

thunder. Who can read these lines without a sensation of mingled awe and admiration?

“ . . . Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.”

And to increase his thunderous vocabulary he racked the world of mythology for sonorous names.

Milton was a profound and elegant scholar. To a mastery of the classics he added a knowledge of every language of Europe, and from every corner of his vast storehouse he drew material for his work. “His poetry,” says Channing, “reminds us of the ocean, which adds to its boundlessness contributions from all regions under heaven.”

As he was profoundly educated, so a profound classical education is necessary in a reader to enjoy him fully. Remoteness is another striking feature of his poetry. Every page suggests volumes. The reader may not extract passive enjoyment from his lines, but is obliged to cooperate in mind with the author; and the more classical information he has in store, and the more exclusively he bends his energies to the page, the more repaid will the reader be.

Paradise Lost is Milton's greatest work, “the noblest monument of human genius.” It stands without a rival as a sublime creation. The only work comparable to it is Dante's Divine Comedy; but in flight of imagination, as well as dignity and solemn music of verse, the English poet is unapproachable. He takes his subject in the mysterious realm of the “undiscovered country,” and without specific description and simple declaration, so common with Dante and Homer, he leads the reader's imagination to wonder to the fullest extent of its individual capacity. In the language of Macaulay, “the works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed unless the mind of the reader cooperate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note and expects the hearer to make out the melody.” The finished picture, the completed symphony, depend upon the capacity of the reader.

H. H. MALLORY.