

THE THIRD BOOK

SO spake the Son of God; and Satan stood
A while as mute, confounded what to say,
What to reply, confuted and convinced
Of his weak arguing and fallacious drift;
At length, collecting all his serpent wiles,
With soothing words renewed, him thus accosts:--
"I see thou know'st what is of use to know,
What best to say canst say, to do canst do;
Thy actions to thy words accord; thy words
To thy large heart give utterance due; thy heart 10
Contains of good, wise, just, the perfect shape.
Should kings and nations from thy mouth consult,
Thy counsel would be as the oracle
Urim and Thummim, those oraculous gems
On Aaron's breast, or tongue of Seers old
Infallible; or, wert thou sought to deeds
That might require the array of war, thy skill
Of conduct would be such that all the world
Could not sustain thy prowess, or subsist
In battle, though against thy few in arms. 20
These godlike virtues wherefore dost thou hide?
Affecting private life, or more obscure
In savage wilderness, wherefore deprive
All Earth her wonder at thy acts, thyself

The fame and glory--glory, the reward
That sole excites to high attempts the flame
Of most erected spirits, most tempered pure
AEthereal, who all pleasures else despise,
All treasures and all gain esteem as dross,
And dignities and powers, all but the highest? 30

Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe. The son
Of Macedonian Philip had ere these
Won Asia, and the throne of Cyrus held
At his dispose; young Scipio had brought down
The Carthaginian pride; young Pompey quelled
The Pontic king, and in triumph had rode.

Yet years, and to ripe years judgment mature,
Quench not the thirst of glory, but augment.
Great Julius, whom now all the world admires,
The more he grew in years, the more inflamed 40
With glory, wept that he had lived so long
Inglorious. But thou yet art not too late."

To whom our Saviour calmly thus replied:--
"Thou neither dost persuade me to seek wealth
For empire's sake, nor empire to affect
For glory's sake, by all thy argument.
For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people's praise, if always praise unmixed?
And what the people but a herd confused,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol 50

Things vulgar, and, well weighed, scarce worth the praise?
They praise and they admire they know not what,
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
And what delight to be by such extolled,
To live upon their tongues, and be their talk?
Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise--
His lot who dares be singularly good.

The intelligent among them and the wise
Are few, and glory scarce of few is raised.
This is true glory and renown--when God, 60

Looking on the Earth, with approbation marks
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
To all his Angels, who with true applause
Recount his praises. Thus he did to Job,
When, to extend his fame through Heaven and Earth,
As thou to thy reproach may'st well remember,
He asked thee, 'Hast thou seen my servant Job?'
Famous he was in Heaven; on Earth less known,
Where glory is false glory, attributed

To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame. 70

They err who count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide, to overrun
Large countries, and in field great battles win,
Great cities by assault. What do these worthies
But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
Peaceable nations, neighbouring or remote,

Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
Than those their conquerors, who leave behind
Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,
And all the flourishing works of peace destroy; 80
Then swell with pride, and must be titled Gods,
Great benefactors of mankind, Deliverers,
Worshipped with temple, priest, and sacrifice?
One is the son of Jove, of Mars the other;
Till conqueror Death discover them scarce men,
Rowling in brutish vices, and deformed,
Violent or shameful death their due reward.
But, if there be in glory aught of good;
It may be means far different be attained,
Without ambition, war, or violence-- 90
By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance. I mention still
Him whom thy wrongs, with saintly patience borne,
Made famous in a land and times obscure;
Who names not now with honour patient Job?
Poor Socrates, (who next more memorable?)
By what he taught and suffered for so doing,
For truth's sake suffering death unjust, lives now
Equal in fame to proudest conquerors.
Yet, if for fame and glory aught be done, 100
Aught suffered--if young African for fame
His wasted country freed from Punic rage--

The deed becomes unpraised, the man at least,
And loses, though but verbal, his reward.
Shall I seek glory, then, as vain men seek,
Oft not deserved? I seek not mine, but His
Who sent me, and thereby witness whence I am."

To whom the Tempter, murmuring, thus replied:--

"Think not so slight of glory, therein least
Resembling thy great Father. He seeks glory, 110
And for his glory all things made, all things
Orders and governs; nor content in Heaven,
By all his Angels glorified, requires
Glory from men, from all men, good or bad,
Wise or unwise, no difference, no exemption.
Above all sacrifice, or hallowed gift,
Glory he requires, and glory he receives,
Promiscuous from all nations, Jew, or Greek,
Or Barbarous, nor exception hath declared;
From us, his foes pronounced, glory he exacts." 120

To whom our Saviour fervently replied:

"And reason; since his Word all things produced,
Though chiefly not for glory as prime end,
But to shew forth his goodness, and impart
His good communicable to every soul
Freely; of whom what could He less expect
Than glory and benediction--that is, thanks--
The slightest, easiest, readiest recompense

From them who could return him nothing else,
And, not returning that, would likeliest render 130
Contempt instead, dishonour, obloquy?

Hard recompense, unsuitable return
For so much good, so much beneficence!
But why should man seek glory, who of his own
Hath nothing, and to whom nothing belongs
But condemnation, ignominy, and shame--
Who, for so many benefits received,
Turned recreant to God, ingrate and false,
And so of all true good himself despoiled;
Yet, sacrilegious, to himself would take 140

That which to God alone of right belongs?
Yet so much bounty is in God, such grace,
That who advances his glory, not their own,
Them he himself to glory will advance."

So spake the Son of God; and here again
Satan had not to answer, but stood struck
With guilt of his own sin--for he himself,
Insatiable of glory, had lost all;
Yet of another plea bethought him soon:--

"Of glory, as thou wilt," said he, "so deem; 150
Worth or not worth the seeking, let it pass.
But to a Kingdom thou art born--ordained
To sit upon thy father David's throne,
By mother's side thy father, though thy right

Be now in powerful hands, that will not part
 Easily from possession won with arms.
 Judaea now and all the Promised Land,
 Reduced a province under Roman yoke,
 Obeys Tiberius, nor is always ruled
 With temperate sway: oft have they violated 160
 The Temple, oft the Law, with foul affronts,
 Abominations rather, as did once
 Antiochus. And think'st thou to regain
 Thy right by sitting still, or thus retiring?
 So did not Machabeus. He indeed
 Retired unto the Desert, but with arms;
 And o'er a mighty king so oft prevailed
 That by strong hand his family obtained,
 Though priests, the crown, and David's throne usurped,
 With Modin and her suburbs once content. 170
 If kingdom move thee not, let move thee zeal
 And duty--zeal and duty are not slow,
 But on Occasion's forelock watchful wait:
 They themselves rather are occasion best--
 Zeal of thy Father's house, duty to free
 Thy country from her heathen servitude.
 So shalt thou best fulfil, best verify,
 The Prophets old, who sung thy endless reign--
 The happier reign the sooner it begins.
 Rein then; what canst thou better do the while?" 180

To whom our Saviour answer thus returned:--
 "All things are best fulfilled in their due time;
 And time there is for all things, Truth hath said.
 If of my reign Prophetic Writ hath told
 That it shall never end, so, when begin
 The Father in his purpose hath decreed--
 He in whose hand all times and seasons rowl.
 What if he hath decreed that I shall first
 Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,
 By tribulations, injuries, insults, 190
 Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,
 Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting
 Without distrust or doubt, that He may know
 What I can suffer, how obey? Who best
 Can suffer best can do, best reign who first
 Well hath obeyed--just trial ere I merit
 My exaltation without change or end.
 But what concerns it thee when I begin
 My everlasting Kingdom? Why art thou
 Solicitous? What moves thy inquisition? 200
 Know'st thou not that my rising is thy fall,
 And my promotion will be thy destruction?"
 To whom the Tempter, inly racked, replied:--
 "Let that come when it comes. All hope is lost
 Of my reception into grace; what worse?
 For where no hope is left is left no fear.

If there be worse, the expectation more
Of worse torments me than the feeling can.
I would be at the worst; worst is my port,
My harbour, and my ultimate repose, 210
The end I would attain, my final good.
My error was my error, and my crime
My crime; whatever, for itself condemned,
And will alike be punished, whether thou
Reign or reign not--though to that gentle brow
Willingly I could fly, and hope thy reign,
From that placid aspect and meek regard,
Rather than aggravate my evil state,
Would stand between me and thy Father's ire
(Whose ire I dread more than the fire of Hell) 220
A shelter and a kind of shading cool
Interposition, as a summer's cloud.
If I, then, to the worst that can be haste,
Why move thy feet so slow to what is best?
Happiest, both to thyself and all the world,
That thou, who worthiest art, shouldst be their King!
Perhaps thou linger'st in deep thoughts detained
Of the enterprise so hazardous and high!
No wonder; for, though in thee be united
What of perfection can in Man be found, 230
Or human nature can receive, consider
Thy life hath yet been private, most part spent

At home, scarce viewed the Galilean towns,
And once a year Jerusalem, few days'
Short sojourn; and what thence couldst thou observe?
The world thou hast not seen, much less her glory,
Empires, and monarchs, and their radiant courts--
Best school of best experience, quickest in sight
In all things that to greatest actions lead.

The wisest, unexperienced, will be ever 240
Timorous, and loth, with novice modesty
(As he who, seeking asses, found a kingdom)
Irresolute, unhardy, unadventrous.

But I will bring thee where thou soon shalt quit
Those rudiments, and see before thine eyes
The monarchies of the Earth, their pomp and state--
Sufficient introduction to inform
Thee, of thyself so apt, in regal arts,
And regal mysteries; that thou may'st know
How best their opposition to withstand." 250

With that (such power was given him then), he took
The Son of God up to a mountain high.
It was a mountain at whose verdant feet
A spacious plain outstretched in circuit wide
Lay pleasant; from his side two rivers flowed,
The one winding, the other straight, and left between
Fair champaign, with less rivers interveined,
Then meeting joined their tribute to the sea.

Fertil of corn the glebe, of oil, and wine;
With herds the pasture thronged, with flocks the hills; 260
Huge cities and high-towered, that well might seem
The seats of mightiest monarchs; and so large
The prospect was that here and there was room
For barren desert, fountainless and dry.

To this high mountain-top the Tempter brought
Our Saviour, and new train of words began:--

"Well have we speeded, and o'er hill and dale,
Forest, and field, and flood, temples and towers,
Cut shorter many a league. Here thou behold'st

Assyria, and her empire's ancient bounds, 270

Araxes and the Caspian lake; thence on
As far as Indus east, Euphrates west,
And oft beyond; to south the Persian bay,
And, inaccessible, the Arabian drouth:

Here, Nineveh, of length within her wall
Several days' journey, built by Ninus old,
Of that first golden monarchy the seat,
And seat of Salmanassar, whose success
Israel in long captivity still mourns;

There Babylon, the wonder of all tongues, 280

As ancient, but rebuilt by him who twice
Judah and all thy father David's house
Led captive, and Jerusalem laid waste,
Till Cyrus set them free; Persepolis,

His city, there thou seest, and Bactra there;
Ecbatana her structure vast there shews,
And Hecatompylos her hunderd gates;
There Susa by Choaspes, amber stream,
The drink of none but kings; of later fame,
Built by Emathian or by Parthian hands, 290
The great Seleucia, Nisibis, and there
Artaxata, Teredon, Ctesiphon,
Turning with easy eye, thou may'st behold.
All these the Parthian (now some ages past
By great Arsaces led, who founded first
That empire) under his dominion holds,
From the luxurious kings of Antioch won.
And just in time thou com'st to have a view
Of his great power; for now the Parthian king
In Ctesiphon hath gathered all his host 300
Against the Scythian, whose incursions wild
Have wasted Sogdiana; to her aid
He marches now in haste. See, though from far,
His thousands, in what martial equipage
They issue forth, steel bows and shafts their arms,
Of equal dread in flight or in pursuit--
All horsemen, in which fight they most excel;
See how in warlike muster they appear,
In rhombs, and wedges, and half-moons, and wings."

He looked, and saw what numbers numberless 310

The city gates outpoured, light-armed troops
In coats of mail and military pride.
In mail their horses clad, yet fleet and strong,
Prauncing their riders bore, the flower and choice
Of many provinces from bound to bound--
From Arachosia, from Candaor east,
And Margiana, to the Hyrcanian cliffs
Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales;
From Atropatia, and the neighbouring plains
Of Adiabene, Media, and the south 320
Of Susiana, to Balsara's haven.
He saw them in their forms of battle ranged,
How quick they wheeled, and flying behind them shot
Sharp sleet of arrowy showers against the face
Of their pursuers, and overcame by flight;
The field all iron cast a gleaming brown.
Nor wanted clouds of foot, nor, on each horn,
Cuirassiers all in steel for standing fight,
Chariots, or elephants indorsed with towers
Of archers; nor of labouring pioners 330
A multitude, with spades and axes armed,
To lay hills plain, fell woods, or valleys fill,
Or where plain was raise hill, or overlay
With bridges rivers proud, as with a yoke:
Mules after these, camels and dromedaries,
And waggons fraught with utensils of war.

Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,
When Agrican, with all his northern powers,
Besieged Albracea, as romances tell,
The city of Gallaphrone, from thence to win 340
The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
His daughter, sought by many prowest knights,
Both Paynim and the peers of Charlemane.
Such and so numerous was their chivalry;
At sight whereof the Fiend yet more presumed,
And to our Saviour thus his words renewed:--
"That thou may'st know I seek not to engage
Thy virtue, and not every way secure
On no slight grounds thy safety, hear and mark
To what end I have brought thee hither, and shew 350
All this fair sight. Thy kingdom, though foretold
By Prophet or by Angel, unless thou
Endeavour, as thy father David did,
Thou never shalt obtain: prediction still
In all things, and all men, supposes means;
Without means used, what it predicts revokes.
But say thou wert possessed of David's throne
By free consent of all, none opposite,
Samaritan or Jew; how couldst thou hope
Long to enjoy it quiet and secure 360
Between two such enclosing enemies,
Roman and Parthian? Therefore one of these

Thou must make sure thy own: the Parthian first,
By my advice, as nearer, and of late
Found able by invasion to annoy
Thy country, and captive lead away her kings,
Antigonus and old Hyrcanus, bound,
Maugre the Roman. It shall be my task
To render thee the Parthian at dispose,
Choose which thou wilt, by conquest or by league. 370

By him thou shalt regain, without him not,
That which alone can truly reinstall thee
In David's royal seat, his true successor--
Deliverance of thy brethren, those Ten Tribes
Whose offspring in his territory yet serve
In Habor, and among the Medes dispersed:
The sons of Jacob, two of Joseph, lost
Thus long from Israel, serving, as of old
Their fathers in the land of Egypt served,
This offer sets before thee to deliver. 380

These if from servitude thou shalt restore
To their inheritance, then, nor till then,
Thou on the throne of David in full glory,
From Egypt to Euphrates and beyond,
Shalt reign, and Rome or Caesar not need fear."

To whom our Saviour answered thus, unmoved:--
"Much ostentation vain of fleshly arm
And fragile arms, much instrument of war,

Long in preparing, soon to nothing brought,
 Before mine eyes thou hast set, and in my ear 390
 Vented much policy, and projects deep
 Of enemies, of aids, battles, and leagues,
 Plausible to the world, to me worth naught.
 Means I must use, thou say'st; prediction else
 Will unpredict, and fail me of the throne!
 My time, I told thee (and that time for thee
 Were better farthest off), is not yet come.
 When that comes, think not thou to find me slack
 On my part aught endeavouring, or to need
 Thy politic maxims, or that cumbersome 400
 Luggage of war there shewn me--argument
 Of human weakness rather than of strength.
 My brethren, as thou call'st them, those Ten Tribes,
 I must deliver, if I mean to reign
 David's true heir, and his full sceptre sway
 To just extent over all Israel's sons!
 But whence to thee this zeal? Where was it then
 For Israel, or for David, or his throne,
 When thou stood'st up his tempter to the pride
 Of numbering Israel--which cost the lives 410
 of threescore and ten thousand Israelites
 By three days' pestilence? Such was thy zeal
 To Israel then, the same that now to me.
 As for those captive tribes, themselves were they

Who wrought their own captivity, fell off
 From God to worship calves, the deities
 Of Egypt, Baal next and Ashtaroth,
 And all the idolatries of heathen round,
 Besides their other worse than heathenish crimes;
 Nor in the land of their captivity 420
 Humbled themselves, or penitent besought
 The God of their forefathers, but so died
 Impenitent, and left a race behind
 Like to themselves, distinguishable scarce
 From Gentiles, but by circumcision vain,
 And God with idols in their worship joined.
 Should I of these the liberty regard,
 Who, freed, as to their ancient patrimony,
 Unhumbled, unrepentant, unreformed,
 Headlong would follow, and to their gods perhaps 430
 Of Bethel and of Dan? No; let them serve
 Their enemies who serve idols with God.
 Yet He at length, time to himself best known,
 Remembering Abraham, by some wondrous call
 May bring them back, repentant and sincere,
 And at their passing cleave the Assyrian flood,
 While to their native land with joy they haste,
 As the Red Sea and Jordan once he cleft,
 When to the Promised Land their fathers passed.
 To his due time and providence I leave them." 440

So spake Israel's true King, and to the Fiend
Made answer meet, that made void all his wiles.
So fares it when with truth falsehood contends.