

Muses, who from Pieria give glory through singing,  
 come to me, tell of Zeus, your own father,  
   sing his praises, through whose will  
 mortal men are named in speech or remain unspoken.  
 Men are renowned or remain unsung  
   as great Zeus wills it.

5 For lightly he makes strong,  
   and lightly brings strength to confusion,  
 lightly diminishes the great man,  
   uplifts the obscure one,  
 lightly the crooked man he straightens,  
   withers the proud man,  
 he, Zeus, of the towering thunders,  
   whose house is highest.

Hear me, see me, Zeus: hearken:  
   direct your decrees in righteousness.  
 10 To you, Perses, I would describe  
   the true way of existence.

It was never true that there was only one kind  
   of strife. There have always  
 been two on earth. There is one  
   you could like when you understand her.  
 The other is hateful. The two Strifes  
   have separate natures.  
 There is one Strife who builds up evil war,  
   and slaughter.  
 15 She is harsh; no man loves her, but under compulsion  
   and by will of the immortals men  
   promote this rough Strife.  
 But the other one was born  
   the elder daughter of black Night.

The son of Kronos, who sits on high and  
 dwells in the bright air,  
 set her in the roots of the earth and among men;  
 she is far kinder.

20 She pushes the shiftless man to work,  
 for all his laziness.

A man looks at his neighbor, who is rich:  
 then he too  
 wants work; for the rich man presses on with  
 his plowing and planting  
 and the ordering of his state.

So the neighbor envies the neighbor  
 who presses on toward wealth. Such Strife  
 is a good friend to mortals.

25 Then potter is potter's enemy, and  
 craftsman is craftman's  
 rival; tramp is jealous of tramp,  
 and singer of singer.

So you, Perses, put all this firmly away  
 in your heart,  
 nor let that Strife who loves mischief  
 keep you from working  
 as you listen at the meeting place  
 to see what you can make of  
 30 the quarrels. The time comes short for litigations  
 and lawsuits,  
 too short, unless there is a year's living  
 laid away inside  
 for you, the stuff that the earth yields,  
 the pride of Demeter.  
 When you have got a full burden of that,  
 you can push your lawsuits,

scheming for other men's goods, yet you  
 shall not be given another chance  
 35 to do so. No, come, let us finally settle  
 our quarrel  
 with straight decisions, which are from Zeus,  
 and are the fairest.  
 Now once before we divided our inheritance,  
 but you seized  
 the greater part and made off with it,  
 gratifying those barons  
 who eat bribes, who are willing  
 to give out such a decision.  
 40 Fools all! who never learned  
 how much better than the whole the half is,  
 nor how much good there is  
 in living on mallow and asphodel.  
 For the gods have hidden and keep hidden  
 what could be men's livelihood.  
 It could have been that easily  
 in one day you could work out  
 enough to keep you for a year,  
 with no more working.  
 45 Soon you could have hung up your steering oar  
 in the smoke of the fireplace,  
 and the work the oxen and patient mules do  
 would be abolished,  
 but Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it away  
 because the devious-minded Prometheus had cheated him;  
 and therefore Zeus thought up dismal sorrows  
 for mankind.  
 50 He hid fire; but Prometheus, the powerful son  
 of Iapetos,

stole it again from Zeus of the counsels,  
to give to mortals.

He hid it out of the sight of Zeus  
who delights in thunder  
in the hollow fennel stalk. In anger  
the cloud-gatherer spoke to him:

“Son of Iapetos, deviser of crafts beyond all others,  
55 you are happy that you stole the fire,  
and outwitted my thinking;  
but it will be a great sorrow to you,  
and to men who come after.  
As the price of fire I will give them an evil,  
and all men shall fondle  
this, their evil, close to their hearts,  
and take delight in it.”

So spoke the father of gods and mortals;  
and laughed out loud.

60 He told glorious Hephaistos to make haste, and plaster  
earth with water, and to infuse it with a human voice  
and vigor, and make the face  
like the immortal goddesses,  
the bewitching features of a young girl;  
meanwhile Athene  
was to teach her her skills, and how  
to do the intricate weaving,  
65 while Aphrodite was to mist her head  
in golden endearment  
and the cruelty of desire and longings  
that wear out the body,  
but to Hermes, the guide, the slayer of Argos,  
he gave instructions  
to put in her the mind of a hussy,  
and a treacherous nature.

So Zeus spoke. And all obeyed Lord Zeus,  
the son of Kronos.

70 The renowned strong smith modeled her figure of earth,  
in the likeness  
of a decorous young girl, as the son of Kronos  
had wished it.

The goddess gray-eyed Athene dressed and arrayed her;  
the Graces,

who are goddesses, and hallowed Persuasion  
put necklaces

of gold upon her body, while the Seasons,  
with glorious tresses,

75 put upon her head a coronal of spring flowers,  
[and Pallas Athene put all decor upon her body].

But into her heart Hermes, the guide,  
the slayer of Argos,

put lies, and wheedling words

of falsehood, and a treacherous nature,  
made her as Zeus of the deep thunder wished,  
and he, the gods' herald,

80 put a voice inside her, and gave her  
the name of woman,

Pandora, because all the gods

who have their homes on Olympos  
had given her each a gift, to be a sorrow to men  
who eat bread. Now when he had done

with this sheer, impossible  
deception, the Father sent the gods' fleet messenger,  
Hermes,

85 to Epimetheus, bringing her, a gift,  
nor did Epimetheus

remember to think how Prometheus had told him never

to accept a gift from Olympian Zeus,  
 but always to send it  
 back, for fear it might prove  
 to be an evil for mankind.

He took the evil, and only perceived it  
 when he possessed her.

90     Since before this time the races of men  
 had been living on earth  
 free from all evils, free from laborious work,  
 and free from  
 all wearing sicknesses that bring  
 their fates down on men  
 [for men grow old suddenly  
 in the midst of misfortune];  
 but the woman, with her hands lifting away the lid  
 from the great jar,  
 95 scattered its contents, and her design  
 was sad troubles for mankind.

Hope was the only spirit that stayed there  
 in the unbreakable  
 closure of the jar, under its rim,  
 and could not fly forth  
 abroad, for the lid of the great jar  
 closed down first and contained her;  
 this was by the will of cloud-gathering Zeus  
 of the aegis;

100 but there are other troubles by thousands  
 that hover about men,  
 for the earth is full of evil things,  
 and the sea is full of them;  
 there are sicknesses that come to men by day,  
 while in the night

moving of themselves they haunt us,  
 bringing sorrow to mortals,  
 and silently, for Zeus of the counsels  
 took the voice out of them.

105 So there is no way to avoid what Zeus has intended.

Or if you will, I will outline it for you  
 in a different story,  
 well and knowledgeably—store it up  
 in your understanding—  
 the beginnings of things, which were the same for gods  
 as for mortals.

In the beginning, the immortals  
 who have their homes on Olympos  
 110 created the golden generation of mortal people.  
 These lived in Kronos' time, when he  
 was the king in heaven.

They lived as if they were gods,  
 their hearts free from all sorrow,  
 by themselves, and without hard work or pain;  
 no miserable  
 old age came their way; their hands, their feet,  
 did not alter.

115 They took their pleasure in festivals,  
 and lived without troubles.

When they died, it was as if they fell asleep.

All goods  
 were theirs. The fruitful grainland  
 yielded its harvest to them  
 of its own accord; this was great and abundant,  
 while they at their pleasure

quietly looked after their works,  
 in the midst of good things  
 120 [prosperous in flocks, on friendly terms  
 with the blessed immortals].

Now that the earth has gathered over this generation,  
 these are called pure and blessed spirits;  
 they live upon earth,  
 and are good, they watch over mortal men  
 and defend them from evil;  
 they keep watch over lawsuits and hard dealings;  
 they mantle  
 125 themselves in dark mist  
 and wander all over the country;  
 they bestow wealth; for this right  
 as of kings was given them.

Next after these the dwellers upon Olympos created  
 a second generation, of silver, far worse  
 than the other.  
 They were not like the golden ones either in shape  
 or spirit.

130 A child was a child for a hundred years,  
 looked after and playing  
 by his gracious mother, kept at home,  
 a complete booby.  
 But when it came time for them to grow up  
 and gain full measure,  
 they lived for only a poor short time;  
 by their own foolishness  
 they had troubles, for they were not able  
 to keep away from  
 135 reckless crime against each other,  
 nor would they worship

the gods, nor do sacrifice on the sacred altars  
 of the blessed ones,  
 which is the right thing among the customs of men,  
 and therefore  
 Zeus, son of Kronos, in anger engulfed them,  
 for they paid no due  
 honors to the blessed gods who live on Olympos.

- 140 But when the earth had gathered over this generation  
 also—and they too are called blessed spirits  
 by men, though under  
 the ground, and secondary, but still  
 they have their due worship—  
 then Zeus the father created the third generation  
 of mortals,  
 the age of bronze. They were not like  
 the generation of silver.
- 145 They came from ash spears. They were terrible  
 and strong, and the ghastly  
 action of Ares was theirs, and violence.  
 They ate no bread,  
 but maintained an indomitable and adamant spirit.  
 None could come near them; their strength was big,  
 and from their shoulders  
 the arms grew irresistible on their ponderous bodies.
- 150 The weapons of these men were bronze,  
 of bronze their houses,  
 and they worked as bronzesmiths. There was not yet  
 any black iron.  
 Yet even these, destroyed beneath the hands  
 of each other,  
 went down into the moldering domain of cold Hades;  
 nameless; for all they were formidable black death

155 seized them, and they had to forsake  
the shining sunlight.

Now when the earth had gathered over this generation  
also, Zeus, son of Kronos, created yet another  
fourth generation on the fertile earth,  
and these were better and nobler,  
the wonderful generation of hero-men, who are also  
160 called half-gods, the generation before our own  
on this vast earth.

But of these too, evil war and the terrible carnage  
took some; some by seven-gated Thebes  
in the land of Kadmos  
as they fought together over the flocks of Oidipous;  
others  
war had taken in ships over the great gulf  
of the sea,  
165 where they also fought for the sake  
of lovely-haired Helen.

There, for these, the end of death was misted  
about them.

But on others Zeus, son of Kronos, settled a living  
and a country  
of their own, apart from human kind,  
at the end of the world.

And there they have their dwelling place,  
and hearts free of sorrow  
in the islands of the blessed  
by the deep-swirling stream of the ocean,  
prospering heroes, on whom in every year  
three times over  
the fruitful grainland bestows its sweet yield.  
These live

far from the immortals, and Kronos  
is king among them.

For Zeus, father of gods and mortals,  
set him free from his bondage,  
although the position and the glory still belong  
to the young gods.

After this, Zeus of the wide brows  
established yet one more  
generation of men, the fifth, to be  
on the fertile earth.

And I wish that I were not any part  
of the fifth generation  
of men, but had died before it came,  
or been born afterward.

For here now is the age of iron. Never by daytime  
will there be an end to hard work and pain,  
nor in the night  
to weariness, when the gods will send anxieties  
to trouble us.

Yet here also there shall be some good things  
mixed with the evils.

180 But Zeus will destroy this generation of mortals  
also,  
in the time when children, as they are born,  
grow gray on the temples,  
when the father no longer agrees with the children,  
nor children with their father,  
when guest is no longer at one with host,  
nor companion to companion,  
when your brother is no longer your friend,  
as he was in the old days.

- 185 Men will deprive their parents of all rights,  
     as they grow old,  
 and people will mock them too,  
     babbling bitter words against them,  
 harshly, and without shame in the sight of the gods;  
     not even  
 to their aging parents will they give back  
     what once was given.  
 Strong of hand, one man shall seek  
     the city of another.
- 190 There will be no favor for the man  
     who keeps his oath, for the righteous  
 and the good man, rather men shall give their praise  
     to violence  
 and the doer of evil. Right will be in the arm.  
     Shame will  
 not be. The vile man will crowd his better out,  
     and attack him  
 with twisted accusations and swear an oath  
     to his story.
- 195 The spirit of Envy, with grim face  
     and screaming voice, who delights  
 in evil, will be the constant companion  
     of wretched humanity,  
 and at last Nemesis and Aidos, Decency and Respect,  
     shrouding  
 their bright forms in pale mantles, shall go  
     from the wide-wayed  
 earth back on their way to Olympos,  
     forsaking the whole race
- 200 of mortal men, and all that will be left by them  
     to mankind

will be wretched pain. And there shall be no defense  
against evil.

Now I will tell you a fable for the barons;  
they understand it.

This is what the hawk said when he had caught  
a nightingale  
with spangled neck in his claws and carried her  
high among the clouds.

205 She, spitted on the clawhooks, was wailing pitifully,  
but the hawk, in his masterful manner,  
gave her an answer:

“What is the matter with you? Why scream?  
Your master has you.

You shall go wherever I take you,  
for all your singing.

If I like, I can let you go. If I like,  
I can eat you for dinner.

210 He is a fool who tries to match his strength  
with the stronger.

He will lose his battle, and with the shame  
will be hurt also.”

So spoke the hawk, the bird who flies so fast  
on his long wings.

But as for you, Perses, listen to justice;  
do not try to practice

violence; violence is bad for a weak man; even a noble  
215 cannot lightly carry the burden of her,

but she weighs him down  
when he loses his way in delusions; that other road  
is the better

which leads toward just dealings. For Justice  
 wins over violence  
 as they come out in the end. The fool knows  
 after he's suffered.

The spirit of Oath is one who runs  
 beside crooked judgments.

220 There is an outcry when Justice is dragged perforce,  
 when bribe-eating  
 men pull her about, and judge their cases  
 with crooked decisions.

She follows perforce, weeping, to the city  
 and gatherings of people.

She puts a dark mist upon her and brings a curse  
 upon all those  
 who drive her out, who deal in her  
 and twist her in dealing.

225 But when men issue straight decisions  
 to their own people  
 and to strangers, and do not step at all  
 off the road of rightness,  
 their city flourishes, and the people  
 blossom inside it.

Peace, who brings boys to manhood, is in their land,  
 nor does Zeus  
 of the wide brows ever ordain that hard war  
 shall be with them.

230 Neither famine nor inward disaster comes the way  
 of those people  
 who are straight and just; they do their work  
 as if work were a holiday;  
 the earth gives them great livelihood,  
 on their mountains the oaks

bear acorns for them in their crowns,  
 and bees in their middles.  
 Their wool-bearing sheep are weighted down  
 with fleecy burdens.

235 Their women bear them children  
 who resemble their parents.  
 They prosper in good things throughout.  
 They need have no traffic  
 with ships, for their own grain-giving land  
 yields them its harvest.

But when men like harsh violence  
 and cruel acts, Zeus  
 of the wide brows, the son of Kronos,  
 ordains their punishment.

240 Often a whole city is paid punishment  
 for one bad man  
 who commits crimes and plans reckless action.  
 On this man's people  
 the son of Kronos out of the sky  
 inflicts great suffering,  
 famine and plague together, and the people die  
 and diminish.

The women bear children no longer, the houses dwindle  
 245 by design of Olympian Zeus; or again at other times,  
 he destroys the wide camped army of a people,  
 or wrecks  
 their city with its walls, or their ships  
 on the open water.

You barons also, cannot even you  
 understand for yourselves  
 how justice works? For the immortals  
 are close to us, they mingle

- 250 with men, and are aware of those who  
     by crooked decisions  
 break other men, and care nothing  
     for what the gods think of it.  
 Upon the prospering earth there are  
     thirty thousand immortal  
 spirits, who keep watch for Zeus and all that men do.  
 They have an eye on decrees given  
     and on harsh dealings,  
 255 and invisible in their dark mist they hover  
     on the whole earth.  
 Justice herself is a young maiden.  
     She is Zeus's daughter,  
 and seemly, and respected by all the gods of Olympos.  
 When any man uses force on her by false impeachment  
 she goes and sits at the feet of Zeus Kronion,  
     her father,  
 260 and cries out on the wicked purpose of men,  
     so that their people  
 must pay for the profligacy of their rulers,  
     who for their own greedy purposes  
 twist the courses of justice aslant  
     by false proclamations.  
 Beware, you barons, of such spirits.  
     Straighten your decisions  
 you eaters of bribes. Banish from your minds  
     the twisting of justice.
- 265 The man who does evil to another does evil  
     to himself,  
 and the evil counsel is most evil  
     for him who counsels it.

The eye of Zeus sees everything. His mind  
understands all.

He is watching us right now, if he wishes to,  
nor does he fail  
to see what kind of justice this community keeps  
inside it.

270 Now, otherwise I would not myself  
be righteous among men  
nor have my son be so; for it is a hard thing  
for a man  
to be righteous, if the unrighteous man  
is to have the greater right.  
But I believe that Zeus of the counsels  
will not let it end thus.

You, Perses, should store away in your mind all  
that I tell you,  
275 and listen to justice, and put away  
all notions of violence.  
Here is the law, as Zeus established it  
for human beings;  
as for fish, and wild animals, and the flying birds,  
they feed on each other, since there is no idea  
of justice among them;  
but to men he gave justice, and she in the end  
is proved the best thing  
280 they have. If a man sees what is right  
and is willing to argue it,  
Zeus of the wide brows grants him prosperity.  
But when one, knowingly, tells lies and swears  
an oath on it,  
when he is so wild as to do incurable damage  
against justice,

285 this man is left a diminished generation hereafter,  
but the generation of the true-sworn man  
grows stronger.

I mean you well, Perses, you great idiot,  
and I will tell you.

Look, badness is easy to have, you can take it  
by handfuls

without effort. The road that way is smooth  
and starts here beside you.

But between us and virtue the immortals have put  
what will make us

290 sweat. The road to virtue is long  
and goes steep up hill,  
hard climbing at first, but the last of it,  
when you get to the summit  
(if you get there) is easy going after the hard part.

That man is all-best who himself works out  
every problem  
and solves it, seeing what will be best late  
and in the end.

295 That man, too, is admirable who follows one  
who speaks well.

He who cannot see the truth for himself, nor,  
hearing it from others,  
store it away in his mind, that man  
is utterly useless.

As for you, remember what I keep telling you  
over and over:

work, O Perses, illustrious-born, work on,  
so that Famine

300 will avoid you, and august and garlanded Demeter

will be your friend, and fill your barn  
 with substance of living;  
 Famine is the unworking man's most constant  
 companion.

Gods and men alike resent that man who, without work  
 himself, lives the life of the stingless drones,  
 305 who without working eat away the substance  
 of the honeybees'  
 hard work; your desire, then, should be  
 to put your works in order  
 so that your barns may be stocked with all  
 livelihood in its season.

It is from work that men grow rich and own flocks  
 and herds;  
 by work, too, they become much better friends  
 of the immortals.

310 [and to men too, for they hate the people  
 who do not labor].

Work is no disgrace; the disgrace is in not working;  
 and if you do work, the lazy man will soon begin  
 to be envious  
 as you grow rich, for with riches go nobility  
 and honor.

315 It is best to work, at whatever you have a talent  
 for doing,  
 without turning your greedy thought toward what  
 some other man  
 possesses, but take care of your own livelihood,  
 as I advise you.

Shame, the wrong kind of shame, has the needy man  
 in convoy,  
 shame, who does much damage to men,  
 but prospers them also,

shame goes with poverty, but confidence  
goes with prosperity.

320 Goods are not to be grabbed; much better if God  
lets you have them.

If any man by force of hands wins him  
a great fortune,  
or steals it by the cleverness of his tongue,  
as so often

happens among people when the intelligence  
is blinded

by greed, a man's shameless spirit tramples  
his sense of honor;

325 lightly the gods wipe out that man, and diminish  
the household

of such a one, and his wealth stays with him  
for only a short time.

It is the same when one does evil to guest  
or suppliant,

or goes up into the bed of his brother, to lie  
in secret

love with his brother's wife, doing acts  
that are against nature;

330 or who unfeelingly abuses fatherless children,  
or speaks roughly with intemperate words  
to his failing

father who stands upon the hateful doorstep  
of old age;

with all these Zeus in person is angry,  
and in the end

he makes them pay a bitter price  
for their unrighteous dealings.

335 Keep your frivolous spirit clear of all such actions.

As far as you have the power, do sacrifice  
 to the immortals,  
 innocently and cleanly; burn them the shining  
 thighbones;  
 at other times, propitiate them with libations  
 and burnings,  
 when you go to bed, and when the holy light  
 goes up the sky;  
 340 so They may have a complacent feeling and thought  
 about you;  
 so you may buy someone else's land, not have someone  
 buy yours.

Invite your friend to dinner; have nothing to do  
 with your enemy.  
 Invite that man particularly who lives close to you.  
 If anything, which ought not to happen, happens  
 in your neighborhood,  
 345 neighbors come as they are to help; relatives  
 dress first.  
 A bad neighbor's as great a pain as a good one's  
 a blessing.  
 One lucky enough to draw a good neighbor  
 draws a great prize.  
 Not even an ox would be lost, if it were not  
 for the bad neighbor.  
 Take good measure from your neighbor,  
 then pay him back fairly  
 350 with the same measure, or better yet,  
 if you can manage it;  
 so, when you need him some other time,  
 you will find him steadfast.

No greedy profits; greedy profit is a kind  
of madness.

Be a friend to your friend, and come to him  
who comes to you.

Give to him who gives; do not give to him  
who does not give.

355 We give to the generous man; none gives to him  
who is stingy.

Give is a good girl, but Grab is a bad one;  
what she gives is death.

For when a man gives willingly, though he gives  
a great thing,

yet he has joy of his gift and satisfaction  
in his heart,

while he who gives way to shameless greed and takes  
from another,

360 even though the thing he takes is small,  
yet it stiffens his heart.

For even if you add only a little to a little, yet if  
you do it often enough, this little may yet  
become big.

When one adds to what he has,  
he fends off staring hunger.

What is stored away in a man's house  
brings him no trouble.

365 Better for it to be at home, since what is abroad  
does damage.

It is fine to draw on what is on hand, and painful  
to have need

and not have anything there; I warn you  
to be careful in this.

When the bottle has just been opened, and when  
it's giving out, drink deep;

be sparing when it's half-full; but it's useless  
to spare the fag end.

370 Let the hire that has been promised to a friend  
be made good.

When you deal with your brother, be pleasant,  
but get a witness; for too much  
trustfulness, and too much suspicion,  
have proved men's undoing.

Do not let any sweet-talking woman beguile  
your good sense  
with the fascinations of her shape. It's your barn  
she's after.

375 Anyone who will trust a woman is trusting flatterers.

One single-born son would be right to support  
his father's  
house, for that is the way substance piles up  
in the household;

if you have more than one, you had better live  
to an old age;

yet Zeus can easily provide abundance  
for a greater number,

380 and the more there are, the more work is done,  
and increase increases.

If the desire within your heart is for greater  
abundance,  
do as I tell you: keep on working with work  
and more work.

At the time when the Pleiades, the daughters  
of Atlas, are rising,  
begin your harvest, and plow again when they  
are setting.

385 The Pleiades are hidden for forty nights and forty  
 days, and then, as the turn of the year reaches  
 that point  
 they show again, at the time you first sharpen  
 your iron.  
 This is the usage, whether you live in the plains,  
 or whether  
 close by the sea, or again in the corners  
 of the mountains  
 390 far away from the sea and its tossing water,  
 you have your rich land;  
 wherever you live: strip down to sow, and strip  
 for plowing,  
 and strip for reaping, if you wish to bring in  
 the yields of Demeter  
 all in their season, and so that each crop  
 in its time will increase  
 for you; so that in aftertime you may not be in need  
 395 and go begging to other people's houses,  
 and get nothing;  
 as you have come now to me; but I will give to you  
 no longer;  
 no further measure: Perses, you fool, work for it,  
 with those works which the gods have arranged  
 men shall do,  
 lest some day you, with your wife and children,  
 in anguish of spirit,  
 400 have to look to your neighbors for substance,  
 and they not heed you.  
 Twice you may get help, and three times even,  
 but if you plague them  
 further, you will get nothing more,  
 and your pleading will fall flat.

Your style with words will do you no good; rather,  
 I urge you  
 to work out some way to pay your debts, and escape  
 from hunger.

405 First of all, get yourself an ox for plowing,  
 and a woman—  
 for work, not to marry—one who can plow  
 with the oxen,  
 and get all necessary gear in your house  
 in good order,  
 lest you have to ask someone else, and he deny you,  
 and you go  
 short, and the season pass you by, and your work  
 be undone.

410 Do not put off until tomorrow and the day after.  
 A man does not fill his barn by shirking his labors  
 or putting them off; it is keeping at it that gets  
 the work done.

The putter-off of work is the man who wrestles  
 with disaster.

At the time when the force of the cruel sun  
 diminishes,  
 415 and the sultriness and the heat, when powerful Zeus  
 brings on  
 the rains of autumn, and the feel of a man's body  
 changes  
 and he goes much lighter, for at this time  
 the star Seirios  
 goes only a little over the heads  
 of hard-fated mankind  
 in the daytime, and takes a greater part  
 of the evening;

420 at this season, timber that you cut with your ax  
 is less open  
 to worms, now when it sheds its leaves to the ground,  
 and stops sprouting.  
 Now, remembering your tasks in their season,  
 is your time to cut wood.  
 Cut a three-foot length for a mortar and a pestle  
 of three cubits,  
 and a seven-foot length for an axle; that would be  
 quite enough for you,  
 425 except if you made it eight feet you could cut a maul  
 from the end.  
 For a wagon of ten palms cut a quarter-felly  
 of three spans.  
 Cut many curved pieces; and look on the mountain  
 and in the meadows,  
 for a good piece of holm oak to make your plow-beam,  
 and bring it  
 home when you find it; this is the strongest  
 for plowing oxen,  
 430 once you have taken it to the carpenter,  
 Athene's apprentice,  
 and he fixes it in the share and bolts it to the pole  
 with dowels.  
 You can work the plows in your house,  
 and you should have a pair of them,  
 one in a single piece, one composite;  
 this is the better way,  
 for if you break one of them, you can put the oxen  
 to the other.  
 435 Poles of laurel or elm are least likely  
 to be worm-eaten.  
 The share should be oak, the beam holm oak.

Get yourself two oxen,  
 males, nine years old, for their strength  
 will be undiminished  
 and they in full maturity, at their best to work with,  
 for such a pair will not fight as they drive  
 the furrow, and shatter  
 440 the plow, thus leaving all the work done  
 gone for nothing.  
 And have a forty-year-old man, still young enough,  
 to follow  
 the plow (give him a full four-piece loaf to eat,  
 eight ounces);  
 such a man will keep his mind on his work,  
 and drive a straight  
 furrow, not always looking about for company,  
 but keep  
 445 his thoughts on business. A younger man  
 will be no improvement  
 for scattering the seeds and not piling them  
 on top of each other.  
 A younger man keeps looking for excitement  
 with other young people.

At the time when you hear the cry of the crane  
 going over, that annual  
 voice from high in the clouds, you should take notice  
 and make plans.  
 450 She brings the signal for the beginning of planting,  
 the winter  
 season of rains, but she bites the heart  
 of the man without oxen.  
 At this time, keep your horn-curved oxen indoors,  
 and feed them.

It is easy to make a speech: "Please give me two oxen  
and a wagon."

But it's also easy to answer: "I have plenty of work  
for my oxen."

455 And a man, rich in his dreams, sees his wagon  
as built already,  
the idiot, forgetting that the wagon has  
a hundred timbers,  
and it takes some work to have these laid up at home,  
beforehand.

At the first moment when the plowing season  
appears for mankind,  
set hard to work, your servants, yourself,  
everybody together

460 plowing through wet weather and dry  
in the plowing season;  
rise early and drive the work along, so your fields  
will be full.

Plow fallow in spring. Fallow land turned in summer  
will not disappoint you.

Fallow land should be sown while the soil  
is still light and dry.

Fallow land is kind to children, and keeps off  
the hexes.

465 Make your prayers to Zeus of the ground  
and holy Demeter  
that the sacred yield of Demeter may grow complete,  
and be heavy.

Do this when you begin your first planting, when,  
gripping the handle  
in one hand, you come down hard with the goad  
on the backs of your oxen

as they lean into the pin of the straps.

Have a small boy helping you  
 470 by following and making hard work for the birds  
 with a mattock  
 covering the seed over. It is best to do things  
 systematically,  
 since we are only human, and disorder  
 is our worst enemy.

Do as I tell you, and the ears will  
 sweep the ground in their ripeness,  
 if the Olympian himself grants that all  
 shall end well;  
 475 and you can knock the spider-webs from your bins,  
 and, as I hope,  
 be happy as you draw on all that substance  
 that's stored up.

You will have plenty to make it till the next  
 gray spring; you need not  
 gaze longingly at others. It's the other man  
 who will need you.

But if you have waited for the winter solstice  
 to plow the divine earth,  
 480 you will have to squat down to reap, gathering it  
 in thin handfuls,  
 down in the dust, cross-binding for the looks of it,  
 not very happy;  
 you will bring it home in a basket,  
 and there will be few to admire you.  
 Yet still, the mind of Zeus of the aegis changes  
 with changing  
 occasions, and it is a hard thing for mortal men  
 to figure.

485 Even if you plant late, here is one thing  
     that might save you:  
 at that time when the cuckoo first makes his song  
     in the oak leaves,  
 and across immeasurable earth makes glad  
     the hearts of mortals,  
 if at that time Zeus should rain three days  
     without stopping,  
 and it neither falls short of, nor goes over,  
     the height of an ox hoof;  
 490 then the late planter might come out even  
     with the early planter.

Be careful and watch everything well. Let not  
     the gray spring  
 go by unnoticed in her time, nor the rain  
     in its season.

    Walk right on past the blacksmith's shop  
     with its crowds and its gossip  
 for warmth, in the winter season, when the cold  
     keeps a man from working.

495 A lively man can do much about the house  
     in this season.

Winter can be a harsh time of helplessness;  
     let it not catch you  
 in need, as you try to warm a thick foot  
     with a thin hand.

The unworking man, who stays on empty anticipation,  
 needing substance, arranges in his mind  
     many bad thoughts,

500 and that is not a good kind of hopefulness  
     which is company  
 for a man who sits, and gossips, and has not enough  
     to live on.

While it is still midsummer, give your people  
their orders.

It will not always be summer. The barns  
had better be building.

Beware of the month Lenaion, bad days,  
that would take the skin off  
505 an ox; beware of it, and the frosts, which,  
as Boreas,  
the north wind, blows over the land, cruelly develop;  
he gets his breath and rises on the open water  
by horse-breeding  
Thrace, and blows, and the earth  
and the forest groan, as many  
oaks with sweeping foliage, many solid fir trees  
510 along the slopes of the mountains his force bends  
against the prospering  
earth, and all the innumerable forest  
is loud with him.

The beasts shiver and put their tails  
between their legs, even  
those with thick furry coats to cover their hides,  
the cold winds  
blow through the furs of even these, for all  
their thickness.

515 The wind goes through the hide of an ox,  
it will not stop him;  
it goes through a goatskin, that is fine-haired;  
but not even Boreas'  
force can blow through a sheepskin to any degree,  
for the thick fleece  
holds him out. It does bend the old man  
like a wheel's timber.



Then you had better cover your skin well,  
as I instruct you.

Put on both a soft outer cloak, and a fringed tunic,  
and have an abundant woof woven across a light warp;  
put this on you, so that your hairs will stay quiet  
in their places

540 and not bristle and stand up shivering  
all over your body.

Upon your feet tie shoes made of the hide  
of a slaughtered  
ox; have them fit well, and line them with felt  
on the inside.

Take skins of firstling kids, when the cold season  
is upon you,  
and stitch them together with the sinew of an ox,  
for a cape to put over

545 your back, and keep the rain off,  
and on your head you should wear  
a hat made out of felt, to keep your ears free  
of the water.

Daybreaks are cold at the time when Boreas  
comes down upon you,  
and at dawn there comes down from the starry sky,  
and spreads all over  
the land, a mist, helping growth  
for fortunate men's cultivations.

550 This, drawn up from rivers that flow forever,  
and mounting  
to a high level over earth on the turn  
of the windstorm,  
comes down in the form of rain toward evening  
sometimes, but sometimes

blows as wind, when Thracian Boreas is chasing  
the thick clouds.

Beat this weather. Finish your work  
and get on homeward

555 before the darkening cloud from the sky  
can gather about you,  
and soak your clothing through to the skin,  
leaving you wet through.

Better keep out of its way; of all months  
this is the hardest,  
full of stormy weather, hard on flocks,  
hard on people.

At that time the oxen should have half rations,  
but a man

560 more than usual, for the nights add up and are longer.  
Keep all these warnings I give you, as the year  
is completed  
and the days become equal with the nights again,  
when once more  
the earth, mother of us all, bears yield  
in all variety.

Now, when Zeus has brought to completion  
sixty more winter

565 days, after the sun has turned in his course,  
the star

Arcturus, leaving behind the sacred stream  
of the ocean,  
first begins to rise and shine at the edges  
of evening.

After him, the treble-crying swallow,  
Pandion's daughter,

comes into the sight of men when spring's just  
at the beginning.

- 570 Be there before her. Prune your vines.  
 That way it is better.  
 But when House-on-Back, the snail,  
 crawls from the ground up  
 the plants, escaping the Pleiades, it's no longer  
 time for vine-digging;  
 time rather to put an edge to your sickles,  
 and rout out your helpers.  
 Keep away from sitting in the shade or lying in bed  
 till the sun's up
- 575 in the time of the harvest, when the sunshine  
 scorches your skin dry.  
 This is the season to push your work and bring home  
 your harvest;  
 get up with the first light so you'll have enough  
 to live on.  
 Dawn takes away from work a third part  
 of the work's measure.  
 Dawn sets a man well along on his journey,  
 in his work also,
- 580 dawn, who when she shows, has numerous people going  
 their ways; dawn who puts the yoke upon many oxen.  
 But when the artichoke is in flower,  
 and the clamorous cricket  
 sitting in his tree lets go his vociferous singing,  
 that issues  
 from the beating of his wings, in the exhausting  
 season of summer;
- 585 then is when goats are at their fattest,  
 when the wine tastes best,  
 women are most lascivious, but the men's strength  
 fails them

most, for the star Seirios shrivels them, knees  
 and heads alike,  
 and the skin is all dried out in the heat; then,  
 at that season,  
 one might have the shadow under the rock,  
 and the wine of Biblis,  
 590 a curd cake, and all the milk that the goats  
 can give you,  
 the meat of a heifer, bred in the woods,  
 who has never borne a calf,  
 and of baby kids also. Then, too, one can sit  
 in the shadow  
 and drink the bright-shining wine, his heart  
 satiated with eating  
 and face turned in the direction where Zephyros  
 blows briskly,  
 595 make three libations of water from a spring  
 that keeps running forever  
 and has no mud in it; and pour wine  
 for the fourth libation.

Rouse up your slaves to winnow the sacred yield  
 of Demeter  
 at the time when powerful Orion first shows himself;  
 do it  
 in a place where there is a good strong wind,  
 on a floor that's rounded.  
 600 Measure it by storing it neatly away in the bins.  
 Then after  
 you have laid away a good store of livelihood  
 in your house,  
 put your hired man out of doors, and look  
 for a serving-maid

with no children, as one with young  
 to look after's a nuisance;  
 and look after your dog with the sharp teeth,  
 do not spare feeding him,  
 605 so the Man Who Sleeps in the Daytime won't be  
 getting at your goods.  
 Bring in hay and fodder so that your mules  
 and your oxen  
 will have enough to eat and go on with. Then,  
 when that is done,  
 let your helpers refresh their knees,  
 and unyoke your oxen.  
 Then, when Orion and Seirios are come to the middle  
 610 of the sky, and the rosy-fingered Dawn  
 confronts Arcturus,  
 then, Perses, cut off all your grapes, and bring  
 them home with you.  
 Show your grapes to the sun for ten days  
 and for ten nights,  
 cover them with shade for five, and on the sixth day  
 press out  
 the gifts of bountiful Dionysos into jars.  
 Then after  
 615 the Pleiades and the Hyades and the strength of Orion  
 have set, then remember again to begin  
 your seasonal plowing,  
 and the full year will go underground,  
 completing the cycle.

But if the desire for stormy seagoing  
 seizes upon you:  
 why, when the Pleiades, running to escape  
 from Orion's

620 grim bulk, duck themselves under the misty face  
 of the water,  
 at that time the blasts of the winds are blowing  
 from every direction,  
 then is no time to keep your ships  
 on the wine-blue water.  
 Think of working your land instead,  
 as I keep telling you.  
 Haul your ship up on the dry land, and make  
 an enclosure  
 625 of stones about it, to keep out the force of winds  
 that blow wet,  
 and pull the plug, so the rains of Zeus will not rot  
 the timbers.  
 Take all the tackle that's rigged to the ship,  
 and lay it up indoors,  
 neatly stowing the wings of the ship that goes  
 over the water;  
 hang the well-wrought steering-oar over the smoke  
 of the fireplace,  
 630 and yourself wait for the time to come when a voyage  
 is in season.  
 Then drag your swift ship down to the sea,  
 and put in a cargo  
 that will be suitable for it, so you can bring home  
 a profit,  
 as did my father, and yours too, O Perses,  
 you great fool,  
 who used to sail in ships, for he wanted to live  
 like a noble,  
 635 and once on a time, leaving Kyme of Aiolis,  
 he came here

in his black ship, having crossed over  
 a vast amount of water;  
 and it was not comfort he was fleeing, nor wealth,  
 nor prosperity,  
 but that evil poverty that Zeus gives men  
 for a present;  
 and settled here near Helikon in a hole of a village,  
 640 Askra, bad in winter, tiresome in summer,  
 and good at no season.

As for you, Perses, remember the timely seasons  
 for all work  
 done, but remember it particularly about seafaring.  
 Admire a little ship, but put your cargo in a big one.  
 The bigger the cargo, the bigger will be  
 the profit added

645 to profit—if only the winds hold off  
 their harsh gales from it.

But for when, turning your easily blown thoughts  
 toward a merchant's  
 life, you wish to escape your debts,  
 and unhappy hunger,  
 I will show you the measures  
 of the much-thundering sea, I  
 who am not one who has much knowledge of ships  
 and sea voyages;

650 for I never did sail in a ship across the wide water  
 except across to Euboa from Aulis, where once  
 the Achaians  
 stayed out the storm and gathered together  
 a great many people  
 from sacred Hellas to go to Troy,  
 the land of fair women.

There I crossed over to Chalkis  
 for the games held in honor  
 655 of gallant Amphidamas, for the sons  
 of this great-hearted  
 man had set out many chosen prizes. There,  
 I can claim,  
 I won the contest with a song  
 and took off an eared tripod;  
 and this I set up as an offering  
 to the Muses of Helikon,  
 where they first had made me a master  
 of melodious singing.  
 660 This is all my experience with intricately bolted  
 ships, but still I can tell you the thought,  
 which is of aegis-bearing  
 Zeus, for the Muses have taught me to sing  
 immortal poetry.  
 For fifty days, after the turn  
 of the summer solstice,  
 when the wearisome season of the hot weather  
 goes to its conclusion  
 665 then is the timely season for men to voyage.  
 You will not  
 break up your ship, nor will the sea drown  
 its people, unless  
 Poseidon, the shaker of the earth,  
 of his own volition,  
 or Zeus, the king of the immortals, wishes  
 to destroy it,  
 for with these rests authority for all outcomes,  
 good or evil.  
 670 At that time the breezes can be judged,  
 and the sea is untroubled.

At that time, trusting your swift ship to the winds,  
 you can draw her  
 down to the sea at will, and load all your cargo  
 inside her;

but make haste still, for the sake of  
 an earlier homecoming,  
 and do not wait for the season of new wine,  
 and the autumn

675 rain, and the winter coming on,  
 and the hard-blowing southwind  
 who comes up behind the heavy rains that Zeus sends  
 in autumn  
 and upheaves the sea and makes the open water  
 difficult.

There is one other sailing season for men,  
 in spring time.

At that point, when you first make out  
 on the topmost branches

680 of the fig tree, a leaf as big as the print  
 that a crow makes  
 when he walks; at that time also the sea is navigable  
 and this is called the spring sailing season.

I for my part  
 do not like it. There is nothing about it  
 that I find pleasant.

It's snatched. You will find it hard  
 to escape coming to grief. Yet still

685 and even so, men in their short-sightedness  
 do undertake it;  
 for acquisition means life to miserable mortals;  
 but it is an awful thing to die among the waves.  
 No, rather

I tell you to follow with all your attention,  
as I instruct you.

Do not adventure your entire livelihood  
in hollow ships.

690 Leave the greater part ashore and make  
the lesser part cargo.

For it is awful to run on disaster in the waves  
of the open  
water, and awful to put an overwhelming load  
on your wagon  
and break the axle, and have all the freight  
go to nothing.

Observe measures. Timeliness is best in all matters.

695 You are of age to marry a wife and bring her  
home with you  
when you are about thirty, not being many years  
short of

that mark, nor going much over. That age  
is ripe for your marriage.

Let your wife be full grown four years,  
and marry in the fifth.

Better marry a maiden, so you can teach her  
good manners,

700 and in particular marry one who lives close by you.

Look her well over first. Don't marry what will  
make your neighbors

laugh at you, for while there's nothing better  
a man can win him

than a good wife, there's nothing more dismal  
than a bad one.

She eats him out. And even though her husband  
be a strong man,

705 she burns him dry without fire, and gives him  
to a green old age.

Always observe a due regard for the blessed  
immortals.

Do not put some friend on equal terms  
with your brother;  
but if you do, never be the first to do him an injury.  
Do not tell lies for the sake of talking.

If your friend begins it  
710 by speaking some disagreeable word,  
or doing some injury,  
remember, and pay him back twice over. Then,  
if he would bring you  
back into his friendship, and propose  
to give reparation,  
take him back. A mean man's one  
who is constantly changing  
friend for friend. Do not let appearance  
confound perception.

715 Do not be called every man's friend.  
Do not be called friendless,  
nor companion of bad people, nor one who quarrels  
with good ones.

Never be so hard as to mock a man for hateful,  
heart-eating  
poverty. That's a gift given  
by the blessed immortals.

The best reserve of resource that men can have  
is a sparing  
720 tongue, and they are best liked when that  
goes moderately;

if you say a bad thing, you may soon hear a worse  
thing said about you.

Never be disagreeable at a feast  
where many guests  
come together; there good feeling's greatest,  
expense is slightest.

Never, from dawn forward, pour a shining libation  
725 of wine to Zeus or the other immortals,  
without washing your hands first.  
When you do, they do not hear your prayers;  
they spit them back at you.

Never stand upright and make water  
facing the sun,  
but only, remember, when he has set,  
or before his rising.

Nor do it when you are on the road,  
nor yet turning out from  
730 the road, nor showing yourself. For nights  
belong to the Blessed Ones.

A devout man, one who has learned the right way  
to do things,  
will huddle down, or go to the wall  
of a courtyard enclosure.

Do not, when in your house, ever show yourself  
near the hearthside  
when you are physically unclean,  
but keep away from it.

735 Do not, when you have come back  
from an ill-omened burial,  
beget children, but when you come from a feast  
of the immortals.

Never wade through the pretty ripples  
of perpetually flowing

rivers, until you have looked at their lovely waters,  
 and prayed to them,  
 and washed your hands in the pale enchanting water.

For if one

740 wades a river unwashed of hands  
 and unwashed of wickedness  
 the gods are outraged at him, and give him pains  
 for the future.

Never, at a happy festival of the gods, cut off  
 the dry from the green on the five-branch plant  
 with shining iron.

Never put the wine-ladle on top  
 of the mixing bowl

745 when people are drinking. This brings  
 accursed bad luck with it.

Never, when you are building a house,  
 leave rough edges on it,  
 for fear a raucous crow may perch there,  
 and croak at you.

Never take up, without an offering, a piece of pottery  
 and eat or wash from it. There is a forfeit  
 on these also.

750 Never let a twelve-year-old boy sit on anything  
 not to be moved; better not; it makes a man  
 lose his virility;  
 nor a twelve-month-boy either, for this will work  
 in the same way.

A man should never wash his body in water a woman  
 has used, for there is a dismal forfeit  
 that comes in time also

755 for this act.

Nor, if you chance on sacred offerings  
 burning,

must you make fun of the rites. The god, naturally,  
resents this.

Never make water into the outlets  
of rivers meeting  
the sea, nor in their springs, but altogether  
avoid this;  
nor plunge in them to cool off; it means no good  
if you do this.

760 Do as I tell you. And keep away from  
the gossip of people.

For gossip is an evil thing by nature,  
she's a light weight to lift up,  
oh very easy, but heavy to carry, and hard  
to put down again.

Gossip never disappears entirely once many people  
have talked her big. In fact, she really is  
some sort of goddess.

765 Observe the Days that come from Zeus, all  
in their right order.

Explain them to your workers; that the thirtieth  
of the month

is best for supervising works,  
and for doling provisions.

And here follow the days that come to us  
from the counselor  
Zeus, when men who judge their true nature  
can observe them.

770 First of all, the first, fourth, and seventh  
of the month are holy;

it was on this last that Leto gave birth to Apollo  
of the golden sword. Then the eighth and ninth,  
two days in each month

as it waxes, are excellent for mortal labors.

The eleventh day, and the twelfth too,  
are both very good days

775 either for shearing sheep or for reaping  
the good harvest;

but of these the twelfth day is far better  
than the eleventh,

for it is on the twelfth that the air-flying  
spider weaves

her web in the full of the day, and Know-All, the ant,  
piles her dirt-hill.

On this day a wife could set up her loom  
and get her work going.

780 In the waxing month, the thirteenth day  
is to be avoided

for planting seed, but it is the best  
for transplanting seedlings.

The sixth of midmonth is very unfavorable  
for plants,

but good for the birth of males; not favorable  
for girl-children,

either to be born in the first place or to go  
to their marriage.

785 Nor is the early sixth either suitable  
for a girl-child

to be born, but for gelding kids, and lambs,  
and for putting

an enclosure around the sheeppen  
it is a day kind and propitious.

Fine, too, for a boy born; but he'll be one  
who is fond of teasing,

and telling lies, and flattering speeches,  
and beguiling sweet talk.

790      On the eighth of the month, it is time  
           to geld the boar and the bellowing  
 bull; but the hard-working mules should be done  
           on the twelfth day.

          On the great twentieth, in full day,  
           a man who will be learned  
 should be born, for one of that day  
           is well armed with brains.

The tenth is fine for a boy-child to be born;  
           for a girl-child

795    the fourth of midmonth, on which day  
           you should gentle your sheep, your  
 horn-curved shambling cattle, sharp-toothed dog,  
           and hard-working  
 mules, by stroking them with the hand,  
           but be very careful  
 on the fourth of the waxing, the fourth  
           of the waning month, to avoid  
 troubles that eat out the heart. For this day  
           has great authority.

800      On the fourth day of the month  
           bring your wife home, only  
 first watch out the bird signs most favorable  
           to this business.

          Beware of all fifth days; they are harsh  
           and angry; it was on  
 the fifth, they say, that the Erinyes  
           assisted at the bearing  
 of Oath, whom Strife bore, to be a plague  
           on those who take false oath.

805      On the seventh of midmonth, after looking  
           carefully all about you,

throw down the holy grain of Demeter  
 on a well-rounded  
 floor; and it's time for the carpenter  
 to cut the house beams  
 and all the many timbers that are required  
 for ship building.

On the fourth, one can begin putting  
 the narrow ships together.

810 The ninth of midmonth grows better toward evening.  
 The first ninth is altogether free of harm for men,  
 for it is a very good day for either a man or a woman  
 either to beget or be born. It is never  
 a truly bad day.

Few know that the twenty-seventh of the month  
 is the best day  
 815 for starting on a wine jar or for putting the yoke  
 on the necks  
 of oxen, or of mules, or swift-footed horses, also  
 for hauling a fast ship with many locks  
 down to the wine-blue  
 waters. For there are few who call true things  
 by their right names.

On the fourth open a wine jar; the fourth  
 is surpassingly sacred  
 820 in midmonth. Few, again, know that any day  
 after the twentieth  
 is best in the dawning, but in the late day  
 it grows less good.

These are the days which greatly advantage  
 earthly people.  
 The others are full of vain noise, ineffective,  
 and produce nothing.

Every man will have his favorite day, but few  
know about them.

825 A certain day is sometimes a stepmother,  
sometimes a mother.

But that man is fortunate and blessed who,  
knowing all these

matters, goes on with his work,

innocent toward the immortals,  
watching all the bird signs, and keeping clear  
of transgression.