



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 the Aonian mount,¹ while it pursues
 Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
 And chiefly Thou, O Spirit,² that dost prefer
 Before all temples the 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 madest 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,³ 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?
 The 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,

¹ *Above the Aonian Mount.*—Mount Helicon, the seat of the Greek Muses. The poet aims at higher things than could have come from their inspiration.

² *And chiefly Thou, O Spirit.*—It is thus that Milton seeks, not only the inspiration which has given us Hebrew poetry, but that which has given us Hebrew sanctity.

³ *Grand Parents.*—First, or great parents.

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
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion,¹ down
To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the 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 witnessed² 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 had 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 the utmost pole.

¹ *Combustion*.—Crushed and scattered by elemental forces.

² *That witnessed*.—Expressed—showed.

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,¹ and named
Beelzebub: to whom the arch-enemy,
And thence in Heaven called Satan,² with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:

If thou beest he; but oh, 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 contention 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,

¹ *Long after known in Palestine.*—Milton often speaks of the heathen gods as being the fallen angels, pretending their frands in that form upon their victims.

² *Satan.*—Enemy, in Hebrew.

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 the excess of joy
Sole reigning, holds the tyranny of Heaven.

So spake the 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 the embattled seraphim to war
Under thy conduct, and, in dreadful deeds
Fearless, endanger'd 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 remain
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 suffice¹ His vengeful ire,
Or do Him mightier service as His thralls²
By right of war, whate'er His business be,
Here in the heart of hell to work in fire,
Or to 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 the 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 contrary to His high will
Whom we resist. If then His providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;
Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their 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.

¹ *Suffice*.—Satisfy.

Thralls.—Anglo-Saxon for slaves. Hence our word thralldom.

Let us not slip the occasion, whether scorn,
 Or satiate fury, yield it from our Foe.
 Seest thou the dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
 The seat of desolation, void of light,
 Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
 Cast 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 whom¹ the fables name of monstrous size,
 'Titanian,² or Earth-born, that warred on Jove;
 Briareus,³ or Typhon,⁴ whom the den
 By ancient Tarsus held; or that sea-beast
 Leviathan, which God of all His works
 Created hugest that swim the 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 lea, while night
 Invests the sea, and wished morn delays:—
 So stretched out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay

¹As whom.—As his whom.

²Titanian.—The Titans, or giants, who according to the Greek mythology, made war upon the gods.

³Briareus.—One of three monster brothers, described as possessing a hundred arms and fifty heads. They are said to have given victory to the gods over the Titans.

⁴Typhon.—A tempest-producing, and sometimes a fire-breathing giant. Hesiod makes Typhaon and Typhæus two distinct monster powers of the primitive world.

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, shown
 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 in the 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,¹ or the shattered side
 Of thundering Ætna, whose combustible
 And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,
 Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds
 And leave a singed bottom, all involved²
 With stench and smoke. Such resting found the sole
 Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate:
 Both glorying to have 'scaped the Stygian³ 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,

¹ *Pelorus*.—The northern cape of Sicily.

² *All involved*.—Involved in, or along with.

³ *Stygian*.—From Styx—the name of the great river which is said to flow round the nether world seven times.