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AN ACROSTIC.

(As a Token of Esteem and Friendship.)

J. M. W.

When sorrow's piercing darts with poisoned steel
Inflict on fallen man relentless woe,
Life's mystic streams of gladness brightly glow—
Like seraphs' smiles—o'er those who humbly kneel
In contrite prayer, to speak the thoughts they feel,
And pray kind Heaven its choicest grace bestow
'Mid demons' wrangling strife, then blessings flow ;
Just as the summer zephyrs timely seal
Kind, soothing draughts upon the flow'ret's face,
Ere blasted by the heat of noon-day sun.
Love's visions blest, in pardoned souls arise,—
Long linger they, bedecked with heavenly grace !
E'er by repentant tears, the fight's thus won ;
Yes, thus the Cross the fatal bond unties.

JOHN MILTON.

W. J. K.

If it be true that "poets are born, not made,"—and assuredly many of the traits which characterize great poets are not entirely due to education,—nature must have throbbled with fond and subtle music when she ushered into being the subject of our sketch; and though winter sobbed her weird dirges at his birth, yet inaudible strains of thrilling harmony must have decoyed his soul to poetry and tuneful numbers. Imagination loves to picture the birthplace of great writers amongst vine-clad hills where sunny pleasure reigns supreme; or amidst plains bedecked with the daisy and buttercup, and serenely showing forth the matchless art of their Creator; or, better still, where the rich fruitage of the vineyard imparts a purplish tinge to smiling valleys washed by the waters of some old, historic river. Let not fancy, however, paint the early home of Milton amongst scenes so redolent of affection and romance; but let the thoughts roam to London,—that grand centre of labor and ease, love and hatred, pleasure and misery; and there where human passions, base and exalted, struggle in the great vortex of life, will we find the birthplace of England's best and noblest poet.

John Milton was born on the 9th of December, 1608, and was the descendant of an ancient Catholic family from which his father became alienated by abandoning the faith of his

ancestors, and embracing the Protestant religion. From his father, who was a musician of no ordinary ability, Milton no doubt inherited that delicacy of ear which so well fitted him to devote his time to poetical composition; and which enabled him to take his stand amongst the writers of the world,—an ornament to literary circles and a grand exemplar of human genius. Without this gift, which nature in her mild beneficence imparted to his mind, it would be difficult indeed to imagine him rising to the very pinnacle of sublimity, yet retaining that most pleasing harmony so essential to success. Born, if not in affluence at least in plenty, Milton was nurtured carefully, and his early training and education was such as to impress upon him the great necessity of integrity of character, without which no man need seek fame and honor; for to those alone who nourish in their souls an upright spirit can we accord a plenteous meed of esteem and respect. He graduated from Christ's College, Cambridge; and in 1632, having determined not to follow any of the professions, he retired to the ease and comfort of his father's home at Horton. Here he spent some years in the study of the Latin and Greek poets; and his pursuit, coupled with his seclusion, and its consequent serenity of mind and exemption from passion, aided him in becoming so proficient in those languages, that he wrote them with an ease and freedom not always acquired by long and faithful study. During this time he did not neglect the art toward which he was bending all the efforts of his strong and determined will; and, while his mind was being enriched by the golden dew of classic lore, and his heart was free from the tumultuous throes of care and solicitude, he gave to the admiring world *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *Arcades*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*. The years intervening between the death of his mother in 1637 and his marriage in 1643 he spent in travel, in the instruction of his nephews, and in the controversies which at that period were engaging the attention of all England, and especially of men of letters. After his marriage, which at first was very unhappy, he composed many works which in themselves would suffice to inscribe his name forever on the scroll of memory, and carve his genius in enduring characters on the tablets of fame. These works are not, as we find in some