

the close of his University course. Having explained that he had been destined to the service of the Church both by his friends and his own resolution, he tells us in *The Reason of Church Government*, that "on coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded 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 straight perjure, or split his faith, he thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing." Milton, therefore, in 1631, was in sympathy with the opponents of the Prelacy. But he appears to have had no definite future marked out for himself. A friend of his had remonstrated with him on the aimlessness of the merely studious life he was then leading, and the *Sonnet on having arrived at the age of* 1631 *twenty-three* is the result of the reflections thereby suggested. He is conscious that "the days are hasting on with full career, but his late spring no bud or blossom sheweth." He is prepared to accept patiently "the lot, however mean or high, towards which Time leads him or the will of Heaven"—

"All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my Great Taskmaster's eye."

On leaving the University in 1632, in which year he obtained the degree of M.A., being then a B.A. of three years' standing, he fell back into the <sup>At Horton, 1632-1638</sup> life of a layman, and went to live at Horton in Buckingham, with his father, who had meanwhile retired, having amassed a considerable fortune. Here he spent over five years, with an occasional visit to the City, as he tells us himself, "for the purpose of buying books, or for that of learning anything new in mathematics or in music."

From other circumstances besides permission to devote himself wholly to literary pursuits, there is reason to believe that Milton was a favourite son, and the lines *Ad Patrem*, written about this time, record <sup>1632-1638</sup> the grateful affection with which he regarded his indulgent parent. It is probable that his residence in this quiet country home was the happiest period of his life. During it he continued to cultivate his mind and accumulate those stores of knowledge that provoke the admiration