

**THE MINOR POEMS
OF JOHN MILTON**

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The minor poems of John Milton by John Milton

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JOHN MILTON

**THE MINOR POEMS
OF JOHN MILTON**



John Milton

TO

JULIUS HAWLEY SEELYE, D.D., LL.D.,

MY "CHUM" IN COLLEGE
AND THE BEST OF FRIENDS EVER SINCE,

THIS BOOK

IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

Dedicated

*We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spoke, the faith and morals hold
That Milton held!*

WORDSWORTH.

The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior blooms and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify.

MACAULAY.

P R E F A C E.

THIS book includes all the minor poems of Milton in English except his "translations" of *Psalms* i.-viii. and lxxx.-lxxxviii. and of Horace, *Ode* i. 5. The juvenile "paraphrases" of *Psalms* cxiv. and cxxxvi. are not put by Milton among his "translations." These, with a few other early or incomplete poems which at first I intended to omit, have been added in an Appendix.

A considerable portion of the matter in the Notes was prepared more than twenty years ago. In revising and completing it for the press, I have made free use of Keightley's, Brown's, and Masson's excellent editions, as the frequent references to them will show. Masson's edition (I mean the larger one in three octavo volumes) is indispensable to the critical student. In the notes on *Lycidas* I have drawn some material from Mr. C. S. Jerram's scholarly monograph on that poem (London, 1874).

It seems to me not improper to add that many notes which I do not credit to other editions wherein the same or similar explanations or illustrations may be found, are honestly my own, having been obtained by independent study. Here and there, indeed, that I might avoid even the appearance of injustice to a former editor, I have given him credit for what was really as much mine as his.

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 23, 1887.

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INTRODUCTION
TO
THE MINOR POEMS OF MILTON.

I. THE LIFE AND WORKS OF MILTON.

JOHN MILTON was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, near St. Paul's, London, on the 9th of December, 1608, and was baptized on the 20th in the adjacent Allhallows Church. His father, John Milton, was a scrivener,* who had taken up that profession after being disinherited by his father, under-ranger of the royal forest of Shotover near Oxford, for becoming a Protestant. He was prosperous in business, and acquired "a plentiful estate." He had also a talent for music, and became noted among the composers of the time. The poet owed his skill as an organist to his father's training.

Whether Milton wrote verses at the age of ten, as Aubrey tells us, or not, he early gave promise of becoming a scholar. He says himself: "My father destined me while yet a child to the study of polite literature, which I embraced with such avidity that from the twelfth year of my age I hardly ever re-

* The *scrivener* (Old French *escrivain*) was originally, as the name implies, a mere *scribe*, or legal copyist, but came to do some of the minor work of the attorney, such as drawing up wills, bonds, mortgages, leases, and other legal contracts. He was also in many cases a money-lender, using his own money or that of his clients.