

No. LXV.

HYMN TO DARKNESS.

THIS is characterized by Mr. Palgrave as a "lyric of a strange, fanciful, yet solemn beauty—Cowley's style intensified by the mysticism of Henry More." Like Cowley, Norris adopted the Pindaric form of ode in somewhat extreme form, and it is significant that it is in Cowley's *Hymn to Light* that his poetical genius reaches its zenith. To that hymn Thomas Yalden (1671-1736) wrote a counterpart, entitled *Hymn to Darkness*, which may be read alongside of Norris's hymn on the same subject. Norris (1657-1711) was a theologian and a student of Platonism, a man of amiable, pure, and affectionate character. His works are voluminous, the most important being an "Essay towards the Theory of an Ideal and Intelligible World"; his *Miscellanies*, published 1687, includes poems characteristic of his religious views; in one of them occurs the phrase, "angel's visits, short and bright," which may have suggested similar expressions in Blair's *Grave* and Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*. He became rector of Bemerton, near Salisbury, in 1692.

The thought in this poem, that light arises out of darkness, should be contrasted with that in Blanco White's splendid sonnet *To Night*: "Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed Within thy beams, O Sun!"

1. **venerable**: see notes, ll. 4, 5.

2. **Muse ... sing**: Comp. *Par. Lost*, iii. 17, "With other notes than to the Orphéan lyre I sing of Chaos and Eternal Night." On the transitive use of 'sing' (=celebrate) see *L'Alleg.* 17, note.

3. **universal womb**: comp. *Par. Lost*, ii. 911, "This wild Abyss, the womb of Nature"; *Comus*, 130, "The dragon womb Of Stygian darkness spots her thickest gloom"; *Par. Lost*, v. 180, "Ye elements, the eldest Birth of Nature's womb"; *Par. Lost*, ii. 150, "the wide womb of uncreated Night."

4. **All things ... did come**. Comp. *Par. Lost*, ii. 894, "eldest Night and Chaos"; *id.* 962, "sable-vested Night, eldest of things." In the ancient cosmogonies Chaos was the first principle of all things, and the poets represent Night and Chaos as exercising dominion from the beginning. Thus Orpheus, in the beginning of his hymn to Night, addresses her as the mother of the gods and men and the origin of all things. Hesiod says that out of Chaos came Erebus and Night, and of these again were born the Sky and the Day (Light). In *Par. Lost*, iii. 1, Light is the "offspring of Heaven's first-born," and in *Par. Lost*, vii. 244, "first of things"; so, in *Du Bartas*, light is "God's eldest daughter": comp. *Genesis*, i.

7. *essence*: in *Par. Lost*, vii. 243, Light is “*quintessence pure*.”

8. *like the light of God*, etc. This is plainly an echo of Milton in his apostrophe to Light, *Par. Lost*, iii, 1-18, “since God is Light, and never but in unapproachèd light Dwelt from eternity”: comp. *ibid.* 375,

“thee, Author of all being,
Fountain of light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sittest
Throned inaccessible.”

9. *great Love*: comp. Spenser’s *Hymn of Heavenly Love*, 22, and *Ode on St. Cecilia’s Day*, ll. 1-15, notes.

10. *theatre*: comp. Spenser’s *Sonnet*, liv., “Of this world’s *theatre* in which we stay.”

11. *folding circles ... tuned*: comp. *In Mem.* xvii., “circles of the bounding sky”; and *Ode on St. Cecilia’s Day*, Grand Chorus, and ll. 1-15, notes.

13. *morning Stars*: the allusion is to *Job*, xxxviii. 4-11; comp. *Hymn Nat.* 119.

14. *council*: see *Hymn Nat.* 10: also *Par. Lost*, vii. 516, where God declares His pleasure to create another world and a new race, and the Son marks out in Chaos the boundaries of this creation.

16. *unquestion’d*: see note, No. XLIII., l. 1, on the form and sense of such epithets.

monarch ... empty space. Comp. *Comus*, 250, “*empty-vaulted Night*”; 957, “*Night sits monarch yet in the mid-sky*.” In *Par. Lost*, ii., Chaos is represented as the monarch, or rather the *Anarch* (l. 988) of empty space, and Night is “the consort of his reign.”

17. *native, original*: comp. *Par. Lost*, i. 634, “repossess their *native seat*”; ii., “we ascend up to our *native seat*”; iii. 604, “*native form*”; *L’Alleg.* 134, “*native wood-notes wild*” (Lat. *nativus*).

19. *awful*; used objectively = awe-inspiring: see note, *Hymn Nat.* 59.

23. *fear and sorrow flee*: comp. Shelley’s *To Night*, “touching all things with thine opiate wand.” The thought here should be contrasted with that in Cowley’s *Hymn to Light*. Refer also to Ovid’s *Meta.* viii. 81, *Curarum maxima nutrix, Nox*.

24. *find rest*. The poetical references to the blessedness of nightly rest are endless: comp. in the *Golden Treasury*, Nos. xl., xlvi., clxxxi., ccxxxii., cccxiv. The fourth stanza of the poem has not been given here: it begins “*Though light and glory be the Almighty’s throne, Darkness is his pavilion*.”

No. LXVI.

A VISION.

VAUGHAN'S Platonic mysticism is well exemplified in this stanza, which opens his poem called *The World*. "The mystic element is finely interfused through the thoughts of Vaughan; indeed, it is the element in which his mind naturally expands itself and seems most at home. This is the solemn background against which Vaughan sees all the transitory ongoings of man. The mystery of the universe by which he is encompassed haunts him; he longs to penetrate to the heart of it."

2. a great ring. Comp. Shelley's well-known lines,

"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity."

5. driven by, etc. : *i.e.* Time is due to, and measured by, the revolutions of the spheres. For the Platonic notion, see *Hymn Nat.* 125, note. Comp. Herrick's *Eternity* :

"O years! and age! farewell:
Behold I go,
Where I do know
Infinity to dwell,
And these mine eyes shall see
All times, how they
Are lost i' the sea
Of vast eternity:—
Where never moon shall sway
The stars; but she,
And night, shall be
Drowned in one endless day."

No. LXVII.

ALEXANDER'S FEAST, OR, THE POWER OF MUSIC.

ON the occasion of this poem, usually entitled "A Song in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day, 1697," see the notes on No. II. in this book, which was the corresponding ode for the year 1687.

1. 'Twas, etc. : 'it was at the royal feast given by Alexander in celebration of his conquest of Persia that,' etc.

for Persia won, for the winning of Persia; participial construction, common in Latin: comp. note, No. XLVII., l. 19.

2. Philip's warlike son. Alexander the Great, son of Philip II. of Macedon, was born B.C. 356. In 334 he set out on his great

expedition against Persia, and in 333 defeated Darius in Asia Minor. He then subdued Phoenicia, Tyre, and Egypt, after which he again met and overthrew Darius in the great battle of Arbela (Erbil), October, 331. From Arbela he marched to Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis, all of which surrendered to him.

3. **awful**, awe-inspiring: used objectively; see notes *Hymn Nat.* 57, and No. LXV., l. 19.

state: the use of 'state' here points back to its older sense of 'seat of honour': comp. *Par. Lost*, ii. 1, "High on a throne of royal state"; Jonson's *Hymenaei*, "And see where Juno ... Displays her glittering state and chair"; see also Trench, *Select Glossary*.

4. **sate**: the O. E. past was *saet*.

6. **peers**: comp. *Par. Lost*, i. 39; ii. 445, etc.

7. **myrtles**: see note, *Lyc.* 2, and comp. Horace, *Od.* i. 38.

9. **Thais** (pron. *Thā-īs*), an Athenian woman of great wit and beauty, who accompanied Alexander on his expedition into Asia (see *Classical Dict.*).

11. **flower**, prime: comp. *Rom. and Jul.* ii. 5, "flower of courtesy"; "flower of the nation."

13. **None ... deserves**. 'None' is here used as a singular, though in such sentences the plural verb would more generally be used. *None* is radically singular, being = *not one*, and used in Old English before vowels or aspirates. We find *none* as a plural as early as Chaucer, "noon holy men" (*Prol.* 178).

16. **Timotheus**: a distinguished flute-player of Thebes, flourished under Alexander the Great, on whom his music made so powerful an impression that once in the midst of a performance by Timotheus of an Orthian Nome to Athena, Alexander started from his seat and seized his arms (Smith's *Class. Dict.*). He is not to be confounded with that Timotheus (B.C. 446-357) who introduced the eleven-stringed lyre and in many other ways developed the artificial forms of musical expression. Pope compares Dryden himself to Timotheus.

17. **tuneful quire**: see No. II. l. 6, and note, *Il Pens.* 162.

21. **began from Jove**; the song opened with allusion to the parentage of Alexander, fabled in order to flatter him. It was pretended that his father was Jupiter Ammon or the Libyan Jove (see *Par. Lost*, iv. 277), who appeared to Olympias, the wife of Philip and mother of Alexander, in the form of a serpent. A similar descent was fabled for Scipio Africanus, who was said to have owed his birth to Jupiter Capitolinus. Milton alludes to these fables in *Par. Lost*, ix. 494-510, with reference to Satan's appearance to Eve in the form of a serpent.

22. **blissful seats** : comp. the language of *Comus*, 1-4. 'Seats' is plural either because honorific or in the sense in which the Lat. plur. *sedes* is sometimes used.

23. **power**. Comp. Jonson's *Hue and Cry after Cupid*, in allusion to the power of love :

"At his sight the sun hath turned,
Neptune in the waters burned,
Hell hath felt a greater heat ;
Jove himself forsook his seat."

24. **belied** : common in Dryden in the sense of 'to counterfeit.' *To belie* is 'to tell lies about,' hence 'to calumniate' (*Hen. IV.* i. 1. 3) ; there is then a transition to the meanings 'to contradict' (*Rich. II.* ii. 2. 77) and 'to counterfeit.'

25. **Sublime**, aloft (Lat. *sublimis*) : comp. Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women*, 141 :

"With whom I rode *sublime*,
On Fortune's neck : we sat as God by God :
The Nilus would have risen before his time,
And flooded at our nod."

See also *Par. Lost*, ii. 528.

radiant spires, glittering coils (Lat. *spira*, applied by Virgil to the coils of a serpent ; hence *spiral*). The poet's meaning will be better understood from Milton's account of the position of the serpent when approaching Eve (*Par. Lost*, ix. 496) ; the erected head seemed to ride upon the coiled body.

26. **Olympia** : see note, l. 21. Olympias, Alexander's mother, was married to Philip B.C. 359, and died B.C. 316.

29. **stamp'd**, etc. : comp. *Cymb.* ii. 5. 5. Perhaps there is a play upon the word, as applicable to a coin and a king. 'Sovereign' : Dryden wrote *sov'raign* ; so it is in *Hamlet*, ii. 2. 27 (1st Fol.) ; up to about 1570 the intensive *g* is not found, M.E. being *soverain* (Lat. *superanum*).

31. **present deity** : comp. Horace, *Od.* iii. 5. 2, *praesens Divus habebitur Augustus* ('Augustus will be considered a present deity').

32. **rebound**, made to rebound, *i.e.* re-echo the words. This causal use of the verb is found in Dryden's trans. of Virgil's *Eclogues*, vi. 19, "the vales his voice *rebound* And carry to the skies the sacred sound."

33. **ravish'd** : comp. *Comus*, 144, "such divine enchanting ravishment," and *Il. Pens.* 40, note ; see also *Song of Sol.* iv. 9.

35. **Assumes the god**, affects a divine character. Comp. *Hen. V.*, *Prolog.* 6, "Then should the warlike Harry ... *assume the port of Mars.*"

36. **Affects to nod.** Comp. Dryden's Translation of Homer's *Il.* i. 517 *et. seq.*:

“ On the faith of Jove rely,
When, *nodding* to thy suit, he bows the sky ”;

also Virg. *Aen.* x. 115, and the note given on line 25, above. The Latin *numen* = a nod, hence a command, hence the divine will, and finally (by metonymy) a divinity.

38. **sung, celebrated** : see note, *Lycidas*, 102.

39. **Bacchus** : comp. Horace, *Ode to Bacchus*, iii. 25, and *Ant. and Cleo.* ii. 7.

40. **jolly, festive.** In Chaucer, Spenser, and others, ‘jolly’ is used in the sense of the French *joli*, pleasing, pretty; in modern English it means merry, and implies boisterous mirth. Dryden here uses it in its radical sense, the word originally referring to such festivities as those of Christmas and *Yule*. In Horace Bacchus is *jocosus* and *inverecundus*.

42. **purple** : see note, *Lyc.* 41.

43. **honest, handsome, goodly.** The Latin *honestus* is thus applied to men and things in respect of their appearance, as well as in the more general sense of ‘honourable,’ see note on xxvii., l. 6. See Jamieson's *Scottish Dict.* on the use of this word both in Scottish and in classical senses.

44. **hautboys.** The hautboy or oboe is a *high*-toned instrument (hence the name).

46. **did first ordain.** Comp. *Comus*, 46,

“ Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape,
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine.”

The epithet ‘drinking’ applies to ‘joys.’

54. **slew the slain** : a cognate object. There is no prolepsis here as in *S. A.* 439, “Who slew'st them many a slain.” Comp. Hor. *Od.* iii. 3. 65.

55. **The master, i.e.** Timotheus.

56. **His, i.e.** Alexander's : in l. 57, ‘he’ = Alexander; in 58, ‘his hand’ is the musician's and ‘his pride’ Alexander's.

ardent, lit. burning, gleaming with martial fire : comp. Pope's *Iliad*, iii. 525, “From rank to rank she darts her *ardent* eyes”; this literal sense is now almost obsolete except in the phrase ‘ardent spirits.’

58. **Changed his hand.** Comp. Herrick's *To Music* (*G. T.* edition, p. 161):

“ Begin to charm, and as thou strok'st mine ears
With thine enchantment, melt me into tears.
Then let thy active hand scud o'er thy lyre,
And make my spirits frantic with the fire ;

That done, sink down into a silvery strain,
And make me smooth as balm and oil again."

59. **Muse**, subject that inspires the Muse: comp. *Lyc.* 19, note.

61. **Darius**: Darius III., the last king of Persia, B.C. 336-331, murdered in the deserts of Parthia by Bessus, satrap of Bactria, and his associates, in 330.

65. **weltering**: comp. *Lyc.* 13, and *Hymn Nat.* 124, note; also Shelley's poem *Written in the Euganean Hills*.

67. **those**: relative omitted.

68. **exposed**, left to chance: comp. 'to expose a child' (Lat. *expono*).

69. **not a friend**: a stronger negative than 'no friend': 'a' is here the numeral *one* (see note to *L'Alleg.* 14).

71. **Revolving**, considering. The Lat. *revolve* is used transitively in the sense of 'to brood over,' 'to reflect upon': comp. *Cymb.* iii. 3, "You may *revolve* what tales I told you."

73. **stole**. Comp. the phrase 'to steal a glance.'

76. **love was in the next degree**. Comp. *Twelfth Night*, iii. 1, "I *pity* you." "That's a *degree* to love." This thought is frequent in the poets: comp. B. and F.'s *Sp. Curate*, v. 1, "Pity, some say, is the parent of future love"; but see also Cotton, *Love's Triumph*, 5, "And some say pity is the child of love," and *Two Gent.* iv. 4. 101, "Because I love him, I must pity him."

79. **Lydian**: see note, *L'Alleg.* 136.

82. **an empty bubble**. Comp. *As You Like It*, ii. 5, "Seeking the *bubble* reputation in the cannon's mouth"; 1 *Hen. IV.* v. 1, "What is honour? a word," etc.; and *Hor. Od.* v. 5, "*inanae purpurae decus*." With "toil and trouble," comp. *Macb.* iv. 1. 20.

85. **worth thy winning**, worthy of being won by thee. This use of 'worth' apparently resembles that of Lat. *dignus* with the ablative, the substantive denoting the extent or manner of the worth or value, e.g. 'worth ten pounds,' 'worth nothing,' 'worth preserving'; "worth ambition" (*Par. Lost*, i. 262), "worth the shame" (*King Lear*, ii. 4), "worthy thy sight" (*Par. Lost*, v. 308). When the derived form 'worthy' is used, it is generally followed by 'of,' but in Shakespeare we find "worthy love" (*King John*, ii. 2), "worthy death" (*Cor.* iii. 1, 299), and in Dryden's *Aurungezbe*, "Be worthy me, as I am worthy you." On the frequent omission of the preposition after verbs and adjectives that imply value, worth, etc., see Abbott, § 198a. In A.S. the word governed by 'worth' was inflected, and the disuse of the inflection has obscured the relation of 'worth' to the following substantive.

88. **good.** Compare the Scriptural use of the word, 1 *Chron.* xxix. 3. With the sentiment of the line comp. *Comus*, 720-724, and Horace, *Od.* iii. 8.

thee : see Abbott, § 220.

89. **The many.** Spenser has "the rascal *many*" (*F. Q.* i. 12. 9, v. 11. 59); and see Shakespeare, 2 *Hen. IV.* i. 3, etc.; also comp. the Gk. *οἱ πολλοί*.

92. **the fair ... care** : comp. No. XLVII., ll. 1-4. This use of 'fair' in reference to one individual=fair one, is less common than that in reference to a class, as in l. 15. Comp. *As You Like It*, iii. 2, "the *fair* of Rosalind."

95. **sigh'd** : comp. Horace, *Od.* v. 11.

96. **at once**, simultaneously.

97. **vanquish'd victor** : comp. "the victor-victim" of No. VIII., l. 20.

98. **again.** The poet now illustrates a new mood or mode.

strain : see note *Il Pens.* 174, and contrast the modes of music described in *L'Alleg.* and *Il Pens.*

100. **bands of sleep.** Comp. Pope's *Odyssey*, xx. 68, "the downy bands of sleep": also such figures as "bands of sin" (Hampole's *Pr. of Cons.* 3207), "fetters of prejudice," "ties of routine," etc.

104. **As, as if** : comp. Tennyson's *Enid*, 210, "Caught at the hilt, *as* to abolish him." This use is common in abbreviated subordinate clauses.

105. **amazed, bewildered** : comp. No. LVIII., l. 1.

107. **Furies**, the avenging deities, called by the Greeks Eumenides or Erinyes; in Aeschylus they are ancient divinities dwelling in Tartarus, having serpents twined in their hair and blood dripping from their eyes.

110. **sparkies** : comp. *Comus*, 80.

111. Another scene is here called up.

112. **Each a torch**, etc. The omission of the preposition (*e.g.* *with*) in adverbial clauses of circumstance is well illustrated in Abbott, § 202.

114. **unburied.** Among the ancients an unburned or unburied body was held to be disgraced, and the spirit was unhappy until a kindly stranger at least threw a few handfuls of earth on the corpse.

117. **crew** : see note *L'Alleg.* 38, and for another instance of a favourable use of the word comp. Lyly's *Euphues*, "a *crew* of gentlemen." Milton uses the word contemptuously in nearly every case, but Shakespeare has it both in good and bad senses :

see *M. N. D.* iii. 2. 9, *Rich. III.* iv. 5. 12, "valiant crew," the very phrase here used by Dryden.

120. **hostile** : perhaps merely in the sense which the Latin word sometimes has = 'belonging to the enemy.'

122. **flambeau** : post-Restoration English for 'torch.'

125. **another Helen**. In allusion to the fact that the abduction of Helen led to the siege of Troy, and that Alexander is said to have set fire to Persepolis at the instigation of Thais : comp. *Hor. Od.* iii. 3.

128. **organs** : see note, No. II., l. 44.

129. **to** : see *Lyc.* 13.

131. **Could** : Dryden wrote cou'd ; the *l* in this word is due to the influence of *should* and *would*.

132. **Cecilia** : see notes on No. II.

134. **enthusiast** : a word of Crashaw's in *Musick's Duel* :

"Her little soul is ravished and so poured
Into loose ecstasies, that she is placed
Above herself, Musick's *enthusiast*."

135. **narrow bounds**, *i.e.* of musical expression. She "added length to solemn sounds," for the organ, having a wind-reservoir, can give a sustained note of which a stringed instrument is incapable. Pope has evidently adopted this notion in his *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* :

"While in more *lengthened* notes, and slow,
The deep majestic *solemn organs* blow."

137. **mother-wit ... arts** : similarly opposed to each other by Spenser in *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, l. 1136,

"For whatsoever mother-wit or arte
Could worke, he put in prooffe."

The word 'Nature's' seems to be tautological.

139. **both** ; Timotheus and St. Cecilia.

140. **raised a mortal** : see l. 31.

141. **angel** : see notes on No. II.

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