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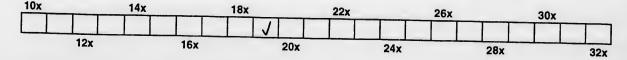
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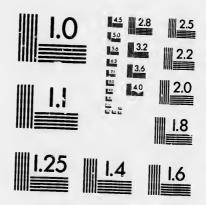
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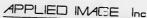
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MILTON L'ALLEGRO

EDITED, WITH NOTES

BY

OLIVER ELTON, B.A.

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD LECTURER ON ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE OWNES COLLEGE (VICTORIA UNIVERSITY) MANCHESTER

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS poem and the Penseroso must be studied side by side in order to understand either. In mechanism, to begin with, they are parallel; they have a similar overture, development, climax, and close, which it is easy to follow. Each poem opens with an imprecation, in similar metre, against the patron goddess of the other, and goes on to invoke its own, Mirth for the joyous man, Melancholy for the sad. The parentage of each goddess is given, and each is bidden to come with its own retinue of beautiful abstractions. Then the poet begins his walk: the lark salutes his joyous mood, the nightingale his sadness. Matin sights and sounds fill the sense of the joyous man; the evening moon and curfew sign to the sad man to go in. Both men, or rather both incarnations of the poet's mood, come together at eve over the well-loved stage; only, the Allegro goes to a comedy at the theatre, while the Penseroso sits at home to read Aeschylus, Shakspere, and Chaucer. For each the close is music: thrilling and delightful 'airs' for the Allegro, for the Penseroso cathedral choir and anthem.

Closer than mere likeness of mechanism is the identity of style and atmosphere in the two poems. The early freshness was still on Milton's genius; the early excess of imagery, which we find in the Nativity Ode, is purged away. Not yet had the poet struck the note which we first hear in Lycidas, the note of the Hebrews and of Dante, of wrath and righteousness and judgment, of the 'two-handed engine at the door.' There is indeed in these two poems more than the promise of a great poet, there is the performance; but the full fire of his soul is not yet kindled, and will not be for many years. In other words, his imagination is still immature; it is perpetually crossed with fantasy, though it be fantasy of a lofty and gracious order, whose later burning away under the stress of conflict and saeva indignatio we can almost regret.

We have no direct evidence of the date when these poems were written. They belong to the years (1632-8) of Milton's life at Horton in Bucks. Comus was acted in 1634; and from the evidence of tone and workmanship these twin-poems are generally thought to have preceded it. It should be noted that their scenery is what Professor Masson well calls 'ideal and eclectic.' The poet only takes the general character of his setting from the country which was before his eyes; but, being a poet, he deals with it even more freely than Turner dealt with the subjects of his pictures.

The rhythm of these poems, like that of all Milton's verse, deserves close study. The base-metre in both poems is the old eight-syllabled, four-accent rhyming line with the accent on the even syllables (second, fourth, &c.). This is the measure of many old French Romances, of Gower, and often of Chaucer; of Scott, Byron, Coleridge, and countless others afterwards. No one, unless it be Coleridge (in *Christabel*), has approached Milton in the mastery of it; and Milton used it only for these two poems and for some of the songs in *Comus*; soon he discarded it, first for the measure of *Lycidus*, and then for blank verse.

In the Penseroso the base-metre prevails; that is, lines like-

'To hit | the sense | of hu | man sight.'

Lines like-

'Sóber | steádfast | ánd de- | múre,'

where there are seven syllables, but still four accents (these accents however being on the odd syllables, first, third, &c.), are the exception. There are twenty-four such lines out of a total of 176. But in the Allegro this joyous and tripping variation of the measure is naturally much commoner, occurring in fifty-five lines out of 152. The effect of each occasion where it is used should be carefully noted and felt. The other notable variation of the base-metre (besides a simple extra syllable at the end, which is called a feminine rhyme), is where the accent is reversed in the first foot, as in—

'Under | the haw- | thorn in | the dale.'

ē

This line closes a series (ll. 64-68) of the seven-syllabled lines, and produces an effect of peculiar lightness, swing, and satisfaction in the climax.

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 15 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, 20 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.

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Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee	25
Jest and youthful Jollity,	3
Quips and Cranks and wanton Wiles,	
Nods and Becks and wreathed Smiles,	
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,	
And love to live in dimple sleek;	30
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,	3-
And Laughter holding both his sides.	
Come, and trip it as ye go	
On the light fantastic toe;	
And in thy right hand lead with thee	35
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;	33
And, if I give thee honour due,	
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,	
To live with her, and live with thee,	
In unreproved pleasures free;	40
To hear the lark begin his flight,	40
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,	45
And at my window bid good morrow,	73
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,	
Or the twisted eglantine;	
While the cock with lively din,	
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,	50
And to the stack, or the barn-door,	3-
Stoutly struts his dames before:	
Oft listening how the hounds and horn	
Cheerly rouse the slumbering Morn,	
From the side of some hoar hill,	55
Through the high wood echoing shrill.	33
Sometime walking, not unseen,	
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,	
Right against the eastern gate	
Where the great Sun begins his state,	60

1		,
25	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,	65
30	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	
35	Whilst the landskip round it measures;	70
	Russet lawns, and fallows gray,	
	Where the nibbling flocks do stray;	
	Mountains on whose barren breast	
	The labouring clouds do often rest;	
	Meadows trim with daisies pied,	75
40	Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;	
	Towers and battlements it sees	
	Bosomed high in tufted trees,	
	Where perhaps some beauty lies,	
ì	The Cyn are of neighbouring eyes.	80
45	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,	85
50	Which the neat-handed Phillis 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.	90
55	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,	9
60	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, 100 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 105 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, 110 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, 115 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, 120 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 125 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. 130 Then to the well-trod stage anon, If Jonson's learned sock be on, Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child, Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever, against eating cares, 135 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 140 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 145 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. 150 These delights if thou canst give, Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

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NOTES.

Some valuable notes and quotations are borrowed below from Mr. R. C. Browne's edition of Milton, and are marked with his initials. The editions of Keightley and Masson have proved most useful. The Glossary is mainly taken from Prof. Skeat's Etymological Dictionary.

1. 2. Melancholy is the child of the porter of Hell and of Midnight; the classical husband of Night was Erebus or Darkness: perhaps Milton substituted 'Cerberus' because its first syllable is more sonorous to dwell upon than that of 'Erebus.'

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i. 3. Stygian. The original meaning of the word 'hateful' is suggested: 'Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate,' Paradise Lost, ii.

577.

1. 5. uncouth: rough, uncivilized.

1. 6. jealous: jealous to guard its 'brood' from intruders, like an

angry vulture, or some dusky bird of ill omen.

Il. 8, 9. 'The tops of the ragged rocks' (Isaiah ii. 21) probably suggested this word to Milton. But 'rocks as ragged as thy locks' is a piece of fantasy more in the manner of Donne than of Milton at his best; there seems no true picture in the comparison, unless the 'ragged' seaweed be thought of.

l. Io. The Cimmerians. See Odyssey, xi. 13: 'The ship came to the end of the world, the deep-flowing Ocean-stream. There is the land and city of the Cimmerians, swathed in mist and in cloud; and the shining sun never looks down on them with his beams, neither when he climbs up the starry heavens, nor when again he turns from the heaven earthward: but over miserable mortals is spread out fatal night.'

l. 12. yelept, called. See Glossary.

Euphrosyn means Blitheness, Festal Cheer. Her 'sister Graces' were Aglaia (Radiance) and Thalia (The Blooming). The Graces 'are the friends of the Muses, with whom they live together in Olympus' (Smith, Class. Dict. Art. *Charites*).

l. 17. some sager. Milton's own fancy has to answer for this beautiful alternative genealogy. Mirth is daughter of the soft west wind and the Dawn.

l. 18. frolic, sportive and blithe, with a touch of mischief like Ariel.

1. 22. Milton remembers The Taming of the Shrew, ii. 1. 174 (all references are to Globe edition):--

'I'll say she looks as clear

As morning roses newly washed with dew.' [R. C. B.]

l. 24. buxom. See Glossary.

debonair, courteous, of easy and kindly manner. See Glossary. 'So buxom, blithe,' occurs in the Prologue to Pericles, Prince of Tyre (not Shakspere's part).

1. 27. A quip is defined by Lyly in Alexander and Campaspe as 'a short saying of a sharp wit, with a bitter sense in a sweet word.'
[R. C. B.] It is a smart and usually punning retort. See Glossary.

cranks are sudden twists and turns of wit. See Glossary. l. 29. Hebe, the cupbearer of nectar and ambrosia to the gods.

1. 33. ye, plural, addressed to Sport, &c. Thy, in 1. 35, is addressed to the nymph Mirth alone.

1. 34. fantastic. The dance is to be a country one, full of wild and graceful figures: not a solemn ceremonious one.

1. 36. The Oread, or hill-nymph, is Liberty incarnate, ranging free as air.

1. 40. unreproved, unblameable, innocent. 'What is not reproved' easily comes to mean 'what cannot be reproved;' and the idiom is common in Milton and Shakspere. In the lines on Shakspere (1.11) we have 'the leaves of thy unvalued book:' an usage perhaps borrowed from Shakspere himself, Richard III. i. 4. 27, 'unvalued jewels' (that is, 'invaluable').

1. 43. The lark sees the dawn sooner than the dull night which grovels on the earth, because he is high up in his 'watchtower.' The word tower (spelt tow'r in edition 1645) is, like 'flower,' 'bower,' &c., nearly always one syllable in Milton.

1. 44. The best commentary is Much Ado about Nothing, v. 3. 25:—
'And look! the gentle day . . .

Dapples the drowsy east with spots of gray.' [R. C. B.]

l. 45. Then to come is parallel in construction to 'to hear' in 1. 41 and 'to live' in 1. 39: depending, that is, on 'admit' in 1. 38, or rather on 'permit' understood from 'admit.' Mark Pattison thinks that the lark comes to the window and greets the Allegro (construing 'to come' as parallel to 'begin' and 'startle' in 11. 41-2). But the words 'in spite of sorrow' seem to imply the Allegro going to his own window and greeting the morning; they would mean little applied to the lark.

1. 48. The eglantine used to mean the sweet-briar; Milton must have meant the honeysuckle. 'Twisted' would not suit the dog-rose,

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which some have conjectured as being the nearest thing to the sweet-briar. But, as Mark Pattison points out in his excellent book on Milton (Eng. Men of Letters series), the city-bred Milton ignored such details.

l. 50 The last thin wreaths of dark mist that linger after sunrise are, like a r uted army, scattered by 'the eock's shrill clarion.'

1. 53. .istening (list'ning, edition 1645) is two syllables. So slumbering in the next line.

1. 54. With this description of the morn contrast that in the Penseroso, 11. 122 sq.

Cheerly, blithely and with good heart. 'Cheerly, good Adam,' As You Like It, ii. 6. 19.

l. 55. hoar, with early unmelted rime.

1. 58. The Penseroso (1. 65) 'walks unseen,' and on college lawns retired, not on 'hillocks.'

ll. 59-63. Note the magnificent sound of these lines. Milton once or twice in these two poems seems to quit the tone of gracious fantasy which he has laid down for them, and to 'somewhat loudly sweep the string.' But the fanciful word 'liveries' brings him back again.

1. 59. against: the cheerful man walks facing the east, with the sun full in his eyes.

1. 60. Like a king holding a court. See Penseroso 37, 'keep thy wonted state.' 'The clouds' in 1. 62 are his courtiers in full dress.

l. 62. dight, adorned. See Glossary.

1. 67. tale is probably 'story,' not 'the number of his flock.' If it be literally said that telling stories is a strange occupation for day-break, there is the equally literal reply that 'under the hawthorn' suggests story-telling much more than it does the 'telling' or counting of flocks.

1. 69. The 'cye' is the mind's eye. The cheerful man is figured, not as looking at different points of a single scene, but as imagining scene after scene. Remember once more that 'The scenery is ideal and eclectic.' At any rate, 'mountains' shows that the Horton country is not (hought of exclusively.

l. 70. landskip. See Glossary.

l. 71. Russet lawns: heath or other waste-lands between woods. 'Russet' is the rusty brown of the bracken or ling. See Glossary for 'lawns.'

l. 74. labouring: charged with rain, and toiling onwards like swimmers in the sky. Goldsmith, Deserted Village, 191:—

'Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread, Eternal sunshine settles on its head.' Pe

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1. 75. So 'trim gardens,' Il Penseroso 50. pied, variegated pink, yellow and white. The word originally refers chiefly to black and white. Shakspere has 'When daisies pied,' Love's Labour's Lost, song at end; also 'piedness,' Winter's Tale, iv. 3. 87, in the great scene of Perdita and the flowers.

l. 77. Windsor Castle, though not 'bosomed high in tufted trees,'

may have suggested this line.

1. 79. lies, lives. Properly of lodging or passing the night at a place. Justice Shallow (2 Henry IV. iii. 2. 299) 'lay at Clement's Inn.' [R.C.B.]

1. 80. Cynosure is literally 'dog's tail' in Greck, and meant the Lesser Bear, which the Phenician sailors fixed their eyes upon to steer by.

1. 83. Corydon, Thyrsis, &c., are pastoral personages out of Virgil's Eclogues. The scholar-poet, writing in part for scholars, dresses the English peasant playfully in classic names, and calls a country girl's room a 'bower.'

1.89. lead, namely, lead 'her thither, i.e. if it be haymaking time' (Keightley).

1. 90. tanned, by the sun.

1. 91. secure means careless (Lat. securus), not 'safc,' with which it is contrasted, e. g. by Ben Jonson in his Epode:—

'Men may securely sin, but safely never.' [R. C. B.]

l. 93. Peals were and arc often rung on church-bells on feast-days.

l. 94. rebecks are a sort of fiddle. See Glossary. The fiddler in Romeo and Juliet, iv. 5. 135, is named Hugh Rebeck.

l. 100. Then (go we) to, &c. The 'spice' is the nutmeg in the wassail-bowl of warm sweet ale.

l. 102. For Queen Mab see Mercutio's speech in Romco and Juliet, i. ÷ 53-94. But Milton doubtless owed more to Ben Jonson's Satyr, where Mab is called 'She that pinches country wenches If they rub not clean their benches . . . But if so they chance to fcast Ler, In a shoe she drops a tester.'

junkets are properly milk curdled and served on rushes (Ital. giunchi).

1. 103. She, one of the maids: he, in the next line, is one of the lads.

l. 104. 'The **Friar** is the celebrated Friar Rush, who haunted houses not fields, and was never the same with Jack-o'-the-Lanthorn' (Keightley).

l. 105. The goblin is Robin Goodfellow, he is long and hairy; a Puck 'imprisoned,' to use Carlyle's phrase, 'in the coarse hulls of a Caliban.'

sweat, past tense, 'sweated.'

1. 111. chimney's length, the width of the old broad-chimneyed hearth.

l. 112. 'Relax his ponderous strength,' Goldsmith, Deserted Village, 246.

1. 113. crop-full, with his crop or stomach full. The word 'crop' suits the half-animal goblin.

1. 115. creep, frightened by the tales.

l. 117. Towered is spelt towered in the edition of 1645, and should be pronounced in two syllables so as to rhyme not with 'sour'd' or 'embow-er'd,' but with 'how red.'

1. 120. triumphs are here shows, spectacles. One of Bacon's Essays is on Masques and Triumphs, the latter term being applied to 'justs, tourneys, and barriers' (railings between the fighters to save the horses). [R. C. B.]

l. 121. store, plenty.

l. 122. Rain influence. Power was thought by the astrologers to stream down from the stars and bring good or ill fortune to men; and the technical word for this was 'influence.' Edmund, in King Lear, i. 2. 128, says: 'we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity.' Here the 'bright eyes' of the ladies are the stars that not only 'judge the prize' but determine the victory.

l. 124. The Queen of Beauty at the particular tourney. her grace whom, the grace of her whom.

l. 125. Hymen, the god of marriage, was a common character in Masques, and appeared in a saffron dress. His 'taper' was his 'teade' (taeda) or torch. See Spenser's Epithalamion. [R. C. B.]

l. 127. pomp, procession, pompa.

1. 128. mask or masque meant the kind of entertainment of which Comus is the noblest instance. It was lyric (or at least undramatic) poetry in a dramatic setting. See notes on Comus for further clucidation.

1. 129. Marriage songs or Epithalamia (like, for instance, Spenser's) as well as masques are meant.

1. 132. The sock (soccus), low-heeled shoe, indicates comedy, in which it was worn, just as the 'buskined stage' (Penseroso, 102) indicates tragedy. Learned is as true an epithet of Jonson's comedies as of Jonson himself: they brim over with allusion and remote information. 'Jonson,' says Professor Masson, 'was still alive when the lines were written.' He died in 1637, and it is probable, though not certain, that the Allegro was written before this date.

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edy, in which (2) indicates medies as of information. e lines were certain, that l. 133. Read the lines on Shakspere (1630) to learn the full scope of Milton's admiration for him. Here, where the poetic note is not one of very deep feeling, Milton merely puts into verse the contrast, accepted in his day, of Jonson the claborate and Shakspere the spontaneous poet. Besides, the context suggests that the Allegro goes to see Comedy; and Milton doubtless was thinking of one of the open-air comedics like As You Like It (as in keeping with the daydreams of the Allegro), a play which would be exactly suited for the phrase 'native woodnotes wild.' Milton, so seldom spontaneous himself, felt the spontaneity of Shakspere almost more than all his other qualities. See the lines to Shakspere, 'Thou, to the shame of slow endeavouring art.'

l. 135. eating cares contains the same idea as the Italian word Pen-

seroso (not in Milton's sense of 'thoughtful').

1. 136. Lydian means sweet and tender music. For contrast, see Paradise Lost, i. 550: 'Anon they moved

In perfect phalanx to the *Dorian* mood Of flutes and soft recorders—such as raised To highth of noblest temper heroes old Arming to battle.'

l. 137. Just like Penseroso, he asks for music accompanied by song, and not simple instrumental music.

1. 138. pierce was pronounced as perse, retaining traces of its French form percer.

1. 139. bout, twist, coil, 'bought.' The word expresses perhaps the complication of the music, which is in the end resolved or 'untwisted.' There may be a kind of suggestion of the Aristotelian $\delta \epsilon \sigma s$, complication, and $\lambda \delta \sigma s$, denoûment, of a dramatic action.

1. 141. These words depend on 'drawn out' in the line before, not on 'running' in the line after, and are to be punctuated accordingly.

cunning, skill. 'The adjectives describe the appearance, the nouns the reality.' [R. C. B.]

Il. 143-4. The singer and the instrument accompanying him unbind the 'hidden soul of harmony,' which is unknown and a prisoner till they release it by utterance.

Il. 144-150. See the latter part of the Fourth Georgic of Virgil. Orpheus went down into Hades and by his music charmed Pluto, so that he consented to let him take back to life his dead wife Eurydice, provided that he would not turn to look at her as they ascended. He did turn, and—

'Ibi omnis

Effusus labor:' 'there all his toil was wasted:' and Eurydice must go back for ever.

1. 149. quite, without the conditions which he imposed on Orpheus. Note the harmony of these two lines as the conclusion of the long paragraph, and the skill with which the concluding couplet is varied in the two poems.

GLOSSARY.

- Buxom, l. 24, bright and gay. O. E. bilhsum, flexible, pliant: hence 'easy-going,' and hence kindly, merry, as here. Milton, Paradise Lost, ii. 842, has the sense 'yielding': 'the buxom air.' Germ. biegsam, pliant. The word now means 'jolly and well-favoured,' and is chiefly used of women.
- Crank, l. 27, a turn or twist (here a turn of wit, a jest). To crank (1 Hen. IV. iii. 1, 98) is to wind about.
- Debonair, l. 24, courteous. O. F. de bon aire, of a good address.
- Dight, 1. 62, adorned. A. S. dihtan, to set in order, Lat. dictare, to prescribe.
- Frolie, l. 18, gay, mischievous. Dutch vrolijk, O. H. Germ. fröhlich.
- Junket, l. 102, originally a kind of cream-cheese served up on rushes, whence the name. Ital. giuncata, lit. strewed with rushes (giunchi), Lat. juncus, rush.
- Landskip, l. 70, originally a painter's term . . . answering somewhat to modern 'background.' From the Dutch landschap (=land-shape).
- Lawns, l. 71, grassy glades between trees, saltus. From O.F. lande, a wild, untilled, shrubby plain. Perhaps same as Gael. lann, Welsh llan, a piece of (enclosed) land.
- Lubber, 1. 110, uncouth, doltish. Shakspere's lob is allied.
- Pomp, l. 127, procession, pompa.
- Quip, l. 27, perhaps adapted from Latin quippe, 'forsooth.'
- Rebeck, l. 94, three-stringed fiddle. Fr. rebec, from Ital, ribecca or ribebba, from Persian rubáb.
- Secure, l. 91, careless; see note.
- Yclept, l. 12, called; past pt. of O. E. clipian, to call.

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