Of rebel angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equaled 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
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine 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 haleful 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 sulfur 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 center thrice to the utmost pole.  
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, overwhelmed
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and weltering by his side,
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
Restored 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 Sion'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 Atalantic mount while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou knowest: thou from the first
Wast present and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sit'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,
Favored 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 been him out from Heaven, with all his host
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As from the center thence to the utmost pole.*
O 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 the archenemy,
And thence in Heaven called Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:

"If thou best 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 luster, that fixed mind
And high disdain from sense of injured merit,
That with the Mightiest misled 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,
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 empire's 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, 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 vigor 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?"

Whereeto with speedy words the Archfiend 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 labor must be to pervert that end
And out of good still to find means of evil,
Which ofttimes 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 sulfurous 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 imperious rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
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
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbor there,
And reassembling 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
Protruded in 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 Earthborn, that warred on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Taurus 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,
Moores by his side under the lee while night
Invests the sea and wished morn delays.
So stretched out huge in length the Archfiend lay.
Aimed 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, or the shattered side
Of thundering Ætna, whose combustible
And fueled entrails, thence conceiving fire
Sublime? 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 escaped 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 forever 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; the 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."