

"Was the trial sore ?
 Temptation sharp ? Thank God a second time !
 Why comes temptation but for man to meet
 And master and make crouch beneath his feet,
 And so he pedestalled in triumph ? Pray
 'Lead us into no such temptations, Lord !'
 Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the bold,
 Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
 Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
 That so he may do battle and have praise."

Milton's Ideal Man.

Two inward forces play the chief part in controlling the lives of men. The one is impulse, the other, the desire to attain to a certain standard or model which they conceive to be the best. The man of impulse gives himself up to his surroundings and varies with them ; but the idealist fashions and follows a model, which, like a signal, restrains or urges him on. To the latter class Milton belongs. He is not one of the poets, whose inspiration bursts in endless variety, leading them to the formation of characters, representing different types of manhood. The ideal conceived by Milton, was of the loftiest type, but he conceived only one. Many are capable of forming high ideals, who have not the power of soul necessary to scale the lofty pinnacle, which they see above them. Nor do authors always consider it incumbent upon them to live up to the standard which they raise in their works. Milton is not such a poet. He considered that the man who hopes to write a poem, ought himself to be a true poem, and to have in himself the practice and experience of that which is most praiseworthy." His ideal therefore may be found not only in his work but also in his life and character, which were the outward expression, of what he conceived to be the most noble, pure and true in man. That element of his nature, which shapes the course of his whole life, and from which most of his other traits spring, is his religious fervour. His intensely religious nature could not stoop to the follies and excesses of his time. To him, man is the image and glory of God, and life, which is a trust from God, should be upright and obedient. His resolve not to leave the path of virtue and integrity, fortified by meditation and reasoning, became a fixed determination. This resolve was strengthened by a second characteristic of his mind, a sturdy spirit of independence, which, next to his religion was the dominating force of his life.

Milton early espoused the cause of the Puritans, as that of the party destined to bring about freedom of mind and conscience. Love of freedom and independence seemed to be instilled by nature into his