

LEADERS OF THE PURITAN AGE.

MILTON.

Professor Henderson delivered the second lecture of his course here on Tuesday evening, when he dealt with John Milton, poet and idealist. Mr. F. H. Daniel again presided.

In the study of Milton's life, Professor Henderson remarked, lay the study of the history of Puritan thought. Milton was born in 1608, near the Mermaid's Inn, where Shakespeare and the wits of his age were accustomed to meet to discuss the affairs of their time. His father had been disinherited for becoming a Puritan. A man of refined and artistic tastes, he gave his son a good education, first at St. Paul's School and afterwards at Cambridge. Milton was trained to a knowledge of the Greek, Latin, French, and Italian languages, and he had also a good acquaintance with Hebrew. He was a hard worker, and from the age of ten years rarely put out his candle before the midnight hour. At Cambridge he was rusticated for a short time, for what reason was not known. On his return to the University he went through the course with credit, and took his degree, first as Bachelor and then as Master of Arts. Milton was intended for holy orders, but, not being able to reconcile his thoughts with some of the doctrines of the Church, he retired into private life. Although Milton was developing rapidly in his religious thought towards Puritanism, with its disregard of outward forms and ceremonies, yet in the year that Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury he wrote a poem in which he showed that he appreciated the influence of external things upon the soul. That poem was "Ill Penseroso." While in "L'Allegro" the poet chose morning effects, in "Ill Penseroso" he employed sentiments relating only to evening, and the cathedral, with its "storied windows richly dight," was a typical evidence of the influence which the sentiment of outward things exercised over the soul of Milton. "Comus," a masque written in 1634, was a poem of the transitional period, when Milton was tending towards Puritanism. It was written in defence of the drama, and in reply to Pym, who held that the drama and all connected with it were bad, and as a rebuke to Shirley, who used the drama for immoral purposes. In this play John Milton gave to the world the highest message Puritanism had to deliver—that beautiful thought makes beautiful form, and that base thought makes base the man who harbours it.

So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and
guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can
hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitant
Begin to cast a beam on the outward
shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the souls
essence,
Till all be made immortal.

In 1637 Milton published Lycidas, a monody in which he bewailed the death of Edward King, a friend drowned at sea, and in which he gave the public his views on those priests who held more than one living. The passages in the poem in which he dealt with these persons formed one of the best illustrations in literature of the language of contempt. After that Milton made his famous Continental tour, which, however, he cut short to participate in the revolution then imminent. He allied himself with the Puritan cause, and his best energies during the years immediately succeeding were devoted to the cause of freedom. He published several pamphlets in reply to those issued by the Bishops, and in 1643 became a Presbyterian. One of his best pamphlets of this period was the "Areopagitica," written in the interests of the freedom of publication. Then Milton broke with the Presbyterians and became an Independent in religion, and the representative of independence in the realm of letters. He concurred in the execution of King Charles because he held that the

King had failed in his public trust, and he wrote "Iconoclastes" in justification of the act. Throughout his public career he continued on intimate terms with Cromwell. It was not until after the restoration of the Monarchy that he sat down to write the great work of his life, "Paradise Lost." He was then poor, solitary, and blind, but he worked on with magnificent fortitude, and the outcome was a composition which had placed Milton among the great epic poets of the world. "Samson Agonistes" followed, and then "Paradise Regained." The lecturer then dealt with the poet's character and his bearing towards those with whom he was brought into daily contact. His home life was a dismal failure, because he was a hard man to get along with, and apparently held that woman was an inferior creature. And yet, perhaps, no one better than Milton realised the true value of the companionship of souls, or knew the idealising power of mutual love. If one read "Paradise Lost" carefully, he would realise that Milton regretted what he had missed in this direction. His was an inspired mind that grew from within outwards, and was of one piece and texture. He stood, as it were, at the portals listening to the whispers from another world, and he regarded it as a solemn duty to convey correct impressions of his spiritual and intellectual experiences to those around him. He was true to his ideals, and a man of strenuous mind; and when told, when writing his Second Defence of the Commonwealth, that blindness would ensue if he persisted with the work, he replied, "Then let blindness ensue." And it did. This was one evidence of that unscen power which made his life an inspired one. Milton lacked the sense of humour. This was his supreme defect as a writer, and no doubt accounted for his occasional bitterness. His life was one of the grandest examples in history of the ideal value of a true and liberal education. They might take leave of him in his own words—

Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
A life heroic.

CROMWELL.

On Wednesday evening the Professor gave the concluding lecture of his series, when he dealt with the great central figure of the Puritan revolution—Oliver Cromwell, the man in whom the practical and the idealistic and religious tendencies of the time were most perfectly blended. There was a gratifying increase in the attendance.

Those who understood Cromwell, said the lecturer, understood a very great deal about the history of England during his times. He believed him to have been one of the greatest men in all history. He was the greatest general of the period, and was certainly the only man who could direct the affairs of state when he sheathed the sword and entered the arena of politics. He was born in Huntingdon in 1598. His parents were farmers, who, however, could trace their descent from one Thomas Cromwell, known in the time of Henry VIII. as "The Hammer of the Monks." At college he distinguished himself in athletics, but he left Cambridge without taking a degree. From his earliest years Cromwell was distinguished for his intense sympathy with the oppressed, and one of his first acts, after he returned to his parents' farm, was to take the part of the people against a certain landed proprietor, who had usurped their rights to the common lands. He was a member of the Parliament of 1629, and later on was elected to the famous Long Parliament. He was not a great talker in the House, but worked very hard on the Committees, and had a thorough grip of the affairs of his time. One Bill which

very much interested him was the Grand Remonstrance, a measure tantamount to a vote of no-confidence in King Charles. Carlyle had unearthed Cromwell after working for half a lifetime among the documents of the House of Commons, and he and S. R. Gardiner and Firth were the best authorities to whom he could refer the seeker after knowledge on this subject. When the civil war broke out Cromwell turned his mind to the subject of army reform. He framed drastic regulations for the guidance of his company, drilled them assiduously,

and they became the nucleus of that army which brought success to the Parliamentary arms. He did effective work against the Royalists in the eastern provinces. The battle of Marston Moor was the turning-point in the revolution, and the lecturer gave a realistic account of it and the important part Cromwell and his company of cavalry played in turning the tide of victory in favor of the Parliamentarians. As Prince Rupert, King Charles's dashing cavalry leader, fell back under the onslaught of Cromwell's invincibles he turned in his saddle and muttered two words that had become historic. They were "Iron side." The exclamation was applied by Rupert to Cromwell, and from him it descended to the men under him, and they became known to fame as the terrible Ironsides. The battle of Naseby was a repetition of Marston Moor, and after it Cromwell stood in the forefront of the fighters of the world. When Charles's resources failed, he attempted to play the different political parties in the state against one another. Quarrels occurred between the Independents and the Presbyterians, and Charles seized upon these to further his plans. At the same time he was in treaty with the Scots. Cromwell did his best to influence the King towards a moderate policy, and one that would have saved him. The two had frequent interviews, and this led his enemies to stigmatise him as a hypocrite. As a matter of fact Cromwell was an ardent Conservative by nature. He did not wish to see the office of King abolished; he only wished to limit the authority of the King; and with this end in view he did his best to re-seat Charles on the throne, limiting him in two points only—that he should grant toleration in matters of religion, and that he should rule as a constitutional monarch. The Clarke papers, recently discovered, had proved that Cromwell risked his life to do this. Then the discovery was made that Charles, while temporising with the Puritans, had been secretly negotiating with their enemies, and from his time Cromwell would have nothing more to do with him. The second civil war then broke out, Charles was taken prisoner, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be executed. The execution, he would like it to be remembered, was carried out by a minority of the English people, not by a majority; and, although the deed was not done at the initiative of Cromwell, he acquiesced in it, and if they would fix the blame on anyone they had a right to fix it on Cromwell, because he was then the most powerful man in England. Now, if he, a conservative by nature, had risked his life for Charles, why did he at a later date acquiesce in his death at the block? The story had been told, with what truth he knew not, of how a man, muffled, had gone up to the chamber where the King's corpse lay, and, motioning aside the trooper at the door, went in and viewed the body in the coffin. As he did so, he was heard to mutter the words "Cruel necessity." The stranger was said to have been Cromwell, and the words "cruel necessity" put it as well as he could Cromwell's mental attitude on the question. The execution was cruel, but absolutely necessary. It had to be admitted—and Cromwell by his letters had done so himself—that his policy in Ireland was unnecessarily severe; and it was madness to say that he put an end to dissatisfaction there. But he asked them, in fairness, to judge the man by the standards of his own times—which were ruder and rougher than those of to-day; and if they compared his actions with those of the generals who directed the Thirty Years' War on the Continent about the same time, they must admit that the balance was in favor of Cromwell. He was never guilty of an act of wanton cruelty; and if he exacted tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye they must remember that he was only conforming to the old Biblical teaching instilled by the Puritan faith. His policy was to strike hard and quickly, and he was not the only general who maintained that the most merciful war was the most merciless. After the battle of Worcester Cromwell sheathed his sword, and came to London. He was easily the first man in England, and Parliament voted him £4,000 a year and gave him Hampden Court to live in. He had been called an ambitious man and compared with Napoleon, but, with all England at