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*Literature Series, No. I*

Milton's "Comus," 1637
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COMUS

“A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634”

By John Milton

Reproduced in Facsimile from the First Edition of 1637

With an Introductory Note by Luther S. Livingston

New York
Dodd, Mead & Company
1903
Milton's little play *Comus*, the first edition of which is herewith reproduced in facsimile, is the author's first book and, after *Paradise Lost*, is considered his most important work. In this first edition, as will be seen, it is called simply "A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle," etc., and in the two collected editions of Milton's minor Poems published during his lifetime, the first in 1645 and the second in 1673, the title is the same. *Comus*, the name of one of the principal characters, was, it seems, given to the "Maske" by some later editor.

At the time *Comus* was written and acted, "1634, on Michaelmasse Night," the 29th of September, Milton was in his twenty-sixth year. Although he had already written a number of pieces both in English and Latin, only one had, apparently, been printed. This was his little poem of sixteen lines, *An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatick Poet, W. Shakespeare*, which is found, but without author's name, among the prefatory verses in the Second Folio, printed in 1632.

Even when this little play was printed in 1637 Milton seems to have been diffident about acknowledging the authorship. It was very probably printed with his permission, as the motto on the title, from Virgil, was evidently selected by him. Masson paraphrases this:

"Ah! wretched and undone! Myself to have brought The wind among my flowers!"

The dedication, it will be noticed, is written and signed by H. Lawes, whose reason for printing is said to be "that..."
Introductory Note

the often copying of it hath tir’d my pen to give my severall friends satisfaction.” This Lawes was one of the most famous composers of music of the time in England, and it was under his direction and to his music that the "Maske" was produced at Ludlow Castle. The occasion was the celebration of the entry of the Earl of Bridgewater upon the Welsh Presidency, and the place was the Great Hall of Ludlow Castle, in which, according to tradition, the elder of the two Princes murdered in the Tower had been proclaimed King, with the title of Edward V, before commencing his fatal journey to London.

The play contains six speaking parts only. Of these, the most important, "The Attendant Spirit," was taken by Lawes, the director of the play and author of the music. The part of "The Lady" was taken by Lady Alice Egerton, youngest daughter of the Earl, then about fifteen years of age. The parts of the "Elder Brother" and the "Second Brother" were played by the two younger brothers of Lady Alice, Viscount Brackley, to whom this printed edition is dedicated, and Mr. Thomas Egerton. These two young noblemen had already had a taste of stage acting, having taken juvenile parts in Carew’s Coelum Britannicum, which had been performed the previous February in the royal Banqueting-house at Whitehall, in which the King himself, Charles I, took part.

The stage-copy, or one of them, perhaps in Lawes’ own autograph, is still preserved in the library at Bridgewater House, and the music of five of the six songs, in Lawes’ own autograph, is in the British Museum.

An earlier draft of the poem in Milton’s own handwriting is preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, in that precious thin folio of forty-six pages (besides eight blank pages), mostly in Milton’s own hand, and containing all but a few of the minor English Poems.

The first edition is, needless to say, very rare, only one copy having been offered at auction in America. That, a fine one, bound by Matthews, brought $425.00 in the Ives
Introductory Note

sale in 1891. A copy sold at Sotheby’s in 1894, in the sale of the library of Sir Joseph Hawley, brought £123, and another in 1899, from the library of the Rev. William Makellar, brought £150. This latter copy is now in the library of Mr. E. D. Church, of New York city. We are indebted to him for the privilege of making this facsimile.

L. S. L.
A MASKE
PRESENTED
At Ludlow Castle,
1634:
On Michaelmasse night, before the
RIGHT HONORABLE,
John Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount Brackly,
Lord President of Wales, And one of
His MAJESTIES most honorable
Privie Counsell.

Eheu quid volui miseromiki: floribus australum
Perditus

LONDON,
Printed for HUMPHREY ROBINSON,
at the signe of the Three Pidgeons in
Pauls Church-yard. 1637.
TO THE RIGHT
HONORABLE,
JOHN Lord Vicount BRACLY,
Son and heire apparent to the Earle,
of Bridgewater, &c.

My Lord,

His Poem, which receiv'd its first occasion of birth from your selfe, and others of your noble familie, and much honour from your own Person in the performance, now returns againe to make a finall dedication of it selfe to you. Although not openly acknowledg'd by the Author, yet it is a legitimate off-spring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tir'd my pen to give my severall friends
The Epistle Dedicatory.

friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessitie of producing it to the publick view; and now to offer it up in all rightfull devotion to those faire hopes, and rare Endowments of your much-promising Youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live sweet Lord to be the honoure of your Name, and receive this as your owne, from the hands of him, who hath by many favours beene long oblig'd to your most honour'd Parents, and as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all reall expression

Your faithfull, and most humble Servant,

H. LAVVES.
A MASKE
PERFORMED BEFORE
the President of WALES
at Ludlow, 1634.

The first Scene discovers a wild wood.

The attendant Spirit descends or enters.

Before the starrie threshold of loves Court
My mansion is, where those immortall shapes
Of bright aëreal Spirits live insphear'd
In Regions mild of calme and serene aire,
Above the smoake and stirre of this dim spot
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pin-fold here,
Strive to keepe up a fraile, and feaverish being
Unmindfull of the crowne that Vertue gives
After this mortall change to her true Servants
Amongst the enthron'd gods on Sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire

To
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That o'pe's the palace of Æternity:
To such my errand is, and but for such
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the ranck vapours of this Sin-worne mould.

But to my task. *Neptune* besides the sway
Of every salt Flood, and each ebbing Streame
Tooke in my lot 'twixt high, and neather *love*
Imperial rule of all the Sea-girt Iles
That like to rich, and various gemms inlay
The unadorned bosome of the Deepe,
Which he to grace his tributarie gods
By course commits to severall government
And gives them leave to weare their Saphire crowns,
And weild their little tridents, but this Ile
The greatest, and the best of all the maine
He quarters to his blu-hair'd deities,
And all this tract that fronts the falling Sun
A noble Peere of mickle trust, and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old, and haughty Nation proud in Armes:
Where his faire off-spring nurs't in Princely lore
Are comming to attend their Fathers state,
And new-entrusted Seepter, but their way
Lies through the perplex't paths of this dreare wood,
The nodding horror of whose shadie browes
Threats the forlornе and wandring Passinger.
And here their tender age might suffer perill
But that by quck command from Soveraigne *love*
I was dispatcht for their defence, and guard,
And listen why, for I will tell yee now
What never yet was heard in Tale or Song.
From old, or moderate Bard in hall, or bow'r.

Bacchus that first from out the purple Grape

Crush't the sweet poy'son of mis-used Wine

After the Tuscan Mariners transform'd

Coasting, the Tyrrhen's shore, as the winds lifted,

On Circes Island fell (who knowes not Circe

The daughter of the Sun; whose charm'd Cup

Whoever tast'd lost his upright shape,

And downward fell into a groveling Swine)

This Nymph that gaz'd upon his clustering locks

With Ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithy 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 nam'd,

Who ripe, and frolick of his full growne age

Roaving the Celtick, and Iberian fields

At last betakes him to this ominous wood,

And in thick shelter of black shades imbown'd

Excells his Mother at her mightie Art

Offering to every weary Travailer

His orient liquor in a Chrystill glasse

To quench the drouth of Phæbus, which as they tast

(For most doe tast through fond intemperate thirst)

Soone as the Potion works, their humane count'hance

Th'expressre resemblence of the gods is chang'd

Into some brutish forme of Wolfe, or Beare

Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog, or bearded Goat,

All other parts remaining as they were,

And they, so perfect in their miserie,

Not once perceive their soule disfigurement;

But boast themselves more comely then before

And all their friends; and native home forget

To
To roule with pleasure in a sensual stie.
Therefore when any favour'd of high love
Chances to passe through this adventrous glade,
Swift as the Sparkle of a glancing Starre
I shooe from heav'n to give him safe convoy,
As now I doe: but first I must put off
The∴ my skiue robes spun out of Iris wooffe,
And take the weeds and likeness e of a Swaine,
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 roare,
And hush the waving woods, nor of lesse faith,
And in this office of his Mountaine watch,
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aide
Of this occasion. But I heare the tread
Of hatefull steps, I must be viewlesse 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 wilde Beasts,
but otherwise like Men and Women, their apparel
glistening, they come ii making a rioutous and unruly noise, with Torches in their hands.

Comus. The starre that bids the Shepheard fold,
Now the top of heav'n doth hold,
And the gilded Carre of Day
His glowing Axle doth allay,
In the steepe Atlantike streame,
And the slope Sun his upward beame
Shoots against the duskie Pole,
Pacing toward the other gole

of
Of his Chamber in the East.
Meanwhile welcome Joy, and Feast,
Midnight shout, and revelrie,
Tippie dance, and Jollitie,
Braid your Locks with rosie Twine,
Dropping odours, dropping Wine.
Rigor now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and fowre Severitie
With their grane Sawes in slumber lie.
We that are of purer fire;
Immitate the starric quire,
Who in their nightly watchfull Spheares,
Lead in swift round the Months and Yeares.
The Sounds, and Seas with all their sinnie drove,
Now to the Moone in wavering Morrice move,
And on the tawny lands and shelves,
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves;
By dimpled Brooke, and Fountaine brim;
The Wood-nymphs deckt with daisiestrim,
Their merry wakes, and pastimes keepe,
What hath night to doe with sleepe?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come let us our rights begin
'Tis onely day-light that makes Sin
Which these dun shades will ne're report.
Haile Goddesse of Nocturnall sport
Dark-vaild Cotytto, t' whom the secret flame
Of mid-night Torches burnes; myserious Dame
That ne're at call'd, but when the Dragon woome
Of Stygian darknesse spets her thickest gloome

A 3

And
And makes one blot of all the aire,  
Stay thy clowdie Ebon chaire,  
Wherein thou rid’st with Hecat, and befriend  
Vs thy vow’d Priests, till utmost end  
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out  
Ere the blabbing Easternes scout  
The nice Morne on th’Indian steepe  
From her cabin’d loop hole peepe,  
And to the tel-tale Sun discry  
Our conceal’d Solemnity.  
Come, knit hands, and beate the ground  
In a light fantastick round.

The Measure.

Breake off, breake off, I feele the different pace  
Of some chaste footing neere 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 charmes  
And to my wilie trains, I shall e’re long  
Be well stock’t with as faire a Heard as graz’d  
About my Mother Circe. Thus I hurle  
My dazling Spells into the spungie aire  
Of power to cheate the eye with bleare illusion,  
And give it false presentiments, left the place  
And my queint habits breed astonishment,  
And put the Damself to suspicous flight,  
Which must not be, for that’s against my course;  
I under faire pretents of friendly ends,  
And wel plac’t words of glozing courtesie  
Baied with reasons not unplausible  

Wind
Wind me into the easy hearted man,
And hug him into th' shares; when once her eye
Hath met the vertue of this Magick dust,
I shall appeare some harmless Villager
Whom thrift keepes up about his Country gear
But here she comes, I fairly step aside
And hearken, if I may, her buisnese here.

The Ladie enters.

This way the noise was, if mine eare be true
My best guide now, me thought it was the sound
Of Riot, and ill manag'd Merriment,
Such as the jocond Flute, or gamesome Pipe
Stirs up among the loose unleter'd Hinds
When for their teeming Flocks, and granges full
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thanke the gods amisse. I should be loath
To meet the rudenesse, and swill'd insolence
Of such late Wassailers; yet 6 where else
Shall I informe 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
Vnder the spreading favour of these Pines
Stept as they se'd 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 gray-hooded Ev'n
Like a lad Votarist in Palmers weeds,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phaebus waine.
But where they are, and why they came not back
Is now the labour of my thoughts, 'tis likeliest

They
They had ingag'd their wandring steps too far,
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stolen them from me, else o' the evil Night
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end
In thy dark lantern thus close up the Stars,
That nature hung in Heav'n, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil to give due light
To the misled, and lonely Travailer.
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 memorie
Of calling-shapes, and beckning shadows dire,
And ayrie tongues, that syllable mens names
On Sands, and Shoars, and desert Wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The vertuous mind, that ever walks attended.
By a strong siding champion Conscience.
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope
Thou flattering Angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemisht forme of Chastitie
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme good, t'whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance
Would send a glistening Guardian if need were
To keepe my life, and honour unalarm'd.
Was I deceiv'd, or did a fable cloud
Turne forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not erre, there does a fables cloud
Turne forth her silver lining on the night

And
And cafts a gleane over this tufted Grove.
I cannot hallow to my Brothers, but
Such noife as I can make to be heard fardest
Ile yenter, for my new enliv'nd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not farre off.

Song.

Sweet echo, sweetest Nymph that liv'est unseen
Within thy ayrie shell
By slow Meander's margent greene,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale
Where the love-lorne Nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad Song mourneth well.

Canst thou not tell me of a gentle Paire
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O if thou have
Hid them in some flowerie Cave,
Tell me but where
Sweet Queen of Parlie, Daughter of the Sphere,
So must thou be translated to the skies;
And give resounding grace to all Heav'ns Harmonies.

Com. Can any mortall mixture of Earths mould
Breath such Divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that brest,
And with these raptures moves the vocal aire
To testifie his hidden residence;
How sweetely did they float upon the wings
Of Silence, through the emptie-vaulted night
At every fall smoothing the Raven downe
Of darkness till she smil'd: I have oft heard

C

My
My mother Circe with the Sirens three
Amidst the flowrie-kirtl'd Naiades
Culling their Potent hearbs, and balefull drugs
Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soule
And lap it in Elysium, Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense
And in sweet madness rob'd it of it selfe,
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking blisse
I never heard till now. I le speake to her
And she shall be my Queene. Haile forreine wonder
Whom certaine these rough shades did never breed
Vnlesse the Goddesse that in rurall shrine
Dwell'd here with Pan, or Silvan, by blest Song
Forbidding every bleake unlindly Fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

La. Nay gentle Shepherd ill is lost that praise
That is address'd to unattending Eares,
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regaine my sever'd companie
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossie Couch.

Co. What chance good Ladie hath bereft youthus?
La. Dim darkneffe, and this leavie Labyrinth.
Co. Could that divide you from mere-usherine
La. They left me weary on a grassie terfe. (guides?
Co. By falshood, or discourtesie, or why?
La. To seeke i' th valley some cable-friendly Spring
Co. And left your faire side-all unguard'd Ladie?
La. They were but twain, & purpos'd quick return.
(11)

Co. Perhaps fore-stalling night prevented them.
La. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
Co. Imports their losse, beside the present need?
La. No lesse then if I should my brothers lose.
Co. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
La. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazord lips.
Co. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd Ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came.
And the twinkle's hedge at his supper fate;
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 then humane; as they stood,
I took it for a faerie vision
Of some gay creatures of the element
That in the colours of the Rainbow live
And play 't' th' plighted clouds, I was aw-strooke;
And as I past, I worshipt; if those you seeke
It were a journey like the path to heav'n
To helpe you find them. La. Gentle villager
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Co. Due west it rises from this shrubbie point.
La. To find out that good shepheard I suppose
In such a scant allowance of starre light
Would overtask the best land-pilots art
Without the sure guesse of well-practiz'd feet.
Co. I know each lane, and every alley green
Dingle, or bushie dell of this wild wood,
And every boskic bourne from side to side
My daylie walks and ancient neighbourhood,
And if your stray attendance be yet lodg'd
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know.

Ere
Ere morrow wake, or the low-rooited lark
From her thatch'd palate rowse, if otherwise.
I can conduct you Ladie to a low
But loyall cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest. "La. Shepheard I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesie,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoakie rafters, then in tapstrie halls,
And courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended: in a place
Lesse warranted then this, or lesse secure
I cannot be, that I should feare to change it,
Eye me blest Providence, and square my triall
To my proportion'd strength. Shepheard lead on.---

The two Brothers.

Eld bro. Unmuffle yee saint stars, and thou fair moon
That wontst to love the travellers benison
Stoope 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 damm'd 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 levell'd rule of streaming light
And thou shalt be our starre of Arcadie
Or Tyrian Cynosure. 2 bro. Or if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but heare
The folded flocks pen'd in their wastled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten shps,
Or whistle from the Lodge, or village cock

Count
Count the night watches to his featherie Dames,
T'would be some solace yet, some little cheating
In this close dungeon of innumerous bowes.
But Ô that hapless virgin our lost sister
Where may she wander now, whether betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold banke is her boulster now
Or 'gainst the rugged barke of some broad Elme
Leans her unpillow'd head fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement, and affright
Or while we speake within the direfull graspe
Of Savage hunger, or of Savage heat?

*Bold. bro. Peace brother, be not over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertaine evils;
For grant they be so, while they rest unknowne
What need a man forestall his date of griece
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of Feare
How bitter is such selfe-delusion?
I doe not thinke my sister so to seek
Or so unprincipl'd in vertues book
And the sweet peace that goodnesse 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 calme thoughts
And put them into mil-becomming plight.
Vertue could see to doe what vertue would
By her owne radiant light, though Sun and Moon
Were in the flat Sea sunck, and Wisdom's selfe
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude.
Where with her best nurse Contemplation
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings

C3 That
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all to ruff't d, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his owne cleere brest
May sit 'th center, and enjoy bright day,
But he that hides a darke soule, and soule thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day Sun,
Himselfe is his owne dungeon.

2. Bro. 'Tis most true
That musing meditation most affects
The Pensive secretie of desert cell
Farre from the checrfull haunt of men, and heards,
And sits as safe as in a Senathouse
For who would rob an Hermit of his weeds
His few books, or his beades, or maple dish,
Or doe his gray hairs any violence?
But beautie like the faire Hesperiantree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon watch with uninchanted eye
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsun'd heaps
Of misers treasure by an outlaws den
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will winke on opportunitie
And let a single helpesse may den passe
Vninjur'd in this wild surrounding waft.
Of night, or lonelynese it recks me not
I feare the dreg events, that dog them both,
Left some ill greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unwonned sister.

Eld. Bro. I doe not brother
Inferre, as if I thought my sisters state

Secure
(15)

Secure without all doubt, or controversy:
Yet where an equal poise of hope; and fear
Does arbitrate th’event, my nature is
That I encline to hope, rather then 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.

2. Bro. What hidden strength
Unless the strength of heav’n, if meane that:

Eld. Bro. I meane that too, but yet a hidden strength
Which if heav’n gave it, may be term’d her owne:
’Tis chastitie, my brother, chastitie:
She that has that, is clad in compleat steele,
And like a quiver’d nymph with arrows keen
May trace huge forrests, and unharbour’d heaths
Infamous hills, and sandie perillus wilds
Where through the sacred rays of chastitie
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaneed
Will dare to soyle her virgin purity
Yea there, where very desolation dwells
By grots, and caverns shag’d with horrid shades
She may passe on with unblench’t majestie
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no vill thing that walks by night
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen
Blew meager hag, or stubborne unlayd ghost
That breaks his magick chains at curfeu time
No goblin, or swart Faërie of the mine
Has hurtfull power ore true virginity.
Doe yee beleev my yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece

To
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Diana her dread bow
Faire silver-shafted Queene for ever chest
Wherewith we tam'd the brinded lionesse.
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid, gods and men
Fear'd her sterne frowne, & she was queen oth' woods.
What was that snake headed Gorgon sheild
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone?
But rigid looks of Chast austerity
And noble grace that dash't brute violence
With sudden adoration, and blanke aw.
So deare to heav'n is faintly chastitie
That when a soule is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackie her
Driving farre off each thing of sinne, and guilt,
And in cleere dreame, and solemnne vision
Tell her of things that no grosse eare can heare,
Till oft converte with heav'nly habitants
Begin to cast a beame on th' outward shape
The unpollluted temple of the mind
And turnes it by degrees to the soules essence
Till all bee made immortall, but when lust
By unchast looks, loose gestures, and soule talke
But most by leud, and lavish act of sin
Let's in desfilement to the inward parts,
The soule grows cotted by contagion,
Imbodie, and imbrutes, till she quite loose
The divine propertie of her first being.
Such are those thick, and gloomie shadows damp
Oft scene in Charnell vaults, and Sepulchers

Hovering,
Hovering, and fitting by a new made grave
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link't it selfe by carnall sensualitie
To a degenerate and degraded state.

2 Bro. How charming is divine Philosophie!
Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musick as Apollo's lute,
And a perpetuall feast of nectar'd sweets
Where no crude surseet reigns. Eld:bro. Lift, lift I heare
Some farre off hallow breake the silent aire.

2 Bro. Me thought so too, what should it be?
Eld:bro. For certaine
Either some one like us night founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour wood man, or at worst
Some roaving robber calling to his fellows.

2 Bro. Heav'n keepe my sister, agen agen and neere,
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
Eld:bro. Ile hallow,
If he be friendly he comes well, if not
Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

The attendant Spirit habited like a shepheard.

That hallow I should know, what are you, speake,
Come not too neere, you fall on iron flakes else.

Spir. What voice is that, my yong Lord: speake agen.
2 Bro. O brother 'tis my father Shepheard sure.

Eld:bro. Thyrfs? whose artfull strains have oft de-
The huddling brook to heare his madrigale, (layd
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale,
How cam'ft thou here good Swaine, hath any ram
Slip't from the fold, or yong kid lost his dam,
Or straggling weather the pen's flock forsauk,

D How
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?
   Spir. O my lov'd masters heire, and his next joy
I came not here on such a triviall toy
As a strayd Ewe, or to pursue the fleath
Of pilfering wolfe, not all the fleecie wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought:
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But o my virgin Ladie where is she,
   How chance she is not in your companie?
   Eld: bro. To tell thee sadly shepheard, without blame
Or our neglect, wee, lost her as wee came.
   Spir. Aye me unhappie then my fears are true.
   Eld: bro. What fears good Thrystis? prethee briefly
   Spir. Ile tell you, 'tis not vaine, or fabulous (shew.
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage Poets taught by th'heav'nly Muse
Storied of old in high immortalt verse
Of dire Chimera's and enchant'd Iles
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell,
For such there be, but unbeliefe is blind.
   Within the navill of this hideous wood
Immur'd in cypresse shades a Sorcerer dwells
Of Bacchus, and of Circe borne, great Comus,
     Deepe skill'd in all his mothers witcheries,
     And here to every thristie wanderer
     By flic enticement gives his banefull cup
     With many murmurs mixt, whose pleasing poison
The vilage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likenesse of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reasons mintage
Character'd in the face; this have Ilearn't
Tending my flocks hard by i'th hilly crofts

That
That brow this bottome glade, whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howle
Like stabl'd wolves, or tigers at their prey
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowres.
Yet have they many baits, and guilefull spells
T'invigle, and invite th'unwarie sense
Of them that passe unweeting by the way.
This evening late by then the chewing flocks
Had ra'ne their supper on the favourie herbe
Of Knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold
I sate me downe to watch upon a bank
With ivie-canopied, and interwove
With flaunting hon'y-suckle, and began
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy
To meditate my rural minstrelsie
Till fancie had her fill, but ere a close
The wonted roare was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the aire with barbarous dissonance
At which I ceas't, and listen'd them a while
Till an unusuall stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsie frighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd sleepe.
At last a soft, and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a frame of rich distill'd Perfumes
And stole upon the aire, that even Silence
Wastoole, e're she was ware, and wish't she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displac't. I was all eare,
And took in strains that might create a soule
Vnder the ribs of Death, but o ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady your deare sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with griefe and feare,
And o poore haplesse nightingale thought I
How sweet thou singft, how neere the deadly snare!
Then downe the lawns I ran with headlong haft,
Through paths, and turnings often tred by day
Till guided by mine eate I found the place
Where that dam'd wizar'd hid in die disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met.
Already, ere my best speed could prevent
The aidlesse innocent Ladie his win't prey,
Who gently ask't if he had seene such two
Supposing him some neighbour.villager;
Longer I durft not stay, but soone I guess't
Yee were the two she mean't, with that I sprung
Into swift flight till I had found you here,
But farther know I not. 2.Bro. O night and shades
How are ye joyn'd with hell in triple knot
Against th'unarmed:weaknesse of one virgin
 Alone, and helpleffe! is this the confidence
You gave me brother? Eld: bro. Yes,and keep it still,
Leane on it safely, not a period
Shall be unsaid for me; 'against the threats
Of malice or of forcerie, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firme,
Virtue may be affail'd, but never hurt,
Surpriz'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd,
Yea even that which mishiefe meant most harme;
Shall in the happietriall prove most glorie.
But evill on it selfe shall backe recoyle
And mixe no more with goodnesse, when at last
Gather'd like scum, and setl'd to it selfe.
It shall be in eternall restless change
Selfe fed, and selfe consum'd, if this faile
The pillar'd firmament is rottenesse,
And earths base built on stubble. But come let's on
Against th' opposing will and arme of heav'n
May never this just sword be lifted up,
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the greisly legions that troope
Vnder the footie flag of Acheron,
Harpyies and Hydra's, or all the monstrous bugs 'Twixt Africa, and Inde, He find him out
And force him to restore his purchase backe
Or drag him by the curles, and cleave his scalpe
downe to the hippes.

Spir. Alas good ventrous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold Emprise,
But here thy sword can doe thee little stead,
Farré other arme, and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms,
He with his bare wand can unthred thy joynts
And crumble all thy finewes.

Eld. Bro. Why prethee thepheard
How durft thou then thy self approach so neere
As to make this relation?

Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Ladie from surprisall
Brought to my mind a certaine thepheard lad
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every vertuous plant, and healing herbe
That spreds her verdant leafe to th'morning ray,
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grasse

Would
Would fit, and hearken even to extasie,
And in requittall ope his lether'n scrip,
And shew me simples of a thousand names
Telling their strange, and vigorous faculties,
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leafe was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another Countrie, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soyle:
Unknowne, and like esteem'd, and the dull swayne
Treads on it dayly with his clouted shoon,
And yet more medicinall is it then that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Vlysses gave,
He call'd it Hamony, and gave it me
And bad me kepe it as of soveraine use
Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp
Or gavely furies apparition;
I purst it up, but little reck'ning made
Till now that this extremity compell'd,
But now I find it true, for by this means
I knew the soule inchanter though disguis'd,
Enter'd the very lime twigs of his spells,
And yet came off, if you have this about you
(As I will give you when we goe) you may
Boldly assault the necromancers hall,
Where if he be, with dauntlesse hardihood
And brandish't blade rush on him, breake his glasse,
And shed the lusious liquor on the ground
But seafe his wand, though he and his curt crew
Feirce signe of bataille make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoake,
Yet will they soone retire, if he but shrinke

Eld:
Eld. Bro. Thyrsis lead on apace I'll follow thee,
And some good angel beare a sheild before us.

The Scene Changes to a stately palace set out with all
manner of deliciousnesse, soft musick, tables spread
with all dainties. Comus appeares with his rabble,
and the Ladie set in an enchanted chaire to whom he
offers his glasse, which she puts by, and goes about
to rise.

Comus. Nay Ladie sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or as Daphne was
Root bound that fled Apollo.

La. Fool do not boast.
Thou canst not touch the freedome of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporall rind
Thou hast immanac'd, while heav'n sees good.

Co. Why are you vex't Ladie, why doe you frowne:
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates
Sorrow flies farre: see here be all the pleasures
That fancie can beget on youthful thoughts
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose leafton.
And first behold this cordial julep here
That flames, and dances in his crystal bounds
With spirits of balme, and fragrant syrops mixt.
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone.
In Egypt gave to Iove borne Helena:
Is of such power to stirre up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool'd to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to your selfe.
And to those daintie limbs which nature lent
For gentle usage, and soft delicacie:
But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,
And harshly deale like an ill borrower
With that which you receiv'd on other termes,
Scorning the unexempt condition,
By which all mortall frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toile, ease after paine,
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted, but faire virgin
This will restore all soone.

La. T'will not false traitor,
T'will not restore the truth and honestie
That thou hast banish't from thy tongue with lies,
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of: what grim aspects are these,
These ougly-headed monsters? Mercie guard me!
Hence with thy brewd enchantments foule deceiver,
Haft thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falshood, and base forgerie,
And wouldst thou seek againe to trap me here
With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draft for Juno when she banquets
I would not tast 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 wel-govern'd and wise appetite.

Co. O foolishnesse of men! that lend their cares
To those budge doctors of the Stoick surse,
And fetch their præceptes from the Cynick tub,
Praising the leane, and fallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature powre her bounties forth

With
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks
Thronging the seas with spawne innumerable
But all to please, and late the curious tatt?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk
To deck her Sons, and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plentie, in her owne loyhs
She hutch't th'all worship't 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 streame, and nothing ware but Freize,
Th'all-giver would be unthank't, would be unprais'd,
Not halfe his riches-known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Natures bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,
And strangl'd with her waft fertilitie; (plumes,
Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd aire dark't with
The heards would over-inultitude their Lords,
The sea ore-fraught would fwell, and th'unfought dia-
Would so emblaze the forehead of the Deep, (monds
And so bestudde with stars that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows.
Lift Ladie be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted-name Virginitie,
Beautie is natures coine, must not be hoorded,
But must be currant, and the good thereof
Consists in mutuall and partaken blisse,
Unfavourie in th'injoyment of it selfe
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish't head.
Beautie is nature's brag, and must be shone
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keepe home;
They had their name thence; course complexions
And cheeks of forrie graine will serve to ply
The sampler, and to teize the huswives wooll.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morne
There was another meaning in these gifts?
Thinke what, and be advis'd, you are but yong yet.

La. I had not thought to have unlockt my lips
In this unhallow'd aire, but that this Jugler
Would thinke to charme my judgement, as mine eyes
Obtruding false rules pranckt in reasons garbe.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments
And vertue has no tongue to check her pride:
Impostor doe not charge most innocent nature
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance, she good cateresse
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 lewdy-pamper'd Luxurie
Now heaps upon some few with vast excessse,
Natures full blessings would be well dispent't.
In unsuperfluous even proportion;
And she no whit encomber'd with her store,

And
And then the giver would be better thank't,
His praise due paid, for sensual gluttony
Ne'er looks to heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with belated base ingratitude
Cramms, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I goe on?
Or have I said enough? to him that dares
Arme his profane tongue with reproachfull words
Against the Sun-clad power of Chastitie
Faine would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou haft nor Eare, nor Soule to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mysterie
That must be utter'd to unfold the fage
And serious doctrine of Virginitie,
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More hapinesse then this thy present lot.
Enjoy your deere Wit, and gay Rhetorick
That hath so well beene taught her dazling fence,
Thou art not fit to heare thy selfe convinc't;
Yet should I trie, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rap't spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magick structures rear'd so high
Were shatter'd into heaps or thy false head.

She fables not, I seele that I doe feare
Her words set off by some superior power;
And though not mortall, yet a cold shuddring dew
Dips me all o' e, as when the wrath of love
Speaks thunder, and the chaines of Erebus
To some of Saturns crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come; no more,
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation,
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees
And setlings of a melancholy blood;
But this will cure all strait, one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taft.—

_The brothers rush in with swords drawne, wrest his_
_glass e out of his hand, and breake it against the_
_ground; his rout make signe of resistance, but are_
_all driven in; the attendant Spirit comes in._

_Spir._ What, have you let the false-enchanter escape?
O yee mistooke, yee should have snatcht his wand
And bound him fast; without his rod revers't,
And backward mutters of dislevering power
Wee cannot free the Ladie that sits here
In stonic setters fixt, and motionlesse;
Yet stay, be not disturb'd, now I bethinke me,
Some other meanes I have which may be us'd,
Which once of _Melibæus_ old I learnt
The foothest shepheard that ere pipe't on plains.

There is a gentle nymph not farre from hence
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream;
_Sabrina_ is her name, a virgin pure,
Whilome shee was the daughter of _Locrine_,
That had the scepter from his father _Brute_.
She guiltlesse damsell flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdam _Guendolen_.
Commended her faire innocence to the flood,
That stay'd her flight with his crosse-flowing course,

The
The water Nymphs that in the bottome playd
Held up their pearled wrists and tooke her in,
Bearing her straite to aged Nereus hall
Who piteous of her woes reatd her lanke head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers strewd with asphodil,
And through the porch, and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oyles till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quicke, immortall change
Made goddesse of the river; still she retaines
Her maiden gentlenesse, and oft at eve
Visti the heards along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill lucke signes
That the strewd medling elfe delights to make,
Which she with precious viold liquors heales.
For which the shepheards at their festivalls
Carroll her goodnesse lowd in rusticke layes,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her streame
Of panicies, pinks, and gaudie daffadills.
And, as the old Swaine said, she can unlocke
The clasping charme, and thaw the numming spell,
If she be right invok't in warbled Song,
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin such as was her selfe
In hard befitting need, this will I trie
And adde the power of some adjuring verse.

Song.

Sabrina faire
Listen where thou art sitting.
Under the glassie, coole, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lillies knitting
The loose traine of thy amber-dropping haire, 
Listen for deare honours sake 
Goddess of the silver lake 
Listen and save.

Listen and appeare to us 
In name of great Oceanus, 
By th earth shaking Neptun's mace 
And Tethys grave majestick pase, 
By hoarie Nereus wrinkled looke, 
And the Carpathian wizards hooke, 
By saltie Tritons winding shell. 
And old sooth saying Glauceus spell, 
By Leucotbes' ovely hands, 
And her son that rules the strands, 
By Thetis tinsel-slipper d feet; 
And the songs of Sirens sweet, 
By dead Parthenope's deare tomb, 
And faire Ligea's golden comb, 
Wherewith she fits on diamond rocks 
Sleeking her soft alluring locks, 
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance 
Vpon thy streams with wilie glance, 
Rise, rise and heave thy rosie head 
From thy coral-paven bed, 
And bridle in thy headlong wave 
Till thou our summons answerd have. 
Listen and save.

Sabrina rises attended by water Nymphes and sings.
by the rushie fringed banke, 
Where groves the willow and she ofier dancke 
My sliding chariot stays, 
Thick
Thicke set with agat, and the azure sheene
Of turkis blew, and Emrould greene
That in the channell straies,
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printlesse feet
Ore the cowslips velvet head,
That bends not as I tread,
Gentle swaine at thy request
I am here.

Spir. Goddesse deare
Wee implore thy powerfull hand
To undoe the charm'd band
Of true virgin here distrest,
Through the force, and through the wile
Of unblest inchanter vile.
Sab. Shepheard tis my office best
To helpe infrared chastitie;
Brightest Ladie looke on me,
Thus I sprinkle on thy brest
Drops that from my fountaine pure
I have kept of precious cure,
Thrice upon thy fingers tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip,
Next this marble venom'd feate
Smear'd with gunmes of glutinous heate
I touch with chast palmes moist and cold,
Now the spell hath lost his hold.
And I must haft ere morning houre
To waite in Amphitrities bowre.
Sabrina descends and the Ladie rises one
of her seate.

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine
Sprung of old Anchises line
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never misse
From a thousand pettie rills,
That tumble downe the snowie hills:
Summer drouth, or singed aire
Never scorch thy tresses faire,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystall fill with mudde,
May thy billowes rowle a shoare
The beryll, and the golden ore,
May thy loftie head be crown'd
With many a tower, and terrasse round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrhe, and cinnamon.

Come Ladie while heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Left the forcerer us intice
With some other new device.
Not a waft, or needlesse sound
Till we come to holyer ground,
I shall be your faithfull guide
Through this gloomie covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence.
Is your Fathers residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a freind to gratulate

His


His wish't presence, and beside
All the Swains that there abide,
With liggs, and rural dance resort,
Wee shall catch them at their sport,
And our suddaine comming there
Will double all their mirth, and chere,
Come let us haft the starrs are high
But night fits monarch yet in the mid skie.

The Scene changes presenting Ludlow towne and the
Presidents Castle, then come in Countrie dancers, af-
ter them the attendant Spirit with the two Brothers
and the Ladie.

Song.

Spir. Back shepheard, 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.

This second Song presents them
to their father and mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought yee new delight,
Here behold so goodly grown.
Three faire branches of your owne,
Heav'n hath timely tri'd their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth.

And
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crowne of deathlesse Praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
Or sensual Folly, and Intemperance.

The dances ended, the Spirit Epilogizes.

Spir. To the Ocean now I fly,
And those happie climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the skie:
There I suck the liquid ayre
All amidst the gardens faire
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree,
Along the crisp'd shades, and bowres
Revels the spruce and jocond Spring,
The Graces, and the rose-bosom'd Howres.
Thither all their bounties bring,
That there æternall Summer dwells
And west winds, with muskie wing
About the cedar'n alleys fling
Nard, and Cæsia's balmie smells.
Tis there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks that blow
Flowers of more mingled hew
Then her purs'd scarfè can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(Lift mortalls, if your cares be true)
Beds of Hyacinth, and roses
Where young Adonis oft repose,
Waxing well of his deepè wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground

Sadly
Sadly fits th'Assyrian Queene;
But farre above in spangled sheene
Celestiall Cupid her fam'd Son advanc't,
Holds his deare Psyche sweet intranc't
After her wandring labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his æternall Bride,
And from her faire unspotted side
Two blissfull twins are to be borne,
Youth, and Ioy; so love hath sworne.
But now my taske is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the greene earths end,
Where the bow'd welkin flow doth bend,
And from thence can soare as soone
To the corners of the Moone.
Mortalls that would follow me,
Love vertue, she alone is free,
She can teach yee how to clime
Higher then the Sphaeric chime;
Or if vertue feeble were
Heav'n it selfe would stoope to her.

The principall persons in this Maske; were
The Lord Bracly,  The Lady Alice
M. Thomas Egerton,  Egerton.

The End.
Milton, John
Comus, "a maske presented at Ludlow castle, 1634"