

Line 14. "Melodious tear?"

It means the poem. Being an elegy, it is tearful of course; and when such moderns as Tennyson and Swinburne assure us that it is the most exquisitely perfect of all elegiac poems as regards artistic form, we may be sure that Milton's own musical ear did not deceive him when he described his poem as "melodious." If it is not so to the reader, so much the worse for him.

Line 17. "Somewhat loudly?"

I don't feel quite sure what Milton meant by this. Perhaps as he was writing this part of the poem he may have been thinking of what he was going to say in lines 113-131.

Lines 19-22.

"So may somebody do for me when I am dead, what I am now about to do for my friend Lycidas." The "somebody" of course was to be a poet, and the "lucky words" were to be such as those in line twenty-two. In his Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester, Milton wrote these "lucky words":

"Gentle lady, may thy grave  
Peace and quiet ever have;  
After this thy travail sore  
Sweet rest seize thee evermore."

Line 55. Why "wizard stream"?

In an earlier poem, Milton has:—"Ancient hallowed Dee." Drayton, too, calls it "hallowed." And Spenser in *F. Q.* 4, 11, has:—

Dee that long ago,  
Did Britons call divine.

In the legendary lore of ancient Britain, the river was said to be haunted by magicians. It was sacred, too, as a boundary stream, separating England from Wales.

Line 56. "Ay me," should it not be "Ah me"?

Look at line 154, and at *Comus* 511, and at *Samson Agonistes* 331, and hear Spenser:—

"Ay me, that thanks so much should fail of meed."

And Shakespeare:—

"Ay me, what act  
That roars so loud and thunders in the index"?

The poets of the present century use it also. Here is a line from Mrs. Browning:—

"Ay me! how dread can look the dead."

And in Tennyson's *Tithonus* we find:—

"Ay me! ay me! the woods decay and fall."

Line 66. What does it mean?

Compare *Comus* 547, read from 543. If you read Latin look at the second line of Virgil's first *Eclogue*. Even if you don't read Latin, you had better get hold of a Latin dictionary and look up the different meanings of "meditor;" and while you have the book in hand

you may as well look up also "utor" to help you understand the "use" in lines 67 and 136; and "clarus" too, for the "clear" in line 70. Milton often uses English words of Latin origin in senses that can be more readily found in a Latin dictionary than in an English one.

Line 75. What is "the Blind Fury"?

The Furies were the

"Dwellers in the nether gloom, avengers of the slain,"

to whom Macaulay makes *Virginius* call for vengeance on *Appius Claudius*. It was one of the Fates, *Atropos*, whose business it was to slit the life-thread of mortals; but Milton is enraged at her for drowning his friend and takes the very natural liberty of applying an opprobrious epithet to her. Compare Tennyson in "*In Memoriam*" 50:—

"Be near me when the sensuous frame  
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;  
And time, a maniac scattering dust,  
And life, a Fury slinging flame."

Line 77. What does "Touch'd my trembling ears" signify.

Masson says this is "A fine poetical appropriation of of the popular superstition that the tingling of a person's ears is a sign that people are talking of him. What Milton has been saying about poetic fame, might be understood, he saw, as applicable to himself."

Lines 103-7. Explain.

*Triton*, "*The Herald of the Sea*" (89), came, on behalf of *Neptune*, to inquire into the drowning of *Lycidas*; by-and-bye, *St. Peter*, "*The Pilot of the Galilean Lake*" (109), comes to lament the untimely fate of a promising son of the church; one who, as a true pastor, would have been in striking contrast to the corrupt *Laudian* clergy.

Here we have the genius of Cambridge University coming to ask about his alumnus. He is dressed as a college don should be, in gown and cap. He represents the river as well as the university, and his gown is made of the hairy weeds that grow in the *Cam*, while his cap is made of the sedges that line its banks. The indistinct markings on the sedge leaves are compared with those on the petals of the hyacinth. As for "sanguine," and "inscribed with woe," look up the fable about *Hyacinthus*.

There is scarcely a line in the whole poem which does not remind the reader of the Greek and Latin pastoral poetry of some passage there. For instance, the "touch'd my trembling ears" in 77 recalls Virgil's "*Cynthius aurem vellit*" in the sixth *Eclogue*. So too, here, we are reminded of a passage near the beginning of "*Moschus's Lament for Bion*." Andrew Lang renders