

his fellow-students. Milton does not seem to have been popular amongst the more boisterous spirits of his college, who "nicknamed him 'The Lady,' on account of his fair complexion, feminine and graceful form, and a certain haughty delicacy in his tastes and morals." But his university career appears to have been unusually brilliant, and he acquired a reputation that was probably due as much to his personal qualities as to his literary successes. Anthony à Wood has left it on record that "he performed the collegiate and academical exercises to the admiration of all, and was esteemed to be a virtuous and sober person, yet not ignorant of his own parts." During his residence at Cambridge he was tuning his lyre for higher flights, though, with the exception of the lines *On Shakespeare*, and another minor poem, all his compositions remained in manuscript. As the great Elizabethan did not die till 1616, Milton may have seen him on one of his visits to London. It is at any rate certain that during this part of his life, if not always, he had a loving appreciation of the genius of this "dear son of memory, great heir of fame." The magnificent ode, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, called by Hallam "perhaps the finest in the English language," was written in his twenty-first year. While engaged in this composition, he wrote a Latin poem (*Elegia Sexta*) to his Italian friend, Charles Diodati, who had been a schoolfellow of his at St. Paul's. To the student of Milton's life this poem is of interest, as in it he expresses his conception of the nature of the training necessary for the highest form of poetry. "For those who would speak of high matters, the deeds of heroes, and the counsels of the gods, for those whose poetry would rise to the prophetic strain, not wine and conviviality are fitted, but spare Pythagorean diet, the beechen bowl of pure water; a life even ascetic in its abstinence, and scrupulously pure—

Diis etenim sacer est vates, divumque sacerdos,
Spirat et occultum pectus et ora Jovem."

But it is not here alone that he expresses himself thus. Even in the *Apoiogy for Smectymnuus*, written after he had embarked "in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes," afar "from the quiet and still air of delightful studies," he reiterates in still stronger language his sublime idea of the poet's mission: "He who would not be