

Paradise Lost, Book I

By John Milton

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first  
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,  
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That, to the height of this great argument,  
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  
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 host  
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  
In adamant 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,  
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,  
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  
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  
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 outshine  
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  
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,  
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  
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,  
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,  
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.  
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,  
Or do his errands in the gloomy Deep?  
What can it then 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  
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 oftentimes 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  
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.  
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,  
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,  
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  
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  
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.  
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,  
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  
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.  
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,  
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?”

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  
Groveling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,  
As we erewhile, astounded and amazed;  
No wonder, fallen such a pernicious height!”

He scarce 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,  
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 admiral, 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.  
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  
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



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 down  
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;  
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;  
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.  
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  
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,  
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 Emperorr'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,  
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  
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  
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:  
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  
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,  
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  
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  
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 ark  
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  
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  
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—  
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  
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  
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;  
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  
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  
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  
Sonerous metal blowing martial sounds:  
At which the universal host up-sent  
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  
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,  
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;  
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,  
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;  
And all who since, baptized or infidel,  
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,  
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,  
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  
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  
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,  
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  
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,  
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  
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  
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  
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  
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,  
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  
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.  
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—  
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  
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 naphtha 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  
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  
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.

Meanwhile the winged Heralds, by command  
Of sovereign power, with awful ceremony  
And trumpet's sound, throughout the host proclaim  
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  
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.  
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 room  
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.  
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,  
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.