

Christians, amid the spoiling of his worldly goods and the collapse of other earthly blessings, he could still be cheerful, because he still had himself as "a better possession and an abiding."

We have two last glimpses of him. One is given us by the painter Richardson, who describes him, in 1671, with the bookseller Millington leading him by the hand. He is dressed in a green camblet coat, and no longer wears his small silver-hilted sword; and sometimes he might be seen sitting in a gray, coarse coat at the door of his house in Bunhill Fields in warm sunny weather, to enjoy the fresh air.

A little later on, a Dorsetshire clergyman, Dr. Wright, saw him "in a small house, up one pair of stairs, sitting in an elbow chair, in black clothes, in a room hung with rusty green, neat enough, pale, but not cadaverous, courteous and stately in manner, and his voice still musically agreeable." The end was not far off. On

Nov. 8, 1674, "the gout struck in," and with perfect calm and faith he passed, after the martyrdom of that life of hurricane and disappointment, —

"To where beyond these voices there is peace."

I have endeavored to point out the characteristics of Milton's childhood, of his boyhood, of his youth and early manhood. I think that the two leading characteristics of the troubled later half of his life were indomitable fortitude and unswerving faith. What is fortitude? Locke tells us that it is "the quiet possession of a man's self, and an undisturbed doing of his duty whatever evil besets him or danger lies in his way." If so, was there any one who showed it more heroically than this poet, who in his blindness, persecution, peril, and misery could yet write, —

"I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward."

And as for unswerving faith, the principle of his life even in youth was —

“All is, if I have faith to use it so,
As ever in my great Taskmaster’s eye.”

The law of his life was “Be thou faithful unto death,” and he believed the promise, “I will give thee the crown of life.” And thus, amid the frightful welter of national and individual catastrophe which crashed in ruin about his later years, Milton was enabled, by the grace of God, with calm of mind and new acquist of experience, all passions spent, “to wait in peaceful darkness for the unconceived Dawn.”

These, then, are the high lessons which his life has to teach us, — in childhood a sweet seriousness; in boyhood a resolute diligence; in youth high self-respect and the white flower of a blameless life; in manhood self-sacrificing energy and heroic public service; and amid the crowded agonies of all his later years an inflexible for-

titude and an indomitable faith. He, like Robert Browning, “believed in the soul and was very sure of God.” And the truths he has chiefly to teach are that —

“Virtue would see to do what virtue would,
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk :

and

“He that hath light within his own clean breast
May sit i’ the centre and enjoy bright day;
But he that hath a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the midday sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.”

In these two papers I may seem to have been speaking much more of a Great Man than of “Great Books;” but I have already explained that Milton’s immortal writings, both in verse and prose, are, to an unusual extent, the reflection of his splendid personality. My object in these papers has been, simply and solely, to encourage in my readers, and especially in the young,

a love for good reading; and it has seemed to me that dealing with Milton —

“Whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart,”

I might the more easily induce some to study his writings if I tried to set before them the way in which those writings illustrate the grandeur of soul that characterizes one of the noblest of England's sons.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

I HAVE spoken in these papers of the glory and the benefit of great books in general; I have pointed to the supremely imaginative grandeur of those mighty lessons which we may learn from Shakspeare, that “Master of those who know.” I have spoken of Milton, towering, like a colossal statue of antique Parian marble, over those low levels of sluggish life “where every molehill is a mountain, and every thistle a forest tree.” I have dwelt on the keen insight, homely wisdom, and spiritual faithfulness of John Bunyan, the immortal tinker of Bedford. I have devoted three papers to those lessons of consummate grandeur which we may learn from the “Divina Commedia” of