

the eye, and fascinate the imagination, is gathered into brief compass in this Idyl. It is genial if nothing else of Milton's poetry is. The poet loves what he pictures. He dwells upon it with fondest delight, and we have a grouping of scenes and objects which all familiar with rural life must have realized: the landscape is Titian-like or Rembrandt-like, or both together; or it is like a Gainsborough with the colouring of Titian and the minuteness of Rembrandt.

If Milton, as is supposed, derived the suggestion of the 'Comus' from Fletcher's 'Faithful Sheperdess,' the 'L'Allegro and 'Il Penseroso' seem to have been suggested to him by some verses which preface that quaint and singular work, Burton's 'Anatomic of Melancholy,' and a song which occurs in one of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. Milton, it cannot be denied, has made somewhat free with some of the thoughts and images of the latter composition: but it was only to expand and improve upon them: there are some who may be disposed to question if the original stanzas are not the finer composition of the two. Milton, however, is always rich enough in his own thoughts and fancies to afford to be indebted to some of his predecessors or cotemporary poets. We would not ascribe it to poverty in a man of known wealth on an occasion, to suit his needs, borrowing a coin from a neighbour less affluent in circumstances than himself. It could obviously be imputed to no actual want, if he did so; and so with Milton and his borrowed ideas. Poetry, too, is a kind of wealth which, if we have plenty of our own, we may, without any charge of dishonesty or meanness, sometimes appropriate—done as it may be from the very love of the beauties stolen or inadvertently filched. Milton repays all that he borrows, restores what he has harmlessly taken away, with interest; he dignifies what he appropriates by associating it with something greater and higher than itself. With what a painter's art has Milton touched off the subjects of these two poems! We almost see Euphrosyne with her

Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles:

Or Melancholy in her sable stole, and with eyes fixed on the ground,
or looks "commercing with the skies."

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.

Milton's wealth of learning and classic illusion is seen in this poem.
His power of introducing appropriate imagery and collateral circum-