

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Bacchylides**  
**- poems -**

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# Bacchylides()

# Athena

Folded arms and sauntering pace  
Come not nigh this holy place.  
She whose image here is seen,  
Golden-Ægis-bearing queen,  
Dread Itonia, doth ordain  
For the suppliants at her fane  
Other services than these  
Tributes rare from bended knees.

Bacchylides

# Here No Fatted Oxen Be

Gold, nor purple tapestry:  
But a well-disposéd mind;  
But a gentle muse, and kind;  
But bright wine to glad our souls,  
Mantling in Boeotian bowls.

Bacchylides

# Not To Be Born 'Twere Best

Not to be born 'twere best,  
Nor view the light of the sun;  
Since to be ever blest  
Is given to none:  
And Fate deals out his share,  
To each alike, of pain and care.

Bacchylides

# Of Happiness To Mortal Man

Of happiness to mortal man  
One is the road, and one the goal  
To keep unburthen'd, all he can,  
From loads of care the tranquil soul.  
But whoso toileth night and day,  
Nor day nor night permits sweet rest.  
To steal him from himself away,  
Or still the fever of his breast,  
Nought will it profit, though he bear  
On gloomy brow the stamp of care.

Bacchylides

# Peace In All Her Sweetness Hail

Peace in all her sweetness hail!  
No more the clarions ravish sleep;  
Red rust-stains o'er the lances creep;  
Gray spider-meshes gather on the mail:  
Glad youths with girls the Comus-carols share;  
In our feastful bowers  
Song puts forth her flowers:  
Peace with thy children, hail! Hail, Wealth and Order fair!

Bacchylides

# Peace On Earth

To mortal men Peace giveth these good things:  
Wealth, and the flowers of honey-throated song;  
The flame that springs  
On craven altars from fat sheep and kine,  
Slain to the gods in heaven; and, all day long,  
Games for gold youths, and flutes, and wreaths, and circling wine.  
Then in the steely shield swart spiders weave  
Their web and dusky woof:  
Rust to the pointed spear and sword doth cleave;  
The brazen trump sounds no alarms;  
Nor is sleep harried from our eyes aloof,  
But with sweet rest my bosom warms:  
The streets are thronged with lovely men and young,  
And hymns in praise of boys like flames to heaven are flung.

Bacchylides

# The Cloud Of Fate

Peaceful wealth, or painful toil,  
Chance of war, or civil broil,  
'Tis not for man's feeble race  
These to shun, or those embrace.  
But that all-disposing Fate  
Which presides o'er mortal state,  
Where it listeth, casts its shroud  
Of impenetrable cloud.

Bacchylides

# The High Immortal Gods Are Free

The high immortal gods are free  
From taint of man's infirmity;  
Nor pale diseases round them wait,  
Nor pain distracts their tranquil state.

Bacchylides

# Theseus

Blue shadows wreathed the galley's prow that bore  
Twice seven Attic youth, a glorious train  
For Theseus, captain of the brunt of war,  
Over the Cretan main.

The North wind filled the shining sails above,  
Thanks to the bucklered Goddess of the Fight;  
But Minos' heart was sore with pains of Love,  
Love brow-bound with delight.

Sweet Eriboea! he refrained no more  
His hands, he touched her cheek of virgin white:  
'Son of Pandion, save!' Her cries implore  
The brazen-armoured knight.

Theseus had seen; beneath his frowning brow  
Dark rolls the sudden anger of his eyes;  
Hard in his heart the stab of grief: 'How now!  
Son of great Zeus,' he cries,

'No more thine unpermitted humour's course  
Within thyself thou governest aright;  
Hold, Prince, I charge thee, thy presuming force!  
Not against Fate we fight:

'All that the God's appointment and decree,  
All that the scales of Justice shall require,  
We will fulfil whene'er the hour may be;  
Stay but thy fell desire.

'What thought the princess of the lovely name  
Bedded to Zeus in Ida gave thee birth,  
To be the first of all the world in fame?  
Am I as nothing worth?

'-I whom the child of treasured Pittheus bare  
To one whose reign doth all the seas enfold?  
Nymphs of the deep with violet-coloured hair  
Gave her a veil of gold.

'Therefore, great Captain of the Cnosian men,  
Forfend the grievous quarrel! Yon dear light  
Of day I would not choose to see again,  
Should'st thou do rude despite

'To one of these:-Oh, better combat's chance-  
A challenge!-God shall judge the issue true!  
So said the valiant master of the lance:  
Fear fell on all the crew,

Fear for the overboldness of the man.  
Then in his soul the son-in-law of the Sun  
Was angry, and he schemed an evil plan,  
And prayed, 'Most Mighty One,

'Hear, Father Zeus! If thou'rt my sire indeed,  
Of the white-wristed Tyrian's child true sire,  
Give me a visible sign! Send down with speed  
The lightning's tress of fire!

'Prince, if Troezenian Aethra mothered thee  
Got by Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth,  
Cast thyself boldly down into the sea,  
His home who gave thee birth!

'Fetch me this golden jewel from my hand  
Out of the deep! Soon shalt thou be aware  
Whether the Lord of Thunder, whose command  
Rules all, will hear my prayer.'

Zeus to that high request his ear inclined,  
And with peculiar praise to magnify  
His son, and give a sign to all mankind,  
Did lighten in the sky.

Then at the welcome sign the Warrior-King  
Spreading his palms to hallowed heaven-wide,  
'Theseus, the grace of God is in this thing  
'Made manifest,' he cried.

'Go, get thee down into the sounding swell!

Surely the God thy father shall upraise  
In all the wooded earth for thee as well  
Exceeding glory and praise.'

But Theseus at the word, no whit unmanned,  
Turnèd not back in spirit: on deck he stood  
Poised for a leap, and passed within the bland  
Sanctuary of the flood.

The son of Zeus was merry in his mind;  
The tight ship to the breeze he bade them lay;  
Fast flew the keel, the strong North drove behind:  
But Fate ruled not the way.

All the Athenians trembled when the first  
Knight of their number seaward sprang, the tear  
Ran down smooth faces, waiting for the worst  
In heavy hopeless fear.

But quick the dolphin-people of the deep  
Down to his father's vasty dwelling steered;  
He saw the state the Gods of Ocean keep,  
And at the sight he feared:

The daughters of the blessed Nereus there  
Beamed from their radiant limbs a fiery blaze,  
Ribbons of golden web reeled round their hair,  
All dancing in a maze

Of fluent feet for pleasure; and he saw  
His father's wife the Lady Amphitrite,  
Eyed like an ox-a Goddess throned for awe  
In chambers of delight.

She flung about him purple raiment brave,  
Over his curls a perfect wreath she laid,  
The wedding-gift that cozening Venus gave,  
Thick roses in a braid.

The thing God wills, the wise man never deems  
Beyond belief. Close by the slender stern  
The Prince appeared, and O the world of schemes

He slit by that return,

Miraculous from the deep! Bright maids arow  
Sang for surprise and joy-Upon his limbs  
Shone gifts of Gods!-laud sang the lads also  
The sea was loud with hymns.

We came from Ceos with a song and dance:  
Lord God of Delos be well pleased this day,  
Send us the conduct of thy lucky chance  
To help us on our way.

Bacchylides

# Truth

As gold the Lydian touch-stone tries,  
So man-the virtuous, valiant, wise  
Must to all-powerful Truth submit  
His virtue, valour, and his wit.

Bacchylides