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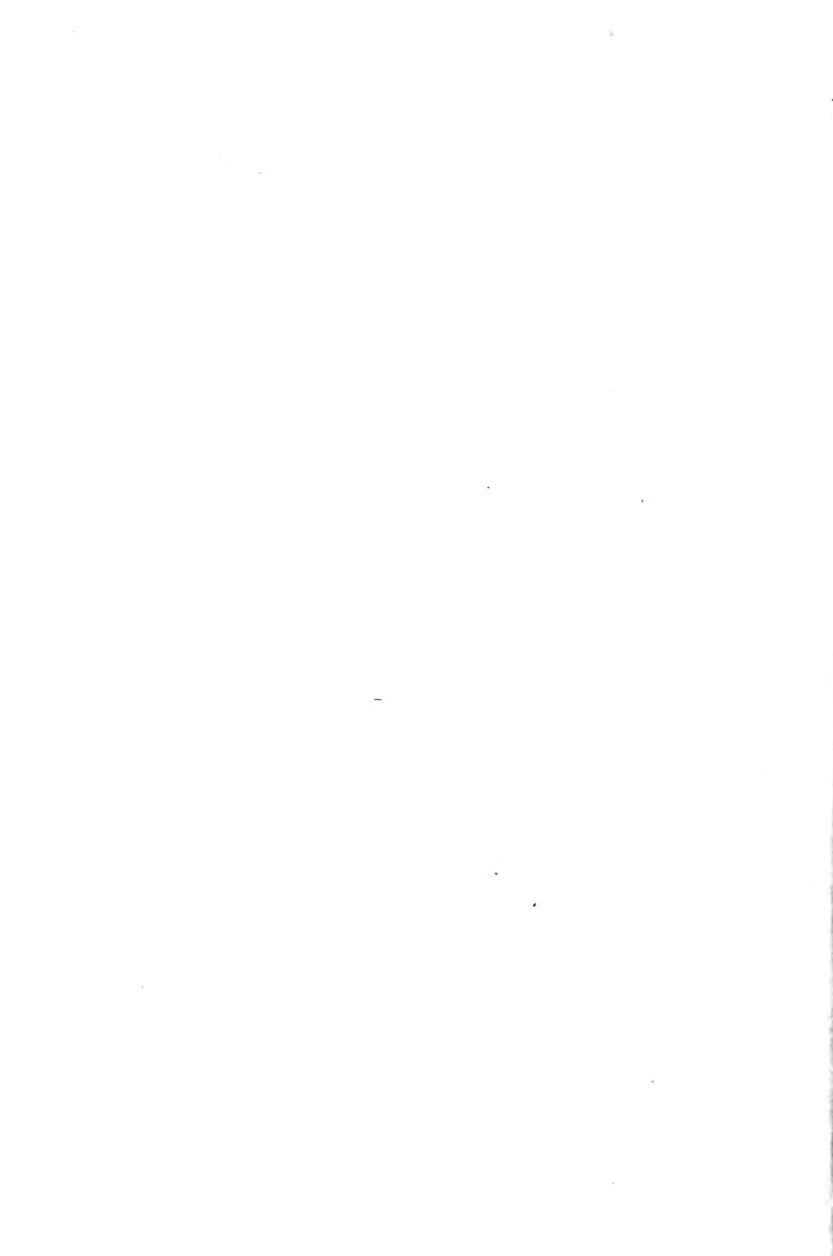
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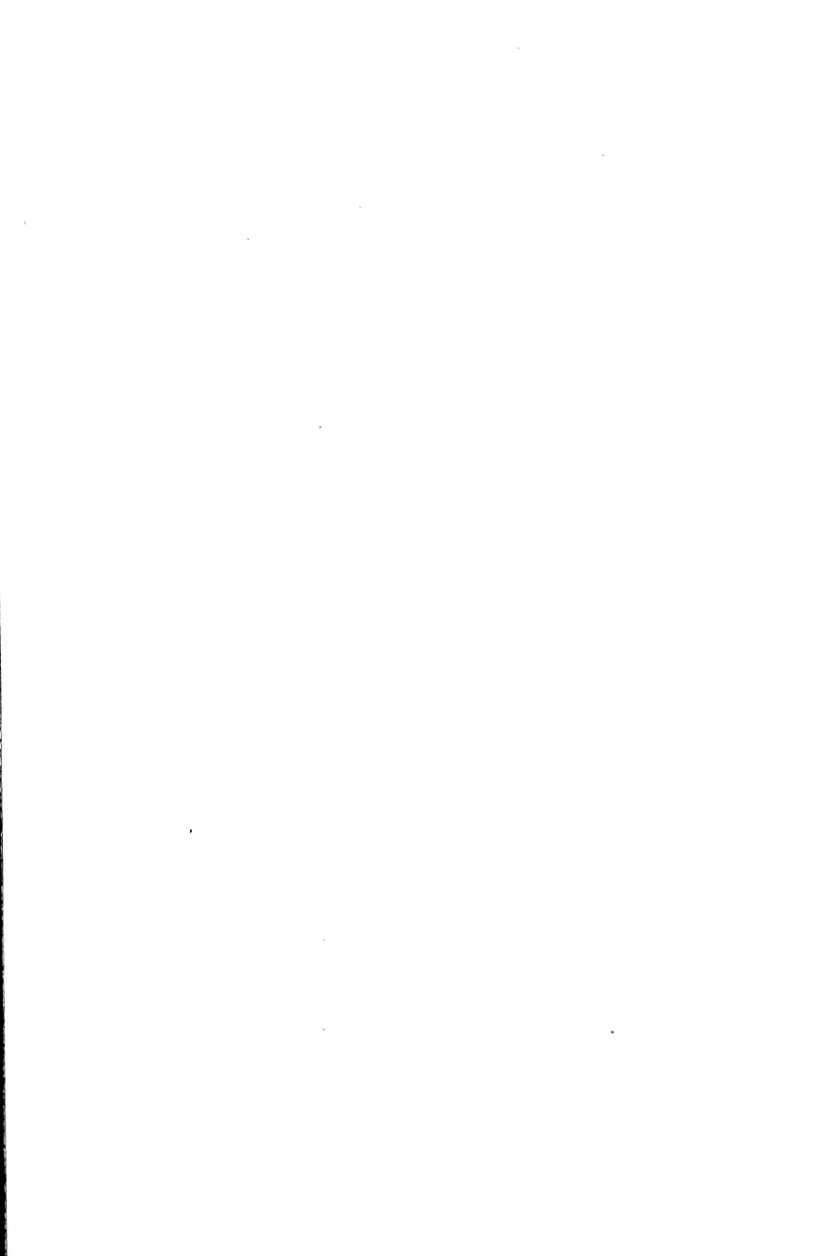
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John Milton

LIFE AND TIMES

OF

JOHN MILTON.

BY

W. CARLOS MARTYN, ESQ.



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PREFACE.

A NUMBER of years ago, Southey declared that a life of John Milton was “yet a *desideratum* in British literature.” This is no longer true of what may be distinctively termed, *English* letters; but it is still true of American literature, which, up to this date, has never produced a biography of that illustrious republican and poet.

Before the recent appearance of Mr. Masson’s admirable and elaborate *Life of Milton*, of which an American firm undertook some years ago to give a reprint, but of which only the first volume has been published, those who were curious to acquaint themselves with the details of his eventful and beneficent career, were obliged to glean their scanty information from some six or eight outline sketches, usually prefixed as introductory memoirs to the various editions of his works. But these, however useful as summaries of fact, are far below the dignity of independent biography.

Mr. Masson’s *Life* has supplied the English people with an accurate and complete account of the immortal author of “*Paradise Lost* ;” but even should its publication be completed in America, it can never, owing to its voluminous and costly character—it consists of three bulky volumes, each containing upwards of seven hundred pages—become

in any proper sense a *popular* life of Milton, but will remain of value chiefly as a book of reference.

A careful perusal of most of the so called "lives" of Milton, revealed the fact that they were almost exclusively devoted to criticisms upon Milton the *poet*, while Milton the *statesman*, Milton the *controversialist*, and Milton the *prose writer*, is either treated with neglect, or with supercilious contempt. Written mostly by authors connected with the English establishment, when Milton's political and religious opinions are touched upon, it is apologetically and deprecatingly.

Since, on this side of the Atlantic, the republican ideas and the ecclesiastical truths which Milton so ardently espoused and so ably expounded, have effected a fixed and lasting lodgment, and since it may, in some sense, be said that religious and political America sprang from his brain, it is somewhat singular that no American should have undertaken to present Milton's life to his fellow-countrymen, for the edification and instruction of those who stand so heavily in his debt. It certainly seems that this republic, based largely upon his ideas, and wedded enthusiastically to his religious opinions, owes John Milton at least the tribute and the grateful recognition of a biographical record.

This debt it has been the purpose of this biography, in a humble and unostentatious way, to pay. No special claim to originality is made for it, the desire of the author having been, not so much to write an original life, as, by levying freely upon the existing and authentic data, to group in one volume those numerous and authentic historical,

biographical, and anecdotal incidents which now lie scattered through a variety of obscure and rare manuscripts and scanty lives, and to present these from an American stand-point.

Milton's connection with the stirring events of the Revolution of 1640 was intimate and influential. Acting as Secretary of State during the ten years of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, that galaxy of glorious and statesmanlike measures which made England during that whole decade the arbiter of Europe, either originated with him, or received from his pen their justification and defence.

Yet this period, so rich and fertile in his life, is, as we have said, passed by in comparative silence by most of his biographers; they entertaining no sympathy with his republicanism, while, captivated by his poetic splendors, they ignore even the interesting incidents of his youth. Thus Ivimey, the only dissenting clergyman who has written Milton's biography, though he has not suppressed the facts of his political career, whirls Milton on through all the scenes of his boyhood, through his college life, through his continental tour, to the commencement of the Revolution, in one short chapter of six pages.

In these respects it is confidently believed that this volume will be found a decided improvement upon most of its predecessors. Considerable space is devoted to the incidents of his youth and early manhood, not only because these phases of his life are interesting in themselves, but because it is instructive to learn the foundations upon which that august life was laid.

An attempt has also been made in these pages

to rescue from comparative obscurity the magnificent prose writings of John Milton. "It is to be regretted," says Macauley, "that the prose writings of Milton should in our time be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages, compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of '*Paradise Lost*' has he ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, 'a seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.'"

Since other biographers have amply descanted upon Milton's transcendent merits as a poet, this biography contents itself, in most cases, with merely mentioning the poems in the chronological order in which they were written, while large space is allotted to characteristic extracts from his religious and political pamphlets.

It is perhaps proper to say that care has been taken to exclude from this volume, so far as could be, every thing of a partisan bias. Engaged in heated controversy at the most exciting period of English history, Milton's ardent temperament occasionally hurried him into rhetorical excesses which in his cooler moments no one was more ready to condemn than himself. He belongs to no single sect in religion, and to no single party in politics.

In the broadest sense, Religion and Liberty unite to claim him as their well-loved son. Wedded himself not to party, but to principle, he was impartial in his defence of what he esteemed truth, came the assault from open foe or professed friend. Thus he opposed Archbishop Laud when that prelate* undertook to stifle freedom of discussion. In the same spirit he lashed the inconsistencies of the Puritans, when, themselves in power, they continued to shackle the press. He was earnest not to elevate a party, but to elevate mankind.

In his fourfold character of Christian, statesman, poet, and man, Milton deserves all the respect that he has ever received. His splendid genius and steadfast devotion to liberty and progress compel the homage of all generous and appreciative souls. God grant that these pages, devoted to the delineation of the life of one of the grandest teachers and benefactors ever lent the human race, may persuade all readers, to the extent of their ability, to emulate his virtues, and to be as faithful to Christianity and freedom in their day and generation, as John Milton was in his.

The authorities consulted in the compilation of this biography have been numerous and diverse. Milton's own works, and his letters of state have, of course, been liberally used; but the author wishes

* It is proper to say that when the word "*prelate*" occurs in the following pages, it is used, not in its modern and more legitimate English and American sense, but as it was understood in Milton's age, as synonymous with that extreme and intolerant high-churchism which bordered on the Vatican, and of which Archbishop Laud and his associates were the fitting representatives.

to express his special indebtedness to the works of Masson, Symmons, Todd, Ivimey, and Toland; and to Wood's curious "History and Antiquities of Oxford," to Philips' interesting Life, to Aubrey's quaint work, to the Gleanings of Mr. Hunter, to Keightley's Memoir, Edmunds' Biography, Johnson's life, and to the very valuable papers of Mr. Marsh relating to Milton's later years. Besides these and some other authorities, a number of collateral works bearing upon the ecclesiastical and civil history of that age, have been consulted from time to time, as necessity arose or convenience suggested.

It is believed that the notes attached to this volume will be found interesting and instructive to some readers.

And now this book, the result of much thought and careful labor, is committed to the public with a prayer that it may be esteemed in some sort worthy of its illustrious subject; and that it may be instrumental in kindling in the bosoms of all who peruse its pages, that ardent love of truth, that upright devotion to justice, that pure morality, and that passion for Christian liberty which so preëminently distinguished the splendid and beneficent career of John Milton.

NEW YORK, January, 1866.

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THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
JOHN MILTON.

CHAPTER. I.

JOHN MILTON, one of the grandest names in letters, statesmanship, and Christian philosophy, had his nativity cast, by the blessing of God, in one of those transition ages when great and positive intellects are enabled, through the crumbling of old ideas and principles, to new-model their own generation, and to mould the future to a grander destiny. His remarkable genius found ample scope for its exercise in the stirring days of the most momentous epoch in English history. And broadcast in the furrows of the time, lay scattered the seed of a growth destined to be pro-

digiously effective both for good and evil in the world.

It was preëminently a period of interesting and instructive import, and singularly productive of famous men. In 1608, the year of Milton's birth, Spenser had been less than ten years dead, and Shakspeare still wrote. So nearly contemporary was this august trinity of poets. The Elizabethan era, fascinatingly gallant and romantic, had already produced Lord Bacon, who wedded religion to the profoundest philosophy in his intellectual theory if not in his daily life, the chivalric Raleigh, and the gentle Sydney, who could write upon his frontlet, and with equal truth, the motto of the French knight Bayard, "Without fear and without reproach," and who fell a martyr to Protestantism while fighting for the religious independence of the Netherlands. Elizabeth's whole reign had been full of that adventure which captivates the imagination, and was also distinguished for that learning and religious enthusiasm which elevates the mind and inspires the heart. Witnessing the meeting shock between nascent Protestantism and the

Roman see armed *cap-à-pie* for the tilt, it saw Catholicism completely unhorsed in England.

At the commencement of the seventeenth century, the Reformation, triumphant in that island, had broken rank into innumerable independent sects, busied mainly in acrimonious controversy concerning doctrinal points not of vital consequence, and united only in claiming from the state larger civil and religious liberty. The Roman-catholic party, still numerous and intriguing, though outnumbered and ostracised at court, recognized the essential agreement of the despotic principles of the then reigning house of Stuart with their own tenets, and therefore yielded an unwavering support to the arbitrary acts of James First, the most pedantic and weak of sovereigns; and of Charles First, the most treacherous and stubborn. The Catholics were still further confirmed in this course by perceiving that the Puritans were constantly drifting into greater hostility to the court, and they reasoned, rightly as the sequel showed, that when the clash came and the king required support, he would look for it to that party which had

been steadfast in its devotion to him even when exiled from his smile. If the king proved successful, they would regrab the reins of power; if unsuccessful, they would at least have the consolation of knowing that they had made a bold push for the reinstatement of their influence. A brilliant court, selfish, tyrannical, and corrupt; cavaliers besotted with wine and license, grown heedless of right and indifferent to justice; the Puritans, shocked by this indecency, working with incessant industry and marvellous talent to inaugurate a new *régime*; the Catholics alert and intriguing; the commons intensely active through the dawning of intelligence; every tavern the headquarters of a political clique; general discontent begotten of the despotic policy of the crown; the people, like a blind Samson, grasping for the pillars of their prison-house: these were the discordant elements which even so early as the year of Milton's birth had begun to ferment: such was the rotten society through which there passed, forty years later, the stern ploughshare of the civil war.

Of course Milton's mind could not but

take color in large measure from that era of saue giants, and giants gone mad. - Out of the chaos of opinions he shaped and elaborated his own theories, based mainly on Bible truth, and so grew to be the thinker and the idealist of the Revolution—the brain of English Protestantism in the seventeenth century.

JOHN MILTON was born on the morning of the 9th of December, 1608, in the city of London, and parish of All-hallows, in his father's house, in Bread-street.

The Milton family, which was of gentle blood, had originally resided in the hamlet of Milton, near Abingdon, in Oxfordshire; but having espoused the unsuccessful side in the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster in the preceding century, their estate, in common with many others, had been sequestrated, and they were in consequence reduced to comparative obscurity, though continuing to hold property to a considerable extent, which had descended on the female side. The poet's grandfather, whose name was John Milton, was under-keeper or ranger to

the forest of Shotover, near Horton, in Oxfordshire.

The poet's father, also named John Milton, was a gentleman of varied accomplishments, and had been educated at Christ church, Oxford,* where he embraced the Protestant faith, being in consequence disinherited by his father, who was a bigoted Catholic. The student being thus thrown upon his own resources, chose for his support the profession of a scrivener. This term, at least in its old sense, is now obsolete; and it may be interesting to know precisely what a scrivener was in Milton's boyhood, and when James First was king.

Scriveners at that time were penmen of all kinds of writing. literary manuscripts as well as charters and law papers. Chaucer, the father of English poetry, has an epigram in which he lampoons his "scrivener" Adam for negligent workmanship. After the invention of printing, the business of the scrivener became very similar to that of a modern attorney, or of an attorney in conjunction with a

* Dr. Todd's Life, p. 1.

Mitford's Life. p. 1, Vol. I.

law-stationer.* The scriveners were an ancient and quite numerous body, and were regularly incorporated in the time of Milton's father. The profession was esteemed an honorable one, and though its members might be sent for, as in the instance mentioned, much of their business was done in their own "shops," the general aspect of which was very like the offices of modern lawyers, a chief desk for the master, side desks for the apprentices, pigeon-holes and drawers for parchments, and seats for customers. A scrivener who had money could find excellent opportunities for lending it at a profit.

Being, as his son has written of him with proper pride, "a man of the utmost integrity," the scrivener Milton prospered rapidly. His industry and prudent conduct soon put him in possession of an extensive estate, so that he owned not only the "Spread-eagle" in Bread-street, where the poet was born, so named

* In Shakspeare's "Taming of the Shrew," a boy is sent for the scrivener to draw up a marriage settlement :

"We'll pass the business privately and well.
Send for your daughter by your servant here :
My boy shall fetch the scrivener presently."

from the armorial bearings of the family, but also another house called the "Rose," in the same street, together with various other houses in different quarters of London. He was passionately fond of the fine arts, especially music, in which he was remarkably skilful. Sir John Hawkins and Dr. Burney have each selected specimens of his talent in their histories of music. He is said to have been "a voluminous composer, and equal in science, if not in genius, to the best musicians of his age."*

It is always interesting to know something of the mothers of great men. Such inquiries almost invariably reveal the fact that they were women of remarkable character. Of Milton's mother enough is known to convince us that she was possessed of rare talent; and the loving pen of her son has recorded of her that she was respectably connected and descended, greatly esteemed for her virtues, and particularly distinguished for that charity upon which the apostle pronounces his glowing eulogium. Concerning her maiden name there is great conflict of authorities, but it is perhaps

* Dr. Burney's History of Music, Vol. III., p. 134.

safe to conclude that she was a Caston, of a genteel family derived originally from Wales.*

Above all, both the parents of the future champion of civil and religious liberty were conscientious and earnest Christians, of which, as we have seen, the father had given convincing proof by his renunciation of the errors of Romanism, in which he had been educated, and which were sanctioned by parental authority, and powerfully enforced by the persuasion of temporal interest. The sense of religious duty must have been keen, and the knowledge of theologic truth considerable, which could enable a man to turn his face resolutely away from such inducements, and accept cheerfully and without a murmur disinheritance and early penury.

We have thus dwelt upon the characteristics of Milton's parents, not only because they are in themselves interesting and instructive, but also because they had a marked influence upon his whole life. Their religious tenets made on the reflective, strong, and enthusias-

* Todd's *Life of Milton*, p. 111. Vol. I. Masson's *Life*, chap. I., *Passim*. Symmons' *Life*, p. 7, Vol. VII.

tic mind of Milton an early and lasting impression.

Milton was remarkable even in his infancy. Aubrey* says of him that "he was a poet at ten." This bud of genius was fondly noticed, wisely encouraged, and anxiously matured by his parents and instructors, until it bloomed in the marvellous glories of his riper manhood. Taught from the outset with scrupulous care, he was so happy as to share the benefits both of public and private education.

His first instruction was gotten from a private tutor named Thomas Young, whom Aubrey calls "a Puritan in Essex who cut his hair short." He appears to have been a man of rare parts, and succeeded in speedily winning the love and respect of his pupil, both of which he ever after retained. Under his able and conscientious instruction Milton made rapid progress, and from Thomas Young he doubtless imbibed many of those religious and political principles which he was called later so powerfully to vindicate. Milton publicly

* John Aubrey, born in 1626. He was a celebrated antiquary, and made the history and antiquities of England his peculiar study.

evinced his gratitude by addressing to Mr. Young his fourth elegy and two elegant Latin epistles. Afterwards, when in the zenith of his power, he caused his old tutor to return from Hamburg, whither he had repaired in the commencement of the reign of Charles First, on account of his religious opinions, and where he was officiating as chaplain to the English merchants under Cromwell's rule, and accept the mastership of Jesus College, Cambridge. This fine incident shows the tenacity of Milton's friendship, and it further proves his kindness of heart, and that in his own prosperity he did not forget his more unfortunate associates.

In 1618 a very beautiful portrait of Milton's boyish face was painted. The picture is now widely known. It was drawn by a young Dutch painter, Cornelius Jansen, recently arrived from Amsterdam, and then rising into fame. The portrait cost five broad pieces, about twenty pounds in the present English money, or nearly one hundred dollars in United States currency, a large price for those days. It was executed in order to operate as

an additional incentive to the continued exertion of the thoughtful boy. The prevailing expression of the face is a *lovable seriousness*; and in looking at it one can well fancy that those lines from "Paradise Lost" which the first engraver ventured to inscribe beneath the portrait, were really written by the poet with some reference to his own recollections of his boyhood :

"When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me seemed pleasing ; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good ; myself I thought
Born to that end—born to promote all truth
And righteous things."

Thomas Young quitted England in 1623, upon which event Milton was sent at St. Paul's school, London, then in charge of Alexander Gill, with whose son, then acting as usher, he contracted a warm and lasting friendship. Here the young student was initiated into several of the modern languages. His insatiable thirst for knowledge habitually kept him at his books till long past midnight—this precocious boy of fifteen years. His passionate devotion to letters, making him utterly inat-

tentive to his health, was the unquestionable source of that blindness in which his sight was quenched in after-life.

Writing in 1641, while his father was yet alive, Milton thus describes his early studies: "I had from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father—whom God recompense—been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers both at home and at the schools." And again, after his father's death, he writes, "My father destined me, while yet a little child, for the study of humane letters. Both at the grammar-school and at home, he caused me to be instructed daily." These sentences summarily describe Milton's education prior to his collegiate course.

In 1623, while in his fifteenth year, he gave several proofs of his precocious poetical genius, among other things translating the one hundred and fourteenth and the one hundred and thirty-sixth Psalms into English verse. These have won high praise from most critics, as being clear, firmly worded, and harmoni-

ous. The translations are mainly of interest now, as showing the early proclivities of his mind towards sacred things, and as marking the dawn on the horizon of letters of that magnificent genius which was eventually to sheet the whole literary heavens with unwonted splendor.

Milton remained at St. Paul's school during two years. Upon completing his seventeenth year, he was removed to Cambridge, where he was admitted a pensioner in Christ college on the 12th of February, 1624-5,* being already distinguished as a classical scholar, and conversant with most of the modern tongues.

* The reason for this double date is, that prior to 1752 the year in England began, not on the 1st of January, but on the 25th of March. All those days therefore which intervened between the 31st of December and the 25th of March, which we should now date as belonging to a particular year, were then dated as belonging to the year *preceding* that. As we now date, Milton entered college in February, 1625, but in the *old* reckoning it was February, 1624.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE accompanying Milton to Cambridge, we desire to turn aside and devote a chapter to the scenes, influences, and society of his boyhood. It has been well said that a great part of the education of every child consists of those impressions, visual and other, which its senses are busily though unconsciously drinking in from the scenes amid which it daily lives. Familiarity therefore with the early associations of famous men, not unfrequently affords a key to their whole character.

The London of 1608 was not that mammoth Babel, the London of our time. In place of its present two millions and a half of inhabitants, the city contained, in the days when Milton's boyish feet trod its pavements, something under two hundred thousand souls. The great fire of 1666 licked up with its flaming tongues most of the antiquities of London. Bread-street, Cheapside, the old taverns, round

whose quaint gables clustered the rich traditions of the past, the famous tenements of the rich burghers—all succumbed. The burned district was, however, rebuilt with as strict attention to the old sites as the surveyor's art of that day could insure; so that these portions of the city occupy the same relative position on the map of London as before the fire. We may therefore, with a little faith and a little fancy, repeople the old streets until the past shall once more live and breathe.

Cheapside was then, as now, a famous thoroughfare, gay with shops, and bustling with traffic. Milton had only to go a few paces from his father's door to see the whole of that great street almost at a glance. Here the din of trade was at its loudest. The shops of the mercers and goldsmiths lined the sidewalks. Some of the most noted hostelries of the city there welcomed travellers. Multitudinous foot-passengers thronged the pavements, while horsemen, chairs, and an occasional coach—for of late years these vehicles had come into fashion, and the complaint was made that "the world was running on wheels with many

whose parents had been glad to go on foot"—passed and repassed. Whenever there was any city pageant, it was sure to pass through Cheapside. The whole aspect of the street, with its houses of various heights, nearly all turned gablewise to the street, all with projecting upper-stories of wood-work, and dotted with latticed windows, was strangely picturesque. Some of the buildings were, according to the ideas of that age, as imposing as any in Christendom. Eastward was a row of many "fair and large houses possessed of mercers;" and westward, beginning at the very corner of Bread-street, was another row, "the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops," says Stow, a careful antiquarian, "that be within the walls of London, or elsewhere in England."

Bread-street stretched southward from Cheapside, and was "so called," says Stow, "of bread anciently sold there." It was in Milton's youth one of the most respectable streets in the city, "wholly inhabited by rich merchants," who had their shops below and their dwellings above. It could boast of two

parish churches, and of "divers fair inns for good receipt of carriers and other travellers." "The Spread-eagle," the shop and dwelling of the scrivener Milton, was, as we have seen, situated in this street. It was a commodious and sightly building, fully in accordance with its owner's prosperous circumstances, and was not at all put to the blush by its neighbors. Near this house was the parish church of All-hallows, where Milton sat every Sunday with his father and mother, and in which he had been christened.

Also in the immediate neighborhood was the famous "Mermaid tavern," the resort of Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and other great spirits of the time, of which Beaumont thus speaks in a sonnet to Ben Jonson:

"What things have we seen
 Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
 So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
 As if they every one from whence they came
 Had meant to put his whole soul in a jest,
 And had resolved to live a fool the rest
 Of his dull life; then, when there hath been thrown
 Wit able enough to justify the town
 For three days past—wit that might warrant be
 For the whole city to talk foolishly

Till that were cancelled ; and when that was gone,
We left an air behind us which alone
Was able to make the two next companies
Right witty, though but downright fools."

Something of all this the youthful eyes of Milton must have taken in. But more important than contact with the world of city sights and the gay humors of the town, was the daily routine of his home existence. Let us then step across the threshold of the Spread-eagle, and while the roar of Cheapside and the surrounding city is muffled in the distance, catch a glimpse of the family circle.

We see a warm and happy home. Peace, comfort, and industry reign within it. During the day the scrivener is busy with his apprentices and clients ; but in the evening the family are gathered together, the father on one side, the mother on the other, the eldest daughter Anne and her brother John seated near, with little Kit, afterwards Sir Christopher Milton, who was seven years younger than John, at his mother's knee. A grave, Puritanic piety was then the order of the day in the households of most of the respectable citizens of London. Religious reading and

devout exercises would therefore be the daily practice of the family. In this way a predisposition towards the serious, a regard for religion as the chief concern of life, and a dutiful love of the parents who so taught him, would be cultivated in Milton from his infancy. Happy child to have such parents; happy parents to have such a child.

Reference has already been made to the fondness of Milton's father for music. The composer of a variety of madrigals, he had also devoted his talent to harmonizing a number of the Psalms—those familiar tunes, Norwich and York, being both of them his lyrical productions. "The tenor part of York tune," says old Sir John Hawkins, "was so well known in my days, that half the nurses in England were used to sing it by way of lullaby," and the chimes of many country churches had "played it six or eight times in twenty-four hours, from time immemorial."

That his father was a man so gifted was very material to Milton. In his scheme for an improved education for children, he gives a high place to music. "The intervals of more

severe labor," he says, "might both with profit and delight be taken up in recreating and composing their travailed spirits with the solemn and divine harmonies of music heard or learned, either while the skilful organist plies his grave or fanciful descant in lofty fugues, or the whole symphony with artful and unimaginable touches, adorn and grace the well-studied chords of some choice composer; sometimes the lute or soft organ-stop waiting on elegant voices, either to religious, martial, or civil ditties, which, if wise men and prophets be not extremely out, have a great power over dispositions and manners, to smooth and make them gentle." Of this kind of education Milton had the full advantage, and it was a source of amusement and praise which yielded him throughout the stormy phases of his life the sweetest consolation. Often as a child he must have bent over his father while composing, or listened to him as he played. Often, at evening, when two or three of his father's musical acquaintances would call, the voices in the Spread-eagle would suffice for a little household concert. Then if one of his father's

compositions were selected, the words might be,

“O had I wings, like as a dove,
Then should I from these troubles fly;
To wilderness I would remove,
To spend my life, and there to die.”

Or perhaps the selection was the 27th Psalm, especially adapted to York, and pregnant with deep significance:

“The Lord is both my health and light,
Shall man make me dismayed?
Sith God doth give me strength and might,
Why should I be afraid?
While that my foes with all their strength,
Begin with me to bawl,
And think to eat me up at length,
Themselves have caught the fall.”

Joining in the chorus with his sweet young voice, Milton became a singer almost as soon as he could speak. We can see him tottling to the organ, his tiny feet scarce able to bear their burden, and picking out little melodies by ear, and stretching his fingers in search of pleasing chords! According to Aubrey, his father taught him the whole theory of music, and made him an accomplished organist. Afterwards, when his philanthropic labors had brought upon him persecution, poverty, and

distress, when the hoarse clamors of the fickle multitude sounded ominously in his ears, the young musician, then grown old, blind, and infirm, would still, as in happier days, repair serenely to his organ

“————— to sing,
And build the lofty rhyme.”

Here the sightless poet, forgetting the cares and vexations of his checkered career, peopled the dim twilight with the Seraphim and Cherubim of his august dreams. So David, flying from the vanities of earth, poured out his soul in praises to his Creator upon the psaltery and the harp. So Luther sought, in his tumultuous age, recreation and composure from his plaintive violin.

But in the most musical household, music occupies but a portion of the domestic evening; and sometimes it would not be musical friends, but acquaintances of more general or different tastes, that would step in to spend an hour or two at the Spread-eagle.

The Rev. Richard Stocke, pastor of the parish of All-hallows, was a frequent and welcome visitor. “This worthy,” says Fuller, “was a

constant, judicious, and religious preacher," a "zealous Puritan." There were young men, afterwards high in the church, who made it a point never to miss one of his sermons. In one essential part of a pastor's duty, that of interesting the young, he had a peculiar faculty. Indeed his influence over the entire parish was extraordinary; and the fruit of his labors, "in converting many and confirming more in religion," was abundantly to be seen.

Then one of the elder Milton's coparishioners and nearest neighbors was Humphrey Lownes, a printer and publisher, residing at the sign of the "Star," in Bread-street, one of a family then and since well known in the literary world, and himself a man of worth and ingenuity. With Lownes, Milton struck a great friendship; and the publisher, perceiving the boy's wondrous precocity and appetite for reading, loaned him from time to time such books as he desired. In this manner he first read Spenser's works and the poems of that quaint old pedant Sylvester, for whom Milton then entertained a profound admiration, much modified however in mature life.

Among the frequenters of the Spread-eagle at that time there was also at least one author, John Lane, whom Milton's nephew, Philips, calls "a fine old queen Elizabeth gentleman," the author of several poems, but who has now passed from remembrance.

If Mr. Stocke, Humphrey Lownes, and John Lane met in an evening at the hospitable hearth of the scrivener, there were other interesting topics besides Stocke's theology, Lownes' books, Lane's poetry, and Milton's music to invite conversation. Undoubtedly the talk would often drift upon the gloomy state of national affairs. Ever since the famous Hampton Court conference, held in 1603-4, at which both the great Protestant parties had appeared before the king, James First, to plead their views and enlist his sympathies, the hopes entertained by the Puritan party had been more and more disappointed. The Scottish sovereign had become, as decidedly as his predecessor, the supporter of prelacy in the church, and the maintainer of the most ultra notions of the royal prerogative in the state. In an English household like that of the elder

Milton, it is certain that this state of things must have provoked frequent and aggrieved comment—comment which the mature and inquiring mind of the boyish poet must have easily understood and treasured up.

Such were some of the scenes amid which John Milton was reared—such some of the early influences which surrounded him—such some of his first associates. It was at this period of his life, as it may be supposed, that he imbibed that spirit of devotion which actuated his bosom to his latest moment upon earth. We need not extend our search beyond his own hearthstone for the influences which moulded his life and anchored it to truth. The warm religious sentiments there communicated to his mind were strengthened by the precepts and practice of his preceptor, Thomas Young, in whom religion was exalted into enthusiasm, and who submitted, as we have seen, to exile upon the requisition of his conscience. But whatever may have been the source of his fervid spirit, its action upon Milton's mind was from the outset powerfully marked; it seemed to enlarge his mental capacity, and to give his

faculties direction and emphasis. Invigorating and elevating, we are unquestionably indebted to devotion not merely for the subject, but in large part for the sublimity of the "Paradise Lost."

CHAPTER III.

It is not known precisely why the elder Milton selected Cambridge for his son, especially as he may be supposed to have been somewhat prejudiced in favor of the rival university, Oxford, where he had himself studied. In the absence of all authoritative data, speculation only is possible. The real cause of the choice may have been in the reputation which Christ College, the special department of Cambridge to which Milton was dispatched, had acquired as the seat not only of sound learning, but also of vital and evangelical piety. "It may without flattery be said of this house," says old Fuller, "'many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all,' if we consider the many divines who in so short a time have here had their education." A number of distinguished prelates had indeed in the preceding century been graduated there, while the genius of the college pointed proudly to

the roll of its alumni which embraced the names of the reformer Latimer, the antiquarian Leland, Harrington the translator of that elegant Italian poet Ariosto, and Sir Philip Sidney—a very honorable list.

Christ College was one of the most comfortable, as it was among the largest, in the university. It was substantially built, with a spacious inner quadrangle, a handsome dining-hall, and an extensive garden, provided with a bowling-green, a pond, and alcoves; it also possessed shady walks, in true academic taste.

Tradition still points out Milton's rooms. "They were," says Masson, "in the older part of the building, on the left side of the court, as you enter through the street-gate; the first floor rooms on the first stair on that side. The rooms consist at present of a small study, with two windows looking into the court, and a very small bed-room adjoining. They do not seem to have been altered at all since Milton's time." As soon as he had settled himself in his apartments, which he retained until he quitted Cambridge, he selected his tutor, William Chappell, and then strolled out to see the town.

At that time the population of Cambridge was between seven and eight thousand. The distinction between "town" and "gown" had grown up long prior to that age, and while the town was governed by a mayor, aldermen, and a common council, the University was controlled by its own statutes, which were enforced by the collegiate authorities. The University was also represented in Parliament by two members returned by itself.*

At the time of Milton's matriculation, Cambridge had fallen into many disorders and deviations from the old academic discipline, ecclesiastical and other, arising on the one hand from the invasion of Puritan opinions, which prevailed to an extent which alarmed the zealous churchmen resident there, and on the other hand from "debauched and atheistical" principles, and that "nicknaming and scoffing at religion and the power of godliness," which serious men thought "strange in a University of the reformed church."

Indeed the selfsame conflict between rotten formalism and scoffing infidelity on one

* Masson's *Life of Milton*, p. 79.

side, and earnest, living, and sincere devotion on the other, which ere long lighted the flames of civil war throughout Great Britain, seems to have already commenced at the University when Milton entered it. In Christ College the order was very good. Its heads and seniors were puritanically inclined, and they imparted to the undergraduates something of their own zeal and piety. Still it is very certain that Milton always entertained a poor opinion of the University *curriculum*, or course of study. He was at the very outset disgusted by the superficial educational system, and the babel of controversy. In speaking, long afterwards, of boys who went up to the colleges for education, he says, "Their honest and ingenuous natures coming to the University to feed themselves with good and solid learning, are there unfortunately fed with nothing else but the scragged and thorny lectures of monkish and miserable sophistry. They are sent home again with such a scholastic bur in their throats as hath stopped and hindered all true and generous philosophy from entering, cracked their voices for ever with metaphysical gargarisms;

bath made them admire a sort of formal, outside men, prelatically addicted, whose unchastened and overwrought minds were never yet initiated, nor subdued under the law of moral or religious virtue, which two are the greatest and best points of learning; but either slightly trained up in a sort of hypocritical and hackney course of literature to get their living by, or else fondly overstudied in useless controversies, except those which they use with all the specious subtlety they are able, to defend their prelatial Sparta."

In a letter to his old friend and tutor Alexander Gill, he speaks again of the superficial and smattering course of learning pursued at the University, and of the manner in which the clergy engaged with raw and untutored judgments in the explanation of theological tenets, patching together a sermon with pilfered scraps, without any acquaintance with criticism or philosophy.

As might have been expected, with these views Milton's tarry at Cambridge was not invariably pleasant and agreeable. Himself, though but a boy in years—he was then but

two months turned of sixteen—marvellously and accurately learned, familiar with the French, Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew tongues, he saw easily beneath the pompous surface-knowledge of the college “Dons.” In familiarity with the current English literature of the day, and with those authors who preceded him, the fossil professors were infinitely behind their strange and intractable pupil.

In the beginning, when they perceived his evident contempt for their time-honored and inflexible methods, they treated him harshly, as a presumptuous and conceited upstart. But in the end they learned to appreciate and admire his genius. Milton was always frank and free in the expression of his opinions, and as he bruited his educational notions abroad, the university authorities set themselves to crush the heresy. He was, in consequence, beset at this time by many vexations. Among other troubles was his famous quarrel with his tutor, William Chappell.

Dr. Johnson, a Tory and a high-churchman, and therefore naturally inimical to Milton's opinions, in his life of the poet, is fre-

quently biased by his prejudices. This prevents that fairness of statement and charity of judgment which are so becoming in a biographer. Misled by this infirmity, he often seeks occasion for fault-finding where in reality none exists. Of this nature is his charge that Milton obtained no fellowship in the university, and that he was publicly flogged while there for infractions of discipline. This assertion, though it has never created much wonder, has stirred more recent biographers to a careful investigation of the facts. The result of these inquiries has gone to show that there was no truth whatever in the charge of public flogging, the rumor of which Milton himself earnestly denied but a few years after he quitted the University, when the facts must have been known to many persons, and when, surrounded as he then was by enemies, if such an allegation could have been made good, the ready pens of a score of adversaries would have attested it. Yet his denial was never questioned in his age, but it was reserved for the pen of Dr. Johnson to revive the exploded slander, and to insult the memory of John

Milton by the expression of an affected concern at its truth.

There is, however, no question that Milton had some difficulty with William Chappell, and that in consequence he changed his tutor.

His life in those days, while under the frown of the college authorities, was probably far from pleasant. He found consolation however in his literary pursuits, and in his correspondence. He addressed at this period several letters to Alexander Gill; to his old preceptor Thomas Young at Hamburg, in one of which he bewailed that worthy's exile, and predicted his speedy return, since the days were coming when England would need all such sons; and to Charles Déodat.

Déodat had been Milton's most intimate friend at St. Paul's school. The family was of Italian extraction, and had originally come from Lucea on account of its Protestant principles. Of two brothers born in Geneva, Giovanni, the younger, remained there, where he rose to be professor in the University of Geneva, and became an eminent theologian of the Reformation. The other brother, Theodore,

came over to England in early life, adopted the medical profession, and attained considerable reputation; so that in 1609 he had a house in Brentford, and was physician to Henry, Prince of Wales, and Elizabeth, afterwards Queen of Bohemia. Charles, Milton's friend, was born about the year 1608, and was therefore near the same age as his great playfellow.

Young Déodat was a boy of more than ordinary ability, and in earnest devotion to study and purity of life, was a proper mate for Milton. He went to Oxford in 1621-2; but their old intimacy was still kept up. Milton's letters to this valued friend, usually written in the Latin or Italian languages, and dated from Cambridge, are very beautiful. They relate his studies, his accomplishments, his feelings, his amusements, giving an inside view of the man. They show him to have excelled as much in the amiable virtues as he did in the controversial and rhetorical ones.

It was during Milton's first year at Cambridge that the plague made its appearance, the tradition of whose horrors still lingers in English history. This scourge stalked through

the island, decimating the population of the larger towns. It carried off over thirty-five thousand people in London, where it first revelled in its ghastly carnival. The pestilence did not break out in Cambridge, but it raged in many of the surrounding villages, and caused such a panic at the University as served to disturb the ordinary quiet routine, and send many of the collegians home. Milton passed the time with his family.

In this same year, 1625, king James died, not much regretted by any party, and was succeeded by Charles Stuart, then in his twenty-fifth year. The death of the old and the succession of the new king caused considerable commotion at the University. It was difficult for the "Dons" and scholars, accustomed as they had long been to the formula "*Jacobum Regum*" in their prayers and graces at meat, to bring their mouths all at once round to "*Carolus Regum*" instead. Meade, one of Milton's fellow-students, tells of one poor bachelor who was so bent on remembering that "*Jacobus*" had gone out and "*Carolus*" had come in, that when, in publicly reading the

Psalms, he came to the phrase, "*Deus Jacobi*," God of Jacob, he altered it before he was aware into "*Deus Caroli*," God of Charles, and then stood horror-struck at his mistake.

Public affairs were at this period very disordered. England was at war with France, and while disaster followed the national arms abroad, dissension reigned at home. An expensive expedition sent under Buckingham to the assistance of the city of Rochelle, the strong-hold of the French Calvinists, then closely besieged by Richelieu, had proved a total failure; and a second expedition, a twelvemonth later, proved equally unsuccessful, when led by Lord Denbigh. Such was the gloomy foreign aspect of affairs.

The domestic situation was still more threatening. Parliament, which had been prorogued in the preceding reign by the angry James, on account of its decided stand in defence of the popular rights, and its opposition to the arbitrary requisitions of the crown, met again in January, 1628-9, and at once "fell upon their grievances." These were of two classes: the tonnage and poundage ques-

tion, which embraced the right of the king to raise money without the consent of Parliament; and the question of the religious condition of the state, as connected with the spread of Popish doctrines, and with the promotion of men holding to those tenets to high positions in the church and state. In order more thoroughly to consider this last great subject, the House of Commons resolved itself into a "Committee of Religion."

"It was in this Committee of Religion," says Carlyle,* "on the 11th day of February, 1628-9, that Mr. Cromwell, member for Huntingdon, then in his thirtieth year, stood up and made his first speech, a fragment of which has found its way into history, and is now known to all the world. He said 'he had heard by relation from one Dr. Beard, his old schoolmaster at Huntingdon, that Dr. Alablaste, prebendary of St. Paul's and rector of a parish in Herts, had preached flat Popery at Paul's Cross; and that the Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Neile, had commanded him, as his

* Carlyle's *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 3d edit., pp. 1-92.

diocesan, he should preach nothing to the contrary. Mainwaring, so justly censured in this House for his sermons, was by the same bishop's means preferred to a rich living. If these are the steps to church preferment, what are we to expect? "

Cromwell's facts on this occasion were but two out of many similar ones brought to the attention of the House of Commons. A new remonstrance to the king was also drawn up, couched in bolder language than any which had preceded it.

Charles, alarmed and provoked at the Parliament, instantly dissolved it. Before the final adjournment however, the Remonstrance was ordered to be put to vote. This the Speaker, Finch, refused to do. Denzil Holles and other members locked the doors, held Finch in his seat, and hastily passed three resolutions to the effect that whosoever should encourage Popery, or should advise the levying of tonnage or poundage by the king on his own authority, or should pay the same so levied, should be held an enemy to religion and the state of England.

The result of this bold movement was the indictment of Denzil Holles and his comrades by the famous Star Chamber court,* and their committal to the tower. Thus ended the Parliament of 1628-9. It was the last held in England for over eleven years, and it was made a penal offence even to speak of the assembling of another.

While the Revolution was thus hastening forward with rapid strides, Milton was immersed in hard and recluse study, reserving himself for a higher hour. Of course he must have shared in the interest which these events excited; but as the year 1628-9 was the one in which his undergraduateship closed and he

* The Court of Star Chamber, the most infamous in English history, derived its name from the room in which it sat, which was frescoed with stars. It was the old council chamber of the ancient palace of Westminster. The court was very ancient, but was remodelled by Henry VII. and Henry VIII., when more obnoxious and arbitrary powers were conferred upon it. It consisted of divers lords, spiritual and temporal, being privy counsellors, together with two judges of the courts of common law, without the intervention of any jury. It was used as the engine of oppression for a long series of years, and thus earned the fear and dislike of the whole nation. Its stretches of despotic power, so alien to the spirit of the British Constitution, at length awoke such opposition that the clamors of the people, finding voice through Parliament, finally compelled its abolition by statute, in the sixteenth year of the reign of Charles I., to the great joy of the whole nation. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, eighth edition, Vol. XX., p. 537.

gained his degree of Bachelor of Arts, he could not have devoted much time, had he so desired, to the consideration of public affairs.

Milton graduated very brilliantly; he had gradually pushed his way into the respect and admiration of the whole University, and was at this time regarded as one of its brightest ornaments. The old grudge had completely vanished, and professors and students united in doing homage to his religious principle and splendid genius.

Malicious critics have made vague charges that Milton was addicted while an undergraduate to fast company and high living. The whole tenor of his life and writings, together with his own published and spirited denial at the time, unite to prove the unspotted innocence of his youth. And indeed these rumors never won much credence, except, as in the case of Dr. Johnson, when the wish was father to the thought. At all events it is very certain that the whole body of his biographers with singular agreement have unanimously branded them as slanderous fables.

But this shows that even the greatest and

best of men, though their lives be as pure as the driven snow, cannot hope to escape vituperation and calumny. Our Saviour himself was accused of being the companion of gluttons and wine-bibbers.

The course of study at Cambridge embraced seven years; the first four being the period of undergraduateship, the last three terminating with the degree of Master of Arts. Milton, as has been mentioned, had just completed the first period, terminating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. He had therefore three years more to remain at the University. Throughout this entire period Milton was treated with unusual respect, and his great powers were fully recognized. But his present popularity did not turn his head any more than his prior unpopularity had dismayed him. Earnest and self-centred, he moved towards his goal unaffected to a remarkable degree by the opinion of his fellows, so that his own conscience said "Amen" to his actions. He continued to "hive fresh wisdom with each studious year," and so grew to rival the qualities of the admirable Crichton of historic tradition.

He did not give any extraordinary evidence during his university life of his splendid poetical talents. Still, a number of his minor poems belong to this period, and especially his very beautiful lines entitled, "On a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," composed on the death of a daughter of his sister Anne, who had married a Mr. Philips—which are as undying as the English language. It was, however, as a profound, elegant scholar and young man of rare purity and promise, that he was at this time most famed.

Having completed his full course, Milton finally quitted Cambridge in July, 1632, he being then in his twenty-fourth year, ripe in wisdom and in honors.

In his personal appearance, Milton was at this time singularly prepossessing. He had acquired in college the nickname of "the lady," on account of his delicate complexion, his hair flowing to his ruff on both sides of his oval face, and his slender and elegant, rather than massive or powerful form. But there was nothing effeminate in his demeanor. He had long auburn hair, beautiful and curling,

an exceedingly fair complexion, an oval face, and dark grey eyes. His deportment was affable, his gait erect and manly, bespeaking courage and undauntedness. Milton himself tells us that in his youth he did not neglect "daily practice" with his sword, and that he was not so very slight, though he was lithe and a trifle below the middle height; but that "armed with it, as he generally was, he was in the habit of thinking himself quite a match for any one, even were he much the most robust, and of being perfectly at his ease as to any injury that any one could offer him, man to man."

Such was John Milton when, at the age of twenty-four, he left his little college world to step out into that broader and grander arena in which God meant him to play so prominent and useful a part.

CHAPTER IV.

MILTON, upon leaving Cambridge, repaired at once to his father's house, now however no longer in Bread-street, but at a villa which his father had taken at some distance from the bustling metropolis. "At my father's country residence," he himself informs us, "whither he had retired to pass his old age, I, with every advantage of leisure, spent a complete holiday in turning over the Greek and Latin authors; not but that sometimes I exchanged the country for the town, either for the purpose of buying books, or for that of learning something new in mathematics or in music, in which sciences I then delighted."

The new residence of the scrivener Milton was situated in the hamlet of Horton, near Colnbrook, in Buckinghamshire, and was but about seventeen miles from London, within easy distance for young Milton's occasional trips to town. The little village, containing at that time but few families, was quiet and very

beautiful—one of those sweet old English towns in which we desire to lie down and dream—precisely the nook for a speculative thinker or a poet. It was scatteringly built, the houses playing at hide-and-seek among the trees and intervening foliage, with no continuous streets, but only a great tree in the centre of an open space where three roads met and suggested that there might be more habitations about the spot than at first appeared, which suggestion was confirmed on looking down one of the roads, by the sight of an old church-tower, ivy covered, and with a cemetery in front, which you entered between two extremely old yew-trees. Here it was that Milton, together with other members of his family, worshipped regularly for five years, or during his residence in the hamlet.

One could lie under the elm-trees in the lawn, saunter through the green meadows by the rippling streamlet, from a rustic bridge watch the lazy mill-wheel, or walk along quiet roads well hedged, deviate into by-paths leading past farm-yards and orchards, or through rich pastures where horses, cows, and sheep

were wont to graze—an elysium indeed for the weary Londoner, a ‘paradise regained’ for the younger Milton.

Milton had been designed both by his father and his own wish for the church, when he went to Cambridge; but long before he acquired his degree he had abandoned the intention. This resolution was owing to his conscientious scruples against signing the Articles, and endorsing the doctrine and discipline of the English church. “The church,” he says, “to whose service, by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in my own resolutions till, coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded in the church—that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either perjure or split his faith—I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing.”*

In order to account for this reluctance on

* Reason of Church Government, (1641.) Works, III. p. 150.

the part of Milton to take the oaths required of candidates for holy orders in the English church, it will be necessary to give a synopsis of British ecclesiasticism at that period, in and about the year 1632.

The population of England in 1632 was something under five millions, and this whole mass was then considered, legally at least, to belong to the English church. Of course the exceptions in fact were multitudinous. There were in the early years of king Charles' reign two parties which stood boldly out from the state creed, both existing under the ban and at the peril of the law, but both having extensive ramifications inside the church, where each had numerous sympathizers. These were the Roman-catholics, or as they were then popularly called the Papists, and the Separatists or Dissenters. The Catholics were powerful and dangerous, always active, always scheming. Their party embraced numbers of the very highest nobility, and was strongly suspected of having the secret sympathy of many of the bishops of the English church. Reference has been made in a preceding chapter to a debate

in the House of Commons concerning the tendency of the English ecclesiastical polity towards Romanism, in which Cromwell stuttered and stamped his maiden speech, and inquired whither they were tending. It is very certain that numerous gentlemen of property and distinction, together with some churchmen, represented the Catholic interest in different English counties, and in the church itself.*

The Dissenters were but a handful, numerically, and consisted of those ultra Puritans who had considered themselves bound, whether on doctrinal or ritual grounds, to separate from the English church, and set up an altar of their own. The majority of those whose Puritanism led them thus far, had before this emigrated to Holland, or to America, where they raised their psalms of thanksgiving on bleak and unknown headlands, amid cold and hunger, with the inimical Indian prowling upon one side, and on the other the eternal sea line which severed them from dear cruel England, and the long, low, monotonous splash of the sullen waves. But some remained at home,

* Dod's Church History, time of Charles First.

getting covert aid and comfort from their less radical brethren within the church.

Behind these two parties stood the majority of the people, swayed one way or the other according to their sympathies, but not yet prepared to ostracize themselves by becoming "come-outers." The great body of the Puritans were still within the church, and the quarrel was, whether the church should be made to lean towards Puritanism, or towards that high-churchism which, it was contended, ended logically if not inevitably, in adhesion to Rome. Every new ecclesiastical measure therefore, and every new bishop, was closely scrutinized as to its or his leaning towards one or the other of these two sides.

Unfortunately for the unity of the English church, it happened that its most influential members and its ruling bishops leaned decidedly, and many of them fiercely, towards the prelatical or high-church theory. Of course they scouted the idea of conceding any thing to the Puritans, and in this they were openly supported by the king. Yet still unsatisfied, and encouraged by the royal sanction, the

hierarchical clergy rallied their whole strength, and after a bitter contest, succeeded in foisting into the canonical law one hundred and forty-one new canons intensely hostile to the Puritan tenets even going so far as to excommunicate all who refused conformity with the most minute and unessential forms of the ritual.

The result was decisive. Instantly a hundred platforms echoed with arguments for separation, while a score of vigorous presses were kept busy day and night in the publication of Puritan pamphlets, numbers of which were also imported from Holland. Then began a persecution as remorseless as it was searching.

The soul of the new crusade was the famous Archbishop Laud, who was born at Reading, in Berkshire, England.* He had been educated at Oxford, and in religion "was a little over the frontier of the church of England, on that side from which the Vatican was visible." The legislative chief of the high-church party, he pushed affairs to an extremity. Narrow and arbitrary in his disposition, he introduced the most bigoted innovations

* Laud's Diary, p. 1.

into British ecclesiasticism. Detestable on account of his intolerance, he was doubly deserving of the scorn of all generous souls on account of his brutal cruelty. He stirred the Star Chamber court to displace obnoxious bishops; he also pushed inferior delinquents to the wall. There were, accordingly, a series of prosecutions from 1628 to 1632, which are recited by the historians of his religious tyranny, and which have covered his name with eternal infamy. Among the most horrible of these cases was that of Dr. Alexander Leighton, father of the famous Archbishop Leighton, a clergyman of earnest piety and decided talent, who held a preachingship in Laud's diocese of London. Dr. Leighton had written and published in 1628 a book entitled, "Zion's Plea against Prelacy," which was fairly, though strongly written. For this he was indicted in 1630, sentenced, degraded from his holy orders, and cast into prison, from which he escaped through the connivance of his wardens. Instantly a hue and cry was raised after him, printed handbills were posted in conspicuous places as for a malefactor, describ-

ing him as "a man of low stature, fair complexion, a yellowish beard, a high forehead; between forty and fifty years of age." Being taken in Bedfordshire, he was brought back to London, and part of his sentence was executed on him in this manner, in the palace of Westminster: he was severely whipped before being placed in the pillory, after which he had one of his ears cut off; then one side of his nose was slit; then he was branded on the cheek with a red-hot iron, with the letters S. S., signifying a Stirrer up of Sedition. After this torture he was carried back to the Fleet prison, where he was kept in close custody. Precisely one week afterwards, his wounds upon the back, nose, and ears being yet unclosed, he was whipped again at the pillory in Cheapside, and there had the remainder of his sentence executed upon him by cutting off the remaining ear, slitting the other side of the nose, and branding the other cheek. Thus horribly disfigured, he was remanded to prison, where he lay for ten years. And all this accumulation of refined torture, which reminds one of the palmy days of the Inquisi-

tion in Spain or Italy, on account of the publication of an obnoxious Puritan pamphlet.

The generous soul of Milton, sickened by the atrocity of this and similar acts, was moved to its profoundest depths, and as we have seen, he turned with loathing from the service of a church which had so far forgotten its Protestantism as to dig up from its grave of two hundred years the horrors of the Inquisition, and which with one hand shackled the press, while with the other it gagged the lips of free inquiry. He was not willing "to subscribe himself slave," by stifling his honest Puritan convictions in order to enter upon an ecclesiastical career.

Cut off thus from his chosen avenue of usefulness, he finally, though not without anxious and prayerful meditation, determined to devote himself to a life of continued study, with the secret purpose of doing his utmost to elevate and enrich the literature of his time. From some random remarks of his, it has been conjectured that he had thoughts of studying the law. However this may be, it is certain that he took no steps towards the mastery of

that science, leaving it for his brother Christopher to become the lawyer of the family, which posterity has never regretted.

Milton's idea of his mission and duty as a literary man was high and noble. He ventured to hope that, by "hard labor," which he took to be the portion of his life, he might be the instrument of some good, and "perhaps leave something so written to after-times as they should not willingly let it die." His chief aim was, as he has himself said, to be "an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among my own citizens throughout this island, in the mother dialect; that what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this advantage of being a Christian, might do for mine."

The literature of that age stood greatly in need of pious and elevated intellects. English letters were never more brilliant and witty than then: neither were they ever more lax and licentious. It was the era of loose dramatists and drunken wits, of infidel satirists and

epigrammatic sneerers. The scholarship of the French Revolution was not more atheistic. Ben Jonson, the poet laureate of England in 1632, was a haunter of taverns and a wine bloat—stains which his rare genius cannot eradicate. Literature was taken possession of by Beaumont and Fletcher, by Webster and Massenger; and though Shakspeare had already written himself into immortality, and Spenser's sweet muse had sung, their efforts, however admirable, were certainly far from being tinctured with a religious spirit. Indeed the graceless letters of the time sadly needed the Christian leaven; and that was precisely what John Milton intended to supply—what he, better than almost any other man who has lived before or since, was fitted and mentally equipped to do.

Though he says he “spent a complete holiday in turning over the Greek and Latin writers” while at Horton, Milton's intellectual labor seems to have been really exhaustive, embracing a “ceaseless round of study and reading.” His pen was seldom idle. It was during the first two and a half years of his

tarry in the hamlet, that he composed five of his finest English poems—the “Sonnet to a Nightingale,” “L’Allegro,” “Il Penseroso,” “Arcades,” and “Comus.” The first was a composition in the “Petrarchian stanza,” a species of verse made familiar to him by his readings in the Italian poets. The poem is light, airy, and very graceful.

Next came “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso.” These are two of the most splendid short poems in the language. The diction is exceedingly rich and melodious, while many of the ideas are quaintly expressed. They display exquisite feeling; and the imaginative subtilty and musical art with which he manages the two styles of verse—“L’Allegro” invoking Mirth, attended by Jest and Jollity; “Il Penseroso,” in contrast, bidding Mirth begone, and invoking the divine maid Melancholy, robed in pensive black, with rapt, heaven-directed eyes—proves Milton to have been at twenty-five one of the most skilful and wonderful of poets.

“Arcades” and “Comus” were conceived in a different vein, being masques, a species of

composition now obsolete, but somewhat allied to our modern drama. "Comus" is a magnificent poem, and as an eulogium upon virtue, has never been surpassed. Milton never afterwards wrote any thing more perfect and beautiful. He proved against all contemporary masque writers, Ben Jonson and the rest, whose similar works abound in vulgarity, what the pure poetry and the pure morality of a masque might be. "Comus" also shows that, had Milton devoted himself to the drama, he might have occupied a niche next to Shakespeare in the dramatic temple.

This masque was originally acted at Ludlow castle, under the auspices of a noble family, for whom it had been composed. It was afterwards represented several times in London, being received with distinguished consideration.

The most prominent and peculiar trait of Milton's writings, both in prose and verse, is their elevated tone, their sublimity. In this respect no writer has equalled him. Others occasionally soar and kiss the heavens; he walks upon the stars, and with an ease and

grace which proves that he made no effort to be grand. From his boyhood he had revelled in ideas of the infinite and the eternal—time, space, immortality; themes which other men seldom touch, save apologetically and with awe, were his intellectual commonplaces. This habit, which made some of his earlier compositions seem magniloquent, ripened in his manhood into the most gorgeous elevation of sentiment.

There was nothing contracted or mean in Milton's soul; every thing was high and noble. Even his faults were such as belong to grand temperaments. Consequently his writings all bear the impress of his spirit, to which the very rhythm of his sentences corresponds.

He is one of the most original of writers. Still, like Shakspeare, he did not disdain to borrow and adopt any isolated phrase or expression that pleased him. Many of his phrases may be found scattered through the pages of preceding or contemporary authors; but he only had the power to collect and remould them into one grand and elevated whole. Spenceer, Fletcher, Beaumont, Ben

Jonson, Sylvester—he levied upon them all, and that too without ceasing to be original; for though many of these writers abounded in noble passages, Milton's genius was of a haughtier character, his sublimity was higher and more unapproachable.

Though this elevation is Milton's peculiar and distinctive quality, it is not his only beauty. He is the full equal of others in those other characteristics which go to make up a great writer. In fitness of epithet, in sprightliness of wit, in splendor of imagination, in a certain dainty quaintness of expression, he has no master. To sum up all, he is a marvel and a model in English literature.

In 1637 Milton's dearly beloved and excellent mother died, ripe in years and in virtues, and happy in the knowledge that she left her children, all of whom were with her upon the solemn occasion of her death—Anne the married daughter, Christopher, then a law student at the Inner Temple, London, and John—in the promise of useful and Christian lives. This blow was a sad one to the Milton family, each member of which felt it keenly.

Milton had scarcely recovered from the shock of his mother's death, when he learned of the accidental drowning of one of his old college friends, Edward King, a young man of piety and erudition, while on a voyage to Ireland on a visit home. It was upon this occasion that he composed his weird monody called "*Lycidas*."

Worn by grief and study, and desirous to see something of foreign countries, Milton now determined to go abroad. Accordingly, after procuring his father's somewhat unwilling consent, and leaving his country in a still more unsettled and threatening condition than ever, in April, 1638, he bade England and his friends adieu for a time, and crossed the channel into France.

Milton did not leave his father, aged and a widower, alone at Horton during his absence. His brother Christopher, then about to be called to the bar, married the daughter of a London citizen in the April of Milton's departure, and he left the young couple domesticated with his father at his country villa.*

* Masson's *Life of Milton*, vol. 1, p. 530.

CHAPTER. V.

WHEN John Milton went abroad, the whole Continent heaved in the throes of that Titanic conflict which commenced in 1618, and raged without cessation until 1648, to which history has affixed the name of "The Thirty Years' War." That momentous struggle between prerogative and popular liberty, between prelacy and Puritanism in England, whose early phases we have traced, and which was about to burst forth when the great poet crossed the channel, was but an eddy of the European contest between the Jesuitism of the Vatican and the Protestant idea.

In its origin, the "Thirty years' war" was an insurrection of the Protestants of Bohemia, and other Slavonian possessions of Austria, in 1618-19, against the unbearable persecutions of the Austrian Cæsars who then led the Catholic reaction in its assault upon the Reformation. These sovereigns being likewise empe-

rors of Germany, recruited their shattered ranks from time to time from the Lanzknechts of the German principalities, and finally drew the whole German confederation into the war. In this stage of the struggle, the representative of the Protestant principle both in Bohemia and in Germany was that Frederick, Elector Palatine, who married Elizabeth Stuart, the sister of Charles First of England, and who lost both kingdom and palatinate in the sequel. This period, from 1618 to 1625, was called "the war of the Palatinate."

Then Denmark and Sweden stepped into the arena as the champions of menaced Protestantism, retrieving "the good old cause" by the victories of Gustavus Adolphus; the last of which was sealed by the heroic death of that great captain. This formed the Danish and Swedish stage of the war, lasting from 1625 until 1634.

Meantime, to the support of Austria and Catholic Germany, had come Spain under Philip II., the most bigoted king in history. She drew in her train Naples, Sicily, Milan, indeed the entire Italian peninsula; so that

the Catholic powers were almost a unit in this attempt finally to suppress German and Slavonian Protestantism. In this posture stood Latin Europe, while religious liberty was unable to foresee from whence its muster should come.

At this desperate crisis, contrary to all ordinary calculation, a Catholic power charged to the rescue. France, witnessing the rapid strides of Spain, its rival, towards universal empire, and frightened by the extraordinary and inimical influence which that kingdom had acquired in Continental politics, had long secretly opposed the allies through Swedish subsidies and diplomatic services in Germany. Upon the death of Gustavus Adolphus, perceiving that the time had come either to give up all hope of French supremacy, or energetically to reinforce succumbing Protestantism, Richelieu, the great statesman who then wielded the destinies of France, did not hesitate to fling the immense weight of the French arms into the scale of battle. France was, to be sure, a Catholic power, but of a very different type from Spain. Huguenot principles had so

leavened her Catholicism, that it was capable, when necessary, of splendid inconsistencies. And as for Richelieu, though he was professedly a cardinal of the Roman see, he was really a secular statesman of the rarest genius and foresight.

The year 1635 had been signalized by a magnificent burst of simultaneous strategy, which crackled over Europe. Richelieu had declared war against Spain as well as against the German emperor; he had established more intimate relations with Oxenstiern, the famous Swedish minister; the wreck of the Protestant forces had been taken into French pay; an alliance had been concluded with the states-general of Holland; and French armies had invaded Italy, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands. Thus began the final, or "French period" of this historic war, to which there was to be no end until the peace of Westphalia in 1648.

Such is a brief *résumé* of the origin and various phases of "The Thirty Years' War," up to the year 1638. When Milton arrived in Paris, three years of the "French period"

had already elapsed. The marchings and countermarchings of the opposing armies were the universal theme of conversation: Bernard of Weimar, D'Enghien, Turenne—the names of these military heroes were blazing brightly, while along the lines of the generals were creeping negotiators as famous in their diplomatic craft, breaking Richelieu's threads, or knitting them more firmly together.

With matters of such moment as the topics of his familiar gossip, Milton, after a brief stay in the giddy French metropolis, continued his journey in a leisurely way through southern France towards the Italian frontier, taking in his route Lyons, Provence, and the Rhone, and entering Italy at Nice.

He had taken care, before leaving home, to provide himself with numerous letters of introduction to distinguished foreign *savants*, and had thus, while at Paris, made the acquaintance of the famous Dutch writer, Grotius, who was then residing at that capital in the capacity of Swedish minister. So far as regarded funds, his father had amply provided for him, and he took with him also one servant.

There is much about Italy to attract scholarly and poetic minds. Its thronging historic remembrances; its treasures of art; its vocal ruins; its marvellous climate, with the deliciously "soft wind blowing from the blue heaven;" its landscapes of plains and terraces, rich with corn and wine, adorned with olive-groves, or picturesque with garden and villa, the scene on one side reaching to the peaks of the Apennines, bounded on the other by the blue Mediterranean which kisses the Italian strand. Yes, there is very much in Italy to awaken the passionate interest even of the most prosaic intellect. How then must it have affected Milton, who had studied its history and dreamed of its fatal beauty from a boy, through whose mind trooped the figures of its mighty sons, who had learned its glorious legends by heart.

But with Milton, the poet did not exclude the statesman and the Christian. He meant to acquaint himself thoroughly with the manners and the politics of those peoples with whom he might sojourn. He meant also to study Catholicism in its action at home, and to know

those distinguished foreigners whom it might afterwards be an honor to have seen.

Unusually well informed beforehand respecting the geography, history, and social condition of Italy, and incalculably assisted by his familiarity with the language, Milton pressed southward by rapid stages towards the central and more interesting portions of the Italian peninsula. From Nice the coasting packet carried him to Genoa, where he tarried for a little, admiring the beauties of the bay, and observing "the proud palaces in and about, whereof there are two hundred within two miles of the town, and no two of them of the same form of building." At Genoa he also came first in contact with the swarms of *lazzaroni* or beggars, who then as now infested the country, affording a pathetic proof of its political mismanagement.

From Genoa Milton sailed by packet to Leghorn, from whence he passed inland some fourteen miles, to the ancient town of Pisa. Here he spent several delightful days viewing the gems of Pisan art. Once or twice during that time he ascended the old belfry, or lean-

ing tower, from whose dizzy height he surveyed the surrounding country, and cast his eyes far out over the Tuscan sea.

From Pisa he went forty-five miles further inland, up the course of the Arno, to Florence, then as now the most charming city in Christendom. Here, as he himself informs us, Milton remained two months.

Much as he loved the whole of Italy, Milton felt a peculiar affection for Florence. Its history ran back to days that were legendary even to Dante. It contained the churches of Santa Croce, San Lorenzo, and many more. The Palazzo Vecchio, an old structure identified with the days of the republic, still reared its hoary walls. The city was synonymous with art and poetry. The grandest masters had here lived and wrought. Florence had witnessed the marvels of Angelo's chisel and the rich frescoes of his pencil. There was the Laurentian library, an immense collection of rare manuscripts, brought together by the princely Medici, when that illustrious house led the revival of learning. Here was the Baptistry in which Dante broke the carved

font in his haste to save a drowning child. Here was Dante's house. Here was the cell, in San Marco, of Savonarola; and here rested at that very time the telescopes of Galileo, upon whose living face Milton was fortunate enough to look. The chosen haunt of belles-lettres scholarship and the fine arts, the very air was lovesick with music and poetry.

Milton's whole visit was one continued ovation. Into the living society of the city, at that time peculiarly agreeable and learned, he found instant and cordial admission, making friends to whom he continued life-long attached. "There immediately," he says, "I contracted acquaintance of many noble and learned men, whose private academies also—which are an institution of most praiseworthy effect, both for the cultivation of polite letters and the keeping up of friendships—I assiduously attended. The memory of you, Jacobo Gaddi, of you, Carlo Dati, of you, Frescobaldi, of you, Cattellini, Baumattei, Chimentelli, Francini, and of not a few others, always delightful and pleasant to me, time shall never destroy."

The academies of which Milton here speaks were institutions quite distinct from the universities, great museums, and libraries established in the chief cities of Europe, being nearer akin to what we now call literary clubs and philosophical societies. They originated in the fifteenth century, when Cosmo de Medici founded the "Platonic academy" at Florence for the purpose of reading and discussing the writings of Plato, and when "academies" were established for the same or similar purposes in Rome, Naples, and Venice, that scholars in those cities might get together, read the classic authors, compare manuscripts, and exchange their ideas and information. These institutions spread throughout Italy very speedily, so that at the period of Milton's visit every town of any importance in the peninsula contained several of them, though the academies of Florence and Rome were the most famous. They were precisely the kind of literary nests in which the great Englishman would delight to hide himself; and whatever specimens of his extraordinary powers he may have presented, the Florentine schol-

ars soon came to regard him as the prodigy he was.

Whenever he tired of the debates of the academies, he might stroll by the banks of the Arno, pass contemplatively through the ancient streets, or standing on some bridge, people the past with dusky historic figures, and live in imagination in those fierce days when Florence ordered that Dante to be burned alive whose dust she afterwards begged with vain tears from Ravenna; or most interesting of all, he might pass an hour at Galileo's villa, a little out of Florence, being greeted by the sage, then grown old and blind, with cordial kindness, while upon his part he gazed with reverend attention upon the mien of Italy's most famous son. "There it was," wrote Milton, "that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than as the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought."

Doubtless he wended his way, under the eager escort of one of Galileo's disciples, to the summit of the adjacent observatory, whence

the great Columbus of the heavens had made his revolutionizing discoveries. He also could gaze upon the moon,

“Whose orb,
Through optic glass, the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers, and mountains in her spotty globe.”

Milton made no secret of his religion when that subject was broached; and his friends, “with singular politeness,” as he afterwards said, conceded him full liberty of speech upon that delicate matter. They on their part did not conceal their sentiments, which in that bigot age there might have been danger in expressing to an unknown person. “I could recount,” he wrote six years later in his “Plea for Unlicensed Printing” in England, “what I have seen and heard in other countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes, when I have sat among their learned men—for that honor I had—and been accounted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition into which learning among

them was brought—that this was it which had damped the glory of Italian wits, that nothing had been written there now these many years but flattery and fustian.”

After the pleasantest of visits, Milton felt compelled to tear himself away from Florence, greatly to the regret of his many warm friends there, in order to set out for Rome, which city he reached in early October, 1638, when the unhealthy season of the Campagna was safely past.

Here he remained, he tells us, “nearly two months,” detained by “the antiquity and ancient renown of the city.” In Rome still more than in Florence might he dream of the shadowy past when standing in the capital, in the Coliseum, on the Tarpeian rock, or when visiting the temples, the baths, and the tombs, the monumental wonders, and all the garnered trophies of the spoiler Time.

Yet though the Rome of the past, of the mythical Latin-Etruscan kings, of the republican era, and of the empire, might throng his mind with the thrilling legends of antiquity, he was not so engrossed by it as to be unable to

see and commiserate the shrunken Rome of his own time. Still, "The Eternal City," though dis-crowned of its ancient glory, was a splendid ruin, and wonderfully rich in artistic beauties. St. Peter's was then but recently completed. There was also the adjacent Vatican. The whole city was flushed with the hues of painting; the public squares were crowded with statuary; the marvels of mediæval art were scattered with lavish hand in all quarters—monuments which recalled the earlier and nobler popes, which connected those days with the brilliant episode of Rienzi and the schism.

It has been very plausibly conjectured that these immortal objects may, many of them, be traced in their effect upon Milton's subsequent poetry. The frescoes of Angelo, then fresh in the Sistine chapel, the beauties of the milder canvas of Raphael, the marbles of Bandinelli, who had executed statues of Adam and Eve—all these being illustrative of holy writ—it is not impossible that they did stimulate the mind of Milton, and direct it to the study of those early scenes of the creation which he has

grouped so marvellously in the "*Paradise Lost*."

In Rome, as in Florence, the young Englishman speedily formed the acquaintance of the most famous characters of the time. The kindness of Holstenius, the learned keeper of the Vatican library, not only opened to his favored eyes that grand but usually closed repository of literature, but introduced him to the friendly attentions of Cardinal Barberini, at that time possessed of the whole delegated sovereignty of Rome by his uncle the reigning pope, Urban VIII.

This prelate treated Milton with marked politeness, giving in his honor a magnificent concert, and bringing him by hand into the assembly. It was upon this occasion that he first listened to the singing of the celebrated Leonora Baroni, the Sontag or Jenny Lind of her age. Passionately fond of music, as we have seen, the beautiful cantatrice made a great impression upon Milton, who evinced his admiration for her vocal talents in two or three Latin epigrams.

In Rome, as in Florence before, several of

the literati addressed eulogistic couplets to the gifted stranger, all of which he amply repaid in kind. Nor was he more cautious in the expression of his views while sojourning in the very centre of intolerant Romanism, than he had been while seated in the more liberal academies of his Florentine friends. Upon all suitable occasions he freely mentioned his religious opinions, provoking by his boldness no little wonder among his associates.

Sometime in November, 1638, the young traveller quitted Rome for Naples, whither he journeyed in company with "a certain eremite friar," a man of some culture, who, upon arriving at the city of their destination, introduced him to that Manso, Marquis of Villa, who had been the constant patron of Tasso, and who, upon the death of that ill-used and unhappy poet, had been his biographer. Manso, who had formerly distinguished himself in the Spanish service, was then in advanced age, and with ample means he had returned to his native city to pass the remainder of his days. He received Milton, a poet yet superior to his immortal fellow-countryman and friend, with

great kindness, pointed out himself all the interesting Neapolitan localities and curiosities to the young stranger, whom he also entertained in his own palace, and did every thing possible to render the visit agreeable.

Milton having with his accustomed freedom disclosed in the course of a conversation his Protestantism, Manso, whom he seems to have completely fascinated, declared that his only blemish was his heresy. When his guest was about to leave him, Manso presented him with a Latin distich in which he again referred to the matter:

“With mind, mien, temper, face, did *faith* agree,
Not ANGLIC, but an ANGEL wouldst thou be.”*

In return for this compliment, Milton addressed to this venerable friend and generous patron of the muses, a Latin poem of very high merit, which abounds in fine passages.

Sicily and Greece were upon Milton's programme of procedure. He longed to visit those lands, older in history and song even than the Italian peninsula. Why he did not do so

* The original is as follows :

“Ut mens, forma, decor, facies, mas, si pietas sic,
Non Anglus verùm herclè Angelus ipse fores.”

he himself informs us: "While I was desirous to cross into Sicily and Greece, the sad news of the civil war coming from England called me back; for I considered it disgraceful that while my fellow-countrymen were fighting at home for liberty, I should be travelling at ease for intellectual purposes."*

Nobly resolving to share the fortunes of the English commons in the opening conflict, Milton began immediately to retrace his steps.

It seems that what Wood calls Milton's "resoluteness" in religion while at Rome, had provoked the bitter anger of the English Jesuits. He himself says, "When I was about to return to Rome, the merchants at Naples warned me that they had learned by letters that snares were being laid for me by the English Jesuits, if I should return to Rome, on the ground that I had spoken too freely concerning religion. For I had made this resolution with myself—not indeed of my own accord to introduce in those places conversation about religion; but, if interrogated respecting the faith, then, whatsoever I should suffer, to dissemble nothing.

* Def., Sec. P. W., Vol. V, p. 231.

To Rome therefore I did return, notwithstanding what I had been told: what I was, if any one asked, I concealed from no one; if any one, in the very city of the Pope, attacked the orthodox religion, I, as before, for a second space of nearly two months, defended it most freely.*

The license permitted Milton was extraordinary for those days. Lord Chandos, in a book published in 1620, affirms that "if a man in his going thither," to Italy, "converse with Italians, and discuss or dispute his religion, he is sure, unless he fly, to be complained of and brought before the Inquisition." Yet this was precisely what Milton did for over a year, scattering his remarks, criticisms, and comments with perfect unconcern, and permitting his discussions at moments to become almost polemical. The matchless courage and earnest piety which would not permit him to listen in silence to attacks on "the orthodox religion," are above human praise. But this stout English independence was highly characteristic of the man.

* Def. Sec., Works VI, pp. 288, 289.

Upon his return to Florence he was welcomed, as he tells us, with no less eagerness than if the return had been to his native country and his friends at home. Here he spent two additional months in the society of his old friends the academicians; and from Florence he indited a letter of thanks to Holstenius, already mentioned as the keeper of the Vatican library at Rome, for his many and kind attentions.

When he left Florence for the last time, he crossed the Apennines, and travelled through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice. The singular attractions of that remarkable city detained him for a month in their examination. Venice then contained several celebrated academies, of which the "*Incognito*" was chief. It has been suggested* that the city and its inhabitants would not be the less interesting to Milton, from the fact that in Venice alone, in Italy, was there some independence of opinion as regarded both the Pope and the Spaniard, and that there had even been expectations that Venice, in her struggle with the papacy,

* By Masson, in his *Life of Milton*, p. 655, Vol. I.

would set the example of Italian Protestantism. At all events he tarried there, deeply absorbed, for thirty odd days; when, after providing for the transportation to England of the many rare books and manuscripts, a number of them musical compositions by the best masters then living, which he had collected during his tour, he continued his homeward course through Verona and Milan, over the Pennine Alps, and by lake Lemanus, to Geneva.

Geneva has been fitly called the Rome of Protestantism. It was then the strong-hold of the reformed theology, and contained a university which was presided over by men of remarkable attainments and earnest piety, who kept up the faith and the discipline established by the Reformation. There Milton again breathed the fresh, free air of Protestantism, after his long confinement to the Catholic atmosphere of Italy. And here he made the acquaintance of the eminent theologians, Frederic Spanheim, and Giovanni Deodati, already mentioned in these pages, and the uncle of his intimate friend, Charles Deodati.

After a pleasant visit at Geneva of a week

or more, Milton retraced his former route through France, and arrived in England early in August, 1639, after an absence of one year and three months.

It is perhaps proper to close this chapter by appending the sentence with which Milton himself concludes his account of his Continental tour: "I again take God to witness, that in all those places where so many things are considered lawful, I lived sound and untouched from all profligacy and vice; having this thought perpetually with me, that though I might escape the eyes of men, I certainly could not the eyes of God."*

* Def. Sec., Works VI., p. 289.

CHAPTER VI.

UPON touching once more his native shore, Milton found chaos everywhere. Anarchy in the streets, bitter dissension in the church, the general dissolution of old institutions, "grim-visaged war" lowering with "its wrinkled front," effectually routed all idea of continuing that peaceful and secluded existence to which he had hitherto been wedded.

The opening acts in the drama of the great rebellion were already being enacted. King Charles, bent upon enforcing the dogma of conformity with the English ritual, had even invaded Scotland at the head of an army, for the purpose of compelling the Scotch, who had been Calvinized or Presbyterianized under the exhortations of stout John Knox, to whose teachings they remained enthusiastically true, to desert their creed, and accept in its place the Episcopal polity.

When the "Service-book," as the bishops had named the new Scottish Liturgy, was cir-

culated and ordered to be used by all parish ministers on pain of outlawry, the rage which swept through Scotland was portentous. The refusal to comply with the conformity laws was universal and indignant. A riot at Edinburgh, when the Service-book ritual was attempted to be read, summoned all Scotland to arms. "Posts running thick betwixt the court in London and the Scottish council," says Baillie, "spread the news of the insurrection far and near." Charles, in an unhappy hour, determined to coerce "these Scottish men who had the presumption to think independently in religious matters."* One expedition, dispatched into Scotland during Milton's absence upon the Continent, had proved futile; in 1639, about the time of his return, Charles equipped a second expedition, and this also had been compelled by Leslie to retreat.

Meantime the "Scottish men," as Clarendon calls them, flocked to Edinburgh from all quarters, and at a meeting held in the Grayfriars' church in that ancient capital, "signed a solemn covenant" never to submit to the

* Clarendon.

abolition of the religious forms they loved, and never to accept the innovations of the prelates. Thus originated the famous "Covenanters." The signing continued for many weeks both at Edinburgh and throughout Scotland, until nine-tenths of the whole lowland population had sworn themselves members of the league

. Such was the posture of affairs in Scotland.

In England, though the Puritans were at the outset less stubborn, as they were less numerous and more loosely organized than on the north of the Tweed, the hubbub grew apace; and joining the chorus of religious protest, the new Parliament, which the unsettled state of the nation had obliged the unwilling king to convoke, gave additional emphasis to the popular demand that the tyrannical action of the prelates should be curbed in ecclesiastical matters, and that in the civil domain the arbitrary prerogatives of the crown should be definitely surrendered, as alien to the spirit of the British Constitution, and as outraging the liberty wrung from despotism by *Magna Charta*.

The Parliament of April, 1640, instead of proving more compliant than its predecessors, was the boldest yet convoked. It refused to grant the king all supplies, until he acceded to their just demands. Charles, with an empty exchequer, greatly indebted, and with an army on his hands drawn together with much difficulty, to whom the state had fallen into arrears, had the still further mortification of learning that the eleven years' intermission between the present Parliament and the prior one, had made his subjects no more submissive to his usurpation, nor did he find them any the less tenaciously wedded to popular rights. Enraged at his disappointment, he dissolved the Parliament.

The dark cloud grew blacker every day. The Scottish army, zealous and triumphant, were already marching for the borders of England. The discontent of the English people became more and more demonstrative. The court having begged, borrowed, and plundered money from friend and foe, Jew and Gentile, was at length bankrupt.

Charles, appalled by the gathering storm,

and conscious of his inability to stem the torrent, determined once more to convoke a Parliament, and yield at least in a measure to necessity. Accordingly that Parliament, famous in history under the name of the "Long Parliament," on account of the length of its continuance, whose "rump" was finally dispersed by a stamp of the iron heel of Cromwell, was convened. Its first measure was to order the impeachment of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, the chief minister of the king, and Archbishop Laud. Against these men, companions in tyranny, and in some sort the authors of many of the evils under which the kingdom groaned, the popular feeling ran very high. Wentworth was shortly after tried and executed; Laud was instantly deposed from his Archiepiscopal see of Canterbury and thrown into the tower.

The next move of the Parliament was to curb the usurpations of the bishops, to demand the abolition of the Star Chamber court, and to settle the foundations of its power upon a basis which should be thereafter indestructible. The House of Commons, as the champion

of religious and civil liberty, had come to be the idol of the liberal masses. Its authority was singularly large, while the genius of its members, comprising such names as Hampden, Pync, and Henry Vane, gave it an unusual amount of executive ability.

The king, after several foolish and treacherous attempts to break the truce just declared between himself and the Parliament, at length, despoiled of many of his prerogatives, and covered with shame, quitted London, hurried to the ancient city of York, and summoning his partisans to assemble beneath his banner, placed himself at the head of the reactionary party, inaugurating the civil war by assaulting, on the 23d of October, 1642, the forces of the Parliament lying at Edge-hill.

Hume declares* that the nobility and more considerable gentry adhered to the royal side. The Catholic, the high-church, and the profligate parties also ranged themselves under that ensign. The *éclat* of family name, proud position, and glittering pomp were decidedly with Charles. But opposed to him stood the great

* Hist. Eng., Vol. VI., p. 425.

middle classes, then as now omnipotent in England. The Parliamentary muster was animated by an earnestness, an enthusiasm, and a unity of purpose which made its onset irresistible. Cromwell's "Ironsides" squadron was simply typical of the *iron sides* of the popular cause. Civil and religious liberty clasped hands, and trod in triumph from the southern coast of Britain to the Orkney islands.

CHAPTER VII.

THE preceding chapter is devoted to a succinct survey of the civil and ecclesiastical condition of Great Britain during the months which immediately portended and ushered in the Revolution. Let us now see what was Milton's connection with that initiatory period.

His first patriotic sensations on reaching England were somewhat benumbed by the calamity of a private loss—the death of his intimate friend and sometime schoolmate, Charles Deodati. Milton gave utterance to his sorrow on this occasion by the composition of his "*Epitaphium Damonis*," one of the most elegant and pathetic pastorals ever written, worthy alike of his genius and of Deodati's virtues.

This debt of fraternal duty paid, he hastened to London, where, after receiving the congratulations of his friends upon his safe return from his tour, and after sadly missing the

warmth of poor Deodati's greeting, he hired handsome lodgings, first in St. Bride's court, Fleet-street, and shortly in Aldersgate-street, a more retired locality. Here, taking a back room, into which the roar of the street should penetrate as little as possible, Milton arranged his library, and settled down into fixed ways.

The expense of his university education, and of his travels, seemed to make it proper that Milton should draw no longer upon the resources of his father, always so generously at his service. "My life," he says, "has not been unexpensive, in learning and voyaging about." Therefore remembering that he was not the only child, and desirous of becoming independent, Milton received the two sons of his sister, Mrs. Phillips, into his house to be instructed and educated. At the earnest solicitation of several others, all intimate friends, he consented to receive their sons also, for the same purpose.

The system of education which Milton adopted in his little academy, unlike the University *Curriculum*, upon which, as we have

seen, he so bitterly animadverts, was sound and comprehensive. Dr. Johnson, and other critics, have severely censured his method of instruction. But it is really more open to criticism on account of its extensive and expensive character than in any other respects. Dr. Johnson has the bad taste to go out of his way, in his elaborate assault upon Milton's educational theory, to launch a sneer at the great poet's condescension in becoming what he terms a "schoolmaster." Since Johnson was himself a sometime schoolmaster, the slur comes with a bad grace from him. But did he not remember that the noblest intellects God has lent the world have stooped to be the teachers of mankind? Did he not recall Socrates in the old Athenian streets? Did he not remember Plato in the groves of the Academy? Did he forget Abélard, who shone so brightly in the middle ages? Had he forgotten the sublimest of all teachers, Christ himself, on the plains of Palestine?

To a thoughtful mind, Milton's occupation, that of conducting young minds into the temple of knowledge, and pointing out to their appre-

ciation the wise actions of the past, the treasured lore of antiquity, the memorable deeds of present days, the thrilling legends of sufferings endured for truth's sake or for justice, and, best of all, of accompanying them into the "holy of holies" of religious sentiment, will seem a fitting and fine absorption of a portion of his time.

To a knowledge of the Greek and Latin authors, Milton's plan added the cultivation of the Asiatic tongues, "the Chaldee, the Syriac, the Hebrew;" he made his pupils "go through the Pentateuch, and gain an entrance into the Targum;" nor did he banish from his theory the modern languages, but he insisted upon an intimate acquaintance with the best Italian and French writers. Every Sunday was spent in theological study; he himself was wont to dictate, from commentators then in vogue, short schemes of the theological system. Pearce has observed that Fagius was Milton's favorite annotator on the Bible.*

But his pupils did not wholly engross him. Milton was then—1640—thirty-two years of

* Mitford's *Life of Milton*, p. 30.

age, fully ripe, his mind enlarged by travel, and singularly learned. From his return to England in 1639 up to the middle of 1642, when the civil war was commenced in earnest, was a remarkably prolific period in Milton's life, many of his most elaborate writings being penned in that time. It witnessed the birth of several of his polemical works.

One phase of the national condition on his return from the continent, he has himself described. "On my return from my travels, I found all mouths open against the bishops; some complaining of their vices, and others quarrelling with the very order; and thinking, from such beginnings, a way might be opened to true liberty, I hastily engaged in the dispute, as well to rescue my fellow-citizens from slavery, as to help the Puritan ministers, who were inferior to the bishops in learning."

One of his biographers, Birch, says, "He, in the first place, published two books on the Reformation from Popery, which were dedicated to a friend. In the first of these he proved, from the reign of Henry VIII., what had all along been the real impediments in the

kingdom to a perfect reformation. These he reduces to two heads: the first, the Popish ceremonies which had been retained in the Protestant church; and the second, the power of ordination to the ministry having been confined to diocesan bishops, to the exclusion of the choice of ministers by the suffrages of the people. 'Our ceremonies,' he says, 'are senseless in themselves, and serve for nothing else but either to facilitate our return to Popery, or to hide the defects of better knowledge, and to set off the pomp of prelacy.' "

This "Treatise on the Reformation" was published in 1641. It abounds in stirring passages, and was written with a purity of motive which Milton solemnly invokes the Deity to witness. He attempts to show in it, that the prelates of the English church had always been the foes of liberty; and though he "denied not but many of them had been good men, though not infallible, nor above all human frailties," he yet "affirmed that, though at the beginning they had renounced the *Pope*, yet they had hugged the *Popedom*, and shared the authority among themselves;

by their six bloody articles persecuting the Protestants no slacker than the Pope would have done."

In contemplating the glorious event of the Reformation, he rises into the highest eloquence: "How the bright and glorious Reformation, by divine power, shone through the black and settled night of ignorance and anti-christian tyranny; methinks a sovereign and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears, and the sweet odor imbue his soul with the fragraney of heaven. Then was the sacred Bible brought out of the dusty corners where profane falsehood and neglect had thrown it; the schools opened, divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues; princes and cities trooping apace to the new-erected banner of salvation; the martyrs, with the irresistible might of weakness, shaking the powers of darkness, and scorning the fiery rage of the old red dragon."

After tracing with singular acumen the influence of prelaey, and displaying the anti-liberal character of its politics, he turns to the

English and Scotch Puritans of his time, united by a "solemn league and covenant" to pursue the contest for liberty in church and state, and thus apostrophizes them: "Go on both, hand in hand, Oh nations never to be disunited. Be the praise and heroic song of all posterity. Merit this; but seek only virtue, not to extend your limits; for what need you win a fading triumphant laurel out of the tears of wretched men, but to settle the pure worship of God in his church, and justice in the state? Then shall the hardest difficulties smooth^d out themselves before you; envy shall sink to hell; craft and malice be confounded, whether it be homebred mischief or outlandish cunning; yea, other nations will then covet to serve you; for lordship and victory are but the passes of justice and virtue. Commit securely to true wisdom the vanquishing and unusing of craft and subtlety, which are but her two renegades. Join your invincible might to do worthy and godlike deeds; and then he that wishes to break your union, a cleaving curse be his inheritance to all generations."

In 1641, the same year in which Milton's

“Treatise on the Reformation” appeared, a number of Presbyterian ministers published, under the title of “Smeetymnus,”* consisting of the initial letters of their names, a treatise against prelacy. This treatise provoked indignant replies, which again drew from Milton three several reviews, in one of which, Toland says, “Milton shows the insufficiency, inconveniency, and impiety” of attempting to establish any part of Christianity from patristical lore, “and blames those persons who cannot think any doubt resolved or any doctrine confirmed unless they run to that undigested heap and fry of authors which they call antiquity.” ‘Whatsoever either time or the blind hand of chance,’ he says, ‘has drawn down to this present, in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea-weed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, these are the fathers.’” And so he chides these writers “for divulging useless treatises, stuffed with the specious names of IGNATIUS and POLYCARPUS, with fragments of old martyrologies and legends, to distract

* This was a quarto work, written by Stephen Marshall, Edward Culamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurstow.

and stagger the multitude of credulous readers."

To one of those writers who insinuated that Milton's habit of early rising was for sensual pursuits, he made this response: "My morning haunts are where they should be, at home; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring: in winter, often before any bell awakens men to labor or devotion; in summer, as apt as the bird that first rouses, or not much tardier, to read good authors, or cause them to be read till the attention is weary, or the memory have its full fraught. Then with useful and generous labor preserving the body's health and hardiness, to render a lightsome, clear, and not lumpish obedience of the mind for the cause of religion and our country's liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations, rather than see the ruin of our Protestation, and the enforcement of a slavish life.

"These means, together with a certain niceness of nature, an honest haughtiness and self-esteem, either of what I was or what I

might be, (which let envy call pride,) and lastly, a burning modesty, all uniting their natural aid together, kept me still above those low descents of mind, beneath which he must plunge himself that can agree to saleable and unlawful prostitution.

“If I should tell you what I learnt of chastity and love, (I mean that which is truly so,) whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy—the rest are cheated with a thick, intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love’s name, carries about—and if I were to tell you how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of the divine generation, knowledge and virtue, with such abstracted sublimities as these, it might be worth your listening, readers.”

It will be observed that Milton’s objections to the assumptions of his opponents were of a twofold nature: objections founded upon the dissenting arguments of the sufficiency of the Scriptures alone, and the right of private judgment, rejecting the authority of the *creeds* of

the first four general councils; and objections founded on an earnest opposition to the clearly antichristian principle, then a cardinal point in the prelatical belief, of the right of the civil magistrate to adopt rites and ceremonies, and enforce them by civil pains and penalties upon the observance of those whose consciences would not allow them to obey any thing in religion but what was taught them in the oracles of God.

One of Milton's biographers* remarks very truly, that though the blunt and caustic style of Milton's writings, and the gorgeous eloquence with which he attacked the bishops, must have been highly diverting to those Puritans both in church and state who had begun to throw off their prelatical chains, yet the *sentiments* would be often very far from meeting their approval; because, though the Puritans were opposed to episcopacy, yet they had no objection to the *principle* of an establishment, nor to what was, above all, exposed and objected to by Milton, the right of the established sect to withhold toleration, and to pun-

* Ivimey, p. 50.

ish with fines and imprisonment, yes, even with death, those who would not submit their consciences to the dictation of the magistrate. In these respects the Puritans of that day were no whit in advance of the prelates, as they proved conclusively upon coming into power. They disliked not the *principle* of intolerance, but intolerance as applied to their own tenets.

Milton stands out from those times as the only political writer whose Christianity and statesmanship were broad and generous enough to enable him to appreciate the inestimable value of unfettered thought, and to inscribe openly upon his phylactery the golden truth of religious toleration.

Upon first entering the arena of controversy, Milton's modesty led him to say, "I was not disposed to this manner of writing, wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task. I have the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand."^{*} But posterity has reversed his

* Introduction to second volume of "Reasons of Church Government."

verdict, and sincerely thanks him for his polemical works, not because they are always fair, or always just, or always right, but because, honestly meant, they abound in noble thoughts magnificently expressed, and because their tendency is towards truth and liberty.

CHAPTER VIII.

UPON the outbreak of hostilities, the Parliament took the reins of government in their own hands, and proceeded to the correction of many abuses. One of their first steps was, to exclude the bishops from their seats in the upper House. Soon after, in 1643, the Lords and Commons signed together the "Solemn League and Covenant" which bound England and Scotland to the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy.*

Considering how greatly Milton's writings had contributed towards that consummation, it must have afforded him undisguised joy, because with his sentiments, as expressed in his several treatises against the prelates, he considered, as the Parliament appears to have done, that popery and prelacy were then identical, or at least so closely united that the death of one insured the burial of the other. He considered that the overthrow of

* Hume's History of England, Vol. VII., p. 470.

prelacy would assimilate the Episcopacy to the simpler, and as he thought, the more apostolic model of the reformed churches in other countries—introducing their exactness of discipline, as they already held their purity of doctrine.*

The rule of the Parliament, from the opening battle of the civil war at Edge-hill in 1642, up to the year 1644, had been checkered by alternate victory and defeat; still, upon the whole, the Puritans had gained, and their rule continued firm.

In 1644 there occurred an event which proved Milton to be the friend of impartial liberty, not of a clique, and as ready to lash the inconsistencies of his political associates as he had been to expose the sophistries of the oppressive prelates. Unlike another famous character in English history, he would never consent “to give up to party what was meant for mankind.”

“No pent-up Utica confined his powers.”

When he beheld the Puritans, who, while smarting under the intolerant license laws of

* Mitford's *Life of Milton*, p. 33.

the prelates, had been the clamorous friends of the freedom of the press, themselves, upon their assumption of power, reënacting those very statutes restricting printing, the glaring inconsistency of these apostate patriots kindled his scornful indignation, and called forth an argument which the voices of the most opposite critics have, with singular unanimity, described as one of the most masterly and eloquent compositions ever originated by the wit of man. Milton called his argument, "AREOPAGITICA;* or, *An Oration to the Parliament of England for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing.*"

From the establishment of printing in England, the business had been constantly interfered with by the government, which in this respect imitated the inquisitorial inspections of the Vatican. In the reign of Philip and Mary an attempt was made to consolidate the printing trade, and the incorporation of the "Stationers' Company of London" was finally effected in 1557. By the act of incorporation, the exclusive privilege of printing and pub-

* From the Greek *Ἀρεοπαγίτις*, an ancient Athenian high court.

lishing in the English domains was conferred upon the London company and its successors by regular apprenticeship. The object of the government in creating this gigantic monopoly, the centralization of literature in one spot, where it could be under the immediate eye of the court, was thus gained. The company could lawfully search for and seize any books printed against its privilege, and such illegal printing was punishable by fine and imprisonment.

When Elizabeth assumed the crown, so stood the law ; but that the determination of what should be published might not be wholly at the discretion of the Stationers' Company, she decreed by the fifty-first of the Injunctions concerning Religion, promulgated in 1559, that no book, school-books and recognized classics excepted, should be published in any language in her domains henceforward, but with the previous license of the queen or six of her privy counsellors, or by the chancellors of the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or by the archbishops of Canterbury and York, or by the bishop of London, or by the bishop

being ordinary and the archdeacon of the place of publication.

The privilege which the universities naturally claimed as seats of learning to print at their option, had caused a long dispute between themselves and the London company, which was finally decided by a Star Chamber decree. It was settled that, in addition to the printing-presses under the control of the stationers of the metropolis, there might be one press at each university; the owners of these however, to have but one apprentice at a time, and to employ London journeymen when they required extra service.*

These laws, so capable of being made the engine of intolerable oppression, had been so used by Archbishop Laud and his satellites; and that too at a time when it was felt as a peculiar hardship. That was a period of remarkable intellectual activity. "Every man," says Clarendon, "had written or expected to write a book;" and Coleridge has assured us that the store of pamphlets left us by the age of Milton is as rich in thought and as multitudinous in

*Cooper's Annals of Cambridge, Vol. II., p. 424.

number as any issued from the press in later days.

People then complained of the plethora of books, precisely as they do now. "In this scribbling age," says Burton in the preface to his "*Anatomy of Melancholy*," "the number of books is without number. What a company of poets hath this year brought out; as Pliny complains to Sosius Senecio. What a catalogue of new books all this year, all this age, I say, have our Franklin marts, our domestic marts, brought out. Who can read them? We are oppressed with them, our eyes ache with reading, our fingers with turning."

Of course at such a time the indispensable *imprimatur* of the licensers came to be regarded by writers as a nuisance; and by the Puritans it was especially objected to, because they often could not secure for their tracts the necessary license, while the prelates with the press for a fulcrum turned their tenets upside down. Yet, not taught toleration by their own suffering, they had no sooner deposed the bishops than they appointed new licensers, and continued

the whole tyrannical system under the new dispensation.

It was against the principle of the license code that Milton, in the "*Areopagitica*," trained his intellectual battery, and fired that tremendous broadside which reverberated then, and still reverberates throughout the world.

The "*Areopagitica*" is opened with masterly art; in conciliatory *finesse*, the exordium equals any thing in Greek or Roman oratory. "Truth is armed, by reason and by fancy, with weapons which are effective by their weight and edge, while they dazzle us by their brightness." Milton's arguments, which are individually strong, derive additional force from their mutual support and admirable arrangement; so that at the climax they compel with imperious power unhesitating conviction.

Showing at the outset that fetters for the press were first contrived by the papal tyranny,* and perfected by the Spanish inquisition,

* Dr. Symmons, in his *Life of Milton*, appends this note to his description of the "*Areopagitica*:" "The turbulent and profligate Sextus IV., whose enormities were exceeded only by those of Alexander VI., was the first who placed the press under the control of a state inquisitor. He died in 1484, after having disgraced the

he next proceeds to prove that these gags are injurious to civil progress and religious truth. He affirms that the circulation of flagitious writings cannot be restrained by shackling the press; while the suspicion which falls upon works, suppressed often by the ignorance of licensers, or by their spite, is an insult to authors, and a discouragement to the learned. Even admitting that the entire control of the press could be attained, as it certainly never has been, still no good would result to morals, as the avenues of corrupt communication would be always numerous; while, after all, not *ignorance of vice*, but its *rejection*, constitutes virtue.

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“Adam’s doom seems to have been that of knowing good *by* evil. A fugitive and cloistered virtue is not to be praised—a virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.”

Milton scouts the idea of any one class undertaking to decide for mankind what truth is.

Roman see and disturbed Italy during thirteen years. This is not specified by Milton, but is the fact.”

Opinion is not always truth ; it is truth filtered through the mood, the disposition, the education, the stand-point of the spectator. While the bishops affirmed that orthodoxy was their 'doxy, the Dissenters were just as firmly persuaded that the orthodox religion dwelt with them ; while the Pope fulminated his bulls of excommunication against them both, arrogating to the Roman see the pure unquestionable orthodox faith. In that and kindred controversies it was Milton's belief that unlicensed, unrestricted printing would be a grand helper, and no hinderance to the eternal truth.

To the jealousy of a government, or the bigotry of a church, demanding an enslaved press, he replies, that "a state governed by the rules of justice and fortitude, or a church built upon the rock of faith and true knowledge, cannot be so pusillanimous" as to dread the utmost liberty of criticism.

Yet it was not the *licentiousness* of the press for which Milton pleaded. He was willing that it should be as free as the air, or the light of heaven, to pour its good and evil alike into the world ; but he would hold the writers to a

proper responsibility to the laws, not to vomit slander through the press, nor to infringe the fundamental precepts of morals and good order. That is, publishers were not to be allowed to violate the innocent peace of society, or of individuals; to permit that were not *liberty*, but flagitious licentiousness.

“I deny not,” says the great champion of regulated liberty, “but that it is of great concernment to the church and commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how *books* bemean themselves as well as men; and therefore to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors; for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the honest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragon’s teeth; and, being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable

creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labors of public men—how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself, and slays an immortality rather than a life."

Milton did not fear the most convulsing agitation: he saw, in what some thought chaos, nothing but an unchained people "casting off

the old and wrinkled skin of corruption, waxing young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and prosperous virtue, and destined to become great and honorable in these latter days." Here occurs this burst of sublime and unrivalled eloquence

"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself, like the strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance, while the whole brood of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means."

What he says concerning the inconsistency of the Parliament in its treatment of the license question, is keen and just: "Who cannot discern the fineness of this politic drift, and who are its contrivers? that while the bishops were to be baited down, then all presses might be open: it was the people's birthright and privilege in time of Parliament;

it was the breaking forth of light. But now, the bishops abrogated and voided out of the church, as if our reformation sought no more but to make room for others into their seats under another name, the episcopal arts begin to bud again; the cruse of truth must run no more oil; liberty of printing must be intrallied under a prelatial commission of twenty;* the privilege of the people nullified, and which is worse, the freedom of learning must groan again, and to her old fetters."†

This entire "Plea" of Milton's is a model of style, impressive dignity, and persuasive eloquence. In sublimity of thought and elevation of sentiment, it is unique and unrivalled in English letters. Some of the sentences are stiff with splendor, while its frequent figurativeness renders it what Burke fitly calls it, "the most magnificent of prose poems."

Notwithstanding its splendor, cogency, and unanswerable logic, the Parliament turned a deaf ear to Milton's address, and remained inexorably determined to preserve the license

* In allusion to a then recent act of Parliament, placing the license under charge of such a commission.

† Works, Vol. I., p. 315.

gags, and to muzzle the press. Nor was it until the year 1694 that the license was definitely abolished, and the press, shaking off its locks and shackles, became really free in England.*

* Blackstone's Commentaries, 11th ed., Vol. IV., p. 152.

CHAPTER IX.

AT Whitsuntide, in 1643, he being then thirty-five years of age, Milton married Mary, a daughter of Mr. Powell, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire, and a gentleman of property and position. After spending the honeymoon among his bride's relatives, Milton brought her to town with him, in the expectation of living comfortably and happily with her. His bright hopes were, however, speedily blasted, and his wife held to his lips a goblet of mortification which he was obliged to drain to the very dregs.

Many circumstances combined to render this match exceedingly unequal and ill-advised; it certainly proves that the wisest of men are at times the most foolish. The Powells were staunchly cavalier in their politics; Miss Powell had been reared in the gay, frivolous circles of the "love-locked" gentry of that loose epoch, was used to much company, merriment, and dancing, held her austere hus-

band's democratic principles in utter contempt, and was not fitted either by nature or training to sympathize with his magnificent projects, and studious, philosophical pursuits.

To a lady thus bred, nothing could be more odiously uninviting than the solitary study of a recluse scholar, where no company whose tastes were similar to hers ever came, where spare diet and a house full of pupils constantly galled one who had been spoiled, petted, and lapped in luxury. Sighing for the old life of mirth and joviality, she urged Milton, after passing some few weeks with him in London, to permit her to visit her friends in Oxfordshire for a while; with which request her husband complied, only stipulating that she should return to him at Michaelmas.

This visit was in fact only a pretence for conjugal desertion.* Philips, Milton's nephew, at the time a pupil in his uncle's house, tells us that her relations "being generally addicted to the cavalier party, and some of them possibly engaged in the king's service, (who by this time had his head-quarters at Oxford, and was

* Todd's *Life of Milton*, p. 48.

in some prospect of success,) they began to repent them of having matched the eldest daughter of the family to a person so contrary to them in opinion; and thought it would be a blot in their escutcheon, whenever that court should come to flourish again."

However this may be, certain it is that she did not make her appearance at the appointed time, and that she yielded no obedience to her husband's repeated requests that she should resume her place at his side. "After receiving several of his letters without sending him any answer," says Tolland, "she did at length positively refuse to come, dismissing his messenger with contempt."

It may easily be imagined what the result of such keenly insulting conduct would be upon a man of John Milton's high, proud, and honorable spirit. Exasperated beyond measure, he resolved to repudiate his wife; and in defence of this resolution, he published his four celebrated treatises on divorce, the two first in 1644, the others in 1645.

The first pamphlet on this subject was called the "*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,*"

and was dedicated to the Parliament and the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. This provoked much comment; and several answers to it being penned by his opponents, Milton shortly after, in order to show that he did not stand alone in his opinion, published his second tract, "*The judgment of the Famous Reformer Martin Bucer, Touching Divorce,*" in which he proved that that worthy exactly agreed with him.

In response to an elaborate attack upon his theory in 1645, Milton published another tract in its defence: "*Tetrarchordon; or, Expositions upon the Four Chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage or Nullities in Marriage.*" Some months later, being provoked thereto by continued denunciation and misrepresentation, he issued the "*Colasterion,*" in which he closed the controversy.

It is not within the purview of this Life to speak at any length or with any oracularness upon the momentous question of divorce. Perhaps however it is but fair to state that Milton's design in the pamphlet he wrote upon the subject was, to show that there may be

other and sufficient reasons for divorce besides adultery, and that to prohibit any sort of divorce but such as are accepted by Moses is unjust, and against the reason of the law.

These innovations brought upon Milton's head a storm of ridicule and denunciation at the time. The wits of the court and the thunders of the pulpit united their terrors to affright and daunt him. He was even summoned before the bar of the House of Lords; but he was quickly dismissed, and all efforts to excite the Lords and Commons of the Parliament against him signally failed. Perhaps they foresaw the time when they should require him to wield his mighty pen in their defence, and thus were cautious not to treat with harshness one beneath the ægis of whose glittering rhetoric they might be driven to hide.

Whether the Parliament accepted his theories or not, his writings gave birth to a sect called *Miltonists*, who did indorse him.

Dr. Symmons, a clergyman of the Established church in England, and one of Milton's ablest biographers, thinks that he "has made out a strong case, and fights with arguments

not easily to be repelled.”* And Mr. Godwin says, “The books on divorce are written with the most entire knowledge of the subject, and with a clearness and strength of argument that it would be difficult to excel.” Selden also, one of the profoundest lawyers in English jurisprudence, fully indorsed Milton’s principles, writing his “*Uxor Hebraica*” on that side of the question; while in America a number of the states have enacted analogous precepts into law.

This proves that those critics who charge that Milton wrote the divorce pamphlets hastily and ignorantly, in order to vent his spite, falsify the record. The pamphlets breathe, in the main, making fair deductions on account of the heated controversial period in which they were written—an age when polemical writers were far from nice in their choice and bestowal of epithets—a pure and Christian spirit, and show their author’s desire and effort to lean prayerfully and unhesitatingly upon the Scriptures. If he erred, it was not intentionally, or because he did not seek the truth.

* Symmons’ *Life of Milton*, p. 202.

The lesson which may safely be drawn from this unhappy episode in Milton's life is, that marriage should be based upon something better than mere fancy, upon which Milton's choice seems only to have rested; and that persons should not "marry in haste," if they do not wish "to repent at leisure."

About this time Milton's little academy was reinforced by the arrival of several new pupils whom he had consented to receive into his family. His father also, upon the capture of Reading by the Earl of Essex in 1643, left his son Christopher, with whom he had been residing in that town, and came to form part of the establishment in Aldersgate-street.

In conformity with his tenets on the subject of divorce, and to exhibit his consciousness of freedom, Milton, in 1644, began to address a beautiful and accomplished young lady, a daughter of a Mr. Davis, with a view to matrimony. It has been asserted somewhat loosely, that Miss Davis was averse to the union; but if she entertained any objections, they were overcome, and the match would have

taken place but for the occurrence of a somewhat remarkable circumstance.

The desperate situation of the king's cause in 1644, caused by the utter rout of the royal army at Naseby, made the family of Milton's wife reluctantly sensible of the folly of their conduct in alienating a man so powerful with the Parliament, and selfishly anxious to propitiate his resentment. They foresaw that his active countenance would soon be necessary for their protection, and possibly for their actual subsistence. "With no resemblance to the elevated equanimity of the man who had honored them with his alliance, they rose or fell, like the mob of their species, with the flow or the ebb of fortune, and were insolent or abject as their unstable power visited or deserted them." They therefore determined to effect a reconciliation between Milton and his wife.

"Their plan," says Dr. Symmons, "was conceived and executed with successful ingenuity." When on a visit to a relative in the lane of St. Martin's-le-grand, he was surprised to see his wife come from another room and

beg forgiveness on her knees. Fenton remarks,* "It is not to be doubted but an interview of that nature, so little expected, must wonderfully affect him; and perhaps the impression it made upon his imagination contributed much to the painting of that pathetic scene in '*Paradise Lost*,' in which Eve addresses herself to Adam for pardon and peace. At the intercession of his friends who were present, after a short reluctance, he generously sacrificed all his resentment to her tears:

—————"Soon his heart relented
Toward her, his life so late, and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress."

Such was Milton's generous and Christian spirit, that, banishing all remembrance of his wife's ill-conduct, and also of her family's provocation, he received them all into his own house, where he freely entertained and protected them until their affairs were accommodated by his interest with the victorious Puritans. His wife continued to reside with him happily and affectionately until her death some years later.

* In the preface to his edition of "*Paradise Lost*," first published in London, in 1725.

At the time of Milton's reconciliation with his wife, the enlargement of his family had obliged him to change his residence to a more commodious mansion in Barbican, whither he now transported his household.

“When it is considered that Milton cheerfully opened his doors to those who had treated him with indignity and breach of faith: to a father who, according to the poet's nuncupative will, never paid him the promised marriage portion of a thousand pounds; and to a mother who, according to Wood, had encouraged the daughter in her perverseness, we cannot but accede to Mr. Hayley's conclusion, that the records of private life exhibit not a more magnanimous example of forgiveness and beneficence.”*

Notwithstanding these domestic embarrassments, and the engrossing interest of the civil war, then rising to its triumphant climax, Milton did not permit his attention to be wholly diverted from other important considerations. He published during this period, in addition to the “Plea for Unlicensed Printing,” and the

* Todd's *Life of Milton*, p. 58.

pamphlets on divorce, his elaborate "*Treatise on Education*," and several sonnets. His leisure hours he filled up pleasantly, either in visiting his friends, and especially one lady, a daughter of the Earl of Marlborough, who was possessed of rare talents, and to whom, as to her husband, Captain Hobson, an accomplished gentleman, his company was peculiarly acceptable; or in collecting and correcting his early poems, both Latin and English, an edition of which was first published under the auspices of Humphrey Moseley, the general publisher of the poets of that epoch, in 1645.

Moseley says, in his "Address to the Reader," "The author's more peculiar excellence in these studies was too well known to conceal his papers, or to keep me from attempting to solicit them from him. Let the event guide itself which way it will, I shall deserve of the age, by bringing into the light as true a birth as the muses have brought forth since our famous Spenser wrote; whose poems in these English ones are as rarely imitated, as sweetly excelled."

Moseley's discernment did indeed "deserve

of the age," and though these poems did not win much applause on their first appearance, it is only another proof that great works in literature are seldom appreciated by the generation which witnesses their birth. Bunyan's immortal writings were long treated with the shabbiest neglect.

In 1647, Milton again removed his residence, taking a smaller house in Holborn; the Powells having left him, he no longer required so much room as was contained in the spacious Barbican dwelling. Philips tells us that "he is much mistaken, if there was not about this time a design of making him an adjutant-general in William Waller's army. But the new modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design."

It was in this year that Milton's father died, ending happily and peacefully a long and useful life, whose declining days had been soothed by every attention possible to be paid him by an affectionate, grateful, and pious son.

Milton still continued to instruct a few pupils; but for a number of months his busy pen had rest.

Milton's wife had, a year or two after the reconciliation, presented him with a daughter, whom he named Anne, after his sister. This child was born lame, or became so in early youth from some accident. In October of 1648, his second daughter was born, receiving her mother's name, Mary.

It was while residing in Holborn, in this quiet and domestic manner, that the Parliament appointed Milton to the Latin secretaryship of state. This at once changed his mode of life, and introduced him to the busiest scene of his checkered career.

CHAPTER X.

IN order fully to comprehend the purpose and significance of Milton's state appointment, it will be necessary to cast a retrospective glance at the progress and scope of the civil war from that incipient stage up to which we have already traced it, to the unhappy and ghastly death of Charles upon the scaffold.

The war, which, from the battle of Edgehill, had somewhat dragged, success alternately perching upon the eagles of the king and upon the Puritan standard, was in 1645 prosecuted with new and Titanic energy, owing to the displacement of the honest but inefficient Parliamentary generals Essex and Fairfax, and the appointment of Oliver Cromwell to the supreme command of the Puritan army. From this period hope, which had twinkled in the political horizon, was quenched for the king. The cohorts of the Parliament, officered by the soldierly genius of Cromwell, one of the great-

est captains of all time, marched forward to assured success, achieving a series of brilliant victories, which speedily gave the royal cause its *coup de grâce*.

The rout at Long Marston Moor in 1644 had sadly broken the spirit of the Cavaliers. The relentless and irresistible charge of Cromwell's "Ironsides" in the following year, at Naseby, completed the demoralization, and hopelessly scattered the adherents of the king.

Charles, after a hazardous and checkered existence of several months from the fatal battle of Naseby, finally determined to throw himself upon the clemency of the Scotch Puritans; and he accordingly repaired, in 1646, to their camp before Newark. Though they received him with every outward appearance of respect, the Scottish generals in reality made the monarch a captive, while they fell upon the consideration of the proper course to pursue towards him.

The Parliament, immediately upon learning the whereabouts of their runaway king, formally demanded his rendition to them by Scotland, on the ground that, though he was

certainly king both of Scotland and England, still, being in England, he was comprehended within the jurisdiction of that kingdom.* After considerable discussion, not without having incurred the suspicion of bribery,† the Scots handed Charles over to the Parliament. By them he was conducted to Holmby House in Northamptonshire, where he resided in easy confinement until his seizure by the army several months later, when he was removed to Hampton Court.

While the king was at Hampton, several events occurred which might have reseated him upon the throne, had he possessed the slightest political honesty or sagacity.

The Puritans were at this crisis divided into two ecclesiastical parties—the “Presbyterians,” a sect of Scotch extraction, and the “Independents,” a new-born organization, but very powerful, and strongly opposed to the Presbyterian policy. The Presbyterians having gotten the Parliament under their control, proceeded to abridge both civil and religious liberty to an almost unprecedented extent,

* Hume's Hist. of Eng., Vol. VII., p. 75. † Ibid., p. 77.

going certainly much further in the direction of arbitrary dictation than the prelates themselves had ventured to go. Milton had all along denounced their usurpations in the boldest and most eloquently emphatic manner; and now behind him the Independents ranged themselves as the opponents of intolerance. They differed also from the Presbyterians in their notions of church government, approaching very closely to modern Congregationalism.

Cromwell, Ireton, and other noted leaders of the army were decided Independents. Discovering that the event might prove that they had lavished their blood only to substitute one tyranny for another, they instantly decided to endeavor to win the king to proclaim amnesty, civil liberty, and toleration, as the price of reinstatement in his royalties;* or, that failing, to crush Charles, oust the Parliament, and establish a free commonwealth upon the basis of justice and impartial liberty.

After several interviews with their royal captive at Hampton Court, his haughtiness

* Symmons' *Life of Milton*, p. 243.

and duplicity disgusted them ; and discovering by his secret correspondence with the queen that no reliance could be placed upon his good faith, they determined to unite with the Parliament in bringing him to speedy trial and execution, perceiving that thus one, and the chief, obstacle to peace and liberty would be removed. Charles meantime had fled, upon the withdrawal of the protection of the army, from Hampton to the Isle of Wight, seeking there an asylum, but finding a close and rigorous prison.

But the Parliament having obtained some inkling of the Independent plot to effect their displacement from power, in their turn endeavored to negotiate a treaty with the king, which should place him at their head, and repossess him of a large part at least of what had been ravished from him by the victorious arms of the Commonwealth.

But the monarch's fatal obstinacy and singular opinion of his great importance, which could lead him to say, as Rushworth records, that it was in his power to turn the scale, and that that party must sink which he abandon-

ed—he the dethroned king of an annihilated faction!—led him to repel all overtures with the remark, “I shall see you glad ere long to accept more equal terms. You cannot do without me. You will fall to ruin if I do not sustain you.”*

While negotiations were still pending between Parliament and the king, the army returned flushed with victory from several expeditions which had completely subdued all their enemies. Immediately, at Cromwell's suggestion, a remonstrance to the Parliament was drawn up, and signed by the council of general officers, demanding its dissolution, complaining of its usurpations, accusing it of treason to liberty and of riveting the old chains still tighter; requiring a more equal representation; and asserting that, though servants, they were entitled to represent these important points to their masters, who were themselves no better than the servants or trustees of the people.† At the same time Cromwell's strategy insured the seizure of the king, and his strict confinement near the capital.

* Rushworth.

† Hume's Hist. of Eng., Vol. VII., p. 127

Parliament met the menaced danger bravely, and declined to comply with the remonstrance of the army. Accordingly on the 6th of December, 1647-8, the military entered the chamber of the Parliament, forcibly ejected one hundred and sixty members, constituting the bulk of the Presbyterian strength, and leaving fifty or sixty Independents to carry on the government: thus, to use the phrase of the time, "purged the house."

Before this "rump" Parliament, Charles was summoned, tried, and sentenced to death; which sentence was carried into execution on the 30th of January, 1648-9. Thus perished this unhappy prince, whose obstinacy, duplicity, and despotism hurried him to an untimely and bloody grave.

Upon the death of Charles, a representative government, springing directly from the people, was organized upon the ruins of the throne. The "rump" Parliament, as that portion of the long Parliament which had survived the recent violence of the army soon came to be called, proceeded to proclaim the Commonwealth, and to lodge the executive power in a

council of thirty-eight members of the Commons, which received the name of "The Council of State."

The men who composed this council were remarkably able, were endowed with singular executive talent, and speedily made the new Commonwealth command the respect, and to be even the terror of Europe.

Resolved on adopting the Latin tongue as its medium of intercourse with foreign nations, the Council decreed the appointment of a Latin secretary. The learning, talents, piety, republicanism, and brilliant rhetorical reputation of Milton, at once suggested him to the Council, and secured his appointment, without a suspicion on his part of being invited to enter into the service of the state.

Though his tastes and inclination dictated the continuance of his more retired literary life and pursuits, yet Milton was a man who never permitted his predispositions to deter him from duty. Influenced by that patriotism which had always been a passion with him, he cheerfully surrendered his private pursuits at its imperious command, that he might do his

part towards strengthening and perfecting the nascent Commonwealth.

That Milton did not regret the overthrow of the Presbyterians, is proved conclusively by his own writings at the time, and especially by a satirical sonnet about the time of their downfall, in which he says,

“New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.”

During the transactions which preceded the death of the king and the establishment of the Commonwealth, Milton had remained quietly domesticated at Holborn, a passive spectator of the tragedy about to be enacted; his pen resting from controversy, and employed in the composition of a history of England, only six books of which were ever finished. These carry the story only to the battle of Hastings, leaving it at the most interesting period; but they are written accurately, minutely, and often eloquently.

Milton himself declared, at a subsequent period, when his party was firmly seated in power, when he had no reason to suppress the truth, but when, on the contrary, it would have redounded to his political advantage to have

asserted his active participation in the execution of the king, that he had not been accessory to the fate of Charles.

“Neither did I write any thing,” he says, “respecting the regal authority, till the king, proclaimed an enemy by the senate, and overcome in arms, was brought captive to his trial, and condemned to suffer death. When indeed some of the Presbyterian leaders, lately the most inveterately hostile to Charles, but now irritated by the prevalence of the Independents in the nation and the senate, and stung with resentment, not of the fact, but of their own want of power to commit it, exclaimed against the sentence of the Parliament upon the king, and raised what commotions they could by daring to assert that the doctrine of the Protestant divines, and of all the reformed churches was strong in reprobation of this severity to kings, then at length I conceived it to be my duty publicly to oppose so much obvious and palpable falsehood. Neither did I then direct my argument personally against Charles, but, by the testimony of many of the most eminent divines, I proved what

course of conduct might lawfully be observed towards tyrants in general; and with the zeal almost of a preacher, I attacked the strange ignorance or the wonderful impudence of these men, who had lately amused us with the promise of better things. This work was not published till after the death of the king; and was written rather to tranquillize the minds of men, than to discuss any part of the question concerning Charles, a question the decision of which belonged to the magistrate, and not to me, and which has now received its final determination."

From all this it should seem that the Presbyterians, filled with bitterness on account of their exclusion from power, and more anxious for government and patronage than for righteousness and the establishment of liberty, united their fierce clamors to swell the chorus of the king's partisans, raised upon the execution of the tyrant prince.

Neale, the historian of the Puritans, makes this statement in reference to the course of the government at this troubled period:

"The Parliament tried several methods to

reconcile the Presbyterians to the present administration. Persons were appointed to assure them of the protection of the government, and of the full enjoyment of their ecclesiastical preferments, according to law. When this would not do . . . the famous Mr. Milton was appointed to write for the government, who rallied the seditious preachers with his satirical pen in a most severe manner.”*

The work to which Neale refers, and which Milton mentions in the extract just quoted, was first published in February, 1648-9, and was entitled, “*The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.*” It is able, elaborate, and like every thing from the pen of its great author, singularly eloquent. His aim was to prove that “it is lawful, and hath been so through all ages, for any who have the power, to call to account a tyrant or wicked king, and after due conviction, to depose and put him to death, if the ordinary magistrate have neglected or denied

* From this statement it would seem that Milton had been hired to defend the government. This was not true. What he wrote was a freewill-offering to the tranquillization of the state. His duties as Latin secretary did not include any such arrangement.

to do it; and that they who of late so much blame deposing, are the men that did it themselves."

In this same year, Milton's prolific pen produced another pamphlet: "*Observations upon the Articles of Peace which the Earl of Ormond has concluded at Kilkenny, January 17th, 1648-9, in the King's name, and by His Authority, with the Popish Irish Rebels.*" Esteeming the new-formed Commonwealth to be threatened by the transactions of Ormond, who headed the disaffected Scotch Presbyterians, and who had entered into a treaty with the Irish partisans of Charles, a movement kept afoot for several months after the king's death, he wrote this tract to avert the menaced danger.

CHAPTER XI.

AT no period in history has Great Britain appeared to grander advantage than under the Commonwealth. Firm, able, yet tolerant in their domestic policy, inflexibly just and judicious in their dealings with foreign powers, the Council of State speedily inspired the utmost respect and awe in the breasts of the surrounding nations. Not Elizabeth herself had exerted a more potent influence in continental politics. In consequence of the proud position it acquired, the Commonwealth was enabled on several occasions to succor the oppressed of other lands, and even to dictate toleration and justice to foreign despots.

The influence of England at this time was owing very largely, without doubt, to the personal character of several of the most prominent members of the Council of State.* Such

* The following is a complete list of the names of the members of the Council during the first year or two of its establishment: President, John Bradshaw, Esq.; Earls Denbigh, Mulgrave, Pembroke, and Salisbury; Lords Grey, Fairfax, and Lord Grey of

men as the younger Vane* and stout John Bradshaw† could not fail to infuse their own

Groby; Esquires, John Lisle, — Rolles, and Bulstrode White-locke; Lieutenant-general Cromwell; Major-general Skippon; Sirs, Gilbert Pickering, William Massum, James Harrington, Henry Vane, Jr., John Danvers, William Armine, Henry Mildmay, and William Constable; Esquires, Alexander Popham, William Puresay, Isaac Pennington, Rowland Wilson, Edmund Ludlow, William Herringham, Robert Wellop, Henry Martin, Anthony Stapely, John Hutchinson, Valentine Walton, Thomas Scot, Dennis Bond, Luke Robinson, John Jones, and Cornelius Holland.

* Milton wrote the following sonnet on Sir Henry Vane the younger, a little previous to his appointment to the Foreign Secretaryship :

“TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER.

“Vane, young in years, but in sage council old,
 Than whom a better senator ne'er held
 The helm of Rome, when gowns not arms repelled
 The fierce Epirot and the Afran bold;
 Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
 The drift of hollow states, hard to be spelled,
 Then to advise how war may, best upheld,
 Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,
 In all her equipage: besides, to know
 Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
 What severs each, thou 'st learned, which few have done:
 The bounds of either sword to thee we owe;
 Therefore on thy firm hand religion leans
 In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.”

† Milton's opinion of John Bradshaw was evinced at about the same time that witnessed the production of the sonnet addressed to Vane. As what he says of that famous regicide may be of interest to some readers, it is subjoined :

“John Bradshaw—a name which, in every country where her authority is acknowledged, liberty herself has dedicated to immortal renown—was descended, as is generally known, of a noble family. The early part of his life he devoted to the study of the laws of his country; and then becoming a profound lawyer, a most

talents and virtues into the governmental policy.

eloquent advocate, a zealous asserter of freedom and the people's rights, he was employed in the more important affairs of the state, and frequently discharged, with unimpeachable integrity, the duties of a judge.

“When at length solicited by the Parliament to preside at the trial of the king, he did not decline this most dangerous commission; for to the science of the law he had brought a liberal disposition, a lofty spirit, sincere and unoffensive manners; and thus qualified, he supported that great and beyond precedent fearful office, exposed to the threats and to the daggers of innumerable assassins, with so much firmness, so much weight of manner, such presence and dignity of mind, that he seemed to have been formed and appointed immediately by the Deity himself for the performance of that deed, which the divine Providence had of old decreed to be accomplished in this nation; and so far has he exceeded the glory of all tyrannicides as it is more humane, more just, more noble to try and to pass legal sentence on a tyrant, than without trial to put him to death.

“Though in other respects neither gloomy nor severe, but gentle and placid, he yet sustains with unflinching dignity the character which he has borne, and uniformly consistent with himself, he appears like a consul from whom the fasces are not to depart with the year; so that not on the tribunal only, but throughout his life, you would regard him as sitting in judgment upon kings.

“Unwearied and singly equal to a multitude in his labors for the public, in domestic life, to the utmost stretch of his powers, he is hospitable and splendid; the steadiness and adherency of his friendship are not to be affected by the vicissitudes of fortune; and instant and eager to acknowledge merit wherever it is discovered, he is munificent to reward it. The pious, the learned, the eminent in any walk of genius, the soldier, the brave man, are either relieved by his wealth, if in distress, or if not indigent, are cultivated by his attentions and cherished in his embrace. Delighted to dwell on the praises of others, he studiously suppresses his own. So great are his placability and readiness to forgive, that they are extended, as the experience of numbers hath ascertained,

Still, without plucking a single laurel from the brows of these eminent patriots, it cannot be questioned that the transcendent genius of John Milton, the Latin Secretary, set to their action the seal of unrivalled dignity. His hand wrote out, and perhaps his voice not unfrequently suggested the orders of the Council. During his tenure of his Secretaryship, which only ended with the Restoration, the state papers of Great Britain are models of diplomatic composition and broad statesmanship. No wonder that the continental states, long accustomed to the pedantry of James and the fluctuating diplomacy of Charles, marvelled at the new *régime*. Nor can we feel

to any among the enemies of himself and of the state who, from a sense of their errors, have reverted to reason. If the cause of the oppressed is openly to be asserted; if the influence and the strong arm of the powerful are to be controlled; if the public ingratitude to any meritorious individual is to be arraigned, then will no deficiency of eloquence or of fortitude be seen in this great man; then will the client possess in him an advocate and a friend suited to all his wants and adequate to his highest expectations; the cause indeed will be in the hands of a defender whom no threats can divert from the straight path, whom neither intimidation nor bribes can bend from the uprightness of duty, or for an instant deject from the conscious firmness of his countenance and the determined attitude of his mind."

Such is the portraiture of one of the central figures of that time, as drawn by the pencil of another.

surprised that England learned to blush under the rotten morals and French policy of the Restoration, and longed once more to behold the brave days of the Commonwealth, when "the good old cause," as Milton loved to call it, gave purpose and emphasis to English diplomacy.

Milton had only been allowed sufficient time in which to acquaint himself with the routine of his office, before he was summoned by the government to the performance of a peculiar duty.

Shortly after the death of the king, a book was published under the title of "*Eikon Basiliké*; or, The Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings," with Charles' name upon the title-page as the author. As we have seen, the death of the king had produced a profound sensation. Busy demagogues, ecclesiastical and lay, had exhausted the arts of cunning and impudent falsehood in order to stir the people to active sedition. The unwonted character of the king's punishment made even the liberal party anxious and troubled, while many held it sacrilegious.

With this feeling already abroad, it may easily be conceived how great was the effect of a book from the then dead hand of a prince whom many had come to consider a martyr and a saint, who spoke from a bloody grave, and who was represented as in constant intercourse through prayer with his Creator while in the flesh, urging before the Searcher of all hearts the integrity of his motives, and appealing from the cruelty and injustice of human tribunals to the awful bar of heavenly clemency and justice.

Had a book of similar scope or purpose been published under the rule of the bishops, or under the Presbyterian administration, it would have been instantly suppressed. But the government was at this time made of sterner stuff. It determined to meet argument with argument, book with book.

Thus disposed to submit the merits of the controversy to the arbitrament of the pen, Milton was selected as the champion to whom the defence of the Commonwealth was to be intrusted.

The result was the production of the "*Icon-*

oclastes," or Image-breaker, which was the peculiarly apposite name chosen by Milton as the title of his refutation. This pamphlet is one of the grandest and most annihilating of his controversial writings. "Pressing closely on its antagonist, and tracing him step by step, it either exposes the fallacy of his reasoning, or the falsehood of his assertions, or the hollowness of his professions, or the convenient speciousness of his devotion. In argument and in style compressed and energetic, perspicuous and neat, it discovers a quickness which never misses an advantage, and a keenness of remark which carries an irresistible edge."*

It has been justly said, that no one not under the dominion of unthinking prejudice can read this book without enforced conviction. It shows conclusively that Charles, however blameless may have been his private life, betrayed in his public conduct the violence of Eastern despotism and the shifting and equivocating morality of Loyola and the Jesuits.

The *Iconoclastes* thus commences: "To descant on the misfortunes of a person fallen

* Symmons' *Life of Milton*, p. 274

from so high a dignity, who hath also paid his final debt to nature and his faults, is neither of itself a thing commendable, nor the intention of this discourse. Neither was it fond ambition, nor the vanity to get a name, present or with posterity, by writing against a king. I never was so thirsty after fame, nor so destitute of other hopes and means better and more certain to attain it; for kings have gained glorious titles from their favorers by writing against private men, as Henry VIII. did against Luther; but no man ever gained much honor by writing against a king, as not usually meeting with that force of argument in such courtly antagonists, which to convince might add to his reputation.*

“Kings most commonly, though strong in legions, are but weak at argument; as they who ever have been accustomed from their cradle to use their will only as their right hand, their reason always as their left. Whence, unexpectedly constrained to that kind of combat, they prove but weak and puny adversa-

Milton's haughty disdain of his opponent is here superbly expressed.

ries. Nevertheless for their sakes who, through custom, simplicity, or want of better teaching, have not more seriously considered kings than in the gaudy name of majesty, and admire them and their doings as if they breathed not the same breath with other mortal men, I shall make no scruple to take up—for it seems to be the challenge of him and all his party—this gauntlet, though the king's, in behalf of liberty and the Commonwealth.”*

Of course it is not possible, within the limits of this volume, to give the full personal expressions of John Milton. All that is intended is, to quote such passages as are required to give a portraiture of the man, his views, and methods of expression. If what is here written shall stir any admiring soul to study carefully and at length the written books of this pious, recondite, and altogether remarkable champion of religion and liberty, its object will have been fully achieved. The following paragraph from the powerful argument and brilliantly keen satire now under consideration, is spirited and eloquent.

* Prose Works, Vol. II., p. 391.

“But what needed that? They knew his chiefest arms left him were those only which the ancient Christians were wont to use against their persecutors, prayers and tears. Oh sacred reverence of God, respect and shame of men, whither were ye fled when these hypocrisies were uttered? Was the kingdom then at all that cost of blood to remove* from him none but prayers and tears? What were those thousands of blaspheming cavaliers about him whose mouths let fly oaths and curses by the volley; were those the prayers? And those carouses, drunk to the confusion of all things good and holy; did these minister the tears? Were they prayers and tears which were listed at York, mustered on Heworth Moor, and laid siege to Hull for the guard of his person? Were prayers and tears at so high a rate in Holland that nothing could purchase them but the crown jewels? Yet they in Holland—such word was sent us—sold them for guns, carbines, mortar-pieces, cannons, and other deadly instruments of war; which, when they came to York, were all, no doubt, by the merit

* The old form of expression for *move*.

of some great saint, suddenly transformed into prayers and tears; and being divided into regiments and brigades, were the only arms which mischieved us in all those battles and encounters. These were his chief arms, whatever we must call them; and yet such arms as they who fought for the Commonwealth have, by the help of better prayers, vanquished and brought to nothing.”*

It is not singular that the impudent claim made through the king's book, that the Cavaliers were peculiarly saint-like in their religious feelings, should have called forth the biting raillery of one who, like Milton, knew the rotten and riotous character of that side, and the stern, unyielding piety of the other.

Milton hinted his doubt on several occasions in the course of his pamphlet, as to the king's being the author of the “Soliloquies,” referring to it once as the work of “the *household rhetorician*” of Charles. And again he says, “These petty conceits on the high and secret judgment of God, besides the boldness of unwarrantable commenting, are so weak

* Prose Works, Vol. II., p. 469.

and shallow, and so like the quibbles of a court sermon, that we may safely reckon them either fetched from such a pattern, or that the hand of some household priest foisted them in.”*

Of course at the time these expressions had no influence upon the heated partisans of a book which served the interests and was subservient to the ends of the royal party. But years later the “Soliloquies” were publicly and formally disavowed as the work of their father by Charles II. and the Duke of York, who afterwards reigned as James II. “*Eikon*” is said to have been written by Dr. Gauden, one of Charles’ most intimate friends, then Bishop of Salisbury, and it must be confessed that the evidence tends irresistibly to support that idea.*

However this may be, Milton’s pamphlet produced at the time a decided sensation. First published in 1649–50, it ran through several editions, and was esteemed by the gov-

* Prose Works, Vol. II. p. 452.

† See Hume’s remarks on this subject, *Hist. of Eng.*, Vol. VII. Also Symmons’ *Life*, pp. 284–294.

ernment and the Independent party generally as an exhaustive and complete refutation of the sophistries of the "*Eikon Basiliké*."

About the time perhaps, or shortly after the publication of the "*Iconoclastes*," Milton removed from Holborn to a lodging in the house of one Thompson, at Charing-cross, and afterwards to apartments in Scotland-yard. Here a third child, a son, was born to him, who died however in infancy, on the 16th of March, 1650. In 1652 Milton once more changed his residence, securing this time a very handsome house in Petty France, opening upon St. James Park, and adjoining the mansion of Lord Scudamore. Here, without further change, he resided for eight years, or until the Restoration drove him to seek safety in flight and obscurity. Besides what property he had inherited from his father and the income derived from the sale of his writings, Milton was at this period in the receipt of an annual salary of two hundred pounds from the government as Latin Secretary, making in all a very comfortable and handsome income.

CHAPTER XII.

GREAT as Milton's English reputation now was, it had not yet become cosmopolitan. Known he was, indeed, to many erudite foreigners, and especially to the admiring academicians of Florence, of Rome, and of Venice. His genius and piety had also won the appreciative plaudits of the able professors of the reformed theology at Geneva. Yet when, in the brilliant belles-lettres circles of the Continent, critics counted the famous scholars of the age, and lauded the great rhetoricians, they did not couple Milton's name with those of Grotius and the *literati*.

An event however now occurred which speedily gave him a splendid European reputation, and not only in the opinion of his contemporaries, but in the estimation of calm posterity, linked his name with those of the grandest and most immortal writers.

Charles Stuart, the exiled son of the recently executed monarch, spurred thereto by

filial piety and a natural desire to keep his name and regal claims before Europe, determined to invoke, in the defence of his house and fainting cause, the pen of some great continental writer: hoping thus, though beaten in many a stricken field, to retrieve his shattered fortunes in the arena of letters. The voice of fame speedily led the exile to select Claudius Salmasius, then residing at Leyden in the capacity of honorary professor in the university.

Salmasius was descended from a noble family, whose seat was near the town of Semar, in the ancient province of Burgundy. Receiving from his mother a strong bias towards Protestantism in early youth, he became, a little later, the staunch defender of the reformed tenets, and the vehement assailant of the popish citadel. Since the death of the illustrious younger Scaliger, no scholar had acquired the reputation of Salmasius. The author of many rare and imperishable works, Grotius alone was at that time ranked as his equal. Selden speaks of Grotius as "the greatest, the chief of men," and of Salmasius as "most admirable," whom he desired much more to re-

semble than the most eminent person for riches and honor in the world: and Cardinal Richelieu declared that Bignon, Grotius, and Salmasius were the only persons of that age whom he looked upon as having arrived at the summit of learning.* "Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment: and having by excessive praises been confirmed in great confidence in himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society and the rights of government, undertook the employment without the distrust of his own qualifications: and as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649-50 published the *Defensio Regia*."† It is certainly wonderful that Salmasius, the pensioner of a republic, should write a vindication of monarchy.‡ Perhaps however Charles' retaining fee of a hundred jacobuses may afford a satisfactory solution of the enigma, especially if the haughty pride of the self-confident scholar at being selected by a prince for such a service be considered.

* Mitford's Life, pp. 51, 52. † Johnson's Life of Milton

The appearance of the "*Defensio Regia*" created a decided sensation, though it is said to have somewhat disappointed the expectations of the learned.* Still it was a formidable volume, both on account of its author's reputation and its own intrinsic merit. It abounded in subtle and specious arguments, clothed in pure and perspicuous language.

Upon its publication in England, the Council of State immediately met and unanimously appointed Milton to answer Salmasius and defend the Commonwealth. "His compliance with the honorable requisition was instant; and, inattentive to the suggestions of his friends, who were fearful of his reputation, committed against so renowned an adversary; undeterred by the remonstrance of his physicians, who predicted that the loss of his sight would be the infallible result of his labor; and unrestrained by the dissuasion of his bad health, which allowed him to compose only at intervals and with hourly interruptions, he persevered in the duty which he had undertaken; and with principle strong within his heart, and the attraction of glory

* Symmons' Life, p. 301.

bright before his view, he produced, early in the year 1651, that noble acquittal of his engagement to the Council, '*The Defence of the People of England.*'**

Both the "*Defensio Regia*," and the "*Defence of the People*," were written in Latin. It was the purpose of Salmasius to support the despotic dogma of the divine right of kings; to prove that in the monarch resides naturally and of right the sovereign power, and that the king is responsible for his acts to God alone. Milton, taking the extreme republican ground, asserted with masterly and unanswerable logic the unlimited sovereignty of the people. In comprehensive erudition, in profound political wisdom, in sublime poetic eloquence, in noble Christian sentiment, in terse logical power, in biting satire, in mirth-provoking wit, in all those attributes which make a composition approximate perfection, Milton's magnificent defence of the Commonwealth stands to this day unrivalled.

Milton used every art known to his rhetoric to interest and attract all classes, knowing well the importance in a contest like that, as Boyle

* Symmons' Life, pp. 310, 311.

acutely observes, of "getting the laughers on our side." The pointed personalities, the aggravated censures, which now perhaps form the chief blemishes of the "Defence" as read by our sober, unprejudiced eyes, were then one of the causes of its power and popularity. No means of teasing his adversary was omitted. The venality and accommodating pliancy of opinion which could enable Salmasius, "the pensioner of a republic," as Dr. Johnson calls him, to prostitute his pen to the defence of humbled despotism, is vividly and scathingly portrayed by Milton's pencil. He even makes the Leyden professor the subject of a sportive sally in iambs :

"Who to our English tuned Salmasius' throat?
 Who taught the pye to speak our words by rote?
 A *hundred golden Jameses** did the feat:
 He learned to prattle, for he wished to eat.
 Let the false glare of gold allure his hope;
 And he whose stormy voice late shook the Pope,
 And threatened antiehrist with speedy death,
 Will soothe the conclave with his tuneful breath."

Milton laid the foundation of his argument broad and strong, rearing thereon a rhetorical edifice of singular symmetry and perfection.

* In allusion to the hundred jacobuses Salmasius received from Charles for undertaking the defence.

Starting with the assertion of the original and unlimited sovereignty of the people, he proves that by the laws of God, by those of nations, and by the municipal laws of England, a king may be impeached, and if found guilty, he may be executed. He affirms that in this the canons of God exactly agree with the dictates of nature; and that it is a settled maxim of natural law, unimpeachable and eternal, that the people are the source of power, and are therefore superior to their servant and creature, the king or magistrate. If therefore it be asked by what law Charles was put to death, the answer is, by that law which God established, and which nature sternly enjoins. He boldly asserts that whatever is for the general good of the state, is for that reason just and imperative; that a people bound by oath to the support of a government or prince, are discharged of that obligation when government becomes destructive of its just ends, or the king assumes to play the tyrant. So circumstanced, the law dispenses with a people's allegiance. These doctrines, he claims, are not unique, or new, but have received the com-

mon sanction of mankind, and are covered with the hoar of ages.

This he proves by copious citations from the history of ancient nations. Thus the kings of the Jews were subject to the selfsame law which controlled the people; and he traces, with masterly erudition, the same principle through Egypt, through Persia, through the glowing legends of Grecian history to the annals of the Roman empire. Crossing the sea with the Roman conqueror, he shows that the principle obtained a fixed lodgment in early Britain; that it maintained itself through the Saxon epoch, through the Norman conquest, and was incorporated in the English constitution by usage and acquiescence; growing stronger and more clearly defined as civilization lighted its myriad torches, until it touched its climax in the necessary execution of Charles Stuart, and the banishment of his outlawed son.

The argument concludes with this magnificent address:

“So far, with God’s assistance, have I accomplished my original purpose of defending, both at home and abroad, the proud achieve-

ments of my countrymen against the insane and malignant fury of a frantic sophist; and of vindicating—as the enemy, not of kings, but of tyrants—the general rights of the subject from the unjust despotism of the prince. Nor have I consciously left unanswered a single argument, instance, or evidence, adduced by my antagonist, which appeared to possess the smallest portion either of strength or conclusiveness; having rather perhaps inclined to the opposite fault, of replying too frequently even to his irrelevant and trivial sophistries, and of treating them, as arguments, with a degree of attention of which they were undeserving.

“One thing alone, but perhaps the most important, remains: that you also, my countrymen, should yourselves unite with me in the confutation of your enemy; and this, in my opinion, can no otherwise be effected than by a perpetual effort on your part to rise above his calumnies, and to crush them with your virtues. To your ardent vows and supplications the Almighty indulgently listened when, under the yoke of double servitude, you sued to him for deliverance. You are the first among the

nations whom he has gloriously rescued from the oppression of tyranny and superstition, those two mighty evils which are the most hostile to the perfection of man. To you, the first of the human race, did he impart the magnanimity to submit to the solemnity of a judicial trial, and, when found guilty, to punish with a just death your vanquished and captive king.

“After a deed so illustrious, nothing low or narrow, nothing but what is great and exalted should enter your thoughts and actions. To this lofty superiority of character you can rise only by showing that, as you have quelled your enemies in war, so with fortitude equally unexampled, without arms, and in profound peace, you can subdue ambition and avarice, the power of wealth, and the corruption of prosperity, which triumph over the rest of your species; and by exhibiting, in the preservation of your freedom, a degree of justice, temperance, and moderation, proportioned to the valor which you evinced in its attainment.

“By these arguments and evidences alone can you satisfactorily prove that you are not, as your calumniator affirms, ‘Rebels,’ ‘Rob-

bers,' 'Ruffians,' 'Parricides,' and 'Fanatics,' and that you have not—under the impulse of ambition or a wish to plunder, not incited by sedition or by depraved passions, not in a paroxysm of folly or phrenzy—murdered a king; but that, elevated and kindled with the love of liberty, of religion, of equity, of honor, and of your country, you have inflicted punishment upon a tyrant.

“If however, which God avert, your projects and purposes be different; if, notwithstanding your signal experience of a Deity so propitious to yourselves and so destructive to your foes; after all your bravery in war, you are resolved to be corrupt in peace, and unaffected by the memorable and awful example before your eyes, you disdain ‘to learn to do justice, and to walk humbly with your God,’ for my part, I must indeed be constrained reluctantly to acknowledge the truth of all these infamous charges against you, which are now uttered or conceived by the slanderers of your fame; and you will but too quickly feel the wrath of the Almighty in a much more powerful degree than it has ever visited your ene-

mies, or than you yourselves have ever experienced, beyond the other nations of modern times, his kind, indulgent, and paternal love.”*

“This great display of intellectual power was received with the plaudit of the world; and as the author’s name was not in any wide celebrity out of his own country, the general surprise was nearly equal to the general admiration. Congratulations and acknowledgments of respect poured in upon him from every quarter, and the scholars of Europe, actuated by a similar spirit with the spectators of the old Olympic games, threw garlands on the conqueror of Salmasius. On the publication of the ‘*Defence of the People of England*,’ all the ambassadors in London, of whom perhaps the greater number were from crowned heads, discovered their sense of its merit by complimenting or visiting its author; and he was gratified by letters, replete with praise and with professions of esteem, from foreigners eminent for their talents and erudition.”†

As for Salmasius, already broken in health,

* Prose Works, Vol. V., p. 194.

† Symmons’ Life, pp. 322, 323.

smote by the "thunder-clasping hand," of the mighty Englishman, and having in his intellectual armory no polemical weapons with which to parry the blow, he quitted Leyden bitterly chagrined, and repairing to the mineral waters of Spa for seclusion and relief, shortly after died there.

No more terrible and utter demolition was ever given an opponent than Milton's crucifying *exposé*. He might say, with stout and somewhat cynical old Wither,*

"I stript abuse from all her colors quite,
And laid her ugly face to open sight."

And again:

"I have my pen so point that, where it traces,
Each accent doth draw blood into their faces."

Yet he is never exactly vindictive, but knows how to be "harsh as truth and uncompromising as justice" when defending against hireling assaults and despotic precepts the majestic tenets of civil and religious liberty.

* John Wither, a noted Puritan poet and satirist of that age; born in 1588, and sometime a major-general in the Parliamentary army under Cromwell.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE hearty applause with which the "*Defence of the English People*" was greeted by continental thinkers, was doubly echoed by Milton's own grateful and appreciative countrymen. The Council of State voted him a donation of a thousand pounds from the public treasury, as a testimonial of their sense of his service to the Commonwealth.* He had besides the gratification to perceive that, while the libel of Salmasius "lingered on the vendors' shelves, or crept languidly through a very confined circulation," his own immortal work passed rapidly through several editions, and made him, as Bayle tells us, the conversation of the world. Nor did the distinction which the "*Defence*" enjoyed of being publicly burned by the common hangman in the squares of Paris and Toulouse tend to decrease the demand for it, or to lessen the fame of its great writer.

* Toland. Symmons, p. 335.

It was at this time, when Milton was at the zenith of his contemporary fame, that the celebrated Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, the faithful friend of religious toleration, and the dauntless defender of civil and ecclesiastical liberty, dispatched by his loving disciples at home on a mission to England, contracted that intimate friendship with the Latin Secretary of the Council and with the younger Vane, the influence of which has been so beneficent to either continent.

Roger Williams reached London some time in 1651. Taking a house in the immediate vicinity of the respective residences of Milton and Vane, his mission brought him to their speedy notice; while his republican sentiments, his religious fervor, his profound scholarship, and his tolerant principles soon secured their respect, which feeling ere long ripened into the most intimate friendship. Domesticated in England for some years—he did not return to America until 1654—Roger Williams eked out his slender income by receiving, after Milton's fashion, a number of pupils. During this time the close familiarity in which he lived with

Milton and with Vane, is shown by several passages in his writings. It appears that he even exchanged literary offices with Milton; for on his return to Rhode Island, in giving his friend Governor Winthrop of Connecticut an account of his employments while abroad, he uses this language: "It pleased the Lord to call me for some time and with some persons to practise the Hebrew, the Greek, Latin, French, and Dutch; the Secretary of the Council, Mr. Milton, for my Dutch I read him, read me many more languages."*

Is it possible to overestimate the influence of an intimate association of two or three years with such master-minds as those of John Milton and Sir Henry Vane upon so congenial a spirit as that of Roger Williams? May not many of those broad, tolerant, and self-sacrificing principles which distinguished Roger Williams' career, have owed their origin to the close intimacy and the friendly chat of these three illustrious men in the vigorous days of the English Commonwealth?

* See Appleton's "Cyclopædia;" also various biographical sketches of Roger Williams.

On the second of May, 1652, Milton's family was increased by the birth of a fourth child, Deborah; whose advent into the world, however, cost the life of her mother. Milton seems ever after their reconciliation to have lived very happily with his wife, and she died regretted and mourned by him. "He was thus," says Dr. Symmons, "left with three orphan daughters in domestic solitude, and in a state rapidly advancing to blindness. As we have seen, his physicians predicted loss of sight as the inevitable result of his persistence in the compilation of the "*Defence*." Their prophetic declarations were fatally verified: his sight, naturally weak, and impaired by long years of ceaseless devotion to study and neglect of all precautions, had been for many months sensibly declining; and completely overtaken by the labor of this last work, he became, probably some time in 1653, totally blind.

Leonard Philarus, an Athenian scholar who had been enthusiastically attached to Milton by the perusal of his "*Defence of the English People*," and who had even visited England for the purpose of making the per-

sonal acquaintance of the immortal Englishman, upon learning Milton's misfortune, wrote him from Paris, urging him to forward a detailed account of his blindness, which he promised to submit to the consideration of M. Thevenot, then an eminent oculist. In response to this request, Milton communicated the following facts, peculiarly interesting and sad:

“It is now about ten years I think since I first perceived my sight to grow weak and dim, and at the same time my spleen and other viscera heavy and flatulent. When I sate down to read as usual of the morning, my eyes gave me considerable pain, and refused their office till fortified by moderate exercise of body. If I looked at a candle, it appeared surrounded with an iris. In a little time a darkness, covering the left side of the left eye, which was partially clouded some years before the other, intercepted the view of all things in that direction. Objects also in front seemed to dwindle in size whenever I closed my right eye. This eye too for three years gradually failing, a few months previous to my total blindness, while I was perfectly stationary, every thing

seemed to swim backward and forward; and now thick vapors appear to settle on my forehead and temples, which weigh down my lids with an oppressive sense of drowsiness, especially in the interval between dinner and the evening, so as frequently to remind me of Phineas the Salmydessian, in the Argonautics :

“In darkness swam his brain, and where he stood,
The steadfast earth seemed rolling as a flood.
Nerveless his tongue, and, every power oppressed,
He sank, and languished into torpid rest.’

“I ought not however to omit mentioning, that, before I wholly lost my sight, as soon as I lay down in my bed and turned upon either side, brilliant flashes of light used to issue from my closed eyes; and afterwards, upon the gradual failure of my powers of vision, colors, proportionably dim and faint, seemed to rush out with a degree of vehemence, and a kind of inward noise. These have now faded into uniform blackness, such as issues on the extinction of a candle; or blackness varied only and intermingled with a dunnish grey. The constant darkness however in which I live day and night inclines more to a whitish than to a blackish tinge, and the eye, in turning itself

round, admits, as through a narrow chink, a very small portion of light. But this, though it may perhaps offer a similar glimpse of hope to the physician, does not prevent me from making up my mind to my case, as one evidently beyond the reach of cure; and I often reflect that, as many days of darkness, according to the wise man, Eccles. 11: 8, are allotted to us all, mine, which, by the singular favor of the Deity, are divided between leisure and study, are recreated by the conversation and intercourse of my friends, and are far more agreeable than those deadly shades of which Solomon is speaking.

“But if, as it is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,’ Matt. 4: 4, why should not each of us likewise acquiesce in the reflection that he derives the benefits of sight not from his eyes alone, but from the guidance and providence of the same supreme Being. While He looks out and provides for me as he does, and leads me about, as it were, with his hand through the paths of life, I willingly surrender my own faculty of vision in

conformity with his good pleasure ; and with a heart as strong and as steadfast as if I were a Lynceus, I bid you, my Philarus, farewell."

This letter to Philarus was dated at Westminster, September 28, 1654, and speaks of the loss of sight as no recent event. Singularly enough the precise date of Milton's blindness has never been definitely ascertained, though circumstances seem to indicate that it occurred sometime in 1652-3.

Milton's enemies did not scruple to taunt him with his blindness, attributing it to the judgment of God upon him for his wicked writings. But the calm Christian philosophy, and the serene reliance upon the indisputable goodness of the Creator, which peculiarly characterized John Milton's mind, enabled him to bear without a murmur, and with pitying disdain, the heartless jibes of his relentless foes, from whose venomous shafts not even the sacred shelter of misfortune could cover him. There is nothing in history grander and more sublime than Milton's uncomplaining and sweet acceptance of a calamity which threatened to throw him out of the employment of the state,

to blight all prospect of a further literary career, and to lead him in darkness and penury to a speedy grave.

This fortitude, and its source, he admirably displays in a touchingly beautiful sonnet addressed to his friend Cyriac Skinner, a grandson of that famous lawyer, Lord Coke.

“TO CYRIAC SKINNER.

“Cyriac, this three years day, these eyes, though clear
 To outward view of blemish or of spot,
 Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot ;
 Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
 Of sun, or moon, or stars, throughout the year,
 Or man, or woman : yet I argue not
 Against heaven’s hand or will, nor bate a jot
 Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
 Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
 The conscience, friend, to have lost them overlid
 In Liberty’s defence, my noble task.
 Of which all Europe rings from side to side ;
 This thought might lead me through the world’s vain mask
 Content, though blind, had I no better guide.”

When Milton came, a little later, to notice the slurs cast upon his loss of sight, he made it evident that he deliberately and serenely chose blindness and speech, rather than silence with sight. Actuated by the old martyr spirit, he tore out his eyes, in no metaphorical sense, and laid them upon the altar of slandered and outraged liberty.

He says, "When the task of replying to the '*Defence of the King*' was publicly committed to me at a time when I had to contend with ill-health, and when one of my eyes being nearly lost, my physicians clearly predicted that, if I undertook the laborious work, I should soon be deprived both of one and the other; undeterred by the warning, I seemed to hear a voice, not of a physician, nor issuing from the shrine of Epidaurian Esculapius, but of some internal and divine monitor; and conceiving that, by some fatal decree, the alternative of two lots was proposed to me, that I must either lose my sight, or must desert a high duty, the two destinies occurred to me which the son of Thetis reports to have been submitted to him by his mother from the oracle of Delphi:

“For, as the goddess spoke who gave me birth,
Two fates attend me while I live on earth.
If fixed, I combat by the Trojan wall,
Deathless my fame, but certain is my fall;
If I return—beneath my native sky
My days shall flourish long—my glory die.’

“Reflecting therefore with myself, that many had purchased less good with greater evil, and had even paid life as the price of glory,

while to me the greater good was offered at the expense of the less evil; that only by incurring blindness I might satisfy the demand of the most honorable duty; and that glory even by itself ought universally to be regarded as of all human possessions the most certain, the most desirable, and the most worthy of our esteem, I determined to dedicate the short enjoyment of my eyesight, with as much effect as I could, to the public advantage.

“ You see then what I have preferred, what I have lost, what motives influenced my conduct. Let my slanderers therefore desist from their calumnies, nor make me the subject of their visionary and dreaming fancies. Let them know that I am far from regretting my lot, or from repenting of my choice; let them be assured that my mind and my opinions are immovably the same; that I am neither conscious of the anger of God, nor believe that I am exposed to it; but, on the contrary, that I have experienced in the most momentous events of my life, and am still sensible of, his mercy and paternal kindness.”*

* *Defensio Secunda*, Prose Works, Vol. V., p. 216.

This beautiful sonnet exhibits still further the patient and Christian spirit of Milton, and shows that the principles of religious faith enabled him to triumph gloriously over the afflictions of the fleshly tabernacle, and "filled him with joy and peace in believing."

“ON MY BLINDNESS.

“When I consider how my life is spent
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest he returning chide,
 ‘Doth God exact *day* labor, *light* denied?’
 I fondly ask ; but patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, ‘God doth not need
 Either man’s works, or his own gift ; who best
 Bears his mild yoke, they serve him best : his state
 Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,
 And post o’er land and ocean without rest :
 They also serve who only stand and wait.’”

“Equally unascertained with that of his blindness,” says Dr. Symmons, “is the precise date of his second marriage, which took place, as we are informed, about two years after his entire loss of sight. The lady whom he chose on this occasion was Catharine, the daughter of a Captain Woodcock of Hackney. She seems to have been the object of her husband’s fond-

est affection ; and dying, like her predecessor, in childbed, within a year after her marriage, she was lamented by him in a pleasing and pathetic sonnet." The daughter born to him at this time lingered but a few days, before following her mother to the tomb.

Infirm, blind, and a widower for the second time, surely Milton needed all his faith in a Providence overruling all things for the best, to enable his chastened lips to say, "Not my will, Father, but thine be done."

CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the whole period of domestic misfortune narrated in the preceding chapter, Milton's pen was employed as vigorously and as effectively as ever, in the defence and elucidation of the principles of religion and just government.

Two answers to the "*Defence of the People of England*" ere long appeared. The first was weakly though venomously written, and Milton, not deigning to notice it, turned it over to the youthful pen of his nephew, Phillips, then scarce twenty years old. The other was published at the Hague in 1652, and was entitled, "*The Cry of Royal Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides.*" In reply to this work, which was ably written, though full of ribald falsehood, Milton himself, urged thereto by the Council of State, drew his trenchant pen.

Accordingly in 1654 appeared "*A Second Defence of the People of England,*" which has

been pronounced the most interesting if not the most striking of his prose compositions.*

The "Second Defence" is mainly of interest now on account of the fact that it contains many personal details concerning the habits, appearance, and purposes of its author, and also because of several valuable pen portraits of Milton's prominent republican and other friends and associates.

In order clearly to understand the several passages which we give from this "Defence," it will be necessary to direct our attention once more to the political condition of Great Britain at this momentous conjuncture.

It will be remembered that that portion of the Long Parliament which had survived the military invasion of 1648, and which has received in history the name of the "Rump" Parliament, had, after the execution of the king, new-modelled and republicanized the government. Under the Parliament and the Council of State, of which Milton was secretary, the conduct of public affairs had been energetic, able, and effective. Many of the political

* Symmons' Life, p. 353.

acts of that unique administration had displayed profound sagacity, and high statesmanship. The famous navigation act, which contributed so essentially to the naval supremacy of Great Britain then and ever after, was the offspring of its wisdom. The exchequer had been kept fully supplied. The entire civil establishment had, for the first time in several decades, been liberally and handsomely kept up; so that from the revenues of the state the various public officers and the army could be paid readily and promptly according to their several merits. It had moreover compelled the unhesitating respect of Continental Europe.

Had the government been as careful to conciliate that public opinion at home upon which it professed to rest, as it was to preserve its dignity and high character, how different might have been the history of "the fast-anchored island."

Many of the domestic measures of the new administration had been exceedingly arbitrary and reprehensible. It had tampered with the jurisprudential system quite as offensively as had the Stuarts beforetime. High courts of

justice of the nature of the Star Chamber had been repeatedly established, and that palladium of popular rights, the jury trial, so dear to every English heart, and so justly eulogized by a long and illustrious line of lawyers and statesmen, from Coke and Bacon to Somers and Mansfield, had been dispensed with. The victims of these irresponsible tribunals, and their friends, made the island echo with their protests; while the government, disregarding in its tenacious grasp of power the fundamental principle upon which it was based, and from which it drew its very breath—popular sovereignty—laid open its inconsistency and greedy ambition to the easy and inevitable observation of the masses. The consequence of all this was that the Parliament became generally odious.

But while the popular assembly was thus declining in the estimation of the people, the army, and especially its victorious and remarkable commander-in-chief, acquired a proportionate ascendancy in the national favor. The conduct of the army, and of its leaders, had been quite as despotic and reprehensible,

to say the least, and that too without the cover of necessity or authority, as that of the Parliament. But prejudice knows no reason, and the people, discontented and harassed, did not stop to philosophize, but clamored ominously for a reform.

For the inauguration of the new *régime* they looked to Oliver Cromwell, then decorated with the almost imperial title of Captain-General, and the idol alike of the army and of the populace. The early and lamented death of the accomplished and high-minded Hampden, the resignation of Fairfax, the sudden death of that stern and inflexible republican, and popular and potent leader, Ireton,* had deprived the nation of many of those leaders upon whom it had been wont to rely, while at the same time these circumstances had served to render the popularity of the grandest chief of them all, Cromwell, all but limitless. To him therefore the nation appealed in this crisis.

Returning flushed with success from the splendid triumphs of Dunbar and Worcester,

* Ireton died at Limerick, Ireland, of the plague, in Nov. 1651.

where the royal cause, which the outlawed prince had sought to prop up by foreign invasion, had again and hopelessly fallen before the genius and the trenchant blade of the Captain-General, his ears were instantly filled with the popular grievances. Wielding the army in his right hand and holding the people in his left, Cromwell now determined to remould the state.

Whether he was urged to what is called his usurpation by hypocritical and impious ambition, or by honest and patriotic zeal for the welfare of the Commonwealth, is matter of mere idle speculation. He is to be judged by his *acts*, not by his secret impulses. Only the great Searcher of all hearts is competent to let the plummet down into Cromwell's soul and to disclose his motives.

And this is what he did: the "Rump" Parliament was dismissed; a new legislature was elected by Cromwell's own authority. After a brief and inefficient existence of but a few months, this puny Parliament, which was called, from one of its leading members, a leather-seller of Fleet-street, "Barebone's Par-

liament," was also rather roughly sent from the Council-chamber; and a board of officers assumed the authority, acting professedly for the nation, to appoint Cromwell to the supreme control, with the title of "Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England." At the same time provision was made for the triennial convocation of a Parliament in whose constitution the popular element was a decided feature.

Into this high office the Lord Protector was installed, amid much enthusiasm and with magnificent ceremonies, on the 16th of December, 1653.

History has of course branded this whole procedure as, in a technical sense, illegal; but remembering the distraction of the times, the foundations of the great political deep broken up, anarchy running mad and raving through the affrighted streets, all generous and liberty-loving souls will find palliation for Cromwell's "usurpation," which gave England a stable government, needed rest, and rational freedom, during the remainder of the great Protector's life.

With this new government Milton at once

fell in, because "he confidently hoped," says Toland, "that Cromwell would employ his power and trust to extinguish the numerous factions in the state, and to settle a perfect form of free government, wherein no single person should enjoy any power above or beside the laws."

The Latin Secretaryship was continued under the Protectorate, with Milton still at its head, he being allowed to have, on account of his blindness, an assistant, one Andrew Marvell, a person of learning and real worth, besides being a devoted friend of the famous Secretary. Milton's salary continued to be two hundred pounds a year, as before.

It is very certain that Milton warmly admired Cromwell's genius and character. The Protector was a sincere friend of complete religious toleration, not, as is too often the case, from carelessness or lukewarmness—for surely no man ever had more decided religious opinions than Oliver Cromwell—but from a firm belief in the justice of the principle. Here at the outset a chord of sympathy was established between these two celebrated men; and when,

shortly after his assumption of sovereign power, Cromwell proclaimed religious toleration, Milton addressed to him this expressive and justly eulogistic sonnet:

“Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but distractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hath ploughed,
And fought God’s battles, and his work pursued,
While *Darwent* streams, with blood of Scots imbued,
And Dunbar’s field resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester’s laureate wreath. Yet much remains
To conquer still ; peace has her victories
No less than those of war. New foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls in secular chains :
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.”

It was, as before stated, in the year 1654 that the “*Second Defence of the English People*” was published, and consequently but a few months after the commencement of Cromwell’s Protectorate. It is in this work, written under the circumstances just described, that Milton’s portrait and eulogy of the Lord Protector appear. This apostrophe, though highly laudatory, is singularly free from flattery or sycophancy, and betrays the erect and austere independent spirit which made John Milton in many respects a model citizen.

Milton thus expresses his approbation of Cromwell's dissolution of the Long Parliament:

“When you saw them studious only of delay, and perceived each one more attentive to private advantage than public welfare; when you found the nation lamenting over their deluded hopes, which were successively baffled and disappointed by the power of a few, you at length did that which *they* had been frequently warned and instructed to do, and put an end to their sittings.”

He bears this witness to Cromwell's religious character: “Such was the discipline of his mind, moulded not merely to military subordination, but to precepts of Christianity, sanctity, and sobriety, that all the good and valiant were irresistibly drawn to his camp, not only as to the best school of martial science, but also of piety and religion; and those who joined it were necessarily rendered such by his example.”

Milton next proceeds animatedly and strikingly to group the remarkable events which had sprinkled Cromwell's path with the stars of glory since his appointment to the Captain-

generalship of the army. He enumerates the complete reconquest of Ireland, the definitive subjugation of Scotland, the great and *crowning victory* at Worcester, the dissolution of the Long Parliament, the meeting and subsequent abdication of the "Barebone's" Parliament. He pictures the deserted Commonwealth as leaning on the single arm of the Protector, who, "by that best of rights, acknowledged by reason and given by God, the right of superior talents and virtue, is in possession of the supreme power." Then resting from his masterly *résumé*, he speaks of Cromwell's magnanimous rejection of the title of king, which had been pressed upon him, and adds this paucyrie :

"Proceed then, Oh Cromwell, and exhibit, under every circumstance, the same loftiness of mind; for it well becomes you, and is consistent with your greatness. The redeemer, as you are, of your country, the author, the guardian, the preserver of her liberty, you can assume no additional character more important or more august; since not only the actions of our kings, but the fabled exploits of our heroes

are overcome by your achievements. Reflect then frequently—how dear alike the trust, and the Parent from whom you received it—that to your hands your country has commended and confided her freedom; that what she lately expected from her choicest representatives, she now hopes only from you. Oh reverence this high confidence, this hope of your country, relying exclusively upon yourself: reverence the countenances and the wounds of those brave men who have so nobly struggled for liberty under your auspices, as well as the manes of those who have fallen in the conflict: reverence also the opinion and the discourse of foreign communities; their lofty anticipation with respect to our freedom so valiantly obtained, to our republic so gloriously established, of which the speedy extinction would involve us in the deepest and the most unexampled infamy: reverence, finally, yourself; and suffer not that liberty, for the attainment of which you have endured so many hardships, to sustain any violation from your hands, or any from those of others. Without *our* freedom, in fact, you cannot *yourself* be free; for

it is justly ordained by nature, that he who invades the liberty of others, shall, in the very outset, lose his own, and be the first to feel that servitude which he has induced. But if the very patron, the tutelary deity as it were, of freedom—if the man the most eminent for justice and sanctity, and general excellence, should assail that liberty which he has asserted, the issue must necessarily be pernicious, if not fatal, not only to the aggressor, but to the entire system and interests of piety herself: honor and virtue would, indeed, appear to be empty names; the credit and character of religion would decline and perish, under a wound more deep than any which, since the first transgression, has been inflicted on the race of man.

“ You have engaged in a most arduous undertaking, which will search you to the quick; which will scrutinize you through and through; which will bring to the severest trial your spirit, your energy, your stability; which will ascertain whether you are really actuated by that living piety and honor and equity and moderation, which seem, by the favor of God, to have raised you to your present high dignity.

“To rule with your counsels three mighty realms; in the place of their erroneous institutions to substitute a sounder system of doctrine and of discipline; to pervade their remotest provinces with unremitting attention and anxiety, vigilance and foresight; to decline no labors, to yield to no blandishments of pleasure, to spurn the pageantries of wealth and of power—these are difficulties in comparison with which those of war are mere levities of play; these will sift and winnow you; these demand a man sustained by the divine assistance—tutored and instructed almost by a personal communication with his God.

“These and more than these you often, as I doubt not, revolve and make the subjects of your deepest meditation, greatly solicitous how, most happily, they may be achieved, and your country’s freedom be strengthened and secured: and these objects you cannot, in my judgment, otherwise effect than by admitting, as you do, to an intimate share in your counsels, those men who have already participated your toils and dangers—men of the utmost moderation, integrity, and valor; not rendered savage or

austere by the sight of so much bloodshed and of so many forms of death; but inclined to justice, to a reverence of the Deity, to a sympathy with human sufferings, and animated, for the preservation of liberty, with a zeal strengthened by the hazards which, for its sake, they have encountered—men not raked together from the dregs of our own or of a foreign population, not a band of mercenary adventurers, but men chiefly of superior condition; in extraction noble or reputable; with respect to property considerable or competent, or, in some instances, deriving a stronger claim to our regard even from their poverty itself—men not convened by the lust of plunder, but, in times of extreme difficulty, amid circumstances generally doubtful, and often almost desperate, excited to vindicate their country from oppression; and prompt, not only in the safety of the senate-house to wage the war of words, but to join battle with the enemy on the field.

“If we will then renounce the idleness of never-ending and fallacious expectation, I see not in whom, if not in such as these, we can

place reliance and trust. Of their FIDELITY we have the surest and most indisputable proof, in the readiness which they have discovered even to die, if it had been their lot, in the cause of their country; of their PIETY, in the devotion with which, having repeatedly and successfully implored the protection of heaven, they uniformly ascribed the glory to Him from whom they had solicited the victory; of their JUSTICE, in their not exempting even their king from trial or from execution; of their MODERATION, in our own experience, and in the certainty that if their violence should disturb the peace which they have established, they would themselves be the first to feel the resulting mischiefs, themselves would receive the first wounds in their own bodies, while they were again doomed to struggle for all their fortunes and honors now happily secured; of their FORTITUDE, lastly, in that none ever recovered their liberty with more bravery or effect, to give us the assurance that none will ever watch over it with more solicitous attention and care.*

* Prose Works, Vol. V., p. 259.

Milton closed the "Second Defence" with this dignified and pathetic address:

"For myself, whatever may be the final result, such efforts as in my judgment were the most likely to be beneficial to the Commonwealth I have made without reluctance, though not, as I trust, without effect. I have wielded my weapons for liberty not only in our domestic scene, but on a far more extensive theatre, that the justice and the principle of our extraordinary actions, explained and vindicated both at home and abroad, and rooted in the general approbation of the good, might be unquestionably established, as well for the honor of my compatriots as for precedents to posterity.

"That the conclusion prove not unworthy of such a commencement, be it my countrymen's to provide; it has been mine to deliver a testimony, I had almost said to erect a monument, which will not soon decay, to deeds of greatness and of glory almost transcending human panegyric. And if I have accomplished nothing further, I have assuredly discharged the whole of my engagement.

"As a bard however who is denominated

epic, if he confine his work a little within certain canons of composition, proposes to himself, for a subject of poetical embellishment, not the whole life of his hero, but some single action, such as the wrath of Achilles, the return of Ulysses, or the arrival in Italy of Æneas, and takes no notice of the rest of his conduct; so will it suffice either to form my vindication or to satisfy my duty, that I have recorded in heroic narrative one only of my fellow-citizen's achievements. The rest I omit; for who can declare all the actions of an entire people?

“If, after such valiant exploits, you fall into gross delinquency, and perpetrate any thing unworthy of yourselves, posterity will not fail to discuss and to pronounce sentence on the disgraceful deed. The foundation they will allow indeed to have been firmly laid, and the first—nay, more than the first—parts of the superstructure to have been erected with success, but with anguish they will regret that there were none found to carry it forward to completion; that such an enterprise and such virtues were not crowned with perseverance; that a rich harvest of glory and abundant ma-

materials for heroic achievement were prepared, but that men were wanting to the illustrious opportunity, while there wanted not a man to instruct, to urge, to stimulate to action—a man who could call fame as well upon the acts as the actors, and could spread their names over lands and seas to the admiration of all future ages.*

The effect produced by the publication of the “Second Defence” was profound. The presses employed in its issue could not keep pace with the popular demand for it, and it served to raise John Milton still higher, if that were possible, in the estimation of the republicans and the scholars of that epoch.

Milton’s friend and assistant, Andrew Marvell, presented a copy of the work to the Lord Protector, with the compliments of the author.

Terribly galled by the crushing force and sarcasm of Milton’s “Second Defence,” Alexander Morus, who had been mistaken by the great Englishman for the author of the pamphlet to which his work was an answer,† ven-

* Prose Works, Vol. V., p. 266.

† The real author was a Frenchman named Du Moulin, who,
Milton.

tured to publish a book which he called "*Fides Publica*," or Public Faith. Milton rejoined by writing his "*Defensio Pro*," or defence of himself, in which he handled his unfortunate adversary with the most extreme severity. This was published in 1655. Apparently in the same year, Morus printed a "*Supplementum*," which was speedily silenced by a brief "*Responsio*" from Milton, in which poor Morus was again so riddled and ridiculed that he gladly retired into obscurity, leaving Milton in undisputed possession of the field. Thus closed a long and bitter controversy, in which Milton had fairly earned, and then wore by general consent, the proud title of "the people's champion and conqueror."

fearful of exposing his own head to Milton's literary hatchet, persuaded More, or Morus, in an unhappy moment, to publish and father it.

CHAPTER XV.

AT the conclusion of the famous controversy with Salmasius, and of those collateral ones which had grown out of that central literary combat, Milton for a time laid aside his polemical pen, and devoted himself to his private studies and the duties of his office. He does not appear to have been very frequent in his attendance upon the government. This is shown by an extract from a letter of his to a young friend who had solicited his influence in obtaining the office of secretary to the English ambassador in Holland: "I am grieved that it is not in my power to serve you on this point, inasmuch as I have very few familiarities with the *gratiosi* of the court, who keep myself almost wholly at home, and am willing to do so."

His absence from the public councils was owing to no political dissatisfaction, but to his blindness and ill-health. His good friend and assistant, Andrew Marvell,* probably perform-

* Andrew Marvell was born in 1620, in the town of Hull, where his father was settled as vicar. He was early distinguished for his

ed the routine duties of the secretaryship, Milton being consulted only in regard to the more important foreign questions and *imbroglios*. Although he was thus eased of the more onerous burdens of his office, his diplomatic pen was still kept quite busy. In 1655 he wrote the elegant and forcible manifesto issued by the Protector in justification of his war with Spain. In this same year he published, under the title of "*The Cabinet Council*," Sir Walter Raleigh's manuscript of aphorisms on the art of government. A little previous to the production of these compositions, he addressed

talents and appetite for learning, being sent at the early age of thirteen to Cambridge University. Possessed of ample fortune, he made a tour of the Continent, tarrying some time at Constantinople in the capacity of Secretary to the British embassy at the Turkish court. Ardently wedded to the liberal and Puritan party, shortly after his return to England, he attached himself to the fortunes of Cromwell, by whom he was, in 1657, associated with Milton in the Latin secretaryship. In the Parliament summoned just before the Restoration, he represented his native town, and though not singularly eloquent, he played in its debates and plans a prominent part. Learned, moral, and sedate, he preserved through his life the respect of the court party, and the affection of his friends. Himself no inconsiderable author, his various writings were then highly esteemed and eagerly sought. His pen was on more than one occasion wielded in the defence of his immortal friend, John Milton. He died in 1678, in his fifty-eighth year. As he was apparently in vigorous health at the time of his decease, his death was attributed to the effect of poison.

some eulogistic verses to the eccentric Christiana, queen of Sweden, sending them in the name of Cromwell.

Milton now spent most of his leisure hours in the prosecution of three literary projects: the composition of his history of England, of which mention has been already made, the compilation of a Latin dictionary, which he left in too undigested a state for publication, though the materials which he accumulated were advantageously employed by the editors of the Cambridge dictionary in later years,* and in the perfection of the plan and the laying of the groundwork of his immortal epic. "Some great production in the highest region of poetry had been, as we have observed, in his contemplation from the commencement nearly of his literary life. The idea accompanied him to Italy, where, with a more defined object, it acquired a more certain shape from the example of Tasso, and the conversation of Tasso's friend, the accomplished Marquis of Villa. From this moment it seems to have been immovably fastened in his mind; and though

* Symmons' Life, pp. 403, 404. Todd's Life, p. 97.

for a season oppressed and overwhelmed by the incumbent duties of controversy, its root was full of life and pregnant with stately vegetation. At the time of which we are speaking, the end of 1653 and the beginning of 1654, the mighty work, according to Phillips, was seriously undertaken; and it is curious to reflect on the steadiness of its growth under a complication of adverse circumstances; and to see it, like a pine on the rocks of Norway, ascending to its majestic elevation beneath the inclemency of a dreary sky, and assailed in the same moment by the fury of the ocean at its feet and the power of the tempest above its head.”*

It may also be noticed as a proof of Milton's indefatigable studiousness, that he had collected all the important state papers from the death of the king to the year 1658—probably with a view to render them easily accessible to the future historian of his times.† These rested in manuscript form until 1743, when they were published under the title of “*Original Letters and Papers of State, address-*

* Symmons' Life, pp. 401, 405.

† Todd's Life, p. 97.

ed to Oliver Cromwell, concerning the Affairs of Great Britain, from the year 1649 to 1658. Found among the Political Collections of Mr. John Milton, now first published from the originals, by John Nicholls, Jr., member of the Society of Antiquarians, London." This collection is singularly interesting, as read by the eyes of this generation, and abounds in curious *data*, anecdotal, historical, and biographical, together with several addresses to, and portraits of, the prominent supporters of what Milton fondly calls, *The good old cause*.*

It was in 1654 that Cromwell raised himself and the Commonwealth to the highest pinnacle of earthly honor, by his famous intervention in behalf of menaced Protestantism on the Continent. As Milton was the mouth of the Lord Protector on this occasion, a sketch of Cromwell's noble zeal, its cause and result, will come legitimately within the purview of the great Secretary's life.

"The Duke of Savoy," says the author of the *Critical History of England*, "raised a new persecution of the Vaudois, massacring

* See Milton's Prose Works, ed. 1698, Vol. II., p. 797.

many, and driving the rest from their habitations. Wherefore Cromwell sent to the French court, demanding of them to oblige that duke, (of Alva,) whom he knew to be in their power, to put a stop to his unjust fury, or otherwise he must break with them. The cardinal, Mazarini, objected to this as unreasonable. He would do good offices, he said, but could not answer for the effects. However, nothing would satisfy the Protector till they obliged the duke to restore all he had taken from his Protestant subjects, and to renew their former privileges.

“Cromwell wrote* on this occasion to the Duke of Alva himself, and by mistake omitted the title of ‘Royal Highness’ on his letter; upon which the major part of the Council of Savoy were for returning it unopened; but one, representing that Cromwell would not pass by such an affront, but would certainly lay Villa Frauca in ashes, and set the Swiss cantons upon Savoy, with Cardinal Mazarini’s influence, had the desired effect. The Protector also raised money in England for the

* Through Milton.

poor sufferers, and sent an agent over to settle their affairs.'

This picture makes the blood tingle in our veins, as we recall the paltry and selfish part which England had stooped to play in the Titanic religious wars of Continental Europe during the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. Cromwell and the Puritans were made of sterner stuff. Not satisfied with having achieved freedom and toleration for themselves at home, they were also zealous to bestow the same beneficent boon upon suffering mankind, and woe betide the despot or the priest who ventured to rattle a secular or religious chain within the hearing of the Puritan government of England in the iron days of the Commonwealth.

Sir Samuel Morland, the English ambassador who was dispatched to Piedmont by the Lord Protector, carried with him a contribution amounting to thirty-eight thousand two hundred forty-one pounds sterling, or about two hundred thousand dollars, which had been specially taken up for the Vaudois in the churches of Great Britain. Cromwell himself

headed the subscription with £2,000, or ten thousand dollars.*

Morland afterwards published a history of the crusade against the Vaudois, which the Protector's noble intervention had stopped, and illustrated his narrative with engravings of some of the most revolting and barbarous scenes which ever harrowed the human heart. Upon these representations Milton founded his inimitable sonnet entitled,

“ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

‘Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy faith so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,
Forget not; in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth grow
A hundred fold, who, having learned thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

In speaking of the compassion and zeal of Cromwell upon this occasion, Morland says, “Having upon his spirit a deep sense of their

* Morland's History of the Evang. Churches in the Valley of Piedmont, 1658, pp. 584-593.

calamities, which were occasioned by their faithful adherence to the profession of the reformed religion, he was pleased not only to mediate by most pathetic letters on their behalf to the King of France and Duke of Savoy, but did also seriously invite the people of England to seek the Lord by prayer and humiliation, in reference to their thus sad condition and future life.”*

These “pathetic letters” to the King of France and the Duke of Savoy, together with others of similar spirit and purpose addressed to the various European governments, Catholic and Protestant, in protest against the Vaudois crusade, emanated from the brain of Milton, if they were not written by his hand. He therefore partakes of the high honor of rescuing the unhappy Vaudois, whose smiling valleys had been twice *harried*, from the fangs of the Roman see.

Of “the notable effects of the intercession of His Highness for the poor distressed Protestants of the valleys of Piedmont upon the spirits of the neighboring princes and states of

* Morland's History, p. 585.

the Protestant profession,"* Morland assures us in his history of that tragic episode.

By their spirited and efficacious intervention, both Cromwell and Milton wove for themselves garlands of imperishable honor; while liberty stands by approvingly through the mist of ages, and shouts, "Amen. Well done, good and faithful servants."

* Morland's History, p. 597.

NOTE. Those who may choose to study this intercession at large, together with Milton's letters to the Continental powers, will find the necessary data in Milton's state papers, mentioned in the above chapter, or in Ivimey's Life of Milton, or in the singularly complete life of the Latin Secretary lately written by David Masson, and published in Boston in 1859.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN September of 1658, after a reign of singular firmness and ability, during which the English Commonwealth had led and shaped European politics, the remarkable, checkered, yet, upon the whole, beneficent career of Oliver Cromwell, the mighty Lord Protector, was closed by his sickness and death.

Instantly the heterogeneous elements which had been moulded into apparent homogeneity by the strategic and powerful hand of Cromwell, began to ferment; and the nation soon learned to regret the loss of one whose vigorous authority had repressed those fatal confusions to which they now fell a prey.

Richard Cromwell, the son of the Protector, who had assumed the Protectorate upon the death of his father, appalled by the stormy atmosphere of the time, and keenly aware of his inability to control the hour, after an inefficient reign of nine months, laid down his sceptre, and retired into that obscurity which he was best fitted to adorn.

Meantime the anarchy into which the nation had lapsed continued to increase. The council of officers, headed by Desborough and Fleetwood, upon the abdication of Richard Cromwell, summoned the relics of the famous Long Parliament, which still legally existed, having never been prorogued by a competent authority, to reassume the guidance of the Commonwealth.

The Parliament convened upon this invitation, and displaying its old-time energy and executive talent, speedily excited the jealousy of the tyrannical army, which ere long once more forcibly ended its sittings.

The Presbyterians, discontented since the triumph of the Independents, instead of attempting to smother the flames of confusion, fanned the fire, and openly united themselves with the Royalists.

It was at this alarming crisis that Milton, drawn once more from his retirement by the voice of patriotism, addressed to the Parliament two treatises, one called "*A Treatise of the Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Matters*," which he wrote because of his apprehension of re-

turning intolerance from the increasing influence of the Presbyterians; the other was of somewhat similar scope and purpose, "*Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church,*" in which he argued with masterly and incontrovertible power for the complete separation and independence of church and state.

His definition of evangelical religion in the first of these treatises is terse and admirable: "What evangelical religion is, is told in two words, faith and charity, or belief and practice, and that both of these flow either the one from the understanding, the other from the will, or both jointly from both; once indeed naturally free, but now only as they are regenerate and wrought on by Divine grace, is in part evident to common sense and principles unquestioned; the rest by Scripture."

The treatise on the "Removal of Hirelings out of the Church," and urging that to each congregation be left the support of its own pastor, instead of maintaining the expensive and aristocratic ecclesiastical establishment

then kept up by the collection of tithes, thus concludes:

“Of which hireling crew, together with all the mischiefs, dissensions, troubles, wars, merely of their own kindling, Christendom might soon rid herself and be happy, if Christians would but know their own dignity, their liberty, their adoption, and let it not be wondered if I say their own spiritual priesthood, whereby they have all equal access to any ministerial functions whenever called by their own abilities to the church, though they never came near commencements or university.

“But while Protestants, to avoid the due labors of understanding their own religion, are content to lodge it in their books or in the breast of a state clergyman, and to take it thence by scraps and mammocks, as he dispenses it in his Sunday dole, they will be always learning and never knowing; always infants; always either his vassals, as lay papists are to their priests, or at odds with him, as reformed principles give them some light to be not wholly conformable; whence infinite disturbances in the state, as they do, must needs follow.

“Thus much I had to say, and I suppose what may be enough to those who are not avariciously bent otherwise, touching the likeliest means to get hirelings out of the church; than which nothing can more conduce to truth, to peace, and all happiness, both in church and state. If I be not heard and believed, the event will bear me witness to have spoken truth; and I in the mean while have borne me witness, not out of season, to the church and my country.”*

Unhappily the nation, maddened by the cries of faction and given over to anarchy, was in no mood to listen to, or heed the sober words and the warning expostulations of its great monitor. Still Milton's fresh appearance as a political writer, after his lengthened withdrawal from public observation, was peculiarly gratifying to his old republican admirers, some of whom had suspected him of alienation from their cause since his repose under the shadow of the Protectoral government. These writings however proved his consistency, and showed him to be still the Milton of old times, and

* Prose Works.

ardently as ever wedded to the "good old cause."

In a letter addressed to him, upon the publication of the treatise on the civil power in ecclesiastical matters, a Mr. Wall of Causham, under date of May 29, 1659, says, "I confess I have even in my privacy in the country oft had thoughts of you, and that with much respect for your friendship to truth in your early years, and in bad times. But I was uncertain whether your relation to the court, though I think that a commonwealth was more friendly to you than a court, had not clouded your former light; but your last book resolved that doubt."*

Meanwhile the general disorder found no hand competent to quell it, and the disorganization grew apace.

Milton, grieved, disquieted, and alarmed by the confusion of parties, and indignant at the outrages of the army, collected his faculties, and made one more desperate and almost despairing effort to retrieve the political situation, pub-

* Birche's *Life of Milton*, p. 42. *Prose Works*, Vol. II., p. 388. *Synmons' Life*, pp. 415, 416.

lishing in 1659 his celebrated pamphlet entitled, "*The Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth,*" which he sadly hoped might not contain "the last words of expiring liberty."

This he addressed to General Monk, then governor of Scotland and commander of the Puritan army in that kingdom, to which posts he had been promoted by Cromwell.

The treatise on the Commonwealth is sadly grand, and its eloquence is full of tears. In it Milton says,

"The Parliament of England, assisted by a great number of the people who appeared and stuck to them faithfully in defence of religion and their civil liberties, judging kingship by long experience a government unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous, justly and magnanimously abolished it, turning regal bondage into a free Commonwealth, to the admiration and terror of our emulous neighbors. They took themselves not bound by the light of nature or religion to any former covenant, from which the king himself, by many forfeitures of a latter date or discovery, and our own long

consideration thereon, had more and more unbound us both to himself and his posterity, as hath been ever the justice and prudence of all wise nations that have ejected tyranny.

“They covenanted to preserve the king’s person and authority, in the preservation of true religion and our liberties; not in his endeavoring to bring in upon our consciences a popish religion, upon our liberties thralldom, upon our lives destruction by his occasioning if not plotting, as was afterwards discovered, the Irish massacre; his fomenting and arming the rebellion; his covert league with the rebels against us; his refusing more than seven times propositions most just and necessary to the true religion and our liberties, tendered him by the Parliament both of England and Scotland.”

Passing then to another consideration, he asks indignantly if the Commonwealth be a failure? “And what will they at best say of us, and of the whole *English* name, but scoffingly, as of that foolish builder mentioned by our Saviour, who began to build a tower, and was not able to finish it. Where is this goodly

tower of a Commonwealth, which the English began to build?"

He then urgently remonstrates with the nation in regard to its proposed invitation to Charles Stuart to ascend the rebuilt throne; showing vividly and prophetically what a wretched tide of lewdness and profanity would overwhelm the state upon the restoration of the reckless and outlawed libertine who was even at that critical hour lapped in the embraces of his continental mistresses, or else engaged in the fitting and congenial pursuit of hunting in the bogs of France.

Next passing to the consideration of other matters, he shows "wherein freedom and a flourishing condition would be more ample and secure to England under a Commonwealth than under a kingship." "Admitting that monarchy may be convenient to some nations," he warns England to beware of it; for the remade king, not forgetting his former ejection, will arm and fortify himself against all similar attempts in future. The people would then be "so narrowly watched and kept so low, that though they would never so fain, and at the

same rate of their blood and treasure, they never shall be able to regain what they now have purchased and may enjoy, or to free themselves from any yoke imposed upon them: nor will they dare to go about it, utterly disheartened for the future, if these their highest attempts prove unsuccessful: which will be the triumph of all tyrants hereafter over any people that shall resist oppression; and their song shall then be, to others, How sped the rebellious English? to our posterity, How sped the rebels your fathers?"

Among other disabilities sure to be inaugurated with a monarchy, he places the shackling of conscience: "This liberty of conscience, which, above all other things, ought to be to all men dearest and most precious, no government is more inclinable, not to favor only, but to protect, than a free Commonwealth; as being most magnanimous, most fearless, and confident of its own fair proceedings. Whereas kingship, though looking big, is yet indeed most pusillanimous, full of fears, full of jealousies, starting at every umbrage. As it hath been observed of all to have ever suspected most

and mistrusted those who were in most esteem for virtue and generosity of mind; so it is now known to have most in doubt and suspicion those who are most reputed to be religious.

“Queen Elizabeth, though herself accounted so good a Protestant, so moderate, so confident of her subjects’ love, would never give way so much as to Presbyterian reformation in this land, though once and again besought, as Camden relates; but imprisoned and persecuted the very proposers thereof, alleging it as her mind and maxim unalterable, that such reformation would diminish regal authority.

“What liberty of conscience can we then expect of others, far worse principled from the cradle, trained up and governed by popish and Spanish counsels, and on such depending hitherto for subsistence?”

Milton’s treatise concludes with these weighty and prophetic words:

“I have no more to say at present: few words will save us, well considered; few and easy things, now seasonably done.

“But if the people be so affected as to prostitute religion and liberty to the vain and

groundless apprehension that nothing but kingship can restore trade, not remembering the frequent plagues and pestilences that then wasted this city, such as through God's mercy we have never felt since; and that trade flourishes nowhere more than in the free commonwealths of Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries, before their eyes at this day; yet if trade be grown so craving and importunate through the profuse living of tradesmen, that nothing can support it but the luxurious expenses of a nation upon trifles or superfluities; so as if the people generally should betake themselves to frugality, it might prove a dangerous matter, lest tradesmen should mutiny for want of trading; and that therefore we must forego and set to sale religion, liberty, honor, safety, all concernments, divine and human, to keep up trading: if, lastly, after all this light among us, the same reason shall pass for current to put our necks again under kingship as was made use of by the Jews to return back to Egypt, and to the worship of their idol queen, because they falsely imagined that they then lived in more plenty and prosperity—our con-

dition is not sound, but rotten, both in religion and all civil prudence, and will bring us soon, the way we are marching, to those calamities which attend always and unavoidably on luxury, all national judgments under foreign and domestic slavery; so far we shall be from mending our condition by monarchizing our government, whatever new conceit now possesses us.

“However, with all hazard I have ventured, what I thought my duty, to speak in season, and to forewarn my country in time; wherein I doubt not but there be many wise men in all places and degrees, but am sorry the effects of wisdom are so little seen among us.

“Many circumstances and particulars are in those things whereof I have spoken, but a few main matters now put speedily in execution, will suffice to recover us, and set all right; and there will want at no time those who are good at circumstances; but men who set their minds on main matters, and sufficiently urge them, in these difficult times, I find not many. What I have spoken is the language of that which is not called amiss, ‘The good old cause.’ If it

seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, than convincing to backsliders.

“Thus much I should perhaps have said, though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones, and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, ‘O earth, earth, earth!’ to tell the very soil itself what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. Nay, though what I have spoke should happen—which Thou suffer not who didst create mankind free, nor Thou next who didst redeem us from being servants of men—to be the last words of our expiring liberty.”*

But Milton’s plaintive yet powerful appeal was without effect. The nation had gone mad with discontent and desire for change, and in 1660 the popular clamor summoned Monk, whom the conflict of factions and his own influential position, united to make the arbiter of events, to reinstate the old *régime*.

That thrice-infamous renegade, placing honor behind his back, and banishing from remembrance his former Puritan convictions and republican professions, pushed by the per-

* Prose Works, Vol. III., pp. 421–428.

suasions of the meanest self-interest, ruthlessly and perfidiously abandoned his old associates to the butchery of legal vengeance, and without a single stipulation for their safety or the preservation of the national liberty, surrendered the Commonwealth "to the dominion of a master in whom voluptuousness and cruelty were confounded in a disgusting embrace." This betrayal of a sacred cause entrusted to his keeping, and his restoration of the monarchy *without a specified condition*, has fairly entitled Monk to be called the Judas Iscariot of British politics.

Against this fatal reaction Milton struggled so long as there was hope. When, however, the final thunder-cloud burst upon him and his party, and the news of the conclusion of the negotiations with Charles II. at Breda was received, together with his own dismissal from the Latin Secretaryship by order of the Parliament, his saddened yet undaunted heart prompted him to take some precautionary measures for his personal safety.

Milton had acted too prominent and decided a part in the revolution not to be made to

feel the keenest edge of the restored prince's resentment. He therefore quitted his famous abode in Petty France, where he had resided happily and in great renown during eight of the eventful years of his connection with the government, and where he had been visited by multitudes of persons eminent in the belles-lettres, political, and religious circles of the time; and while Charles advanced, amid the acclamations of the fickle masses, to reseat himself upon the throne of his fathers, the deposed Secretary sought an obscure asylum under the roof of a devoted friend, where he trusted to outlive the first flush of the king's severity of punishment.

Thus inauspiciously ended, when he was at the age of fifty-two, John Milton's glorious and beneficent public career, in which he had proved himself as superior to his contemporaries in polemics and Christian statesmanship, as it was still reserved for him to prove himself superior to all rivals in the different sphere of the sublimest poetry.

Then also was inaugurated that age which Macauley paints with a pen of fire: "Then

came those days never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the bigot and the slave the government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the anathema-maranatha of every fawning dean."

And here, at the close of Milton's public life, it may not be inappropriate to glance briefly at the system upon which he asserts his political career to have been based.

When the popular opposition to the usurpations of the prelates commenced, and the model of the reformed churches was compared disadvantageously to those of others, seeing the way open for the establishment of true liberty, Milton felt called of God to write in defence of justice and toleration.

He conceived that there were three kinds of liberty essential to the happiness of social life—religious, domestic, and political. To

promote the first, he wrote against the prelates, and published the treatises on the Reformation. Perceiving that the whole people were eager in the pursuit of their civil rights, and that they then needed little scholarly assistance, he turned his attention to the subject of domestic liberty, which he also divided into three departments—the nature of the conjugal relation, the education of children, and the free publication of opinion. These subjects he severally and respectively considered in the treatises on divorce, in the tractate on education, and in the *Areopagitica*, or plea for unlicensed printing.

With regard to civil affairs, he left them in the hands of the magistrates till it became necessary to vindicate the right of lawfully dethroning or destroying tyrants.

Such were the fruits of his private studies ; and these he gratuitously presented to justice and liberty in church and state, receiving scoffs and persecution as his reward from his own ungrateful age, though posterity has crowned him with its laureate wreath.

But notwithstanding the ingratitude of his

countrymen, cozened and heated by the glitter of the throne, Milton says, "The actions themselves procured me peace of conscience and the approbation of the good, while I exercised that freedom of discussion which I loved."

CHAPTER XVII.

MILTON remained securely hidden in the house of that friend in need, whose name has escaped the most careful inquiry,* during the first four months of the Restoration. Safely sheltered himself, he saw with grievous sorrow that the heads of many of his old associates were bared to the pitiless pelting of the storm of persecution.

Meantime a vote of the House of Commons had decreed the public prosecution of the *ex*-secretary, and also ordered that two of his most obnoxious pamphlets, the "*Iconoclastes*" and the "*Defence of the People of England*," should be burned by the common hangman. It is not probable that these measures troubled Milton very seriously. He had seen one of these same works publicly burned in the squares of Toulouse and Paris, and yet it had survived. Nor can it be imagined that his serenity was much disturbed by the futile ma-

† Symmons' Life, p. 429.

lignity of his oft-beaten enemies, who eagerly seized upon this hour of his political undoing to publish the refuted slanders of the dead Salmasius.

Still Milton ran, through all this period, a fearful personal risk. The proclamation against himself and another of the noted characters of the time, John Goodwin, who had written a tract against the king entitled, "*The Obstructors of Justice*," issued immediately after the coronation of Charles, was yet out, declaring that "the said John Milton and John Goodwin are so fled or so obscure themselves that no endeavors used for their apprehension can take effect, whereby they may be brought to legal trial and deservedly receive condign punishment for their treasons and offences."*

Some of his friends, esteeming the danger that menaced his life to be imminent, actually bruted it through the streets that he was dead, and they contrived for him a sham funeral.† Afterwards, when matters had been accommodated, Charles laughed heartily at the trick.

* Kennet's Chronicle, p. 189.

† Wharton's Second Ed. of Milton's Minor Poems, p. 358. Ivi-mey's Life, p. 218. Todd's Life, p. 101.

“The king,” says an old historian, “applauded his policy in escaping the punishment of death by a seasonable show of dying.”*

It is also certain that a number of influential gentlemen ardently exerted themselves at this crisis of Milton's life to secure his preservation,† and it was probably to this kind intervention that he owed his security, since no keen search for him was ever instituted.

Milton's offence had been more grave than that of the regicides themselves: *they* had only put one king to death, *he* had attacked the very *office*, and memorialized posterity against the idea of kingship, lavishing the most splendid panegyrics upon the rebellion and the most prominent and obnoxious actors in it; and it was well known that with these glowing eulogiums in her hand the muse of history would march proudly down through the ages with the immortal trust. Yet contenting himself with the babble of spiteful words, and the absurd comedy of burning his pamphlets, the king per-

* Cunningham's Hist. of Great Britain, Vol. I., p. 14.

† Symmons' Life, pp. 427, 428.

mitted the great architect of the ruin of his house to go untouched. This clemency was due, not to the heart or brain of the effeminate prince who then acted like a puppet the part of king, but to the powerful influence of active friends, whose menacing intercession made it dangerous to punish Milton, and convenient to overlook him.

Andrew Marvell, his old associate in office under the Commonwealth, then member of Parliament for Hull, made all possible influence for him in the House of Commons, while Sir William D'Avenant, one of the most amiable and influential gentlemen of the day, whose life Milton had saved when he had been captured by the fleet of the Commonwealth in his passage from France to America and ordered to his trial before the High Court of Justice, in 1651, now eagerly requited that kind act by one of equal generosity.*

Thus, in one way or another, Milton managed to survive the opening months of the Restoration, until, on the 29th of August, 1660, the "Act of Oblivion" opened the doors of his

* Wood, *Athenæ Oxon*, Vol. II., p. 412.

asylum, and allowed him safely to emerge from his secrecy.

The clemency of Charles in the promulgation of the act of oblivion has been the theme not only of lavish contemporary panegyric, but also of later eulogium; but "the time has long elapsed in which praise, unsupported by truth, can be admitted on the plea of passion."

It has been well remarked by an able and candid writer,* that "if we reflect that Charles was not now reclaiming his royal right as a conqueror; that the nation was not trembling at his feet, and, like a city taken by storm, in a state to be thankful for every deed of brutal violence which was not committed; but that, in truth, he was an impotent exile, receiving gratuitously a crown from the very hands which had torn it from his family, from a Parliament a great majority of whose members had been active in the overthrow of the monarchy, and from an army which had immediately conducted his father to the scaffold, we may reasonably inquire by what acts he could have dis-

* Dr. Symmons, in his *Life of Milton*, pp. 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436.

covered a stronger propensity to cruelty than he did in the first moments of power conferred on him by his recent popularity. When his heart ought to have been softened by the unexpected influx of prosperous fortune, he eluded the proposition which was made to him at Breda for a general amnesty, and evidently discovered that his spirit brooded revenge.

“When he was seated on his throne, he accepted those victims which the perfidiousness of party, in expiation of its own offences, was so base as to offer him; and he glutted the nation, so far as he durst, with an effusion of blood not more guilty than that of thousands, perhaps, who were present to behold it; for they who, from their office, were more personally engaged in the trial and execution of the king, were unquestionably not more criminal than were all those who had voted for these violences in Parliament, or, in the army, had first planned, and then imperiously carried them into effect. More however than they who were regarded as the actual regicides were exempted from the benefit of the amnesty. Neither Vane, nor Peters, nor Lambert was immediately im-

plicated in the murder of the king; yet the two former were slaughtered, and Vane in violation of the royal promise to the Parliament for his pardon; while the last, the most guilty of the three, was indeed permitted to live, but to live only in a state of miserable exile.

“But not limited to the sufferings of the living, the vengeance of Charles extended itself to mean and atrocious outrages on the dead. It broke the hallowed repose of the tomb, and exhibited that last infirmity of our mortal nature, the corruption through which it is doomed to pass into its kindred earth, to the derision and the disgust of impotent malignity. When we behold the bodies of the illustrious usurper and of the formidable Ireton torn from their graves, and made the subject of idle punishment, we are less disposed to wonder than to smile at the cowardly and pitiful insult; but when we see subjected to similar indignities, the mouldering remains of the noble-minded Blake,* of the mild and amiable Clay-

* Blake, the famous admiral whose name stands first on the pages of the naval history of England, and whose integrity and patriotism need no vouchers.

pole,* one of whom had strenuously opposed all the crimes of her father's ambition, and the other had carried the thunder and the fame of his country to the extremities of the world, we are shocked by the infamy of the deed, and are tempted in the bitterness of our hearts, to vent a curse upon the savageness of the perpetrators."

Upon his appearance once more in society, Milton was arrested, probably in consequence of the order for his apprehension issued in the preceding June by the House of Commons. The sequel is to be derived from the following Minutes in the journals of the House:

"SATURDAY, 15th Decem., 1660.

"Ordered, That Mr. Milton, now in custody of the serjeant attending this House, be forthwith released, paying his fees."

"MONDAY, 17th December.

"A complaint made, that the serjeant-at-arms had demanded excessive fees for the imprisonment of Mr. Milton,

"Ordered, That it be referred to a com-

* Mrs. Claypole, Cromwell's favorite daughter, a lady of singularly upright and humane character.

mittee for privileges, to examine this business, and to call Mr. Milton and the serjeant before them, and to determine what is fit to be given to the serjeant for his fees in this case."

What the conclusion of this committee was we know not; but it is certain that Milton was unconditionally released within a day or two, and that he rented a house, first in Holborn, near Red Lion-square, where he resided but a few months; next, in 1662, removing to Jewen-street; then to a small house in the Artillery-walk, adjoining Bunhill-fields; and in this residence he continued until the close of his life.

It is related by Richardson that, at some intermediate period after he left Jewen-street, he resided with Millington, a celebrated auctioneer of that age, who was accustomed to lead his venerable and illustrious lodger through the streets for air and exercise.*

In or about the year 1662, Milton once more entered into the marriage state, his choice being on this occasion a Miss Elizabeth Minshall, the daughter of a gentleman of

* See Richardson's Life of Milton.

Cheshire, and a distant relative of the poet's good friend and medical adviser Dr. Paget, then a physician of eminence in London, upon whose advice it was that Milton now married.

This lady appears to have made him an excellent and faithful wife, tending him with the utmost solicitude, and carefully protecting him from the imposition of heartless and false friends and relations.* From Mrs. Milton a number of interesting personal incidents touching her husband's mode of life, are to be gleaned. Among other things, she relates that he composed principally in the winter; and on his waking in the morning, he would request her to write at his dictation sometimes twenty, sometimes thirty verses. On being asked whether Milton did not frequently consult Homer and Virgil, she replied that "he stole from nobody but the muse who inspired him;" and to a lady who inquired who that muse was, she quickly answered, "it was God's grace and the Holy Spirit that visited him nightly."†

It is sad and revolting to be obliged to

* Mrs. Milton survived her husband some fifty-five years, dying at Namptwich, in her native Cheshire, in the year 1729.

† Newton's Life of Milton.

relate that, previous to his marriage, Milton suffered seriously from the ill-treatment of those whom this venerable father, in his non-occupative will, quite recently discovered and published,* which shows Milton to have been amiable and forgiving in all those domestic scenes in which alone he has seemed liable to censure or unworthy of sympathy, calls his "unkind children." We are assured that against these unnatural daughters Milton was frequently obliged to appeal for protection even to his servants, one of whom, in a deposition under oath, affirms that the poet's complaints were not extorted from him by slight wrongs, or uttered by capricious passion upon trivial provocations; but that his children, with the probable exception of Deborah, then a little thing but nine years old, would even sell his books, and that they habitually combined with the maid-servant, advising her to cheat her master and their father in her marketing, since he was sightless and would be none the wiser. One of them, Mary, upon

* It was first published by Thornton in an appendix to the preface of his second edition of Milton's Juvenile Poems, and is well entitled to the reader's attentive perusal.

being informed of her father's intention to marry, replied that "that was no news; but if she could hear of his death, that would be something."^{*}

Milton had taught two of his daughters to read and pronounce with the nicest propriety the English, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages. There was therefore no work in any of these tongues which he could not hear read to him, though they did not understand any but their mother tongue. Learning that his daughters complained of this employment as drudgery, the proud spirit of John Milton would not brook such grudged assistance, and he instantly dispensed with their aid, and procuring for them the knowledge of some useful trades suited to their sex and tastes,[†] he secured, though he was now poor and could ill afford the expense, the services of a private secretary.

From the domestic tyranny of his daughters Milton's marriage at once secured him, and he gained that ease of mind and tranquillity of spirit which were necessary to enable

^{*} Symmons' *Life*, pp. 441, 442. [†] Ivinney's *Life*, p. 221.

him to prosecute his transcendent literary projects to a successful conclusion.

It is a curious fact, and a remarkable tribute to Milton's unrivalled genius and statesmanship, that he was offered about this time, 1662-3, the Latin Secretaryship of State under the king. But to accept office under a government in which he did not believe, whose hands were still red with the blood of his old political friends of the Commonwealth, would have been an act of recreant sycophancy to which his high and unsullied spirit could never stoop. Accordingly, when his wife, attentive only to the advancement of his worldly fortunes, urged him to accept the appointment, he silenced her with, "You are in the right; you, as other women, would ride in your coach; but my aim is to live and die an honest man."^{*}

* This high anecdote rests on the authority of Richardson, who received it from Henry Bendish, a grandson of Cromwell's, and an intimate in Milton's house at this time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BANISHING, so far as possible, all cares and anxieties from his mind, Milton forgot the instability of fortune, the treachery of parties, the fickleness of the unthinking multitude, and, seated in his study, gave himself up to the full pleasure of that poetic composition which had ever been his passion. After the publication of several trifles,* he surrendered himself completely to the work of elaborating and finishing that immortal epic, "*Paradise Lost*," which, as we have seen, he had commenced in 1655, while acting as Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth, and which had until lately been laid aside, owing to the manifold distractions and misfortunes which had beset his career. Now however, resuming his epic pen, he daily approached nearer and yet more near to the transcendent climax of his poem.

* A short treatise on "*Accidence in Grammar*," for juvenile students, and another manuscript of Sir Walter Raleigh's, entitled, "*Aphorisms of State*."

It was about the time of Milton's marriage that he formed the now historic acquaintance with Thomas Ellwood, a pious and learned Quaker, and one of the ablest writers of the society of Friends. Ellwood, who has left a history of his own life, thus relates his connection with Milton :

“John Milton, a gentleman of great note for learning throughout the learned world, for the accurate pieces he had written on various subjects and occasions. This person having filled a public station in former times, lived now a private and retired life in London; and having wholly lost his sight, kept always a man to read to him, which usually was the son of some gentleman of his acquaintance, whom in kindness he took to improve in learning. Thus by the mediation of my friend Isaac Pennington with Dr. Paget, and of Dr. Paget with John Milton, was I admitted to come to him; not as a servant to him, which at that time he needed not, nor to be in the house with him; but only to have the liberty of coming to his house, at certain times when I would, and to read to him what books he should appoint me.

Understanding that the mediation for my admittance with John Milton had succeeded so well that I might come when I would, I hastened to London, and in the first place went to wait upon him.

“He received me courteously, as well for the sake of Dr. Paget who introduced me, as of Isaac Pennington who recommended me; to both whom he bore a good respect. And having inquired divers things of me in respect to my former progression in learning, he dismissed me to provide myself such accommodations as might be most suitable to my future studies. I went therefore and took myself a lodging as near to his house, which was in Irwen-street, as conveniently I could; and from thenceforward went every day in the afternoon, except on the first day of the week, and sitting by him in his dining-room, read to him in such books in the Latin tongue as he pleased to hear me read.

“At my first sitting to read to him, observing that I used the *English pronunciation*,^{*}

* There are two ways in which the Latin language is pronounced, the *English* and the *Continental*. It seems from Ellwood, that Milton preferred the latter.

he told me, 'if I would have the benefit of the Latin tongue, not only to read and understand Latin authors, but to converse with foreigners, either abroad or at home, I must learn the foreign pronounciation.' To this I consenting, he instructed me how to sound the vowels. Perceiving with what earnest desire I pursued learning, he gave me not only all the encouragement, but all the help he could. For having a curious ear, he understood by my tones when I understood what I read, and when I did not.

"Some time before I went to Alesbury prison* in 1665, I was desired by my quondam master, Milton, to take a house for him in the neighborhood where I dwelt, that he might get out of the city, for the safety of himself and his family, the pestilence† then growing hot

* Ellwood was imprisoned several times by the bigots of that age on account of his Quaker principles, from which no persecution was ever able to alienate him.

† In the following year, 1666, the plague raged with ghastly fury in London, decimating the population. Nothing like that holocaust of death was ever witnessed in that city before or since. And the great plague year is still mentioned in England with a shudder. To crown the full horrors of the scene, 1666 was also the year of the terrific conflagration in London already mentioned, which half destroyed the city.

in London. I took a pretty box for him in Giles Chalfont, a mile from me, of which I gave him notice; and intended to have waited on him, and seen him well settled in it, but was prevented by that imprisonment. But now, being released and returned home, I soon made a visit to him, to welcome him into the country.

“After some common discourses had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his; which being brought, he delivered to me, bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure; and when I had so done, to return it to him with my judgment thereupon.

“When I came home and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem ‘PARADISE LOST.’ After I had, with the best attention, read it through, I made him another visit, and returned him his book, with due acknowledgment of the favor he had done me in communicating it to me. He asked me how I liked it, and what I thought of it, which I modestly but freely told him; and after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, ‘Thou hast said much here of ‘*Paradise*

Lost,' but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found?*' He made no answer, but sat some time in a muse, then broke off that discourse, and fell upon another subject.

"After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed and become safely habitable again, he returned thither; and when afterwards I went to wait on him there, which I seldom failed of doing whenever any occasion drew me to London, he showed me his second poem, called 'PARADISE REGAINED,' and in a pleasant tone said to me, 'This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of.' **

Thus at the close of 1666 Milton had, against every disadvantage of domestic and political trouble, of pecuniary embarrassment and blindness, prosecuted to a successful and triumphant climax his two great epics. "Considering," says Dr. Newton, "the difficulties under which the author lay—his uneasiness on account of public affairs, his age and infirmities, his not being in circumstances to maintain

* Ellwood's Life, pp. 132, 134, 135.

an amanuensis, but obliged to make use of any hand that came next to write his verses as he made them—it is really wonderful that he should have the spirit to undertake such a work, and much more that he should ever bring it to perfection.”

Yet the evil days upon which he had fallen could not shake his faith, or make him “bate one jot of heart or hope.” His tuneful voice was

“Unchanged
 To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
 On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues ;
 In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,
 And solitude.”

It is not certain how long Milton resided at Chalfont, but it has been conjectured that it extended from June or July of 1665 to March or April of 1666, or during the prevalence and until the extirpation of the plague which haunted the capital, to avoid which he had changed his residence.* If this inference be correct, Milton must not only have *commenced*, but also *completed*, the poem of “PARADISE RE-GAINED,” which Ellwood suggested to him, and

* Symmons' Life, p. 451.

the plan of which must have been entirely unformed, within the incredibly short space of eight or nine months.

But though these grand and immortal poems were completed in 1666, Milton suffered a twelvemonth to elapse before he committed either of them to the press. It was not until the 27th of April, 1667, as the contract for the copy-right of "PARADISE LOST," with a publisher named Samuel Simmons, conclusively shows, that that *chef-d'œuvre* of John Milton's laborious and brilliant literary career was first published to the admiration of the ages.

Dr. Symmons remarks, "Much surprise and concern have been discovered at the small pecuniary benefit which the author was permitted to derive from this proud display of his genius, and on the slow and laborious progress with which the work won its way to public estimation. To us in the utmost cultivation of taste, and accustomed to admire the 'PARADISE LOST' without any reference to its author or to the age in which it appeared, it must certainly seem deplorable that the copy-right of such a composition should be sold for the

actual payment of five pounds, and the contingent payment, on the sale of two thousand six hundred copies, of two other equal sums. But if we would regard ourselves as placed in the middle of the seventeenth century, and immersed in all the party violence of that miserable period, we should rather be inclined to wonder at the venturous liberality of the bookseller who would give even this small sum for the poem of a man living under the heaviest frown of the times, in whom the poet had long been forgotten in the polemic, and who now tendered an experiment in verse, of which it was impossible that the purchaser should be able to appreciate the value, or should not be suspicious of the danger.

“Our shame and regret for the slow apprehension of our forefathers with respect to the merits of this illustrious production, are still more unwarranted than those which have been expressed for the parsimony of the bookseller. Before the entire revolution of two years, at a time when learning and the love of reading were far from being in their present wide diffusion through the community, thirteen hundred

copies of the 'PARADISE LOST' were absorbed into circulation. In five years after this period, a second edition of the poem was issued; and after another interval of four years, a third was conceded to the honorable demands of the public. As we may fairly conclude that, according to the original stipulation of the bookseller, each of these impressions consisted of fifteen hundred copies, we shall find that in the space of little more than eleven years four thousand five hundred individuals of the British community were possessed of sufficient discrimination to become the purchasers of the 'PARADISE LOST.'

“Before the expiration of twenty years, the poem passed through six editions, a circumstance which abundantly proves that it was not destitute of popularity before it attained its full and final dominion over the public taste from the patronage of Somers, and still more from the criticism of Addison.”*

The office of licenser of printing, which had been abolished under the wise and liberal government of Cromwell, was restored under the

* Symmons' Life, pp. 457-459.

monarchy for a limited time by an act of Parliament passed in 1662. Milton's great epic barely escaped being strangled at its birth by the malignity or the perverse sagacity of a Mr. Tomkyns, then acting as licenser. The quick nostril of this suspicious and alert official scented treason in the well-known simile of the sun, in the first book :

—————“As when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams ; or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nation, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs.”

It has been well remarked that “the press was certainly in safe hands when it was in those of this licenser, . . . for an eye which could dive so deeply and could discern so finely was not likely to be baffled by the most profound, or to be eluded by the most subtle and aerial mischief.” Or perhaps Lord Lytton's acute explanation is the most correct, that “the politics of Milton at this time brought his poetry into disgrace ; for it is a rule with the English, *they see no good in a man whose politics they dislike.*”

It is not within the scope of this Life to enter into any examination of the beauties or the defects of "PARADISE LOST," or of its brother poem, "PARADISE REGAINED," which singularly enough Milton always preferred, and which several competent critics, among others Jortin and Warburton, have united to place above "PARADISE LOST," though they have ever failed to get the mass of readers to agree with them. That harvest has been so frequently and so efficiently gleaned, that but few sheaves would reward the reaper of this late day. All readers therefore who are curious in this matter, are referred directly to the poems themselves, and to the learned and acute comments of the multitudinous accomplished critics who have edited them.*

* See the Lives by Symmons, Todd, Mitford, Newton, Warton, Richardson, Cleveland, Turner, and others; also Addison's essays in the "*Spectator*."

CHAPTER XIX.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sadly changed times and his own discrowned political principles, the unwavering respect and even veneration accorded to Milton after the Restoration, proves the high estimation in which his genius, integrity, and unostentatious piety were universally held. Toland, after mentioning that numbers of the nobility and the more cultivated gentry were his habitual visitors, adds, "Nor was he less frequented by foreigners to the last, than in the time of his flourishing condition before the Restoration." Indeed his illustrious foreign friends and correspondents always manifested the kindest regard and exhibited the most watchful solicitude, from the unhappy day when blindness first struck him, until the hour of his death.

Thus a rumor having been circulated that he had fallen a victim to the plague in 1666, Peter Heimbach, a learned and famous German scholar and politician, and perhaps a

sometime pupil of the immortal Englishman, wrote anxiously to inquire into the truth of the report. To this letter Milton penned the following reply :

“TO THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED PETER HEIMBACH, COUNCILLOR
OF STATE TO THE ELECTOR OF BRANDENBURGH :

“That in a year so pestilential and so fatal as the present, amid the deaths of so many of my compatriots, you should have believed me likewise, as you write me word, in consequence too of some rumor or other, to have fallen a victim, excites in me no surprise; and if that rumor owed its currency among you, as it seems to have done, to anxiety for my welfaré, I feel flattered by it as an instance of your friendly regard. Through the goodness of God however, who had provided me with a safe retreat in the country, I still live and am well; and would that I could add, not incompetent to any duty which it may be my further destiny to discharge.

“But that, after so long an interval, I should have recurred to your remembrance, is highly gratifying to me; though, to judge from your eloquent embellishments of the matter,

when you profess your admiration of so many different virtues united in my single person, you seem to furnish some ground for suspecting that I have indeed escaped from your recollection. From such a number of unions, in fact, I should have cause to dread a progeny too numerous, were it not admitted that in disgrace and adversity the virtues principally increase and flourish. One of them, however, has not made me any very grateful return for her entertainment; for she whom you call the political, though I had rather you had termed her love of country, after seducing me with her fine name, has nearly, if I may so express myself, deprived me of a country. The rest indeed harmonize more perfectly together. Our country is wherever we can live as we ought.

“Before I conclude, I must prevail on you to impute whatever incorrectness of orthography or of punctuation you may discover in this epistle to my young amanuensis, whose total ignorance of Latin has imposed on me the disagreeable necessity of actually dictating to him every individual letter.

“That your deserts as a man, consistently with the high promise with which you raised my expectations in your youth, should have elevated you to so eminent a station in your sovereign’s favor, gives me the most sincere pleasure; and I fervently pray and trust that you may proceed and prosper. Farewell.

“LONDON, August 15, 1666.”

In 1671 Milton published the “*Paradise Regained*,” and “*Samson Agonistes*,”* a poem written after the completion, in 1666, of the “*Paradise Lost*” and the “*Paradise Regained*.”

It seems peculiarly appropriate that the blind Samson who typifies the physical strength of antiquity, should be celebrated by the blind Samson of literature, who had groped for the pillars, and who overthrew the temple of English tyranny.

Of the merits of this noble and pathetic drama, all critics are loud in the praise, though several writers have quarrelled with its con-

* *Agonistes*, from a Greek word, meaning a contender in the public games of Greece, which were called *agones*, whence our English word *agony*. This was the peculiarly appropriate title which Milton chose for the hero of his drama, the catastrophe of which results from an exhibition of his strength in the public games of the Philistines. See Symmons, p. 490.

duct, and also with some portions of its structure. Still, in pathos of sentiment, in breadth of tone, in dignity of diction, and in that marvellous and heaven-kissing sublimity which immortalizes all of Milton's more elaborate compositions, "*Samson Agonistes*" is hardly surpassed even by the transcendent glories of "*Paradise Lost*."

Milton's philosophy, unlike that of the old philosophers of the Grecian and Roman schools, which scorned to descend to the advancement of humble and useful things, was derived from the broader school of Lord Bacon, the key to whose philosophic system, as Macauley assures us, is found in two words—progress and utility. Therefore, notwithstanding the high and ideal level upon which many of his works stood, he stooped with grace and ease to perform the humblest offices of utility. He had already published several treatises for the special assistance and advancement of young students. The year following the appearance of the "*Samson Agonistes*" witnessed another instance of his literary condescension. He wrote in 1672, for the aid of advanced schol-

ars, a scheme of logic, digested on the plan of M. De la Ramée, a learned French Huguenot, who closed a life of remarkable vicissitude at Paris on the ghastly eve of St. Bartholomew.

Milton was especially attracted towards Ramée by the rebellion of his logic against the artificial and antichristian system of Aristotle and the schoolmen, an assault which Martin Luther had powerfully commenced years before from his professorial chair at Wittenburg, and which had ever since been spiritedly continued by the philosophical adherents of the Reformation.

Though Milton's bodily infirmities daily increased, and his lamp of life began to flicker ominously, his ardor of composition was not stifled by the hand of disease, nor extinguished by the damp of blindness and age.

In 1673, attracted and alarmed by the rapid and insidious progress which Catholicism, under the active, open countenance of the Duke of York, afterwards James II., was making in Great Britain, Milton wrote his last elaborate prose work, entitled, "*A Treatise of*

True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means which may be used to Prevent the Growth of Popery." In this pamphlet, showing that "the great interests of man were uniformly the leading objects of his regard," he paints vividly the dangers arising from Jesuitism; "strongly inculcates the doctrine of mutual forbearance and essential union among those Christians of every denomination who appeal to the holy Scriptures for the rule of their faith;" and excludes from his scheme of ample toleration the Roman see alone, as being not so much a religious sect as a meddling foreign *propaganda*, inimical not only to the ecclesiastical, but to the civil welfare and liberty of England.

"Let us now inquire," he says, "whether Popery be tolerable or no. Popery is a double thing to deal with, and claims a twofold power, ecclesiastical and political, both usurped, and the one sustaining the other.

"But the ecclesiastical is ever pretended to the political. The pope, by this mixed faculty, pretends right to kingdoms and states, and especially to this of England, thrones and un-

thrones kings, and absolves the people from their obedience to them; sometimes interdicts to whole nations the public worship of God, shutting up their churches; and was wont to draw away the greatest part of the wealth of this then miserable land as part of his patrimony, to maintain the pride and luxury of his court and prelates; and now since, through the infinite mercy and favor of God, we have shaken off his Babylonish yoke, hath not ceased, by his spies and agents, bulls and emissaries, once to destroy both king and Parliament, perpetually to seduce, corrupt, and pervert as many as they can of the people. Whether therefore it be fit or reasonable to tolerate men thus principled in religion towards the state, I submit it to the consideration of all magistrates, who are best able to provide for their own and the public safety."

But towards the Papists he was not in favor of exercising any personal harshness or severity. "Are we," he asks, "to punish them by corporal punishments or fines in their estates on account of their religion? I suppose it stands not with the clemency of the

gospel more than what appertains to the security of the state."

"The best means to abate Popery," he says, "arises from the constant reading of Scripture. The Papal antichristian church permits not the laity to read the Bible in her own tongue. Our Protestant church, on the contrary, hath proposed it to all men, and to this end translated it into English, with profitable notes to what is met with obscure, though what is most necessary to know is still plainest, that all sorts and degrees of men not understanding it in the original, may read it in their mother tongue; . . . wherein believers who agree in the main are everywhere exhorted to mutual forbearance and charity towards one another, though dissenting in some opinions. It is written that the coat of our Saviour was without seam; whence some would infer that there should be no division in the church of Christ. It should be so indeed; yet seams in the same cloth neither hurt the cloth nor misbecome it; and not only *seams*, but *schisms* will be while men are fallible. But if they dissent in matters not essential to belief while the com-

mon adversary is in the field, and stand jarring and pelting at one another, they will be soon routed and subdued.

“It is human frailty to err, and no man is infallible here on earth,” says Milton. Then, after enumerating different Christian sects, he says of such as “profess to set the word of God only before them as the rule of their faith and obedience, and use all diligence and sincerity of heart by reading, by learning, by study, by prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit, to understand this rule and obey it, they have done whatever man can do. God will assuredly pardon them, as he did the friends of Job, good and pious men, though much mistaken, as there it appears, in some points of doctrine. But some will say, with Christians it is otherwise, whom God has promised by his Spirit to teach all things. True, all things *absolutely necessary* to salvation; but the hottest disputes among Protestants, calmly and charitably examined, will be found less than such.” Of these Protestants he adds,

“It cannot be denied that the authors or late revivers of all these sects or opinions

were learned, worthy, zealous, and religious men, as appears by their lives written, and the fame of their many eminent and learned followers, perfect and powerful in the Scriptures, holy and unblamable in their actions; and it cannot be imagined that God would desert such painful and zealous laborers in his church, and oftentimes great sufferers for their conscience, to damnable errors and reprobate sense, who had often implored the assistance of his Spirit; but rather, having made no man infallible, that he has pardoned their errors, and accepts their pious endeavors, sincerely searching all things according to the rule of Scripture, with such guidance and direction as they can obtain of God by prayer.

“What Protestant then, who himself maintains the same principles and disavows all implicit faith, would persecute and not tolerate such men as these, unless he means to abjure the principles of our religion? If it be asked how far they should be tolerated, I answer, Doubtless equally, as being all *Protestants*; that is, on all occasions to be permitted to give an account of their faith, either by arguing,

preaching in their several assemblies, by public writing, and the freedom of printing."

After urging, as an additional means of preventing the growth of Popery, the reformation of their conduct by professed Protestants—a warning not inappropriate in the loose morals and unbridled license of the Restoration—Milton concludes in these words:

"Let us therefore, using this last mean, last here spoken of, but first to be done, *amend our lives at all speed*; lest, through impenitency, we run into that stupidly which we now seek by all means warily to avoid, THE WORST OF SUPERSTITIONS AND THE HEAVIEST OF ALL GOD'S JUDGMENTS, *POPERY*."

The danger which had awakened Milton's fears, and which he put forth this pamphlet to avert, ere long became so palpably near and deadly as to stir up a new rebellion, depose the Catholic bigot who had succeeded Charles II. upon the throne, and in 1688 to hand over the emancipated kingdom to triumphant Protestantism in the persons of William of Orange and Mary Stuart.

Besides his pamphlet against Popery, Mil-

ton also published in 1673 a second edition of his earlier poems, incorporating several pieces which had not appeared in the edition of 1645. In the following year, 1674, his familiar Latin letters, now widely celebrated, and some of his university exercises, were published; and in some part of this same year his laborious and splendid literary career was closed by his translation of the Latin declaration of the Poles in favor of the election of John Sobieski to the throne of Poland.

Milton, as we have seen, had long been an invalid; the *gout* especially had of late years racked his enfeebled frame. Fully and calmly aware of his approaching death, and desirous of setting his house in order, he sent for his brother Christopher, then an eminent lawyer, and a bencher of the Inner Temple, to whom he dictated that nuncupative will to which we have once before had occasion to refer.

This duty completed, at length at peace with man, as he had always been with God, on the 8th of November, 1674, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, "without pain, and so quietly that those who waited in his chamber

were unconscious of the moment of his departure," the bright and beneficent spirit of John Milton deserted its fleshly tabernacle and winged its glad way to that "*paradise regained*" whose beatitudes he had so sublimely chanted, where, seated among seraphim and cherubim, he might still more transcendently

"Sing,
And build the lofty rhyme."

Upon his death, Toland says that "all his learned and great friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the vulgar, accompanied his body to the church of St. Giles, near Cripplegate, where he lies buried in the chancel."

To that record Toland adds this fine eulogium: "Thus lived and died John Milton, a person of the best accomplishments, the happiest genius, and the rarest learning which this nation, so renowned for producing excellent writers, could ever yet show; esteemed indeed at home, but much more honored abroad, where almost in his childhood he made a considerable figure, and continues to be reputed one of the brightest luminaries of the sciences."

CHAPTER XX.

AND now it becomes of interest to learn something of Milton's personal habits, to glance somewhat at his character, and to trace briefly his manifold influence upon his own age and upon posterity.

Milton habitually dedicated the commencement of each day to religion. Immediately upon rising, which was "with the birds," a chapter of the Scriptures, usually in the Greek or Hebrew text, was read to him. The subsequent interval till seven o'clock he passed in private meditation. At seven he breakfasted. From seven till twelve he devoted to reading and writing; after he lost his sight, he dictated when "some friendly hand supplied him with a pen." From twelve to one he occupied in exercise. He had ordered a peculiar kind of swing to be constructed in his study, and upon this he was accustomed to practise gymnastic feats. At the conclusion of this hour of exercise he took his frugal dinner; after which,

repairing to his organ, he resigned himself to the delightful recreation of music, instrumental, vocal, or both. From this amusement he returned to his books or writing, with fresh inspiration and renewed strength. At six he received the visits of his friends; at eight he supped, very simply; and at nine, having smoked a pipe and taken a glass of water, for of wine or of any strong liquors he was not a friend,* he retired to his repose.

Such was the ordinary routine of Milton's day, though of course this distribution of his hours was not stereotyped, but bent to circumstances. "When he was in office," says Dr. Symmons, "many of his four and twenty hours were unquestionably engaged in business; and as a table was allowed him by government for the entertainment of learned foreigners, this scheme of life could, at that juncture, have been but very imperfectly followed."† But it is probable that during his later years he resumed these regular and domestic habits.

"Milton," says Toland, "was middle sized,

* Todd's *Life*, p. 144. Ivimey, p. 250. Toland's *Life*.

† Symmons' *Life*, pp. 510, 511.

and well proportioned, his deportment was erect and manly, his hair of a light brown, his features exactly regular, his complexion wonderfully fair when a youth, and ruddy to the last.

“He was affable in conversation, of an equal and cheerful temper, and highly delighted with all sorts of music, in which he was himself not meanly skilled.”*

What is termed the unequal flow of Milton's genius has provoked much comment. Some writers, Toland, for instance, assigned the spring as the season of his special and highest activity; Philips, his nephew, declared that his “vein never flowed happily but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal;” while Richardson, with a proper respect to the ardent character of Milton's intellect, doubts whether he could suffer any work to lie still for a considerable period. When we reflect that those great controversial writings which elicited the admiring plaudits of contemporary Europe were written at various times of the year, we shall probably dismiss the idea that Milton

* Toland's Life. Wood's *Fasti Oxon*, p. 266.

could not sufficiently command his faculties to write sublimely at any season, though doubtless particular seasons somewhat affected his spirits and intellectual activity, precisely as the climate affects all minds, at certain times clouding the full splendor of his genius, and at other luminous moments inspiring him to soar with easy effort and kiss the stars.

Milton's domestic life has usually been considered the vulnerable spot in the heel of this Achilles. At that the venomous shafts of bitter critics have long been aimed. But we apprehend that even that spot upon the disc of his fair fame disappears before an impartial examination. It seems certain that in his conduct towards his wives he displayed no deficient tenderness. "To his first," says one of his biographers, "his conduct seems at least to have been exempt from blame; to his last two to have been distinguished by uniform kindness and affection."

As regards his "unkind" daughters, he seems to have acted towards them, through all their disrespect and negligence, the part of an affectionate and considerate father. Well edu-

eated and amply provided for, when they complained of the hardship of ministering to his physical and intellectual comfort, Milton instantly dismissed them to more congenial pursuits; continuing to support them, though they refused to raise a finger to ease the heavy load under which their blind father staggered, until they voluntarily quitted his roof.

Milton left but three children, all the daughters of his first wife. Of these Anne, the eldest, who, though deformed, possessed some beauty, married well, but died in giving birth to her first child. Mary, the second daughter, is said to have been the most unfilial of the three; of her little is known, save that she died unmarried. Deborah, the youngest, and the least guilty of them all, left her father's house in consequence of some disagreement with her stepmother, and repairing to Ireland in company with a lady named Merian, shortly after married there a weaver of Spitalfields, Abraham Clarke. Falling, later, into some distress, she was tardily relieved by a donation from Joseph Addison, and by a present from Queen Caroline of fifty guineas. She had several children, all of

whom nowever she outlived: and when, in 1754, she herself died, after a life of singular and touching penury and wretchedness,* the last descendant of John Milton vanished from the earth.

Milton's religious tenets have been the theme of much idle speculation. The wildest bigot, even in his most heated moment, has never ventured to question the sincerity, fervor, and essentially evangelical character of Milton's Christian belief and practice; it is what is termed his *peculiarities*† of faith which have provoked comment. Most of this criticism is based upon the following brief paragraph in Toland's life of the poet.

“In his early days he was a favorer of

* Symmons' Life, pp. 528, 529.

† Sometime in the reign of George IV., a Latin manuscript was discovered in the state paper office bearing Milton's name, and containing sentiments in some respects at variance with those which have been attributed to him in this work. By command of the king, this manuscript was translated and published in 1825, under the title of “*A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By John Milton.*”

It has been asserted that this pamphlet placed Milton in the Arian ranks. It is doubtful on many accounts—it was not discovered until a hundred and fifty years after Milton's death—whether he ever wrote it. Even if he did, the above inference cannot be drawn from it.

those Protestants then opprobriously called by the name of *Puritans*; in his middle years he was best pleased with the *Independents* and *Anabaptists*, as allowing of more liberty than others, and coming nearest, in his opinion, to the primitive practice; but in the latter part of his life he was not a professed member of any particular sect among Christians, he frequented none of their assemblies, nor made use of their peculiar rites in his family.”

Upon this passage Dr. Symmons very judiciously remarks, “The fact of Milton’s not frequenting, in the latter period of his life, any place of public worship, may possibly, though still with caution, be admitted on the single testimony of Toland;* but the cause of this fact may more properly be sought in the blindness and infirmities which for some of his last years confined the great author to his house, than to any disgust with which he had been affected by a nearer insight into the imperfec-

* It should be remembered that Toland was an open infidel, and he would naturally seek to identify, so far as possible, the views of Milton with his own, or at least to bridge over the impassable chasm which separated them. For this cause Symmons receives his testimony with hesitation.

tions of contending sects. On any determination of this question, narrow must be the mind of that man who can suspect the devotion of Milton merely because it was not exercised within the consecrated precincts of a church. We know that a good man may offer his homage to God with as strong an assurance of acceptance, in the Lybian desert as in the cathedral of St. Paul."^{*}

Dr. Newton considers Milton to have been a *Quietist*, full of the interior of religion, though he so little regarded the exterior.[†] Dr. Johnson observes that "he grew old without any visible worship; but that he lived without prayer, can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer."[‡]

To us it seems that all these surmises are flippant and impudent. What shall we say of that idle curiosity which stands indulging in *dilettante* speculation concerning the orthodoxy of John Milton's creed—Milton, who consecrated the opening hours of each day to the exer-

* Symmons' Life, pp. 524, 525.

† Todd's Life, pp. 154, 155.

‡ Johnson's Life.

cises of devotion; who initiated his children and his pupils with careful zeal into the principles of Christianity; who never wrote even the most trifling pamphlet without descanting upon the merits or the sufferings of the Redeemer of mankind; whose larger works are replete with the essence of godliness, and many of which were written in elucidation of obscure points of religious doctrine, or for the purpose of reforming ecclesiastical abuses, and assimilating the modern church more closely to its primitive model; whose latest elaborate writing was devoted to an earnest plea for the closer union of the evangelical sects—Milton, whose sublimest poems are made immortal by hymning the praises of that very Christianity whose necessary forms some critics hesitate to acknowledge that he valued.

It is certain that Milton was not a rigid sectarian, being much more anxious to secure *essential* Christian agreement, than earnest for similarity of *form*; this trait of his character, in connection with his infirmity and blindness, may, in his later years, have made him less desirous than in his youth of prominently iden-

tifying himself with any *one* of the various evangelical sects; but his whole career exhaled the very odor of sanctity; his life bloomed with the beatitudes.

A notion exists that John Milton passed the last fourteen years of his life in sullen gloom, plunged in penury, soured by disappointment,* uncheered by sympathy or appreciation. Nothing could be more untrue, nothing could be more unjust to his memory.

Although with the peculiar carelessness of generous and high souls, he never attached undue value to money, or made any effort to hoard it, he left a considerable estate upon his death. Though never affluent, he had inherited from his father some property. As Latin Secretary, his income had been ample for his support; while the large sale of his political writings before and during the revolution, yielded him no mean revenue. Upon the Restoration, two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the excise office, were lost to him by confiscation; he had before lost a similar sum by an abuse of confidence, the scrivener

† Todd's Life, p. 152.

to whom it had been intrusted failing to make a due return. By the great fire in 1666, his father's old residence in Bread-street, where he was born, and which had descended to him, was destroyed; and after his dismissal from the secretaryship of state, of course his official salary was cut off. Yet notwithstanding this series of financial misfortunes, Milton contrived, by the paucity of his wants and economical *finesse*, not only always to keep himself above want, but actually to devise, for the subsistence of his family, upwards of three thousand pounds, including the amount he had received by the sale of his library, disposed of a little before his death, and his first wife's dowry, which then remained in the hands of the Powells still unpaid.

So far from being soured by disappointment or unappreciated, after his rescue by marriage from the cruelty of his unnatural daughters, he lived in unbroken peace and serenity of temper. He continued to be the recipient of the most gratifying notice of illustrious foreigners,* to whom, on their visits to England,

† Symmons' Life, p. 511.

he formed the principal object of curiosity and regard; and though deserted in his misfortunes by the gay and sycophantic crowd of his own countrymen who had fluttered about him in more prosperous days, there were numerous generous and discerning souls who appreciated his personal merits, and warmly recognized his transcendent genius.

Nor were his friends and admirers confined to those of his own creed and politics. One of the foremost poets in English letters, Dryden, upon being handed by the Earl of Dorset a volume of "*Paradise Lost*," which that nobleman had accidentally picked up, and, struck with the majesty of certain passages, given to him with the request that he should pronounce an opinion upon it, remarked, after an attentive perusal, "This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too." Shortly afterwards, as Aubrey informs us, Dryden called upon Milton and solicited permission to construct a drama upon his epic. Milton readily assenting, with the remark that he saw no objection to this scheme of "tagging his lines," the result was the production of Dryden's opera, "*The State*

of Innocence and the Fall of Man."* In the preface to this opera, which was not published till 1676, two years after Milton's death, "Dryden is sufficiently liberal in his acknowledgments to the majestic and venerable poet with whose materials he had constructed his own beautiful edifice."

Milton was in his temper somewhat grave and haughty, though not unpleasantly or obtrusively so. He could at times descend to bandy epithets, and to jocularities; but though his sarcasm is terrible, nay, almost annihilating, his wit is ponderous, and when he jokes it is like the gambol of an elephant; he seems out of his element. He never appears to so great advantage as when,

"High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric gold and pearls,"

he sits in majesty and discourses upon high morals, settles religious differences, and gives vocal expression to the beneficent impulses of liberty.

But if in his deportment he exhibited some-

* Aubrey's *Life of Milton*.

thing of conscious superiority and a little impatience of opposition, his heart was too kind and his charity was too broad to permit him ever to give intentional offence. When convinced of error, no one was more ready to recant. When convicted of over-vehement resentment, no one was more willing, nay, anxious to make atonement. When wronged, no one was more ready to forgive, as witness his cordial reconciliation with his erring but repentant wife. If, lashed into severity by the brutal personality of his political assailants, he retorted with crushing power, and sometimes, hurling back the scurrilous epithets which they had showered upon him, beat them at their chosen weapons, sufficient justification is usually found in the circumstances under which he defended himself; or perhaps Solomon's aphorism will apply: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

Instant in season and out of season in the defence of those civil and religious principles which he esteemed essential to the welfare of society, if any heedless or venturous adversary

dared to assail them, his sacred animosity was instantly kindled, and be his opponent king or courtier, priest or layman, scholar or ignoramus, this knight-errant of truth, buckling on his armor for God and liberty, went gladly into the arena, eager for the combat.

Milton's erudition was immense. Of the two dialects of the Hebrew, and of the Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish languages, he was the master. Passionately fond of reading, his favorite classical authors were *Homer*, *Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,'* and *Euripides*. He also himself informs us that "the divine volumes of Plato and his equal Xenophon," were chief objects of his regard. His skill in Latin was such, says Dr. Johnson, as places him in the first rank of writers and critics. In Italian, his melodious sonnets have received from Italian critics the highest eulogiums; and in skilful use of the Tuscan he rivals Petrarch, and at times Danté himself.

But vast as was his literature, no book was so frequently in his hands as the Bible, none yielded him such solace and support. "It must gratify every Christian to reflect," says

Mr. Hayley, "that the man of our country most eminent for energy of mind, for intenceness of application, and for frankness and intrepidity in asserting what he believed to be the cause of truth, was so confirmedly devoted to Christianity, that he seems to have made the Bible not only the rule of his conduct, but the prime director of his genius." And Milton himself says he penned his plea for unlicensed printing, "hoping that his name might deserve to appear, not among the mercenary crew of false pretenders to learning, but the free and ingenuous sort, of such as evidently were born for study, and love learning for itself, not for lucre, or any other end but the service of God and truth, and perhaps that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose published labors advance the good of mankind."*

In his influence upon his own time and upon succeeding ages, Milton stands absolutely without a rival in English letters. Broader than Bacon, sublimer than Dryden, more

* Milton's "*Areopagitica*." Prose Works.

statesmanlike than Pym or the younger Vane, freer from the infirmity of ambition than Cromwell, more scholarly than Hampden, finer than Pope, grander than Burke—these men, so illustrious in the various circles of philosophy, politics, poetry, and Christianity, stand with proud humility at his feet.

“From the power of Milton, the English language has obtained a sublimity adequate to the loftiest conceptions of the human mind, and a variety and a richness of harmony on which his poetic successors, including Dryden himself, have been utterly unable to improve.”

But civil and religious liberty stand most heavily in his debt.

In Milton's age, the British Constitution had not settled down upon its present foundations of comparative liberty. Those nice checks and balances which enable it now to combine, to some extent, democratic energy with the stability of an hereditary order, and which have served to curb so completely the prerogatives of the crown, that the king is moved by the will of the ministry, these Britain owes to the efforts of Milton and his compeers, who, in

1640, following in the footsteps of the old barons at Runnymede, insisted upon the enlargement of popular liberty and the curtailment of the arbitrary assumptions of the crown.

In the century preceding Milton's epoch, "the impetuous power of the Tudors, springing from the disastrous consequences of the wars between the factions of York and Lancaster, had overleaped every barrier of the Constitution." In Milton's age, "the ambition of the Stuarts, at a period less favorable to the exertion of lawless prerogative, had diligently followed in the track of their insolent and tyrannical predecessors. On whatever side he looked, Milton saw nothing but insulted parliaments, arbitrary taxation, illegal and sanguinary tribunals, corrupt and mercenary law, bigoted and desolating persecution. With that ardent love of liberty therefore, which always burns brightest in the most expanded and elevated bosoms, and fresh from the schools of Greece and Rome which had educated the masterspirits of the world, it was natural for him to turn with delight from the scene in which he was engaged," to the contemplation

of those republican forms of government in which the value of manhood was fully recognized, and political and ecclesiastical equality were enthroned in the statute-book.

Such a government he made a gallant though unsuccessful attempt to organize in England. But though he failed, the effects of his brave effort are clearly traceable in the present and the constantly increasing liberality of the British Constitution. While, upon this side of the Atlantic, Milton's ideal dreams have been stereotyped into a grand republic, planted by those sturdy Puritans who were his intellectual children, in successful operation from the Atlantic coast to the shores of the peaceful sea, upon whose phylactery is inscribed his glorious motto of the iron days of the Commonwealth, "*Toleration, equality, and devotion to the GOOD OLD CAUSE.*"

Such, in his life and in his influence, was John Milton. And now, arrived at the close of this unworthy and imperfect record of his radiant and beneficent career, we devoutly thank God for lending to the human race so high a teacher, so grand a benefactor. "The

sight of his books, the sound of his name, are refreshing to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the virgin martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, distinguished from the productions of other soils not only by their superior bloom and sweetness, but by their miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful not only to delight, but to elevate and purify.

“Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptation and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.”*

Over John Milton's grave civil and religious liberty clasp hands; science, poesy, and

* Macaulay's Miscellaneous Writings, Essay on Milton.

“divine philosophy” strew upon it garlands as immortal as his name; while the muse of history, dipping her pencil in the sunlight, sculpts through proud tears the scriptural benediction, “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

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