

Proclus' hymn to Athena



Translated by Thomas Taylor

Daughter of aegis-bearing Jove, divine,
Propitious to thy vot'ries prayer incline;
From thy great father's fount supremely bright,
Like fire resounding, leaping into light.
Shield-bearing goddess, hear, to whom belong
A manly mind, and power to tame the strong!
Oh, sprung from matchless might, with joyful mind
Accept this hymn; benevolent and kind!
The holy gates of wisdom by thy hand
Are wide unfolded; and the daring band
Of earth-born giants, that in impious fight
Strove with thy sire, were vanquish'd by thy might.
Once by thy care, as sacred poets sing,
The heart of Bacchus, swiftly-slaughter'd king,
Was sav'd in aether, when, with fury fir'd,
The Titans fell against his life conspir'd;
And with relentless rage and thirst for gore,
Their hands his members into fragments tore:
But ever watchful of thy father's will,
Thy pow'r preserv'd him from succeeding ill,
Till from the secret counsels of his sire,
And born from Semele through heav'nly fire,
Great Dionysius to the world at length
Again appear'd with renovated strength.
Once, too, thy warlike axe, with matchless sway,
Lopp'd from their savage necks the heads away
Of furious beasts, and thus the pests destroy'd
Which long all-seeing Hecate annoy'd.
By thee benevolent great Juno's might
Was rous'd, to furnish mortals with delight:
And through life's wide and various range 'tis thine
Each part to beautify with arts divine:

Invigorated hence by thee, we find
A demiurgic impulse in the mind.
Towers proudly rais'd, and for protection strong,
To thee, dread guardian, deity belong,
As proper symbols of th'exalted height
Thy series claims amidst the courts of light.
Lands are below'd by thee to learning prone,
And Athens, O Athena, is thy own!
Great goddess, hear! and on my dark'ned mind
Pour thy pure light in measure unconfin'd;
— That sacred light, O all-protecting queen,
Which beams eternal from thy face serene:
My soul, while wand'ring on the earth, inspire
With thy own blessed and impulsive fire;
And from thy fables, mystic and divine,
Give all her powers with holy light to shine.
Give love, give wisdom, and a power to love,
Incessant tending to the realms above;
Such as, unconscious of base earth's control,
Gently attracts the vice-subduing soul;
From night's dark region aids her to retire,
And once more gain the palace of her sire:
And if on me some just misfortune press,
Remove th'affliction, and thy suppliant bless.
All-Saving goddess, to my prayer incline!
Nor let those horrid punishments be mine
Which guilty souls in Tartarus confine,
With fetters fast'ned to its brazen floors,
And lock'd by hell's tremendous iron doors.
Hear me, and save (for power is all thy own)
A soul desirous to be thine alone.

