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LONDON :
PRINTED BY RICHARD CLAY,
BREAD STREET HILL.

COMUS.

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

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

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

*To the RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD JOHN VISCOUNT BRACKLY, Son
and Heir Apparent to the EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, &c.*

MY LORD,—This poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person

COMUS.

in the performance, now returns again to make a final dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view; and now to offer it up in all rightful devotion to those fair hopes, and rare endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet lord, to be the honour of your name, and receive this as your own, from the hands of him who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all real expression

Your faithful and most humble Servant,

H. LAWES.

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

C O M U S.

A MASK,

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634,

BEFORE THE EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT
OF WALES.

The Persons.

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

COMUS, *with his crew.*

THE LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, *the Nymph.*

The Chief Persons who presented were—

THE LORD BRACKLY.

MR. THOMAS EGERTON, *his Brother.*

THE LADY ALICE EGERTON.

C O M U S.

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

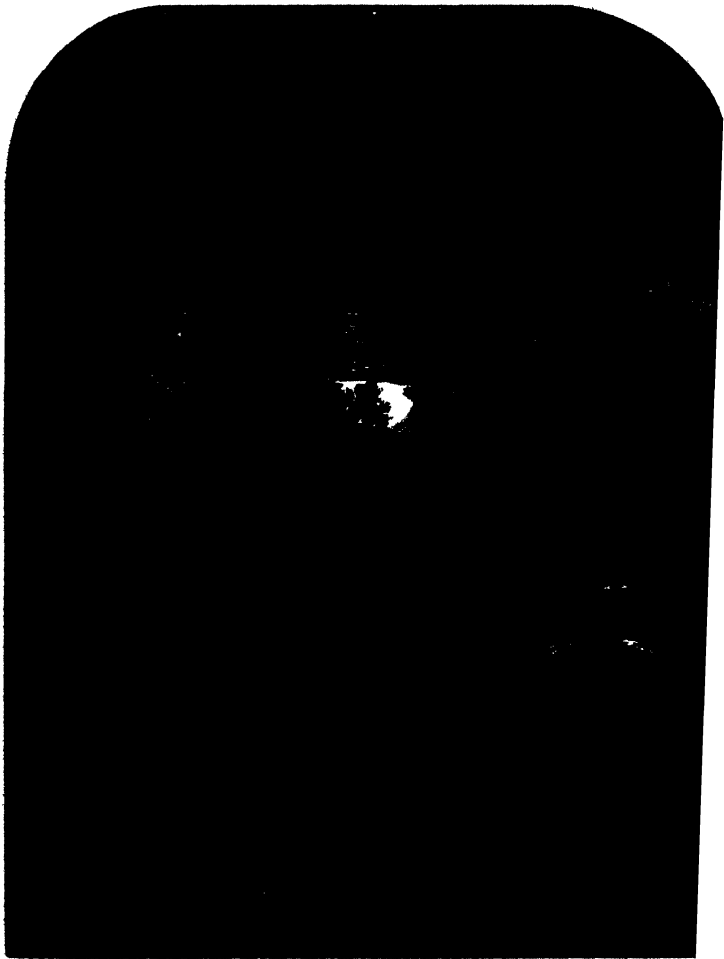
ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aërial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth ; and with low-thoughted care
Confined, and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful¹ of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key,²
That opes the palace of eternity :

COMUS.

To such my errand is ; and but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
That, like to rich and various gems,⁸ inlay
The unadornéd bosom of the deep :
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents ; but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities ;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms :
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre ; but their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows



Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger ;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,

COMUS.

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

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misuséd wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell (who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?) :
This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named :
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,⁴
At last betakes him to this ominous wood ;
And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller



His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus ; which, as they taste

COMUS.

(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were ;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before ;
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore when any, favoured of high Jove,
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do ; but first I must put off
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,⁵
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain,
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods ; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch,
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid

COMUS.

Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps ! I must be viewless now.



[COMUS enters with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other ; with
him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but other-

COMUS.

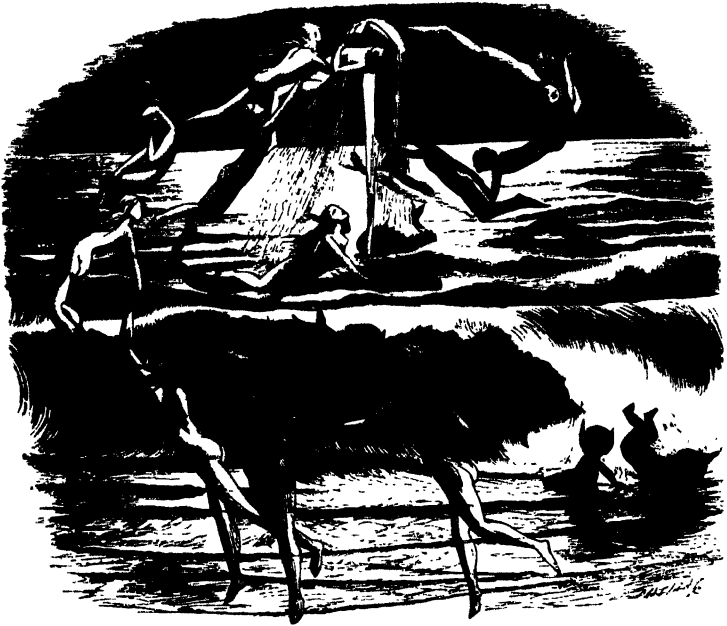
wise like men and women, their apparel glistening ; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with their torches in their hands.]

COMUS.

The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold ;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream ;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal⁶
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And advice with scrupulous head.
Strict age, and sour severity,
With their grave saws in slumber lie
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire ;

COMUS

Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,



Now to the moon in wavering morrice move ;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.

COMUS.

By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep ;
What hath night to do with sleep ?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin ;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto !⁷ to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns ; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air ;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat, and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out ;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep
From her cabined loophole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.



Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure.

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.

COMUS.

Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees ;
Our number may affright : some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains : I shall, ere long,
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight,
Which must not be, for that's against my course ;
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes ; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

[*The LADY enters.*]



LADY.

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,

COMUS.

My best guide now : methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan.
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers ; yet oh ! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood ?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the grey-hooded even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts ; 'tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far ;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,

COMUS.

Had stole them from me ; else, O thievish Night !
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lanthorn thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller ?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear ;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be ? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
Oh, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemished form of chastity !
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,

COMUS.

Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err; there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture, for my new enlivened spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

Song.

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



Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere,
So mayst thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.

COMUS.

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment ?

COMUS.

Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence :
How sweetly do they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled ! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul
And lap it in Elysium : Scylla wept,⁹
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause ;
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself ;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder !
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan ; by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog



To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

COMUS.

LADY.

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

COMUS.

What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus ?

LADY.

Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

COMUS.

Could that divide you from near-ushering guides ?

They left me weary on a grassy turf.

COMUS.

COMUS.

By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why ?

LADY.

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

COMUS.

And left your fair side all unguarded, lady ?

LADY.

They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

COMUS.

Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

LADY.

How easy my misfortune is to hit !

COMUS.

COMUS.

Imports their loss, beside the present need ?

LADY.

No less than if I should my brothers lose.

COMUS.

Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom ?

LADY.

As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

COMUS.

Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinkt¹⁰ hedger at his supper sat ;
I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,



Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots ;

COMUS.

Their port was more than human, as they stood ;
I took it for a fairy vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And, as I passed, I worshipped ; if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heaven,
To help you find them.

Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place ?

COMUS.

Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

LADY.

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



COMUS.

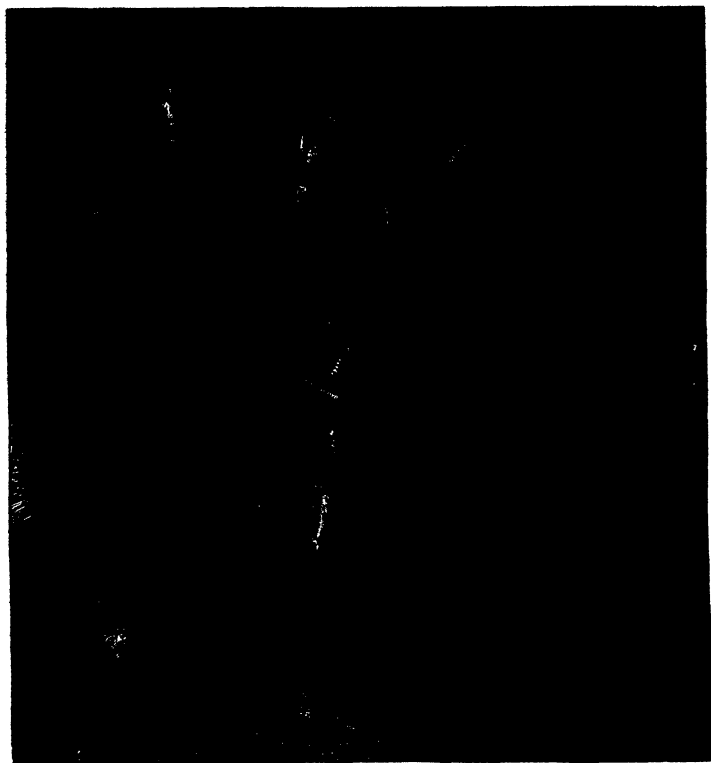
I know each lane, and every alley green,

COMUS.

Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky¹¹ bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood ;
And if your stray attendants be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse : if otherwise,
I can conduct you, lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

LADY.

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



[*The two BROTHERS.*]

ELDER BROTHER.

Unmuffle, ye faint stars ; and thou fair moon,
That wont'st¹² to love the traveller's benizon,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,

COMUS.

And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades ;
Or if your influence be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

SECOND BROTHER.

Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'T would be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.
But oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister !
Where may she wander now ? whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles ?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now ;



Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement and affright?
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage Hunger, or of savage Heat?

ELDER BROTHER.

Peace, brother! be not over-exquisite

COMUS.

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



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

COMUS.

SECOND BROTHER.

'Tis most true,

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

COMUS.

Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.

ELDER BROTHER.

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

SECOND BROTHER.

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

ELDER BROTHER.

I mean that too ; but yet a hidden strength,

COMUS.

Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own ;
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity :
She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds ;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity :
Yea there, where very Desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet ? or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity ?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,



Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid ; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.

COMUS.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace, that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe ?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,¹³
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear ;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,¹⁴
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,¹⁵
Till all be made immortal ; but when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Embodies, and embrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp

COMUS.

Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

SECOND BROTHER.

How charming is divine philosophy !¹⁶
Nor harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

ELDER BROTHER.

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

SECOND BROTHER.

Methought so too ; what should it be ?

ELDER BROTHER.

For certain

COMUS.

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

SECOND BROTHER.

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

ELDER BROTHER.

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

[*The ATTENDANT SPIRIT habited like a Shepherd.*]

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

SPIRIT.

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



SECOND BROTHER.

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

COMUS.

ELDER BROTHER.

Thyrsis ? whose artful strains ¹⁷ have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.
How can'st thou here, good swain ? Hath any ram
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook ?
How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook ?

SPIRIT.

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

ELDER BROTHER.

To tell thee sadly, ¹⁸ shepherd, without blame,



Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

COMUS.

SPIRIT.

Ay me unhappy ! then my fears are true.

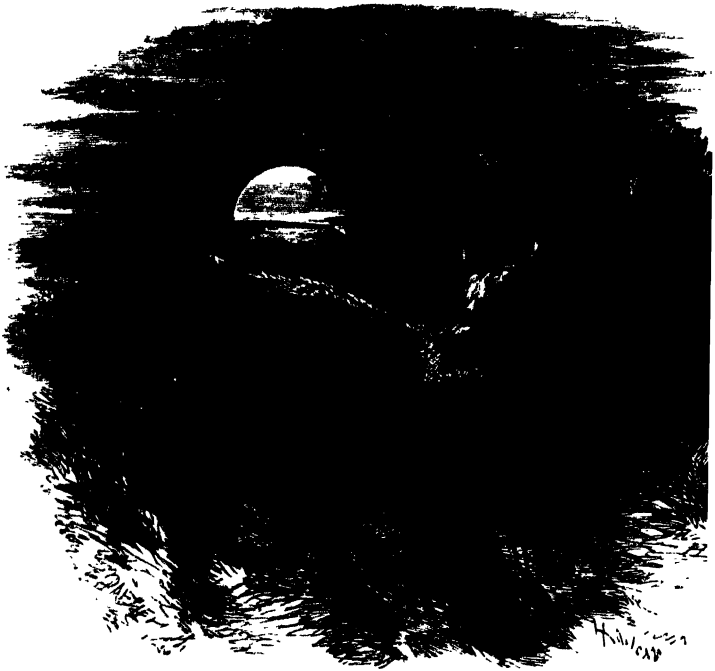
ELDER BROTHER.

What fears, good Thyrsis ? Prythee briefly shew.

SPIRIT.

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

Within the navel¹⁹ of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries ;
And here to every thirsty wanderer,
By sly enticement, gives his baneful cup,



With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding Reason's mintage
Charactered²⁰ in the face ; this have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade ; whence night by night

COMUS.

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscuréd haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spe'ls
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent,²¹ and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill ; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance ;
At which I ceased, and listened them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted ²² steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep ;
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound ²³
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,



And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death: ²⁴ but oh, ere long,

COMUS.

Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear :
And oh, poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare !
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey,
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant ; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here,
But further know I not.

SECOND BROTHER.

O night and shades,
How are ye joined with Hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin



Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?

COMUS.

ELDER BROTHER.

Yes, and keep it still ;
Lean on it safely ; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me : against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm :
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,²⁵
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled ;
Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory :
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness ; when at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change,
Self-fed, and self-consumed : ²⁶ if this fail,
The pillared firmament ²⁷ is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on.
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up !
But for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,

COMUS.

Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twi't Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

SPIRIT.

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

ELDER BROTHER.

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

SPIRIT.

Care and utmost shifts

COMUS.

How to secure the lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray :
He loved me well,²⁸ and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties :
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out ;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it ;
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil :²⁹
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon ;³⁰
And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly³¹
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave ;
He called it hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.



I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,

COMUS.

Till now that this extremity compelled :
But now I find it true ; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off : if you have this about you,
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall ;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandished blade, rush on him ; break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
But seize his wand ; though he and his cursed crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

ELDER BROTHER.

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

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

COMUS.

COMUS.

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

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

COMUS.

Why are you vexed, lady ? why do you frown ?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger ; from these gates
Sorrow flies far : see, here be all the pleasures
That Fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,⁸²
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.
And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,⁸³

COMUS.

With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes,³⁴ which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent
For gentle usage, and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

LADY.

'T will not, false traitor!
'T will not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode,

COMUS.

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

COMUS.

Oh, foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and satiate the voracious taste?

COMUS.

And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk
To deck her sons ; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hatched the all-worshipped ore, and precious gems,
To store her children with : if all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised ;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility ;
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,³⁵
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamond
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady, be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, virginity.



Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current ; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself ;

COMUS.

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.³⁶
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship ;
It is for homely features to keep home,³⁷
They had their name thence ; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?
There was another meaning in these gifts ;
Think what, and be advised : you are but young yet.

LADY.

I had not thought to have unlocked my lips³⁸
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked³⁹ in Reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt⁴⁰ her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous

COMUS.

With her abundance ; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance :
If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store ;
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid ; for swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base Ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on ?
Or have I said enough ? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end ?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery,
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity ;

COMUS.

And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence,
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced ;
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathise,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

COMUS.

She fables not : I feel that I do fear ⁴¹
Her words set off by some superior power ;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more ;
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation.



I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the

COMUS.

And settlings of a melancholy blood :
But this will cure all straight : one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

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

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

There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,-
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure ;
Whilome she was the daughter of Locrine,⁴²



That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,

COMUS.

That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water nymphs that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearléd wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall,
Who, piteous of our woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to embathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropped in ambrosial oils till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made goddess of the river : still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf⁴³ delights to make,
Which she with precious vialéd liquors heals ;
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream,
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song ;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift



To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need : this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

COMUS.

Song.

Sabrina fair,

Listen where thou art sitting

Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,

In twisted braids of lilies knitting

The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ;

Listen for dear honour's sake,

Goddess of the silver lake,

Listen, and save.

Listen, and appear to us,

In name of great Oceanus ;

By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,

And Tethys' grave majestic pace,

By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,

And the Carpathian wizard's hook,⁴⁴

By scaly Triton's winding shell,

And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell,

By Leucothea's lovely hands,

And her son that rules the strands,

By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,

And the songs of sirens sweet,

By dead Parthenope's ⁴⁵ dear tomb,



And fair Ligea's ⁴⁶ golden comb,

COMUS.

Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks ;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.

Listen, and save.

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

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays ;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bonds not as I tread ;
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here.



SPIRIT.

Goddess dear,

COMUS.

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

SABRINA.

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

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

COMUS.

SPIRIT.

Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,⁴⁷
May thy brimméd ⁴⁸ waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills :
Summer drouth, or singéd air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud :
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl, and the golden ore ;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon ⁴⁹
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, lady, while Heaven lends us grace .
Let us fly this curséd place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground ;

COMUS.

I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide :
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence ; and, beside,
All the swains that near abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort :
We shall catch them at their sport ;
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer.
Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

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

Song.

SPIRIT.

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



Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,

COMUS.

With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns, and on the leas.⁵⁰

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

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

[*The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguises.*]

SPIRIT.

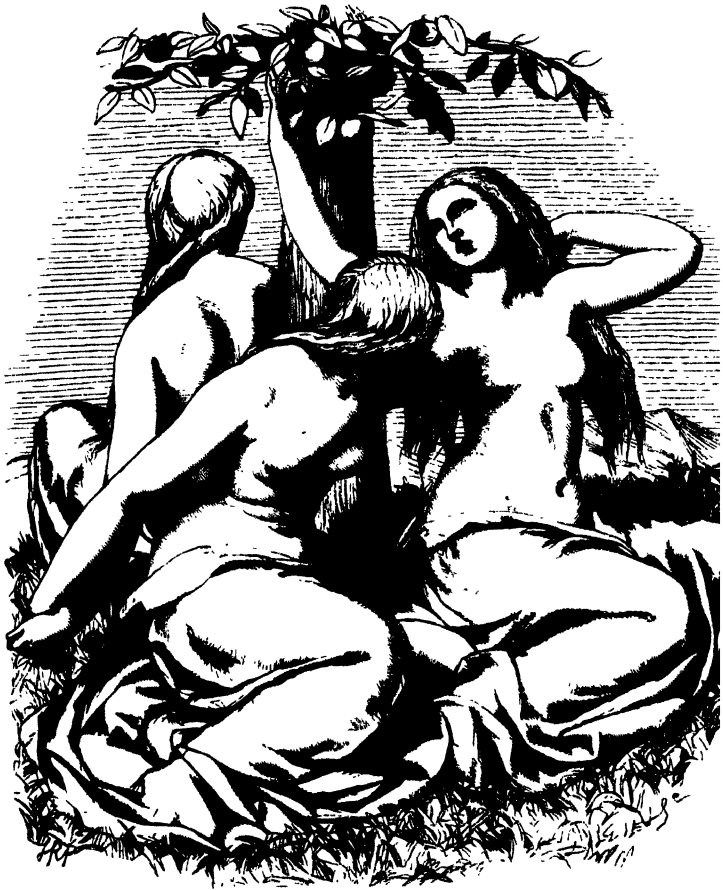
To the ocean now I fly,⁵¹
And those happy climes that lie
Where Day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky :



There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair

COMUS.

Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,
That sing about the golden tree :
Along the crispéd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,
The Graces, and the rosy-bosomed Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring :
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purpled ⁵² scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen ; ⁵³
But far above, in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,



After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among

COMUS.

Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy ; so Jove hath sworn.

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

Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue ; she alone is free :
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime ;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.⁵⁴

NOTES.

N O T E S.

Note ¹, page 3. *Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives.*

The stress is upon this fact; for, though it may not be a fault in itself to

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

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

P. 3. *To lay their just hands on that golden key.*

Of *St. Peter.* Cf. *Lycidas*, ver. 110.

³ P. 4. *That, like to rich and various gems.*

Cf. “*Richard II.*” Act II. Sc. 1, where John of Gaunt speaks of England

a—

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

P. 6. *Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields.*—*i. e.* France and Spain.

NOTES.

⁵ P. 8. *These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof.*

Cf. "Paradise Lost," xi. 244.

⁶ P. 10. *Pacing toward the other goal.*]—See Ps. xix. 5.

⁷ P. 12. *Dark-veiled Cotytto!*

The goddess of immodesty, formerly worshipped at Athens with nocturnal rites.

⁸ P. 18. *Within thy airy shell.*

The margin of Milton's MS. gives "cell." See *Newton*.

⁹ P. 20. *Scylla wept.*]—See "Paradise Lost," ii. 260, 1019.

¹⁰ P. 24. *Swinkt.*]—Tired, from swink, to toil or labour.

¹¹ P. 28. *Bosky.*]—Woody.

¹² P. 29. *That wont st.*]—Art accustomed.

¹³ P. 38. *So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity.*

Spenser, "Faërie Queene," iii. 8, 29 :—

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

NOTES.

¹⁴ P. 38. *The unpolluted temple of the mind.*—Cf. John ii. 21.

¹⁵ P. 38. *And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence.*

Milton here somewhat betrays his materialist tendency.

¹⁶ P. 39. *How charming is divine philosophy!*

This alludes more particularly to the philosophy of Plato, who went by the surname of *divine*.

¹⁷ P. 42. *Thyrxis? whose artful strains have oft delayed.*

An elegant compliment to the musical abilities of Mr. Henry Lawes, a celebrated musician of the time, and who probably sustained the two parts of the Genius of the Wood and the Attendant Spirit. See *Newton*.

¹⁸ P. 42. *To tell thee sadly.*—Soberly, truly.

¹⁹ P. 44. *Within the navel.*—Depth, middle.

²⁰ P. 45. *Charactered in the face.*

Both Spenser and Shakspeare use this word with the same accent as Milton has done here.

²¹ P. 46. *Of knot-grass dew-besprent.*

Besprent, *i. e.* sprinkled. "Knot-grass" is mentioned in "Midsummer Night's Dream," III. 7.

NOTES.

²³ P. 46. *Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds.*

So the commentators have rightly restored, instead of "drowsy-frighted." Milton had in view Shakspeare, "Henry VI." Part II. Act IV. Sc. 1 :—

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

²³ P. 46. *At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound.*

See the beginning of "Twelfth Night."

²⁴ P. 47. *Under the ribs of Death.*

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

²⁵ P. 50. *Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt.*

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

²⁶ P. 50. *Self-fed, and self-consumed.*

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

²⁷ P. 50. *The pillared firmament is rottenness.*

Cf. "Paradise Regained," iv. 455.

NOTES.

²⁸ P. 52. *He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing.*

This is perhaps a compliment to the author's friend and schoolfellow, Charles Deodati, who had been bred up a physician.

²⁹ P. 52. *Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil :
Unknown, and like esteemed.*

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

³⁰ P. 52. *Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon.*

So in "Henry VI." Part II. Act IV. Sc. 3. Cade says :—

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

³¹ P. 52. *And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly.*

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

³² P. 55. *That Fancy can beget on youthful thoughts.*

An improvement on "Romeo and Juliet," Act I. Sc. 3.

³³ P. 55. *That flames and dances in his crystal bounds.*

Prov. xxiii. 31 : "Look not thou to the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."

NOTES.

³⁴ P. 56. *Not that Nepenthes.*

See Pope's *Odyssey*, iv. 301, sq. and the "Faerie Queene," iv. 3, 43.

³⁵ P. 58. *The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes.*

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

³⁶ P. 60. *It withers on the stalk with languished head.*

Spenser, "Faerie Queene," ii. 12, 75 :—

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

³⁷ P. 60. *It is for homely features to keep home.*

So in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona :"—

"Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits."

³⁸ P. 60. *I had not thought to have unlocked my lips.*

The six following lines are spoken aside.—*Symson*

³⁹ P. 60. *Prankt.*]—Decked, dressed.

⁴⁰ P. 60. *Bolt.*]—Sift, or dart, aim. See *Newton*.

NOTES.

⁴¹ P. 62. *She fables not : I feel that I do fear.*

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

⁴² P. 64. *Whilome she was the daughter of Lochrine.*

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

⁴³ P. 66. *That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make.*

Puck, or Robin Goodfellow.

⁴⁴ P. 68. *And the Curpathian wizard's hook.]—i. e. Proteus.*

⁴⁵ P. 68. *By dead Parthenope's dear tomb.]—This tomb was at Naples.*

⁴⁶ P. 69. *And fair Liyea's golden comb.*

One of the sirens, and also a sea-nymph.

NOTES.

⁴⁷ P. 78. *Sprung of old Anchises' line.*

For Lochrine was the son of Brutus, who was the son of Silvius, he of Ascanius, and Ascanius of Æneas, the son of Anchises.

⁴⁸ P. 78. *Brimméd*—i. e. swelling, rising to the brim.

⁴⁹ P. 78. *And here and there thy banks upon.*

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

⁵⁰ P. 76. *Leas.*—Pastures, corn-fields.

⁵¹ P. 76. *To the ocean now I fly.*

A paraphrase of Ariel's song in the "Tempest :"—

"Where the bee sucks, there lurk I."

⁵² P. 78. *Purpled.*—Flourished, embroidered with the needle.

⁵³ P. 78. *Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.*

Venus, so called, because she was first worshipped by the Assyrians.

NOTES.

⁵⁴ P. 80. *Heaven itself would stoop to her.*

“Comus,” observes Hallam, “was sufficient to convince any one of taste and feeling, that a great poet had arisen in England, and one partly formed in a different school from his contemporaries. Many of them had produced highly beautiful and imaginative passages; but none had evinced so classical a judgment, none had aspired to so regular a perfection. Jonson had learned much from the ancients, but there was a grace in their best models which he did not quite attain. Neither his ‘Sad Shepherd,’ nor the ‘Faithful Shepherdess’ of Fletcher, have the elegance or dignity of ‘Comus.’ A noble virgin and her young brothers, by whom this masque was originally represented, required an elevation, a purity, a sort of severity of sentiment which no one in that age could have given but Milton. He avoided, and nothing loth, the more festive notes which dramatic poetry was wont to mingle with its serious strain. But for this he was compensated by the brightest hues of fancy, and the sweetest melody of song. In ‘Comus’ we find nothing prosaic or feeble, no false taste in the incidents, and not much in the language, nothing over which we should desire to pass on a second perusal. The want of what we may call personality, none of the characters having names, except Comus himself, who is a very indefinite being, and the absence of all positive attributes of time and place, enhance the ideality of the fiction by a certain indistinctness not displeasing to the imagination.”

THE END.

