

There ended was his quest, there ceased his care  
 Down he descended from his snow-soft chair,  
 But all unwares with his cold-kind embrace  
 Unhoused thy virgin soul from her fair bidding place.<sup>1</sup>

## IV.

Yet art thou not inglorious in thy fate;  
 For so Apollo, with unweeting hand,  
 Whilome did slay<sup>2</sup> his dearly-lovèd mate,  
 Young Hyacinth, born on Eurotas' strand,  
 Young Hyacinth, the pride of Spartan land;  
 But then transformed him to a purple flower:  
 Alack! that so to change thee Winter had no power.

## V.

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,  
 Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb,  
 Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,  
 Hid from the world in a low-delvèd tomb;  
 Could Heaven for pity thee so strictly doom?  
 Oh, no! for something in thy face did shine  
 Above mortality, that showed thou wast divine.

## VI.

Resolve me then, O soul most surely blest!  
 (If so it be that thou these complaints dost hear);  
 Tell me, bright spirit, where'er thou hoverest,  
 Whether above that high first-moving sphere,  
 Or in the Elysian fields (if such there were);  
 Oh, say me true, if thou wert mortal wight,  
 And why from us so quickly thou didst take thy flight?

## VII.

Wert thou some star which from the ruined roof  
 Of shaked Olympus by mischance didst<sup>3</sup> fall;  
 Which careful Jove in nature's true behoof  
 Took up, and in fit place did reinstal?  
 Or did of late earth's sons besiege the wall  
 Of sheeny Heaven, and thou some goddess fled  
 Amongst us here below to hide thy nectared<sup>4</sup> head?

## VIII.

Or wert thou that just maid<sup>5</sup> who once before  
 Forsook the hated earth, oh, tell me sooth!

<sup>1</sup> The legend of the Erl King will probably suggest itself to n any readers as a parallel to this graceful fiction of Milton's.

<sup>2</sup> While playing at quoits.

<sup>3</sup> Rather, "did fall."

<sup>4</sup> "Nectared" here seems equivalent to "divine."

<sup>5</sup> Astræa, the goddess of justice.

And cam'st again to visit us once more?  
 Or wert thou that sweet smiling youth?<sup>1</sup>  
 Or that crowned matron sage, white-robed Truth?  
 Or any other of that heavenly brood  
 Let down in cloudy throne to do the world some good?

## IX.

Or wert thou of the golden-winged host,  
 Who, having clad thyself in human weed,  
 To earth from thy prefixed seat didst post,  
 And after short abode fly back with speed,  
 As if to show what creatures Heaven doth breed,  
 Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire,  
 To scorn the sordid world, and unto Heaven aspire?

## X.

But oh! why didst thou not stay here below  
 To bless us with thy Heaven-loved innocence,  
 To slake his wrath whom sin hath made our foe,  
 To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence,  
 Or drive away the slaughtering pestilence,<sup>2</sup>  
 To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart?  
 But thou canst best perform that office where thou art

## XI.

Then thou, the mother of so sweet a child,  
 Her false imagined loss cease to lament,  
 And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;  
 Think what a present thou to God hast sent,  
 And render him with patience what he lent;  
 This if thou do, he will an offspring give,  
 That till the world's last end shall make thy name to live

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## II.

## ANNO ÆTATIS XIX.

[At a vacation exercise in the College, part Latin, part English  
 The Latin speeches ended, the English thus began.]

HAIL, native language! that by sinews weak  
 Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak,

<sup>1</sup> Two syllables are wanting to complete this line. It is probable that "Mercy" is the *youth* implied, and that we should read,

"Or wert thou Mercy, that," &c.

Jortin proposes "Hebe."

<sup>2</sup> About the time when this poem was written (*i. e.* 1625) a great plague raged in London. Milton was at this time only in his 17th year

And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,  
 Half unpronounced, slide through my infant lips,  
 Driving dumb silence from the portal door,  
 Where he had mutely sat two years before:  
 Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask,  
 That now I use thee in my latter task:  
 Small loss it is that thence can come unto thee,  
 I know my tongue but little grace can do thee:  
 Thou need'st not be ambitious to be first,  
 Believe me I have thither packed the worst;  
 And, if it happen as I did forecast,  
 The daintiest dishes shall be served up last.  
 I pray thee then deny me not thy aid  
 For this same small neglect that I have made;  
 But haste thee straight to do me once a pleasure,  
 And from thy wardrobe bring thy chieftest treasure,  
 Not those new-fangled toys and trimming slight  
 Which takes our late fantastics with delight,  
 But cull those richest robes and gay'st attire  
 Which deepest spirits and choicest wits desire:  
 I have some naked thoughts that rove about,  
 And loudly knock to have their passage out;  
 And weary of their place, do only stay  
 Till thou hast decked them in thy best array,  
 That so they may, without suspect or fears,  
 Fly swiftly to this fair assembly's ears;  
 Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,  
 Thy service in some graver subject use,<sup>1</sup>  
 Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,  
 Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:  
 Such were the deep transported mind may soar  
 Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door  
 Look in, and see each blissful deity  
 How he before, the thunderous throne doth lie,  
 Listening to what unshorn<sup>2</sup> Apollo sings  
 To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings  
 Immortal nectar to her kingly sire;

<sup>1</sup> It appears, by this address of Milton's to his native language, that even in these green years he had the ambition to think of writing an epic poem; and it is worth the curious reader's attention to observe how much the *Paradise Lost* corresponds in its circumstances to the prophetic wish he now formed.—*Thyer*.

<sup>2</sup> An epithet peculiar to Apollo among the poets  
*lii.* 26, *Hor. Od. i.* 21, 2.

Then passing through the scenes of watchful fire,  
 And misty regions of wide air next under,  
 And hills of snow and lofts of piled thunder,  
 May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,  
 In Heaven's defiance mustering all his waves;  
 Then sing of secret things that came to pass  
 When beldams Nature in her cradle was;  
 And last of kings and queens and heroes old,  
 Such as the wise Demodocus<sup>1</sup> once told  
 In solemn songs at king Alcinous' feast  
 While sad Ulysses' soul and all the rest  
 Are held with his melodious harmony  
 In willing chains and sweet captivity.  
 But fie, my wandering muse, how thou dost stray!  
 Expectance calls thee now another way;  
 Thou know'st it must be now thy only bent  
 To keep in compass of thy predicament:  
 Then quick about thy purposed business come,  
 That to the next I may resign my room.

[Then **Ens** is represented as father of the Predicaments,<sup>2</sup> his ten sons, whereof the eldest stood for Substance with his canons, which Ens, thus speaking, explains.]

Good luck befriend thee, son, for at thy birth  
 The fairy ladies danced upon the hearth;  
 Thy drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spy  
 Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie  
 And, sweetly singing round about thy bed,  
 Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head.  
 She heard them give thee this, that thou shouldst still  
 From eyes of mortals walk invisible:  
 Yet there is something that doth force my fear,  
 For once it was my dismal hap to hear  
 A sibyl old, bow-bent with crooked age,  
 That far events full wisely could presage,  
 And in time's long and dark prospective glass  
 Foresaw what future days should bring to pass:  
 Your son, said she (nor can you it prevent),  
 Shall subject be to many an accident.

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the eighth book of the Odyssey.

<sup>2</sup> Or categories. If the reader does not understand metaphysics, he will not be much the wiser for any explanation I could give him within the space of a note.

O'er all his brethren he shall reign as king,  
 Yet every one shall make him underling,  
 And those that cannot live from him asunder  
 Ungratefully shall strive to keep him under,  
 In worth and excellence he shall out-go them,  
 Yet, being above them, he shall be below them:  
 From others he shall stand in need of nothing,  
 Yet on his brothers shall depend for clothing.  
 To find a foe it shall not be his hap,  
 And peace shall lull him in her flowery lap;  
 Yet shall he live in strife, and at his door  
 Devouring war shall never cease to roar:  
 Yea it shall be his natural property  
 To harbour those that are at enmity.  
 What power, what force, what mighty spell, if not  
 Your learned hands, can loose this Gordian knot?

[The next, Quantity and Quality, spake in prose, then  
 Relation was called by his name.]

RIVERS, arise!<sup>1</sup> whether thou be the son  
 Of utmost Tweed, or Oose, or gulfy Dun;  
 Or Trent, who, like some earth-born giant, spreads  
 His thirty arms along the indented meads;  
 Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath;  
 Or Severn swift, guilty of maidens' death;  
 Or rocky Avon; or of sedgy Lee;  
 Or coaly Tine; or ancient hallowed Dee;  
 Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian's name;  
 Or Medway smooth; or royal towered Thame.

[The rest was prose.]

### III.

#### ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

Composed 1629.<sup>2</sup>

##### I.

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,  
 Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,

<sup>1</sup> In invoking these rivers, Milton had his eye particularly upon that admirable episode in Spenser of the marriage of the Thames and the Medway, where the several rivers are introduced in honour of the ceremony.—*Newton*.

<sup>2</sup> When Milton was twenty-one years old.

Faults of the Nativity

Ode are:

(1) Inequality of treatment

(2) Too gorgeous use of ornament

(3) Weak & inappropriate ending.

The Conception & arrangement of the whole are very remarkable

Mather

Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born,  
 Our great redemption from above did bring;  
 For so the holy sages once did sing,  
 That he our deadly forfeit should release,  
 And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

## II.

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,  
 And that far-beaming blaze of majesty  
 Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high council-table  
 To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,  
 He laid aside; and here with us to be,  
 Forsook the courts of everlasting day,  
 And chose with us a darksome house of morial clay.

## III.

Say, heavenly muse, shall not thy sacred vein  
 Afford a present to the Infant God?  
 Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,  
 To welcome him to this his new abode,  
 Now while the Heaven, by the sun's team untrod,  
 Hath took no print of the approaching light,  
 And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

## IV.

See how from far upon the eastern road  
 The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:  
 Oh, run, prevent them with thy humble ode, *anticipate, come before.*  
 And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;  
 Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,  
 And join thy voice unto the angel quire,  
 From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire!<sup>1</sup>

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## THE HYMN.

## L

It was the winter wild,  
 While the Heaven-born child  
 All meanly wrapped in the rude manger lies:  
 Nature in awe to him  
 Had doffed her gaudy trim,  
 With her great Master so to sympathize:  
 It was no season then for her  
 To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to Is. vi. 6, 7.

## II.

Only with speeches fair  
 She woos the gentle air  
 To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,  
 And on her naked shame,  
 Pollute with sinful blame,  
 The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,  
 Confounded, that her Maker's eyes  
 Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

## III.

But he, her fears to cease,  
 Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;  
 She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding  
 Down, through the turning sphere  
 His ready harbinger,  
 With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing,  
 And waving wide her myrtle wand,  
 She strikes an universal peace<sup>1</sup> through sea and land.

## IV.

No war, or battle's sound,  
 Was heard the world around:  
 The idle spear and shield were high up hung;  
 The hookèd chariot stood,  
 Unstained with hostile blood;  
 The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng,  
 And kings sat still with awful eye,  
 As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

## V.

But peaceful was the night  
 Wherein the Prince of Light  
 His reign of peace upon the earth began:  
 The winds with wonder whist<sup>2</sup>  
 Smoothly the waters kissed,  
 Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,  
 Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
 While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

## VI.

The stars with deep amaze  
 Stand fixed in stedfast gaze,  
 Bending one way their precious influence,  
 And will not take their flight,  
 For all the morning light,  
 Or Lucifer that often warned them thence:

<sup>1</sup> "Strikes peace," a Latinism, *foedus ferire*.

<sup>2</sup> Silent.

English  
 [False Alexandrine]

Every word expresses  
 fixedness.

But in their glimmering orbs did glow,  
Until their Lord himself bespoke, and bid them go.

VII

And though the shady gloom  
Had given day her room,  
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
And hid his head for shame,  
As his inferior flame  
The new enlightened world no more should need;  
He saw a greater sun appear  
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree, could bear

*English*  
[~~False~~ Alexandrine]

VIII.

The shepherds on the lawn,  
Or e'er the point of dawn,  
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;  
Full little thought they then,  
That the mighty Pan  
Was kindly come to live with them below;  
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

*English*  
[~~False~~ Alexandrine]

IX.

When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet,  
As never was by mortal finger strook,  
Divinely-warbled voice  
Answering the stringéd noise,  
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:  
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,  
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

X.

Nature that heard such sound,  
Beneath the hollow round  
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,<sup>1</sup>  
Now was almost won  
To think her part was done,  
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

XI.

At last surrounds their sight  
A globe of circular light,  
That with long beams the shame-faced night arrayed;  
The helméd cherubim,

<sup>1</sup> Piercing.



And sworded seraphim,  
 Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,  
 Harping in loud and solemn quire,  
 With unexpressive notes to Heaven's new-born Heir

XII.

Such music (as 'tis said)  
 Before was never made,  
 But when of old the sons of morning sung,<sup>1</sup>  
 While the Creator great  
 His constellations set,  
 And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,  
 And cast the dark foundations deep,  
 And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep

XIII.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,  
 Once bless our human ears  
 (If ye have power to touch our senses so),  
 And let your silver chime  
 Move in melodious time,  
 And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow  
 And with your ninefold harmony  
 Make up full consort to the angelic symphony

XIV.

For if such holy song  
 Enwrap our fancy long,  
 Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,  
 And speckled Vanity  
 Will sicken soon and die,  
 And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould,  
 And Hell itself will pass away,  
 And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

XV.

Yea, Truth and Justice then  
 Will down return to men,  
 Orbed in a rainbow; and like glories wearing<sup>2</sup>  
 Mercy will sit between,  
 Throned in celestial sheen,  
 With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering,  
 And Heaven, as at some festival,  
 Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

<sup>1</sup> Job xxxviii. 7.<sup>2</sup> This is the author's own correction. He had originally written—

“The enamelled arras of the rainbow wearing;  
 And Mercy sit between.” &c.

English  
 [False Alexandrine]

XVI.

But wisest Fate says no,  
 This must not yet be so,  
 The babe lies yet in smiling infancy,  
 That on the bitter cross  
 Must redeem our loss;  
 So both himself and us to glorify:  
 Yet first to those ychained in sleep,  
 The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.

XVII.

With such a horrid clang  
 As on Mount Sinai rang,  
 While the red fire and smouldering clouds out brake,  
 The aged earth aghast,  
 With terror of that blast,  
 Shall from the surface to the centre shake;  
 When at the world's last session,  
 The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII.

And then at last our bliss  
 Full and perfect is,  
 But now begins; for, from this happy day,  
 The old dragon, underground  
 In straiter limits bound,  
 Not half so far casts his usurpéd sway,  
 And wroth to see his kingdom fail,  
 Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX.

The oracles are dumb,<sup>1</sup>  
 No voice or hideous hum  
 Runs through the archéd roof in words deceiving  
 Apollo from his shrine  
 Can no more divine,  
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.  
 No nightly trance, or breathéd spell,  
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell

XX.

The lonely mountains o'er,  
 And the resounding shore,  
 A voice of weeping heard<sup>2</sup> and loud lament;

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the belief entertained by many of the Fathers, that the oracles ceased at the coming of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Alluding to an effective story told by Plutarch (*de defectu oraculorum*), that a voice had been heard, proclaiming that "The Great Power was dead."

From haunted spring, and dale  
 Edged with poplar pale,  
 The parting genius is with sighing sent;  
 With flower-inwoven tresses torn  
 The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn

## XXI.

In consecrated earth,  
 And on the holy hearth,  
 The Lars<sup>1</sup> and Lemures<sup>2</sup> moan with midnight plaint,  
 In urns, and altars round,  
 A drear and dying sound  
 Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;  
 And the chill marble seems to sweat,  
 While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

## XXII.

Peor and Baälim  
 Forsake their temples dim,  
 With that twice battered god of Palestine<sup>3</sup>,  
 And mooned Ashtaroth,  
 Heaven's queen and mother both,  
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;  
 The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,  
 In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn

## XXIII.

And sullen Moloch fled,  
 Hath left in shadows dread  
 His burning idol all of blackest hue;  
 In vain with cymbals' ring  
 They call the grisly king,  
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue,  
 The brutish gods of Nile as fast,  
 Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

## XXIV.

Nor is Osiris seen  
 In Memphian grove or green,  
 Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud  
 Nor can he be at rest  
 Within his sacred chest,  
 Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud;

<sup>1</sup> Household gods.

<sup>2</sup> Night spirits, ghosts.

<sup>3</sup> Dagon. See Judges xvi., and 1 Sam. v. The names of the heathen gods mentioned in the following lines have already been explained in the notes on the first book of Paradise Lost.

a vain with timbrelled anthems dark  
The sable-stoléd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark

XXV.

He feels from Juda's land  
The dreaded infant's hand,  
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn,  
Nor all the gods beside,  
Longer dare abide,  
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;  
Our Babe to show his Godhead true,  
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnéd crew.

XXVI.

So when the sun in bed,  
Curtained with cloudy red,  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
The flocking shadows pale  
Troop to the infernal jail,  
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,  
And the yellow-skirted fays  
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

XXVII.

But see the virgin blest  
Hath laid her Babe to rest,  
Time is our tedious song should here have ending:  
Heaven's youngest teeméd star  
Hath fixed her polished car,  
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:  
And all about the courtly stable  
Bright-harnessed<sup>1</sup> angels sit in order serviceable,

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## IV

THE PASSION.<sup>2</sup>

I.

EREWHILE of music, and ethereal mirth,  
Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,  
And joyous news of heavenly Infant's birth,  
My muse with angels did divide to sing;  
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,

<sup>1</sup> Equipped.<sup>2</sup> It appears from the beginning of this poem, that it was composed after, and probably soon after, the ode on the Nativity.

In winter solstice like the shortened light  
Soon swallowed up in dark and long out-living night

## II.

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,  
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe,  
Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,  
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so  
Which he for us did freely undergo :

Most perfect Hero, tried in heaviest plight  
Of labours huge and hard, too hard for human wight !

## III.

He, sovran Priest, stooping his regal head,  
That dropp'd with odorous oil down his fair eyes,  
Poor fleshly tabernacle enter'd,  
His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies :  
Oh, what a mask was there, what a disguise !

Yet more ; the stroke of death he must abide,  
Then lies him meekly down fast by his brethren's side

## IV

These latest scenes confine my roving verse  
To this horizon is my Phœbus bound ;  
His godlike acts, and his temptations fierce,  
And former sufferings other where are found ;  
Loud o'er the rest Cremona's trump<sup>1</sup> doth sound ;  
Me softer airs befit, and softer strings  
Of lute, or viol still, more apt for mournful things.

## V.

Befriend me night, best patroness of grief,  
Over the pole thy thickest mantle throw,  
And work my flattered fancy to belief,  
That Heaven and Earth are coloured with my woe ;  
My sorrows are too dark for day to know :  
The leaves should all be black whereon I write,  
And letters, where my tears have washed, a wannish white

## VI.

See, see the chariot, and those rushing wheels,  
That whirled the prophet up at Chebar<sup>2</sup> flood.  
My spirit some transporting cherub feels,  
To bear me where the towers of Salem stood,  
Once glorious towers, now sunk in guiltless blood ;

<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* the poetry of Hieronymus Vida, of Cremona, who wrote  
"Christiad."

<sup>2</sup> As Ezekiel saw the vision of the four wheels and of the glory of  
God at the river Chebar.

There doth my soul in holy vision sit  
In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatic fit

## VII.

Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock  
That was the casket of Heaven's richest store,  
And here though grief my feeble hands up lock,  
Yet on the softened quarry would I score  
My plaining verse as lively as before ;

For sure so well instructed are my tears,  
That they would fitly fall in ordered characters.

## VIII.

Or should I thence, hurried on viewless wing,  
Take up a weeping on the mountains wild,  
The gentle neighbourhood of grove and spring  
Would soon unbosom all their echoes mild,  
And I (for grief is easily beguiled)

Might think the infection of my sorrows loud  
Had got a race of mourners on some pregnant cloud

[This subject the author finding to be above the years he had,  
when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun.  
left it unfinished.]

## V.

ON TIME.<sup>1</sup>

FLY, envious Time, till thou run out thy race ;  
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,  
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace  
And glut thyself with what thy womb devour  
Which is no more than what is false and vain  
And merely mortal dross ;  
So little is our loss,  
So little is thy gain.  
For when as each thing bad thou hast entombed,  
And last of all thy greedy self consumed,  
Then long eternity shall greet our bliss  
With an individual kiss ;  
And joy shall overtake us as a flood,  
When every thing that is sincerely good

<sup>1</sup> To this copy of verses the poet had appended the direction, "To be set on a clock-case."

And perfectly divine,  
 With truth, and peace, and love, shall ever shine  
 About the supreme throne  
 Of him, to whose happy-making sight<sup>1</sup> alone  
 When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,  
 Then all this earthy grossness quit,  
 Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit,  
 Triumphant over Death, and Chance, and thee, O Time

## VI.

## UPON THE CIRCUMCISION.

YE flaming powers, and wingéd warriors bright,  
 That erst with music, and triumphant song,  
 First heard by happy watchful shepherds' ear,  
 So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along  
 Through the soft silence of the listening night,  
 Now mourn; and if sad share with us to bear  
 Your fiery essence can distil no tear,  
 Burn in your sighs, and borrow  
 Seas wept from our deep sorrow:  
 He who with all Heaven's heraldry whilere  
 Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease;  
 Alas! how soon our sin  
 Sore doth begin  
 His infancy to seize!

O more exceeding love, or law more just?  
 Just law, indeed, but more exceeding love!  
 For we by rightful doom remediless  
 Were lost in death, till he that dwelt above,  
 High throned in secret bliss, for us frail dust  
 Emptied his glory,<sup>2</sup> even to nakedness;  
 And that great covenant which we still transgress  
 Entirely satisfied,  
 And the full wrath beside  
 Of vengeful justice bore for our excess.

<sup>1</sup> The same precisely as "beatific vision."

<sup>2</sup> From the Greek of Phillip. ii. 7: *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε*, "he made himself of no reputation."

And seals obedience first with wounding smart  
 This day; but oh, ere long,  
 Huge pangs and strong  
 Will pierce more near his heart.

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 VII.

## AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

BLEST pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,  
 Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,  
 Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,  
 Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,  
 And to our high-raised fantasy present  
 That undisturbed song of pure concert,<sup>1</sup>  
 Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne  
 To him that sits thereon,  
 With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,  
 Where the bright seraphim in burning row  
 Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,  
 And the cherubic host in thousand quires  
 Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
 With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,  
 Hymns devout and holy psalms  
 Singing everlastingly;  
 That we on earth with undiscording voice  
 May rightly answer that melodious noise,  
 As once we did, till disproportioned sin  
 Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din  
 Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
 To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed  
 In perfect diapason,<sup>2</sup> whilst they stood  
 In first obedience, and their state of good.  
 Oh, may we soon again renew that song,  
 And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long  
 To his celestial consort us unite,  
 To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.

<sup>1</sup> This is preferable to the other reading, "content"

<sup>2</sup> Compare Plin. Nat. Hist. ii. 20.

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## VIII.

## AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER.

THIS rich marble doth inter  
 The honoured wife of Winchester,  
 A viscount's daughter, an earl's heir.  
 Besides what her virtues fair  
 Added to her noble birth,  
 More than she could own from earth.  
 Summers three times eight, save one,  
 She had told; alas! too soon,  
 After so short time of breath,  
 To house with darkness, and with death.  
 Yet had the number of her days  
 Been as complete as was her praise,  
 Nature and fate had had no strife  
 In giving limit to her life.  
 Her high birth, and her graces sweet,  
 Quickly found a lover meet;  
 The virgin quire for her request  
 The god that sits at marriage feast;  
 He at their invoking came,  
 But with a scarce well-lighted flame,  
 And in his garland as he stood  
 Ye might discern a cypress bud.<sup>2</sup>  
 Once had the early matrons run  
 To greet her of a lovely son,  
 And now with second hope she goes,  
 And calls Lucina to her throes;  
 But whether by mischance or blame  
 Atropos for Lucina<sup>3</sup> came,  
 And with remorseless cruelty  
 Spoiled at once both fruit and tree;  
 The hapless babe before his birth  
 Had burial, yet not laid in earth,  
 And the languished mother's womb  
 Was not long a living tomb.

<sup>1</sup> Jane, daughter of Thomas Lord Viscount Savage, of Rocksavage, Chester. She died in childbed of a second son, in the twenty-third year of her age.

<sup>2</sup> Symbolical of a funeral.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. the Fates instead of the goddess who presides over child-birth

So have I seen some tender slip,  
Saved with care from winter's nip,  
The pride of her carnation train,  
Plucked up by some unheedy swain  
Who only thought to crop the flower  
New shot up from vernal shower,  
But the fair blossom hangs the head  
Side-ways, as on a dying bed,  
And those pearls of dew she wears,  
Prove to be presaging tears,  
Which the sad morn had let fall  
On her hastening funeral  
Gentle lady, may thy grave  
Peace and quiet ever have:  
After this, thy travel sore,  
Sweet rest seize thee evermore,  
That to give the world increase,  
Shortened hast thy own life's lease.  
Here, besides the sorrowing  
That thy noble house doth bring,  
Here be tears of perfect moan  
Wept for thee in Helicon,  
And some flowers, and some bays,  
For thy hearse, to strew the ways,  
Sent thee from the banks of Came,  
Devoted to thy virtuous name;  
Whilst thou, bright saint, high sitt'st in glory,  
Next her much like to thee in story,  
That fair Syrian shepherdess,<sup>1</sup>  
Who, after years of barrenness,  
The highly favoured Joseph bore  
To him that served for her before,  
And at her next birth, much like thee,  
Through pangs fled to felicity,  
Far within the bosom bright  
Of blazing Majesty and Light:  
There with thee, new welcome saint,  
Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,  
With thee there clad in radiant sheen,  
No marchioness, but now a queen.

<sup>1</sup> Rachel. See Gen. xxxv. 18.

## IX

## SONG ON MAY MORNING.

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,  
 Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her  
 The flowery May, who from her green lap throws<sup>1</sup>  
 The yellow cowslip, and the pale primrose  
 Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire  
 Mirth and youth and warm desire;  
 Woods and groves are of thy dressing,  
 Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.  
 Thus we salute thee with our early song,  
 And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

10.

## X

ON SHAKSPEARE, 1630.<sup>2</sup>

WHAT needs my Shakspeare for his honoured bones  
 The labour of an age in piléd stones?  
 Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid  
 Under a star-pointing pyramid?  
 Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,  
 What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?  
 Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
 Hast built thyself a livelong monument.  
 For whilst to the shame of flow-endeavouring art  
 Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
 Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book  
 Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;  
 Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving,  
 Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;  
 And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie,  
 That kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die.

16.

<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare, Richard II. act v. sc. 4—

“Who are the violets now  
 That strow the green lap of the new-come spring.”

<sup>2</sup> In the twenty-second year of the poet's age.

## XI.

## ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER,

WHO WICKENED IN THE TIME OF HIS VACANCY, BEING FORBID TO  
GO TO LONDON, BY REASON OF THE PLAGUE.

HERE lies old Hobson;<sup>1</sup> Death hath broke his girt  
And here, alas! hath laid him in the dirt;  
Or else the ways being foul, twenty to one,  
He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown.  
'Twas such a shifter, that if truth were known,  
Death was half glad when he had got him down;  
For he had, any time this ten years full,  
Dodged with him betwixt Cambridge and the Bull  
And surely Death could never have prevailed,  
Had not his weekly course of carriage failed;  
But lately finding him so long at home,  
And thinking now his journey's end was come,  
And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,  
In the kind office of a chamberlin  
Showed him his room where he must lodge that night,  
Pulled off his boots, and took away the light:  
If any ask for him, it shall be said,  
Hobson has supped, and 's newly gone to bed.

18.

## XII.

## ANOTHER ON THE SAME.

HERE lieth one, who did most truly prove  
That he could never die while he could move,  
So hung his destiny, never to rot  
While he might still jog on and keep his trot;

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Thomas Hobson was a carrier, and the first man in this island who let out hackney horses. He lived in Cambridge, and, observing that the scholars rid hard, his manner was to keep a large stable of horses, with boots, bridles, and whips, to furnish the gentlemen at once, without going from college to college to borrow, as they have done since the death of this worthy man. I say, Mr. Hobson kept a stable of forty good cattle, always ready and fit for travel

Made of sphere-metal, never to decay  
 Until his revolution was at stay.  
 Time numbers motion, yet (without a crime  
 Gainst old truth) motion numbered out his time  
 And like an engine moved with wheel and weight,  
 His principles being ceased, he ended straight.  
 Rest that gives all men life, gave him his death,  
 And too much breathing put him out of breath;  
 Nor were it contradiction to affirm  
 Too long vacation hastened on his term  
 Merely to drive the time away he sickened,  
 Fainted, and died, nor would with ale be quickened,  
 "Nay," quoth he, on his swooning bed out-stretched,  
 "If I mayn't carry, sure I'll ne'er be fetched,  
 But vow, though the cross doctors all stood hearers,  
 For one carrier put down to make six bearers."  
 Ease was his chief disease, and to judge right,  
 He died for heaviness that his cart went light:  
 His leisure told him that his time was come,  
 And lack of load made his life burdensome,  
 That even to his last breath (there be that say't)  
 As he were pressed to death, he cried "More weight;"  
 But had his doings lasted as they were,  
 He had been an immortal carrier.  
 Obedient to the moon he spent his date  
 In course reciprocal, and had his fate  
 Linked to the mutual flowing of the seas,  
 Yet (strange to think) his wain was his increase:  
 His letters are delivered all and gone,  
 Only remains this superscription.

ling; but when a man came for a horse, he was led into the stable, where there was great choice, but he obliged him to take the horse which stood next to the stable-door; so that every customer was alike well served, according to his chance, and every horse ridden with the same justice; from whence it became a proverb, when what ought to be your choice was forced upon you, to say "Hobson's choice." This memorable man stands drawn in fresco at an inn (which he used) in Bishopsgate-street, with an hundred pound bag under his arm, with this inscription upon the said bag, "The fruitful mother of a hundred more."--*Spectator*, No. 509.

XIII.

L'ALLEGRO.<sup>1</sup>

HENCE loathéd Melancholy,  
 Of Cerberus<sup>2</sup> and blackest Midnight born,  
 In Stygian cave forlorn,  
 'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,  
 Find out some uncouth cell,  
 Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,  
 And the night raven sings; Trochaic inversion - 1<sup>st</sup> syllable.  
 There under ebon shades, and low-browed rocks,  
 As ragged as thy locks,  
 In dark Cimmerian<sup>3</sup> desert ever dwell.  
 But come thou goddess fair and free,  
 In Heaven ycleped Euphrosyne,  
 - And by men, heart-easing Mirth,  
 Whom lovely Venus at a birth<sup>4</sup>  
 - With two sister graces more 1<sup>st</sup> foot - trochaic inversion.  
 To ivy-crownéd Bacchus bore  
 Or whether (as some sages sing)<sup>5</sup>  
 The frolic wind that breathes the spring,  
 Zephyr with Aurora playing, 7 syllables. Trochaic.

Lines 1-6  
 syllables alternate  
 10.

<sup>1</sup> This and the following poem are exquisitely beautiful in themselves, but appear much more beautiful when they are considered as they were written, in contrast with each other. There is a great variety of pleasing images in each of them; and it is remarkable that the poet represents several of the same objects as exciting both mirth and melancholy, and affecting us differently according to the different dispositions and affections of the soul. This is nature and experience. He derives the title of both poems from the Italian, which language was then principally in vogue. L'Allegro is the cheerful, merry man; and, in this poem, he describes the course of mirth, in the country and in the city, from morning till noon, and from noon till night: and possibly he might have this in his thoughts, when he said afterwards in his "Areopagitica," "There be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightful dream." Vol. i. p. 154.—Newton.

<sup>2</sup> Erebus, the conjecture of Upton and Newton, is more agreeable to mythology.

<sup>3</sup> The Cimmerians lived in caves, and never saw the light of the sun. See Homer, Od. xi. 14; Tibull. iv. i. 65.

<sup>4</sup> The more ancient opinion makes the graces spring from Jupiter and Eurynome.

<sup>5</sup> This is merely Milton's fiction, as no such account is given elsewhere.

As he met her once a maying,  
 There on beds of violets blue,  
 And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,  
 Filled her with thee a daughter fair,  
 So buxom, blithe, and debonair.  
 Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee  
 Jest and youthful jollity,  
 Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,  
 Nods, and becks, and wreathéd smiles,  
 Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
 And love to live in dimple sleek;  
 Sport that wrinkled care derides,  
 And laughter holding both his sides.  
 Come, and trip it as you go  
 On the light fantastic toe,  
 And in thy right hand lead with thee,  
 The mountain nymph,<sup>1</sup> sweet Liberty; *Note*  
 And if I give thee honour due,  
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
 To live with her, and live with thee,  
 In unreprieved pleasures free;  
 To hear the lark begin his flight,  
 And singing startle the dull night,  
 From his watch-tower in the skies,  
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;  
 Then to come in spite of sorrow,  
 And at my window bid good-morrow,  
 Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,  
 Or the twisted eglantine:  
 While the cock with lively din  
 Scatters the rear of darkness thin,  
 And to the stack, or the barn-door,  
 Stoutly struts his dames before:  
 Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
 Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,  
 From the side of some hoar hill,  
 Through the high wood echoing shrill:  
 Some time walking not unseen  
 By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,  
 Right against the eastern gate,  
 Where the great sun begins his state,

<sup>1</sup> So called, probably because those nations which dwell on mountains have preserved their liberty longest and most perseveringly.

Robed in flames and amber light,  
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight,<sup>1</sup> *dressed, adorned.*  
 While the ploughman near at hand  
 Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
 And the mower whets his scythe,  
 And every shepherd tells his tale  
 Under the hawthorn in the dale.  
 Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures  
 Whilst the landskip round it measures,  
 Russet lawns, and fallows gray,  
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray,<sup>2</sup> *feed at large*  
 Mountains on whose barren breast  
 The labouring clouds do often rest,  
 Meadows trim with daisies pied,  
 Shallow brooks, and rivers wide  
 Towers and battlements it sees  
 Bosomed high in tufted trees,  
 Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
 The Cynosure<sup>3</sup> of neighbouring eyes. *Ursa Minor (constellation)*  
 Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,  
 From betwixt two aged oaks,  
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,  
 Are at their savoury dinner set  
 Of herbs, and other country messes,  
 Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;  
 And then in haste her bower she leaves,  
 With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;  
 Or if the earlier season lead  
 To the tanned haycock in the mead.  
 Sometimes with secure delight  
 The upland hamlets will invite,  
 When the merry bells ring round,  
 And the jocund rebecks<sup>4</sup> sound *three-stringed fiddles.*  
 To many a youth, and many a maid,  
 Dancing in the chequered shade;  
 And young and old come forth to play  
 On a sunshine holy-day,  
 Til the livelong daylight fail;  
 Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,

<sup>1</sup> Dressed, adorned.

<sup>2</sup> Feed at large.

<sup>3</sup> The constellation of Ursa Minor, or the Little Bear.

<sup>4</sup> A three-stringed fiddle.



With stories<sup>1</sup> told of many a feat,  
 How fairy Mab the junkets eat,  
 She was pinched, and pulled, she said,  
 And he by friars' lanthorn led,  
 Tells how the drudging goblin sweat,  
 To earn his cream bowl duly set,<sup>2</sup>  
 When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
 His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn,  
 That ten day-labourers could not end;  
 Then lies him down the lubbar fiend,  
 And stretched out all the chimney's length,  
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
 And crop-full out of doors he flings,  
 Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
 Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,  
 By whispering winds soon lulled asleep  
 Towered cities please us then,  
 And the busy hum of men,  
 Where throngs of knights and barons bold  
 In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,  
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
 Rain influence, and judge the prize  
 Of wit, or arms, while both contend  
 To win her grace, whom all commend.  
 There let Hymen oft appear  
 In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
 And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
 With mask, and antique pageantry;  
 Such sights as youthful poets dream  
 On summer eves by haunted stream.  
 Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
 If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
 Or sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,  
 Warble his native wood-notes wild

<sup>1</sup> These stories, it is almost unnecessary to say, formed a favourite amusement of the country people. Shakspeare has introduced several such folk-lore legends into his "Midsummer Night's Dream."

<sup>2</sup> Reginald Scott gives a brief account of this imaginary spirit much in the same manner with this of our author. "Your grand-dames, maids, were wont to set a *bowl of milk* for him, for his pains in grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight—his *white bread and milk* was his standing fee." *Discovery of Witchcraft*; London: 4to. p. 66, *Peck*. See Keightley's *Fairy Mythology* Art. Kobold.

And ever against eating cares,  
 Lap me in soft Lydian<sup>1</sup> airs,  
 Married to immortal verse,  
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce  
 In notes, with many a winding bout  
 Of linked sweetness long drawn out,  
 With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,  
 The melting voice through mazes running,  
 Untwisting all the chains that tie  
 The hidden soul of harmony;  
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
 From golden slumber on a bed  
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear  
 Such strains as would have won the ear  
 Of Pluto, to have quite set free  
 His half regained Eurydice.  
 These delights, if thou canst give,  
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live.<sup>2</sup>

## XIV

IL PENSEROSO.<sup>3</sup>

HENCE, vain deluding joys,  
 The brood of folly without father bred!  
 How little you bested,  
 Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!  
 Dwell in some idle brain,  
 And fancies fond with gawly shapes possess,  
 As thick and numberless  
 As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Lydian measure was very soft and sweet. So Dryden, Ode on St. Cecilia's Day:—

“Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,  
 Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.”

<sup>2</sup> A charming adaptation from Shakspeare's “Nymph's Reply to the passionate Shepherd” :—

“If these delights thy mind may move,  
 Then live with me, and be my love.”

<sup>3</sup> See note at the beginning of the last poem. The model of a great portion of this poem is a song in praise of melancholy, in Fletcher's Comedy of “The Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman.”

<sup>4</sup> Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale, ver. 868.

Or likest hovering dreams,  
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.  
 But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,  
 Hail, divinest Melancholy,  
 Whose saintly visage is too bright  
 To hit the sense of human sight,  
 And therefore to our weaker view,  
 O'erlaid with black, staid wisdom's hue;  
 Black, but such as in esteem  
 Prince Memnon's<sup>1</sup> sister might beseem,  
 Or that starred Ethiop queen<sup>2</sup> that strove  
 To set her beauty's praise above  
 The sea-rymths, and their powers offended:  
 Yet thou art higher far descended;  
 Thee, bright-haired Vesta long of yore  
 To solitary Saturn<sup>3</sup> bore;  
 His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,  
 Such mixture was not held a stain).  
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades  
 He met her, and in secret shades  
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
 While yet there was no fear of Jove.  
 Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,  
 Sober, stedfast, and demure,  
 All in a robe of darkest grain,  
 Flowing with majestic train,  
 And sable stole of Cyprus lawn,  
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
 With even step, and musing gait,  
 And looks commercing with the skies,  
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:  
 There, held in holy passion still,  
 Forget thyself to marble, till

<sup>1</sup> Son of Tithonus, by Aurora, and king of Ethiopia. He was slain by Achilles when coming to the assistance of Priam, at the siege of Troy.

<sup>2</sup> Cassiopeia, wife of Cepheus, who, having dared to compare herself with the Nereids for beauty, was by them exposed to be devoured by a monster. Perseus, however, slew the creature, and obtained a place for Cassiopeia among the constellations.

<sup>3</sup> The planet Saturn was supposed to exert much influence over persons of a gloomy and thoughtful temperament.

With a sad leaden<sup>1</sup> downward cast  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast:  
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
And hear the Muses in a ring  
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;  
And add to these retiréd Leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure:  
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheeléd throne,  
The cherub Contemplation;  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will deign a song,  
In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,  
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,  
Gently o'er the accustomed oak;  
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly  
Most musical, most melancholy!  
Thee, chantress, oft the woods among  
I woo to hear thy even-song;  
And missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
To behold the wandering moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray  
Through the Heaven's wide pathless way,  
And oft, as if her head she bowed,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud,  
Oft on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-watered shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar;  
Or if the air will not permit,  
Some still removéd place will fit,  
Where glowing embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth,  
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,  
To bless the doors from nightly harm

<sup>1</sup>leaden contemplation," in Shakspeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,  
 Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
 Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,<sup>1</sup>  
 With thrice great Hermes,<sup>2</sup> or unsphere  
 The spirit of Plato to unfold  
 What worlds, or what vast regions hold  
 The immortal mind that hath forsook  
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook :  
 And of those demons that are found  
 In fire, air, flood, or under ground,<sup>3</sup>  
 Whose power hath a true consent  
 With planet or with element.  
 Sometime let gorgeous tragedy  
 In sceptred pall<sup>4</sup> come sweeping by,  
 Presenting<sup>5</sup> Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
 Or the tale of Troy divine ;  
 Or what (though rare) of later age  
 Ennobled hath the buskined stage.  
 But oh, sad virgin, that thy power  
 Might raise Musæus from his bower !  
 Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
 Such notes as warbled to the string  
 Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
 And made Hell grant what love did seek.  
 Or call up him that left half told  
 The story of Cambuscan<sup>6</sup> bold, — *The accent should be on the last*  
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife, *| Syllable*  
 And who had Canace to wife,  
 That owned the virtuous ring and glass,  
 And of the wondrous horse of brass,  
 On which the Tartar king did ride ;  
 And if aught else great bards beside  
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
 Of turneys and of trophies hung,  
 Of forests and enchantments drear,  
 Where more is meant than meets the ear.

<sup>1</sup> A constellation which never sets. Virg. Georg. i. 246.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. Mercurius Trismegistus.

<sup>3</sup> Plato believed that every part of this universe was peopled with spirits, exercising medial functions between gods and men.

<sup>4</sup> The long robe worn by distinguished persons in tragedy. Cf. Hor. Art. poet. 278.

<sup>5</sup> i. e. representing. The subjects here enumerated were favourite topics with the Greek tragedians.

<sup>6</sup> See Chaucer's Squire's Tale, and Spenser's Faerie Queen iv. 232.

Thus night oft see me in thy pale career,  
 Till civil-suited morn<sup>1</sup> appear,  
 Not trickt and frount<sup>2</sup> as she was wont *fuzzled, crisped, curled.*  
 With the Attic<sup>3</sup> boy to hunt, *Cephalus (Note).*  
 But kerchiefed in a comely cloud,  
 While rocking winds are piping loud,  
 Or ushered with a shower still,  
 When the gust hath blown his fill,  
 Ending on the rustling leaves.  
 With minute drops from off the eaves.  
 And when the sun begins to fling  
 His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring  
 To archéd walks of twilight groves,  
 And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,  
 Of pine, or monumental oak,  
 Where the rude axe with heavéd stroke  
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,  
 Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.  
 There in close covert by some brook,  
 Where no profaner eye may look,  
 Hide me from day's garish<sup>4</sup> eye, *gandy.*  
 While the bee with honeyed thigh,  
 That at her flowery work doth sing,  
 And the waters murmuring,  
 With such consort as they keep,  
 Entice the dewy-feathered sleep;  
 And let some strange mysterious dream  
 Wave at his wings in airy stream  
 Of lively portraiture displayed,  
 Softly on my eyelids laid.  
 And as I wake, sweet music breathe  
 Above, about, or underneath,  
 Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
 Or the unseen genius of the wood.  
 But let my due feet never fail  
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Romeo and Juliet, iii. 4:—

"Come civil night,  
 Thou sober-suited matron, all in black."

<sup>2</sup> Frizzled, crisped, curled.

<sup>3</sup> Cephalus, with whom Aurora fell in love while he was hunting,  
 Ovid. Met. vii. 701.

<sup>4</sup> Bright, gandy.

And love the high embowéd roof,  
 With antic<sup>1</sup> pillars massy proof,  
 And storied windows richly dight,  
 Casting a ðim religious light.  
 There let the pealing organ blow,<sup>2</sup>  
 To the full-voicéd quire below,  
 In service high, and anthems clear,  
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
 Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
 And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.  
 And may at last my weary age  
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
 The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell  
 Of every star that Heaven doth shew,  
 And every herb that sips the dew ;  
 Till old experience do attain  
 To something like prophetic strain.  
 These pleasures, Melancholy, give,  
 And I with thee will choose to live

---

 XV.

## ARC .DES.

[Part of an entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby, at Harefield,<sup>3</sup> by some noble persons of her family, who appear on the scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this song.]

## SONG I.

LOOK, nymphs, and shepherds look,  
 What sudden blaze of majesty  
 Is that which we from hence descry,  
 Too divine to be mistook :

<sup>1</sup> Ancient.

<sup>2</sup> This shows that Milton, however mistaken in other respects, did not run into the enthusiastic madness of that fanatic age against church music.—*Thyer*.

<sup>3</sup> Alice, daughter of Sir John Spenser, of Althorp, in Northamptonshire. This poem was probably written during Milton's residence in the neighbourhood of Uxbridge. See *Newtons*.

This, this is she  
 To whom our views and wishes bend  
 Here our solemn search hath end.

Fame, that her high worth to raise,  
 Seemed erst so lavish and profuse,  
 We may justly now accuse  
 Of detraction from her praise;  
 Less than half we find expressed,  
 Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark what radiant state she spreads,  
 In circle round her shining throne,  
 Shooting her beams like silver threads;  
 This, this is she alone,  
 Sitting like a goddess bright,  
 In the centre of her light.

Might she the wise Latona be,  
 Or the towered Cybele,  
 Mother of a hundred gods?  
 Juno dares not give her odds;  
 Who had thought this clime had held  
 A deity so unparalleled?

[As they come forward, the GENIUS of the wood appears, and turning  
 towards them, speaks.]

## GENIUS.

Stay, gentle swains, for though in this disguise,  
 I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes;  
 Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung  
 Of that renown'd flood, so often sung,  
 Divine Alpheus,<sup>1</sup> who by secret sluice  
 Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;  
 And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,  
 Fair silver-buskin'd nymphs as great and good  
 I know this quest of yours, and free intent,

<sup>1</sup> A famous river of Arcadia that, sinking under ground, passes through the sea without mixing his stream with the salt waters, and rises at last with the fountain Arethuse, near Syracuse, in Sicily.—  
 Newton.



Was all in honour and devotion meant  
 To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,  
 Whom with low reverence I adore as mine,  
 And with all helpful service will comply  
 To further this night's glad solemnity,  
 And lead ye where ye may more near behold  
 What shallow-searching fame hath left untold;  
 Which I full oft amidst these shades alone  
 Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon:  
 For know by lot from Jove I am the power  
 Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,  
 To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove  
 With ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove.  
 And all my plants I save from nightly ill  
 Of noisome winds, and blasting vapours chill:  
 And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,  
 And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,  
 Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,  
 Or hurtful worm with cankered venom bites.  
 When evening gray doth rise, I fetch my round  
 Over the mount, and all this hallowed ground,  
 And early, ere the odorous breath of morn  
 Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tasselled horn<sup>1</sup>  
 Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,  
 Number my ranks, and visit every sprout  
 With puissant words, and murmurs made to bless  
 But else in deep of night, when drowsiness  
 Hath locked up mortal sense, then listen I  
 To the celestial sirens' harmony,  
 That sit upon the nine enfolded spheres,<sup>2</sup>  
 And sing to those that hold the vital shears,  
 And turn the adamantine spindle round,  
 On which the fate of gods and men is wound  
 Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,  
 To lull the daughters of Necessity,  
 And keep unsteady Nature to her law,  
 And the low world in measured motion draw

<sup>1</sup> Spenser, F. Q. i. 8, 3:—

“An *horn* of bugle small,  
 Which hung adown his side in twisted gold,  
 And tassels gay.”

Newton

See Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, § 4.

After the heavenly tune,<sup>1</sup> which none can hear  
 Of human mould with gross unpurgéd ear;  
 And yet such music worthiest were to blaze  
 The peerless highth of her immortal praise,  
 Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,  
 If my inferior hand or voice could hit  
 Inimitable sounds; yet as we go,  
 Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show,  
 I will assay, her worth to celebrate,  
 And so attend ye toward her glittering state;  
 Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,  
 Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

## SONG II.

O'er the smooth enamelled green,  
 Where no print of step hath been,  
     Follow me, as I sing,  
     And touch the warbled string,  
 Under the shady roof  
 Of branching elm star-proof  
     Follow me,  
 I will bring you where she sits,  
 Glad in splendour as befits  
     Her deity.  
 Such a rural queen  
 All Arcadia hath not seen.

## SONG III.

Nymphs and shepherds dance no more  
     By sandy Ladon's<sup>2</sup> liliated banks,  
 On old Lycæus or Cyllene hoar  
     Trip no more in twilight ranks,  
 Though Erymanth your loss deplore,  
     A better soil shall give ye thanks.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Merchant of Venice, v. 1:—

“There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st.  
 But in his motion like an angel sings,  
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;  
 Such harmony is in immortal sounds!  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close us in, we cannot hear it.”

*Newton.*

<sup>2</sup> The most beautiful river of Arcadia.

From the stony Mænalus  
Bring your flocks, and live with us ;  
Here ye shall have greater grace,  
To serve the lady of this place ;  
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,  
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.  
Such a rural queen  
All Arcadia hath not seen.

XVI.

## Comus.

A MASK, PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634, BEFORE THE  
EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

The Mask was presented in 1634, and consequently in the twenty-sixth year of our author's age. In the title-page of the first edition, printed in 1637, it is said that it was presented on Michaelmas night, and there was this motto:—

“Eheu quid volui misero mihi! floribus austrum  
Perditus.”

In this edition, and in that of Milton's poems in 1645, there was prefixed to the Mask the following dedication:—

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD JOHN VISCOUNT BRACKLY, SON  
AND HEIR APPARENT TO THE EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, &c.

MY LORD,—This poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a final dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view; and now to offer it up in all rightful devotion to those fair hopes, and

rare endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet lord, to be the honour of your name, and receive this as your own, from the hands of him, who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all real expression

Your faithful and most  
humble servant,

H. LAWES.

[In the edition of 1645 was also prefixed Sir Henry Wotton's letter to the author upon the following poem.]

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THE PERSONS.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *afterwards*  
*in the habit of THYRSIS.*

COMUS, *with his crew.*

THE LADY

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, *the Nymph.*

*The Chief Persons who presented were—*

THE LORD BRACKLY.

MR. THOMAS EGERTON, *his Brother.*

THE LADY ALICE EGERTON

---

[The first scene discovers a wild wood. The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters.]

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court  
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes  
Of bright ærial spirits live insphered  
In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,  
Which men call Earth; and with low-thoughted care  
Confined, and pestered in this pifold here,

Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
 Unmindful<sup>1</sup> of the crown that virtue gives,  
 After this mortal change to her true servants,  
 Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.  
 Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire  
 To lay their just hands on that golden key,<sup>2</sup>  
 That opes the palace of eternity:  
 To such my errand is; and but for such,  
 I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds  
 With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway  
 Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,  
 Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove  
 Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,  
 That, like to rich and various gems,<sup>3</sup> inlay  
 The unadornéd bosom of the deep:  
 Which he, to grace his tributary gods,  
 By course commits to several government,  
 And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,  
 And wield their little tridents; but this isle,  
 The greatest and the best of all the main,  
 He quarters to his blue-haired deities;  
 And all this tract that fronts the falling sun  
 A noble peer of mickle trust and power  
 Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide  
 An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:  
 Where his fair offspring nursed in princely lore,  
 Are coming to attend their father's state,  
 And new-entrusted sceptre; but their way  
 Lies through the pérplexed paths of this drear wood,  
 The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
 Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;  
 And here their tender age might suffer peril,  
 But that by quick command from sovran Jove

<sup>1</sup> The stress is upon this fact; for, though it may not be a fault in itself to

“ Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,”

yet it certainly is to strive to keep it up “unmindful,” &c.—*Newton*.

<sup>2</sup> Of St. Peter. Cf. *Lycidas*, ver. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Richard II.* act. ii. sc. 1, where John of Gaunt speaks of England as—

“ this little world,  
 This precious stone set in the silver sea.”

I was despatched for their defence and guard:  
 And listen why; for I will tell you now  
 What never yet was heard in tale or song,  
 From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape  
 Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,  
 After the Tuscan mariners transformed,  
 Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,  
 On Circe's island fell (who knows not Circe,  
 The daughter of the sun, whose charmed cup  
 Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,  
 And downward fell into a grovelling swine?):  
 This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks  
 With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,  
 Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son  
 Much like his father, but his mother more,  
 Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named,  
 Who, ripe and frolic of his full grown age,  
 Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,<sup>1</sup>  
 At last betakes him to this ominous wood;  
 And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,  
 Excels his mother at her mighty art,  
 Offering to every weary traveller  
 His orient liquor in a crystal glass,  
 To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which, as they taste  
 (For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),  
 Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,  
 The express resemblance of the gods, is changed  
 Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,  
 Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,  
 All other parts remaining as they were,  
 And they, so perfect is their misery,  
 Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
 But boast themselves more comely than before;  
 And all their friends and native home forget,  
 To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.  
 Therefore when any, favoured of high Jove,  
 Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,  
 Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star  
 I shoot from Heaven, to give him save convoy,  
 As now I do; but first I must put off  
 These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* France and Spain.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Par. Lost*, xi. 244.

And take the weeds and likeness of a swain,  
 That to the service of this house belongs,  
 Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,  
 Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,  
 And hush the waving woods, nor of less faith,  
 And in this office of his mountain watch,  
 Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid  
 Of this occasion. But I hear the tread  
 Of hateful steps! I must be viewless now.

[Comus enters with a charming reed in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistening; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with their torches in their hands.]

## COMUS.

The star that bids the shepherd fold,  
 Now the top of Heaven doth hold;  
 And the gilded car of day  
 His glowing axle doth allay  
 In the steep Atlantic stream;  
 And the slope sun his upward beam  
 Shoots against the dusky pole,  
 Pacing toward the other goal<sup>1</sup>  
 Of his chamber in the east.  
 Meanwhile welcome joy and feast,  
 Midnight shout and revelry,  
 Tipsy dance and jollity.  
 Braid your locks with rosy twine  
 Dropping odours, dropping wine.  
 Rigour now is gone to bed,  
 And advice with scrupulous head.  
 Strict age, and sour severity,  
 With their grave saws in slumber lie  
 We, that are of purer fire,  
 Imitate the starry quire;  
 Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,  
 Lead in swift round the months and years.  
 The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove  
 Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;  
 And, on the tawny sands and shelves,  
 Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves

<sup>1</sup> See Ps. xix. 5.



By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,  
 The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,  
 Their merry wakes and pastimes keep;  
 What hath night to do with sleep?  
 Night hath better sweets to prove.  
 Venus now wakes, and wakens Love  
 Come, let us our rites begin;  
 'Tis only daylight that makes sin,  
 Which these dun shades will ne'er report.  
 Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,  
 Dark-veiled Cotytto!<sup>1</sup> to whom the secret flame  
 Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,  
 That ne'er art called, but when the dragon womt  
 Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,  
 And makes one blot of all the air;  
 Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,  
 Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat, and befriend  
 Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end  
 Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;  
 Ere the blabbing eastern scout,  
 The nice morn, on the Indian steep  
 From her cabined loophole peep,  
 And to the tell-tale sun descry  
 Our concealed solemnity.  
 Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,  
 In a light fantastic round.

*The Measure.*

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace  
 Of some chaste footing near about this ground.  
 Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;  
 Our number may affright: some virgin sure  
 (For so I can distinguish by mine art)  
 Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,  
 And to my wily trains: I shall, ere long,  
 Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed  
 About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl  
 My dazzling spells into the spongy air,  
 Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion  
 And give it false presentments, lest the place  
 And my quaint habits breed astonishment,  
 And put the damsel to suspicious flight,  
 Which must not be, for that's against my course

<sup>1</sup> The goddess of immodesty, formerly worshipped at Athens with nocturnal rites.

I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,  
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,  
Baited with reasons not unplaussible,  
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,  
And hug him into snares. When once her eye  
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,  
I shall appear some harmless villager,  
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.  
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,  
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

[The LADY enters.]

LADY.

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,  
My best guide now: methought it was the sound  
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,  
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,  
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,  
When, for their teeming flocks, and granges full,  
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,  
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth  
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence  
Of such late wassailers; yet oh! where else  
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet  
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?  
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out  
With this long way, resolving here to lodge  
Under the spreading favour of these pines,  
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket side,  
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit  
As the kind hospitable woods provide.  
They left me then, when the gray-hooded even,  
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,  
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.  
But where they are, and why they came not back,  
Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest  
They had engaged their wandering steps too far,  
And envious darkness, ere they could return,  
Had stole them from me; else, O thievish night!  
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,  
In thy dark lanthorn thus close up the stars,  
That nature hung in Heaven, and filled their lamps  
With everlasting oil, to give due light

To the misled and lonely traveller?  
 This is the place, as well as I may guess,  
 Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth  
 Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;  
 Yet nought but single darkness do I find.  
 What might this be? A thousand fantasies  
 Begin to throng into my memory,  
 Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,  
 And airy tongues, that syllable men's names  
 On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.  
 These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,  
 The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended  
 By a strong siding champion, conscience.  
 Oh, welcome, pure-eyed faith, white-handed hope,  
 Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,  
 And thou unblemished form of chastity!  
 I see ye visibly, and now believe  
 That he, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill  
 Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,  
 Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,  
 To keep my life and honour unassailed.  
 Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night?  
 I did not err, there does a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:  
     cannot halloo to my brothers, but  
 Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
 I'll venture, for my new enlivened spirits  
 Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

*Song.*

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen  
     Within thy airy shell,<sup>1</sup>  
     By slow Meander's margent green,  
 And in the violet-embroidered vale,  
     Where the love-lorn nightingale  
 Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;  
 Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair  
     That likest thy Narcissus are?  
     Oh! if thou have  
     Hid them in some flowery cave,  
     Tell me but where,  
 Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the spnere.

<sup>1</sup> The margin of Milton's MS. gives "cell." See *Newton*.

So mayst thou be translated to the skies,  
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.

COMUS.

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?  
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
To testify his hidden residence:  
How sweetly do they float upon the wings  
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,  
At every fall smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard  
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,  
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades  
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,  
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul  
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,<sup>1</sup>  
And chid her barking waves into attention,  
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause;  
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,  
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;  
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,  
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder!  
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,  
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine  
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan; by blest song  
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog  
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

LADY.

Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise  
That is addressed to unattending ears;  
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift  
How to regain my severed company,  
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo  
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

COMUS.

What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?

LADY.

Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth

COMUS.

Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

<sup>1</sup> See Paradise Lost, ii. 260, 1019.

LADY.

They left me weary on a grassy turf.

COMUS.

By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

LADY.

To seek i' the valley some cool, friendly spring.

COMUS.

And left your fair side all unguarded, lady?

LADY.

They were but twain, and purposed quick return

COMUS.

Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

LADY.

How easy my misfortune is to hit!

COMUS.

Imports their loss, beside the present need?

LADY.

No less than if I should my brothers lose

COMUS.

Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

LADY.

As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

COMUS.

Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox  
 In his loose traces from the furrow came,  
 And the swinkt<sup>1</sup> hedger at his supper sat;  
 I saw them under a green mantling vine  
 That crawls along the side of yon small hill,  
 Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;  
 Their port was more than human, as they stood;  
 I took it for a fairy vision  
 Of some gay creatures of the element,  
 That in the colours of the rainbow live,  
 And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,  
 And, as I passed, I worshipped; if those you seek,  
 It were a journey like the path to Heaven,  
 To help you find them.

LADY.

Gentle villager,

What readiest way would bring me to that place?

COMUS.

Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

<sup>1</sup> Tired, from swink, to toil or labour.

LADY.

To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,  
In such a scant allowance of star-light,  
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,  
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

COMUS.

I know each lane, and every alley green,  
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,  
And every bosky<sup>1</sup> bourn from side to side,  
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;  
And if your stray attendants be yet lodged,  
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know  
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark  
From her thatched pallet rouse: if otherwise,  
I can conduct you, lady, to a low  
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe  
Till further quest.

LADY.

Shepherd, I take thy word,  
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,  
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds  
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls  
And courts of princes, where it first was named,  
And yet is most pretended: in a place  
Less warranted than this, or less secure,  
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.  
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial  
To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on

since "courtesy"  
comes from "court"

[The two BROTHERS.]

ELDER BROTHER.

Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou fair moon,  
That wont'st<sup>2</sup> to love the traveller's benizon,  
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,  
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here  
In double night of darkness and of shades;  
Or if your influence be quite dammed up  
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,  
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole  
Of some clay habitation, visit us  
With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,  
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,  
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

<sup>1</sup> Woody.<sup>2</sup> Art accustomed.

## SECOND BROTHER.

Or, if our eyes  
 Be barred that happiness, might we but hear  
 The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,  
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,  
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock  
 Count the night watches to his feathery dames,  
 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,  
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.  
 But oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!  
 Where may she wander now? whither betake her  
 From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?  
 Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now;  
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm  
 Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.  
 What if in wild amazement and affright?  
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp  
 Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

## ELDER BROTHER.

Peace, brother! be not over-exquisite  
 To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;  
 For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,  
 What need a man forestall his date of grief,  
 And run to meet what he would most avoid?  
 Or if they be but false alarms of fear,  
 How bitter is such self-delusion!  
 I do not think my sister so to seek,  
 Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,  
 And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,  
 As that the single want of light and noise  
 (Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)  
 Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts.  
 And put them into misbecoming plight.  
 Virtue could see to do what virtue would  
 By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
 Were in the flat sea sunk. And wisdom's self  
 Oft seeks to sweet retir'd solitude,  
 Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,  
 She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,  
 That in the various bustle of resort  
 Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired.  
 He that has light within his own clear breast  
 May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day;  
 But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,

Benighted walks under the midday sun;  
Himself is his own dungeon.

SECOND BROTHER.

'Tis most true,  
That musing meditation most affects  
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,  
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds  
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;  
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,  
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,  
Or do his gray hairs any violence?  
But beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree  
Laden with blooming gold, hath need the guard  
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,  
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit  
From the rash hand of bold incontinence.  
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps  
Of misers' treasure by an outlaw's den,  
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope  
Danger will wink on opportunity,  
And let a single helpless maiden pass  
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.  
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;  
I fear the dread events that dog them both,  
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person  
Of our unowned sister

ELDER BROTHER.

I do not, brother,  
Infer, as if I thought my sister's state  
Secure without all doubt or controversy;  
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear  
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is  
That I incline to hope rather than fear,  
And gladly banish squint suspicion.  
My sister is not so defenceless left  
As you imagine: she has a hidden strength  
Which you remember not.

SECOND BROTHER.

What hidden strength,  
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

ELDER BROTHER.

I mean that too; but yet a hidden strength,  
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own;  
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:



She that has that is clad in complete steel,  
 And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,  
 May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,  
 Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;  
 Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,  
 No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,  
 Will dare to soil her virgin purity:  
 Yea there, where very desolation dwells,  
 By grotts and caverns shagged with horrid shades  
 She may pass on with unblenched majesty,  
 Be it not done in pride or in presumption.  
 Some say no evil thing that walks by night,  
 In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,  
 Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost  
 That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,  
 No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,  
 Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.  
 Do ye believe me yet? or shall I call  
 Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
 To testify the arms of chastity?  
 Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,  
 Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,  
 Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness  
 And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought  
 The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men  
 Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods  
 What was that snaky headed Gorgon shield  
 That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,  
 Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,  
 But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
 And noble grace, that dashed brute violence  
 With sudden adoration and blank awe?  
 So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,<sup>1</sup>  
 That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
 A thousand liveried angels lackey her,  
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
 And, in clear dream, and solemn vision,  
 Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;

<sup>1</sup>Spenser, F. Q. iii. 8, 29:—

"See how the Heavens, of voluntary grace,  
 And sovereign favour towards chastity,  
 Do succour send to her distressed case:  
 So much high God doth innocence embrace." — *Thyll.*

Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
 Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,  
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,<sup>1</sup>  
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,<sup>2</sup>  
 Till all be made immortal; but when lust,  
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
 Embodies, and embrutes, till she quite lose  
 The divine property of her first being.  
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
 Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres  
 Lingerin', and sitting by a new-made grave,  
 As loth to leave the body that it loved,  
 And linked itself by carnal sensuality  
 To a degenerate and degraded state.

SECOND BROTHER.

How charming is divine philosophy!<sup>3</sup>  
 Nor harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
 But musical as is Apollo's lute,  
 And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,  
 Where no crude surfeit reigns.

ELDER BROTHER.

List, list! I hear  
 Some far off halloo break the silent air.

SECOND BROTHER.

Methought so too; what should it be?

ELDER BROTHER.

For certain

Either some one like us night-foundered here,  
 Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,  
 Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

SECOND BROTHER.

Heaven keep my sister! Again, again, and near  
 Best draw and stand upon our guard.

ELDER BROTHER.

I'll halloc;

If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,  
 Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Milton here somewhat betrays his materialist tendency.

<sup>3</sup> This alludes more particularly to the philosophy of Plato, who  
 vent by the surname of *divine*

[THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT habited like a Shepherd.]

That halloo I should know; what are you? Speak!  
Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.

SPIRIT.

What voice is that? My young lord? Speak again.

SECOND BROTHER.

O brother! tis my father's shepherd, sure.

ELDER BROTHER.

Thyrsis? whose artful strains<sup>1</sup> have oft delayed  
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,  
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.  
How cam'st thou here, good swain? Hath any ram  
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,  
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?  
How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?

SPIRIT.

O my loved master's heir, and his next joy!  
I came not here on such a trivial toy  
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth  
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth  
That doth enrich these downs, is worth a thought  
To this my errand, and the care it brought.  
But oh, my virgin lady! where is she?  
How chance she is not in your company?

ELDER BROTHER.

To tell thee sadly,<sup>2</sup> shepherd, without blame,  
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

SPIRIT.

Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true

ELDER BROTHER.

What fears, good Thyrsis? Prythee briefly shew

SPIRIT.

I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous  
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)  
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly muse,  
Storied of old in high immortal verse,  
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,  
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;  
For such there be; but unbelief is blind.

<sup>1</sup> An elegant compliment to the musical abilities of Mr. Henry Lawes, a celebrated musician of the time, and who probably sustained the two parts of the genius of the wood and the attendant spirit. See *Newton*.

<sup>2</sup> Soberly, truly.

Within the navel,<sup>1</sup> of this hideous wood,  
 Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwelle,  
 Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,  
 Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries ;  
 And here to every thirsty wanderer,  
 By sly enticement, gives his baneful cup,  
 With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison  
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
 And the inglorious likeness of a beast  
 Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage  
 Charáctered<sup>2</sup> in the face ; this have I learnt  
 Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts  
 That brow this bottom glade ; whence night by night  
 He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl  
 Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,  
 Doing abhorréd rites to Hecate  
 In their obscuréd haunts of inmost bowers.  
 Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells  
 To inveigle and invite the unwary sense  
 Of them that pass unweeting by the way.  
 This evening late, by then the chewing flocks  
 Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb  
 Of knot-grass dew-besprent,<sup>3</sup> and were in fold,  
 I sat me down to watch upon a bank  
 With ivy canopied, and interwove  
 With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,  
 Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,  
 To meditate my rural minstrelsy,  
 Till fancy had her fill ; but, ere a close,  
 The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,  
 And filled the air with barbarous dissonance ;  
 At which I ceased, and listened them a while,  
 Till an unusual stop of sudden silence  
 Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted<sup>4</sup> steeds

<sup>1</sup> Depth, middle.

<sup>2</sup> Both Spenser and Shakspeare use this word with the same accent.

<sup>3</sup> Milton has done here.

<sup>3</sup> Besprent, *i. e.* sprinkled. "Knot-grass" is mentioned in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> So the commentators have rightly restored, instead of "drowsy-frighted." Milton had in view Shakspeare, *2 Henry VI.* act 4, sc. i.—

"And now loud howling wolves arouse the jades,  
 That drag the tragic melancholy night,  
 Who, with their drowsy, slow, and flagging wings,  
 Clip dead men's graves."

That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep;  
 At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound<sup>1</sup>  
 Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,  
 And stole upon the air, that even Silence  
 Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might  
 Deny her nature, and be never more  
 Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,  
 And took in strains that might create a soul  
 Under the ribs of death:<sup>2</sup> but oh, ere long,  
 Too well I did perceive it was the voice  
 Of my most honoured lady, your dear sister.  
 Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear  
 And oh, poor hapless nightingale, thought I,  
 How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!  
 Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,  
 Through paths and turnings often trod by day,  
 Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place,  
 Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise  
 (For so by certain signs I knew), had met  
 Already, ere my best speed could prevent,  
 The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey,  
 Who gently asked if he had seen such two,  
 Supposing him some neighbour villager.  
 Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed  
 Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung  
 Into swift flight, till I had found you here,  
 But further know I not.

## SECOND BROTHER.

O night and shades,  
 How are ye joined with Hell in triple knot  
 Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin  
 Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence  
 You gave me, brother?

## ELDER BROTHER.

Yes, and keep it still,  
 Lean on it safely; not a period  
 Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats  
 Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power  
 Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm:

<sup>1</sup> See the beginning of *Twelfth Night*.

<sup>2</sup> This grotesque comparison is taken from one of Alciat's emblems, where a soul in the figure of an infant is represented within the ribs of a skeleton, as in a prison.

Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,<sup>1</sup>  
 Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;  
 Yea even that which mischief meant most harm,  
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:  
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,  
 And mix no more with goodness; when at last,  
 Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,  
 It shall be in eternal restless change,  
 Self-fed, and self-consumed:<sup>2</sup> if this fail,  
 The pillared firmament<sup>3</sup> is rottenness,  
 And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on  
 Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven  
 May never this just sword be lifted up!  
 But for that damned magician, let him be girt  
 With all the grisly legions that troop  
 Under the sooty flag of Acheron,  
 Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms  
 'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,  
 And force him to restore his purchase back,  
 Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,  
 Cursed as his life.

SPIRIT.

Alas! good venturous youth,  
 I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;  
 But here thy sword can do thee little stead;  
 Far other arms, and other weapons, must  
 Be those that quell the might of hellish charms:  
 He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,  
 And crumble all thy sinews.

ELDER BROTHER.

Why prythee, shepherd,  
 How durst thou then thyself approach so near,  
 As to make this relation?

SPIRIT.

Care and utmost shifts  
 How to secure the lady from surprisal,

<sup>1</sup> Milton seems to allude to the famous answer of the philosopher to a tyrant, who threatened him with death, "Thou mayst kill me, but thou canst not hurt me."—*Thyer*.

<sup>2</sup> This image is taken from the conjectures of astronomers concerning the dark spots which, from time to time, appear on the surface of the sun's body, and, after a while, disappear again, which they suppose to be the scum of that fiery matter, which first breeds it, and then breaks through and consumes it.—*Warburton*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Paradise Regained*, iv. 355.

Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,  
 Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled  
 In every virtuous plant and healing herb  
 That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray:  
 He loved me well,<sup>1</sup> and oft would beg me sing,  
 Which when I did, he on the tender grass  
 Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,  
 And in requital ope his leathern scrip,  
 And show me simples of a thousand names  
 Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:  
 Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,  
 But of divine effect, he culled me out;  
 The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it;  
 But in another country, as he said,  
 Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:<sup>2</sup>  
 Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain  
 Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;<sup>3</sup>  
 And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly<sup>4</sup>  
 That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;  
 He called it hæmony, and gave it me,  
 And bade me keep it as of sovran use  
 'Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp,  
 Or ghastly furies' apparition.  
 I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,  
 Till now that this extremity compelled:  
 But now I find it true; for by this means  
 I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,  
 Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,  
 And yet came off: if you have this about you,  
 (As I will give you when we go) you may  
 Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;  
 Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,  
 And brandished blade, rush on him; break his glass,

<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps a compliment to the author's friend and school-fellow, Charles Deodati, who had been bred up a physician.

<sup>2</sup> Seward would omit "not," and substitute "light esteemed." But, as Newton observes, "unknown and like esteemed" may be taken as equivalent to *unknown* and *unesteemed*.

<sup>3</sup> So in 2 Henry VI. act 4, sc. 3. Cade says:—

"We will not leave one lord, one gentleman;  
 Spare not, but such as go in clouted shoon."

<sup>4</sup> See Pope's Homer's Odyssey, x. 361 sq. Pliny, Nat. Hist. xxiv. 4, speaks of it highly; but its nature and properties are unknown. Thyer thinks it was the herb called *sp'zenwert*.

And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,  
 But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew  
 Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,  
 Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,  
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

ELDER BROTHER.

Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee;  
 And some good angel bear a shield before us!

[The scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness; soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS appears with his rabble, and the LADY set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.]

COMUS.

Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,  
 Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,  
 And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,  
 Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

LADY.

Fool! do not boast;  
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind  
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind  
 Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.

COMUS.

Why are you vexed, lady? why do you frown?  
 Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates  
 Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures  
 That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,<sup>1</sup>  
 When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns  
 Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.  
 And first behold this cordial julep here,  
 That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,<sup>2</sup>  
 With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.  
 Not that Nepenthes,<sup>3</sup> which the wife of Thone  
 In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,  
 Is of such power to stir up joy as this,  
 To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.  
 Why should you be so cruel to yourself,

<sup>1</sup> An improvement on *Romeo and Juliet*, act i. sc. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxiii. 31: "Look not thou to the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."

<sup>3</sup> See Pope's *Odyssey*, iv. 301, sq., and the *Faërie Queen*, iv. 3, 18.



And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent  
 For gentle usage, and soft delicacy?  
 But you invert the covenants of her trust,  
 And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,  
 With that which you received on other terms,  
 Scorning the unexempt condition  
 By which all mortal frailty must subsist,  
 Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,  
 That have been tired all day without repast,  
 And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,  
 This will restore all soon.

LADY.

'Twill not, false traitor!  
 'Twill not restore the truth and honesty  
 That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies  
 Was this the cottage, and the safe abode,  
 Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these.  
 These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!  
 Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!  
 Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence  
 With visored falsehood, and base forgery?  
 And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here  
 With liquorish baits fit to ensnare a brute?  
 Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,  
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none  
 But such as are good men can give good things,  
 And that which is not good, is not delicious  
 To a well-governed and wise appetite.

COMUS.

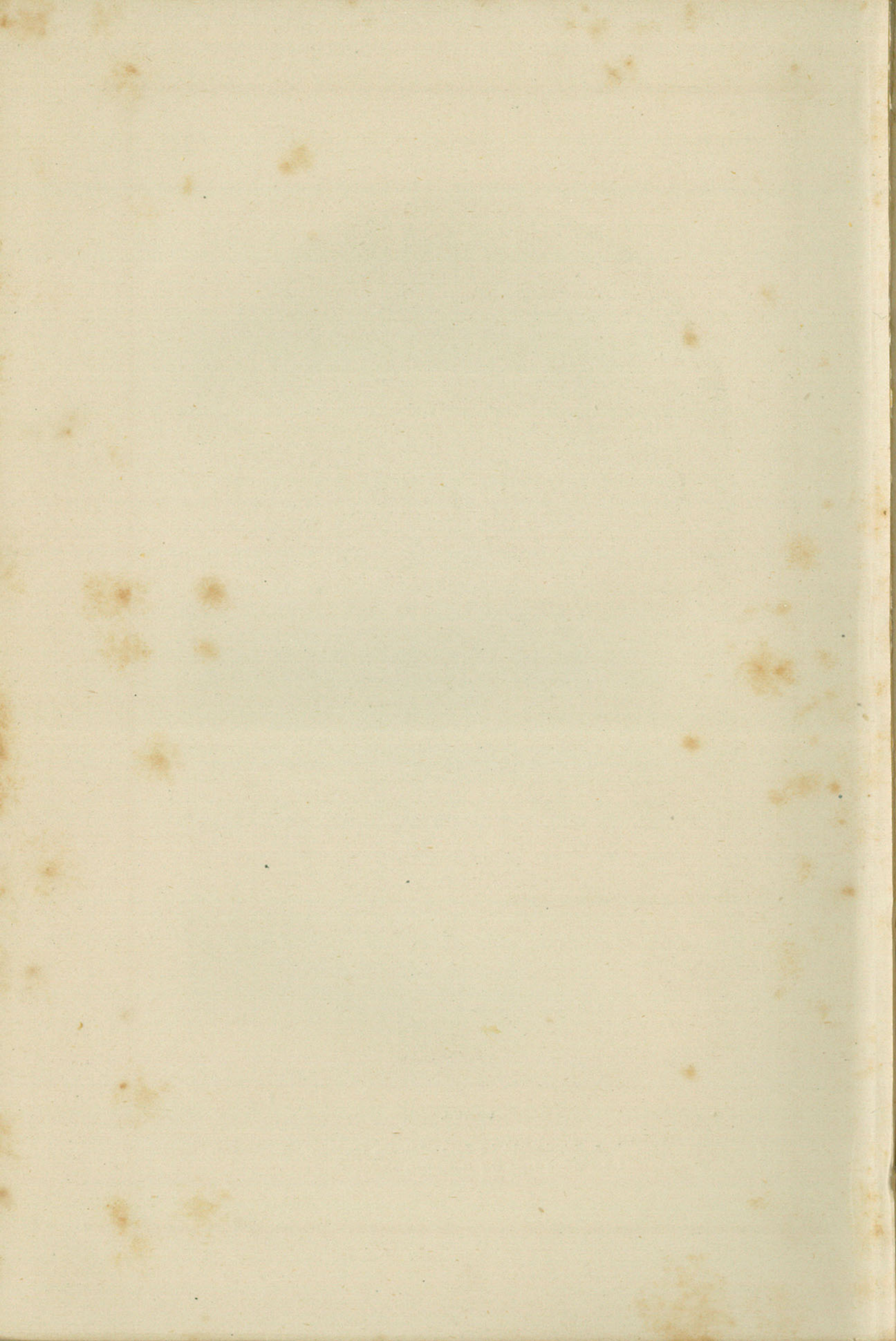
Oh, foolishness of men! that lend their ears  
 To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,  
 And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,  
 Praising the lean and sallow abstinence.  
 Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth  
 With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
 Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks  
 Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,  
 But all to please and sate the curious taste?  
 And set to work millions of spinning worms,  
 That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk  
 To deck her sons; and, that no corner might  
 Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins  
 She hatched the all-worshipped ore, and precious gems  
 To store her children with: if all the world



COMUS.

P. 404.

Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets  
I would not taste thy treasonous offer.



Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,  
 Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,  
 The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,  
 Not half his riches known, and yet despised;  
 And we should serve him as a grudging master,  
 As a penurious niggard of his wealth,  
 And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,  
 Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,  
 And strangled with her waste fertility; [plumes,<sup>2</sup>  
 The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with  
 The herds would over-multitude their lords,  
 The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds  
 Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,  
 And so bestud with stars, that they below  
 Would grow inured to light, and come at last  
 To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.  
 List, lady, be not coy, and be not cozened  
 With that same vaunted name, virginity.  
 Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,  
 But must be current; and the good thereof  
 Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,  
 Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself;  
 If you let slip time, like a neglected rose  
 It withers on the stalk with languished head.<sup>2</sup>  
 Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown  
 In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,  
 Where most may wonder at the workmanship;  
 It is for homely features to keep home,<sup>3</sup>  
 They had their name thence; coarse complexions,  
 And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply  
 The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool  
 What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,  
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?

<sup>1</sup> The image is taken from what the ancients said of the air of the northern islands, that it was clogged and darkened with feathers.

<sup>2</sup> Spenser, F. Q. ii. 12, 75:—

“Gather therefore the rose, whilst yet is prime,  
 For soon comes age, that will her pride deflower;  
 Gather the rose of love, whilst yet is time,  
 Whilst loving thou mayst loved be with equal crime.”

—Newton.

<sup>3</sup> See in the Two Gentlemen of Verona:—

“Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits.”

There was another meaning in these gifts,  
Think what, and be advised: you are but young yet.

LADY.

I had not thought to have unlocked my lips<sup>1</sup>  
In this unhal'owed air, but that this juggler  
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,  
Obtruding false rules pranked<sup>2</sup> in reason's garb.  
I hate when vice can bolt<sup>3</sup> her arguments,  
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.  
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,  
As if she would her children should be riotous  
With her abundance; she, good cateress,  
Means her provision only to the good,  
That live according to her sober laws,  
And holy dictate of spare temperance:  
If every just man, that now pines with want,  
Had but a moderate and beseeming share  
Of that which lewdly-pampered luxury  
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit encumbered with her store;  
And then the Giver would be better thanked,  
His praise due paid; for swinish gluttony  
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,  
But with besotted base ingratitude  
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?  
Or have I said enough? To him that dares  
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,  
Fain would I something say, yet to what end?  
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend  
The sublime notion, and high mystery,  
That must be uttered to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of virginity;  
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know  
More happiness than this thy present lot.  
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,  
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence,  
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced;

<sup>1</sup> The six following lines are spoken aside.—*Symson*

<sup>2</sup> Decker, dressed.

<sup>3</sup> Sift, or dash aim. See *Newton*.

Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
 Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
 To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
 That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,  
 And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,  
 'Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,  
 Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

COMUS.

She fables not: I feel that I do fear<sup>1</sup>  
 Her words set off by some superior power;  
 And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew  
 Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove  
 Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,  
 To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,  
 And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more;  
 'This is mere moral babble, and direct  
 Against the canon laws of our foundation;  
 I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees  
 And settlings of a melancholy blood:  
 But this will cure all straight; one sip of this  
 Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight  
 Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste

[The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in.]

SPIRIT.

What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?  
 Oh! ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand,  
 And bound him fast; without his rod reversed,  
 And backward mutters of dissevering power,  
 We cannot free the lady that sits here  
 In stony fetters fixed, and motionless:  
 Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me,  
 Some other means I have which may be used,  
 Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,  
 The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.  
 There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,  
 That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is better to put a semicolon after *that*, meaning: "I feel that she does not fable," &c.—*Simpson*. These six lines are also spoken aside.

Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure ;  
 Whilome she was the daughter of Lochrine,<sup>1</sup>  
 That had the sceptre from his father Brute.  
 She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit  
 Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,  
 Commended her fair innocence to the flood,  
 That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course  
 The water nymphs that in the bottom played,  
 Held up their pearléd wrists, and took her in,  
 Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall,  
 Who, piteous of our woes, reared her lank head,  
 And gave her to his daughters to embathe  
 In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,  
 And through the porch and inlet of each sense  
 Dropped in ambrosial oils till she revived,  
 And underwent a quick immortal change,  
 Made goddess of the river: still she retains  
 Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve  
 Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,  
 Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs  
 That the shrewd meddling elf<sup>2</sup> delights to make,  
 Which she with precious vialled liquors heals ;  
 For which the shepherds at their festivals  
 Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,  
 And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream  
 Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.  
 And, as the old swain said, she can unlock  
 The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,

<sup>1</sup> Lochrine, king of the Britons, married Guendolen, the daughter of Corineus, Duke of Cornwall; but in secret, for fear of Corineus, he loved Estrildis, a fair captive whom he had taken in a battle with Humber, king of the Huns, and had by her a daughter equally fair, whose name was Sabrina. But when once his fear was off, by the death of Corineus, not content with secret enjoyment, divorcing Guendolen, he made Estrildis now his queen. Guendolen, all in rage, departs into Cornwall, and, gathering an army of her father's friends and subjects, gives battle to her husband by the river Sture; wherein Lochrine, shot with an arrow, ends his life. But not so ends the fury of Guendolen, for Estrildis and her daughter Sabra she throws into a river; and, to leave a monument of revenge, proclaims that the stream be thenceforth called after the damsel's name, which by length of time is now called Sabrina or Severn. This is the account given by Milton himself in the first book of his History of England; but he here takes some liberties with the story, in order to heighten the character of Sabrina.—*Newton*.

<sup>2</sup> Puck, or Robin Goodfellow.

If she be right 'nvoked in warbled song;  
 For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift  
 To aid a virgin, such as was herself,  
 In hard-besetting need: this will I try,  
 And add the power of some adjuring verse

*Song.*

Sabrina fair,  
 Listen where thou art sitting  
 Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,  
 In twisted braids of lilies knitting  
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair  
 Listen for dear honour's sake,  
 Goddess of the silver lake,  
 Listen, and save  
 Listen, and appear to us,  
 In name of great Oceanus;  
 By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,  
 And 'Tethys' grave majestic pace,  
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,  
 And the Carpathian wizard's<sup>1</sup> hook,  
 By scaly Triton's winding shell,  
 And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell,  
 By Leucothea's lovely hands,  
 And her son that rules the strands,  
 By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,  
 And the songs of sirens sweet,  
 By dead Parthenope's<sup>2</sup> dear tomb,  
 And fair Ligea's<sup>3</sup> golden comb,  
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,  
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks;  
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance  
 Upon thy streams with wily glance,  
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head  
 From thy coral-paven bed,  
 And bridle in thy headlong wave,  
 Till thou our summons answered have.  
 Listen, and save.

[SABRINA rises, attended by water-nymphs, and sings.]

By the rushy-fringed bank,  
 Where grows the willow and the osier dank,

<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* Proteus.

<sup>2</sup> This tomb was at Naples.

<sup>3</sup> One of the sirens, and also a sea-nymph.



My sliding chariot stays,  
 Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen  
 O turkis blue, and emerald green,  
     That in the channel strays;  
 Whilst from off the waters fleet  
 Thus I set my printless feet  
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,  
     That bends not as I tread;  
 Gentle swain, at thy request  
 I am here.

SPIRIT.

Goddess dear,  
 We implore thy powerful hand  
 To undo the charmed band  
 Of true virgin here distressed,  
 'Through the force, and through the wile,  
 Of unblest enchanter vile.

SABRINA.

Shepherd, 'tis my office best  
 To help ensnaréd chastity :  
 Brightest lady, look on me ;  
 Thus I sprinkle on thy breast  
 Drops, that from my fountain pure  
 I have kept, of precious cure ;  
 Thrice upon thy finger's tip,  
 Thrice upon thy rubied lip ;  
 Next this marble venoméd seat,  
 Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,  
 I touch with chaste palms moist and cold :  
 Now the spell hath lost his hold ;  
 And I must haste, ere morning hour,  
 To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

[SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.]

SPIRIT.

Virgin, daughter of Locline,  
 Sprung of old Anchises' line,<sup>1</sup>  
 May thy brimméd<sup>2</sup> waves for this  
 Their full tribute never miss

<sup>1</sup> For Locline was the son of Brutus, who was the son of Silvius, the son of Ascanius, and Ascanius of Æneas, the son of Anchises.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. swelling, rising to the brim.

From a thousand petty rills,  
 That tumble down the snowy hills:  
 Summer drouth, or singéd air,  
 Never scorch thy tresses fair,  
 Nor wet October's torrent flood  
 Thy molten crystal fill with mud:  
 May thy billows roll ashore  
 The beryl, and the golden ore;  
 May thy lofty head be crowned  
 With many a tower and terrace round,  
 And here and there thy banks upon<sup>1</sup>  
 With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.  
 Come, lady, while Heaven lends us grace,  
 Let us fly this curséd place,  
 Lest the sorcerer us entice  
 With some other new device.  
 Not a waste or needless sound  
 Till we come to holier ground,  
 I shall be your faithful guide  
 Through this gloomy covert wide;  
 And not many furlongs thence  
 Is your father's residence,  
 Where this night are met in state  
 Many a friend to gratulate  
 His wished presence; and, beside,  
 All the swains that near abide,  
 With jigs and rural dance resort:  
 We shall catch them at their sport;  
 And our sudden coming there  
 Will double all their mirth and cheer.  
 Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,  
 But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

[The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the PRESIDENT'S castle; then come in country dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the two BROTHERS and the LADY.]

*Song.*

SPIRIT.

Back, shepherds, back! enough your play,  
 Till next sunshine holiday:

<sup>1</sup> *Banks* is the nominative case, as *head* was in the last line but one. The sense and syntax of the whole is, may thy head be crowned round about with towers, &c., and here and there [may] thy banks [be crowned] upon with groves, &c.—ἰτιστέφουντο σοι αἱ ὄχθαι. The phrase is Greek.—*Calion*.

Here be, without duck or nod,  
 Other trippings to be trod  
 Of lighter toes, and such court guise  
 As Mercury did first devise,  
 With the mincing Dryades,  
 On the lawns, and on the leas.<sup>1</sup>

[This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.]

Noble lord, and lady bright,  
 I have brought ye new delight ;  
 Here behold, so goodly grown,  
 Three fair branches of your own ;  
 Heaven hath timely tried their youth,  
 Their faith, their patience, and their truth,  
 And sent them here through hard assays  
 With a crown of deathless praise,  
 To triumph in victorious dance  
 O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

[The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguises.]

SPIRIT.

To the ocean now I fly,<sup>2</sup>  
 And those happy climes that lie  
 Where day never shuts his eye,  
 Up in the broad fields of the sky :  
 There I suck the liquid air  
 All amidst the gardens fair  
 Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,  
 That sing about the golden tree :  
 Along the crispéd shades and bowers  
 Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,  
 The Graces, and the rosy-bosomed Hours,  
 Thither all their bounties bring :  
 There eternal Summer dwells,  
 And west winds, with musky wing,  
 About the cedarn alleys fling  
 Nard and cassia's balmy smells.  
 Iris there with humid bow  
 Waters the odorous banks, that blow

<sup>1</sup> Pastures, corn-fields.

<sup>2</sup> A paraphrase of Ariel's song in the "Tempest :

"Where the bee sucks, there lurk I."

Flowers of more mingled hue  
 Than her purpled<sup>1</sup> scarf can shew,  
 And drenches with Elysian dew  
 (List, mortals, if your ears be true)  
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,  
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
 Waxing well of his deep wound  
 In slumber soft, and on the ground  
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen;<sup>2</sup>  
 But far above, in spangled sheen,  
 Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced  
 Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,  
 After her wandering labours long,  
 Till free consent the gods among  
 Make her his eternal bride,  
 And from her fair unspotted side  
 Two blissful twins are to be born,  
 Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.

But now my task is smoothly done;  
 I can fly, or I can run  
 Quickly to the green earth's end,  
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,  
 And from thence can soar as soon  
 To the corners of the moon.

Mortals, that would follow me,  
 Love Virtue; she alone is free:  
 She can teach ye how to climb  
 Higher than the sphery chime;  
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,  
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Flourished, embroidered with the needle.

<sup>2</sup> Venus, so called, because she was first worshipped by the Assyrians.

<sup>3</sup> "Comus," observes Hallam, "was sufficient to convince any one of taste and feeling, that a great poet had arisen in England, and one partly formed in a different school from his contemporaries. Many of them had produced highly beautiful and imaginative passages; but none had evinced so classical a judgment, none had aspired to so regular a perfection. Jonson had learned much from the ancients, but there was a grace in their best models which he did not quite attain. Neither his 'Sad Shepherd,' nor the 'Faithful Shepherdess' of Fletcher, have the elegance or dignity of 'Comus.' A noble virgin and her young brothers, by whom this masque was originally represented, required an elevation, a purity, a sort of severity of sentiment which no one in that age could have given but Milton. He avoided, and nothing loth, the more festive notes which dramatic poetry was

## XVII.

LYCIDAS.<sup>1</sup>

[In this monody the author bewails a learned friend, Mr. Edward King who was unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637, and by occasion foretels the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height.]

YET once more, O ye laurels! and once more  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
 And with forced fingers rude  
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
 Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
 Compels me to disturb your season due;  
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
 Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:  
 Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew  
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
 He must not float upon his watery bier  
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.

( 14. )

went to mingle with its serious strain. But for this he was compensated by the brightest hues of fancy, and the sweetest melody of song. In 'Comus' we find nothing prosaic or feeble, no false taste in the incidents, and not much in the language, nothing over which we should desire to pass on a second perusal. The want of what we may call personality, none of the characters having names, except Comus himself, who is a very indefinite being, and the absence of all positive attributes of time and place, enhance the ideality of the fiction by a certain indistinctness not displeasing to the imagination."

<sup>1</sup> "It has been said, I think very fairly, that Lycidas is a good test of real feeling for what is peculiarly called poetry. Many, or perhaps we might say most readers, do not taste its excellence; nor does it follow that they may not greatly admire Pope and Dryden, or even Virgil and Homer. It is, however, somewhat remarkable, that Johnson, who has committed his critical reputation by the most contemptuous depreciation of this poem, had, in an earlier part of his life, selected the tenth Eclogue of Virgil for peculiar praise; the tenth Eclogue, which, beautiful as it is, belongs to the same class of pastoral

Begin then, sisters, of the sacred well,<sup>1</sup>  
 That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring.  
 Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
 Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,  
 So may some gentle muse  
 With lucky words favour my destined urn,  
 And, as he<sup>2</sup> passes, turn  
 And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud:  
 For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
 Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high lawns appeared  
 Under the opening eyelids of the morn,  
 We drove afield, and both together heard  
 What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn,  
 Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
 Oft till the star that rose, at evening, bright,  
 Toward Heaven's descent had sloped his westering<sup>3</sup> whee  
 Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
 Tempered to the oaten flute;

Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel  
 From the glad sound would not be absent long,  
 And old Damætas<sup>4</sup> loved to hear our song. (36.)

(Note)

But oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
 Now thou art gone, and never must return!  
 Thee, shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves  
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,  
 And all their echoes mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green, (42)

and personal allegory, and requires the same sacrifice of reasoning criticism, as the *Lycidas* itself. In the age of Milton, the poetical world had been accustomed by the Italian and Spanish writers to a more abundant use of allegory than has been pleasing to their posterity; but *Lycidas* is not so much in the nature of an allegory as of a masque; the characters pass before our eyes in imagination, as on the stage; they are chiefly mythological, but not creations of the poet. Our sympathy with the fate of *Lycidas* may not be much stronger than for the desertion of Gallus by his mistress; but many poems will yield an exquisite pleasure to the imagination that produce no emotion in the heart; or none at least, except through associations independent of the subject."—*Hallam*.

<sup>1</sup> Fountain.

<sup>2</sup> So the muse is made *masculine* in *Samson Agonistes*, ver. 973.

<sup>3</sup> Drawing towards the west.

<sup>4</sup> He probably means Dr. William Chappel, who had been tutor to them both and afterwards became Bishop of Cork and Ross.

Shall now no more be seen,  
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
 As killing as the canker to the rose,  
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,  
 When first the white-thorn blows,  
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherds' ear.

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep  
 Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?  
 For neither were ye playing on the steep,  
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie;  
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona<sup>1</sup> high,  
 Nor yet where Deva<sup>2</sup> spreads her wizard stream:  
 Ay me! I fondly dream  
 Had ye been there, for what could that have done?  
 What could the muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
 The muse herself for her enchanting son,  
 Whom universal nature did lament,  
 When by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
 His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
 Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
 To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,  
 And strictly meditate the thankless muse?  
 Were it not better done as others use,  
 To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
 Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?  
 Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)  
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days,  
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
 Comes the blind fury with the abhorred shears,  
 And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"  
 Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears;  
 "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
 Nor in the glistening foil -  
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;  
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
 Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy need." (84)

<sup>1</sup> The Isle of Anglesea.

<sup>2</sup> The River Dee. The word *Deva* is supposed to mean *divina*.

O fountain Arethuse,<sup>1</sup> and thou honoured flood,  
 Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,  
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood:  
 But now my oar proceeds,  
 And listens to the herald of the sea  
 That came in Neptune's plea;  
 He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,  
 What hard mishap had doomed this gentle swain?  
 And questioned every gust of rugged wings,  
 That blows from off each beaked promontory:  
 They knew not of his story,  
 And sage Hippotades<sup>2</sup> their answer brings,  
 That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed,  
 The air was calm, and on the level brine  
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.  
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark  
 Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine. (102)

Next Camus,<sup>3</sup> reverend sire, went footing slow,  
 His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge,  
 Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.<sup>4</sup>  
 "Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"  
 Last came, and last did go,  
 The pilot of the Galilean lake,<sup>5</sup> (109)

<sup>1</sup> Now Phœbus, whose strain was of a higher mood, has done speaking, he invokes the *fountain Arethuse* of Sicily, the country of Theocritus, and Mincius, the river of Mantua, Virgil's country, in compliment to those poets.

<sup>2</sup> Æolus, the son of Hippotas.

<sup>3</sup> The Cam, the river of Cambridge.

<sup>4</sup> Meaning the hyacinth, the leaves of which were supposed to be marked with the mournful letters *At, At*. Cf. Ovid, *Met.* x. 210 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> "The introduction of St. Peter after the fabulous deities of the sea, has appeared an incongruity deserving of censure to some admirers of this poem. It would be very reluctantly that we could abandon to this criticism the most splendid passage it presents. But the censure rests, as I think, on too narrow a principle. In narrative or dramatic poetry, where something like illusion or momentary belief is to be produced, the mind requires an objective possibility, a capacity of real existence, not only in all the separate portions of the imagined story, but in their coherency and relation to a common whole. Whatever is obviously incongruous, whatever shocks our previous knowledge of possibility, destroys, to a certain extent, that acquiescence in the fiction which it is the true business of the fiction to produce. But the case is not the same in such poems as *Lycidas*. They pretend to no credibility, they aim at no illusion, they are read



Two massy keys he bore, of metals twain  
 (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain),  
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :  
 " How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
 Enow of such as for their bellies' sake  
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold !  
 Of other care they little reckoning make,  
 Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,  
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest ;  
 Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least  
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !  
 What recks it them ? What need they ? They are sped ;  
 And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scrannel<sup>1</sup> pipes of wretched straw ;  
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
 But swollen with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread :  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said.  
 But that two-handed engine at the door  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,  
 That shrunk thy streams ; return Sicilian muse,  
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
 Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues  
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,  
 Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,  
 That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,  
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
 The glowing violet,

with the willing abandonment of the imagination to a waking dream, and require only that general possibility, that combination of images, which common experience does not reject as incompatible, without which the fancy of the poet would be only like that of the lunatic. And it had been so usual to blend sacred with mythological personages in allegory, that no one, probably, in Milton's age, would have been struck by the objection."—*Hallam*.

<sup>1</sup> Probably equivalent to the Latin "stridens," creaking, piercing.

The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears:  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,  
 To strow the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
 For so to interpose a little ease,  
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.  
 Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
 Wash far away, where ere thy bones are hurled,  
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
 Where thou, perhaps, under the whelming tide  
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;  
 Or whether thou to our moist vows denied,  
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus<sup>1</sup> old,  
 Where the great vision of the guarded mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's<sup>2</sup> hold;  
 Look homeward, angel now, and melt with ruth:<sup>3</sup>  
 And, O ye dolphins,<sup>4</sup> waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,  
 For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;  
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:  
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
 Through the dear might of him that walked the waves.  
 Where other groves and other streams along,  
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,  
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
 There entertain him all the saints above,  
 In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
 That sing, and singing in their glory move.  
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Probably Bellerus, one of the Cornish giants, fabulously supposed to dwell at the Land's End.

<sup>2</sup> A watch-tower and lighthouse formerly stood on the promontory called the Land's End, and looked, as Orosius says, towards another high tower at Brigantia in Galicia, and consequently towards *Bayona's Hold*.—*Newton*.

<sup>3</sup> Pity.

<sup>4</sup> A dolphin is said to have carried the body of Palæmon to the shores of Corinth, where he was deified.

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;  
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,  
While the still morn went out with sandals gray,  
He touched the tender stops of various quills,  
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:  
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,  
And now was dropped into the western bay;  
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:  
To morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

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 XVIII.

## THE FIFTH ODE OF HORACE, LIB. I.

[“*Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa,*” rendered almost word for word without rhyme, according to the Latin measure, as near as the language will permit.]

WHAT slender youth, bedewed with liquid odours,  
Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,  
Pyrrha? For whom bind'st thou  
In wreaths thy golden hair,  
Plain in thy neatness? Oh, how oft shall he  
On faith and changed gods complain, and seas  
Rough with black winds and storms  
Unwonted shall admire!  
Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold;  
Who always vacant, always amiable,  
Hopes thee, of flattering gales  
Unmindful. Hapless they  
To whom thou untried seem'st fair. Me in my vowed  
Picture the sacred wall declares to have hung  
My dank and dropping weeds  
To the stern god of sea