

## HESIOD'S WORKS AND DAYS

Pierian Muses, with your songs of praise,  
Come hither and of Zeus, your father, tell,  
Through whom all mortal men throughout their days  
Acclaimed or not, talked of or nameless dwell'  
So great is he. He strengthens easily  
The weak, makes weak the strong and the well-known  
Obscure, makes great the low; the crooked he  
Makes straight, high-thundering Zeus upon his throne.  
See me and hear me, make straight our decrees,  
For, Perses, I would tell the truth to you. 10  
Not one, but two Strifes live on earth: when these  
Are known, one's praised, one blamed, because these two  
Far differ. For the one makes foul war thrive,  
The wretch, unloved of all, but the gods on high  
Gave the decree that every man alive  
Should that oppressive goddess glorify.  
The other, black Night's first-born child, the son  
Of Cronus, throned on high, set in the soil,  
A greater boon to men; she urges on  
Even the slack to work. One craves to toil 20  
When others prosper, hankering to seed  
And plough and set his house in harmony.  
So neighbour vies with neighbour in great need  
Of wealth: this Strife well serves humanity.  
Potter hates potter, builder builder, and  
A beggar bears his fellow-beggar spite,  
Likewise all singers. Perses, understand  
My verse, don't let the evil Strife invite  
Your heart to shrink from work and make you gaze  
And listen to the quarrels in the square - 30  
No time for quarrels or to spend one's days  
In public life when in your granary there  
Is not stored up a year's stock of the grain  
Demeter grants the earth. Get in that store,  
*Then* you may wrangle, struggling to obtain  
Other men's goods – a chance shall come no more  
To do this. Let's set straight our wrangling  
With Zeus's laws, so excellent and fair.  
We split our goods in two, but, capturing  
The greater part, you carried it from there 40  
And praised those kings, bribe-eaters, who adore  
To judge such cases. Fools! They do not know  
That half may well transcend the total store  
Or how the asphodel and the mallow

Will benefit them much. The means of life  
 The gods keep from us or else easily  
 Could one work for one day, then, free from strife,  
 One's rudder packed away, live lazily,  
 Each ox and hard-worked mule sent off. In spleen  
 That fraudulent Prometheus duped him, Zeus 50  
 Kept safe this thing, devising labours keen  
 For men. He hid the fire: for human use  
 The honourable son of Iapetus  
 Stole it from counsellor Zeus and in his guile  
 He hid it in a fennel stalk and thus  
 Hoodwinked the Thunderer, who aired his bile,  
 Cloud-Gatherer that he was, and said: "O son  
 Of Iapetus, the craftiest god of all,  
 You stole the fire, content with what you'd done,  
 And duped me. So great anguish shall befall 60  
 Both you and future mortal men. A thing  
 Of ill in lieu of fore I'll afford  
 Them all to take delight in, cherishing  
 The evil. Thus he spoke and then the lord  
 Of men and gods laughed. Famed Hephaistus he  
 Enjoined to mingle water with some clay  
 And put a human voice and energy  
 Within it and a goddess' features lay  
 On it and, like a maiden, sweet and pure,  
 The body, though Athene was to show 70  
 Her how to weave; upon her head allure  
 The golden Aphrodite would let flow,  
 With painful passions and bone-shattering stress.  
 Then Argus-slayer Hermes had to add  
 A wily nature and shamefacedness.  
 Those were his orders and what Lord Zeus bade  
 They did. The famed lame god immediately  
 Formed out of clay, at Cronus' son's behest,  
 The likeness of a maid of modesty.  
 By grey-eyed Queen Athene was she dressed 80  
 And cinctured, while the Graces and Seduction  
 Placed necklaces about her; then the Hours,  
 With lovely tresses, heightened this production  
 By garlanding this maid with springtime flowers.  
 Athene trimmed her up, while in her breast  
 Hermes put lies and wiles and qualities  
 Of trickery at thundering Zeus' behest:  
 Since all Olympian divinities  
 Bestowed this gift, Pandora was her name,  
 A bane to all mankind. When they had hatched 90

This perfect trap, Hermes, that man of fame,  
 The gods' swift messenger, was then dispatched  
 To Epimetheus. Epimetheus, though,  
 Ignored Prometheus' words not to receive  
 A gift from Zeus but, since it would cause woe  
 To me, so send it back; he would perceive  
 This truth when he already held the thing.  
 Before this time men lived quite separately,  
 Grief-free, disease-free, free of suffering,  
 Which brought the Death-Gods. Now in misery 100  
 Men age. Pandora took out of the jar  
 Grievous calamity, bringing to men  
 Dreadful distress by scattering it afar.  
 Within its firm sides, Hope alone was then  
 Still safe within its lip, not leaping out  
 (The lid already stopped her, by the will  
 Of aegis-bearing Zeus). But all about  
 There roam among mankind all kinds of ill,  
 Filling both land and sea, while every day  
 Plagues haunt them, which, unwanted, come at night 110  
 As well, in silence, for Zeus took away  
 Their voice – it is not possible to fight  
 The will of Zeus. I'll sketch now skilfully,  
 If you should welcome it, another story:  
 Take it to heart. The selfsame ancestry  
 Embraced both men and gods, who, in their glory  
 High on Olympus first devised a race  
 Of gold, existing under Cronus' reign  
 When he ruled Heaven. There was not a trace  
 Of woe among them since they felt no pain; 120  
 There was no dread old age but, always rude  
 Of health, away from grief, they took delight  
 In plenty, while in death they seemed subdued  
 By sleep. Life-giving earth, of its own right,  
 Would bring forth plenteous fruit. In harmony  
 They lived, with countless flocks of sheep, at ease  
 With all the gods. But when this progeny  
 Was buried underneath the earth – yet these  
 Live on, land-spirits, holy, pure and blessed,  
 Who guard mankind from evil, watching out 130  
 For all the laws and heinous deeds, while dressed  
 In misty vapour, roaming all about  
 The land, bestowing wealth, this kingly right  
 Being theirs – a second race the Olympians made.  
 A silver one, far worse, unlike, in sight  
 And mind, the golden, for a young child stayed,

A large bairn, in his mother's custody,  
 Just playing inside for a hundred years.  
 But when they all reached their maturity,  
 They lived a vapid life, replete with tears, 140  
 Through foolishness, unable to forbear  
 To brawl, spurning the gods, refusing, too,  
 To sacrifice (a law kept everywhere).  
 Then Zeus, since they would not give gods their due,  
 In rage hid them, as did the earth – all men  
 Have called the race Gods Subterranean,  
 Second yet honoured still. A third race then  
 Zeus fashioned out of bronze, quite different than  
 The second, with ash spears, both dread and stout;  
 They liked fell warfare and audacity; 150  
 They ate no corn, encased about  
 With iron, full invincibility  
 In hands, limbs, shoulders, and they arms they plied  
 Were bronze, their houses, too, their tools; they knew  
 Of no black iron. Later, when they died  
 It was self-slaughter – they descended to  
 Chill Hades' mouldy house, without a name.  
 Yes, black death took them off, although they'd been  
 Impetuous, and they the sun's bright flame  
 Would see no more, nor would this race be seen 160  
 Themselves, screened by the earth. Cronus' son then  
 Fashioned upon the lavish land one more,  
 The fourth, more just and brave – of righteous men,  
 Called demigods. It was the race before  
 Our own upon the boundless earth. Foul war  
 And dreadful battles vanquished some of these,  
 While some in Cadmus' Thebes, while looking for  
 The flocks of Oedipus, found death. The seas  
 Took others as they crossed to Troy fight  
 For fair-tressed Helen. They were screened as well 170  
 In death. Lord Zeus arranged it that they might  
 Live far from others. Thus they came to dwell,  
 Carefree, among the blessed isles, content  
 And affluent, by the deep-swirling sea.  
 Sweet grain, blooming three times a year, was sent  
 To them by the earth, that gives vitality  
 To all mankind, and Cronus was their lord,  
 Far from the other gods, for Zeus, who reigns  
 Over gods and men, had cut away the cord  
 That bound him. Though the lowest race, its gains 180  
 Were fame and glory. A fifth progeny  
 All-seeing Zeus produced, who populated

The fecund earth. I wish I could not be  
 Among them, but instead that I'd been fated  
 To be born later or be in my grave  
 Already: for it is of iron made.  
 Each day in misery they ever slave,  
 And even in the night they do not fade  
 Away. The gods will give to them great woe  
 But mix good with the bad. Zeus will destroy 190  
 Them too when babies in their cribs shall grow  
 Grey hair. No bond a father with his boy  
 Shall share, nor guest with host, nor friend with friend –  
 No love of brothers as there was erstwhile,  
 Respect for aging parents at an end.  
 Their wretched children shall with words of bile  
 Find fault with them in their irreverence  
 And not repay their bringing up. We'll find  
 Cities brought down. There'll be no deference  
 That's given to the honest, just and kind. 200  
 The evil and the proud will get acclaim,  
 Might will be right and shame shall cease to be,  
 The bad will harm the good whom they shall maim  
 With crooked words, swearing false oaths. We'll see  
 Envy among the wretched, foul of face  
 And voice, adoring villainy, and then  
 Into Olympus from the endless space  
 Mankind inhabits, leaving mortal men,  
 Fair flesh veiled by white robes, shall Probity  
 And Shame depart, and there'll be grievous pain 210  
 For men: against all evil there shall be  
 No safeguard. Now I'll tell, for lords who know  
 What it purports, a fable: once, on high,  
 Clutched in its talon-grip, a bird of prey  
 Took off a speckled nightingale whose cry  
 Was "Pity me", but, to this bird's dismay,  
 He said disdainfully: "You silly thing,  
 Why do you cry? A stronger one by far  
 Now has you. Although you may sweetly sing,  
 You go where *I* decide. Perhaps you are 220  
 My dinner or perhaps I'll let you go.  
 A fool assails a stronger, for he'll be  
 The loser, suffering scorn as well as woe."  
 Thus spoke the swift-winged bird. Listen to me,  
 Perses – heed justice and shun haughtiness;  
 It aids no common man' nobles can't stay  
 It easily because it will oppress  
 Us all and bring disgrace. The better way

Is Justice, who will outstrip Pride at last.  
 Fools learn this by experience because 230  
 The God of Oaths, by running very fast,  
 Keeps pace with and requites all crooked laws.  
 When men who swallow bribes and crookedly  
 Pass sentences and drag Justice away,  
 There's great turmoil, and then, in misery  
 Weeping and covered in a misty spray,  
 She comes back to the city, carrying  
 Woe to the wicked men who ousted her.  
 The city and its folk are burgeoning,  
 However, when to both the foreigner 240  
 And citizen are given judgments fair  
 And honest, children grow in amity,  
 Far-seeing Zeus sends them no dread warfare,  
 And decent men suffer no scarcity  
 Of food, no ruin, as they till their fields  
 And feast; abundance reigns upon the earth;  
 Each mountaintop a wealth of acorns yields,  
 Bees thrive below, and mothers all give birth  
 To children who resemble perfectly  
 Their fathers, while the fleeces on the sheep 250  
 Are heavy. All things flourish, while the sea  
 Needs not a ship; the vital sol is deep  
 With fruits. Far-seeing Zeus evens the score  
 Against proud, evil men. The wickedness  
 Of one man often sways whole cities, for  
 The son of Cronus sends from heaven distress,  
 Both plague and famine, causing death amid  
 Its folk, its women barren. Homes decline  
 By Zeus's plan. Sometimes he will consign  
 Broad armies to destruction or will bid 260  
 Them of their walls and take their ships away.  
 Lords, note this punishment. The gods are nigh  
 Those mortals who from adulation stray  
 And grind folk down with fraud. Yes, from on high  
 Full thirty-thousand gods of Zeus exist  
 Upon the fecund earth who oversee  
 All men and wander far, enclosed in mist,  
 And watch for law-suits and iniquity.  
 Justice is one, daughter of Zeus, a maid  
 Who is renowned among the gods who dwell 270  
 High in Olympus: should someone upbraid  
 Her cruelly, immediately she'll tell  
 Lord Zeus, there at his side, of men who cause  
 Much woe till people pay a penalty

For unjust lords, who cruelly bend the laws  
 For evil. You who hold supremacy  
 And swallow bribes, beware of this and shun  
 All crooked laws and deal in what is best.  
 Who hurts another hurts himself. When one  
 Makes wicked plans, he'll be the most distressed. 280  
 All-seeing Zeus sees all there is to see  
 And, should he wish, takes note nor fails to know  
 The justice in a city. I'd not be  
 A just man nor would have my son be so –  
 It's no use being good when wickedness  
 Holds sway. I trust wise Zeus won't punish me.  
 Perses, remember this, serve righteousness  
 And wholly sidestep the iniquity  
 Of force. The son of Cronus made this act  
 For men - that fish, wild beasts and birds should eat 290  
 Each other, being lawless, but the pact  
 He made with humankind is very meet –  
 If one should know and publicize what's right,  
 Far-seeing Zeus repays him with a store  
 Of wealth, but if one swears false oaths outright,  
 Committing fatal wrongs, forevermore  
 His kin shall live in gloominess, while he  
 Who keeps his oath shall benefit his kin.  
 I tell you things of great utility,  
 Foolish Perses; to take and capture sin 300  
*En masse* is easy: she is very near,  
 The road is flat. To goodness, though, much sweat  
 The gods have placed en route. The road is sheer  
 And long and rough at first, but when you get  
 Right to the very peak, though hard to bear  
 It's found with ease. That man is wholly best  
 Who uses his own mind and takes good care  
 About the future. Who takes interest  
 In others' notions is a good man too,  
 But he who shuns these things is valueless. 310  
 Remember all that I have said to you,  
 Noble Perses, and work with steadfastness  
 Till Hunger vexes you and you're a friend  
 Of holy, wreathed Demeter, who with corn  
 Will fill your barn. But Hunger will attend  
 A lazy man. The gods and men all scorn  
 A lazy man, who's like a stingless drone  
 Who merely eats and wastes the industry  
 Of the bees. You must be organized and hone  
 Your working skills so that your granary 320

Is full at harvest-time. Through work men grow  
 Wealthy in sheep and gold: by earnest work  
 One's loved more by the gods above. There's no  
 Disgrace in toil; disgrace it is to shirk.  
 The wealth you gain from work will very soon  
 Be envied by the idle man: virtue  
 And fame come to the rich. A greater boon  
 Is work, whatever else happens to you.  
 If from your neighbours' goods your foolish mind  
 You turn and earn your pay by industry, 330  
 As I bid you. Shame of a cringing kind  
 Attends a needy man, ignominy  
 That causes major damage or will turn  
 To gain. Poor men feel sham, the rich, though, are  
 Self-confident. The money that we earn  
 Should not be seized – god-sent, it's better far.  
 If someone steals great riches by duress  
 Or with a lying tongue, as has ensued  
 Quite often, when his mind in cloudiness  
 Is cast by gain, and shame is now pursued 340  
 By shamelessness, the gods then easily  
 Destroy him, bringing down his house, and there,  
 In record time, goes his prosperity.  
 Likewise, if someone brings great ills to bear  
 On guest or suppliant or, by wrong beguiled,  
 Lies with his brother's wife or sinfully  
 Brings harm upon a little orphan child,  
 Or else insults with harsh contumely  
 His aged father, thus provoking Zeus  
 And paying dearly for his sins. But you 350  
 Must keep your foolish heart from such abuse  
 And do your best to give the gods their due  
 Of sacrifice; the glorious meat-wrapped thighs  
 Roast for them, please them with an offering  
 Of wine and balm at night and when you rise  
 To gain their favour and that it may bring  
 The sale of others' goods, not yours. Invite  
 A friend to dine and not an enemy,  
 A neighbour chiefly, for disaster might  
 Be near and they're in the vicinity, 360  
 Unarmed through haste, while kinsmen will delay  
 In arming. Wicked neighbours cause much pain  
 But good ones bring a splendid profit. They  
 Who have good neighbours find that they will gain  
 Much worth. No cow is lost unless you dwell  
 Near wicked neighbours. Measure carefully



When borrowing from a neighbour, serve them well  
 When giving him repayment equally,  
 Nay more if you are able, for you'll gain  
 By this a friend in need, and do not earn 370  
 Ill-gotten wealth – such profits are a bane.  
 Love all your friends, turn to all those who turn  
 To you. Give to a giver but forbear  
 To give to one who doesn't give. One gives  
 To open-handed men but does not care  
 To please a miser thus, for Giving lives  
 In virtue, while Theft lives in sin and brings  
 Grim death. The man who gives abundantly  
 And willingly rejoices in the things  
 He gives, delighting in his soul. But he 380  
 Who steals however small a thing will find  
 A freezing in his heart. Add to your store  
 And leave ferocious famine far behind;  
 If to a little you a little more  
 Should add and do this often, with great speed  
 It will expand. A man has little care  
 For what he has at home: there's greater need  
 To guard his wealth abroad, while still his share  
 At home is safer. Taking from your store  
 Is good, but wanting something causes pain – 390  
 Think on this. Use thrift with the flagon's core  
 But when you open it and then again  
 As it runs out, then take your fill – no need  
 For prudence with the lees. Allow no doubt  
 About a comrade's wages; no, take heed  
 Even with your brother – smile and ferret out  
 A witness. Trust and mistrust both can kill.  
 Let not a dame, fawning and lascivious,  
 Dupe you - she wants your barn. Your trust is ill-  
 Placed in a woman – she's perfidious. 400  
 An only child preserves his family  
 That wealth may grow. But if one leaves two heirs,  
 One must live longer. Zeus, though, easily  
 To larger houses gives great wealth. The cares  
 And increase for more kindred greater grow.  
 If you want wealth, do this, add industry  
 To industry, and harvest what you sow  
 When Pleiades' ascendancy you see,  
 And plough when they have set. They lurk concealed  
 For forty days and nights but then appear 410  
 In time when first your sickles for the field  
 You sharpen. This is true for dwellers near

The level plains and sea, and those who dwell  
 In woody glens far from the raging deep,  
 Those fertile lands; sow naked, plough, as well,  
 Unclothed, and harvest stripped if you would reap  
 Demeter's work in season. Everything  
 Will then be done in time: in penury  
 You'll not beg help at others' homes and bring  
 Your own downfall. Thus now you come to me: 420  
 I'll give you nothing. Practise industry,  
 Foolish Perses, which the gods have given men,  
 Lest, with their wives and children, dolefully  
 They seek food from their neighbours, who will then  
 Ignore them. Twice or thrice you may succeed,  
 But if you still harass them, you'll achieve  
 Nothing and waste your words about your need.  
 I urge you, figure how you may relieve  
 Your need and cease your hunger. The first thing  
 That you must do is get a house, then find 430  
 A slave to help you with your furrowing,  
 Female, unwed, an ox to plough behind,  
 Then in the house prepare the things you'll need;  
 Don't borrow lest you be refused and lack  
 All means and, as the hours duly speed  
 Along, your labour's lost. Do not push back  
 Your toil for just one day: don't drag your feet  
 And fight with ruin evermore. No, when  
 You feel no more the fierce sun's sweaty heat  
 And mighty Zeus sends autumn rain, why, then 440  
 We move more quickly – that's the time when we  
 See Sirius travelling less above us all,  
 Poor wretches, using night more, and that tree  
 You cut has shed its foliage in the fall,  
 No longer sprouting, and is less replete  
 With worm-holes. Now's the time to fell your trees.  
 Cut with a drilling-mortar of three feet  
 And pestle of three cubits: you must seize  
 A seven-foot axle – that's a perfect fit  
 (You'll make a hammerhead with one of eight). 450  
 To have a ten-palm wagon, make for it  
 Four three-foot wagon-wheels. Wood that's not straight  
 Is useful – gather lots for use within:  
 At home or in the mountains search for it.  
 Hol-oak is strongest for the plough: the pin  
 Is fixed on it, on which the pole will sit,  
 By craftsmen of Athene. But make two  
 Within your house, of one piece and compressed.

That's better \_ if one breaks the other you  
 May use. Sound elm or laurel are the best 460  
 For poles. The stock should be of oak, the beam  
 Of holm-oak. Two bull oxen you should buy,  
 Both nine years old - a prime age, you may deem,  
 For strength. They toil the hardest nor will vie  
 In conflict in the furrows nor will break  
 The plough or leave the work undone. And now  
 A forty-year-old stalwart you should take  
 Who will, before he ventures out to plough,  
 Consume a quartered, eight-slice loaf, one who,  
 Skilled in his craft, will keep the furrow straight 470  
 Nor look around for comrades but stay true  
 To his pursuit. Born at a later date,  
 A man may never plough thus and may cause  
 A second sowing. Younger men, distract,  
 Will wink at comrades. Let this give you pause -  
 The crane's high, yearly call means "time to act"  
 Start ploughing for it's winter-time. It's gall  
 To one who has no oxen: it will pay  
 To have horned oxen fattened in their stall.  
 It will be simple then for you to say 480  
 "Bring me my oxen and my wagon too",  
 And it is also easy to reject  
 A friend and say "They have their work to do,  
 My oxen." Merely mind-rich men expect  
 Their wagon's made already, foolish men.  
 They don't know that a hundred boards they'll need.  
 Get all you need together and then, when  
 The ploughing term commences, with all speed,  
 You and your slaves, set out and plough straight through  
 The season, wet or dry; quick, at cockcrow, 490  
 That you may fill those furrows, plough; and you  
 Should plough in spring; in summer, should you go  
 On ploughing, won't dismay you. Plough your field  
 When soil is light – such is a surety  
 For us and for our children forms a shield.  
 Pray, then, to Zeus, the god of husbandry,  
 And pure Demeter that she fill her grain.  
 First grab the handles of the plough and flick  
 The oxen as upon the straps they strain.  
 Then let a bondsman follow with a stick, 500  
 Close at your back, to hide the seed and cheat  
 The birds. For man good management's supreme,  
 Bad management is worst. If you repeat  
 These steps, your fields of corn shall surely teem

With stalks which bow down low if in the end  
 Zeus brings a happy outcome and you've cleared  
 Your jars of cobwebs: then if you make fast  
 Your stores of food at home you will be cheered,  
 I think. You'll be at ease until pale spring,  
 Nor will you gape at others – rather they'll 510  
 Have need of you. Keep at your furrowing  
 Until the winter sun and surely fail  
 And reap sat down and seize within your hand  
 Your meagre crop and bind with dusty speed,  
 With many a frown, and take it from your land  
 Inside a basket, and few folk will waste  
 Their praise upon you. Aegis-bearing Zeus  
 Is changeable – his thoughts are hard to see.  
 If you plough late, this just may be of use:  
 When first the cuckoo calls on the oak-tree 520  
 And through the vast earth causes happiness,  
 Zeus rains non-stop for three days that the height  
 Of flood's an ox's hoof, no more, no less:  
 That way the man who ploughs but late just might  
 Equal the early plougher. All this you  
 Must do, and don't permit pale spring to take  
 You by surprise, the rainy season, too.  
 Round public haunts and smithies you should make  
 A detour during winter when the cold  
 Keeps men from work, for then a busy man 530  
 May serve his house. Let hardship not take hold,  
 Nor helplessness, through cruel winter's span,  
 Nor rub your swollen foot with scrawny hand.  
 An idle man will often, while in vain  
 He hopes, lacking a living from his land,  
 Consider crime. A needy man will gain  
 Nothing from hope while sitting in the street  
 And gossiping, no livelihood in sight.  
 Say to your slaves in the midsummer heat:  
 "There won't always be summer, shining bright – 540  
 Build barns." Lenaion's evil days, which gall  
 The oxen, guard yourself against. Beware  
 Of hoar-frosts, too, which bring distress to all  
 When the North Wind blows, which blasts upon the air  
 In horse-rich Thrace and rouses the broad sea,  
 Making the earth and woods resound with wails.  
 He falls on many a lofty-leafed oak-tree  
 And on thick pines along the mountain-vales  
 And fecund earth, the vast woods bellowing.  
 The wild beasts, tails between their legs, all shake. 550

Although their shaggy hair is covering  
 Their hides, yet still the cold will always make  
 Their way straight through the hairiest beast. Straight through  
 An ox's hide the North Wind blows and drills  
 Through long-haired goats. His strength, though, cannot do  
 Great harm to sheep who keep away all chills  
 With ample fleece. He makes old men stoop low  
 But soft-skinned maids he never will go through –  
 They stay indoors, who as yet do not know  
 Gold Aphrodite's work, a comfort to 560  
 Their darling mothers, and their tender skin  
 They wash and smear with oil in winter's space  
 And slumber in a bedroom far within  
 The house, when in his cold and dreadful place  
 The Boneless gnaws his foot (the sun won't show  
 Him pastures but rotate around the land  
 Of black men and for all the Greeks is slow  
 To brighten). That's the time the hornèd and  
 The unhorned beasts of the wood flee to the brush,  
 Teeth all a-chatter, with one thought in mind – 570  
 To find some thick-packed shelter, p'raps a bush  
 Or hollow rock. Like one with head inclined  
 Towards the ground, spine shattered, with a stick  
 To hold him up, they wander as they try  
 To circumvent the snow. As I ordain,  
 Shelter your body, too, when snow is nigh –  
 A fleecy coat and, reaching to the floor,  
 A tunic. Bothe the warp and woof must you  
 Entwine but of the woof there must be more  
 Than of the warp. Don this, for, if you do, 580  
 Your hair stays still, not shaking everywhere.  
 Be stoutly shod with ox-hide boots which you  
 Must line with felt. In winter have a care  
 To sew two young kids' hides to the sinew  
 Of an ox to keep the downpour from your back,  
 A knit cap for your head to keep your ears  
 From getting wet. It's freezing at the crack  
 Of dawn, which from the starry sky appears  
 When Boreas drops down: then is there spread  
 A fruitful mist upon the land which falls 590  
 Upon the blessed fields and which is fed  
 By endless rivers, raised on high by squalls.  
 Sometimes it rains at evening, then again,  
 When the thickly-compressed clouds are animated  
 BY Thracian Boreas, it blows hard. Then  
 It is the time, having anticipated

All this, to finish and go home lest you  
 Should be enwrapped by some dark cloud, heaven-sent,  
 Your flesh all wet, your clothing drenched right through.  
 This is the harshest month, both violent 600  
 And harsh to beast and man – so you have need  
 To be alert. Give to your men more fare  
 Than usual but halve your oxen's feed.  
 The helpful nights are long, and so take care.  
 Keep at this till the year's end when the days  
 And nights are equal and a diverse crop  
 Springs from our mother earth and winter's phase  
 Is two months old and from pure Ocean's top  
 Arcturus rises, shining, at twilight.  
 Into the light then Pandion's progeny, 610  
 The high-voiced swallow, comes at the first sight  
 Of spring. Before then, the best strategy  
 Is pruning of your vines. But when the snail  
 Climbs up the stems to flee the Pleiades,  
 Stop digging vineyards; now it's of avail  
 To sharpen scythes and urge your men. Shun these  
 Two things – dark nooks and sleeping till cockcrow  
 At harvest-season when the sun makes dry  
 One's skin. Bring in your crops and don't be slow.  
 Rise early to secure your food supply. 620  
 For Dawn will cut your labour by a third,  
 Who aids your journey and you toil, through whom  
 Men find the road and put on many a herd  
 Of oxen many a yoke. When thistles bloom  
 And shrill cicadas chirp up in the trees  
 Nonstop beneath their wings, into our view  
 Comes summer, harbinger of drudgery,  
 Goats at their fattest, wine its choicest, too,  
 The women at their lustiest, though men  
 Are at their very weakest, head and knees 630  
 Being dried up by Sirius, for then  
 Their skin is parched. It is at times like these  
 I crave some rocky shade and Bibline wine,  
 A hunk of cheese, goat's milk, meat from a beast  
 That's pasture-fed, uncalved, or else I pine  
 For new-born kids. Contented with my feast,  
 I sit and drink the wine, so sparkling,  
 Facing the strong west wind, there in the shade,  
 And pour three-fourths of water from the spring,  
 A spring untroubled that will never fade, 640  
 Then urge your men to sift the holy corn  
 Of Demeter, when Orion first we see

In all his strength, upon the windy, worn  
 Threshing-floor. The measure well the quantity  
 And take it home in urns. Now I urge you  
 To stockpile all your year's supplies inside.  
 Dismiss your hired man and then in lieu  
 Seek out a childless maid (you won't abide  
 One who is nursing). You must take good care  
 Of your sharp-toothed dog; do not scant his meat 650  
 In case The One Who Sleeps by Day should dare  
 To steal your goods. Let there be lots to eat  
 For both oxen and mules, and litter, too.  
 Unyoke your team and grant a holiday.  
 When rosy-fingered Dawn first gets a view  
 Of Arcturus and across the sky halfway  
 Come Sirius and Orion, pluck your store  
 Of grapes and bring them home; then to the sun  
 Expose them for ten days, then for five more  
 Conceal them in the dark; when this is done, 660  
 Upon the sixth begin to pour in jars  
 Glad Bacchus' gift. When strong Orion's set  
 And back into the sea decline the stars  
 Pleiades and Hyades, it's time to get  
 Your plough out, Perses. Then, as it should be,  
 The year is finished. If on stormy seas  
 You long to sail, when into the dark,  
 To flee Orion's rain, the Pleiades  
 Descend, abundant winds will blow: forbear  
 To keep at that time on the wine-dark sea 670  
 Your ships, but work your land with earnest care,  
 As I ordain. So that the potency  
 Of the wet winds may not affect your craft,  
 You must protect it on dry land, and tamp  
 It tight with stones on both sides, fore and aft.  
 Take out the plug that Zeus's rain won't damp  
 And rot the wood. The tackle store inside  
 And neatly fold the sails and then suspend  
 The well-made rudder over smoke, then bide  
 Your time until the season's at an end 680  
 And you may sail. Then take down to the sea  
 Your speedy ship and then prepare the freight  
 To guarantee a gain, as formerly  
 Our father would his vessels navigate.  
 In earnest, foolish Perses, to possess  
 Great riches, once he journeyed to this place  
 From Kyme, fleeing not wealth or success  
 But grinding poverty, which many face

At Zeus's hands. Near Helicon he dwelt  
 In a wretched village, Ascra, most severe 690  
 In winter, though an equal woe one felt  
 In summer, goods at no time. Perses, hear  
 My words – of every season's toil take care,  
 Particularly sailing. Sure, approve  
 A little ship but let a large one bear  
 Your merchandise – the more of this you move,  
 The greater gain you make so long as you  
 Avoid strong winds. When you have turned to trade  
 Your foolish mind, in earnest to eschew  
 Distressful want and debits yet unpaid, 700  
 The stretches of the loud-resounding sea  
 I'll teach you, though of everything marine  
 I am unlearned: yet on no odyssey  
 Upon the spacious ocean have I been –  
 Just to Euboea from Aulis (the great host  
 Of Greeks here waited out the stormy gale,  
 Who went from holy Greece to Troy, whose boast  
 Is comely women). I myself took sail  
 To Chalchis for the games of the genius  
 Archidamas: for many games had been 710  
 Arranged by children of that glorious,  
 Great man and advertised. I scored a win  
 For song and brought back home my accolade,  
 A two-eared tripod which I dedicated  
 To the Muses there in Helicon (I made  
 My debut there when I participated  
 In lovely song). Familiarity  
 With ships for me to this has been confined.  
 But since the Muses taught singing to me,  
 I'll tell you aegis-bearing Zeus's mind. 720  
 When fifty days beyond the solstice go  
 And toilsome summer's ending, mortals can  
 Set sail upon the ocean, which will no  
 Seafarers slaughter, nor will any man  
 Shatter his ship, unless such is the will  
 Of earth-shaking Poseidon or our king,  
 Lord Zeus, who always judge both good and ill.  
 The sea is tranquil then, unwavering  
 The winds. Trust these and drag down to the sea  
 Your ship with confidence and place all freight 730  
 On board and them as swiftly as may be,  
 Sail home and for the autumn rain don't wait  
 Or fast-approaching blizzards, new-made wine,  
 The South Wind's dreadful blasts – he stirs the sea



And brings downpours in spring and makes the brine  
 Inclement. Spring, too, grants humanity  
 The chance to sail. When first some leaves are seen  
 On fig-tree-tops, as tiny as the mark  
 A raven leaves, the sea becomes serene  
 For sailing. Though spring bids you to embark, 740  
 I'll not praise it – it does not gladden me.  
 It's hazardous, for you'll avoid distress  
 With difficulty thus. Imprudently  
 Do men sail at that time – covetousness  
 Is their whole life, the wretches. For the seas  
 To take your life is dire. Listen to me:  
 Don't place aboard *all* your commodities –  
 Leave most behind, place a small quantity  
 Aboard. To tax your cart too much and break  
 An axle, losing all, will bring distress. 750  
 Be moderate, for everyone should take  
 An apt approach. When you're in readiness,  
 Get married. Thirty years, or very near,  
 Is apt for marriage. Now, past puberty  
 Your bride should go four years: in the fifth year  
 Wed her. That you may teach her modesty  
 Marry a maid. The best would be one who  
 Lives near you, but you must with care look round  
 Lest neighbours make a laughingstock of you.  
 A better choice for men cannot be found 760  
 Than a good woman, nor a worse one than  
 One who's unworthy, say a sponging mare  
 Who will, without a torch, burn up a man  
 And bring him to a raw old age. Beware  
 Of angering the blessed ones – your friend  
 Is not your brother – treat them differently.  
 But if you don't, don't be first to offend.  
 Don't lie. If he treats you offensively  
 In word or deed, then you should recompense  
 Him double, then, if he would be again 770  
 Your friend and pay the price for his offence,  
 Then take him back. They are all wretched men  
 Who go from friend to friend, so let your face  
 Not falsify your nature. Let none be  
 Able to call you comrade of the base  
 Or one who fights men of integrity  
 Or over-friendly or no friend at all.  
 Don't chide a man for his pennilessness  
 That devastates and turns one's soul to gall,  
 For it's the Deathless Ones' largesse. 780

A man's best trait's a thrifty tongue. Malign  
 Someone and you will very likely hear  
 Worse of yourself. When you are out to dine  
 With many folk at common feasts, don't smear  
 Another, for the happiness is fine,  
 The cost a trifle. Wash your hands before  
 You start to sacrifice the sparkling wine  
 To Zeus or other gods – they'll hark no more  
 And spit back all your prayers. Don't urinate  
 Towards the sun, and when you're travelling 790  
 Do not upon the highway micturate,  
 Nor off it either. From your frame don't fling  
 Your garments – to the gods belongs the night.  
 A wise and reverent man will sit beside  
 The courtyard wall which keeps him out of sight.  
 Your sexual parts do not reveal but hide  
 Then after you make love. Don't sow your seed  
 After a funeral, rather, having fed  
 At a god's feast you should perform the deed.  
 When you a lovely stream of water find, 800  
 Don't cross it till you've looked into that rill  
 And prayed and washed your hands in it. If you  
 Should cross with hands and errors unpurged still,  
 The gods will visit you with penance due  
 And cause you pain. And do not, when you're dining  
 At a great feast to honour the gods, cut through  
 The dry shoots from the five-branched plant with shining  
 Iron, nor in the mixing-bowl, when you  
 Are drinking, leave the ladle - fatal blend!  
 Don't leave your house half-built in case a crow 810  
 Should perch on it and misery portend.  
 A pot that is unblessed can bring you woe,  
 Therefore don't eat or wash from it. Permit  
 No twelve-year- or twelve-month-old to be sat  
 Upon a sacred monument, for it  
 Will make him womanish, and make sure that  
 You don't wash in a basin that has been  
 Just handled by a woman – punishment,  
 Should you do this, will for a time be keen.  
 If you should find a sacrifice unspent 820  
 Of flame, do not belittle things that we  
 Know nothing of – a god is angered thus.  
 In springs or rivers flowing to the sea  
 Don't urinate – this point is serious.  
 It's better not to vent your bowels there:  
 Thus you'll stay free of mortals' wicked chat,

Which, though lightweight, is difficult to bear  
 And hard to lose. Such idle talk as that  
 Will not completely die when manifold  
 Folk use it, for it's godlike. And observe 830  
 The days Zeus sends; make sure your slaves are told  
 To do likewise. The day that's best to serve  
 To portion out all food and oversee  
 All work's the thirtieth. These are the days  
 Of Counsellor Zeus: all prudent men agree  
 This is the truth. Upon these days we praise  
 The gods: first, fourth and seventh. It was then  
 Gold-girt Apollo first beheld the light,  
 Born of Leto: on the eighth and ninth day, when  
 The moon is waxing, it's fitting and right 840  
 For men to work. When you would shear your sheep  
 Or pick your fruit, the twelfth and eleventh days  
 Are good, although it's better that you keep  
 The twelfth, for then, beneath the morning's rays,  
 The spider spins its web and floats in space  
 While clever ants their store are harvesting.  
 Your wife may then set up her loom and face  
 Her coming toil. No time for scattering  
 Your seeds in this month is the thirteenth, when  
 It's best to raise your plants, though they're unfit 850  
 For setting on the sixth, while yet for men  
 It is a good day to be born, though it  
 Is not for females, who should ne be wed  
 Upon this day. Days One to Five well may  
 Inflict ill luck on women brought to bed  
 Of girls, but geld your kids and lambs that day  
 And build a sheepfold. Male births, though, create  
 Good luck, but boys born then will love to lie,  
 Taunt, flatter, chat in secret. On Day Eight  
 Geld boars and bawling bulls, then, by and by, 860  
 Upon the twelfth the labouring mules should be  
 Castrated too. The twentieth births males  
 Of wisdom. On the tenth prosperity  
 Attends male births, while wellbeing prevails  
 For girls upon the fourth. That time is fair  
 For training shuffling oxen, sheep as well,  
 And sharp-toothed dogs and labouring mules. Take care  
 To shun the fourth, at both its wane and swell –  
 Such days will eat your soul. Bring home a bride  
 On the auspicious fourth. The fifth you ought 870  
 To shun, whose pains will make you terrified.  
 Upon the fifth, the Furies, it is thought,

Helped Strife birth Horkos, who would bring heartache  
 To perjurers. Upon the seventh, take care,  
 Upon the well-worn threshing-floor, to take  
 To cast Demeter's holy kernels there.  
 Let wood be gathered by a carpenter  
 To build your house, and let him bring enough  
 To build a ship and start constructing her  
 Upon the fourth. The ninth becomes less rough 880  
 Towards nightfall. The first ninth is quite free  
 Of woe for men and fine for coitus  
 For either sex and never totally  
 Unlikely, while the most salubrious  
 For opening up of jars and coupling  
 Your oxen, mules and speedy steeds (it's known  
 To few) is the twentieth. You must bring  
 Upon that day the swift, oared ship you own  
 Down from her dock into the wine-dark sea:  
 This day by few is called its proper name. 890  
 Broach casks upon the fourth, for markedly  
 This is a holy day. Few, too, can claim  
 To know the twenty-first's best at cockcrow,  
 The worst at dusk. These are of greatest use,  
 The rest are luckless, fickle, bland. Few know  
 These things, although opinions are diffuse.  
 From stepmother to mother goes each day.  
 Happy are they who know that these days bless  
 All men, guiltless before the gods, while they  
 Watch omens and avoid all wickedness. 900