

**ANNOTATED POEMS
OF ENGLISH AUTHORS.
IL PENSEROSO**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649759002

Annotated Poems of English Authors. Il Penseroso by John Milton & Rev. E. T. Stevens & Rev. D. Morris

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Cover @ 2017

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JOHN MILTON & REV. E. T. STEVENS & REV. D. MORRIS

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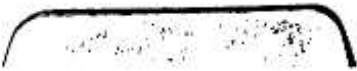
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*IL PENSEROSO*  
*BY JOHN MILTON*

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LONDON  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
1876

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LONDON : PRINTED BY  
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE  
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

## JOHN MILTON.

JOHN MILTON, a poet of the first rank, was born in London in 1608, and died in 1674. His ancestors derived their name from the estate of Milton, near Thame, in Oxfordshire, of which they were the proprietors.<sup>1</sup> He was educated at St. Paul's School, London, and Christ's College, Cambridge, and was ultimately appointed Latin Secretary to Oliver Cromwell and the Parliament. The last twenty years of his life were spent in total blindness; and yet during this period he composed his most important poem, 'Paradise Lost.' He wrote also many other works, both in poetry and prose, the chief of which are 'Paradise Regained,' 'Comus' (a mask, or play, performed at Ludlow Castle, in 1634, before the Earl of Bridgewater), 'L'Allegro,' 'Il Penseroso,' and 'Samson Agonistes'; with various Sonnets, Odes, and Hymns.

<sup>1</sup> There are two villages in this neighbourhood, Great and Little Milton, and at least twelve others, in various parts of England, bearing the same name.

CRITICISM  
ON  
'L'ALLEGRO' AND 'IL PENSEROSO.'

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DR. JOHNSON says, 'Of the two pieces "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," I believe, opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

'The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks, *not unseen*, to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listens to the singing milkmaid, and views the labours of the ploughman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant: thus he pursues real gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

'The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse