

# **L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas**

John Milton

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# L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

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- 

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## L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,  
.....Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born  
In Stygian cave forlorn  
.....'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights  
unholy!  
Find out some uncouth cell,  
.....Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,  
And the night-raven sings;  
.....There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,  
As ragged as thy locks,  
.....In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.  
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,  
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
And by men heart-easing Mirth;  
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,  
With two sister Graces more,  
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore:  
Or whether (as some sager sing)  
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,  
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,  
As he met her once a-Maying,  
There, on beds of violets blue,  
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,  
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,  
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.  
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest, and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,

L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

And love to live in dimple sleek;  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it, as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe;  
And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The mountain–nymph, sweet Liberty;  
And, if I give thee honour due,  
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
To live with her, and live with thee,  
In unproved pleasures free:  
To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And, singing, startle the dull night,  
From his watch–tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;  
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good–morrow,  
Through the sweet–briar or the vine,  
Or the twisted eglantine;  
While the cock, with lively din,  
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,  
And to the stack, or the barn–door,  
Stoutly struts his dames before:  
Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill:  
Sometime walking, not unseen,  
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,  
Right against the eastern gate  
Where the great Sun begins his state,  
Robed in flames and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;  
While the ploughman, near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.  
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
Whilst the landskip round it measures:  
Russet lawns, and fallows grey,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;  
Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest;  
Meadows trim, with daisies pied;  
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;  
Towers and battlements it sees  
Bosomed high in tufted trees,  
Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Hard by a cottage chimney smokes  
From betwixt two aged oaks,  
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met  
Are at their savoury dinner set  
Of herbs and other country messes,  
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;  
And then in haste her bower she leaves,  
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;  
Or, if the earlier season lead,  
To the tanned haycock in the mead.  
Sometimes, with secure delight,  
The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound  
To many a youth and many a maid  
Dancing in the chequered shade,  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday,  
Till the livelong daylight fail:  
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
With stories told of many a feat,  
How Faery Mab the junkets eat.  
She was pinched and pulled, she said;  
And he, by Friar's lantern led,  
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat  
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end;  
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,  
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
And crop-full out of doors he flings,  
Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,  
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.  
Towered cities please us then,  
And the busy hum of men,  
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold  
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
Rain influence, and judge the prize  
Of wit or arms, while both contend  
To win her grace whom all commend.  
There let Hymen oft appear  
In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With mask and antique pageantry;  
Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream.  
Then to the well-trod stage anon,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild.  
And ever, against eating cares,  
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
Married to immortal verse,  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
In notes with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out  
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony;  
That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear  
Such strains as would have won the ear  
Of Pluto to have quite set free  
His half-regained Eurydice.  
These delights if thou canst give,  
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

## IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,  
.....The brood of Folly without father bred!  
How little you bested  
.....Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!  
Dwell in some idle brain,  
.....And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
As thick and numberless  
.....As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,  
Or likest hovering dreams,  
.....The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.  
But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!  
Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
Whose saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the sense of human sight,  
And therefore to our weaker view  
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;  
Black, but such as in esteem  
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,  
Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove  
To set her beauty's praise above

L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

The Sea–Nymphs, and their powers offended.  
Yet thou art higher far descended:  
Thee bright–haired Vesta long of yore  
To solitary Saturn bore;  
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign  
Such mixture was not held a stain.  
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades  
He met her, and in secret shades  
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.  
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train,  
And sable stole of cypress lawn  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
Come; but keep thy wonted state,  
With even step, and musing gait,  
And looks commercing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:  
There, held in holy passion still,  
Forget thyself to marble, till  
With a sad leaden downward cast  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
And hears the Muses in a ring  
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;  
And add to these retired Leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;  
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery–wheeled throne,  
The Cherub Contemplation;  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will deign a song,  
In her sweetest saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,  
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke  
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.  
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy!  
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among  
I woo, to hear thy even–song;  
And, missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth–shaven green,  
To behold the wandering moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray  
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,  
And oft, as if her head she bowed,

L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-watered shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar;  
Or, if the air will not permit,  
Some still removed place will fit,  
Where glowing embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth,  
Or the bellman's drowsy charm  
To bless the doors from nightly harm.  
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,  
Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,  
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere  
The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
What worlds or what vast regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;  
And of those demons that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or underground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet or with element.  
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine,  
Or what (though rare) of later age  
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.  
But, O sad Virgin! that thy power  
Might raise Musaeus from his bower;  
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
And made Hell grant what love did seek;  
Or call up him that left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,  
And of the wondrous horse of brass  
On which the Tartar king did ride;  
And if aught else great bards beside  
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,  
Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant than meets the ear.  
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,  
Till civil-suited Morn appear,



L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Not tricked and frowned, as she was wont  
With the Attic boy to hunt,  
But kerchieft in a comely cloud  
While rocking winds are piping loud,  
Or ushered with a shower still,  
When the gust hath blown his fill,  
Ending on the rustling leaves,  
With minute-drops from off the eaves.  
And, when the sun begins to fling  
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring  
To arched walks of twilight groves,  
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,  
Of pine, or monumental oak,  
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke  
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,  
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.  
There, in close covert, by some brook,  
Where no profaner eye may look,  
Hide me from day's garish eye,  
While the bee with honeyed thigh,  
That at her flowery work doth sing,  
And the waters murmuring,  
With such consort as they keep,  
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.  
And let some strange mysterious dream  
Wave at his wings, in airy stream  
Of lively portraiture displayed,  
Softly on my eyelids laid;  
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,  
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.  
But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high embowed roof,  
With antique pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light.  
There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voiced quire below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.  
And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every star that heaven doth shew,  
And every herb that sips the dew,  
Till old experience do attain

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

To something like prophetic strain.  
These pleasures, Melancholy, give;  
And I with thee will choose to live.

### COMUS

A MASQUE PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634, BEFORE  
THE EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

The Persons

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.  
COMUS, with his Crew.  
The LADY.  
FIRST BROTHER.  
SECOND BROTHER.  
SABRINA, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons which presented were:--

The Lord Brackley;  
Mr. Thomas Egerton, his Brother;  
The Lady Alice Egerton.

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

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court  
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes  
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered  
In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,  
Confined and pestered in this pifold here,  
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,  
After this mortal change, to her true servants  
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.  
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire  
To lay their just hands on that golden key  
That opes the palace of eternity.  
To Such my errand is; and, but for such,  
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds  
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway  
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,  
Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove,  
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles  
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay  
The unadorned bosom of the deep;  
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,  
By course commits to several government,  
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns  
And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,

COMUS

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

The greatest and the best of all the main,  
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;  
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun  
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power  
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide  
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:  
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,  
Are coming to attend their father's state,  
And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way  
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,  
The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;  
And here their tender age might suffer peril,  
But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,  
I was despatched for their defence and guard:  
And listen why; for I will tell you now  
What never yet was heard in tale or song,  
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape  
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,  
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,  
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,  
On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not Circe,  
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup  
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,  
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)  
This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks,  
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,  
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son  
Much like his father, but his mother more,  
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:  
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,  
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,  
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,  
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,  
Excels his mother at her mighty art;  
Offering to every weary traveller  
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,  
To quench the drouth of Phoebus; which as they taste  
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),  
Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,  
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed  
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,  
Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,  
All other parts remaining as they were.  
And they, so perfect is their misery,  
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
But boast themselves more comely than before,  
And all their friends and native home forget,  
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.  
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove  
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,  
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star  
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,  
As now I do. But first I must put off  
These my sky-ropes, spun out of Iris' woof,  
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain  
That to the service of this house belongs,  
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,  
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,  
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith  
And in this office of his mountain watch

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid  
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread  
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the  
other: with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of  
wild  
beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel  
glistening.  
They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in  
their hands.

COMUS. The star that bids the shepherd fold  
Now the top of heaven doth hold;  
And the gilded car of day  
His glowing axle doth allay  
In the steep Atlantic stream;  
And the slope sun his upward beam  
Shoots against the dusky pole,  
Pacing toward the other goal  
Of his chamber in the east.  
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,  
Midnight shout and revelry,  
Tipsy dance and jollity.  
Braid your locks with rosy twine,  
Dropping odours, dropping wine.  
Rigour now is gone to bed;  
And Advice with scrupulous head,  
Strict Age, and sour Severity,  
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.  
We, that are of purer fire,  
Imitate the starry quire,  
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,  
Lead in swift round the months and years.  
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,  
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;  
And on the tawny sands and shelves  
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.  
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,  
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,  
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:  
What hath night to do with sleep?  
Night hath better sweets to prove;  
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.  
Come, let us our rights begin;  
'T is only daylight that makes sin,  
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.  
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,  
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame  
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame,  
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb  
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,  
And makes one blot of all the air!  
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,  
Wherein thou ridest with Hecat', and befriend  
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end  
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,  
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,  
The nice Morn on the Indian steep,  
From her cabined loop-hole peep,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

And to the tell-tale Sun descry  
Our concealed solemnity.  
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground  
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure.

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

The LADY enters.

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

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars  
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps  
With everlasting oil to give due light  
To the misled and lonely traveller?  
This is the place, as well as I may guess,  
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth  
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;  
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.  
What might this be ? A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memory,  
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,  
And airy tongues that syllable men's names  
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.  
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended  
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.  
O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,  
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,  
And thou unblemished form of Chastity!  
I see ye visibly, and now believe  
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill  
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,  
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,  
To keep my life and honour unassailed. . . .  
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?  
I did not err: there does a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.  
I cannot hallo to my brothers, but  
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits  
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

Song.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen  
    Within thy airy shell  
    By slow Meander's margent green,  
And in the violet-embroidered vale  
    Where the love-lorn nightingale  
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:  
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair  
    That likest thy Narcissus are?  
    O, if thou have  
Hid them in some flowery cave,  
    Tell me but where,  
Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the Sphere!  
    So may'st thou be translated to the skies,  
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies!

COMUS. Can any mortal mixture of earth  
    Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?  
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
To testify his hidden residence.  
How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,  
At every fall smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard  
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,  
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,  
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,  
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,  
And chid her barking waves into attention,  
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.  
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,  
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;  
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,  
And she shall be my queen. O Hail, foreign wonder!  
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,  
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine  
Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song  
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog  
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

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

COMUS: What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?

LADY. Dim darkness and this leafy labyrinth.

COMUS. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

LADY. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

COMUS. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

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

COMUS. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?

LADY. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

COMUS. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

LADY. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

COMUS. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

LADY. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

COMUS. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

LADY. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

COMUS. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came,  
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.  
I saw them under a green mantling vine,  
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,  
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;  
Their port was more than human, as they stood.  
I took it for a faery vision  
Of some gay creatures of the element,  
That in the colours of the rainbow live,  
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,  
And, as I passed, I worshiped. If those you seek,  
It were a journey like the path to Heaven  
To help you find them.

LADY. Gentle villager,

What readiest way would bring me to that place?

COMUS. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

LADY. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,

In such a scant allowance of star-light,  
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,  
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

COMUS. I know each lane, and every alley green,  
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,  
And every bosky bourn from side to side,  
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

And, if your stray attendance be yet lodged,  
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know  
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark  
From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,  
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low  
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe  
Till further quest.

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

The TWO BROTHERS.

ELD. BRO. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,  
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,  
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,  
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here  
In double night of darkness and of shades;  
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up  
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,  
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole  
Of some clay habitation, visit us  
With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,  
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,  
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

SEC. BRO. Or, if our eyes  
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear  
The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,  
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,  
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock  
Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,  
'T would be some solace yet, some little cheering,  
In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.  
But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!  
Where may she wander now, whither betake her  
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles  
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,  
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm  
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.  
What if in wild amazement and affright,  
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp  
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat!

ELD. BRO. Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite  
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;  
For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,  
What need a man forestall his date of grief,  
And run to meet what he would most avoid?  
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,  
How bitter is such self-delusion!  
I do not think my sister so to seek,  
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,  
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,  
As that the single want of light and noise  
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)  
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,



## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

And put them into misbecoming plight.  
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would  
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self  
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,  
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,  
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,  
That, in the various bustle of resort,  
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.  
He that has light within his own clear breast  
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;  
Himself is his own dungeon.

SEC. BRO.

'Tis most true

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

ELD. BRO.

I do not, brother,

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

SEC. BRO..

What hidden strength,

Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

ELD. BRO. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,

Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own.

'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:

She that has that is clad in complete steel,  
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,  
May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,  
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;  
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,  
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,  
Will dare to soil her virgin purity.  
Yea, there where very desolation dwells,  
By grotts and caverns shagged with horrid shades,  
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.  
Some say no evil thing that walks by night,  
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,  
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,  
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,  
No goblin or swart faery of the mine,  
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.  
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call  
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
To testify the arms of chastity?  
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow  
Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,  
Wherewith she tamed the brindled lioness  
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought  
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men  
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.  
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield  
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,  
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,  
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
And noble grace that dashed brute violence  
With sudden adoration and blank awe?  
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity  
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,  
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
And in clear dream and solemn vision  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;  
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
Till all be made immortal. But, when lust,  
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
Lets ill defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose  
The divine property of her first being.  
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,  
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,  
As loth to leave the body that it loved,  
And linked itself by carnal sensuality  
To a degenerate and degraded state.

SEC. BRO. How charming is divine Philosophy!  
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is Apollo's lute,  
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

Eld. Bro. List!  
list! I hear  
Some far-off hallo break the silent air.

SEC. BRO. Methought so too; what should it be?  
ELD. BRO. For  
certain.

Either some one, like us, night-founded here,  
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,  
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.  
SEC. BRO. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again, and near!  
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

ELD. BRO. I'll hallo!

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

If he be friendly, he comes well: if not,  
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, habited like a shepherd.

That hallo I should know. What are you? speak.  
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.

SPIR. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.

SEC. BRO. O brother, Tt is my father's Shepherd, sure.

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

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

ELD. BRO. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame  
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

SPIR. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.

ELD. BRO. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee briefly  
shew.

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

Within the navel of this hideous wood,  
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,  
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,  
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,  
And here to every thirsty wanderer  
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,  
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison  
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
And the inglorious likeness of a beast  
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage  
Charactered in the face. This have I learnt  
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts  
That brow this bottom glade; whence night by night  
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl  
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,  
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate  
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.  
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells  
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense  
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.  
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks  
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb  
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,  
I sat me down to watch upon a bank  
With ivy canopied, and interwove  
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,  
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,  
Till fancy had her fill. But ere a close  
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,  
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance;  
At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,  
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence  
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds  
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.  
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound  
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,  
And stole upon the air, that even Silence  
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might  
Deny her nature, and be never more,  
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,  
And took in strains that might create a soul  
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long  
Too well I did perceive it was the voice  
Of my most honoured Lady, your dear sister.  
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear;  
And RO poor hapless nightingale," thought I,  
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!"  
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,  
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,  
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place  
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise  
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met  
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,  
The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;  
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,  
Supposing him some neighbour villager.  
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed  
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung  
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;  
But further know I not.

SEC. BRO. O night and shades,  
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot  
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,  
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence  
You gave me, brother?

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



## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

to  
whom he offers his glass; which she puts by, and goes about to  
rise.

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

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

COMUS. Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you frown?  
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates  
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures  
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,  
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns  
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.  
And first behold this cordial julep here,  
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,  
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.  
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone  
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena  
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,  
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.  
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,  
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent  
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?  
But you invert the covenants of her trust,  
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,  
With that which you received on other terms,  
Scorning the unexempt condition  
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,  
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,  
That have been tired all day without repast,  
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,  
This will restore all soon.

LADY. 'T will not, false  
traitor!

'T will not restore the truth and honesty  
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.  
Was this the cottage and the safe abode  
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,  
These oughly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!  
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!  
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence  
With vizored falsehood and base forgery?  
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here  
With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?  
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,  
I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None  
But such as are good men can give good things;  
And that which is not good is not delicious  
To a well-governed and wise appetite.

COMUS. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears  
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,  
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,  
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!  
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth  
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,  
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

But all to please and sate the curious taste?  
And set to work millions of spinning worms,  
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,  
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might  
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins  
She hatched the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,  
To store her children with. If all the world  
Should, in a pet of temperance, feed on pulse,  
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,  
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,  
Not half his riches known and yet despised;  
And we should serve him as a grudging master,  
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,  
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,  
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,  
And strangled with her waste fertility:  
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,  
The herds would over-multitude their lords;  
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds  
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,  
And so bestud with stars, that they below  
Would grow inured to light, and come at last  
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.  
List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cozened  
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.  
Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,  
But must be current; and the good thereof  
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,  
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.  
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose  
It withers on the stalk with languished head.  
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown  
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,  
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.  
It is for homely features to keep home;  
They had their name thence: coarse complexions  
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply  
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.  
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,  
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?  
There was another meaning in these gifts;  
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

LADY. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips  
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler  
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,  
Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.  
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments  
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.  
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,  
As if she would her children should be riotous  
With her abundance. She, good cateress,  
Means her provision only to the good,  
That live according to her sober laws,  
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.  
If every just man that now pines with want  
Had but a moderate and beseeming share  
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury  
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit encumbered with her store;  
And then the Giver would be better thanked,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony  
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,  
But with besotted base ingratitude  
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on  
Or have I said enow? To him that dares  
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
Against the sun-clad power of chastity  
Fain would I something say;--yet to what end?  
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend  
The sublime notion and high mystery  
That must be uttered to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginity;  
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know  
More happiness than this thy present lot.  
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,  
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;  
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.  
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence  
That dumb things would be moved to sympathise,  
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,  
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,  
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

COMUS. She fables not. I feel that I do fear  
Her words set off by some superior power;  
And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew  
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove  
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus  
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,  
And try her yet more strongly.--Come, no more !  
This is mere moral babble, and direct  
Against the canon laws of our foundation.  
I must not suffer this; yet 't is but the lees  
And settlings of a melancholy blood.  
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this  
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight  
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

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

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

There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,  
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream:  
Sabrina is her name: a virgin pure;  
Whilom she was the daughter of Loctrine,  
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.  
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit  
Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen,  
Commended her fair innocence to the flood



## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.  
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,  
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,  
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;  
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,  
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe  
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodil,  
And through the porch and inlet of each sense  
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,  
And underwent a quick immortal change,  
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains  
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve  
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,  
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs  
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,  
Which she with precious viald liquors heals:  
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,  
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,  
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream  
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.  
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock  
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,  
If she be right invoked in warbled song;  
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift  
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,  
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,  
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

### SONG.

Sabrina fair,  
    Listen where thou art sitting  
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,  
    In twisted braids of lilies knitting  
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;  
    Listen for dear honour's sake,  
Goddess of the silver lake,  
    Listen and save!

Listen, and appear to us,  
In name of great Oceanus.  
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,  
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;  
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,  
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;  
By scaly Triton's winding shell,  
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;  
By Leucothea's lovely hands,  
And her son that rules the strands;  
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,  
And the songs of Sirens sweet;  
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,  
And fair Ligea's golden comb,  
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks  
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;  
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance  
Upon thy streams with wily glance;  
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head  
From thy coral-paven bed,  
And bridle in thy headlong wave,

SONG.

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Till thou our summons answered have.

Listen and save!

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

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

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

    SABR. Shepherd, 't is my office best  
To help ensnared chastity.  
Brightest Lady, look on me.  
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast  
Drops that from my fountain pure  
I have kept of precious cure;  
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,  
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:  
Next this marble venom'd seat,  
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,  
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.  
Now the spell hath lost his hold;  
And I must haste ere morning hour  
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

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

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

    Come, Lady; while Heaven lends us grace,  
Let us fly this cursed place,  
Lest the sorcerer us entice  
With some other new device.  
Not a waste or needless sound

SONG.

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

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

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town, and the President's Castle: then come in Country Dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the two BROTHERS and the LADY.

### SONG.

SPIR. Back, shepherds, back! Enough your play  
Till next sun-shine holiday.  
Here be, without duck or nod,  
Other trippings to be trod  
Of lighter toes, and such court guise  
As Mercury did first devise  
With the mincing Dryades  
On the lawns and on the leas.

The second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

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

The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes.

SPIR. To the ocean now I fly,  
And those happy climes that lie  
Where day never shuts his eye,  
Up in the broad fields of the sky.  
There I suck the liquid air,  
All amidst the gardens fair  
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three  
That sing about the golden tree.  
Along the crisped shades and bowers  
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;  
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours  
Thither all their bounties bring.  
There eternal Summer dwells;  
And west winds with musky wing  
About the cedarn alleys fling  
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.

### SONG.

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Iris there with humid bow  
Waters the odorous banks, that blow  
Flowers of more mingled hue  
Than her purpled scarf can shew,  
And drenches with Elysian dew  
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)  
Beds of hyacinth and roses,  
Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
Waxing well of his deep wound,  
In slumber soft, and on the ground  
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.  
But far above, in spangled sheen,  
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced  
Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced  
After her wandering labours long,  
Till free consent the gods among  
Make her his eternal bride,  
And from her fair unspotted side  
Two blissful twins are to be born,  
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.

But now my task is smoothly done:  
I can fly, or I can run,  
Quickly to the green earth's end,  
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,  
And from thence can soar as soon  
To the corners of the moon.  
Mortals, that would follow me,  
Love virtue; she alone is free.  
She can teach ye how to climb  
Higher than the sphery chime;  
Or, if Virtue feeble were,  
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

### 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  
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;

### SONG.

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

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,  
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  
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 Damoetas 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,  
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  
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  
RHad ye been there, S . . . 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,  
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 Neaera's hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(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. RBut not the praise,"  
Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears:  
RFame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
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.  
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 from off each beaked promontory.  
They knew not of his story;  
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,  
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:  
The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.  
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,  
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, Rmy dearest pledge?"  
Last came, and last did go,  
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain.  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).  
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:--  
RHow 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  
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."

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,

## L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas

And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rather 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,  
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,  
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, woeful 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  
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,  
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,  
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,  
And now was dropt into the western bay.  
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:  
Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.