In any one of these acceptations it denoted ſomething new to Adam, which he could not underſtand without an ex­planation of the term ; and therefore, as it was threatened as the puniſhment of only one tranſgreſſion, it could not be the divine intention to inflict it upon any other.

The abſtaining from a particular fruit in the midſt of a garden abounding with fruits of all kinds, was a precept which at first view appears of eaſy obſervation ; and the penalty threatened againſt the breach of it was, in every ſenſe awful. The precept, however, was broken notwithstanding that penalty ; and though we may thence infer that our first parents were not beings of ſuch abſolute perfection as by ſyſtem-building divines they have ſometimes been represented, we ſhall yet find, upon due conſideration, that the temptation by which they were ſeduced, when taken with all its circumſtances, was ſuch as no wiſe and modeſt man will think himſelf able to have reſiſted. The ſhort hiſtory of this important tranſaction, as we have it in the third chapter of the book of Geneſis, is as follows.

“ Now the ſerpent was more ſubtile than any beaſt of the field which the Lord God had made ; and he ſaid unto the woman, Yea, hath God ſaid, ye ſhall not eat of every tree of the garden ? And the woman ſaid unto the ſerpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden ; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midſt of the garden, God hath ſaid ye ſhall not eat of it, neither ſhall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, ye ſhall not ſurely die : For God doth know, that on the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman *ſaw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleaſant to the eyes, and a tree to be deſired to make one wise, ſhe took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave alſo unto her huſband with her, and he did eat.”

To the leſs attentive reader this converſation between the ſerpent and the woman muſt appear to begin abruptly ; and indeed it is not poſſible to reconcile it with the natural order of a dialogue, or even with the common rules of grammar, but by ſuppoſing the tempter’s queſtion, “ Yea, hath God ſaid, ye ſhall not eat of every tree of the garden ?” to have been suggeſted by ſomething immediately preceding either in words or in ſignificant ſigns. Eve had undoubtedly by ſome means or other informed the ſerpent that ſhe was for­bidden to eat of the fruit upon which he was probably feaſting ; and that information, whether given in words or in actions, muſt have produced the queſtion with which the sacred historian begins his relation of this fatal dialogue. We are told that the woman *ſaw* that the tree was *good for food* ; that it was pleaſant to the eyes, and a tree to be *deſired to make one wise;* but all this ſhe could not have s*een,* had not the ſerpent eaten of its fruit in her preſence. In her walks through the garden, it might have often appeared pleaſant to her eyes ; but previous to experience ſhe could not know but that its fruit was the moſt deadly poiſon, far Leſs could ſhe conceive it capable of conferring wiſdom. But if the ſerpent eat of it before her, and then extolled its virtues in rapturous and intelligible language, ſhe would at once ſee that it was not deſtructive of animal life, and na­turally infer that it had very ſingular qualities. At the moment ſhe was drawing this inference, it is probable that he invited her to partake of the delicious fruit, and that her refuſal produced the conference before us. That ſhe yield­ed to his temptation need excite no wonder ; for ſhe knew that the ſerpent was by nature a mute animal, and if he attributed his ſpeech to the virtues of the tree, ſhe might infer, with ſome plauſibility, that what had power to raise the brute mind to human, might raise the human to divine, and make her and her huſband, according to the promise of the tempter, become as gods, knowing good and evil. Milton, who was an eminent divine as well as the prince of poets, makes her reaſon thus with herſelf.

Great are thy virtues, doubtleſs, beſt of fruits,

Tho’ kept from man, and worthy to be admir’d ;

Whoſe taſte, too long forborne, at first essay

Gave elocution to the mute, and taught

The tongue not made for ſpeech to speak thy praiſe.

­For us alone

Was death invented ? or to us denied

This intellectual food, for beaſts reſerved ?

For beaſts it ſeems : yet that one beaſt which first

Hath taſted, envies not, but brings with joy

The good befallen him, author unſuſpect,

Friendly to man, far from deceit or guile.

What fear I then, rather what know to fear

Under this ignorance of good and evil,

Of God or death, of law or penalty ?

Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,

Fair to the eye, inviting to the taſte,

Of virtue to make wiſe : what hinders then

To reach, and feed at once both body and mind ?

*Paradiſe Lost,* book ix.

Full of theſe hopes of raiſing herſelf to divinity, and not, as has ſometimes been ſuppoſed, led headlong by a senſual ap­petite, ſhe took of the fruit and did eat, and gave to her huſ­band with her, and he did eat. The great poet makes Adam delude himſelf with the ſame ſophiſtry that had deluded Eve, and infer, that as the ſerpent had attained the language and reaſoning powers of man, they ſhould attain

Proportional aſcent, which could not be

But to be gods, or angels, demi-gods.

Thus was the covenant, which, on the introduction of our first parents into paradiſe, their Creator was graciouſly pleased to make with them, broken by their violation of the con­dition on which they were advanced to that ſupernatural ſtate ; and therefore the hiſtorian tells us, that “ left they ſhould put forth their hand and take alſo of the tree of life and eat, and live for ever, the Lord God ſent them forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence they were taken @@(n).” Had they been ſo ſent forth with­out any farther intimation respecting their preſent condi­tion or their future proſpects, and if the death under which they had fallen was only a loss of conſciouſneſs, they would have been in preciſely the ſame ſtate in which they lived be­fore they were placed in the garden of Eden ; only their minds muſt now have been burdened with the inward ſenſe of guilt, and they muſt have *knοwn* themſelves to be ſubject to death; of which, though not exempted from it by nature, they had probably no *apprehension* till it was revealed to them in the covenant of life which they had ſo wantonly broken.

God, however, did not send them forth thus hopeleſs and forlorn from the paradiſe or delights which they had ſo re­