

WOMEN AND SCHOOLS

Do unto others
As Ye Would
That They
Should
Do unto
You.

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John Milton.

BY EMILY L. BLACKHALL.

THE life and character of Milton prove that "even the best of men are but men at the best." An ardent, yet stern lover of his country; a champion for liberty in its broadest sense; and eminently an honest man; he also had repellent traits of character. His unsympathetic disposition found expression in the wish to have "fit audience, though few;" his most loyal biographers admitting that his greatest poem, *Paradise Lost*, has been from the first more admired than read, partly because of its lack of what is known as the "human element," and partly, no doubt, because of the real excellence of the poem, requiring more effort to understand it than ordinary readers can make. A poet suggests so much more than he says, that one must have at least tasted of the same fountain of knowledge to be able to follow him. What school-girl or boy has not had headache over vainly trying to analyze and interpret—

—God is light,
And never but in unapproachable
light
Dwelt from eternity.

A volume of Milton is not for an evening of "slippers and ease," or an hour of leisure by the study window. He says of himself, when referring to his habit of study, "When I take up with a thing I never pause, nor break it off, nor am drawn away from it by any other interest, till I have arrived at the goal I proposed to myself." The same kind of severe mental application is necessary for those who would understand him. The gods do not lie on the surface, but must be delved for; or, as one has said, "a man must sweat to read him." His reverence for learning is expressed in his definition of it: "I call a com-

plete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war, and to repair the ruin of our first parents by regaining to know God."

John Milton was born December 9,

described of middle-size and well proportioned; of erect and manly bearing; his hair a light brown; his features regular; his complexion wonderfully fair when a youth, and ruddy to the very last.

His genius began to announce itself in his boyhood; his eagerness for

a profession, but were considered only to be dismissed; and, it is said, he returned to his father's house, at the age of twenty-four, when his college days were over, bringing nothing but his education and a "silent purpose."

Having finally settled it that the will of heaven led him toward what he called the "prophetic office," he set forth his estimate of a true poet in the following exalted strain: "He who would not be frustrated of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all which is praiseworthy. A poet's soul should contain of good, wise, just, the perfect shape; and to knowledge and to virtue, must be added religion; and to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation and insight into all seemly and generous acts and affairs." Such an ideal should have made Milton a better rounded character; but he bristled with angles, and his impetuous and austere temper seems inconsistent with his lofty aspirations.

His daughters were treated as inferiors, because of their sex; were not sent to school, nor allowed to study languages—their father saying that "one tongue was enough for a woman;" and they were sent out from home to learn trades.

A variety of causes, added to his natural reserve, resulted in that "aloofness from men" that characterized Milton.

His hasty and unhappy marriage, his violent party zeal in the political troubles of his time, and his blindness, were some of these. That the reaping shall be according to the sowing, is proved in the sequel to all this. He had no sons. When he became old, and blind, and desolate, and turned to his daughters for sympathy



JOHN MILTON.

1608, in Bread Street, Cheapside, London. His home was one of plenty, and of considerable culture. From his father he inherited a capacity and love for music, and he became somewhat skilled in the use of the bass-viol and the organ. He possessed "the unhappy gift of beauty;" and is

learning often keeping him up until midnight, from the time he was twelve years old. He was not a docile pupil; but, when a boy, showed traits of character and a temper that, in his manhood, led him into many tribulations. The Church and the law were considered, as he came of age to choose