



JOHN MILTON.

BELL'S EDITION.
The POETS of GREAT BRITAIN
COMPLETE FROM
CHAUCER to CHURCHILL.



MILTON VOLUME I.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Alone, incumbent on the dusky Air.

For Last Book i. line 242.

Mortimer del.

Hall sculp!

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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN MILTON.

FROM THE TEXT OF DR. NEWTON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

WITH THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

AND A CRITIQUE ON PARADISE LOST,

BY JOSEPH ADDISON, ESQ.

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England, did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpass;
The next in majesty; in both the last.
The force of Nature could no further go:
To make a third she join'd the former two.

DRYDEN.

VOL. I.

EDINBURG:

AT THE Apollo Press, BY THE MARTINS.

Anno 1779.

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1.

THE LIFE OF
JOHN MILTON.

FROM a family and town of his name in Oxfordshire our Author derived his descent; but he was born at London in the year 1608. The publisher* of his Works in prose (on whose veracity some part of this Narrative must entirely depend) dates his birth two years earlier than this; but, contradicting himself afterwards in his own computation, I reduce it to the time that Monsieur Bayle hath assigned, and for the same reason which prevailed with him to assign it. His father, John Milton, by profession a scrivener, lived in a reputable manner, on a competent estate entirely his own acquisition; having been early disinherited by his parents for renouncing the communion of the Church of Rome, to which they were zealously devoted. By his wife, Sarah Caston, he had likewise one daughter, named Anna, and another son, Christopher, whom he trained to the practice of the Common law; who in the Great Rebellion adhered to the Royal cause; and in the reign of King James II. by too easy a compliance with the doctrines of the Court, both religious and civil, he attained to the dignity of being made a judge of the Common Pleas; of which he died divested not long after the Revolution.

* Mr. Toland.

But John, the subject of the present Essay, was the favourite of his father's hopes, who, to cultivate the great genius which early displayed itself, was at the expense of a domestic tutor; whose care and capacity his pupil hath gratefully celebrated in an excellent
An. Ætat. 12. Latin elegy. At his initiation he is said to have applied himself to letters with such indefatigable industry, that he rarely was prevailed with to quit his studies before midnight; which not only made him frequently subject to severe pains in his head, but likewise occasioned that weakness in his eyes which terminated in a total privation of sight. From a domestic education he was removed to St. Paul's school, to complete his acquaintance with the Classics, under the care of Dr. Gill: and after a short stay there was
An. Ætat. 15. transplanted to Christ's College in Cambridge, where he distinguished himself in all kinds of academical exercises. Of this society he continued a member till he commenced Master of Arts; and then leaving the University, he returned to his father, who
An. Ætat. 23. had quitted the Town, and lived at Horton in Buckinghamshire, where he pursued his studies with unparalleled assiduity and success.

After some years spent in this studious retirement his mother died; and then he prevailed with his father to gratify an inclination he had long entertained
An. Ætat. 30. of seeing foreign countries. Sir Henry Wotton, at that time Provost of Eton College, gave

him a letter of advice* for the direction of his travels; but by not observing an excellent maxim in it,

* "SIR,

Eton College, 10th April, 1638.

"It was a special favour when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though no longer than to make me know that I wanted more time to value it, and to enjoy it rightly. And in truth, if I could then have imagined your farther stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr. H. I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught, for you left me with an extreme thirst, and to have begged your conversation again, jointly with your said learned friend, at a poor meal or two, that we might have banded together some good authors of the ancient time, among which I observed you to have been familiar.

"Since your going you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kind letter from you, dated the 6th of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment that came therewith; wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish with a certain Doric delicacy in your Songs and Odes, wherein I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language, *ipsa mollities*. But I must not omit to tell you, that I now only owe you thanks for intimating unto me, how modestly soever, the true artificer: for the work itself I had viewed some good while before with singular delight, having received it from our common friend Mr. R. in the very close of the late R.'s poems, printed at Oxford, whereunto it is added, as I now suppose, that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of flatterers, and leave the reader *con la bocca dolce*.

"Now, Sir, concerning your travels, wherein I may challenge a little more privilege of discourse with you: I suppose you will not blanch Paris in your way; therefore I have been bold to trouble you with a few lines to Mr. M. B. whom you shall easily find attending the young Lord S. as his governor; and you may surely receive from him good directions for shaping of your farther journey into Italy,

he incurred great danger, by disputing against the superstition of the Church of Rome within the verge of the Vatican. Having employed his curiosity about

“ where he did recide, by my choice, some time for the King,
 “ after mine own recess from Venice.

“ I should think that your best line will be through the
 “ whole length of France to Marseilles, and thence by sea to
 “ Genoa, whence the passage into Tuscany is as diurnal as a
 “ Gravesend barge. I hasten, as you do, to Florence or Sienna,
 “ the rather to tell you a short story, from the interest you
 “ have given me in your safety.

“ At Sienna I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipione, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times, having
 “ been steward to the Duca di Pagliano, who with all his family were strangled, save this only man, that escaped by
 “ foresight of the tempest. With him I had often much chat
 “ of those affairs; into which he took pleasure to look back
 “ from his native harbour; and at my departure toward
 “ Rome, which had been the center of his experience, I had
 “ won confidence enough to beg his advice how I might carry
 “ myself securely there, without offense of others, or of my
 “ own conscience. *Signor, arrigo mo*, says he, *I pensieri stretti*,
 “ *et il viso sciolto*; that is, “ Your thoughts close, and your
 “ countenance loose, will go safely over the whole world.”
 “ Of which Delphian oracle (for so I have found it) your
 “ judgment doth need no commentary; and therefore, Sir,
 “ I will commit you with it to the best of all securities, God’s
 “ dear love, remaining your friend, as much at command as
 “ any of longer date.

“ H. WOTTON.

“ P. S. Sir, I have expressly sent this by my foot-boy, to
 “ prevent your departure without some acknowledgment
 “ from me of the receipt of your obliging letter, having myself, through some business, I know not how, neglected the
 “ ordinary conveyance. In any part where I shall understand
 “ you fixed, I shall be glad and diligent to entertain you with
 “ home novelties, even for some fomentation of our friendship, too soon interrupted in the cradle.”

two years in France and Italy*, on the news of a Civil war breaking out in England, he returned without taking a survey of Greece and Sicily, as, at his setting out, the scheme was projected. At Paris the Lord Viscount Scudamore, ambassador from King Charles I. at the court of France, introduced him to the acquaintance of Grotius†, who, at that time, was honoured with the same character there by Christina Queen of Sweden. In Rome, Genoa, Florence, and other cities of Italy, he contracted a familiarity with those who were of highest reputation for wit and learning; several of whom gave him very obliging testimonies of their friendship and esteem, which are printed before his Latin poems. The first of them was written by Manso Marquis of Villa, a great patron of Tasso, by whom he is celebrated in his poem on the conquest of Jerusalem ||. It is highly probable that to his conversation with this noble Neapolitan we owe the first design which Milton conceived of writing an epic poem: and it appears, by some Latin verses addressed to the Marquis with the title of Mansus, that he intended to fix on King Arthur for his hero: but Arthur was reserved to another destiny!

* Et jam his viridi surgebat culmus arista,
Et totidem flavas numerabant horrea messes,---
Nec dum aderat Thyrsis: pastorem scilicet illum
Dulcis amor Musæ Thusca retinebat in urbe.

Epitaph. Dam.

† Defensio Secunda, p. 96. Fol.

|| "Fra Cavalier' magnanimi, e cortesi,

"Resplende il Manso."-----

Lib. 20.

Returning from his travels, he found England on An. *Ætat.* 32. the point of being involved in blood and confusion. It seems wonderful that one of so warm and daring a spirit, as his certainly was, should be restrained from the camp in those unnatural commotions. I suppose we may impute it wholly to the great deference he paid to paternal authority that he retired to lodgings provided for him in the City; which being commodious for the reception of his sister's sons, and some other young gentlemen, he undertook their education; and is said to have formed them on the same plan which he afterwards published in a short tractate inscribed to his friend Mr. Hartlib.

In this philosophical course he continued without a An. *Ætat.* 35. wife to the year 1643; when he married Mary the daughter of Richard Powell of Forest-Hill in Oxfordshire; a gentleman of estate and reputation in that county, and of principles so very opposite to his son-in-law, that the marriage is more to be wondered at than the separation which ensued in little more than a month after she had cohabited with him in London. Her desertion provoked him both to write several treatises concerning the doctrine and discipline of divorce, and also to make his addresses to a young lady of great wit and beauty; but before he had engaged her affections to conclude the marriage-treaty, in a visit at one of his relations he found his wife prostrate before him imploring forgiveness and reconciliation, It is not to be doubted but an interview

of this nature, so little expected, must wonderfully affect him; and perhaps the impressions it made on his imaginations contributed much to the painting of that pathetic scene in *Paradise Lost* *, in which Eve addresseth 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 relentèd
Tow'ards her, his life so late, and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress!

And after this re-union, so far was he from retaining an unkind memory of the provocations which he had received from her ill conduct, that when the King's cause was entirely oppressed, and her father, who had been active in his loyalty, was exposed to sequestration, Milton received both him and his family to protection and free entertainment in his own house, 'till their affairs were accommodated by his interest in the victorious faction.

For he was now grown famous by his Polemical writings of various kinds, and held in *An. Ætat. 41.* great favour and esteem by those who had power to dispose of all preferments in the state. 'Tis in vain to dissemble, and far be it from me to defend, his engaging with a party combined in the destruction of our Church and Monarchy. Yet, leaving the justification of a misguided sincerity to be debated in the schools, may I presume to observe in his favour

* Book X. ver. 909.

that his zeal, distempered and furious as it was, does not appear to have been inspirited by self-interested views; for it is affirmed, that though he lived always in a frugal retirement, and before his death had disposed of his library, (which we may suppose to have been a valuable collection) he left no more than fifteen hundred pounds behind him for the support of his family : and whoever considers the posts to which he was advanced, and the times in which he enjoyed them, will, I believe, confess he might have accumulated a much more plentiful fortune. In a dispassionate mind it will not require any extraordinary measure of candour to conclude, that though he abode in the heritage of oppressors, and the spoils of his country lay at his feet, neither his conscience nor his honour could stoop to gather them.

A commission to constitute him Adjutant-general *An. Ætat. 42.* to Sir William Waller was promised, but soon superseded by Waller's being laid aside, when his masters thought it proper to new-model their army. However, the keenness of his pen had so effectually recommended him to Cromwell's esteem, that when he took the reins of government into his own hand, he advanced him to be Latin secretary both to himself and the Parliament : the former of these preferments he enjoyed both under the Usurper and his son, the other 'till King Charles II. was restored. For some time he had an apartment for his family in Whitehall; but his health requiring a freer accession

of air, he was obliged to remove from thence to lodgings which opened into St. James's Park. Not long after his settlement there his wife died in child-bed; and much about the time of her death a gutta serena, which had for several years been gradually increasing, totally extinguished his sight *. In this me-

* It was the sight of his left eye that he lost first; and it was at the desire of his friend Leonard Philaras, the Duke of Parma's minister at Paris, that he sent him a particular account of his case, and of the manner of his growing blind, for him to consult Thevenot the physician, who was reckoned famous in cases of the eyes. The letter is the fifteenth of his Familiar Epistles, is dated September 23. 1654, and is thus translated by Mr. Richardson:

“ Since you advise me not to sling away all hopes of recovering my sight, for that you have a friend at Paris, Thevenot the physician, particularly famous for the eyes, whom you offer to consult in my behalf, if you receive from me an account by which he may judge of the causes and symptoms of my disease, I will do what you advise me to, that I may not seem to refuse any assistance that is offered, perhaps from God.

“ I think 'tis about ten years, more or less, since I began to perceive that my eye-sight grew weak and dim, and at the same time my spleen and bowels to be oppressed and troubled with flatulency; and in the morning when I began to read, according to custom, my eyes grew painful immediately, and to refuse reading, but were refreshed after a moderate exercise of the body. A certain iris began to surround the light of the candle if I looked at it; soon after which, on the left part of the left eye (for that was some years sooner clouded) a mist arose which hid every thing on that side; and looking forward, if I shut my right eye objects appeared smaller. My other eye also, for these last three years, failing by degrees, some months before all sight was abolished, things which I looked upon seemed to swim to the

lancholic condition he was easily prevailed with to think of taking another wife, who was Catharine the daughter of Capt. Woodcock of Hackney; and she too, in less than a year after their marriage, died in the same unfortunate manner as the former had done; to whose memory he does honour in one of his Sonnets.

These private calamities were much heightened by *An. Ætat. 52.* the different figure he was likely to make in the new scene of affairs which was going to be acted in the state: for all things now conspiring to promote the King's restoration, he was too conscious of his own activity during the usurpation to expect any favour from the Crown; and therefore he prudently absconded 'till the act of Oblivion was published; by which he was only rendered incapable of bearing any office in the nation. Many had a very just esteem of his admirable parts and learning who de-

“ right and left; certain inveterate vapours seem to possess
 “ my forehead and temples, which after meat, especially
 “ quite to evening, generally urge and depress my eyes with
 “ a sleepy heaviness: nor would I omit, that whilst there was
 “ as yet some remainder of sight, I no sooner lay down in
 “ my bed, and turned on my side, but a copious light daz-
 “ zled out of my shut eyes; and as my sight diminished eve-
 “ ry day, colours gradually more obscure flashed out with ve-
 “ hementness; but now that the lucid is in a manner wholly
 “ extinct, a direct blackness, or else spotted, and, as it were,
 “ woven with ash-colour, is used to pour itself in. Neverthe-
 “ less, the constant and settled darkness that is before me, as
 “ well by night as by day, seems nearer to the whitish than
 “ the blackish; and the eye rolling itself a little, seems to ad-
 “ mit I know not what little smallness of light as through a
 “ chink.”

tested his principles, by whose intercession his pardon passed the seals: and I wish the laws of Civil history could have extended the benefit of that oblivion to the memory of his guilt which was indulged to his person; *Ne tanti facinoris immanitas aut exitiisse, aut non vindicata fuisse, videatur.*

Having thus gained a full protection from the government, (which was in truth more than he could have reasonably hoped) he appeared as much in public as he formerly used to do; and employing his friend Dr. Paget to make choice of a third consort, on his recommendation he married Elizabeth the daughter of Mr. Minshul, a Cheshire gentleman, by whom he had no issue. Three daughters by his first wife were then living, two of whom are said to have been very serviceable to him in his studies: for, having been instructed to pronounce not only the modern, but also the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, they read in their respective originals whatever authors he wanted to consult, though they understood none but their mother-tongue. This employment, however, was too unpleasant to be continued for any long process of time; and therefore he dismissed them, to receive an education more agreeable to their sex and temper.

We come now to take a survey of him in that point of view in which he will be looked on by all succeeding ages with equal delight and admiration. An interval of above twenty years had elapsed since he