her kids have been satisfied.

And an ivy-wood bowl shalt thou gain, with sweet wax varnished fair,
New-carven, with handles twain, and the scent of the scoop still there.
And around its lips go twining the ivy-leaves crowning the rim:
Star-dust of the helichryse gleameth thereon, and a tendril seemeth
To exult in its golden-shining berries that girdle the brim.
And within is a maiden—she might have been carved by a God's own
hand—

In mantle and coif fair-dight; and beside her lovers stand,
Two young men beautiful-tressed, and they fling from side to side
Each at other the gibe and the jest; but untouched doth her heart abide;
But a look now laughter-dancing she flasheth on one of the twain;
At the other anon is she glancing: they pine in love's long pain
With pale tired eyes; but their toil and their sighs are spent in vain.

And thereby is a fisher, an old man; crouched on a rock is he:
For a cast he upgathers the fold of a great net eagerly;

And the grey-haired seemeth as one that toileth with might and main:
Thou wouldst say that his fishing was done with his strong limbs' uttermost strain.

So stand out down the length of his neck the sinews: in sooth,
Grey-haired though he be, his strength is even as the strength of youth.
IDYLL I.

And withdrawn from the sea-worn sire but a little space is a garth
Whose lovely vines by the fire-red clusters are bowed to the earth;
And a little lad on the height of the stone dyke warding them sits:
Two foxes to left and to right of him prowl: one stealthily flits
Through the vine-rows devouring the grapes, while the other a guileful plot
For the boy’s food-wallet shapes, and she vows she will leave him not 50
Until she may flee thence leaving him stranded, of breakfast bare:
But a locust-trap is he weaving of asphodel-stalks wrought fair,
And with rushes he intertwines it: his scrip no whit he minds,
Neither the plundered vines, such joy in his plaiting he finds.
And the rippling acanthus embracing floats all round the bowl,
A marvel of delicate chaising; it would strike with amaze thy soul.
A goat for its price I paid to a sailor from Calydon,
And a great cream-cheese I laid in his hands ere the prize was won.
Not once have I lifted it up to my lips, but unsoiled it stands
Still. That selfsame cup will I gladly give to thine hands 60
If thou sing that heart-thrilling song, O friend, for the which I long:
I begrudge it no whit. Ah come, dear friend! Thou canst not keep
Thy song in the Unseen Home, in the all-forgetting sleep.

THYRSIS.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman’s Lay.
Thyrsis of Etna is this, and the voice of his singing it is.
Where were ye, Nymphs, in the hour when Daphnis pined to his dying?—
Where the crests of Pindus tower?—in Peneius’ dells fair-lying?
For not by Anapus the bright broad flood were ye wandering,
Nor on Etna’s watchtower-height, nor by Acis’ hallowed spring.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman’s Lay. 70
For him was the lynxes’ moan, and the wolves’ long howl for him,
And the lion’s thunderous groan for the dead thrilled oakwoods dim.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman’s Lay.
Couched at his feet ere he died, mourned kine and bulls enow,
Heifers for sorrow that sighed, and young calves moaning low.
Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman's Lay.

From the mountain did Hermes come the first, and "Daphnis," he spake,
"Whom lovest thou so? For whom doth thine heart with anguish break?"

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman's Lay.

Thronged neat-herds and shepherds around, came goat-herds gather-
ing,

All questioning touching his wound; came thither the Garden-king
Crying, "Daphnis, why pine with love? I know a maiden fair
Who seeks thee by fountain and grove, whose feet fit everywhere—

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman's Lay—

In the quest. O a laggard art thou in love, and a feeble-wit!

Men have called thee a neat-herd—I trow, 'tis for herding of goats thou
art fit!

For the goat-herd, whene'er he espies his goats at their amorous play,
Gazeth with yearning eyes, and would fain be even as they:—

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman's Lay—

Thou seest the maiden-throng, and thou hearest their laughter ring-
ing,

And with languishing eyes dost thou long with these in the dance to be
swinging."

Yet never a word he replied, but set him to dree the weird
Of his bitter love, and abide the doom whose goal he neared.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman's Lay.

And the Queen of Love drew nigh, with her subtle inscrutable smile—
But still did the stern wrath lie hidden under her lips' sweet guile.
"Ha, Daphnis, and thou didst say," she whispered, "that thou wouldst
throw

Love!—hath not a stronger this day laid that proud boaster low?"

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdman's Lay.

"Tyrannous Cypris!"—keen scorn rang in the answering word

Of Daphnis—"rancorous Queen, O Cypris by mortals abhorred!

All things are proclaiming, I ween, that the sun of my life hath set;
Yet even from the Land Unseen will I deal to thy Love wounds yet!"
IDYLL I.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdmans Lay.
Yea, there is it told how he cried unto Cypris, ‘To Ida go!
To thy minion Anchises speed, by the oak and the sighing reed!
But peacefully bees beside the hives here murmur low.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdmans Lay.
Thine Adonis is young, is fair, and the flock doth he feed and fold,
And he smiteth the trembling hare, and he chaseth the beasts of the wold.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdmans Lay.
Draw nigh Diomedes again, and dare him to face thy might!
Cry, ‘Daphnis the herd have I slain: now meet me thou in fight!’

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdmans Lay.
Wolves, lynxes, and bears that drowse through the winter in caves of the glen,

Farewell! Your Daphnis shall rouse not the forest-echoes again!
Woods, glades, ye shall see him no more: Arethusa, many farewells!
Farewell, ye rivers that pour bright streams down Thymbris’ dells!

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdmans Lay.
That selfsame Daphnis am I who pastured the kine in the mead,
And the bulls to the springs hereby and the calves I wont to lead.

Wake, O sweet Song-queens, yea, now wake ye the Herdmans Lay.
Pan, Pan, from the long crag-towers of Lycaeus, if there thou be,
Or where Maenalus’ huge cliff towers art roaming, to Sicily
From Helicas’ barrow O come! Let Lycaon’s son for a space
Lie lone in the high-reared tomb whereon Gods marvelling gaze.

Come away, Song-queens, refrain: hush, hush ye the Herdfolk’s strain!
Come, take from mine hand this sweet-breathed pipe, O Forest-king,
Fair-moulded with wax: to meet thy lip doth it curve and cling.
Dragged downward by Love are my feet unto Hades, where no pipes ring.

Come away, Song-queens, refrain: hush, hush ye the Herdfolk’s strain!
Now let thorns be with violets overspread; bear pansies, ye thistles, now!
Let the lovely narcissus shed its curls o’er the juniper-bough.
Be turmoil and change everywhere; let the pine’s arms bend with the pear;
For Daphnis is dying, is dying! The hounds let the stag pull down:
Let owls from the hills replying the chant of the nightingale drown!"

Come away, Song-queens, refrain: hush, hush ye the Herdfolk’s strain!
He spake, and his voice was stilled. Aphrodite repented o’erlate,
And had raised up him she had killed—but all the threads of his fate
Had by this run out, and along death’s flood was Daphnis swept, 140
The man by the Queens of Song beloved, and for whom Nymphs wept.

Come away, Song-queens, refrain: hush, hush ye the Herdfolk’s strain!
Now give thou the bowl and the goat: of her milk an offering
To the Queens of Song will I pour. Farewell to you o’er and o’er,
Song-queens, and a sweeter note ere long unto you will I sing.

GOAT-HERD.

May thy lips for thy song divine, O Thyrsis, with honey be filled,
And with honeycombs drop, and the sweet dried Aegilan grape mayst
thou eat!
For notes clear-ringing as thine hath never cicala shrilled.
Lo, here is the cup: mark thou what odours around it cling:
Thou wouldst say it was dipped but now in the Hours’ rose-scented
spring. 150
Kissaitha, draw near! Thou art free to milk her. She-goats, have a
care
That ye skip not frolicsomely: of the he-goat’s onrush beware!
IDYLL II.

The girl Simaetha, forsaken by her lover Delphis, essays to win him back by magical spells and incantations. As she burns her charms, she turns a brazen wheel.

Where are the bay-leaves? Where are the love-syrups? Thestylos, bring
These hither: the bowl set there, and with crimson wool enring.
For against you rebel lover twined shall the witch-knots be,
Seeing twelve days now have passed over since his feet drew nigh unto me,
He knows not if we have died, or if yet living we are:
Not once his buffet hath tried my door, but away and afar
Aphrodite and Eros fly me, and his fickle soul have they borne.
To the wrestling-ring will I hie me of Timagetus to-morn
To see him: for his false dealing with me will I chide him there:
But now with enchantments sealing him mine will I work. Shine fair, 10
O Moon, for the Song of the Spell unto thee shall be softly chanted,
And to Hecate Queen of Hell: the very dogs cower, daunted,
As o'er corpses and mounds of the dead, and o'er dark-clotted blood she
doeth wend.

Hail to thee, Hecate dread! Stand by me thou to the end,
Fashioning charms outdone by naught that Circe prepared,
Or Medea, or that weird one, Perimede the golden-haired.

Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower.
Lo, first must smoulder the grain on the fire: haste, straw it thereon,
Thestylos—out, scatterbrain! whither now be thy senses gone? [20
How, in thine eyes am I vile?—dost thou mock at my love-lorn moans?
Straw it, and murmur the while: "I am strewing Delphis' bones."

Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower.
Delphis hath done to me shame and wrong, and the bay burn I
Over Delphis. Touched by the flame like a living thing doth it cry!
Suddenly is it consumed, till we see not an ash-fleck grey:—
May the flesh of Delphis the doomed in fire so waste away!

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
As I melt in the fire's red glow this wax, with the Goddess to aid me,
May love melt Delphis so, that Myndian who betrayed me;
And, as turns this brazen plate, whirled round by my fingers, so
By the Love-queen's spell at my gate may he restlessly turn to and fro!

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
Now burn I the husks; and thou, O Artemis, bow to my will
Hell's ruthless Lord—yea, bow whatsoever is stubborn still!
Hark, Thestylos! ringeth the street with the baying of dogs in their fear!
The Goddess where three ways meet—the castanets, clash them!—is near.

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
Lo, hushed is the face of the sea, the breezes are hushed to rest:
But mine heart's fierce agony is hushed not within my breast;
But for him is my soul aflame who made me—alas the day!—
No wife, but a thing of shame, a maiden no more for aye.

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
Thrice from the bowl I spill the drops, O Queen, thrice crying:
"Be it woman or minion that still in those false arms is lying,
May their memory out of his breast fleet wholly, as Theseus of yore
Forgat the lovely-tressed Ariadne on Dia's shore."

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
A plant to Arcadian men is known; nor foal nor steed
Nor mare, mid mountain and glen, but is mad for the coltsfoot weed:
Even Delphis thus may I see; from the glistening wrestling-ring
As one possessed may he flee, to my dwelling hastening.

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
This fringe but a short while past did Delphis from his attire
Lose: now do I shed it, and cast the threads on the red fierce fire.
Ah, torturing love, why then hast thou fastened on me, to drain,
Close-clinging as leech of the fen, my blood from every vein?

_Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you truant to love to my bower._
To-morn will I pound me an eft, and an evil drink shall be here.
But the magic herbs that be left now, Thestylos, take thou, and smear
Their juice on his lintel—mine own heart lies chained down on its stone, 60
Even as I say it; but none account doth he take of my moans;—
And murmur, spitting thereon: “I am smearing Delphis’ bones.”

*Draw, magic Wheel of Power, you true to love to my bower.*

 Alone am I now, to bewail the curse that hath come with my love.
How shall I begin the tale? Who made me partaker thereof?
Anaxo the maund-bearer sought me one day, and would fain have brought me

Unto Artemis’ precinct, where wild beasts in procession were led
In the Goddess’s honour, and there in their midst was a lioness dread.

*Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell.*

And Theucaridas’ servant from Thrace, the nurse—now laid in the tomb—
Which dwelt near neighbour to me, besought me earnestly
On that pomp of procession to gaze; and I, drawn on by my doom,
In linen white low-trailing forth of my chamber I passed:
Clearista’s mantle o’er-veiling my shoulders about me I cast.

*Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell.*

In the midst of the highway we were by this, by Lycaon’s abode—
Lo, Delphis beheld I there, and his friend, as onward they strome.
More golden than flowered helichryse their cheeks’ bloom showed to mine eyes:

Far whiter, O Moon, than thou gleamed out the breasts of the twain
Who were newly come but now from the graceful athlete-strain. 80

*Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell.*

When I saw him, when madness caught me, pierced was my soul with pain;

All beauty was stricken with blight, and for all that goodly sight
Naught cared I: of this knew I naught, how I came to mine home again
Thence; but through all my frame a sudden fever burned.
Ten days on a bed of flame, ten nights, I tossed and turned.

*Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell.*

Even as the boxwood, paling ever, my hue had grown;
Mine hair from mine head was failing, nothing but skin and bone
Was left of me, worn and weak. Whereunto did I not seek? 90
Unto what grey chanter of strains love-binding had I not gone?
But relief came none to my pains, and the time went fleeting on.

_Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell._

To mine handmaid I opened my mind at the last, and the truth I told:

"Up, Thestyris, now must thou find a salve for the stricken-souled;
For possessed am I, body and heart, by the Myndian. Up, then, depart,
And thou by the wrestling-ground of Timagetus be my spy;
For there is he chiefly found, and he loveth to sit thereby.

_Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell._

Watch till alone he shall be, then sign to him secretly;
Say 'Simaetha calleth for thee,' and privily lead him to me."

I spake, and she went, and anon came bringing that radiant one,
Delphis, to mine abode: as with wings in his feet he passed
My threshold-stone, and he trode my floor at last—at last!

_Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell._

Then chill mine heart's blood grew as the snow; from my brow in that hour,
Heavy-dropping as summer-night dew, did the dew of my passion pour.
Not a word, not a word could I speak, not so much as the faint low cry Of a babe in a dream of fear, which only the mother can hear.
As a carven image, weak and numbed did my fair form lie.

_Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell._

Under eyelashes earthward-drooping one glance he flashed upon me—
O loveless one!—and stooping to my bed low murmured he:
"Thy bidding to this dear door, and my coming to seek thy face—
One ran, O Simaetha, before the other by no more space
Than was gained by my feet when Philinus the fleet was outstripped in
the race:

_Think on me, Moon, as I tell of my love, and how it befell._

For myself was at point to come—by sweet Love swear I to thee—
Even this night, to thine home, with friends or twain or three,
With the Wine-god's quinces golden in the breast of my tunic enfolden,
And a silver-poplar wreath, even Herakles' sacred bough,
With purple bands beneath and above twined, set on my brow.