

and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations—doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ.” The inspiration for these august themes is not, he tells us, “to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her syren daughters; but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases.”

In his eloquent plea for the liberty of the press he rises to the loftiest heights of majestic expression :

“Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them, to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are. . . . Almost as good kill a man as kill a good book : who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God’s image ; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. . . . We should be wary, therefore, how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books ; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a kind of martyrdom ; and if it extends to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends, not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and soft essence, the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather than a life.

“Lords and Commons of England, consider what nation it is whereof ye are, a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit ; acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point that human capacity can soar to. Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks ; methinks I see her as an eagle renewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam ; purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance. . . .

“Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple ; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter ? For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty ? She needs no policies, no stratagems, no licensings to make her victorious. Give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps.”

Few pictures in the history of literature are more pathetic than that of the old blind bard, in his humble house at Chalfont, dictating to his daughters in his loneliness “the dolourous and glorious strophes of *Paradise Lost*.” In the mouth of Samson, in his “*Agonistes*,” he puts words which but echo the sorrows of his own heart :

O loss of sight of thee I most complain,
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age,