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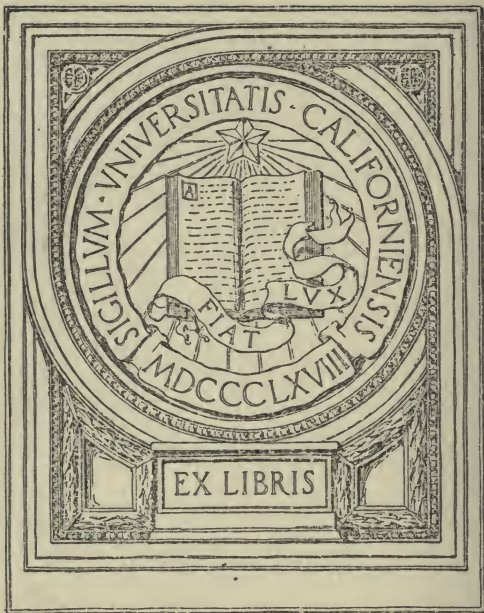
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JOHN MILTON

# ARCADES

*WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES AND INDEXES*

EDITED BY

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TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
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## NOTE.

THIS edition of *Arcades* is reprinted from the volume containing *Arcades* and *Comus* that was published in the Pitt Press Series in 1891. I desire to repeat the earlier acknowledgment of my obligations.

A. W. V.

*October, 1905.*



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# INTRODUCTION.

## LIFE OF MILTON.

MILTON'S life falls into three clearly defined divisions. The first period ends with the poet's return from Italy in 1639; the second at the Restoration in 1660, when release from the fetters of politics enabled him to remind the world that he was a great poet, if not a great controversialist; the third is brought to a close with his death in 1674. The poems given in the present volume date from the first of these periods; but we propose to summarise briefly the main events of all three.

*The three  
periods in Mil-  
ton's life.*

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London. He came, in his own words, *ex genere honesto*. A family of Miltons had been settled in Oxfordshire since the reign of Elizabeth. The poet's father had been educated at an Oxford school, possibly as a chorister in one of the College choir-schools, and imbibing Anglican sympathies had conformed to the Established Church. For this he was disinherited by his father. He settled in London, following the profession of scrivener. A scrivener combined the occupations of lawyer and law-stationer. It appears to have been a lucrative calling; certainly John Milton (the poet was named after the father) attained to easy circumstances. He married about 1600, and had six children, of whom several died young. The third child was the poet.

*Born 1608; the  
poet's father.*

The elder Milton was evidently a man of considerable culture, in particular an accomplished musician, and a com-

poser<sup>1</sup> whose madrigals were deemed worthy of being printed side by side with those of Byrd, Orlando Gibbons and other leading musicians of the time. To him, no doubt, the poet owed the love of music of which we see frequent indications in the poems.<sup>2</sup> Realising, too, that in his son lay the promise and possibility of future greatness, John Milton took the utmost pains to have the boy adequately educated; and the lines *Ad Patrem* show that the ties of affection between father and child were of more than ordinary closeness.

Milton was sent to St Paul's School as a day scholar about the year 1620. He also had a tutor, Thomas *Early training.* Young, a Scotchman, who subsequently became Master of Jesus College, Cambridge. More important still, Milton grew up in the stimulating atmosphere of cultured home-life. This was a signal advantage. Most men do not realise that the word 'culture' signifies anything very definite or desirable before they pass to the University, but for Milton home-life meant from the first broad interests, refinement and the easy, material prosperity under which the literary habit is best developed. In 1625 he left St Paul's. Of his extant English poems<sup>3</sup> only one, *On the Death of a Fair Infant*, dates from his school-days; but we are told that he had written much verse, English and Latin. And his early training had done that which was all-important: it had laid the foundation of the far-ranging knowledge which makes *Paradise Lost* unique for diversity of suggestion and interest.

Milton entered at Christ's College, Cambridge, commencing residence in the Easter term of 1625. Seven years *At Cambridge.* were spent at the University. He took his B.A. degree in 1629, proceeded M.A. in 1632, and in the latter year

<sup>1</sup> See the article on him in Grove's *Dict. of Music*.

<sup>2</sup> Milton was especially fond of the organ; see note on *Il Pen.* 161. During his residence at Horton Milton made occasional journeys to London to hear, and obtain instruction in, music.

<sup>3</sup> His paraphrases of *Psalms* cxiv, cxxxvi, scarcely come under this heading. Aubrey says in his quaint *Life of Milton*: "Anno Domini 1619 he was ten yeares old, as by his picture: and was then a poet."

left Cambridge. His experience of University life had not been wholly fortunate. He was, and felt himself to be, out of sympathy with his surroundings; and whenever in after-years he spoke of Cambridge<sup>1</sup> it was with something of the grave *impietas* of Gibbon who, unsoftened even by memories of Magdalen, complained that the fourteen months spent at Oxford were the least profitable part of his life. Milton, in fact, anticipates the laments that we find in the correspondence of Gray, addressed sometimes to Richard West and reverberated from the banks of the Isis. It may, however, be fairly assumed that, whether consciously or not, Milton owed a good deal to his University; and it must not be forgotten that the uncomplimentary and oft-quoted allusions to Cambridge date for the most part from the unhappy period when Milton the politician and polemical dogmatist had effectually divorced himself at once from Milton the scholar and Milton the poet. A poet he had proved himself before leaving the University. The short but exquisite ode *At a Solemn Music*, and the *Nativity Hymn*<sup>2</sup> (1629), were already written.

<sup>1</sup> That Milton's feeling towards the authorities of his own college was not entirely unfriendly would appear from the following sentences written in 1642. He takes, he says, the opportunity to "acknowledge publicly, with all grateful mind, that more than ordinary respect which I found, above many of my equals, at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the Fellows of that college wherein I spent some years; who, at my parting after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many ways how much better it would content them that I would stay; as by many letters full of kindness and loving respect, both before that time and long after, I was assured of their singular good affection towards me."—*Apology for Smectymnuus*, P. W. III. 311. Perhaps it would have been better for Milton had he been sent to Emmanuel College, long a stronghold of Puritanism. Dr John Preston, the Master of the college at that time, was a noted leader of the Puritan party; see his *Life* by Thomas Ball, printed in 1885 by Mr E. W. Harcourt from the ms. at Newnham Court.

<sup>2</sup> See later, p. xxv.

Milton's father had settled<sup>1</sup> at Horton in Buckinghamshire. Thither the son retired in 1632. He had gone to *The five years (1632—1637) spent at Horton.* Cambridge with the intention of qualifying for some profession, perhaps the Church<sup>2</sup>. This purpose was soon given up, and when Milton returned to his father's house he seems to have made up his mind that there was no profession which he cared to enter. He would choose the better part of studying and preparing himself, by rigorous self-discipline and application, for the far-off divine event to which his whole life moved.

It was Milton's constant resolve to achieve something that should vindicate the ways of God to men, something great<sup>3</sup> that should justify his own possession of unique powers—powers of which, with no trace of egotism, he proclaims himself proudly conscious. The feeling finds repeated expression in his prose; it is the guiding-star that shines clear and steadfast even through the mists of politics.

<sup>1</sup> As tenant of the Earl of Bridgewater, according to one account; but probably the tradition arose from Milton's subsequent connection with the Bridgewater family.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Milton's own words, "The Church, to whose service by the intention of my parents and friends I was destined of a child, and in my own resolutions." What kept him from taking orders was not, at first, any difference of belief, but solely his objection to Church discipline and government. "Coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded in the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave.....(I) thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."—*Reason of Church Government*, P. W. II. 482. Milton disliked in particular the episcopal system, and spoke of himself as "Church-outed by the prelates."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the second sonnet; "How soon hath Time." Ten years later (1641) Milton speaks of the "inward prompting which grows daily upon me, that by labour and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die." *Reason of Church Government*, P. W. II. 477, 478.

He has a mission to fulfil, a purpose to accomplish, no less than the most fanatic of religious enthusiasts; and the means whereby this end is to be attained are fourfold: devotion to learning, devotion to religion, ascetic purity of life, and the pursuit of *σπουδαιότης* or "excellent seriousness" of thought.

This period of self-centred isolation lasted from 1632 to 1637. Gibbon tells us among the many wise things contained in that most wise book the *Autobiography*, that every man has two educations; that which he receives from his teachers and that which he owes to himself; the latter being infinitely the more important. During these five years Milton completed his second education; ranging the whole world of classical antiquity and absorbing the classical genius so thoroughly that the ancients were to him what they afterwards became to Landor, what they have never become to any other English poet in the same degree, even as the very breath of his being; learning, too, all of art, especially music, that contemporary England could furnish; wresting from modern languages and literatures their last secrets; and combining these vast and diverse influences into a splendid equipment of hard-won, well-ordered culture. The world has known many greater scholars in the technical, limited sense than Milton, but few men, if any, who have mastered more things worth mastering in art, letters and scholarship<sup>1</sup>. It says much for the poet that he was sustained through this period of study, pursued *ohne Hast, ohne Rast*, by the full consciousness that all would be crowned by a masterpiece which should add one more testimony to the belief in that God who ordains the fates of men. It says also a very great deal for the father who suffered his son to follow in this manner the path of learning<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Milton's poems with their undercurrent of perpetual allusion are the best proof of the width of his reading; but interesting supplementary evidence is afforded by the commonplace book discovered in 1874, and printed by the *Camden Society*, 1876. It contains extracts from about 80 different authors whose works Milton had studied.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the poem *Ad Patrem*, 68—72, in which Milton thanks his father for not having forced him to be a merchant or lawyer.



True, Milton gave more than one earnest of his future fame. The dates of the early pieces—*L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus* and *Lycidas*—are not all certain; but probably each was composed at Horton before 1638. We must speak of them elsewhere. Here we may note that four of them have great autobiographic value as an indirect commentary, written from Milton's coign of seclusion, upon the moral crisis through which English life and thought were passing, the clash between the careless hedonism of the Cavalier world and the deepening austerity of Puritanism. In *L'Allegro* the poet holds the balance almost equal between the two opposing tendencies. In *Il Penseroso* it becomes clear to which side his sympathies are leaning. *Comus* is a covert prophecy of the downfall of the Court-party, while *Lycidas* openly "foretells the ruine" of the Established Church. The latter poem is the final utterance of Milton's lyric genius. Here he reaches, in Mr Mark Pattison's words, the high-water mark of English verse; and then—the pity of it—he resigns that place among the *lyrici vates* of which the Roman singer was ambitious, and for nearly twenty years suffers his lyre to hang mute and rusty in the temple of the Muses.

The composition of *Lycidas* may be assigned to the year 1637. In the spring of the next year Milton started for Italy. He had long made himself a master of Italian, and it was natural that he should seek inspiration in the land where many English poets, from Chaucer to Shelley, have found it. Milton remained abroad some fifteen months. Originally he had intended to include Sicily and Greece in his travels, but news of the troubles in England hastened his return. He was brought face to face with the question whether or not he should bear his part in the coming struggle; whether without self-reproach he could lead any longer this life of learning and indifference to the public weal. He decided as we might have expected that he would decide, though some good critics see cause to regret the decision. Milton puts his

*Milton's lyric verse; its relation to contemporary life.*

*Travels in Italy; close of the first period in his life.*

*Cause of his return to England.*



position very clearly. "I considered it," he says "dishonourable to be enjoying myself at my ease in foreign lands, while my countrymen were striking a blow for freedom." And again: "Perceiving that the true way to liberty followed on from these beginnings, inasmuch also as I had so prepared myself from my youth that, above all things, I could not be ignorant what is of Divine and what of human right, I resolved, though I was then meditating certain other matters, to transfer into this struggle all my genius and all the strength of my industry."

The summer of 1639 (July) found Milton back in England. Immediately after his return he wrote the *Epitaphium Damonis*, the beautiful elegy in which he lamented the death of his school friend, Diodati. *Lycidas* was the last of the English lyrics: the *Epitaphium*, which should be studied in close connection with *Lycidas*, the last of the long Latin poems. Thenceforth, for a long spell, the rest was silence, so far as concerned poetry. The period which for all men represents the strength and maturity of manhood, which in the cases of other poets produces the best and most characteristic work, is with Milton a blank. In twenty years he composed no more than a bare handful of Sonnets, and even some of these are infected by the taint of political *animus*. Other interests filled his thoughts—the question of Church-reform, education, marriage, and, above all, politics.

Milton's first treatise upon the government of the Established Church (*Of Reformation touching Church-Discipline in England*) appeared in 1641. Others followed in quick succession. The abolition of Episcopacy was the watch-word of the enemies of the Anglican Church—the *delenda est Carthago* cry of Puritanism, and no one enforced the point with greater eloquence than Milton. During 1641 and 1642 he wrote five pamphlets on the subject. Meanwhile he was studying the principles of education. On his return from Italy he had undertaken the training of his nephews<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Edward and John Phillips, sons of Milton's only sister. Both subsequently joined the Royalist party. To Edward Phillips we owe a memoir of the poet.

*The second period, 1639—1660. Milton abandons poetry.*

*Pamphlets on the Church and Education.*

This led to consideration of the best educational methods ; and in the *Tractate of Education*, 1644, Milton assumed the part of educational theorist. In the previous year, May, 1643, he married<sup>1</sup>. The marriage proved, at the time, unfortunate. Its immediate outcome was the pamphlets on Divorce. Clearly he had little leisure for literature proper.

The finest of Milton's prose works, the *Areopagitica*, a plea for the free expression of opinion, was published in 1644. In 1645<sup>2</sup> he edited the first collection of his poems. In 1649 his advocacy of the anti-royalist cause was recognised by the offer of a post under the newly appointed Council of State. His bold vindication of the trial of Charles I., *The Tenure of Kings*, had appeared

*Political Pamphlets. Appointment to Latin Secretaryship.*

<sup>1</sup> His wife (who was only seventeen) was Mary Powell, eldest daughter of Richard Powell, of Forest Hill, a village some little distance from Oxford. She went to stay with her father in July 1643, and refused to return to Milton ; why, it is not certain. She was reconciled to her husband in 1645, bore him four children, and died in 1652, in her twenty-seventh year. No doubt, the scene in *P. L.* x. 909—946, in which Eve begs forgiveness of Adam, reproduced the poet's personal experience, while many passages in *S. A.* must have been inspired by the same cause.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. old style. The volume was entered on the registers of the Stationers' Company under the date of October 6th, 1645. It was published on Jan. 2, 1645—6, with the following title-page :

*“Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin, compos'd at several times. Printed by his true Copies. The Songs were set in Musick by Mr. Henry Lawes, gentleman of the King's Chappel, and one of His Majesties private Musick.*

‘—————*Baccare frontem*

*Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro.* VIRG. *Ecl.* 7.

*Printed and publish'd according to Order. London, Printed by Ruth Raworth, for Humphrey Moseley, and are to be sold at the signe of the Princes Arms in Pauls Churchyard. 1645.”*

From the prefatory Address to the Reader it is clear that the collection was due to the initiative of the publisher. Milton's own feeling is expressed by the motto, where the words “*vati futuro*” show that, as

earlier in the same year. Milton accepted the offer, becoming Latin<sup>1</sup> Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. There was nothing distasteful about his duties. He drew up the despatches to foreign governments, translated state-papers, and served as interpreter to foreign envoys. Had his duties stopped here his acceptance of the post would, I think, have proved an unqualified gain. It brought him into contact with the first men in the state<sup>2</sup>, gave him a practical insight into the working of national affairs and the motives of human action; in a word, furnished him with that experience of life which is essential to all poets who aspire to be something more than "the idle singers of an empty day." But unfortunately the secretaryship entailed the necessity of defending at every turn the past course of the revolution and the present policy of the Council. Milton, in fact, held a perpetual brief as advocate for his party. Hence the endless and unedifying controversies into which he drifted; controversies which wasted the most precious years of his life, warped, as some critics think, his nature, and eventually cost him his eyesight.

Between 1649 and 1660 Milton produced no less than eleven pamphlets. Several of these arose out of the publication of the famous *Eikon Basilike*. The book was printed in 1649 and created so extraordinary a

*The advantage of the post.*

*Its disadvantage.*

*Milton's writings on behalf of the Commonwealth.*

he judged, his great achievement was yet to come. The volume was divided into two parts, the first containing the English, the second the Latin poems. *Comus* was printed at the close of the former, with a separate title-page to mark its importance.

<sup>1</sup> A Latin Secretary was required because the Council scorned, as Edward Phillips says, "to carry on their affairs in the wheedling, lispng jargon of the cringing French." Milton's salary was £288, in modern money about £900.

<sup>2</sup> There is no proof that Milton ever had personal intercourse with Cromwell, and Mr Mark Pattison implies that he was altogether neglected by the foremost men of the time. Yet it seems unlikely that the Secretary of the Committee should not have been on friendly terms with some of its members, Vane, for example, and Whitelocke.

sensation that Milton was asked to reply to it. This he did with *Eikonoklastes*, introducing the wholly unworthy sneer at Sidney's *Arcadia* and the awkwardly expressed reference to Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>. Controversy of this barren type has the inherent disadvantage that once started it may never end. The Royalists commissioned the Leyden professor, Salmasius, to prepare a counterblast, the *Defensio Regia*, and this in turn was met by Milton's *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, 1651, over the preparation of which he lost what little *His blindness.* power of eyesight remained<sup>2</sup>. Salmasius retorted, and died before his second *farrago* of scurrilities was issued: Milton was bound to answer, and the *Defensio Secunda* appeared in 1654. Neither of the combatants gained anything by the dispute; while the subsequent development of the controversy in which Milton crushed the Amsterdam pastor

<sup>1</sup> See *L'Al.* 133--134, note. It would have been more to the point to remind his readers that the imprisoned king must have spent a good many hours over La Calprenède's *Cassandre*.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this was the saddest part of the episode. Milton tells us in the *Defensio Secunda* that his eyesight was injured by excessive study in boyhood: "from the twelfth year of my age I scarce ever left my lessons and went to bed before midnight. This was the first cause of my blindness." Continual reading and writing must have increased the infirmity, and by 1650 the sight of the left eye had gone. He was warned that he must not use the other for book-work. Unfortunately this was just the time when the Commonwealth stood most in need of his services. If Milton had not written the first *Defence* he might have retained his partial vision. The choice lay between private good and public duty. He repeated in 1650 the sacrifice of 1639. "In such a case I could not listen to the physician, not if Æsculapius himself had spoken from his sanctuary; I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spoke to me from heaven.....I concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render" (*Second Defence*). By the Spring of 1652 Milton was quite blind. He was then in his forty-fourth year. The allusion in *P. L.* 111. 21--26, leaves it doubtful from what disease he suffered, whether cataract or amaurosis. Throughout *S. A.* there are frequent references to his affliction.

and professor, Morus, goes far to prove the contention of Mr Mark Pattison, that it was an evil day when the poet left his study at Horton to do battle for the Commonwealth amid the vulgar brawls of the market-place:

“Not here, O Apollo,  
Were haunts meet for thee.”

Fortunately this poetic interregnum in Milton's life was not destined to last much longer. The Restoration came, a blessing in disguise, and in 1660 the ruin of Milton's political party and of his personal hopes, the absolute overthrow of the cause for which he had fought for twenty years, left him free. The author of *Lycidas* could once more become a poet<sup>1</sup>.

*The Restoration releases Milton from politics. Return to poetry.*

Much has been written upon this second period, 1639—1660, and a word may be said here. We saw what parting of the ways confronted Milton on his return from Italy. Did he choose aright? Should he have continued upon the path of learned leisure? There are writers who argue that Milton made a mistake. A poet, they say, should keep clear of political strife: fierce controversy can benefit no man: who touches pitch must expect to be, certainly will be, defiled: Milton sacrificed twenty of the best years of his life, doing work which an underling could have done and which was not worth doing: another *Comus* might have been written, a loftier *Lycidas*: that literature should be the poorer by the absence of these possible masterpieces, that the second greatest genius which England has produced should in a way be the “inheritor of unfulfilled renown,” is and must be a thing entirely and terribly deplorable. This is the view of the purely literary critic. Mr Mark Pattison writes very much to this effect.

*Should Milton have kept apart from political life?*

*One reply to this question.*

<sup>1</sup> We have not attempted to trace the growth of Milton's political and religious opinions: “Through all these stages,” Mr Mark Pattison writes, “Milton passed in the space of twenty years—Church-Puritan, Presbyterian, Royalist, Independent, Commonwealth's man, Oliverian.” To illustrate this statement would need many pages.



There remains the other side of the question. It may fairly be contended that had Milton elected in 1639 to live the scholar's life apart from "the action of men," *Paradise Lost*, as we have it, could never have been written<sup>1</sup>. Knowledge of life and human nature, insight into the problems of men's motives and emotions, grasp of the broader issues of the human tragedy, all these were essential to the author of an epic poem; they could only be obtained through commerce with the world; they would have remained beyond the reach of a recluse. Dryden complained that Milton saw nature through the spectacles of books: we might have had to complain that he saw men through the same medium. Fortunately it is not so: and it is not so because at the age of twenty-two he threw in his fortunes with those of his country; like the diver in Schiller's ballad he took the plunge which was to cost him so dear. The mere man of letters will never move the world. Æschylus fought at Marathon: Shakespeare was practical to the tips of his fingers; a better business man than Goethe there was not within a radius of a hundred miles of Weimar.

This aspect of the question is emphasised by Milton himself. The man he says, "who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things, *not<sup>2</sup> presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have within himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.*" Again, in estimating the qualifications which the writer of an epic such as he contemplated should possess, he is careful to include "insight into all seemly and generous arts and *affairs*<sup>3</sup>."

Truth usually lies half-way between extremes: perhaps it does so here. No doubt, Milton did gain very greatly by breathing awhile the larger air of public life, even though that air was often tainted by

<sup>1</sup> This is equally true of *S. A.*

<sup>2</sup> The italics are not Milton's.

<sup>3</sup> *Reason of Church Government*, P. W. II. 481.

miasmatic impurities. No doubt, too, twenty years of eristic unrest must have left their mark even on Milton. In one of the very few places<sup>1</sup> where he "abides our question," Shakespeare writes:

O! for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
 The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,  
 That did not better for my life provide,  
 Than public means, which public manners breeds:  
 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand;  
 And almost thence my nature is subdu'd  
 To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

Milton's genius was subdued in this way. If we compare him, the Milton of the great epics and of *Samson Agonistes*, with Homer or Shakespeare—and none but the greatest can be his parallel—we find in him a certain want of humanity, a touch of narrowness. He lacks the large-heartedness, the genial, generous breadth of Shakespeare; the sympathy and sense of the *lacrimæ rerum* that even in *Troilus and Cressida* or *Timon of Athens* are there for those who have eyes wherewith to see them. Milton reflects many of the less gracious aspects of Puritanism, its intolerance, want of humour, one-sided intensity. He is stern, unbending, austere, and it seems natural to assume that this narrowness was to a great extent the price he paid for two decades of ceaseless special pleading and dispute. The real misfortune of his life lay in the fact that he fell on evil, angry days when there was no place for moderate men. He had to be one of two things: either a controversialist or a student: there was no *via media*. Probably he chose aright; but we could wish that the conditions under which he chose had been different.

The last part of Milton's life, 1660—1674, passed quietly. At the age of fifty-two he was thrown back upon poetry, and could at length discharge his self-imposed obligation. The early poems he had never regarded as a fulfilment of the debt due to his Creator;

*From the Restoration to Milton's death.*

<sup>1</sup> *Sonnet CXI.*

even when the fire of political strife burned at its hottest Milton never lost sight of the purpose which had been with him since his boyhood. The main difficulty lay in the selection of a suitable subject. He wavered between themes drawn from the Scriptures and others taken from the history of his own country. For a time he was evidently inclined to choose the Arthurian story<sup>1</sup>, the only cycle of events in British history or legend which seems to lend itself naturally to epic treatment. Had he done so we should have lost the *Idylls of the King*. The rough drafts of his projected schemes, now among the Milton MSS.<sup>2</sup> at Trinity College, shew that exactly ninety-nine possible themes occupied his thoughts from time to time; but even as early as 1641 the story of the lost Paradise began to assume prominence. Still, even when the subject was definitively chosen, the question of its treatment—dramatic or epic—remained. Milton contemplated the former. He even commenced work upon a drama of which Satan's address to the sun in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*<sup>3</sup> formed the exordium. These lines were written about 1642. Milton recited them to his nephew Phillips at the time of their composition. Possibly had Milton not been distracted and diverted from poetry by political and other interests he might from 1642 onwards have continued this inchoate drama

<sup>1</sup> This project is not mentioned among the schemes enumerated in the Trinity MSS. Cf. however, the *Epitaphium Damonis*, 162—178, and the poem *Mansus*, 80—84. See also the note on *Comus*, 826—841. Among Milton's prose works was a *History of Britain*, written for the most part about 1649, but not printed till 1670. In it he used the materials collected for his abandoned epic on the story of King Arthur.

<sup>2</sup> They include the original drafts of *Arcades*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*, and some of the minor poems, together with Milton's notes on the design of the long poem he meditated composing, and other less important papers. The MSS. were presented to Trinity by a former member of the college, Sir Henry Newton Puckering, who died in 1700. It is not known how they originally came into his possession.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. IV. ll. 32 *et seq.*



and thus produced a dramatic epic akin to *Samson Agonistes*. As things fell out, the scheme was dropped, and never taken up again. When he finally addressed himself to the composition of *Paradise Lost* he had decided in favour of the epic or narrative form.

Following Aubrey (from Aubrey and Phillips most of our information concerning Milton is derived) we may assume that Milton began to write *Paradise Lost* *Paradise Lost begun.* about 1658. He worked continuously at the epic for some five years. It was finished in 1663, the year of his third<sup>1</sup> marriage. Two more years, however, were spent in the necessary revision, and in 1665 Milton placed the completed poem in the hands of his friend Thomas Ellwood<sup>2</sup>. In 1667 *Paradise Lost* was issued from the press<sup>3</sup>. Milton received £5. Before his death he was paid a second instalment, *The poem published.* £5. Six editions of the poem had been published by the close of the century.

When Ellwood returned the MS. of *Paradise Lost* to Milton

<sup>1</sup> Milton's second marriage took place in the autumn of 1656, i.e. after he had become blind. His wife died in February, 1658. Cf. the *Sonnet*, "Methought I saw my late espoused saint," the pathos of which is heightened by the fact that he had never seen her.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the account given in Ellwood's *Autobiography*: "after some common discourses had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his; which, being brought, he delivered to me, bidding me take it home with me and read it at my leisure, and, when I had so done, return it to him with my judgment thereupon. When I came home, and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem which he intituled *Paradise Lost*."

<sup>3</sup> The delay was due to external circumstances. Milton had been forced by the plague to leave London, settling for a time at Chalfont St Giles in Buckinghamshire, where Ellwood had taken a cottage for him. On his return to London, after "the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed," the Great Fire threw everything into disorder; and there was some little difficulty over the licensing of the poem. For these reasons the publication of *Paradise Lost* was delayed till the autumn of 1667 (Masson).

he remarked: "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of Paradise found?" Possibly we owe *Paradise Regained* to these chance words; or the poem, forming as it does a natural pendant to its predecessor, may have been included in Milton's original design. In any case he must have commenced the second epic about the year 1665. *Samson Agonistes* appears to have been written a little later. The two poems were published together in 1671.

In giving this bare summary of facts it has not been our purpose to offer any criticism upon the poems. It would take too much space to show why *Samson Agonistes* is in subject-matter the poet's threnody over the fallen form of Puritanism, and in style the most perfectly classical poem in English literature; or again, why some great writers (among them Coleridge and Wordsworth) have pronounced *Paradise Regained* to be in point of artistic execution the most consummate of Milton's works—a judgment which would have pleased the author himself since, according to Phillips, he could never endure to hear *Paradise Regained* "censured to be much inferior to *Paradise Lost*." The latter speaks for itself in the rolling splendour of those harmonies which Lord Tennyson has celebrated and alone in his time equalled.

In 1673 Milton brought out a reprint of the 1645 edition of his *Poems*, adding most of the sonnets<sup>1</sup> written in the interval. The last four years of his life were

*Close of Milton's life.*

<sup>1</sup> The number of Milton's sonnets is twenty-three (if we exclude the piece on "The New Forcers of Conscience"), five of which were written in Italian, probably during the time of his travels in Italy, 1638—9. Ten sonnets were printed in the edition of 1645, the last of them being that entitled (from the *Cambridge MS.*) "To the Lady Margaret Ley." The remaining thirteen were composed between 1645 and 1658. The concluding sonnet, therefore (to the memory of Milton's second wife), immediately preceded his commencement of *Paradise Lost*. Four of these poems, (xv. xvi. xvii. xxii.) could not, on account of their political tone, be included in the edition of 1673. They were first published by Edward Phillips at the end of his memoir of Milton, 1694.

devoted to prose works of no particular interest to us<sup>1</sup>. He continued to live in London. His third marriage had proved happy, and he enjoyed something of the renown which was rightly his. Various well-known men used to visit him—notably Dryden<sup>2</sup>, who on one of his visits asked and received permission to dramatise *Paradise Lost*. It does not often happen that a university can point to two such poets among her living sons, each without rival in his generation.

Milton died in 1674, November 8th. He was buried in St Giles' Church, Cripplegate. When we think of him we have to think of a man who lived a life of very *His death.* singular purity and devotion to duty; who for what he conceived to be his country's good sacrificed—and no one can well estimate the sacrifice—during twenty years the aim that was nearest to his heart and best suited to his genius; who, however, eventually realised his desire of writing a great work *in gloriam Dei*.

The sonnet on the "Massacre in Piedmont" is usually considered the finest of the collection, of which the late Rector of Lincoln College edited a well-known edition, 1883. The sonnet inscribed with a diamond on a window pane in the cottage at Chalfont where the poet stayed in 1665 is (in the judgment of a good critic) Miltonic, if not Milton's (Garnett's *Life of Milton*, p. 175).

<sup>1</sup> The treatise on *Christian Doctrine* is valuable as throwing much light on the theological views expressed in the two epic poems and *S.A.*

<sup>2</sup> The lines by Dryden which were printed beneath the portrait of Milton in Tonson's folio edition of *Paradise Lost* published in 1688 are too familiar to need quotation; but it is worth noting that the younger poet had in Milton's lifetime described the great epic as "one of the most noble, and most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced" (prefatory essay to *The State of Innocence*, 1674). Further, tradition assigned to Dryden (a Catholic and a Royalist) the remark, "this fellow (Milton) cuts us all out and the ancients too."

## ARCADES.

*Arcades* was first printed in the edition of his poems issued by Milton in 1645. We have no direct means of determining when it was written. A probable date, however, is 1633. We may assume that Milton was busy over *Comus* in 1634, and since *Arcades* has great stylistic affinity with the longer Masque and was produced under very similar circumstances, it is fair to suppose that only a brief space of time separated the two poems. Probably *Arcades* was the earlier: in each of Milton's editions of his minor works it precedes *Comus*; and it shows, so far as its fragmentary state permits us to judge, rather less finish and maturity of workmanship. Combining these points, critics are content, for the most part, to take 1633 as the date of the shorter poem.

There is, I think, little to be said in favour of the view which would assign the composition of *Arcades* to an earlier date than 1633—to 1631 or 1630. The evidence of style, the æsthetic test, is never conclusive, but if we compare *Arcades* with the poems undoubtedly written before Milton left Cambridge we shall at least find that it presents a very strong contrast with them. It is, for instance, far more akin to *Comus* than to the *Nativity Ode*: scarcely less so to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. In all four we have much the same atmosphere of calm, the same fragrance and freshness of outdoor life, the same enjoyment of nature and country sights and sounds, so that it is hard to resist the impression that many touches in each were suggested by the quiet woodland scenery of Horton. It will be well therefore and safe to accept with Professor Masson the year 1633.

The title of *Arcades* explains the circumstances of its composition—"Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some Noble Persons of her Family."

The Countess Dowager of Derby was a daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe in Northamptonshire, ancestor of the present Earl Spencer. Born about 1560, she married Lord Strange, eldest son of the fourth Earl of Derby. She had several sisters, two of whom—Elizabeth Spencer, afterwards Lady Carey, and Anne Spencer, afterwards Lady Compton—were celebrated by Spenser; as was the Countess herself. Spenser indeed claimed kinship with the Spencer family; cf. the *Prothalamion*<sup>1</sup>,

*The Egerton family for whom Arcades was written.*

“Though from another place I take my name,  
An house of auncient fame.”

To Lady Carey he dedicated his *Muiopotmos* (1590); to Lady Compton his *Mother Hubberds Tale* (1591); to Lady Strange *The Teares of the Muses*<sup>2</sup>. This last poem was published (in the volume curiously entitled *Complaints*) in 1591. Two years later, September 1593, Lady Strange became Countess of Derby. In the spring of 1594 her husband died (popular report attributing his death to witchcraft), and his widow retained for the rest of her life the title of Alice, Countess Dowager of Derby. The death of the Earl is alluded to in *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*. The greater portion of that poem had been previously written, indeed soon after Spenser's return to Ireland in 1591; but the whole work was not published till 1595. Between these dates various additions were made, the following lines among them:

“But Amaryllis, whether fortunate  
Or else unfortunate may I areade,  
That freed is from Cupids yoke by fate,  
Since which she doth new bands adventure dread.”

“Amaryllis” was the Countess of Derby. Apparently she did not fear “new bands adventure.” She married in 1600 Sir

<sup>1</sup> 131, 132.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the note on *Arcades*, line 8. In each “soft dedication” the poet alluded to his relationship. It may be added that the northern branch of the family to which he belonged spelt the name with s.



Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal to Elizabeth. In 1603 he was made Baron Ellesmere; in 1616, Viscount Brackley. For many years the Countess and her husband lived at Harefield in Middlesex; they had purchased the property in 1601. No children were born of the marriage. The Countess, however, had three daughters by her first husband; the Lord Keeper was a widower. His son, Sir John Egerton, married her second daughter, Lady Frances Stanley. The father, shortly after being created Viscount Brackley, died in 1617. The Countess, a widow for the second time, was then in her fifty-sixth year, and till her death in 1637 continued to live at Harefield. In 1617 Sir John Egerton, her son-in-law (and stepson), who had succeeded to the title of Viscount Brackley, received the earldom intended for his father. He became Earl of Bridgewater. It was he who commissioned the performance of *Comus*.

Milton tells us that *Arcades* was performed by "some Noble Persons" of the family of the Countess. "Family" means direct descendants and relatives, and these were sufficiently numerous. The eldest daughter of the Countess, Lady Chandos, lived at Harefield; she was a widow with several children. The second daughter, Countess of Bridgewater, had a very large family, most of whom, no doubt, acted in *Comus*. There were other grandchildren, the family of the third daughter, Countess of Huntingdon. To these might be added the families of the married sisters of the Countess. Milton therefore when he compared her to Cybele, "mother of a hundred gods," indulged in no poetic hyperbole. Nor does it require any strenuous effort of the imagination to conceive the position which the Countess occupied. She was in a way the head of the whole line, a picturesque survival from the great Elizabethan generation of the Spencer family which the great Elizabethan poet, their kinsman, had honoured in "the proud full sail" of his verse. She lived at the noble country house where the Queen had stayed on one of her progresses, the famous visit in 1602 at which tradition says (but falsely) that *Othello* was first performed. She had seen her three daughters raised by

marriage to splendid rank ; she herself bore one of the greatest of English titles ; her beauty and personal worth had been rehearsed by more than one writer. There was everything in her past life and present fortunes that could stimulate admiration and reverence. Out of compliment to her the members of her family conceived the happy idea of representing a Masque. Perhaps a birthday or some anniversary of felicitous memory was the immediate occasion. In any case the entertainment added one more link to the chain of illustrious associations which unites the name of the Countess with the history of the first great age of English poetry. Milton ended what Spenser had begun. As long as literature endures, the memory of this noble lady of the Elizabethan and Jacobean world will remain.

*Occasion of the performance of Arcades.*

A private entertainment at that time meant a Masque<sup>1</sup>. Especially in vogue were slight dramatic pieces which might be characterised as Masque-idylls of a pastoral type, such as could be played in the open air. The classics were ransacked and pillaged for suitable subjects, the result being representations in which fancy and fiction were supreme, realism or strict dramatic propriety conspicuously absent. Great ladies fretted their hour on the level grass, under broad, spreading trees, as goddesses, or nymphs, or shepherdesses more Arcadian than any Alpheus had ever seen on his banks. The young noble from the University who knew exactly how a Latin comedy was rendered in the hall of Trinity, or the Templar who had borne his part in the Christmas Revels of one of the Inns of Court, would masquerade as Apollo, or Sylvanus, or Thyrsis. Everybody was faultless as the graceful figures on a delicate piece of Dresden china or the fine *seigneurs* in the *fêtes champêtres* of Watteau. A lawn made the best of stages ; the woodland background supplied the place of scenery ; madrigals and choruses that blended with the notes of birds and the splash of fountains heightened the illusion ; and if the piece was performed at

*The piece is a Dramatic Pastoral.*

<sup>1</sup> See the sketch of the English Masque appended to *Comus*.

nightfall (as was the case with *Arcades*<sup>1</sup>), friendly dusk concealed from too critical eyes any imperfections that were best unrevealed.

We have nothing quite parallel to these entertainments of which were very popular and for which Ben Jonson, the first dramatist of the age, or Campion would think it worth while to write the words, and Ferrabosco, Lanière, Coperario the musical setting. Anyone, however, who has read the admirable description of the Court-play in Mr Shorthouse's *Schoolmaster Mark*, or seen an out-of-door performance of *As You Like It*, or some similar piece, will have gained a good idea of the purely fanciful species of idyllic, ideal drama represented by *Arcades*. And in reading the Masque we should bear in mind the circumstances which called it forth and the conditions under which it was rendered. To treat it as simply a piece of exquisite lyric work—which it no doubt is—ignoring its dramatic character and the fact that it may be illustrated by reference to pastorals of a similar nature seems to me a mistake. We cannot appreciate its beauty fully until we have studied it in connection with what Ben Jonson accomplished on the same lines; and, as Mr Symonds points out<sup>2</sup>, the style of *Arcades* reflects very directly the influence of Jonson, just as in the last part of *Comus* we catch continuous echoes of the music of Fletcher.

Why Milton, an unknown writer hidden away in a nook of Buckinghamshire, who hitherto had not published a single line, was asked to compose the play, is a matter of conjecture; though, happily, of conjecture not far removed from certainty. It is as clear as anything well can be which does not rest on proof plain and positive that his share in *Arcades* was due to the initiation of Henry Lawes. This well known musician<sup>3</sup> was employed by the Earl and Countess of Bridgewater as music-tutor to their children. When the Earl resolved in 1634 to inaugurate his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. line 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakspeare's Predecessors*, p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief account of him see the note upon his *Dedication* prefixed to the 1637 edition of *Comus*.



official career in Wales with the festivities which were held at Ludlow Castle in the autumn of that year, the duty of providing a Masque fell upon Lawes. He applied to Milton for the *libretto*. This was probably a repetition of what had occurred in the case of *Arcades*. The younger members of the Bridgewater family had turned to their musical instructor for assistance. It is reasonable to suppose that Lawes induced Milton to furnish the poetic material of the play, that he himself composed the incidental music, arranged the scenes, acted (as in *Comus*) the part of the Genius, and was mainly responsible for the success of the performance. He might quite well have gone to Carew or Shirley, as in the year 1633 he wrote the music for a Masque by each of these writers. But Milton was a friend of long standing. Every musician of note must have visited the house in Spread Eagle Street of John Milton, the elder. Hence Lawes may have known the poet in his boyhood. Milton's sonnet shows that the connection between them was very close. To this friendship we are indebted for *Arcades* and *Comus*.

The former has little pretension to completeness. It represents the *disiecta membra* of a longer entertainment; or at best the very slender thread of Incompleteness of *Arcades*. narrative which held the incidents together. There would be dances<sup>1</sup> of the courtly guise recommended by the Attendant Spirit in *Comus*; picturesque grouping of the *dramatis personæ*; possibly some of the effective devices which Ben Jonson was wont to introduce, using machinery for the purpose; and a good deal of music. Many such trifles were given at the great houses of Jacobean nobles, to grace a wedding ceremony, to entertain the court on its royal progresses, to show an Italian ambassador that culture had crossed the Alps and reached the *toto divisos orbe Britannos*. But these were mostly ephemeral pieces, inspired by some special occasion, serving the occasion, and then forgotten. *Arcades* survives because for once an evening's amusement was married to immortal verse.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* after line 95.



ARCADES.



11 The Arcades

## ARCADES.

*Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some Noble Persons of her Family; who appear on the Scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this song:*

### I. Song.

Look, Nymphs and Shepherds, look!  
What sudden blaze of majesty  
Is that which we from hence descry,  
Too divine to be mistook?

    This, this is she  
To whom our vows 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:

10

    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, 20  
 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 toward them, speaks.*

*Gen.* 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 renownèd flood, so often sung,  
 Divine Alpheus, who, by secret sluice, 30  
 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  
 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 40  
 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, 50  
 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 grey 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  
 Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,  
 Number my ranks, and visit every sprout  
 With puissant words and murmurs made to bless. 60  
 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 infolded spheres,  
 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, 70  
 And the low world in measured motion draw  
 After the heavenly tune, which none can hear  
 Of human mould with gross unpurgèd ear.  
 And yet such music worthiest were to blaze  
 The peerless height 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, 80  
 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.

II. *Song.*

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,  
 Clad in splendour as befits  
     Her deity.  
 Such a rural Queen  
 All Arcadia hath not seen.

90

III. *Song.*

Nymphs and Shepherds, dance no more  
     By sandy Ladon's 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.  
 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.

100



## NOTES.

### ARCADES.

*Title.* *Presented to*, i.e. represented before. For *present* cf. the direction at the beginning of *Comus*, *The chief Persons which presented*.

*Dowager.* Properly *dowager* means 'a widow with a jointure;' coined from *dowage*= 'an endowment.' The first part of the word is obviously French *dou-er*, from *dotare*. Cf. Lat. *dos*, allied to *do*, *dare*; and *dower*=O. F. *doaire*, later *douaire*=*dotarium*. *Age* (*dow-age-r*) is the French form of Latin *aticum*, not, as is sometimes stated, of Low Lat. *agium*. Thus *viaticum*=*voyage*: Low Lat. *carnaticum*=*carnage*; and so forth. Then from *age* to *ager* was an easy step: *cottage*—*cottage-r*, *dowage*—*dowage-r*. In modern E. the strict meaning of *dowager* is lost: the word merely distinguishes the widow of a nobleman from the wife of the heir who succeeds to his title. Shakespeare, however, uses *dowager* with much closer reference to its proper sense. Cf. *Midsummer N. D.* I. I. 5:

"A dowager

Long withering out a young man's revenue;"

i. e. a widow who by living on keeps the heir out of the estate. So the same scene, 159:

"A dowager

Of great revenue."

For the other use cf. *Henry VIII.* III. 2. 70, IV. 1. 23, passages which Shakespeare may, or may not, have written.

*Habit*, i.e. dress. See *Comus*, 157, note.

*Seat of State*, i.e. the raised throne over which rested a canopy. Cf. *Henry VIII.* IV. 1. 67:

"While her grace sat down  
To rest awhile, some half an hour or so,  
In a rich chair of state."

Sometimes we have *state* alone with the same sense; e.g. in *Macbeth* III. 4. 5:

“Our hostess keeps her state.”

At the performance of a Masque, or out-of-doors entertainment such as was *Arcades*, this seat of dignity, occupied by the person in whose honour the festivity was given, stood in a central position facing the stage. Cf. the following stage-directions: Shirley's *Triumph of Peace*: “At the lower end of the room, opposite to the State, was raised a stage with a descent of stairs in two branches leading into the room;” where Dyce's footnote is, “i.e. the raised platform on which were placed the royal seats under a Canopy”—Shirley's *Works*, VI. p. 262. Again: “The Great Hall (wherein the Masque was presented) received this division, and order. The upper part where the cloth and chair of state were placed, had scaffolds and seats on either side”—*Masque of the Marriage of the Lord Hayes*, by the Cambridge Musician Thomas Campion, Bullen's ed. p. 150.

*State* might also signify the canopy by itself; cf. *P. L.* x. 445:

“Under state  
Of richest texture spread.”

Cotgrave indeed implied that it first meant the covering, then the throne; but there is nothing to prove this. Cf. his explanation of *dais* or *daiz*: “A cloth of Estate, Canopie or Heauen, that stands ouer the heads of Princes thrones, also, the whole State or seat of Estate.” In any case the canopy would be made of very rich material; cf. Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victorie in Heaven*, 61:

“Over her hung a Canopie of State  
Not of rich tissew, nor of spangled gold”

(Grosart's ed. p. 119); the implication being that these textures were usually employed. No doubt the simple expression *State* was an abbreviation of *Chair of State*; *state* in the latter having its common meaning ‘splendour,’ ‘pomp.’ Note that in sixteenth century English we get *estate* and *state* in the same sense. Cf. Cotgrave above and Spenser, *F. Q.* VI. 2. 27 “discovering my estate.” Afterwards the forms split up, *estate* in modern E. being practically confined to the meaning ‘property.’ *Estate* is the commoner in early E., from O. F. *estat*, Lat. *statum*. Latin initial *st* became *est*—cf. O. F. *ester* from *stare*—just as *sp* was lengthened to *esp*—cf. *espérer* from *spereare*. The abbreviated form *state* represents the tendency to drop an unaccented syllable at the

beginning of a word; cf. the double forms *strange*, *estrange*—squire, esquire. Morris, *Outlines*, pp. 76, 77.

Song. Sung by one member of the band of Masquers; not by them all.

1. As pointed out elsewhere, *Comus* 966, this practice of addressing from the stage some noble person in the audience was quite regular.

5. *This, this is she*. The line would have a familiar ring for the Countess of Derby. Ben Jonson had written in *The Satyr*:

“This is she, this is she  
In whose world of grace  
Every season, person, place,  
That receive her happy be.”

*The Satyr* was Ben Jonson's first *Entertainment* (Ward, *Dramatic Literature*, 1. p. 524). It was performed in June, 1603, before the queen, Anne of Denmark, wife of James I., on her way to London. The scene was Althorpe near Northampton, the country seat of Sir John Spencer, father of the future Countess of Derby. Doubtless she was present on that occasion, and the words would now be a pleasant reminiscence. The editors note too that Marston has a very similar verse—perhaps with the same graceful purpose—in the Masque presented by Lord and Lady Huntingdon (her daughter) before the Countess in 1607. Milton may have remembered *Arcades* when many years later he began the first chorus in *S. A.*:

“This, this is he; softly awhile;  
Let us not break in upon him,” 115, 116.

6—7. As though she were a deity to whom their adoration should be directed.

8—13. Spenser, as we have said (*Introduction*), had more than once celebrated the beauty and noble character of the Countess.

It was to her that he dedicated the *Tears of the Muses* 1591, not forgetting to claim kinship with the house of Spencer, a claim which was allowed. Again, in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* lines 536—583 refer to the Countess—then Lady Strange—and her sisters.

9. *Lavish*. From an obsolete verb *lave* = ‘pour out;’ whence, by a metaphor, the idea of giving bountifully. Confused, but not cognate, with *lave*, Lat. *lavo*. See *Comus* 465, note.

10—14. These lines at first stood rather differently. Fame, said the poet,

“ Now seems guilty of abuse  
And detraction from her praise :  
Less than half she hath expressed ;  
Envy bid her hide the rest.” *Cambridge MS.*

The difference between the original and the substituted lines does not seem great ; though *abuse* in the first couplet was rather a strong word.

14—15. Partly metaphorical, partly a flattering reference to the splendid assemblage grouped round the throne of the Countess. *State* in Shakespeare often = ‘the attendants on a great person ;’ hence his ‘household,’ ‘court.’ Cf. *Henry VIII.* v. 2. 24 :

“ His grace of Canterbury,  
Who holds his state at door.”

20. *Latona*, i.e. Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis ; cf. Milton’s seventh sonnet :

“ Railed at Latona’s twin-born progeny,  
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.”

Leto = ‘the concealed’ or ‘obscure,’ and from the fact that she gave birth to the deities of the sun and moon “her whole legend seems to indicate nothing else but the issuing from darkness to light,” *Dict. of Mythology*. Perhaps *wise* because the goddess of obscurity. The point of the comparison is, that from the Countess of Derby has descended a brilliant line of sons and daughters, just as from Latona were born Apollo and Artemis. The verse therefore conveys a twofold compliment, to the Countess and the family assembled round her.

21, 22. *Towered Cybele*. Cybele, or Rhea, or Berecynthia, was the wife of Saturn, and mother of Jupiter, Juno, Neptune and other deities : hence Milton’s “mother of a hundred gods.” In classical writers she often appears as the *μεγάλη μήτηρ*.

*Towered* reproduces Vergil’s *turrata* in *Æneid* vi. 785, a passage which may have suggested the present :

*qualis Berecynthia mater  
Invehitur curru Phrygiæ turrata per urbes,  
Lætâ deum partu, centum complexa nepotes,  
Omnes calicolas.*

Cf. Spenser, *Ruines of Rome* vi. :

“ Such as the Berecynthia Goddess bright,  
In her swifte charret with high turrets crownde.”

Line 62 of Milton's *Elegia Quinta* is a rather forced reference to the same idea, which in works of art is symbolised by the crown on the head of the goddess. The Countess of Derby might fairly be compared to Cybele because (i) she had *centum nepotes*, (ii) she probably wore her coronet and was therefore *turrita*. Masson notes (III. 391) that the recumbent figure of this lady in Harefield church bears a very beautiful crown.

23. *Juno*, i.e. the queen of heaven herself. In the *Cambridge MS.* the name is changed several times. Milton first wrote *Juno*, then erased it in favour of *Ceres*, and finally came back to the original.

*Odds*, i.e. advantage. *Juno* could not concede anything in her favour: if they contended it would have to be on equal terms. *Odds* often bears this sense in Shakespeare; "thou hast the odds of me," *Titus Andronicus*, v. 2. 19; "and with that odds he weighs King Richard down," *Richard III.* III. 4. 89. The Icelandic word *oddi*= "a triangle, a point of land; metaphorically (from the triangle) an odd number" (Skeat). Allied to Icelandic *oddr* 'a point.'

*The Genius of the Wood*. Not an unfamiliar character in Masques. Cf. "here comes Sylvanus, god of these woods, whose presence is rare, and imports some novelty,"—Campion's *Entertainment Given by the Lord Knowles*, Bullen's ed. 158. This *rex nemorensis* was useful as a *deus ex machina*.

26. *Gentle Swains*, i.e. the gentlemen who took part in the entertainment. The ladies are mentioned lower down, 33.

*For* explains *gentle*: outwardly they may be swains; only he can tell that they are 'gentle,' i.e. well-born. The adjective has lost this sense except in the compound *gentleman* and the phrase "of gentle birth." Shakespeare uses *gentility*= 'good extraction,' *As You L. I.* 1. 1. 22; *gentles*= 'gentlefolk,' *Love's L. L.* IV. 2. 172; and *gentle* as a verb= 'ennoble,' *Henry V.* IV. 3. 63:

"be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition."

*Gentilis*, 'belonging to the same clan' (*gens*), fared in French much as in English. *Gentil* keeps the idea of birth in *gentilhomme*, which we half appropriated as *gentleman*; for the rest *gentil*= 'pretty;' cf. *gentle*= 'kind.'

28. *Famous Arcady*. Having called his piece *Arcades* 'the Arcadians,' Milton was in duty bound to celebrate Arcadia, the ideal land of pastoral life and pastoral associations.



*Famous*, because from the classics downwards its praises had so often been sung. Everybody was familiar with the beauties of the country since everybody read Sidney's *Arcadia* (published in 1590, but written about 1580), though some people may have agreed with Milton that the great Elizabethan romance was a "vain and amatorious poem" (*Eikonoclastes*). Gabriel Harvey sneeringly suggested that Greene, his Cambridge contemporary, should paint an alternative picture of Arcadia and then rewrite the *Faerie Queene* (cf. Symonds' *Shakspeare's Predecessors*, p. 551).

29—31. Alpheus was a river in *Arcadia*. The legend said that a hunter named Alpheus fell in love with Arethusa, one of the nymphs attendant on Diana. To escape from him she was changed into a fountain whose waters flowed under the earth and rose again at Ortygia in Sicily, near Syracuse. Alpheus, however, was metamorphosed into a river, and imitating her example passed under the Adriatic to unite with the nymph in the fountain Arethusa. Probably the myth arose from the fact that the river Alpheus goes underground not far from its source, reappearing at some distance.

29. *So often sung*, e.g. by Vergil, *Aeneid* III. 694—96 :

*Alpheum fama est huc Elidis annem  
Occultas egisse vias subter mare, qui nunc  
Ore, Arethusa, tuo Siculis confunditur undis.*

Cf. *Lyc.*, lines 85 and 132, where Arethusa and Alpheus are treated as names symbolical of pastoral verse, especially of the type of pastoral elegy which in *Lyc.* Milton borrowed from the Sicilian singers Theocritus, Bion and Moschus. Shelley among modern poets has told the Alpheus legend in his exquisite lyric :

"Arethusa arose  
From her couch of snows."—

30. *Divine* ; because a river-god.

*Secret sluice*, i.e. subterranean channel. Todd notes that this curious phrase is found in Sylvester's *Du Bartas* (1598), a work which Milton had studied very closely. See *Comus* 132. *Sluice* is O. F. *escluse*, modern *écluse* ; cf. *recluse* from O. F. *recluse*. *Escluse* (Spanish *esclusa*) is from Low Lat. *exclusa*, i.e. *exclusa aqua*, shut-off water. Brachet says : "*exclusa aqua*...is used thus in Fortunatus and several Merovingian documents ;" and if we turn to Du Cange we find the following line from Fortunatus, x. 12 :

*Inde per exclusas cauta rate pergimus undas.*



Afterwards *exclusa*, from signifying the water shut off, came to mean the place where this was done, i.e. the mill-dam or flood-gate. Cf. Du Cange, s.v. *exclusa*: “*escluse, clusa, Locus ubi concluduntur aque. Conclusio aquarum.*” Apparently in English *sluice* has always been a monosyllable, the *es* or *ex* dropping out, perhaps from the awkwardness of the sound. French retained the preposition; i.e. in O. F. *escluse*, in modern F. *écluse*, the accent (*é*) representing lost *s*, as *écrire* for *escrire*. But in Low Latin the abbreviation—*exclusa* to *sclusa* or *clusa*, had taken place; cf. Du Cange, *supra*, and Brachet’s quotation from the *Lex Salica*: “*si quis sclusam de moliendo alieno rumpert.*” To us the rhyme *sluice*—*Arethuse* seems awkward, since *sluice* has the sound of the light *s* (as in *recluse*) whereas the *s* in *Arethusa* is a *z*. Most likely the pronunciation of *sluice* has changed; in Milton’s time it may have = *sluze*.

32. *Breathing*. Perhaps ‘fragrant’ is the sense; cf. the *Ode to Evening*, by Collins:

“And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest eve.”

Collins has the epithet frequently.

33. *Silver-buskined*. No doubt, literally true of the dresses of the ladies. *Buskined stage* in *Il Pen.* 102 stands for ‘Tragedy,’ the Muse of which wears the buskin (*cothurnus*), while her sister Comedy prefers the sock (cf. *L’Al.*, 132, and the *Glosse* to the *Shepherds Calender*, *October*). *Buskin* is a Dutch word and a good example of metathesis; it should be *bruskin* or *burskin*, the letter *r* being very liable to shift its place. See the instances given in Professor Skeat’s *Principles of Etymology*, p. 376. The Middle Dutch form is *broosken*, i.e. a diminutive of *broos*, ‘a legging.’ English has a considerable number of Dutch words, introduced in different ways at different times. Several are sea-terms, such as *sloop*, *yacht*, *reef*, *skipper*, *smack*; some of the cant-terms used by the Elizabethans were Dutch; and not a few words still current, e.g. *deck*, *fop*, *frolic*, *jeer*, *uproar*, *waggon*, found their way into England during Elizabeth’s reign, through the wars in the Netherlands against Spain. Thus George Gascoigne (author of *The Steel Glass*) and Ben Jonson, after they left the University (Cambridge), served as volunteers in Flanders, picked up stray words (mostly military), and on their return naturalised them. The same thing would be done by other travellers. See Skeat’s *Principles*, pp. 481—485, or his *Concise Dictionary*, where, p. 607, a full list of these importations is given.

34. *Quest*, i.e. search; cf. Cotgrave: "*Queste*: A quest, inquirie, search, inquisition, seeking." *Quest*=O. F. *queste* (modern *quête*)=*quesita* (*res*), a thing sought.

41. The Genius is made to repeat what had been said in the introductory song, stanza 11.

44. *By lot*, i.e. by appointment. For the same phrase in a rather different sense cf. *Comus* 20. *Lot* is A. S. *hlot*; for loss of initial *h* in *hl*, *hn*, and *hr*, see note on *lank*, *Comus* 836. Cognate with Germ. *loos*. The *Attendant Spirit* in *Comus* 41 announces himself as the minister of "sovran Jove."

46. *Curl*, 'adorn.' *Curl* is used in allusion to the metaphor in *ringlets*. What the deity does amounts in plain prose to this: he makes the young trees ('saplings') grow tall and strong, decks the grove with creepers and undergrowth, and intersperses it with winding paths. *Ringlets* is intentionally vague and fanciful; it just suggests the tangled growth of a forest—foliage, creepers and so forth. *Curl* is from the Low German (to be more correct, Friesic) *krul*; in Middle E. spelt *crul*. For the shifting of the *r* see l. 33. Probably cognate with *crook*. "Middle English," we may explain, signifies in Skeat's words, "English from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries inclusive."

47. *Quaint*, i.e. dainty, pretty; see *Comus*, 157. The alliteration of the verse is in the manner of the author of *Atalanta in Calydon*. Perhaps *w* is treated alliteratively more than any other letter; cf. the case of *v* in Latin. To Milton the sound was especially grateful; cf. the *Nativity Ode*, 51, 52:

"And, waving wide her myrtle wand,  
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land;"

and again 64,

"The winds, with wonder whist."

So *P. R.* l. 221. Cf. for a different sound line 61 *infra*. Masson notes that a couplet in the *Faerie Queene*, l. 2. 13, has much the same ring as the present verse:

"Her wanton palfrey all was overspred  
With tinsell trappings, woven like a wave."

The history of alliteration in English is interesting. In Saxon poetry this trick of language occupied the place of rhyme, and as late as the fourteenth century we find it holding its ground against the rhymed iambic couplet (Earle's *English Tongue*, p. 608). During that century

rhyme prevailed, but alliteration still exercised a very strong influence. Cf., for example, some of Gascoigne's works (1536—1577), and pieces in *Tottel's Miscellany*, 1557. By Shakespeare's time alliteration was spoken of as a mark of pedantry. It became a phase of Euphuism. When the University wits, Gabriel Harvey of Trinity Hall and Thomas Nash of St John's College, the ablest of contemporary satirists, fell out, the former taunted his adversary with imitating Greene, who in turn had imitated Lyly; to which Nash replied; "Did I ever stuff my style with herbs and stones [This alludes to Lyly's way of illustrating his remarks by absurd similes drawn from an impossible natural history], or apprentice myself to the running of the letter?"—*Shakspeare's Predecessors*, p. 552. Shakespeare again, sketching the character of a pedant, makes Holofernes "affect the letter," *Love's L. L.* IV. I. 56, and ridicules alliteration in *Midsummer N. D.* V. 2, and elsewhere. Yet Shakespeare himself sometimes ventures to write a line like the following:

"Fear'd by their breed, and famous for their birth,"

*Richard II.* II. I. 52.

Spenser presents still more striking and frequent examples. We may perhaps conclude that in the English of Shakespeare and Milton occasional alliteration was permissible; if it became a mannerism (as it has become in much modern verse) public taste dissented and condemned the use.

47—53. Cf. *Comus*, 843—47, and the address to Pan in *Endymion* I:

"Breather round our farms,  
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms."

50. Cf. Gray's *Elegy*, 99:

"Brushing with hasty steps the dew away." So *P. L.* V. 429.

51. *Thwarting*. Perhaps in its literal sense 'crossing,' i.e. lighting which runs zig-zag athwart the heaven; cf. Shakespeare's "Cross blue lightning," *Julius Caesar* I. 3. 50; and *Lear* IV. 7. 35 "Quick cross lightning." In *Pericles* IV. 4. 10 *thwart* = 'pass over:'

"Pericles

Is now again thwarting the wayward seas."

From the notion 'crossing' comes the secondary and common sense 'hindering,' which, of course, would suit here: the thunder damages the growth of the forest and field. Properly *thwart* was an adverb;

then an adjective, cf. *Lear* I. 4. 305; lastly a verb. A Scandinavian word.

52. *Cross*, i.e. the planet whose evil aspect (*dire-looking*) brings crosses or troubles. This seems more probable than *cross* = 'vexed.' The reference is to Saturn, the morose, malign planet. Men born under Saturn (like Conrade in *Much Ado* I. 3. 12) are surly-tempered, in fact, *Saturnine*. In *Il Pen.* (24) Milton makes Saturn the father of Melancholy; and in the *Epitaphium Damonis*, 78—80, he celebrates the evil influence of the planet :

*Aut te perdit amor, aut te male fascinat astrum ;  
Saturni grave sæpe fuit pastoribus astrum  
Intimaque obliquo figit præcordia plumbo.*

In one of the finest passages of his *History of the World* (quoted in Saintsbury's *Elizabethan Literature*, pp. 214, 215) Raleigh compares the seven ages of man—Shakespeare in *As You Like It*, II. 7. 143—166, merely worked up an old-world idea—to the seven planets. "The sixth age," he says, "is ascribed to Jupiter; in which we begin to take account of our times, judge of ourselves, and grow to the perfection of our understanding. The last and seventh, to Saturn; wherein our days are sad and overcast; and in which we find by dear and lamentable experience, and by the loss which can never be repaired; that, of all our vain passions and affections past, the sorrow only abideth."

*Smites*. Compare Shakespeare's use of *strike*, to signify the harmful influence exercised by the planets; e.g. in *Hamlet* I. 1. 162, *Coriolanus* II. 2. 117.

53. i.e. the worm that preys on blossoms, especially roses; often called *canker* by Shakespeare. By a metaphor it came to signify any corroding evil. Lat. *cancer* (a 'crab'—also an 'eating tumour') was one of the Latin words of the 'Second Period' (i.e. roughly speaking, from A.D. 596—1000) which established themselves in Anglo-Saxon; that is to say, *canker* did not come to us through the French; it was naturalized in Old English before the Conquest. The English were converted to Christianity about 596 A.D., and many Latin words were introduced by Roman ecclesiastics and English writers translating from the Latin: Morris, *Outlines of English Accidence*, 28, 29. *Cancer*, the disease, is the same word, the difference in meaning being shown by difference in spelling, *c* for *k*.

*Venom*: from O. F. *venim*, i.e. *venenum*. The form *venym* occurs in *Piers the Plowman* and Chaucer; cf. Mayhew and Skeat's *Middle*

*English Dict.* s. v. Lat. *e*=French *i* (ven-*e*-num) is seen in various words; e.g. *mercedem*=*merci*. But *venim* is noticeable because the change *e* to *i* does not often take place before a nasal.

54. *Fetch*, i.e. make: "I'll fetch a turn about the garden" = 'take a walk,' *Cymbeline* I. I. 81. *Fetch* in this sense must long have been in current use; cf. Congreve's *Way of the World* (1700) IV. 4, "I made bold to see, to come, and know if that how you were disposed to fetch a walk this evening." We still speak of a vessel 'fetching its course' by any point, i.e. steering by it.

55. *Over the mount*. Masson reminds us that Harefield House stood on a slight slope. Milton may have been there. Horton is only ten miles from Harefield, and *Arcades* was probably written at the former.

57. Cf. *L' All.* 53, 54 and Gray's *Elegy*, 19, 20. There would be tassels hanging from the horn of the huntsman. Cf. the *Faerie Queene*, I. 8. 3:

"Then took that Squire an horn of bugle small,  
Which hung adowne his side in twisted gold  
And tasselles gay."

Trumpeters on state-occasions often have ornamental cloths attached to their instruments. O. F. *tassel* (the modern word being *tasseau*, but rarely used in this sense) is from Lat. *taxillus*, the diminutive of *talus*, 'a die.' Apparently a *tassel* was a piece of stuff cut in such a way as to resemble a die. *Tassel* applied to a hawk, i.e. the male bird (cf. Shakespeare's *tassel-gentle* in *Romeo and Juliet* II. 2. 160), is a corruption of *tiercel* or *tercel*. May the spelling of one word have influenced that of the other? This frequently happens with words wholly distinct in meaning and origin, but somewhat alike in sound. Cf. note on *alabaster*, *Comus* 660.

59. *Ranks*, i.e. the metaphor of a general inspecting a regiment. He 'numbers' them to see that none are missing.

60. *Murmurs*, i.e. muttered charms. Cf. *Comus* 526:

"His baneful cup  
With many murmurs mixt."

62. *Locked up mortal sense*. Substituted in the Cambridge MS. for the first reading—*chained mortality*.

*Mortal sense*=the senses of mortals, in particular their sense of hearing.

63. *Sirens'*. Even educated people often write *syren* under the



impression that they are retaining the Greek form; the latter being, as a matter of fact, *σειρήν*. Cf. the misspelling *tyro*, for Latin *tiro*. The letters *i* and *y* have suffered much from these false notions of etymology. Thus we get *style* instead of *stile* because it was supposed that Latin *stilus* was derived from Gk *στῦλος*. So again with *sylvan*, due to the idea that Lat. *silva* came from Gk *ἴλη* and should therefore be written *sylva*. See Skeat upon "Etymological Spelling," *Principles* pp. 326—28. French gives the correct form *sirène*.

64. *Sphere* is a word of very frequent occurrence in Milton. Many passages—and this is one—are unintelligible unless we know what he meant by it. In Milton's time the Copernican system of astronomy was not generally approved. Milton himself did not, seemingly, accept it, although two passages in *P. L.* (IV. 592—597, and VIII. 15—178) show that he was quite familiar with the arguments in its favour (Masson). Certainly for the purposes of his great poem he adopts the old Ptolemaic or Alphonsine System. The astronomer Ptolemy of Alexandria held that the Earth was the fixed centre of the Mundane Universe; and that the central Earth was enclosed at different distances by eight successive Spheres of space. Seven of these Spheres were the Spheres or Orbs of the Seven Planets—in this order, if we start from the central Earth: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Outside the last of these Spheres (i.e. Saturn) was an eighth Sphere, namely the Firmament in which were set the fixed stars. This eighth Sphere moved from East to West, completing a revolution in twenty-four hours; it carried with it the Seven inside Spheres, though the latter were supposed to have separate motions of their own. This system was considered satisfactory up till the Middle Ages. Afterwards a ninth Sphere was added, viz. the Crystalline Sphere, outside the Firmament or Sphere of the fixed Stars. Finally the number was brought up to ten by a supplementary tenth Sphere, the Primum Mobile, enclosing all the others.

The development of the Ptolemaic system from eight to ten spheres was associated with the name of the Astronomer, Alphonsus X. of Castille—1252—1284. Hence it is sometimes called the Alphonsine System. Now, whenever writers who lived prior to the middle of the XVIIth century—Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and others—use the word *sphere*, they are referring not to the modern Copernican theory of the Universe, but this obsolete Ptolemaic or Alphonsine System. It does not make much difference how many spheres they recognise: Marlowe allows nine in *Faustus* II. 2; Ben Jonson only eight in the *Sad Shepherd*



III. 2. *Sphere*, in any case, had for these writers associations which are now lost. (Abridged from Masson.)

With regard to this long and at first sight difficult passage, lines 62—71, it may be explained that Milton is adapting part of Plato's account of the Myth of Er in the tenth book of the *Republic* 616—617. Plato says—and we should note how closely Milton follows the original—

“They looked down upon a straight pillar of light, stretching across the whole heaven and earth, more like the rainbow than anything else, only brighter and clearer. This they reached when they had gone forward a day's journey; and, arriving at the centre of the light, they saw that its extremities were fastened by chains to the sky. For this light binds the sky together, like the hawser that strengthens a trireme, and thus holds together the whole revolving universe. To the extremities is fastened the distaff of Necessity, by means of which all the revolutions of the universe are kept up. The shaft and hook of this distaff are made of steel; the whorl is a compound of steel and other materials. The nature of the whorl may be thus described. In shape it is like an ordinary whorl; but from Er's account we must picture it to ourselves under the form of a large hollow whorl, scooped out right through, into which a similar, but smaller, whorl is nicely inserted, like those boxes which fit into one another. In the same way a third whorl is inserted within the second, a fourth within the third, and so on to four more. For in all there are eight whorls, inserted into one another...and all together forming one solid whorl embracing the shaft, which is passed right through the centre of the eighth.” Then follows a description of these whorls or spheres—their size, colour; and he continues: “The distaff spins round upon the knees of Necessity. Upon each of its circles stands a siren, who travels round with the circle, uttering one note in one tone; and from all the eight notes there results a single harmony. At equal distances around sit three other personages, each on a throne. These are the daughters of Necessity, the Fates, Lachesis, Clotho, Atropos; who, clothed in white robes, with garlands on their heads, chant to the music of the sirens, Lachesis the events of the past, Clotho those of the present, Atropos those of the future. Clotho with her right hand takes hold of the outermost rim of the distaff, and twirls it altogether, at intervals; and Atropos with her left hand twirls the inner circles in like manner; while Lachesis takes hold of each in turn with either hand.”

Davies and Vaughan, 364—66.

*Infolded*, because, as Plato says, they are inserted one within the other, after the fashion of a puzzle.

65. *To those*, i.e. the Destinies;

“Those three fatal Sisters, whose sad hands  
Doo weave the direfull threds of destinie,  
And in their wrath breake off the vitall bands.”

Spenser, *Daphnaïda*, 16—18.

The shears (which, strictly, were not held by the three Μοῖραι, but only by Atropos—cf. the old line *Clotho colum retinet, Lachesis net, et Atropos occat*) are ‘vital’ because they sever the threads of life (*vita*); cf. *Lyc.* 75

“Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears.”

In *Midsummer N. D.* v. 1. 89—92 the Destinies are made fun of. We may remember that the classicism of this passage, with its recondite references, would for most of Milton’s hearers present no difficulty, since the Fates were not unfamiliar figures among the *dramatis personae* of Masque-writers. Thus a stage direction in Ben Jonson’s *Entertainment at Theobalds*, 1607, mentions the entry of “The Three Parcæ, the one holding the rock, the other the spindle, and the third the shears, with a book of Adamant lying open before them.” Campion, again, in the *Masque for the Marriage of the Earl of Somerset*, 1613, introduces “the three Destinies, in long robes of white taffeta;...and in their left hands they carried distaffs”—Bullen’s *Campion*, 218. Each extract suggests that its writer was acquainted with the description in Plato quoted above. A young Jacobean nobleman who was present at many of these Masque-entertainments could scarcely help acquiring a considerable knowledge of classical mythology and legend.

69. *The daughters*, i.e. Lachesis, Clotho and Atropos.

70, 71. It is the influence of this celestial music that directs aright the revolutions of the universe.

71. *In measured motion*. Cf. the poem *Naturam non Pati Senium*, 33—38, especially lines 37, 38, which Cowper seems to have translated with the present passage before him:

*Volvitur hinc lapsu Mundi rota prima diurno,  
Raptat et ambitos socia vertigine cælos.*

“Hence the prime mover wheels itself about  
Continual, day by day, and with it bears  
In social measure the swift heavens round.”

72. *Heavenly tune.* This notion of "the great sphere-music of stars and constellations" (Tennyson's *Parnassus*) was referred to Pythagoras. So Milton in his Latin exercise *De Spherarum Concertu* says: "*solus inter mortales concentum audisse fertur Pythagoras,*" *Prose Works*, vol. VI. p. 155. In a note on *P. L.* v. 625—27, Todd quotes (without reference) a beautiful sentence from the Alexandrian Philo Judæus: ὁ δὲ οὐρανοῦ ἀεὶ μελωδεῖ, κατὰ τὰς κινήσεις τῶν ὄντων ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν πάμμουσον ἀρμονίαν ἀποτελῶν. Cf. Cicero's *Republic*, VI. 18.

The beauty of the idea explains the hold it has gained upon English poetry. Shakespeare refers to it several times, e.g. *Twelfth Night* III. I. 121:

"I had rather hear you to solicit that  
Than music from the spheres;"

*Antony and Cleopatra* v. 2. 83—84; and the *Merchant of Venice* v. 60. For Milton cf. the *Nativity Ode* 125—132; and the poem *At a Solemn Music*. In the latter Milton has done what he so often did—taken a theory of the ancients and penetrated it with Christian associations; cf. *Comus* 977 et seq. (with note), and *Lyc.* 180.

72, 73. Cf. *Merchant of Venice* v. 60—65; Lorenzo is speaking to Jessica and pointing to the starlit heaven:

"There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

73. *Human mould*, i.e. one who bears the form of humanity. *Mould* is from Lat. *modulus*, through O.F. *modle*=Modern F. *moule*.

74—81. A magnificent compliment to the Countess: only the harmony of the spheres was worthy to celebrate her praise.

74. *Blaze*, i.e. proclaim; cf. *Romeo and Juliet* III. 3. 150—1:

"Till we can find a time  
To blaze your marriage."

So in the Authorised Version, *Mark* i. 45. Cf. *emblaze* in *II. Henry VI.* IV. 10. 76. *Blaze*= 'fame' in *Lyc.* 74 (probably). The notion of the word is 'noising abroad' as by note of trumpet. A. S. *blasen*= 'to blow;' cf. Germ. *blasen*, in the same sense. Cognates are *blave*, *blast* and *blason*= 'a proclamation,' in *Hamlet* I. 5. 21.

76. *Fit*, i.e. 'such music' were fit.

78. *Go*. 'Walk,' a common meaning in Shakespeare: "ride more than thou goest," *Lear* I. 4. 134.

79. So in *Il Pen.* 151—154 the poet asks that music may breathe upon him:

"Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
Or the unseen Genius of the wood."

80. *Assay*, i.e. essay, attempt. See *Comus* 972, note.

81. *State*. 'Throne;,' as before.

82. *Stem*, i.e. birth.

Song. This was sung by the Genius of the wood, perhaps to the accompaniment of a lute, Lawes being a notably skilled player of that instrument. The Masquers or Chorus advanced with him and did obeisance to the throned lady.

83. Looking back on this long piece of rhymed heroics we are struck by the almost unbroken series of complete rhymes. Usually Milton does not stint himself in the employment of imperfect rhyme. See *Introduction to Comus*.

84. *Enamelled*, i.e. so smooth as to look like enamel-work; cf. *Lyc.* 139, *P. L.* 149. A perfect specimen of the purely literary epithet. Milton was neither a close observer of nature like Tennyson, nor an enthusiast like Wordsworth; hence in painting any picture of nature he too often drew (as did Gray) upon the conventional imagery passed down from poet to poet. To this we owe the *soi-disant* 'poetic diction' against which Wordsworth's early work was a long protest. In Sidney's *Arcadia* the meadows were "enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers;" and 'enamelled' have they been but too often since. Mr Ruskin has a curious criticism on the word in *Modern Painters*, III. 229. *Derivation*: *en* = 'on,' Lat. *in*. The second part *-amel-* is O. F. *esmail*, Mod. *émail*; cf. Ital. *smalto* and *smaltare*, 'to enamel' (given in Florio). Of German origin, the notion being 'something fused, melted' (Brachet); i.e. cognate with Germ. *schmelzen* = 'to smelt.' See Mayhew and Skeat, s. v. *Amellen*.

89. *Branching elm star-proof*. Most editors think that the pretty epithet "star-proof" was suggested by the *Facrie Queene* I. 1. 7, where Spenser speaks of a grove

"Not perceable with power of any starr."

A closer parallel, however, occurs in Peele's play, *David and Bethsabe*:

"This shade, sun-proof, is yet no proof for thee."

Matthew Arnold may have remembered one or the other when he wrote:

“The hills are clothed with pines sun-proof.”

*Church of Brou II.*

Cowper echoes the present line in translating the first *Elegy* 49, 50, and the *Epitaphium Damonis* 69. Curiously enough Mark Pattison treats it as an instance of Milton's inaccuracy in describing nature: “the elm” (he says), “one of the thinnest foliaged trees of the forest, is inappropriately named star-proof,” *Life of Milton* p. 25. Each can settle the question for himself: Milton, if wrong, is wrong with Tennyson: cf. *In Memoriam* xcv. :

“And gathering freshlier overhead,  
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms.”

*Proof* in these compounds retains the old sense of the noun, viz. ‘test,’ ‘trial.’ The “exception *proves* the rule” (*exceptio probat regulam*) because it puts the latter to the *test*. Cf. Cotgrave's explanation of O. F. *prover*: “to prove, try, essay, verifie.” From Lat. *probare*. Low Latin has a substantive *proba*; whence German *probe* = ‘rehearsal (i.e. trial) of a play.’

90. The refrain that Shelley uses so beautifully in *Prometheus Unbound* II.

96. Song. *Arcades* is so fragmentary that we are unable to follow the course of the Masque as actually performed. Perhaps after the preceding song a minuet or some other graceful dance (cf. *Comus* 962—65) took place; then the entertainment was brought to a close by the Masquers singing the final song as a madrigal. That, as we know from *Comus*, 495, was a form of musical composition in which Lawes excelled. The concluding couplet, first sung by the Masquers part-wise and then given out by the whole body, would emphasize the idea with which *Arcades* was produced; namely, homage to the Countess.

97. *Sandy Ladon*. A river in Arcadia which fell into the Alpheus. A poet alluding to the legend of Pan and the nymph Syrinx, or describing the pastoral life of Arcadia, was evidently bound to introduce the “Sandy Ladon.” Cf. Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* II. 4:

“The silver *Ladon* on his sandy shore  
Heard my complaints.” Carew Hazlitt's ed. II. p. 88;



and Giles Fletcher, *Christ's Victorie in Heaven*, 47 :

“Like to the reede of Arcadie  
Which Pan of Syrinx made, when she did flie  
To Ladon's Sands.” Grosart, p. 113.

*Lilied* occurs in Tennyson: “The streams through many a liliated row.”—*Song in the Juvenilia*.

99. Lycæus, Erymanthus (100), Mænalus (102), and Cyllene were mountains in Arcadia; the three first being associated with Pan. Cyllene, the highest mountain in the Peloponnese, on the frontiers of Arcadia and Achaia, was the birthplace of Hermes and sacred to him: whence the epithet *Cyllenius* applied to Mercury, the Hermes of Roman mythology. Cf. Vergil's *quos ignis celo Cyllenius erret in orbis*, where *Cyllenius ignis*=the planet Mercury. Cf. too the quotation from Carew's *Cælum Britannicum* in the note on *Comus*, the first stage direction. That the mountain was a favourite resort of the nymphs we know from Ben Jonson's *Penates*. Mercury appearing on the scene says: “The place whereon you are now advanced is the Arcadian hill Cyllene, the place where myself was begot and born.....Here, for her month, the yearly delicate May keeps state....Hither the Dryads of the valley, and nymphs of the great river come every morning to taste of her favours.”

100. *Erymanth*. On the frontiers of Achaia and Elis. There was also a river of the same name. Cf. Shelley's *Arethusa*:

“Then Alpheus bold,  
On his glacier cold,  
With his trident the mountains strook;  
And opened a chasm  
In the rocks; with the spasm  
All Erymanthus shook.”

The killing of the Erymanthian boar was one of the labours of Hercules. It may be noted that Milton very rarely shortens classical names; cf. however *Lycid* for *Lycidas* (151). In Chaucer and Spenser these abbreviations are common.

102. *Mænalus*. A favourite haunt of Pan. Vergil mentions Lycæus and Mænalus together:

*Ipse nemus linquens patrium saltusque Lycæi  
Pan, ovium custos, tua si tibi Mænala curæ.*

G. 1. 16, 17.

So Ben Jonson in the Masque of *Pan's Anniversary*, Hymn IV. 5. 15.



*Mænalius* became an epithet of the god. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, IV. 650, imitated by Milton in the fifth *Elegy* 125:

*Per sata luxuriat fruticetaque Mænalius Pan.*

A later reference to the legend is Shelley's

"Singing how down the vale of Mænalus  
I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed."

*Hymn of Pan.*

106. *Syrinx*. Spenser in the *Shepherds Calender*, *April*, has:

"For shee is Syrinx daughter without spotte;"

upon which the writer of the *Glosse* (identified by some recent critics on very slender ground with Spenser himself) comments: "Syrinx is the name of a nymphe of Arcadie, whom when Pan being in love pursued, she, flying from him, of the Gods was turned into a reede. So that Pan catching at the Reedes, in stede of the Damosell, and puffing hard, (for he was almost out of wind,) with hys breath made the Reedes to pype; which he seeing, tooke of them, and, in remembrance of his lost love, made him a pype thereof."

The river in which the nymph took refuge was the above-mentioned Ladon; see Vergil *Eclogue* II. 31, Ovid *Met.* I. 690 et seq.  $\Sigma\upsilon\rho\mu\gamma\xi$  = 'a pipe.'

*Were*. The preterite subjunctive was then much more used than now. The following sentence from the *Arcopagitica* has to us an antiquated ring: "He who *were* pleasantly dispos'd, could not well avoid to liken it to the exploit of that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by shutting his Park-gate."

As an effective example of the beauty of the idiom, Earle, p. 543, quotes from Tennyson's *Ænonè*:

"And, because right is right, to follow right,  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

107. *Her*, i.e. the new deity to whom the nymphs and shepherds should pay reverence; that is, the noble lady in whose honour *Arcades* was performed.

108, 109. The repetition of the refrain has point. After they have seen the "rural queen" the Masquers endorse what the Genius had said before they came into her presence: to look at her was to do reverence.



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