

deeply as the sight of them could have done. But those very characteristics gave rise to his faults. His landscapes are often too minute. He dwells too long on each insignificant object in detail, and by his over-intense appreciation of them he is led to aggrandize them and even sometimes to adopt a style bare and meagre. His description leans notably toward the subjective, but still many of his poems exhibit great powers of minute and faithful description. Many of the best of them are contained in his *Descriptive Sketches*, upon the appearance of which Coleridge wrote: "Seldom if ever was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced." This work with his *Excursion* comprises the greater part of his descriptions.

No small part of the beauty of descriptive poetry is contrived by an appropriate application of epithets, and, moreover, it is epithets that are most frequently abused by poets, for, quite frequently it occurs that a verse wants a foot to complete the line or to make the rhyme, when the only expedient is to make up the deficiency in epithets. Every epithet should contribute a new idea to the word modified or else strengthen its known signification. It is in this feature that Milton particularly distinguished himself. The *Il Penseroso* and *P' Allegro* are the two richest and most remarkable poems of descriptive style in English. They belong rather to the

subjective class, also, as they represent the different impressions made upon the mind in different dispositions by the same surroundings; but while subjective as a whole they contain many perfect descriptions of outward objects. Here is the description of 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,  
Stooping through a fleeting cloud."

It has not, of course, been the object in this brief compendium to give a comprehensive outline of all the exquisite descriptions of nature that occur in our literature; only a few characteristic instances have been mentioned with the purpose of attracting attention to this particular part of the poet's field. Neither has description as a whole been considered, for if we take description in the broad sense of the word we will be obliged to include all literature of every kind, for all expression is description of something, material or immaterial. We have confined ourselves to poetic description of nature as nearly as possible, for, as has been shown, there is no distinct line between description of outward beauty and description of inward sensibility of that beauty; and if the reader of this paper has gained any clearer conception of the importance of that department of poetry, this effort has accomplished its purpose.

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