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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

THE INFLUENCE
OF
MILTON'S BLINDNESS
ON
PARADISE LOST

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
Of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of Master of Arts

Department of English

By

Harrell N. Tague

1932

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The Influence of Milton's Blindness
on
Paradise Lost

Part One
Light and Shadow

It seems reasonable to believe that if Milton had never lost his sight, Paradise Lost would have been a very different poem. William Vaughan Moody, one of the very few writers to consider even superficially the effect of Milton's blindness on Paradise Lost, has written:-

"Milton's blindness, which at first thought might be deemed crushingly against him here, really helped him. Cut off forever from the light of the sun, he turned his imagination passionately in upon the memories of color and form which he had carried with him into darkness, and took delight in giving to the obscure shades of hell and the vague glories of heaven a startling concreteness and actuality. And these pictures, almost without exception, possess a quality very rare in the history of imagination, a quality which can only be hinted at by the abused epithet 'sublime.' Even the pictures of Dante, placed beside them, have an everyday colloquial look. Milton's all 'dilated stand like Teneriffe or Atlas.' DeQuincey was right in declaring that

the pervading presence of this quality gives Paradise Lost its unique worth, and makes of it a work which, if lost, could not be guessed at from the work of other minds."*

To determine, however, the exact influence of Milton's blindness upon Paradise Lost is practically impossible. The subject matter of the poem is such that even a man with perfectly normal sight would have to treat it with a pen dipped alternately in stygian darkness and heavenly light. Where does the painting of light and shadow inherent in the subject matter cease, and where does the painting of light and shadow occasioned by blindness begin? A great deal of care will be necessary to determine even fairly accurately just how the poem was affected by the blindness of the poet.

Perhaps the best method by which to determine what part Milton's blindness had in the creation of his images is to compare his poem with another which deals with the same subject and which was written by a man with normal sight. Shall we find so much light and darkness in Dante's Inferno and Paradiso? Let us look first at Milton's poem and then at Dante's.

In Book I of Paradise Lost there are 23 words meaning darkness and 36 meaning light. The question may arise here as to what is meant by a light word or a dark word. A light word is any word which denotes or connotes light. The following examples were taken from Book I:- brightness, lustre, fiery, azure,

*Milton's Complete Poems, p. 100

(Edited by William Vaughn Moody, N. Y. 1924, Houghton Mifflin)

beams, shone, blaze, starry, sun. Conversely any word which denotes or connotes darkness is considered a dark word. The following examples were taken from Book I:- darkness, doleful shades, gloom, night, pitchy cloud.

The fact that in a description of Hell where there is "no light but only darkness visible" Milton should use more words signifying light than darkness seems remarkable at first, but the situation is cleared up when we make a careful check and find that most of the light words are used negatively and thus become to all intents and purposes dark words. The feeling of darkness is emphasized by contrast.

In Book II which deals with the consultation of the fallen angels and the journey of Satan toward the world, we have 40 dark words and only 16 light words. The darkness deepens.

In Book III we find 63 light words to only 21 dark words. What a sudden burst of glory! One would know without being told that Book III pictures God in his Heaven.

Second only to the light of Heaven is the light of Paradise. In Book IV which describes Eden we find 42 light words as compared with 26 dark words.

In Book V which continues to describe Eden the brilliance still grows. It is almost as if a picture were coming gradually into focus. There are only 31 dark words to contrast with 64 light words. Part of this preponderance of light words may, however, be attributed to the fact that in this book Raphael is describing heavenly scenes.

Raphael's descriptions carry over into Book VI which also reflects the glories of Heaven by a 59 to 28 majority of light over dark words.

As Raphael's story progresses to an account of the creation of the world great floods of light stream out across the darkness. In Book VII there are only 25 words of darkness as compared with 76 words of light.

Adam himself is not at a loss for glorious words. In Book VIII when he recounts his earliest recollections of Eden, he employs 43 light words and only 9 dark words.

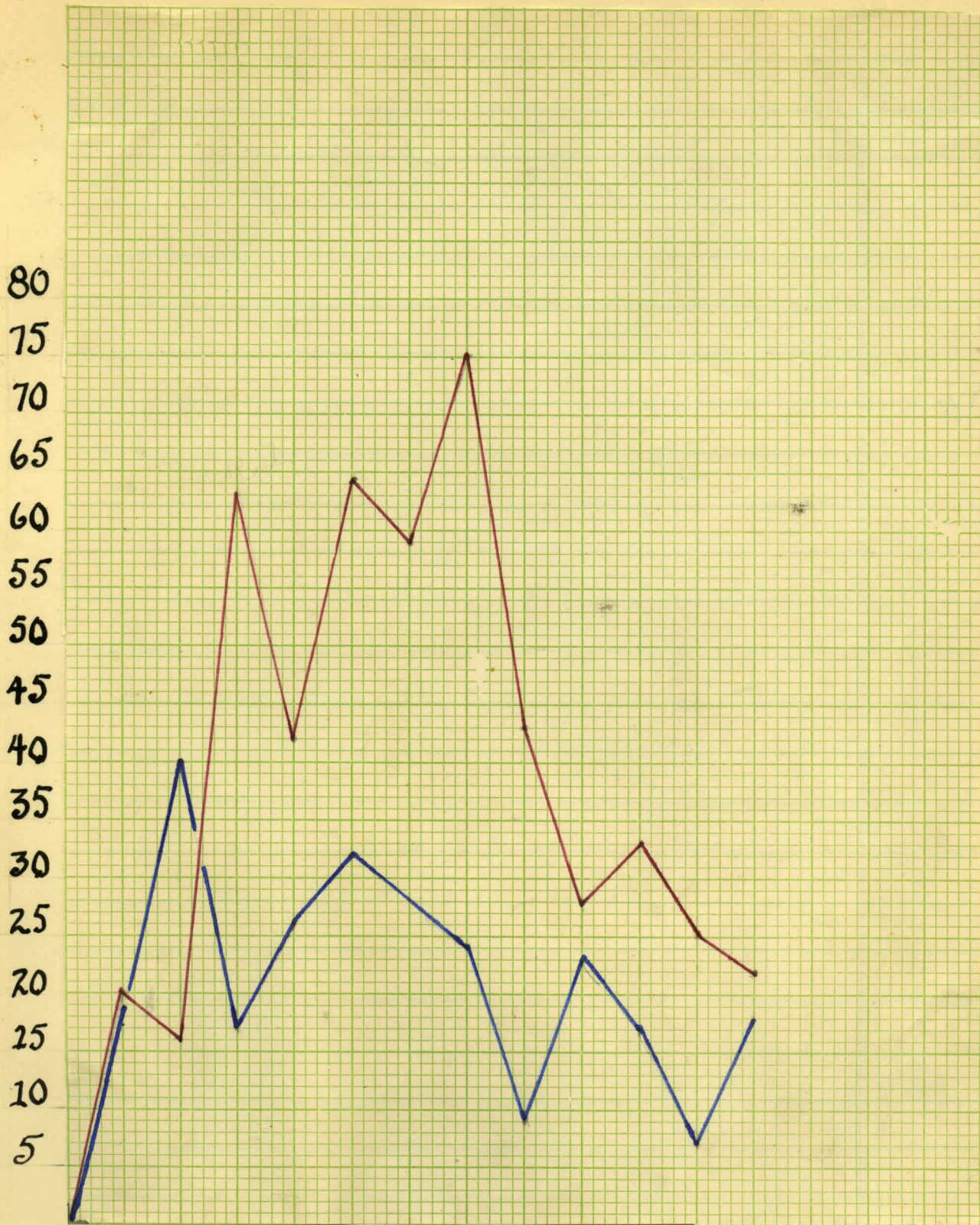
In Book IX a cloud of impending disaster descends upon the Garden. Eden which in Book VIII was described with 43 light and only 9 dark words now grows gloomy with 23 dark words to only 28 light words.

In Book X lines 1-230 in which a heavenly scene is described there are 6 light words and only 1 dark word. But in lines 230-315, the gloom returns, however, because the visit of Satan to Hell is recounted. There are only 11 light words to 9 dark ones. The remainder of the book, which describes earthly scenes, is only semi-light with 10 light words to 9 dark words.

Book XI which pictures both Heaven and Eden is more brilliant with a 25 to 7 light majority.

The future of man as pictured in Book XII is neither all joy nor all sorrow if we are to judge from the use of light and dark words. There are 23 of the former and 18 of the latter.

Milton's use of light and shadow may be expressed in a graph.



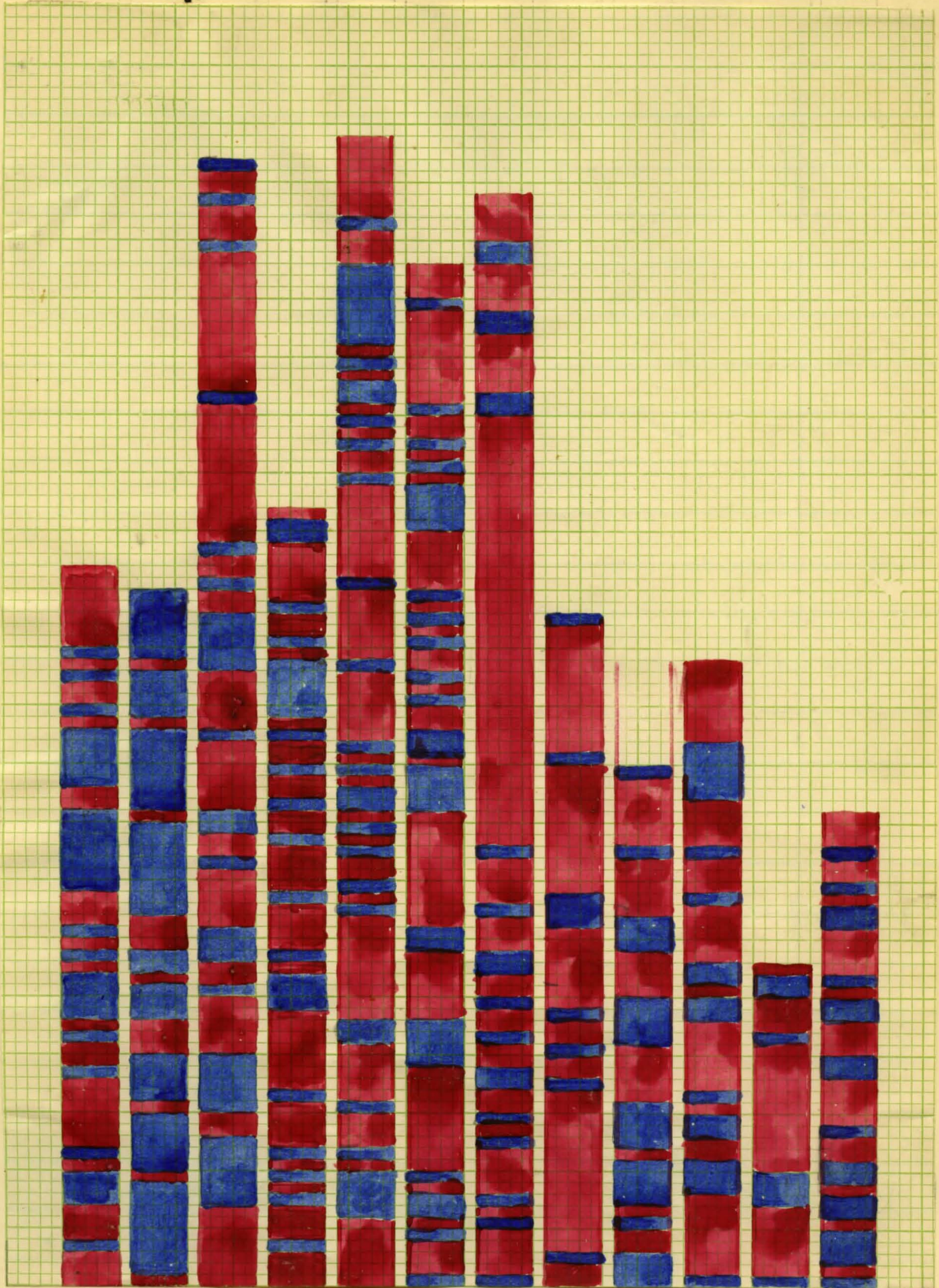
BOOK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

KEY █ = LIGHT WORDS
█ = DARK WORDS

A glance at this graph shows us that in spite of the gloom of Hell there is a great deal more of light in this poem than there is of darkness. One notices, too, that there is an ebbing-and-flowing increase of light to about the middle of the epic and from that point a sudden drop which seems in a fashion to reflect the fall of man. Coincidental with the descent of the light line there is a sudden rise of the dark line. It may seem at first that this is only natural, that the darkness should increase as the light declines; but a glance at the graph shows that frequently the two lines rise and fall together. Why is it, then, that the gloom is deepest, both from a decline of light and from an increase in darkness, in Book IX? It is this book which recounts the temptation and fall of Man. Subject enough for gloom! Only in the first two books which deal with Hell and in Book XII wherein sorrowful Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden, do the shadows lie so deep.

Perhaps one of the best ways to get a view of the total effect of light and darkness throughout the entire poem is by a chart like the one given on the next page.

HELL HELL HEAVEN EARTH EARTH AND HEAVEN HEAVEN OF EARTH EARTH HEAVEN HELL EARTH HEAVEN HEAVEN FUTURE OF EARTH



BOOKS-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12

KEY █ = LIGHT WORD
█ = DARK WORD

In this chart one can see how the light and darkness are distributed. It might be called a color visualization of each book. The chart was constructed by filling in with black or red one small horizontal column for each dark or light word. Notice how the gloom of Hell gradually disappears and how the shadows fall away as the epic progresses; and then how even the brilliance subsides toward the last. The rise and fall of the use of light and darkness is suggestive of the development of a climax followed by the conclusion. As one looks at the chart one actually sees all the light and darkness in all of Paradise Lost gathered into one body. It is as if one had distilled both the gloom and the glory from the poem and caught it as an essence.

The locale of the chief action of each book is indicated at the top of the column representing that book.

In the Biblical story of creation we read, "and God said, 'Let there be light and there was light!'" Notice the column representing Book VII which gives Milton's account of the creation. Surely God said, "Let there be light." The column rises high and red.

It is apparent that Milton pursued no middle course in his use of light and darkness. Hell is a place completely devoid of light; Heaven is refulgent with glory. A glance, however, at Dante's Inferno and Paradiso shows how widely

different two treatments of a single subject may be. Dante, although he employs many shadowy words in his description of Hell, makes it by no means a place of real darkness. Ruskin, speaking of Dante's use of the word bruno, says:-

"In describing a simple twilight--not a Hades twilight, but an ordinarily fair evening--(Inf.ii.I) he says, the 'brown' air took the animals away from their fatigues;--the waves under Charon's boat are 'brown' (Inf.iii.117); and Lethe, which is perfectly clear and yet dark, as with oblivion, is 'bruna-bruna,' 'brown, exceeding brown.' Now, clearly in all these cases no warmth is meant to be mingled in the colour. Dante had never seen one of our bog-streams, with its porter-coloured foam; and there can be no doubt that, in calling Lethe brown, he means that it was dark slate-gray, inclining to black; as, for instance, our clear Cumberland lakes, which, looked straight down upon where they are deep, seem to be lakes of ink. I am sure this is the colour he means; because no clear stream or lake on the Continent ever looks brown, but blue or green; and Dante, by merely taking away the pleasant colour, would get at once to this idea of grave clear gray. So, when he was talking of twilight, his eye for colour was far too good to let him call it brown in our sense. Twilight is not brown, but purple, golden, or dark gray; and this last was what Dante meant. Farther, I find that this negation of colour is always the means by which Dante subdues his tones. Thus the fatal inscription on the Hades gate is written in 'obscure colour,' and the air which torments the

passionate spirits is 'aer nero,' black air (Inf.v.51), called presently afterwards (line 81) malignant air, just as the gray cliffs are called malignant cliffs."*

Hell in Dante's descriptions is a place of suffering. The emphasis is upon physical torture rather than upon sunless gloom. Notice how the following pictures of Hell differ from those in Paradise Lost. Dante was objective and concrete. Milton painted huge shadowy pictures which are more suggestive. There is room here for only a few quotations from the Inferno but they are sufficient to illustrate this difference in the two great poems.

"And after he had laid his hand on mine

With joyful mien, whence I was comforted,

He led me in among the secret things.

There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud

Resounded through the air without a star,

Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.

Languages diverse, horrible dialects,

Accents of anger, words of agony,

And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands."**

*Modern Painters, III. 240

**Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto III, lines 19-26

Longfellow's Translation - Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1895

And again:-

"These miscreants, who never were alive,
 Were naked, and were stung exceedingly
 By gadflies and by hornets that were there.
 These did their faces irrigate with blood,
 Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet
 By the disgusting worms were gathered up."*

x x x x x x x

It is always pain and not darkness that Dante pictures.

"And he to me: 'The anguish of the people
 Who are below here in my face depicts
 That pity which for terror thou hast taken.
 Let us go on, for the long way impels us.'
 Thus he went in, and thus he made me enter
 The foremost circle that surrounds the abyss.
 There, as it seemed to me from listening,
 Were lamentations none, but only sighs,
 That tremble made the everlasting air.
 And this arose from sorrow without torment,
 Which the crowds had, that many were and great,
 Of infants and of women and of men."**

x x x x x

*Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto III, lines 64-69

Longfellow's Translation, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1895

** Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto XIV, lines 20-30

Longfellow's Translation, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1895

And the horrors continue:-

"Among this cruel and most dismal throng
 People were running naked and affrighted.
 Without the hope of hole or heliotrope.
 They had their hands with serpents bound behind them;
 These riveted upon their reins the tail
 And head, and were in front of them entwined.
 And lo! at one who was upon our side
 There darted forth a serpent, which transfixed him
 There where the neck is knotted to the shoulders.
 Nor O so quickly e'er, nor I was written,
 As he took fire, and burned; and ashes wholly
 Behoved it that in falling he became.
 And when he on the ground was thus destroyed,
 The ashes drew together, and of themselves
 Into himself they instantly returned."*

What a contrast to Milton who scarcely refers to actual physical pain in his description of Hell! To Milton it is a realm of utter darkness all compact.

It may appear at first that a comparison between a hell for human beings, such as was the Inferno, and a hell for fallen angels is hardly valuable in a study of this kind but such is not the case. It is true, of course, that the two hells are so different as to be hardly comparable and yet it must be borne in mind that both Dante and Milton had a single aim, namely to make hell horrible. This was a place of punishment; Milton and Dante

*Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto XXIV, lines 90-105

(Longfellow's Translation) Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1895

would, therefore, put into their respective pictures the elements most horrifying to them. Dante could conceive of nothing worse than eternal pain; Milton could conceive of nothing worse than eternal darkness.

Just as Dante's Inferno differs from Milton's Hell so does the Paradiso differ from Heaven. Search where you will in Dante's poem there is not to be found the blinding glory which characterized the work of the English poet.

To the Italian, Heaven was a kingdom of happiness. To the Puritan, Heaven was a place wherein God shone so gloriously "that brightest Seraphim approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."*

It is reasonable, therefore, to infer that Milton's blindness was at least partially responsible for the emphasis upon light and shadow which we find in Paradise Lost. Dante, with normal sight, dealing with much the same materials, shows no such pre-occupation in this respect. Light and shadow with him are merely incidental. Even if we allow, as we must, for all the other differences in the personality of these two men we must concede that the blindness of the one gave him an exaggerated fear of darkness and love of light which is plainly discernible in Paradise Lost.

*Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 381-382

A N
A N A L Y S I S

Part Two
An Analysis

Only a man who knew the horror of blindness could have pictured Hell as Milton pictured it:-

"A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
No light; but rather darkness visible
Served onely to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades where peace
And rest can never dwell----."*

It is worthy of note that many students are best able to visualize Milton's conception of Hell by closing their eyes. Just as Dante was limited by objectivity and concreteness in writing the Inferno so are we limited if we attempt to picture for ourselves with eyes wide open, the images which Milton makes for us in Paradise Lost. The blind man knew the meaning of a darkness visible vague and without boundary. We draw nearer to him in darkness than in light. Close your eyes if you would walk with Milton.

What is it Milton makes most terrible in Hell? Is it the terrific heat, the devouring flames? No. It is "doleful shades where peace and rest can never dwell." Evil and suffering are everywhere identified by Milton with the absence of light. He goes on to describe Hell:-

*Milton's Complete Poems (Moody) Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
New York, 1924 - Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 61-66

"---here their prison ordained
 In utter darkness, and their portion set,
 As far removed from God and light of Heaven
 As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole."*

In Book I, lines 242-245:-

"'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?"

Here again it is not fiery torment that strikes fear to Satan's heart but it is the gloom. The contrast between Heaven and Hell is all a matter of light.

In the simile of the locusts Milton writes:-

"----As when the potent rod
 Of Amram's son, in Egypt's evil day,
 Waved round the coast, up-called a pitchy cloud
 Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,
 That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung
 Like Night, and darkened all the land of Nile."**

The locust plague is described as a pitchy cloud and the real menace of locusts is overlooked, while the fact that they "darkened all the land" is emphasized. In referring again to the Egyptian plagues farther on in the poem Milton writes:-

*Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 71-74

**Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 338-343

"----herb, or fruit, or grain,
 A darksome cloud of locusts swarming down
 Must eat, and on the ground leave nothing green;
 Darkness must overshadow all his bounds,
 Palpable darkness, and blot out three days;
 Last, with one midnight-stroke, all the firstborn
 Of Egypt must lie dead."*

In choosing an adjective to describe the idolatries of alienated Judah, Milton could find no better word than dark. In this one word he summed up what to him was the essence of iniquity. The dark idolatries of alienated Judah are void of light because they are removed from the worship of the one true God.**

The nature of Satan undergoes a gradual change after his fall from Heaven. He becomes more and more evil. The glory and goodness which were in him slowly succumb to the power of darkness. How does Milton indicate this change?

"His form had yet not lost
 All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess
 Of glory obscured: as when the sun newrisen
 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,
 In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds

*Paradise Lost, Book XII lines 184-190

**Paradise Lost, Book I line 456

On half the nations, and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, then shon
 Above them all the archangel: but his face
 Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
 Sat on his faded cheek."*

So it is that as Satan degenerates his countenance loses brightness. Evil and darkness are always in company with each other.

In Book II, line 58, Milton causes Moloch, the fearless and bloodthirsty, to describe Hell as a "dark approbrious den of shame." In line 67 of the same book when Moloch is urging war against Heaven his chief weapon was to be black fire.

Even Belial speaks of insurrection as being black and assumes that its aim is chiefly "to confound Heaven's purest light."** His greatest fear in Hell is not pain but darkness.

"Sad cure! for who would lose,
 Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
 Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
 To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
 In the wide womb of uncreated Night,
 Devoid of sense and motion?"***

It is noteworthy also that one of the hopes urged by Belial in his plea for remaining in Hell is that darkness will become light.

*Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 591-602

**Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 136-137

***Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 146-151

"Or, changed at length, and to the place conformed
 In temper and in nature, will receive
 Familiar the fierce heat; and, void of pain,
 This horror will grow mild, this darkness light."*

Beelzebub also in his speech refers not so much to the suffering in Hell as to the fact that it is a dungeon. (Book II, line 317). His plan for revenge against God is closely concerned with an eclipse of light for Adam and Eve:-

"This would surpass
 Common revenge, and interrupt His joy
 In our confusion, and our joy upraise
 In His disturbance; when his darling sons,
 Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse
 Their frail original, and faded bliss--
 Faded so soon! Advise if this be worth
 Attempting, or to sit in darkness here
 Hatching vain empires."**

His greatest hope is that Satan and his cohorts may soon discover a place to "purge off this gloom."

"Well have ye judged, well ended long debate,
 Synod of Gods, and, like to what ye are,
 Great things resolved, which from the lowest deep
 Will once more lift us up, in spite of fate,
 Nearer our ancient Seat--perhaps in view

*Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 217-220

**Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 370-378

Of those bright confines, whence, with neighboring arms,
 And opportune excursion, we may chance
 Re-enter Heaven; or else in some mild zone
 Dwell, not unvisited of Heaven's fair light,
 Secure, and at the brightening orient beam
 Purge off this gloom."*

Satan at the very opening of his speech says:-

"Long is the way

And hard, that out of Hell leads up to Light."**

Notice that he does not say up to rest or peace or freedom
 from pain but up to Light.

In lines 438-441 of the same book, night is identified
 with total loss of being:-

"These passed, if any pass, the void profound
 Of unessential Night receives him next,
 Wide-gaping, and with utter loss of being
 Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf."***

Milton's simile describing the end of the consultations of
 the fallen angels shows again his preoccupation with light and
 darkness.

"Thus they their doubtful consultations dark
 Ended, rejoicing in their matchless Chief:
 As, when from mountain-tops the dusky clouds

*Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 390-400

**Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 432-433

Ascending, while the North-wind sleeps, o'erspread
 Heaven's cheerful face, the louring element
 Scowls o'er the darkened lantskip snow or shower,
 If chance the radiant sun, with farewell sweet,
 Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,
 The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
 Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings."*

When Milton is seeking for a description of Death he can find nothing which connotes such evil and horror as shapelessness and blackness, both of which are suggestive of blindness.

"-----The other Shape--

If shape it might be called that shape had none
 Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
 Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
 For each seemed either--black it stood as Night,
 Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell."**

Satan seldom refers to Hell except in terms of darkness. Over and over again he emphasizes the fact that the horror of Hell is the horror of gloom. In speaking to Sin and Death he says:-

"I come no enemy, but to set free
 From out this dark and dismal house of pain
 Both him and thee, and all the Heavenly host
 Of Spirits that, in our just pretences armed,
 Fell with us from on high."***

*Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 486-495

**Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 666-671

Sin herself refers to her abiding place as "gloom of Tartarus profound."*

Wherein is the chief horror of chaos before which even Satan might well quail? It is its darkness and formlessness. Milton well knew what it meant to look out upon

"a dark

Illimitable ocean, without bound,
Without dimension; where length, breadth, and highth,
And time, and place, are lost; where eldest Night
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand."**

Milton's adoration for light is nowhere more eloquently expressed than in the opening lines of Book III. In our imaginations we have been deep in the Stygian Pool with Milton and "long detained in that obscure sojourn."*** Now what a blinding contrast! His song of praise to light is a prelude to a visit to Heaven. Light represents not only the chief characteristic of Heaven (as darkness represents the chief characteristic of Hell,) but light is the very person of God:-

*Paradise Lost, Book II, line 858

**Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 891-896

***Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 14-15

"Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven first-born!
 Or of the Eternal coeternal beam
 May I express thee unblamed? since God is light,
 And never but in unapproached light
 Dwelt from eternity--dwelt then in thee,
 Bright effluence of bright essence increate!
 Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal Stream,
 Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the Sun,
 Before the Heavens, thou wert, and at the voice
 Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
 The rising World of waters dark and deep
 Won from the void and formless Infinite!"*

And again in describing the angels' chorus about the throne of God, Milton writes:-

"Thee, Father, first they sung, Omnipotent,
 Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
 Eternal King; thee, Author of all being,
 Fountain of light, thyself invisible
 Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st
 Throned inaccessible, but when thou shad'st
 The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
 Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine
 Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
 Yet dazzle Heaven, that brightest Seraphim
 Approach not but with both wings veil their eyes."**

* Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 1-12

**Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 372-382

But the poor blind eyes of Milton hunger not only for light but for color as well since it is also the very antithesis of darkness. Philosophers say that men persuade themselves that they will find in Heaven what they have been denied on earth, that Heaven is a repository for Man's dead earthly hopes. It is no wonder that Milton's eternal home was not a mansion of rest but a land wherein bright angels

"cast down

Their crowns, inwove with amarant and gold,--
 Immortal amarant, a flower which once
 In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life,
 Began to bloom, but, soon for Man's offence
 To Heaven removed where first it grew, there grows
 And flowers aloft, shading the Fount^t of Life,
 And where the River of Bliss through midst of Heaven
 Rowls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream!
 With these, that never fade, the Spirits elect
 Bind their resplendent locks, inwreathed with beams.
 Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the bright
 Pavement, that like a sea of jasper shon,
 Impurpled with celestial roses smiled.
 Then, crowned again, their golden harps they took--
 Harps ever tuned, that glittering by their side
 Like quivers hung."*

*Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 351-367

Light and color in Heaven, but alhwart the universe a shadow falls; for Satan, trailing clouds of darkness as he comes, alights upon the earth:-

"Meanwhile, upon the firm opacous globe
Of this round World, whose first convex divides
The luminous inferior Orbs, inclosed
From Chaos and the inroad of Darkness old,
Satan alighted walks. A globe far off
It seemed; now seems a boundless continent,
Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night
Starless exposed, and ever-threatening storms
Of Chaos blustering round, inclement sky."*

Satan's fallen nature is thrown into sharp relief and his punishment of darkness is emphasized as Milton causes him to see from afar off the gates of Heaven "thick with sparkling orient gems."**

"All this dark globe the Fiend found as he passed;
And long he wandered, till at last a gleam
Of dawning light turned thitherward in haste
His travelled steps. Far distant he descories,
Ascending by degrees magnificent
Up to the wall of Heaven, a structure high;
At top whereof, but far more rich, appeared
The work as of a kingly palace-gate,

*Paradise Lost Book III, lines 418-426

**Paradise Lost, Book III, line 507

With frontispice of diamond and gold
 Imbellished; thick with sparkling orient gems
 The portal shon, inimitable on Earth
 By model, or by shading pencil drawn.
 The stairs were such as whereon Jacob saw
 Angels ascending and descending, bands
 Of guardians bright, when he from Esau fled
 To Padan-Aram, in the field of Luz
 Dreaming by night under the open sky,
 And waking cried, This is the gate of heaven.
 Each stair mysteriously was meant, nor stood
 There always, but drawn up to Heaven sometimes
 Viewless; and underneath a bright sea flowed
 Of jasper, or of liquid pearl, whereon
 Who after came from Earth sailing arrived
 Wafted by Angels, or flew o'er the lake
 Rapt in a chariot drawn by fiery steeds."*

It is to be noticed here also that Milton indulges again in a riotous use of color which betrays his longing for sight.

In Book IV, lines 30-41, Satan himself contrasts the brightness of Heaven with the gloom of his present state:-

*Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 498-522

"Then, much revolving, thus in sighs began:-

'O thou that, with surpassing glory crowned,
 Look'st from thy sole dominion like the god
 Of this new World--at whose sight all the stars
 Hide their diminished heads--to thee I call,
 But with no friendly voice, and add thy name,
 O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams,
 That bring to my remembrance from what state
 I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere,
 Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,
 Warring in Heaven against Heaven's matchless King."

As Satan rededicates himself to evil there is an actual physical change in him. The greater his descent into sin, disobedience, and defiance, the greater decline there is in the light of his countenance. In Book I Milton said of him.

"His form had yet not lost

All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess
 Of glory obscured: as when the sun newrisen
 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,
 In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
 On half the nations, and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shon

Above them all the Archangel: but his face
 Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
 Sat on his faded cheek."*

But now as Satan identifies himself finally and
 irrevocably with evil his countenance darkens with each
 passion he expresses.

"All good to me is lost;
 Evil, be thou my Good: by thee at least
 Divided empire with Heaven's King I hold,
 By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
 As Man ere long, and this new World, shall know.
 Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face,
 Thrice changed with pale--ire, envy, and despair."**

And Zephon speaking to the fallen angel says:

"Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
 Or undiminished brightness, to be known
 As when thou stood'st in Heaven upright and pure.
 That glory then, when thou no more wast good,
 Departed from thee; and thou resemblest now
 Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul."***

*Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 591-602

**Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 109-115

***Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 834-841

Even Eve seems to be somewhat preoccupied with light. As night descends upon the Garden of Eden she speaks to Adam and her speech is full of words that glisten:-

"Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,
 With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the Sun,
 When first on this delightful land he spreads
 His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
 Glistering with dew; fragrant the fertile Earth
 After soft showers; and sweet the coming-on
 Of grateful Evening mild; then silent Night,
 With this her solemn bird, and this fair Moon,
 And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train:
 But neither breath of Morn, when she ascends
 With charm of earliest birds; nor rising Sun
 On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
 Glistering with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
 Nor grateful Evening mild; nor silent Night,
 With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,

Or glittering star-light, without thee is sweet.
 But wherefore all night long shine these? for whom
 This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?"*

To this question which is suddenly thrust at him by Eve in the very midst of her praise of him, Adam replies that the luminous planets of night exist "lest total darkness should by night regain her old possession and extinguish life in nature and all things."** Here again is Milton's same old fear of total darkness even for a moment. One night of utter blackness, and chaos unrestrained by guardian light would fling her black confusion on the world

It was during the hours of night when Satan "squat like a toad close at the ear of Eve"*** brought temptation into the Garden of Eden.**** That temptation which Eve had in her dream was to walk in the night. Darkness is made to seem attractive by Satan.

"Why sleep'st thou, Eve? now is the pleasant time,
 The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
 To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
 Tunes sweetest his love-laboured song; now reigns
 Full-orbed the moon, and, with more pleasing light,
 Shadowy sets off the face of things--in vain,
 If none regard. Heaven wakes with all his eyes;

*Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 641-658

**Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 665-666

***Paradise Lost, Book IV, line 800

****In this connection notice, too, that as Satan fled from the Garden "with him fled the shades of Night." Adam at

Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire,
 In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment
 Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze?'
 I rose as at thy call, but found thee not:
 To find thee I directed then my walk;
 And on, methought, alone I passed through ways
 That brought me on a sudden to the Tree
 Of interdicted Knowledge. Fair it seemed,
 Much fairer to my fancy than by day."*

The things which lie nearest one's heart are the things
 remembered in one's daily prayers. They are the things which

 Notes continued from page 27

the conclusion of his morning devotions (Book V, lines
 206-208) makes this appeal to God:-

"and if the night
 Have gathered aught of evil, or concealed,
 Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark"

It was at night that Satan first resolved to
 rebel against God. (Book V, lines 667-670)

"Soon as midnight brought on the dusky hour
 Friendliest to sleep and silence, he resolved
 With all his legions to dislodge, and leave
 Unworshipped, unobeyed, the Throne supreme."

*Paradise Lost, Book V, lines 38-53

one is most likely to recall to mind upon awakening in the morning. Second only to God in Adam's morning prayer of thankfulness is the sun with its attendant planets of light.

"Thou Sun, of this great World both eye and soul,
 Acknowledge him thy Greater; sound his praise
 In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
 And when high noon hast gained, and when thou fall'st.
 Moon, that now meet'st the orient Sun, now fliest,
 With the fixed Stars, fixed in their orb that flies;
 And ye five other wandering Fires, that move
 In mystic dance, not without song, resound
 His praise who out of Darkness called up Light."*

Adam's very earliest remembrance is concerned with light. In Book VIII, lines 273-277, as he recounts to Raphael his awakening into birth in the Garden of Eden he tells of his addressing the sun first of all:-

"'Thou Sun,' said I, 'fair light,
 And thou enlightened Earth, so fresh and gay,
 Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
 And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
 Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here!'"**

Milton held darkness in such horror that he recoiled from speaking of night in Heaven--or when he did speak of it, he hastened to make assurance that it was not really night at all

*Paradise Lost, Book V, lines 171-179

**Paradise Lost, Book VIII, lines 273-277

but only a very agreeable twilight.

"Now when ambrosial Night, with clouds exhaled
 From that high mount of God whence light and shade
 Spring both, the face of brightest Heaven had changed
 To grateful twilight (for Night comes not there.
 In darker veil), and roseate dews disposed
 All but the unsleeping eyes of God to rest."*

And again:-

"There is a cave
 Within the Mount of God, fast by his Throne,
 Where Light and Darkness in perpetual round
 Lodge and dislodge by turns--which makes through Heaven
 Grateful vicissitude, like day and night;
 Light issues forth, and at the other door
 Obsequious Darkness enters, till her hour
 To veil the heaven, though darkness there might well
 Seem twilight here."**

*Paradise Lost, Book V, lines 642-647

**Paradise Lost, Book VI, lines 4-11

It may seem strange that Milton even momentarily and inadvertently referred to night in Heaven even though he corrected himself immediately by adding that it was only a grateful twilight. Surely the poet who had suffered so much through blindness would want to think of Heaven as a place where

The streets we are told
Are all paved with pure gold
And the sun shall never go down.*

But Milton was trapped into his description by the earth-like and very concrete picture he had made of Heaven with its mountains and definite boundaries. He mentions night as a matter of course and then realizes that he has damaged his Heaven--and so hastens to amend his darkness to twilight.

It is in Book VII that Milton grows most intoxicated with light. When he reaches the fourth day in his story of creation his language runs riot in his description of the planets. Let a starving man marooned on an island describe a seven-course dinner. Let Milton in eternal darkness describe the gleaming planets of the firmament:-

"Again the Almighty spake, 'Let there be Lights
High in the expanse of Heaven, to divide
The Day from Night; and let them be for signs,
For seasons, and for days, and circling years;
And let them be for lights, as I ordain

*Words of an old hymn

Their office in the firmament of heaven,
To give light on the Earth!' and it was so.
And God made two great Lights, great for their use
To Man, the greater to have rule by day,
The less by night, alterne; and made the Stars,
And set them in the firmament of heaven
To illuminate the Earth, and rule the day
In their vicissitude, and rule the night,
And light from darkness to divide. God saw,
Surveying his great work, that it was good:
For, of celestial bodies, first the Sun
A mighty sphere he framed, unlightsome first,
Though of ethereal mould; then formed the Moon
Globose, and every magnitude of Stars,
And sowed with stars the heaven thick as a field.
Of light by far the greater part he took,
Transplanted from her cloudy shrine, and placed
In the Sun's orb, made porous to receive
And drink the liquid light, firm to retain
Her gathered beams great palace now of Light.
Hither, as to their fountain, other stars
Repairing, in their golden urns draw light
And hence the morning planet gilds her horns;
By tincture or reflection they augment
Their small peculiar, though, from human sight
So far remote, with diminution seen.

First in his east the glorious lamp was seen,
 Regent of day, and all the horizon round
 Invested with bright rays, jocond to run
 His longitude through heaven's high-road; the grey
 Dawn, and the Pleiades, before him danced,
 Shedding sweet influence. Less bright the Moon
 But opposite in levelled west, was set,
 His mirror, with full face borrowing her light
 From him; for other light she needed none
 In that aspect, and still that distance keeps
 Til night; then in the east her turn she shines,
 Revolved on heaven's great axle, and her reign
 With thousand lesser lights dividual holds,
 With thousand thousand stars that then appeared
Spangling the hemisphere. Then first adorned
 With her bright luminaries, that set and rose,
 Glad evening and glad morn crowned the fourth Day.*

A miser delights in allowing his gold to run through
 his fingers. Milton seems in the passage above to be enjoying
 much the same thing with light. Beautifully naive but
 strikingly powerful is his conception of the sun as a sort
 of reservoir of liquid light to which the other planets
 repair to fill their golden urns.

*Paradise Lost, Book VII, lines 338-387

In Milton's opinion the greatest of all blessings is light; the greatest of all curses is darkness. It is to be expected then that the temptation which Satan offers Eve will be concerned with an offer of clear sight because it is so attractive and that the punishment for the transgression will somehow be concerned with a kind of blindness. Satan as he tempts the Woman says:-

"He knows that in the day
Ye eat thereof your eyes, that seem so clear,
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
Opened and cleared, and ye shall be as Gods,
Knowing both good and evil, as they know."*

After due consideration our poor deluded mother put forth "her rash hand in evil hour" and plucked the fruit. That a blindness came upon both Adam and Eve after their disobedience is not mentioned in the Biblical account which emphasizes that they knew both good and evil and that, knowing they were naked, they were ashamed. The account in Genesis seems to imply that their sight was, in a sense really improved. It is not so in Milton's account. Their punishment was that punishment which to Milton was the most terrible of all--a film upon their eyes. But Milton could not leave even the primal sinners so afflicted and he tells of Michael's curing Adam's eyes.

"But to nobler sights
Michael from Adam's eyes the film removed
Which that false fruit that promised clearer sight

*Paradise Lost, Book IX, lines 705-709

Had bred; then purged with euphrasy and rue
 The visual nerve, for he had much to see,
 And from the well of life three drops instilled.
 So deep the power of these ingredients pierced,
 Even to the inmost seat of mental sight,
 That Adam, now enforced to close his eyes,
 Sunk down, and all his spirits became intranced.*

Adam had sinned and come short of the glory of God. He deserved punishment; his exclusion from the Garden of Eden was just; but Milton, knowing the despair of "having a film upon the eye" could not bring himself to send Adam out into the sorrows of the world so afflicted. It is not too much to say that not only the idea of such punishment but also the final healing mercy find their inception in Milton's own blindness. It is almost as if the stern old Puritan had said "Adam deserves to suffer but not to the extent of permanent blindness--no, not that!"

*Paradise Lost, Book XI, lines 411-420

THE
WAKEFUL
BIRD
SINGS
DARKLING

Part Three

The Wakeful Bird Sings Darkling

Now and then amid his description of the black and rolling clouds of chaos and the huge and shadowy form of Satan, Milton pauses to sing piteously of his own existence in the "everduring dark." No one could listen without sympathy to the hopeless longing of the blind old poet, when after a hymn of praise to light he cries:-

"but thou

Revisit 'st not these eyes, that rowl in vain
 To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
 So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,
 Or dim suffusion veiled. Yet not the more
 Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt
 Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
 Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
 Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
 That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
 Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget
 Those other two equalled with me in fate,
 (So were I equalled with them in renown!)
 Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides,
 And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old:
 Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
 Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird

Sings darkling, and, in shadiest covert hid,
 Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
 Seasons return; but not to me returns
 Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
 But cloud instead and ever-during dark
 Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
 Cut off, and, for the book of knowledge fair,
 Presented with a universal blank
 Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.*

There is only one other passage in all of Milton's works (not excepting his Sonnet On His Blindness) which can be compared for pure pathos with the lines just quoted. It is found in his Sonnet On His Deceased Wife. He pictures his "late espoused saint" as she

"Came vested all in white, pure as her mind
 Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight
 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shines
 So clear as in no face with more delight.
 But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined,
 I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

At irregular intervals throughout all of Paradise Lost Milton is reminded of his own plight, and voices his woe in the

*Paradise Lost, Book III, lines 22-50

simple eloquence of despair. After the Restoration Milton was in danger of losing his life along with the others who had been influential during the Commonwealth. His precarious position was doubtless in his mind when he wrote

"--I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round
And solitude."*

And Milton feared that solitude almost as much as he did his human enemies. He shows us Adam dissatisfied in Eden because he was alone; and as the first created man speaks, it might well be Milton sighing again over his solitary state, the terrible loneliness of the blind:-

"But with me
I see not who partakes. In solitude
What happiness? who can enjoy alone,
Or, all enjoying, what contentment find?"**

We sympathize with Milton in his sorrow but we have already seen that his blindness was responsible for most of the sublime effects in Paradise Lost, and so we feel that he did indeed reap a rich reward in the "far off interest of tears."

*Paradise Lost, Book VII, lines 24-28

**Paradise Lost, Book VIII, lines 363-366

There is, however, some evidence in Paradise Lost that Milton's blindness proved a hindrance in his description of minor details. An article appeared in 1845 in Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* which treated of this very matter at some length. It said in part:-

"A blind man who has once enjoyed sight will carry with him into his own black atmosphere a memory full of images of what he has seen; and when he tries to describe things by their appearance, it will be by an effort of recollection. He will amuse himself by painting, on the dark canvas stretched before him, those objects which he has most pleasure in recollecting--the white gables of his own cottage, the faces of his wife and children. The power of love will keep the recollection of such objects as these bright and vivid, while all other images are growing dimmer and dimmer. But although there is a certain class of images, the recollection of which in a state of blindness would always continue to be easy and pleasurable, it would be difficult for a person who had been blind for some time to recall the appearance of such a flower as the violet.

x x x x x x x

"If we examine Milton's earlier poems--those which he wrote before he became blind--we shall find their characteristic to be luscious and flowery description. In this respect we know

*Milton's Blindness - Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, Vol. III(1845)
pages 392-394 - author anonymous

none so like him as the poet Keats. Take, for instance, the following exquisite passage from Lycidas:-

Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
 That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
 Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks.
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale gessamine,
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with yet,
 The glowing violet,
 The must-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.*

*There is not a passage like this in all the Paradise Lost.

If the poet after being blind for some time had attempted to rival it, he could have accomplished it only by the help of a

*Lycidas, lines 132-151

book on botany. Here is the passage describing Eve's nuptial bower in Paradise, and we may be sure that on this occasion Milton would lavish his richest beauties:-

"The roof

Of thickest covert was inwoven shade,
 Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
 Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
 Acanthus, and each odorous bushy shrub,
 Fenced up the verdant wall; each beauteous flower,
 Iris all hues, roses, and gessamin,
 Reared high their flourished heads between, and wrought
 Mosaic; under foot the violet,
 Crocus, and hyacinth, with rich inlay
 Broïdered the ground, more coloured than with stone
 Of costliest emblem. Other creature here,
 Beast, bird, insect, or worm, durst enter none;
 Such was their awe of Man. In shadier bower
 More sacred and sequestered, though but feigned,
 Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor Nymph
 Nor Faunus haunted. Here, in close recess,
 With flowers, garlands, and sweet-smelling hearbs,
 Espoused Eve decked first her nuptial bed.*

"Beautiful still; brave recollections of his old loves, the flowers. But alas, alas! the recollections are growing fainter and fewer in the mind of the blind old man."

*Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 692-710

The essay in Chambers' Edinburgh Journal gives no further examples of this change in Milton's descriptive power and yet his work is full of instances which bear out the conclusion that his memory of details was growing faint. In *L'Allegro* Milton describes a landscape as follows:-

"Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
 Whilst the lantskip round it measures:
 Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
 Mountains on whose barren breast
 The labouring clouds do often rest;
 Meadows trim with daisies pied;
 Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.
 Towers and battlements it sees
 Bosomed high in tufted trees."*

Here in only ten lines Milton paints a more life-like and more varied a picture than he does in the thirty-six lines of Paradise Lost below:-

"So on he fares, and to the border comes
 Of Eden, where delicious Paradise,
 Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green,
 As with a rural mound, the champain head
 Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
 With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,

**L'Allegro*, lines 69-78

Access denied; and overhead up-grew
Insuperable highth of loftiest shade,
Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
A sylvan scene, and, as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
The verdurous wall of Paradise up-sprung;
Which to our general Sire gave prospect large
Into his nether empire neighbouring round.
And higher than that wall a circling row
Of goodliest trees, loaden with fairest fruit,
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue,
Appeared, with gay enamelled colours mixed;
On which the sun more glad impressed his beams
Than in fair evening cloud, or humid bow,
When God hath showered the earth: so lovely seem'd
That lantskip. And of pure now purer air
Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
All sadness but despair. Now gentle gales,
Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
Those balmy spoils. As, when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow

Sabean odours from the spicy shore
 Of Araby the Blest, with such delay
 Well pleased they slack their course, and many a league
 Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles;
 So entertained those odorous sweets the Fiend
 Who came their bane.*

It is interesting to note that the landscape painted with short, swift strokes in L'Allegro is characterized by such delicate touches as "meadows trim with daisies pied", "russet lawns", and "tufted trees". The longer description from Paradise Lost has no color except green and gold. The whole picture is painted with long strokes which betray a neglect of detail. It is impressionistic whereas the picture in L'Allegro is classic.

Perhaps the most startling discovery to be made in contrasting these two passages is that nearly the entire latter half of the one taken from Paradise Lost is made up of an orgy of smells. Milton's eyesight had failed him but his other senses had become more acute. This matter of perfume in Milton's descriptions will be taken up in detail farther along in this paper.**

There are many other passages in Milton's earlier poems which contrast sharply with his impressionistic painting in Paradise Lost. Notice how clearly the details are brought out in the following descriptions written while Milton had his eyesight:-

*Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 131-167

"Now the bright morning-star, Day's harbinger,
 Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her
 The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
 The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.
 Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
 Mirth, and youth, and warm desire!
 Woods and groves are of thy dressing;
 Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
 Thus we salute thee with our early song,
 And welcome thee, and wish thee long."*

And here is another thumb-nail sketch which shows more
 color than any of the broad canvases of Paradise Lost:-

"By the rushy-fringed bank,
 Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
 My sliding chariot stays,
 Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen,
 Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
 That in the channel strays:
 Whilst from off the waters fleet
 Thus I set my printless feet
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
 That bends not as I tread.
 Gentle swain, at thy request
 I am here!"**

*Song On May Morning

**Comus, lines 890-900

With these two pictures so full of the beauty resulting from a deft use of color, contrast the following "rural seat" from Paradise Lost.

"Thus was this place,

A happy rural seat of various view:
 Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm;
 Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
 Hung amiable--Hesperian fables true,
 If true, here only--and of delicious taste.
 Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
 Grazing the tender herb, were interposed,
 Or palmy hillock; or the flowery lap
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
 Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.
 Another side, umbrageous grots and caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
 Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
 Luxuriant; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
 Down the slope hills dispersed, or in a lake,
 That to the fringed bank with myrtle crowned
 Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
 The birds their quire apply; airs, vernal airs,
 Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
 The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,
 Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,
 Led on the eternal Spring."*

*Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 246-268

Here is to be found again the use of vague and suggestive words which make the picture misty rather than clear-cut like those of his earlier poems. Odors receive once more an undue emphasis. There is no delicate color shading; gold and purple are the outstanding colors. It is natural that the more brilliant colors such as these should remain longer in the memory of a blind man than those which are more delicate.

It is, however, comparatively unimportant that Milton's memory of color shade was growing faint. He still retained the sensuousness which marked his earlier poems. In fact his love of gorgeous effects seems to have been intensified by his lack of sight.

"But rather to tell how, if Art could tell
 How, from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,
 Rowling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
 With mazy error under pendent shades
 Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
 Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice Art
 In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon
 Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
 Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
 The open field, and where the unpierced shade
 Imbrowned the noontide bowers."*

It is true, of course, that neither in this passage nor in any other passage in the poem is there the delicate use of color

*Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 237-246

shade that was formerly apparent in Milton's verse. "Orient pearl" and "sapphire" and "pendent shades" and even the word "amaranthine" which Milton used so much, do not paint the nicely touched pastels which would have been possible to the author of Lycidas had he retained his sight. In Paradise Lost Milton obtains his effects by the bold use of primary colors upon a background alternately white and black.

Nevertheless Milton liked to banquet his senses.* Mention has already been made of the frequent and emphatic use of perfumes in his descriptions. It will be interesting to examine some of these passages more closely. For clarity it will be necessary to quote again a part of a passage already given:-

"Now gentle gales,
 Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
 Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
 Those balmy spoils. As, when to them who sail
 Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
 Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
 Sabeian odours from the spicy shore
 Of Araby the Blest, with such delay
 Well pleased they slack their course, and many a league
 Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles;
 So entertained those odorous sweets the Fiend
 Who came their bane."**

*For a fine discussion of this subject see, Sensuousness in the Poetry of Milton and Keats, Walter Graham, South Atlantic Quarterly XVI (1917) pages 346-356

**Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 156-167

It hardly seems possible that a man who could see would dwell so long upon the ecstasy of smell. Our conclusion that Milton's abnormal interest in perfume is a result of his blindness is strengthened by the following passages:-

"In this pleasant soil
His far more pleasant garden God ordained.
Out of the fertile ground he caused to grow
All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste;
And all amid them stood the Tree of Life,
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit
Of vegetable gold."*

The most notable quality of the Tree of Life was that of its perfume. The same quality is to be found in the Tree of Knowledge as well.

"So saying, he drew nigh, and to me held,
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part
Which he had plucked: the pleasant savoury smell
So quickened appetite that I, methought,
Could not but taste."**

This is Eve's description of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as she dreamed of it. Satan in his temptation of her uses remarkably similar language. The emphasis is again upon the tempting perfume of the tree:-

*Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 214-220

**Paradise Lost, Book V, lines 82-86

"I nearer drew to gaze;
 When from the boughs a savoury odour blown,
 Grateful to appetite, more pleased my sense
 Than smell of sweetest fennel, or the teats
 Of ewe or goat dropping with milk at even,
 Unsucked of lamb or kid, that tend their play.
 To satisfy the sharp desire I had
 Of tasting those fair Apples, I resolved
 Not to defer; hunger and thirst at once,
 Powerful persuaders, quickened at the scent
 Of that alluring fruit, urged me so keen."*

It is this very perfume which finally is more powerful in bringing about the downfall of Eve than all the fair promises of Satan:-

"Meanwhile the hour of noon drew on, and waked
 An eager appetite, raised by the smell
 So savoury of that Fruit, which with desire;
 Inclivable now grown to touch or taste,
 Solicited her longing eye."**

This brief study of Milton's love of perfume suggests a whole new line of inquiry. It is fairly sure that all the other senses of Milton were sharpened by his blindness. It is a commonly accepted fact that hearing, touch, etc., are heightened by a loss of sight. Someone should by all means make a study

*Paradise Lost, Book IX, lines 577-587

**Paradise Lost, Book IX, lines 739-743

of the sensuousness in Paradise Lost occasioned by Milton's blindness. There would be fine material in the almost sensual descriptions of Adam and Eve in the Garden, in the sunbeams, among the flowers, and beside the shady fountains. Macaulay suggested all this when he wrote of Milton:-

"Hence it was that, though he wrote the Paradise Lost at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairyland, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche."*

Some of the pastoral pictures of Eden are indeed beyond comparison. One is inclined to ask with the author of the essay which we have already quoted from Chambers' *Edinburgh Journal*--How were such descriptions possible to a blind old man?

*Macaulay Essay on Milton, pages 81-82 (The Lake English Classics)

Scott Foresman & Co., Chicago, 1908

"Deduct those five-sixths of the Paradise Lost in which the descriptions^s are all grand and gigantic--of spirits warring in heaven, toiling through chaos, or winging from star to star--there remains one-sixth of the poem in which leaving the regions of space, the poet condescends on our dear particular planet, and outpours his imagination in rich and luscious^s descriptions of earth's own scenes and landscapes, the fragrant woods, the blooming gardens, the daisied banks and green overarching bowers of Eden's Paradise. How are these passages of rich vegetable description to be accounted for? Suns and moons and chaoses were easy; but whence got he the trees, and shrubs, and flowers?--that blind old man!"*

That question is not difficult to answer. Milton's mind was full of the things he loved while he was able to see. He carried them with him into his darkness and through the emphasis of his constant thought upon them they grew both brighter and darker--that is to say, the bright colors grew brighter and the dark colors darker--until all pastel shades disappeared leaving only colors of startling vividness. Milton was able to picture "trees and shrubs and flowers" long after he was blind, because he had loved them all his life, because they were the furniture of "A mind not to be changed by place or time."** Milton knew that a blind man is forced back upon his own mind

*Milton's Blindness, Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, Vol. III (1845)
pages 392-394

**Paradise Lost, Book I, line 253

for the greater part of his existence and that was what caused him to say:-

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."*

*Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 254-255

A
S U M M A R Y

Part Four

A Summary

In consideration of the evidence offered it seems clear now that Milton's blindness definitely and appreciably affected Paradise Lost. It would, of course, be far from accurate to say that all the light and all the darkness in this poem are occasioned by Milton's lack of sight. It was conceded in the early part of this paper that it would be practically impossible to determine the exact influence of Milton's blindness upon Paradise Lost because the subject matter of the poem is such that even a man with perfectly normal sight would have to treat it with a pen dipped alternately in stygian darkness and heavenly light.

The Milton made Hell a place of darkness and Heaven a place of light; that he made evil a thing of blackness, and goodness gloriously bright, is not taken as one iota of proof in the establishment of the general thesis that Milton's blindness affected the epic. In nearly every religion since the world began the good has been characterized by light and the bad by darkness. The Christian tradition of light, for instance, was antedated by the Egyptian worship of Ra, the sun-god; and the Persian worship of Ahura Mazda, the spirit of light. It would be specious, therefore, to assume that Milton's symbolism of light was in any way the result of his loss of sight.

It is, however, fair to conclude that his blindness affected the manner in which he used this ancient tradition of light and darkness. The undue emphasis which he gives to the blackness of Hell and the brightness of Heaven is indicative of an abnormal fear of darkness and an abnormal craving for light.

Hell is almost nothing but darkness; God and Heaven are pure light.

Milton uses darkness not only to describe Hell but to describe anything which he wishes to condemn or render terrible. The plagues of Egypt, the rebellion in Heaven, the temptation in the Garden of Eden, Death, Chaos, and Satan's gradual degeneracy, all are associated with darkness.* This is going much further than the limits of the tradition of light and darkness in religion.

That Milton made an exaggerated use of light and darkness is apparent from a comparison of Paradise Lost and The Divine Comedy. Both of these poems describe Hell and Heaven. Dante, with normal sight, made of his Hell a place of horrible suffering, and of his Heaven a place of happiness. Milton, on the other hand, scarcely mentions suffering in Hell or happiness in Heaven; he dwells almost exclusively upon the darkness of the one and the colorful brightness of the other. That Dante's Hell and Heaven were peopled by the souls of human beings whereas Milton's Hell and Heaven were peopled by angels is unimportant. Both writers attempted to picture a place of horror and then a place of infinite felicity. Each chose his own method and that method betrays what each feared and what each longed for in this world. Dante feared pain and longed for his Beatrice; Milton feared darkness and longed for light.

*Milton does not always, however, associate shadows with evil.

Christ in Paradise Regained habitually retreated to "shady coverts" when puzzled. Adam and Eve enjoyed "shadowy bowers." The shadows here, though, are hardly to be considered comparable with the deeper darkness with which Milton symbolizes evil.

Let us grant then that although Milton's blindness was not responsible in general for his use of light and darkness, it was, nevertheless, responsible in particular for his exaggerated and intemperate use of these qualities.

Perhaps the most compelling bit of evidence that Milton's blindness affected Paradise Lost is to be found in his description of shapes and forms. The figure of Satan rising after his fall into the lake of fire which gave forth only darkness visible could have been pictured only by a blind man. The huge form of Satan battling his way through chaos would have been difficult for a man who was limited by the objectivity of sight. The same is true of the picture of Death which is described as "the Shape, if shape it might be called that shape had none, distinguishable in number, joint, or limb."* Here is formlessness which suggests the conceptions of the blind. Chaos, as Milton pictures it, is pure blindness and nothing else. It is "a dark illimitable ocean without bound, without dimension, where length, breadth, and height, and time and place are lost."**

Put side by side with these shadowy pictures the definite and startling picture given below and it will be seen that Milton's blindness caused him to go to extremes in description. The angels surround Satan in the Garden of Eden in the passage below:-

"While thus he spake, the angelic squadron bright
Turned fiery red, sharpening in mooned horns
Their phalanx, and began to hem him round
With ported spears."***

*Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 666-668

**Paradise Lost, Book II, lines 891-894

***Paradise Lost, Book IV, lines 975-980

This moon of fiery red angels would never have suggested itself to a man who had not looked for years upon eternal night. It is too fanciful for even the most imaginative writer unaided by blindness. The essay in Chambers' Journal, already mentioned in this paper, makes much of this particular picture in discussing Milton's blindness.*

Consider also the gate of Heaven as seen by Satan from a distance across the vast reaches of chaos and old Night. It is a "palace gate with frontispiece of diamond and gold imbellished; thick with sparkling orient gems the portal shone x x x x x and underneath a bright sea flowed of jasper, or of liquid pearl----." Verily this is none other than the gorgeous fancy of a mind unrestrained by the objectivity of sight. It is hard for the reader to visualize it for himself without closing his eyes.

But in spite of this riotous use of color, it is clear that Milton has lost a certain power of description which was formerly his. If the flowers and landscapes found in his earlier poems are compared with those in Paradise Lost it is apparent that he is no longer able to deal with delicate color shades. Color there is in Eden to be sure, but it is always definite and primary color such as a blind man would be likely to remember. It is noticeable, too, that in the landscapes of Eden there are no minute details such as "meadows pied with daisies." The pictures are broad impressionistic canvases which lack the classic attention to detail which characterizes Milton's earlier work.

In these descriptions of Eden there is evidence, too, that Milton's blindness has brought about a sharpening of the senses other than sight. He is, for instance, abnormally interested in perfumes. It is strange, to say the least, to find a poet devoting more attention to the perfume of a landscape than to its physical characteristics. But Milton goes even further than this and makes the most charming quality of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge an ambrosial smell. This preoccupation with perfume by no means constitutes a weakness in Milton. It adds rather to the compelling force of his descriptions. It is, nevertheless, whether vice or virtue, a result of his blindness, and a characteristic which would have been lacking in great measure if he had retained his sight. Milton, of course, frequently mentioned perfumes in his earlier poems, but the mention there was casual, and shows nothing of the obsession found in the perfume passages of Paradise Lost.

Milton in his blindness was no less sensuous than he was as a young man with all the panorama of nature before him; and although the descriptions of his later years show a decline in accuracy of detail, there is a counterbalancing intensity such as we found in his gorgeous color passages and those passages which dwell eagerly upon the ecstasy to be derived from the perfume of things.

Into Paradise Lost is written John Milton's blindness with all its chaos of blackness, its fear, its loneliness, its longing for light and color. The vast shadows of Hell and the splendor of

Heaven could never have been painted had he lived in the broad light of day. The scenes in the Garden of Eden might have been sketched with a more delicate sense of color yet they, too, would have lost intensity had Milton never known the passionate eagerness of the blind to live in all the senses.

The End

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