

ance at the celebrated St. Paul's school, which he entered in 1620.

He was not a precocious youth like Shelley, but very few, unimportant poems of his school days surviving. In 1625 he entered Christ's College, Cambridge, where he took his bachelor's degree in 1629 and his master's degree in 1632. Milton did not seem to enjoy his college course, and it is doubtful if he derived more benefit from his years at Cambridge than from the cultured surroundings of his early years. He was a master of Latin before entering college, and a most patient, untiring student throughout his boyhood, thus laying the foundation of his later blindness.

Upon leaving college Milton retired to Horton, in Buckinghamshire, about seventeen miles from London, where his father had been enabled by his successes in business to purchase an estate. Here he lived for six years amid beautiful and inspiring surroundings, studying the classics and writing his unexcelled lyrics. *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas* were all written during this period.

In 1638, Milton, with his pockets full of introductions to the great men he was to meet, set out for the Continent. He remained a short time in France, and then went on to Italy, whose language he had already mastered. Here he met the greatest literary lights of the country, visiting Galileo, the great scientist, to whom he refers in the early part of *Paradise Lost*, and who was at that time a "Prisoner to the Inquisition." Milton was everywhere received with the greatest distinction and praise. It was his intention to do the Continent thoroughly, but after fifteen months away from home the trouble between Charles and Parliament recalled him to England, as he could not reconcile the thought of being absent from his country in the time of her distress.

Upon his return he spent some time teaching his nephews and the sons of some neighboring gentlemen, of course taking a lively interest in politics as one of the most devoted lovers of liberty. In 1643 he married a girl of half his age. She belonged to the opposite party, and being totally unused to the customs of a Puritan household she was unhappy and deserted her husband after a month of married life. Her desertion called forth from Milton his paper in favor of divorce. However, they became reconciled a few years later.

Early in the forties Milton's energy for the cause of freedom