

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Theocritus**

**- poems -**

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## Idyll XII

Art come, dear youth? two days and nights away!  
(Who burn with love, grow aged in a day.)  
As much as apples sweet the damson crude  
Excel; the blooming spring the winter rude;  
In fleece the sheep her lamb; the maiden in sweetness  
The thrice-wed dame; the fawn the calf in fleetness;  
The nightingale in song all feathered kind-  
So much thy longed-for presence cheers my mind.  
To thee I hasten, as to shady beech,  
The traveller, when from the heaven's reach  
The sun fierce blazes. May our love be strong,  
To all hereafter times the theme of song!  
'Two men each other loved to that degree,  
That either friend did in the other see  
A dearer than himself. They loved of old  
Both golden natures in an age of gold.

O father Zeus! ageless immortals all!  
Two hundred ages hence may one recall,  
Down-coming to the irremeable river,  
This to my mind, and this good news deliver:  
'E'en now from east to west, from north to south,  
Your mutual friendship lives in every mouth'  
This, as they please, th' Olympians will decide:  
Of thee, by blooming virtue beautified,  
My glowing song shall only truth disclose;  
With falsehood's pustules I'll not shame my nose.  
If thou dost sometime grieve me, sweet the pleasure  
Of reconciliation, joy in double measure  
To find thou never didst intend the pain,  
And feel myself from all doubt free again.

And ye Megarians, at Nesaea dwelling,  
Expert at rowing, mariners excelling,  
Be happy ever! for with honors due  
Th' Athenian Diocles, to friendship true  
Ye celebrate. With the first blush of spring  
The youth surround his tomb: there who shall bring  
The sweetest kiss. whose lip is Purest found,

Back to his mother goes with garlands crowned.  
Nice touch the arbiter must have indeed,  
And must, methinks, the blue-eyed Ganymede  
Invoke with many prayers-a mouth to own  
True to the touch of lips, as Lydian stone  
To proof of gold-which test will instant show  
The pure or base. as money changers know."

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## **Idyll XXIX**

Hi There! I see you're enjoying the site, and just wanted to extend an invitation to register for our free site. The members of oldpoetry strive to make this a fun place to learn and share - hope you join us! - Kevin

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## Idyll XXX

When Cypris saw Adonis,  
In death already lying  
With all his locks dishevelled,  
And cheeks turned wan and ghastly,  
She bade the Loves attendant  
To bring the boar before her.

And lo, the winged ones, fleetly  
They scoured through all the wild wood;  
The wretched boar they tracked him,  
And bound and doubly bound him.  
One fixed on him a halter,  
And dragged him on, a captive,  
Another drove him onward,  
And smote him with his arrows.  
But terror-struck the beast came,  
For much he feared Cythere.  
To him spake Aphrodite, -  
'Of wild beasts all the vilest,  
This thigh, by thee was 't wounded?  
Was 't thou that smote my lover?'  
To her the beast made answer -  
'I swear to thee, Cythere,  
By thee, and by thy lover,  
Yea, and by these my fetters,  
And them that do pursue me, -  
Thy lord, thy lovely lover  
I never willed to wound him;  
I saw him, like a statue,  
And could not bide the burning,  
Nay, for his thigh was naked,  
And mad was I to kiss it,  
And thus my tusk it harmed him.  
Take these my tusks, O Cypris,  
And break them, and chastise them,  
For wherefore should I wear them,  
These passionate defences?  
If this doth not suffice thee,  
Then cut my lips out also,  
Why dared they try to kiss him?'

Then Cypris had compassion;  
She bade the Loves attendant  
To loose the bonds that bound him.  
From that day her he follows,  
And flees not to the wild wood  
But joins the Loves, and always  
He bears Love's flame unflinching.

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## The Psalm Of Adonis - from Fifteenth Idyll

O Queen that loves Golgi, and Idalium,  
And the steep of Eryx,  
O Aphrodite, that playes with gold,  
Lo, from the stream eternal of Acheron  
They have brought back to you Adonis---  
Even in the twelfth month they have brought him,  
The dainty-footed Hours.  
Tardiest of the Immortals are the beloved Hours,  
But dear and desired they come,  
For always, to all mortals,  
They bring some gift with them.  
O Cypris, daughter of Dione,  
From mortal to immortal, so men tell,  
You have changed Berenice, dropping softly in  
The woman's breast the stuff of immortality.  
Therefore, for your delight,  
O you of many names and many temples,  
Does the daughter of Berenice, even Arsinoë,  
Lovely as Helen, cherish Adonis with all things beautiful.  
Before him lie all ripe fruits that the tall trees' branches bear,  
And the delicate gardens, arrayed in baskets of silver,  
And the golden vessels are full of incense of Syria.  
And all the dainty cakes that women fashion in the kneading tray,  
Mingling blossoms manifold with the white wheaten flour,  
All that is wrought of honey sweet, and in soft olive oil,  
All cakes fashioned in the semblance of things that fly,  
And of things that creep, lo, here they are set before him.  
Here are built for him shadowy bowers of green,  
All laden with tender anise, and children flit overhead---  
The little loves---  
As the young nightingales perched upon  
The trees fly forth and try their wings  
From bough to bough.  
O! the ebony, O! the gold, O! the twin eagles of white  
Ivory that carry to Zeus, the son of Cronos,  
His darling, his cupbearer!  
O! the purple coverlet strewn above,  
More soft than sleep!  
So Miletus will say,  
And whoso feeds sheep in Samos.  
Another bed is strewn for beautiful Adonis,  
One bed Cypris keeps, and one the rosy-armed Adonis.  
A bride-groom of eighteen or nineteen years is he,  
His kisses are not rough, the golden down being yet upon his lips!  
And now, good-night to Cypris, in the arms of her lover!  
But lo, in the morning we will all of us gather with the dew,  
And carry him forth among the waves that break upon the beach,  
And with locks unloosed, and ungirt raiment falling to the ankles,  
And bosom bare, will we begin our shrill, sweet song.  
You only, dear Adonis, so men tell,  
You only of the demi-gods,  
Do visit both this world and the stream of Acheron.

For Agamemnon had no such lot, nor Aias,  
That mighty lord of the terrible anger, nor Hector,  
The eldest born of the twenty sons of Hecuba, nor Patroclus,  
Nor Pyrrhus, that returned out of Troy land,  
Nor the heroes of yet more ancient days,  
The Lapithai and Deucalion's sons,  
Nor the sons of Pelops, and the chiefs of Pelasgian Argos.  
Be gracious now, dear Adonis, and propitious  
Even in the coming year.  
Dear to us has your advent been, Adonis,  
And dear shall it be when you come again.

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