



**Selections from Paradise Lost, Including Books I.  
and II. Entire, and Portions of Books III., IV., VI.,  
VII., and X. with Introduction, Suggestions Fo**

*John Milton*

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# Selections from Paradise Lost, Including Books I. and II. Entire, and Portions of Books III., IV., VI., VII., and X. with Introduction, Suggestions Fo

*John Milton*

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INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE LOST. Its History. This poem is the result of the union in one person of the highest quality of poetic genius, the most exalted personal character, and the most unremitting industry, all devoted through a period of more than sixty years to the accomplishment of a single purpose. In this statement the early productions of Milton are not ignored; for at the time when he was composing his lyrics he had already formed the resolution to "write something that the world would not willingly let die," and all his minor poems were but the flights in which he tried his wings to gain strength for the great flight "above the Aonian mount" (P. L. I. 15). It was for this great work alone that he stored his mind with all the learning of the ages, and exercised his soul in all godly discipline from earliest boyhood. Immediately upon his return from Italy in 1639, Milton turned his attention to the composition of his projected masterpiece. He noted down, in a list which still exists, over one hundred possible subjects from which to select, and seems to have considered the subject of the Arthurian legend<sup>1</sup> a very promising one. His intensely religious <sup>1</sup> This legend deals with the Britons, or ancient inhabitants of England, who were early driven westward into the mountain fastnesses of Wales by Saxon, Danish, and Anglian invaders, but who, in those retreats, long retained their pride of ancient lineage, their bent, however, soon led him to fix upon the subject of Paradise Lost, and he next began to weigh the respective merits of the dramatic and the epic forms. Four tentative drafts of characters and leading incidents, which he drew up at this time, exhibit clearly his progress toward a decision in favor of the epic form. Short passages were composed a...

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