

INTRODUCTION.

[Principal authorities consulted:—Milton's Works; Masson's Life and Times of Milton; Browne's English Poems by Milton; Morley's, Craik's, Spalding's, Taine's, &c., Histories of English Literature; Johnson's Life of Milton; Green's History of the English People; Hallam's Literature of Europe; Arber's Arcopagitica, &c.]

SECTION I.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL.

I.

MILTON'S family during his boyhood lived in Bread Street, in the very heart of Old London. His father, also named John, followed the profession of a scrivener, which consisted chiefly in conveyancing and lending money for clients, a lucrative employment even in those days, for it was not long before he became rich enough to retire from business. He lived in a house known as "The Spread Eagle," and here, on Friday, Dec. 9th, 1608, John Milton, the poet, was born. His sister Anne and his brother Christopher, afterwards Sir Christopher Milton, one of the servile judges appointed by James II., were the only other children of John Milton, the elder, that arrived at maturity. The Bread Street household, we have every reason to believe, was a peaceful and a happy one, pervaded by the earnest religious feelings that characterized the Puritans, and the liberal cheerfulness belonging to prosperous circumstances and æsthetic tastes. The scrivener, himself a man of more than ordinary culture, was passionately fond of music, and contributed Madrigals and Psalm tunes to the popular collections of the day. He taught his son to sing and to play on the organ—accomplishments which the poet found an inexhaustible source of consolation and delight in the darkness of his declining years. From his father, who had been cast off by bigoted parents for

FIRST
PERIOD,
1608-1640

Birth,
1608

Early
Education.