

writers, an index of sameness of spirit; but they embody all the fire and energy of his nature, together with the satire and eloquence of one whose soul brooked neither opposition nor equality. When he became Latin Secretary to the Council of State he wielded his pen with terrible effect, and proved to his adversaries that, though the sword is powerful, the pen in skillful hands can leave devastating traces of a well-contested battle. In 1656 he married the daughter of Captain Woodcock, and her death, in 1658, called forth an exquisite sonnet in which Milton has enshrined her memory, and which is a worthy tribute to the tender love at whose altar she sacrificed her being.

His devotedness to labor had been making terrible ravages upon his eyesight, until, in 1664, he became totally blind; and thus, in his old age, deprived of one of God's greatest blessings, he could not rest from labor: but having married a third time he busied himself in the composition of *Paradise Lost*. Later he published a *History of England*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. He died on the 8th of November, 1674; and, as the glory of the morning star pales in the sun's dawning lustre, so is Milton well-nigh forgotten in the wonder and admiration which the offsprings of his genius awaken in the minds of men. With him perished the soul of English poetry, and they lie entombed together in the chancel of St Giles,—beneath them the cold unsympathetic clay; above, the unfeeling earth and the firm marble, fit emblems of his strong, unyielding spirit. Even he who boasts the greatest name of living men should not forget that heaven can withhold the kind bounty of being.

Of all the works of Milton that which reflects most credit on his name is *Paradise Lost*. With a boldness which fills the pious faithful with awe he soared to the divine heights of the Godhead; and, enveloping the mysteries of creation in phantoms of his towering imagination, he produced a picture unreal, chimerical, yet majestic and sublime. With the touch of a master he colored the primeval happiness of man; and the tales of ancient splendor and the dreams of faded glory assumed an air of vanishing simplicity: With a woful glance at the fall of man, he paints the shame and misery of that expulsion which lowered humanity; and weeping at the loss of their created greatness, an overpowering sympathy, an unaffected sorrow for our first parents' sin, cannot fail to be awakened in the mind of the reader. Yet the majesty and grandeur of the Demon, the idea, try as we will, that he is the grand centre around which clusters the pomp and pageantry of Milton's ideal images, wins the pity of tearful humanity, while the character itself repels the stubborn hatred inborn in every Christian soul. The style of *Paradise Lost* is characterized by a sublimity unequalled in any English production. It rolls along like the surging mass of ocean's waves; and the snow-white spray, topping each recurring roll, falls upon fancy's shore in cata-

facts of dazzling splendor. In solemn peals the tide of eloquence sweeps along until the thunder of Milton's mighty genius fills us with awe and apprehension, only to die in the low, weird echo of our wearied minds. His *Comus*, on the contrary, sparkles and beams with the varying hues of his fanciful imagery; and, like dew on the spotless lily, seems invested with the jewelled lights of countless coronals, gleaming in the bursting light of a new-born sun; in a word, it embodies the glory of his fancy with the delicacy of his unparalleled taste. As a sweeping criticism we may say that though in prose Milton was not always faultless, in verse he was ever excellent.

We find in him a strange medley of contradictions which do not accord well with the extreme opinions that he formed upon all subjects falling under his close and attentive scrutiny. He drew conclusions with logical correctness; yet with wilful pertinacity he allowed his mind to build up the splendid creations of his fancy in direct opposition to the dictates of his prosaic choice. The strangest features, however, in the character of this great poet are the earnest love of labor which he displayed during his whole career, and the admirable zeal with which he was inspired, even when robbed of the boundless pleasure experienced in gazing upon the wondrous works of the Creator. Nor can we imagine him bowing in calm resignation to the infliction which deprived him of sight. Some portions of his poems show how bitter was the pang which often pierced his heart; and how painful was the thought that earth's beauties were forever hidden, and all was dark and desolate to him.

"Dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!"

OUR STARRY BANNER.

T. A. D.

When history opens the records of the past to the ever-scrutinizing eyes of the world, she reveals, in a particular manner, the deeds of those heroes who have fought against the overbearing sway of tyranny, and raised an oppressed people to the glory of an independent and self-sustaining nation. With the deeds of such men she chisels the roughness which too often disfigures her universal and impartial records; and, when the emulative mind seeks recreation and knowledge from the pages of this cold medium of the past, it fain would imitate those exploits which have crowned man with the imperishable cognomen—Liberator. Surrounded with this halo of glory are the names of those thousands of patriots who rushed from the village and the city, leaving the fields unploughed and the homestead desolate, in the ever memorable 1776, to fight for that liberty destined to build up the structure of independent government on the colossal foundation—Republicanism.