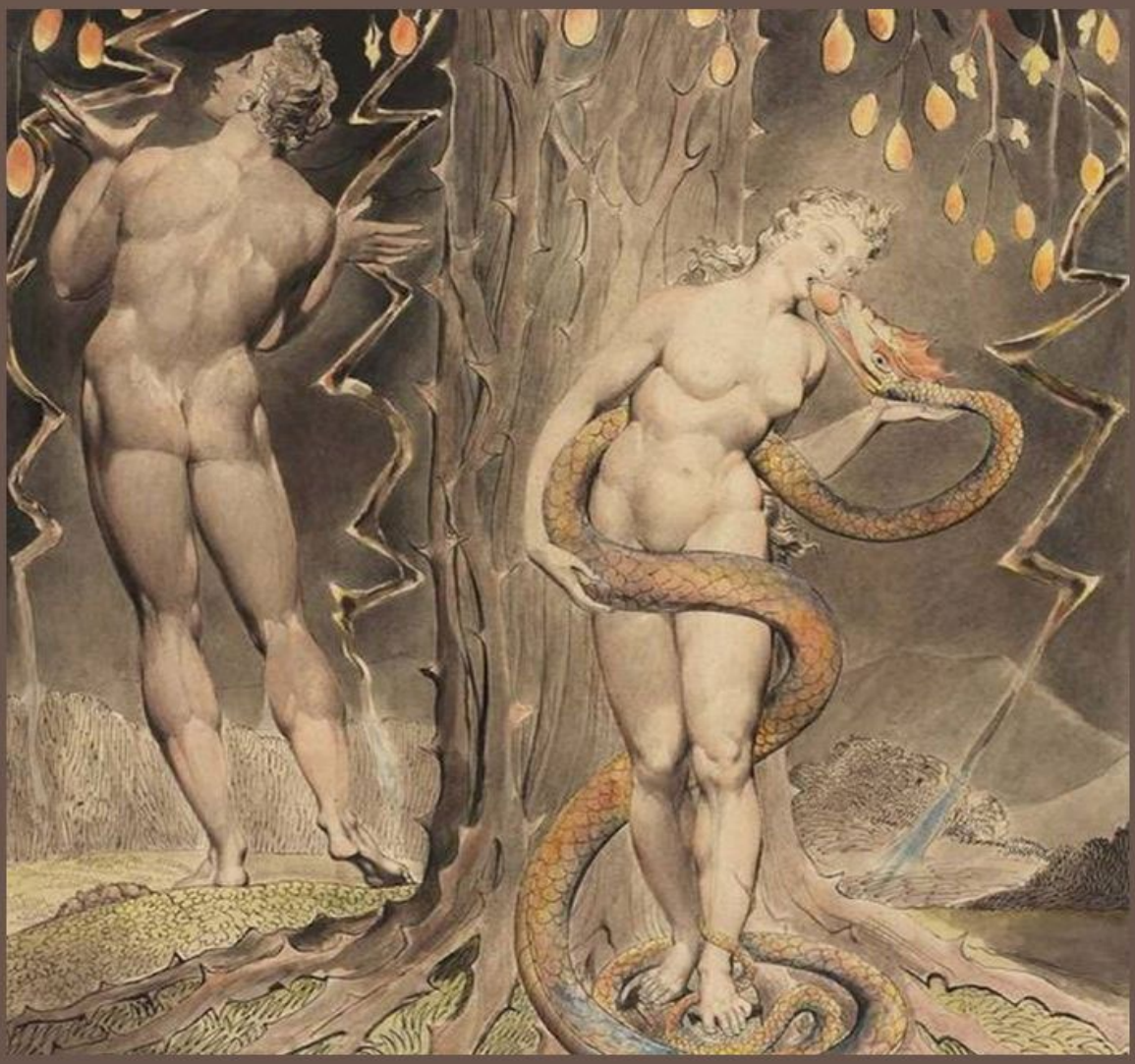
JOHN MILTON



PARADISE LOST

ANNOTATED & ILLUSTRATED EDITION

Paradise Lost

John Milton

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John Milton – A Primer

John Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608. He was the third child and namesake of a prosperous scrivener (lawyer and law stationer) whose puritanical leanings did not prevent him from conforming to the established church, from cultivating with some success the art of music, and from giving his children a liberal education and a pleasant, happy home. From this father Milton must have inherited much of his genius — a genius fostered by the wisdom and liberality of the parent to an extent that can scarcely be paralleled in our literary annals, save in the cases of Robert Browning and John Stuart Mill. To his mother, too, he owed not a little, as every good man does as well as to his early tutors, with whom he seems to have been on especially affectionate terms. The noted musicians who frequented his father's house must also have had an influence on him, and later, his friendship with Charles Diodati ; but the direct influence of his fellows seems to have counted for less with Milton than with any other great world-poet. The indirect influence of men .through their books counted, however, for more with him than can be estimated in words. From his earliest youth he was an omnivorous reader and student, and to this day he stands as our most learned poet and cultured artist, Ben Jonson not excepted.

About 1620 Milton entered St. Paul's School as a day scholar and remained there until 1625, when he commenced residence, during the Easter term, at Christ's College, Cambridge. Although he continued his university studies for seven years, taking his B.A. in 1629 and his M.A. in 1632, he plainly did not enter into the spirit of the place ; and he heads the list of great English men of letters who have been more or less out of sympathy with their alma mater — a list that includes such names as Dryden, Gibbon, and Shelley. But he was laying the broad foundations of his character and his culture. The personal purity preserved through all temptation and ridicule (his fellow students dubbed him lady as much on this account, we cannot doubt, as on account of his conspicuous beauty of face and figure) enabled him to expound as no other poet has ever done

" — the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity ; "

the self-absorption in the pursuit of high ideals, the proud aloofness from common things and common men that characterized him, may have lessened his human sympathies, but assuredly made possible that supremely ideal love of religion and his native land that prompted and accomplished the noblest deed of patriotic self-sacrifice that has yet been recorded to the credit of our race ; and finally it is almost impossible to believe that he would ever have become master of so profound and exact an erudition and so serene and balanced a culture had he not profited by that systematic training and discipline of the faculties which is alone imparted in full measure by a historic university. In view of these facts, we may well conclude that Cambridge meant more to Milton than he was himself aware of, and we can afford to leave to his biographers the question whether he was actually "whipt" by his

unsympathetic tutor, one William Chappell. But we should remember that during his university course he found time to write much of his Latin verse, as well as such great English poems as the ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity", the epitaph "On Shakespeare ", and the sonnet "On his being arrived at the age of twenty-three." This was no slight actual accomplishment in verse, but more important was the formation of the resolution to which he consistently adhered — to order his life.

" As ever in his great Task-Master's eye."

When he left Cambridge the young student betook himself to his father's residence at Horton in Buckinghamshire. Although he had criticized the administration of the university, he was pressed to take a fellowship, but that would have meant practically taking orders and, while such had once been his intention, he felt that he could not conscientiously pursue the latter course. Theological difficulties do not seem to have beset him, for he subscribed the Articles and his Arian proclivities were a matter of later j-ears. It was at the organization of the church then controlled by Laud, who was fostering to the best of his abilities the high church reaction that the Puritan idealist looked askance. If Milton had continued at Cambridge he would have been the centre of many an academic dispute; it is impossible to say what would have happened if he had entered the church in any active way and been brought into personal contact with Laud. The genius of Boswell would have failed to do justice to that encounter; it would have needed a Shakespeare.

If Milton read his own character as we now do and restrained his ardent nature that he might allow his powers to ripen through solitude and study, he more than deserves the epithets he bestowed upon his favorite Spenser — "

sage and serious." If he did not fully understand himself but simply felt conscious of high powers and a mission to fulfill, he deserves all the praise that so amply belongs to those " who only stand and wait." But much praise is also due to the father who, now that his business career was over and his chief interest was necessarily centered in his children's success, was content to do his share of waiting till the genius of his son should in the fullness of time be manifest to the world. That genius was slowly developing through study, contemplation, intercourse with nature, and occasional wooing of the muse. He mastered the classics and the chief writers of more recent times until he may fairly be said to have lived with them. He contemplated life with all its possibilities and became more firmly fixed in his determination to devote himself to the service of humanity, to lead a life that should be a true poem, and to leave behind him some child of his imagination that posterity would not willingly let die. He watched also with poignant anguish the headlong course of Charles and Laud toward destruction and saw that they would involve in ruin, not merely themselves but the nation for which he already felt the burning passion of the man who not loving easily still loves well. But he also contemplated the serene beauty of the peaceful landscape around him and the spirit of nature took hold upon him — not as it had done on Shakespeare and was to do on Wordsworth — but in a true, noble, and elevating way. Finally he wrote verse to relieve his pent up feelings or to oblige friends, but never without keeping his eyes fixed upon the masters of his craft, and registering a solemn vow not to allow himself to be tempted by easy praise to abandon the arduous upward path on which his feet were set. It is to the five years (1632— 1637) spent at Horton that we are said to owe L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Arcades, Comus, and Lycidas — a fact that should make the little Buckinghamshire village second only to Stratford in interest to all lovers of English poetry.

In the spring of 1638 Milton undertook to put the finishing touch upon his education by setting out for Italy. The spell that she exercises on every liberal soul, had already been felt by him through the medium of her great poets, but it was not to be permanently sealed upon his spirit as it has been since upon Byron, Shelley, Landor, and Browning. He was fitter than these to penetrate into Italy's secret and it is interesting to speculate what a longer residence there would have meant for him ; but that was not to be. Yet we may be sure that no nobler stranger has ever since apostolic times set foot upon that sacred soil so often trod by alien feet — not Chaucer or Goethe, not Luther or Bayard. Shakespeare never saw the land that his genius so often adorned and Dante was its native — and it is with Shakespeare and Dante alone that we can safely compare Milton. The details of his journey are scant but even the few facts we know must be here rapidly passed over. He gave and received compliments, was hospitably entertained, discussed philosophy sagely and religion imprudently, proved that although he was an angel not an Angle, the Angles were not entirely barbarous, heard Leonora Baroni sing — and met Galileo. " The meeting between the two great blind men of their century," writes Dr. Garnett, " is one of the most picturesque in history ; it would have been more pathetic still if Galileo could have known that his name would be written in ' Paradise Lost,' or Milton could have foreseen that within thirteen years he too would see only with the inner eye, but that the calamity which disabled the astronomer would restore inspiration to the poet."

The young traveler had been some time in Naples when news from England warned him of the fact that the political and ecclesiastical crisis had come, and that it was his duty as a true patriot to turn his face homeward. He accordingly

relinquished his design of proceeding to Sicily and Greece, and after another visit to Florence, which fascinated him, and a short stay at Geneva where he probably learned of the death of his friend Diodati, he once more set foot on English soil toward the end of July, 1639. Here his first duty was an act of piety — he wrote his greatest and practically his last Latin poem — the *Epithaphium Damonis* in honor of Diodati — a tribute the exquisite sincerity and beauty of which its foreign medium of expression could not impair but unfortunately obscures to those of his countrymen whose classical education has been neglected. Then he set himself to a less congenial but in every way honorable task, he began to teach his two nephews, Edward and John Phillips. Milton as a schoolmaster may suggest to some the veriest profanation of genius, to others that irony of fate at which we smile or jest ; but no one who has read the tractate entitled " Of Education," or rightly gauged Milton's character, or comprehended the true dignity of the teacher's office will ever regret the quiet months spent by the poet-pedagogue in the house in Aldersgate street where he could smile grimly at the failure of the attempts to subdue Scotland and wait for the Long Parliament to throw open the door concealing " that two-handed engine."

For a short space after his return Milton seems to have formulated no plan of action that concerned the outer world, but he did contemplate a great poem that should be his lifework, although he could not definitely settle upon a theme. "King Arthur" was abandoned for a lesser though great poet. " Paradise Lost " was begun as a drama and fortunately laid aside for epic treatment. The times began to call for something besides poetry and Milton felt that he had something else in him to give. For twenty years he wrote no verse save a comparatively small number of sonnets — great it is true — and his silence curing a period when most poets do their best work has been regretted by

many an admirer and by more than one able critic. This regret is natural but probably unreasonable as we shall soon see.

The humbling of Charles, the arrest and imprisonment of Laud, and the execution of Strafford, had shown the religious and political reformers their power, and had brought into prominence not merely men of action but also a crowd of zealous and advanced theorists and of visionary schemers for the ordering of church and state. It is always so with revolutions. The French had their Abbe Siéyès and we Americans had scores of theorists from Jefferson down. But no such ideal reformer as Milton has ever since lifted his voice above the din of party and faction — and if we convict him of partisanship, we must nevertheless figure him to ourselves as a seraphic partisan. His first utterances were naturally on the subject of episcopacy. As Dr. Garnett has pointed out, it is difficult for us now not merely to see any great force in Milton's arguments, but to comprehend at all the point of view maintained by him in the five tractates of 1841—42. It was not a question of expediency that he was considering ; it was a question whether God or the devil should rule in England, if not in the world. The sublime confidence with which he promulgated his ideas of church polity moves our wonder; the impassioned language in which he clothed those ideas moves not only our admiration but a sense of our infinite inferiority. Such swelling periods of prophecy and denunciation, of high purpose and holy hope have been possible to one man alone — to the future author of " Paradise Lost." Whether or not we love Laud less and Milton more, whether or not we seek or shun the arena of religious controversy, we cannot but conclude that the crisis which called forth the following dithyrambic utterance was not lacking in momentous results to England's literature or to the character and work of her noblest son :

"Then amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may perhaps be heard offering at high strains in new and lofty measures, to sing and and celebrate Thy Divine mercies and marvelous judgments in this land throughout all ages; whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her old vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day when Thou, the Eternal and shortly-expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honors and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming Thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth ; where they undoubtedly, that by their labors, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities, legions, and thrones into their glorious titles, and in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in over-measure forever."

The out-break of war in the autumn of 1642 forced upon Milton the question whether he should take up arms in defense of the principles he advocated. We do not know his exact course of reasoning, but we can infer it. He could serve his country and his God better with his pen than with his sword, so instead of fighting, he wrote his sonnet " When the Assault was Intended to the City" — that superb plea for the inviolability of the " Muse's bower." To blame Milton for not becoming a soldier is like blaming Washington for not writing an epic on the Revolutionary War after he had sheathed his sword. The man whose

imagination was already revolving the war in heaven was not wanted on the fields of Naseby and Dunbar ; the prophet of the glories of a renovated and redeemed England had faith enough to believe that God would, in due season, show forth the man who should render those glories possible. He could not foresee that the representatives of the people for whom he sang and Cromwell fought would one day refuse the need of a statue to their greatest ruler and soldier; but could he rise from the dead he would set the seal of his approval upon the fiery protest against a nation's ingratitude recently wrung from a poet into whom he has breathed not a little of his own impassioned eloquence and love of liberty :

" The enthroned Republic from her kinglier throne
Spake, and her speech was Cromwell's. Earth has known
No lordlier presence. How should Cromwell stand
By kinglets and by queenlings hewn in stone?"

But while Oxford was protesting her loyalty and Cornwall was rising in arms and the king's cause seemed by no means hopeless, Milton for the first time in his life apparently, was falling in love. Exactly how this came about is not known. He seems to have gone to Oxfordshire in the spring of 1643 to collect a debt from a Cavalier squire, Richard Powell by name, and to have returned to London in a month with this gentleman's daughter, Mary, as his bride. A party of her relatives soon after visited the pair and the young wife appears to have enjoyed their dancing more than she did her husband's philosophizing, for she shortly left him under promise of return and took up her abode with her father, from whose protection she could not be induced to withdraw for about two years. Whether Milton began his pamphleteering on divorce before or after his wife's desertion is a moot point ; indeed this whole matrimonial affair is the most mysterious, perhaps, on

record save that of a very different character — Sam Houston of San Jacinto fame. But Milton wrote four learned treatises on divorce while Houston consoled himself with a Cherokee squaw. The divorce literature was too strong diet even for his co-religionists and had to be published without license — a fact to which we owe the greatest and best known of his prose writings — the noble "Areopagitica ; a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England."

We cannot discuss here Milton's view of what an ideal marriage ought to be, or his notions about divorce which he threatened to put into practice, and can say only a word about his relations to his wives and to women in general. On the last of these points he has been much criticized, not always with entire justice. We know that his first wife returned to him of her own accord, a fact which is decidedly in his favor. We have his sonnet to his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, by which any woman might be proud to think she would be remembered; and with his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, he seems to have lived as congenially as could be expected when all the circumstances are taken into account. His daughters by his first wife have won a sympathy which they hardly deserve. Reading aloud in a language one doesn't understand is not an enjoyable task ; but what are we to say of the characters and dispositions of women who could lack reverence for such a father? Admiration and sympathy are two of the noblest attributes of womanhood, and who has ever been fitter to elicit them than Milton in his blindness? Perhaps the best excuse for these daughters is that they were trained by their mother. We may dismiss this unpleasant topic with the remark that it is well to note that in the scanty tale of Milton's English sonnets there are four addressed to women, in which there is not a line to make us believe that he had a low estimate of the sex, and much to

convince us that he was capable of extending to them that intelligent admiration which the mass of mankind are only just beginning to recognize as their due.

In 1645 or rather in the early part of 1646 at the solicitation of Humphrey Moseley the publisher, Milton brought out the first edition of his poems, English and Latin. He prefixed a quotation from Virgil which showed that he regarded the publication as premature. It was an unpropitious time for the Muses, but it was not many years before he was plagiarized from in a shocking manner by Robert Barron, and if imitation is the sincerest flattery, he ought to have been pleased, but probably was not. Meantime his school seems to have prospered and he worked away at his studies, gathering materials for his " History of England," and perhaps writing his treatise " De Doctrina Christiana " which did not see the light until 1825. In 1647 his father died and the consequent improvement in his circumstances led him to give up all his pupils save his nephews. So he lived on and looked out at the swift succession of events that seemed about to change entirely the course of English history. He was still conscious of great powers and still yearning for an opportunity to do something for his people, but he preferred a scholarly seclusion, as he tells us, to a station " at the doors of the court with a petitioner's face."

With the king's death, however, a change took place in Milton's affairs. Charles was beheaded on January 30, 1649; in exactly two weeks Milton had published his pamphlet " The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates " in which he maintained the right of " any who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due Conviction, to depose, and put him to Death, if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected, or denied to do it." This was a bold and certainly expeditious defense of the actions of his

party ; how bold may be somewhat realized when we remember how the news of the execution of Louis XVI. nearly a century and a half later resounded through Europe. Even the philosophic mind of Burke was unhinged by the latter catastrophe ; the prior and more astounding event simply woke Milton up. Merely as a private citizen with convictions of his own he dared to defend a deed which had filled a whole people with horror and consternation ; to the seductions of sympathy stimulated by the timely appearance of the " Eikon Basilike" he opposed the warning voice of reason and the high clear strains of duty. The popular leaders could overlook him no longer and he was offered the post of Latin Secretary to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The salary was ample and the position such as even a Milton could accept, for he was not merely to carry on diplomatic correspondence in the language of scholars but, we cannot doubt, to be the recognized spokesman of his party. As Dr. Garnett happily expresses it, he was to be the " Orpheus among the Argonauts of the Commonwealth."

His first work that we need notice is his " Eikonoklastes " a reply to the "Eikon Basilike " of Bishop Gauden, then believed by many to be the work of the "Royal Martyr " himself. Milton seems to have shirked the task knowing that to accomplish it effectively would necessitate depreciation of the dead king and much chaffering over straws. In spite of this known reluctance on his part and of the obvious fact that much of his matter and manner was determined by circumstances that he could not control, critics have not ceased to search his book minutely for data on which to rest charges against his personal integrity, his consistency, even his taste in literature. But he was soon to undertake a greater task. The learned Frenchman, Salmasius, had been employed to unmask the batteries of his ponderous erudition, so valued at the time, in defense

of Charles I. His " Defensio Regia " appeared in the latter part of 1649, and Milton was directed by the Council to answer it. He did at the cost of his sight.

For some years his eyes had been failing and one was already gone. He was advised that any further strain would speedily induce total blindness, yet he never wavered in the performance of his duty. He calmly faced the loss of a sense that every true scholar must value more than life itself; he put from him all anticipation of the noble pleasure he had looked forward to deriving from the first sight of his great poem in print ; he may even have despaired of ever composing that poem at all ; he looked forward to the miseries of a cheerless old age, and without repining accepted a commission that could not under any circumstances have been specially grateful to him — all because he deemed it right that his country and party should make a proper reply to the charges that had been laid against them in the forum of European opinion. If a sublimer act of patriotic self-sacrifice has ever been performed it has surely never been recorded. And yet critics have been found who could calmly dissect the " Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio contra Salmasium " and argue from it that its author had not merely a bad cause, but a bad temper and a worse taste. There have been critics who have imagined that it is proper to judge a seventeenth century controversialist by standards more talked about than acted upon in the nineteenth. There have even been friends of Milton who forgetting that the man is and ought to be greater than the poet, have wished that he had never performed this act of self-sacrifice that makes him the true Milton of song and history.

And now by the Spring of 1652 the Milton who had won the plaudits of cultivated Italians for his beauty and his grace, the Milton who had looked on Nature's face and found her

fair, the Milton who had at last been brought to mingle with the affairs of men at a critical juncture in his country's history, was totally blind, an object of pity, a man who was apparently without a future. It was due to the fact that he was Milton and no one else that he did not succumb but became the poet of " Paradise Lost." The mention of this great poem, however, reminds us that we may pass over his " Second Defense of the People of England," his answer to Moras, and his ecclesiastical treatises all accomplished with the assistance of coadjutors, one of whom was Andrew Marveil, which brings us to the year of the Stuart Restoration (1660,) when of course his political occupation was gone. That occupation while it may not have given him the position he deserved in the councils of his party (it is not even certain that he and Cromwell were ever face to face) had given him a knowledge of men and affairs which was to be of immense service to him in the coming years of retirement when he was to be permitted to resume his higher and natural role of inspired poet. It seems as idle to argue that " Paradise Lost " would have been the poem it is without the often regretted poetic interregnum of 1640-1660 as it is to argue that Milton could have been as great a man without it. Those critics may indeed be right who maintain that Milton's nature was subdued to what it worked in " like the dyer's hand," that the Puritan controversialist sometimes got the better of the poet long after occasion for controversy had passed away, but this is only to claim that Milton had not the universality of genius, the absolute perfection of artistic balance that characterize Homer and Shakespeare alone — a claim no true critic will think of disputing for a moment.

It is difficult to say exactly how the defender of the regicides escaped with the mild punishment of having his writings against Charles I. burned by the hangman. Perhaps his blindness helped him, perhaps the entreaties of

influential friends. The " Muse's bower" was spared (though removed more than once) to become the resort of a few congenial spirits and of an occasional admirer like Dryden, and in due time the poet of " Lycidas " culminated in the author of the greatest poem since the " Divine Comedy."

As we have seen Milton had long since resolved to use his powers in the production of a poem as noble as he must have felt those powers to be, and after examining and rejecting many subjects had finally determined on "Paradise Lost " as the most sublime and worthy theme. He had even practically determined on the equally sublime metrical form in which his epic should be cast before he began really working upon the latter in 1658. The story of its composition under the difficulties imposed by his blindness, his lack of a permanent and trained amanuensis, and his curious susceptibility to the effects of the seasons upon his temperament, has been often told and just as often the apparent irony of the circumstances of its publication in 1667 has formed the subject of critical homilies. Mr. Symmons may have driven a hard bargain though there is room to doubt it, but he did better by Milton and his epic than a good many modern critics have done who are not supposed to hold chairs in the School of Cobbett. We are told now that people do not read "Paradise Lost" and that its subject is antiquated and a little absurd, especially since the theory of evolution has thrown grave doubts upon the lion's ever having pawed to extricate his hinder parts. If this be true of the public, and if our critics are to judge poets from the point of view of Cobbett's so-called common sense or of Huxley's epoch-making science, it may well be doubted whether printer Symmons was not more a child of the Muses than one is likely to-day to jostle on the streets of one of our great cities. But Symmons' niggardly pounds have either been quite worn out or have forgotten that they ever took part in a shabby transaction,

and a similar fate awaits the Cobbett critics and the public that pays attention to them. "Paradise Lost" has set a seal upon Milton's glory that can be effaced or unloosed by angelic power alone — by the might of the angel who shall in the fullness of time blow the last trump.

The Quaker Ellwood's query as to what Milton had to say of " Paradise Regained " after so much told of " Paradise Lost," may or may not have had much to do with the composition of that pendant poem, and Milton's partiality for it may have been exaggerated, but surely those persons, and they are many, who refrain from reading it now that its author's fame has made precious everything he touched, stand greatly in their own light. Neither it nor " Samson Agonistes." published with it in one volume in 1671, can claim the preeminence in our poetry that belongs of right to " Paradise Lost," "Comus," and " Lycidas," but none the less both poems are worthy of Milton, and therefore of our admiration and love. They may give evidence of the declining power of the genius that gave them birth (although as we are somewhat in the dark as to the exact time of their composition, this is not certain) or they may represent that genius moving in regions less elevated and pure, but they are worthy to shine through their own luster and to live through their own vitality. Their comparative unpopularity is proof of nothing save of the proverbial isolation of the noble, but their existence is proof of the fact that in a blind old age, Milton would be content with nothing less than a strenuous and lofty use of his divinely bestowed powers. He could not, like his Nazarene hero, pull down the pillars of an ungodly state upon the heads of its citizens, although he would not have shirked the self-destruction involved, but he could still sing in exultant tones of the triumphs of virtue and of the justice and majesty and mercy of God.

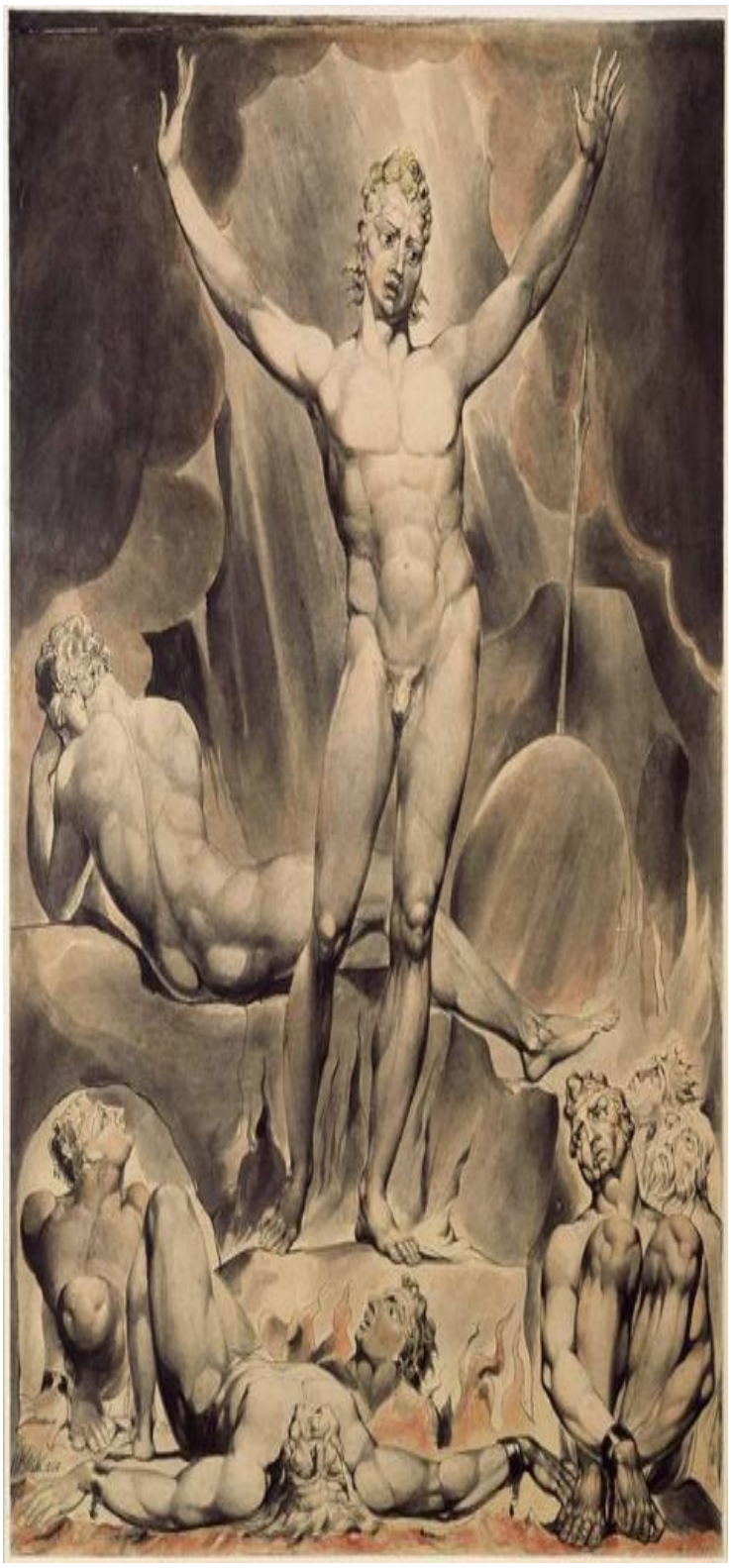
That mercy was shown him in his last years in fuller measure than he perhaps himself expected or than his political or ecclesiastical foes would have admitted to be his due. From the moment that his safety after the Restoration was assured until his death on November 8, 1674, he lived a comparatively calm and peaceful life. The great Fire and Plague disturbed him, as was natural, but not seriously, his darkness was ever with him, but was shot through with visions of glory denied to all men save his three compeers Homer, Shakespeare, and Dante ; his home though now comfortable was hardly congenial, but he had a few choice friends and a memory stored with the best that the world of literature had to give. Thus he lived and thus he died, and although his " soul was like a star and dwelt apart," we feel glad that it had its earthly setting in a pure and cloudless sky. Yet before we take our leave of him in this imperfect sketch, let us remember that there are two facts that make a knowledge of hie life and work essential to all persons that would fain have the slightest claim to be considered cultured men.

The first is that Milton has unquestionably influenced his country's literature more than any other English man of letters, unless it be Shakespeare. Although he did not live to reap the reward of the fame that " Paradise Lost " began to attract, even before the close of the seventeenth century, he must have felt sure that he had built himself an enduring monument. His conviction was true. Certainly from the appearance of Addison's criticism of the great epic to the present day no English poet of any note has failed at one time or another to pass under his spell. Even Pope borrowed from him, and Thomson, Dyer, Collins and Gray were his open disciples. What Cowper and Wordsworth would have been without him, it is hard to imagine. The youthful Keats imitated him and Shelley sang that " his clear sprite yet reigns o'er earth, the third among the sons

of light." As for Landor, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, and Swinburne their direct or indirect debt to him is plain to every student. With regard to his prose the case has been somewhat different. It is the old story of the bow of Ulysses, but it cannot be doubted that if on the formal side our modern writers look back to Cowley and Dryden, there has never been a writer of sonorous and eloquent prose who did not owe more than he was perhaps aware of to the author of " Areopagitica."

The second fact is equally patent but less often insisted upon. It is that in the triumphal progress of the Anglo-Saxon race, whether in the mother island, in America, or in Australia, whatever has been won for the cause of civic or religious or mental liberty, has been won along lines that Milton would have approved in the main had he been living, has been won by men more or less inspired by him, and will be kept only by men who are capable of appreciating rightly the height and breadth and depth of his splendid and ineffable personality.

W. P. Trent.



Paradise Lost

BOOK I.

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of EDEN, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of OREB, or of SINAI, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of CHAOS: Or if SION Hill
Delight thee more, and SILOA'S Brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' AONIAN Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert th' Eternal Providence,
And justifie the wayes of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?

Who first seduc'd them to that fowl revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankinde, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms.
Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
Confounded though immortal: But his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate:
At once as far as Angels kenn he views
The dismal Situation waste and wilde,
A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed

With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd:
Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd
For those rebellious, here their Prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, o'rewhelm'd
With Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and weltring by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in PALESTINE, and nam'd
BEELZEBUB. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

If thou beest he; But O how fall'n! how chang'd
From him, who in the happy Realms of Light
Cloth'd with transcendent brightnes didst outshine
Myriads though bright: If he whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope,
And hazard in the Glorious Enterprize,
Joynd with me once, now misery hath joynd
In equal ruin: into what Pit thou seest
From what highth fal'n, so much the stronger provd
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre; that fixt mind
And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit,
That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd

In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deifie his power
Who from the terrour of this Arm so late
Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath
This downfall; since by Fate the strength of Gods
And this Empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In Arms not worse, in foresight much advanc't,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal Warr
Irreconcileable, to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n.

So spake th' Apostate Angel, though in pain,
Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despare:
And him thus answer'd soon his bold Compeer.

O Prince, O Chief of many Throned Powers,
That led th' imbattelld Seraphim to Warr
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds
Fearless, endanger'd Heav'ns perpetual King;
And put to proof his high Supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or Chance, or Fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty Host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,

As far as Gods and Heav'nly Essences
Can Perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
Though all our Glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conquerour, (whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Then such could hav orepow'rd such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength intire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of Warr, what e're his business be
Here in the heart of Hell to work in Fire,
Or do his Errands in the gloomy Deep;
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminisht, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?
Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-fiend reply'd.

Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable
Doing or Suffering: but of this be sure,
To do ought good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his Providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;
Which oft times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destind aim.
But see the angry Victor hath recall'd
His Ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the Gates of Heav'n: The Sulphurous Hail
Shot after us in storm, oreblown hath laid

The fiery Surge, that from the Precipice
Of Heav'n receiv'd us falling, and the Thunder,
Wing'd with red Lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.
Seest thou yon dreary Plain, forlorn and wilde,
The seat of desolation, voyd of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,
And reassembling our afflicted Powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire Calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from Hope,
If not what resolution from despare.

Thus Satan talking to his neerest Mate
With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
TITANIAN, or EARTH-BORN, that warr'd on JOVE,
BRIARIOS or TYPHON, whom the Den
By ancient TARSUS held, or that Sea-beast
LEVIATHAN, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:
Him haply slumbring on the NORWAY foam
The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell,
With fixed Anchor in his skaly rind
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night

Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delayes:
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.
Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool
His mighty Stature; on each hand the flames
Drivn backward slope their pointing spires, & rowld
In billows, leave i'th' midst a horrid Vale.
Then with expanded wings he stears his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry Land
He lights, if it were Land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire;
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a Hill
Torn from PELORUS, or the shatter'd side
Of thundring AETNA, whose combustible
And fewel'd entrals thence conceiving Fire,
Sublim'd with Mineral fury, aid the Winds,
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoak: Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next Mate,
Both glorying to have scap't the STYGIAN flood
As Gods, and by their own recover'd strength,
Not by the sufferance of supernal Power.

Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime,
Said then the lost Arch Angel, this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since hee
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: fardest from him is best
Whom reason hath equald, force hath made supream
Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields
Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrours, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then hee
Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th' associates and copartners of our loss
Lye thus astonisht on th' oblivious Pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy Mansion, or once more
With rallied Arms to try what may be yet
Regaind in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell?

So SATAN spake, and him BEELZEBUB
Thus answer'd. Leader of those Armies bright,
Which but th' Omnipotent none could have foyld,
If once they hear that voyce, their liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
In worst extreams, and on the perilous edge

Of battel when it rag'd, in all assaults
Their surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lye
Groveling and prostrate on yon Lake of Fire,
As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd,
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious highth.

He scarce had ceas't when the superiour Fiend
Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the TUSCAN Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of FESOLE,
Or in VALDARNO, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.
His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on NORWEGIAN hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with to support uneasie steps
Over the burning Marle, not like those steps
On Heavens Azure, and the torrid Clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;
Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach
Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd
His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In VALLOMBROSA, where th' ETRURIAN shades
High overarch't imbowr; or scatterd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce Winds ORION arm'd
Hath vext the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves orethrew
BUSIRIS and his MEMPHIAN Chivalrie,
VVhile with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The Sojourners of GOSHEN, who beheld
From the safe shore their floating Carkases
And broken Chariot Wheels, so thick bestrown