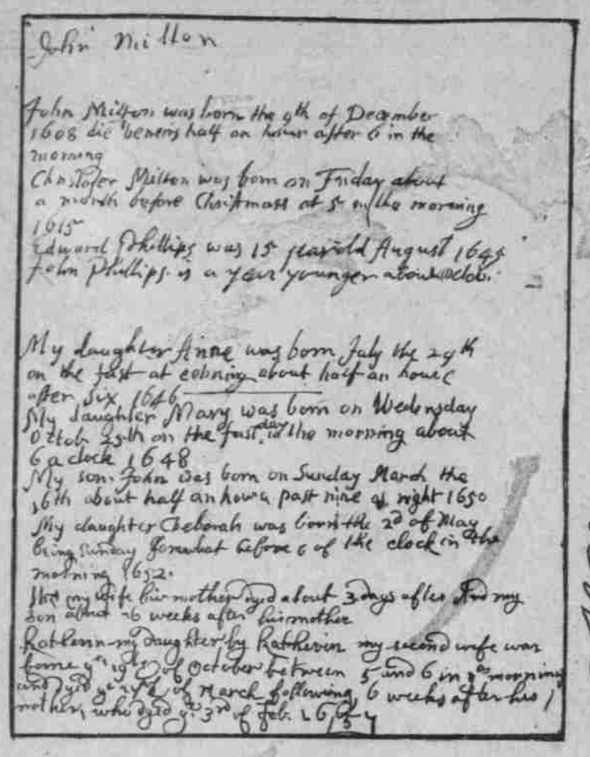
TER-CENTENARY of BLIND JOHN MILTON


John Milton

John Milton was born the 9th of December 1608 die between half an hour after 6 in the morning
Christofer Milton was born on Friday about a month before Christmass at 8 of the clock in the morning 1615
Edward Phillips was 15 yeares old August 1645
John Phillips is a year younger about 10 clock.

My daughter Anne was born July the 29th on the fast at coming about half an houre after Six, 1646
My daughter Mary was born on Wednesday 9ber 25th on the fast day in the morning about 6 a clock 1648
My son John was born on Sunday March the 16th about half an houre past nine at night 1650
My daughter Deborah was born the 2d of May being Sunday foremeat before 6 of the clock in the morning 1652.
Her my first wife mother died about 3 days after she my son about 6 weeks after her mother
Katherin my daughter by Katherin my second wife was borne 6th of October between 5 and 6 in the morning and dyed 24th of March following 6 weeks after her mother, who died 3d of Feb. 1657

MILTON'S FAMILY BIBLE, NOW OWNED BY THE BRITISH MUSEUM, PRINTED IN 1612, IT BEARS IN THE POET'S HAND-WRITING MEMORANDA ENTRIES OF THE BIRTHS AND SO-FORTH OF THE MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY

TO BE HONORED THIS WEEK BY THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD AS STANDING FOR ALL TIME NEXT TO IMMORTAL SHAKESPEARE

THE PORTRAIT BY VAN DER PLAAS, SHOWING MILTON AS IN HIS PRIME AND BEFORE HIS BLINDNESS

"THE REPULSION OF ADAM AND EVE FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN;"—A PAINTING BY THE FRENCH ARTIST MARCHAND, ILLUSTRATING THE LAST CANTO OF "PARADISE LOST."

A CHALK-DRAWING BY WASHINGTON ALLSTON OF MICHAEL "SETTING THE WATCH"—A FRAGMENT OF A SERIES OF THAT EARLY AMERICAN ARTIST'S PLATES TO THE "PARADISE LOST"!

THE EARLIEST KNOWN PORTRAIT OF MILTON, REPRESENTING HIM AS OF TEN YEARS OF AGE.

WHEN JANSSEN, THE DUTCH ARTIST, VISITED IN LONDON, HAD ROOMS ON BREAD ST, NEAR THE MILTONS, AND PAINTED THE FUTURE POET

John Milton

FAC-SIMILE OF THE SIGNATURE OF "THE BARD OF REPUBLICANISM"

1608—(December 9.) Born on Bread street, Cheapside, London, to John (Senior), a scrivener, who wrote psalms as well as legal documents, setting them to music.

1618—Tutored by Thomas Young, a Puritan divine.

1620-25—At St. Paul's School, studying language and philosophy.

1625-32—In "the studious cloisters pale" of Christ's College, Cambridge, devoting himself to the classics, abstruse mathematics, music as a science, theology and logic. Took both B. A. and M. A. degrees; receiving an M. A. from Oxford in '35.

1632-37—At his father's home, at Horton, Buckinghamshire, "letting his wings grow" for poesy, having decided he could not enter the church. His mother died at the close of '37.

1638-39—On the Continent, meeting Grotius in Paris and Galileo in Italy. Dropped all plans for further travel and returned home, on the news of the outbreak of the Scotch Covenanters against King Charles I.

1639 (August 1.)—Began tutoring and pamphlet writing in a rented house in St. Bride's Churchyard. (Lived in later years in many London localities, Aldersgate, etc.).

1641—Execution of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. ("Thorough!").

1642—Outbreak of war between the Royalists and Parliamentarians.

1643—Married Mary Powell, daughter of an Oxfordshire Justice of the Peace; "A bit of pink-and-white protoplasm, aged 17." A few months later she left him, returning to live with her father.

1645—Reunited to his wife, who lived with him till '53; there were three daughters born to the union—Anne, Mary and Deborah.

1646—Charles I surrendered to the Scotch, who sold him to the English.

1649—(January 30). Execution of King Charles.

1649—(March 15). Made "Secretary for Foreign Tongues," in the Cromwell Cabinet, all diplomatic correspondence being then carried on in Latin.

1653—Cromwell, made Lord Protector, appoints Milton his Latin Secretary.

1654—His blindness became total.

1656—(November). Retired from public life and married Catherine Woodcock, who died 15 months later.

1660—The Restoration. Two of Milton's books publicly burned (June 16) by the hangman, and a proclamation issued for his arrest. He lay hid in St. Bartholomew's Close till the Act of Indemnity appeared.

1663—Married Elizabeth Minshull.

1665—Driven from the city by the plague, he resided several months at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire.

1668—Took up residence in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields, London, where he lived for the eight years remaining to him.

1674—(November 8.) Died, at the age of 65, "departing so peacefully from his crowded life that those in the room with him knew not the moment of his passing." He was buried in St. Giles' Churchyard, Cripplegate, where he had attended service (and where his master, Cromwell, had been married.)

Milton's family became extinct just a century later (1770) with the death, in direst poverty, of the poet's great-granddaughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Foster.

LIKE SOME PATRIARCH OF OLD—AUSTERE, PURE AND DAUNTLESS.

In his university years, Milton's looks of aristocratic refinement and his gentle manner, won him the name of "The Lady of Christ's." He was under middle height, with the oval face and fair complexion; his nose was delicately arched, his lips full, his dark gray eyes kindly and soft, his hair long and auburn. "But there was whipcord fibre in the makeup of the youth who united the toughness of a Calvin to the tenderness of an Erasmus."

The earnest unselfishness of the young man whose boyish ambition had been "to be myself a true poem" that he might "write well of laudable things," appeared in '38, when he who loved the beautiful turned back from Italy to a life of austerity and harshness; "when he who had chosen to be a poet went home to write himself blind over partisan tracts."

"Milton was not a Puritan. He was not a free-thinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all which was base and pernicious."—T. B. Macaulay.

Compound of Puritan and the scholar, he was essentially of the austere type, with no tenderness in his mind, no intimacies in his life. "From the first," wrote Lowell, "he looked upon himself as a man dedicated and set apart," and Wordsworth said of him:

"Thy soul was like a star that dwelt apart."

Impracticable and idealistic, he yet was one of the two men of the time of genuine heroic mould—Cromwell was the other. "Of firm convictions and dauntless in pursuit of their fulfillment; stubbornly honest and pure in life, grandeur is the prime characteristic of the man—whom we yet admire rather than love."

Cloaked in grey threadbare poverty, and blind,
Age-weak, and desolate, and beloved of God:
High-heartedness to long repulse resigned,
Yet beating not one jot of hope, he trod
The sun and skyless streets he could not see;
By those faint feet made sacrosanct to me
—F. T. PALGRAVE.

ELEVEN TITLES IN UNDERLYING VERSE; MORE OF STATELY, MASSIVE PROSE.

1625—(The year he left St. Paul's School) Poetic paraphrases of the 114th and 136th Psalms.

1629—"An Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," which Hallam called "The finest ode in the English language."

1633—"Arcades," a masque in honor of the Countess of Derby; "the first of his poems to make a noise in the world."

1634—"Comus"—"the best of masques in a period when masques were at their best." First acted in Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas Night.

1635—"L'Allegro,"—The Day of "The Cheerful Man." "There is in it a certain Doric delicacy whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language."—Sir Henry Wotton.

1636—"Il Penseroso,"—The Day of "The Thoughful Man." "In its sphere it is unexcelled; it is as attar of roses compared with ordinary rose-water."—T. B. Macaulay.

1637—"Lycidas"; a pastoral elegy in memory of Edward King, a college-mate of the poet's, who had been drowned in the Irish Channel. "Unmatched in the whole range of English poetry and never again equaled by Milton himself; it leaves all criticism behind. . . . It marks the point of transition from the early Milton of masque and idyl to the quite other Milton who, after 20 years of hot party struggle, returned to poetry in another vein."—Mark Pattison.

1641—"Of the Reformation in England and the Causes that hitherto Have Hindered It." This, with two other attacks upon Episcopacy, in the same year, was the first of Milton's prose. "His earlier prose has fire and violence and eloquence, but it is too diffuse."—Stopford Brooke.

1644—"The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, restored to the Good of Both Sexes." In this, and three other works on the same subject, written just after his wife had left him, Milton anticipated every one of today's radical arguments for divorce, even to "probationary marriages."

1644—"Areopagetica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing." Itself unlicensed, it is Milton's most brilliant piece of prose. "It is a perfect field of cloth of gold; stiff with gorgeous embroidery."—T. B. Macaulay.

1644—"A Tractate on Education." "A Utopian curriculum of heroic mould."

1645—(January 2). The minor poems first published together, including most of his Latin verse (the best ever composed by an Englishman) and ten of the sonnets.

1649 (February 13)—"The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates"—upholding the act of the Council in putting Charles to death. Following the execution by only a fortnight, it procured him prompt recognition at the hands of the new state.

1649 (October)—"Eikonoklastes" ("The Image Breaker"), in answer to a Continental Royalist work, "Eikon Basilieke" ("The Royal Image").

1651—"Pro populo Anglicano Defensio contra Salmasi Defensionam Regium," in answer to Salmasius' defense or royalty. "Literature knows no more masterly a piece of controversial writing; the commonwealth owed its standing in Europe as much to Milton's tracts as to Cromwell's sword."

1654 (May)—"Defensio Secunda." A largely autobiographic reply to an attack upon himself.

1658—The 23 sonnets, completed; "Soul-animating strains, alas too few!" was Wordsworth's comment upon them, though Dr. Johnson remarked in their connection: "His was a genius that could hew a colossus out of a rock, but could not carve heads on cherry stones."

1667 (April)—"Paradise Lost" (which Channing called "Perhaps the loftiest monument of human genius"), sold to Samuel Simmons for £5, another £5 to be paid if 1300 copies were sold. The idea of the poem had come to the author when he was tutoring youths in St. Bride's Churchyard, but actual work upon it had been postponed till '58. Then, dropping the idea of tragic form, as he had at first planned, he worked upon it something more than five years, dictating it to his (unwilling!) daughters and a young Quaker friend, Thomas Ellwood. A second edition was put out in '74 and a third in '78; the first illustrated edition bears date of 1688. "It is not the greatest epic only because it is not the first."—Samuel Johnson. "It speaks to us of feeling, character, understanding, learning, poetical and oratorical genius. . . . It will maintain its place triumphantly in virtue of the majestice personality which it reveals."—Goethe.

1670—A history of Britain, mainly famous for the Faithorne portrait which prefaces it.

1671—"Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes." The former, a telling of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, is "poorer than the 'Paradise Lost' in that error, sin, and defeat had burned more strongly than redemption into the Puritan life." The latter, a dramatic paraphrase of the 16th chapter of the Book of Judges, is a powerful poem, much in the Greek manner.

SOME IMMORTAL MILTONIC FRAGMENTS, OFTEN QUOTED IN LETTERS AND LIFE.

"From Paradise Lost:"

Flown with insolence and wine.

Unrespited, unpitied, unrepriev'd.

The reign of Chaos and Old Night.

Gorgons and Hydras and Chimaeras dire.

Death grinned horrible a ghastly smile.

Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth.

Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.

And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.

Thick as Autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa.

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woes.

From morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve.—
A Summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropp'd from the Zenith like a falling star.

Deep on his front engraven
Deliberation sat, and public care;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
Majestic though in ruin.

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of ind,
Or where the gorgeous east with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold.

Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence.

From "Paradise Regained":

As children gathering pebbles on the shore.
Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise.

Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence.

From "Samson Agonistes":

For evil news rides post, while good news waits.
What boots it at one gate to make defense,
And at another to let in the foe?

From "Lycidas":

Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new.
Or strictly meditate the thankless Muse.
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade.
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair.

From "L'Allegro":

Linked sweetness, long drawn out.
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty.
Come and trip it as ye go.
On the light, fantastic toe.
Such sights as youthful poets dream.
On Summer eves by haunted stream.

From "Il Penseroso":

Casting a dim religious light.
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Where glowing embers through a room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom.
Peace hath her victories, no less renown'd than war.—To Lord Cromwell.
They also serve who only stand and wait.—Sonnet on his blindness.
As good almost kill a man as kill a good book.—Areopagetic.

TRIBUTES OF POETS AND CRITICS TO THE BARD OF REPUBLICANISM.

I think it would take many Newtons to make one Milton.—S. T. Coleridge.

The third among the sons of light.—P. B. Shelley.

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him.—Charles Lamb.

In Homer's craft Jack Milton thrives.—Robert Burns.

Milton, who was the stair, or high tableland, to lead down the English genius from the summits of Shakespeare.—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

That mighty orb of song, divine Milton.—W. Wordsworth.

He put new life into the masque, the song, the sonnet, the descriptive lyric, the elegy, the choral drama; and he created the epic in England.—Stopford Brooke.

Milton's mind
Shall dwell with us, an influence and a power.—Robert Southey.

If Milton resembled a Roman Republican in the severe and stoic elevation of his character, he also shared the aristocratic intellectualism of the classical type.—Mark Pattison.

O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of Time and Eternity,
God-gifted organ voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages.
LORD TENNYSON.

All he wrote is eloquent in his plea for human liberty. He advocated the cause of the rights of mankind with the enthusiasm that afterwards characterized, to a still greater degree, the utterances of Shelley.—Edmund Clarence Stedman.

Child of organic numbers!
Old scholar of the spheres!
Thy spirit never slumbers,
But rolls about our ears
Forever and forever.
—JOHN KEATS.

He was a man whom England never produced another more worthy of her pride: a man raised by his endowments almost above the level and lot of humanity, in whom a genius that resembled inspiration, and attainments which might have been thought too various and extensive for human capacity, were sanctified by the grace of God, and devoted to the freedom, the advancement and the happiness of man.—C. R. Edmonds.

Milton's the prince of poets—so we say;
A little heavy, but no less divine;
An independent being in his day—
Learn'd, pious, temperate in love and wine.
—LORD BYRON.

In our race are thousands of readers, presently there will be millions, who know not a word of Greek and Latin and will never learn those languages. If this host of readers is ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients but through the original poetry of Milton, who has the like power and charm, because he has the like great style.—Matthew Arnold.

In majestic cadence rises and fall
The mighty undulations of thy song,
O sightless bard, England's Maeonides!
And ever and anon, high over all
Uplifted, a ninth wave, superb and strong,
Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.
—LONGFELLOW.

He has none of the intellectual subtlety of Donne, none of the psychological intensity of Pope, none of the spiritual tenderness of Wordsworth; his merits depend almost entirely upon a facility of lofty and grandiose vein coupled with a complete mastery of the resources of verbal sound. His imagination, within its own province, was supreme; but it was, so to speak, a material imagination, perpetually concerned with objects which, however, vast and however splendid, still remained objects of sense.—Augustine Birrell.

Three poets, in three distance ages born,
Greece, Italy and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
The next in majesty; in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go;
To make a third she joined the former two.
—JOHN DRYDEN.

There are some of us who don't like Milton. We dare not say so, in so many words, and we try to pretend we have read the "Paradise Lost" quite through. But when, in our secret hearts, we admit the truth to our most confidential selves, let us remember that it is not always wise to find fault with the treasures of the past, merely because we cannot see treasures in them today. It is just as possible the fault may lie—not with Milton.—Professor Saintsbury.

The White House China

THERE is nearing completion in the White House at Washington one of the most interesting historical collections to be found in the country, writes Abby G. Baker in the Century. It is a collection of Presidential ware—largely composed of pieces of china, but also containing a few pieces of plate—begun by Mrs. Roosevelt soon after she became mistress of the famous old mansion.

The inception of the collection was almost by accident. While General Theodore A. Bingham, now Police Commissioner of Greater New York, was superintendent of public buildings and grounds at Washington, a position which entails supervision of the White House he found that there was comparatively little of the china or the plate left which had been used through the administrations of the various Chief Executives.

Before his appointment as superintendent he had served as military aide to our American embassies at both Berlin and Rome, and while there had noted the veneration and care bestowed upon the royal residences and their belongings. It did not take him long to discover the painful lack in that regard in the President's house. Meeting the writer of this article one day in the early Summer of 1901, he asked her why she did not write a "story" on the Presidential china in the White House and awaken an interest in it that would lead to its preservation.

"If somebody does not do that pretty soon," he added energetically, "there won't be any left to preserve."

When the article was published President Roosevelt and his family occupied the White House and Colonel Thomas W. Symons had succeeded as superintendent of public buildings and grounds. The article, however, came under his notice and he called it to the attention of the President's wife.

Mrs. Roosevelt has always taken the greatest interest in everything pertaining to American history, and she saw that it lay within her power to preserve at least specimens of the historic ware. She designed two cabinets and had them placed in the lower east corridor of the mansion; where they could be inspected by all visitors, and then asked the writer to come to the White House and select the pieces of china which should be placed in the cabinets.

While this work was being done the new state dining set which Mrs. Roosevelt had ordered for the White House arrived and, including the pieces chosen from it, eight shelves were filled with china which was used during the administrations of Lincoln, Grant, Hayes, Arthur, Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley and Roosevelt—a shelf to each administration.

The china selected by Mrs. Roosevelt for the state dining set could not be in better taste. It is Wedgewood and is decorated in a simple Colonial pattern in gold, with the obverse of the great seal enameled in colors on each dish. There are over 1200 pieces in the set, and to accompany it she ordered 144 pieces of glassware. A dinner platter, dinner, breakfast, tea and soup plates, with a tea cup and a coffee cup and the saucers, were selected from this set for the collection.

Neither Mrs. McKinley nor Mrs. Cleveland ordered much china for the Executive Mansion, but plates and cups and saucers of their selection were placed in the cabinets.

Mrs. Harrison was very artistic in her tastes, as well as patriotic, and she greatly desired to have the goldenrod adopted as the National flower. When she found that she would have to order some new china she designated the decoration for it, combining the goldenrod and leaf with the Indian corn and stalk. On each piece this design, with the coat-of-arms of the United States and a rim of golden stars, was emblazoned. In addition she selected many pieces of cut glass.

Through the public press it was made known that the collection had been started and in order to secure their co-operation wherever it was possible the descendants of the Presidents were corresponded with or seen personally, and a number of invaluable contributions were secured in that way. From the first Mrs. Roosevelt desired that the collection should be patriotic, and that the pieces for it should be either given or loaned rather than purchased. While this has sometimes added to the difficulty of obtaining the ware, it has made the collection of vastly more worth.