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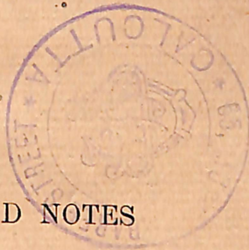
MILTON'S LYCIDAS.



WITH

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

I. Pre-literary period, 1608-25.
II. Period of College and Country life and Travel, 1625-40.
III. Controversial period, 1640-60.
IV. Period of Great Poems, 1660-74.

I. John Milton was born on December 9th, 1608, about eight years before the death of Shakespeare. His father, a prosperous London scrivener, was a pious and cultured man, and chose as his son's first tutor Thomas Young, a Puritan divine. In his twelfth year

the boy was entered as a day-scholar at St. Paul's School, and there he attended for four or five years. Before he left this school he had made good progress in Greek and Latin, he knew some Hebrew, and he had also, by his father's advice, studied French and Italian. His own account of these laborious pre-college days is as follows: "My father destined me while yet a little boy for the study of humane letters, which I seized with such eagerness, that from the twelfth year of my age I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight; which indeed was the first cause of injury to my eyes, to whose natural weakness there were also added frequent headaches. All which not retarding my impetuosity in learning, he caused me to be daily instructed, both at the grammar-school and under other masters at home, and then when I had acquired various tongues, and also not some insignificant taste for the sweetness of philosophy, he sent me to Cambridge." He had already shown some facility in the writing of verses, but only two paraphrases of psalms have been preserved to us.

II. In February, 1625—six weeks before the accession of Charles I., Milton was enrolled at Christ's College, Cambridge, and for seven years he continued to study there. He took the B.A. degree in 1628-9, and the M.A. degree in July, 1632. During these years he wrote a number of Latin pieces and the following English poems:—*On the Death of a Fair Infant* (1626)—his first original poem in his native tongue; *At a Vacation Exercise* (1628); *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629), an unfinished piece on *The Passion;* also the five short poems that stand at the beginning of this volume, and the first and second sonnets. In the *Song on May Morning* we have a foretaste of the spirit of *L'Allegro*, both in the matter and the rhythm; in the lines *On Shakespeare* we already discover some of the most striking characteristics of Milton's style; in the two poems *On the University Carrier* the poet shows a kind of whimsical pleasantry that does not appear again anywhere in his poems; and in the graceful *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester* we have much of the exquisite perfection of language and metre seen in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, along with a glimpse of the elegiac beauty and religious feeling of *Lycidas.* The small piece *On Time* is variously referred to the period of Milton's life at Cambridge and to the Horton period; similarly with *At a Solemn Music* and *Upon the Circumcision.* The second sonnet closes the list of his compositions at Cambridge. He had already found his true vocation—poetry; and, in obedience to "an inward prompting" to fit himself by labour and intent study for his life-work, he gave up all intention of studying for the Church, left the university after obtaining his degree and retired at the age of twenty-three to his father's house in the small village of Horton, near Windsor, and about twenty miles from London.

To the six quiet years of country life at Horton—years which Milton regarded merely as a time of "ripening" for his great work, we owe the best of his minor poems, written in the order in which they are here named, viz. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas.* It has been said that these pieces, even though their author had not written *Paradise Lost*, "would have sufficed to place their author in a class apart, and above all those who had used the English language for poetical purposes before him."

CALCUTTA

Yet Milton himself regarded them as no more than the first fruits of his genius; he had, in his own estimation, shattered the leaves of his poetic laurels "before the mellowing year." In April, 1638, he set out on a journey to Italy, the classic land of poetry and art. He had spent some months in Florence and Rome, and was staying in Naples when "the sad news of civil war" reached him; he resolved to turn his face homewards, "for," he says, "I thought it disgraceful, while my fellow-countrymen were fighting for liberty, that I should be travelling abroad for pleasure." He retraced his steps in a leisurely manner, and arrived in England in August, 1639. It was on this journey that he wrote his Italian Sonnets, and shortly after his return he wrote that elegy on the death of his friend Charles Diodati, to which allusion is made in the notes on *Lycidas*.

III. In the end of 1639 Milton took lodgings in London, and hoped to betake himself to his favourite studies with a view to still further maturing himself for the production of some great English poem. But this hope was not fulfilled. The Scots had rebelled against Episcopacy, and the Puritans of England (of whom, both by nature and upbringing, Milton was one) were all in sympathy with them. The famous Long Parliament had already resisted in a number of ways the unconstitutional conduct of Charles I., and had decided to sweep away the abuses of the Episcopal Church. How best to do this was the important question, and to the answering of this Milton first devoted himself with all the enthusiasm of his truly religious spirit.

Then, in 1642, civil war broke out, and Milton, of course, declared for the side of the Parliament. In

1643, he nevertheless married a lady belonging to a Royalist family, who left him after less than two months and did not return for two years. This turned his attention to the question of divorce, and the new controversy between the Presbyterians and the Independents provided still more work for his pen. Throughout all the din and smoke of war we catch only a few glimpses of the poet, as distinct from the pamphleteer: how few these glimpses are the sonnets composed in these years will show. From 1640 to 1648, when the last embers of the civil war were finally extinguished, Milton wrote nothing in poetry but nine sonnets (VIII.-XV.) and a few Latin pieces. And in the next ten years, when he was in the employment of the new government, and when upon him was thrown the task of answering all attacks made upon it, he wrote, along with much prose, nothing more than his eight remaining sonnets (XVI.-XXIII.) and a few scraps in Latin. In 1658, when he wrote his last sonnet, Cromwell died. Milton continued in office as Latin Secretary, and within a few weeks of the Restoration we find him issuing projects for the best means of establishing a free commonwealth. He had been blind since 1652; in 1653-4 his first wife died, and in 1656 he married again, but his second wife died fifteen months after the marriage; in 1664 he married a third time.

IV. At the Restoration, Milton was placed for a short time under arrest, but he was at last able to take up the task that had been laid aside so long, and in 1665 the composition of *Paradise Lost* was completed. It was followed in 1671 by *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. In 1674 the poet died.

We shall sum up in a few words the most striking characteristics of Milton's genius.

1. First of all we may note his early and settled conviction that poetry was his vocation. He tells us, before he is twenty-three years of age, that he has discovered "whether aught was imposed upon me by them that had the overlooking or betaken to of mine own choice, in English or other tongue, prosing or versing, *but chiefly this latter*, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live." In 1637, just before he wrote *Lycidas*, he felt that God had instilled into him a vehement love of the beautiful, and declared that he was "wont day and night to seek for this idea of the beautiful through all the forms and faces of things . . . . You ask what I am thinking of? So may the good Deity help me, of immortality."—*Letter to Diodati.*

2. Along with this we note his sense of the greatness of the poet's task, and his consequent self-appreciation, which, however, was very different from the sickly self-conceit of that race of poets who immediately preceded him, and of that equally complacent race who came after him. His ideal was too high to enable him to be other than truly modest. He looked for inspiration to "that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases."—*Reason of Church Government* (1641).

3. His rule of life was therefore a strict one: the inward ripeness that he desired could only be attained in one way—by the noblest purity in every thought and action. "Long it was not after when I was confirmed

in this opinion, that he 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."—*Apology for Smectymnuus.* As a part of his noble austerity of life we may specially note his strictly temperate habits. In his sixth elegy he tells us that they who would hope to sing of heroes and to explore the counsels of Heaven must live simply:

> Let herbs to them a bloodless banquet give;
> In beechen goblets let their beverage shine,
> Cool from the crystal spring, their sober wine!
>
> (Cowper's translation.)

The same sentiment shows itself in the delineation of *Penseroso*, one of whose companions is "spare Fast"; in *Lycidas* (line 72); and in Sonnet XX. For the poet is sacred and must draw his inspiration from Heaven, not from the wine-cup.

4. He was a man of industrious and select reading. His knowledge was most extensive. "Whatever," says Prof. Masson, "of learning, of science, or of discipline in logic or philosophy, the University at that time could give, he had duly and in the largest measure acquired. No better Greek or Latin scholar probably had the University in that age sent forth; he was proficient in the Hebrew tongue, and in all the other customary aids to a Biblical Theology; and he could speak and write well in French and Italian. His acquaintance, obtained by independent reading, with the history and with the whole body of the literature of ancient and modern nations, was extensive and various."—*Three Devils, etc.* When he left the University and went to Horton he

devoted himself to a steady perusal of the Greek and Latin writers, and was eager to learn "anything new in Mathematics or in Music." And just before he was whirled into the controversies of Church and State he was still looking forward to a time of hard study.

5. His religious fervour was as much a part of himself as his poetic temperament. Hence, in the controversial war in which he engaged, he believed his task to have been imposed upon him by Heaven in no less degree than that other task of writing a great poem. And hence, also, it was as natural for Milton to introduce deep thoughts of death and immortality into a few lines written to set on a clock-case, or to compare the Marchioness of Winchester with Rachel, or to speak of Lycidas in the same breath as a risen saint and the "genius of the shore," as it was for him to write of the great truths of Scripture in *Paradise Lost.* His grand seriousness is over all.

6. His love of music is an important element of his genius. His father was no mean musician, and both father and son numbered famous musicians among their friends. "As nature had endowed him in no ordinary degree with that most exquisite of her gifts, the ear and the passion for harmony, he had studied music as an art, and had taught himself not only to sing in the society of others, but also to touch the keys for his solitary pleasure" (Masson, *Three Devils, etc.*). His style is everywhere dominated by his mastery over the effects of music, and his works are full of expressions of his love for it. It influences his choice of words, his choice of a particular form of a word, and even his pronunciation; it explains many of those inversions so common in his

poetry; it accounts for his use of alliteration and for the form of many of the compound epithets that he coined so freely; it heightens the charm of his songs; and, above all, it has enabled him once for all to stamp the character of English blank verse.

7. Bound up with the preceding is his laborious striving after perfection of workmanship. We shall close with the words of Mr. Matthew Arnold on this point: "If to our English race an inadequate sense for perfection of work is a real danger, if the discipline of respect for a high and flawless excellence is peculiarly needed by us, Milton is of all our gifted men the best lesson, the most salutary influence. In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique amongst us. No one else in English literature and art possesses the like distinction."—*Essays in Criticism*, 2nd series.

LYCIDAS.

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew 10
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn, 20
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright 30

Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.
  But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
  Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep 50
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
Ay me! I fondly dream
"Had ye been there," . . . for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament, 60
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
  Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?

Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies, 80
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."
  O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,
That came in Neptune's plea. 90
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows off from each beakèd promontory.
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotadès their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panopè with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:—
"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least 120
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more." 130
Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,

Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers, 140
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears, 150
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise,
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled;
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old, 160
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore 170
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,

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With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move, 180
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey:
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills, 190
And now was dropt into the western bay.
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

LYCIDAS.

This poem was written in November, 1637, and appeared in a volume of memorial verses published at Cambridge in 1638 as a tribute to Mr. Edward King. King, a son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland, had been admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge in 1626, so that he was a fellow-student of Milton's. He was made a Fellow in 1630, and seems to have become extremely popular. He was a young man of 'hopeful parts,' and had shown some skill in poetical composition. In 1633 he took his degree of M.A., and remained at Cambridge to study for the Church. In the vacation of 1637 he sailed from Chester on a visit to his friends in Ireland: the ship was wrecked off the Welsh coast and King went down with it. His death was much lamented by his college friends and they got together a collection of tributary verses to which Milton contributed *Lycidas*.

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy, *i.e.* the poet speaks as a shepherd bewailing the loss of a fellow-shepherd. The subjoined analysis will guide the student in reading it. We do not look in the poem for the keen sense of personal loss that we find in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or in Milton's own *Epitaphium Damonis*, nor for the sustained scorn that animates Shelley's *Adonais*; but in its tender regret for a dead friend, in its sweet "touches of idealised rural life," in its glimpses of a suppressed passion that was soon to break forth, and in its mingling of a truly religious spirit with all its classical imagery, it reveals to us the greatness of the poetical genius of Milton. It "marks the point of transition from the early Milton, the Milton of mask, pastoral, and idyll, to the quite other Milton, who, after twenty years of hot party struggle, returned to poetry in another vein, never to the 'woods and pastures' of which he took a final leave in *Lycidas*." (Pattison.)

ANALYSIS.

I. The pastoral proper (the poet sings as shepherd):
1. Occasion of the poem, - - - - - - 1-14
2. Invocation of the Muses, - - - - - - 15-22
3. Poet's personal relations with Lycidas, - - 23-36
4. Strain of sorrow and indignation; the loss great and inexplicable:—
(1) Poet's own sense of loss, - - - - - 37-49
(2) The guardian Nymphs could not prevent it, 50-57
(3) The Muse herself could not prevent it, though he was her true son, - - - 58-63

[*First rise to a higher mood:* the true poet and the nature of his reward] - - - - - - - 64-84

(4) Neptune was not to blame for the loss, - 85-102
(5) Camus, representing Cambridge, bewails his loss, - - - - - - - - - 103-107
(6) St. Peter, the guardian of the Church, sorely misses Lycidas as a true son, - - - 108-112
[*Second rise to a higher mood:* The false sons of the Church and their coming ruin,] - - - - 113-131
(7) All nature may well mourn his loss, - - 132-151
(8) Sorrow loses itself in "false surmise," and Hope arises, - - - - - - 152-164
5. Strain of joy and hope; Lycidas is not dead, - 165-185
II. The Epilogue (the poet reviews the shepherd's song), 186-193

NOTES.

Monody: an ode in which a single mourner bewails (Greek *monos*, single: *ōdē*, a song or ode) *Lycidas* is a typical example of the Elegy, with much of the intense feeling peculiar to the less sustained Ode proper; but its form is that of the Pastoral, and its varied metrical structure is totally unlike that of the modern elegiac stanza.

height: so spelt in both the editions published in Milton's lifetime, though his usual spelling is 'highth.'

1. **Yet once more.** These words have reference to the fact that Milton had written no English verse for three years, and that he did not yet consider himself sufficiently matured for the poet's task. The words do not imply that he is once more to write an elegiac poem, as if he were referring back to his poems, *On the death of a Fair Infant* and *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester*: he is thinking of *Comus* (written in 1634).

laurels, etc. Laurels, myrtles and ivy are here addressed because they are, in classical poetry, associated with the Muses, and not because the poet thinks them to be specially suggestive of mourning. The laurel has been associated with poetry since the time of the Greeks, who believed that it communicated the poetic spirit: the Romans regarded it as sacred to Apollo. Comp. *Son.* xvi. 9.

2. **myrtles brown.** 'Brown' is a classical epithet of the myrtle; in one of his Odes Horace contrasts the brown myrtle with the evergreen ivy. It was sacred to Venus, and at Greek banquets each singer held a myrtle bough.

ivy never sere, evergreen ivy: it was sacred to Bacchus, and in Virgil we read of the laurel of victory being twined with the ivy. Horace also speaks of ivy as being used to deck the brows of the learned: in Christian art it is the symbol of everlasting life.

'Sere' = dry, withered; the same word as *sear* (A.S. *searian*, to dry up), and cognate with the verb 'to sear,' *i.e.* to burn up.

3. **I come**, etc. "I come to make a poet's garland for myself," *i.e.* to write a poem.

harsh and crude, bitter and unripe, because plucked before their due time! this refers to the poet's own unripeness, not to that of Lycidas. Milton's 'mellowing year' had not yet come; his opinion was that poetry was a "work not to be raised from the heat of youth . . but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge." 'Crude' is literally 'raw'; hence 'unprepared,' as 'crude salt'; and hence 'undeveloped,' *e.g.*—

> "Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself,
> *Crude*, or intoxicate, collecting toys."
> *Par. Reg.* iv.

'Cruel' (Lat. *crudelis*) is from the same root.

4. **forced fingers rude.** On the order of the words compare note on *L'Alleg.* 40. 'Forced' = unwilling, not because the poet was unwilling to mourn his friend's loss, but unwilling yet to turn again to poetry. 'Rude': comp. *Il Pens.* 136.

5. **Shatter your leaves.** 'Shatter' is a doublet of *scatter*, and here (as in *Par. Lost*, x. 1063) the former is used where we should now use the latter. 'Shatter' suggests the employment of force, and therefore agrees with the sense of the preceding line.

mellowing year: time of maturity. 'Mellow' has here an active sense, *i.e.* 'making mellow.' The word originally means 'soft' like ripe fruit, and hence its present use: it is cognate with *melt* and *mild.* Warton objects to the phrase here used as inaccurate, because the leaves of the laurel, myrtle, and ivy are not affected by the mellowing year: the poet, however, is influenced by the personal application of the words, and is thinking of the poetical fruit he was himself to produce.

6. **sad occasion dear**: see note on l. 4. The original sense of 'dear' is 'precious' (A.S. *deore*), and hence its present meanings in English, viz. 'costly' and 'beloved.' But it is used by Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton in an entirely different sense: comp. 'my *dearest* foe,' 'hated his father *dearly*,' '*dear* peril,' etc. Some would say that 'dear' is here a corruption of *dire*, but this is a mere assumption, though the sense is similar. Craik suggests "that the notion properly involved in it of love, having first become generalised into that of a strong affection of any kind, had thence passed on to that of such an emotion the very reverse of love." The fact seems to be that 'dear' as 'precious' came to denote close relation, and hence was applied generally to whatever intimately concerned a person.

7. **Compels**: the verb is singular, though there are two nominatives, for both together convey the one idea that, but for the occasion of Lycidas' death, the poet would not have been constrained to write.

to disturb your season due: to pluck you before your proper season. On 'due' see *Il Pens.* 155. 'Season' is often used to denote 'the usual or proper time'; *e.g.* we speak of fruit as being 'in season,' when it is fit for use, and the adjective 'seasonable' = occurring in good time: comp. *Son.* ii. 7.

8. **ere his prime**: see note on *L'Alleg.* 107. 'Prime' here denotes 'the best part of life': contrast its meaning in *Son.* ix. 1.

9. **peer**, equal (Lat. *par*): see *Arc.* 75.

10. **Who would not sing**, etc.: a rhetorical question, equivalent to 'No one could refuse to sing,' etc.: comp. '*Neget quis carmina Gallo?*' Virgil, *Ecl.* x. 3. The name *Lycidas* occurs in the pastorals of Theocritus and in Virgil's ninth *Eclogue*.

knew Himself to sing, was himself able to sing, *i.e.* was a poet. Comp. Horace's phrase, "*Reddere* qui voces jam *scit* puer."

11. **build the lofty rhyme**: comp. the Lat. phrase "condere carmen," to build up a song (Hor. *Epis.* i. 3). 'Build' has reference to the regular structure of the verse: it may also allude to the fact that King had written several short poetical pieces in Latin. 'Rhyme' is here used for 'verse'; the original spelling was 'rime,' and 'rhyme' does not occur in English before 1550: there is now a tendency to revert to the older and more correct spelling. The A.S. *rim* meant 'number,' and *rimcraft*, arithmetic; then the word was applied in a secondary sense to verse having regularity in the number of its syllables and accents, and finally to verse having final syllables of like sound. The change of *i* to *y*, and the insertion of *h* is due to confusion with the Greek word *rhythmos*, measured motion. Shakespeare has 'rime'; and Milton in his prefatory remarks on the verse of *Par. Lost* uses the spelling 'rime,' and speaks of it as the "jingling sound of like endings."

13. **welter**, roll about: in *Par. Lost*, i. 78, Milton speaks of Satan as *weltering* in Hell, in which case the use of the word more nearly accords with modern usage.

to, here seems to have the sense of 'in accordance with': comp. lines 33, 44. The use of the prepositions in Elizabethan writers is extremely varied.

It will be noticed that there is no rhyme to this line; so with lines 1, 15, 22, 39, 51, 82, 91, 92, 161. But though these lines have no rhymes adjacent to them, they do not detract from the music of the verse: there are only about sixty different endings in the whole poem, and if assonantal rhymes be admitted the number is still further reduced. Besides, though line 1 has no

adjacent rhyme, similar final sounds occur in lines 61, 63, 165, 167, 182, 183, just as lines 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14 rhyme together. This partly explains the resonance and beauty of the verse.

14. **meed**, recompense: comp. "A rosy garland is the victor's meed." *Tit. Andron.* i. 2.

melodious tear, tearful melody, an elegiac poem. Comp. the title of Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*; also *Epitaph on M. of W.* 55.

15. **Sisters of the sacred well**, the nine Muses, daughters of Jove: they are often mentioned in Greek poetry as the nymphs of Helicon, because Mount Helicon in Boeotia was one of their favourite haunts; on this mountain were two fountains sacred to the Muses; hence Milton's allusion to 'the sacred well.' Hesiod, in his *Theogony*, speaks of the Muses of Helicon dancing round "the altar of the mighty son of Kronos," *i.e.* Jupiter: this explains the allusion to "the seat of Jove" (Hales). A simpler explanation is that the sacred well is the Pierian fountain at the foot of Mount Olympus, where the Muses were born, and that the 'seat of Jove' is Mount Olympus.

17. **somewhat loudly**, not too softly.

sweep the string, strike the lyre. Elsewhere Milton calls music "stringed noise."

18. **Hence**: see note *L'Alleg.* 1.

coy excuse. 'Coy' = hesitating: the word is generally applied only to persons in the sense of 'shy'; it is the same word as 'quiet,' both being from Lat. *quietus*, the former through French. Shakespeare uses it as an intrans. verb, and it also occurs in Elizabethan English in the sense of 'to allure.'

19. **Muse**, poet inspired by the Muse: hence the pronoun 'he' in l. 21: see *Son.* i. 13, note. Lines 19 to 22 form a parenthesis: l. 23 resumes the main theme.

20. **lucky words**, words of good luck, words expressing a good wish: see note, *Epitaph on M. of W.* 31.

my destined urn. The sense is: "As *I* now write a poem to the memory of Lycidas, so may some one, when *I* am dead, write kindly words about *me*." 'Destined urn' = the death that I am destined to die: 'urn' is the vessel in which the Romans deposited the ashes of their dead, sometimes inscribed with the name and history of the dead: comp. 'storied urn,' Gray's *Elegy*, 41.

21. **as he passes**, in passing: comp. Gray's *Elegy*, 20, 'passing tribute of a sigh.'

'Turn,' *i.e.* may turn, co-ordinate with 'may favour' and (may) 'bid,' optative mood.

22. **bid fair peace,** etc.: 'pray that sweet peace may rest upon me in death.' 'Bid,' in the sense of 'pray,' has probably no radical connection with 'bid' = to command, and is nearly obsolete: 'to bid beads' was originally 'to pray prayers' (A.S. *bed*, a prayer). The word *bead* was then applied to the little balls used for counting the prayers, and is now used of any small ball. 'Be' is infinitive: see note on *Arc.* 13.

sable shroud: 'the darkness in which I am shrouded,' previously referred to figuratively as 'my destined urn.' Some interpret the words literally = 'my black coffin.' Etymologically 'shroud' is something cut off, and is allied to 'shred'; hence used of a garment. In *Par. Lost*, x. 1068, Milton uses it in this sense, and in *Comus*, 147, in the general sense of a covering or shelter. Its present uses as a noun are chiefly restricted to 'a dress for the dead' and (in the plural) to part of the rigging of a vessel.

23. **nursed,** etc.: a pastoral way of saying that they had been members of the same college at Cambridge, viz. Christ's.

24. **Fed the same flock,** employed ourselves in the same pursuits.

25. **the high lawns**: comp. *L'Alleg.* 71.

26. **Under the opening eyelids,** etc., *i.e.* at dawn. Morn is here personified: comp. *Job*, iii. 9, "Neither let it behold the eyelids of the morning"; Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 3, "the grey-eyed morn"; see also *Son.* i. 5. The poet represents himself and Lycidas as spending the whole day together, from dawn to sultry noon, and from noon to dewy eve. As Warton points out, Milton was a very early riser, both in winter and summer, and the sunrise had great charm for him. In this poem, however, he may refer to the fixed hours of college duty.

27. **We drove a-field.** The prefix *a* is a corruption of *on*, the noun and preposition being fused together in one adverb: see *L'Alleg.* 20. 'We' is in agreement with 'both,' l. 27; and the verb 'drove' may be regarded as transitive, its object 'the same flock' being understood.

heard What time, etc. There are two possible renderings of this passage: (1) 'heard at what time the grey-fly,' etc., the object of 'heard' being the whole of line 28; or (2) 'heard the grey-fly at what time (she) winds,' etc. The latter, though it makes the object of the principal verb also the subject of the dependent verb, is preferable, for in Latin it frequently happens that words belonging to the principal clause are drawn into the relative clause.

28. **grey-fly,** the trumpet-fly, so called from the sharp humming sound produced by it, generally in the heat of the day; hence the allusion to its "sultry horn."

29. **Battening,** *sc.* 'and afterwards.' Battening = feeding, making fat: here used transitively, though generally intransitive = to grow fat. The same root is seen in *better*. In this line *with* = along with, at the time of.

30. **Oft till the star,** etc. 'Oft' modifies 'battening.' The star here referred to is Hesperus, an appellation of the planet Venus: see note, *Song on May Morning*, 1. In *Comus*, 93, it is "the star that bids the shepherds fold."

31. **sloped his westering wheel**: Similarly in *Comus*, 98, the setting sun is called 'the *slope* sun,' and we read of 'his glowing axle' just as here we read of the star's 'wheel' or course in the heavens. 'Westering' = passing towards the west: now obsolete.

32. **rural ditties**: pastoral language for the early poetic efforts of Milton and King. 'Ditty' (Lat. *dictatum*, something dictated) originally meant the words of a song as distinct from the musical accompaniment; now applied to any little poem intended to be sung: comp. "am'rous ditties," *Par. Lost*, i. 447.

33. **Tempered,** attuned, timed (Lat. *temperare*, to regulate); the word qualifies ditties, and hence the semi-colon at end of l. 33. Masson has a semi-colon at end of l. 32; 'tempered' would then be absolute construction, or it would qualify 'Satyrs.'

to the oaten flute. 'To'; see note l. 13. The oaten flute is the flute or pipe made of reeds, and the favourite instrument in pastoral poetry: in Latin it is *avena* (= oats, a straw, and hence a shepherd's pipe): comp. lines 86, 88. 'Oaten'; the termination 'en' denotes 'made of': modern English has a tendency to use the noun as an adjective in such cases, *e.g.* a *gold* ring. Most of the adjectives in 'en' that still survive do not now denote the material, but simply resemblance, *e.g.* 'golden hair' = hair of the colour of gold. Such adjectives as birchen, beechen, firen, glassen, hornen, treen, thornen, etc., are now obsolete.

34. **Satyrs ... Fauns**; pastoral language for the men attending Cambridge at the same time as Milton and King. The Satyrs of Greek mythology were the representatives of the luxuriance of nature, and were always described as engaged in light pleasures, such as dancing, playing on the lute, or syrinx (see *Arc.* 106), etc. The Romans confounded them with their Fauni, represented as half men, half goats (Lat. *semicaper*), with cloven feet and horns; the chief was Faunus, whom the Romans identified with Pan (see *Arc.* 106).

36. **old Damœtas**: this pastoral name occurs in Virgil, Theocritus, and Sidney: it here probably refers to Dr. W. Chappell, the tutor of Christ's College in Milton's time. Masson thinks it may be "Joseph Meade or some other well-remembered Fellow of Christ's."

38. **Now thou**, etc., *i.e.* now that thou art gone = seeing that thou art gone: comp. *Son.* xx. 2.

must return: 'must' here expresses certainty with regard to the future = thou wilt certainly never return. In ordinary use it implies either compulsion, *e.g.* 'He must obey me,' or permission, *e.g.* 'You must not come in': the latter is the original sense of the A.S. verb *motan* (past tense *moste*).

39. **Thee**: object of 'mourn,' l. 41. Ovid (*Met.* xi.) similarly represents birds, beasts, and trees as lamenting the death of Orpheus.

40. **gadding**, straggling. To *gad* is to wander about idly: Bacon calls Envy a *gadding* passion, and in the Bible we find—"Why *gaddest* thou about so much to change thy way," *Jer.* ii. Cicero uses the word *erraticus* (wandering) in connection with the vine.

41. **their echoes**, *i.e.* of the caves: comp. Song to Echo in *Comus*. In Shelley's *Adonais* the same idea occurs—

"Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And *feeds her grief* with his remembered lay."

42. **hazel copses green**. See note *L'Alleg.* 40.
'Copse,' a wood of small growth, is a corruption of *coppice* (Fr. *couper*, to cut).

44. **Fanning**: moving their leaves in unison with the music: with 'to' in this line, comp. 'to' in lines 13 and 33.

45. Lines 45 to 48 are in apposition to 'such,' line 49: thus 'Thy loss to shepherd's ear was such' = 'Thy loss to shepherd's ear was as killing as,' etc. The word 'such' is redundant, being rendered necessary by the separation of the words 'as killing' from the rest of the principal clause.

killing, deadly, terrible.

canker: see *Arc.* 53; the more definite form 'canker-worm' is often used, just as 'taint-worm' is used in the next line. Warton notes that Shakespeare is fond of this simile.

46. **taint-worm**, also called the 'taint.' "There is found in summer a spider called a *taint*, of a red colour, and so little that ten of the largest will hardly outweigh a grain." Browne, *Vulgar Errours*. 'Taint' is cognate with *tint*, *tinge*, and *tincture*.

weanling herds, young animals that have just been weaned from the mother's milk. *Ling* is the diminutive suffix, as in year*ling*, dar*ling*, found*ling*. 'To wean' (A.S. *wenian*) is strictly 'to accustom to,' but is now used only in the sense of 'to disaccustom to.' The connection between the two meanings is obvious. 'Weanling' also occurs as 'yeanling' or 'eanling.'

47. **gay wardrobe**, bright and varied colours. By metonymy

'wardrobe,' in which clothes are kept, is applied to its contents: the flowers are here said to clothe themselves in gay colours. 'Wardrobe' = guard-robe (Fr. *garde-robe*): the *usual* law in such compounds is that the first word denotes the purpose for which the thing denoted by the second is used, *e.g.* inkstand, teaspoon, writing-desk.

48. **white-thorn**, hawthorn: the flower is sometimes called "May blossom."

49. **to shepherd's ear**, *sc.* 'when heard by him.' The use of 'killing' is here an instance of syllepsis: as applied to the herds, etc., it means literally 'deadly'; as used in this line it means 'dreadful.'

50. **Where were ye**, etc. This is imitated from the first Idyll of Theocritus, and the tenth Eclogue of Virgil, "but with the substitution of West British haunts of the Muses for their Greek haunts in those classic passages."

remorseless deep, unpitying or cruel sea; an instance of the pathetic fallacy which attributes human feelings to inanimate objects.

52. **neither**. This answers to 'nor' in line 55, so that the sense is "You were playing *neither* on the steep ... *nor* on the shaggy top."

the steep, 'the mountain where the Druidic bards are buried.' Milton probably refers to a mountain in Carnarvon, called Penmaenmawr, or to Kerig-i-Druidion in Denbigh, where there was a burying-place of the Druids. The Druids were the minstrels, priests, and teachers among the ancient Celts of Britain: in his *History of England* Milton calls them "our philosophers, the Druids." The word 'your' implies that the bards were followers of the Muses.

54. **shaggy top of Mona high**: the high interior of the island of Anglesey (known by the Romans as Mona), once the chief haunt of the Welsh Druids. The island was once thickly wooded: Selden says, "The British Druids took this isle of Anglesey, then well-stored with thick wood and religious groves; in so much that it was called *Inis Dowil*, 'The Dark Isle,' for their chief residence." This explains the allusion in the words 'shaggy top.'

55. **Deva ... wizard stream**, the river Dee, on which stands Chester, the port from which King sailed on his ill-fated voyage. In his poem *At a Vacation Exercise* Milton calls it "ancient hallowed Dee." Spenser also speaks of it as haunted by magicians, and Drayton tells how, being the ancient boundary between England and Wales, it foreboded evil fortune to that country towards which it changed its course and good to the other. The word 'wizard' is therefore very appropriately used

here. In fact these lines (52-55) are interesting for two reasons: (1) their appropriateness to the subject, seeing that King was drowned off the Welsh coast; (2) their evidence that Milton had already been engaged in careful reading of British legendary history with a view to the composition of an epic poem on some British subject—the first hints of which are conveyed in the Latin poems *Mansus* (1638) and *Epitaphium Damonis* (1639). In the former of these we find reference to the Druids, and in the latter to King Arthur.

'Wizard' is one of the few survivals in English of words with the termination *ard* or *art*, *e.g.* sluggard, braggart: the suffix had an intensive, and also a somewhat contemptuous force, though here 'wizard' merely denotes 'magical.'

56. **Ay me!** this exclamatory phrase = ah me! Its form is due to the French *aymi* = 'ah, for me!' and has no connection with 'ay' or 'aye' = yes. Comp. Lat. *me miserum*.

fondly, foolishly: comp. *Il Pens.* 6 and *Son.* xix. 8.

57. There is an anacolouthon or break in the construction in the middle of this line. The poet, in addressing the nymphs, is about to say, 'Had you been there, you might have saved Lycidas'; but, recollecting that their presence could have done no good, he adds, 'for what could that have done?'

58. **the Muse herself**: Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, and mother of Orpheus, who is here called 'her enchanting son' (see *L'Alleg.* 145, note). His grief for the loss of Eurydice led him to treat the Thracian women with contempt, and in revenge they tore him in pieces in the excitement of their Bacchanalian festivals (here called 'the hideous roar'). His head was thrown into the river Hebrus, and, being carried to the sea, was washed across to Lesbos, an island in the Ægean Sea. His lyre was also swept ashore there. Both traditions simply express the fact that Lesbos was the first great seat of the music of the lyre.

60. **universal nature**, all nature, animate and inanimate: see note on line 39.

61. **rout**, a disorderly crowd (as explained above). The word is also used in the sense of 'a defeat'; and is cognate with *route*, *rote*, and *rut*. The explanation is that all come from the Lat. *ruptus*, broken: a 'rout' is the breaking up of an army, or a crowd broken up; a 'route' is a way broken through a forest; a 'rote' is a beaten route or track, hence we say "to learn by rote"; and a 'rut' is a track left by a wheel.

62. **visage**; see note on *Il Pens.* 13.

63. **swift Hebrus**: a translation of Virgil's *volucrem Hebrum* (*Æn.* i. 321), supposed to be a corrupt reading, as the river is not swift.

64. **what boots it**, etc.: 'Of what profit is it to be a poet in these days when true poetry is slighted? Would it not be better, as many do, to give one's self up to trifling.' The passage is of interest, because (1) it illustrates Milton's high aspirations, and (2) it directs our attention to the historical fact that the literary outburst which began in 1580 was over. The poets who were alive in 1637 were such as Wither, Herrick, Shirley, May, Davenant, Suckling, Crashaw, etc.: they could not be compared with Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and others.

The word 'boot' (A.S. *bót*=profit) is now chiefly preserved in the adjective *bootless* = profitless, and in the phrase *to boot*=in addition (where 'boot' is a noun governed by the preposition 'to,' not the infinitive): from this noun comes the A.S. verb *bétan*, to amend, to make *better*.

uncessant, incessant. The tendency of modern English is to use a prefix belonging to the same language as the body of the word, so that 'cessant,' which is of Latin origin, takes the Lat. negative prefix *in*. This rule was not recognised in older English; hence in Milton we find such forms as 'unactive,' 'uncessant,' and in other writers, 'unpossible,' 'unglorious,' 'unpatient,' 'unhonest,' etc. On the other hand, there are anomalies in our present English that did not exist in the Elizabethan literature, *e.g.* 'uncertain' (formerly and more regularly 'incertain'), 'unfortunate,' etc.: comp. l. 176.

65. **tend**: the trans. verb (as here) is a short form of 'attend.' 'Tend,' to move in a certain direction, is intransitive.

homely, slighted, etc. These adjectives qualify 'trade,' not 'shepherd.' 'Trade' here denotes the practice of poetry. In lines 113-120 the shepherd's trade is not poetry, but the work of the Church. The former application of the words is found in all pastoral poetry, the latter in the Scriptures.

In *Com.* 748, Milton gives the derivation of 'homely'; 'It is for homely features to keep home'; comp. *Son.* xii a. 20, note. Spenser, in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, speaks of the 'homely shepherd's quill.'

66. **strictly**, rigorously, devotedly.

meditate the thankless Muse: apply one's self to the thankless task of writing poetry.

'Meditate' is here used transitively like the Lat. *meditor*, which does not mean merely to ponder or think upon, but to apply one's self with close attention to a subject. The phrase occurs in Virgil (*Ecl.* i. 2; vi. 8). As a transitive verb, 'meditate' has now the meaning of 'purpose'; *e.g.* he meditated revenge.

'Thankless,' as applied to the Muse,' is 'ungrateful': comp. Virgil, *Æn.* vii. 425.

67. **Were it not**, etc.: subjunctive mood.

use, are accustomed (to do). The present tense of the verb 'to use' is obsolete in this sense: we can say 'he used to do this,' but not 'he uses to do this.' The present tense is found in the following passage: "They *use* to place him that shall be their captain upon a stone always reserved for that purpose."—*Spenser*. Compare such words as *ought*, *must*, *durst*, *wot*, *wont*, etc., all originally past tenses: see note, *Il. Pens.* 37.

68. **Amaryllis ... Neæra's hair.** These are the names of imaginary shepherdesses from the Greek and Latin pastorals. (See Virgil's first three *Eclogues*.) Milton expresses, in one of his prose works, great fondness for the 'smooth elegiac poets,' but in the last of his Latin Elegies he announces his intention of turning his mind to other subjects—

> . . . "Learning taught me, in his shady bower,
> To quit Love's servile yoke, and spurn his power."
> *Cowper's Translation.*

Warton thinks that the allusion to Amaryllis and Neæra is made with special reference to certain poems by Buchanan in which he addresses females by these names.

69. **tangles**, locks or curls; comp. Peele's *David and Bethsabe*—

> "Now comes my lover tripping like the roe,
> And brings my longings *tangled* in her hair."

70. Fame is the spur that incites the noble mind to high efforts: comp. *Par. Reg.* iii. 25—

> "Glory, the reward
> That sole excites to high attempts the flame
> Of most erected spirits, most tempered pure
> Ethereal, who all pleasures else despise,
> All treasures and all gain esteem as dross,
> And dignities and powers, all but the highest."

Also Spenser: "Due praise, that is the *spur* of doing well."

clear, in the sense of Lat. *clarus*, noble, pure. 'Spirit' is the object of 'doth raise.'

71. This bracketed line is in apposition to 'Fame,' though in reality it is not fame that is meant but the love of fame, which, as Massinger says, is 'the last weakness wise men put off.' The idea is found in *Tacitus*: "Etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur"; and by the use of the word *that* in line 71, Milton seems to signify that he regarded the expression as a well-known one.

72. This line states the high efforts to which the love of fame

will incite men, viz., "to scorn delights and live laborious days."

73. **guerdon**, reward: grammatically, object of 'find.' The formation of this word is peculiar; the second part is from Lat. *donum*, gift; and the first part from an old High German word meaning 'back,' and corresponding to the Lat. prefix *re* in *reward*, etc.

74. **blaze**: comp. *Arc.* 74 and *Par. Reg.* iii. 47: "For what is glory but the blaze of fame?" The whole of the passage in *Par. Reg.*, like this part of *Lycidas*, has a certain biographical interest, for we see here Milton's estimate of the worth of popular applause.

75. **blind Fury**; nomin. to verb 'comes.'

The three goddesses of vengeance were called Furies by the Romans, but Milton's reference to 'the abhorred shears' shows that he is thinking of one of the Fates (see *Arc.* 65, note), viz. Atropos. She is here said to be blind because she is no respecter of persons. Milton probably used the word *Fury* in a general sense as signifying the cruelty of Fate, or he may mean to denote Destiny: comp. Shak. *King John*, iv. 2, "Think you I have the shears of Destiny."

76. **thin-spun life**, *i.e.* the thin-spun or fragile thread of life, in allusion to the uncertainty of human life as shown in the case of Edward King. For the form of the adjective comp. *Il Pens.* 66.

"But not the praise." Phoebus (*i.e.* Apollo), as the god of song, here checks the poet, reminding him that though Fate may deprive the poet of life it cannot deprive him of his due meed of true praise. The construction is, "Fate slits the thin-spun life, but does not slit the praise": there is therefore a zeugma in 'slits'; it is applied to life in its literal sense 'to cut,' and to praise in the sense of 'to intercept.'

77. **touched my trembling ears**, *i.e.* touched the ears of me trembling: comp. note on *L'Alleg.* 124. Masson's acute note on this is: "A fine poetical appropriation of the popular superstition that the tingling of a person's ears is a sign that people are talking of him. What Milton had been saying about poetic fame might be understood, he saw, as applicable to himself." Comp. Virgil's *Eclog.* vi. 3. The rhymes of lines 70-77 are *a b a b a c a c*.

78. 'Fame is not found in this life, and dwells *neither* in the glittering leaf displayed in the world, *nor* in the wide-spread rumour.'

mortal soil, this earth. The epithet *mortal* is transferred from life to the scene of life. 'Mortal' here denotes 'associated

with death'; Milton also uses it in the senses of 'causing death' = fatal, and 'human.'

79. **Nor** ... **nor**, neither ... nor: common in poetry.

glistering; from the same base as *glisten*, *glitter*, *glint*, *gleam*, *glow*.

foil, applied to a leaf or thin plate of shining metal placed under a gem to increase its lustre (Lat. *folium*, a leaf): so Fame is not a gem that requires to be set off by the use of some foil; it shines by its own light. 'Set off' qualifies 'Fame,' not 'foil.'

80. **lies**, dwells; as often in Old English. Comp. *L'Alleg.* 79.

81. **by**, by means of, *i.e.* because it is perceived by. Comp. "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

82. **perfect witness**, searching and infallible discrimination. The old spelling of this word (which is found in Milton) is *perfet*, the French form being *parfait* (Lat. *perfectus*, done thoroughly).

83. **pronounces lastly**, decides finally: see *Son.* xxi. 3, note.

84. **meed**: see line 14, note. This ends the sublime strain of Phoebus, which (as Milton says in line 87) "was of a higher mood" than the ordinary pastoral. He now returns again to his 'oaten pipe' (see *Analysis*).

85. **Arethuse**: see *Arc.* 30. The poet invokes the fountain of Arethusa in the island of Ortygia, off Sicily, because Theocritus was a Sicilian; hence the words "Sicilian Muse," l. 133. He also invokes the Mincius, which falls into the river Po, below Mantua in North Italy, because Virgil was a native of Mantua. Hence the significance of the words 'honoured flood' and 'vocal reeds.'

88. **my oat**, my pastoral muse. The construction is peculiar, 'oat' being apparently nominative to 'proceeds' and 'listens.' We may either take the nominative *I* out of the possessive *my*, or suppose that the Muse listens; but see note on *L'Alleg.* 122, "judge the prize."

89. **the Herald of the Sea**: Triton, represented by the Romans as bearing a 'wreathed horn' or shell, which he blew at the command of Neptune in order to still the waves of the sea. He is here supposed by Milton to appear 'in Neptune's plea,' *i.e.* to defend him from the suspicion of having caused Lycidas' death by a storm, and to discover the real cause of the shipwreck. 'Plea' and 'plead' are cognate words.

91. **felon**, here used attributively. The origin of the word is doubtful; its radical sense is probably 'treacherous' (as in this passage). In the MS. the poet wrote *fellon*, but this is not, as some think, a different word, though it may be cognate with *fell* = fierce.

92. The mark of interrogation at the end of this line and the use of the present perfect tense 'hath doomed,' show that it gives the actual words of Triton's question; otherwise the dependent verb (by sequence of tenses) would have been 'had doomed.'

mishap: see note, *Epitaph on M. of W.* 31.

93. **of rugged wings**, 'rugged-winged,' having rugged wings, *i.e.* tempestuous.

94. **each beakèd promontory**, each pointed cape. Observe the proximity of the words *every* and *each*, where we might have expected *every* ... *every*, or *each* ... *each*: comp. *Com.* 19 and 311. 'Every' is radically = ever each (Old English *everoelc*): it denotes each without exception, and can now only be used with reference to *more than two* objects; 'each' may refer to *two or more*.

95. They (*i.e.* the waves and winds) knew nothing of the fate of Lycidas. Observe the double or feminine rhymes,—*promontory*, *story*.

96. **sage Hippotadès**; the wise ruler of the winds, Æolus, son of Hippotès: he brings the answer of the winds to the effect "that not a blast was from its dungeon strayed." 'Hippotadès' is a Greek patronymic, formed by the suffix *-des*, seen in Boreades, son of Boreas; Priamides, son of Priam, etc. Comp. Homer's *Odyssey*, x. 2.

97. **was** ... **strayed**: in modern English we say 'had strayed'; the auxiliary 'have' being now more common than 'be.' See note, *Son.* ii. 6, and comp. 'was dropt,' l. 191.

his dungeon: the winds are probably here personified, hence the pronoun 'his' (but see note, *Il Pens.* 128). Milton's language here is evidently suggested by Virgil's picture of the winds (*Æn.* i. 50), where they are represented as confined within a vast cave: Virgil there speaks of Æolia as the 'fatherland' of the winds, thus poetically endowing them with personality. 'Dungeon,' prison, literally 'the chief tower': it is another form of the old French word *donjon*, from Lat. *dominionem*, and therefore cognate with 'dominion,' 'domain,' etc.

98. **level brine**, the placid sea. 'Brine' denotes salt water, and by a figure of speech is applied to the ocean whose waters are salt.

99. **Panopè and her sister**, the daughters of Nereus, hence called Nereids: in classical mythology they were the nymphs who dwelt in the Mediterranean Sea, distinct from the fresh-water nymphs, and the nymphs of the great Ocean. Their names and duties are given in the *Faery Queene*, iv. 11. 49; see also Virgil, *Georg.* i. 437.

100. **fatal and perfidious bark**, the ill-fated and treacherous ship in which King sailed: it went down in perfectly calm weather, and hence the force of Triton's plea on Neptune's behalf. 'Bark,' also spelt 'barque,' is etymologically the same as 'barge'; but the latter is now only used of a kind of boat. 'Fatal' = appointed by fate; 'perfidious' = faithless (Lat. *per*, away; and *fides*, faith).

101. **Built in the eclipse**: this circumstance is imagined by the poet in order to account for the wreck of the ship, eclipses being popularly supposed to bring misfortune upon all undertakings begun or carried on while they lasted. The moon's eclipse was specially unlucky, but in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* we read also of "disasters in the sun," and similarly in *Par. Lost*, i. 597. An eclipse was supposed to be a favourite occasion for the machinations of witches: in *Macbeth*, iv. 1 we read that "slips of yew slivered in the moon's eclipse" formed one of the ingredients in the witches' cauldron.

rigged with curses dark. To rig a ship is to fit it with the necessary sails, ropes, etc.; and by a bold figure the poet says that King's vessel was fitted out with curses; at least this is the sense if 'with' be taken to mean 'by means of.' Some prefer to interpret 'with' as 'in the midst of,' the sense being that the ship was cursed by the witches while it was being rigged.

102. **That sunk**: 'that,' relative pronoun, antecedent 'bark.' 'Sunk' = sank; for the explanation compare Morris's *English Accidence*—"The verbs *swim*, *begin*, *run*, *drink*, *shrink*, *sink*, *ring*, *sing*, *spring*, have for their proper past tenses *swam*, *began*, *ran*, etc., preserving the original *a*; but in older writers (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and in colloquial English we find forms with *u*, which have come from the passive participles."

that sacred head of thine. This is a pleonastic expression: it will be noticed that when the noun denotes the possession of one object only, this form is inadmissible unless preceded by a demonstrative (as here), *e.g.* we can say '*that* body of yours,' because a person has only one body, but we cannot say 'a body of yours,' as this word would imply that one of a number was referred to.

'Sacred': etymologically signifies the same as 'consecrated,' 'set apart,' and hence 'devoted': it may be used here of Lycidas as devoted to death: comp. *Par. Lost*, iii. 208—"To destruction *sacred* and devote."

103. **Camus**: "the genius of the Cam River and of Cambridge University was naturally one of the mourners for Lycidas." 'Reverend sire' is an allusion to the antiquity of the University. *Sire*, *sir*, *senior*, *seignior*, and *signor* all owe their origin to the nomin. or accus. form of the Lat. *senior*, elder.

went footing slow, passed slowly along, wended his way slowly. As Camus comes forward to bewail Lycidas we should naturally read 'came' in this line instead of 'went,' because in modern English the meanings of 'go' and 'come' are opposed. But it is not so here: *went* is radically the past tense of *wend* (A.S. *wendan*, to turn), but is now used in place of the obsolete past of *go;* so that it has become necessary to make a new form for the past tense of 'wend,' viz. *wended*. The original past tense of 'go' was 'yode.' *Wend* is the causal form of *wind*, and is therefore peculiarly appropriate to the winding Cam. It is now nearly obsolete except in the phrase 'to wend one's way.'

'Foot' as a verb is generally followed by the cognate accusative 'it,' but it then denotes sprightly movement, and is therefore unsuitable here (see *L'Alleg.* 33). 'Slow-footing' occurs in Spenser as a compound adjective.

104. **His mantle hairy**, etc. Here 'mantle' and 'bonnet' are in the absolute case. The 'hairy mantle' is the hairy river-weed that is found floating on the Cam, and the 'bonnet' is the sedge that grows in the river and along its edge. In his first Elegy Milton alludes to the reedy or sedgy Cam (*arundiferum Camum*, *juncosas Cami paludes*). 'Bonnet,' now generally applied to a head-dress worn by women, here denotes (as it still does in Scotland) a man's cap.

105. **Inwrought with figures dim**, having indistinct markings worked into it. 'Inwrought' is a participial adjective (as if from a verb *inwork*, which is not in use), qualifying 'bonnet': to *work in* figures into cloth, etc., is to embroider or adorn. Milton refers to the peculiar natural markings seen on the leaves of sedge, especially when they begin to wither.

The edge of the 'sedge bonnet' of the Cam is said to be like the edge of the hyacinth because it is marked: the hyacinth was fabled by the ancients to have sprung from the blood of the Spartan youth Hyacinthus, and the markings on the petals were said to resemble the words αἲ αἲ (alas! alas!) or the letter Υ, the Greek initial of Hyacinthus: hence the significance of the words 'sanguine' and 'inscribed with woe.' The poet Drummond calls the hyacinth "that sweet flower that bears in *sanguine* spots the tenor of our woes." Similarly Milton fancies that the markings on the sedge may signify the grief of Cambridge for the death of Lycidas.

106. **Like to that sanguine flower.** Here the preposition 'to' is expressed after 'like': see note on *Il Pens.* 69. 'Sanguine,' bloody, an illustration of Milton's fondness for the primary sense of words (Lat. *sanguis*, blood): its present meaning is 'hopeful,' and the connecting link between the two meanings is found in the old theory of the four humours of the body, an excess of the

bloody humour making persons of a hopeful disposition. In the primary sense we now use 'sanguinary.'

107. **reft**: see note on 'bereft,' *Son.* xxii. 3.

quoth he, he said: this verb always precedes its nominative, and is used only in the first and third persons: it is really a past tense (though occasionally used as a present), and the original present is seen only in the compound *be-queath*.

pledge, child: comp. Lat. *pignus*, a pledge or security, also applied (generally in the plural) to children or relations.

108. **Last came ... did go**: see note on *Il Pens.* 46.

109. **The Pilot of the Galilean Lake**: St. Peter, here introduced as Head of the Church, because King had been intended for the Church. St. Peter was at first a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee (*Matt.* iv. 18) and became one of the disciples of Christ. It was of him that Christ said: "Upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee *the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*" (*Matt.* xvi. 18. *R. V.*) It was he also whom Christ constituted the Shepherd of the Christian flock by his parting charge: "Feed my lambs." (*John* xxi. 15.) In both of his capacities, as Head and Shepherd of the Christian Church, he mourns the death of one who promised to be a true disciple, unlike the false shepherds who crept into the Church "for their bellies' sake."

110. **Two massy keys**: the keys that St. Peter carried as the symbol of his power are usually spoken of as two in number (though there is no such statement in the Scriptures), because he had power both in heaven and hell, the golden one opening the gates of heaven, and the iron one forcibly closing them: comp. *Com.* 13:

> "that golden key
> That opes the palace of eternity."

'**Massy**,' massive: see note *Il Pens.* 58.

of metals twain, made of two different metals: *twain* (cognate with *two*) is, in older English, used (1) predicatively, (2) when it follows the noun (as here), and (3) as a noun.

111. **amain**, with force: *a* is here the usual adverbial prefix (see note l. 27); *main* = strength or force, as in the phrase 'with might and main.' The adjective *main*, = principal, is only indirectly connected with it, being from Lat. *magnus*, great. 'Ope' for 'open' is found in poetry, both as verb and adjective.

112. **mitred locks**, locks crowned with a bishop's head-dress, St. Peter being regarded as the first bishop of the Church.

stern bespake, said with indignation. Milton sometimes used the verb *bespeak* as a transitive verb = to address (a person);

in modern English both these senses are obsolete and it now denotes 'to *speak for*,' 'to engage beforehand.'

113. Here for the second time the poem rises far above the ordinary pastoral strain and Milton puts into the mouth of St. Peter his first explicit declaration of his sympathy with the Puritans in their opposition to the attempt of Archbishop Laud to introduce changes in the ritual of the English and Scottish Churches, an attempt which hastened the downfall of Charles I. and Laud himself: see notes on *Son.* xii a., xv., xvi. As early as 1584, Spenser had also written in vehement strain against the corruptions of the Church, and there is a faint echo of Spenser's language here and there throughout Milton's indignant lines. (See *Analysis*).

spared for thee, etc., *i.e.* given up, *in return for* you, an ample number of the corrupt clergy.

114. **Enow**: here used as in Early English to denote a number; it is also spelt *anow*, and in Chaucer *ynowe*, and is the plural of *enough*. It still occurs as a provincialism in England.

such as: see *L'Alleg.* 29.

for their bellies' sake: comp. *Son.* xvi. 14, where the reference is to the Presbyterian clergy; here he means the Episcopalian ministers.

115. The Church is a sheepfold into which the "hireling wolves" (see *Son.* xvi. 14), *i.e.* the corrupt clergy, intrude themselves; their only care being to share the endowments of the Church. One of Milton's pamphlets was entitled *The likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church.* Comp. *Par. Lost*, iv. 192, and *John*, x. 12.

116. "They make little reckoning of any care other than," etc.

117. **scramble**: this word, and 'shove' in the next line, express the eager and rude striving for those church endowments that are here called 'the shearers' feast.' The 'worthy bidden guest' denotes the conscientious and faithful clergy.

119. **Blind mouths**! a figure of speech into which Milton condenses the greatest contempt. 'Mouths' is put by synecdoche for 'gluttons,' and 'blind' is therefore quite applicable. They are blind guides "whose Gospel is their maw" (*Son.* xvi. 14). By saying that they scarcely know how to hold a sheep-hook or crook (which is the symbol of the shepherd's task) the poet signifies their unfitness for 'the faithful herdman's art,' *i.e.* for pastoral duty.

120. **the least**, may be regarded as an adverbial phrase modifying 'belongs,' = in the least; or it may be attributive to 'aught.'

121. **herdman**: this spelling, which occurs in the Bible, is not now in use, nor is it that of Milton's manuscript; he wrote 'herdsman,' which is current in the restricted sense of 'one who herds *cattle.*' Milton applies it to a shepherd, the word being then used generally.

122. **What recks it them?** = what does it reck them? = what do they care? Here we have an old impersonal use of the verb 'to reck,' which still survives in the adjective *reckless.*

They are sped, they have sped = they have gained their object. For the use of the auxiliary 'are' instead of 'have,' see note on l. 97. One of the early meanings of *speed* is 'success,' and *to speed* is to be successful (as in this line): comp. *Par. Lost*, x. 39. It occurs in older English both of good and ill success, and also in the sense of 'to assist' (Shakespeare has 'God speed the Parliament'), 'to send away quickly,' 'to destroy,' etc.

123. **when they list**, when it pleases them. The verb *list* is, in older English, generally used impersonally, and in Chaucer we find 'if thee lust' or 'if thee list' = if it please thee. It is derived from A.S. *lust*, pleasure, and survives in the adjective *listless*, of which the older form was *lustless*. The noun *lust* has lost the meaning it had in A.S. and still has in German, and now signifies 'longing desire.'

lean and flashy songs: pastoral language for 'their teaching, which is without substance or nourishment to their hearers.' 'Flashy' = showy but worthless: comp. Dryden, "*flashy* wit"; and Bacon, "distilled books are ... *flashy* things."

124. **Grate**, etc.: 'sound harshly on their weak and wretched oaten pipes'—a description in pastoral language of the preaching of the careless clergy. 'Grate' and 'scrannel' are here skilfully chosen to express contempt. 'Grate': the nominative of this verb is 'songs,' the sense being intermediate between the active form 'they grate their songs,' and the passive, 'their songs are grated.' Hence some would regard this as a middle voice. In Latin and Greek the passive voice arose from the middle or reflective verb. Comp. *Il. Pens.* 161.

scrannel, not found in English dictionaries, being a provincialism = 'lean': the harsh sound of the word also suits the passage. Comp. Virgil's *Ecl.* iii. 26.

125. **The hungry sheep**, the neglected congregations. Compare Milton's *Epitaph Damon.*—

> "Nor please me more my flocks; they, slighted, turn
> Their unavailing looks on me, and mourn."
>
> *Cowper's Translation.*

126. **swoln with wind**, etc., with minds filled with unsound and unwholesome teaching.

rank = coarse, foul: 'draw' = inhale, *e.g.* to *draw* breath: comp. *Par. Lost*, viii. 284, "From where I first *drew* air." The Lat. *haurio* has the same sense.

127. **Rot inwardly**, etc., have their hearts corrupted, and disseminate false doctrines.

128. **Besides.** The meaning is: "While all this injury to the Church is taking place, there is another source of loss to which the English clergy seem to be indifferent, viz. the desertions to the Church of Rome that are so frequent."

the grim wolf, the Church of Rome: comp. *Matt.* vii. 16, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." Also *Acts*, xx. 29, "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock." 'Privy' = secret. 'Apace' = rapidly, at a great *pace*: comp. notes on *amain*, *a-field.*

129. **and nothing said.** Milton may here refer to Archbishop Laud's leaning towards Popery. Grammatically, there would seem to be a confusion here between two constructions: (1) 'and nothing (is) said,' and (2) 'nothing (being) said.' The latter would be the absolute construction, and in Shakespeare it sometimes happens that a noun intended to be used absolutely is diverted, by a change of thought, into a subject; the opposite process may have taken place here.

130. **two-handed engine.** The sense is, "But the instrument of retribution is ready and punishment will swiftly fall upon the corrupt Church." 'Engine' = instrument, its literal sense being 'something skilful' (Lat. *ingenium*, skill): it is therefore cognate with *ingenious*, *ingenuity*, and has been corrupted into *gin* = a snare. Comp. *Par. Lost*, i. 749, "Nor did he 'scape by all his *engines*' (*i.e.* schemes).

'Two-handed' is applied to swords, axes, etc., that require to be wielded with both hands. The nature of the instrument that is here called a 'two-handed engine' has been much discussed; the various interpretations are:—

(1) That it denotes the axe by which Laud was afterwards to be beheaded in 1645, Milton's words being thus prophetic. This view may be set aside: it certainly did not occur to any one at the time of the publication of *Lycidas*, when the power of Laud was at its height.

(2) That the axe is that alluded to metaphorically in the Scriptures as the instrument of reformation: see *St. Matt.* iii. 10, "And now the axe is laid to the root of the tree; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down." In Milton's treatise *Of Reformation in England* he speaks of "the axe of God's reformation hewing at the old and hollow trunk of Papacy." This view is both the most obvious and the most probable.

(3) That there is an allusion to the "two-edged sword" which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Living One (see *Rev.* i. 16).

(4) That the poet refers to the powers of the pure Gospel as contained in the Old and New Testaments.

(5) That the English Parliament with its two Houses is meant, "the agency by which, three or four years afterwards, the doors of the Church of England *were* dashed in."

(6) That it denotes *civil* and *ecclesiastical* power. See note on *Son.* xvii. 12.

132. The poet again descends to the level of the ordinary pastoral, though it should be observed that in lines 113-131 he has skilfully adapted pastoral language to an unusual theme. The "dread voice" is the voice of St. Peter, and it is to this passage that Milton refers in the sub-title to the poem prefixed on its republication in 1645. "In 1638 it had been bold enough to let the passage stand in the poem, as published in the Cambridge memorial volume, without calling attention to it in the title" (Masson).

Alpheus: see *Arc.* 30, note.

133. **That shrunk thy streams**, *i.e.* which silenced my pastoral muse. The figure is a Scriptural one: "The waters stood above the mountains; at thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away," *Psalm*, civ. 7. 'Shrunk' is here used in an active or causal sense = made to shrink, as in the phrase 'to shrink cloth.'

Sicilian Muse, the muse of pastoral poetry: see note on l. 85.

134. **hither cast**, *i.e.* come hither and cast. Compare the Lat. idiom, *se in silvas abdiderunt*, "they hid themselves *into* the woods," *i.e.* "they went into the woods and hid there," *Ovid.* See also l. 139.

135. **bells**, bell-shaped blossoms. Plants with bell-shaped flowers are technically called 'campanulate' (Ital. *campana*, a bell).

flowerets: 'floweret' is diminutive of 'flower.'

136. **use**, dwell, frequent. The verb is quite obsolete in this sense: comp. note, l. 67. In Spenser we find, "In these strange ways, where never foot did *use*."

137. The construction is, "Where the mild whispers of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks, dwell."

138. **lap**; by a common figure we speak of 'the lap of earth,' 'the earth's bosom,' etc.: comp. Gray's *Elegy*, "Here rests his head upon the *lap* of earth"; also *Rich. II.* v. 2, "the green *lap* of the new-come spring." The word has no connection with 'lap' = wrap (*L'Alleg.* 136).

the swart star sparely looks, *i.e.* "where the influence of the burning dog-star is scarcely felt," the flowers being therefore fresh and bright. The swart star is Sirius or Canicula, a star just in the mouth of the constellation Canis, hence called the dog-star (Lat. *canis*, a dog). Hence also the term "dog days." To the Greeks and Romans this star appeared at the hottest time of the year, and was by them regarded as the cause of the great heat. It is therefore here called 'swart,' *i.e.* swart-making, because by exposure to heat the face becomes *swarthy* or brown. Milton frequently transfers an epithet from the object of an action to the agent: comp. "oblivious pool" = pool that makes one oblivious (*Par. Lost*, i. 266), "forgetful lake," etc. There are four forms of the adjective: the earliest is *swart*, then *swarty*, *swarth*, and finally *swarthy*: all four forms occur in Shakespeare.

For the technical sense of 'looks,' comp. *Arc.* 52. It may be noted that in *Epit. Damon.* Milton speaks of the evil influence of the planet Saturn upon the fortunes of shepherds.

139. **quaint enamelled eyes**, *i.e.* blossoms neat and bright. The centre of a blossom is sometimes called an 'eye'; the name is also given to a tender bud or even to a flower (as here). Milton's use of the word 'enamelled' is illustrated in *Arc.* 84, and his use of 'quaint' in *Arc.* 47; see notes. Comp. Peele's *David and Bethsabe*: "May that sweet plain ... be still *enamelled* with discoloured (*i.e.* variegated) flowers."

140. **honeyed showers**, sweet and refreshing rain. 'Honeyed' is here used figuratively; comp. "honeyed words" = flattery. It is sometimes, but less correctly, spelt 'honied': comp. *Il Pens.* 142.

141. **purple**, here used as a verb. The meaning is that the spring flowers are so abundant that they give the green turf a purple tint: comp. *Par. Lost*, vii. 28, "When morn *purples* the east." In Latin *purpureus* is common in the sense of 'dazzling.'

vernal, pertaining to Spring (Lat. *ver*).

142. Lines 142-151 form (as Masson says) "the most exquisite flower-and-colour passage in all Milton's poetry. His manuscript shows that he brought it to perfection by additions and after thoughts." "For musical sweetness and dainty richness of floral colour, it beats perhaps anything else in all Milton. It is the call upon all valleys of the landscape, and the banks of all the secret streamlets, to yield up their choicest flowers, and those dearest to shepherds that they may be strewn over the dead body of Lycidas." A similar fancy is found in Shakespeare: "With fairest flowers ... I'll sweeten thy sad grave." *Cymb.* iv. 2.

Those critics who judge the beauty of any poetical reference to nature by its fidelity to actual fact may readily object that

Milton would here bring together flowers that are never found in bloom at the same time of the year. But the season of the year does not enter into Milton's thoughts except in so far as it enables him to characterize some of the flowers. His only concern is to honour the grave of his fellow-shepherd by heaping upon it a rich offering of nature's fairest and sweetest flowers—flowers that, by their purity or their "sad embroidery," are well fitted to "strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies."

In connection with this passage Mr. Ruskin writes:—"In Milton it happens, I think, generally, and in the case before us most certainly, that the imagination is mixed and broken with fancy, and so the strength of the imagery is part of iron and part of clay." Lines 142, 145, and 147 he considers 'imaginative'; lines 144 and 146 'fanciful'; line 143 'nugatory'; and line 148 'mixed.'

rathe, early: the root of this word survives in the comparative *rather*: comp. "The *rather* lambs be starved with cold" (*Spenser*), where *rather* is an adjective. Tennyson has: "the men of *rathe* and riper years" (*In Mem.* cx.). *Rather* is now used only as an adverb, except perhaps in the phrase 'I had rather'; in 'I would rather' it is certainly an adverb. The Old English *rath*=early (adj.); *rathe*=soon (adv.).

that forsaken dies, *i.e.* 'that dies because it is forsaken by the sun-light,' a reference to the fact that it is often found in shady places. Milton at first wrote 'unwedded,' showing that he had in mind Shakespeare's words, "Pale primroses that die *unmarried*, ere they can behold Bright Phœbus (*i.e.* the sun) in his strength": *Winter's Tale* iv. 4. See *Song on M. M.* 4.

143. **tufted crow-toe.** This plant is more commonly called "crow-foot," both names having reference to the shape of the flower: comp. '*bird's foot* trefoil,' belonging to the same order of plants. Another similar plant is the *tufted* vetch, and this epithet correctly describes the appearance of all these plants when in flower.

pale jessamine. 'Jessamine' or jasmine, a plant which belongs originally to the East; hence the name, from Persian *yásmin*.

144. **pink**, a flower which has given name to a particular colour; similarly the colour called 'violet' receives its name from the flower, and 'mauve' is the colour of the 'mallow.' The reverse process is seen in 'carnation,' this flower having received its name from its *fleshy* colour (Lat. *caro*, flesh). Some varieties of the pink are white.

pansy freaked with jet, a species of violet having generally dark spots in the centre of its blossoms. 'Freaked'= spotted or marked; this word is now little used except in the

diminutive *freckles*=small dark spots (as those on some faces). Shakespeare speaks of the 'freckled cowslip.'

146. **well-attired woodbine**, *i.e.* the honey-suckle with its clusters of flowers. 'Well-attired' does not here mean well-clothed or covered with leaves, but 'having a beautiful *head-dress of flowers*.' 'Tire' (the prefix being dropped) occurs in the same sense. The word is now extended to the whole dress: comp. *On Time*, 21.

147. **hang the pensive head**: 'pensive' is here used proleptically, *i.e.* it denotes the result of the action expressed by the verb 'hang': comp. *Arc.* 87.

148. **sad embroidery**; or, as Milton originally wrote, "sorrow's livery," *i.e.* colours suited to mourning. 'To embroider' is strictly to adorn with needlework, hence used in the sense of 'to ornament,' and finally 'to diversify by different colours.'

149. **amaranthus**, a plant so called because its flowers last long without withering. In *Par. Lost* it occurs as 'amarant,' the adjective being 'amarantine,' which comes directly from the Greek *amarantos*, unfading. The word is cognate with 'ambrosia,' the food of the gods, both having their counterpart in the Sanskrit *amrita*, immortal.

his beauty shed: 'his' here stands for 'its': see note on *Il Pens.* 128. 'Shed' is the infinitive after 'bid'; so is 'fill' in the next line.

150. **daffadillies**, more commonly written 'daffodils.' There is also a more colloquial form, *daffadown-dilly*, which occurs in Spenser. Comp. *Par. Lost*, ix. 1040, "Pansies and violets and *asphodel*." 'Daffodil' and 'asphodel' are the same, both name and thing: the initial *d* is no part of the word, and in earlier English it was written *affodille*, which is from an old French word *asphodile*, which again is from the Greek *asphodelos*, a flower of the lily tribe. The dew-drops resting in the hollow of the lilies are here spoken of as tears shed for Lycidas.

151. **laureate hearse**, the poet's tomb. The word 'laureate' here signifies that Lycidas was a poet and was lamented by poets. Another interpretation is that it refers to the fact that King had obtained an academical degree: see note on *Son.* xvi. 9. 'Hearse' now denotes the carriage in which the dead are carried to the grave, and even the meaning which Milton here gives it is not the primary one. The changes of meaning which this word has shown are: (1) a harrow, *i.e.* a frame of wood fitted with spikes, and used for breaking up the soil; (2) a frame of similar shape in which lighted candles were stuck during church service; (3) a frame for lights at a funeral; (4) a funeral ceremony, a monument, etc.; (5) a frame on which a dead body

is laid; (6) a carriage for a dead body; comp. *Epitaph on M. of W.* 58. 'Lycid'=Lycidas, the suffix being dropped.

152. The sense is: 'Let us thus, in order to comfort ourselves for a little, please our weak fancies by imagining that we actually have the corpse of Lycidas to strew with flowers, even while, alas! his bones are being drifted about by the waves.' Some editions read a comma after 'for,' and connect 'so' with 'to interpose': it seems better to read 'so' with 'for,' thus making 'to interpose,' etc., a clause of purpose.

154. There is a zeugma in *wash* as applied to 'shores' and 'seas.' Comp. Virgil's *Æn.* vi. 362: "my body is sometimes *tossed* by the waves, and sometimes *thrown* on the shore." The pathetic allusions in *Lycidas* to King's death at sea may be compared throughout with Virgil's language on the death of the pilot Palinurus, especially in the closing lines of Book v.:

> "O nimium caelo et pelago confise sereno,
> Nudus in ignota, Palinure, jacebis harena."

156. **Hebrides**, or Western Isles, a range of about 200 islands, scattered along the western coast of Scotland. King having been wrecked in the Irish Sea, his body may (according to Milton) have been carried far north to the Hebrides or far south to the coast of Cornwall, these two parts being the extremities of Great Britain.

157. **whelming**: the compound 'overwhelming' is more commonly used.

158. **the bottom of the monstrous world**, *i.e.* the bottom of the sea, "there being more room for the marvellous among the creatures of the deep than among the better known inhabitants of the land." 'Monstrous' is therefore here used literally = full of monsters. Comp. *Par. Lost*, ii. 624, "Nature breeds, Perverse, all *monstrous*, all prodigious things"; also Virgil's *Aen.* 729, "Quae marmores fert *monstra* sub aequora pontus."

159. **Or whether.** This would naturally answer to 'whether' in line 156, but there is another anacolouthon, or change of construction; the first 'whether' introduces an adverbial phrase, while the second introduces a complete sentence.

to our moist vows denied, *i.e.* your body being denied to our tearful prayers. 'Moist' is properly applicable to the eyes of those praying for the recovery of Lycidas' body. There may be an allusion in 'vows' to those promises of thanksgiving and offerings made to Neptune that he might restore the bodies of those who had been drowned. Comp. *Arc.* 6.

160. **fable of Bellerus old**, *i.e.* the fabled abode of the old Cornish giant Bellerus. Bellerium was the Latin name for Land's End in Cornwall, and Milton 'fables' this name to have been derived from Bellerus, though no such name occurs in the catalogue of the old Cornish giants. There was, however, a giant named Corineus, said to have come into Britain with Brute, and in his first draft of the poem Milton wrote 'Corineus,' not 'Bellerus' (pron. *Bellérus*).

161. **great Vision of the guarded mount.** The 'guarded mount' is St. Michael's Mount, near Land's End, on which there is a crag called St. Michael's Chair. The tradition is that the 'vision' (or apparition) of the Archangel had been seen seated on this crag. Milton, therefore, speaks of the Mount as 'guarded' by the Archangel.

162. **Looks toward Namancos**, etc. Namancos is in the province of Gallicia, near Cape Finisterre, in Spain (the name being found in old maps). Bayona is also in Gallicia. "It was a boast of the Cornish people that there was a direct line of sea-view from Land's End passing France altogether and hitting no European land till it reached Spain" (see map of Europe).

hold = stronghold, castle.

163. **Angel**, *i.e.* St. Michael, who is here asked to cease looking towards Spain and to turn his gaze to the seas around him, where the shipwrecked Lycidas lies. Some would take 'Angel' as addressed to Lycidas, who would then be regarded as a glorified spirit looking down upon his weeping friends: that this is not the meaning is evident from the language of l. 164.

ruth, pity: see note, *Son.* ix. 8.

164. **dolphins**, sea-animals; here alluded to because Arion, an ancient Greek bard, when thrown overboard by sailors on a voyage to Corinth, was supported on the backs of dolphins whom he had charmed by his music.

waft, a word generally applied to winds, sometimes also to water, is here used of the dolphins to signify their swift passage through the sea. For 'hapless,' see *Epit. on M. of W.* 31, note.

165. The poem here becomes a strain of joy (see *Analysis*), which may be compared with that which closes Milton's other famous elegy on the death of Charles Diodati two years after *Lycidas* was composed. The following extract from the latter (Cowper's translation) will partly enable the student to compare the two pieces—

> "*Cease then my tears to flow!*
> Away with grief, on Damon ill bestowed!
> Who, pure himself, *has found a pure abode*,
> Has passed the showery arch, henceforth *resides*
> *With saints and heroes*, and from flowing tides
> Quaffs copious *immortality and joy*. . . .
> Thy brows encircled with a radiant band,
> And the green palm-branch waving in thy hand,

> "Thou in *immortal nuptials* shalt rejoice,
> And *join with seraphs thy according voice*,
> *Where rapture reigns*, and the ecstatic lyre
> Guides the blest orgies of the blazing quire."

woful, also spelt 'woeful.'

166. **your sorrow**, object of your sorrow; by synecdoche the name of a passion or emotion is often put for the object that inspires it, *e.g.* joy, pride, delight, care, hope, etc.

is not dead, *i.e.* he lives in Paradise.

167. **watery floor**, the surface of the sea: comp. "level brine," l. 98, and the Lat. *aequor* (a level surface) applied to the sea. Shakespeare calls the sky the "*floor* of heaven."

168. **day-star**, the sun, which, to one looking seaward, seems to sink, at setting, into the ocean. Comp. *Com.* 95—

> "And the gilded car of day
> His glowing axle doth allay
> In the steep Atlantic stream."

169. **anon**, after a short time, *i.e.* at sunrise. Comp. *L'Alleg.* 131.

repairs his drooping head, renews his brightness.

170. **tricks**; here used transitively in the sense of 'to display': see *Il Pens.* 123, note.

new-spangled ore, bright golden rays. 'Ore' = metal, the newly-risen sun being like a ball or disc of gold. 'Spangled' = sparkling: a spangle is strictly a small plate of shining metal used as an ornament, and hence in poetry it is common to speak of the stars as spangles, and of the sky as 'spangled with stars.' Comp. Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, iv. 5.: see also *Par. Lost*, xi. 128.

172. **So**. The meaning is, '*As* the sun sinks into the sea in the evening but rises again in the morning with renewed beauty, *so* Lycidas sank low into the sea, but rose again through the saving power of Christ, to take his place in Paradise.

'Sunk' = sank: see l. 102, note.

173. **the dear might of Him**, etc. = the power of that dear Saviour over whom the waves of the sea had no power. Milton thus appropriately illustrates Christ's power by a reference to that one of his miracles which shows his rule over the waters. See *Matt.* xiv. 22.

'Walked': here used transitively; comp. *Il Pens.* 156.

174. **Where**, *i.e.* 'mounted high (to that place) *where*,' etc.

along, a preposition governing 'groves' and 'streams.'

175. His locks that were wet with the sea ooze he washes with the pure nectar of heaven.

'Oozy,' slimy; 'ooze' is the soft mud found at the bottom of the sea. 'To ooze' is to flow gently, as ooze would do.

'Nectar,' the drink of the gods: in *Death of a Fair Infant*, Milton speaks of the "nectared head" of a goddess, and in *Par. Lost*, he tells us that there is a "nectarous humour" in the veins of the angels.

176. **unexpressive nuptial song**, *i.e.* inexpressible marriage song: see *Rev.* xix. 9, where all true believers are spoken of as bidden to the marriage feast of the Lamb of God. In the two preceding lines the language of *Lycidas* is that of classical mythology; in this line and the six following, the imagery is Christian; and then the poet reverts to mythology. "We might say that these things are ill-fitted to each other. So they would be, were not the art so fine and the poetry so overmastering; were they not fused together by genius into a whole so that the unfitness itself becomes fascination." (*Brooke.*)

'Unexpressive': both Shakespeare and Milton use adjectives with the termination *-ive* where we now use *-ible* or *-able*. Comp. incomprehensive, plausive, insuppressive, etc., occurring in Shakespeare. For the prefix *-un* see note on l. 64 above. The word 'unexpressive' has therefore, in modern English, become *in-express-ible*. 'Nuptial' is from Lat. *nubere*, to marry; comp. 'connubial.'

177. For the order of the words comp. *L'Alleg.* 40.

kingdoms meek, abodes of the meek.

178. 'There all the saints above entertain him.'

179. **sweet societies**. What Milton here calls 'sweet societies' of angels, he calls (in *Par. Lost*, xi. 80) 'fellowships of joy.' Milton believed in a complete angelic system, with a most elaborate division into orders and degrees of rank—a system widely recognised in mediæval Christian tradition. In *Par. Lost* he makes large use of this belief; in this poem it is merely hinted at.

181. The language of this line is taken from the Scriptures: see *Isaiah*, xxv. 8, and *Rev.* vii. 7, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

for ever, once and for all.

182. This line is to be compared with line 165.

183. **the Genius of the shore**: see *Arc.* 25, 26; *Il Pens.* 154. It is common in Latin poetry to represent a drowned person as becoming the genius or guardian spirit of the locality where he met his fate, his office being to prevent future voyagers from a like disaster; hence Milton says, "(thou) shalt be good (*i.e.* propitious) to all that wander," etc. The Latin *bonus* occurs in the sense of 'propitious,' Virgil's *Ecl.* v. 64.

184. **In thy large recompense,** *i.e.* as a great recompense *to thee.* "The use of the possessive pronouns and of the inflected possessive case of nouns and pronouns was, until a comparatively recent period, very much more extensive than at present, and they were employed in many cases where the preposition with the objective now takes its place" (*Marsh*).

185. **wander in that perilous flood,** *i.e.* sail over that dangerous sea.

186. The epilogue begins here (see analysis): its separateness from the rest of the poem is indicated by the fact that in it Milton lays aside his "oaten flute" and resumes his own personality, and by the metrical and rhyming structure of the eight lines of which it consists. It is, in fact, a stanza in *Ottava Rima*, the arrangement of rhymes being *abababcc*.

uncouth: see note, *L'Alleg.* 5.

187. **with sandals grey,** *i.e.* at the grey dawn. Comp. "grey-hooded even," *Com.* 188. The shepherd had begun to sing at daybreak, but in his eagerness he had continued till evening.

188. **He touched the tender stops of various quills,** *i.e.* throughout his song he had passed through various moods and had sung in various metres. 'Quill' is here used in its primary sense, = a reed, which Milton has already called 'oaten pipe': the application of this word to the feather of a bird is secondary. The 'stops' of a reed or flute are the small holes over which the fingers of the player are placed, also called vent-holes or (as in Shakespeare) 'ventages': comp. *Com.* 345, "pastoral reed with oaten stops." The epithet 'tender' is here transferred from the music itself to the stops, from the effect to the cause.

189. **thought,** care: comp. *Matt.* vi. 25, "Take no *thought* for your life," etc.

Doric lay, pastoral song, so called because Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus wrote their pastorals in the Doric dialect of the Greek tongue: see note on *L'Alleg.* 136.

190. 'The sun, being low, had lengthened *the shadows* of the hills.' Comp. Virgil, *Ecl.* i. 83.

191. **was dropt,** had dropt: see note, l. 97, and *Son.* ii. 6.

192. **twitched,** plucked tightly around him.

his mantle blue. The colour is that of a shepherd's dress, hence the allusion. It is very improbable that any allegorical sense is intended.

193. **To-morrow,** etc.: comp. the *Purple Island,* by Fletcher—

> "Home, then, my lambs: the falling drops eschew:
> To-morrow shall ye feast in pastures new."

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