

**THE LONDON SERIES OF
ENGLISH CLASSICS.
PARADISE REGAINED.
A POEM IN FOUR BOOKS**

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The London Series of English Classics. Paradise Regained. A Poem in Four Books by John Milton & Charles S. Jerram

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JOHN MILTON & CHARLES S. JERRAM

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LONDON SERIES OF ENGLISH CLASSICS

EDITED BY

J. W. HALES, M.A. AND C. S. JERRAM, M.A.

MILTON'S PARADISE REGAINED

JERRAM

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A POEM IN FOUR BOOKS

BY

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EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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INTRODUCTION.

OF the origin of *Paradise Regained* we have an authentic account in the Autobiography of Thomas Ellwood, an Oxfordshire Quaker, who had been introduced to Milton in London, in or about 1662, and had been employed to read to him now that he had become totally blind. During the great Plague of 1665, Ellwood had taken a cottage for Milton at Chalfont St. Giles, in Buckinghamshire. There the poet put into his hands the MS. of *Paradise Lost*, bidding him read it at his leisure and give his opinion upon the work. 'After I had,' says Ellwood, 'with the best attention read it through, I made him another visit, and returned him his book. . . . He asked me how I liked it and what I thought of it, which I modestly but freely told him; and after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?" He made me no answer, but sat some time in a muse; then brake off that discourse, and fell upon another subject. After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed and become safely habitable again, he returned thither. And when afterwards I went to wait upon him there . . . he showed me his second poem, called *Paradise Regained*, and in a pleasant

tone said to me, "This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of." Hence we infer that *Paradise Regained* was begun at Chalfont in the latter part of 1665, and completed in manuscript by the following summer, or perhaps earlier.¹

That an attentive reader of *Paradise Lost* should have asked the question—'What hast thou to say of Paradise Found?'—is surprising, since the final restoration of Man is clearly set forth, not only in isolated passages, but in the entire plan of the poem. If its opening lines speak of the 'loss of Eden' as the penalty of Adam's transgression, they also declare that this penalty is to continue, not for ever, but only

'till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat.'—*P. L.* l. 4. 5.

Again, the plan of Man's redemption proposed by Messiah, and accepted by his Father in the Third Book, is in the Tenth communicated, though obscurely, to Adam and Eve in the curse pronounced against the Serpent:—

'Her seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his heel.'—*x.* 181.

¹ It is difficult to fix the date of Ellwood's visit to Milton in London; Milton probably returned thither in the spring of 1666, and we know that Ellwood was in prison at Wycombe from March 13 to June 25 of that year. Assuming that he would take the first opportunity of visiting his friend, we may suppose him to have done so very soon after his release; but his first *recorded* journey to London was on the occasion of a 'solemn meeting,' which may possibly have been held as late as the beginning of 1667. (See Ellwood's *Life*, p. 220.) That Milton composed most, if not the whole, of *Paradise Regained* at Chalfont is probable from his known habit of mind, which made him restlessly eager to finish any work he had begun, and from the internal evidence of the poem itself, which exhibits 'such a high degree of unity, connexion, and integral perfection, as indicates it to have been the uninterrupted work of (Dunster.)

the import of which is fully explained in the ten succeeding lines; while further on (x. 634-648) the Father declares to the assembled angels his gracious purpose, which his Son, the 'destined restorer of mankind,' shall afterwards accomplish. Lastly, in the Twelfth Book, Michael relates to Adam 'who that seed of the woman shall be, which was promised in the fall; his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the state of the Church till his second coming' (Argument of Bk. xii.); whereat Adam breaks forth into a transport of joy, exclaiming—

'O goodness infinite, goodness immense,
That all this good of evil shall produce
And evil turn to good!'—xii. 469.

Hence Addison, in his *Criticism on Paradise Lost*, justly observes that the author has taken pains to 'repair' what seemed to be an inherent defect in his subject by making the poem end with a prospect of future happiness; 'so that, while Satan is represented miserable in the height of his triumphs, Adam is triumphant in the height of misery' (*P. L.* x. 506-577).

We need not then be surprised that Milton, on hearing Ellwood's question, 'sat some time in a muse,' and 'brake off that discourse;' nor is it difficult to imagine what his thoughts must then have been. If Ellwood, a man of at least average intelligence (as his connexion with Milton implies, and as we know from other sources that he was), could so far misunderstand the poem, might not the general public fail yet more signally to apprehend its purpose; and would it not be best to make the matter secure by writing a second poem that should deal directly and exclusively with the event which in *Paradise Lost* he had but contemplated in the far distant future? This intention is distinctly declared in the first lines of the new poem—

'I who erewhile the happy garden sung
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
Recovered Paradise to all mankind.'

We do not therefore agree with Dunster's opinion that the *Paradise Regained* is so necessary a sequel to the *Paradise Lost*, that Milton must have intended from the first such a completion of his subject; nor with that of Schlegel, who thinks that 'he failed to discover the incompleteness of *Paradise Lost*,' but 'eventually perceived the defect, and appended *Paradise Regained*.' The former hypothesis is contradicted by his express declaration to Ellwood; the latter appears to be inconsistent with those passages in the earlier poem which we have cited as defining its scope, and which lead to the conclusion that its author would have been least likely to recognise incompleteness in the design. When however the suggestion thrown out by Ellwood had once recommended itself, the idea of making the new poem a sequel by way of contrast¹ to *Paradise Lost* would naturally follow.

The opening lines sufficiently indicate this connexion. As the first Adam, by yielding to the tempter, had lost Paradise, so the second Adam, by his successful resistance, restored it 'to all mankind;' and as the one disobedient act in Eden had been the occasion of the Fall, so the process of Man's recovery is fitly concentrated upon that single event in the life of Jesus, which placed him in immediate antagonism to the Spirit of evil. From an artistic point of view therefore Milton was right in confining the scene of *Paradise Regained* to the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness; here, if anywhere, was to be found the antithesis which would make the second poem a fitting sequel to the first; and we may

¹ See Prof. Masson's Introduction, vol. ii. pp. 7-10.

well believe that the choice was deliberately made. Commentators have regretted that he chose so narrow a ground to work upon, when his epic might have embraced the whole period of our Saviour's life, to its triumphal close in the Resurrection and Ascension. We can hardly suppose that the idea of all this never occurred to Milton, or that in his opinion the conflict with Satan was over, and the final victory won, after this single trial in the desert. In *Paradise Lost*, x. 182, he had declared that the prophecy, 'he shall bruise thy head,' was—

'then verified,
When Jesus . . . 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.'—

but not even then was it completely fulfilled, for he adds—

'Whom he shall tread at last under our feet,'

knowing only too well that the dominion of the 'god of this world' was as yet far from being finally abolished, and that by no conceivable extension of the limits of his poem could he have carried it onward to the desired consummation. But in *Paradise Regained* he has chosen a scene which is at once typical and representative. The victory in the wilderness was the earnest of ultimate victory, a first great battle, whose issue virtually decided the campaign; a grand turning-point or crisis, wherein all that came after was as surely determined as though it had been already achieved.¹ There is therefore no

¹ Archbishop Trench, speaking of the Temptation, observes—
'We cannot estimate too highly the importance of this victory, or the bearing which it had, and still has, on the work of Redemption.'