

**MILTON: A SHEAF OF GLEANINGS
AFTER HIS BIOGRAPHERS AND
ANNOTATORS: I. GENEALOGICAL
INVESTIGATION. II. NOTES ON
SOME OF HIS POEMS**

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Milton: A Sheaf of Gleanings After His Biographers and Annotators: I. Genealogical investigation. II. Notes on some of his poems by Joseph Hunter

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JOSEPH HUNTER

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MILTON.

A SHEAF OF GLEANINGS

AFTER HIS

BIOGRAPHERS AND ANNOTATORS :

- I. GENEALOGICAL INVESTIGATION.
- II. NOTES ON SOME OF HIS POEMS.

BY JOSEPH HUNTER.

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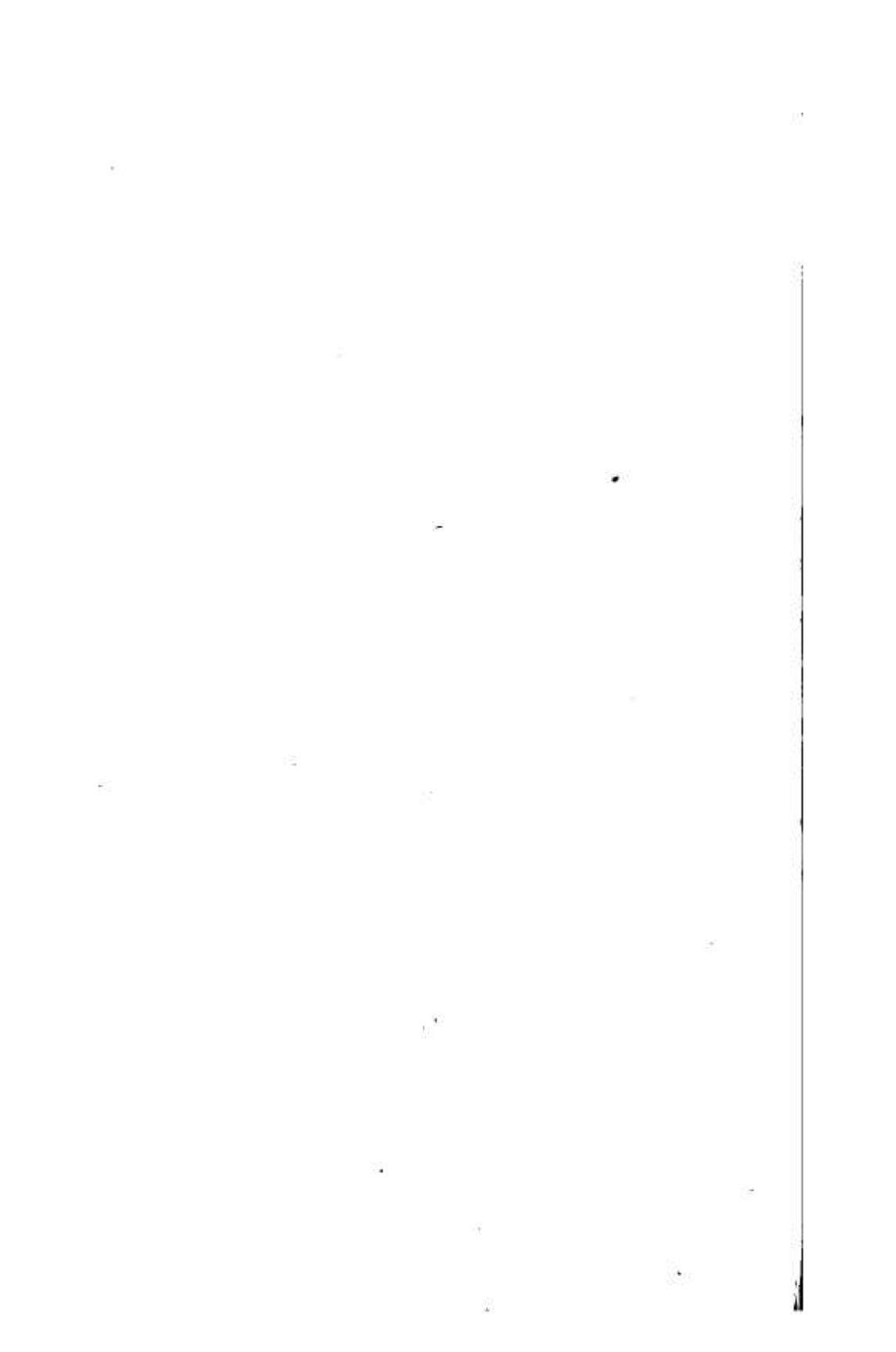
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MILTON.

I. GENEALOGICAL INVESTIGATION.

I. HIS PATERNAL ANCESTRY.—In a well-known passage of the *Defensio Secunda*, Milton claims for himself that he was of generous descent: "Londini sum natus, genere honesto." Yet no proof of this has been given either by his earlier or later biographers, and we should apply in vain to the ordinary sources of information of this kind, for any thing that could support such a claim, if the phrase is to be taken in any of the higher senses which belong to it.

For any thing beyond the father the little that has been transmitted to us is comprised in the following statement in Mr. Archdeacon Todd's *Life of the Poet*:—"The grandfather was Under-ranger or Keeper of the forest of Shotover near Halton in Oxfordshire. He was a bigotted Papist, and disinherited his son, the poet's father, because, when a member of Christ Church, Oxford, he became a Protestant."

I have discovered evidence which enables me to give a little more of precision and authority to some part of this statement.

There exists among the Records of the Exchequer a series of Rolls known by the name of the Recusant Rolls, on which was entered year by year an account of the fines levied on those persons who had not acquiesced in the Reformation recently effected, for non-attendance at their parish churches, or of compositions made by them.

Each county is treated apart, and in the Roll for Oxfordshire of the forty-third year of Queen Elizabeth, 1601, we find the name of "Richard Milton of Stanton St. John, yeoman." On the 13th of July 1601, this person was fined in the sum of £60 for not having resorted to his parish church for the three months following the 6th of December, 1600. This was ruinous work to a family of but slender fortunes: but he was not subdued by it, for a second fine of the same amount was imposed upon him soon after for not having attended church from the 13th of July, 1601, to the 4th of October following, nor having made his submission, nor promised to be conformable, pursuant to the statute of the 23rd of Elizabeth. Another inhabitant of the parish of Stanton St. John, named Thomas Stacey, was subjected to the same penalty.

Stanton St. John is one of the townships which form the Hundred of Bullington, one of the Hundreds of Oxfordshire. In this Hundred is Shotover, parcel of the forest of Bernwood, and Stowe-wood, the former being of the extent of 811 acres, and the latter of 485, according to a survey made in the 9th of Elizabeth. Shotover bounded on another wood called St. John's Wood, which belonged to Magdalene College, and a wood and lease of pasture belonging to Corpus Christi College, which wood and lease were known by the name of Pirial Plain, "and so continueth forth by the lordship of Horspath to the lordship of Whately in the east, and to the lordship of Forest-Hill and Stanton St. John north-east."* We have, therefore, found a Milton living on the borders of Shotover Forest, a man of a certain substance, and so zealously attached to the ancient form and order of

* Forest Documents in the Exchequer.