



UNIVERSITÄTS-  
BIBLIOTHEK  
PADERBORN

## Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 369. Saturday, May 3.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621)

cumstance of the removal of our first parents from *Paradise*; but though this is not in it self so great a subject as that in most of the foregoing books, it is extended and diversified with so many surprizing incidents and pleasing Epifodes, that these two last books can by no means be looked upon as unequal parts of this divine Poem. I must further add, that had not *Milton* represented our first parents as driven out of *Paradise*, his Fall of man would not have been compleat, and consequently his Action would have been imperfect.

---

N<sup>o</sup> 369. Saturday, May 3.

---

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus----*

Hor.

---

**M**ILTON, after having represented in vision the history of mankind to the first great period of nature, dispatches the remaining part of it in narration. He has devised a very handsome reason for the Angel's proceeding with *Adam* after this manner; though doubtless the true reason was the difficulty which the Poet would have found to have shadowed out so mix'd and complicated a story in visible objects. I could wish, however, that the author had done it, whatever pains it might have cost him. To give my opinion freely, I think that the exhibiting part of the history of mankind in Vision, and part in Narrative, is as if an History-painter should put in colours one half of his subject, and write down the remaining part of it. If *Milton's* Poem flags any where, it is in this narration, where in some places the author has been so attentive to his divinity, that he has neglected his poetry. The narration, however, rises very happily on several occasions, where the subject is capable of poetical ornaments, as particularly in the confusion which he describes among the builders of *Babel*, and in his short sketch of the plagues of *Ægypt*. The storm of hail and fire, with the darkness that overspread the land for three days, are described with great strength. The beautiful passage which follows, is raised upon noble hints in scripture. — *Thus*

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 harden'd after thaw: till in his rage  
 Pursuing whom he late dismiss'd, the sea  
 Swallows him with his host, but them lets pass  
 As on dry land between two crystal walls,  
 Aw'd by the rod of Moses, so to stand  
 Divided

The *River-dragon* is an allusion to the Crocodile, which inhabits the Nile, from whence *Ægypt* derives her plenty. This allusion is taken from that sublime passage in *Ezekiel*; Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against thee Pharaoh King of Egypt, the great Dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for my self. Milton has given us another very noble and poetical image in the same description, which is copied almost word for word out of the history of *Moses*.

All night he will pursue, but his approach  
 Darkness defends between till morning watch;  
 Then thro' the fiery pillar and the cloud  
 God looking forth, will trouble all his host,  
 And craze their chariot-wheels: when by command  
 Moses once more his potent rod extends  
 Over the sea; the sea his rod obeys;  
 On their embattell'd ranks the waves return  
 And overwhelm their war:

As the principal design of this *Episode* was to give *Adam* an idea of the holy person, who was to re-instate humane nature in that happiness and perfection from which it had fallen, the Poet confines himself to the line of *Abraham*, from whence the *Messiah* was to descend. The Angel is described as seeing the Patriarch actually travelling towards the *Land of Promise*, which gives a particular liveliness to this part of the narration.

I see him, but thou canst not, with what faith  
 He leaves his Gods, his friends, his native soil  
 Ur of Chaldæa, passing now the ford

To Haran, after him a cumbrous train  
 Of herds and flocks and numerous servitude;  
 Not wand'ring poor, but trusting all his wealth  
 With God who call'd him, in a land unknown.  
 Canaan he now attains, I see his Tents  
 Pitcht about Sechem, and the neighbouring plain  
 Of Moreh, there by promise he receives  
 Gift to his progeny of all that land,  
 From Hamath northward to the desert south,  
 (Things by their names I call, though yet unnam'd.)

As *Virgil's* Vision in the sixth *Æneid* probably gave *Milton* the hint of this whole *Episode*, the last line is a translation of that verse, where *Archifus* mentions the names of places, which they were to bear hereafter.

*Hæc tum nomina erunt, nunc sunt sine nomine terræ.*

The Poet has very finely represented the joy and gladness of heart which rises in *Adam* upon his discovery of the *Messiah*. As he sees his day at a distance through types and shadows, he rejoices in it; but when he finds the redemption of man compleated, and *Paradise* again renewed, he breaks forth in rapture and transport,

*O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!  
 That all this good of evil shall produce, &c.*

I have hinted in my sixth paper on *Milton*, that an Heroic Poem, according to the opinion of the best Critics, ought to end happily, and leave the mind of the Reader, after having conducted it through many doubts and fears, sorrows and disquietudes, in a state of tranquillity and satisfaction. *Milton's* Fable, which had so many other qualifications to recommend it, was deficient in this particular. It is here therefore, that the Poet has shewn a most exquisite judgment, as well as the finest invention, by finding out a method to supply this natural defect in his subject. Accordingly he leaves the adversary of mankind, in the last view which he gives us of him, under the lowest state of mortification and disappointment. We see him chewing ashes, grovelling in the dust, and loaden with supernumerary pains and torments. On the contrary, our two first Parents are comforted by Dreams and Visions, cheered with promises of salvation, and, in a manner, raised to a greater happiness than that which they had forfeited: In short, *Satan* is represented miserable in the height of his triumphs, and *Adam* triumphant in the height of misery.

*Milton's*

Milton's Poem ends very nobly. The last speeches of *Adam* and the Arch-Angel are full of moral and instructive sentiments. The sleep that fell upon *Eve*, and the effects it had in quieting the disorders of her mind, produces the same kind of consolation in the Reader, who cannot peruse the last beautiful speech which is ascribed to the Mother of mankind, without a secret pleasure and satisfaction.

*Whence thou return'st, and whither went'st, 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  
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me  
Art all things under heav'n, all places thou  
Who for my wilful crime art banish'd hence.  
This farther consolation yet secure  
I carry hence; though all by me is lost,  
Such favour I unworthy am vouchsaf'd,  
By me the promis'd Seed shall all restore.*

The following lines, which conclude the Poem, rise in a most glorious blaze of poetical images and expressions.

*Heliodorus* in his *Aethiopics* acquaints us, that the motion of the gods differs from that of mortals, as the former do not stir their feet, nor proceed step by step, but slide over the surface of the earth by an uniform swimming of the whole body. The Reader may observe with how poetical a description *Milton* has attributed the same kind of motion to the Angels who were to take possession of *Paradise*.

*So spake our Mother Eve, and Adam heard  
Well-pleas'd, but answer'd not; for now too nigh  
Th' Arch-Angel stood, and from the other hill  
To their fix'd station, all in bright array  
The Cherubim descended; on the ground  
Gliding meteorous, as evening mist,  
Ris'n from a river, o'er the marish glides,  
And gathers ground fast at the lab'rer's heel  
Homeward returning. High in front advanc'd*

B b b 2

The

*The brandish'd sword of God before them blaz'd  
Fierce as a Comet——*

The Author helped his invention in the following passage, by reflecting on the behaviour of the Angel, who, in holy Writ, has the conduct of Lot and his family. The circumstances drawn from that relation are very gracefully made use of on this occasion.

*In either hand the hastning Angel caught  
Our ling'ring Parents, and to the eastern gate  
Led them direct; and down the cliff as fast  
To the subjected plain; then disappear'd.  
They looking back, &c.*

The scene which our first Parents are surprized with upon their looking back on *Paradise*, wonderfully strikes the Reader's imagination, as nothing can be more natural than the tears they shed on that occasion.

*They looking back, all th' eastern side beheld  
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,  
Wav'd over by that flaming brand, the gate  
With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms:  
Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wiped them soon:  
The world was all before them, where to chuse  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.*

If I might presume to offer at the smallest alteration in this divine work, I should think the Poem would end better with the passage here quoted, than with the two verses which follow.

*They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.*

These two verses, though they have their beauty, fall very much below the foregoing passage, and renew in the mind of the Reader that anguish which was pretty well laid by that consideration,

*The world was all before them, where to chuse  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.*

The number of books in *Paradise Lost* is equal to those of the *Aeneid*. Our Author in his first edition had divided his Poem into ten books, but afterwards broke the seventh and the eleventh each of them into two different books, by the help of some small additions. This second division

division was made with great judgment, as any one may see who will be at the pains of examining it. It was not done for the sake of such a chimerical beauty as that of resembling *Virgil* in this particular, but for the more just and regular disposition of this great work.

Those who have read *Bossu*, and many of the Critics who have written since his time, will not pardon me if I do not find out the particular moral which is inculcated in *Paradise Lost*. Though I can by no means think, with the last-mentioned *French* Author, that an Epic Writer first of all pitches upon a certain moral, as the ground-work and foundation of his Poem, and afterwards finds out a story to it: I am, however, of opinion, that no just Heroic Poem ever was, or can be made, from whence one great moral may not be deduced. That which reigns in *Milton* is the most universal and most useful that can be imagined; it is in short this, *that obedience to the will of God makes men happy, and that disobedience makes them miserable*. This is visibly the moral of the principal Fable which turns upon *Adam* and *Eve*, who continued in *Paradise* while they kept the Command that was given them, and were driven out of it as soon as they had transgressed. This is likewise the moral of the principal Episode, which shews us how an innumerable multitude of Angels fell from their state of bliss, and were cast into hell, upon their disobedience. Besides this great moral, which may be looked upon as the soul of the Fable, there are an infinity of under morals which are to be drawn from the several parts of the Poem, and which makes this work more useful and instructive than any other Poem in any language.

Those who have criticised on the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, and *Æneid*, have taken a great deal of pains to fix the number of months or days contained in the action of each of those Poems. If any one thinks it worth his while to examine this particular in *Milton*, he will find that from *Adam's* first appearance in the fourth book, to his expulsion from *Paradise* in the twelfth, the author reckons ten days. As for that part of the action which is described in the three first books, as it does not pass within the regions of nature, I have before observed that it is not subject to any calculations of time.

I have now finished my observations on a work which does an honour to the *English* nation. I have taken a general view of it under those four heads, the Fable, the Characters, the Sentiments, and the Language, and made each of them the subject of a particular paper. I have in the next place spoken of the Censures which our Author may incur under each  
of

of these heads, which I have confined to two papers, though I might have enlarged the number, if I had been disposed to dwell on so ungrateful a subject. I believe, however, that the severest Reader will not find any little fault in Heroic Poetry, which this Author has fallen into, that does not come under one of those heads among which I have distributed his several blemishes. After having thus treated at large of *Paradise Lost*, I could not think it sufficient to have celebrated this Poem in the whole, without descending to particulars. I have therefore bestowed a paper upon each book, and endeavoured not only to prove that the Poem is beautiful in general, but to point out its particular beauties, and to determine wherein they consist. I have endeavoured to shew how some passages are beautiful by being sublime; others by being soft; others by being natural: which of them are recommended by the passion; which by the moral; which by the sentiment; and which by the expression. I have likewise endeavoured to shew how the Genius of the Poet shines by a happy invention; a distant allusion; or a judicious imitation: how he has copied or improved *Homer* or *Virgil*, and raised his own imaginations by the use which he has made of several poetical passages in Scripture. I might have inserted also several passages of *Tasso*, which our Author has imitated; but as I do not look upon *Tasso* to be a sufficient Voucher, I would not perplex my Reader with such quotations, as might do more honour to the *Italian* than *English* Poet. In short, I have endeavoured to particularize those innumerable kinds of beauty, which it would be tedious to recapitulate, but which are essential to poetry, and which may be met with in the works of this great Author. Had I thought, at my first engaging in this design, that it would have led me to so great a length, I believe I should never have entered upon it; but the kind reception which it has met with among those whose judgments I have a value for, gives me no reason to repent of the pains I have been at in composing them.



Tuesday,