

began to be felt. Realizing fully the dangers of shackling the press, he wrote his wonderful *Areopagitica*, generally conceded to be his best prose work, which is a powerful plea for freedom of opinion. In 1645 was published the first collection of his poems, and in 1649 he became Cromwell's Latin Secretary. The political disputes in which his new position involved him called forth a dozen pamphlets, and precipitated, in 1652, his total blindness. This year also he married again, his first wife having died; but his second wife lived only two years, leaving the poet more desolate than before.

In 1660, with the restoration of the Stuarts, came the downfall of his political party and of his hopes. For some time he was obliged to live a fugitive existence, but soon protective measures enabled him to live in peace and to accomplish his destiny. The fact that so powerful a foe to the Stuarts as Milton should be included in the general pardon issued seems to corroborate Milton's notion of the purpose of divinity in his creation.

The life of Milton naturally divides into three periods. First, his boyhood, his college days, and his years spent at Horton and in Italy. Second, the twenty years, roughly speaking, from his return to England to the Restoration. These were the twenty best years of his life, and volumes have been written in discussing whether his course was justifiable. Did he wrong himself and all humanity by devoting his wonderful intellect to political wrangle and controversy? What might he not have written during that time if he had followed his muse? On the other hand, would it have been possible for him to compose his grand epic in all its perfection with a lesser knowledge of humanity and with narrower views of the universe in general than he acquired during those years of political strife? If the answer to the latter question be negative, is it not far better that he deprive the world of volumes of excellent, yes, grand verse which he might have given it and substitute therefor one *Paradise Lost*? The third and last period begins with the Restoration.

From his earliest recollection Milton was conscious of an inner sense of duty to man and to his God, of a divine purpose in his creation. During all his early life he had felt it; during his score of years in politics the thought was ever present; and, though he met with the keenest sorrow the ruin of his beloved hope of liberty