

lowed sacredness of purity in the dark ways of men, and *Lycidas*, written after the death of his college friend, King, both of which show the development of his character in the direction of Puritan seriousness. Milton was a man of the most exalted, idealistic purpose. He had set a high tension for himself, and, like all men of his stamp, found it hard to expect less of others. Therefore we find in him a man of stern, severe character, rather harsh in his dealings with those surrounding him. An intense zeal for righteousness was his master passion. In his devotion to it he lost the beautiful element of charity, and herein lies a distinguishing feature between him and the merry Shakspeare. He lived

“As ever in my great Taskmaster’s eye,”

but forgot the emphasis which his Taskmaster placed upon charity.

His life is indeed a noble example of consecration to duty. He belonged to no party, but was a party in himself, conforming his action to the need of his country. Accordingly we see him bitterly opposed to the execution of Charles, but for his nation’s weal defending the regicide with all his power after the deed was done.

Milton lived in a most memorable era, at the crisis between liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. Of liberty and reason he was the most devoted champion, resisting the despotism of Charles with the same zeal that he defended his execution. Milton lived in a time when enlightenment made purely imaginative work difficult, and he himself expressed a doubt as to whether he had not been born a century too late; but his genius triumphed over all obstacles, and for the difficulties surmounted that triumph was the more glorious.

Of Milton’s style much has been written. Probably no other writer has a style so distinctly characteristic and inimitable. In pleasing variety of cadence, with sense long drawn out, and the grouping of lines into stanzas of organic harmony, Milton is perfect. The “power to take long sweeps, pause, and leap again,” was never so well illustrated by any one else as by the blind poet. In fact, Milton’s lines do not stand alone, but bear the same relation to the whole that the foundation stones do to the house, or the piers to the bridge.

No feature of Milton is more striking than his sonorous tone. The very name of Milton arouses a concept of majesty, and the adjective derivative, *Miltonic*, is suggestive of rolling, harmonious