

Milton's Ideas of Freedom.

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It has been said that Milton's prose or controversial works have been buried in a merciful oblivion. This is a superficial view. The dust has returned to dust, but the spirit, the soul of the master-teacher, that wrought upon the chaos and night of mediæval superstition, that began the transformation process which has resulted in the splendor of this strange new day, still lives and breathes in "Milton's Ideas of Freedom." Like stars that embroider heaven's stole they have illumined, do now and will continue to illumine the page of Anglo-Saxon story in every clime.

So essentially have they become constituent parts of the Saxon's individual and national life that he has ceased to enquire for their origin, and has become almost unconscious of their presence and influence. For him they have brought to light a fuller life, and not only have they made him heir to the best of all that has been, but heir to the best of all that will be, by crowning him king of himself and of men in every quarter of the globe, and by placing within his reach the horoscope which reveals and the sceptre of thought which must control the world's great future.

Though the favored child of the muses Milton did not always dwell apart from his contemporaries on the sacred heights of his native Parassus. Their struggle for personal liberty and the removal of a Stuart tyrant from the British throne were achievements accomplished by the energies of an English peasantry aroused, directed and inspired by Milton's Ideas of Freedom. But the battle for liberty of thought he fought alone, because he alone among the hosts enchanted by the Circean cup of servitude, saw that truth was supreme, that it must be free. He alone understood the importance of freedom of thought as the fundamental principle of national life and individual liberty. His ideas are too comprehensive to admit of bounding him by any class or age, but are comprehensive enough to include all. Into them he has garnered the best of all the past, his present and ours they embody and we wait for the future to fill out in action the prescribed page of Miltonic theory. In him we find the Puritan uprightness, fortitude, tranquillity and inexorable resolution without the Puritan's life-annihilating asceticism, the nobility of the cavalier without the servile degeneracy of the court lackey, the liberty of the free thinker without the pedantic ignorance of the agnostic.

The freedom of the human will, regarded by him as the only possible foundation of true morality, government and justice so forcibly expressed in his "Immortal Verse," should be accepted and retained not as a meaningless formula but as a vital fact by every man who would become master of himself and of his circumstances. Of man the Creator says,

"I made him sufficient to have stood but free to fall, Within himself the danger lies yet lies within his power, Against his will he can receive no harm, But God left free the will for what obeys reason is free and reason he made right."

His ideas of the liberty of the subject and the rights of the sovereign were first brought forward in his defence of the people of England against the charge of regicide for which they had been indicted by the monarchs of Europe. Here he appears as a true democrat. The king as ruler has a right to the obedience of his subjects, this is guaranteed by their oath of allegiance, as long as he is true to his coronation oath, when this is violated his subjects are free because he is no longer king; the king rules by the "grace of God" and must therefore submit to the ruling of the King of Kings, whose rule he violates when he usurps the God-given liberty of subjects; it then becomes their duty to dethrone the tyrant.

Nature decrees that no man has a right to rule unless he excels all others in wisdom and courage; she does not appoint fools to govern the wise, nor wicked to rule the good, so that they who remove the government from the hands of such act in accordance with nature.

Here we have the note struck so often by Carlyle, the principle that must be universally endorsed by Christendom ere we reach that ser's ideal state, a government manipulated by nature's true born kings, who are kings by right divine. The king's duty is to protect; the holy things of the church are in the hands of him who purchased by his death our life, and who established our Christian liberty by sending his free Spirit to dwell within us. This liberty he must defend as it requests defence. To dictate to the church means bondage, because it makes thought impossible and the church becomes the prison not the liberator of the mind as was intended by its Divine Founder.

But the emanations from this liberated mind Milton saw must remain isolated from their proper spheres of action until the liberty of the press was established. He began the agitation that about half a century later resulted in its absolute freedom. This was the grandest achievement of England's prophet statesman, who in the gloaming of this present brighter day gave to the world a conception of liberty as liberal as any now existing. Without liberty to express his ideas he believed

and taught that no man could be free, and from his lordly treasure house of Grecian lore he gave to the waking world its long lost and long sought conception of freedom.

This is true liberty when free born men, Having to advise the public may speak free, Which who can and will deserves high praise, What can be juster in a state than this.

Here we have a statement of the broadest creed, one which has some defects that exist in spite of rather than because of the liberty granted. Would we institute a censorship of the press practically unknown until the mind of Christendom was imprisoned by pagan Rome? Would we limit the liberty that has given us the life of the ancient world embalmed in immortal story? Shall we attempt to reform the defects that accompany free publication by allowing any individual or organization of individuals to dictate to the author what he shall think and what he shall express! To each of these questions Milton replied with a universal negative. The apostle's injunction, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," he accepts as the standard given by divine and human reason, the standard that must establish truth because of its divine nature, that must overthrow falsehood because of its inherent weakness. Reason God left free. Reason God made right. Man must choose. This thought presents itself as we consider the initial chapters of sacred story. Adam and Eve in Eden were surrounded by all that the eye could wish or the imagination desire. In the midst of the Garden stood the tree of life and beside it the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Why, we ask, did conscious Omniscience place before unconscious weakness the possibility of sin? and in doing so we ask the question of the ages, whose only answer is, true virtue can only be developed by rejecting and overcoming vice, all other, such as developed in the cloister, is a blank virtue. All the faculties that make the man a man are perfected in strife. Wisdom and judgment are the quintessence distilled from processes of discriminating and selecting, by proving all things and holding fast that which is good. This is God's plan for releasing man from the captivity of a perpetual childhood of prescription and irresponsibility.

Free publication is further sanctioned by reason, her first question is who are to be the judges of the work suppressed? who knows the mind of the author producing or the minds of the people who are to read? "Nature never repeats herself," we are told, therefore no two individuals can view any book from the same standpoint, nor can any be equally satisfied by the same books. Personal experience suggests that the idea expressed by Emerson admits of universal application, "I go to the Bible and if it has not a message for me I will go to Plato."

The universal mind of humanity is composed of an almost infinite number of divergent units. These cannot be supplied by the universal mind much less than by any fraction of it. Literature would be impossible if the author's end in view while producing was to meet the requirements of even the most liberal licenser; his work would not bear the impress of his character, it would not give us the life of the man, which, however eccentric or seemingly absurd, is all he has worth giving the world, and all the world will permanently receive. It is actual life we thirst for. This is the essence that has made some books the treasures of the centuries.

Cross sections of life, real being are these, in whose veins the pulse of immortality ever throbs, whose power is sufficient to transform the mind that long has remained its own prisoner in Castle Thoughtlessness, and fit it to receive and enjoy the priceless treasures bequeathed to it by the thoughts of the ages. Suppression would eliminate this element of life and cause the disease to prove fatal which it attempted to cure.

Milton's views of divorce, which have brought upon him the opprobrium of "the many," we can only mention. These have led some to speak slightly of the man who never slighted anything, who was so constituted that he could not be insincere. The first thing in the world pronounced by God "not good" was man's loneliness. Angels conversed with him, beasts made sport for him, yet until woman came in the language of the Eternal man was alone. This loneliness is solely and entirely a mental state, and the marriage that does not remove this state is recognized as a legalized partnership, not as a marriage by nature and nature's God. Congenial natures by these united cannot by law be separated, and uncongenial natures that refuse by them to be united must in spite of law ever remain separate.

This, in brief, is a statement of Milton's views of divorce without his elaborate defence. Would they, if adopted, smooth some of those destructive billows whose ceaseless roll endangers life on the social sea? or would they usher in a social chaos? The latter, perhaps, we fear, and having urged our obligations against his system, we await his reply. But this great teacher of the ages still silently speaking, refuses to listen to our objections, still seeming to say, "Have patience thou toward a child of time." Wait, and time, "greatest innovator," will fulfill those prophecies you now doubt. Intervening centuries have seen the liberty of the subject established, the liberation of the mind and a federation of the world

achieved through the freedom granted to the press. And must we doubt that the remaining views of England's greatest prophet may be fulfilled when Milton's ideal man assumes control? In him Milton sees the nation, sees all that must be defended, all that requires liberty, he sees that it is of individuals that society is composed, that society must be ruled by them. This is the note of individual importance first struck by Christ, re-echoed by Luther and Milton, and is the central and crescent thought in all modern literature. The guiding spirit seems to say, "Give a proper value to the individual as a unit of society." Teach him that he is not a worm of the dust but a child of the Eternal, place upon him his God-given responsibility, grant him in full his birthright of personal liberty; then having the inherent germ of divinity developed by these principles, need we fear the social chaos that some predict would follow an endorsement of the full cycle of the "Miltonic Ideas of Freedom."

Milton's politics were the politics of the individual. His method of reform was moral rather than legal suasion. To this ideal we are gradually approaching, and this makes him a lawgiver of the present and future as well as of the past, so that to dismiss without careful consideration any of his views means that we must stand condemned before the bar of universal reason. We must remember that he was ever a sincere thinker; that he stood first among those who for Saxon liberty, by untrammelled thought and its fearless expression, rent the veil that long had prevented light from penetrating darkness, thought from annihilating superstition, liberty from abolishing servitude, that he made possible the noblest achievements of the noblest race, in the noblest age this old world has yet known.

If those achievements by us would be retained, and used as "stepping stones" on which to rise to a still higher plane, a still nobler race, a still grander age, we must make our own the soul that inspired and that comprehends those ideas,—the soul that breathes into each new age the breath of life, the soul whose power Milton has expressed so tersely in a few immortal lines which he has polished and set as a royal diamond that will forever reflect the life-giving rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

"Mortals—
Love virtue she alone is free,
She can teach ye how to climb,
Higher than the spher's chime,
Or if virtue feeble were
Heaven itself would stoop to her."

This embodies the soul of our hero's ideas of freedom, the heirloom bequeathed to ages yet to be by the "genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the prophet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the pride of the English nation, the champion and martyr of English liberty." EDWIN SIMPSON, '99.
Belmont, P. E. I.

Education.

"The object of education, then, is not a diploma, or a better social standing, or a means of livelihood, but life, a more abundant life. It is as desirable for women as it is for men; and not only for those who teach and lecture, and write books and advocate "causes," but for those who keep house and cook bread and darn stockings. True education never separates us from our God-appointed tasks, never makes them seem common and beneath us; rather it sheds the glory upon them, enabling us to fulfill them in the best manner and the noblest spirit. In the case of women, therefore, it never belittles the home as a sphere of activity and influence. The education which treats a career in the home as secondary to any other on earth is established on a wrong basis. It forgets that the home is the first church and the first state, and the great questions which from time to time agitate society have their origin and their settlement in the home.

"To educate is to quicken, cultivate, direct in accordance with nature's laws, the growth of a living being. Access to knowledge and acquisition of knowledge are necessary to this growth, but only as sun and air and rain and the juices of the soil are necessary to the growth of a plant. We possess not what is piled up around us or over us, but what we assimilate by the action of our powers into the living fibre. We increase, not by accretions from without, but by a living energy working from within. The direction is evermore 'from within outward.'"

REV. S. V. COLR.

"Good Will Toward Men."

Luke 2:14.

Sweet, sweet is the message the shepherds receive.
The message of comfort for all that believe!
The music of Heaven thus sounds o'er the earth,
While telling the story of God's human birth.

The Lord of all glory from glory descends
And with our sad nature His pure nature blends:
The Father's good purpose, revealed in the Son,
On earth is established—the work has begun!

With loud hallelujahs ring forth from the skies,
All peoples and ages send back glad replies.
United thanksgiving—returning God's love,
In rapture that rivals the angels above.

First thousands, then millions, then millions again,
A host beyond number pass under His reign.
The church of our Jesus, His Presence in Time,
Restores and makes perfect, Eternity's chime!

—ADDISON F. BROWNE.

North River, P. E. I.