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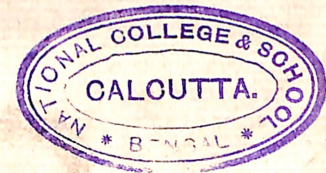
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MILTON

IN PENSEROSO



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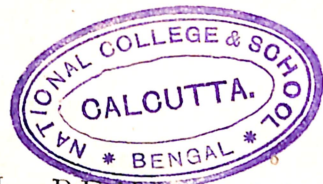
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INTRODUCTION

WHEN Milton wrote the twin poems, 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,' the pastorals of gladness and sadness, he was probably about twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. At that time he was living quietly in his father's house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, watching with deep interest, yet taking no part in, the beginnings of the great struggle between gay Cavalier and sad Puritan, which was destined so soon to convulse the whole realm. He was at Horton from A.D. 1632 to 1636. There are those who have contended that these poems describe the country round Forest Hill, near Oxford; but this opinion does not prevail.

This present edition of the 'Penseroso' is taken from 'The English Poems of John Milton, edited by R. C. Browne, M.A.,' for the Clarendon Press.





IL PENSEROSO.

HENCE vain deluding joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred,
How little you bested, *help, be of advantage*
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys ;
Dwell in some idle brain ;
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless

As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train. *good to*

But hail thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail divinest Melancholy,

Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight ;

And therefore to our weaker view,
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue ; *grave*
Black, but such as in esteem

Prince Memnon's sister might beseem ; *be fit*

Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove *Cassiopeia*
To set her beauty's praise above

The sea nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended ;

Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore ;

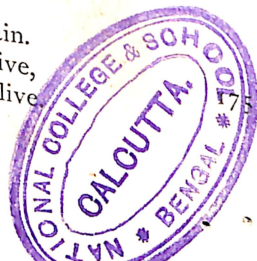
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,
Such mixture was not held a stain) ;
Oft in glimmering bow'rs, and glades
He met her ; and in secret shades

Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
 While yet there was no fear of Jove. 30
 Come pensive Nun, devout and pure,
 Sober, stedfast, and demure,
 All in a robe of darkest grain,
 Flowing with majestic train,
 And sable stole of cypress lawn, *from the animal* 35
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,
 With ev'n step, and musing gait,
 And looks commercing with the skies,
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes : 40
 There held in holy passion still,
 Forget thyself to marble, till
 With a sad leaden downward cast,
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
 And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet, 45
 Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
 And hears the Muses in a ring,
 Aye round about Jove's altar sing.
 And add to these retired Leisure,
 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure ; 50
 But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,
 Him that soars on golden wing,
 Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
 The cherub Contemplation,
 And the mute Silence hist along, 55
 'Less Philomel will deign a song,
 In her sweetest, saddest plight,
 Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
 While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
 Gently o'er th' accustom'd oak : 60
 Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
 Most musical, most melancholy !
 Thee chauntress oft the woods among,
 I woo to hear thy even-song ;
 And missing thee, I walk unseen 65
 On the dry smooth-shaven green,

To behold the wandring Moon,
 Riding near her highest noon,
 Like one that had been led astray
 Through the Heav'n's wide pathless way ; 70
 And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
 Oft on a plat of rising ground,
 I hear the far-off curfew sound,
 Over some wide-water'd shore, *provided with reeds* 75
 Swinging slow with sullen roar ; *lake*
 Or if the air will not permit,
 Some still removed place will fit,
 Where glowing embers through the room
 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom, 80
 Far from all resort of mirth,
 Save the cricket on the hearth,
 Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
 To bless the doors from nightly harm :
 Or let my lamp at midnight hour 85
 Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,
 Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
 With thrice-great Hermes ; or unsphere
 The spirit of Plato to unfold
 What worlds, or what vast regions hold 90
 The immortal mind that hath forsook
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook ;
 And of those dæmons that are found
 In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
 Whose power hath a true consent 95
 With planet, or with element.
 Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy *Tragedy = her goat*
 In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,
 Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
 Or the tale of Troy divine, 100
 Or what (though rare) of later age,
 Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
 But, O sad virgin, that thy power
 Might raise Musæus from his bower, *son of Orpheus*

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing 105
 Such notes as warbled to the string
 Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
 And made Hell grant what Love did seek.
 Or call up him that left half told
 The story of Cambuscan bold, 110
 Of Camphall, and of Algarsife,
 And who had Canace to wife,
 That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
 And of the wondrous horse of brass
 On which the Tartar king did ride ; 115
 And if aught else great bards beside
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
 Of turneys and of trophies hung ;
 Of forests, and enchantments drear,
 Where more is meant than meets the ear. 120
 Thus Night oft see me in thy pale career,
 Till civil-suited Morn appear ;
 Not trickt and frounc't, as she was wont
 With the Attic boy to hunt, *Cephalus* 125
 But kercheft in a comely cloud,
 While rocking winds are piping loud ;
 Or usher'd with a shower still,
 When the gust hath blown his fill,
 Ending on the rustling leaves, 130
 With minute drops from off the eaves.
 And when the sun begins to fling
 His flaring beams, me Goddess bring
 To arched walks of twilight groves,
 And shadows brown that Sylvan loves, *god of woods* 135
 Of pine, or monumental oak,
 Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
 Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.
 There in close covert by some brook,
 Where no profaner eye may look, *unfading* 140
 Hide me from day's garish eye ;
 While the bee with honied thigh,

That at her flowry work doth sing,
 And the waters murmuring
 With such consort as they keep,
 Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep ; 145
 And let some strange mysterious dream
 Wave at his wings in airy stream
 Of lively portraiture display'd,
 Softly on my eye-lids laid.
 And as I wake, sweet music breathe 150
 Above, about, or underneath,
 Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
 Or th' unseen Genius of the wood.
 But let my due feet never fail
 To walk the studious cloister's pale ;
 And love the high embowed roof, *bound on*
 With antique pillars massy proof, *arched*
 And storied windows richly dight, *completed a before*
 Casting a dim religious light. *with an account of*
 There let the pealing organ blow 160
 To the full voic'd quire below,
 In service high, and anthems clear, *majestic liturgical*
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
 Dissolve me into ecstasies,
 And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes. 165
 And may at last my weary age
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,
 The hairy gown and mossy cell,
 Where I may sit, and rightly spell
 Of every star that Heav'n doth shew,
 And every herb that sips the dew ;
 Till old experience do attain 170
 To something like prophetic strain.
 These pleasures Melancholy give,
 And I with thee will choose to live



NOTES.

1. 1. 'Hence, hence, fond pleasures, momentary joys,' is a line of Sylvester. The beginning of the poem appears to have been suggested by a song in Fletcher's 'Nice Valour':

'Hence, all you vain delights.'

1. 3. **bestead**, from A. S. *stede*, place, position. Hence *stead* is applied to signify the influences arising from relative position. To *bestead* one is to perform a charitable office to him. (Wedgwood.) Here the word would seem equivalent to 'help,' but in Shakespeare (2 Henry VI, ii. 3) and in some passages of Spenser it means simply to be in such and such a state. Only used here by Milton.

1. 4. Cp. *Paradise Lost*, i. 97.

'Nothing could my fixed mind remove.'

(Faery Queene, iv. 7. 16.)

'With so eternal and so fixed a soul.'

(Troilus and Cressida, v. 2.)

1. 6. **fond** in its old meaning of 'foolish.' Cp. Lycidas 56. 'Thou fond mad man,' says Friar Laurence to Romeo (iii. 3).

1. 7. Cp. 'As thick as motis in the sonne-beem,'

(Canterbury Tales 6450.)

1. 10. **pensioners**; Queen Elizabeth had for her guard a select band of tall and handsome gentlemen, called Pensioners. The word became common for 'retinue.' Cp. Mrs. Quickly's climax, 'carls, nay, which is more, pensioners' (Merry Wives of Windsor, ii. 2); and

'The cowslips tall her pensioners be.'

(Midsummer Night's Dream, ii. 1.)

1. 14. **To hit**; to meet, touch. Cp. its use in *Arcades* 77.

'A strange invisible perfume hits the sense.'

(Antony and Cleopatra, ii. 2.)

1. 16. Cp. *Paradise Lost*, iii. 380.

1. 18. **Memnon**, King of Ethiopia, was an auxiliary to the Trojans, and was slain by Achilles. Archbishop Trench remarks that Milton did not, as some say, invent the sister. Her name is Hemera, and she is mentioned by Dictys Cretensis. As Memnon was the fairest of warriors (Od. xi. 522), his sister might be presumed to be no less beautiful.

1. 19. Cassiope was wife to Cepheus, King of Ethiopia. To appease the Nereids, she exposed her daughter Andromeda to the sea-monster which they had prevailed upon Poseidon to send into Ethiopia with an inundation. She was afterwards placed among the stars.

1. 23. **Vesta**, or Hestia, was the goddess of the hearth. She was daughter of Saturn or Cronos. According to classic legends, she swore by the head of Zeus to remain a virgin. To her father is attributed the origin of civilisation. Milton's Melancholy is therefore the offspring of Retirement and Culture.

1. 25. **Saturn's reign**: 'the first age, when there was no summer nor winter, spring nor autumn, but all after one air and season.' (Bacon, Advancement of Learning, ii.) Cp. Virg. *Æn.* vi. 792-795.

1. 32. **demure**, solemn.

'The drums

Demurely wake the sleepers.'

(Antony and Cleopatra, iv. 9.)

Keightley derives the word from *demeuré*, stayed, staid; Wedgwood from Fr. *meure*, Lat. *maturus*, ripe, and 'cannot but think it is the remnant of some such expression as *de mure conduite*.' 'It formerly meant *truly* virtuous and good' (Trench).

1. 33. **darkest grain**: *granum* means seed or kernel, and was early applied to all small objects resembling seeds. A species of oak common on all Mediterranean coasts, and especially in Spain, is frequented by an insect of the genus *Coccus*, the dried body, or rather ovarium of which furnishes a variety of red dyes. From its form the prepared *coccus* was called *granum*. This grain Milton and other English poets often use as equivalent to Tyrian purple. Here the epithet 'darkest,' and the character and attributes of the weaver of the robe, shew that the poet meant the violet shade. In *Paradise Lost*, xi. 242, 'grain of Sarra' = purple of Tyre, Sarra being used by some Latin authors for Tyre. In *Paradise Lost*, v. 285, 'sky-tinctured' is not necessarily azure, for sky in old writers means clouds which may be of various hues, and 'regal ornament' suggests the imperial purple. Though we commonly restrict purple to the violet shade, it is employed in poetry to express as wide a range of colour as its Greek and Latin equivalents—that is, all shades between scarlet and dark violet

inclusive. In *Comus* 750, 'grain' is used for vermilion. (Abridged from Marsh's Lectures.)

l. 35. stole, here = veil or hood (as in *Faery Queene*, i. 1. 4), not the long robe of the Roman matrons. 'Cyprus black' is one of the wares of Autolycus. Minshew (1625) defines cipres 'a fine curled linen, crespé,' whence our 'crape.' Olivia says,

'A cyprus, not a bosom, hides my poor heart.'
(*Twelfth Night*, iii. 1.)

'Take off the cypress veil and leave a mask.'
(Marvell to Dr. Witty.)

l. 36. decent here means 'comely,' 'beautiful,' as Horace uses it when he applies the word to the cheeks of Europa, to Venus, and to the Graces.

l. 37. To keep state was a familiar phrase taken from the cloth of estate or canopy under which the throne was placed. 'This chair shall be my state,' says Falstaff (1 *Henry IV*, ii. 4). Lady Macbeth, when queen, keeps her state at the banquet, remaining on the dais while her husband goes about among his guests to play the humble host (*Macbeth*, iii. 4). The expression also occurs in the Chamberlain's speech (*Henry VIII*, i. 3).

l. 39. George Herbert accentuates in the same manner:

'Surely if each one saw another's heart
There would be no commerce.'

l. 40. So in *Macbeth*, i. 3,

'Look how our partner's rapt.'

The word is used by old writers for 'ravished' in both its primary and secondary meanings.

l. 44. As firmly fixed on the earth as before on heaven.

l. 50. trim, A.S. *trum*, orderly, well-arranged; as in *L'Allegro* 75.

l. 52. Cp. *Fair Infant* 57.

l. 59. Cp. 'Swift, swift, you dragons of the night.'

(*Cymbeline*, ii. 2.)

'Night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast.'

(*Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii, 2.)

l. 67. Cp. 'I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;'

and 'Swifter than the wandering moon.'

(*Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1; iv. 1.)

l. 69. Sir Philip Sidney has a beautiful sonnet beginning,
'With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently! and with how wan a face!'

and Wordsworth took the same two lines as the opening of another nearly as beautiful. Shelley asks of the moon,

'Art thou pale for weariness

Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth?'

l. 76. Cp. 'sullen bell' (2 *Henry IV*, i. 1); 'solemn curfew' (*Tempest*, v. 1).

l. 78. removed was formerly used where we employ its equivalent 'remote.' The Ghost beckons Hamlet to a more 'removed ground' (i. 4), and Orlando wonders how a shepherd could have acquired so fine an accent in 'so removed a dwelling' (*As You Like It*, iii. 2).

l. 83. Keightley quotes Stow: 'The bell-man at every lane's end, and at the ward's end, gave warning of fire and candle and to help the poor, and to pray for the dead.' Cp. *Lady Macbeth* (ii. 2),

'It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman
Which gives the stern'st good night.'

l. 84. nightly is used by Shakespeare both as adjective and adverb. It here means 'by night.'

l. 87. 'As the Bear never sets, he could only out-watch him by sitting up till day-break.' (Keightley.)

l. 88. *Hermes Trismegistus*, 'thrice great'—a fabled king of Egypt, supposed contemporary with Moses. To him many books on politics, physics, and theology were ascribed. Chemistry, or rather alchemy, was called the hermetical art, from his supposed invention of it. The books now extant under his name are forgeries by the Neo-Platonists, who wished to make the Egyptian religious system appear more venerable than the Christian mysteries. Cp. note in the edition of Hooker, Bk. i. in this series. Bacon speaks (*Advancement of Learning*, i.) of the 'triplicity which in great veneration was ascribed to the ancient Hermes; the power and fortune of a king, the knowledge and illumination of a priest, and the learning and universality of a philosopher.'

unsphere, draw down from the station assigned to him. Cp. *Comus* 3.

l. 90. This is treated in the *Phædo* of Plato; and in some of his other dialogues he speaks of the intelligences which he names *dæmons*. But this assigning them their abode in the four elements over which they had power, rather belongs to the later Platonists and to the writers of the middle ages. (Keightley.)

l. 95. Drayton (*Polyolbion* v.) enunciates the opinion of the 'humorous Platonist,'

'Which boldly dares affirm that spirits themselves supply
With bodies to commix with frail mortality;



And here allow them place, beneath this lower sphere
Of the inconstant moon; to tempt us daily here.
Some earthly mixture take; as others, which aspire,
Their subtler shapes resume, of water, air, and fire;
Being those immortals long before from heaven that fell,
Whose deprivation thence, determined their hell.'

l. 96. Cp. Paradise Regained, ii. 122.

l. 97. Ovid gives Tragedy a sceptre (Amores, iii. 2. 13). The subjects of Attic tragedy are taken from the misfortunes of royal and heroic personages, which afforded 'stateliest and most regal argument,' as Milton says in his Tractate of Education.

l. 98. The pall is Lat. *palla*, the outer garment, usually of wool or cloth, often richly dyed or embroidered.

l. 99. Presenting, representing. It was the technical word for acting a masque or play. The nine worthies are 'presented' by Holofernes, Armado, and Costard in Love's Labour's Lost. Lord Brackley and the rest 'presented' Comus.

Thebes, the capital of Bœotia. Æschylus made it the scene of his Seven against Thebes, Sophocles of his Œdipus Tyrannus and Antigone, and Euripides of his Bacchæ. In ed. 1645 it is printed *Theb's*, lest the reader should make it a dissyllable. So *hero's* in Vacation Exercise 47.

Pelops' line, allusion to the trilogy of Æschylus on the subject of the murder of Agamemnon, a descendant of Pelops, King of Pisa in Elis, who has given his name to Peloponnesus.

l. 100. Troy divine. Its story is dramatically treated, at least in selected episodes, by Sophocles in his Ajax and his Philoctetes, and by Euripides in his Hecuba and his Andromache.

ll. 101, 102. This couplet is probably intended to include the tragedies of Shakespeare.

l. 104. Musæus, a mythical bard of Thrace, according to some legends the son of Orpheus. The yearning after the long-lost past is here forcibly expressed in language that, by dwelling on the dim fragments yet remaining, gives the beauty of the feeling without its pain.

l. 106. Cp. Arcades 87.

l. 110. The Squire's Tale in Chaucer.

l. 116. And if aught else, &c. Referring to Spenser, in whose great poem all the enumerated circumstances may be found.

l. 120. It is somewhat strange that Dante finds no place in this catalogue. He and Petrarch were favourite writers with Milton.

l. 122. Juliet calls 'civil Night' a
'Sober-suited matron all in black.'
(Romeo and Juliet, iii. 2.)

l. 123. trickt, adorned. Only used once by Shakespeare,
'Horridly tricked
'With blood of fathers.' (Hamlet, ii. 2. Speech of the Player.)
frounc't, applied to the dressing of the hair.
'Some frounce their curled hair in courtly guise.'
(Faery Queene, i. 4. 14.)

l. 124. The Attic boy is Cephalus. His mother was daughter of Cecrops, King of Attica. He was beloved by Eos, the dawn.

l. 127. still, here = gentle, as in the stage-direction in Midsummer Night's Dream, iv. 1, 'still music.' Cp. Passion 28.

l. 130. minute drops from off the eaves seems to indicate the large drops falling from time to time from the eaves after a shower; cp. our minute-guns.

l. 134. Milton uses brown, the Italian *bruno*, for 'dark.' (Keightley.)

l. 135. monumental, i. e. a monument of other times, like the Talking Oak of Tennyson. 'Monument' is used for 'memorial' by Spenser and Shakespeare.

l. 141. garish (from O. E. *gare* or *gawe*, to stare) is Juliet's epithet for the sun (iii. 2), which is called 'the eye of heaven' in Faery Queene, i. 3. 4. Cp. Lycidas 26 (note), and Glossary to Faery Queene, ii. (*garre*.)

l. 145. In Spenser's Faery Queene (i. 1. 41) the noise of waters, bees, and rain lull Morpheus in 'his slumber soft.' Cp. Virgil, Eclogue i. 55.

l. 148. Of the spirit (Faery Queene, i. 1. 44) we read that
'And on his little wings a Dream he bore.'

It has been suggested that Milton was here thinking of the old pictures of angels holding scrolls displayed against the background of their extended wings.

l. 151. Ferdinand (Tempest, i. 2) asks
'Where should this music be? i' th' air, or the earth?'
It sounds no more

. I hear it now above me.'

l. 156. pale, enclosure. With *studious cloister*, cp. 'studious universities' (Two Gentlemen of Verona, i. 3).

l. 158. massy-proof, able to resist the incumbent weight. So *star-proof* is used in Arcades 89.

l. 159. storied. 'Storia' is used for 'historia' in barbarous Latin.

Chaucer has 'storial' for 'historical' (Canterbury Tales 3179), and Shakespeare 'story' for 'history' (Henry V, concluding Chorus). 'Story' was used in monastic records for Scripture history.

l. 161. Milton, who here bears testimony to the solemn influences of the cathedral service, in his Eikonoclastes ridicules the organs and the singing-men in the king's chapel, as well as the 'English mass-book' of the 'old Ephesian goddess called the Church of England.'

l. 172. Milton speaks (Epitaphium Damonis) of his hopes of being assisted in the study of botany by his friend Carlo Diodati.

