
Paradise Lost



by John Milton

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I may assert Eternal Providence,
 And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first—for Heaven hides nothing from thy view,
 Nor the deep tract of Hell—say first what cause 30
 Moved our grand parents, in that happy state,
 Favoured of Heaven so highly, to fall off
 From their Creator, and transgress his will
 For one restraint, lords of the World besides.

Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
 Th' infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,
 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
 The mother of mankind, what time his pride
 Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host⁴⁰
 Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring
 To set himself in glory above his peers,
 He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
 If he opposed, and with ambitious aim
 Against the throne and monarchy of God,
 Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,
 With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
 Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky,
 With hideous ruin and combustion, down
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell 50
 In adamantine chains and penal fire,
 Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.

Nine times the space that measures day and night
 To mortal men, he, with his horrid crew,
 Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,
 Confounded, though immortal. But his doom
 Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought
 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
 Torments him: round he throws his baleful eyes,⁶⁰
 That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,
 Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.
 At once, as far as Angels ken, he views

The dismal situation waste and wild.

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
 As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
 No light; but rather darkness visible
 Served only to discover sights of woe, 70
 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 unconsumed.

Such place Eternal Justice has prepared
 For those rebellious; here their prison ordained
 In utter darkness, and their portion set,
 As far removed from God and light of Heaven 80
 As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.

Oh how unlike the place from whence they fell!
 There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed
 With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
 He soon discerns; and, weltering by his side,
 One next himself in power, and next in crime,
 Long after known in Palestine, and named
 Beelzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,
 And thence in Heaven called Satan, with bold
 words 90

Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:—
 "If thou beest he—but O how fallen! how changed
 From him who, in the happy realms of light
 Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst out-
 shine
 Myriads, though bright!—if he whom mutual
 league,
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise
 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined
 In equal ruin; into what pit thou seest

From what height fallen: so much the stronger
 proved 100
 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 changed in outward lustre, that fixed
 mind,
 And high disdain from sense of injured merit,
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,
 And to the fierce contentions brought along
 Innumerable force of Spirits armed,
 That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring, 110
 His utmost power with adverse power opposed
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,
 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 deify his power 120
 Who, from the terror 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 advanced,
 We may with more successful hope resolve
 To wage by force or guile eternal war,
 Irreconcilable to our grand Foe, 130
 Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven."

So spake th' apostate Angel, though in pain,
 Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair;
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:—
 "O Prince, O Chief of many throned Powers
 That led th' embattled Seraphim to war
 Under thy conduct, and, in dreadful deeds
 Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual King,
 And put to proof his high supremacy, 140
 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 Heaven, and all this mighty host
 In horrible destruction laid thus low,
 As far as Gods and heavenly Essences
 Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
 Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
 Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
 Here swallowed up in endless misery. 150

But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now
 Of force believe almighty, since no less
 Than such could have o'erpowered such force as
 ours)

Have left us this our spirit and strength entire,
 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 war, whate'er his business be,
 Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire, 160
 Or do his errands in the gloomy Deep?
 What can it the avail though yet we feel
 Strength undiminished, or eternal being
 To undergo eternal punishment?"

Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-Fiend
 replied:—

"Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,
 Doing or suffering: but of this be sure—

To do aught good never will be our task,
 But ever to do ill our sole delight,
 As being the contrary to his high will 170
 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 ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps
 Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
 His inmost counsels from their destined aim.

But see! the angry Victor hath recalled
 His ministers of vengeance and pursuit 180
 Back to the gates of Heaven: the sulphurous hail,
 Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
 The fiery surge that from the precipice
 Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,
 Winged 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. 190

Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
 The seat of desolation, void 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, re-assembling our afflicted powers,
 Consult how we may henceforth most offend
 Our enemy, our own loss how repair, 200
 How overcome this dire calamity,
 What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
 If not, what resolution from despair."
 Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,
 With head uplift above the wave, and eyes

That sparkling blazed; 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 warred on Jove, 210
 Briareos 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 slumbering on the Norway foam,
 The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
 With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
 Moors by his side under the lee, while night 220
 Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.

So stretched out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay,
 Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence
 Had risen, or heaved 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 enraged might see 230
 How all his malice served but to bring forth
 Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy, shewn
 On Man by him seduced, but on himself
 Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured.

Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
 His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
 Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and
 rolled
 In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale. 240

Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
 Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,

That felt unusual weight; till on dry land
 He lights—if it were land that ever burned
 With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,
 And such appeared in hue as when the force
 Of subterranean wind transports a hill
 Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
 Of thundering Etna, whose combustible
 And fuelled entrails, thence conceiving fire, 250
 Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
 And leave a singed bottom all involved
 With stench and smoke. Such resting found the
 sole

Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate;
 Both glorying to have scaped the Stygian flood
 As gods, and by their own recovered strength,
 Not by the sufferance of supernal Power.

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
 Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat 260
 That we must change for Heaven?—this mournful
 gloom

For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
 Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid
 What shall be right: farthest from him is best
 Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made
 supreme

Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
 Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,
 Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
 Receive thy new possessor—one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time. 270

The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than he
 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 choice, 280
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.

But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
 Th' associates and co-partners of our loss,
 Lie thus astonished 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
 Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell?"
 290

So Satan spake; and him Beelzebub
 Thus answered:—"Leader of those armies bright
 Which, but th' Omnipotent, none could have
 foiled!

If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge
 Of hope in fears and dangers—heard so oft
 In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
 Of battle, when it raged, in all assaults
 Their surest signal—they will soon resume
 New courage and revive, though now they lie
 Grovelling and prostrate on yon lake of fire, 300
 As we erewhile, astounded and amazed;
 No wonder, fallen such a pernicious height!"
 He scare had ceased when the superior 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 evening, from the top of Fesole,
 Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands, 310
 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 walked with, to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marl, not like those steps
On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.

320

Nathless he so endured, till on the beach
Of that inflamed sea he stood, and called
His legions—Angel Forms, who lay entranced
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High over-arched embower; or scattered sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
Hath vexed the Red-Sea coast, whose waves
o'erthrew

Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursued 330
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore their floating carcasses
And broken chariot-wheels. So thick bestrown,
Abject and lost, lay these, covering the flood,
Under amazement of their hideous change.

He called so loud that all the hollow deep
Of Hell resounded:—"Princes, Potentates,
Warriors, the Flower of Heaven—once yours; now
lost,

If such astonishment as this can seize 340
Eternal Spirits! Or have ye chosen this place
After the toil of battle to repose
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heaven?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
To adore the Conqueror, who now beholds
Cherub and Seraph rolling in the flood

With scattered arms and ensigns, till anon
 His swift pursuers from Heaven-gates discern
 Th' advantage, and, descending, tread us down³⁵⁰
 Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
 Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf?
 Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen!"

They heard, and were abashed, and up they
 sprung

Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
 On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
 Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.

Nor did they not perceive the evil plight
 In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;³⁶⁰
 Yet to their General's voice they soon obeyed
 Innumerable. As when the potent rod
 Of Amram's son, in Egypt's evil day,
 Waved round the coast, up-called a pitchy cloud
 Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,
 That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung
 Like Night, and darkened all the land of Nile;
 So numberless were those bad Angels seen
 Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell,
 'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires; ³⁷⁰
 Till, as a signal given, th' uplifted spear
 Of their great Sultan waving to direct
 Their course, in even balance down they light
 On the firm brimstone, and fill all the plain:
 A multitude like which the populous North
 Poured never from her frozen loins to pass
 Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous sons
 Came like a deluge on the South, and spread
 Beneath Gibraltar to the Libyan sands.

380

Forthwith, from every squadron and each band,
 The heads and leaders thither haste where stood
 Their great Commander—godlike Shapes, and

Forms

Excelling human; princely Dignities;
 And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on thrones,
 Though on their names in Heavenly records now
 Be no memorial, blotted out and rased
 By their rebellion from the Books of Life.

Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve 390
 Got them new names, till, wandering o'er the
 earth,

Through God's high sufferance for the trial of man,
 By falsities and lies the greatest part
 Of mankind they corrupted to forsake
 God their Creator, and th' invisible
 Glory of him that made them to transform
 Oft to the image of a brute, adorned
 With gay religions full of pomp and gold,
 And devils to adore for deities:

Then were they known to men by various names,
 400

And various idols through the heathen world.

Say, Muse, their names then known, who first, who
 last,

Roused from the slumber on that fiery couch,
 At their great Emperor's call, as next in worth
 Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
 While the promiscuous crowd stood yet aloof?
 The chief were those who, from the pit of Hell
 Roaming to seek their prey on Earth, durst fix
 Their seats, long after, next the seat of God, 410
 Their altars by his altar, gods adored
 Among the nations round, and durst abide
 Jehovah thundering out of Sion, throned
 Between the Cherubim; yea, often placed
 Within his sanctuary itself their shrines,
 Abominations; and with cursed things

His holy rites and solemn feasts profaned,
 And with their darkness durst affront his light.
 First, Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
 420
 Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears;
 Though, for the noise of drums and timbrels loud,
 Their children's cries unheard that passed through
 fire
 To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite
 Worshiped in Rabba and her watery plain,
 In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
 Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
 Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart
 Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
 His temple right against the temple of God 430
 On that opprobrious hill, and made his grove
 The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
 And black Gehenna called, the type of Hell.
 Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons,
 From Aroar to Nebo and the wild
 Of southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
 And Horonaim, Seon's real, beyond
 The flowery dale of Sibma clad with vines,
 And Eleale to th' Asphaltic Pool: 440
 Peor his other name, when he enticed
 Israel in Sittim, on their march from Nile,
 To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
 Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarged
 Even to that hill of scandal, by the grove
 Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate,
 Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.
 With these came they who, from the bordering
 flood 450
 Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts
 Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names

Of Baalim and Ashtaroth—those male,
These feminine. For Spirits, when they please,
Can either sex assume, or both; so soft
And uncompounded is their essence pure,
Not tried or manacled with joint or limb,
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
Like cumbrous flesh; but, in what shape they
choose,
Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure, 460
Can execute their airy purposes,
And works of love or enmity fulfil.

For those the race of Israel oft forsook
Their Living Strength, and unfrequented left
His righteous altar, bowing lowly down
To bestial gods; for which their heads as low
Bowed down in battle, sunk before the spear
Of despicable foes. With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians called 470
Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent horns;
To whose bright image nightly by the moon
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs;
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her temple on th' offensive mountain, built
By that uxorious king whose heart, though large,
Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul. Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate 480
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the love-tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when, by the vision led,
His eye surveyed the dark idolatries

Of alienated Judah. Next came one
 Who mourned in earnest, when the captive ark⁴⁹⁰
 Maimed his brute image, head and hands lopt off,
 In his own temple, on the grunsel-edge,
 Where he fell flat and shamed his worshippers:
 Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man
 And downward fish; yet had his temple high
 Reared in Azotus, dreaded through the coast
 Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon,
 And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.

Him followed Rimmon, whose delightful seat 500
 Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
 Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.

He also against the house of God was bold:
 A leper once he lost, and gained a king—
 Ahaz, his sottish conqueror, whom he drew
 God's altar to disparage and displace
 For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
 His odious offerings, and adore the gods
 Whom he had vanquished. After these appeared
 510

A crew who, under names of old renown—
 Osiris, Isis, Orus, and their train—
 With monstrous shapes and sorceries abused
 Fanatic Egypt and her priests to seek
 Their wandering gods disguised in brutish forms
 Rather than human. Nor did Israel scape
 Th' infection, when their borrowed gold composed
 The calf in Oreb; and the rebel king
 Doubled that sin in Bethel and in Dan,
 Likening his Maker to the grazed ox— 520
 Jehovah, who, in one night, when he passed
 From Egypt marching, equalled with one stroke
 Both her first-born and all her bleating gods.

Belial came last; than whom a Spirit more lewd

Fell not from Heaven, or more gross to love
 Vice for itself. To him no temple stood
 Or altar smoked; yet who more oft than he
 In temples and at altars, when the priest
 Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who filled 530
 With lust and violence the house of God?
 In courts and palaces he also reigns,
 And in luxurious cities, where the noise
 Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers,
 And injury and outrage; and, when night
 Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
 Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.

Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night
 In Gibeah, when the hospitable door 540
 Exposed a matron, to avoid worse rape.

These were the prime in order and in might:
 The rest were long to tell; though far renowned
 Th' Ionian gods—of Javan's issue held
 Gods, yet confessed later than Heaven and Earth,
 Their boasted parents;—Titan, Heaven's first-born,
 With his enormous brood, and birthright seized
 By younger Saturn: he from mightier Jove,
 His own and Rhea's son, like measure found; 550
 So Jove usurping reigned. These, first in Crete
 And Ida known, thence on the snowy top
 Of cold Olympus ruled the middle air,
 Their highest heaven; or on the Delphian cliff,
 Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
 Of Doric land; or who with Saturn old
 Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian fields,
 And o'er the Celtic roamed the utmost Isles.

All these and more came flocking; but with looks
 560
 Downcast and damp; yet such wherein appeared
 Obscure some glimpse of joy to have found their

Chief

Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost
 In loss itself; which on his countenance cast
 Like doubtful hue. But he, his wonted pride
 Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
 Semblance of worth, not substance, gently raised
 Their fainting courage, and dispelled their fears.

Then straight commands that, at the warlike sound

570

Of trumpets loud and clarions, be upreared
 His mighty standard. That proud honour claimed
 Azazel as his right, a Cherub tall:

Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurled
 Th' imperial ensign; which, full high advanced,
 Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
 With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed,
 Seraphic arms and trophies; all the while
 Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds:

At which the universal host up-sent 580

A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
 Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.

All in a moment through the gloom were seen
 Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
 With orient colours waving; with them rose
 A forest huge of spears; and thronging helms
 Appeared, and serried shields in thick array
 Of depth immeasurable. Anon they move

In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood 590

Of flutes and soft recorders—such as raised
 To height of noblest temper heroes old
 Arming to battle, and instead of rage
 Deliberate valour breathed, firm, and unmoved
 With dread of death to flight or foul retreat;
 Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
 With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase

Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they,
Breathing united force with fixed thought, 600
Moved on in silence to soft pipes that charmed
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil. And now
Advanced in view they stand—a horrid front
Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
Of warriors old, with ordered spear and shield,
Awaiting what command their mighty Chief
Had to impose. He through the armed files
Darts his experienced eye, and soon traverse
The whole battalion views—their order due,
Their visages and stature as of gods; 610
Their number last he sums. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and, hardening in his
strength,
Glories: for never, since created Man,
Met such embodied force as, named with these,
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warred on by cranes—though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were joined
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mixed with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son, 620
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
And all who since, baptized or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisonde,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabbia. Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observed
Their dread Commander. He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent, 630
Stood like a tower. His form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared

Less than Archangel ruined, and th' excess
Of glory obscured: as when the sun new-risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all th' Archangel: but his face 640
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge. Cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion, to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss), condemned
For ever now to have their lot in pain—
Millions of Spirits for his fault amerced
Of Heaven, and from eternal splendours flung 650
For his revolt—yet faithful how they stood,
Their glory withered; as, when heaven's fire
Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepared
To speak; whereat their doubled ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round
With all his peers: attention held them mute.

Thrice he assayed, and thrice, in spite of scorn, 660
Tears, such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last
Words interwove with sighs found out their way:—
"O myriads of immortal Spirits! O Powers
Matchless, but with th' Almighty!—and that strife
Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,
As this place testifies, and this dire change,
Hateful to utter. But what power of mind,
Forseeing or presaging, from the depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have feared

How such united force of gods, how such 670
 As stood like these, could ever know repulse?
 For who can yet believe, though after loss,
 That all these puissant legions, whose exile
 Hath emptied Heaven, shall fail to re-ascend,
 Self-raised, and repossess their native seat?
 For me, be witness all the host of Heaven,
 If counsels different, or danger shunned
 By me, have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
 Monarch in Heaven till then as one secure
 Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute, 680
 Consent or custom, and his regal state
 Put forth at full, but still his strength concealed—
 Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.

Henceforth his might we know, and know our
 own,
 So as not either to provoke, or dread
 New war provoked: our better part remains
 To work in close design, by fraud or guile,
 What force effected not; that he no less
 At length from us may find, who overcomes 690
 By force hath overcome but half his foe.

Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife
 There went a fame in Heaven that he ere long
 Intended to create, and therein plant
 A generation whom his choice regard
 Should favour equal to the Sons of Heaven.

Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps 700
 Our first eruption—thither, or elsewhere;
 For this infernal pit shall never hold
 Celestial Spirits in bondage, nor th' Abyss
 Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
 Full counsel must mature. Peace is despaired;
 For who can think submission? War, then, war
 Open or understood, must be resolved."

He spake; and, to confirm his words, outflew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze
Far round illumined Hell. Highly they raged 710
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clashed on their sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heaven.

There stood a hill not far, whose grisly top
Belched fire and rolling smoke; the rest entire
Shone with a glossy scurf—undoubted sign
That in his womb was hid metallic ore,
The work of sulphur. Thither, winged with speed,
A numerous brigade hastened: as when bands 720
Of pioneers, with spade and pickaxe armed,
Forerun the royal camp, to trench a field,
Or cast a rampart. Mammon led them on—
Mammon, the least erected Spirit that fell
From Heaven; for even in Heaven his looks and
thoughts

Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific. By him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught, 730
Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands
Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth
For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Opened into the hill a spacious wound,
And digged out ribs of gold. Let none admire
That riches grow in Hell; that soil may best
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wondering tell
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame 740
And strength, and art, are easily outdone
By Spirits reprobate, and in an hour

What in an age they, with incessant toil
 And hands innumerable, scarce perform.

Nigh on the plain, in many cells prepared,
 That underneath had veins of liquid fire
 Sluiced from the lake, a second multitude
 With wondrous art founded the massy ore,
 Severing each kind, and scummed the bullion-
 dross. 750

A third as soon had formed within the ground
 A various mould, and from the boiling cells
 By strange conveyance filled each hollow nook;
 As in an organ, from one blast of wind,
 To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
 Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
 Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet— 760
 Built like a temple, where pilasters round
 Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
 With golden architrave; nor did there want
 Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven;
 The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon
 Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
 Equalled in all their glories, to enshrine
 Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
 Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
 In wealth and luxury. Th' ascending pile 770
 Stood fixed her stately height, and straight the
 doors,

Opening their brazen folds, discover, wide
 Within, her ample spaces o'er the smooth
 And level pavement: from the arched roof,
 Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
 Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
 With naptha and asphaltus, yielded light
 As from a sky. The hasty multitude

Admiring entered; and the work some praise,
 And some the architect. His hand was known 780
 In Heaven by many a towered structure high,
 Where sceptred Angels held their residence,
 And sat as Princes, whom the supreme King
 Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
 Each in his Hierarchy, the Orders bright.

Nor was his name unheard or unadored
 In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
 Men called him Mulciber; and how he fell
 From Heaven they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
 790

Sheer o'er the crystal battlements: from morn
 To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
 A summer's day, and with the setting sun
 Dropt from the zenith, like a falling star,
 On Lemnos, th' Aegaeon isle. Thus they relate,
 Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
 Fell long before; nor aught availed him now
 To have built in Heaven high towers; nor did he
 scape
 By all his engines, but was headlong sent,
 With his industrious crew, to build in Hell. 800

Meanwhile the winged Heralds, by command
 Of sovereign power, with awful ceremony
 And trumpet's sound, throughout the host pro-
 claim
 A solemn council forthwith to be held
 At Pandemonium, the high capital
 Of Satan and his peers. Their summons called
 From every band and squared regiment
 By place or choice the worthiest: they anon
 With hundreds and with thousands trooping came
 810
 Attended. All access was thronged; the gates

And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall
 (Though like a covered field, where champions
 bold

Wont ride in armed, and at the Soldan's chair
 Defied the best of Paynim chivalry
 To mortal combat, or career with lance),
 Thick swarmed, both on the ground and in the air,
 Brushed with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
 In spring-time, when the Sun with Taurus rides.

820

Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
 In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
 Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,
 The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
 New rubbed with balm, expatiate, and confer
 Their state-affairs: so thick the airy crowd
 Swarmed and were straitened; till, the signal
 given,

Behold a wonder! They but now who seemed
 In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
 Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room⁸³⁰
 Throng numberless—like that pygmean race
 Beyond the Indian mount; or faery elves,
 Whose midnight revels, by a forest-side
 Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
 Or dreams he sees, while overhead the Moon
 Sits arbitress, and nearer to the Earth
 Wheels her pale course: they, on their mirth and
 dance

Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
 At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.

840

Thus incorporeal Spirits to smallest forms
 Reduced their shapes immense, and were at large,
 Though without number still, amidst the hall
 Of that infernal court. But far within,

BOOK I

And in their own dimensions like themselves,
The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat,
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full. After short silence then,
And summons read, the great consult began. 850

BOOK II

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth or Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence; and, from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain war with Heaven; and, by success untaught,
His proud imaginations thus displayed:— 10
"Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heaven!—
For, since no deep within her gulf can hold
Immortal vigour, though oppressed and fallen,
I give not Heaven for lost: from this descent
Celestial Virtues rising will appear
More glorious and more dread than from no fall,
And trust themselves to fear no second fate!—
Me though just right, and the fixed laws of Heaven,
Did first create your leader—next, free choice 20
With what besides in council or in fight
Hath been achieved of merit—yet this loss,
Thus far at least recovered, hath much more
Established in a safe, unenvied throne,
Yielded with full consent. The happier state
In Heaven, which follows dignity, might draw

Envy from each inferior; but who here
 Will envy whom the highest place exposes
 Foremost to stand against the Thunderer's aim
 Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share
 Of endless pain? Where there is, then, no good 30
 For which to strive, no strife can grow up there
 From faction: for none sure will claim in Hell
 Precedence; none whose portion is so small
 Of present pain that with ambitious mind
 Will covet more! With this advantage, then,
 To union, and firm faith, and firm accord,
 More than can be in Heaven, we now return
 To claim our just inheritance of old,
 Surer to prosper than prosperity
 Could have assured us; and by what best way, 40
 Whether of open war or covert guile,
 We now debate. Who can advise may speak."
 He ceased; and next him Moloch, sceptred king,
 Stood up—the strongest and the fiercest Spirit
 That fought in Heaven, now fiercer by despair.

His trust was with th' Eternal to be deemed
 Equal in strength, and rather than be less
 Cared not to be at all; with that care lost
 Went all his fear: of God, or Hell, or worse, 50
 He recked not, and these words thereafter spake:—
 "My sentence is for open war. Of wiles,
 More unexpert, I boast not: them let those
 Contrive who need, or when they need; not now.

For, while they sit contriving, shall the rest—
 Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait
 The signal to ascend—sit lingering here,
 Heaven's fugitives, and for their dwelling-place
 Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame, 60
 The prison of his tyranny who reigns
 By our delay? No! let us rather choose,

Armed with Hell-flames and fury, all at once
O'er Heaven's high towers to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the Torturer; when, to meet the noise
Of his almighty engine, he shall hear
Infernal thunder, and, for lightning, see
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage
Among his Angels, and his throne itself 70
Mixed with Tartarean sulphur and strange fire,
His own invented torments. But perhaps
The way seems difficult, and steep to scale
With upright wing against a higher foe!
Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench
Of that forgetful lake benumb not still,
That in our proper motion we ascend
Up to our native seat; descent and fall
To us is adverse. Who but felt of late,
When the fierce foe hung on our broken rear 80
Insulting, and pursued us through the Deep,
With what compulsion and laborious flight
We sunk thus low? Th' ascent is easy, then;
Th' event is feared! Should we again provoke
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find
To our destruction, if there be in Hell
Fear to be worse destroyed! What can be worse
Than to dwell here, driven out from bliss, con-
demned
In this abhorred deep to utter woe!
Where pain of unextinguishable fire 90
Must exercise us without hope of end
The vassals of his anger, when the scourge
Inexorably, and the torturing hour,
Calls us to penance? More destroyed than thus,
We should be quite abolished, and expire.

What fear we then? what doubt we to incense
His utmost ire? which, to the height enraged,

Will either quite consume us, and reduce
 To nothing this essential—happier far 100
 Than miserable to have eternal being!—
 Or, if our substance be indeed divine,
 And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
 On this side nothing; and by proof we feel
 Our power sufficient to disturb his Heaven,
 And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
 Though inaccessible, his fatal throne:
 Which, if not victory, is yet revenge."
 He ended frowning, and his look denounced
 Desperate revenge, and battle dangerous 110
 To less than gods. On th' other side up rose
 Belial, in act more graceful and humane.

A fairer person lost not Heaven; he seemed
 For dignity composed, and high exploit.

But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
 Dropped manna, and could make the worse ap-
 pear

The better reason, to perplex and dash
 Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low— 120
 To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
 Timorous and slothful. Yet he pleased the ear,
 And with persuasive accent thus began:—
 "I should be much for open war, O Peers,
 As not behind in hate, if what was urged
 Main reason to persuade immediate war
 Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast
 Ominous conjecture on the whole success;
 When he who most excels in fact of arms,
 In what he counsels and in what excels 130
 Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair
 And utter dissolution, as the scope
 Of all his aim, after some dire revenge.

First, what revenge? The towers of Heaven are

filled

With armed watch, that render all access
 Impregnable: oft on the bordering Deep
 Encamp their legions, or with obscure wing
 Scout far and wide into the realm of Night,
 Scorning surprise. Or, could we break our way 140
 By force, and at our heels all Hell should rise
 With blackest insurrection to confound
 Heaven's purest light, yet our great Enemy,
 All incorruptible, would on his throne
 Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould,
 Incapable of stain, would soon expel
 Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire,
 Victorious. Thus repulsed, our final hope
 Is flat despair: we must exasperate
 Th' Almighty Victor to spend all his rage; 150
 And that must end us; that must be our cure—
 To be no more. Sad cure! for who would lose,
 Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
 Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
 To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
 In the wide womb of uncreated Night,
 Devoid of sense and motion? And who knows,
 Let this be good, whether our angry Foe
 Can give it, or will ever? How he can
 Is doubtful; that he never will is sure. 160

Will he, so wise, let loose at once his ire,
 Belike through impotence or unaware,
 To give his enemies their wish, and end
 Them in his anger whom his anger saves
 To punish endless? "Wherefore cease we, then?"
 Say they who counsel war; "we are decreed,
 Reserved, and destined to eternal woe;
 Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,
 What can we suffer worse?" Is this, then, worst—
 170

Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms?
 What when we fled amain, pursued and struck
 With Heaven's afflicting thunder, and besought
 The Deep to shelter us? This Hell then seemed
 A refuge from those wounds. Or when we lay
 Chained on the burning lake? That sure was
 worse.

What if the breath that kindled those grim fires,
 Awaked, should blow them into sevenfold rage,
 And plunge us in the flames; or from above 180
 Should intermitted vengeance arm again
 His red right hand to plague us? What if all
 Her stores were opened, and this firmament
 Of Hell should spout her cataracts of fire,
 Impendent horrors, threatening hideous fall
 One day upon our heads; while we perhaps,
 Designing or exhorting glorious war,
 Caught in a fiery tempest, shall be hurled,
 Each on his rock transfixed, the sport and prey
 Or racking whirlwinds, or for ever sunk 190
 Under yon boiling ocean, wrapt in chains,
 There to converse with everlasting groans,
 Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,
 Ages of hopeless end? This would be worse.

War, therefore, open or concealed, alike
 My voice dissuades; for what can force or guile
 With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye
 Views all things at one view? He from Heaven's
 height
 All these our motions vain sees and derides, 200
 Not more almighty to resist our might
 Than wise to frustrate all our plots and wiles.

Shall we, then, live thus vile—the race of Heaven
 Thus trampled, thus expelled, to suffer here
 Chains and these torments? Better these than

worse,
 By my advice; since fate inevitable
 Subdues us, and omnipotent decree,
 The Victor's will. To suffer, as to do,
 Our strength is equal; nor the law unjust 210
 That so ordains. This was at first resolved,
 If we were wise, against so great a foe
 Contending, and so doubtful what might fall.

I laugh when those who at the spear are bold
 And venturous, if that fail them, shrink, and fear
 What yet they know must follow—to endure
 Exile, or igominy, or bonds, or pain,
 The sentence of their Conqueror. This is now
 Our doom; which if we can sustain and bear, 220
 Our Supreme Foe in time may much remit
 His anger, and perhaps, thus far removed,
 Not mind us not offending, satisfied
 With what is punished; whence these raging fires
 Will slacken, if his breath stir not their flames.

Our purer essence then will overcome
 Their noxious vapour; or, inured, not feel;
 Or, changed at length, and to the place conformed
 In temper and in nature, will receive 230
 Familiar the fierce heat; and, void of pain,
 This horror will grow mild, this darkness light;
 Besides what hope the never-ending flight
 Of future days may bring, what chance, what
 change
 Worth waiting—since our present lot appears
 For happy though but ill, for ill not worst,
 If we procure not to ourselves more woe."
 Thus Belial, with words clothed in reason's garb,
 Counsell'd ignoble ease and peaceful sloth,
 Not peace; and after him thus Mammon spake:—
 240

"Either to disenthroned the King of Heaven
 We war, if war be best, or to regain
 Our own right lost. Him to unthroned we then
 May hope, when everlasting Fate shall yield
 To fickle Chance, and Chaos judge the strife.

The former, vain to hope, argues as vain
 The latter; for what place can be for us
 Within Heaven's bound, unless Heaven's Lord
 supreme

We overpower? Suppose he should relent 250

And publish grace to all, on promise made
 Of new subjection; with what eyes could we
 Stand in his presence humble, and receive
 Strict laws imposed, to celebrate his throne
 With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead sing
 Forced hallelujahs, while he lordly sits

Our envied sovereign, and his altar breathes
 Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers,
 Our servile offerings? This must be our task
 In Heaven, this our delight. How wearisome 260

Eternity so spent in worship paid
 To whom we hate! Let us not then pursue,
 By force impossible, by leave obtained
 Unacceptable, though in Heaven, our state
 Of splendid vassalage; but rather seek

Our own good from ourselves, and from our own
 Live to ourselves, though in this vast recess,
 Free and to none accountable, preferring
 Hard liberty before the easy yoke

Of servile pomp. Our greatness will appear 270
 Then most conspicuous when great things of
 small,

Useful of hurtful, prosperous of adverse,
 We can create, and in what place so'er
 Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain
 Through labour and endurance. This deep world

Of darkness do we dread? How oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark doth Heaven's all-ruling
Sire

Choose to reside, his glory unobscured,
And with the majesty of darkness round
Covers his throne, from whence deep thunders
roar. 280

Mustering their rage, and Heaven resembles Hell!
As he our darkness, cannot we his light
Imitate when we please? This desert soil
Wants not her hidden lustre, gems and gold;
Nor want we skill or art from whence to raise
Magnificence; and what can Heaven show more?
Our torments also may, in length of time,
Become our elements, these piercing fires
As soft as now severe, our temper changed 290

Into their temper; which must needs remove
The sensible of pain. All things invite
To peaceful counsels, and the settled state
Of order, how in safety best we may
Compose our present evils, with regard
Of what we are and where, dismissing quite
All thoughts of war. Ye have what I advise."
He scarce had finished, when such murmur filled
Th' assembly as when hollow rocks retain
The sound of blustering winds, which all night
long 300

Had roused the sea, now with hoarse cadence lull
Seafaring men o'erwatched, whose bark by chance
Or pinnacle, anchors in a craggy bay
After the tempest. Such applause was heard
As Mammon ended, and his sentence pleased,
Advising peace: for such another field
They dreaded worse than Hell; so much the fear
Of thunder and the sword of Michael
Wrought still within them; and no less desire

To found this nether empire, which might rise, 310
 By policy and long process of time,
 In emulation opposite to Heaven.

Which when Beelzebub perceived—than whom,
 Satan except, none higher sat—with grave
 Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed
 A pillar of state. Deep on his front engraven
 Deliberation sat, and public care;
 And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
 Majestic, though in ruin. Sage he stood 320
 With Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear
 The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look
 Drew audience and attention still as night
 Or summer's noontide air, while thus he spake:—
 "Thrones and Imperial Powers, Offspring of
 Heaven,
 Ethereal Virtues! or these titles now
 Must we renounce, and, changing style, be called
 Princes of Hell? for so the popular vote
 Inclines—here to continue, and build up here
 A growing empire; doubtless! while we dream, 330
 And know not that the King of Heaven hath
 doomed
 This place our dungeon, not our safe retreat
 Beyond his potent arm, to live exempt
 From Heaven's high jurisdiction, in new league
 Banded against his throne, but to remain
 In strictest bondage, though thus far removed,
 Under th' inevitable curb, reserved
 His captive multitude. For he, to be sure,
 In height or depth, still first and last will reign
 Sole king, and of his kingdom lose no part 340
 By our revolt, but over Hell extend
 His empire, and with iron sceptre rule
 Us here, as with his golden those in Heaven.

What sit we then projecting peace and war?
War hath determined us and foiled with loss
Irreparable; terms of peace yet none
Vouchsafed or sought; for what peace will be given
To us enslaved, but custody severe,
And stripes and arbitrary punishment 350
Inflicted? and what peace can we return,
But, to our power, hostility and hate,
Untamed reluctance, and revenge, though slow,
Yet ever plotting how the Conqueror least
May reap his conquest, and may least rejoice
In doing what we most in suffering feel?
Nor will occasion want, nor shall we need
With dangerous expedition to invade
Heaven, whose high walls fear no assault or siege,
Or ambush from the Deep. What if we find 360
Some easier enterprise? There is a place
(If ancient and prophetic fame in Heaven
Err not)—another World, the happy seat
Of some new race, called Man, about this time
To be created like to us, though less
In power and excellence, but favoured more
Of him who rules above; so was his will
Pronounced among the Gods, and by an oath
That shook Heaven's whole circumference con-
firmed.

370

Thither let us bend all our thoughts, to learn
What creatures there inhabit, of what mould
Or substance, how endued, and what their power
And where their weakness: how attempted best,
By force of subtlety. Though Heaven be shut,
And Heaven's high Arbitrator sit secure
In his own strength, this place may lie exposed,
The utmost border of his kingdom, left
To their defence who hold it: here, perhaps,

Some advantageous act may be achieved 380
 By sudden onset—either with Hell-fire
 To waste his whole creation, or possess
 All as our own, and drive, as we were driven,
 The puny habitants; or, if not drive,
 Seduce them to our party, that their God
 May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
 Abolish his own works. This would surpass
 Common revenge, and interrupt his joy
 In our confusion, and our joy upraise
 In his disturbance; when his darling sons, 390
 Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse
 Their frail original, and faded bliss—
 Faded so soon! Advise if this be worth
 Attempting, or to sit in darkness here
 Hatching vain empires." Thus Beelzebub
 Pleaded his devilish counsel—first devised
 By Satan, and in part proposed: for whence,
 But from the author of all ill, could spring
 So deep a malice, to confound the race
 Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell 400
 To mingle and involve, done all to spite
 The great Creator? But their spite still serves
 His glory to augment. The bold design
 Pleas'd highly those infernal States, and joy
 Sparkled in all their eyes: with full assent
 They vote: whereat his speech he thus renews:—
 "Well have ye judged, well ended long debate,
 Synod of Gods, and, like to what ye are,
 Great things resolved, which from the lowest deep
 Will once more lift us up, in spite of fate, 410
 Nearer our ancient seat—perhaps in view
 Of those bright confines, whence, with neighbour-
 ing arms,
 And opportune excursion, we may chance
 Re-enter Heaven; or else in some mild zone

Dwell, not unvisited of Heaven's fair light,
Secure, and at the brightening orient beam
Purge off this gloom: the soft delicious air,
To heal the scar of these corrosive fires,
Shall breathe her balm. But, first, whom shall we
send

In search of this new World? whom shall we find
420

Sufficient? who shall tempt with wandering feet
The dark, unbottomed, infinite Abyss,
And through the palpable obscure find out
His uncouth way, or spread his airy flight,
Upborne with indefatigable wings
Over the vast abrupt, ere he arrive
The happy Isle? What strength, what art, can then
Suffice, or what evasion bear him safe,
Through the strict senteries and stations thick
Of Angels watching round? Here he had need 430
All circumspection: and we now no less
Choice in our suffrage; for on whom we send
The weight of all, and our last hope, relies."
This said, he sat; and expectation held
His look suspense, awaiting who appeared
To second, or oppose, or undertake
The perilous attempt. But all sat mute,
Pondering the danger with deep thoughts; and
each

In other's countenance read his own dismay,
Astonished. None among the choice and prime 440
Of those Heaven-warring champions could be
found

So hardy as to proffer or accept,
Alone, the dreadful voyage; till, at last,
Satan, whom now transcendent glory raised
Above his fellows, with monarchal pride
Conscious of highest worth, unmoved thus

spake:—

"O Progeny of Heaven! Empyrean Thrones!
 With reason hath deep silence and demur
 Seized us, though undismayed. Long is the way
 And hard, that out of Hell leads up to light. 450

Our prison strong, this huge convex of fire,
 Outrageous to devour, immures us round
 Ninefold; and gates of burning adamant,
 Barred over us, prohibit all egress.

These passed, if any pass, the void profound
 Of unessential Night receives him next,
 Wide-gaping, and with utter loss of being
 Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf. 460

If thence he scape, into whatever world,
 Or unknown region, what remains him less
 Than unknown dangers, and as hard escape?
 But I should ill become this throne, O Peers,
 And this imperial sovereignty, adorned
 With splendour, armed with power, if aught pro-
 posed

And judged of public moment in the shape
 Of difficulty or danger, could deter
 Me from attempting. Wherefore do I assume 470
 These royalties, and not refuse to reign,
 Refusing to accept as great a share
 Of hazard as of honour, due alike
 To him who reigns, and so much to him due
 Of hazard more as he above the rest
 High honoured sits? Go, therefore, mighty Pow-
 ers,

Terror of Heaven, though fallen; intend at home,
 While here shall be our home, what best may ease
 The present misery, and render Hell
 More tolerable; if there be cure or charm 480
 To respite, or deceive, or slack the pain

Of this ill mansion: intermit no watch
 Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad
 Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek
 Deliverance for us all. This enterprise
 None shall partake with me." Thus saying, rose
 The Monarch, and prevented all reply;
 Prudent lest, from his resolution raised,
 Others among the chief might offer now,
 Certain to be refused, what erst they feared, 490
 And, so refused, might in opinion stand
 His rivals, winning cheap the high repute
 Which he through hazard huge must earn. But
 they
 Dreaded not more th' adventure than his voice
 Forbidding; and at once with him they rose.

Their rising all at once was as the sound
 Of thunder heard remote. Towards him they bend
 With awful reverence prone, and as a God
 Extol him equal to the Highest in Heaven. 500

Nor failed they to express how much they praised
 That for the general safety he despised
 His own: for neither do the Spirits damned
 Lose all their virtue; lest bad men should boast
 Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,
 Or close ambition varnished o'er with zeal.

Thus they their doubtful consultations dark
 Ended, rejoicing in their matchless Chief: 510
 As, when from mountain-tops the dusky clouds
 Ascending, while the north wind sleeps,
 o'erspread
 Heaven's cheerful face, the louring element
 Scowls o'er the darkened landscape snow or
 shower,
 If chance the radiant sun, with farewell sweet,
 Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,

The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
 Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.

O shame to men! Devil with devil damned 520
 Firm concord holds; men only disagree
 Of creatures rational, though under hope
 Of heavenly grace, and, God proclaiming peace,
 Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife
 Among themselves, and levy cruel wars
 Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:
 As if (which might induce us to accord)
 Man had not hellish foes enow besides,
 That day and night for his destruction wait!
 The Stygian council thus dissolved; and forth 530
 In order came the grand infernal Peers:
 Midst came their mighty Paramount, and seemed
 Alone th' antagonist of Heaven, nor less
 Than Hell's dread Emperor, with pomp supreme,
 And god-like imitated state: him round
 A globe of fiery Seraphim enclosed
 With bright emblazonry, and horrent arms.

Then of their session ended they bid cry
 With trumpet's regal sound the great result: 540
 Toward the four winds four speedy Cherubim
 Put to their mouths the sounding alchemy,
 By herald's voice explained; the hollow Abyss
 Heard far and wide, and all the host of Hell
 With deafening shout returned them loud acclaim.

Thence more at ease their minds, and somewhat
 raised
 By false presumptuous hope, the ranged Powers
 Disband; and, wandering, each his several way
 Pursues, as inclination or sad choice 550
 Leads him perplexed, where he may likeliest find
 Truce to his restless thoughts, and entertain
 The irksome hours, till his great Chief return.

Part on the plain, or in the air sublime,
 Upon the wing or in swift race contend,
 As at th' Olympian games or Pythian fields;
 Part curb their fiery steeds, or shun the goal
 With rapid wheels, or fronted brigades form:
 As when, to warn proud cities, war appears 560
 Waged in the troubled sky, and armies rush
 To battle in the clouds; before each van
 Prick forth the airy knights, and couch their spears,
 Till thickest legions close; with feats of arms
 From either end of heaven the welkin burns.

Others, with vast Typhoean rage, more fell,
 Rend up both rocks and hills, and ride the air
 In whirlwind; Hell scarce holds the wild uproar:—
 As when Alcides, from Oechalia crowned 570
 With conquest, felt th' envenomed robe, and tore
 Through pain up by the roots Thessalian pines,
 And Lichas from the top of Oeta threw
 Into th' Euboic sea. Others, more mild,
 Retreated in a silent valley, sing
 With notes angelical to many a harp
 Their own heroic deeds, and hapless fall
 By doom of battle, and complain that Fate
 Free Virtue should enthrall to Force or Chance.

580

Their song was partial; but the harmony
 (What could it less when Spirits immortal sing?)
 Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
 The thronging audience. In discourse more sweet
 (For Eloquence the Soul, Song charms the Sense)
 Others apart sat on a hill retired,
 In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
 Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate—
 Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
 And found no end, in wandering mazes lost. 590

Of good and evil much they argued then,
 Of happiness and final misery,
 Passion and apathy, and glory and shame:
 Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy!—
 Yet, with a pleasing sorcery, could charm
 Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
 Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdured breast
 With stubborn patience as with triple steel.

600

Another part, in squadrons and gross bands,
 On bold adventure to discover wide
 That dismal world, if any clime perhaps
 Might yield them easier habitation, bend
 Four ways their flying march, along the banks
 Of four infernal rivers, that disgorge
 Into the burning lake their baleful streams—
 Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate;
 Sad Acheron of sorrow, black and deep;
 Cocytus, named of lamentation loud
 Heard on the rueful stream; fierce Phlegeton,
 Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.

610

Far off from these, a slow and silent stream,
 Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls
 Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks
 Forthwith his former state and being forgets—
 Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.

Beyond this flood a frozen continent
 Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
 Of whirlwind and dire hail, which on firm land
 Thaws not, but gathers heap, and ruin seems
 Of ancient pile; all else deep snow and ice,
 A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog
 Betwixt Damietta and Mount Casius old,
 Where armies whole have sunk: the parching air
 Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of fire.

620

Thither, by harpy-footed Furies haled, 630
 At certain revolutions all the damned
 Are brought; and feel by turns the bitter change
 Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce,
 From beds of raging fire to starve in ice
 Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine
 Immovable, infixed, and frozen round
 Periods of time,—thence hurried back to fire.

They ferry over this Lethean sound
 Both to and fro, their sorrow to augment, 640
 And wish and struggle, as they pass, to reach
 The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose
 In sweet forgetfulness all pain and woe,
 All in one moment, and so near the brink;
 But Fate withstands, and, to oppose th' attempt,
 Medusa with Gorgonian terror guards
 The ford, and of itself the water flies
 All taste of living wight, as once it fled
 The lip of Tantalus. Thus roving on
 In confused march forlorn, th' adventurous bands,
 650

With shuddering horror pale, and eyes aghast,
 Viewed first their lamentable lot, and found
 No rest. Through many a dark and dreary vale
 They passed, and many a region dolorous,
 O'er many a frozen, many a fiery alp,
 Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of
 death—
 A universe of death, which God by curse
 Created evil, for evil only good;
 Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
 Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things, 660
 Obominable, inutterable, and worse
 Than fables yet have feigned or fear conceived,
 Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire.

Meanwhile the Adversary of God and Man,
Satan, with thoughts inflamed of highest design,
Puts on swift wings, and toward the gates of Hell
Explores his solitary flight: sometimes
He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the left;
Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars
670

Up to the fiery concave towering high.

As when far off at sea a fleet descried
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs; they on the trading flood,
Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape,
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole: so seemed
Far off the flying Fiend. At last appear 680
Hell-bounds, high reaching to the horrid roof,
And thrice threefold the gates; three folds were
brass,
Three iron, three of adamant rock,
Impenetrable, impaled with circling fire,
Yet unconsumed. Before the gates there sat
On either side a formidable Shape.

The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold,
Voluminous and vast—a serpent armed 690
With mortal sting. About her middle round
A cry of Hell-hounds never-ceasing barked
With wide Cerberian mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal; yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturbed their noise, into her womb,
And kennel there; yet there still barked and
howled
Within unseen. Far less abhorred than these
Vexed Scylla, bathing in the sea that parts

Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore;
Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when, called 700
In secret, riding through the air she comes,
Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon
Eclipses at their charms. The other Shape—
If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either—black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seemed his head
710

The likeness of a kingly crown had on.

Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast
With horrid strides; Hell trembled as he strode.

Th' undaunted Fiend what this might be admired—
Admired, not feared (God and his Son except,
Created thing naught valued he nor shunned),
And with disdainful look thus first began:— 720
"Whence and what art thou, execrable Shape,
That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way
To yonder gates? Through them I mean to pass,
That be assured, without leave asked of thee.

Retire; or taste thy folly, and learn by proof,
Hell-born, not to contend with Spirits of Heaven."
To whom the Goblin, full of wrath, replied:—
"Art thou that traitor Angel? art thou he, 730
Who first broke peace in Heaven and faith, till then
Unbroken, and in proud rebellious arms
Drew after him the third part of Heaven's sons,
Conjured against the Highest—for which both thou
And they, outcast from God, are here condemned

To waste eternal days in woe and pain?
 And reckon'st thou thyself with Spirits of Heaven
 Hell-doomed, and breath'st defiance here and
 scorn,

Where I reign king, and, to enrage thee more,
 Thy king and lord? Back to thy punishment, 740
 False fugitive; and to thy speed add wings,
 Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
 Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart
 Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before."
 So spake the grisly Terror, and in shape,
 So speaking and so threatening, grew tenfold,
 More dreadful and deform. On th' other side,
 Incensed with indignation, Satan stood
 Unterrified, and like a comet burned, 750
 That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge
 In th' arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
 Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head
 Levelled his deadly aim; their fatal hands
 No second stroke intend; and such a frown
 Each cast at th' other as when two black clouds,
 With heaven's artillery fraught, came rattling on
 Over the Caspian,—then stand front to front
 Hovering a space, till winds the signal blow
 To join their dark encounter in mid-air.

760

So frowned the mighty combatants that Hell
 Grew darker at their frown; so matched they stood;
 For never but once more was wither like
 To meet so great a foe. And now great deeds
 Had been achieved, whereof all Hell had rung,
 Had not the snaky Sorceress, that sat
 Fast by Hell-gate and kept the fatal key,
 Risen, and with hideous outcry rushed between.

"O father, what intends thy hand," she cried, 770
 "Against thy only son? What fury, O son,

Possesses thee to bend that mortal dart
 Against thy father's head? And know'st for
 whom?

For him who sits above, and laughs the while
 At thee, ordained his drudge to execute
 Whate'er his wrath, which he calls justice, bids—
 His wrath, which one day will destroy ye both!"
 She spake, and at her words the hellish Pest
 Forbore: then these to her Satan returned:—
 "So strange thy outcry, and thy words so strange
 780

Thou interposest, that my sudden hand,
 Prevented, spares to tell thee yet by deeds
 What it intends, till first I know of thee
 What thing thou art, thus double-formed, and
 why,

In this infernal vale first met, thou call'st
 Me father, and that phantasm call'st my son.

I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
 Sight more detestable than him and thee."
 T' whom thus the Portress of Hell-gate replied:—
 790

"Hast thou forgot me, then; and do I seem
 Now in thine eye so foul?—once deemed so fair
 In Heaven, when at th' assembly, and in sight
 Of all the Seraphim with thee combined
 In bold conspiracy against Heaven's King,
 All on a sudden miserable pain
 Surprised thee, dim thine eyes and dizzy swum
 In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
 Threw forth, till on the left side opening wide,
 Likest to thee in shape and countenance bright, 800
 Then shining heavenly fair, a goddess armed,
 Out of thy head I sprung. Amazement seized
 All th' host of Heaven; back they recoiled afraid
 At first, and called me Sin, and for a sign

Portentous held me; but, familiar grown,
 I pleased, and with attractive graces won
 The most averse—thee chiefly, who, full oft
 Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing,
 Becam'st enamoured; and such joy thou took'st
 With me in secret that my womb conceived 810
 A growing burden. Meanwhile war arose,
 And fields were fought in Heaven: wherein re-
 mained

(For what could else?) to our Almighty Foe
 Clear victory; to our part loss and rout
 Through all the Empyrean. Down they fell,
 Driven headlong from the pitch of Heaven, down
 Into this Deep; and in the general fall
 I also: at which time this powerful key
 Into my hands was given, with charge to keep
 These gates for ever shut, which none can pass 820
 Without my opening. Pensive here I sat
 Alone; but long I sat not, till my womb,
 Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown,
 Prodigious motion felt and rueful throes.

At last this odious offspring whom thou seest,
 Thine own begotten, breaking violent way,
 Tore through my entrails, that, with fear and pain
 Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew 830
 Transformed: but he my inbred enemy
 Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,
 Made to destroy. I fled, and cried out Death!
 Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sighed
 From all her caves, and back resounded Death!
 I fled; but he pursued (though more, it seems,
 Inflamed with lust than rage), and, swifter far,
 Me overtook, his mother, all dismayed,
 And, in embraces forcible and foul
 Engendering with me, of that rape begot
 These yelling monsters, that with ceaseless cry 840

Surround me, as thou saw'st—hourly conceived
 And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
 To me; for, when they list, into the womb
 That bred them they return, and howl, and gnaw
 My bowels, their repast; then, bursting forth
 Afresh, with conscious terrors vex me round,
 That rest or intermission none I find.

Before mine eyes in opposition sits
 Grim Death, my son and foe, who set them on, 850
 And me, his parent, would full soon devour
 For want of other prey, but that he knows
 His end with mine involved, and knows that I
 Should prove a bitter morsel, and his bane,
 Whenever that shall be: so Fate pronounced.

But thou, O father, I forewarn thee, shun
 His deadly arrow; neither vainly hope
 To be invulnerable in those bright arms,
 Through tempered heavenly; for that mortal dint,
 860

Save he who reigns above, none can resist."
 She finished; and the subtle Fiend his lore
 Soon learned, now milder, and thus answered
 smooth:—

"Dear daughter—since thou claim'st me for thy sire,
 And my fair son here show'st me, the dear pledge
 Of dalliance had with thee in Heaven, and joys
 Then sweet, now sad to mention, through dire
 change

Befallen us unforeseen, unthought-of—know,
 I come no enemy, but to set free
 From out this dark and dismal house of pain 870
 Both him and thee, and all the heavenly host
 Of Spirits that, in our just pretences armed,
 Fell with us from on high. From them I go
 This uncouth errand sole, and one for all

Myself expose, with lonely steps to tread
 Th' unfounded Deep, and through the void im-
 mense

To search, with wandering quest, a place foretold
 Should be—and, by concurring signs, ere now
 Created vast and round—a place of bliss
 In the purlieus of Heaven; and therein placed 880
 A race of upstart creatures, to supply
 Perhaps our vacant room, though more removed,
 Lest Heaven, surcharged with potent multitude,
 Might hap to move new broils. Be this, or aught
 Than this more secret, now designed, I haste
 To know; and, this once known, shall soon return,
 And bring ye to the place where thou and Death
 Shall dwell at ease, and up and down unseen
 Wing silently the buxom air, embalmed
 With odours. There ye shall be fed and filled 890
 Immeasurably; all things shall be your prey."
 He ceased; for both seemed highly pleased, and
 Death

Grinned horrible a ghastly smile, to hear
 His famine should be filled, and blessed his maw
 Destined to that good hour. No less rejoiced
 His mother bad, and thus bespake her sire:—
 "The key of this infernal Pit, by due
 And by command of Heaven's all-powerful King,
 I keep, by him forbidden to unlock
 These adamantine gates; against all force 900
 Death ready stands to interpose his dart,
 Fearless to be o'ermatched by living might.

But what owe I to his commands above,
 Who hates me, and hath hither thrust me down
 Into this gloom of Tartarus profound,
 To sit in hateful office here confined,
 Inhabitant of Heaven and heavenly born—
 Here in perpetual agony and pain,

With terrors and with clamours compassed round
910

Of mine own brood, that on my bowels feed?
Thou art my father, thou my author, thou
My being gav'st me; whom should I obey
But thee? whom follow? Thou wilt bring me soon
To that new world of light and bliss, among
The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign
At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems
Thy daughter and thy darling, without end."

Thus saying, from her side the fatal key,
Sad instrument of all our woe, she took; 920

And, towards the gate rolling her bestial train,
Forthwith the huge portcullis high up-drew,
Which, but herself, not all the Stygian Powers
Could once have moved; then in the key-hole turns
Th' intricate wards, and every bolt and bar
Of massy iron or solid rock with ease
Unfastens. On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook 930

Of Erebus. She opened; but to shut
Excelled her power: the gates wide open stood,
That with extended wings a bannered host,
Under spread ensigns marching, might pass
through

With horse and chariots ranked in loose array;
So wide they stood, and like a furnace-mouth
Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame.

Before their eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoary Deep—a dark 940

Illimitable ocean, without bound,
Without dimension; where length, breadth, and
height,
And time, and place, are lost; where eldest Night

And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
 Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
 Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.
 For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions
 fierce,
 Strive here for mastery, and to battle bring
 Their embryon atoms: they around the flag 950
 Of each his faction, in their several clans,
 Light-armed or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift, or
 slow,
 Swarm populous, unnumbered as the sands
 Of Barca or Cyrene's torrid soil,
 Levied to side with warring winds, and poise
 Their lighter wings. To whom these most adhere
 He rules a moment: Chaos umpire sits,
 And by decision more embroils the fray
 By which he reigns: next him, high arbiter,
 Chance governs all. Into this wild Abyss, 960
 The womb of Nature, and perhaps her grave,
 Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
 But all these in their pregnant causes mixed
 Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight,
 Unless th' Almighty Maker them ordain
 His dark materials to create more worlds—
 Into this wild Abyss the wary Fiend
 Stood on the brink of Hell and looked a while,
 Pondering his voyage; for no narrow frith
 He had to cross. Nor was his ear less pealed 970
 With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
 Great things with small) than when Bellona storms
 With all her battering engines, bent to rase
 Some capital city; or less than if this frame
 Of Heaven were falling, and these elements
 In mutiny had from her axle torn
 The steadfast Earth. At last his sail-broad vans
 He spread for flight, and, in the surging smoke

Uplifted, spurns the ground; thence many a
 league,
 As in a cloudy chair, ascending rides 980
 Audacious; but, that seat soon failing, meets
 A vast vacuity. All unawares,
 Fluttering his pennons vain, plumb-down he
 drops

Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour
 Down had been falling, had not, by ill chance,
 The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud,
 Instinct with fire and nitre, hurried him
 As many miles aloft. That fury stayed—
 Quenched in a boggy Syrtis, neither sea,
 Nor good dry land—nigh foundered, on he fares,
 990

Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,
 Half flying; behoves him now both oar and sail.

As when a gryphon through the wilderness
 With winged course, o'er hill or moory dale,
 Pursues the Arimaspians, who by stealth
 Had from his wakeful custody purloined
 The guarded gold; so eagerly the Fiend
 O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or
 rare,

With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way,
 1000

And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.

At length a universal hubbub wild
 Of stunning sounds, and voices all confused,
 Borne through the hollow dark, assaults his ear
 With loudest vehemence. Thither he plies
 Undaunted, to meet there whatever Power
 Or Spirit of the nethermost Abyss
 Might in that noise reside, of whom to ask
 Which way the nearest coast of darkness lies 1010

Bordering on light; when straight behold the
 throne
 Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread
 Wide on the wasteful Deep! With him enthroned
 Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,
 The consort of his reign; and by them stood
 Orcus and Ades, and the dreaded name
 Of Demogorgon; Rumour next, and Chance,
 And Tumult, and Confusion, all embroiled,
 And Discord with a thousand various mouths.

1020

T' whom Satan, turning boldly, thus:—"Ye Powers
 And Spirits of this nethermost Abyss,
 Chaos and ancient Night, I come no spy
 With purpose to explore or to disturb
 The secrets of your realm; but, by constraint
 Wandering this darksome desert, as my way
 Lies through your spacious empire up to light,
 Alone and without guide, half lost, I seek,
 What readiest path leads where your gloomy
 bounds

Confine with Heaven; or, if some other place, 1030
 From your dominion won, th' Ethereal King
 Possesses lately, thither to arrive
 I travel this profound. Direct my course:
 Directed, no mean recompense it brings
 To your behoof, if I that region lost,
 All usurpation thence expelled, reduce
 To her original darkness and your sway
 (Which is my present journey), and once more
 Erect the standard there of ancient Night.

1040

Yours be th' advantage all, mine the revenge!"
 Thus Satan; and him thus the Anarch old,
 With faltering speech and visage incomposed,
 Answered: "I know thee, stranger, who thou art—

That mighty leading Angel, who of late
Made head against Heaven's King, though over-
thrown.

I saw and heard; for such a numerous host
Fled not in silence through the frightened Deep,
With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout, 1050
Confusion worse confounded; and Heaven-gates
Poured out by millions her victorious bands,
Pursuing. I upon my frontiers here
Keep residence; if all I can will serve
That little which is left so to defend,
Encroached on still through our intestine broils
Weakening the sceptre of old Night: first, Hell,
Your dungeon, stretching far and wide beneath;
Now lately Heaven and Earth, another world
Hung o'er my realm, linked in a golden chain 1060
To that side Heaven from whence your legions fell!
If that way be your walk, you have not far;
So much the nearer danger. Go, and speed;
Havoc, and spoil, and ruin, are my gain."
He ceased; and Satan stayed not to reply,
But, glad that now his sea should find a shore,
With fresh alacrity and force renewed
Springs upward, like a pyramid of fire,
Into the wild expanse, and through the shock
Of fighting elements, on all sides round 1070
Environed, wins his way; harder beset
And more endangered than when Argo passed
Through Bosphorus betwixt the justling rocks,
Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunned
Charybdis, and by th' other whirlpool steered.

So he with difficulty and labour hard
Moved on, with difficulty and labour he;
But, he once passed, soon after, when Man fell,
Strange alteration! Sin and Death amain, 1080

Following his track (such was the will of Heaven)
 Paved after him a broad and beaten way
 Over the dark Abyss, whose boiling gulf
 Tamely endured a bridge of wondrous length,
 From Hell continued, reaching th' utmost orb
 Of this frail World; by which the Spirits perverse
 With easy intercourse pass to and fro
 To tempt or punish mortals, except whom
 God and good Angels guard by special grace.

1090

But now at last the sacred influence
 Of light appears, and from the walls of Heaven
 Shoots far into the bosom of dim Night
 A glimmering dawn. Here Nature first begins
 Her farthest verge, and Chaos to retire,
 As from her outmost works, a broken foe,
 With tumult less and with less hostile din;
 That Satan with less toil, and now with ease,
 Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light,
 And, like a weather-beaten vessel, holds 1100
 Gladly the port, though shrouds and tackle torn;
 Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,
 Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold
 Far off th' empyreal Heaven, extended wide
 In circuit, undetermined square or round,
 With opal towers and battlements adorned
 Of living sapphire, once his native seat;
 And, fast by, hanging in a golden chain,
 This pendent World, in bigness as a star
 Of smallest magnitude close by the moon. 1110

Thither, full fraught with mischievous revenge,
 Accursed, and in a cursed hour, he hies.

BOOK III

Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven firstborn,
Or of the Eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,
And never but in unapproach'd light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.

Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell? before the sun,
Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice 10
Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.

Thee I re-visit now with bolder wing,
Escap'd the Stygian pool, though long detain'd
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
Through utter and through middle darkness
borne,

With other notes than to the Orphean lyre
I sung of Chaos and eternal Night; 20
Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to re-ascend,
Though hard and rare: Thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sovran vital lamp; but thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain

To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
 So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,
 Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more
 Cease I to wander, where the Muses haunt,
 Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill, 30
 Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
 Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
 That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
 Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget
 So were I equall'd with them in renown,
 Thy sovran command, that Man should find grace;
 Blind Thamyras, and blind Maeonides,
 And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old:
 Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
 Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird 40
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
 Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
 Seasons return; but not to me returns
 Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
 But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
 Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
 Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
 Presented with a universal blank 50
 Of nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

So much the rather thou, celestial Light,
 Shine inward, and the mind through all her pow-
 ers
 Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
 Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
 Of things invisible to mortal sight.

Now had the Almighty Father from above, 60
 From the pure empyrean where he sits

High thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye
 His own works and their works at once to view:
 About him all the Sanctities of Heaven
 Stood thick as stars, and from his sight receiv'd
 Beatitude past utterance; on his right
 The radiant image of his glory sat,
 His only son; on earth he first beheld
 Our two first parents, yet the only two
 Of mankind in the happy garden plac'd 70
 Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,
 Uninterrupted joy, unrivall'd love,
 In blissful solitude; he then survey'd
 Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there
 Coasting the wall of Heaven on this side Night
 In the dun air sublime, and ready now
 To stoop with wearied wings, and willing feet,
 On the bare outside of this world, that seem'd
 Firm land imbosom'd, without firmament,
 Uncertain which, in ocean or in air. 80

Him God beholding from his prospect high,
 Wherein past, present, future, he beholds,
 Thus to his only Son foreseeing spake.

Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage
 Transports our Adversary? whom no bounds
 Prescrib'd no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
 Heap'd on him there, nor yet the main abyss 90
 Wide interrupt, can hold; so bent he seems
 On desperate revenge, that shall redound
 Upon his own rebellious head. And now,
 Through all restraint broke loose, he wings his way
 Not far off Heaven, in the precincts of light,
 Directly towards the new created world,
 And man there plac'd, with purpose to assay
 If him by force he can destroy, or, worse,
 By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert;

For man will hearken to his glozing lies,
 And easily transgress the sole command, 100
 Sole pledge of his obedience: So will fall
 He and his faithless progeny: Whose fault?
 Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of me
 All he could have; I made him just and right,
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

Such I created all the ethereal Powers
 And Spirits, both them who stood, and them who
 fail'd;
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell. 110

Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where only what they needs must do appear'd,
 Not what they would? what praise could they re-
 ceive?

What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason also is choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,
 Made passive both, had serv'd necessity,
 Not me. They therefore, as to right belong'd, 120
 So were created, nor can justly accuse
 Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
 As if predestination over-rul'd
 Their will dispos'd by absolute decree
 Or high foreknowledge they themselves decreed
 Their own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
 Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.

So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
 Or aught by me immutably foreseen, 130
 They trespass, authors to themselves in all
 Both what they judge, and what they choose; for
 so

I form'd them free: and free they must remain,
 Till they enthrall themselves; I else must change
 Their nature, and revoke the high decree
 Unchangeable, eternal, which ordain'd
 Their freedom: they themselves ordain'd their fall.

The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
 Self-tempted, self-deprav'd: Man falls, deceiv'd
 140

By the other first: Man therefore shall find grace,
 The other none: In mercy and justice both,
 Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory ex-
 cel;

But Mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine.

Thus while God spake, ambrosial fragrance fill'd
 All Heaven, and in the blessed Spirits elect
 Sense of new joy ineffable diffus'd.

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen 150
 Most glorious; in him all his Father shone
 Substantially express'd; and in his face
 Divine compassion visibly appear'd,
 Love without end, and without measure grace,
 Which uttering, thus he to his Father spake.

O Father, gracious was that word which clos'd
 Thy sovran command, that Man should find grace;
 For which both Heaven and earth shall high extol
 Thy praises, with the innumerable sound 160
 Of hymns and sacred songs, wherewith thy throne
 Encompass'd shall resound thee ever blest.

For should Man finally be lost, should Man,
 Thy creature late so lov'd, thy youngest son,
 Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though join'd
 With his own folly? that be from thee far,
 That far be from thee, Father, who art judge
 Of all things made, and judgest only right.

170

Or shall the Adversary thus obtain
 His end, and frustrate thine? shall he fulfill
 His malice, and thy goodness bring to nought,
 Or proud return, though to his heavier doom,
 Yet with revenge accomplish'd, and to Hell
 Draw after him the whole race of mankind,
 By him corrupted? or wilt thou thyself
 Abolish thy creation, and unmake
 For him, what for thy glory thou hast made?
 So should thy goodness and thy greatness both¹⁸⁰
 Be question'd and blasphem'd without defence.

To whom the great Creator thus replied.

O son, in whom my soul hath chief delight,
 Son of my bosom, Son who art alone.

My word, my wisdom, and effectual might,
 All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are, all
 As my eternal purpose hath decreed; ¹⁹⁰
 Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will;
 Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
 Freely vouchsaf'd; once more I will renew
 His lapsed powers, though forfeit; and enthrall'd
 By sin to foul exorbitant desires;
 Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand
 On even ground against his mortal foe;
 By me upheld, that he may know how frail
 His fallen condition is, and to me owe
 All his deliverance, and to none but me. ²⁰⁰

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace,
 Elect above the rest; so is my will:
 The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn'd
 Their sinful state, and to appease betimes
 The incensed Deity, while offer'd grace
 Invites; for I will clear their senses dark,
 What may suffice, and soften stony hearts
 To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.

210

To prayer, repentance, and obedience due,
 Though but endeavour'd with sincere intent,
 Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut.

And I will place within them as a guide,
 My umpire Conscience; whom if they will hear,
 Light after light, well us'd, they shall attain,
 And to the end, persisting, safe arrive.

This my long sufferance, and my day of grace, 220
 They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;
 But hard be harden'd, blind be blinded more,
 That they may stumble on, and deeper fall;
 And none but such from mercy I exclude.

But yet all is not done; Man disobeying,
 Disloyal, breaks his fealty, and sins
 Against the high supremacy of Heaven,
 Affecting God-head, and, so losing all,
 To expiate his treason hath nought left, 230
 But to destruction sacred and devote,
 He, with his whole posterity, must die,
 Die he or justice must; unless for him
 Some other able, and as willing, pay
 The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

Say, heavenly Powers, where shall we find such
 love?

Which of you will be mortal, to redeem
 Man's mortal crime, and just the unjust to save?
 Dwells in all Heaven charity so dear? 240
 He ask'd, but all the heavenly quire stood mute,
 And silence was in Heaven: on Man's behalf
 Patron or intercessour none appear'd,
 Much less that durst upon his own head draw
 The deadly forfeiture, and ransom set.

And now without redemption all mankind
 Must have been lost, adjudg'd to Death and Hell

By doom severe, had not the Son of God,
 In whom the fulness dwells of love divine, 250
 His dearest mediation thus renew'd.

Father, thy word is past, Man shall find grace;
 And shall grace not find means, that finds her way,
 The speediest of thy winged messengers,
 To visit all thy creatures, and to all
 Comes unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought?
 Happy for Man, so coming; he her aid
 Can never seek, once dead in sins, and lost;
 Atonement for himself, or offering meet, 260
 Indebted and undone, hath none to bring;
 Behold me then: me for him, life for life
 I offer: on me let thine anger fall;
 Account me Man; I for his sake will leave
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die
 Well pleased; on me let Death wreak all his rage.

Under his gloomy power I shall not long
 Lie vanquished. Thou hast given me to possess²⁷⁰
 Life in myself for ever; by thee I live;
 Though now to Death I yield, and am his due,
 All that of me can die, yet, that debt paid,
 Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave
 His prey, nor suffer my unspotted soul
 For ever with corruption there to dwell;
 But I shall rise victorious, and subdue
 My vanquisher, spoiled of his vaunted spoil.

Death his death's wound shall then receive, and
 stoop 280
 Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarmed;
 I through the ample air in triumph high
 Shall lead Hell captive maugre Hell, and show
 The powers of darkness bound. Thou, at the sight
 Pleased, out of Heaven shalt look down and smile,

While, by thee raised, I ruin all my foes;
 Death last, and with his carcase glut the grave;
 Then, with the multitude of my redeemed,
 Shall enter Heaven, long absent, and return,
 Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud 290
 Of anger shall remain, but peace assured
 And reconcilment: wrath shall be no more
 Thenceforth, but in thy presence joy entire.

His words here ended; but his meek aspect
 Silent yet spake, and breathed immortal love
 To mortal men, above which only shone
 Filial obedience: as a sacrifice
 Glad to be offered, he attends the will
 Of his great Father. Admiration seized 300
 All Heaven, what this might mean, and whither
 tend,

Wondering; but soon th' Almighty thus replied:
 O thou in Heaven and Earth the only peace
 Found out for mankind under wrath, O thou
 My sole complacence! Well thou know'st how dear
 To me are all my works; nor Man the least,
 Though last created, that for him I spare
 Thee from my bosom and right hand, to save,
 By losing thee a while, the whole race lost. 310

Thou, therefore, whom thou only canst redeem,
 Their nature also to thy nature join;
 And be thyself Man among men on Earth,
 Made flesh, when time shall be, of virgin seed,
 By wondrous birth; be thou in Adam's room
 The head of all mankind, though Adam's son.

As in him perish all men, so in thee,
 As from a second root, shall be restored
 As many as are restored, without thee none. 320
 His crime makes guilty all his sons; thy merit,

Imputed, shall absolve them who renounce
 Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,
 And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
 Receive new life. So Man, as is most just,
 Shall satisfy for Man, be judged and die,
 And dying rise, and rising with him raise
 His brethren, ransomed with his own dear life.

330

So heavenly love shall outdo hellish hate,
 Giving to death, and dying to redeem,
 So dearly to redeem what hellish hate
 So easily destroyed, and still destroys
 In those who, when they may, accept not grace.

Nor shalt thou, by descending to assume
 Man's nature, lessen or degrade thine own.

Because thou hast, though throned in highest bliss
 340

Equal to God, and equally enjoying
 God-like fruition, quitted all, to save
 A world from utter loss, and hast been found
 By merit more than birthright Son of God,
 Found worthiest to be so by being good,
 Far more than great or high; because in thee
 Love hath abounded more than glory abounds;
 Therefore thy humiliation shall exalt
 With thee thy manhood also to this throne:
 Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign 350
 Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,
 Anointed universal King; all power
 I give thee; reign for ever, and assume
 Thy merits; under thee, as head supreme,
 Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions, I re-
 duce:

All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
 In Heaven, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell.

When thou, attended gloriously from Heaven,
 Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send 360
 The summoning Arch-Angels to proclaim
 Thy dread tribunal; forthwith from all winds,
 The living, and forthwith the cited dead
 Of all past ages, to the general doom
 Shall hasten; such a peal shall rouse their sleep.

Then, all thy saints assembled, thou shalt judge
 Bad Men and Angels; they, arraigned, shall sink
 Beneath thy sentence; Hell, her numbers full,
 Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Mean while 370
 The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
 New Heaven and Earth, wherein the just shall
 dwell,

And, after all their tribulations long,
 See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
 With joy and peace triumphing, and fair truth.

Then thou thy regal scepter shalt lay by,
 For regal scepter then no more shall need,
 God shall be all in all. But, all ye Gods,
 Adore him, who to compass all this dies; 380
 Adore the Son, and honour him as me.

No sooner had the Almighty ceased, but all
 The multitude of Angels, with a shout
 Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
 As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heaven rung
 With jubilee, and loud Hosannas filled
 The eternal regions: Lowly reverent
 Towards either throne they bow, and to the ground
 With solemn adoration down they cast 390
 Their crowns inwove with amarant and gold;
 Immortal amarant, a flower which once
 In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
 Began to bloom; but soon for man's offence
 To Heaven removed, where first it grew, there

grows,
And flowers aloft shading the fount of life,
And where the river of bliss through midst of
Heaven
Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream;
With these that never fade the Spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks inwreathed with
beams; 400
Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the bright
Pavement, that like a sea of jasper shone,
Impurpled with celestial roses smiled.

Then, crowned again, their golden harps they took,
Harps ever tuned, that glittering by their side
Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet
Of charming symphony they introduce
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high;
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join 410
Melodious part, such concord is in Heaven.

Thee, Father, first they sung Omnipotent,
Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
Eternal King; the Author of all being,
Fountain of light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st
Throned inaccessible, but when thou shadest
The full blaze of thy beams, and, through a cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine, 420
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
Yet dazzle Heaven, that brightest Seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.

Thee next they sang of all creation first,
Begotten Son, Divine Similitude,
In whose conspicuous countenance, without cloud
Made visible, the Almighty Father shines,
Whom else no creature can behold; on thee
Impressed the effulgence of his glory abides, 430

Transfused on thee his ample Spirit rests.

He Heaven of Heavens and all the Powers therein
 By thee created; and by thee threw down
 The aspiring Dominations: Thou that day
 Thy Father's dreadful thunder didst not spare,
 Nor stop thy flaming chariot-wheels, that shook
 Heaven's everlasting frame, while o'er the necks
 Thou drovest of warring Angels disarrayed.

440

Back from pursuit thy Powers with loud acclaim
 Thee only extolled, Son of thy Father's might,
 To execute fierce vengeance on his foes,
 Not so on Man: Him through their malice fallen,
 Father of mercy and grace, thou didst not doom
 So strictly, but much more to pity incline:
 No sooner did thy dear and only Son
 Perceive thee purposed not to doom frail Man
 So strictly, but much more to pity inclined,
 He to appease thy wrath, and end the strife 450
 Of mercy and justice in thy face discerned,
 Regardless of the bliss wherein he sat
 Second to thee, offered himself to die
 For Man's offence. O unexampled love,
 Love no where to be found less than Divine!
 Hail, Son of God, Saviour of Men! Thy name
 Shall be the copious matter of my song
 Henceforth, and never shall my heart thy praise
 Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.

460

Thus they in Heaven, above the starry sphere,
 Their happy hours in joy and hymning spent.

Mean while upon the firm opacous globe
 Of this round world, whose first convex divides
 The luminous inferiour orbs, enclosed
 From Chaos, and the inroad of Darkness old,

Satan alighted walks: A globe far off
 It seemed, now seems a boundless continent
 Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night
 470

Starless exposed, and ever-threatening storms
 Of Chaos blustering round, inclement sky;
 Save on that side which from the wall of Heaven,
 Though distant far, some small reflection gains
 Of glimmering air less vexed with tempest loud:
 Here walked the Fiend at large in spacious field.

As when a vultur on Imaus bred,
 Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
 Dislodging from a region scarce of prey 480
 To gorge the flesh of lambs or yeanling kids,
 On hills where flocks are fed, flies toward the
 springs

Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams;
 But in his way lights on the barren plains
 Of Sericana, where Chineses drive
 With sails and wind their cany waggons light:
 So, on this windy sea of land, the Fiend
 Walked up and down alone, bent on his prey;
 Alone, for other creature in this place,
 Living or lifeless, to be found was none; 490

None yet, but store hereafter from the earth
 Up hither like aerial vapours flew
 Of all things transitory and vain, when sin
 With vanity had filled the works of men:
 Both all things vain, and all who in vain things
 Built their fond hopes of glory or lasting fame,
 Or happiness in this or the other life;
 All who have their reward on earth, the fruits
 Of painful superstition and blind zeal,
 Nought seeking but the praise of men, here find 500
 Fit retribution, empty as their deeds;
 All the unaccomplished works of Nature's hand,

Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixed,
 Dissolved on earth, fleet hither, and in vain,
 Till final dissolution, wander here;
 Not in the neighbouring moon as some have
 dreamed;
 Those argent fields more likely habitants,
 Translated Saints, or middle Spirits hold
 Betwixt the angelical and human kind.

510

Hither of ill-joined sons and daughters born
 First from the ancient world those giants came
 With many a vain exploit, though then renowned:
 The builders next of Babel on the plain
 Of Sennaar, and still with vain design,
 New Babels, had they wherewithal, would build:
 Others came single; he, who, to be deemed
 A God, leaped fondly into Aetna flames,
 Empedocles; and he, who, to enjoy
 Plato's Elysium, leaped into the sea, 520
 Cleombrotus; and many more too long,
 Embryos, and idiots, eremites, and friars
 White, black, and gray, with all their trumpery.

Here pilgrims roam, that strayed so far to seek
 In Golgotha him dead, who lives in Heaven;
 And they, who to be sure of Paradise,
 Dying, put on the weeds of Dominick,
 Or in Franciscan think to pass disguised;
 They pass the planets seven, and pass the fixed,⁵³⁰
 And that crystalline sphere whose balance weighs
 The trepidation talked, and that first moved;
 And now Saint Peter at Heaven's wicket seems
 To wait them with his keys, and now at foot
 Of Heaven's ascent they lift their feet, when lo
 A violent cross wind from either coast
 Blows them transverse, ten thousand leagues awry
 Into the devious air: Then might ye see

Cowls, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, tost
 And fluttered into rags; then reliques, beads, 540
 Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
 The sport of winds: All these, upwhirled aloft,
 Fly o'er the backside of the world far off
 Into a Limbo large and broad, since called
 The Paradise of Fools, to few unknown
 Long after; now unpeopled, and untrod.

All this dark globe the Fiend found as he passed,
 And long he wandered, till at last a gleam
 Of dawning light turned thither-ward in haste 550
 His travelled steps: far distant he descries
 Ascending by degrees magnificent
 Up to the wall of Heaven a structure high;
 At top whereof, but far more rich, appeared
 The work as of a kingly palace-gate,
 With frontispiece of diamond and gold
 Embellished; thick with sparkling orient gems
 The portal shone, inimitable on earth
 By model, or by shading pencil, drawn.

560

These stairs were such as whereon Jacob saw
 Angels ascending and descending, bands
 Of guardians bright, when he from Esau fled
 To Padan-Aram, in the field of Luz
 Dreaming by night under the open sky
 And waking cried, This is the gate of Heaven.

Each stair mysteriously was meant, nor stood
 There always, but drawn up to Heaven sometimes
 Viewless; and underneath a bright sea flowed 570
 Of jasper, or of liquid pearl, whereon
 Who after came from earth, failing arrived
 Wafted by Angels, or flew o'er the lake
 Rapt in a chariot drawn by fiery steeds.

The stairs were then let down, whether to dare

The Fiend by easy ascent, or aggravate
 His sad exclusion from the doors of bliss:
 Direct against which opened from beneath,
 Just o'er the blissful seat of Paradise, 580
 A passage down to the Earth, a passage wide,
 Wider by far than that of after-times
 Over mount Sion, and, though that were large,
 Over the Promised Land to God so dear;
 By which, to visit off those happy tribes,
 On high behests his angels to and fro
 Passed frequent, and his eye with choice regard
 From Paneas, the fount of Jordan's flood,
 To Beersaba, where the Holy Land
 Borders on Egypt and the Arabian shore; 590
 So wide the opening seemed, where bounds were
 set
 To darkness, such as bound the ocean wave.

Satan from hence, now on the lower stair,
 That scaled by steps of gold to Heaven-gate,
 Looks down with wonder at the sudden view
 Of all this world at once. As when a scout,
 Through dark and desert ways with peril gone
 All night; at last by break of cheerful dawn
 Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill, 600
 Which to his eye discovers unaware
 The goodly prospect of some foreign land
 First seen, or some renowned metropolis
 With glistening spires and pinnacles adorned,
 Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams:
 Such wonder seised, though after Heaven seen,
 The Spirit malign, but much more envy seised,
 At sight of all this world beheld so fair.

Round he surveys (and well might, where he stood
 610
 So high above the circling canopy

Of night's extended shade,) from eastern point
 Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears
 Andromeda far off Atlantick seas
 Beyond the horizon; then from pole to pole
 He views in breadth, and without longer pause
 Down right into the world's first region throws
 His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
 Through the pure marble air his oblique way
 Amongst innumerable stars, that shone 620
 Stars distant, but nigh hand seemed other worlds;
 Or other worlds they seemed, or happy isles,
 Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,
 Fortunate fields, and groves, and flowery vales,
 Thrice happy isles; but who dwelt happy there
 He staid not to inquire: Above them all
 The golden sun, in splendour likest Heaven,
 Allured his eye; thither his course he bends
 Through the calm firmament, (but up or down,
 By center, or eccentric, hard to tell, 630
 Or longitude,) where the great luminary
 Aloof the vulgar constellations thick,
 That from his lordly eye keep distance due,
 Dispenses light from far; they, as they move
 Their starry dance in numbers that compute
 Days, months, and years, towards his all-cheering
 lamp
 Turn swift their various motions, or are turned
 By his magnetick beam, that gently warms
 The universe, and to each inward part
 With gentle penetration, though unseen, 640
 Shoots invisible virtue even to the deep;
 So wonderously was set his station bright.

There lands the Fiend, a spot like which perhaps
 Astronomer in the sun's lucent orb
 Through his glazed optick tube yet never saw.

The place he found beyond expression bright,
 Compared with aught on earth, metal or stone;
 Not all parts like, but all alike informed 650
 With radiant light, as glowing iron with fire;
 If metal, part seemed gold, part silver clear;
 If stone, carbuncle most or chrysolite,
 Ruby or topaz, to the twelve that shone
 In Aaron's breast-plate, and a stone besides
 Imagined rather oft than elsewhere seen,
 That stone, or like to that which here below
 Philosophers in vain so long have sought,
 In vain, though by their powerful art they bind
 Volatile Hermes, and call up unbound 660
 In various shapes old Proteus from the sea,
 Drained through a limbeck to his native form.

What wonder then if fields and regions here
 Breathe forth Elixir pure, and rivers run
 Potable gold, when with one virtuous touch
 The arch-chemick sun, so far from us remote,
 Produces, with terrestrial humour mixed,
 Here in the dark so many precious things
 Of colour glorious, and effect so rare? 670
 Here matter new to gaze the Devil met
 Undazzled; far and wide his eye commands;
 For sight no obstacle found here, nor shade,
 But all sun-shine, as when his beams at noon
 Culminate from the equator, as they now
 Shot upward still direct, whence no way round
 Shadow from body opaque can fall; and the air,
 No where so clear, sharpened his visual ray
 To objects distant far, whereby he soon
 Saw within ken a glorious Angel stand, 680
 The same whom John saw also in the sun:
 His back was turned, but not his brightness hid;
 Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
 Circl'd his head, nor less his locks behind

Illustrious on his shoulders fledge with wings
Lay waving round; on some great charge employed

He seemed, or fixed in cogitation deep.

Glad was the Spirit impure, as now in hope
To find who might direct his wandering flight 690
To Paradise, the happy seat of Man,
His journey's end and our beginning woe.

But first he casts to change his proper shape,
Which else might work him danger or delay:
And now a stripling Cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smiled celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffused, so well he feigned:
Under a coronet his flowing hair 700

In curls on either cheek played; wings he wore
Of many a coloured plume, sprinkled with gold;
His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
Before his decent steps a silver wand.

He drew not nigh unheard; the Angel bright,
Ere he drew nigh, his radiant visage turned,
Admonished by his ear, and straight was known
The Arch-Angel Uriel, one of the seven
Who in God's presence, nearest to his throne, 710
Stand ready at command, and are his eyes
That run through all the Heavens, or down to the
Earth

Bear his swift errands over moist and dry,
O'er sea and land: him Satan thus accosts.

Uriel, for thou of those seven Spirits that stand
In sight of God's high throne, gloriously bright,
The first art wont his great authentick will
Interpreter through highest Heaven to bring,
Where all his sons thy embassy attend; 720
And here art likeliest by supreme decree

Like honour to obtain, and as his eye
 To visit oft this new creation round;
 Unspeakable desire to see, and know
 All these his wonderous works, but chiefly Man,
 His chief delight and favour, him for whom
 All these his works so wonderous he ordained,
 Hath brought me from the quires of Cherubim
 Alone thus wandering. Brightest Seraph, tell
 In which of all these shining orbs hath Man 730
 His fixed seat, or fixed seat hath none,
 But all these shining orbs his choice to dwell;
 That I may find him, and with secret gaze
 Or open admiration him behold,
 On whom the great Creator hath bestowed
 Worlds, and on whom hath all these graces poured;
 That both in him and all things, as is meet,
 The universal Maker we may praise;
 Who justly hath driven out his rebel foes
 To deepest Hell, and, to repair that loss, 740
 Created this new happy race of Men
 To serve him better: Wise are all his ways.

So spake the false dissembler unperceived;
 For neither Man nor Angel can discern
 Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
 Invisible, except to God alone,
 By his permissive will, through Heaven and Earth:
 And oft, though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
 At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity 750
 Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
 Where no ill seems: Which now for once beguiled
 Uriel, though regent of the sun, and held
 The sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heaven;
 Who to the fraudulent impostor foul,
 In his uprightness, answer thus returned.

Fair Angel, thy desire, which tends to know

The works of God, thereby to glorify
 The great Work-master, leads to no excess 760
 That reaches blame, but rather merits praise
 The more it seems excess, that led thee hither
 From thy empyreal mansion thus alone,
 To witness with thine eyes what some perhaps,
 Contented with report, hear only in Heaven:
 For wonderful indeed are all his works,
 Pleasant to know, and worthiest to be all
 Had in remembrance always with delight;
 But what created mind can comprehend
 Their number, or the wisdom infinite 770
 That brought them forth, but hid their causes
 deep?

I saw when at his word the formless mass,
 This world's material mould, came to a heap:
 Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
 Stood ruled, stood vast infinitude confined;
 Till at his second bidding Darkness fled,
 Light shone, and order from disorder sprung:
 Swift to their several quarters hasted then
 The cumbrous elements, earth, flood, air, fire;
 And this ethereal quintessence of Heaven 780
 Flew upward, spirited with various forms,
 That rolled orbicular, and turned to stars
 Numberless, as thou seest, and how they move;
 Each had his place appointed, each his course;
 The rest in circuit walls this universe.

Look downward on that globe, whose hither side
 With light from hence, though but reflected,
 shines;
 That place is Earth, the seat of Man; that light
 His day, which else, as the other hemisphere, 790
 Night would invade; but there the neighbouring
 moon
 (So call that opposite fair star) her aid

Timely interposes, and her monthly round
Still ending, still renewing, through mid Heaven,
With borrowed light her countenance triform
Hence fills and empties to enlighten the Earth,
And in her pale dominion checks the night.

That spot, to which I point, is Paradise,
Adam's abode; those lofty shades, his bower. 800

Thy way thou canst not miss, me mine requires.

Thus said, he turned; and Satan, bowing low,
As to superiour Spirits is wont in Heaven,
Where honour due and reverence none neglects,
Took leave, and toward the coast of earth beneath,
Down from the ecliptick, sped with hoped success,
Throws his steep flight in many an aery wheel;
Nor staid, till on Niphates' top he lights. 810

BOOK IV

O, for that warning voice, which he, who saw
The Apocalypse, heard cry in Heaven aloud,
Then when the Dragon, put to second rout,
Came furious down to be revenged on men,
Woe to the inhabitants on earth! that now,
While time was, our first parents had been warned
The coming of their secret foe, and 'scaped,
Haply so 'scaped his mortal snare: For now
Satan, now first inflamed with rage, came down,
The tempter ere the accuser of mankind, 10
To wreak on innocent frail Man his loss
Of that first battle, and his flight to Hell:
Yet, not rejoicing in his speed, though bold
Far off and fearless, nor with cause to boast,
Begins his dire attempt; which nigh the birth
Now rolling boils in his tumultuous breast,
And like a devilish engine back recoils
Upon himself; horror and doubt distract
His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
The Hell within him; for within him Hell 20
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step, no more than from himself, can fly
By change of place: Now conscience wakes de-
spair,
That slumbered; wakes the bitter memory

Of what he was, what is, and what must be
 Worse; of worse deeds worse sufferings must en-
 sue.

Sometimes towards Eden, which now in his view
 Lay pleasant, his grieved look he fixes sad;
 Sometimes towards Heaven, and the full-blazing
 sun, 30
 Which now sat high in his meridian tower:
 Then, much revolving, thus in sighs began.

O thou, that, with surpassing glory crowned,
 Lookest from thy sole dominion like the God
 Of this new world; at whose sight all the stars
 Hide their diminished heads; to thee I call,
 But with no friendly voice, and add thy name,
 Of Sun! to tell thee how I hate thy beams,
 That bring to my remembrance from what state 40
 I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere;
 Till pride and worse ambition threw me down
 Warring in Heaven against Heaven's matchless
 King:

Ah, wherefore! he deserved no such return
 From me, whom he created what I was
 In that bright eminence, and with his good
 Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.

What could be less than to afford him praise,
 The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks, 50
 How due! yet all his good proved ill in me,
 And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
 I 'sdeined subjection, and thought one step higher
 Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
 The debt immense of endless gratitude,
 So burdensome still paying, still to owe,
 Forgetful what from him I still received,
 And understood not that a grateful mind
 By owing owes not, but still pays, at once

Indebted and discharged; what burden then 60
 O, had his powerful destiny ordained
 Me some inferiour Angel, I had stood
 Then happy; no unbounded hope had raised
 Ambition! Yet why not some other Power
 As great might have aspired, and me, though
 mean,

Drawn to his part; but other Powers as great
 Fell not, but stand unshaken, from within
 Or from without, to all temptations armed.

Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand?
 70

Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to ac-
 cuse,

But Heaven's free love dealt equally to all?
 Be then his love accursed, since love or hate,
 To me alike, it deals eternal woe.

Nay, cursed be thou; since against his thy will
 Chose freely what it now so justly rues.

Me miserable! which way shall I fly
 Infinite wrath, and infinite despair? 80
 Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
 And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep
 Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.

O, then, at last relent: Is there no place
 Left for repentance, none for pardon left?
 None left but by submission; and that word
 Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
 Among the Spirits beneath, whom I seduced 90
 With other promises and other vaunts
 Than to submit, boasting I could subdue
 The Omnipotent. Ay me! they little know
 How dearly I abide that boast so vain,
 Under what torments inwardly I groan,

While they adore me on the throne of Hell.
 With diadem and scepter high advanced,
 The lower still I fall, only supreme
 In misery: Such joy ambition finds. 100
 But say I could repent, and could obtain,
 By act of grace, my former state; how soon
 Would highth recall high thoughts, how soon un-
 say
 What feigned submission swore? Ease would re-
 cant
 Vows made in pain, as violent and void.
 For never can true reconciliation grow,
 Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so
 deep:
 Which would but lead me to a worse relapse 110
 And heavier fall: so should I purchase dear
 Short intermission bought with double smart.
 This knows my Punisher; therefore as far
 From granting he, as I from begging, peace;
 All hope excluded thus, behold, instead
 Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,
 Mankind created, and for him this world.
 So farewell, hope; and with hope farewell, fear; 120
 Farewell, remorse! all good to me is lost;
 Evil, be thou my good; by thee at least
 Divided empire with Heaven's King I hold,
 By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
 As Man ere long, and this new world, shall know.
 Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his
 face
 Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy, and despair;
 Which marred his borrowed visage, and betrayed
 Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld. 130
 For heavenly minds from such distempers foul

Are ever clear. Whereof he soon aware,
 Each perturbation smoothed with outward calm,
 Artificer of fraud; and was the first
 That practised falsehood under saintly show,
 Deep malice to conceal, couched with revenge:
 Yet not enough had practised to deceive
 Uriel once warned; whose eye pursued him down
 The way he went, and on the Assyrian mount 140
 Saw him disfigured, more than could befall
 Spirit of happy sort; his gestures fierce
 He marked and mad demeanour, then alone,
 As he supposed, all unobserved, unseen.

So on he fares, and to the border comes
 Of Eden, where delicious Paradise,
 Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green,
 As with a rural mound, the champaign head 150
 Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
 With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
 Access denied; and overhead upgrew
 Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
 Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
 A sylvan scene, and, as the ranks ascend,
 Shade above shade, a woody theatre
 Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
 The verdurous wall of Paradise upsprung;
 Which to our general sire gave prospect large
 Into his nether empire neighbouring round. 160

And higher than that wall a circling row
 Of goodliest trees, loaden with fairest fruit,
 Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue,
 Appeared, with gay enamelled colours mixed:
 On which the sun more glad impressed his beams
 Than in fair evening cloud, or humid bow,
 When God hath showered the earth; so lovely
 seemed

That landskip: And of pure now purer air
Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires 170
Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
All sadness but despair: Now gentle gales,
Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
Those balmy spoils. As when to them who fail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambick, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabean odours from the spicy shore
Of Araby the blest; with such delay
Well pleased they slack their course, and many a
league 180
Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles:
So entertained those odorous sweets the Fiend,
Who came their bane; though with them better
pleased
Than Asmodeus with the fishy fume
That drove him, though enamoured, from the
spouse
Of Tobit's son, and with a vengeance sent
From Media post to Egypt, there fast bound.

Now to the ascent of that steep savage hill
Satan had journeyed on, pensive and slow; 190
But further way found none, so thick entwined,
As one continued brake, the undergrowth
Of shrubs and tangling bushes had perplexed
All path of man or beast that passed that way.

One gate there only was, and that looked east
On the other side: which when the arch-felon saw,
Due entrance he disdained; and, in contempt,
At one flight bound high over-leaped all bound
Of hill or highest wall, and sheer within 200
Lights on his feet. As when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,

Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve
 In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,
 Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold:
 Or as a thief, bent to unhoard the cash
 Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
 Cross-barred and bolted fast, fear no assault,
 In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles:
 So clomb this first grand thief into God's fold; 210
 So since into his church lewd hirelings climb.

Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life,
 The middle tree and highest there that grew,
 Sat like a cormorant; yet not true life
 Thereby regained, but sat devising death
 To them who lived; nor on the virtue thought
 Of that life-giving plant, but only used
 For prospect, what well used had been the pledge
 Of immortality. So little knows 220
 Any, but God alone, to value right
 The good before him, but perverts best things
 To worst abuse, or to their meanest use.

Beneath him with new wonder now he views,
 To all delight of human sense exposed,
 In narrow room, Nature's whole wealth, yea more,
 A Heaven on Earth: For blissful Paradise
 Of God the garden was, by him in the east 230
 Of Eden planted; Eden stretched her line
 From Auran eastward to the royal towers
 Of great Seleucia, built by Grecian kings,
 Or where the sons of Eden long before
 Dwelt in Tassar: In this pleasant soil
 His far more pleasant garden God ordained;
 Out of the fertile ground he caused to grow
 All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste;
 And all amid them stood the tree of life,
 High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit

Of vegetable gold; and next to life, 240
Our death, the tree of knowledge, grew fast by,
Knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill.

Southward through Eden went a river large,
Nor changed his course, but through the shaggy
hill

Passed underneath ingulfed; for God had thrown
That mountain as his garden-mould high raised
Upon the rapid current, which, through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst up-drawn,
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill 250

Watered the garden; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
Which from his darksome passage now appears,
And now, divided into four main streams,
Runs diverse, wandering many a famous realm
And country, whereof here needs no account;
But rather to tell how, if Art could tell,
How from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
With mazy error under pendant shades 260

Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice Art
In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon
Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierced shade
Imbrowned the noontide bowers: Thus was this
place

A happy rural seat of various view;
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and
balm,

Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
270

Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only, and of delicious taste:

Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
 Grazing the tender herb, were interposed,
 Or palmy hillock; or the flowery lap
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
 Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose:
 Another side, umbrageous grotts and caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
 Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps 280
 Luxuriant; mean while murmuring waters fall
 Down the slope hills, dispersed, or in a lake,
 That to the fringed bank with myrtle crowned
 Her crystal mirrour holds, unite their streams.

The birds their quire apply; airs, vernal airs,
 Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
 The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,
 Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, 290
 Led on the eternal Spring. Not that fair field
 Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
 Herself a fairer flower by gloomy Dis
 Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
 To seek her through the world; nor that sweet
 grove

Of Daphne by Orontes, and the inspired
 Castalian spring, might with this Paradise
 Of Eden strive; nor that Nyseian isle
 Girt with the river Triton, where old Cham,
 Whom Gentiles Ammon call and Libyan Jove, 300
 Hid Amalthea, and her florid son
 Young Bacchus, from his stepdame Rhea's eye;
 Nor where Abassin kings their issue guard,
 Mount Amara, though this by some supposed
 True Paradise under the Ethiop line
 By Nilus' head, enclosed with shining rock,
 A whole day's journey high, but wide remote
 From this Assyrian garden, where the Fiend
 Saw, undelighted, all delight, all kind

Of living creatures, new to sight, and strange
 Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall, 310
 Godlike erect, with native honour clad
 In naked majesty seemed lords of all:
 And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine
 The image of their glorious Maker shone,
 Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
 (Severe, but in true filial freedom placed,)
 Whence true authority in men; though both
 Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
 For contemplation he and valour formed;
 For softness she and sweet attractive grace; 320
 He for God only, she for God in him:
 His fair large front and eye sublime declared
 Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
 Round from his parted forelock manly hung
 Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
 She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
 Her unadorned golden tresses wore
 Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved
 As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
 Subjection, but required with gentle sway, 330
 And by her yielded, by him best received,
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.

Nor those mysterious parts were then concealed;
 Then was not guilty shame, dishonest shame
 Of nature's works, honour dishonourable,
 Sin-bred, how have ye troubled all mankind
 With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure,
 And banished from man's life his happiest life, 340
 Simplicity and spotless innocence!
 So passed they naked on, nor shunned the sight
 Of God or Angel; for they thought no ill:
 So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair,
 That ever since in love's embraces met;

Adam the goodliest man of men since born
 His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.

Under a tuft of shade that on a green
 Stood whispering soft, by a fresh fountain side 350
 They sat them down; and, after no more toil
 Of their sweet gardening labour than sufficed
 To recommend cool Zephyr, and made ease
 More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
 More grateful, to their supper-fruits they fell,
 Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs
 Yielded them, side-long as they sat recline
 On the soft downy bank damasked with flowers:
 The savoury pulp they chew, and in the rind,
 Still as they thirsted, scoop the brimming stream;
 360

Nor gentle purpose, nor endearing smiles
 Wanted, nor youthful dalliance, as beseems
 Fair couple, linked in happy nuptial league,
 Alone as they. About them frisking played
 All beasts of the earth, since wild, and of all chase
 In wood or wilderness, forest or den;
 Sporting the lion ramped, and in his paw
 Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
 Gambolled before them; the unwieldy elephant,
 To make them mirth, used all his might, and
 wreathed 370

His lithe proboscis; close the serpent sly,
 Insinuating, wove with Gordian twine
 His braided train, and of his fatal guile
 Gave proof unheeded; others on the grass
 Couched, and now filled with pasture gazing sat,
 Or bedward ruminating; for the sun,
 Declined, was hasting now with prone career
 To the ocean isles, and in the ascending scale
 Of Heaven the stars that usher evening rose:
 When Satan still in gaze, as first he stood, 380

Scarce thus at length failed speech recovered sad.

O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold!
Into our room of bliss thus high advanced
Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
Not Spirits, yet to heavenly Spirits bright
Little inferiour; whom my thoughts pursue
With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
In them divine resemblance, and such grace
The hand that formed them on their shape hath
poured. 390

Ah! gentle pair, ye little think how nigh
Your change approaches, when all these delights
Will vanish, and deliver ye to woe;
More woe, the more your taste is now of joy;
Happy, but for so happy ill secured
Long to continue, and this high seat your Heaven
Ill fenced for Heaven to keep out such a foe
As now is entered; yet no purposed foe
To you, whom I could pity thus forlorn, 400
Though I unpitied: League with you I seek,
And mutual amity, so strait, so close,
That I with you must dwell, or you with me
Henceforth; my dwelling haply may not please,
Like this fair Paradise, your sense; yet such
Accept your Maker's work; he gave it me,
Which I as freely give: Hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest gates,
And send forth all her kings; there will be room,
Not like these narrow limits, to receive 410
Your numerous offspring; if no better place,
Thank him who puts me loth to this revenge
On you who wrong me not for him who wronged.

And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, as I do, yet publick reason just,
Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,

By conquering this new world, compels me now
 To do what else, though damned, I should abhor. 420

So spake the Fiend, and with necessity,
 The tyrant's plea, excused his devilish deeds.

Then from his lofty stand on that high tree
 Down he alights among the sportful herd
 Of those four-footed kinds, himself now one,
 Now other, as their shape served best his end
 Nearer to view his prey, and, unespied,
 To mark what of their state he more might learn,
 By word or action marked. About them round 430
 A lion now he stalks with fiery glare;
 Then as a tiger, who by chance hath spied
 In some purlieu two gentle fawns at play,
 Straight couches close, then, rising, changes oft
 His couchant watch, as one who chose his ground,
 Whence rushing, he might surest seize them both,
 Griped in each paw: when, Adam first of men
 To first of women Eve thus moving speech,
 Turned him, all ear to hear new utterance flow. 440

Sole partner, and sole part, of all these joys,
 Dearer thyself than all; needs must the Power
 That made us, and for us this ample world,
 Be infinitely good, and of his good
 As liberal and free as infinite;
 That raised us from the dust, and placed us here
 In all this happiness, who at his hand
 Have nothing merited, nor can perform
 Aught whereof he hath need; he who requires 450
 From us no other service than to keep
 This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
 In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
 So various, not to taste that only tree
 Of knowledge, planted by the tree of life;

So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,
 Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou know-
 est

God hath pronounced it death to taste that tree,
 The only sign of our obedience left,
 Among so many signs of power and rule
 Conferred upon us, and dominion given 460
 Over all other creatures that possess
 Earth, air, and sea. Then let us not think hard
 One easy prohibition, who enjoy
 Free leave so large to all things else, and choice
 Unlimited of manifold delights:
 But let us ever praise him, and extol
 His bounty, following our delightful task,
 To prune these growing plants, and tend these
 flowers,
 Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet. 470

To whom thus Eve replied. O thou for whom
 And from whom I was formed, flesh of thy flesh,
 And without whom am to no end, my guide
 And head! what thou hast said is just and right.

For we to him indeed all praises owe,
 And daily thanks; I chiefly, who enjoy
 So far the happier lot, enjoying thee
 Pre-eminent by so much odds, while thou
 Like consort to thyself canst no where find. 480

That day I oft remember, when from sleep
 I first awaked, and found myself reposed
 Under a shade on flowers, much wondering where
 And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.

Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
 Of waters issued from a cave, and spread
 Into a liquid plain, then stood unmoved
 Pure as the expanse of Heaven; I thither went 490

With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.

As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
Bending to look on me: I started back,
It started back; but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love: There I had fixed 500
Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warned me; "What thou seest,
What there thou seest, fair Creature, is thyself;
With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he
Whose image thou art; him thou shalt enjoy
Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called
Mother of human race." What could I do, 510
But follow straight, invisibly thus led?
Till I espied thee, fair indeed and tall,
Under a platane; yet methought less fair,
Less winning soft, less amiably mild,
Than that smooth watery image: Back I turned;
Thou following cryedst aloud, "Return, fair Eve;
Whom flyest thou? whom thou flyest, of him thou
art,

His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart,
Substantial life, to have thee by my side 520
Henceforth an individual solace dear;
Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim
My other half:" With that thy gentle hand
Seised mine: I yielded; and from that time see
How beauty is excelled by manly grace,
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.

So spake our general mother, and with eyes
 Of conjugal attraction unreproved,
 And meek surrender, half-embracing leaned 530
 On our first father; half her swelling breast
 Naked met his, under the flowing gold
 Of her loose tresses hid: he in delight
 Both of her beauty, and submissive charms,
 Smiled with superiour love, as Jupiter
 On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds
 That shed Mayflowers; and pressed her matron lip
 With kisses pure: Aside the Devil turned
 For envy; yet with jealous leer malign
 Eyed them askance, and to himself thus plained.
 540

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two,
 Imparadised in one another's arms,
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
 Of bliss on bliss; while I to Hell am thrust,
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
 Among our other torments not the least,
 Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines.

Yet let me not forget what I have gained 550
 From their own mouths: All is not theirs, it seems;
 One fatal tree there stands, of knowledge called,
 Forbidden them to taste: Knowledge forbidden
 Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord
 Envy them that? Can it be sin to know?
 Can it be death? And do they only stand
 By ignorance? Is that their happy state,
 The proof of their obedience and their faith?
 O fair foundation laid whereon to build
 Their ruin! hence I will excite their minds 560
 With more desire to know, and to reject
 Envious commands, invented with design
 To keep them low, whom knowledge might exalt

Equal with Gods: aspiring to be such,
 They taste and die: What likelier can ensue
 But first with narrow search I must walk round
 This garden, and no corner leave unspied;
 A chance but chance may lead where I may meet
 Some wandering Spirit of Heaven by fountain
 side,

Or in thick shade retired, from him to draw 570
 What further would be learned. Live while ye may,
 Yet happy pair; enjoy, till I return,
 Short pleasures, for long woes are to succeed!
 So saying, his proud step he scornful turned,
 But with sly circumspection, and began
 Through wood, through waste, o'er hill, o'er dale,
 his roam

Mean while in utmost longitude, where Heaven
 With earth and ocean meets, the setting sun
 Slowly descended, and with right aspect
 Against the eastern gate of Paradise 580
 Levelled his evening rays: It was a rock
 Of alabaster, piled up to the clouds,
 Conspicuous far, winding with one ascent
 Accessible from earth, one entrance high;
 The rest was craggy cliff, that overhung
 Still as it rose, impossible to climb.

Betwixt these rocky pillars Gabriel sat,
 Chief of the angelick guards, awaiting night;
 About him exercised heroick games 590
 The unarmed youth of Heaven, but nigh at hand
 Celestial armoury, shields, helms, and spears,
 Hung high with diamond flaming, and with gold.

Thither came Uriel, gliding through the even
 On a sun-beam, swift as a shooting star
 In autumn thwarts the night, when vapours fired
 Impress the air, and shows the mariner

From what point of his compass to beware
 Impetuous winds: He thus began in haste. 600

Gabriel, to thee thy course by lot hath given
 Charge and strict watch, that to this happy place
 No evil thing approach or enter in.

This day at highth of noon came to my sphere
 A Spirit, zealous, as he seemed, to know
 More of the Almighty's works, and chiefly Man,
 God's latest image: I described his way
 Bent all on speed, and marked his aery gait; 610
 But in the mount that lies from Eden north,
 Where he first lighted, soon discerned his looks
 Alien from Heaven, with passions foul obscured:
 Mine eye pursued him still, but under shade
 Lost sight of him: One of the banished crew,
 I fear, hath ventured from the deep, to raise
 New troubles; him thy care must be to find.

To whom the winged warriour thus returned. 620

Uriel, no wonder if thy perfect sight,
 Amid the sun's bright circle where thou sitst,
 See far and wide: In at this gate none pass
 The vigilance here placed, but such as come
 Well known from Heaven; and since meridian
 hour

No creature thence: If Spirit of other sort,
 So minded, have o'er-leaped these earthly bounds
 On purpose, hard thou knowest it to exclude
 Spiritual substance with corporeal bar.

630

But if within the circuit of these walks,
 In whatsoever shape he lurk, of whom
 Thou tellest, by morrow dawning I shall know.

So promised he; and Uriel to his charge
 Returned on that bright beam, whose point now

raised

Bore him slope downward to the sun now fallen
 Beneath the Azores; whether the prime orb,
 Incredible how swift, had thither rolled
 Diurnal, or this less volubil earth, 640
 By shorter flight to the east, had left him there
 Arraying with reflected purple and gold
 The clouds that on his western throne attend.

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
 Had in her sober livery all things clad;
 Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
 They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
 Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
 She all night long her amorous descant sung; 650
 Silence was pleased: Now glowed the firmament
 With living sapphires: Hesperus, that led
 The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
 Rising in clouded majesty, at length
 Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,
 And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

When Adam thus to Eve. Fair Consort, the hour
 Of night, and all things now retired to rest,
 Mind us of like repose; since God hath set 660
 Labour and rest, as day and night, to men
 Successive; and the timely dew of sleep,
 Now falling with soft slumbrous weight, inclines
 Our eye-lids: Other creatures all day long
 Rove idle, unemployed, and less need rest;
 Man hath his daily work of body or mind
 Appointed, which declares his dignity,
 And the regard of Heaven on all his ways;
 While other animals unactive range,
 And of their doings God takes no account. 670

To-morrow, ere fresh morning streak the east
 With first approach of light, we must be risen,

And at our pleasant labour, to reform
Yon flowery arbours, yonder alleys green,
Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
That mock our scant manuring, and require
More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth:
Those blossoms also, and those dropping gums,
That lie bestrown, unsightly and unsmooth, 680
Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease;
Mean while, as Nature wills, night bids us rest.

To whom thus Eve, with perfect beauty adorned
My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst
Unargued I obey: So God ordains;
God is thy law, thou mine: To know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise.

With thee conversing I forget all time; 690
All seasons, and their change, all please alike.

Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds: pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glistering with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful Evening mild; then silent Night,
With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon, 700
And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train:
But neither breath of Morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistering with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
Nor grateful Evening mild; nor silent Night,
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon,
Or glittering star-light, without thee is sweet.

But wherefore all night long shine these? for whom
710
This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?

To whom our general ancestor replied.

Daughter of God and Man, accomplished Eve,
 These have their course to finish round the earth,
 By morrow evening, and from land to land
 In order, though to nations yet unborn,
 Ministering light prepared, they set and rise;
 Lest total Darkness should by night regain
 Her old possession, and extinguish life 720
 In Nature and all things; which these soft fires
 Not only enlighten, but with kindly heat
 Of various influence foment and warm,
 Temper or nourish, or in part shed down
 Their stellar virtue on all kinds that grow
 On earth, made hereby apter to receive
 Perfection from the sun's more potent ray.

These then, though unbeheld in deep of night,
 Shine not in vain; nor think, though men were
 none, 730
 That Heaven would want spectators, God want
 praise:

Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
 Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
 All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
 Both day and night: How often from the steep
 Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
 Celestial voices to the midnight air,
 Sole, or responsive each to others note,
 Singing their great Creator? oft in bands
 While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
 740

With heavenly touch of instrument sounds
 In full harmonick number joined, their songs
 Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven.

Thus talking, hand in hand alone they passed
 On to their blissful bower: it was a place

Chosen by the sovran Planter, when he framed
All things to Man's delightful use; the roof
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade
Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew 750
Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
Acanthus, and each odorous bushy shrub,
Fenced up the verdant wall; each beauteous
flower,
Iris all hues, roses, and jessamin,
Reared high their flourished heads between, and
wrought
Mosaick; underfoot the violet,
Crocus, and hyacinth, with rich inlay
Broidered the ground, more coloured than with
stone
Of costliest emblem: Other creature here,
Bird, beast, insect, or worm, durst enter none, 760
Such was their awe of Man. In shadier bower
More sacred and sequestered, though but feigned,
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor Nymph
Nor Faunus haunted. Here, in close recess,
With flowers, garlands, and sweet-smelling herbs,
Espoused Eve decked first her nuptial bed;
And heavenly quires the hymenaeans sung,
What day the genial Angel to our sire
Brought her in naked beauty more adorned,
More lovely, than Pandora, whom the Gods 770
Endowed with all their gifts, and O! too like
In sad event, when to the unwiser son
Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnared
Mankind with her fair looks, to be avenged
On him who had stole Jove's authentick fire.

Thus, at their shady lodge arrived, both stood,
Both turned, and under open sky adored
The God that made both sky, air, earth, and
heaven,

Which they beheld, the moon's resplendent globe,
780

And starry pole: Thou also madest the night,
Maker Omnipotent, and thou the day,
Which we, in our appointed work employed,
Have finished, happy in our mutual help
And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss
Ordained by thee; and this delicious place
For us too large, where thy abundance wants
Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground.

But thou hast promised from us two a race 790
To fill the earth, who shall with us extol
Thy goodness infinite, both when we wake,
And when we seek, as now, thy gift of sleep.

This said unanimous, and other rites
Observing none, but adoration pure
Which God likes best, into their inmost bower
Handed they went; and, eased the putting off
These troublesome disguises which we wear,
Straight side by side were laid; nor turned, I ween,
800

Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refused:
Whatever hypocrites austerely talk
Of purity, and place, and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.

Our Maker bids encrease; who bids abstain
But our Destroyer, foe to God and Man?
Hail, wedded Love, mysterious law, true source
810

Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise of all things common else!
By thee adulterous Lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee

Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
 Relations dear, and all the charities
 Of father, son, and brother, first were known.

Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,
 Or think thee unbefitting holiest place, 820
 Perpetual fountain of domestick sweets,
 Whose bed is undefiled and chaste pronounced,
 Present, or past, as saints and patriarchs used.

Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
 His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
 Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
 Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendeared,
 Casual fruition; nor in court-amours,
 Mixed dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball,
 830

Or serenate, which the starved lover sings
 To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain.

These, lulled by nightingales, embracing slept,
 And on their naked limbs the flowery roof
 Showered roses, which the morn repaired. Sleep
 on,

Blest pair; and O! yet happiest, if ye seek
 No happier state, and know to know no more.

Now had night measured with her shadowy cone
 840

Half way up hill this vast sublunar vault,
 And from their ivory port the Cherubim,
 Forth issuing at the accustomed hour, stood armed
 To their night watches in warlike parade;
 When Gabriel to his next in power thus spake.

Uzziel, half these draw off, and coast the south
 With strictest watch; these other wheel the north;
 Our circuit meets full west. As flame they part,
 Half wheeling to the shield, half to the spear. 850

From these, two strong and subtle Spirits he called
That near him stood, and gave them thus in charge.

Ithuriel and Zephon, with winged speed
Search through this garden, leave unsearched no
nook;

But chiefly where those two fair creatures lodge,
Now laid perhaps asleep, secure of harm.

This evening from the sun's decline arrived, 860
Who tells of some infernal Spirit seen
Hitherward bent (who could have thought?) es-
caped

The bars of Hell, on errand bad no doubt:
Such, where ye find, seise fast, and hither bring.

So saying, on he led his radiant files,
Dazzling the moon; these to the bower direct
In search of whom they sought: Him there they
found

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
Assaying by his devilish art to reach 870
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
Illusions, as he list, phantasms and dreams;
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint
The animal spirits, that from pure blood arise
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise
At least distempered, discontented thoughts,
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires,
Blown up with high conceits ingendering pride.

Him thus intent Ithuriel with his spear 880
Touched lightly; for no falshood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness: Up he starts
Discovered and surprised. As when a spark
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, laid
Fit for the tun some magazine to store
Against a rumoured war, the smutty grain,

With sudden blaze diffused, inflames the air;
So started up in his own shape the Fiend. 890

Back stept those two fair Angels, half amazed
So sudden to behold the grisly king;
Yet thus, unmoved with fear, accost him soon.
Which of those rebel Spirits adjudged to Hell
Comest thou, escaped thy prison? and, trans-
formed,
Why sat'st thou like an enemy in wait,
Here watching at the head of these that sleep?
Know ye not then said Satan, filled with scorn,
Know ye not me? ye knew me once no mate 900
For you, there sitting where ye durst not soar:
Not to know me argues yourselves unknown,
The lowest of your throng; or, if ye know,
Why ask ye, and superfluous begin
Your message, like to end as much in vain?
To whom thus Zephon, answering scorn with
scorn.

Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
Or undiminished brightness to be known,
As when thou stoodest in Heaven upright and
pure; 910
That glory then, when thou no more wast good,
Departed from thee; and thou resemblest now
Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul.

But come, for thou, be sure, shalt give account
To him who sent us, whose charge is to keep
This place inviolable, and these from harm.
So spake the Cherub; and his grave rebuke,
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace 920
Invincible: Abashed the Devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape how lovely; saw, and pined

His loss; but chiefly to find here observed
 His lustre visibly impaired; yet seemed
 Undaunted. If I must contend, said he,
 Best with the best, the sender, not the sent,
 Or all at once; more glory will be won,
 Or less be lost. Thy fear, said Zephon bold,
 Will save us trial what the least can do 930
 Single against thee wicked, and thence weak.

The Fiend replied not, overcome with rage;
 But, like a proud steed reined, went haughty on,
 Champing his iron curb: To strive or fly
 He held it vain; awe from above had quelled
 His heart, not else dismayed. Now drew they nigh
 The western point, where those half-rounding
 guards

Just met, and closing stood in squadron joined,
 A waiting next command. To whom their Chief,
 940

Gabriel, from the front thus called aloud.

O friends! I hear the tread of nimble feet
 Hasting this way, and now by glimpse discern
 Ithuriel and Zephon through the shade;
 And with them comes a third of regal port,
 But faded splendour wan; who by his gait
 And fierce demeanour seems the Prince of Hell,
 Not likely to part hence without contest;
 Stand firm, for in his look defiance lours. 950

He scarce had ended, when those two approached,
 And brief related whom they brought, where
 found,

How busied, in what form and posture couched.

To whom with stern regard thus Gabriel spake.

Why hast thou, Satan, broke the bounds prescribed
 To thy transgressions, and disturbed the charge
 Of others, who approve not to transgress 960

By thy example, but have power and right
 To question thy bold entrance on this place;
 Employed, it seems, to violate sleep, and those
 Whose dwelling God hath planted here in bliss!
 To whom thus Satan with contemptuous brow.

Gabriel? thou hadst in Heaven the esteem of wise,
 And such I held thee; but this question asked
 Puts me in doubt. Lives there who loves his pain!
 Who would not, finding way, break loose from
 Hell, 970

Though thither doomed! Thou wouldst thyself, no
 doubt

And boldly venture to whatever place
 Farthest from pain, where thou mightst hope to
 change

Torment with ease, and soonest recompense
 Dole with delight, which in this place I sought;
 To thee no reason, who knowest only good,
 But evil hast not tried: and wilt object
 His will who bounds us! Let him surer bar
 His iron gates, if he intends our stay
 In that dark durance: Thus much what was asked.
 980

The rest is true, they found me where they say;
 But that implies not violence or harm.

Thus he in scorn. The warlike Angel moved,
 Disdainfully half smiling, thus replied.

O loss of one in Heaven to judge of wise
 Since Satan fell, whom folly overthrew,
 And now returns him from his prison 'scaped, 990
 Gravely in doubt whether to hold them wise
 Or not, who ask what boldness brought him hither
 Unlicensed from his bounds in Hell prescribed;
 So wise he judges it to fly from pain
 However, and to 'scape his punishment!

So judge thou still, presumptuous! till the wrath,
 Which thou incurrest by flying, meet thy flight
 Sevenfold, and scourge that wisdom back to Hell,
 Which taught thee yet no better, that no pain
 Can equal anger infinite provoked. 1000

But wherefore thou alone? wherefore with thee
 Came not all hell broke loose? or thou than they
 Less hardy to endure? Courageous Chief!
 The first in flight from pain! hadst thou alleged
 To thy deserted host this cause of flight,
 Thou surely hadst not come sole fugitive.

To which the Fiend thus answered, frowning stern. 1010

Not that I less endure, or shrink from pain,
 Insulting Angel! well thou knowest I stood
 Thy fiercest, when in battle to thy aid
 The blasting vollied thunder made all speed,
 And seconded thy else not dreaded spear.

But still thy words at random, as before,
 Argue thy inexperience what behoves
 From hard assays and ill successes past
 A faithful leader, not to hazard all 1020
 Through ways of danger by himself untried:
 I, therefore, I alone first undertook
 To wing the desolate abyss, and spy
 This new created world, whereof in Hell
 Fame is not silent, here in hope to find
 Better abode, and my afflicted Powers
 To settle here on earth, or in mid air;
 Though for possession put to try once more
 What thou and thy gay legions dare against;
 Whose easier business were to serve their Lord
 1030

High up in Heaven, with songs to hymn his throne,
 And practised distances to cringe, not fight,

To whom the warrior Angel soon replied.
 To say and straight unsay, pretending first
 Wise to fly pain, professing next the spy,
 Argues no leader but a liar traced,
 Satan, and couldst thou faithful add? O name,
 O sacred name of faithfulness profaned!
 Faithful to whom? to thy rebellious crew? 1040
 Army of Fiends, fit body to fit head.

Was this your discipline and faith engaged,
 Your military obedience, to dissolve
 Allegiance to the acknowledged Power supreme?
 And thou, sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem
 Patron of liberty, who more than thou
 Once fawned, and cringed, and servilely adored
 Heaven's awful Monarch? wherefore, but in hope
 To dispossess him, and thyself to reign? 1050
 But mark what I arreed thee now, Avant;
 Fly neither whence thou fledst! If from this hour
 Within these hallowed limits thou appear,
 Back to the infernal pit I drag thee chained,
 And seal thee so, as henceforth not to scorn
 The facile gates of Hell too slightly barred.

So threatened he; but Satan to no threats
 Gave heed, but waxing more in rage replied. 1060

Then when I am thy captive talk of chains,
 Proud liminary Cherub! but ere then
 Far heavier load thyself expect to feel
 From my prevailing arm, though Heaven's King
 Ride on thy wings, and thou with thy compeers,
 Us'd to the yoke, drawest his triumphant wheels
 In progress through the road of Heaven star-
 paved.

While thus he spake, the angelick squadron bright
 Turned fiery red, sharpening in mooned horns1070

Their phalanx, and began to hem him round
 With ported spears, as thick as when a field
 Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
 Her bearded grove of ears, which way the wind
 Sways them; the careful plowman doubting
 stands,

Left on the threshing floor his hopeless sheaves
 Prove chaff. On the other side, Satan, alarmed,
 Collecting all his might, dilated stood,
 Like Teneriff or Atlas, unremoved:
 His stature reached the sky, and on his crest 1080
 Sat Horror plumed; nor wanted in his grasp
 What seemed both spear and shield: Now dreadful
 deeds

Might have ensued, nor only Paradise
 In this commotion, but the starry cope
 Of Heaven perhaps, or all the elements
 At least had gone to wrack, disturbed and torn
 With violence of this conflict, had not soon
 The Eternal, to prevent such horrid fray,
 Hung forth in Heaven his golden scales, yet seen
 Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion sign, 1090
 Wherein all things created first he weighed,
 The pendulous round earth with balanced air
 In counterpoise, now ponders all events,
 Battles and realms: In these he put two weights,
 The sequel each of parting and of fight:
 The latter quick up flew, and kicked the beam,
 Which Gabriel spying, thus bespake the Fiend.

Satan, I know thy strength, and thou knowest
 mine;
 Neither our own, but given: What folly then 1100
 To boast what arms can do? since thine no more
 Than Heaven permits, nor mine, though doubled
 now
 To trample thee as mire: For proof look up,

And read thy lot in yon celestial sign;
Where thou art weighed, and shown how light,
 how weak,
If thou resist. The Fiend looked up, and knew
His mounted scale aloft: Nor more; but fled
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night.

BOOK V

Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl,
When Adam waked, so custom'd; for his sleep
Was airy-light, from pure digestion bred,
And temperate vapours bland, which the only
 sound

Of leaves and fuming rills, Aurora's fan,
Lightly dispersed, and the shrill matin song
Of birds on every bough; so much the more
His wonder was to find unwakened Eve
With tresses discomposed, and glowing cheek, 10
As through unquiet rest: He, on his side
Leaning half raised, with looks of cordial love
Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar graces; then with voice
Mild, as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whispered thus. Awake,
My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,
Heaven's last best gift, my ever new delight!
Awake: The morning shines, and the fresh field 20
Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
Our tender plants, how blows the citron grove,
What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
How nature paints her colours, how the bee

Sits on the bloom extracting liquid sweet.

Such whispering waked her, but with startled eye
On Adam, whom embracing, thus she spake.

O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose, 30
My glory, my perfection! glad I see
Thy face, and morn returned; for I this night
(Such night till this I never passed) have dreamed,
If dreamed, not, as I oft am wont, of thee,
Works of day past, or morrow's next design,
But of offence and trouble, which my mind
Knew never till this irksome night: Methought,
Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk
With gentle voice; I thought it thine: It said,
"Why sleepest thou, Eve? now is the pleasant time,
40

The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
Tunes sweetest his love-laboured song; now reigns
Full-orbed the moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
If none regard; Heaven wakes with all his eyes,
Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire?
In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment
Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze."
I rose as at thy call, but found thee not; 50
To find thee I directed then my walk;
And on, methought, alone I passed through ways
That brought me on a sudden to the tree
Of interdicted knowledge: fair it seemed,
Much fairer to my fancy than by day:
And, as I wondering looked, beside it stood
One shaped and winged like one of those from
Heaven
By us oft seen; his dewy locks distilled
Ambrosia; on that tree he also gazed;

And "O fair plant," said he, "with fruit surcharged,
60

Deigns none to ease thy load, and taste thy sweet,
Nor God, nor Man? Is knowledge so despised?
Or envy, or what reserve forbids to taste?

Forbid who will, none shall from me withhold
Longer thy offered good; why else set here?"

This said, he paused not, but with venturous arm
He plucked, he tasted; me damp horrour chilled
At such bold words vouched with a deed so bold:
But he thus, overjoyed; "O fruit divine,
Sweet of thyself, but much more sweet thus cropt,

70

Forbidden here, it seems, as only fit
For Gods, yet able to make Gods of Men:
And why not Gods of Men; since good, the more
Communicated, more abundant grows,
The author not impaired, but honoured more?

Here, happy creature, fair angelick Eve!
Partake thou also; happy though thou art,
Happier thou mayest be, worthier canst not be:
Taste this, and be henceforth among the Gods
Thyself a Goddess, not to earth confined, 80

But sometimes in the air, as we, sometimes
Ascend to Heaven, by merit thine, and see
What life the Gods live there, and such live thou!"

So saying, he drew nigh, and to me held,
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part
Which he had plucked; the pleasant savoury smell
So quickened appetite, that I, methought,
Could not but taste. Forthwith up to the clouds
With him I flew, and underneath beheld
The earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide
90

And various: Wondering at my flight and change
To this high exaltation; suddenly

My guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down,
 And fell asleep; but O, how glad I waked
 To find this but a dream! Thus Eve her night
 Related, and thus Adam answered sad.

Best image of myself, and dearer half,
 The trouble of thy thoughts this night in sleep
 Affects me equally; nor can I like 100
 This uncouth dream, of evil sprung, I fear;
 Yet evil whence? in thee can harbour none,
 Created pure. But know that in the soul
 Are many lesser faculties, that serve
 Reason as chief; among these Fancy next
 Her office holds; of all external things
 Which the five watchful senses represent,
 She forms imaginations, aery shapes,
 Which Reason, joining or disjoining, frames 110
 All what we affirm or what deny, and call
 Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
 Into her private cell, when nature rests.

Oft in her absence mimick Fancy wakes
 To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes,
 Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams;
 Ill matching words and deeds long past or late.

Some such resemblances, methinks, I find
 Of our last evening's talk, in this thy dream, 120
 But with addition strange; yet be not sad.

Evil into the mind of God or Man
 May come and go, so unreprieved, and leave
 No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope
 That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,
 Waking thou never will consent to do.

Be not disheartened then, nor cloud those looks,
 That wont to be more cheerful and serene, 130
 Than when fair morning first smiles on the world;
 And let us to our fresh employments rise

Among the groves, the fountains, and the flowers
 That open now their choisest bosomed smells,
 Reserved from night, and kept for thee in store.

So cheered he his fair spouse, and she was cheered;
 But silently a gentle tear let fall
 From either eye, and wiped them with her hair;
 Two other precious drops that ready stood, 140
 Each in their crystal sluice, he ere they fell
 Kissed, as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
 And pious awe, that feared to have offended.

So all was cleared, and to the field they haste.

But first, from under shady arborous roof
 Soon as they forth were come to open sight
 Of day-spring, and the sun, who, scarce up-risen,
 With wheels yet hovering o'er the ocean-brim, 150
 Shot parallel to the earth his dewy ray,
 Discovering in wide landskip all the east
 Of Paradise and Eden's happy plains,
 Lowly they bowed adoring, and began
 Their orisons, each morning duly paid
 In various style; for neither various style
 Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
 Their Maker, in fit strains pronounced, or sung
 Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence
 Flowed from their lips, in prose or numerous verse,
 160

More tuneable than needed lute or harp
 To add more sweetness; and they thus began.

These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
 Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
 Thus wonderous fair; Thyself how wonderous
 then!

Unspeaking, who sitst above these heavens
 To us invisible, or dimly seen
 In these thy lowest works; yet these declare

Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.
170

Speak, ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels; for ye behold him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne rejoicing; ye in Heaven
On Earth join all ye Creatures to extol
Him first, him last, him midst, and without end.

Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn, 180
Sure pledge of day, that crownest the smiling morn
With thy bright circlet, praise him in thy sphere,
While day arises, that sweet hour of prime.

Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
Acknowledge him thy greater; sound his praise
In thy eternal course, both when thou climbest,
And when high noon hast gained, and when thou
fallest.

Moon, that now meetest the orient sun, now flyest,
190

With the fixed Stars, fixed in their orb that flies;
And ye five other wandering Fires, that move
In mystick dance not without song, resound
His praise, who out of darkness called up light.

Air, and ye Elements, the eldest birth
Of Nature's womb, that in quaternion run
Perpetual circle, multiform; and mix
And nourish all things; let your ceaseless change
Vary to our great Maker still new praise. 200

Ye Mists and Exhalations, that now rise
From hill or steaming lake, dusky or gray,
Till the sun paint your fleecy skirts with gold,
In honour to the world's great Author rise;
Whether to deck with clouds the uncoloured sky,

Or wet the thirsty earth with falling showers,
 Rising or falling still advance his praise.
 His praise, ye Winds, that from four quarters blow,
 210
 Breathe soft or loud; and, wave your tops, ye Pines,
 With every plant, in sign of worship wave.
 Fountains, and ye that warble, as ye flow,
 Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praise.
 Join voices, all ye living Souls: Ye Birds,
 That singing up to Heaven-gate ascend,
 Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise.

220

Ye that in waters glide, and ye that walk
 The earth, and stately tread, or lowly creep;
 Witness if I be silent, morn or even,
 To hill, or valley, fountain, or fresh shade,
 Made vocal by my song, and taught his praise.
 Hail, universal Lord, be bounteous still
 To give us only good; and if the night
 Have gathered aught of evil, or concealed,
 Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark! 230
 So prayed they innocent, and to their thoughts
 Firm peace recovered soon, and wanted calm.

On to their morning's rural work they haste,
 Among sweet dews and flowers; where any row
 Of fruit-trees over-woody reached too far
 Their pampered boughs, and needed hands to
 check
 Fruitless embraces: or they led the vine
 To wed her elm; she, spoused, about him twines
 Her marriageable arms, and with him brings 240
 Her dower, the adopted clusters, to adorn
 His barren leaves. Them thus employed beheld
 With pity Heaven's high King, and to him called
 Raphael, the sociable Spirit, that deigned

To travel with Tobias, and secured
His marriage with the seventimes-wedded maid.

Raphael, said he, thou hearest what stir on Earth
Satan, from Hell 'scaped through the darksome
gulf,

Hath raised in Paradise; and how disturbed 250
This night the human pair; how he designs
In them at once to ruin all mankind.

Go therefore, half this day as friend with friend
Converse with Adam, in what bower or shade
Thou findest him from the heat of noon retired,
To respite his day-labour with repast,
Or with repose; and such discourse bring on,
As may advise him of his happy state,
Happiness in his power left free to will, 260
Left to his own free will, his will though free,
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware
He swerve not, too secure: Tell him withal
His danger, and from whom; what enemy,
Late fallen himself from Heaven, is plotting now
The fall of others from like state of bliss;
By violence? no, for that shall be withstood;
But by deceit and lies: This let him know,
Lest, wilfully transgressing, he pretend
Surprisa! unadmonished, unforwarned. 270

So spake the Eternal Father, and fulfilled
All justice: Nor delayed the winged Saint
After his charge received; but from among
Thousand celestial Ardours, where he stood
Veiled with his gorgeous wings, up springing light,
Flew through the midst of Heaven; the angelick
quires,

On each hand parting, to his speed gave way
Through all the empyreal road; till, at the gate
Of Heaven arrived, the gate self-opened wide 280

On golden hinges turning, as by work
 Divine the sovran Architect had framed.

From hence no cloud, or, to obstruct his sight,
 Star interposed, however small he sees,
 Not unconformed to other shining globes,
 Earth, and the garden of God, with cedars crowned
 Above all hills. As when by night the glass
 Of Galileo, less assured, observes
 Imagined lands and regions in the moon: 290
 Or pilot, from amidst the Cyclades
 Delos or Samos first appearing, kens
 A cloudy spot. Down thither prone in flight
 He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky
 Sails between worlds and worlds, with steady
 wing

Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan
 Winnows the buxom air; till, within soar
 Of towering eagles, to all the fowls he seems
 A phoenix, gazed by all as that sole bird,
 When, to enshrine his reliques in the Sun's 300
 Bright temple, to Egyptian Thebes he flies.

At once on the eastern cliff of Paradise
 He lights, and to his proper shape returns
 A Seraph winged: Six wings he wore, to shade
 His lineaments divine; the pair that clad
 Each shoulder broad, came mantling o'er his breast
 With regal ornament; the middle pair
 Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
 Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold 310
 And colours dipt in Heaven; the third his feet
 Shadowed from either heel with feathered mail,
 Sky-tinctured grain. Like Maia's son he stood,
 And shook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance
 filled
 The circuit wide. Straight knew him all the bands

Of Angels under watch; and to his state,
 And to his message high, in honour rise;
 For on some message high they guessed him
 bound.

Their glittering tents he passed, and now is come
 320

Into the blissful field, through groves of myrrh,
 And flowering odours, cassia, nard, and balm;
 A wilderness of sweets; for Nature here
 Wantoned as in her prime, and played at will
 Her virgin fancies pouring forth more sweet,
 Wild above rule or art, enormous bliss.

Him through the spicy forest onward come
 Adam discerned, as in the door he sat
 Of his cool bower, while now the mounted sun³³⁰
 Shot down direct his fervid rays to warm
 Earth's inmost womb, more warmth than Adam
 needs:

And Eve within, due at her hour prepared
 For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please
 True appetite, and not disrelish thirst
 Of nectarous draughts between, from milky
 stream,
 Berry or grape: To whom thus Adam called.

Haste hither, Eve, and worth thy sight behold
 Eastward among those trees, what glorious shape
 340

Comes this way moving; seems another morn
 Risen on mid-noon; some great behest from
 Heaven

To us perhaps he brings, and will vouchsafe
 This day to be our guest. But go with speed,
 And, what thy stores contain, bring forth, and pour
 Abundance, fit to honour and receive
 Our heavenly stranger: Well we may afford

Our givers their own gifts, and large bestow
 From large bestowed, where Nature multiplies
 Her fertile growth, and by disburthening grows³⁵⁰
 More fruitful, which instructs us not to spare.

To whom thus Eve. Adam, earth's hallowed
 mould,
 Of God inspired! small store will serve, where
 store,

All seasons, ripe for use hangs on the stalk;
 Save what by frugal storing firmness gains
 To nourish, and superfluous moist consumes:
 But I will haste, and from each bough and brake,
 Each plant and juciest gourd, will pluck such
 choice

To entertain our Angel-guest, as he 360
 Beholding shall confess, that here on Earth
 God hath dispensed his bounties as in Heaven.

So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste
 She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
 What choice to choose for delicacy best,
 What order, so contrived as not to mix
 Tastes, not well joined, inelegant, but bring
 Taste after taste upheld with kindest change;
 Bestirs her then, and from each tender stalk 370
 Whatever Earth, all-bearing mother, yields
 In India East or West, or middle shore
 In Pontus or the Punick coast, or where
 Alcinous reigned, fruit of all kinds, in coat
 Rough, or smooth rind, or bearded husk, or shell,
 She gathers, tribute large, and on the board
 Heaps with unsparing hand; for drink the grape
 She crushes, inoffensive must, and meaths
 From many a berry, and from sweet kernels
 pressed
 She tempers dulcet creams; nor these to hold 380

Wants her fit vessels pure; then strows the ground
 With rose and odours from the shrub unfumed.

Mean while our primitive great sire, to meet
 His God-like guest, walks forth, without more
 train

Accompanied than with his own complete
 Perfections; in himself was all his state,
 More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
 On princes, when their rich retinue long
 Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold,
 390

Dazzles the croud, and sets them all agape.

Nearer his presence Adam, though not awed,
 Yet with submiss approach and reverence meek,
 As to a superiour nature bowing low,
 Thus said. Native of Heaven, for other place
 None can than Heaven such glorious shape con-
 tain;

Since, by descending from the thrones above,
 Those happy places thou hast deigned a while
 To want, and honour these, vouchsafe with us 400
 Two only, who yet by sovran gift possess
 This spacious ground, in yonder shady bower
 To rest; and what the garden choicest bears
 To sit and taste, till this meridian heat
 Be over, and the sun more cool decline.

Whom thus the angelick Virtue answered mild.

Adam, I therefore came; nor art thou such
 Created, or such place hast here to dwell, 410
 As may not oft invite, though Spirits of Heaven,
 To visit thee; lead on then where thy bower
 O'ershades; for these mid-hours, till evening rise,
 I have at will. So to the sylvan lodge
 They came, that like Pomona's arbour smiled,
 With flowerets decked, and fragrant smells; but

Eve,
 Undecked save with herself, more lovely fair
 Than Wood-Nymph, or the fairest Goddess
 feigned
 Of three that in mount Ida naked strove,
 Stood to entertain her guest from Heaven; no veil
 420

She needed, virtue-proof; no thought infirm
 Altered her cheek. On whom the Angel Hail
 Bestowed, the holy salutation used
 Long after to blest Mary, second Eve.

Hail, Mother of Mankind, whose fruitful womb
 Shall fill the world more numerous with thy sons,
 Than with these various fruits the trees of God
 Have heaped this table!—Raised of grassy turf
 Their table was, and mossy seats had round, 430
 And on her ample square from side to side
 All autumn piled, though spring and autumn here
 Danced hand in hand. A while discourse they
 hold;

No fear lest dinner cool; when thus began
 Our author. Heavenly stranger, please to taste
 These bounties, which our Nourisher, from whom
 All perfect good, unmeasured out, descends,
 To us for food and for delight hath caused
 The earth to yield; unsavoury food perhaps
 To spiritual natures; only this I know, 440
 That one celestial Father gives to all.

To whom the Angel. Therefore what he gives
 (Whose praise be ever sung) to Man in part
 Spiritual, may of purest Spirits be found
 No ingrateful food: And food alike those pure
 Intelligential substances require,
 As doth your rational; and both contain
 Within them every lower faculty

Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch,
taste, 450

Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
And corporeal to incorporeal turn.

For know, whatever was created, needs
To be sustained and fed: Of elements
The grosser feeds the purer, earth the sea,
Earth and the sea feed air, the air those fires
Ethereal, and as lowest first the moon;
Whence in her visage round those spots, unpurged
Vapours not yet into her substance turned. 460

Nor doth the moon no nourishment exhale
From her moist continent to higher orbs.

The sun that light imparts to all, receives
From all his alimantal recompence
In humid exhalations, and at even
Sups with the ocean. Though in Heaven the trees
Of life ambrosial fruitage bear, and vines
Yield nectar; though from off the boughs each
morn 470

We brush mellifluous dewes, and find the ground
Covered with pearly grain: Yet God hath here
Varied his bounty so with new delights,
As may compare with Heaven; and to taste
Think not I shall be nice. So down they sat,
And to their viands fell; nor seemingly
The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
Of Theologians; but with keen dispatch
Of real hunger, and concoctive heat
To transubstantiate: What redounds, transpires 480
Through Spirits with ease; nor wonder; if by fire
Of sooty coal the empirick alchemist
Can turn, or holds it possible to turn,
Metals of drossiest ore to perfect gold,
As from the mine. Mean while at table Eve

Ministered naked, and their flowing cups
 With pleasant liquours crowned: O innocence
 Deserving Paradise! if ever, then,
 Then had the sons of God excuse to have been
 Enamoured at that sight; but in those hearts 490
 Love unlibidinous reigned, nor jealousy
 Was understood, the injured lover's hell.

Thus when with meats and drinks they had suf-
 ficed,
 Not burdened nature, sudden mind arose
 In Adam, not to let the occasion pass
 Given him by this great conference to know
 Of things above his world, and of their being
 Who dwell in Heaven, whose excellence he saw
 Transcend his own so far; whose radiant forms, 500
 Divine effulgence, whose high power, so far
 Exceeded human; and his wary speech
 Thus to the empyreal minister he framed.

Inhabitant with God, now know I well
 Thy favour, in this honour done to Man;
 Under whose lowly roof thou hast vouchsafed
 To enter, and these earthly fruits to taste,
 Food not of Angels, yet accepted so,
 As that more willingly thou couldst not seem 510
 At Heaven's high feasts to have fed: yet what com-
 pare
 To whom the winged Hierarch replied.

O Adam, One Almighty is, from whom
 All things proceed, and up to him return,
 If not depraved from good, created all
 Such to perfection, one first matter all,
 Endued with various forms, various degrees
 Of substance, and, in things that live, of life;
 But more refined, more spiritous, and pure, 520
 As nearer to him placed, or nearer tending

Each in their several active spheres assigned,
 Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
 Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
 Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the
 leaves

More aery, last the bright consummate flower
 Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit,
 Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,
 To vital spirits aspire, to animal, 530
 To intellectual; give both life and sense,
 Fancy and understanding; whence the soul
 Reason receives, and reason is her being,
 Discursive, or intuitive; discourse
 Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours,
 Differing but in degree, of kind the same.

Wonder not then, what God for you saw good
 If I refuse not, but convert, as you
 To proper substance. Time may come, when Men
 With Angels may participate, and find 540
 No inconvenient diet, nor too light fare;
 And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
 Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,
 Improved by tract of time, and, winged, ascend
 Ethereal, as we; or may, at choice,
 Here or in heavenly Paradises dwell;
 If ye be found obedient, and retain
 Unalterably firm his love entire,
 Whose progeny you are. Mean while enjoy
 Your fill what happiness this happy state 550
 Can comprehend, incapable of more.

To whom the patriarch of mankind replied.

O favourable Spirit, propitious guest,
 Well hast thou taught the way that might direct
 Our knowledge, and the scale of nature set
 From center to circumference; whereon,

In contemplation of created things,
 By steps we may ascend to God. But say, 560
 What meant that caution joined, If ye be found
 Obedient? Can we want obedience then
 To him, or possibly his love desert,
 Who formed us from the dust and placed us here
 Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
 Human desires can seek or apprehend?
 To whom the Angel. Son of Heaven and Earth,
 Attend! That thou art happy, owe to God;
 That thou continuest such, owe to thyself,
 That is, to thy obedience; therein stand. 570

This was that caution given thee; be advised.

God made thee perfect, not immutable;
 And good he made thee, but to persevere
 He left it in thy power; ordained thy will
 By nature free, not over-ruled by fate
 Inextricable, or strict necessity:
 Our voluntary service he requires,
 Not our necessitated; such with him 580
 Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how
 Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve
 Willing or no, who will but what they must
 By destiny, and can no other choose?
 Myself, and all the angelick host, that stand
 In sight of God, enthroned, our happy state
 Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
 On other surety none: Freely we serve,
 Because we freely love, as in our will
 To love or not; in this we stand or fall: 590
 And some are fallen, to disobedience fallen,
 And so from Heaven to deepest Hell; O fall
 From what high state of bliss, into what woe!
 To whom our great progenitor. Thy words
 Attentive, and with more delighted ear,

Divine instructor, I have heard, than when
Cherubick songs by night from neighbouring hills
Aereal musick send: Nor knew I not
To be both will and deed created free;
Yet that we never shall forget to love 600
Our Maker, and obey him whose command
Single is yet so just, my constant thoughts
Assured me, and still assure: Though what thou
tellest
Hath passed in Heaven, some doubt within me
move,
But more desire to hear, if thou consent,
The full relation, which must needs be strange,
Worthy of sacred silence to be heard;
And we have yet large day, for scarce the sun
Hath finished half his journey, and scarce begins
His other half in the great zone of Heaven. 610

Thus Adam made request; and Raphael,
After short pause assenting, thus began.

High matter thou enjoimest me, O prime of men,
Sad task and hard: For how shall I relate
To human sense the invisible exploits
Of warring Spirits? how, without remorse,
The ruin of so many glorious once
And perfect while they stood? how last unfold 620
The secrets of another world, perhaps
Not lawful to reveal? yet for thy good
This is dispensed; and what surmounts the reach
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
By likening spiritual to corporal forms,
As may express them best; though what if Earth
Be but a shadow of Heaven, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?
As yet this world was not, and Chaos wild
Reigned where these Heavens now roll, where

Earth now rests 630
 Upon her center poised; when on a day
 (For time, though in eternity, applied
 To motion, measures all things durable
 By present, past, and future,) on such day
 As Heaven's great year brings forth, the empyreal
 host

Of Angels by imperial summons called,
 Innumerable before the Almighty's throne
 Forthwith, from all the ends of Heaven, appeared
 Under their Hierarchs in orders bright:
 Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced,
 640

Standards and gonfalons 'twixt van and rear
 Stream in the air, and for distinction serve
 Of hierarchies, of orders, and degrees;
 Or in their glittering tissues bear imblazed
 Holy memorials, acts of zeal and love
 Recorded eminent. Thus when in orbs
 Of circuit inexpressible they stood,
 Orb within orb, the Father Infinite,
 By whom in bliss imbosomed sat the Son,
 Amidst as from a flaming mount, whose top 650
 Brightness had made invisible, thus spake.

Hear, all ye Angels, progeny of light,
 Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Pow-
 ers;
 Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand.

This day I have begot whom I declare
 My only Son, and on this holy hill
 Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
 At my right hand; your head I him appoint; 660
 And by myself have sworn, to him shall bow
 All knees in Heaven, and shall confess him Lord:
 Under his great vice-gerent reign abide

United, as one individual soul,
 For ever happy: Him who disobeys,
 Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day,
 Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
 Into utter darkness, deep engulfed, his place
 Ordained without redemption, without end.

670

So spake the Omnipotent, and with his words
 All seemed well pleased; all seemed, but were not
 all.

That day, as other solemn days, they spent
 In song and dance about the sacred hill;
 Mystical dance, which yonder starry sphere
 Of planets, and of fixed, in all her wheels
 Resembles nearest, mazes intricate,
 Eccentrick, intervolved, yet regular
 Then most, when most irregular they seem; 680
 And in their motions harmony divine
 So smooths her charming tones, that God's own
 ear

Listens delighted. Evening now approached,
 (For we have also our evening and our morn,
 We ours for change delectable, not need;)
 Forthwith from dance to sweet repast they turn
 Desirous; all in circles as they stood,
 Tables are set, and on a sudden piled
 With Angels food, and rubied nectar flows
 In pearl, in diamond, and massy gold, 690
 Fruit of delicious vines, the growth of Heaven.

On flowers reposed, and with fresh flowerets
 crowned,
 They eat, they drink, and in communion sweet
 Quaff immortality and joy, secure
 Of surfeit, where full measure only bounds
 Excess, before the all-bounteous King, who show-

ered
 With copious hand, rejoicing in their joy.
 Now when ambrosial night with clouds exhaled
 700
 From that high mount of God, whence light and
 shade
 Spring both, the face of brightest Heaven had
 changed
 To grateful twilight, (for night comes not there
 In darker veil) and roseate dews disposed
 All but the unsleeping eyes of God to rest;
 Wide over all the plain, and wider far
 Than all this globous earth in plain outspread,
 (Such are the courts of God) the angelick throng,
 Dispersed in bands and files, their camp extend
 By living streams among the trees of life, 710
 Pavilions numberless, and sudden reared,
 Celestial tabernacles, where they slept
 Fanned with cool winds; save those, who, in their
 course,
 Melodious hymns about the sovran throne
 Alternate all night long; but not so waked
 Satan; so call him now, his former name
 Is heard no more in Heaven; he of the first,
 If not the first Arch-Angel, great in power,
 In favour and pre-eminence, yet fraught
 With envy against the Son of God, that day 720
 Honoured by his great Father, and proclaimed
 Messiah King anointed, could not bear
 Through pride that sight, and thought himself im-
 paired.

Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain,
 Soon as midnight brought on the dusky hour
 Friendliest to sleep and silence, he resolved
 With all his legions to dislodge, and leave

Unworshipt, unobeyed, the throne supreme,
 Contemptuous; and his next subordinate 730
 Awakening, thus to him in secret spake.

Sleepest thou, Companion dear? What sleep can
 close
 Thy eye-lids? and rememberest what decree
 Of yesterday, so late hath passed the lips
 Of Heaven's Almighty. Thou to me thy thoughts
 Wast wont, I mine to thee was wont to impart;
 Both waking we were one; how then can now
 Thy sleep dissent? New laws thou seest imposed;
 New laws from him who reigns, new minds may
 raise 740

In us who serve, new counsels to debate
 What doubtful may ensue: More in this place
 To utter is not safe. Assemble thou
 Of all those myriads which we lead the chief;
 Tell them, that by command, ere yet dim night
 Her shadowy cloud withdraws, I am to haste,
 And all who under me their banners wave,
 Homeward, with flying march, where we possess
 The quarters of the north; there to prepare
 Fit entertainment to receive our King, 750
 The great Messiah, and his new commands,
 Who speedily through all the hierarchies
 Intends to pass triumphant, and give laws.

So spake the false Arch-Angel, and infused
 Bad influence into the unwary breast
 Of his associate: He together calls,
 Or several one by one, the regent Powers,
 Under him Regent; tells, as he was taught,
 That the Most High commanding, now ere night,
 760

Now ere dim night had disincumbered Heaven,
 The great hierarchal standard was to move;

Tells the suggested cause, and casts between
 Ambiguous words and jealousies, to sound
 Or taint integrity: But all obeyed
 The wonted signal, and superiour voice
 Of their great Potentate; for great indeed
 His name, and high was his degree in Heaven;
 His countenance, as the morning-star that guides
 The starry flock, allured them, and with lies 770
 Drew after him the third part of Heaven's host.

Mean while the Eternal eye, whose sight discerns
 Abstrusest thoughts, from forth his holy mount,
 And from within the golden lamps that burn
 Nightly before him, saw without their light
 Rebellion rising; saw in whom, how spread
 Among the sons of morn, what multitudes
 Were banded to oppose his high decree;
 And, smiling, to his only Son thus said. 780

Son, thou in whom my glory I behold
 In full resplendence, Heir of all my might,
 Nearly it now concerns us to be sure
 Of our Omnipotence, and with what arms
 We mean to hold what anciently we claim
 Of deity or empire: Such a foe
 Is rising, who intends to erect his throne
 Equal to ours, throughout the spacious north;
 Nor so content, hath in his thought to try 790
 In battle, what our power is, or our right.

Let us advise, and to this hazard draw
 With speed what force is left, and all employ
 In our defence; lest unawares we lose
 This our high place, our sanctuary, our hill.

To whom the Son with calm aspect and clear,
 Lightning divine, ineffable, serene,
 Made answer. Mighty Father, thou thy foes 800
 Justly hast in derision, and, secure,

Laughest at their vain designs and tumults vain,
Matter to me of glory, whom their hate
Illustrates, when they see all regal power
Given me to quell their pride, and in event
Know whether I be dextrous to subdue
Thy rebels, or be found the worst in Heaven.

So spake the Son; but Satan, with his Powers,
Far was advanced on winged speed; an host 810
Innumerable as the stars of night,
Or stars of morning, dew-drops, which the sun
Inpearls on every leaf and every flower.

Regions they passed, the mighty regencies
Of Seraphim, and Potentates, and Thrones,
In their triple degrees; regions to which
All thy dominion, Adam, is no more
Than what this garden is to all the earth,
And all the sea, from one entire globose 820
Stretched into longitude; which having passed,
At length into the limits of the north
They came; and Satan to his royal seat
High on a hill, far blazing, as a mount
Raised on a mount, with pyramids and towers
From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of gold;
The palace of great Lucifer, (so call
That structure in the dialect of men
Interpreted,) which not long after, he
Affecting all equality with God, 830
In imitation of that mount whereon
Messiah was declared in sight of Heaven,
The Mountain of the Congregation called;
For thither he assembled all his train,
Pretending so commanded to consult
About the great reception of their King,
Thither to come, and with calumnious art
Of counterfeited truth thus held their ears.

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers; 840

If these magnifick titles yet remain
 Not merely titular, since by decree
 Another now hath to himself engrossed
 All power, and us eclipsed under the name
 Of King anointed, for whom all this haste
 Of midnight-march, and hurried meeting here,
 This only to consult how we may best,
 With what may be devised of honours new,
 Receive him coming to receive from us
 Knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile! 850
 Too much to one! but double how endured,
 To one, and to his image now proclaimed?
 But what if better counsels might erect
 Our minds, and teach us to cast off this yoke?
 Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
 The supple knee? Ye will not, if I trust
 To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves
 Natives and sons of Heaven possessed before
 By none; and if not equal all, yet free,
 Equally free; for orders and degrees 860
 Jar not with liberty, but well consist.

Who can in reason then, or right, assume
 Monarchy over such as live by right
 His equals, if in power and splendour less,
 In freedom equal? or can introduce
 Law and edict on us, who without law
 Err not? much less for this to be our Lord,
 And look for adoration, to the abuse
 Of those imperial titles, which assert 870
 Our being ordained to govern, not to serve.

Thus far his bold discourse without controul
 Had audience; when among the Seraphim
 Abdiel, than whom none with more zeal adored

The Deity, and divine commands obeyed,
Stood up, and in a flame of zeal severe
The current of his fury thus opposed.

O argument blasphemous, false, and proud! 880
Words which no ear ever to hear in Heaven
Expected, least of all from thee, Ingrate,
In place thyself so high above thy peers.

Canst thou with impious obloquy condemn
The just decree of God, pronounced and sworn,
That to his only Son, by right endued
With regal scepter, every soul in Heaven
Shall bend the knee, and in that honour due
Confess him rightful King? unjust, thou sayest, 890
Flatly unjust, to bind with laws the free,
And equal over equals to let reign,
One over all with unsucceeded power.

Shalt thou give law to God? shalt thou dispute
With him the points of liberty, who made
Thee what thou art, and formed the Powers of
Heaven
Such as he pleased, and circumscribed their being?
Yet, by experience taught, we know how good,
And of our good and of our dignity 900
How provident he is; how far from thought
To make us less, bent rather to exalt
Our happy state, under one head more near
United. But to grant it thee unjust,
That equal over equals monarch reign:
Thyself, though great and glorious, dost thou
count,
Or all angelick nature joined in one,
Equal to him begotten Son? by whom,
As by his Word, the Mighty Father made
All things, even thee; and all the Spirits of Heaven
910

By him created in their bright degrees,
 Crowned them with glory, and to their glory
 named
 Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Pow-
 ers,
 Essential Powers; nor by his reign obscured,
 But more illustrious made; since he the head
 One of our number thus reduced becomes;
 His laws our laws; all honour to him done
 Returns our own. Cease then this impious rage,
 And tempt not these; but hasten to appease
 The incensed Father, and the incensed Son, 920
 While pardon may be found in time besought.

So spake the fervent Angel; but his zeal
 None seconded, as out of season judged,
 Or singular and rash: Whereat rejoiced
 The Apostate, and, more haughty, thus replied.

That we were formed then sayest thou? and the
 work
 Of secondary hands, by task transferred
 From Father to his Son? strange point and new! 930
 Doctrine which we would know whence learned:
 who saw

When this creation was? rememberest thou
 Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
 We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
 By our own quickening power, when fatal course
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
 Of this our native Heaven, ethereal sons.

Our puissance is our own; our own right hand 940
 Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
 Who is our equal: Then thou shalt behold
 Whether by supplication we intend
 Address, and to begirt the almighty throne

Beseeching or besieging. This report,
 These tidings carry to the anointed King;
 And fly, ere evil intercept thy flight.

He said; and, as the sound of waters deep,
 Hoarse murmur echoed to his words applause 950
 Through the infinite host; nor less for that
 The flaming Seraph fearless, though alone
 Encompassed round with foes, thus answered
 bold.

O alienate from God, O Spirit accursed,
 Forsaken of all good! I see thy fall
 Determined, and thy hapless crew involved
 In this perfidious fraud, contagion spread
 Both of thy crime and punishment: Henceforth
 No more be troubled how to quit the yoke 960
 Of God's Messiah; those indulgent laws
 Will not be now vouchsafed; other decrees
 Against thee are gone forth without recall;
 That golden scepter, which thou didst reject,
 Is now an iron rod to bruise and break
 Thy disobedience. Well thou didst advise;
 Yet not for thy advice or threats I fly
 These wicked tents devoted, lest the wrath
 Impendent, raging into sudden flame,
 Distinguish not: For soon expect to feel 970
 His thunder on thy head, devouring fire.

Then who created thee lamenting learn,
 When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know.

So spake the Seraph Abdiel, faithful found
 Among the faithless, faithful only he;
 Among innumerable false, unmoved,
 Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal; 980
 Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,

Though single. From amidst them forth he passed,
Long way through hostile scorn, which he sus-
tained
Superiour, nor of violence feared aught;
And, with retorted scorn, his back he turned
On those proud towers to swift destruction
doomed.

BOOK VI

All night the dreadful Angel, unpursued,
Through Heaven's wide champain held his way;
till Morn,
Waked by the circling Hours, with rosy hand
Unbarred the gates of light. There is a cave
Within the mount of God, fast by his throne,
Where light and darkness in perpetual round
Lodge and dislodge by turns, which makes
through Heaven
Grateful vicissitude, like day and night;
Light issues forth, and at the other door
Obsequious darkness enters, till her hour 10
To veil the Heaven, though darkness there might
well
Seem twilight here: And now went forth the Morn
Such as in highest Heaven arrayed in gold
Empyreal; from before her vanished Night,
Shot through with orient beams; when all the plain
Covered with thick embattled squadrons bright,
Chariots, and flaming arms, and fiery steeds,
Reflecting blaze on blaze, first met his view:
War he perceived, war in procinct; and found
Already known what he for news had thought 20
To have reported: Gladly then he mixed
Among those friendly Powers, who him received

With joy and acclamations loud, that one,
 That of so many myriads fallen, yet one
 Returned not lost. On to the sacred hill
 They led him high applauded, and present
 Before the seat supreme; from whence a voice,
 From midst a golden cloud, thus mild was heard.

Servant of God. Well done; well hast thou fought
 30

The better fight, who single hast maintained
 Against revolted multitudes the cause
 Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms;
 And for the testimony of truth hast borne
 Universal reproach, far worse to bear
 Than violence; for this was all thy care
 To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
 Judged thee perverse: The easier conquest now
 Remains thee, aided by this host of friends,
 Back on thy foes more glorious to return, 40
 Than scorned thou didst depart; and to subdue
 By force, who reason for their law refuse,
 Right reason for their law, and for their King
 Messiah, who by right of merit reigns.

Go, Michael, of celestial armies prince,
 And thou, in military prowess next,
 Gabriel, lead forth to battle these my sons
 Invincible; lead forth my armed Saints,
 By thousands and by millions, ranged for fight, 50
 Equal in number to that Godless crew
 Rebellious: Them with fire and hostile arms
 Fearless assault; and, to the brow of Heaven
 Pursuing, drive them out from God and bliss,
 Into their place of punishment, the gulf
 Of Tartarus, which ready opens wide
 His fiery Chaos to receive their fall.

So spake the Sovran Voice, and clouds began

In the mid way: Though strange to us it seemed
 At first, that Angel should with Angel war,
 And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet
 So oft in festivals of joy and love
 Unanimous, as sons of one great Sire,
 Hymning the Eternal Father: But the shout
 Of battle now began, and rushing sound 100
 Of onset ended soon each milder thought.

High in the midst, exalted as a God,
 The Apostate in his sun-bright chariot sat,
 Idol of majesty divine, enclosed
 With flaming Cherubim, and golden shields;
 Then lighted from his gorgeous throne, for now
 'Twixt host and host but narrow space was left,
 A dreadful interval, and front to front
 Presented stood in terrible array 110
 Of hideous length: Before the cloudy van,
 On the rough edge of battle ere it joined,
 Satan, with vast and haughty strides advanced,
 Came towering, armed in adamant and gold;
 Abdiel that sight endured not, where he stood
 Among the mightiest, bent on highest deeds,
 And thus his own undaunted heart explores.

O Heaven! that such resemblance of the Highest
 Should yet remain, where faith and realty 120
 Remain not: Wherefore should not strength and
 might
 There fail where virtue fails, or weakest prove
 Where boldest, though to fight unconquerable?
 His puissance, trusting in the Almighty's aid,
 I mean to try, whose reason I have tried
 Unsound and false; nor is it aught but just,
 That he, who in debate of truth hath won,
 Should win in arms, in both disputes alike
 Victor; though brutish that contest and foul,

When reason hath to deal with force, yet so 130
 Most reason is that reason overcome.

So pondering, and from his armed peers
 Forth stepping opposite, half-way he met
 His daring foe, at this prevention more
 Incensed, and thus securely him defied.

Proud, art thou met? thy hope was to have reached
 The highth of thy aspiring unopposed,
 The throne of God unguarded, and his side 140
 Abandoned, at the terrour of thy power
 Or potent tongue: Fool! not to think how vain
 Against the Omnipotent to rise in arms;
 Who out of smallest things could, without end,
 Have raised incessant armies to defeat
 Thy folly; or with solitary hand
 Reaching beyond all limit, at one blow,
 Unaided, could have finished thee, and whelmed
 Thy legions under darkness: But thou seest
 All are not of thy train; there be, who faith 150
 Prefer, and piety to God, though then
 To thee not visible, when I alone
 Seemed in thy world erroneous to dissent
 From all: My sect thou seest; now learn too late
 How few sometimes may know, when thousands
 err.

Whom the grand foe, with scornful eye askance,
 Thus answered. Ill for thee, but in wished hour
 Of my revenge, first sought for, thou returnest
 From flight, seditious Angel! to receive 160
 Thy merited reward, the first assay
 Of this right hand provoked, since first that
 tongue,
 Inspired with contradiction, durst oppose
 A third part of the Gods, in synod met
 Their deities to assert; who, while they feel

Vigour divine within them, can allow
 Omnipotence to none. But well thou comest
 Before thy fellows, ambitious to win
 From me some plume, that thy success may show
 Destruction to the rest: This pause between, 170
 (Unanswered lest thou boast) to let thee know,
 At first I thought that Liberty and Heaven
 To heavenly souls had been all one; but now
 I see that most through sloth had rather serve,
 Ministring Spirits, trained up in feast and song!
 Such hast thou armed, the minstrelsy of Heaven,
 Servility with freedom to contend,
 As both their deeds compared this day shall prove.

To whom in brief thus Abdiel stern replied. 180

Apostate! still thou errest, nor end wilt find
 Of erring, from the path of truth remote:
 Unjustly thou depravest it with the name
 Of servitude, to serve whom God ordains,
 Or Nature: God and Nature bid the same,
 When he who rules is worthiest, and excels
 Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
 To serve the unwise, or him who hath rebelled
 Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee, 190
 Thyself not free, but to thyself enthralled;
 Yet lewdly darest our ministring upbraid.

Reign thou in Hell, thy kingdom; let me serve
 In Heaven God ever blest, and his divine
 Behests obey, worthiest to be obeyed;
 Yet chains in Hell, not realms, expect: Mean while
 From me returned, as erst thou saidst, from flight,
 This greeting on thy impious crest receive. 200

So saying, a noble stroke he lifted high,
 Which hung not, but so swift with tempest fell
 On the proud crest of Satan, that no sight,

Nor motion of swift thought, less could his shield,
 Such ruin intercept: Ten paces huge
 He back recoiled; the tenth on bended knee
 His massy spear upstaid; as if on earth
 Winds under ground, or waters forcing way,
 Sidelong had pushed a mountain from his seat,
 Half sunk with all his pines. Amazement seised
 210

The rebel Thrones, but greater rage, to see
 Thus foiled their mightiest; ours joy filled, and
 shout,
 Presage of victory, and fierce desire
 Of battle: Whereat Michael bid sound
 The Arch-Angel trumpet; through the vast of
 Heaven

It sounded, and the faithful armies rung
 Hosanna to the Highest: Nor stood at gaze
 The adverse legions, nor less hideous joined
 The horrid shock. Now storming fury rose,
 And clamour such as heard in Heaven till now 220
 Was never; arms on armour clashing brayed
 Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
 Of brazen chariots raged; dire was the noise
 Of conflict; over head the dismal hiss
 Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,
 And flying vaulted either host with fire.

So under fiery cope together rushed
 Both battles main, with ruinous assault
 And inextinguishable rage. All Heaven 230
 Resounded; and had Earth been then, all Earth
 Had to her center shook. What wonder? when
 Millions of fierce encountering Angels fought
 On either side, the least of whom could wield
 These elements, and arm him with the force
 Of all their regions: How much more of power
 Army against army numberless to raise

Dreadful combustion warring, and disturb,
 Though not destroy, their happy native seat;
 Had not the Eternal King Omnipotent, 240
 From his strong hold of Heaven, high over-ruled
 And limited their might; though numbered such
 As each divided legion might have seemed
 A numerous host; in strength each armed hand
 A legion; led in fight, yet leader seemed
 Each warrior single as in chief, expert
 When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway
 Of battle, open when, and when to close
 The ridges of grim war: No thought of flight,
 None of retreat, no unbecoming deed 250
 That argued fear; each on himself relied,
 As only in his arm the moment lay
 Of victory: Deeds of eternal fame
 Were done, but infinite; for wide was spread
 That war and various; sometimes on firm ground
 A standing fight, then, soaring on main wing,
 Tormented all the air; all air seemed then
 Conflicting fire. Long time in even scale
 The battle hung; till Satan, who that day
 Prodigious power had shown, and met in arms 260
 No equal, ranging through the dire attack
 Of fighting Seraphim confused, at length
 Saw where the sword of Michael smote, and felled
 Squadrons at once; with huge two-handed sway
 Brandished aloft, the horrid edge came down
 Wide-wasting; such destruction to withstand
 He hasted, and opposed the rocky orb
 Of tenfold adamant, his ample shield,
 A vast circumference. At his approach
 The great Arch-Angel from his warlike toil 270
 Surceased, and glad, as hoping here to end
 Intestine war in Heaven, the arch-foe subdued
 Or captive dragged in chains, with hostile frown

And visage all inflamed first thus began.

Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt,
 Unnamed in Heaven, now plenteous as thou seest
 These acts of hateful strife, hateful to all,
 Though heaviest by just measure on thyself,
 And thy adherents: How hast thou disturbed 280
 Heaven's blessed peace, and into nature brought
 Misery, uncreated till the crime
 Of thy rebellion! how hast thou instilled
 Thy malice into thousands, once upright
 And faithful, now proved false! But think not here
 To trouble holy rest; Heaven casts thee out
 From all her confines. Heaven, the seat of bliss,
 Brooks not the works of violence and war.

Hence then, and evil go with thee along, 290
 Thy offspring, to the place of evil, Hell;
 Thou and thy wicked crew! there mingle broils,
 Ere this avenging sword begin thy doom,
 Or some more sudden vengeance, winged from
 God,
 Precipitate thee with augmented pain.

So spake the Prince of Angels; to whom thus
 The Adversary. Nor think thou with wind
 Of aery threats to awe whom yet with deeds
 Thou canst not. Hast thou turned the least of these
 300

To flight, or if to fall, but that they rise
 Unvanquished, easier to transact with me
 That thou shouldst hope, imperious, and with
 threats
 To chase me hence? err not, that so shall end
 The strife which thou callest evil, but we style
 The strife of glory; which we mean to win,
 Or turn this Heaven itself into the Hell
 Thou fablest; here however to dwell free,

If not to reign: Mean while thy utmost force,
 And join him named Almighty to thy aid, 310
 I fly not, but have sought thee far and nigh.

They ended parle, and both addressed for fight
 Unspeakable; for who, though with the tongue
 Of Angels, can relate, or to what things
 Liken on earth conspicuous, that may lift
 Human imagination to such highth
 Of Godlike power? for likest Gods they seemed,
 Stood they or moved, in stature, motion, arms,
 Fit to decide the empire of great Heaven. 320

Now waved their fiery swords, and in the air
 Made horrid circles; two broad suns their shields
 Blazed opposite, while Expectation stood
 In horror: From each hand with speed retired,
 Where erst was thickest fight, the angelick throng,
 And left large field, unsafe within the wind
 Of such commotion; such as, to set forth
 Great things by small, if, nature's concord broke,
 Among the constellations war were sprung, 330
 Two planets, rushing from aspect malign
 Of fiercest opposition, in mid sky
 Should combat, and their jarring spheres con-
 found.

Together both with next to almighty arm
 Up-lifted imminent, one stroke they aimed
 That might determine, and not need repeat,
 As not of power at once; nor odds appeared
 In might or swift prevention: But the sword
 Of Michael from the armoury of God 340
 Was given him tempered so, that neither keen
 Nor solid might resist that edge: it met
 The sword of Satan, with steep force to smite
 Descending, and in half cut sheer; nor staid,
 But with swift wheel reverse, deep entering,

shared

All his right side: Then Satan first knew pain,
 And writhed him to and fro convolved; so sore
 The griding sword with discontinuous wound
 Passed through him: But the ethereal substance
 closed,

Not long divisible; and from the gash 350
 A stream of necturous humour issuing flowed
 Sanguine, such as celestial Spirits may bleed,
 And all his armour stained, ere while so bright.

Forthwith on all sides to his aid was run
 By Angels many and strong, who interposed
 Defence, while others bore him on their shields
 Back to his chariot, where it stood retired
 From off the files of war: There they him laid
 Gnashing for anguish, and despite, and shame, 360
 To find himself not matchless, and his pride
 Humbled by such rebuke, so far beneath
 His confidence to equal God in power.

Yet soon he healed; for Spirits that live throughout
 Vital in every part, not as frail man
 In entrails, heart of head, liver or reins,
 Cannot but by annihilating die;
 Nor in their liquid texture mortal wound
 Receive, no more than can the fluid air: 370
 All heart they live, all head, all eye, all ear,
 All intellect, all sense; and, as they please,
 They limb themselves, and colour, shape, or size
 Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare.

Mean while in other parts like deeds deserved
 Memorial, where the might of Gabriel fought,
 And with fierce ensigns pierced the deep array
 Of Moloch, furious king; who him defied,
 And at his chariot-wheels to drag him bound 380
 Threatened, nor from the Holy One of Heaven

Refrained his tongue blasphemous; but anon
 Down cloven to the waist, with shattered arms
 And uncouth pain fled bellowing. On each wing
 Uriel, and Raphael, his vaunting foe,
 Though huge, and in a rock of diamond armed,
 Vanquished Adramelech, and Asmadai,
 Two potent Thrones, that to be less than Gods
 Disdained, but meaner thoughts learned in their
 flight,
 Mangled with ghastly wounds through plate and
 mail. 390

Nor stood unmindful Abdiel to annoy
 The atheist crew, but with redoubled blow
 Ariel, and Arioch, and the violence
 Of Ramiel scorched and blasted, overthrew.

I might relate of thousands, and their names
 Eternize here on earth; but those elect
 Angels, contented with their fame in Heaven,
 Seek not the praise of men: The other sort, 400
 In might though wonderous and in acts of war,
 Nor of renown less eager, yet by doom
 Cancelled from Heaven and sacred memory,
 Nameless in dark oblivion let them dwell.

For strength from truth divided, and from just,
 Illaudable, nought merits but dispraise
 And ignominy; yet to glory aspires
 Vain-glorious, and through infamy seeks fame:
 Therefore eternal silence be their doom. 410

And now, their mightiest quelled, the battle
 swerved,
 With many an inroad gored; deformed rout
 Entered, and foul disorder; all the ground
 With shivered armour strown, and on a heap
 Chariot and charioteer lay overturned,
 And fiery-foaming steeds; what stood, recoiled

O'er-wearied, through the faint Satanick host
 Defensive scarce, or with pale fear surprised,
 Then first with fear surprised, and sense of pain,

420

Fled ignominious, to such evil brought
 By sin of disobedience; till that hour
 Not liable to fear, or flight, or pain.

Far otherwise the inviolable Saints,
 In cubick phalanx firm, advanced entire,
 Invulnerable, impenetrably armed;
 Such high advantages their innocence
 Gave them above their foes; not to have sinned,
 Not to have disobeyed; in fight they stood 430
 Unwearied, unobnoxious to be pained
 By wound, though from their place by violence
 moved,

Now Night her course began, and, over Heaven
 Inducing darkness, grateful truce imposed,
 And silence on the odious din of war:
 Under her cloudy covert both retired,
 Victor and vanquished: On the foughten field
 Michael and his Angels prevalent
 Encamping, placed in guard their watches round,
 Cherubick waving fires: On the other part, 440
 Satan with his rebellious disappeared,
 Far in the dark dislodged; and, void of rest,
 His potentates to council called by night;
 And in the midst thus undismayed began.

O now in danger tried, now known in arms
 Not to be overpowered, Companions dear,
 Found worthy not of liberty alone,
 Too mean pretence! but what we more affect,
 Honour, dominion, glory, and renown; 450
 Who have sustained one day in doubtful fight,
 (And if one day, why not eternal days?)

What Heaven's Lord had powerfullest to send
Against us from about his throne, and judged
Sufficient to subdue us to his will,
But proves not so: Then fallible, it seems,
Of future we may deem him, though till now
Omniscient thought. True is, less firmly armed,
Some disadvantage we endured and pain,
Till now not known, but, known, as soon con-
temned; 460

Since now we find this our empyreal form
Incapable of mortal injury,
Imperishable, and, though pierced with wound,
Soon closing, and by native vigour healed.

Of evil then so small as easy think
The remedy; perhaps more valid arms,
Weapons more violent, when next we meet,
May serve to better us, and worse our foes,
Or equal what between us made the odds, 470
In nature none: If other hidden cause
Left them superiour, while we can preserve
Unhurt our minds, and understanding sound,
Due search and consultation will disclose.

He sat; and in the assembly next upstood
Nisroch, of Principalities the prime;
As one he stood escaped from cruel fight,
Sore toiled, his riven arms to havock hewn,
And cloudy in aspect thus answering spake. 480

Deliverer from new Lords, leader to free
Enjoyment of our right as Gods; yet hard
For Gods, and too unequal work we find,
Against unequal arms to fight in pain,
Against unpained, impassive; from which evil
Ruin must needs ensue; for what avails
Valour or strength, though matchless, quelled with
pain

Which all subdues, and makes remiss the hands
 Of mightiest? Sense of pleasure we may well 490
 Spare out of life perhaps, and not repine,
 But live content, which is the calmest life:
 But pain is perfect misery, the worst
 Of evils, and, excessive, overturns
 All patience. He, who therefore can invent
 With what more forcible we may offend
 Our yet unwounded enemies, or arm
 Ourselves with like defence, to me deserves
 No less than for deliverance what we owe.

500

Whereto with look composed Satan replied.

Not uninvented that, which thou aright
 Believest so main to our success, I bring.

Which of us who beholds the bright surface
 Of this ethereous mould whereon we stand,
 This continent of spacious Heaven, adorned
 With plant, fruit, flower ambrosial, gems, and
 gold;

Whose eye so superficially surveys 510
 These things, as not to mind from whence they
 grow

Deep under ground, materials dark and crude,
 Of spiritous and fiery spume, till touched
 With Heaven's ray, and tempered, they shoot forth
 So beauteous, opening to the ambient light?
 These in their dark nativity the deep
 Shall yield us, pregnant with infernal flame;
 Which, into hollow engines, long and round,
 Thick rammed, at the other bore with touch of fire
 Dilated and infuriate, shall send forth 520
 From far, with thundering noise, among our foes
 Such implements of mischief, as shall dash
 To pieces, and o'erwhelm whatever stands

Now when fair morn orient in Heaven appeared,
 Up rose the victor-Angels, and to arms
 The matin trumpet sung: In arms they stood
 Of golden panoply, refulgent host,
 Soon banded; others from the dawning hills
 Look round, and scouts each coast light-armed
 scour,
 Each quarter to descry the distant foe, 570
 Where lodged, or whither fled, or if for fight,
 In motion or in halt: Him soon they met
 Under spread ensigns moving nigh, in slow
 But firm battalion; back with speediest sail
 Zophiel, of Cherubim the swiftest wing,
 Came flying, and in mid air aloud thus cried.

Arm, Warriours, arm for fight; the foe at hand,
 Whom fled we thought, will save us long pursuit
 This day; fear not his flight; so thick a cloud 580
 He comes, and settled in his face I see
 Sad resolution, and secure: Let each
 His adamantine coat gird well, and each
 Fit well his helm, gripe fast his orb'd shield,
 Borne even or high; for this day will pour down,
 If I conjecture aught, no drizzling shower,
 But rattling storm of arrows barbed with fire.

So warn'd he them, aware themselves, and soon
 In order, quit of all impediment; 590
 Instant without disturb they took alarm,
 And onward mov'd embattled: When behold!
 Not distant far with heavy pace the foe
 Approaching gross and huge, in hollow cube
 Training his devilish enginery, impaled
 On every side with shadowing squadrons deep,
 To hide the fraud. At interview both stood
 A while; but suddenly at head appeared
 Satan, and thus was heard commanding loud.

600

Vanguard, to right and left the front unfold;
 That all may see who hate us, how we seek
 Peace and composure, and with open breast
 Stand ready to receive them, if they like
 Our overture; and turn not back perverse:
 But that I doubt; however witness, Heaven!
 Heaven, witness thou anon! while we discharge
 Freely our part: ye, who appointed stand
 Do as you have in charge, and briefly touch
 What we propound, and loud that all may hear!

610

So scoffing in ambiguous words, he scarce
 Had ended; when to right and left the front
 Divided, and to either flank retired:
 Which to our eyes discovered, new and strange,
 A triple mounted row of pillars laid
 On wheels (for like to pillars most they seemed,
 Or hollowed bodies made of oak or fir,
 With branches lopt, in wood or mountain felled.)
 Brass, iron, stony mould, had not their mouths
 With hideous orifice gaped on us wide, 620
 Portending hollow truce: At each behind
 A Seraph stood, and in his hand a reed
 Stood waving tipt with fire; while we, suspense,
 Collected stood within our thoughts amused,
 Not long; for sudden all at once their reeds
 Put forth, and to a narrow vent applied
 With nicest touch. Immediate in a flame,
 But soon obscured with smoke, all Heaven ap-
 peared,
 From those deep-throated engines belched, whose
 roar

Embowelled with outrageous noise the air, 630
 And all her entrails tore, disgorging foul
 Their devilish glut, chained thunderbolts and hail

Of iron globes; which, on the victor host
 Levelled, with such impetuous fury smote,
 That, whom they hit, none on their feet might
 stand,
 Though standing else as rocks, but down they fell
 By thousands, Angel on Arch-Angel rolled;
 The sooner for their arms; unarmed, they might
 Have easily, as Spirits, evaded swift
 By quick contraction or remove; but now 640
 Foul dissipation followed, and forced rout;
 Nor served it to relax their serried files.

What should they do? if on they rushed, repulse
 Repeated, and indecent overthrow
 Doubled, would render them yet more despised,
 And to their foes a laughter; for in view
 Stood ranked of Seraphim another row,
 In posture to displode their second tire
 Of thunder: Back defeated to return 650
 They worse abhorred. Satan beheld their plight,
 And to his mates thus in derision called.

O Friends! why come not on these victors proud
 Ere while they fierce were coming; and when we,
 To entertain them fair with open front
 And breast, (what could we more?) propounded
 terms

Of composition, straight they changed their minds,
 Flew off, and into strange vagaries fell,
 As they would dance; yet for a dance they seemed
 660

Somewhat extravagant and wild; perhaps
 For joy of offered peace: But I suppose,
 If our proposals once again were heard,
 We should compel them to a quick result.

To whom thus Belial, in like gamesome mood.
 Leader! the terms we sent were terms of weight,

Of hard contents, and full of force urged home;
 Such as we might perceive amused them all, 670
 And stumbled many: Who receives them right,
 Had need from head to foot well understand;
 Not understood, this gift they have besides,
 They show us when our foes walk not upright.

So they among themselves in pleasant vein
 Stood scoffing, hightened in their thoughts beyond
 All doubt of victory: Eternal Might
 To match with their inventions they presumed
 So easy, and of his thunder made a scorn, 680
 And all his host derided, while they stood
 A while in trouble: But they stood not long;
 Rage prompted them at length, and found them
 arms
 Against such hellish mischief fit to oppose.

Forthwith (behold the excellence, the power,
 Which God hath in his mighty Angels placed!)
 Their arms away they threw, and to the hills
 (For Earth hath this variety from Heaven
 Of pleasure situate in hill and dale,) 690
 Light as the lightning glimpse they ran, they flew;
 From their foundations loosening to and fro,
 They plucked the seated hills, with all their load,
 Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops
 Up-lifting bore them in their hands: Amaze,
 Be sure, and terrour, seized the rebel host,
 When coming towards them so dread they saw
 The bottom of the mountains upward turned;
 Till on those cursed engines' triple-row
 They saw them whelmed, and all their confidence
 700

Under the weight of mountains buried deep;
 Themselves invaded next, and on their heads
 Main promontories flung, which in the air

Came shadowing, and oppressed whole legions
armed;
Their armour helped their harm, crushed in and
bruised
Into their substance pent, which wrought them
pain
Implacable, and many a dolorous groan;
Long struggling underneath, ere they could wind
Out of such prison, though Spirits of purest light,
Purest at first, now gross by sinning grown. 710

The rest, in imitation, to like arms
Betook them, and the neighbouring hills uptore:
So hills amid the air encountered hills,
Hurled to and fro with jaculation dire;
That under ground they fought in dismal shade;
Infernal noise! war seemed a civil game
To this uproar; horrid confusion heaped
Upon confusion rose: And now all Heaven
Had gone to wrack, with ruin overspread; 720
Had not the Almighty Father, where he sits
Shrined in his sanctuary of Heaven secure,
Consulting on the sum of things, foreseen
This tumult, and permitted all, advised:
That his great purpose he might so fulfil,
To honour his anointed Son avenged
Upon his enemies, and to declare
All power on him transferred: Whence to his Son,
The Assessour of his throne, he thus began. 730

Effulgence of my glory, Son beloved,
Son, in whose face invisible is beheld
Visibly, what by Deity I am;
And in whose hand what by decree I do,
Second Omnipotence! two days are past,
Two days, as we compute the days of Heaven,
Since Michael and his Powers went forth to tame

These disobedient: Sore hath been their fight,
 As likeliest was, when two such foes met armed;
 For to themselves I left them; and thou knowest,
 740

Equal in their creation they were formed,
 Save what sin hath impaired; which yet hath
 wrought

Insensibly, for I suspend their doom;
 Whence in perpetual fight they needs must last
 Endless, and no solution will be found:
 War wearied hath performed what war can do,
 And to disordered rage let loose the reins
 With mountains, as with weapons, armed; which
 makes
 Wild work in Heaven, and dangerous to the main.
 750

Two days are therefore past, the third is thine;
 For thee I have ordained it; and thus far
 Have suffered, that the glory may be thine
 Of ending this great war, since none but Thou
 Can end it. Into thee such virtue and grace
 Immense I have transfused, that all may know
 In Heaven and Hell thy power above compare;
 And, this perverse commotion governed thus,
 To manifest thee worthiest to be Heir
 Of all things; to be Heir, and to be King 760
 By sacred unction, thy deserved right.

Go then, Thou Mightiest, in thy Father's might;
 Ascend my chariot, guide the rapid wheels
 That shake Heaven's basis, bring forth all my war,
 My bow and thunder, my almighty arms
 Gird on, and sword upon thy puissant thigh;
 Pursue these sons of darkness, drive them out
 From all Heaven's bounds into the utter deep:
 There let them learn, as likes them, to despise 770
 God, and Messiah his anointed King.

He said, and on his Son with rays direct
Shone full; he all his Father full expressed
Ineffably into his face received;
And thus the Filial Godhead answering spake.

O Father, O Supreme of heavenly Thrones,
First, Highest, Holiest, Best; thou always seek'st
To glorify thy Son, I always thee, 780
As is most just: This I my glory account,
My exaltation, and my whole delight,
That thou, in me well pleased, declarest thy will
Fulfilled, which to fulfil is all my bliss.

Scepter and power, thy giving, I assume,
And gladlier shall resign, when in the end
Thou shalt be all in all, and I in thee
For ever; and in me all whom thou lovest:
But whom thou hatest, I hate, and can put on 790
Thy terrors, as I put thy mildness on,
Image of thee in all things; and shall soon,
Armed with thy might, rid Heaven of these re-
belled;
To their prepared ill mansion driven down,
To chains of darkness, and the undying worm;
That from thy just obedience could revolt,
Whom to obey is happiness entire.

Then shall thy Saints unmixed, and from the im-
pure
Far separate, circling thy holy mount, 800
Unfeigned Halleluiahs to thee sing,
Hymns of high praise, and I among them Chief.

So said, he, o'er his scepter bowing, rose
From the right hand of Glory where he sat;
And the third sacred morn began to shine,
Dawning through Heaven. Forth rushed with
whirlwind sound
The chariot of Paternal Deity,

Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel un-
drawn,
Itself instinct with Spirit, but convoyed 810
By four Cherubick shapes; four faces each
Had wonderous; as with stars, their bodies all
And wings were set with eyes; with eyes the
wheels

Of beryl, and careering fires between;
Over their heads a crystal firmament,
Whereon a sapphire throne, inlaid with pure
Amber, and colours of the showery arch.

He, in celestial panoply all armed
Of radiant Urim, work divinely wrought, 820
Ascended; at his right hand Victory
Sat eagle-winged; beside him hung his bow
And quiver with three-bolted thunder stored;
And from about him fierce effusion rolled
Of smoke, and bickering flame, and sparkles dire:
Attended with ten thousand thousand Saints,
He onward came; far off his coming shone;
And twenty thousand (I their number heard)
Chariots of God, half on each hand, were seen;
He on the wings of Cherub rode sublime 830
On the crystalline sky, in sapphire throned,
Illustrious far and wide; but by his own
First seen: Them unexpected joy surprised,
When the great ensign of Messiah blazed
Aloft by Angels borne, his sign in Heaven;
Under whose conduct Michael soon reduced
His army, circumfused on either wing,
Under their Head imbodyed all in one.

Before him Power Divine his way prepared; 840
At his command the uprooted hills retired
Each to his place; they heard his voice, and went
Obsequious; Heaven his wonted face renewed,

And with fresh flowerets hill and valley smiled.

This saw his hapless foes, but stood obdured,
 And to rebellious fight rallied their Powers,
 Insensate, hope conceiving from despair.

In heavenly Spirits could such perverseness dwell?
 850

But to convince the proud what signs avail,
 Or wonders move the obdurate to relent?
 They, hardened more by what might most reclaim,
 Grieving to see his glory, at the sight
 Took envy; and, aspiring to his highth,
 Stood re-embattled fierce, by force or fraud
 Weening to prosper, and at length prevail
 Against God and Messiah, or to fall
 In universal ruin last; and now
 To final battle drew, disdainning flight, 860
 Or faint retreat; when the great Son of God
 To all his host on either hand thus spake.

Stand still in bright array, ye Saints; here stand,
 Ye Angels armed; this day from battle rest:
 Faithful hath been your warfare, and of God
 Accepted, fearless in his righteous cause;
 And as ye have received, so have ye done,
 Invincibly: But of this cursed crew 870
 The punishment to other hand belongs;
 Vengeance is his, or whose he sole appoints:
 Number to this day's work is not ordained,
 Nor multitude; stand only, and behold
 God's indignation on these godless poured
 By me; not you, but me, they have despised,
 Yet envied; against me is all their rage,
 Because the Father, to whom in Heaven s'preme
 Kingdom, and power, and glory appertains,
 Hath honoured me, according to his will.

880

Therefore to me their doom he hath assigned;
 That they may have their wish, to try with me
 In battle which the stronger proves; they all,
 Or I alone against them; since by strength
 They measure all, of other excellence
 Not emulous, nor care who them excels;
 Nor other strife with them do I vouchsafe.

So spake the Son, and into terrour changed
 His countenance too severe to be beheld, 890
 And full of wrath bent on his enemies.

At once the Four spread out their starry wings
 With dreadful shade contiguous, and the orbs
 Of his fierce chariot rolled, as with the sound
 Of torrent floods, or of a numerous host.

He on his impious foes right onward drove,
 Gloomy as night; under his burning wheels
 The stedfast empyrean shook throughout, 900
 All but the throne itself of God. Full soon
 Among them he arrived; in his right hand
 Grasping ten thousand thunders, which he sent
 Before him, such as in their souls infix'd
 Plagues: They, astonished, all resistance lost,
 All courage; down their idle weapons dropt:
 O'er shields, and helms, and helmed heads he rode
 Of Thrones and mighty Seraphim prostrate,
 That wish'd the mountains now might be again
 Thrown on them, as a shelter from his ire. 910

Nor less on either side tempestuous fell
 His arrows, from the fourfold-visaged Four
 Distinct with eyes, and from the living wheels
 Distinct alike with multitude of eyes;
 One Spirit in them ruled; and every eye
 Glared lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire
 Among the accursed, that withered all their
 strength,

And of their wonted vigour left them drained,
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen. 920

Yet half his strength he put not forth, but checked
His thunder in mid volley; for he meant
Not to destroy, but root them out of Heaven:
The overthrown he raised, and as a herd
Of goats or timorous flock together thronged
Drove them before him thunder-struck, pursued
With terrors, and with furies, to the bounds
And crystal wall of Heaven; which, opening wide,
Rolled inward, and a spacious gap disclosed 930
Into the wasteful deep: The monstrous sight
Struck them with horror backward, but far worse
Urged them behind: Headlong themselves they
threw

Down from the verge of Heaven; eternal wrath
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.

Hell heard the unsufferable noise, Hell saw
Heaven ruining from Heaven, and would have
fled

Affrighted; but strict Fate had cast too deep
Her dark foundations, and too fast had bound. 940

Nine days they fell: Confounded Chaos roared,
And felt tenfold confusion in their fall
Through his wild anarchy, so huge a rout
Incumbered him with ruin: Hell at last
Yawning received them whole, and on them
closed;

Hell, their fit habitation, fraught with fire
Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain.

Disburdened Heaven rejoiced, and soon repaired
950

Her mural breach, returning whence it rolled.

Sole victor, from the expulsion of his foes,
Messiah his triumphal chariot turned:

To meet him all his Saints, who silent stood
 Eye-witnesses of his almighty acts,
 With jubilee advanced; and, as they went,
 Shaded with branching palm, each Order bright,
 Sung triumph, and him sung victorious King,
 Son, Heir, and Lord, to him dominion given, 960
 Worthiest to reign: He, celebrated, rode
 Triumphant through mid Heaven, into the courts
 And temple of his Mighty Father throned
 On high; who into glory him received,
 Where now he sits at the right hand of bliss.

Thus, measuring things in Heaven by things on
 Earth,
 At thy request, and that thou mayest beware
 By what is past, to thee I have revealed
 What might have else to human race been hid; 970
 The discord which befel, and war in Heaven
 Among the angelick Powers, and the deep fall
 Of those too high aspiring, who rebelled
 With Satan; he who envies now thy state,
 Who now is plotting how he may seduce
 Thee also from obedience, that, with him
 Bereaved of happiness, thou mayest partake
 His punishment, eternal misery;
 Which would be all his solace and revenge,
 As a despite done against the Most High, 980
 Thee once to gain companion of his woe.

But listen not to his temptations, warn
 Thy weaker; let it profit thee to have heard,
 By terrible example, the reward
 Of disobedience; firm they might have stood,
 Yet fell; remember, and fear to transgress.

BOOK VII

Descend from Heaven, Urania, by that name
If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine
Following, above the Olympian hill I soar,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing!
The meaning, not the name, I call: for thou
Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
Of old Olympus dwellest; but, heavenly-born,
Before the hills appeared, or fountain flowed,
Thou with eternal Wisdom didst converse, 10
Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
In presence of the Almighty Father, pleased
With thy celestial song. Up led by thee
Into the Heaven of Heavens I have presumed,
An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air,
Thy tempering: with like safety guided down
Return me to my native element:
Lest from this flying steed unreined, (as once
Bellerophon, though from a lower clime,)
Dismounted, on the Aleian field I fall,
Erroneous there to wander, and forlorn. 20

Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound
Within the visible diurnal sphere;
Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged

To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
 On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;
 In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,
 And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
 Visitest my slumbers nightly, or when morn 30
 Purples the east: still govern thou my song,
 Urania, and fit audience find, though few.

But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
 Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
 Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
 In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
 To rapture, till the savage clamour drowned
 Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
 Her son. So fail not thou, who thee implores: 40
 For thou art heavenly, she an empty dream.

Say, Goddess, what ensued when Raphael,
 The affable Arch-Angel, had forewarned
 Adam, by dire example, to beware
 Apostasy, by what befel in Heaven
 To those apostates; lest the like befall
 In Paradise to Adam or his race,
 Charged not to touch the interdicted tree,
 If they transgress, and slight that sole command, 50
 So easily obeyed amid the choice
 Of all tastes else to please their appetite,
 Though wandering. He, with his consorted Eve,
 The story heard attentive, and was filled
 With admiration and deep muse, to hear
 Of things so high and strange; things, to their
 thought
 So unimaginable, as hate in Heaven,
 And war so near the peace of God in bliss,
 With such confusion: but the evil, soon
 Driven back, redounded as a flood on those 60
 From whom it sprung; impossible to mix

With blessedness. Whence Adam soon repealed
The doubts that in his heart arose: and now
Led on, yet sinless, with desire to know
What nearer might concern him, how this world
Of Heaven and Earth conspicuous first began;
When, and whereof created; for what cause;
What within Eden, or without, was done
Before his memory; as one whose drouth
Yet scarce allayed still eyes the current stream, 70
Whose liquid murmur heard new thirst excites,
Proceeded thus to ask his heavenly guest.

Great things, and full of wonder in our ears,
Far differing from this world, thou hast revealed,
Divine interpreter! by favour sent
Down from the empyrean, to forewarn
Us timely of what might else have been our loss,
Unknown, which human knowledge could not
reach;

For which to the infinitely Good we owe 80
Immortal thanks, and his admonishment
Receive, with solemn purpose to observe
Immutably his sovran will, the end
Of what we are. But since thou hast vouchsafed
Gently, for our instruction, to impart
Things above earthly thought, which yet con-
cerned

Our knowing, as to highest wisdom seemed,
Deign to descend now lower, and relate
What may no less perhaps avail us known,
How first began this Heaven which we behold 90
Distant so high, with moving fires adorned
Innumerable; and this which yields or fills
All space, the ambient air wide interfused
Embracing round this floried Earth; what cause
Moved the Creator, in his holy rest
Through all eternity, so late to build

In Chaos; and the work begun, how soon
 Absolved; if unforbid thou mayest unfold
 What we, not to explore the secrets ask
 Of his eternal empire, but the more 100
 To magnify his works, the more we know.

And the great light of day yet wants to run
 Much of his race though steep; suspense in
 Heaven,
 Held by thy voice, thy potent voice, he hears,
 And longer will delay to hear thee tell
 His generation, and the rising birth
 Of Nature from the unapparent Deep:
 Or if the star of evening and the moon
 Hasten to thy audience, Night with her will bring,
 110

Silence; and Sleep, listening to thee, will watch;
 Or we can bid his absence, till thy song
 End, and dismiss thee ere the morning shine.

Thus Adam his illustrious guest besought:
 And thus the Godlike Angel answered mild.

This also thy request, with caution asked,
 Obtain; though to recount almighty works
 What words or tongue of Seraph can suffice, 120
 Or heart of man suffice to comprehend?
 Yet what thou canst attain, which best may serve
 To glorify the Maker, and infer
 Thee also happier, shall not be withheld
 Thy hearing; such commission from above
 I have received, to answer thy desire
 Of knowledge within bounds; beyond, abstain
 To ask; nor let thine own inventions hope
 Things not revealed, which the invisible King,
 Only Omniscient, hath suppressed in night; 130
 To none communicable in Earth or Heaven:
 Enough is left besides to search and know.

But knowledge is as food, and needs no less
 Her temperance over appetite, to know
 In measure what the mind may well contain;
 Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
 Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.

Know then, that, after Lucifer from Heaven 140
 (So call him, brighter once amidst the host
 Of Angels, than that star the stars among,)
 Fell with his flaming legions through the deep
 Into his place, and the great Son returned
 Victorious with his Saints, the Omnipotent
 Eternal Father from his throne beheld
 Their multitude, and to his Son thus spake.

At least our envious Foe hath failed, who thought
 All like himself rebellious, by whose aid 150
 This inaccessible high strength, the seat
 Of Deity supreme, us dispossessed,
 He trusted to have seised, and into fraud
 Drew many, whom their place knows here no
 more:

Yet far the greater part have kept, I see,
 Their station; Heaven, yet populous, retains
 Number sufficient to possess her realms
 Though wide, and this high temple to frequent
 With ministeries due, and solemn rites:
 But, lest his heart exalt him in the harm 160
 Already done, to have dispeopled Heaven,
 My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
 That detriment, if such it be to lose
 Self-lost; and in a moment will create
 Another world, out of one man a race
 Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
 Not here; till, by degrees of merit raised,
 They open to themselves at length the way
 Up hither, under long obedience tried;

And Earth be changed to Heaven, and Heaven to
 Earth, 170
 One kingdom, joy and union without end.

Mean while inhabit lax, ye Powers of Heaven;
 And thou my Word, begotten Son, by thee
 This I perform; speak thou, and be it done!
 My overshadowing Spirit and Might with thee
 I send along; ride forth, and bid the Deep
 Within appointed bounds be Heaven and Earth;
 Boundless the Deep, because I Am who fill
 Infinitude, nor vacuous the space. 180

Though I, uncircumscribed myself, retire,
 And put not forth my goodness, which is free
 To act or not, Necessity and Chance
 Approach not me, and what I will is Fate.

So spake the Almighty, and to what he spake
 His Word, the Filial Godhead, gave effect.

Immediate are the acts of God, more swift 190
 Than time or motion, but to human ears
 Cannot without process of speech be told,
 So told as earthly notion can receive.

Great triumph and rejoicing was in Heaven,
 When such was heard declared the Almighty's
 will;

Glory they sung to the Most High, good will
 To future men, and in their dwellings peace;
 Glory to Him, whose just avenging ire
 Had driven out the ungodly from his sight 200
 And the habitations of the just; to Him
 Glory and praise, whose wisdom had ordained
 Good out of evil to create; instead
 Of Spirits malign, a better race to bring
 Into their vacant room, and thence diffuse
 His good to worlds and ages infinite.

So sang the Hierarchies: Mean while the Son
 On his great expedition now appeared,
 Girt with Omnipotence, with radiance crowned 210
 Of Majesty Divine; sapience and love
 Immense, and all his Father in him shone.

About his chariot numberless were poured
 Cherub, and Seraph, Potentates, and Thrones,
 And Virtues, winged Spirits, and chariots winged
 From the armoury of God; where stand of old
 Myriads, between two brazen mountains lodged
 Against a solemn day, harnessed at hand,
 Celestial equipage; and now came forth 220
 Spontaneous, for within them Spirit lived,
 Attendant on their Lord: Heaven opened wide
 Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound
 On golden hinges moving, to let forth
 The King of Glory, in his powerful Word
 And Spirit, coming to create new worlds.

On heavenly ground they stood; and from the
 shore
 They viewed the vast immeasurable abyss
 Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild, 230
 Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
 And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
 Heaven's highth, and with the center mix the pole.

Silence, ye troubled Waves, and thou Deep, peace,
 Said then the Omnifick Word; your discord end!
 Nor staid; but, on the wings of Cherubim
 Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
 Far into Chaos, and the world unborn;
 For Chaos heard his voice: Him all his train 240
 Followed in bright procession, to behold
 Creation, and the wonders of his might.

Then staid the fervid wheels, and in his hand
 He took the golden compasses, prepared

In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
 This universe, and all created things:
 One foot he centered, and the other turned
 Round through the vast profundity obscure;
 And said, Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,²⁵⁰
 This be thy just circumference, O World!
 Thus God the Heaven created, thus the Earth,
 Matter unformed and void: Darkness profound
 Covered the abyss: but on the watery calm
 His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread,
 And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth
 Throughout the fluid mass; but downward purged
 The black tartareous cold infernal dregs,
 Adverse to life: then founded, then conglobed
 Like things to like; the rest to several place 260
 Disparted, and between spun out the air;
 And Earth self-balanced on her center hung.

Let there be light, said God; and forthwith Light
 Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
 Sprung from the deep; and from her native east
 To journey through the aery gloom began,
 Sphered in a radiant cloud, for yet the sun
 Was not; she in a cloudy tabernacle
 Sojourned the while. God saw the light was good;
 270

And light from darkness by the hemisphere
 Divided: light the Day, and darkness Night,
 He named. Thus was the first day even and morn:
 Nor past uncelebrated, nor unsung
 By the celestial quires, when orient light
 Exhaling first from darkness they beheld;
 Birth-day of Heaven and Earth; with joy and shout
 The hollow universal orb they filled,
 And touched their golden harps, and hymning
 praised
 God and his works; Creator him they sung, 280

Both when first evening was, and when first morn.

Again, God said, Let there be firmament
 Amid the waters, and let it divide
 The waters from the waters; and God made
 The firmament, expanse of liquid, pure,
 Transparent, elemental air, diffused
 In circuit to the uttermost convex
 Of this great round; partition firm and sure,
 The waters underneath from those above 290
 Dividing: for as earth, so he the world
 Built on circumfluous waters calm, in wide
 Crystalline ocean, and the loud misrule
 Of Chaos far removed; lest fierce extremes
 Contiguous might distemper the whole frame:
 And Heaven he named the Firmament: So even
 And morning chorus sung the second day.

The Earth was formed, but in the womb as yet
 Of waters, embryon immature involved, 300
 Appeared not: over all the face of Earth
 Main ocean flowed, not idle; but, with warm
 Prolifick humour softening all her globe,
 Fermented the great mother to conceive,
 Satiated with genial moisture; when God said,
 Be gathered now ye waters under Heaven
 Into one place, and let dry land appear.

Immediately the mountains huge appear
 Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave 310
 Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:
 So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low
 Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
 Capacious bed of waters: Thither they
 Hasted with glad precipitance, uprolled,
 As drops on dust conglobing from the dry:
 Part rise in crystal wall, or ridge direct,
 For haste; such flight the great command im-

pressed

On the swift floods: As armies at the call
 Of trumpet (for of armies thou hast heard) 320
 Troop to their standard; so the watery throng,
 Wave rolling after wave, where way they found,
 If steep, with torrent rapture, if through plain,
 Soft-ebbing; nor withstood them rock or hill;
 But they, or under ground, or circuit wide
 With serpent error wandering, found their way,
 And on the washy ooze deep channels wore;
 Easy, ere God had bid the ground be dry,
 All but within those banks, where rivers now
 Stream, and perpetual draw their humid train. 330

The dry land, Earth; and the great receptacle
 Of congregated waters, he called Seas:
 And saw that it was good; and said, Let the Earth
 Put forth the verdant grass, herb yielding seed,
 And fruit-tree yielding fruit after her kind,
 Whose seed is in herself upon the Earth.

He scarce had said, when the bare Earth, till then
 Desart and bare, unsightly, unadorned, 340
 Brought forth the tender grass, whose verdure clad
 Her universal face with pleasant green;
 Then herbs of every leaf, that sudden flowered
 Opening their various colours, and made gay
 Her bosom, smelling sweet: and, these scarce
 blown,
 Forth flourished thick the clustering vine, forth
 crept
 The swelling gourd, up stood the corny reed
 Embattled in her field, and the humble shrub,
 And bush with frizzled hair implicit: Last
 Rose, as in dance, the stately trees, and spread 350
 Their branches hung with copious fruit, or
 gemmed

Their blossoms: With high woods the hills were
 crowned;
 With tufts the valleys, and each fountain side;
 With borders long the rivers: that Earth now
 Seemed like to Heaven, a seat where Gods might
 dwell,
 Or wander with delight, and love to haunt
 Her sacred shades: though God had yet not rained
 Upon the Earth, and man to till the ground
 None was; but from the Earth a dewy mist
 Went up, and watered all the ground, and each³⁶⁰
 Plant of the field; which, ere it was in the Earth,
 God made, and every herb, before it grew
 On the green stem: God saw that it was good:
 So even and morn recorded the third day.

Again the Almighty spake, Let there be lights
 High in the expanse of Heaven, to divide
 The day from night; and let them be for signs,
 For seasons, and for days, and circling years;
 And let them be for lights, as I ordain ³⁷⁰
 Their office in the firmament of Heaven,
 To give light on the Earth; and it was so.

And God made two great lights, great for their use
 To Man, the greater to have rule by day,
 The less by night, altern; and made the stars,
 And set them in the firmament of Heaven
 To illuminate the Earth, and rule the day
 In their vicissitude, and rule the night,
 And light from darkness to divide. God saw, ³⁸⁰
 Surveying his great work, that it was good:
 For of celestial bodies first the sun
 A mighty sphere he framed, unlightsome first,
 Though of ethereal mould: then formed the moon
 Globose, and every magnitude of stars,
 And sowed with stars the Heaven, thick as a field:

Of light by far the greater part he took,
 Transplanted from her cloudy shrine, and placed
 In the sun's orb, made porous to receive
 And drink the liquid light; firm to retain 390
 Her gathered beams, great palace now of light.

Hither, as to their fountain, other stars
 Repairing, in their golden urns draw light,
 And hence the morning-planet gilds her horns;
 By tincture or reflection they augment
 Their small peculiar, though from human sight
 So far remote, with diminution seen,
 First in his east the glorious lamp was seen,
 Regent of day, and all the horizon round 400
 Invested with bright rays, jocund to run
 His longitude through Heaven's high road; the
 gray

Dawn, and the Pleiades, before him danced,
 Shedding sweet influence: Less bright the moon,
 But opposite in levelled west was set,
 His mirrour, with full face borrowing her light
 From him; for other light she needed none
 In that aspect, and still that distance keeps
 Till night; then in the east her turn she shines,
 Revolved on Heaven's great axle, and her reign⁴¹⁰
 With thousand lesser lights dividual holds,
 With thousand thousand stars, that then appeared
 Spangling the hemisphere: Then first adorned
 With their bright luminaries that set and rose,
 Glad evening and glad morn crowned the fourth
 day.

And God said, Let the waters generate
 Reptile with spawn abundant, living soul:
 And let fowl fly above the Earth, with wings
 Displayed on the open firmament of Heaven. 420

And God created the great whales, and each

Soul living, each that crept, which plenteously
 The waters generated by their kinds;
 And every bird of wing after his kind;
 And saw that it was good, and blessed them, say-
 ing.

Be fruitful, multiply, and in the seas,
 And lakes, and running streams, the waters fill;
 And let the fowl be multiplied, on the Earth. 430

Forthwith the sounds and seas, each creek and bay,
 With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals
 Of fish that with their fins, and shining scales,
 Glide under the green wave, in sculls that oft
 Bank the mid sea: part single, or with mate,
 Graze the sea-weed their pasture, and through
 groves

Of coral stray; or, sporting with quick glance,
 Show to the sun their waved coats dropt with gold;
 Or, in their pearly shells at ease, attend 440
 Moist nutriment; or under rocks their food
 In jointed armour watch: on smooth the seal
 And bended dolphins play: part huge of bulk
 Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait,
 Tempest the ocean: there leviathan,
 Hugest of living creatures, on the deep
 Stretched like a promontory sleeps or swims,
 And seems a moving land; and at his gills
 Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out, a sea.

450

Mean while the tepid caves, and fens, and shores,
 Their brood as numerous hatch, from the egg that
 soon

Bursting with kindly rupture forth disclosed
 Their callow young; but feathered soon and fledge
 They summed their pens; and, soaring the air sub-
 lime,

With clang despised the ground, under a cloud
 In prospect; there the eagle and the stork
 On cliffs and cedar tops their eyries build:
 Part loosely wing the region, part more wise
 In common, ranged in figure, wedge their way, 460
 Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
 Their aery caravan, high over seas
 Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing
 Easing their flight; so steers the prudent crane
 Her annual voyage, borne on winds; the air
 Floats as they pass, fanned with unnumbered
 plumes:

From branch to branch the smaller birds with song
 Solaced the woods, and spread their painted wings
 Till even; nor then the solemn nightingale
 Ceased warbling, but all night tun'd her soft lays:
 470

Others, on silver lakes and rivers, bathed
 Their downy breast; the swan with arched neck,
 Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
 Her state with oary feet; yet oft they quit
 The dank, and, rising on stiff pennons, tower
 The mid aerial sky: Others on ground
 Walked firm; the crested cock whose clarion
 sounds

The silent hours, and the other whose gay train
 Adorns him, coloured with the florid hue
 Of rainbows and starry eyes. The waters thus 480
 With fish replenished, and the air with fowl,
 Evening and morn solemnized the fifth day.

The sixth, and of creation last, arose
 With evening harps and matin; when God said,
 Let the Earth bring forth soul living in her kind,
 Cattle, and creeping things, and beast of the Earth,
 Each in their kind. The Earth obeyed, and straight
 Opening her fertile womb teemed at a birth

Innumerable living creatures, perfect forms, 490
 Limbed and full grown: Out of the ground up rose,
 As from his lair, the wild beast where he wons
 In forest wild, in thicket, brake, or den;
 Among the trees in pairs they rose, they walked:
 The cattle in the fields and meadows green:
 Those rare and solitary, these in flocks
 Pasturing at once, and in broad herds upsprung.

The grassy clods now calved; now half appeared
 The tawny lion, pawing to get free 500
 His hinder parts, then springs as broke from
 bonds,
 And rampant shakes his brinded mane; the ounce,
 The libbard, and the tiger, as the mole
 Rising, the crumbled earth above them threw
 In hillocks: The swift stag from under ground
 Bore up his branching head: Scarce from his mould
 Behemoth biggest born of earth upheaved
 His vastness: Fleeced the flocks and bleating rose,
 As plants: Ambiguous between sea and land
 The river-horse, and scaly crocodile. 510

At once came forth whatever creeps the ground,
 Insect or worm: those waved their limber fans
 For wings, and smallest lineaments exact
 In all the liveries decked of summer's pride
 With spots of gold and purple, azure and green:
 These, as a line, their long dimension drew,
 Streaking the ground with sinuous trace; not all
 Minims of nature; some of serpent-kind,
 Wonderous in length and corpulence, involved 520
 Their snaky folds, and added wings. First crept
 The parsimonious emmet, provident
 Of future; in small room large heart enclosed;
 Pattern of just equality perhaps
 Hereafter, joined in her popular tribes

Of commonalty: Swarming next appeared
 The female bee, that feeds her husband drone
 Deliciously, and builds her waxen cells
 With honey stored: The rest are numberless,
 And thou their natures knowest, and gavest them
 names, 530

Needless to thee repeated; nor unknown
 The serpent, subtlest beast of all the field,
 Of huge extent sometimes, with brazen eyes
 And hairy mane terrifick, though to thee
 Not noxious, but obedient at thy call.

Now Heaven in all her glory shone, and rolled
 Her motions, as the great first Mover's hand
 First wheeled their course: Earth in her rich attire
 Consummate lovely smiled; air, water, earth, 540
 By fowl, fish, beast, was flown, was swum, was
 walked,

Frequent; and of the sixth day yet remained:
 There wanted yet the master-work, the end
 Of all yet done; a creature, who, not prone
 And brute as other creatures, but endued
 With sanctity of reason, might erect
 His stature, and upright with front serene
 Govern the rest, self-knowing; and from thence
 Magnanimous to correspond with Heaven,
 But grateful to acknowledge whence his good 550
 Descends, thither with heart, and voice, and eyes
 Directed in devotion, to adore
 And worship God Supreme, who made him chief
 Of all his works: therefore the Omnipotent
 Eternal Father (for where is not he
 Present?) thus to his Son audibly spake.

Let us make now Man in our image, Man
 In our similitude, and let them rule
 Over the fish and fowl of sea and air, 560

Beast of the field, and over all the Earth,
 And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.

This said, he formed thee, Adam, thee, O Man,
 Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breathed
 The breath of life; in his own image he
 Created thee, in the image of God
 Express; and thou becamest a living soul.

Male he created thee; but thy consort 570
 Female, for race; then blessed mankind, and said,
 Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth;
 Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
 Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air,
 And every living thing that moves on the Earth.

Wherever thus created, for no place
 Is yet distinct by name, thence, as thou knowest,
 He brought thee into this delicious grove,
 This garden, planted with the trees of God, 580
 Delectable both to behold and taste;
 And freely all their pleasant fruit for food
 Gave thee; all sorts are here that all the Earth
 yields,

Variety without end; but of the tree,
 Which, tasted, works knowledge of good and evil,
 Thou mayest not; in the day thou eatest, thou diest;
 Death is the penalty imposed; beware,
 And govern well thy appetite; lest Sin
 Surprise thee, and her black attendant Death. 590

Here finished he, and all that he had made
 Viewed, and behold all was entirely good;
 So even and morn accomplished the sixth day:
 Yet not till the Creator from his work
 Desisting, though unwearied, up returned,
 Up to the Heaven of Heavens, his high abode;
 Thence to behold this new created world,

The addition of his empire, how it showed
 In prospect from his throne, how good, how fair,
 Answering his great idea. Up he rode 600
 Followed with acclamation, and the sound
 Symphonious of ten thousand harps, that tuned
 Angelick harmonies: The earth, the air
 Resounded, (thou rememberest, for thou heardest,)
 The heavens and all the constellations rung,
 The planets in their station listening stood,
 While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.

Open, ye everlasting gates! they sung,
 Open, ye Heavens! your living doors; let in 610
 The great Creator from his work returned
 Magnificent, his six days work, a World;
 Open, and henceforth oft; for God will deign
 To visit oft the dwellings of just men,
 Delighted; and with frequent intercourse
 Thither will send his winged messengers
 On errands of supernal grace. So sung
 The glorious train ascending: He through Heaven,
 That opened wide her blazing portals, led
 To God's eternal house direct the way; 620
 A broad and ample road, whose dust is gold
 And pavement stars, as stars to thee appear,
 Seen in the galaxy, that milky way,
 Which nightly, as a circling zone, thou seest
 Powdered with stars. And now on Earth the sev-
 enth

Evening arose in Eden, for the sun
 Was set, and twilight from the east came on,
 Forerunning night; when at the holy mount
 Of Heaven's high-seated top, the imperial throne
 Of Godhead, fixed for ever firm and sure, 630
 The Filial Power arrived, and sat him down
 With his great Father; for he also went
 Invisible, yet staid, (such privilege

Hath Omnipresence) and the work ordained,
 Author and End of all things; and, from work
 Now resting, blessed and hallowed the seventh
 day,
 As resting on that day from all his work,
 But not in silence holy kept: the harp
 Had work and rested not; the solemn pipe,
 And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop, 640
 All sounds on fret by string or golden wire,
 Tempered soft tunings, intermixed with voice
 Choral or unison: of incense clouds,
 Fuming from golden censers, hid the mount.

Creation and the six days acts they sung:
 Great are thy works, Jehovah! infinite
 Thy power! what thought can measure thee, or
 tongue
 Relate thee! Greater now in thy return
 Than from the giant Angels: Thee that day 650
 Thy thunders magnified; but to create
 Is greater than created to destroy.

Who can impair thee, Mighty King, or bound
 Thy empire! Easily the proud attempt
 Of Spirits apostate, and their counsels vain,
 Thou hast repelled; while impiously they thought
 Thee to diminish, and from thee withdraw
 The number of thy worshippers. Who seeks
 To lessen thee, against his purpose serves 660
 To manifest the more thy might: his evil
 Thou usest, and from thence createst more good.

Witness this new-made world, another Heaven
 From Heaven-gate not far, founded in view
 On the clear hyaline, the glassy sea;
 Of amplitude almost immense, with stars
 Numerous, and every star perhaps a world
 Of destined habitation; but thou knowest

Their seasons: among these the seat of Men, 670
 Earth, with her nether ocean circumfused,
 Their pleasant dwelling-place. Thrice happy Men,
 And sons of Men, whom God hath thus advanced!
 Created in his image, there to dwell
 And worship him; and in reward to rule
 Over his works, on earth, in sea, or air,
 And multiply a race of worshippers
 Holy and just: Thrice happy, if they know
 Their happiness, and persevere upright!
 So sung they, and the empyrean rung 680
 With halleluiahs: Thus was sabbath kept.

And thy request think now fulfilled, that asked
 How first this world and face of things began,
 And what before thy memory was done
 From the beginning; that posterity,
 Informed by thee, might know: If else thou seekest
 Aught, not surpassing human measure, say.

BOOK VIII

The Angel ended, and in Adam's ear
So charming left his voice, that he a while
Thought him still speaking, still stood fixed to
hear;

Then, as new waked, thus gratefully replied.

What thanks sufficient, or what recompence
Equal, have I to render thee, divine
Historian, who thus largely hast allayed
The thirst I had of knowledge, and vouchsafed
This friendly condescension to relate 10
Things, else by me unsearchable; now heard
With wonder, but delight, and, as is due,
With glory attributed to the high
Creator! Something yet of doubt remains,
Which only thy solution can resolve.

When I behold this goodly frame, this world,
Of Heaven and Earth consisting; and compute
Their magnitudes; this Earth, a spot, a grain,
An atom, with the firmament compared 20
And all her numbered stars, that seem to roll
Spaces incomprehensible, (for such
Their distance argues, and their swift return
Diurnal,) merely to officiate light
Round this opacous Earth, this punctual spot,

One day and night; in all her vast survey
 Useless besides; reasoning I oft admire,
 How Nature wise and frugal could commit
 Such disproportions, with superfluous hand
 So many nobler bodies to create, 30
 Greater so manifold, to this one use,
 For aught appears, and on their orbs impose
 Such restless revolution day by day
 Repeated; while the sedentary Earth,
 That better might with far less compass move,
 Served by more noble than herself, attains
 Her end without least motion, and receives,
 As tribute, such a sumless journey brought
 Of incorporeal speed, her warmth and light;
 Speed, to describe whose swiftness number fails.
 40

So spake our sire, and by his countenance seemed
 Entering on studious thoughts abstruse; which Eve
 Perceiving, where she sat retired in sight,
 With lowliness majestick from her seat,
 And grace that won who saw to wish her stay,
 Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flowers,
 To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom,
 Her nursery; they at her coming sprung,
 And, touched by her fair tendance, gladlier grew.
 50

Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
 Delighted, or not capable her ear
 Of what was high: such pleasure she reserved,
 Adam relating, she sole auditress;
 Her husband the relater she preferred
 Before the Angel, and of him to ask
 Chose rather; he, she knew, would intermix
 Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
 With conjugal caresses: from his lip 60

Not words alone pleased her. O! when meet now
 Such pairs, in love and mutual honour joined?
 With Goddess-like demeanour forth she went,
 Not unattended; for on her, as Queen,
 A pomp of winning Graces waited still,
 And from about her shot darts of desire
 Into all eyes, to wish her still in sight.

And Raphael now, to Adam's doubt proposed,
 Benevolent and facile thus replied. 70

To ask or search, I blame thee not; for Heaven
 Is as the book of God before thee set,
 Wherein to read his wonderous works, and learn
 His seasons, hours, or days, or months, or years:
 This to attain, whether Heaven move or Earth,
 Imports not, if thou reckon right; the rest
 From Man or Angel the great Architect
 Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
 His secrets to be scanned by them who ought 80
 Rather admire; or, if they list to try
 Conjecture, he his fabrick of the Heavens
 Hath left to their disputes, perhaps to move
 His laughter at their quaint opinions wide
 Hereafter; when they come to model Heaven
 And calculate the stars, how they will wield
 The mighty frame; how build, unbuild, contrive
 To save appearances; how gird the sphere
 With centrick and eccentric scribbled o'er,
 Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb: 90
 Already by thy reasoning this I guess,
 Who art to lead thy offspring, and supposest
 That bodies bright and greater should not serve
 The less not bright, nor Heaven such journeys run,
 Earth sitting still, when she alone receives
 The benefit: Consider first, that great
 Or bright infers not excellence: the Earth

Though, in comparison of Heaven, so small,
 Nor glistering, may of solid good contain
 More plenty than the sun that barren shines; 100
 Whose virtue on itself works no effect,
 But in the fruitful Earth; there first received,
 His beams, unactive else, their vigour find.

Yet not to Earth are those bright luminaries
 Officious; but to thee, Earth's habitant.

And for the Heaven's wide circuit, let it speak
 The Maker's high magnificence, who built
 So spacious, and his line stretched out so far; 110
 That Man may know he dwells not in his own;
 An edifice too large for him to fill,
 Lodged in a small partition; and the rest
 Ordained for uses to his Lord best known.

The swiftness of those circles attribute,
 Though numberless, to his Omnipotence,
 That to corporeal substances could add
 Speed almost spiritual: Me thou thinkest not slow,
 Who since the morning-hour set out from Heaven
 120

Where God resides, and ere mid-day arrived
 In Eden; distance inexpressible
 By numbers that have name. But this I urge,
 Admitting motion in the Heavens, to show
 Invalid that which thee to doubt it moved;
 Not that I so affirm, though so it seem
 To thee who hast thy dwelling here on Earth.

God, to remove his ways from human sense,
 Placed Heaven from Earth so far, that earthly sight,
 130

If it presume, might err in things too high,
 And no advantage gain. What if the sun
 Be center to the world; and other stars,
 By his attractive virtue and their own

Incited, dance about him various rounds?
 Their wandering course now high, now low, then
 hid,

Progressive, retrograde, or standing still,
 In six thou seest; and what if seventh to these
 The planet earth, so stedfast though she seem,
 Insensibly three different motions move? 140
 Which else to several spheres thou must ascribe,
 Moved contrary with thwart obliquities;
 Or save the sun his labour, and that swift
 Nocturnal and diurnal rhomb supposed,
 Invisible else above all stars, the wheel
 Of day and night; which needs not thy belief,
 If earth, industrious of herself, fetch day
 Travelling east, and with her part averse
 From the sun's beam meet night, her other part
 Still luminous by his ray. What if that light, 150
 Sent from her through the wide transpicuous air,
 To the terrestrial moon be as a star,
 Enlightening her by day, as she by night
 This earth? reciprocal, if land be there,
 Fields and inhabitants: Her spots thou seest
 As clouds, and clouds may rain, and rain produce
 Fruits in her softened soil for some to eat
 Allotted there; and other suns perhaps,
 With their attendant moons, thou wilt descry,
 Communicating male and female light; 160
 Which two great sexes animate the world,
 Stored in each orb perhaps with some that live.

For such vast room in Nature unpossessed
 By living soul, desart and desolate,
 Only to shine, yet scarce to contribute
 Each orb a glimpse of light, conveyed so far
 Down to this habitable, which returns
 Light back to them, is obvious to dispute. 170

But whether thus these things, or whether not;
 But whether the sun, predominant in Heaven,
 Rise on the earth; or earth rise on the sun;
 He from the east his flaming road begin;
 Or she from west her silent course advance,
 With inoffensive pace that spinning sleeps
 On her soft axle, while she paces even,
 And bears thee soft with the smooth hair along;
 Sollicit not thy thoughts with matters hid;
 Leave them to God above; him serve, and fear! 180
 Of other creatures, as him pleases best,
 Wherever placed, let him dispose; joy thou
 In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
 And thy fair Eve; Heaven is for thee too high
 To know what passes there; be lowly wise:
 Think only what concerns thee, and thy being;
 Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there
 Live, in what state, condition, or degree;
 Contented that thus far hath been revealed
 Not of Earth only, but of highest Heaven. 190

To whom thus Adam, cleared of doubt, replied.

How fully hast thou satisfied me, pure
 Intelligence of Heaven, Angel serene!
 And, freed from intricacies, taught to live
 The easiest way; nor with perplexing thoughts
 To interrupt the sweet of life, from which
 God hath bid dwell far off all anxious cares,
 And not molest us; unless we ourselves 200
 Seek them with wandering thoughts, and notions
 vain.

But apt the mind or fancy is to rove
 Unchecked, and of her roving is no end;
 Till warned, or by experience taught, she learn,
 That, not to know at large of things remote
 From use, obscure and subtle; but, to know

That which before us lies in daily life,
 Is the prime wisdom: What is more, is fume,
 Or emptiness, or fond impertinence: 210
 And renders us, in things that most concern,
 Unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek.

Therefore from this high pitch let us descend
 A lower flight, and speak of things at hand
 Useful; whence, haply, mention may arise
 Of something not unseasonable to ask,
 By sufferance, and thy wonted favour, deigned.

Thee I have heard relating what was done 220
 Ere my remembrance: now, hear me relate
 My story, which perhaps thou hast not heard;
 And day is not yet spent; till then thou seest
 How subtly to detain thee I devise;
 Inviting thee to hear while I relate;
 Fond! were it not in hope of thy reply:
 For, while I sit with thee, I seem in Heaven;
 And sweeter thy discourse is to my ear
 Than fruits of palm-tree pleasantest to thirst
 And hunger both, from labour, at the hour 230
 Of sweet repast; they satiate, and soon fill,
 Though pleasant; but thy words, with grace divine
 Imbued, bring to their sweetness no satiety.

To whom thus Raphael answered heavenly meek.

Nor are thy lips ungraceful, Sire of men,
 Nor tongue ineloquent; for God on thee
 Abundantly his gifts hath also poured
 Inward and outward both, his image fair: 240
 Speaking, or mute, all comeliness and grace
 Attends thee; and each word, each motion, forms;
 Nor less think we in Heaven of thee on Earth
 Than of our fellow-servant, and inquire
 Gladly into the ways of God with Man:
 For God, we see, hath honoured thee, and set

On Man his equal love: Say therefore on;
 For I that day was absent, as befel,
 Bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure,
 Far on excursion toward the gates of Hell; 250
 Squared in full legion (such command we had)
 To see that none thence issued forth a spy,
 Or enemy, while God was in his work;
 Lest he, incensed at such eruption bold,
 Destruction with creation might have mixed.

Not that they durst without his leave attempt;
 But us he sends upon his high behests
 For state, as Sovran King; and to inure
 Our prompt obedience. Fast we found, fast shut,
 260

The dismal gates, and barricadoed strong;
 But long ere our approaching heard within
 Noise, other than the sound of dance or song,
 Torment, and loud lament, and furious rage.

Glad we returned up to the coasts of light
 Ere sabbath-evening: so we had in charge.

But thy relation now; for I attend,
 Pleased with thy words no less than thou with
 mine. 270

So spake the Godlike Power, and thus our Sire.

For Man to tell how human life began
 Is hard; for who himself beginning knew
 Desire with thee still longer to converse
 Induced me. As new waked from soundest sleep,
 Soft on the flowery herb I found me laid,
 In balmy sweat; which with his beams the sun
 Soon dried, and on the reeking moisture fed. 280

Straight toward Heaven my wondering eyes I
 turned,
 And gazed a while the ample sky; till, raised

By quick instinctive motion, up I sprung,
 As thitherward endeavouring, and upright
 Stood on my feet: about me round I saw
 Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,
 And liquid lapse of murmuring streams; by these,
 Creatures that lived and moved, and walked, or
 flew;

Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled;
 290

With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed.

Myself I then perused, and limb by limb
 Surveyed, and sometimes went, and sometimes
 ran

With supple joints, as lively vigour led:
 But who I was, or where, or from what cause,
 Knew not; to speak I tried, and forthwith spake;
 My tongue obeyed, and readily could name
 Whate'er I saw. Thou Sun, said I, fair light,
 And thou enlightened Earth, so fresh and gay, 300
 Ye Hills, and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plains,
 And ye that live and move, fair Creatures, tell,
 Tell, if ye saw, how I came thus, how here?—

Not of myself;—by some great Maker then,
 In goodness and in power pre-eminent:
 Tell me, how may I know him, how adore,
 From whom I have that thus I move and live,
 And feel that I am happier than I know.—
 While thus I called, and strayed I knew not
 whither,

From where I first drew air, and first beheld 310
 This happy light; when, answer none returned,
 On a green shady bank, profuse of flowers,
 Pensive I sat me down: There gentle sleep
 First found me, and with soft oppression seised
 My droused sense, untroubled, though I thought
 I then was passing to my former state

Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve:
 When suddenly stood at my head a dream,
 Whose inward apparition gently moved
 My fancy to believe I yet had being, 320
 And lived: One came, methought, of shape divine,
 And said, "Thy mansion wants thee, Adam; rise,
 First Man, of men innumerable ordained
 First Father! called by thee, I come thy guide
 To the garden of bliss, thy seat prepared."
 So saying, by the hand he took me raised,
 And over fields and waters, as in air
 Smooth-sliding without step, last led me up
 A woody mountain; whose high top was plain,
 A circuit wide, enclosed, with goodliest trees 330
 Planted, with walks, and bowers; that what I saw
 Of Earth before scarce pleasant seemed. Each tree,
 Loaden with fairest fruit that hung to the eye
 Tempting, stirred in me sudden appetite
 To pluck and eat; whereat I waked, and found
 Before mine eyes all real, as the dream
 Had lively shadowed: Here had new begun
 My wandering, had not he, who was my guide
 Up hither, from among the trees appeared,
 Presence Divine. Rejoicing, but with awe, 340
 In adoration at his feet I fell
 Submiss: He reared me, and "Whom thou sought-
 est I am,"
 Said mildly, "Author of all this thou seest
 Above, or round about thee, or beneath.

 This Paradise I give thee, count it thine
 To till and keep, and of the fruit to eat:
 Of every tree that in the garden grows
 Eat freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth:
 But of the tree whose operation brings 350
 Knowledge of good and ill, which I have set
 The pledge of thy obedience and thy faith,

Amid the garden by the tree of life,
 Remember what I warn thee, shun to taste,
 And shun the bitter consequence: for know,
 The day thou eatest thereof, my sole command
 Transgressed, inevitably thou shalt die,
 From that day mortal; and this happy state
 Shalt lose, expelled from hence into a world
 Of woe and sorrow." Sternly he pronounced 360
 The rigid interdiction, which resounds
 Yet dreadful in mine ear, though in my choice
 Not to incur; but soon his clear aspect
 Returned, and gracious purpose thus renewed.

"Not only these fair bounds, but all the Earth
 To thee and to thy race I give; as lords
 Possess it, and all things that therein live,
 Or live in sea, or air; beast, fish, and fowl. 370

In sign whereof, each bird and beast behold
 After their kinds; I bring them to receive
 From thee their names, and pay thee fealty
 With low subjection; understand the same
 Of fish within their watery residence,
 Not hither summoned, since they cannot change
 Their element, to draw the thinner air."
 As thus he spake, each bird and beast behold
 Approaching two and two; these cowering low
 With blandishment; each bird stooped on his wing.
 380

I named them, as they passed, and understood
 Their nature, with such knowledge God endued
 My sudden apprehension: But in these
 I found not what methought I wanted still;
 And to the heavenly Vision thus presumed.

O, by what name, for thou above all these,
 Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,

Surpassest far my naming; how may I 390
 Adore thee, Author of this universe,
 And all this good to man? for whose well being
 So amply, and with hands so liberal,
 Thou hast provided all things: But with me
 I see not who partakes. In solitude
 What happiness, who can enjoy alone,
 Or, all enjoying, what contentment find?
 Thus I presumptuous; and the Vision bright,
 As with a smile more brightened, thus replied.

400

What callest thou solitude? Is not the Earth
 With various living creatures, and the air
 Replenished, and all these at thy command
 To come and play before thee? Knowest thou not
 Their language and their ways? They also know,
 And reason not contemptibly: With these
 Find pastime, and bear rule; thy realm is large.

So spake the Universal Lord, and seemed
 So ordering: I, with leave of speech implored, 410
 And humble deprecation, thus replied.

Let not my words offend thee, Heavenly Power;
 My Maker, be propitious while I speak.

Hast thou not made me here thy substitute,
 And these inferiour far beneath me set?
 Among unequals what society
 Can sort, what harmony, or true delight?
 Which must be mutual, in proportion due 420
 Given and received; but, in disparity
 The one intense, the other still remiss,
 Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
 Tedious alike: Of fellowship I speak
 Such as I seek, fit to participate
 All rational delight: wherein the brute
 Cannot be human consort: They rejoice

Each with their kind, lion with lioness;
 So fitly them in pairs thou hast combined:
 Much less can bird with beast, or fish with fowl⁴³⁰
 So well converse, nor with the ox the ape;
 Worse then can man with beast, and least of all.

Whereto the Almighty answered, not displeas'd.

A nice and subtle happiness, I see,
 Thou to thyself proposest, in the choice
 Of thy associates, Adam! and wilt taste
 No pleasure, though in pleasure, solitary.

440

What thinkest thou then of me, and this my state?
 Seem I to thee sufficiently possess'd
 Of happiness, or not? who am alone
 From all eternity; for none I know
 Second to me or like, equal much less.

How have I then with whom to hold converse,
 Save with the creatures which I made, and those
 To me inferiour, infinite descents
 Beneath what other creatures are to thee? ⁴⁵⁰
 He ceased; I lowly answer'd. To attain
 The highth and depth of thy eternal ways
 All human thoughts come short, Supreme of
 things!

Thou in thyself art perfect, and in thee
 Is no deficiencie found: Not so is Man,
 But in degree; the cause of his desire
 By conversation with his like to help
 Or solace his defects. No need that thou
 Shouldst propagate, already Infinite;
 And through all numbers absolute, though One:

460

But Man by number is to manifest
 His single imperfection, and beget
 Like of his like, his image multiplied,

In unity defective; which requires
Collateral love, and dearest amity.

Thou in thy secrecy although alone,
Best with thyself accompanied, seekest not
Social communication; yet, so pleased,
Canst raise thy creature to what highth thou wilt
470

Of union or communion, deified:
I, by conversing, cannot these erect
From prone; nor in their ways complacence find.

Thus I emboldened spake, and freedom used
Permissive, and acceptance found; which gained
This answer from the gracious Voice Divine.

Thus far to try thee, Adam, I was pleased;
And find thee knowing, not of beasts alone, 480
Which thou hast rightly named, but of thyself;
Expressing well the spirit within thee free,
My image, not imparted to the brute;
Whose fellowship therefore unmeet for thee
Good reason was thou freely shouldst dislike;
And be so minded still: I, ere thou spakest,
Knew it not good for Man to be alone;
And no such company as then thou sawest
Intended thee; for trial only brought,
To see how thou couldest judge of fit and meet:490
What next I bring shall please thee, be assured,
Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire.

He ended, or I heard no more; for now
My earthly by his heavenly overpowered,
Which it had long stood under, strained to the
highth

In that celestial colloquy sublime,
As with an object that excels the sense
Dazzled and spent, sunk down; and sought repair

500

Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, called
By Nature as in aid, and closed mine eyes.

Mine eyes he closed, but open left the cell
Of fancy, my internal sight; by which,
Abstract as in a trance, methought I saw,
Though sleeping, where I lay, and saw the shape
Still glorious before whom awake I stood:
Who stooping opened my left side, and took
From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm, 510
And life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the
wound,

But suddenly with flesh filled up and healed:
The rib he formed and fashioned with his hands;
Under his forming hands a creature grew,
Man-like, but different sex; so lovely fair,
That what seemed fair in all the world, seemed
now

Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained
And in her looks; which from that time infused
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspired 520
The spirit of love and amorous delight.

She disappeared, and left me dark; I waked
To find her, or for ever to deplore
Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure:
When out of hope, behold her, not far off,
Such as I saw her in my dream, adorned
With what all Earth or Heaven could bestow
To make her amiable: On she came,
Led by her heavenly Maker, though unseen, 530
And guided by his voice; nor uninformed
Of nuptial sanctity, and marriage rites:
Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.

I, overjoyed, could not forbear aloud.

This turn hath made amends; thou hast fulfilled
 Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,
 Giver of all things fair! but fairest this 540
 Of all thy gifts! nor enviest. I now see
 Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself
 Before me: Woman is her name; of Man
 Extracted: for this cause he shall forego
 Father and mother, and to his wife adhere;
 And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul.

She heard me thus; and though divinely brought,
 Yet innocence, and virgin modesty,
 Her virtue, and the conscience of her worth, 550
 That would be wooed, and not unsought be won,
 Not obvious, not obtrusive, but, retired,
 The more desirable; or, to say all,
 Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought,
 Wrought in her so, that, seeing me, she turned:
 I followed her; she what was honour knew,
 And with obsequious majesty approved
 My pleaded reason. To the nuptial bower
 I led her blushing like the morn: All Heaven, 560
 And happy constellations, on that hour
 Shed their selectest influence; the Earth
 Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill;
 Joyous the birds; fresh gales and gentle airs
 Whispered it to the woods, and from their wings
 Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub,
 Disporting, till the amorous bird of night
 Sung spousal, and bid haste the evening-star
 On his hill top, to light the bridal lamp.

Thus have I told thee all my state, and brought 570
 My story to the sum of earthly bliss,
 Which I enjoy; and must confess to find
 In all things else delight indeed, but such

As, used or not, works in the mind no change,
 Nor vehement desire; these delicacies
 I mean of taste, sight, smell, herbs, fruits, and flow-
 ers,
 Walks, and the melody of birds: but here
 Far otherwise, transported I behold,
 Transported touch; here passion first I felt,
 Commotion strange! in all enjoyments else 580
 Superiour and unmoved; here only weak
 Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance.

Or Nature failed in me, and left some part
 Not proof enough such object to sustain;
 Or, from my side subducting, took perhaps
 More than enough; at least on her bestowed
 Too much of ornament, in outward show
 Elaborate, of inward less exact. 590

For well I understand in the prime end
 Of Nature her the inferiour, in the mind
 And inward faculties, which most excel;
 In outward also her resembling less
 His image who made both, and less expressing
 The character of that dominion given
 O'er other creatures: Yet when I approach
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
 And in herself complete, so well to know
 Her own, that what she wills to do or say, 600
 Seems wisest, virtuousest, discrettest, best:
 All higher knowledge in her presence falls
 Degraded; Wisdom in discourse with her
 Loses discountenanced, and like Folly shows;
 Authority and Reason on her wait,
 As one intended first, not after made
 Occasionally; and, to consummate all,
 Greatness of mind and Nobleness their seat
 Build in her loveliest, and create an awe

About her, as a guard angelick placed. 610

To whom the Angel with contracted brow.

Accuse not Nature, she hath done her part;
 Do thou but thine; and be not diffident
 Of Wisdom; she deserts thee not, if thou
 Dismiss not her, when most thou needest her nigh,
 By attributing overmuch to things
 Less excellent, as thou thyself perceivest.

620

For, what admirest thou, what transports thee so,
 An outside? fair, no doubt, and worthy well
 Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love;
 Not thy subjection: Weigh with her thyself;
 Then value: Oft-times nothing profits more
 Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
 Well managed; of that skill the more thou knowest,
 The more she will acknowledge thee her head,
 And to realities yield all her shows:
 Made so adorn for thy delight the more, 630
 So awful, that with honour thou mayest love
 Thy mate, who sees when thou art seen least wise.

But if the sense of touch, whereby mankind
 Is propagated, seem such dear delight
 Beyond all other; think the same vouchsafed
 To cattle and each beast; which would not be
 To them made common and divulged, if aught
 Therein enjoyed were worthy to subdue
 The soul of man, or passion in him move. 640

What higher in her society thou findest
 Attractive, human, rational, love still;
 In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
 Wherein true love consists not: Love refines
 The thoughts, and heart enlarges; hath his seat
 In reason, and is judicious; is the scale
 By which to heavenly love thou mayest ascend,

Not sunk in carnal pleasure; for which cause,
 Among the beasts no mate for thee was found. 650

To whom thus, half abashed, Adam replied.

Neither her outside formed so fair, nor aught
 In procreation common to all kinds,
 (Though higher of the genial bed by far,
 And with mysterious reverence I deem,)
 So much delights me, as those graceful acts,
 Those thousand decencies, that daily flow
 From all her words and actions mixed with love
 660

And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned
 Union of mind, or in us both one soul;
 Harmony to behold in wedded pair
 More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear.

Yet these subject not; I to thee disclose
 What inward thence I feel, not therefore foiled,
 Who meet with various objects, from the sense
 Variously representing; yet, still free,
 Approve the best, and follow what I approve. 670

To love, thou blamest me not; for Love, thou
 sayest,

Leads up to Heaven, is both the way and guide;
 Bear with me then, if lawful what I ask:
 Love not the heavenly Spirits, and how their love
 Express they? by looks only? or do they mix
 Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch?
 To whom the Angel, with a smile that glowed
 Celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue,
 Answered. Let it suffice thee that thou knowest 680
 Us happy, and without love no happiness.

Whatever pure thou in the body enjoyest,
 (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
 In eminence; and obstacle find none
 Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars;

Easier than air with air, if Spirits embrace,
 Total they mix, union of pure with pure
 Desiring, nor restrained conveyance need,
 As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul. 690

But I can now no more; the parting sun
 Beyond the Earth's green Cape and verdant Isles
 Hesperian sets, my signal to depart.

Be strong, live happy, and love! But, first of all,
 Him, whom to love is to obey, and keep
 His great command; take heed lest passion sway
 Thy judgement to do aught, which else free will
 Would not admit: thine, and of all thy sons, 700
 The weal or woe in thee is placed; beware!
 I in thy persevering shall rejoice,
 And all the Blest: Stand fast; to stand or fall
 Free in thine own arbitrement it lies.

Perfect within, no outward aid require;
 And all temptation to transgress repel.

So saying, he arose; whom Adam thus
 Followed with benediction. Since to part, 710
 Go, heavenly guest, ethereal Messenger,
 Sent from whose sovran goodness I adore!
 Gentle to me and affable hath been
 Thy condescension, and shall be honoured ever
 With grateful memory: Thou to mankind
 Be good and friendly still, and oft return!
 So parted they; the Angel up to Heaven
 From the thick shade, and Adam to his bower.

BOOK IX

No more of talk where God or Angel guest
With Man, as with his friend, familiar us'd,
To sit indulgent, and with him partake
Rural repast; permitting him the while
Venial discourse unblam'd. I now must change
Those notes to tragick; foul distrust, and breach
Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt,
And disobedience: on the part of Heaven
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke, and judgement given, 10
That brought into this world a world of woe,
Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery
Death's harbinger: Sad task! yet argument
Not less but more heroick than the wrath
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued
Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespous'd;
Or Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long
Perplexed the Greek, and Cytherea's son:
If answerable style I can obtain 20
Of my celestial patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,
And dictates to me slumbering; or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse:
Since first this subject for heroick song

Pleas'd me long choosing, and beginning late;
 Not sedulous by nature to indite
 Wars, hitherto the only argument
 Heroick deem'd chief mastery to dissect
 With long and tedious havock fabled knights 30
 In battles feign'd; the better fortitude
 Of patience and heroick martyrdom
 Unsung; or to describe races and games,
 Or tilting furniture, imblazon'd shields,
 Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds,
 Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
 At joust and tournament; then marshall'd feast
 Serv'd up in hall with sewers and seneshals;
 The skill of artifice or office mean,
 Not that which justly gives heroick name 40
 To person, or to poem. Me, of these
 Nor skill'd nor studious, higher argument
 Remains; sufficient of itself to raise
 That name, unless an age too late, or cold
 Climate, or years, damp my intended wing
 Depress'd; and much they may, if all be mine,
 Not hers, who brings it nightly to my ear.

The sun was sunk, and after him the star
 Of Hesperus, whose office is to bring 50
 Twilight upon the earth, short arbiter
 'Twixt day and night, and now from end to end
 Night's hemisphere had veil'd the horizon round:
 When satan, who late fled before the threats
 Of Gabriel out of Eden, now improv'd
 In meditated fraud and malice, bent
 On Man's destruction, maugre what might hap
 Of heavier on himself, fearless returned
 By night he fled, and at midnight returned
 From compassing the earth; cautious of day, 60
 Since Uriel, regent of the sun, descried
 His entrance, and forewarned the Cherubim

That kept their watch; thence full of anguish
driven,
The space of seven continued nights he rode
With darkness; thrice the equinoctial line
He circled; four times crossed the car of night
From pole to pole, traversing each colure;
On the eighth returned; and, on the coast averse
From entrance or Cherubick watch, by stealth
Found unsuspected way. There was a place, 70
Now not, though sin, not time, first wrought the
change,
Where Tigris, at the foot of Paradise,
Into a gulf shot under ground, till part
Rose up a fountain by the tree of life:
In with the river sunk, and with it rose
Satan, involved in rising mist; then sought
Where to lie hid; sea he had searched, and land,
From Eden over Pontus and the pool
Maeotis, up beyond the river Ob;
Downward as far antarctick; and in length, 80
West from Orontes to the ocean barred
At Darien; thence to the land where flows
Ganges and Indus: Thus the orb he roamed
With narrow search; and with inspection deep
Considered every creature, which of all
Most opportune might serve his wiles; and found
The Serpent subtlest beast of all the field.

Him after long debate, irresolute
Of thoughts revolved, his final sentence chose 90
Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud, in whom
To enter, and his dark suggestions hide
From sharpest sight: for, in the wily snake
Whatever sleights, none would suspicious mark,
As from his wit and native subtlety
Proceeding; which, in other beasts observed,
Doubt might beget of diabolick power

Active within, beyond the sense of brute.

Thus he resolved, but first from inward grief 100
His bursting passion into plaints thus poured.

More justly, seat worthier of Gods, as built
With second thoughts, reforming what was old!
O Earth, how like to Heaven, if not preferred
For what God, after better, worse would build?
Terrestrial Heaven, danced round by other Heav-
ens

That shine, yet bear their bright officious lamps,
Light above light, for thee alone, as seems,
In thee concentrating all their precious beams 110
Of sacred influence! As God in Heaven
Is center, yet extends to all; so thou,
Centring, receivest from all those orbs: in thee,
Not in themselves, all their known virtue appears
Productive in herb, plant, and nobler birth
Of creatures animate with gradual life
Of growth, sense, reason, all summed up in Man.

With what delight could I have walked thee round,
If I could joy in aught, sweet interchange 120
Of hill, and valley, rivers, woods, and plains,
Now land, now sea and shores with forest
crowned,

Rocks, dens, and caves! But I in none of these
Find place or refuge; and the more I see
Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
Torment within me, as from the hateful siege
Of contraries: all good to me becomes
Bane, and in Heaven much worse would be my
state.

But neither here seek I, no nor in Heaven 130
To dwell, unless by mastering Heaven's Supreme;
Nor hope to be myself less miserable
By what I seek, but others to make such

As I, though thereby worse to me redound:
For only in destroying I find ease
To my relentless thoughts; and, him destroyed,
Or won to what may work his utter loss,
For whom all this was made, all this will soon
Follow, as to him linked in weal or woe;
In woe then; that destruction wide may range: 140
To me shall be the glory sole among
The infernal Powers, in one day to have marred
What he, Almighty styled, six nights and days
Continued making; and who knows how long
Before had been contriving? though perhaps
Not longer than since I, in one night, freed
From servitude inglorious well nigh half
The angelick name, and thinner left the throng
Of his adorers: He, to be avenged,
And to repair his numbers thus impaired, 150
Whether such virtue spent of old now failed
More Angels to create, if they at least
Are his created, or, to spite us more,
Determined to advance into our room
A creature formed of earth, and him endow,
Exalted from so base original,
With heavenly spoils, our spoils: What he decreed,
He effected; Man he made, and for him built
Magnificent this world, and earth his seat,
Him lord pronounced; and, O indignity! 160
Subjected to his service angel-wings,
And flaming ministers to watch and tend
Their earthly charge: Of these the vigilance
I dread; and, to elude, thus wrapt in mist
Of midnight vapour glide obscure, and pry
In every bush and brake, where hap may find
The serpent sleeping; in whose mazy folds
To hide me, and the dark intent I bring.
O foul descent! that I, who erst contended 170

With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
Into a beast; and, mixed with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
That to the highth of Deity aspired!
But what will not ambition and revenge
Descend to? Who aspires, must down as low
As high he soared; obnoxious, first or last,
To basest things. Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long, back on itself recoils:
Let it; I reck not, so it light well aimed, 180
Since higher I fall short, on him who next
Provokes my envy, this new favourite
Of Heaven, this man of clay, son of despite,
Whom, us the more to spite, his Maker raised
From dust: Spite then with spite is best repaid.

So saying, through each thicket dank or dry,
Like a black mist low-creeping, he held on
His midnight-search, where soonest he might find
The serpent; him fast-sleeping soon he found 190
In labyrinth of many a round self-rolled,
His head the midst, well stored with subtile wiles:
Not yet in horrid shade or dismal den,
Nor nocent yet; but, on the grassy herb,
Fearless unfeared he slept: in at his mouth
The Devil entered; and his brutal sense,
In heart or head, possessing, soon inspired
With act intelligential; but his sleep
Disturbed not, waiting close the approach of morn.
200

Now, when as sacred light began to dawn
In Eden on the humid flowers, that breathed
Their morning incense, when all things, that
 breathe,
From the Earth's great altar send up silent praise
To the Creator, and his nostrils fill
With grateful smell, forth came the human pair,

And joined their vocal worship to the quire
 Of creatures wanting voice; that done, partake
 The season prime for sweetest scents and airs:
 Then commune, how that day they best may ply
 210

Their growing work: for much their work out-
 grew
 The hands' dispatch of two gardening so wide,
 And Eve first to her husband thus began.

Adam, well may we labour still to dress
 This garden, still to tend plant, herb, and flower,
 Our pleasant task enjoined; but, till more hands
 Aid us, the work under our labour grows,
 Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
 Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind, 220
 One night or two with wanton growth derides
 Tending to wild. Thou therefore now advise,
 Or bear what to my mind first thoughts present:
 Let us divide our labours; thou, where choice
 Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
 The woodbine round this arbour, or direct
 The clasping ivy where to climb; while I,
 In yonder spring of roses intermixed
 With myrtle, find what to redress till noon:
 For, while so near each other thus all day 230
 Our task we choose, what wonder if so near
 Looks intervene and smiles, or object new
 Casual discourse draw on; which intermits
 Our day's work, brought to little, though begun
 Early, and the hour of supper comes unearned?
 To whom mild answer Adam thus returned.

Sole Eve, associate sole, to me beyond
 Compare above all living creatures dear!
 Well hast thou motioned, well thy thoughts em-
 ployed, 240

How we might best fulfil the work which here
 God hath assigned us; nor of me shalt pass
 Unpraised: for nothing lovelier can be found
 In woman, than to study household good,
 And good works in her husband to promote.

Yet not so strictly hath our Lord imposed
 Labour, as to debar us when we need
 Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,
 Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse 250
 Of looks and smiles; for smiles from reason flow,
 To brute denied, and are of love the food;
 Love, not the lowest end of human life.

For not to irksome toil, but to delight,
 He made us, and delight to reason joined.

These paths and bowers doubt not but our joint
 hands

Will keep from wilderness with ease, as wide
 As we need walk, till younger hands ere long 260
 Assist us; But, if much converse perhaps
 Thee satiate, to short absence I could yield:
 For solitude sometimes is best society,
 And short retirement urges sweet return.

But other doubt possesses me, lest harm
 Befall thee severed from me; for thou knowest
 What hath been warned us, what malicious foe
 Envyng our happiness, and of his own
 Despairing, seeks to work us woe and shame 270
 By sly assault; and somewhere nigh at hand
 Watches, no doubt, with greedy hope to find
 His wish and best advantage, us asunder;
 Hopeless to circumvent us joined, where each
 To other speedy aid might lend at need:
 Whether his first design be to withdraw
 Our fealty from God, or to disturb
 Conjugal love, than which perhaps no bliss

Enjoyed by us excites his envy more;
 Or this, or worse, leave not the faithful side 280
 That gave thee being, still shades thee, and pro-
 tects.

The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
 Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,
 Who guards her, or with her the worst endures.

To whom the virgin majesty of Eve,
 As one who loves, and some unkindness meets,
 With sweet austere composure thus replied. 290

Offspring of Heaven and Earth, and all Earth's
 Lord!

That such an enemy we have, who seeks
 Our ruin, both by thee informed I learn,
 And from the parting Angel over-heard,
 As in a shady nook I stood behind,
 Just then returned at shut of evening flowers.

But, that thou shouldst my firmness therefore
 doubt

To God or thee, because we have a foe
 May tempt it, I expected not to hear. 300

His violence thou fearest not, being such
 As we, not capable of death or pain,
 Can either not receive, or can repel.

His fraud is then thy fear; which plain infers
 Thy equal fear, that my firm faith and love
 Can by his fraud be shaken or seduced;
 Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy
 breast,

Adam, mis-thought of her to thee so dear? 310
 To whom with healing words Adam replied.

Daughter of God and Man, immortal Eve!
 For such thou art; from sin and blame entire:

Not diffident of thee do I dissuade
 Thy absence from my sight, but to avoid
 The attempt itself, intended by our foe.
 For he who tempts, though in vain, at least as-
 perses
 The tempted with dishonour foul; supposed 320
 Not incorruptible of faith, not proof
 Against temptation: Thou thyself with scorn
 And anger wouldst resent the offered wrong,
 Though ineffectual found: misdeem not then,
 If such affront I labour to avert
 From thee alone, which on us both at once
 The enemy, though bold, will hardly dare;
 Or daring, first on me the assault shall light.
 Nor thou his malice and false guile contemn; 330
 Subtle he needs must be, who could seduce
 Angels; nor think superfluous other's aid.
 I, from the influence of thy looks, receive
 Access in every virtue; in thy sight
 More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were
 Of outward strength; while shame, thou looking
 on,
 Shame to be overcome or over-reached,
 Would utmost vigour raise, and raised unite. 340
 Why shouldst not thou like sense within thee feel
 When I am present, and thy trial choose
 With me, best witness of thy virtue tried?
 So spake domestick Adam in his care
 And matrimonial love; but Eve, who thought
 Less attributed to her faith sincere,
 Thus her reply with accent sweet renewed.
 If this be our condition, thus to dwell
 In narrow circuit straitened by a foe, 350
 Subtle or violent, we not endued

Single with like defence, wherever met;
 How are we happy, still in fear of harm?
 But harm precedes not sin: only our foe,
 Tempting, affronts us with his foul esteem
 Of our integrity: his foul esteem
 Sticks no dishonour on our front, but turns
 Foul on himself; then wherefore shunned or feared
 By us? who rather double honour gain
 From his surmise proved false; find peace within,
 360

Favour from Heaven, our witness, from the event.

And what is faith, love, virtue, unassayed
 Alone, without exteriour help sustained?
 Let us not then suspect our happy state
 Left so imperfect by the Maker wise,
 As not secure to single or combined.

Frail is our happiness, if this be so,
 And Eden were no Eden, thus exposed. 370

To whom thus Adam fervently replied.

O Woman, best are all things as the will
 Of God ordained them: His creating hand
 Nothing imperfect or deficient left
 Of all that he created, much less Man,
 Or aught that might his happy state secure,
 Secure from outward force; within himself
 The danger lies, yet lies within his power: 380
 Against his will he can receive no harm.

But God left free the will; for what obeys
 Reason, is free; and Reason he made right,
 But bid her well be ware, and still erect;
 Lest, by some fair-appearing good surprised,
 She dictate false; and mis-inform the will
 To do what God expressly hath forbid.

Not then mistrust, but tender love, enjoins, 390

That I should mind thee oft; and mind thou me.

Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve;
 Since Reason not impossibly may meet
 Some specious object by the foe suborned,
 And fall into deception unaware,
 Not keeping strictest watch, as she was warned.

Seek not temptation then, which to avoid
 Were better, and most likely if from me 400
 Thou sever not: Trial will come unsought.

Wouldst thou approve thy constancy, approve
 First thy obedience; the other who can know,
 Not seeing thee attempted, who attest?
 But, if thou think, trial unsought may find
 Us both securer than thus warned thou seemest,
 Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more;
 Go in thy native innocence, rely
 On what thou hast of virtue; summon all! 410
 For God towards thee hath done his part, do thine.

So spake the patriarch of mankind; but Eve
 Persisted; yet submiss, though last, replied.

With thy permission then, and thus forewarned
 Chiefly by what thy own last reasoning words
 Touched only; that our trial, when least sought,
 May find us both perhaps far less prepared,
 The willinger I go, nor much expect 420
 A foe so proud will first the weaker seek;
 So bent, the more shall shame him his repulse.

Thus saying, from her husband's hand her hand
 Soft she withdrew; and, like a Wood-Nymph light,
 Oread or Dryad, or of Delia's train,
 Betook her to the groves; but Delia's self
 In gait surpassed, and Goddess-like deport,
 Though not as she with bow and quiver armed,
 But with such gardening tools as Art yet rude, 430

Guiltless of fire, had formed, or Angels brought.

To Pales, or Pomona, thus adorned,
 Liket she seemed, Pomona when she fled
 Vertumnus, or to Ceres in her prime,
 Yet virgin of Proserpina from Jove.

Her long with ardent look his eye pursued
 Delighted, but desiring more her stay.

440

Oft he to her his charge of quick return
 Repeated; she to him as oft engaged
 To be returned by noon amid the bower,
 And all things in best order to invite
 Noontide repast, or afternoon's repose.

O much deceived, much failing, hapless Eve,
 Of thy presumed return! event perverse!
 Thou never from that hour in Paradise
 Foundst either sweet repast, or sound repose; 450
 Such ambush, hid among sweet flowers and
 shades,

Waited with hellish rancour imminent
 To intercept thy way, or send thee back
 Despoiled of innocence, of faith, of bliss!
 For now, and since first break of dawn, the Fiend,
 Mere serpent in appearance, forth was come;
 And on his quest, where likeliest he might find
 The only two of mankind, but in them
 The whole included race, his purposed prey.

460

In bower and field he sought, where any tuft
 Of grove or garden-plot more pleasant lay,
 Their tendance, or plantation for delight;
 By fountain or by shady rivulet
 He sought them both, but wished his hap might
 find
 Eve separate; he wished, but not with hope

Of what so seldom chanced; when to his wish,
 Beyond his hope, Eve separate he spies,
 Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood,
 Half spied, so thick the roses blushing round 470
 About her glowed, oft stooping to support
 Each flower of slender stalk, whose head, though
 gay

Carnation, purple, azure, or specked with gold,
 Hung drooping unsustained; them she upstays
 Gently with myrtle band, mindless the while
 Herself, though fairest unsupported flower,
 From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh.

Nearer he drew, and many a walk traversed
 Of stateliest covert, cedar, pine, or palm; 480
 Then voluble and bold, now hid, now seen,
 Among thick-woven arborets, and flowers
 Imbordered on each bank, the hand of Eve:
 Spot more delicious than those gardens feigned
 Or of revived Adonis, or renowned
 Alcinous, host of old Laertes' son;
 Or that, not mystick, where the sapient king
 Held dalliance with his fair Egyptian spouse.

Much he the place admired, the person more. 490

As one who long in populous city pent,
 Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
 Forth issuing on a summer's morn, to breathe
 Among the pleasant villages and farms
 Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight;
 The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
 Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound;
 If chance, with nymph-like step, fair virgin pass,
 What pleasing seemed, for her now pleases more;
 500

She most, and in her look sums all delight:
 Such pleasure took the Serpent to behold

This flowery plat, the sweet recess of Eve
 Thus early, thus alone: Her heavenly form
 Angelick, but more soft, and feminine,
 Her graceful innocence, her every air
 Of gesture, or least action, overawed
 His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved
 His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
 That space the Evil-one abstracted stood 510
 From his own evil, and for the time remained
 Stupidly good; of enmity disarmed,
 Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge:
 But the hot Hell that always in him burns,
 Though in mid Heaven, soon ended his delight,
 And tortures him now more, the more he sees
 Of pleasure, not for him ordained: then soon
 Fierce hate he recollects, and all his thoughts
 Of mischief, gratulating, thus excites.

520
 Thoughts, whither have ye led me! with what
 sweet
 Compulsion thus transported, to forget
 What hither brought us! hate, not love; nor hope
 Of Paradise for Hell, hope here to taste
 Of pleasure; but all pleasure to destroy,
 Save what is in destroying; other joy
 To me is lost. Then, let me not let pass
 Occasion which now smiles; behold alone
 The woman, opportune to all attempts,
 Her husband, for I view far round, not nigh, 530
 Whose higher intellectual more I shun,
 And strength, of courage haughty, and of limb
 Heroick built, though of terrestrial mould;
 Foe not formidable! exempt from wound,
 I not; so much hath Hell debased, and pain
 Enfeebled me, to what I was in Heaven.

She fair, divinely fair, fit love for Gods!

Not terrible, though terrour be in love
 And beauty, not approached by stronger hate, 540
 Hate stronger, under show of love well feigned;
 The way which to her ruin now I tend.

So spake the enemy of mankind, enclosed
 In serpent, inmate bad! and toward Eve
 Addressed his way: not with indented wave,
 Prone on the ground, as since; but on his rear,
 Circular base of rising folds, that towered
 Fold above fold, a surging maze! his head
 Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes; 550
 With burnished neck of verdant gold, erect
 Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass
 Floated redundant: pleasing was his shape
 And lovely; never since of serpent-kind
 Lovelier, not those that in Illyria changed,
 Hermione and Cadmus, or the god
 In Epidaurus; nor to which transformed
 Ammonian Jove, or Capitoline, was seen;
 He with Olympias; this with her who bore
 Scipio, the highth of Rome. With tract oblique 560
 At first, as one who sought access, but feared
 To interrupt, side-long he works his way.

As when a ship, by skilful steersmen wrought
 Nigh river's mouth or foreland, where the wind
 Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail:
 So varied he, and of his tortuous train
 Curled many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,
 To lure her eye; she, busied, heard the sound 570
 Of rusling leaves, but minded not, as used
 To such disport before her through the field,
 From every beast; more duteous at her call,
 Than at Circean call the herd disguised.

He, bolder now, uncalled before her stood,
 But as in gaze admiring: oft he bowed

His turret crest, and sleek enamelled neck,
Fawning; and licked the ground whereon she trod.

His gentle dumb expression turned at length 580
The eye of Eve to mark his play; he, glad
Of her attention gained, with serpent-tongue
Organick, or impulse of vocal air,
His fraudulent temptation thus began.

Wonder not, sovran Mistress, if perhaps
Thou canst, who art sole wonder! much less arm
Thy looks, the Heaven of mildness, with disdain,
Displeas'd that I approach thee thus, and gaze
Insatiate; I thus single; nor have feared 590
Thy awful brow, more awful thus retired.

Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,
Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore
With ravishment beheld! there best beheld,
Where universally admired; but here
In this enclosure wild, these beasts among,
Beholders rude, and shallow to discern
Half what in thee is fair, one man except, 600
Who sees thee? and what is one? who should be
seen

A Goddess among Gods, adored and served
By Angels numberless, thy daily train.

So glozed the Tempter, and his proem tuned:
Into the heart of Eve his words made way,
Though at the voice much marvelling; at length,
Not unamazed, she thus in answer spake.

What may this mean? language of man pro-
nounced 610

By tongue of brute, and human sense expressed?
The first, at least, of these I thought denied
To beasts; whom God, on their creation-day,
Created mute to all articulate sound:

The latter I demur; for in their looks
 Much reason, and in their actions, oft appears.
 Thee, Serpent, subtlest beast of all the field
 I knew, but not with human voice endued;
 Redouble then this miracle, and say, 620
 How camest thou speakable of mute, and how
 To me so friendly grown above the rest
 Of brutal kind, that daily are in sight?
 Say, for such wonder claims attention due.

To whom the guileful Tempter thus replied.
 Empress of this fair world, resplendent Eve!
 Easy to me it is to tell thee all
 What thou commandest; and right thou shouldst
 be obeyed: 630

I was at first as other beasts that graze
 The trodden herb, of abject thoughts and low,
 As was my food; nor aught but food discerned
 Or sex, and apprehended nothing high:
 Till, on a day roving the field, I chanced
 A goodly tree far distant to behold
 Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mixed,
 Ruddy and gold: I nearer drew to gaze;
 When from the boughs a savoury odour blown,
 Grateful to appetite, more pleased my sense 640
 Than smell of sweetest fennel, or the teats
 Of ewe or goat dropping with milk at even,
 Unsucked of lamb or kid, that tend their play.

To satisfy the sharp desire I had
 Of tasting those fair apples, I resolved
 Not to defer; hunger and thirst at once,
 Powerful persuaders, quickened at the scent
 Of that alluring fruit, urged me so keen. 650

About the mossy trunk I wound me soon;
 For, high from ground, the branches would require

Thy utmost reach or Adam's: Round the tree
 All other beasts that saw, with like desire
 Longing and envying stood, but could not reach.

Amid the tree now got, where plenty hung
 Tempting so nigh, to pluck and eat my fill
 I spared not; for, such pleasure till that hour,
 At feed or fountain, never had I found. 660

Sated at length, ere long I might perceive
 Strange alteration in me, to degree
 Of reason in my inward powers; and speech
 Wanted not long; though to this shape retained.

Thenceforth to speculations high or deep
 I turned my thoughts, and with capacious mind
 Considered all things visible in Heaven,
 Or Earth, or Middle; all things fair and good: 670
 But all that fair and good in thy divine
 Semblance, and in thy beauty's heavenly ray,
 United I beheld; no fair to thine
 Equivalent or second! which compelled
 Me thus, though importune perhaps, to come
 And gaze, and worship thee of right declared
 Sovran of creatures, universal Dame!
 So talked the spirited sly Snake; and Eve,
 Yet more amazed, unwary thus replied.

680

Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt
 The virtue of that fruit, in thee first proved:
 But say, where grows the tree? from hence how
 far?

For many are the trees of God that grow
 In Paradise, and various, yet unknown
 To us; in such abundance lies our choice,
 As leaves a greater store of fruit untouched,
 Still hanging incorruptible, till men
 Grow up to their provision, and more hands

Help to disburden Nature of her birth. 690
 To whom the wily Adder, blithe and glad.
 Empress, the way is ready, and not long;
 Beyond a row of myrtles, on a flat,
 Fast by a fountain, one small thicket past
 Of blowing myrrh and balm: if thou accept
 My conduct, I can bring thee thither soon
 Lead then, said Eve. He, leading, swiftly rolled
 In tangles, and made intricate seem straight, 700
 To mischief swift. Hope elevates, and joy
 Brightens his crest; as when a wandering fire,
 Compact of unctuous vapour, which the night
 Condenses, and the cold environs round,
 Kindled through agitation to a flame,
 Which oft, they say, some evil Spirit attends,
 Hovering and blazing with delusive light,
 Misleads the amazed night-wanderer from his way
 To bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool;
 There swallowed up and lost, from succour far.710
 So glistered the dire Snake, and into fraud
 Led Eve, our credulous mother, to the tree
 Of prohibition, root of all our woe;
 Which when she saw, thus to her guide she spake.
 Serpent, we might have spared our coming hither,
 Fruitless to me, though fruit be here to excess,
 The credit of whose virtue rest with thee;
 Wonderous indeed, if cause of such effects. 720
 But of this tree we may not taste nor touch;
 God so commanded, and left that command
 Sole daughter of his voice; the rest, we live
 Law to ourselves; our reason is our law.
 To whom the Tempter guilefully replied.
 Indeed! hath God then said that of the fruit
 Of all these garden-trees ye shall not eat, 730

Yet Lords declared of all in earth or air?
 To whom thus Eve, yet sinless. Of the fruit
 Of each tree in the garden we may eat;
 But of the fruit of this fair tree amidst
 The garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat
 Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

She scarce had said, though brief, when now more
 bold

The Tempter, but with show of zeal and love
 To Man, and indignation at his wrong, 740
 New part puts on; and, as to passion moved,
 Fluctuates disturbed, yet comely and in act
 Raised, as of some great matter to begin.

As when of old some orator renowned,
 In Athens or free Rome, where eloquence
 Flourished, since mute! to some great cause ad-
 dressed,

Stood in himself collected; while each part,
 Motion, each act, won audience ere the tongue;
 Sometimes in highth began, as no delay 750
 Of preface brooking, through his zeal of right:
 So standing, moving, or to highth up grown,
 The Tempter, all impassioned, thus began.

O sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving Plant,
 Mother of science! now I feel thy power
 Within me clear; not only to discern
 Things in their causes, but to trace the ways
 Of highest agents, deemed however wise. 760

Queen of this universe! do not believe
 Those rigid threats of death: ye shall not die:
 How should you? by the fruit? it gives you life
 To knowledge; by the threatener? look on me,
 Me, who have touched and tasted; yet both live,
 And life more perfect have attained than Fate

Meant me, by venturing higher than my lot.
 Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast
 Is open? or will God incense his ire 770
 For such a petty trespass? and not praise
 Rather your dauntless virtue, whom the pain
 Of death denounced, whatever thing death be,
 Deterred not from achieving what might lead
 To happier life, knowledge of good and evil;
 Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
 Be real, why not known, since easier shunned?
 God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
 Not just, not God; not feared then, nor obeyed:
 Your fear itself of death removes the fear. 780

Why then was this forbid? Why, but to awe;
 Why, but to keep ye low and ignorant,
 His worshippers? He knows that in the day
 Ye eat thereof, your eyes that seem so clear,
 Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
 Opened and cleared, and ye shall be as Gods,
 Knowing both good and evil, as they know.

That ye shall be as Gods, since I as Man, 790
 Internal Man, is but proportion meet;
 I, of brute, human; ye, of human, Gods.

So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off
 Human, to put on Gods; death to be wished,
 Though threatened, which no worse than this can
 bring.

And what are Gods, that Man may not become
 As they, participating God-like food?
 The Gods are first, and that advantage use 800
 On our belief, that all from them proceeds:
 I question it; for this fair earth I see,
 Warmed by the sun, producing every kind;
 Them, nothing: if they all things, who enclosed
 Knowledge of good and evil in this tree,

That whoso eats thereof, forthwith attains
 Wisdom without their leave? and wherein lies
 The offence, that Man should thus attain to know?
 What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree
 Impart against his will, if all be his? 810
 Or is it envy? and can envy dwell
 In heavenly breasts? These, these, and many more
 Causes import your need of this fair fruit.

Goddess humane, reach then, and freely taste!
 He ended; and his words, replete with guile,
 Into her heart too easy entrance won:
 Fixed on the fruit she gazed, which to behold
 Might tempt alone; and in her ears the sound
 Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregned 820
 With reason, to her seeming, and with truth:
 Mean while the hour of noon drew on, and waked
 An eager appetite, raised by the smell
 So savoury of that fruit, which with desire,
 Inclinable now grown to touch or taste,
 Solicited her longing eye; yet first
 Pausing a while, thus to herself she mused.

Great are thy virtues, doubtless, best of fruits,
 Though kept from man, and worthy to be admired;
 830
 Whose taste, too long forborn, at first assay
 Gave elocution to the mute, and taught
 The tongue not made for speech to speak thy
 praise:
 Thy praise he also, who forbids thy use,
 Conceals not from us, naming thee the tree
 Of knowledge, knowledge both of good and evil;
 Forbids us then to taste! but his forbidding
 Commends thee more, while it infers the good
 By thee communicated, and our want:
 For good unknown sure is not had; or, had 840

And yet unknown, is as not had at all.

In plain then, what forbids he but to know,
 Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
 Such prohibitions bind not. But, if death
 Bind us with after-bands, what profits then
 Our inward freedom? In the day we eat
 Of this fair fruit, our doom is, we shall die!
 How dies the Serpent? he hath eaten and lives,
 And knows, and speaks, and reasons, and dis-
 cerns, 850

Irrational till then. For us alone
 Was death invented? or to us denied
 This intellectual food, for beasts reserved?
 For beasts it seems: yet that one beast which first
 Hath tasted envies not, but brings with joy
 The good befallen him, author unsuspect,
 Friendly to man, far from deceit or guile.

What fear I then? rather, what know to fear
 Under this ignorance of good and evil, 860
 Of God or death, of law or penalty?
 Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,
 Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,
 Of virtue to make wise: What hinders then
 To reach, and feed at once both body and mind?
 So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
 Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat!
 Earth felt the wound; and Nature from her seat,
 Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
 That all was lost. Back to the thicket slunk 870
 The guilty Serpent; and well might; for Eve,
 Intent now wholly on her taste, nought else
 Regarded; such delight till then, as seemed,
 In fruit she never tasted, whether true
 Or fancied so, through expectation high
 Of knowledge; not was Godhead from her

thought.

Greedily she ingorged without restraint,
 And knew not eating death: Sate at length,
 And hightened as with wine, jocund and boon,880
 Thus to herself she pleasingly began.

O sovran, virtuous, precious of all trees
 In Paradise! of operation blest
 To sapience, hitherto obscured, infamed.

And thy fair fruit let hang, as to no end
 Created; but henceforth my early care,
 Not without song, each morning, and due praise,
 Shall tend thee, and the fertile burden ease 890
 Of thy full branches offered free to all;
 Till, dieted by thee, I grow mature
 In knowledge, as the Gods, who all things know;
 Though others envy what they cannot give:
 For, had the gift been theirs, it had not here
 Thus grown. Experience, next, to thee I owe,
 Best guide; not following thee, I had remained
 In ignorance; thou openest wisdom's way,
 And givest access, though secret she retire.

900

And I perhaps am secret: Heaven is high,
 High, and remote to see from thence distinct
 Each thing on Earth; and other care perhaps
 May have diverted from continual watch
 Our great Forbidder, safe with all his spies
 About him. But to Adam in what sort
 Shall I appear? shall I to him make known
 As yet my change, and give him to partake
 Full happiness with me, or rather not,
 But keeps the odds of knowledge in my power910
 Without copartner? so to add what wants
 In female sex, the more to draw his love,
 And render me more equal; and perhaps,

A thing not undesirable, sometime
 Superiour; for, inferiour, who is free
 This may be well: But what if God have seen,
 And death ensue? then I shall be no more!
 And Adam, wedded to another Eve,
 Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
 A death to think! Confirmed then I resolve, 920
 Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe:
 So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
 I could endure, without him live no life.

So saying, from the tree her step she turned;
 But first low reverence done, as to the Power
 That dwelt within, whose presence had infused
 Into the plant sciential sap, derived
 From nectar, drink of Gods. Adam the while,
 Waiting desirous her return, had wove 930
 Of choicest flowers a garland, to adorn
 Her tresses, and her rural labours crown;
 As reapers oft are wont their harvest-queen.

Great joy he promised to his thoughts, and new
 Solace in her return, so long delayed:
 Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill,
 Misgave him; he the faltering measure felt;
 And forth to meet her went, the way she took
 That morn when first they parted: by the tree 940
 Of knowledge he must pass; there he her met,
 Scarce from the tree returning; in her hand
 A bough of fairest fruit, that downy smiled,
 New gathered, and ambrosial smell diffused.

To him she hasted; in her face excuse
 Came prologue, and apology too prompt;
 Which, with bland words at will, she thus ad-
 dressed.

Hast thou not wondered, Adam, at my stay? 950
 Thee I have missed, and thought it long, deprived

Thy presence; agony of love till now
Not felt, nor shall be twice; for never more
Mean I to try, what rash untried I sought,
The pain of absence from thy sight. But strange
Hath been the cause, and wonderful to hear:
This tree is not, as we are told, a tree
Of danger tasted, nor to evil unknown
Opening the way, but of divine effect
To open eyes, and make them Gods who taste; 960
And hath been tasted such: The serpent wise,
Or not restrained as we, or not obeying,
Hath eaten of the fruit; and is become,
Not dead, as we are threatened, but thenceforth
Endued with human voice and human sense,
Reasoning to admiration; and with me
Persuasively hath so prevailed, that I
Have also tasted, and have also found
The effects to correspond; opener mine eyes, 970
Dim erst, dilated spirits, ampler heart,
And growing up to Godhead; which for thee
Chiefly I sought, without thee can despise.

For bliss, as thou hast part, to me is bliss;
Tedious, unshared with thee, and odious soon.

Thou therefore also taste, that equal lot
May join us, equal joy, as equal love;
Lest, thou not tasting, different degree
Disjoin us, and I then too late renounce 980
Deity for thee, when Fate will not permit.

Thus Eve with countenance blithe her story told;
But in her cheek distemper flushing glowed.

On the other side Adam, soon as he heard
The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed,
Astonied stood and blank, while horror chill
Ran through his veins, and all his joints relaxed;
From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve

990

Down dropt, and all the faded roses shed:
Speechless he stood and pale, till thus at length
First to himself he inward silence broke.

O fairest of Creation, last and best
Of all God's works, Creature in whom excelled
Whatever can to sight or thought be formed,
Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet!
How art thou lost! how on a sudden lost,
Defaced, deflowered, and now to death devote!

1000

Rather, how hast thou yielded to transgress
The strict forbiddance, how to violate
The sacred fruit forbidden! Some cursed fraud
Of enemy hath beguiled thee, yet unknown,
And me with thee hath ruined; for with thee
Certain my resolution is to die:
How can I live without thee! how forego
Thy sweet converse, and love so dearly joined,
To live again in these wild woods forlorn!
Should God create another Eve, and I 1010
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart: no, no! I feel
The link of Nature draw me: flesh of flesh,
Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.

So having said, as one from sad dismay
Recomforted, and after thoughts disturbed
Submitting to what seemed remediless,
Thus in calm mood his words to Eve he turned.

1020

Bold deed thou hast presumed, adventurous Eve,
And peril great provoked, who thus hast dared,
Had it been only coveting to eye
That sacred fruit, sacred to abstinence,

Much more to taste it under ban to touch.

But past who can recall, or done undo?
 Not God Omnipotent, nor Fate; yet so
 Perhaps thou shalt not die, perhaps the fact 1030
 Is not so heinous now, foretasted fruit,
 Profaned first by the serpent, by him first
 Made common, and unhallowed, ere our taste;
 Nor yet on him found deadly; yet he lives;
 Lives, as thou saidst, and gains to live, as Man,
 Higher degree of life; inducement strong
 To us, as likely tasting to attain
 Proportional ascent; which cannot be
 But to be Gods, or Angels, demi-Gods.

1040

Nor can I think that God, Creator wise,
 Though threatening, will in earnest so destroy
 Us his prime creatures, dignified so high,
 Set over all his works; which in our fall,
 For us created, needs with us must fail,
 Dependant made; so God shall uncreate,
 Be frustrate, do, undo, and labour lose;
 Not well conceived of God, who, though his power
 Creation could repeat, yet would be loth
 Us to abolish, lest the Adversary 1050
 Triumph, and say; "Fickle their state whom God
 Most favours; who can please him long? Me first
 He ruined, now Mankind; whom will he next?"
 Matter of scorn, not to be given the Foe.

However I with thee have fixed my lot,
 Certain to undergo like doom: If death
 Consort with thee, death is to me as life;
 So forcible within my heart I feel
 The bond of Nature draw me to my own; 1060
 My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
 Our state cannot be severed; we are one,

One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.

So Adam; and thus Eve to him replied.

O glorious trial of exceeding love,
 Illustrious evidence, example high!
 Engaging me to emulate; but, short
 Of thy perfection, how shall I attain, 1070
 Adam, from whose dear side I boast me sprung,
 And gladly of our union hear thee speak,
 One heart, one soul in both; whereof good proof
 This day affords, declaring thee resolved,
 Rather than death, or aught than death more
 dread,

Shall separate us, linked in love so dear,
 To undergo with me one guilt, one crime,
 If any be, of tasting this fair fruit;
 Whose virtue for of good still good proceeds,
 Direct, or by occasion, hath presented 1080
 This happy trial of thy love, which else
 So eminently never had been known?
 Were it I thought death menaced would ensue
 This my attempt, I would sustain alone
 The worst, and not persuade thee, rather die
 Deserted, than oblige thee with a fact
 Pernicious to thy peace; chiefly assured
 Remarkably so late of thy so true,
 So faithful, love unequalled: but I feel
 Far otherwise the event; not death, but life 1090
 Augmented, opened eyes, new hopes, new joys,
 Taste so divine, that what of sweet before
 Hath touched my sense, flat seems to this, and
 harsh.

On my experience, Adam, freely taste,
 And fear of death deliver to the winds.

So saying, she embraced him, and for joy
 Tenderly wept; much won, that he his love

Had so ennobled, as of choice to incur 1100
 Divine displeasure for her sake, or death.

In recompence (for such compliance bad
 Such recompence best merits) from the bough
 She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
 With liberal hand: he scrupled not to eat,
 Against his better knowledge; not deceived,
 But fondly overcome with female charm.

Earth trembled from her entrails, as again 1110
 In pangs; and Nature gave a second groan;
 Sky loured; and, muttering thunder, some sad
 drops

Wept at completing of the mortal sin
 Original: while Adam took no thought,
 Eating his fill; nor Eve to iterate
 Her former trespass feared, the more to sooth
 Him with her loved society; that now,
 As with new wine intoxicated both,
 They swim in mirth, and fancy that they feel
 Divinity within them breeding wings, 1120
 Wherewith to scorn the earth: But that false fruit
 Far other operation first displayed,
 Carnal desire inflaming; he on Eve
 Began to cast lascivious eyes; she him
 As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn:
 Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to dalliance move.

Eve, now I see thou art exact of taste,
 And elegant, of sapience no small part;
 Since to each meaning savour we apply, 1130
 And palate call judicious; I the praise
 Yield thee, so well this day thou hast purveyed.

Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstained
 From this delightful fruit, nor known till now
 True relish, tasting; if such pleasure be
 In things to us forbidden, it might be wished,

For this one tree had been forbidden ten.

But come, so well refreshed, now let us play, 1140
 As meet is, after such delicious fare;
 For never did thy beauty, since the day
 I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorned
 With all perfections, so inflame my sense
 With ardour to enjoy thee, fairer now
 Than ever; bounty of this virtuous tree!
 So said he, and forbore not glance or toy
 Of amorous intent; well understood
 Of Eve, whose eye darted contagious fire.

1150

Her hand he seised; and to a shady bank,
 Thick over-head with verdant roof imbowered,
 He led her nothing loth; flowers were the couch,
 Pansies, and violets, and asphodel,
 And hyacinth; Earth's freshest softest lap.

There they their fill of love and love's disport
 Took largely, of their mutual guilt the seal,
 The solace of their sin; till dewy sleep
 Oppressed them, wearied with their amorous play,
 1160

Soon as the force of that fallacious fruit,
 That with exhilarating vapour bland
 About their spirits had played, and inmost powers
 Made err, was now exhaled; and grosser sleep,
 Bred of unkindly fumes, with conscious dreams
 Incumbered, now had left them; up they rose
 As from unrest; and, each the other viewing,
 Soon found their eyes how opened, and their
 minds

How darkened; innocence, that as a veil
 Had shadowed them from knowing ill, was gone;
 1170

Just confidence, and native righteousness,

And honour, from about them, naked left
To guilty Shame; he covered, but his robe
Uncovered more. So rose the Danite strong,
Herculean Samson, from the harlot-lap
Of Philistean Dalilah, and waked
Shorn of his strength. They destitute and bare
Of all their virtue: Silent, and in face
Confounded, long they sat, as stricken mute:
Till Adam, though not less than Eve abashed, 1180
At length gave utterance to these words con-
strained.

O Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear
To that false worm, of whomsoever taught
To counterfeit Man's voice; true in our fall,
False in our promised rising; since our eyes
Opened we find indeed, and find we know
Both good and evil; good lost, and evil got;
Bad fruit of knowledge, if this be to know;
Which leaves us naked thus, of honour void, 1190
Of innocence, of faith, of purity,
Our wonted ornaments now soiled and stained,
And in our faces evident the signs
Of foul concupiscence; whence evil store;
Even shame, the last of evils; of the first
Be sure then.—How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God or Angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? Those heavenly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly with their blaze
Insufferably bright. O! might I here 1200
In solitude live savage; in some glade
Obscured, where highest woods, impenetrable
To star or sun-light, spread their umbrage broad
And brown as evening: Cover me, ye Pines!
Ye Cedars, with innumerable boughs
Hide me, where I may never see them more!—
But let us now, as in bad plight, devise

What best may for the present serve to hide
 The parts of each from other, that seem most
 To shame obnoxious, and unseemliest seen; 1210
 Some tree, whose broad smooth leaves together
 sewed,
 And girded on our loins, may cover round
 Those middle parts; that this new comer, Shame,
 There sit not, and reproach us as unclean.

So counselled he, and both together went
 Into the thickest wood; there soon they chose
 The fig-tree; not that kind for fruit renowned,
 But such as at this day, to Indians known,
 In Malabar or Decan spreads her arms 1220
 Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
 The bended twigs take root, and daughters grow
 About the mother tree, a pillared shade
 High over-arched, and echoing walks between:
 There oft the Indian herdsman, shunning heat,
 Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds
 At loop-holes cut through thickest shade: Those
 leaves
 They gathered, broad as Amazonian targe;
 And, with what skill they had, together sewed,
 To gird their waist; vain covering, if to hide 1230
 Their guilt and dreaded shame! O, how unlike
 To that first naked glory! Such of late
 Columbus found the American, so girt
 With feathered cincture; naked else, and wild
 Among the trees on isles and woody shores.

Thus fenced, and, as they thought, their shame in
 part
 Covered, but not at rest or ease of mind,
 They sat them down to weep; nor only tears
 Rained at their eyes, but high winds worse within
 1240

Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
Mistrust, suspicion, discord; and shook sore
Their inward state of mind, calm region once
And full of peace, now tost and turbulent:
For Understanding ruled not, and the Will
Heard not her lore; both in subjection now
To sensual Appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovran Reason claimed
Superiour sway: From thus distempered breast,
Adam, estranged in look and altered style, 1250
Speech intermitted thus to Eve renewed.

Would thou hadst hearkened to my words, and
staid

With me, as I besought thee, when that strange
Desire of wandering, this unhappy morn,
I know not whence possessed thee; we had then
Remained still happy; not, as now, despoiled
Of all our good; shamed, naked, miserable!
Let none henceforth seek needless cause to ap-
prove

The faith they owe; when earnestly they seek 1260
Such proof, conclude, they then begin to fail.

To whom, soon moved with touch of blame, thus
Eve.

What words have passed thy lips, Adam severe!
Imputest thou that to my default, or will
Of wandering, as thou callest it, which who knows
But might as ill have happened thou being by,
Or to thyself perhaps? Hadst thou been there,
Or here the attempt, thou couldst not have dis-
cerned 1270

Fraud in the Serpent, speaking as he spake;
No ground of enmity between us known,
Why he should mean me ill, or seek to harm.

Was I to have never parted from thy side?

As good have grown there still a lifeless rib.
 Being as I am, why didst not thou, the head,
 Command me absolutely not to go,
 Going into such danger, as thou saidst? 1280
 Too facile then, thou didst not much gainsay;
 Nay, didst permit, approve, and fair dismiss.
 Hadst thou been firm and fixed in thy dissent,
 Neither had I transgressed, nor thou with me.
 To whom, then first incensed, Adam replied.
 Is this the love, is this the recompence
 Of mine to thee, ingrateful Eve! expressed 1290
 Immutable, when thou wert lost, not I;
 Who might have lived, and joyed immortal bliss,
 Yet willingly chose rather death with thee?
 And am I now upbraided as the cause
 Of thy transgressing? Not enough severe,
 It seems, in thy restraint: What could I more
 I warned thee, I admonished thee, foretold
 The danger, and the lurking enemy
 That lay in wait; beyond this, had been force;
 And force upon free will hath here no place. 1300
 But confidence then bore thee on; secure
 Either to meet no danger, or to find
 Matter of glorious trial; and perhaps
 I also erred, in overmuch admiring
 What seemed in thee so perfect, that I thought
 No evil durst attempt thee; but I rue
 The error now, which is become my crime,
 And thou the accuser. Thus it shall befall
 Him, who, to worth in women overtrusting, 1310
 Lets her will rule: restraint she will not brook;
 And, left to herself, if evil thence ensue,
 She first his weak indulgence will accuse.
 Thus they in mutual accusation spent

BOOK IX

The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning;
And of their vain contest appeared no end.

BOOK X

Mean while the heinous and spiteful act
Of Satan, done in Paradise; and how
He, in the serpent, had perverted Eve,
Her husband she, to taste the fatal fruit,
Was known in Heaven; for what can 'scape the eye
Of God all-seeing, or deceive his heart
Omniscient? who, in all things wise and just,
Hindered not Satan to attempt the mind
Of Man, with strength entire and free will armed,
Complete to have discovered and repulsed 10
Whatever wiles of foe or seeming friend.

For still they knew, and ought to have still remem-
bered,

The high injunction, not to taste that fruit,
Whoever tempted; which they not obeying,
(Incurred what could they less?) the penalty;
And, manifold in sin, deserved to fall.

Up into Heaven from Paradise in haste
The angelick guards ascended, mute, and sad, 20
For Man; for of his state by this they knew,
Much wondering how the subtle Fiend had stolen
Entrance unseen. Soon as the unwelcome news
From Earth arrived at Heaven-gate, displeased
All were who heard; dim sadness did not spare

That time celestial visages, yet, mixed
With pity, violated not their bliss.

About the new-arrived, in multitudes
The ethereal people ran, to hear and know 30
How all befel: They towards the throne supreme,
Accountable, made haste, to make appear,
With righteous plea, their utmost vigilance
And easily approved; when the Most High
Eternal Father, from his secret cloud,
Amidst in thunder uttered thus his voice.

Assembled Angels, and ye Powers returned
From unsuccessful charge; be not dismayed,
Nor troubled at these tidings from the earth, 40
Which your sincerest care could not prevent;
Foretold so lately what would come to pass,
When first this tempter crossed the gulf from Hell.

I told ye then he should prevail, and speed
On his bad errand; Man should be seduced,
And flattered out of all, believing lies
Against his Maker; no decree of mine
Concurring to necessitate his fall,
Or touch with lightest moment of impulse 50
His free will, to her own inclining left
In even scale. But fallen he is; and now
What rests, but that the mortal sentence pass
On his transgression,—death denounced that day?
Which he presumes already vain and void,
Because not yet inflicted, as he feared,
By some immediate stroke; but soon shall find
Forbearance no acquittance, ere day end.

Justice shall not return as bounty scorned. 60
But whom send I to judge them? whom but thee,
Vicegerent Son? To thee I have transferred
All judgement, whether in Heaven, or Earth, or
Hell.

Easy it may be seen that I intend
 Mercy colleague with justice, sending thee
 Man's friend, his Mediator, his designed
 Both ransom and Redeemer voluntary,
 And destined Man himself to judge Man fallen. 70

So spake the Father; and, unfolding bright
 Toward the right hand his glory, on the Son
 Blazed forth unclouded Deity: He full
 Resplendent all his Father manifest
 Expressed, and thus divinely answered mild.

Father Eternal, thine is to decree;
 Mine, both in Heaven and Earth, to do thy will
 Supreme; that thou in me, thy Son beloved, 80
 Mayest ever rest well pleased. I go to judge
 On earth these thy transgressours; but thou know-
 est,

Whoever judged, the worst on me must light,
 When time shall be; for so I undertook
 Before thee; and, not repenting, this obtain
 Of right, that I may mitigate their doom
 On me derived; yet I shall temper so
 Justice with mercy, as may illustrate most
 Them fully satisfied, and thee appease.

90

Attendance none shall need, nor train, where none
 Are to behold the judgement, but the judged,
 Those two; the third best absent is condemned,
 Convict by flight, and rebel to all law:
 Conviction to the serpent none belongs.

Thus saying, from his radiant seat he rose
 Of high collateral glory: Him Thrones, and Pow-
 ers,
 Princedoms, and Dominations ministrant,
 Accompanied to Heaven-gate; from whence 100
 Eden, and all the coast, in prospect lay.

Down he descended straight; the speed of Gods
Time counts not, though with swiftest minutes
winged.

Now was the sun in western cadence low
From noon, and gentle airs, due at their hour,
To fan the earth now waked, and usher in
The evening cool; when he, from wrath more cool,
Came the mild Judge, and Intercessour both, 110
To sentence Man: The voice of God they heard
Now walking in the garden, by soft winds
Brought to their ears, while day declined; they
heard,
And from his presence hid themselves among
The thickest trees, both man and wife; till God,
Approaching, thus to Adam called aloud.

Where art thou, Adam, wont with joy to meet
My coming seen far off? I miss thee here,
Not pleased, thus entertained with solitude, 120
Where obvious duty ere while appeared unsought:
Or come I less conspicuous, or what change
Absents thee, or what chance detains?—Come
forth!

He came; and with him Eve, more loth, though first
To offend; discountenanced both, and discom-
posed;
Love was not in their looks, either to God,
Or to each other; but apparent guilt,
And shame, and perturbation, and despair,
Anger, and obstinacy, and hate, and guile.

130

Whence Adam, faltering long, thus answered
brief.

I heard thee in the garden, and of thy voice
Afraid, being naked, hid myself. To whom
The gracious Judge without revile replied.

My voice thou oft hast heard, and hast not feared,
 But still rejoiced; how is it now become
 So dreadful to thee? That thou art naked, who
 Hath told thee? Hast thou eaten of the tree, 140
 Whereof I gave thee charge thou shouldst not eat?
 To whom thus Adam sore beset replied.

O Heaven! in evil strait this day I stand
 Before my Judge; either to undergo
 Myself the total crime, or to accuse
 My other self, the partner of my life;
 Whose failing, while her faith to me remains,
 I should conceal, and not expose to blame
 By my complaint: but strict necessity 150
 Subdues me, and calamitous constraint;
 Lest on my head both sin and punishment,
 However insupportable, be all
 Devolved; though should I hold my peace, yet
 thou

Wouldst easily detect what I conceal.—
 This Woman, whom thou madest to be my help,
 And gavest me as thy perfect gift, so good,
 So fit, so acceptable, so divine,
 That from her hand I could suspect no ill,
 And what she did, whatever in itself, 160
 Her doing seemed to justify the deed;
 She gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

To whom the Sovran Presence thus replied.

Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
 Before his voice? or was she made thy guide,
 Superiour, or but equal, that to her
 Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place
 Wherein God set thee above her made of thee, 170
 And for thee, whose perfection far excelled
 Hers in all real dignity? Adorned
 She was indeed, and lovely, to attract

Thy love, not thy subjection; and her gifts
 Were such, as under government well seemed;
 Unseemly to bear rule; which was thy part
 And person, hadst thou known thyself aright.
 So having said, he thus to Eve in few.

180

Say, Woman, what is this which thou hast done?
 To whom sad Eve, with shame nigh overwhelmed,
 Confessing soon, yet not before her Judge
 Bold or loquacious, thus abashed replied.

The Serpent me beguiled, and I did eat.

Which when the Lord God heard, without delay
 To judgement he proceeded on the accused
 Serpent, though brute; unable to transfer 190
 The guilt on him, who made him instrument
 Of mischief, and polluted from the end
 Of his creation; justly then accursed,
 As vitiated in nature: More to know
 Concerned not Man, (since he no further knew)
 Nor altered his offence; yet God at last
 To Satan first in sin his doom applied,
 Though in mysterious terms, judged as then best:
 And on the Serpent thus his curse let fall.

200

Because thou hast done this, thou art accursed
 Above all cattle, each beast of the field;
 Upon thy belly groveling thou shalt go,
 And dust shalt eat all the days of thy life.

Between thee and the woman I will put
 Enmity, and between thine and her seed;
 Her seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his
 heel.

So spake this oracle, then verified 210
 When Jesus, Son of Mary, second Eve,
 Saw Satan fall, like lightning, down from Heaven,

Prince of the air; then, rising from his grave
 Spoiled Principalities and Powers, triumphed
 In open show; and, with ascension bright,
 Captivity led captive through the air,
 The realm itself of Satan, long usurped;
 Whom he shall tread at last under our feet;
 Even he, who now foretold his fatal bruise;
 And to the Woman thus his sentence turned. 220

Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply
 By thy conception; children thou shalt bring
 In sorrow forth; and to thy husband's will
 Thine shall submit; he over thee shall rule.

On Adam last thus judgement he pronounced.

Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy
 wife,
 And eaten of the tree, concerning which 230
 I charged thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat thereof:
 Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thou in sorrow
 Shalt eat thereof, all the days of thy life;
 Thorns also and thistles it shall bring thee forth
 Unbid; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;
 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,
 Till thou return unto the ground; for thou
 Out of the ground wast taken, know thy birth,
 For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return.

240

So judged he Man, both Judge and Saviour sent;
 And the instant stroke of death, denounced that
 day,
 Removed far off; then, pitying how they stood
 Before him naked to the air, that now
 Must suffer change, disdained not to begin
 Thenceforth the form of servant to assume;
 As when he washed his servants feet; so now,
 As father of his family, he clad

Their nakedness with skins of beasts, or slain,
 Or as the snake with youthful coat repaid; 250
 And thought not much to clothe his enemies;
 Nor he their outward only with the skins
 Of beasts, but inward nakedness, much more.

Opprobrious, with his robe of righteousness,
 Arraying, covered from his Father's sight.

To him with swift ascent he up returned,
 Into his blissful bosom reassumed
 In glory, as of old; to him appeased 260
 All, though all-knowing, what had passed with
 Man

Recounted, mixing intercession sweet.

Mean while, ere thus was sinned and judged on
 Earth,

Within the gates of Hell sat Sin and Death,
 In counterview within the gates, that now
 Stood open wide, belching outrageous flame
 Far into Chaos, since the Fiend passed through,
 Sin opening; who thus now to Death began. 270

O Son, why sit we here each other viewing
 Idly, while Satan, our great author, thrives
 In other worlds, and happier seat provides
 For us, his offspring dear? It cannot be
 But that success attends him; if mishap,
 Ere this he had returned, with fury driven
 By his avengers; since no place like this
 Can fit his punishment, or their revenge.

Methinks I feel new strength within me rise, 280
 Wings growing, and dominion given me large
 Beyond this deep; whatever draws me on,
 Or sympathy, or some connatural force,
 Powerful at greatest distance to unite,
 With secret amity, things of like kind,

By secretest conveyance. Thou, my shade
 Inseparable, must with me along;
 For Death from Sin no power can separate.

But, lest the difficulty of passing back 290
 Stay his return perhaps over this gulf
 Impassable, impervious; let us try
 Adventurous work, yet to thy power and mine
 Not unagreeable, to found a path
 Over this main from Hell to that new world,
 Where Satan now prevails; a monument
 Of merit high to all the infernal host,
 Easing their passage hence, for intercourse,
 Or transmigration, as their lot shall lead.

300

Nor can I miss the way, so strongly drawn
 By this new-felt attraction and instinct.

Whom thus the meager Shadow answered soon.

Go, whither Fate, and inclination strong,
 Leads thee; I shall not lag behind, nor err
 The way, thou leading; such a scent I draw
 Of carnage, prey innumerable, and taste
 The savour of death from all things there that live:

310

Nor shall I to the work thou enterprisest
 Be wanting, but afford thee equal aid.

So saying, with delight he snuffed the smell
 Of mortal change on earth. As when a flock
 Of ravenous fowl, though many a league remote,
 Against the day of battle, to a field,
 Where armies lie encamped, come flying, lured
 With scent of living carcasses designed
 For death, the following day, in bloody fight: 320
 So scented the grim Feature, and upturned
 His nostril wide into the murky air;
 Sagacious of his quarry from so far.

Then both from out Hell-gates, into the waste
Wide anarchy of Chaos, damp and dark,
Flew diverse; and with power (their power was
great)

Hovering upon the waters, what they met
Solid or slimy, as in raging sea
Tost up and down, together crouded drove, 330
From each side shoaling towards the mouth of
Hell;

As when two polar winds, blowing adverse
Upon the Cronian sea, together drive
Mountains of ice, that stop the imagined way
Beyond Petsora eastward, to the rich
Cathaian coast. The aggregated soil
Death with his mace petrifick, cold and dry,
As with a trident, smote; and fixed as firm
As Delos, floating once; the rest his look
Bound with Gorgonian rigour not to move; 340
And with Asphaltick slime, broad as the gate,
Deep to the roots of Hell the gathered beach
They fastened, and the mole immense wrought on
Over the foaming deep high-arched, a bridge
Of length prodigious, joining to the wall
Immoveable of this now fenceless world,
Forfeit to Death; from hence a passage broad,
Smooth, easy, inoffensive, down to Hell.

So, if great things to small may be compared, 350
Xerxes, the liberty of Greece to yoke,
From Susa, his Memnonian palace high,
Came to the sea: and, over Hellespont
Bridging his way, Europe with Asia joined,
And scourged with many a stroke the indignant
waves.

Now had they brought the work by wonderous art
Pontifical, a ridge of pendant rock,

Over the vexed abyss, following the track
 Of Satan to the self-same place where he 360
 First lighted from his wing, and landed safe
 From out of Chaos, to the outside bare
 Of this round world: With pins of adamant
 And chains they made all fast, too fast they made
 And durable! And now in little space
 The confines met of empyrean Heaven,
 And of this World; and, on the left hand, Hell
 With long reach interposed; three several ways
 In sight, to each of these three places led.

370

And now their way to Earth they had descried,
 To Paradise first tending; when, behold!
 Satan, in likeness of an Angel bright,
 Betwixt the Centaur and the Scorpion steering
 His zenith, while the sun in Aries rose:
 Disguised he came; but those his children dear
 Their parent soon discerned, though in disguise.

He, after Eve seduced, unminded slunk
 Into the wood fast by; and, changing shape, 380
 To observe the sequel, saw his guileful act
 By Eve, though all unweeting, seconded
 Upon her husband; saw their shame that sought
 Vain covertures; but when he saw descend
 The Son of God to judge them, terrified
 He fled; not hoping to escape, but shun
 The present; fearing, guilty, what his wrath
 Might suddenly inflict; that past, returned
 By night, and listening where the hapless pair
 Sat in their sad discourse, and various plaint, 390
 Thence gathered his own doom; which understood
 Not instant, but of future time, with joy
 And tidings fraught, to Hell he now returned;
 And at the brink of Chaos, near the foot
 Of this new wonderous pontifice, unhopd

Met, who to meet him came, his offspring dear.
 Great joy was at their meeting, and at sight
 Of that stupendous bridge his joy encreased.

400

Long he admiring stood, till Sin, his fair
 Enchanting daughter, thus the silence broke.

O Parent, these are thy magnifick deeds,
 Thy trophies! which thou viewest as not thine
 own;

Thou art their author, and prime architect:
 For I no sooner in my heart divined,
 My heart, which by a secret harmony
 Still moves with thine, joined in connexion sweet,
 That thou on earth hadst prospered, which thy
 looks

410

Now also evidence, but straight I felt,
 Though distant from thee worlds between, yet felt,
 That I must after thee, with this thy son;
 Such fatal consequence unites us three!
 Hell could no longer hold us in our bounds,
 Nor this unvoyageable gulf obscure
 Detain from following thy illustrious track.

Thou hast achieved our liberty, confined
 Within Hell-gates till now; thou us impowered
 To fortify thus far, and overlay,
 With this portentous bridge, the dark abyss.

Thine now is all this world; thy virtue hath won
 What thy hands builded not; thy wisdom gained
 With odds what war hath lost, and fully avenged
 Our foil in Heaven; here thou shalt monarch reign,
 There didst not; there let him still victor sway,
 As battle hath adjudged; from this new world
 Retiring, by his own doom alienated;
 And henceforth monarchy with thee divide
 Of all things, parted by the empyreal bounds,

430

His quadrature, from thy orbicular world;
 Or try thee now more dangerous to his throne.
 Whom thus the Prince of darkness answered glad.
 Fair Daughter, and thou Son and Grandchild both;
 High proof ye now have given to be the race
 Of Satan (for I glory in the name, 440
 Antagonist of Heaven's Almighty King,)
 Amply have merited of me, of all
 The infernal empire, that so near Heaven's door
 Triumphal with triumphal act have met,
 Mine, with this glorious work; and made one
 realm,
 Hell and this world, one realm, one continent
 Of easy thorough-fare. Therefore, while I
 Descend through darkness, on your road with
 ease,
 To my associate Powers, them to acquaint
 With these successes, and with them rejoice; 450
 You two this way, among these numerous orbs,
 All yours, right down to Paradise descend;
 There dwell, and reign in bliss; thence on the earth
 Dominion exercise and in the air,
 Chiefly on Man, sole lord of all declared;
 Him first make sure your thrall, and lastly kill.
 My substitutes I send ye, and create
 Plenipotent on earth, of matchless might
 Issuing from me: on your joint vigour now 460
 My hold of this new kingdom all depends,
 Through Sin to Death exposed by my exploit.
 If your joint power prevail, the affairs of Hell
 No detriment need fear; go, and be strong!
 So saying he dismissed them; they with speed
 Their course through thickest constellations held,
 Spreading their bane; the blasted stars looked wan,
 And planets, planet-struck, real eclipse

Then suffered. The other way Satan went down⁴⁷⁰
 The causey to Hell-gate: On either side
 Disparted Chaos overbuilt exclaimed,
 And with rebounding surge the bars assailed,
 That scorned his indignation: Through the gate,
 Wide open and unguarded, Satan passed,
 And all about found desolate; for those,
 Appointed to sit there, had left their charge,
 Flown to the upper world; the rest were all
 Far to the inland retired, about the walls
 Of Pandemonium; city and proud seat 480
 Of Lucifer, so by allusion called
 Of that bright star to Satan paragoned;
 There kept their watch the legions, while the
 Grand
 In council sat, solicitous what chance
 Might intercept their emperour sent; so he
 Departing gave command, and they observed.

As when the Tartar from his Russian foe,
 By Astracan, over the snowy plains,
 Retires; or Bactrin Sophi, from the horns 490
 Of Turkish crescent, leaves all waste beyond
 The realm of Aladule, in his retreat
 To Tauris or Casbeen: So these, the late
 Heaven-banished host, left desert utmost Hell
 Many a dark league, reduced in careful watch
 Round their metropolis; and now expecting
 Each hour their great adventurer, from the search
 Of foreign worlds: He through the midst un-
 marked,
 In show plebeian Angel militant
 Of lowest order, passed; and from the door 500
 Of that Plutonian hall, invisible
 Ascended his high throne; which, under state
 Of richest texture spread, at the upper end
 Was placed in regal lustre. Down a while

He sat, and round about him saw unseen:
 At last, as from a cloud, his fulgent head
 And shape star-bright appeared, or brighter; clad
 With what permissive glory since his fall
 Was left him, or false glitter: All amazed
 At that so sudden blaze the Stygian throng 510
 Bent their aspect, and whom they wished beheld,
 Their mighty Chief returned: loud was the ac-
 claim:

Forth rushed in haste the great consulting peers,
 Raised from their dark Divan, and with like joy
 Congratulant approached him; who with hand
 Silence, and with these words attention, won.

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Pow-
 ers;

For in possession such, not only of right,
 I call ye, and declare ye now; returned 520
 Successful beyond hope, to lead ye forth
 Triumphant out of this infernal pit
 Abominable, accursed, the house of woe,
 And dungeon of our tyrant: Now possess,
 As Lords, a spacious world, to our native Heaven
 Little inferiour, by my adventure hard
 With peril great achieved. Long were to tell
 What I have done; what suffered; with what pain
 Voyaged th' unreal, vast, unbounded deep
 Of horrible confusion; over which 530
 By Sin and Death a broad way now is paved,
 To expedite your glorious march; but I
 Toiled out my uncouth passage, forced to ride
 The untractable abyss, plunged in the womb
 Of unoriginal Night and Chaos wild;
 That, jealous of their secrets, fiercely opposed
 My journey strange, with clamorous uproar
 Protesting Fate supreme; thence how I found
 The new created world, which fame in Heaven

Long had foretold, a fabrick wonderful 540
 Of absolute perfection! therein Man
 Placed in a Paradise, by our exile
 Made happy: Him by fraud I have seduced
 From his Creator; and, the more to encrease
 Your wonder, with an apple; he, thereat
 Offended, worth your laughter! hath given up
 Both his beloved Man, and all his world,
 To Sin and Death a prey, and so to us,
 Without our hazard, labour, or alarm;
 To range in, and to dwell, and over Man 550
 To rule, as over all he should have ruled.

True is, me also he hath judged, or rather
 Me not, but the brute serpent in whose shape
 Man I deceived: that which to me belongs,
 Is enmity which he will put between
 Me and mankind; I am to bruise his heel;
 His seed, when is not set, shall bruise my head:
 A world who would not purchase with a bruise,
 Or much more grievous pain?—Ye have the account
 560

Of my performance: What remains, ye Gods,
 But up, and enter now into full bliss?
 So having said, a while he stood, expecting
 Their universal shout, and high applause,
 To fill his ear; when, contrary, he hears
 On all sides, from innumerable tongues,
 A dismal universal hiss, the sound
 Of publick scorn; he wondered, but not long
 Had leisure, wondering at himself now more,
 His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare; 570
 His arms clung to his ribs; his legs entwining
 Each other, till supplanted down he fell
 A monstrous serpent on his belly prone,
 Reluctant, but in vain; a greater power
 Now ruled him, punished in the shape he sinned,

According to his doom: he would have spoke,
But hiss for hiss returned with forked tongue
To forked tongue; for now were all transformed
Alike, to serpents all, as accessories
To his bold riot: Dreadful was the din 580
Of hissing through the hall, thick swarming now
With complicated monsters head and tail,
Scorpion, and Asp, and Amphisbaena dire,
Cerastes horned, Hydrus, and Elops drear,
And Dipsas; (not so thick swarmed once the soil
Bedropt with blood of Gorgon, or the isle
Ophiusa,) but still greatest he the midst,
Now Dragon grown, larger than whom the sun
Ingendered in the Pythian vale or slime,
Huge Python, and his power no less he seemed 590
Above the rest still to retain; they all
Him followed, issuing forth to the open field,
Where all yet left of that revolted rout,
Heaven-fallen, in station stood or just array;
Sublime with expectation when to see
In triumph issuing forth their glorious Chief;
They saw, but other sight instead! a croud
Of ugly serpents; horror on them fell,
And horrid sympathy; for, what they saw,
They felt themselves, now changing; down their
arms, 600
Down fell both spear and shield; down they as fast;
And the dire hiss renewed, and the dire form
Caught, by contagion; like in punishment,
As in their crime. Thus was the applause they
meant,
Turned to exploding hiss, triumph to shame
Cast on themselves from their own mouths. There
stood
A grove hard by, sprung up with this their change,
His will who reigns above, to aggravate

Their penance, laden with fair fruit, like that
Which grew in Paradise, the bait of Eve 610
Used by the Tempter: on that prospect strange
Their earnest eyes they fixed, imagining
For one forbidden tree a multitude
Now risen, to work them further woe or shame;
Yet, parched with scalding thirst and hunger fierce,
Though to delude them sent, could not abstain;
But on they rolled in heaps, and, up the trees
Climbing, sat thicker than the snaky locks
That curled Megaera: greedily they plucked
The fruitage fair to sight, like that which grew 620
Near that bituminous lake where Sodom flamed;
This more delusive, not the touch, but taste
Deceived; they, fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
Chewed bitter ashes, which the offended taste
With spattering noise rejected: oft they assayed,
Hunger and thirst constraining; drugged as oft,
With hatefullest disrelish writhed their jaws,
With soot and cinders filled; so oft they fell
Into the same illusion, not as Man 630
Whom they triumphed once lapsed. Thus were
they plagued
And worn with famine, long and ceaseless hiss,
Till their lost shape, permitted, they resumed;
Yearly enjoined, some say, to undergo,
This annual humbling certain numbered days,
To dash their pride, and joy, for Man seduced.

However, some tradition they dispersed
Among the Heathen, of their purchase got,
And fabled how the Serpent, whom they called 640
Ophion, with Eurynome, the wide-
Encroaching Eve perhaps, had first the rule
Of high Olympus; thence by Saturn driven
And Ops, ere yet Dictaeon Jove was born.

Mean while in Paradise the hellish pair
 Too soon arrived; Sin, there in power before,
 Once actual; now in body, and to dwell
 Habitual habitant; behind her Death,
 Close following pace for pace, not mounted yet⁶⁵⁰
 On his pale horse: to whom Sin thus began.

Second of Satan sprung, all-conquering Death!
 What thinkest thou of our empire now, though
 earned
 With travel difficult, not better far
 Than still at Hell's dark threshold to have sat
 watch,
 Unnamed, undreaded, and thyself half starved?
 Whom thus the Sin-born monster answered soon.

To me, who with eternal famine pine, 660
 Alike is Hell, or Paradise, or Heaven;
 There best, where most with ravine I may meet;
 Which here, though plenteous, all too little seems
 To stuff this maw, this vast unhide-bound corps.

To whom the incestuous mother thus replied.
 Thou therefore on these herbs, and fruits, and
 flowers,
 Feed first; on each beast next, and fish, and fowl;
 No homely morsels! and, whatever thing 670
 The sithe of Time mows down, devour unspared;
 Till I, in Man residing, through the race,
 His thoughts, his looks, words, actions, all infect;
 And season him thy last and sweetest prey.

This said, they both betook them several ways,
 Both to destroy, or unimmortal make
 All kinds, and for destruction to mature
 Sooner or later; which the Almighty seeing,
 From his transcendent seat the Saints among, 680
 To those bright Orders uttered thus his voice.

See, with what heat these dogs of Hell advance
To waste and havock yonder world, which I
So fair and good created; and had still
Kept in that state, had not the folly of Man
Let in these wasteful furies, who impute
Folly to me; so doth the Prince of Hell
And his adherents, that with so much ease
I suffer them to enter and possess 690
A place so heavenly; and, conniving, seem
To gratify my scornful enemies,
That laugh, as if, transported with some fit
Of passion, I to them had quitted all,
At random yielded up to their misrule;
And know not that I called, and drew them thither,
My Hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth
Which Man's polluting sin with taint hath shed
On what was pure; til, crammed and gorged, nigh
burst
With sucked and glutted offal, at one sling 700
Of thy victorious arm, well-pleasing Son,
Both Sin, and Death, and yawning Grave, at last,
Through Chaos hurled, obstruct the mouth of Hell
For ever, and seal up his ravenous jaws.

Then Heaven and Earth renewed shall be made
pure
To sanctity, that shall receive no stain:
Till then, the curse pronounced on both precedes.

He ended, and the heavenly audience loud 710
Sung Halleluiah, as the sound of seas,
Through multitude that sung: Just are thy ways,
Righteous are thy decrees on all thy works;
Who can extenuate thee? Next, to the Son,
Destined Restorer of mankind, by whom
New Heaven and Earth shall to the ages rise,
Or down from Heaven descend.—Such was their

song;

While the Creator, calling forth by name
 His mighty Angels, gave them several charge,
 As sorted best with present things. The sun 720
 Had first his precept so to move, so shine,
 As might affect the earth with cold and heat
 Scarce tolerable; and from the north to call
 Decepit winter; from the south to bring
 Solstitial summer's heat. To the blanc moon
 Her office they prescribed; to the other five
 Their planetary motions, and aspects,
 In sextile, square, and trine, and opposite,
 Of noxious efficacy, and when to join
 In synod unbenign; and taught the fixed 730
 Their influence malignant when to shower,
 Which of them rising with the sun, or falling,
 Should prove tempestuous: To the winds they set
 Their corners, when with bluster to confound
 Sea, air, and shore; the thunder when to roll
 With terrour through the dark aerial hall.

Some say, he bid his Angels turn ascense
 The poles of earth, twice ten degrees and more,
 From the sun's axle; they with labour pushed 740
 Oblique the centrick globe: Some say, the sun
 Was bid turn reins from the equinoctial road
 Like distant breadth to Taurus with the seven
 Atlantick Sisters, and the Spartan Twins,
 Up to the Tropick Crab: thence down amain
 By Leo, and the Virgin, and the Scales,
 As deep as Capricorn; to bring in change
 Of seasons to each clime; else had the spring
 Perpetual smiled on earth with vernant flowers,
 Equal in days and nights, except to those 750
 Beyond the polar circles; to them day
 Had unbenighted shone, while the low sun,
 To recompense his distance, in their sight

Had rounded still the horizon, and not known
Or east or west; which had forbid the snow
From cold Estotiland, and south as far
Beneath Magellan. At that tasted fruit
The sun, as from Thyestean banquet, turned
His course intended; else, how had the world
Inhabited, though sinless, more than now, 760
Avoided pinching cold and scorching heat?
These changes in the Heavens, though slow, produced

Like change on sea and land; sideral blast,
Vapour, and mist, and exhalation hot,
Corrupt and pestilent: Now from the north
Of Norumbega, and the Samoed shore,
Bursting their brazen dungeon, armed with ice,
And snow, and hail, and stormy gust and flaw,
Boreas, and Caecias, and Argestes loud,
And Thrascias, rend the woods, and seas upturn;
770

With adverse blast upturns them from the south
Notus, and Afer black with thunderous clouds
From Serralion; thwart of these, as fierce,
Forth rush the Levant and the Ponent winds,
Eurus and Zephyr, with their lateral noise,
Sirocco and Libecchio. Thus began
Outrage from lifeless things; but Discord first,
Daughter of Sin, among the irrational
Death introduced, through fierce antipathy:
Beast now with beast 'gan war, and fowl with fowl,
780

And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe
Of Man, but fled him; or, with countenance grim,
Glared on him passing. These were from without
The growing miseries, which Adam saw
Already in part, though hid in gloomiest shade,

To sorrow abandoned, but worse felt within;
 And, in a troubled sea of passion tost,
 Thus to disburden sought with sad complaint.

790

O miserable of happy! Is this the end
 Of this new glorious world, and me so late
 The glory of that glory, who now become
 Accursed, of blessed? hide me from the face
 Of God, whom to behold was then my highth
 Of happiness!—Yet well, if here would end
 The misery; I deserved it, and would bear
 My own deservings; but this will not serve:
 All that I eat or drink, or shall beget,
 Is propagated curse. O voice, once heard

800

Delightfully, Encrease and multiply;
 Now death to hear! for what can I encrease,
 Or multiply, but curses on my head?
 Who of all ages to succeed, but, feeling
 The evil on him brought by me, will curse
 My head? Ill fare our ancestor impure,
 For this we may thank Adam! but his thanks
 Shall be the execration: so, besides
 Mine own that bide upon me, all from me
 Shall with a fierce reflux on me rebound;

810

On me, as on their natural center, light
 Heavy, though in their place. O fleeting joys
 Of Paradise, dear bought with lasting woes!
 Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
 To mould me Man? did I solicit thee
 From darkness to promote me, or here place
 In this delicious garden? As my will
 Concurred not to my being, it were but right
 And equal to reduce me to my dust;
 Desirous to resign and render back

820

All I received; unable to perform
 Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold

The good I sought not. To the loss of that,
Sufficient penalty, why hast thou added
The sense of endless woes? Inexplicable
Thy justice seems; yet to say truth, too late
I thus contest; then should have been refused
Those terms whatever, when they were proposed:
Thou didst accept them; wilt thou enjoy the good,
Then cavil the conditions? And, though God 830
Made thee without thy leave, what if thy son
Prove disobedient, and reprov'd, retort,
"Wherefore didst thou beget me? I sought it not!"
Wouldst thou admit for his contempt of thee
That proud excuse? yet him not thy election,
But natural necessity begot.

God made thee of choice his own, and of his own
To serve him; thy reward was of his grace;
Thy punishment then, justly is at his will. 840

Be it so, for I submit; his doom is fair,
That dust I am, and shall to dust return.

O welcome hour whenever! Why delays
His hand to execute what his decree
Fixed on this day? Why do I overlive,
Why am I mocked with death, and lengthened out
To deathless pain? How gladly would I meet 850
Mortality my sentence, and be earth
Insensible! How glad would lay me down
As in my mother's lap! There I should rest,
And sleep secure; his dreadful voice no more
Would thunder in my ears; no fear of worse
To me, and to my offspring, would torment me
With cruel expectation. Yet one doubt
Pursues me still, lest all I cannot die;
Lest that pure breath of life, the spirit of Man
Which God inspired, cannot together perish 860
With this corporeal clod; then, in the grave,

Or in some other dismal place, who knows
 But I shall die a living death? O thought
 Horrid, if true! Yet why? It was but breath
 Of life that sinned; what dies but what had life
 And sin? The body properly had neither,
 All of me then shall die: let this appease
 The doubt, since human reach no further knows.

For though the Lord of all be infinite,
 Is his wrath also? Be it, Man is not so, 870
 But mortal doomed. How can he exercise
 Wrath without end on Man, whom death must
 end?

Can he make deathless death? That were to make
 Strange contradiction, which to God himself
 Impossible is held; as argument
 Of weakness, not of power. Will he draw out,
 For anger's sake, finite to infinite,
 In punished Man, to satisfy his rigour,
 Satisfied never? That were to extend
 His sentence beyond dust and Nature's law; 880
 By which all causes else, according still
 To the reception of their matter, act;
 Not to the extent of their own sphere. But say
 That death be not one stroke, as I supposed,
 Bereaving sense, but endless misery
 From this day onward; which I feel begun
 Both in me, and without me; and so last
 To perpetuity;—Ay me! that fear
 Comes thundering back with dreadful revolution
 On my defenceless head; both Death and I 890
 Am found eternal, and incorporate both;
 Nor I on my part single; in me all
 Posterity stands cursed: Fair patrimony
 That I must leave ye, Sons! O, were I able
 To waste it all myself, and leave ye none!
 So disinherited, how would you bless

Me, now your curse! Ah, why should all mankind,
For one man's fault, thus guiltless be condemned,
It guiltless? But from me what can proceed,
But all corrupt; both mind and will depraved 900
Not to do only, but to will the same
With me? How can they then acquitted stand
In sight of God? Him, after all disputes,
Forced I absolve: all my evasions vain,
And reasonings, though through mazes, lead me
still

But to my own conviction: first and last
On me, me only, as the source and spring
Of all corruption, all the blame lights due;
So might the wrath! Fond wish! couldst thou sup-
port

That burden, heavier than the earth to bear; 910
Than all the world much heavier, though divided
With that bad Woman? Thus, what thou desirest,
And what thou fearest, alike destroys all hope
Of refuge, and concludes thee miserable
Beyond all past example and future;
To Satan only like both crime and doom.

O Conscience! into what abyss of fears
And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which
I find no way, from deep to deeper plunged! 920
Thus Adam to himself lamented loud,
Through the still night; not now, as ere Man fell,
Wholesome, and cool, and mild, but with black air
Accompanied; with damps, and dreadful gloom;
Which to his evil conscience represented
All things with double terrour: On the ground
Outstretched he lay, on the cold ground; and oft
Cursed his creation; Death as oft accused
Of tardy execution, since denounced
The day of his offence. Why comes not Death, 930
Said he, with one thrice-acceptable stroke

To end me? Shall Truth fail to keep her word,
 Justice Divine not hasten to be just?
 But Death comes not at call; Justice Divine
 Mends not her slowest pace for prayers or cries,
 O woods, O fountains, hillocks, dales, and bowers!
 With other echo late I taught your shades
 To answer, and resound far other song.—
 Whom thus afflicted when sad Eve beheld,
 Desolate where she sat, approaching nigh, 940
 Soft words to his fierce passion she assayed:
 But her with stern regard he thus repelled.

Out of my sight, thou Serpent! That name best
 Befits thee with him leagued, thyself as false
 And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape,
 Like his, and colour serpentine, may show
 Thy inward fraud; to warn all creatures from thee
 Henceforth; lest that too heavenly form, pretended
 To hellish falshood, snare them! But for thee 950
 I had persisted happy; had not thy pride
 And wandering vanity, when least was safe,
 Rejected my forewarning, and disdained
 Not to be trusted; longing to be seen,
 Though by the Devil himself; him overweening
 To over-reach; but, with the serpent meeting,
 Fooled and beguiled; by him thou, I by thee
 To trust thee from my side; imagined wise,
 Constant, mature, proof against all assaults;
 And understood not all was but a show, 960
 Rather than solid virtue; all but a rib
 Crooked by nature, bent, as now appears,
 More to the part sinister, from me drawn;
 Well if thrown out, as supernumerary
 To my just number found. O! why did God,
 Creator wise, that peopled highest Heaven
 With Spirits masculine, create at last
 This novelty on earth, this fair defect

Of nature, and not fill the world at once
With Men, as Angels, without feminine; 970
Or find some other way to generate
Mankind? This mischief had not been befallen,
And more that shall befall; innumerable
Disturbances on earth through female snares,
And strait conjunction with this sex: for either
He never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gained
By a far worse; or, if she love, withheld 980
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already linked and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame:
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound.

He added not, and from her turned; but Eve,
Not so repulsed, with tears that ceased not flowing
And tresses all disordered, at his feet
Fell humble; and, embracing them, besought 990
His peace, and thus proceeded in her plaint.

Forsake me not thus, Adam! witness Heaven
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
Unhappily deceived! Thy suppliant
I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not,
Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
Thy counsel, in this uttermost distress,
My only strength and stay: Forlorn of thee, 1000
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?
While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
Between us two let there be peace; both joining,
As joined in injuries, one enmity
Against a foe by doom express assigned us,

That cruel Serpent: On me exercise not
 Thy hatred for this misery befallen;
 On me already lost, me than thyself
 More miserable! Both have sinned; but thou
 Against God only; I against God and thee; 1010
 And to the place of judgement will return,
 There with my cries importune Heaven; that all
 The sentence, from thy head removed, may light
 On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe;
 Me, me only, just object of his ire!
 She ended weeping; and her lowly plight,
 Immoveable, till peace obtained from fault
 Acknowledged and deplored, in Adam wrought
 Commiseration: Soon his heart relented
 Towards her, his life so late, and sole delight, 1020
 Now at his feet submissive in distress;
 Creature so fair his reconciliation seeking,
 His counsel, whom she had displeased, his aid:
 As one disarmed, his anger all he lost,
 And thus with peaceful words upraised her soon.

Unwary, and too desirous, as before,
 So now of what thou knowest not, who desirest
 The punishment all on thyself; alas!
 Bear thine own first, ill able to sustain 1030
 His full wrath, whose thou feelest as yet least part,
 And my displeasure bearest so ill. If prayers
 Could alter high decrees, I to that place
 Would speed before thee, and be louder heard,
 That on my head all might be visited;
 Thy frailty and infirmer sex forgiven,
 To me committed, and by me exposed.

But rise;—let us no more contend, nor blame
 Each other, blamed enough elsewhere; but strive
 1040
 In offices of love, how we may lighten

Each other's burden, in our share of woe;
Since this day's death denounced, if aught I see,
Will prove no sudden, but a slow-paced evil;
A long day's dying, to augment our pain;
And to our seed (O hapless seed!) derived.

To whom thus Eve, recovering heart, replied.

Adam, by sad experiment I know 1050
How little weight my words with thee can find,
Found so erroneous; thence by just event
Found so unfortunate: Nevertheless,
Restored by thee, vile as I am, to place
Of new acceptance, hopeful to regain
Thy love, the sole contentment of my heart
Living or dying, from thee I will not hide
What thoughts in my unquiet breast are risen,
Tending to some relief of our extremes,
Or end; though sharp and sad, yet tolerable, 1060
As in our evils, and of easier choice.

If care of our descent perplex us most,
Which must be born to certain woe, devoured
By Death at last; and miserable it is
To be to others cause of misery,
Our own begotten, and of our loins to bring
Into this cursed world a woeful race,
That after wretched life must be at last
Food for so foul a monster; in thy power 1070
It lies, yet ere conception to prevent
The race unblest, to being yet unbegot.

Childless thou art, childless remain: so Death
Shall be deceived his glut, and with us two
Be forced to satisfy his ravenous maw.

But if thou judge it hard and difficult,
Conversing, looking, loving, to abstain
From love's due rights, nuptial embraces sweet;
1080

And with desire to languish without hope,
 Before the present object languishing
 With like desire; which would be misery
 And torment less than none of what we dread;
 Then, both ourselves and seed at once to free
 From what we fear for both, let us make short,—
 Let us seek Death;—or, he not found, supply
 With our own hands his office on ourselves:
 Why stand we longer shivering under fears,
 That show no end but death, and have the power,
 1090

Of many ways to die the shortest choosing,
 Destruction with destruction to destroy?—
 She ended here, or vehement despair
 Broke off the rest: so much of death her thoughts
 Had entertained, as dyed her cheeks with pale.

But Adam, with such counsel nothing swayed,
 To better hopes his more attentive mind
 Labouring had raised; and thus to Eve replied.
 1100

Eve, thy contempt of life and pleasure seems
 To argue in thee something more sublime
 And excellent, than what thy mind contemns;
 But self-destruction therefore sought, refutes
 That excellence thought in thee; and implies,
 Not thy contempt, but anguish and regret
 For loss of life and pleasure overloved.

Or if thou covet death, as utmost end
 Of misery, so thinking to evade 1110
 The penalty pronounced; doubt not but God
 Hath wiselier armed his vengeful ire, than so
 To be forestalled; much more I fear lest death,
 So snatched, will not exempt us from the pain
 We are by doom to pay; rather, such acts
 Of contumacy will provoke the Highest

To make death in us live: Then let us seek
Some safer resolution, which methinks
I have in view, calling to mind with heed
Part of our sentence, that thy seed shall bruise¹¹²⁰
The Serpent's head; piteous amends! unless
Be meant, whom I conjecture, our grand foe,
Satan; who, in the serpent, hath contrived
Against us this deceit: To crush his head
Would be revenge indeed! which will be lost
By death brought on ourselves, or childless days
Resolved, as thou proposest; so our foe
Shal 'scape his punishment ordained, and we
Instead shall double ours upon our heads.

1130

No more be mentioned then of violence
Against ourselves; and wilful barrenness,
That cuts us off from hope; and savours only
Rancour and pride, impatience and despite,
Reluctance against God and his just yoke
Laid on our necks. Remember with what mild
And gracious temper he both heard, and judged,
Without wrath or reviling; we expected
Immediate dissolution, which we thought
Was meant by death that day; when lo! to thee¹¹⁴⁰
Pains only in child-bearing were foretold,
And bringing forth; soon recompensed with joy,
Fruit of thy womb: On me the curse aslope
Glanced on the ground; with labour I must earn
My bread; what harm? Idleness had been worse;
My labour will sustain me; and, lest cold
Or heat should injure us, his timely care
Hath, unbesought, provided; and his hands
Clothed us unworthy, pitying while he judged;
How much more, if we pray him, will his ear ¹¹⁵⁰
Be open, and his heart to pity incline,
And teach us further by what means to shun

The inclement seasons, rain, ice, hail, and snow!
 Which now the sky, with various face, begins
 To show us in this mountain; while the winds
 Blow moist and keen, shattering the graceful locks
 Of these fair spreading trees; which bids us seek
 Some better shroud, some better warmth to cherish
 Our limbs benumbed, ere this diurnal star
 Leave cold the night, how we his gathered beams
 1160

Reflected may with matter sere foment;
 Or, by collision of two bodies, grind
 The air attrite to fire; as late the clouds
 Justling, or pushed with winds, rude in their
 shock,
 Tine the slant lightning; whose thwart flame,
 driven down
 Kindles the gummy bark of fir or pine;
 And sends a comfortable heat from far,
 Which might supply the sun: Such fire to use,
 And what may else be remedy or cure
 To evils which our own misdeeds have wrought,
 1170

He will instruct us praying, and of grace
 Beseeking him; so as we need not fear
 To pass commodiously this life, sustained
 By him with many comforts, till we end
 In dust, our final rest and native home.

What better can we do, than, to the place
 Repairing where he judged us, prostrate fall
 Before him reverent; and there confess
 Humbly our faults, and pardon beg; with tears
 1180

Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air
 Frequenter, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
 Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek.

Undoubtedly he will relent, and turn
From his displeasure; in whose look serene,
When angry most he seemed and most severe,
What else but favour, grace, and mercy, shone?
So spake our father penitent; nor Eve
Felt less remorse: they, forthwith to the place 1190
Repairing where he judged them, prostrate fell
Before him reverent; and both confessed
Humbly their faults, and pardon begged; with
tears
Watering the ground, and with their sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek.

BOOK XI

Thus they, in lowliest plight, repentant stood
Praying; for from the mercy-seat above
Prevenient grace descending had removed
The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
Regenerate grow instead; that sighs now breathed
Unutterable; which the Spirit of prayer
Inspired, and winged for Heaven with speedier
flight

Than loudest oratory: Yet their port
Not of mean suitors; nor important less
Seemed their petition, than when the ancient pair
10

In fables old, less ancient yet than these,
Deucalion and chaste Pyrrha, to restore
The race of mankind drowned, before the shrine
Of Themis stood devout. To Heaven their prayers
Flew up, nor missed the way, by envious winds
Blown vagabond or frustrate: in they passed
Dimensionless through heavenly doors; then clad
With incense, where the golden altar fumed,
By their great intercessour, came in sight
Before the Father's throne: them the glad Son 20
Presenting, thus to intercede began.

See Father, what first-fruits on earth are sprung

From thy implanted grace in Man; these sighs
 And prayers, which in this golden censer mixed
 With incense, I thy priest before thee bring;
 Fruits of more pleasing savour, from thy seed
 Sown with contrition in his heart, than those
 Which, his own hand manuring, all the trees
 Of Paradise could have produced, ere fallen 30
 From innocence. Now therefore, bend thine ear
 To supplication; hear his sighs, though mute;
 Unskilful with what words to pray, let me
 Interpret for him; me, his advocate
 And propitiation; all his works on me,
 Good, or not good, ingraft; my merit those
 Shall perfect, and for these my death shall pay.

Accept me; and, in me, from these receive
 The smell of peace toward mankind: let him live 40
 Before thee reconciled, at least his days
 Numbered, though sad; till death, his doom,
 (which I
 To mitigate thus plead, not to reverse,)
 To better life shall yield him: where with me
 All my redeemed may dwell in joy and bliss;
 Made one with me, as I with thee am one.

To whom the Father, without cloud, serene.

All thy request for Man, accepted Son, 50
 Obtain; all thy request was my decree:
 But, longer in that Paradise to dwell,
 The law I gave to Nature him forbids:
 Those pure immortal elements, that know,
 No gross, no unharmonious mixture foul,
 Eject him, tainted now; and purge him off,
 As a distemper, gross, to air as gross,
 And mortal food; as may dispose him best
 For dissolution wrought by sin, that first
 Distempered all things, and of incorrupt 60

Corrupted. I, at first, with two fair gifts
 Created him endowed; with happiness,
 And immortality: that fondly lost,
 This other served but to eternize woe;
 Till I provided death: so death becomes
 His final remedy; and, after life,
 Tried in sharp tribulation, and refined
 By faith and faithful works, to second life,
 Waked in the renovation of the just,
 Resigns him up with Heaven and Earth renewed.

70

But let us call to synod all the Blest,
 Through Heaven's wide bounds: from them I will
 not hide
 My judgements; how with mankind I proceed,
 As how with peccant Angels late they saw,
 And in their state, though firm, stood more con-
 firmed.

He ended, and the Son gave signal high
 To the bright minister that watched; he blew
 His trumpet, heard in Oreb since perhaps 80
 When God descended, and perhaps once more
 To sound at general doom. The angelick blast
 Filled all the regions: from their blisful bowers
 Of amarantine shade, fountain or spring,
 By the waters of life, where'er they sat
 In fellowships of joy, the sons of light
 Hasted, resorting to the summons high;
 And took their seats; till from his throne supreme
 The Almighty thus pronounced his sovran will.

90

O Sons, like one of us Man is become
 To know both good and evil, since his taste
 Of that defended fruit; but let him boast
 His knowledge of good lost, and evil got;

Happier! had it sufficed him to have known
 Good by itself, and evil not at all.

He sorrows now, repents, and prays contrite,
 My motions in him; longer than they move,
 His heart I know, how variable and vain, 100
 Self-left. Lest therefore his now bolder hand
 Reach also of the tree of life, and eat,
 And live for ever, dream at least to live
 For ever, to remove him I decree,
 And send him from the garden forth to till
 The ground whence he was taken, fitter soil.

Michael, this my behest have thou in charge;
 Take to thee from among the Cherubim
 Thy choice of flaming warriors, lest the Fiend, 110
 Or in behalf of Man, or to invade
 Vacant possession, some new trouble raise:
 Haste thee, and from the Paradise of God
 Without remorse drive out the sinful pair;
 From hallowed ground the unholy; and denounce
 To them, and to their progeny, from thence
 Perpetual banishment. Yet, lest they faint
 At the sad sentence rigorously urged,
 (For I behold them softened, and with tears
 Bewailing their excess,) all terror hide. 120

If patiently thy bidding they obey,
 Dismiss them not disconsolate; reveal
 To Adam what shall come in future days,
 As I shall thee enlighten; intermix
 My covenant in the Woman's seed renewed;
 So send them forth, though sorrowing, yet in
 peace:
 And on the east side of the garden place,
 Where entrance up from Eden easiest climbs,
 Cherubick watch; and of a sword the flame 130
 Wide-waving; all approach far off to fright,

And guard all passage to the tree of life:
Lest Paradise a receptacle prove
To Spirits foul, and all my trees their prey;
With whose stolen fruit Man once more to delude.

He ceased; and the arch-angelick Power prepared
For swift descent; with him the cohort bright
Of watchful Cherubim: four faces each
Had, like a double Janus; all their shape 140
Spangled with eyes more numerous than those
Of Argus, and more wakeful than to drowse,
Charmed with Arcadian pipe, the pastoral reed
Of Hermes, or his opiate rod. Mean while,
To re-salute the world with sacred light,
Leucothea waked; and with fresh dews imbalded
The earth; when Adam and first matron Eve
Had ended now their orisons, and found
Strength added from above; new hope to spring
Out of despair; joy, but with fear yet linked; 150
Which thus to Eve his welcome words renewed.

Eve, easily my faith admit, that all
The good which we enjoy from Heaven descends;
But, that from us aught should ascend to Heaven
So prevalent as to concern the mind
Of God high-blest, or to incline his will,
Hard to belief may seem; yet this will prayer
Or one short sigh of human breath, upborne 160
Even to the seat of God. For since I sought
By prayer the offended Deity to appease;
Kneeled, and before him humbled all my heart;
Methought I saw him placable and mild,
Bending his ear; persuasion in me grew
That I was heard with favour; peace returned
Home to my breast, and to my memory
His promise, that thy seed shall bruise our foe;
Which, then not minded in dismay, yet now

Assures me that the bitterness of death
 Is past, and we shall live. Whence hail to thee, 170
 Eve rightly called, mother of all mankind,
 Mother of all things living, since by thee
 Man is to live; and all things live for Man.

To whom thus Eve with sad demeanour meek.

Ill-worthy I such title should belong
 To me transgressour; who, for thee ordained
 A help, became thy snare; to me reproach
 Rather belongs, distrust, and all dispraise: 180
 But infinite in pardon was my Judge,
 That I, who first brought death on all, am graced
 The source of life; next favourable thou,
 Who highly thus to entitle me vouchsaf'st,
 Far other name deserving. But the field
 To labour calls us, now with sweat imposed,
 Though after sleepless night; for see! the morn,
 All unconcerned with our unrest, begins
 Her rosy progress smiling: let us forth;
 I never from thy side henceforth to stray, 190
 Where'er our day's work lies, though now en-
 joined
 Laborious, till day droop; while here we dwell,
 What can be toilsome in these pleasant walks?
 Here let us live, though in fallen state, content.

So spake, so wished much humbled Eve; but Fate
 Subscribed not: Nature first gave signs, impressed
 On bird, beast, air; air suddenly eclipsed,
 After short blush of morn; nigh in her sight
 The bird of Jove, stooped from his aery tour, 200
 Two birds of gayest plume before him drove;
 Down from a hill the beast that reigns in woods,
 First hunter then, pursued a gentle brace,
 Goodliest of all the forest, hart and hind;
 Direct to the eastern gate was bent their flight.

Adam observed, and with his eye the chase
Pursuing, not unmoved, to Eve thus spake.

O Eve, some further change awaits us nigh, 210
Which Heaven, by these mute signs in Nature,
shows

Forerunners of his purpose; or to warn
Us, haply too secure, of our discharge
From penalty, because from death released
Some days: how long, and what till then our life,
Who knows? or more than this, that we are dust,
And thither must return, and be no more?
Why else this double object in our sight
Of flight pursued in the air, and o'er the ground,
One way the self-same hour? why in the east 220
Darkness ere day's mid-course, and morning-light
More orient in yon western cloud, that draws
O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
And slow descends with something heavenly
fraught?

He erred not; for by this the heavenly bands
Down from a sky of jasper lighted now
In Paradise, and on a hill made halt;
A glorious apparition, had not doubt
And carnal fear that day dimmed Adam's eye. 230

Not that more glorious, when the Angels met
Jacob in Mahanaim, where he saw
The field pavilioned with his guardians bright;
Nor that, which on the flaming mount appeared
In Dothan, covered with a camp of fire,
Against the Syrian king, who to surprise
One man, assassin-like, had levied war,
War unproclaimed. The princely Hierarch
In their bright stand there left his Powers, to seize
Possession of the garden; he alone, 240
To find where Adam sheltered, took his way,

Not unperceived of Adam; who to Eve,
While the great visitant approached, thus spake.
Eve, now expect great tidings, which perhaps
Of us will soon determine, or impose
New laws to be observed; for I descry,
From yonder blazing cloud that veils the hill,
One of the heavenly host; and, by his gait,
None of the meanest; some great Potentate 250
Or of the Thrones above; such majesty
Invests him coming! yet not terrible,
That I should fear; nor sociably mild,
As Raphael, that I should much confide;
But solemn and sublime; whom not to offend,
With reverence I must meet, and thou retire.

He ended: and the Arch-Angel soon drew nigh,
Not in his shape celestial, but as man
Clad to meet man; over his lucid arms 260
A military vest of purple flowed,
Livelier than Meliboean, or the grain
Of Sarra, worn by kings and heroes old
In time of truce; Iris had dipt the woof;
His starry helm unbuckled showed him prime
In manhood where youth ended; by his side,
As in a glistering zodiack, hung the sword,
Satan's dire dread; and in his hand the spear.

Adam bowed low; he, kingly, from his state 270
Inclined not, but his coming thus declared.

Adam, Heaven's high behest no preface needs:
Sufficient that thy prayers are heard; and Death,
Then due by sentence when thou didst transgress,
Defeated of his seisure many days
Given thee of grace; wherein thou mayest repent,
And one bad act with many deeds well done
Mayest cover: Well may then thy Lord, appeased,
Redeem thee quite from Death's rapacious claim;

280

But longer in this Paradise to dwell
 Permits not: to remove thee I am come,
 And send thee from the garden forth to till
 The ground whence thou wast taken, fitter soil.

He added not; for Adam at the news
 Heart-struck with chilling gripe of sorrow stood,
 That all his senses bound; Eve, who unseen
 Yet all had heard, with audible lament
 Discovered soon the place of her retire. 290

O unexpected stroke, worse than of Death!
 Must I thus leave thee Paradise? thus leave
 Thee, native soil! these happy walks and shades,
 Fit haunt of Gods? where I had hope to spend,
 Quiet though sad, the respite of that day
 That must be mortal to us both. O flowers,
 That never will in other climate grow,
 My early visitation, and my last
 At even, which I bred up with tender hand 300
 From the first opening bud, and gave ye names,
 Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
 Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?
 Thee lastly, nuptial bower! by me adorned
 With what to sight or smell was sweet! from thee
 How shall I part, and whither wander down
 Into a lower world; to this obscure
 And wild, how shall we breathe in other air
 Less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits?
 Whom thus the Angel interrupted mild. 310

Lament not, Eve, but patiently resign
 What justly thou hast lost, nor set thy heart,
 Thus over-fond, on that which is not thine:
 Thy going is not lonely; with thee goes
 Thy husband; whom to follow thou art bound;
 Where he abides, think there thy native soil.

Adam, by this from the cold sudden damp
Recovering, and his scattered spirits returned, 320
To Michael thus his humble words addressed.

Celestial, whether among the Thrones, or named
Of them the highest; for such of shape may seem
Prince above princes! gently hast thou told
Thy message, which might else in telling wound,
And in performing end us; what besides
Of sorrow, and dejection, and despair,
Our frailty can sustain, thy tidings bring,
Departure from this happy place, our sweet 330
Recess, and only consolation left
Familiar to our eyes! all places else
Inhospitable appear, and desolate;
Nor knowing us, nor known: And, if by prayer
Incessant I could hope to change the will
Of Him who all things can, I would not cease
To weary him with my assiduous cries:
But prayer against his absolute decree
No more avails than breath against the wind,
Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth:
340

Therefore to his great bidding I submit.

This most afflicts me, that, departing hence,
As from his face I shall be hid, deprived
His blessed countenance: Here I could frequent
With worship place by place where he vouchsafed
Presence Divine; and to my sons relate,
On this mount he appeared; under this tree
Stood visible; among these pines his voice
I heard; here with him at this fountain talked: 350
So many grateful altars I would rear
Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone
Of lustre from the brook, in memory,
Or monument to ages; and thereon

Offer sweet-smelling gums, and fruits, and flowers:

In yonder nether world where shall I seek
 His bright appearances, or foot-step trace?
 For though I fled him angry, yet recalled
 To life prolonged and promised race, I now
 Gladly behold though but his utmost skirts 360
 Of glory; and far off his steps adore.

To whom thus Michael with regard benign.

Adam, thou knowest Heaven his, and all the Earth;
 Not this rock only; his Omnipresence fills
 Land, sea, and air, and every kind that lives,
 Fomented by his virtual power and warmed:
 All the earth he gave thee to possess and rule,
 No despicable gift; surmise not then 370
 His presence to these narrow bounds confined
 Of Paradise, or Eden: this had been
 Perhaps thy capital seat, from whence had spread
 All generations; and had hither come
 From all the ends of the earth, to celebrate
 And reverence thee, their great progenitor.

But this pre-eminence thou hast lost, brought
 down

To dwell on even ground now with thy sons:
 Yet doubt not but in valley, and in plain, 380
 God is, as here; and will be found alike
 Present; and of his presence many a sign
 Still following thee, still compassing thee round
 With goodness and paternal love, his face
 Express, and of his steps the track divine.

Which that thou mayest believe, and be confirmed
 Ere thou from hence depart; know, I am sent
 To show thee what shall come in future days
 To thee, and to thy offspring: good with bad 390
 Expect to hear; supernal grace contending

With sinfulness of men; thereby to learn
 True patience, and to temper joy with fear
 And pious sorrow; equally inured
 By moderation either state to bear,
 Prosperous or adverse: so shalt thou lead
 Safest thy life, and best prepared endure
 Thy mortal passage when it comes.—Ascend
 This hill; let Eve (for I have drenched her eyes)
 Here sleep below; while thou to foresight wakest;
 400

As once thou sleptst, while she to life was formed.

To whom thus Adam gratefully replied.

Ascend, I follow thee, safe Guide, the path
 Thou leadest me; and to the hand of Heaven submit,

However chastening; to the evil turn
 My obvious breast; arming to overcome
 By suffering, and earn rest from labour won,
 If so I may attain.—So both ascend 410
 In the visions of God. It was a hill,
 Of Paradise the highest; from whose top
 The hemisphere of earth, in clearest ken,
 Stretched out to the amplest reach of prospect lay.

Not higher that hill, nor wider looking round,
 Whereon, for different cause, the Tempter set
 Our second Adam, in the wilderness;
 To show him all Earth's kingdoms, and their glory.
 420

His eye might there command wherever stood
 City of old or modern fame, the seat
 Of mightiest empire, from the destined walls
 Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can,
 And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
 To Paquin of Sinaean kings; and thence
 To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul,

Down to the golden Chersonese; or where
 The Persian in Ecbatan sat, or since
 In Hispahan; or where the Russian Ksar 430
 In Mosco; or the Sultan in Bizance,
 Turchestan-born; nor could his eye not ken
 The empire of Negus to his utmost port
 Ercoco, and the less maritim kings
 Mombaza, and Quiloa, and Melind,
 And Sofala, thought Ophir, to the realm
 Of Congo, and Angola farthest south;
 Or thence from Niger flood to Atlas mount
 The kingdoms of Almansor, Fez and Sus,
 Morocco, and Algiers, and Tremisen; 440
 On Europe thence, and where Rome was to sway
 The world: in spirit perhaps he also saw
 Rich Mexico, the seat of Montezume,
 And Cusco in Peru, the richer seat
 Of Atabalipa; and yet unspoiled
 Guiana, whose great city Geryon's sons
 Call El Dorado. But to nobler sights
 Michael from Adam's eyes the film removed,
 Which that false fruit that promised clearer sight
 Had bred; then purged with euphrasy and rue 450
 The visual nerve, for he had much to see;
 And from the well of life three drops instilled.

So deep the power of these ingredients pierced,
 Even to the inmost seat of mental sight,
 That Adam, now enforced to close his eyes,
 Sunk down, and all his spirits became entranced;
 But him the gentle Angel by the hand
 Soon raised, and his attention thus recalled.

460

Adam, now ope thine eyes; and first behold
 The effects, which thy original crime hath wrought
 In some to spring from thee; who never touched
 The excepted tree; nor with the snake conspired;

Nor sinned thy sin; yet from that sin derive
Corruption, to bring forth more violent deeds.

His eyes he opened, and beheld a field,
Part arable and tilth, whereon were sheaves
New reaped; the other part sheep-walks and folds;
470

I' the midst an altar as the land-mark stood,
Rustick, of grassy sord; thither anon
A sweaty reaper from his tillage brought
First fruits, the green ear, and the yellow sheaf,
Unculled, as came to hand; a shepherd next,
More meek, came with the firstlings of his flock,
Choicest and best; then, sacrificing, laid
The inwards and their fat, with incense strowed,
On the cleft wood, and all due rights performed:
His offering soon propitious fire from Heaven 480
Consumed with nimble glance, and grateful steam;
The other's not, for his was not sincere;
Whereat he inly raged, and, as they talked,
Smote him into the midriff with a stone
That beat out life; he fell; and, deadly pale,
Groaned out his soul with gushing blood effused.

Much at that sight was Adam in his heart
Dismayed, and thus in haste to the Angel cried.
490

O Teacher, some great mischief hath befallen
To that meek man, who well had sacrificed;
Is piety thus and pure devotion paid?
To whom Michael thus, he also moved, replied.

These two are brethren, Adam, and to come
Out of thy loins; the unjust the just hath slain,
For envy that his brother's offering found
From Heaven acceptance; but the bloody fact
Will be avenged; and the other's faith, approved,
500

Lose no reward; though here thou see him die,
 Rolling in dust and gore. To which our sire.

Alas! both for the deed, and for the cause!
 But have I now seen Death? Is this the way
 I must return to native dust? O sight
 Of terrour, foul and ugly to behold,
 Horrid to think, how horrible to feel!
 To whom thus Michael. Death thou hast seen
 In his first shape on Man; but many shapes 510
 Of Death, and many are the ways that lead
 To his grim cave, all dismal; yet to sense
 More terrible at the entrance, than within.

Some, as thou sawest, by violent stroke shall die;
 By fire, flood, famine, by intemperance more
 In meats and drinks, which on the earth shall bring
 Diseases dire, of which a monstrous crew
 Before thee shall appear; that thou mayest know
 What misery the inabstinence of Eve 520
 Shall bring on Men. Immediately a place
 Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark;
 A lazar-house it seemed; wherein were laid
 Numbers of all diseased; all maladies
 Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
 Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
 Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
 Intestine stone and ulcer, colick-pangs,
 Demoniack phrenzy, moaping melancholy,
 And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy, 530
 Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
 Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

Dire was the tossing, deep the groans; Despair
 Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch;
 And over them triumphant Death his dart
 Shook, but delayed to strike, though oft invoked
 With vows, as their chief good, and final hope.

Sight so deform what heart of rock could long 540
 Dry-eyed behold? Adam could not, but wept,
 Though not of woman born; compassion quelled
 His best of man, and gave him up to tears
 A space, till firmer thoughts restrained excess;
 And, scarce recovering words, his plaint renewed.

O miserable mankind, to what fall
 Degraded, to what wretched state reserved!
 Better end here unborn. Why is life given
 To be thus wrested from us? rather, why 550
 Obtruded on us thus? who, if we knew
 What we receive, would either no accept
 Life offered, or soon beg to lay it down;
 Glad to be so dismissed in peace. Can thus
 The image of God in Man, created once
 So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
 To such unsightly sufferings be debased
 Under inhuman pains? Why should not Man,
 Retaining still divine similitude
 In part, from such deformities be free, 560
 And, for his Maker's image sake, exempt?
 Their Maker's image, answered Michael, then
 Forsook them, when themselves they vilified
 To serve ungoverned Appetite; and took
 His image whom they served, a brutish vice,
 Inductive mainly to the sin of Eve.

Therefore so abject is their punishment,
 Disfiguring not God's likeness, but their own;
 Or if his likeness, by themselves defaced; 570
 While they pervert pure Nature's healthful rules
 To loathsome sickness; worthily, since they
 God's image did not reverence in themselves.

I yield it just, said Adam, and submit.
 But is there yet no other way, besides
 These painful passages, how we may come

To death, and mix with our connatural dust?
 There is, said Michael, if thou well observe 580
 The rule of Not too much; by temperance taught,
 In what thou eatest and drinkest; seeking from
 thence

Due nourishment, not gluttonous delight,
 Till many years over thy head return:
 So mayest thou live; till, like ripe fruit, thou drop
 Into thy mother's lap; or be with ease
 Gathered, nor harshly plucked; for death mature:
 This is Old Age; but then, thou must outlive
 Thy youth, thy strength, thy beauty; which will
 change

To withered, weak, and gray; thy senses then, 590
 Obtuse, all taste of pleasure must forego,
 To what thou hast; and, for the air of youth,
 Hopeful and cheerful, in thy blood will reign
 A melancholy damp of cold and dry
 To weigh thy spirits down, and last consume
 The balm of life. To whom our ancestor.

Henceforth I fly not death, nor would prolong
 Life much; bent rather, how I may be quit,
 Fairest and easiest, of this cumbrous charge; 600
 Which I must keep till my appointed day
 Of rendering up, and patiently attend
 My dissolution. Michael replied.

Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest
 Live well; how long, or short, permit to Heaven:
 And now prepare thee for another sight.

He looked, and saw a spacious plain, whereon
 Were tents of various hue; by some, were herds⁶¹⁰
 Of cattle grazing; others, whence the sound
 Of instruments, that made melodious chime,
 Was heard, of harp and organ; and, who moved
 Their stops and chords, was seen; his volant touch,

Instinct through all proportions, low and high,
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.

In other part stood one who, at the forge
Labouring, two massy clods of iron and brass
Had melted, (whether found where casual fire 620
Had wasted woods on mountain or in vale,
Down to the veins of earth; thence gliding hot
To some cave's mouth; or whether washed by
stream

From underground;) the liquid ore he drained
Into fit moulds prepared; from which he formed
First his own tools; then, what might else be
wrought

Fusil or graven in metal. After these,
But on the hither side, a different sort
From the high neighbouring hills, which was their
seat,

Down to the plain descended; by their guise 630
Just men they seemed, and all their study bent
To worship God aright, and know his works
Not hid; nor those things last, which might pre-
serve

Freedom and peace to Men; they on the plain
Long had not walked, when from the tents, behold!
A bevy of fair women, richly gay
In gems and wanton dress; to the harp they sung
Soft amorous ditties, and in dance came on:
The men, though grave, eyed them; and let their
eyes

Rove without rein; till, in the amorous net 640
Fast caught, they liked; and each his liking chose;
And now of love they treat, till the evening-star,
Love's harbinger, appeared; then, all in heat
They light the nuptial torch, and bid invoke
Hymen, then first to marriage rites invoked:
With feast and musick all the tents resound.

Such happy interview, and fair event
 Of love and youth not lost, songs, garlands, flow-
 ers,

And charming symphonies, attached the heart 650
 Of Adam, soon inclined to admit delight,
 The bent of nature; which he thus expressed.

True opener of mine eyes, prime Angel blest;
 Much better seems this vision, and more hope
 Of peaceful days portends, than those two past;
 Those were of hate and death, or pain much worse;
 Here Nature seems fulfilled in all her ends.

To whom thus Michael. Judge not what is best 660
 By pleasure, though to nature seeming meet;
 Created, as thou art, to nobler end
 Holy and pure, conformity divine.

Those tents thou sawest so pleasant, were the tents
 Of wickedness, wherein shall dwell his race
 Who slew his brother; studious they appear
 Of arts that polish life, inventers rare;
 Unmindful of their Maker, though his Spirit
 Taught them; but they his gifts acknowledged
 none. 670

Yet they a beauteous offspring shall beget;
 For that fair female troop thou sawest, that seemed
 Of Goddesses, so blithe, so smooth, so gay,
 Yet empty of all good wherein consists
 Woman's domestick honour and chief praise;
 Bred only and completed to the taste
 Of lustful appetite, to sing, to dance,
 To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye:
 To these that sober race of men, whose lives 680
 Religious titled them the sons of God,
 Shall yield up all their virtue, all their fame
 Ignobly, to the trains and to the smiles
 Of these fair atheists; and now swim in joy,

Erelong to swim at large; and laugh, for which
The world erelong a world of tears must weep.

To whom thus Adam, of short joy bereft.

O pity and shame, that they, who to live well 690
Entered so fair, should turn aside to tread
Paths indirect, or in the mid way faint!
But still I see the tenour of Man's woe
Holds on the same, from Woman to begin.

From Man's effeminate slackness it begins,
Said the Angel, who should better hold his place
By wisdom, and superiour gifts received.

But now prepare thee for another scene. 700

He looked, and saw wide territory spread
Before him, towns, and rural works between;
Cities of men with lofty gates and towers,
Concourse in arms, fierce faces threatening war,
Giants of mighty bone and bold emprise;
Part wield their arms, part curb the foaming steed,
Single or in array of battle ranged

Both horse and foot, nor idly mustering stood;
One way a band select from forage drives 710

A herd of beeves, fair oxen and fair kine,
From a fat meadow ground; or fleecy flock,
Ewes and their bleating lambs over the plain,
Their booty; scarce with life the shepherds fly,
But call in aid, which makes a bloody fray;

With cruel tournament the squadrons join;
Where cattle pastured late, now scattered lies
With carcasses and arms the ensanguined field,
Deserted: Others to a city strong

Lay siege, encamped; by battery, scale, and mine,
720

Assaulting; others from the wall defend
With dart and javelin, stones, and sulphurous fire;
On each hand slaughter, and gigantick deeds.

In other part the sceptered heralds call
 To council, in the city-gates; anon
 Gray-headed men and grave, with warriors
 mixed,
 Assemble, and harangues are heard; but soon,
 In factious opposition; till at last,
 Of middle age one rising, eminent 730
 In wise deport, spake much of right and wrong,
 Of justice, or religion, truth, and peace,
 And judgement from above: him old and young
 Exploded, and had seized with violent hands,
 Had not a cloud descending snatched him thence
 Unseen amid the throng: so violence
 Proceeded, and oppression, and sword-law,
 Through all the plain, and refuge none was found.

Adam was all in tears, and to his guide 740
 Lamenting turned full sad; O! what are these,
 Death's ministers, not men? who thus deal death
 Inhumanly to men, and multiply
 Ten thousandfold the sin of him who slew
 His brother: for of whom such massacre
 Make they, but of their brethren; men of men
 But who was that just man, whom had not Heaven
 Rescued, had in his righteousness been lost?
 To whom thus Michael. These are the product
 Of those ill-mated marriages thou sawest; 750
 Where good with bad were matched, who of them-
 selves
 Abhor to join; and, by imprudence mixed,
 Produce prodigious births of body or mind.

Such were these giants, men of high renown;
 For in those days might only shall be admired,
 And valour and heroick virtue called;
 To overcome in battle, and subdue
 Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite

Man-slaughter, shall be held the highest pitch 760
Of human glory; and for glory done
Of triumph, to be styled great conquerours
Patrons of mankind, Gods, and sons of Gods;
Destroyers rightlier called, and plagues of men.

Thus fame shall be achieved, renown on earth;
And what most merits fame, in silence hid.

But he, the seventh from thee, whom thou beheldst
The only righteous in a world preverse, 770
And therefore hated, therefore so beset
With foes, for daring single to be just,
And utter odious truth, that God would come
To judge them with his Saints; him the Most High
Rapt in a balmy cloud with winged steeds
Did, as thou sawest, receive, to walk with God
High in salvation and the climes of bliss,
Exempt from death; to show thee what reward
Awaits the good; the rest what punishment;
Which now direct thine eyes and soon behold. 780

He looked, and saw the face of things quite
changed;

The brazen throat of war had ceased to roar;
All now was turned to jollity and game,
To luxury and riot, feast and dance;
Marrying or prostituting, as befel,
Rape or adultery, where passing fair
Allured them; thence from cups to civil broils.

At length a reverend sire among them came, 790
And of their doings great dislike declared,
And testified against their ways; he oft
Frequented their assemblies, whereso met,
Triumphs or festivals; and to them preached
Conversion and repentance, as to souls
In prison, under judgements imminent:
But all in vain: which when he saw, he ceased

By the Angel, on thy feet thou stoodest at last,
 Though comfortless; as when a father mourns
 His children, all in view destroyed at once;
 And scarce to the Angel utter'dst thus thy plaint.

O visions ill foreseen! Better had I
 Lived ignorant of future! so had borne
 My part of evil only, each day's lot
 Enough to bear; those now, that were dispensed

840

The burden of many ages, on me light
 At once, by my foreknowledge gaining birth
 Abortive, to torment me ere their being,
 With thought that they must be. Let no man seek
 Henceforth to be foretold, what shall befall
 Him or his children; evil he may be sure,
 Which neither his foreknowing can prevent;
 And he the future evil shall no less
 In apprehension than in substance feel,
 Grievous to bear: but that care now is past, 850
 Man is not whom to warn: those few escaped
 Famine and anguish will at last consume,
 Wandering that watery desert: I had hope,
 When violence was ceased, and war on earth,
 All would have then gone well; peace would have
 crowned

With length of happy days the race of Man;
 But I was far deceived; for now I see
 Peace to corrupt no less than war to waste.

How comes it thus? unfold, celestial Guide, 860
 And whether here the race of Man will end.

To whom thus Michael. Those, whom last thou
 sawest

In triumph and luxurious wealth, are they
 First seen in acts of prowess eminent
 And great exploits, but of true virtue void;

Who, having spilt much blood, and done much
wast
Subduing nations, and achieved thereby
Fame in the world, high titles, and rich prey;
Shall change their course to pleasure, ease, and
sloth, 870
Surfeit, and lust; till wantonness and pride
Raise out of friendship hostile deeds in peace.

The conquered also, and enslaved by war,
Shall, with their freedom lost, all virtue lose
And fear of God; from whom their piety feigned
In sharp contest of battle found no aid
Against invaders; therefore, cooled in zeal,
Thenceforth shall practice how to live secure,
Worldly or dissolute, on what their lords 880
Shall leave them to enjoy; for the earth shall bear
More than enough, that temperance may be tried:
So all shall turn degenerate, all depraved;
Justice and temperance, truth and faith, forgot;
One man except, the only son of light
In a dark age, against example good,
Against allurements, custom, and a world
Offended: fearless of reproach and scorn,
Or violence, he of their wicked ways
Shall them admonish; and before them set 890
The paths of righteousness, how much more safe
And full of peace; denouncing wrath to come
On their impenitence; and shall return
Of them derided, but of God observed
The one just man alive; by his command
Shall build a wonderous ark, as thou beheldst,
To save himself, and household, from amidst
A world devote to universal wrack.

No sooner he, with them of man and beast 900
Select for life, shall in the ark be lodged,

And sheltered round; but all the cataracts
Of Heaven set open on the Earth shall pour
Rain, day and night; all fountains of the deep,
Broke up, shall heave the ocean to usurp
Beyond all bounds; till inundation rise
Above the highest hills: Then shall this mount
Of Paradise by might of waves be moved
Out of his place, pushed by the horned flood,
With all his verdure spoiled, and trees adrift, 910
Down the great river to the opening gulf,
And there take root an island salt and bare,
The haunt of seals, and orcs, and sea-mews' clang:
To teach thee that God attributes to place
No sanctity, if none be thither brought
By men who there frequent, or therein dwell.

And now, what further shall ensue, behold.

He looked, and saw the ark hull on the flood, 920
Which now abated; for the clouds were fled,
Driven by a keen north-wind, that, blowing dry,
Wrinkled the face of deluge, as decayed;
And the clear sun on his wide watery glass
Gazed hot, and of the fresh wave largely drew,
As after thirst; which made their flowing shrink
From standing lake to tripping ebb, that stole
With soft foot towards the deep; who now had
stopt

His sluces, as the Heaven his windows shut.

930

The ark no more now floats, but seems on ground,
Fast on the top of some high mountain fixed.

And now the tops of hills, as rocks, appear;
With clamour thence the rapid currents drive,
Towards the retreating sea, their furious tide.

Forthwith from out the ark a raven flies,
And after him, the surer messenger,

A dove sent forth once and again to spy 940
 Green tree or ground, whereon his foot may light:
 The second time returning, in his bill
 An olive-leaf he brings, pacifick sign:
 Anon dry ground appears, and from his ark
 The ancient sire descends, with all his train;
 Then with uplifted hands, and eyes devout,
 Grateful to Heaven, over his head beholds
 A dewy cloud, and in the cloud a bow
 Conspicuous with three lifted colours gay,
 Betokening peace from God, and covenant new.950

Whereat the heart of Adam, erst so sad,
 Greatly rejoiced; and thus his joy broke forth.

O thou, who future things canst represent
 As present, heavenly Instructor! I revive
 At this last sight; assured that Man shall live,
 With all the creatures, and their seed preserve.

Far less I now lament for one whole world 960
 Of wicked sons destroyed, than I rejoice
 For one man found so perfect, and so just,
 That God vouchsafes to raise another world
 From him, and all his anger to forget.

But say, what mean those coloured streaks in
 Heaven

Distended, as the brow of God appeased?
 Or serve they, as a flowery verge, to bind
 The fluid skirts of that same watery cloud,
 Lest it again dissolve, and shower the earth? 970
 To whom the Arch-Angel. Dextrously thou aimest;
 So willingly doth God remit his ire,
 Though late repenting him of Man depraved;
 Grieved at his heart, when looking down he saw
 The whole earth filled with violence, and all flesh
 Corrupting each their way; yet, those removed,
 Such grace shall one just man find in his sight,

That he relents, not to blot out mankind;
And makes a covenant never to destroy
The earth again by flood; nor let the sea 980
Surpass his bounds; nor rain to drown the world,
With man therein or beast; but, when he brings
Over the earth a cloud, will therein set
His triple-coloured bow, whereon to look,
And call to mind his covenant: Day and night,
Seed-time and harvest, heat and hoary frost,
Shall hold their course; till fire purge all things
new,
Both Heaven and Earth, wherein the just shall
dwell.

BOOK XII

As one who in his journey bates at noon,
Though bent on speed; so here the Arch-Angel
 paused

 Betwixt the world destroyed and world restored,
If Adam aught perhaps might interpose;
Then, with transition sweet, new speech resumes.

Thus thou hast seen one world begin, and end;
And Man, as from a second stock, proceed.

Much thou hast yet to see; but I perceive 10
Thy mortal sight to fail; objects divine
Must needs impair and weary human sense:
Henceforth what is to come I will relate;
Thou therefore give due audience, and attend.

This second source of Men, while yet but few,
And while the dread of judgement past remains
Fresh in their minds, fearing the Deity,
With some regard to what is just and right
Shall lead their lives, and multiply apace; 20
Labouring the soil, and reaping plenteous crop,
Corn, wine, and oil; and, from the herd or flock,
Oft sacrificing bullock, lamb, or kid,
With large wine-offerings poured, and sacred feast,
Shall spend their days in joy unblamed; and dwell
Long time in peace, by families and tribes,

Under paternal rule: till one shall rise
 Of proud ambitious heart; who, not content
 With fair equality, fraternal state,
 Will arrogate dominion undeserved 30
 Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
 Concord and law of nature from the earth;
 Hunting (and men not beasts shall be his game)
 With war, and hostile snare, such as refuse
 Subjection to his empire tyrannous:
 A mighty hunter thence he shall be styled
 Before the Lord; as in despite of Heaven,
 Or from Heaven, claiming second sovranity;
 And from rebellion shall derive his name,
 Though of rebellion others he accuse. 40

He with a crew, whom like ambition joins
 With him or under him to tyrannize,
 Marching from Eden towards the west, shall find
 The plain, wherein a black bituminous gurge
 Boils out from under ground, the mouth of Hell:
 Of brick, and of that stuff, they cast to build
 A city and tower, whose top may reach to Heaven;
 And get themselves a name; lest, far dispersed
 In foreign lands, their memory be lost; 50
 Regardless whether good or evil fame.

But God, who oft descends to visit men
 Unseen, and through their habitations walks
 To mark their doings, them beholding soon,
 Comes down to see their city, ere the tower
 Obstruct Heaven-towers, and in derision sets
 Upon their tongues a various spirit, to rase
 Quite out their native language; and, instead,
 To sow a jangling noise of words unknown: 60
 Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud,
 Among the builders; each to other calls
 Not understood; till hoarse, and all in rage,

As mocked they storm: great laughter was in
 Heaven,
 And looking down, to see the hubbub strange,
 And hear the din: Thus was the building left
 Ridiculous, and the work Confusion named.

Whereto thus Adam, fatherly displeased.

70

O execrable son! so to aspire
 Above his brethren; to himself assuming
 Authority usurped, from God not given:
 He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl,
 Dominion absolute; that right we hold
 By his donation; but man over men
 He made not lord; such title to himself
 Reserving, human left from human free.

But this usurper his encroachment proud 80

Stays not on Man; to God his tower intends
 Siege and defiance: Wretched man! what food
 Will he convey up thither, to sustain
 Himself and his rash army; where thin air
 Above the clouds will pine his entrails gross,
 And famish him of breath, if not of bread?
 To whom thus Michael. Justly thou abhorrest
 That son, who on the quiet state of men

Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue
 Rational liberty; yet know withal, 90

Since thy original lapse, true liberty
 Is lost, which always with right reason dwells
 Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:
 Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
 Immediately inordinate desires,
 And upstart passions, catch the government
 From reason; and to servitude reduce
 Man, till then free. Therefore, since he permits
 Within himself unworthy powers to reign

Over free reason, God, in judgement just, 100
 Subjects him from without to violent lords;
 Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
 His outward freedom: Tyranny must be;
 Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.

Yet sometimes nations will decline so low
 From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong,
 But justice, and some fatal curse annexed,
 Deprives them of their outward liberty;
 Their inward lost: Witness the irreverent son 110
 Of him who built the ark; who, for the shame
 Done to his father, heard this heavy curse,
 Servant of servants, on his vicious race.

Thus will this latter, as the former world,
 Still tend from bad to worse; till God at last,
 Wearied with their iniquities, withdraw
 His presence from among them, and avert
 His holy eyes; resolving from thenceforth 120
 To leave them to their own polluted ways;
 And one peculiar nation to select
 From all the rest, of whom to be invoked,
 A nation from one faithful man to spring:
 Him on this side Euphrates yet residing,
 Bred up in idol-worship: O, that men
 (Canst thou believe?) should be so stupid grown,
 While yet the patriarch lived, who 'scaped the
 flood,
 As to forsake the living God, and fall
 To worship their own work in wood and stone
 For Gods! Yet him God the Most High vouchsafes
 130

To call by vision, from his father's house,
 His kindred, and false Gods, into a land
 Which he will show him; and from him will raise
 A mighty nation; and upon him shower

His benediction so, that in his seed
 All nations shall be blest: he straight obeys;
 Not knowing to what land, yet firm believes:
 I see him, but thou canst not, with what faith
 He leaves his Gods, his friends, and native soil,
 Ur of Chaldaea, passing now the ford 140
 To Haran; after him a cumbrous train
 Of herds and flocks, and numerous servitude;
 Not wandering poor, but trusting all his wealth
 With God, who called him, in a land unknown.

Canaan he now attains; I see his tents
 Pitched about Sechem, and the neighbouring plain
 Of Moreh; there by promise he receives
 Gift to his progeny of all that land,
 From Hameth northward to the Desert south; 150
 (Things by their names I call, though yet un-
 named;)
 From Hermon east to the great western Sea;
 Mount Hermon, yonder sea; each place behold
 In prospect, as I point them; on the shore
 Mount Carmel; here, the double-founted stream,
 Jordan, true limit eastward; but his sons
 Shall dwell to Senir, that long ridge of hills.

This ponder, that all nations of the earth
 Shall in his seed be blessed: By that seed 160
 Is meant thy great Deliverer, who shall bruise
 The Serpent's head; whereof to thee anon
 Plainlier shall be revealed. This patriarch blest,
 Whom faithful Abraham due time shall call,
 A son, and of his son a grand-child, leaves;
 Like him in faith, in wisdom, and renown:
 The grandchild, with twelve sons increased, de-
 parts
 From Canaan to a land hereafter called
 Egypt, divided by the river Nile

See where it flows, disgorging at seven mouths¹⁷⁰
 Into the sea. To sojourn in that land
 He comes, invited by a younger son
 In time of dearth, a son whose worthy deeds
 Raise him to be the second in that realm
 Of Pharaoh. There he dies, and leaves his race
 Growing into a nation, and now grown
 Suspected to a sequent king, who seeks
 To stop their overgrowth, as inmate guests
 Too numerous; whence of guests he makes them
 slaves

Inhospitably, and kills their infant males: 180
 Till by two brethren (these two brethren call
 Moses and Aaron) sent from God to claim
 His people from enthrallment, they return,
 With glory and spoil, back to their promised land.

But first, the lawless tyrant, who denies
 To know their God, or message to regard,
 Must be compelled by signs and judgements dire;
 To blood unshed the rivers must be turned;
 Frogs, lice, and flies, must all his palace fill 190
 With loathed intrusion, and fill all the land;
 His cattle must of rot and murren die;
 Botches and blains must all his flesh emboss,
 And all his people; thunder mixed with hail,
 Hail mixed with fire, must rend the Egyptians sky,
 And wheel on the earth, devouring where it rolls;
 What it devours not, herb, or fruit, or grain,
 A darksome cloud of locusts swarming down
 Must eat, and on the ground leave nothing green;
 Darkness must overshadow all his bounds, 200
 Palpable darkness, and blot out three days;
 Last, with one midnight stroke, all the first-born
 Of Egypt must lie dead. Thus with ten wounds
 The river-dragon tamed at length submits
 To let his sojourners depart, and oft

Humbles his stubborn heart; but still, as ice
More hardened after thaw; till, in his rage
Pursuing whom he late dismissed, the sea
Swallows him with his host; but them lets pass,
As on dry land, between two crystal walls; 210
Awed by the rod of Moses so to stand
Divided, till his rescued gain their shore:
Such wondrous power God to his saint will lend,
Though present in his Angel; who shall go
Before them in a cloud, and pillar of fire;
By day a cloud, by night a pillar of fire;
To guide them in their journey, and remove
Behind them, while the obdurate king pursues:
All night he will pursue; but his approach
Darkness defends between till morning watch; 220
Then through the fiery pillar, and the cloud,
God looking forth will trouble all his host,
And craze their chariot-wheels: when by com-
mand

Moses once more his potent rod extends
Over the sea; the sea his rod obeys;
On their embattled ranks the waves return,
And overwhelm their war: The race elect
Safe toward Canaan from the shore advance
Through the wild Desert, not the readiest way;
Lest, entering on the Canaanite alarmed, 230
War terrify them inexpert, and fear
Return them back to Egypt, choosing rather
Inglorious life with servitude; for life
To noble and ignoble is more sweet
Untrained in arms, where rashness leads not on.

This also shall they gain by their delay
In the wide wilderness; there they shall found
Their government, and their great senate choose
Through the twelve tribes, to rule by laws or-
dained: 240

God from the mount of Sinai, whose gray top
Shall tremble, he descending, will himself
In thunder, lightning, and loud trumpets' sound,
Ordain them laws; part, such as appertain
To civil justice; part, religious rites
Of sacrifice; informing them, by types
And shadows, of that destined Seed to bruise
The Serpent, by what means he shall achieve
Mankind's deliverance. But the voice of God
To mortal ear is dreadful: They beseech 250
That Moses might report to them his will,
And terrour cease; he grants what they besought,
Instructed that to God is no access
Without Mediator, whose high office now
Moses in figure bears; to introduce
One greater, of whose day he shall foretel,
And all the Prophets in their age the times
Of great Messiah shall sing. Thus, laws and rites
Established, such delight hath God in Men
Obedient to his will, that he vouchsafes 260
Among them to set up his tabernacle;
The Holy One with mortal Men to dwell:
By his prescript a sanctuary is framed
Of cedar, overlaid with gold; therein
An ark, and in the ark his testimony,
The records of his covenant; over these
A mercy-seat of gold, between the wings
Of two bright Cherubim; before him burn
Seven lamps as in a zodiack representing
The heavenly fires; over the tent a cloud 270
Shall rest by day, a fiery gleam by night;
Save when they journey, and at length they come,
Conducted by his Angel, to the land
Promised to Abraham and his seed:—The rest
Were long to tell; how many battles fought
How many kings destroyed; and kingdoms won;

Or how the sun shall in mid Heaven stand still
 A day entire, and night's due course adjourn,
 Man's voice commanding, "Sun, in Gibeon stand,
 And thou moon in the vale of Aialon, 280
 Till Israel overcome!" so call the third
 From Abraham, son of Isaac; and from him
 His whole descent, who thus shall Canaan win.

Here Adam interposed. O sent from Heaven,
 Enlightener of my darkness, gracious things
 Thou hast revealed; those chiefly, which concern
 Just Abraham and his seed: now first I find
 Mine eyes true-opening, and my heart much
 eased;
 Erewhile perplexed with thoughts, what would
 become 290

Of me and all mankind: But now I see
 His day, in whom all nations shall be blest;
 Favour unmerited by me, who sought
 Forbidden knowledge by forbidden means.

This yet I apprehend not, why to those
 Among whom God will deign to dwell on earth
 So many and so various laws are given;
 So many laws argue so many sins
 Among them; how can God with such reside? 300
 To whom thus Michael. Doubt not but that sin
 Will reign among them, as of thee begot;
 And therefore was law given them, to evince
 Their natural pravity, by stirring up
 Sin against law to fight: that when they see
 Law can discover sin, but not remove,
 Save by those shadowy expiations weak,
 The blood of bulls and goats, they may conclude
 Some blood more precious must be paid for Man;
 Just for unjust; that, in such righteousness 310
 To them by faith imputed, they may find

Justification towards God, and peace
 Of conscience; which the law by ceremonies
 Cannot appease; nor Man the mortal part
 Perform; and, not performing, cannot live.

So law appears imperfect; and but given
 With purpose to resign them, in full time,
 Up to a better covenant; disciplined
 From shadowy types to truth; from flesh to spirit;

320

From imposition of strict laws to free
 Acceptance of large grace; from servile fear
 To filial; works of law to works of faith.

And therefore shall not Moses, though of God
 Highly beloved, being but the minister
 Of law, his people into Canaan lead;
 But Joshua, whom the Gentiles Jesus call,
 His name and office bearing, who shall quell
 The adversary-Serpent, and bring back 330
 Through the world's wilderness long-wandered
 Man

Safe to eternal Paradise of rest.

Mean while they, in their earthly Canaan placed,
 Long time shall dwell and prosper, but when sins
 National interrupt their publick peace,
 Provoking God to raise them enemies;
 From whom as oft he saves them penitent
 By Judges first, then under Kings; of whom 340
 The second, both for piety renowned
 And puissant deeds, a promise shall receive
 Irrevocable, that his regal throne
 For ever shall endure; the like shall sing
 All Prophecy, that of the royal stock
 Of David (so I name this king) shall rise
 A Son, the Woman's seed to thee foretold,
 Foretold to Abraham, as in whom shall trust

All nations; and to kings foretold, of kings
 The last; for of his reign shall be no end. 350

But first, a long succession must ensue;
 And his next son, for wealth and wisdom famed,
 The clouded ark of God, till then in tents
 Wandering, shall in a glorious temple enshrine.

Such follow him, as shall be registered
 Part good, part bad; of bad the longer scroll;
 Whose foul idolatries, and other faults
 Heaped to the popular sum, will so incense 360
 God, as to leave them, and expose their land,
 Their city, his temple, and his holy ark,
 With all his sacred things, a scorn and prey
 To that proud city, whose high walls thou sawest
 Left in confusion; Babylon thence called.

There in captivity he lets them dwell
 The space of seventy years; then brings them back,
 Remembering mercy, and his covenant sworn
 To David, stablished as the days of Heaven. 370

Returned from Babylon by leave of kings
 Their lords, whom God disposed, the house of God
 They first re-edify; and for a while
 In mean estate live moderate; till, grown
 In wealth and multitude, factious they grow;
 But first among the priests dissention springs,
 Men who attend the altar, and should most
 Endeavour peace: their strife pollution brings
 Upon the temple itself: at last they seize
 The scepter, and regard not David's sons; 380
 Then lose it to a stranger, that the true
 Anointed King Messiah might be born
 Barred of his right; yet at his birth a star,
 Unseen before in Heaven, proclaims him come;

And guides the eastern sages, who inquire
 His place, to offer incense, myrrh, and gold:
 His place of birth a solemn Angel tells
 To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night;
 They gladly thither haste, and by a quire
 Of squadroned Angels hear his carol sung. 390

A virgin is his mother, but his sire
 The power of the Most High: He shall ascend
 The throne hereditary, and bound his reign
 With Earth's wide bounds, his glory with the
 Heavens.

He ceased, discerning Adam with such joy
 Surcharged, as had like grief been dewed in tears,
 Without the vent of words; which these he
 breathed.

400

O prophet of glad tidings, finisher
 Of utmost hope! now clear I understand
 What oft my steadiest thoughts have searched in
 vain;

Why our great Expectation should be called
 The seed of Woman: Virgin Mother, hail,
 High in the love of Heaven; yet from my loins
 Thou shalt proceed, and from thy womb the Son
 Of God Most High: so God with Man unites!
 Needs must the Serpent now his capital bruise
 Expect with mortal pain: Say where and when
 Their fight, what stroke shall bruise the victor's
 heel.

To whom thus Michael. Dream not of their fight,
 As of a duel, or the local wounds
 Of head or heel: Not therefore joins the Son
 Manhood to Godhead, with more strength to foil
 Thy enemy; nor so is overcome
 Satan, whose fall from Heaven, a deadlier bruise,

Disabled, not to give thee thy death's wound:
 Which he, who comes thy Saviour, shall recure,⁴²⁰
 Not by destroying Satan, but his works
 In thee, and in thy seed: Nor can this be,
 But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,
 Obedience to the law of God, imposed
 On penalty of death, and suffering death;
 The penalty to thy transgression due,
 And due to theirs which out of thine will grow:
 So only can high Justice rest appaid.

The law of God exact he shall fulfil 430
 Both by obedience and by love, though love
 Alone fulfil the law; thy punishment
 He shall endure, by coming in the flesh
 To a reproachful life, and cursed death;
 Proclaiming life to all who shall believe
 In his redemption; and that his obedience,
 Imputed, becomes theirs by faith; his merits
 To save them, not their own, though legal, works.

For this he shall live hated, be blasphemed, 440
 Seised on by force, judged, and to death con-
 demned
 A shameful and accursed, nailed to the cross
 By his own nation; slain for bringing life:
 But to the cross he nails thy enemies,
 The law that is against thee, and the sins
 Of all mankind, with him there crucified,
 Never to hurt them more who rightly trust
 In this his satisfaction; so he dies,
 But soon revives; Death over him no power
 Shall long usurp; ere the third dawning light 450
 Return, the stars of morn shall see him rise
 Out of his grave, fresh as the dawning light,
 Thy ransom paid, which Man from death redeems,
 His death for Man, as many as offered life

Neglect not, and the benefit embrace
By faith not void of works: This God-like act
Annuls thy doom, the death thou shouldest have
died,

In sin for ever lost from life; this act
Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength,
Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms; 460
And fix far deeper in his head their stings
Than temporal death shall bruise the victor's heel,
Or theirs whom he redeems; a death, like sleep,
A gentle wafting to immortal life.

Nor after resurrection shall he stay
Longer on earth, than certain times to appear
To his disciples, men who in his life
Still followed him; to them shall leave in charge 470
To teach all nations what of him they learned
And his salvation; them who shall believe
Baptizing in the profluent stream, the sign
Of washing them from guilt of sin to life
Pure, and in mind prepared, if so befall,
For death, like that which the Redeemer died.

All nations they shall teach; for, from that day,
Not only to the sons of Abraham's loins
Salvation shall be preached, but to the sons
Of Abraham's faith wherever through the world;
480

So in his seed all nations shall be blest.

Then to the Heaven of Heavens he shall ascend
With victory, triumphing through the air
Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise
The Serpent, prince of air, and drag in chains
Through all his realm, and there confounded leave;
Then enter into glory, and resume
His seat at God's right hand, exalted high
Above all names in Heaven; and thence shall come,

490

When this world's dissolution shall be ripe,
 With glory and power to judge both quick and
 dead;

To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward
 His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
 Whether in Heaven or Earth; for then the Earth
 Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days.

So spake the Arch-Angel Michael; then paused,
 As at the world's great period; and our sire, 500
 Replete with joy and wonder, thus replied.

O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
 That all this good of evil shall produce,
 And evil turn to good; more wonderful
 Than that which by creation first brought forth
 Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
 Whether I should repent me now of sin
 By me done, and occasioned; or rejoice
 Much more, that much more good thereof shall
 spring; 510

To God more glory, more good-will to Men
 From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.

But say, if our Deliverer up to Heaven
 Must re-ascend, what will betide the few
 His faithful, left among the unfaithful herd,
 The enemies of truth? Who then shall guide
 His people, who defend? Will they not deal
 Worse with his followers than with him they dealt?
 Be sure they will, said the Angel; but from Heaven
 520

He to his own a Comforter will send,
 The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
 His Spirit within them; and the law of faith,
 Working through love, upon their hearts shall

write,

To guide them in all truth; and also arm
 With spiritual armour, able to resist
 Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts;
 What man can do against them, not afraid,
 Though to the death; against such cruelties
 With inward consolations recompensed, 530

And oft supported so as shall amaze
 Their proudest persecutors: For the Spirit,
 Poured first on his Apostles, whom he sends
 To evangelize the nations, then on all
 Baptized, shall them with wonderous gifts endue
 To speak all tongues, and do all miracles,
 As did their Lord before them. Thus they win
 Great numbers of each nation to receive
 With joy the tidings brought from Heaven: At
 length

Their ministry performed, and race well run, 540
 Their doctrine and their story written left,
 They die; but in their room, as they forewarn,
 Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous
 wolves,

Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
 To their own vile advantages shall turn
 Of lucre and ambition; and the truth
 With superstitions and traditions taint,
 Left only in those written records pure,
 Though not but by the Spirit understood.

550

Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
 Places, and titles, and with these to join
 Secular power; though feigning still to act
 By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
 The Spirit of God, promised alike and given
 To all believers; and, from that pretence,
 Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force

On every conscience; laws which none shall find
 Left them inrolled, or what the Spirit within
 Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then⁵⁶⁰
 But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
 His consort Liberty? what, but unbuild
 His living temples, built by faith to stand,
 Their own faith, not another's? for, on earth,
 Who against faith and conscience can be heard
 Infallible? yet many will presume:
 Whence heavy persecution shall arise
 On all, who in the worship persevere
 Of spirit and truth; the rest, far greater part,
 Will deem in outward rites and specious forms⁵⁷⁰
 Religion satisfied; Truth shall retire
 Bestuck with slanderous darts, and works of faith
 Rarely be found: So shall the world go on,
 To good malignant, to bad men benign;
 Under her own weight groaning; till the day
 Appear of respiration to the just,
 And vengeance to the wicked, at return
 Of him so lately promised to thy aid,
 The Woman's Seed; obscurely then foretold,
 Now ampler known thy Saviour and thy Lord;⁵⁸⁰
 Last, in the clouds, from Heaven to be revealed
 In glory of the Father, to dissolve
 Satan with his perverted world; then raise
 From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
 New Heavens, new Earth, ages of endless date,
 Founded in righteousness, and peace, and love;
 To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss.
 He ended; and thus Adam last replied.

590

How soon hath thy prediction, Seer blest,
 Measured this transient world, the race of time,
 Till time stand fixed! Beyond is all abyss,
 Eternity, whose end no eye can reach.

Greatly-instructed I shall hence depart;
 Greatly in peace of thought; and have my fill
 Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
 Beyond which was my folly to aspire. 600

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
 And love with fear the only God; to walk
 As in his presence; ever to observe
 His providence; and on him sole depend,
 Merciful over all his works, with good
 Still overcoming evil, and by small
 Accomplishing great things, by things deemed
 weak
 Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
 By simply meek: that suffering for truth's sake
 Is fortitude to highest victory, 610
 And, to the faithful, death the gate of life;
 Taught this by his example, whom I now
 Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.

To whom thus also the Angel last replied.

This having learned, thou hast attained the sum
 Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars
 Thou knewest by name, and all the ethereal pow-
 ers,
 All secrets of the deep, all Nature's works, 620
 Or works of God in Heaven, air, earth, or sea,
 And all the riches of this world enjoyedst,
 And all the rule, one empire; only add
 Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith,
 Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,
 By name to come called charity, the soul
 Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loth
 To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
 A Paradise within thee, happier far.—
 Let us descend now therefore from this top 630

Of speculation; for the hour precise
 Exacts our parting hence; and see the guards,
 By me encamped on yonder hill, expect
 Their motion; at whose front a flaming sword,
 In signal of remove, waves fiercely round:
 We may no longer stay: go, waken Eve;
 Her also I with gentle dreams have calmed
 Portending good, and all her spirits composed
 To meek submission: thou, at season fit,
 Let her with thee partake what thou hast heard; 640
 Chiefly what may concern her faith to know,
 The great deliverance by her seed to come
 (For by the Woman's seed) on all mankind:
 That ye may live, which will be many days,
 Both in one faith unanimous, though sad,
 With cause, for evils past; yet much more cheered
 With meditation on the happy end.

He ended, and they both descend the hill;
 Descended, Adam to the bower, where Eve 650
 Lay sleeping, ran before; but found her waked;
 And thus with words not sad she him received.

Whence thou returnest, and whither wentest, I
 know;
 For God is also in sleep; and dreams advise,
 Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
 Presaging, since with sorrow and heart's distress
 Wearied I fell asleep: But now lead on;
 In me is no delay; with thee to go,
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay, 660
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
 Art all things under Heaven, all places thou,
 Who for my wilful crime art banished hence.

This further consolation yet secure
 I carry hence; though all by me is lost,
 Such favour I unworthy am vouchsafed,

By me the Promised Seed shall all restore.
So spake our mother Eve; and Adam heard 670
Well pleased, but answered not: For now, too nigh
The Arch-Angel stood; and, from the other hill
To their fixed station, all in bright array
The Cherubim descended; on the ground
Gliding meteorous, as evening-mist
Risen from a river o'er the marish glides,
And gathers ground fast at the labourer's heel
Homeward returning. High in front advanced,
The brandished sword of God before them blazed,
Fierce as a comet; which with torrid heat, 680
And vapour as the Libyan air adust,
Began to parch that temperate clime; whereat
In either hand the hastening Angel caught
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain; then disappeared.
They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand; the gate 690
With dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms:
Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them
soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and
slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.