

**THE FALL OF MAN OR
PARADISE LOST OF CAEDMON:
TRANSLATED IN VERSE FROM
THE ANGLO-SAXON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649458684

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Cover @ 2017

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genesis & Anglo-Saxon poems

THE FALL OF MAN

OR

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PARADISE LOST

OF

CÆDMON

TRANSLATED IN VERSE FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON

WITH A NEW METRICAL ARRANGEMENT
OF THE LINES OF PART OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT, AND AN INTRODUCTION
ON THE VERSIFICATION OF CÆDMON.

BY

WILLIAM H. F. BOSANQUET, ESQ.

LONDON
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1860

PREFACE.

THE earliest poetry of the English or Anglo-Saxons is so far above the poetry of any other country of Europe at the same period, and Cædmon's first poem, "The Fall of Man, or Loss of Paradise," is so far above all other Anglo-Saxon poetry, that it will not be thought a useless labour to make some effort to put this fine poem into language intelligible to persons not familiar with the Anglo-Saxon dialect, and in the form of the original.

There is only one manuscript of Cædmon's poems in existence, which is now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and supposed to be of the tenth century.

The first printed copy of the poems was edited by Junius, without a translation, in 1655, the year

in which Milton is supposed to have made his first sketch of "Paradise Lost." A literal prose version of the work, together with the original text, was published by the Society of Antiquaries in 1832, under the superintendence of Mr. Benjamin Thorpe. In 1849 an improved edition of the original text was published in Germany, edited by Dr. Bouterwek.

In the following Introduction some observations are offered on the Metre of Cædmon's poetry; and in the Appendix a new division of the lines of a portion of the original text is given, in accordance with the observations made in the Introduction.

Cædmon was first a herdsman, afterwards a monk of Whitby in Yorkshire: he died A.D. 680. An account of him is given in the Venerable Bede's "Ecclesiastical History of England," bk. iv. c. 24. St. Bede tells us that Cædmon was a very devout man, and that by his poems many were inflamed with a love of heavenly things.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN speaking of the Poems of the Father of English Song, and perhaps the first Christian author of narrative poetry in any of the dialects of modern Europe, one assumes instinctively a calm and subdued air. We are not about to speak of the sacred Scriptures, but the work of Cædmon, his Paraphrase as it has been called, resembles so strongly the sacred writings that one approaches the subject with a feeling of reverence. We do not simply admire Cædmon. His first poem, "The Fall of Man," is not a paraphrase of the first part of the book of Genesis: such a title would be very inappropriate; it is a work of the imagination, founded doubtless upon the Scriptures, upon tradition and pious belief; and the subject is the most sublime upon which

the imagination of man can be employed ; and is treated by the poet with the simplicity and grandeur of Scripture.

The tone of Cædmon throughout this poem is more even and sustained than that of Milton, particularly in the latter part, after our first parents have eaten of the forbidden fruit. Here the conduct of Adam and Eve, so beautifully and touchingly narrated by Cædmon, is in Milton's poem so coarse, so repulsive, and so improbable that no one can read this part of Milton's narrative without displeasure, if indeed any one can bear to read it at all. Cædmon's poem has this further and great advantage over Milton's, it is not tainted with theological error or polemic banter, with which Milton's is much defaced ; and which, however imaginative, are neither poetical nor to the purpose of the poem. Cædmon is every inch a poet ; he never flags, he never offends in thought or word ; would the reader stay to criticise, he is carried on conscious of his master.

Sweetness, tenderness, devotion, and simplicity characterise the poems of the unlettered herdsman. His

language is smooth, sonorous, and varied, and displays the richness, flexibility, and expressive terseness of the Anglo-Saxon.

When we look back through so many ages upon our old bard, the Monk of Whitby, upon his contemporary and biographer the Venerable Bede, standing almost alone in Europe amid the ruins of the literature of the old world, presaging the greatness of the future, we become impressed with the large share our country has had in building up the literature of the Christian world, and with the great antiquity of our own. And if we look around for others of the same age, we find them still amongst the Angles, Aldhelm and Alcuin are ours.

The Versification of Cædmon.—Very different judgments have been formed with respect to Cædmon's versification. His contemporary the Venerable Bede, himself a poet and well acquainted with the harmonious verse of Greece and Rome, speaks of Cædmon as the chief of English poets, without an equal; he speaks of his "most harmonious verse," and says that English poets endeavoured to follow him, but none could ever compare with him. Modern writers, unacquainted as

we have hitherto been with so much as the proper pronunciation of his words, have expressed a very different opinion with respect to the harmoniousness of his verse. Sharon Turner, speaking of Anglo-Saxon poetry in general says:—"Little else seems to have been done than the formation of a style of composition different from prose; if we call this style poetry it is rather by complaisance than truth." (*Hist. of Angl.-Sax.*, vol. iii. b. ix.) And according to the modern mode of reading and arranging the lines the verse of Cædmon is certainly not harmonious to us. The Metre of Cædmon's first poem I believe to be the Heroic measure of five feet, making ten or eleven syllables, the tenth, however, being in all cases the last accented syllable, the same as Chaucer's and Shakspeare's, with the additional ornament of a judicious and moderate Alliteration. Shakspeare makes free use of alliteration as an ornament, but in Cædmon the alliteration appears to be made almost essential to the verse. The line differs in some respects from the modern English heroic line, inasmuch as it appears to contain a greater number of elisions, or blending of syllables; and there are other