

must feel at the strange and subtle meanings nineteenth-century editors inject into your simplest ideas! What a plague on Greek-grinding mankind, Euripides, didst thou leave in thy choral odes, to be the endless riddles and quibbles of modern sophists! Alas, it is to be feared that when the gods with their scales sit in solemn conclave near the Scottish Acropolis, and the hapless Attic kicks the beam, thou wilt be considered the indirect cause of banishing Greek from our seats of learning!

Glancing into the future, when our own Teutonic tongue may perchance be a relic of the past, we may foresee our epic bard subjected to such treatment as the following:

Specimen Page of Sturm's Milton.

Him the Almighty power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst oppose th' Omnipotent to arms.

Hurl'd headlong: all the MSS., transposed by Horsenout. *Ethereal*: D.F.V.—*Sidereal* conjectured by Sperm, and found in 'K. (Edinburgensis). *Ruin*: most MSS., but Kalm conjectures "brewing."

Notes.—(a) *Him*.—The junior student should notice the irregular position of the object; it is a transposition for the sake of emphasis, and often occurs in these old writers, though in silver period of Anglo-Saxon it might savour of pedantry. Examples could be multiplied from the orators.

Hurl'd headlong.—Note the alliteration, a common, though puerile, source of poetic effect, cf., "Far flashed the flame her fan."—*Punch*. Horsenout deems it proper to transpose these two terms on the assumption that Satan would first be turned head downwards before hurled "Sheer o'er the crystal battlements of heaven," as the blacksmith Vulcan had been of yore. This is pressing the meaning too far, however. The MSS. all give this order.

(b) *Ethereal sky*.—This is clear tautology, but pedantic verbosity was then commonly mistaken for elevated poetry. Bigboy, in his reply to Sturmfild, tries to justify this, but all he says merely amounts to the assertion that ether is the constituent of the sky. It is true that he takes five pages to say this, but he says no more after all. It were well if editors

studied brevity. *Sidereal* is conjectured, but needlessly, though a happy poetic conjecture.

(c) *Combustion*.—The meaning here, as Sneezer points out, probably is that in his downward course he collided with stars, comets, etc., which would immediately explode when driven from their normal courses. Jeff goes on to give a scientific account of combustion, with the probable effect this had on subsequent astronomical difficulties, but such a question is clearly extraneous, and should not be introduced into literary works. It may be mentioned that "brewing" is conjectured for "ruin," on the ground that the scribe might mistake the sound when the word was dictated. We have no authority, however, for imagining that such a "seething" effect would be shown, and the poet could not have had such scientific knowledge.

(d) *Dwell in adamant chains*.—Here we have a profound difficulty. All former editors have given the reading up, and resort to conjectures, with the exception of Boyne, but his work is so much one of the scissors and so slipshod that it is not worth taking account of. Some of the German conjectures are probable, but they show so much over-subtlety that we must be on our guard against them. The point that troubles all commentators is the impossibility of Satan's *dwelling* in perdition when it was bottomless. He is said to be chained, but how would the chains be fixed when there was no bottom? The use of the word adamantine also adds to the suspicious character of the passage, and, in fact, it is universally condemned. Now it remains for the present editor to claim the honour of explaining this puzzle, this paradoxical enigma. The chain was fixed to one of the stars, and the chained one was so weighed down that he might be said literally to dwell, as his weight would rest on the chain. This simple explanation escaped the notice of critics, who are rather prone to raise difficulties where none exist. For the word adamantine, cf. Campbell, Odes I. 2; Shakespeare, L.L.L., Act I., Sc. 2; Chaucer, Knight's Tale, 1215; Tennyson's In Memoriam, I, 13, etc.

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