



Moschus and Bion

Complete Works

DELPHI  CLASSICS

Ancient Classics Series

The Complete Works of
MOSCHUS and BION

(fl. 150 BC)



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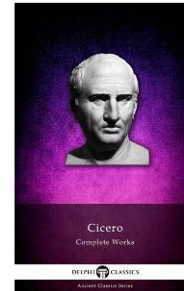
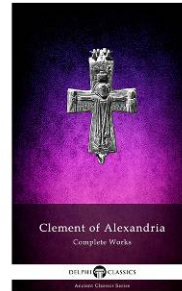
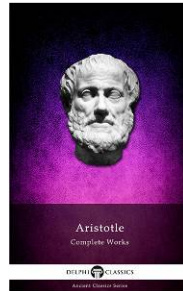
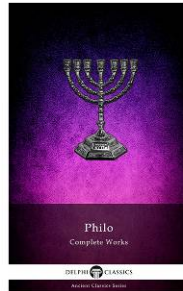
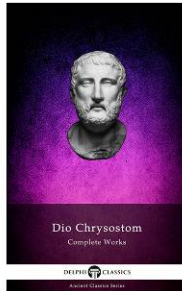
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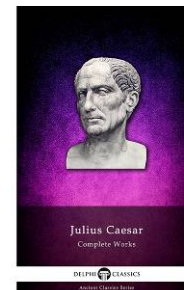
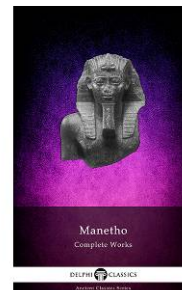
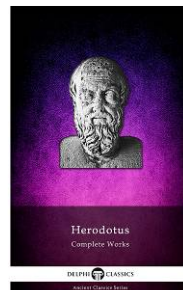
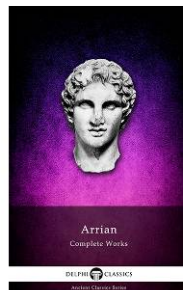
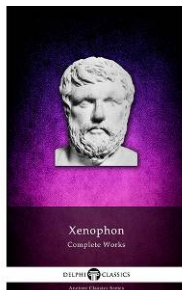
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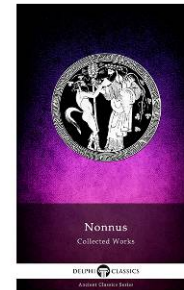
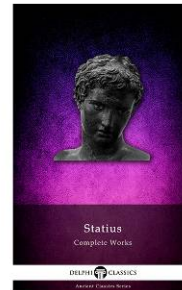
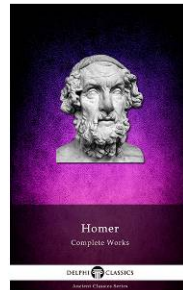
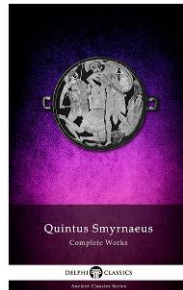
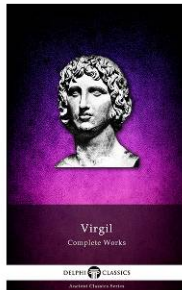
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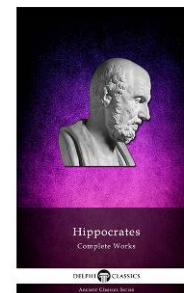
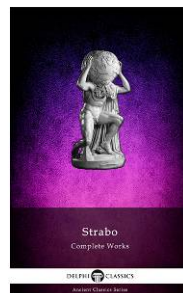
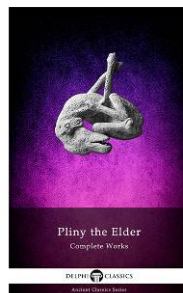
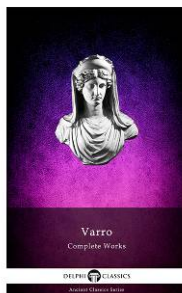
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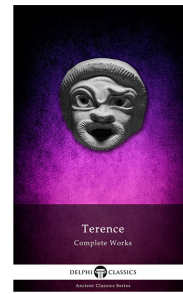
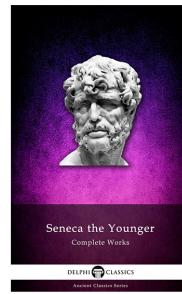
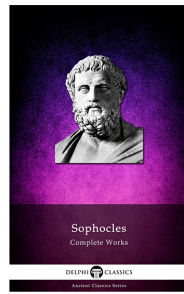
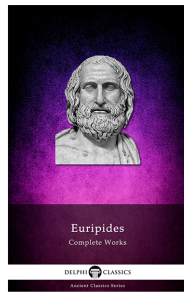
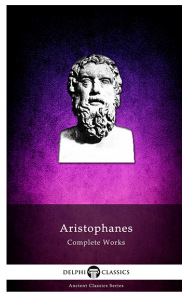
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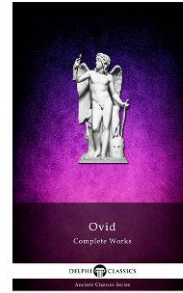
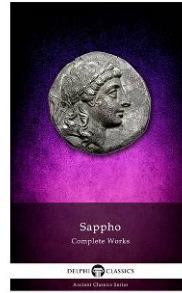
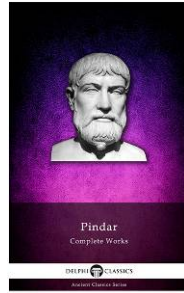
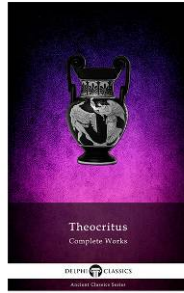
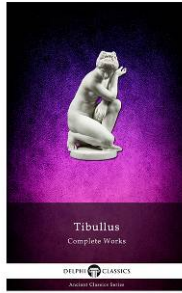
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The Complete Works of
MOSCHUS AND BION



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Complete Works of Moschus and Bion



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Moschus of Syracuse



Syracuse, Sicily — Moschus' birthplace



Ruins at Syracuse

The Poems of Moschus (Edmonds Translation)

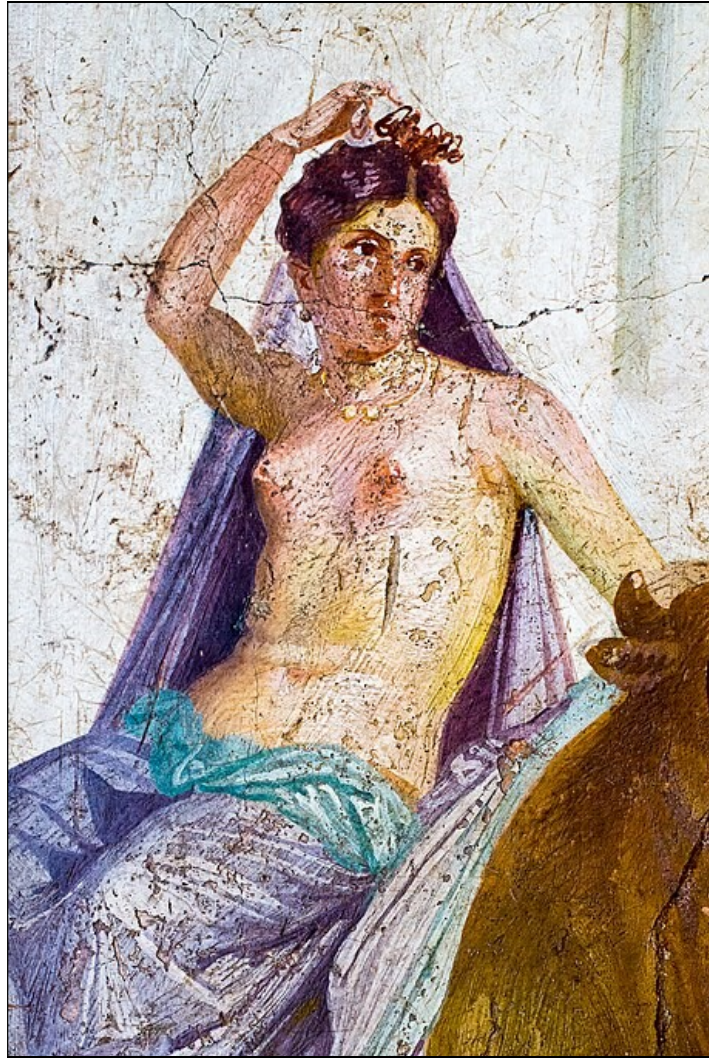


Translated by J. M. Edmonds, Loeb Classical Library, 1912

Theocritus of Syracuse (c. 300 BC-c. 260 BC) is generally acknowledged as the founder of the bucolic genre. Having studied poetry at Cos with the poet and critic Philitas, he composed poetry under patronage, chiefly perhaps at Syracuse and Cos, before moving on to Alexandria. The bucolic genre was further developed by the second and third members of the Greek bucolic canon, Moschus and Bion (who flourished some fifty years later). The literary genre chiefly describes scenes and characters of rural life, especially the life of shepherds, portrayed in a classical style.

Born at Syracuse, Moschus flourished in c. 150 BC and was a student of the Alexandrian grammarian Aristarchus of Samothrace. Aside from his bucolic poetry, he was known for his grammatical work, which has not survived. His few surviving works consist of the *Europa*, an epyllion (a short narrative poem featuring formal affinities with epic) on the myth of the Phoenician princess beloved by Zeus. We also have three bucolic fragments and a whole short bucolic poem, *Runaway Love*, as well as an epigram in elegiac couplets. Moschus' surviving bucolic material is composed in traditional dactylic hexameters and Doric dialect, detailing pastoral themes.

The *Europa*, along with Callimachus' *Hecale* and such Latin examples as *Catullus 64*, is a prominent example of the Hellenistic phenomenon of the epyllion. Although it is difficult to tell because of the fragmentary nature of the texts, Moschus' influence on Greek bucolic poetry is likely to have been significant. The influence of *Runaway Love* is detectable in Bion and other later bucolic poets. In later European literature his work was imitated or translated by such authors as Torquato Tasso and Ben Jonson.



Europa on the back of Zeus turned into a bull, as depicted in a fresco at Pompeii, c. 70 AD

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Portrait bust of the great bucolic poet Theocritus in profile to left, after an antique marble, illustration to Gronow's "Thesaurus Graecarum antiquitatum", c. 1702

I. THE RUNAWAY LOVE

Cypris has lost her boy Love, and cries him in the streets.



CYPRIS ONE DAY made hue and cry after her son Love (Eros) and said: “Whosoever hath seen one Love loitering at the street-corners, know that he is my runaway, and any that shall bring me word of him shall have a reward; and the reward shall be the kiss of Cypris; and if he bring her runaway with him the kiss shall not be all. He is a notable lad; he shall be known among twenty: complexion not white but rather like to fire; eyes keen and beamy; of an ill disposition but fair spoken, for he means not what he says – ’tis voice of honey, heart of gall; forward, cozening, a ne’er-say-troth; a wily brat; makes cruel play. His hair is plenty, his forehead bold; his baby hands tiny but can shoot a long way, aye, e’en across Acheron into the dominions of Death (Hades). All naked his body, but well covered his mind. He’s winged like a bird and flies from one to another, women as well as men, and alights upon their hearts. He hath a very little bow and upon it an arrow; ’tis but a small arrow but carries even to the sky. And at his back is a little golden quiver, but in it lie the keen shafts with which he oftentimes woundeth e’en me. And cruel though all this equipage be, he hath something crueler far, his torch; ’tis a little light, but can set the very Sun afire.

Let any that shall take him bind and bring him and never pity. If he see him weeping, let him have a care lest he be deceived; if laughing, let him still hale him along; but if making to kiss him, let him flee him, for his kiss is an ill kiss and his lips poison; and if he say ‘Here, take these things, you are welcome to all my armour,’ then let him not touch those mischievous gifts, for they are all dipped in fire.

II. EUROPA



MOSCHUS TELLS IN Epic verse how the virgin Europa, after dreaming of a struggle between the two continents for the possession of her, was carried off from among her companions by Zeus in the form of a bull, and borne across the sea from Tyre to Crete, there to become his bride. The earlier half of the poem contains a description of Europa's flower-basket. It bears three pictures in inlaid metal – Io crossing the sea to Egypt in the shape of a heifer, Zeus restoring her there by a touch to human form, and the birth of the peacock from the blood of Argus slain.

Once upon a time Europa had of the Cyprian a delightful dream. 'Twas the third watch o' the night when 'tis nigh dawn and the Looser of Limbs is come down honey-sweet upon the eyelids for to hold our twin light in gentle bondage, 'twas at that hour which is the outgoing time of the flock of true dreams, that whenas Phoenix' daughter the maid Europa slept in her bower under the roof, she dreamt that two lands near and far strove with one another for the possession of her. Their guise was the guise of women, and the one had the look of an outland wife and the other was like to the dames of her own country. Now this other clave very vehemently to her damsel, saying she was the mother that bare and nursed her, but the outland woman laid violent hands upon her and haled her far away; nor went she altogether unwilling, for she that haled her said: "The Aegis-Bearer hath ordained thee to be mine." Then leapt Europa in fear from the bed of her lying, and her heart went pit-a-pat; for she had had a dream as it were a waking vision. And sitting down she was long silent, the two women yet before her waking eyes. At last she raised her maiden voice in accents of terror, saying: "Who of the People of Heaven did send me forth such phantoms as these? What meant the strange dreams that did affray me in that most sweet slumber I had upon the bed in my chamber? And who was the outland wife I did behold in my sleep? O how did desire possess my heart for her, and how gladly likewise did she take me to her arms and look upon me as I had been her child! I only pray the Blessed may send the dream turn out well."

So speaking she up and sought the companions that were of like age with her, born the same year and of high degree, the maidens she delighted in and was wont to play with, whether there were dancing afoot or the washing of a bright fair body at the outpourings of the water-brooks, or the cropping of odorous lily-flowers in the mead. Forthwith were they before her sight, bound flower-baskets in hand for the longshore meadows, there to foregather as was their wont and take their pleasure with the springing roses and the sound of the waves.

Now Europa's basket was of gold, an admirable thing, a great marvel and a great work of Hephaestus, given of him unto Libya the day the Earth-Shaker took her to his bed, and given of Libya unto the fair beauteous Telephassa because she was one of her own blood; and so the virgin Europa came to possess the renowned gift, being Telephassa was her mother.

And in this basket were wrought many shining pieces of cunning work. Therein first was wrought the daughter of Inachus, in the guise of a heifer yet, passing wide over the briny ways by labour of her feet like one swimming; and the sea was wrought of blue lacquer; and high on either cliff-brow stood a great crowd and watched the sea-going heifer. Therein for the second piece was the Son of Cronus gently touching the same heifer of Inachus beside the seven-streamèd Nile, and so transfiguring the hornèd creature to a woman again; and the flowing Nile was of silver wrought, and

the heifer of brass, and the great Zeus of gold. And beneath the rim of the rounded basket was Hermes fashioned, and beside him lay outstretched that Argus which surpassed all others in ever-waking eyes; and from the purple blood of him came a bird uprising in the pride of the flowery hues of his plumage, and unfolding his tail like the sails of a speeding ship till all the lip of the golden basket was covered with the same. Such was this basket of the fair beauteous Europa's.

Now when these damsels were got to the blossomy meads, they waxed merry one over this flower, another over that. This would have the odorous narcissus, that the corn-flag; here 'twas the violet, there the thyme: for right many were the flowerets of the lusty springtime budded and bloomed upon that ground. Then all the band fell a-plucking the spicy tresses of the yellow saffron, to see who could pluck the most; only their queen in the midst of them culled the glory and delight of the red red rose, and was pre-eminent among them even as the Child o' the Foam among the Graces.

Howbeit not for long was she to take her pleasure with the flowers, nor yet to keep her maiden girdle undefiled. For, mark you, no sooner did the Son of Cronus espy her, than his heart was troubled and brought low of a sudden shaft of the Cyprian, that is the only vanquisher of Zeus. Willing at once to escape the jealous Hera's wrath and beguile the maiden's gentle heart, he put off the god and put on the bull, not such as feedeth in the stall, nor yet such as cleaveth the furrow with his train of the bended plough, neither one that draweth in harness the laden wagon. Nay, but all his body was of a yellow hue, save that a ring of gleaming white shined in the midst of his forehead and the eyes beneath it were grey and made lightnings of desire; and the horns of his head rose equal one against the other even as if one should cleave in two rounded cantles the rim of the hornèd moon.

So came he into that meadow without affraying those maidens; and they were straightway taken with a desire to come near and touch the lovely ox, whose divine fragrance came so far and outdid even the delightful odour of that breathing meadow. There went he then and stood afore the spotless may Europa, and for to cast his spell upon her began to lick her pretty neck. Whereat she fell to touching and toying, and did wipe gently away the foam that was thick upon his mouth, till at last there went a kiss from a maid unto a bull. Then he lowed, and so moving-softly you would deem it was the sweet cry of the flute of Mygdony, and kneeling at Europa's feet, turned about his head and beckoned her with a look to his great wide back.

At that she up and spake among those pretty curly-pates saying "Come away, dear my fellows and my feres; let's ride for a merry sport upon this bull. For sure he looks and mild, so kind and so gentle, nothing resembling other bulls; moreover an understanding moveth over him meet as a man's, and all he lacks is speech." So saying, she sat her down smiling upon his back; and the rest would have sate them likewise, but suddenly the bull, possessed of his desire, leapt up and made hot-foot for the sea. Then did the rapt Europa turn her about and stretch forth her hands and call upon her dear companions; but nay, they might not come at her, and the sea-shore reached, 'twas till forward, forward till he was faring over the wide waves with hooves as unharmed of the water as the finds of any dolphin.

And lo! the sea waxed calm, the sea-beasts frolicked afore great Zeus, the dolphins made joyful ups and tumblings over the surge, and the Nereids rose from the brine and mounting the sea-beasts rode all a-row. And before them all that great rumbling sea-lord the Earth-Shaker played pilot of the briny pathway to that his brother, and the Tritons gathering about him took their long taper shells and sounded the marriage-music like some clarioners of the main. Meanwhile Europa, seated on the back of Zeus the Bull, held with one hand to his great horn and caught up with the other the

long purple fold of her robe, lest trailing it should be wet in the untold waters of the hoar brine; and the robe went bosoming deep at the shoulder like the sail of a ship, and made that fair burden light indeed.

When she was now far come from the land of her fathers, and could see neither wave-beat shore nor mountain-top, but only sky above and sea without end below, she gazed about her and lift up her voice saying: “Whither away with me, thou god-like bull? And who art thou, and how come undaunted where is so ill going for shambling oxen? Troth, ’tis for the speeding ship to course o’ the sea, and bulls do shun the paths of the brine. What water is here thou canst drink? What food shalt thou get thee of the sea? Nay, ’tis plain thou art a God; only a God would do as thou doest. For bulls go no more on the sea than dolphins of the wave on the land; but as for you, land and sea is all one for your traveling, your hooves are oars to you. It may well be you will soar above the gray mists and fly like a bird on the wing. Alas and well-a-day that I left my home and followed this ox to go so strange a sea-faring and so lonesome! O be kind good Lord of the hoar sea – for methinks I see thee yonder piloting me on this way – , great Earth-Shaker, be kind and come hither to help me; for sure there’s a divinity in this my journey upon the ways of the waters.”

So far the maid, when the hornèd ox upspake and said: “Be of good cheer, sweet virgin, and never thou fear the billows. ’Tis Zeus himself that speaketh, though to the sight he seem a bull; for I can put on what semblance soever I will. And ’tis love of thee hath brought me to make so far a sea-course in a bull’s likeness; and ere ’tis long thou shalt be in Crete, that was my nurse when I was with her; and there shall thy wedding be, whereof shall spring famous children who shall all be kings among them that are in the earth.”

So spake he, and lo! what he spake was done; for appear it did, the Cretan country, and Zeus took on once more his own proper shape, and upon a bed made him of the Seasons unloosed her maiden girdle. And so it was that she that before was a virgin became straightway the bride of Zeus, and thereafter straightway too a mother of children unto the Son of Cronus.

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