

Question! - Attempt a critical note on Milton's unique position in English literature.

Answer! - In appreciation of Milton let us cite some important observations to prove his greatness. These observations are made by eminent creative writers and poets!

(i)

Three poets, in three distant 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 join'd the former two.

- Dryden.

(ii)

"Of all English poets that ever lived, Milton had certainly the finest ear."

- Cowper, Letters to Lady Hesketh, March 1786

(iii)

" Thy Soul was like a
star, and dwelt apart,
Thou hadst a voice whose
sound was like the
sea.

Pure as the naked hea-
vens, majestic, free!"

- William Wordsworth
He died

(iv)

Who was the sire of an
immortal strain ...

... the third among the
Sons of Light.

- P.B. Shelley,
'Adonais'

(v)

O mighty mouth'd inve-
ntor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of
Time and eternity,
God-gifted voice of Eng-
land,

Milton, a name to
resound for ages.

- Tennyson.

Milton stands head and sho-
ulders above all other poets
of England, and perhaps with
the exception of Shakespeare,

He is the only English poet, who can represent English literature in an international congress of poetry. Milton ranks amongst the greatest poets of the world - Homer, Virgil, ~~Shakespeare~~ Dante, Firdausi, Surdas etc. and indeed it is an exceptional honour and pride for England to have given birth to such an immortally inspiring muse. "Milton's inflexible personal righteousness and his singular majesty of utterance have made him the least popular of the great English poets" says Saintsbury. It is indeed possible still to feel for passages in Milton's writings as well as in his life the aversion, which made the incurably romantic Royalist, Dr. Samuel Johnson, disparage him in the 'Lives of the Poets'. What the serious reader of English literature must avoid, however, is

not the natural inclination of feeling, but tame submission to dictate of any coteries of the moment, which demands that a famous poet shall be determined in favour of some current and transient fashion in verse.

An age, which repudiated obligation and which believed that liberty and liberalism in art and life are one and the same thing, is sure to be an age in which Milton will be disparaged. Simpudence of assertion and ~~affection~~ ~~affection~~ affectation of singularity find in the oceanic magnitude of Milton an opportunity for exhibitionism. "We should remain undisturbed. The prose and verse of Milton have the might, majesty, dominion and power of the prose and verse of Dante and Virgil," says Mark Pattison. "Milton, the immortal poet of the immortal poem, para-

disc lost," says Prof. Dobson
"is rightly and judiciously
classified with the two great
epic poets of the world - Homer
and Virgil, but he surpasses
either, possessing the one's
loftiness of thought and the
other's sublimity."

Milton gave to England a
poetic message, which could
be given neither by Chaucer
nor by Spenser... the two great
English poets, who preceded
him. He was the first English
poet who interpreted poetry
not only as 'joy of soul', or
as a 'criticism of life' but as
the sublime message of
God to man. He, through his
poetic art, revealed the absolute
truth that the highest
and noblest function of poetry
is to make man a divine being
by purifying and ennobling his
soul. Closely connected with
the ~~firmness~~ firmness of his
style, is the perfect workman-
ship of his verse. As Matthew

Arnold has said, "In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction, he is ~~as~~ as admirable as Virgil and Dante, and in this respect he is unique among us." Another important factor which contributed to the uniqueness of Milton's poetic art, is unconscious affinity, which we find in his poetry, between the poet's personality and the spirit of the poem. Milton had a firm ethical conviction that for becoming a great poet one should, first of all, possess a great soul. He is the only English poet who combined the majesty of poetic art with the sublimity of man's soul.

"To the greatness of poetry Milton joined the splendour and majesty of a fine and lofty character." Living at a time when criticism began to purify the verse of England and being himself well acquainted with the great

classical models, his work is seldom weakened by the false concepts and the intemperance of the Elizabethan writers and yet, is as imaginative as theirs. He has not their naturalness, not all their intensity, but he has a larger grace, a more finished art and a sublimer dignity. All the kinds of poetry, which he touched with ease of great strength and with so much weight that they became new in his hands. He put a new life into masque, the sonnet, the elegy, the song and the chorus drama, and he created the epic in England." says Saintsbury.

The position, which Milton occupied in the realm of English poetic art is, indeed, unique and novel, so long the students of English poetry study the works of English poets, they would take off their hat before such

Page - (08)

poetic pieces as 'Paradise Lost'
and 'Paradise Regained'.

The end.

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