

THE FREE LANCE.

*Published Monthly during the College Year by the Students of
The Pennsylvania State College.*

Vol. XI.

FEBRUARY, 1898.

No. 8.

THE PURITAN POET

THE 17th century in England was a time of strife and revolution. Popery and protestantism, royalism and republicanism strove for the ascendancy during all those long years of turmoil from the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 to the Bloodless Revolution of 1688. The incessant cry of the Stuarts, "Our Divine Rights," and the struggle of the Commons for constitutional privileges fill countless pages of England's history, until the Civil War of 1642 brings forth its Cromwell, who accomplishes the downfall of the Monarchy and the execution of Charles I. But the Commonwealth then established crumbled with the death of the great leader. The unworthy rule of his incapable son Richard caused in 1660 the Restoration of the haughty Stuarts, who worried and debased the people until by common consent they invited to their throne the noble William of Orange.

This very brief outline of the events of the time will facilitate a better understanding of the circumstances surrounding the life of the great poet, for his existence is closely wrapped up in the politics of his day, and he was a powerful influence in the molding of public opinion. In the year 1608, December 9, in the city of London, John Milton was born. His grandfather was a stern papist, and disowned the father of the poet for not adhering to the doctrines of the Mother Church. Thus the elder Milton, also named John, was obliged to shift for himself, becoming a scrivener in London. However, he succeeded so well that he was able to surround his children with the most refining influences. Early appreciating the promise of John, who was the third child, he gave him the best of opportunities. The poet's early education was accomplished under the direction of a tutor, and by attend-