

Turning with easy eye thou mayst behold
 All these the Parthian, now some ages past,
 By great Arsaces¹ 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
 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
 The city gates out-poured, light armed troops
 In coats of mail and military pride;
 In mail their horses clad, yet fleet and strong,
 Prancing their riders bore, the flower and choice
 Of many provinces from bound to bound;
 From Arachosia,² from Candaor east,
 And Margiana to the Hyrcanian cliffs
 Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales,
 From Atropatia³ and the neighbouring plains
 Of Adiabene, Media, and the south
 Of Susiana, to Balsara's haven.⁴

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 towers⁵
 Of archers, nor of labouring pioneers

¹ His revolt is placed by Prideaux 250 B. C. It may be observed, that there is a serious anachronism in our Saviour being here made to behold cities, long since ruined, in a flourishing condition.

² Near the Indus. ³ West of Media. ⁴ The same as Terebon.

⁵ *i. e.* with towers upon their backs. Milton here uses *indorsed* according to its strict derivative meaning, from *in* and *de-rum*.

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,¹ with all his northern powers,
 Besieged Albracca, as romances tell,
 The city of Gallaphrone, from thence to win
 The fairest of her sex, Angelica
 His daughter, sought by many prowest knights,
 Both Paynim, and the peers of Charlemain.
 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 mayst 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 shown
 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,
 Between too 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,

¹ See Boiardo's *Orlando Inamorato*. i. 10. "It must, I think," observes Thyer, "be acknowledged by the greatest admirers of Milton, that the impression which romances had made upon his imagination in his youth, has in this place led him into a blameable excess. Not to mention the notorious fabulousness of the fact alluded to, which I doubt some people will censure in a poem of so grave a turn, the number of the troops of Agrican, &c., is by far too much disproportioned to any army which the Parthian king by any historical evidence, could be supposed to bring into the field."

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
 By him thou shalt regain, without him not,
 That which alone can truly reinstal 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,¹ and among the Medes dispersed;
 Ten 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.

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 Cæsar 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
 Vented much policy, and projects deep
 Of enemies, of aids, battles, and leagues,
 Plausible to the world, to me worth nought
 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
 Luggage of war there shown 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

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 11.

Of numbering Israel, which cost the lives
 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
 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;¹ and to their gods, perhaps
 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."

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.

BOOK IV.

PERPLEXED and troubled at his bad success
 The tempter stood, nor had what to reply;

¹ There is great difficulty in this passage, unless the construction be "Headlong would follow as to their ancient patrimony, and to their gods, perhaps."

Discovered in his fraud, thrown from his hope
 So oft, and the persuasive rhetoric
 That sleeked his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
 So little here, nay lost; but Eve was Eve,
 This far his over-match, who, self-deceived
 And rash, beforehand had no better weighed
 The strength he was to cope with, or his own;
 But as a man who had been matchless held
 In cunning, over-reached where least he thought,
 To salve his credit; and for very spite,
 Still will be tempting him who foils him still,
 And never cease, though to his shame the more;
 Or as a swarm of flies in vintage time,
 About the wine-press where sweet must is poured,
 Beat off, returns as oft with humming sound;
 Or surging waves against a solid rock,
 Though all to shivers dashed, the assault renew,
 Vain battery, and in froth or bubbles end;
 So Satan, whom repulse upon repulse
 Met ever, and to shameful silence brought,
 Yet gives not o'er, though desperate of success,
 And his vain importunity pursues.
 He brought our Saviour to the western side
 Of that high mountain, whence he might behold
 Another plain,¹ long, but in breadth not wide,
 Washed by the southern sea, and on the north
 To equal length backed with a ridge of hills,
 That screened the fruits of the earth and seats of men
 From cold septentrion² blasts; thence in the midst
 Divided by a river, of whose banks
 On each side an imperial city stood,
 With towers and temples proudly elevate
 On seven small hills, with palaces adorned,
 Porches and theatres, baths, aqueducts,
 Statues and trophies, and triumphal arcs,
 Gardens and groves, presented to his eyes,
 Above the height of mountains interposed;
 By what strange parallax, or optic skill
 Of vision multiplied through air, or glass
 Of telescope, were curious to inquire;
 And now the tempter thus his silence broke:

¹ Italy, which is washed by the Mediterranean on the south, and screened by the Northern Alps on the north, and divided in the midst, by the river Tiber.

² Northern.

" The city which thou seest no other deem
 Than great and glorious Rome, queen of the earth
 So far renowned, and with the spoils enriched
 Of nations; there the capitol thou seest
 Above the rest lifting his stately head
 On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel
 Impregnable, and there Mount Palatine,
 The imperial palace, compass huge, and high
 The structure, skill of noblest architects,
 With gilded battlements, conspicuous far,
 Turrets and terraces, and glittering spires.
 Many a fair edifice besides, more like
 Houses of gods (so well I have disposed
 My airy microscope), thou mayst behold
 Outside and inside both, pillars and roofs,
 Carved work, the hand¹ of famed artificers
 In cedar, marble, ivory, or gold.
 Thence to the gates cast round thine eye, and see
 What conflux issuing forth, or entering in:
 Prætors, proconsuls to their provinces
 Hastening, or on return, in robes of state;
 Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power,
 Legions and cohorts, turms² of horse and wings;
 Or embassies from regions far remote
 In various habits on the Appian³ road,
 Or on the Emilian, some from farthest south,
 Syene, and where the shadow both way falls,
 Meroe, Nilotic isle, and more to west,
 The realm of Bocchus⁴ to the Black-moor sea,
 From the Asian kings, and Parthian among these,
 From India and the golden Chersonese,
 And utmost Indian isle, Taprobane,
 Dusk faces with white silken turbans wreathed,
 From Gallia, Gades, and the British west,
 Germans and Scythians, and Sarmatians north
 Beyond Danubius to the Tauric pool.⁵
 All nations now to Rome obedience pay,
 To Rome's great emperor, whose wide domain
 In ample territory, wealth and power,

¹ Handywork, a Latinism, as in Virg. *Æn.* i. 455.

² Troops, the Latin *turmæ*.

³ The Appian road from Rome led towards the S., the Emilian towards the N. of Italy.

⁴ Mauritania

⁵ The Palus Mæotis.

Civility of manners, arts and arms,
 And long renown, thou justly mayst prefer
 Before the Parthian; these two thrones except,
 The rest are barbarous, and scarce worth the sight,
 Shared among petty kings too far removed;
 These having shown thee, I have shown thee all
 The kingdoms of the world, and all their glory.
 This emperor¹ hath no son, and now is old,
 Old and lascivious, and from Rome retired
 To Capreæ, an island small but strong
 On the Campanian shore, with purpose there
 His horrid lusts in private to enjoy,
 Committing to a wicked favourite²
 All public cares, and yet of him suspicious,
 Hated of all, and hating; with what ease,
 Endued with regal virtues as thou art,
 Appearing, and beginning noble deeds,
 Mightst thou expel this monster from his throne
 Now made a sty, and, in his place ascending,
 A victor people free from servile yoke?
 And with my help thou mayst; to me the power
 Is given, and by that right I give it thee.
 Aim therefore at no less than all the world,
 Aim at the highest, without the highest attained
 Will be for thee no sitting, or not long,
 On David's throne, be prophesied what will."

To whom the Son of God unmoved replied:
 "Nor doth this grandeur and majestic show
 Of luxury, though called magnificence,
 More than of arms before, allure mine eye,
 Much less my mind; though thou shouldst add to tell
 Their sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feast:
 On citron tables,³ or Atlantic stone
 (For I have also heard, perhaps have read),
 Their wines of Setia, Cales, and Falerne,
 Chios, and Crete,⁴ and how they quaff in gold,
 Crystal, and myrrhine⁵ cups, embossed with gems

¹ Tiberius Nero. This account is strictly conformable to history.

² Sejanus.

³ Citron-wood tables were in such request among the Romans, that Pliny calls it *mensarum insania*, see Hist. Nat. xiii. 29.

⁴ The three former wines were Italian; the two latter Greek.

⁵ These kind of cups are constantly mentioned together, Pliny xxxiii. 2; *rechios myrrhine*, cups among fossils.

And studs of pearl, to me shouldst tell who thirst
 And hunger still. Then embassies thou show'st
 From nations far and nigh: what honour that,
 But tedious waste of time to sit and hear
 So many hollow compliments and lies,
 Outlandish flatteries? Then proceed'st to talk
 Of the emperor, how easily subdued,
 How gloriously; I shall, thou say'st, expel
 A brutish monster: what if I withal
 Expel a devil who first made him such?
 Let his tormentor conscience find him out;
 For him I was not sent, nor yet to free
 That people victor once, now vile and base,
 Deservedly made vassal, who once just,
 Frugal, and mild, and temperate, conquered well,
 But govern ill the nations under yoke,
 Peeling their provinces, exhausted all
 By lust and rapine; first ambitious grown
 Of triumph, that insulting vanity;
 Then cruel, by their sports to blood inured
 Of fighting beasts, and men to beasts exposed,
 Luxurious by their wealth, and greedier still,
 And from the daily scene effeminate.
 What wise and valiant man would seek to free
 These thus degenerate, by themselves enslaved,
 Or could of inward slaves make outward free?
 Know, therefore, when my season comes to sit
 On David's throne, it shall be like a tree
 Spreading and overshadowing all the earth,
 Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
 All monarchies besides throughout the world,
 And of my kingdom there shall be no end:
 Means there shall be to this, but what the means,
 Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell."

To whom the tempter impudent replied:
 "I see all offers made by me how slight
 Thou valuest, because offered, and reject'st:
 Nothing will please the difficult and nice,
 Or nothing more than still to contradict:
 On the other side know also thou, that I
 On what I offer set as high esteem,
 Nor what I part with mean to give for nought;
 All these which in a moment thou behold'st,
 The kingdoms of the world to thee I give;

For given to me, I give to whom I please,
 No trifle; yet with this reserve, not else,
 On this condition,¹ if thou wilt fall down.
 And worship me as thy superior lord,
 Easily done, and hold them all of me;
 For what can less so great a gift deserve?"

Whom thus our Saviour answered with disdain:
 "I never liked thy talk, thy offers less,
 Now both abhor, since thou hast dared to utter
 The abominable terms, impious condition;
 But I endure the time, till which expired,
 Thou hast permission on me. It is written
 The first of all commandments, 'Thou shalt worship
 The Lord thy God, and only him shalt serve';
 And dar'st thou to the Son of God propound
 To worship thee, accursed, now more accursed
 For this attempt bolder than that on Eve,
 And more blasphemous? which expect to rue
 The kingdoms of the world to thee were given,
 Permitted rather, and by thee usurped;
 Other donation none thou canst produce:
 If given, by whom but by the King of Kings,
 God over all supreme? If given to thee,
 By thee how fairly is the giver now
 Repaid? But gratitude in thee is lost
 Long since. Wert thou so void of fear or shame,
 As offer them to me, the Son of God,
 To me my own on such abhorred pact,²
 That I fall down and worship thee as God?
 Get thee behind me; plain thou now appear'st
 That evil one, Satan for ever damned."

To whom the fiend with fear abashed replied:
 "Be not so sore offended, Son of God,
 Though sons of God both angels are and men,
 If I to try whether in higher sort
 Than these thou bear'st that title, have proposed

¹ "In my opinion," says Bishop Newton (and with good reason). "there is not anything in the disposition and conduct of the whole poem so justly liable to censure as the awkward and preposterous introduction of this incident in this place. The tempter should have proposed the condition at the same time that he offered the gifts, as he does likewise in Scripture; but, after his gifts had been absolutely refused, to what purpose was it to propose the 'impious condition'?"

² Treaty, agreement.

What both from men and angels I receive,
 Tetrarchs of fire, air, flood, and on the earth
 Nations besides from all the quartered winds,
 God of this world invoked and world beneath;
 Who then thou art, whose coming is foretold
 To me so fatal, me it most concerns.
 The trial hath endamaged thee no way,
 Rather more honour left and more esteem;
 Me nought advantaged, missing what I aimed.
 Therefore let pass, as they are transitory,
 The kingdoms of this world; I shall no more
 Advise thee; gain them as thou canst, or not.
 And thou thyself seem'st otherwise inclined
 Than to a worldly crown, addicted more
 To contemplation and profound dispute,
 As by that early action may be judged,
 When slipping from thy mother's eye thou went'st
 Alone into the temple, there wast found
 Among the gravest rabbis disputant
 On points and questions fitting Moses' chair,
 Teaching, not taught; the childhood shows the man,
 As morning shows the day. Be famous then
 By wisdom; as thy empire must extend,
 So let extend thy mind o'er all the world
 In knowledge, all things in it comprehend:
 All knowledge is not couched in Moses' law,
 The Pentateuch, or what the prophets wrote:
 The Gentiles also know, and write and teach
 To admiration, led by nature's light;
 And with the Gentiles much thou must converse,
 Ruling them by persuasion as thou mean'st;
 Without their learning how wilt thou with them,
 Or they with thee, hold conversation meet?
 How wilt thou reason with them, how refute
 Their idolisms, traditions, paradoxes?
 Error by his own arms is best evinced.
 Look once more ere we leave this specular mount¹
 Westward, much nearer by south-west, behold
 Where on the Ægean shore a city stands
 Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil;
 Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
 And eloquence, native to famous wits

¹ Like "mount of speculation" in *Par. Lost*, xii. 588

Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
 City or suburban, studious walks and shades;
 See there the olive grove of Academe,¹
 Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird²
 Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long;
 There flowery hill Hymettus, with the sound
 Of bees' industrious murmur, oft invites
 To studious musing; there Ilissus rolls
 His whispering stream: within the walls then view
 The schools of ancient sages; his who bred
 Great Alexander to subdue the world,
 Lyceum³ there, and painted Stoa⁴ next:
 There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power
 Of harmony in tones and numbers hit
 By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
 Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,
 And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,
 Blind Melesigenes,⁵ thence Homer called,
 Whose poem Phœbus challenged for his own.
 Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
 In chorus or iambic, teachers best
 Of moral prudence, with delight received
 In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
 Of fate and chance, and change in human life.
 High actions and high passions best describing
 Thence to the famous orators repair,
 Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence
 Wielded at will that fierce democratic,
 Shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece
 To Macedon⁶ and Artaxerxes' throne.
 To sage philosophy next lend thine ear,

¹ A favourite resort for the students and philosophers of Athens taking its name from an ancient hero. Cf. Aristoph. Ran. iii. 3, Hor. Ep. ii. 2, 45.

² The nightingale, into which Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, is fabled to have been changed. Cf. Mart. Epigr. i. 46.

³ The school of Aristotle, the founder of the Peripatetic philosophy.

⁴ The school of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic philosophy.

⁵ According to the life of Homer, falsely attributed to Herodotus, this was Homer's original name. See my introduction to Pope's Homer, in the National Illustrated Library edition.

⁶ As Pericles and others fulminated over Greece to Artaxerxes' throne against the Persian king, so Demosthenes was the orator particularly who fulminated over Greece to Macedon, against king Philip. —Newton.

From Heaven descended to the low-roofed house
 Of Socrates; see there his tenement,
 Whom well inspired the oracle pronounced
 Wisest of men; from whose mouth issued forth
 Mellifluous streams that watered all the schools
 Of academics old and new, with those
 Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect
 Epicuréan, and the Stoic severe:
 These here revolve, or, as thou lik'st, at home,
 Till time mature thee to a kingdom's weight.
 These rules will render thee a king complete
 Within thyself, much more with empire joined."

To whom our Saviour sagely thus replied:
 "Think not but that I know these things, or think
 I know them not; not therefore am I short
 Of knowing what I ought: he who receives
 Light from above, from the fountain of light,
 No other doctrine needs, though granted true,
 But these are false, or little else but dreams,
 Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm.
 The first and wisest of them all professed
 To know this only, that he nothing knew;
 The next to fabling fell and smooth conceits;
 A third sort doubted all things, though plain sense;
 Others in virtue placed felicity,
 But virtue joined with riches and long life;
 In corporal pleasure he, and careless ease;
 The Stoic last, in philosophic pride,
 By him called virtue; and his virtuous man,
 Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing,
 Equals to God, oft shames not to prefer,
 As fearing God nor man, contemning all
 Wealth, pleasure, pain, or torment, death and life,
 Which when he lists he leaves, or boasts he can,
 For all his tedious talk is but vain boast,
 Or subtle shifts conviction to evade.
 Alas! what can they teach and not mislead,
 Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
 And how the world began, and how man fell
 Degraded by himself, on grace depending?
 Much of the soul they talk, but all awry,
 And in themselves seek virtue, and to themselves
 All glory arrogate, to God give none,
 Rather accuse him under usual names,

Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
 Of mortal things. Who therefore seeks in these
 True wisdom, finds her not, or by delusion,
 Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
 An empty cloud. However, many books,
 Wise men have said, are wearisome : who reads
 Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
 A spirit and judgment equal or superior
 (And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek?),
 Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
 Deep versed in books and shallow in himself,
 Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
 And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge
 As children gathering pebbles on the shore.
 Or if I would delight my private hours
 With music or with poem, where so soon
 As in our native language can I find
 That solace? All our law and story strewed
 With hymns, our psalms with artful terms inscrib'd,
 Our Hebrew songs and harps in Babylon,
 That pleased so well our victors' ear, declare
 That rather Greece from us these arts derived ;¹
 Ill imitated, while they loudest sing
 The vices of their deities, and their own
 In fable, hymn, or song, so personating
 Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.
 Remove their swelling epithets, thick laid
 As varnish on a harlot's cheek, the rest,
 Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,
 Will far be found unworthy to compare
 With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
 Where God is praised aright, and god-like men,
 The Holiest of Holies, and his saints ;
 Such are from God inspired, not such from thee,
 Unless where moral virtue is expressed
 By light of nature not in all quite lost.
 Their orators thou then extoll'st, as those
 The top of eloquence ; statist² indeed,
 And lovers of their country, as may seem ;

¹ This was the system in vogue at that time. It was established and supported with vast erudition by Bochart, and carried to an extravagant and even ridiculous length by Haetius and Gale.—*Warton*.

² Statesmen, a word used by Shakspeare.

But herein to our prophets far beneath,
 As men divinely taught, and better teaching
 The solid rules of civil government,
 In their majestic, unaffected style,
 Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.
 In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
 What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,
 What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat;
 These only with our law best form a king."

So spake the Son of God: but Satan now
 Quite at a loss, for all his darts were spent,
 Thus to our Saviour with stern brow replied:

"Since neither wealth, nor honour, arms nor arts,
 Kingdom nor empire, pleases thee, nor aught
 By me proposed in life contemplative,
 Or active, tended on by glory or fame,
 What dost thou in this world? The wilderness
 For thee is fittest place; I found thee there,
 And thither will return thee; yet remember
 What I foretell thee: soon thou shalt have cause
 To wish thou never hadst rejected thus
 Nicely or cautiously my offered aid,
 Which would have set thee in short time with ease
 On David's throne, or throne of all the world,
 Now at full age, fullness of time, thy season,
 When prophecies of thee are best fulfilled.
 Now contrary, if I read aught in Heaven,¹
 Or Heaven write aught of fate, by what the stars
 Voluminous, or single characters,
 In their conjunction met, give me to spell,
 Sorrows, and labours, opposition, hate,
 Attends thee, scorns, reproaches, injuries,
 Violence and stripes, and lastly cruel death;
 A kingdom they portend thee, but what kingdom.
 Real or allegoric, I discern not,
 Nor when, eternal sure, as without end,
 Without beginning; for no date prefixed
 Directs me in the starry rubric set."

¹ A satire on Cardan, who, with the boldness and impiety of an atheist and a madman, both of which he was, cast the nativity of Jesus Christ, and found by the great and illustrious concourse of stars at his birth, that he must needs have the fortune which befell him, and become the author of a religion, which should spread itself far and near for many ages.—*Newton*.

So saying he took (for still he knew his power
 Not yet expired), and to the wilderness
 Brought back the Son of God, and left him there
 Feigning to disappear. Darkness now rose,
 As daylight sunk, and brought in louring night,
 Her shadowy offspring, unsubstantial both,
 Privation mere of light and absent day.
 Our Saviour meek, and with untroubled mind
 After his airy jaunt, though hurried sore,
 Hungry and cold, betook him to his rest,
 Wherever, under some concourse of shades,
 Whose branching arms, thick intertwined, might shie
 From dews and damps of night his sheltered head,
 But sheltered slept in vain, for at his head
 The tempter watched, and soon with ugly dreams
 Disturbed his sleep; and either tropic now
 Gan thunder, and both ends of Heaven, the clouds
 From many a horrid rift abortive poured
 Fierce rain with lightning mixed, water with fire
 In ruin reconciled: nor slept the winds
 Within their stony caves, but rushed abroad
 From the four hinges of the world, and fell
 On the vexed wilderness, whose tallest pines,
 Though rooted deep as high, and sturdiest caks
 Bowed their stiff necks, loaden with stormy blasts,
 Or torn up sheer: ill wast thou shrouded then,
 O patient Son of God, yet only stood'st
 Unshaken; nor yet stayed the terror there,
 Infernal ghosts, and hellish furies, round
 Environed thee, some howled, some yelled, some shrieked
 Some bent at thee their fiery darts, while thou
 Sat'st unappalled in calm and sinless peace.
 Thus passed the night so foul, till morning fair
 Came forth with pilgrim steps in amice¹ gray,
 Who with her radiant finger stilled the roar
 Of thunder, chased the clouds, and laid the winds
 And grisly spectres, which the fiend had raised
 To tempt the Son of God with terrors dire.
 And now the sun, with more effectual beams,
 Had cheered the face of earth, and dried the wet
 From drooping plant, or dropping tree; the birds,
 Who all things now behold² more fresh and green,
 After a night of storm so ruinous.

¹ Clothing, from *amicia*

² Probably "beheld."

Cleared up their choicest notes in bush and spray
 To gratulate the sweet return of morn;
 Nor yet amidst this joy and brightest morn
 Was absent, after all his mischief done,
 The prince of darkness, glad would also seem
 Of this fair change, and to our Saviour came,
 Yet with no new device, they all were spent,
 Rather by this his last affront resolved,
 Desperate of better course, to vent his rage,
 And mad despite to be so oft repelled.

Him walking on a sunny hill he found,
 Backed on the north and west by a thick wood;
 Out of the wood he starts in wonted shape,
 And in a careless mood thus to him said:

“ Fair morning yet betides thee, Son of God,
 After a dismal night; I heard the wrack
 As earth and sky would mingle; but myself
 Was distant; and these flaws, though mortals fear them
 As dangerous to the pillared frame of Heaven,
 Or to the earth’s dark basis underneath,
 Are to the main as inconsiderable,
 And harmless, if not wholesome, as a sneeze
 To man’s less universe, and soon are gone:
 Yet as being oft-times noxious where they light
 On man, beast, plant, wasteful and turbulent,
 Like turbulencies in the affairs of men,
 Over whose heads they roar, and seem to point,
 They oft fore-signify and threaten ill:
 This tempest at this desert most was bent;
 Of men at thee, for only thou here dwell’st.
 Did I not tell thee,¹ if thou didst reject
 The perfect season offered with my aid
 To win thy destined seat, but wilt prolong
 All to the push of fate, pursue thy way
 Of gaining David’s throne no man knows when,
 For both the when and how is no where told,
 Thou shalt be what thou art ordained, no doubt;
 For angels have proclaimed it, but concealing
 The time and means: each act is rightliest done,
 Not when it must, but when it may be best
 If thou observe not this, be sure to find,
 What I foretold thee, many a hard assay

¹ This sentence is, as Newton observes, “dark and perplexed
 having no proper exit.”

Of dangers, and adversities, and pains,
 Ere thou of Israel's sceptre get fast hold;
 Whereof this ominous night that closed thee round,
 So many terrors, voices, prodigies,
 May warn thee, as a sure foregoing sign."

So talked he; while the Son of God went on
 And stayed not, but in brief him answered thus:

"Me worse than wet thou find'st not, other harm
 Those terrors which thou speak'st of did me none;
 I never feared they could, though noising loud
 And threatening nigh; what they can do as signs
 Betokening, or ill boding, I contemn
 As false portents, not sent from God, but thee;
 Who knowing I shall reign past thy preventing,
 Obtrud'st thy offered aid, that I accepting,
 At least might seem to hold all power of thee,
 Ambitious spirit, and wouldst be thought my God,
 And storm'st refused, thinking to terrify
 Me to thy will. Desist, thou art discerned,
 And toil'st in vain, nor me in vain molest.

To whom the fiend, now swollen with rage, replied
 "Then hear, O Son of David, virgin-born;
 For Son of God to me is yet in doubt:
 Of the Messiah I have heard foretold
 By all the prophets; of thy birth at length
 Announced by Gabriel with the first I knew,
 And of the angelic song in Bethlehem field,
 On thy birth-night, that sung thee Saviour born.
 From that time seldom have I ceased to eye
 Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
 Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred
 Till at the ford of Jordan, whither all
 Flocked to the Baptist, I among the rest,
 Though not to be baptized, by voice from Heaven
 Heard thee pronounced the Son of God beloved.
 Thenceforth I thought thee worth my nearer view
 And narrower scrutiny, that I might learn
 In what degree or meaning thou art called
 The Son of God, which bears no single sense;
 The son of God I also am, or was,
 And if I was, I am; relation stands;
 All men are sons of God; yet thee I thought
 In some respect far higher so declared.
 Therefore I watched thy footsteps from that hour,

And followed thee still on to this waste wild,
 Where by all best conjectures I collect
 Thou art to be my fatal enemy.
 Good reason then, if I beforehand seek
 To understand my adversary, who
 And what he is; his wisdom, power, intent;
 By parle, or composition, truce, or league
 To win him, or win from him what I can.
 And opportunity I here have had
 To try thee, sift thee, and confess have found thee
 Proof against all temptation, as a rock
 Of adamant, and as a centre, firm,
 To the utmost of mere man both wise and good,
 Not more; for honours, riches, kingdoms, glory,
 Have been before contemned, and may again:
 Therefore to know what more thou art than man,
 Worth naming Son of God by voice from Heaven,
 Another method I must now begin."

So saying, he caught him up, and, without wing
 Of hippogrif,¹ bore through the air sublime
 Over the wilderness and o'er the plain;
 Till underneath them fair Jerusalem,
 The holy city, lifted high her towers,
 And higher yet the glorious temple reared
 Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
 Of alabaster, topped with golden spires:
 There on the highest pinnacle he set
 The Son of God, and added thus in scorn:

"There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright
 Will ask thee skill; I to thy Father's house
 Have brought thee, and highest placed, highest is best,
 Now show thy progeny; if not to stand,
 Cast thyself down; safely, if Son of God,
 For it is written, 'He will give command
 Concerning thee to his angels, in their hands
 They shall up-lift thee, lest at any time
 Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.'"

To whom thus Jesus: "Also it is written,
 Tempt not the Lord thy God:" he said and stood:
 But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell.
 As when earth's son, Antæus (to compare

¹ A quiz upon Ariosto, with whom this horse-griffin monster is his
 great favourite.

Small things with greatest) in Irassa¹ strove
 With Jove's Alcides, and oft foiled still rose,
 Receiving from his mother earth new strength,
 Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple joined,
 Throttled at length in the air, expired and fell:
 So after many a foil the tempter proud,
 Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride
 Fell whence he stood to see his victor fall.
 And as that Theban monster² that proposed
 Her riddle, and him who solved it not devoured
 That once found out and solved, for grief and spite
 Cast herself headlong from the Ismenian³ steep;
 So struck with dread and anguish fell the fiend,
 And to his crew, that sat consulting, brought
 Joyless triumphals of his hoped success,
 Ruin, and desperation, and dismay,
 Who durst so proudly tempt the Son of God.
 So Satan fell; and straight a fiery globe
 Of angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
 Who on their plummy vans received him soft
 From his uneasy station, and upbore,
 As on a floating couch, through the blithe air,
 Then in a flowery valley set him down
 On a green bank, and set before him spread
 A table of celestial food, divine,
 Ambrosial fruits, fetched from the tree of life,
 And from the fount of life ambrosial drink,
 That soon refreshed him wearied, and repaired
 What hunger, if aught hunger had impaired,
 Or thirst; and as he fed, angelic quires
 Sung heavenly anthems of his victory
 Over temptation, and the tempter proud.

"True image of the Father, whether throned
 In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
 Conceiving, or remote from Heaven, enshrined
 In fleshly tabernacle, and human form,
 Wandering the wilderness, whatever place,
 Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing
 The Son of God, with godlike force endued
 Against the attempter of thy Father's throne,
 And thief of Paradise; him long of old
 Thou didst debel,⁴ and down from Heaven cast.

¹ A city in Libya.

² The Sphinx.

³ Thebes

⁴ War down, subdue, from the Latin *debellare*.

With all his army; now thou hast avenged
 Supplanted Adam, and by vanquishing
 Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,
 And frustrated the conquest fraudulent:
 He never more henceforth will dare set foot
 In Paradise to tempt; his snares are broke:
 For though that seat of earthly bliss be failed.
 A fairer Paradise is founded now
 For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou
 A Saviour art come down to reinstal
 Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be
 Of tempter and temptation without fear.
 But thou, infernal serpent, shalt not long
 Rule in the clouds; like an autumnal star
 Or lightning thou shalt fall from Heaven, trod down
 Under his feet; for proof, ere this thou feel'st
 Thy wound, yet not thy last and deadliest wound,
 By this repulse received, and hold'st in Hell
 No triumph; in all her gates Abaddon rues
 Thy bold attempt; hereafter learn with awe
 To dread the Son of God: he all unarmed
 Shall chase thee with the terror of his voice
 From thy demoniac holds, possession foul,
 Thee and thy legions; yelling they shall fly,
 And beg to hide them in a herd of swine,
 Lest he command them down into the deep
 Bound, and to torment sent before their time.
 Hail! Son of the Most High, heir of both worlds,
 Queller of Satan, on thy glorious work
 Now enter, and begin to save mankind."

Thus they the Son of God, our Saviour meek,
 Sung victor, and from heavenly feast refreshed
 Brought on his way with joy; he unobserved
 Home to his mother's house private returned

END OF PARADISE REGAINED

Samson Agonistes.¹

A DRAMATIC POEM.

Τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας.—κ. τ. λ.

ARISTOT. *Poet.*, cap. 7.

Tragedia est imitatio actionis seriæ, &c., per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.

OF THAT SORT OF DRAMATIC POEM WHICH IS
CALLED TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading

¹ The tragedy of "Samson Agonistes" has been celebrated as the second work of the great author of "Paradise Lost," and opposed, with all the confidence of triumph, to the dramatic performances of other nations. It contains, indeed, just sentiments, maxims of wisdom, and oracles of piety, and many passages written with the ancient spirit of choral poetry, in which there is a just and pleasing mixture of Seneca's moral declamation, with the wild enthusiasm of the Greek writers. It is therefore worthy of examination, whether a performance thus illuminated with genius, and enriched with learning, is composed according to the indispensable laws of Aristotelian criticism; and, omitting at present all other considerations, whether it exhibits a beginning, a middle, or an end.

The beginning is undoubtedly beautiful and proper, opening with a graceful abruptness, and proceeding naturally to a mournful recital

or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in physic, things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour; salt to remove salt humours. Hence, philosophers and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch, and others, frequently cite out of tragic poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the text of Holy Scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 33; and Paræus, commenting on the Revelation, divides the whole book as a tragedy, into acts distinguished each by a chorus of heavenly harpings and song between. Heretofore, men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought able to compose a tragedy. Of that honour Dionysius the elder was no less ambitious, than before of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Cæsar also begun his Ajax, but unable to please his own judgment with what he had begun, left it unfinished. Seneca, the philosopher, is by some thought the author of those tragedies (at least the best of them) that go under that name. Gregory Nazianzen, a father of the church, thought it not unbecoming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy, which is entitled "Christ Suffering." This is mentioned to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which, in the account of many, it undergoes at this day with other common interludes; happening through the poets' error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which by all judicious hath been counted absurd; and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people. And though ancient tragedy use no prologue, yet using sometimes, in case of self defence or explanation, that which Martial calls an epistle; in behalf of this tragedy coming forth after the ancient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much beforehand may be epistled; that chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner, not ancient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the modelling, therefore, of

of facts necessary to be known. Samson's soliloquy is interrupted by a chorus or company of men of his own tribe, who condole his miseries, extenuate his fault, and conclude with a solemn vindication of divine justice. So that, at the conclusion of the first act, there is no design laid, no discovery made, nor any disposition formed, towards the consequent event.—*Johnson, Rambler, No. 139.*

this poem, with good reason, the ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame, The measure of verse used in the chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks Monostrophic, or rather Apolelymenon, without regard had to Strophe, Antistrophe, or Epode, which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the music then used with the chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called Allœostropha. Division into act and scene referring chiefly to the stage (to which this work never was intended), is here omitted.

It suffices if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act. Of the style and uniformity, and that commonly called the plot, whether intricate or explicit, which is nothing, indeed, but such œconomy or disposition of the fable as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum; they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three tragic poets unequalled yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy. The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours.

THE PERSONS.

SAMSON.

MANOAH, *the Father of Samson*

DALILA, *his Wife.*

HARAPHA of Gath.

Public Officer.

Messenger.

Chorus of Danites.

The SCENE before the Prison in Gaza.

THE ARGUMENT.

Samson made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air to a place high, somewhat retired, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition; where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father, Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistian lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons, and lastly by a public officer, to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or show his strength in their presence: he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come; at length, persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him. The Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns, full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance; in the midst of which discourse an Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterward more distinctly, relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

SAMSON.

A LITTLE onward lend thy guiding hand¹
 To these dark steps, a little further on;
 For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade:
 There I am wont to sit when any chance
 Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
 Daily in the common prison else enjoined me,
 Where I a prisoner chained, scarce freely draw
 The air imprisoned also, close and damp,
 Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,
 The breath of Heaven fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
 With day-spring born; here leave me to respire. *Breathe*
 This day a solemn feast the people hold
 To Dagon their sea idol,² and forbid

¹ The opening scene of this tragedy is highly suggestive of the commencement of the *Œdipus at Colonus* of Sophocles, where the blind *Œdipus* is introduced, guided by his daughter *Antigone*.

² See note on *Paradise Lost*, i. 462.

Laborious works ; unwillingly this rest
Their superstition yields me ; hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease,
Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of hornets armed, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
Oh, wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
Of both my parents all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an offering burned,
As in a fiery column charioting
His god-like presence, and from some great act
Or benefit revealed to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed
As of a person separate to God,
Designed for great exploits ; if I must die
Betrayed, captived, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze ;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this Heaven-gifted strength ? O glorious strength
Put to the labour of a beast, debased
Lower than bondslave ! Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver ;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke :
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction ; what if all foretold
Had been fulfilled but through mine own default.
Whom have I to complain of but myself ?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong !
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom ? vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command !

God, when he gave me strength, to show withal
 How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
 But peace! I must not quarrel with the will
 Of highest dispensation, which herein
 Haply had ends above my reach to know;
 Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
 And proves the source of all my miseries;
 So many and so huge, that each apart
 Would ask a life to wail; but chief of all,
 O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
 Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
 Dungeon or beggary, or decrepit age!
 Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
 And all her various objects of delight
 Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased,
 Inferior to the vilest now become
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me;
 They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
 Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
 In power of others; never in my own;
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
 Oh, dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
 Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse,
 Without all hope of day!
 O first created beam, and thou great Word,
 "Let there be light!" and light was over all;
 Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
 The sun to me is dark
 And silent as the moon,
 When she deserts the night,
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.¹
 Since light so necessary is to life,
 And almost life itself, if it be true
 That light is in the soul,
 She all in every part: why was the sight
 To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
 So obvious and so easy to be quenched?

¹ Perhaps, as Thyer observes, alluding to the notion which our poet has adopted from Hesiod, in *Paradise Lost*, vi. 4:—

"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."

And not as feeling through all parts diffused,
 That she might look at will through every pore?
 Then had I not been thus exiled from light,
 As in the land of darkness, yet in light,
 To live a life half dead, a living death,
 And buried; but, oh, yet more miserable!
 Myself, my sepulchre, a moving grave,
 Buried, yet not exempt
 By privilege of death and burial
 From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs,
 But made hereby obnoxious more
 To all the miseries of life,
 Life in captivity
 Among inhuman foes.
 But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
 The tread of many feet steering this way;
 Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
 At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
 Their daily practice to afflict me more

CHORUS.

This, this is he; softly awhile,
 Let us not break in upon him:
 Oh, change beyond report, thought, or belief:
 See how he lies at random, carelessly diffused,¹
 With languished head unpropped,
 As one past hope, abandoned,
 And by himself given over;
 In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
 O'er-worn and soiled;
 Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
 That heroic, that renowned,
 Irresistible Samson? whom unarmed
 No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand,
 Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid,
 Ran on embattled armies clad in iron,
 And weaponless himself;
 Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
 Of brazen shield and spear, the hammered cuirass,
 Chalybean² tempered steel, and frock of mail,
 Adamantean proof;
 But safest he who stood aloof,

¹ Poured, stretched out.

² So called from the Chalybes, who were famous for their skill in tempering steel.

When insupportably his foot advanced,¹
 In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
 Spurned them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite
 Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turned
 Their plated backs under his heel ;
 Or grovelling soiled their crested helmets in the dust.
 Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,
 The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,
 A thousand foreskins fell, the flower of Palestine,
 In Ramath-lechi² famous to this day.
 Then by main force pulled up, and on his shoulders tore
 The gates of Azza, post,³ and massy bar,
 Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,⁴
 No journey of a sabbath-day,⁵ and loaded so ;
 Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heaven
 Which shall I first bewail,
 Thy bondage or lost sight,
 Prison within prison,
 Inseparably dark ?
 Thou art become (oh, worst imprisonment !)
 The dungeon of thyself ; thy soul
 (Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain,
 Imprisoned now indeed,
 In real darkness of the body dwells,
 Shut up from outward light
 To incorporate with gloomy night ;
 For inward light, alas !
 Puts forth no visual beam.
 O mirror of our fickle state,
 Since man on earth unparalleled !
 The rarer thy example stands,
 By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
 Strongest of mortal men,
 To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen.

¹ For this nervous expression Milton was probably indebted to Spenser, F. Q. i. 7, 11 :—

“That when the knight he spied, he 'gan advance
 With huge force, and insupportable main.”—*Thuer.*

² Cf. Judges xv. 17.

³ Some propose to read “posts,” from Judges xvi. 3.

⁴ Josh. xv. 13 sq. ; Numbers xiii. 33.

⁵ A Sabbath-day's journey was probably about from three-quarters to the whole of a geographical mile.—See Kitto's Cyclop. ii., p 159 sq.

For him I reckon not in high estate
 Whom long descent of birth
 Or the sphere of fortune raises;
 But thee whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
 Might have subdued the earth,
 Universally crowned with highest praises.

SAMSON.

I hear the sound of words, their sense the air
 Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear

CHORUS.

He speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,
 The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
 We come, thy friends and neighbours not unknown,
 From Eshtaol and Zora's¹ fruitful vale
 To visit or bewail thee; or, if better,
 Counsel or consolation we may bring,
 Salve to thy sores; apt words have power to swage
 The tumours of a troubled mind,
 And are as balm to festered wounds

SAMSON

Your coming, friends, revives me, for I learn
 Now of my own experience, not by talk,
 How counterfeit a coin they are who friends
 Bear in their superscription (of the most
 I would be understood): in prosperous days
 They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head,
 Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends
 How many evils have enclosed me round;
 Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,
 Blindness, for had I sight, confused with shame,
 How could I once look up, or heave the head,
 Who like a foolish pilot have shipwrecked
 My vessel trusted to me from above,
 Gloriously rigged; and for a word, a tear,
 Fool! have divulged the secret gift of God
 To a deceitful woman? Tell me, friends,
 Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
 In every street? Do they not say, How well
 Are come upon him his deserts? Yet why?
 Immeasurable strength they might behold
 In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean;

¹ Both cities of the tribe of Dan the latter being Samson's birth place.

This with the other should, at least, have paired,
These two proportioned ill drove me transverse

CHORUS.

Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have erred, and by bad women been deceived,
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble

SAMSON.

The first I saw at Timna,¹ and she pleased
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel: they knew not
That what I motioned was of God; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urged
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely called
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(Oh that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec,² Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplished snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquished with a peal of words (Oh weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman

CHORUS.

In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness
Yet Israël still serves with all his sons.

SAMSON.

That fault I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,
Who seeing those great acts, which God had done
Singly by me against their conquerors,
Acknowledged not, or not at all considered
Deliverance offered: I, on the other side,

¹ Judges xiv. 1.

² Judges xvi. 4.

Used no ambition¹ to commend my deeds,
 The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer
 But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
 To count them things worth notice, till at length
 Their lords, the Philistines, with gathered powers,
 Entered Judea seeking me, who then
 Safe to the rock of Etham² was retired,
 Not flying, but forecasting in what place
 To set upon them, what advantaged best:
 Meanwhile the men of Judah, to prevent
 The harass of their land, beset me round;
 I willingly on some conditions came
 Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me
 To the uncircumcised a welcome prey,
 Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threads
 Touched with the flame: on their whole host I flew
 Unarmed, and with a trivial weapon felled
 Their choicest youth; they only lived who fled
 Had Judah that day joined, or one whole tribe,
 They had by this possessed the towers of Gath,
 And lorded over them whom now they serve.
 But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
 And by their vices brought to servitude,
 Than to love bondage more than liberty,
 Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
 And to despise, or envy, or suspect
 Whom God hath of his special favour raised
 As their deliverer; if he aught begin,
 How frequent to desert him, and at last
 To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?

CHORUS

Thy words to my remembrance bring
 How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
 Their great deliverer contemned,
 The matchless Gideon in pursuit
 Of Madian and her vanquished kings:
 And how ingrateful Ephraim
 Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,
 Not worse than by his shield and spear,
 Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
 Had not his prowess quelled their pride
 In that sore battle, when so many died

¹ Made no elaborate canvass, sought not to curry favour; from the Latin electioneering term, *ambire*.

² Judges xv. 8.

Without reprieve adjudged to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibbolcth.

SAMSON

Of such examples add me to the roll,
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's proposed deliverance not so

CHORUS.

Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men ;
Unless there be who think not God at all .
If any be, they walk obscure ;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wandering thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution ;
Till by their own perplexities involved
They ravel more, still less resolved,
But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine the Interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstruction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt ;

or with his own laws ne can best dispense.

He would not else who never wanted means,
or in respect of the enemy just cause
o set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,
Against his vow of strictest purity,
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,
Unclean, unchaste.

Down reason then, at least vain reasonings down.
Though reason here aver
That moral verdict quits her of unclean :
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not his
But see, here comes thy reverend sire
With careful step, locks white as down,
Old Manoah : advise
Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him

SAMSON.

Ay me! another inward grief awaked
With mention of that name renews the assault.

MANOAH.

Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye seem,
Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,
As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,
My son now captive, hither hath informed
Your younger feet; while mine, cast back with age,
Came lagging on after; say if he be here

CHORUS.

As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in highest, behold him where he lies

MANOAH.

Oh, miserable change! is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renowned,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels walked their streets,
None offering fight; who single combatant
Duelled their armies ranked in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal-match
To save himself against a coward armed
At one spear's length. Oh, ever-failing trust
In mortal strength! and oh, what not in man
Deceivable and vain? Nay, what thing good
Prayed for, but often proves our woe, our bane?
I prayed for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach; I gained a son,
And such a son as all men hailed me happy;
Who would be now a father in my stead?
Oh, wherefore did God grant me my request,
And, as a blessing, with such pomp adorned?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest prayers, then given with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?
For this did the angel twice descend? for this
Ordained thy nurture holy, as of a plant
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men; then in an hour
Ensnared, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves
Alas! methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err

He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

SAMSON.

Appoint¹ not heavenly disposition, father;
Nothing of all these evils hath befallen me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who have profaned
The mystery of God given me under pledge
Of vow, and have betrayed it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy
This well I knew, nor was at all surprised,
But warned by oft experience: did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her height
Of nuptial love professed, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies,
And rivals? In this other was there found
More faith, who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Though offered only, by the scent conceived
Her spurious first-born, treason against me?
Thrice she assayed with flattering prayers and sighs,
And amorous reproaches, to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stored, in what part summed, that she might know;
Thrice I deluded her, and turned to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purposed to betray me, and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself;
Yet the fourth time, when mustering all her wiles,
With blandished parleys, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceased not day nor night
To storm me over-watched, and wearied out,
At times when men seek most repose and rest,
I yielded, and unlocked her all my heart,
Who with a grain of manhood well resolved
Might easily have shook off all her snares:
But foul effeminacy held me yoked
Her bond-slave; oh, indignity! oh, blot

¹ Anagn.

To honour and religion! servile mind
 Rewarded well with servile punishment!
 The base degree to which I now am fallen,
 These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base
 As was my former servitude, ignoble,
 Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
 True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
 That saw not how degenerately I served

MANOAH.

I cannot praise thy marriage choices, son;
 Rather approved them not; but thou didst plead
 Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
 Find some occasion to infest our foes
 I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
 Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
 Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
 Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms
 To violate the sacred trust of silence
 Deposited within thee; which, to have kept
 Tacit, was in thy power: true, and thou bear'st
 Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
 Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying
 That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains;
 This day¹ the Philistines a popular feast
 Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
 Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
 To Dagon, as their god who hath delivered
 Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands
 Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slai
 So Dagon shall be magnified, and God,
 Besides whom is no God, compared with idols,
 Disglorified, blasphemed, and had in scorn
 By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
 Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
 Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
 Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
 Could have befallen thee and thy father's house.

SAMSON.

Father, I do acknowledge and confess
 That I this honour, I this pomp have brought
 To Dagon, and advanced his praises high
 Among the heathen round; to God have brought
 Dishonour, obloquy, and oped the mouths

¹ Cf. *Judges* xvi. 23.

Of idolists and theists; have brought scandal
 To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
 In feeble hearts, propense enough before
 To waver, or fall off and join with idols;
 Which is my chief affliction, shame, and sorrow
 The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
 Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.
 This only hope relieves me, that the strife
 With me hath end; all the contest is now
 Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presumed,
 Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
 His deity comparing and preferring
 Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
 Will not connive, or linger, thus provoked,
 But will arise and his great name assert:
 Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
 Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
 Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
 And with confusion blank his worshippers.

MANOAH.

With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
 I as a prophecy receive; for God,
 Nothing more certain, will not long defer
 To vindicate the glory of his name
 Against all competition, nor will long
 Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
 Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?
 Thou must not in the mean while here forgot
 Lie in this miserable loathsome plight,
 Neglected. I already have made way
 To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
 About thy ransom: well they may by this
 Have satisfied their utmost of revenge
 By pains and slaveries, worse than death, inflicted
 On thee, who now no more canst do them harm:

SAMSON

Spare that proposal, father, spare the trouble
 Of that solicitation; let me here,
 As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
 And expiate, if possible, my crime,
 Shameful garrulity. To have revealed
 Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
 How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
 Contempt and scorn of all, to be excluded

P B

All friendship, and avoided as a blab
 The mark of fool set on his front! But I
 God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
 Presumptuously have published, impiously,
 Weakly at least, and shamefully, a sin
 That Gentiles¹ in their parables condemn
 To their abyss and horrid pains confined

MANOAH

Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,
 But act not in thy own affliction, son;
 Repent the sin, but if the punishment
 Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids
 Or the execution leave to high disposal,
 And let another hand, not thine, exact
 Thy penal forfeit from thyself; perhaps
 God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
 Who ever more approves and more accepts
 (Best pleased with humble and filial submission)
 Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
 Than who self-rigorous chooses death as due;
 Which argues over-just, and self-displeased
 For self-offence, more than for God offended
 Reject not then what offered means; who knows
 But God hath set before us, to return thee
 Home to thy country and his sacred house,
 Where thou mayst bring thy offerings, to avert
 His further ire, with prayers and vows renewed?

SAMSON

His pardon I implore; but as for life,
 To what end should I seek it? when in strength
 All mortals I excelled, and great in hopes
 With youthful courage and magnanimous thought
 Of birth from Heaven foretold and high exploits,
 Full of divine instinct, after some proof
 Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
 The sons of Anak, famous now and blazed,
 Fearless of danger, like a petty god
 I walked about admired of all, and dreaded
 On hostile ground, none daring my affront.²
 Then swollen with pride into the snare I fell
 Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,

¹ Alluding to the story of Tantalus, who, for revealing the secrets of the gods, was condemned to the torments of Hell.

² i. e. none daring to meet me face to face

Softened with pleasure and voluptuous life ;
 At length to lay my head and hallowed pledge
 Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
 Of a deceitful concubine, who shorn me
 Like a tame wether, all¹ my precious fleece,
 Then turned me out ridiculous, despoiled,
 Shaven, and disarmed among mine enemies.

CHORUS.

Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
 Which many a famous warrior overturns,
 Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing ruby
 Sparkling, out-poured, the flavour, or the smell,
 Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,
 Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

SAMSON.

Wherever fountain or fresh current flowed
 Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure,
 With touch ethereal of Heaven's fiery rod,
 I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
 Thirst, and refreshed: nor envied them the grape
 Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes

CHORUS.

Oh ! madness, to think use of strongest wines
 And strongest drinks our chief support of health
 When God with these forbidden made choice to
 His mighty champion, strong above compare,
 Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.²

SAMSON.

But what availed this temperance, not complete
 Against another object more enticing?
 What boots it at one gate to make defence,
 And at another to let in the foe,
 Effeminately vanquished? by which means,
 Now blind, disheartened, shamed, dishonoured, quelled
 To what can I be useful, wherein serve
 My nation, and the work from Heaven imposed,
 But to sit idle on the household hearth,
 A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,
 Or pitied object, these redundant locks
 Robustious to no purpose clustering down,
 Vain monument of strength; till length of years

¹ Meadowcourt would read, "of my precious fleece;" but there seems no occasion for the alteration.

² As being a Nazarite, Judges xiii. 7.

(And sedentary numbness craze¹ my limbs
 To a contemptible old age obscure?
 Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,
 Till vermin or the draff of servile food
 Consume me, and oft-invoked death
 Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

MANOAH.

Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
 Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?
 Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
 Inglorious, unemployed, with age outworn.
 But God, who caused a fountain at thy prayer
 From the dry ground² to spring, thy thirst to allay
 After the brunt of battle, can as easy
 Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
 Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
 And I persuade me so, why else this strength
 Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?
 His might continues in thee not for nought,
 Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

SAMSON.

All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
 That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light.
 Nor the other light of life continue long,
 But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:
 So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
 My hopes all flat, nature within me seems
 In all her functions weary of herself,
 My race of glory run, and race of shame,
 And I shall shortly be with them that rest

MANOAH.

Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
 From anguish of the mind and humours black,
 That mingle with thy fancy. I, however,
 Must not omit a father's timely care
 To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
 By ransom, or how else: meanwhile be calm,
 And healing words from these thy friends admit

¹ Used as in *Paradise Lost*, xii. 210.

² According to the Chaldee paraphrast of Judges xv. 13 sq. Our translation has—"But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout." The original word, *Lehi*, signifies both a jaw, and a place so called.—*Newton*.

SAMSON.

Oh, that torment should not be confined
 To the body's wounds and sores,
 With maladies innumerable
 In heart, head, breast, and reins;
 But must secret passage find
 To the inmost mind,
 There exercise all his fierce accidents,
 And on her purest spirits prey,
 As on entrails, joints and limbs,
 With answerable pains, but more intense,
 Though void of corporal sense!

My griefs not only pain me
 As a lingering disease,
 But, finding no redress, ferment and rage,
 Nor less than wounds immedicable
 Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
 To black mortification.
 Thoughts my tormentors armed with deadly stings
 Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
 Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
 Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb
 Or medicinal liquor can assuage,
 Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.¹
 Sleep hath forsook and given me o'er
 To death's benumbing opium as my only cure:
 These faintings, swoonings of despair,
 And sense of Heaven's desertion.

I was his nurseling once, and choice delight,
 His destined from the womb,
 Promised by heavenly message twice descending,
 Under his special eye
 Abstemious I grew up and thrived amain,
 He led me on to mightiest deeds
 Above the nerve of mortal arm
 Against the uncircumcised, our enemies;
 But now hath cast me off as never known,
 And to those cruel enemies,
 Whom I by his appointment had provoked,
 Left me all helpless with the irreparable loss
 Of sight, reserved alive to be repeated
 The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
 Nor am I in the list of them that hope,

¹ Used here for any mountain.

Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;
 This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
 No long petition, speedy death,
 The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

CHORUS.

Many are the sayings of the wise
 In ancient and in modern books enrolled,
 Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
 And to the bearing well of all calamities,
 All chances incident to man's frail life,
 Consolatories writ¹
 With studied argument, and much persuasion sought²
 Lenient of grief³ and anxious thought:
 But with the afflicted in his pangs their sound
 Little prevails, or rather seems a tune
 Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
 Unless he feel within
 Some source of consolation from above,
 Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
 And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our fathers! what is man,
 That thou towards him with hand so various,
 Or might I say contrarious,
 Temperest thy providence through his short course,
 Not evenly, as thou rul'st
 The angelic orders and inferior creatures mute,
 Irrational and brute.
 Nor do I name of men the common rout,
 That wandering loose about
 Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
 Heads⁴ without name no more remembered,
 But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
 With gifts and graces eminently adorned,
 To some great work, thy glory,
 And people's safety, which in part they effect:
 Yet toward these thus dignified, thou oft,
 Amidst their height of noon,
 Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no regard
 Of highest favours past
 From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
 Nor only dost degrade them, or remit

¹ Are written.² Is soft.³ Capable of assuaging grief.⁴ People.

To life obscured, which were a fair dismissal,
 But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt them high
 Unseemly falls in human eye,
 Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
 Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
 Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
 To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captived;
 Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,¹
 And condemnation of the ungrateful multitude.
 If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty²
 With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,
 Painful diseases and deformed,
 In crude³ old age;
 Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
 The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,
 Just or unjust alike seem miserable,
 For oft alike both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,
 The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
 What do I beg? How hast thou dealt already?
 Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
 His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

But who is this? what thing of sea or land?
 Female of sex it seems,
 That so bedecked, ornate, and gay,
 Comes this way sailing
 Like a stately ship
 Of Tarsus, bound for the isles
 Of Javan or Gadire,⁴
 With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
 Sails filled, and streamers waving,
 Courted by all the winds that hold them play
 An amber scent of odorous perfume
 Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
 Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,

Here no doubt Milton reflected upon the trials and sufferings of his party after the Restoration; and probably he might have in mind particularly the case of Sir Harry Vane, whom he has so highly celebrated in one of his sonnets.—*Newton*.

² This was Milton's own case.

³ Premature.

⁴ Cadiz. On this comparison, see Warburton's note on Shakspeare, *Merry Wives*, iii. 8.

And now, at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.

SAMSON.

My wife, my traitress! let her not come near me.

CHORUS.

Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fixed,
About to have spoke, but now, with head declined
Like a fair flower surcharged with dew, she weeps,
And words addressed seem into tears dissolved,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.

DALILA.

With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge; yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw),
My penance hath not slackened, though my pardon
No way assured. But conjugal affection,
Prevailing over fear and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on, desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou sufferest, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

SAMSON.

Out, out, hyena! these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilment move with feigned remorse;
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men full oft beguiled,
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,



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SAMSON AGONISTES.

Out, out, Hyæna ; these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee.

Intangled with a poisonous bosom snake,
 If not by quick destruction soon cut off
 As I by thee, to ages an example.

DALILA.

Yet hear me, Samson ; not that I endeavour
 To lessen or extenuate my offence ;
 But that on the other side, if it be weighed
 By itself, with aggravations not surcharged,
 Or else with just allowance counterpoised,
 I may, if possible, thy pardon find
 The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.
 First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
 In me, but incident to all our sex,
 Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
 Of secrets, then, with like infirmity
 To publish them, both common female faults :
 Was it not weakness also to make known
 For importunity, that is for nought,
 Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety ?
 To what I did thou show'dst me first the way
 But I to enemies revealed, and should not :
 Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to woman's frailty :
 Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
 Let weakness then with weakness come to parle,
 So near related, or the same of kind,
 Thine forgive mine ; that men may censure thine
 The gentler, if severely thou exact not
 More strength from me, than in thyself was found.
 And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
 The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
 In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,
 Caused what I did ? I saw thee mutable
 Of fancy ; feared lest one day thou wouldst leave me
 As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
 How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest :
 No better way I saw than by importuning
 To learn thy secrets, get into my power
 Thy key of strength and safety : thou wilt say,
 Why then revealed ? I was assured by those
 Who tempted me, that nothing was designed
 Against thee but safe custody, and hold
 That made for me ; I knew that liberty
 Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
 While I at home sat full of cares and fears.

Wailing thy absence in my widowed bed;
 Here I should still enjoy thee day and night,
 Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines;
 Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
 Fearless at home of partners in my love.
 These reasons in love's law have passed for good,
 Though fond and reasonless to some, perhaps;
 And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much woe,
 Yet always pity or pardon hath obtained.
 Be not unlike all others, not austere
 As thou art strong, inflexible as steel
 If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
 In uncompassionate anger do not so.

SAMSON.

How cunningly the sorceress displays
 Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
 That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither,
 By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, the example;
 I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;
 I to myself was false ere thou to me;
 Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
 Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest
 Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
 Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
 Confess it feigned: weakness is thy excuse,
 And I believe it; weakness to resist
 Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
 What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
 Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
 All wickedness is weakness: that plea, therefore,
 With God or man will gain thee no remission.
 But love constrained thee; call it furious rage
 To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to have love:
 My love how couldst thou hope, who took'st the way
 To raise in me inexpiable hate,
 Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betrayed?¹
 In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,
 Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

DALILA.

Since thou determin'st weakness for no plea
 In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
 Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,

¹ The same construction is in *Paradise Lost*, ix. 792:—

“And knew not eating death.”

What sieges girt me round, ere I consented ;
 Which might have awed the best resolved of men,
 The constantest, to have yielded without blame.
 It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
 That wrought with me : thou know'st the magistrates
 And princes of my country came in person,
 Solicited, commanded, threatened, urged,
 Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
 And of religion ; pressed how just it was,
 How honourable, how glorious to entrap
 A common enemy, who had destroyed
 Such numbers of our nation : and the priest
 Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
 Preaching how meritorious with the gods
 It would be to ensnare an irreligious
 Dishonourer of Dagon : what had I
 To oppose against such powerful arguments ?
 Only my love of thee held long debate,
 And combated in silence all these reasons
 With hard contest : at length that grounded maxim
 So rife and celebrated in the mouths
 Of wisest men, that to the public good
 Private respect must yield, with grave authority
 Took full possession of me and prevailed ;
 Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

SAMSON.

I thought where all thy circling wiles would end,
 In feigned religion, smooth hypocrisy.
 But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
 Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee
 Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
 I, before all the daughters of my tribe,
 And of my nation, chose thee from among
 My enemies, loved thee, as too well thou knew'st,
 Too well, unbosomed all my secrets to thee,
 Not out of levity, but overpowered
 By thy request, who could deny thee nothing ;
 Yet now am judged an enemy. Why then
 Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,
 Then, as since then, thy country's foe professed ?
 Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
 Parents and country ; nor was I their subject
 Nor under their protection but my own,
 Thou mine, not theirs : if aught against my life

Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
 Against the law of nature, law of nations,
 No more thy country, but an impious crew
 Of men conspiring to uphold their state
 By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
 For which our country is a name so dear ;
 Not therefore to be obeyed. But zeal moved thee
 To please thy gods thou didst it : gods unable
 To acquit themselves, and prosecute their foes
 But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
 Of their own deity, gods cannot be ;
 Less therefore to be pleased, obeyed, or feared.
 These false pretexts and varnished colours failing,
 Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear !

DALILA.

In argument with men a woman ever
 Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause

SAMSON.

For want of words, no doubt, or lack of breath ;
 Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

DALILA.

I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken
 In what I thought would have succeeded best.
 Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson ;
 Afford me place to show what recompense
 Towards thee I intend for what I have misdome,
 Misguided ; only what remains past cure
 Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
 To afflict thyself in vain : though sight be lost,
 Life yet hath many solaces, enjoyed
 Where other senses want not their delights
 At home in leisure and domestic ease,
 Exempt from many a care and chance to which
 Eyesight exposes daily men abroad.
 I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
 Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
 From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
 With me, where my redoubled love and care
 With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
 May ever tend about thee to old age
 With all things grateful cheered, and so supplied,
 That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt miss

SAMSON.

No, no, of my condition take no care ;

It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;
 Nor think me so unwary or accursed,
 To bring my feet again into the snare
 Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains
 Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils;
 Thy fair enchanted cup and warbling charms¹
 No more on me have power; their force is nullè.²
 So much of adder's wisdom² I have learned
 To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
 If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
 Loved, honoured, feared me, thou alone couldst hate me
 Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me,
 How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
 Deceivable in most things as a child
 Helpless, thence easily contemned, and scorned,
 And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult
 When I must live uxorious to thy will
 In perfect thralldom; how again betray me,
 Bearing my words and doings to the lords
 To gloss upon, and, censuring, frown or smile?
 This jail I count the house of liberty
 To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.

DALILA.

Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand

SAMSON.

Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake
 My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint
 At distance I forgive thee, go with that;
 Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
 It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
 Among illustrious women, faithful wives:
 Cherish thy hastened widowhood with the gold
 Of matrimonial treason: so farewell.

DALILA.

I see thou art implacable, more deaf
 To prayers than winds and seas; yet winds to seas
 Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore.
 Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
 Eternal tempest never to be calmed.

¹ Alluding, no doubt, to the story of Circe and the Sirens; but did not our author's fondness for Greek learning make him here forget that it is a little out of character to represent Samson acquainted with the mythology of that country?—*Thyer*.

² See Psalm lviii. 4, 5.

Why do I humble thus myself, and, suing
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
 Bid go with evil omen, and the brand
 Of infamy upon my name denounced?
 To mix with thy concernments I desist
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
 Fame, if not double-faced, is double-mouthed,
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
 On both his¹ wings, one black, the other white,
 Bears greatest names in his wild airy flight.
 My name perhaps among the circumcised
 In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
 To all posterity may stand defamed,
 With malediction mentioned, and the blot
 Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced.
 But in my country where I most desire
 (In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath),
 I shall be named among the famoussest
 Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
 Living and dead recorded, who, to save
 Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
 Above the faith of wedlock bands; my tomb
 With odours visited and annual flowers;²
 Not less renowned than in Mount Ephraim
 Jael, who with inhospitable guile
 Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nailed
 Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
 The public marks of honour and reward
 Conferred upon me, for the piety
 Which to my country I was judged to have shown
 At this who ever envies or repines,
 I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

CHORUS.

She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
 Discovered in the end, till now concealed.

SAMSON

So let her go; God sent her to debase me,
 And aggravate my folly, who committed
 To such a viper his most sacred trust
 Of secrecy, my safety, and my life

¹ Fame is always a *goddess* in the classic poets; but our author has made the muse *masculine* in Lycidas.

² This would seem to have been an oriental custom, from what we read respecting the yearly lamentation for the laughter of Jephtha.

CHORUS.

Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
 After offence returning, to regain
 Love once possessed, nor can be easily
 Repulsed without much inward passion felt,
 And secret sting of amorous remorse.

SAMSON

Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,
 Not wedlock-treachery endangering life.

CHORUS.

It is not virtue,¹ wisdom, valour, wit,
 Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,
 That woman's love can win or long inherit;
 But what it is, hard is to say,
 Harder to hit
 (Which way soever men refer it);
 Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
 Or seven, though one should musing sit.

If any of these, or all, the Timnian bride
 Had not so soon preferred
 Thy paranymp², worthless to thee compared,
 Successor in thy bed,
 Nor both so loosely disallied
 Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherous³
 Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
 Is it for that such outward ornament
 Was lavished on their sex, that inward gifts
 Were left for haste unfinished, judgment scant,
 Capacity not raised to apprehend
 Or value what is best
 In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong?
 Or was too much of self-love mixed,
 Of constancy no root infix'd,
 That either they love nothing, or not long?
 Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best

¹ However just the observation may be, that Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, seems to court the favour of the female sex, it is very certain that he did not carry the same complaisance into this performance. What the chorus here says outgoes the very bitterest satire of Euripides.—*Thyer*.

It will be recollected that Milton's own domestic life was not a happy one, and that some of the bitterness with which this poem is fraught may be traced to that cause.

² Brideman. Cf. Judges xiv. 20.

Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
 Soft, modest, meek, demure,
 Once joined, the contrary she proves, a thorn
 Intestine, far within defensive arms
 A cleaving mischief,¹ in his way to virtue
 Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
 Draws him awry enslaved
 With dotage, and his sense depraved
 To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
 What pilot so expert but needs must wreck
 Embarked with such a steers-mate at the helm?

Favoured of Heaven who finds
 One virtuous rarely found,
 That in domestic good combines;
 Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth.
 But virtue, which breaks through all opposition,
 Most shines, and most is acceptable above.

Therefore God's universal law
 Gave to the man despotic power
 Over his female in due awe,
 Nor from that right to part an hour,
 Smile she or lour;
 So shall he least confusion draw
 On his whole life, not swayed
 By female usurpation, or dismayed.

But had we best retire? I see a storm

SAMSON.

Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain

CHORUS

But this another kind of tempest brings.

SAMSON

Be less abstruse: my riddling days are past

CHORUS

Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear
 The bait of honeyed words: a rougher tongue
 Draws hitherward; I know him by his stride;
 The giant Harapha of Gath; his look
 Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.
 Comes he in peace? What wind hath blown him hither
 I less conjecture than when first I saw
 The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:
 His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

¹ An allusion to the poisoned garment sent to Hercules by Deira
 nira.

SAMSON.

Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

CHORUS.

His fraught we soon shall know: he now arrives.

HARAPHA.

I come not, Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,
Men call me Harapha,¹ of stock renowned
As Og or Anak, and the Emims old
That Kiriathaim² held: thou know'st me now,
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might, and feats performed
Incredible to me; in this displeas'd,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have tried
Each other's force in camp or listed field;
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

SAMSON.

The way to know were not to see but taste

HARAPHA.

Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves³ and the mill had tamed thee. Oh, that fortune
Had brought me to the field, where thou art famed
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw!
I should have forced thee soon with other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown:
So had the glory of prowess been recovered
To Palestine, won by a Philistine
From the unforeskinned race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant acts; that honour
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

SAMSON.

Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do
What then thou wouldst; thou seest it in thy hand.

¹ This character is fictitious, but is properly introduced by the poet, and not without some foundation in Scripture. Arapha, or rather Rapha (says Calmet), was father of the giants of Rephaim. The word Rapha may likewise signify simply a giant.—Newton.

² Cf. Genes. xiv. 5.

³ Fetters.

HARAPHA.

To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be touched.

SAMSON.

Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me, assassinated and betrayed,
Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarmed,
Nor in the house with chamber ambushes
Close-banded durst attack me, no, not sleeping,
Till they had hired a woman with their gold,
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.
Therefore, without feigned shifts, let be assigned
Some narrow place enclosed, where sight may give thee,
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine¹ of brass, thy broad habergeon,²
Vant-brass³ and greaves,⁴ and gauntlet, add thy spear,
A weaver's beam,⁵ and seven-times-folded shield,
I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clattered iron,
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,
That in a little time while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath, to boast
Again in safety what thou wouldst have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

HARAPHA.

Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells⁶
And black enchantments, some magician's art, [Heaven
Armed thee, or charmed thee strong, which thou from
Feign'dst at thy birth was given thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles, ranged like those that ridge the back
Of chafed wild boars, or ruffled porcupines.⁷

¹ A coat of mail. See Jer. xlvi. 4; li. 3.

² A coat of mail for the neck and shoulders.

³ Or vantbrace, *avant bras*, armour for the arms.

⁴ Armour for the legs.

⁵ Like Goliath's, 1 Sam. xvii. 7.

⁶ This notion is probably adopted from some of the Italian epic poets, who are fond of representing their heroes achieving victory, or saved from danger, by the use of such doubtful means.

⁷ Evidently from the "fretted porcupine" of Shakspeare.

SAMSON.

I know no spells, use no forbidden arts ;
 My trust is in the living God, who gave me
 At my nativity this strength, diffused
 No less through all my sinews, joints, and bones,
 Than thine, while I preserved these locks unshorn,
 The pledge of my unviolated vow.
 For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
 Go to his temple, invoke his aid
 With solemnest devotion, spread before him
 How highly it concerns his glory now
 To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,
 Which I to be the power of Israel's God
 Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
 Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
 With the utmost of his godhead seconded :
 Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow
 Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mi

HARAPHA.

Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be ;
 Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
 Quite from his people, and delivered up
 Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them
 To put out both thine eyes, and fettered send thee
 Into the common prison, there to grind
 Among the slaves and asses, thy comrades,
 As good for nothing else, no better service
 With those thy boisterous locks, no worthy match
 For valour to assail, nor by the sword
 Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
 But by the barber's razor best subdued.

SAMSON.

All these indignities, for such they are
 From thine, these evils I deserve and more,
 Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
 Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
 Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
 Gracious to re-admit the suppliant ;
 In confidence whereof I once again
 Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
 By combat to decide whose God is God,
 Thine or whom I with Israel's sons adore

HARAPHA.

Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting

He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber.

SAMSON.

Tongue doughty giant,¹ how dost thou prove me these?

HARAPHA.

Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confessed it, when they took thee
As a league-breaker, and delivered bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then, like a robber, stripp'dst them of their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,
Went up with arméd power thee only seeking,
To others did no violence nor spoil.

SAMSON.

Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who threatening cruel death constrained the bride
To wring from me and tell to them my secret,
That solved the riddle which I had proposed.
When I perceived all set on enmity,
As on my enemies, wherever chanced,
I used hostility, and took their spoil
To pay my underminers in their coin.
My nation was subjected to your lords;
It was the force of conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the conquered can.
But I, a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presumed
Single rebellion, and did hostile acts.
I was no private, but a person raised
With strength sufficient and command from Heaven
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for nought,
The unworthier they; whence to this day they ser. e.
I was to do my part from Heaven assigned,
And had performed it, if my known offense

¹ Speech-valiant.

Had not disabled me, not all your force :
 These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant
 Though by his blindness maimed for high attempts,
 Who now defies thee thrice¹ to single fight,
 As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

HARAPHA.

With thee! a man condemned, a slave enrolled.
 Due by the law to capital punishment?
 To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

SAMSON.

Can'st thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,
 To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?
 Come nearer, part not hence so slight informed;
 But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

HARAPHA.

O Baal-zebub! can my ears unused
 Hear these dishonours, and not render death?

SAMSON.

No man withholds thee, nothing from thy hand
 Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,
 My heels are fettered, but my fist is free.

HARAPHA.

This insolence other kind of answer fits.

SAMSON.

Go, baffled coward! lest I run upon thee,
 Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
 And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
 Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
 To the hazard of thy brains and shattered sides

HARAPHA.

By Astaroth! ere long thou shalt lament
 These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

CHORUS.

His giantship is gone somewhat crest-fallen,
 Stalking with less unconscionable strides,
 And lower locks, but in a sultry chafe.

SAMSON.

I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,
 Though fame divulge him father of five sons,
 All of gigantic size, Goliath chief.

CHORUS.

He will directly to the lords, I fear,

¹ The usual number in the chivalrous adventures of the middle ages.

And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee

SAMSON.

He must allege some cause, and offered fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept the offer or not,
And that he durst not plain enough appear:
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain;
If they intend advantage of my labours,
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence:
The worst that he can give, to me the best.
Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

CHORUS.

Oh, how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppressed!
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressor,
The brute and boisterous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth;
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour armed,
Their armouries and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless, while
With wingéd expedition,
Swift as the lightning glance, he executes
His errand on the wicked, who, surprised,
Lose their defence, distracted and amazed.

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict:
Either of these is in thy lot,

Samson, with might endued
Above the sons of men; but sight bereaved
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.

This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest.
Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands.
And yet, perhaps, more trouble is behind.
For I descry this way
Some other tending, in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand.
His message will be short and voluble.

OFFICER.

Hebrews, the prisoner Samson here I seek.

CHORUS.

His manacles remark him,¹ there he sits

OFFICER.

Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say.
This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games;
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some public proof thereof require
To honour this great feast, and great assembly,
Rise therefore with all speed, and come along,
Where I will see thee heartened and fresh clad,
To appear as fits before the illustrious lords.

SAMSON.

Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them,
Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.

OFFICER.

This answer, be assured, will not content them.

SAMSON.

Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnastic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out with shackles tired,
And over-laboured at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels

¹ Point him out.

On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

OFFICER

Regard thyself: this will offend them highly;

SAMSON.

Myself? my conscience and internal peace
Can they think me so broken, so debased
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands?
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To show them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Joined with extreme contempt? I will not come.

OFFICER.

My message was imposed on me with speed,
Brooks no delay; is this thy resolution?

SAMSON.

So take it with what speed thy message needs

OFFICER.

I am sorry what this stoutness will produce.

SAMSON.

Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed

CHORUS.

Consider, Samson; matters now are strained
Up to the highth, whether to hold or break;
He's gone, and who knows how he may report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperious,
More lordly thundering than thou well wilt bear

SAMSON.

Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression; so requite
Favour renewed, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols?
A Nazarite in place abominable
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon?
Besides how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,
What act more execrably unclean, profane?

CHORUS.

Yet with this strength thou serv'st the Philistines
Idolatrours, uncircumcised, unclean

SAMSON.

Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil power.

CHORUS.

Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.

SAMSON.

Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging? The Philistian lords command:
Commands are no restraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely, venturing to displease
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,
Set God behind; which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense¹ with me or thee
Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt

CHORUS.

How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.

SAMSON.

Be of good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be aught of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.

CHORUS.

In time thou hast resolved, the man returns.

OFFICER.

Samson, this second message from our lords
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,
And dar'st thou at our sending and command
Dispute thy coming? Come without delay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,
Though thou wert firmlier fastened than a rock

¹ Perhaps in reference to the story of Naaman the Syrian begging a similar dispensation from Elisha. See 2 Kings v. 18 sq.—*Thyer*

SAMSON.

I could be well content to try their art,
 Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.
 Yet knowing their advantages too many,
 Because they shall not trail me through their streets
 Like a wild beast, I am content to go.
 Masters' commands¹ come with a power resistless
 To such as owe them absolute subjection;
 And for a life who will not change his purpose?
 (So mutable are all the ways of men)
 Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
 Scandalous or forbidden in our law.

OFFICER.

I praise thy resolution; doff these links:
 By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
 To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

SAMSON.

Brethren, farewell; your company along
 I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
 To see me girt with friends; and how the sight
 Of me as of a common enemy,
 So dreaded once, may now exasperate them
 I know not. Lords are lordliest in their wine.
 And the well-feasted priest then soonest fired
 With zeal, if aught religion seem concerned;
 No less the people on their holy-days
 Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
 Happen what may, of me expect to hear
 Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
 Our God, our law, my nation, or myself,
 The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

CHORUS.

Go, and the Holy One
 Of Israel be thy guide
 To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name
 Great among the heathen round;
 Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand
 Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
 Rode up in flames after his message told
 Of thy conception, and be now a shield
 Of fire; that Spirit that first rushed on thee

¹ This was a feint, but it had betrayed itself had it not been covered
 by ver. 1408.—Warburton.

In the camp of Dan
 Be efficacious in thee now at need.
 For never was from Heaven imparted
 Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
 As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen
 But wherefore comes old Manoaah in such haste
 With youthful steps? much livelier than erewhile
 He seems; supposing here to find his son,
 Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

MANOAH.

Peace with you, brethren; my inducement hither
 Was not at present here to find my son,
 By order of the lords new parted hence
 To come and play before them at their feast.
 I heard all as I came, the city rings,
 And numbers thither flock, I had no will,
 Lest I should see him forced to things unseemly.
 But that which moved my coming now, was chiefly
 To give ye part with me what hope I have
 With good success to work his liberty

CHORUS.

That hope would much rejoice us to partake
 With thee; say, reverend sire, we thirst to hear

MANOAH.

I have attempted one by one the lords
 Either at home, or through the high street passing,
 With supplication prone and father's tears,
 To accept of ransom for my son their prisoner.
 Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
 Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
 That part most revered Dagon and his priests:
 Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
 Private reward, for which both god and state
 They easily would set to sale; a third
 More generous far and civil, who confessed
 They had enough revenged, having reduced
 Their foe to misery beneath their fears
 The rest was magnanimity to remit,
 If some convenient ransom were proposed.
 What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky

CHORUS.

Doubtless the people shouting to behold
 Their once great dread, captive and blind before them,
 Or at some proof of strength before them shown

MANOAH.

His ransom, if my whole inheritance
 May compass it, shall willingly be paid
 And numbered down: much rather I shall choose
 To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
 And he in that calamitous prison left.
 No, I am fixed not to part hence without him.
 For his redemption all my patrimony,
 If need be, I am ready to forego
 And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing

CHORUS.

Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons,
 Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all;
 Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
 Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son,
 Made older than thy age through eyesight lost

MANOAH.

It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
 And view him sitting in the house, ennobled
 With all those high exploits by him achieved,
 And on his shoulders waving down those locks,
 That of a nation armed the strength contained:
 And I persuade me God had not permitted
 His strength again to grow up with his hair
 Garrisoned round about him like a camp
 Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose
 To use him further yet in some great service,
 Not to sit idle with so great a gift
 Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.
 And since his strength with eyesight was not lost,
 God will restore him eyesight to his strength

CHORUS.

Thy hopes are not ill-founded, nor seem vain
 Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon
 Conceived, agreeable to a father's love.
 In both which we, as next, participate

MANOAH.

I know your friendly minds, and—Oh, what noise?
 Mercy of Heaven! what hideous noise was that?
 Horribly loud, unlike the former shout.

CHORUS.

Noise call you it, or universal groan,
 As if the whole inhabitation perished!

Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

MANOAH.

Of ruin, indeed, methought I heard the noise :
Oh ! it continues ; they have slain my son !

CHORUS.

Thy son is rather slaying them ; that outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

MANOAH.

Some dismal accident it needs must be :
What shall we do, stay here or run and see ?

CHORUS.

Best keep together here, lest running thither
We unawares run into danger's mouth.
This evil on the Philistines is fallen ;
From whom could else a general cry be heard ?
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,
From other hands we need not much to fear
What if his eyesight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restored,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,¹
And over heaps of slaughtered walk his way ?

MANOAH.

That were a joy presumptuous to be thought

CHORUS.

Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old ; what hinders now ?

MANOAH.

He can, I know, but doubt to think he will ;
Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

CHORUS.

Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner ;²
For evil news rides post, while good news baits
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe

MESSENGER.

Oh, whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,
Which erst my eyes beheld and yet behold ?

¹ Distributing his gifts and portions among his enemies.

² Calton would assign the words, "of bad the sooner ; for evil news rides post, while good news baits"—to Manoah, and the two following lines to the chorus.

For dire imagination still pursues me,
 But providence or instinct of nature seems,
 Or reason though disturbed, and scarce consulted,
 To have guided me aright, I know not how,
 To thee first, reverend Manoah, and to these
 My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining
 As at some distance from the place of horror,
 So in the sad event too much concerned.

MANOAH.

The accident was loud, and here before thee
 With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not;
 No preface needs,¹ thou seest we long to know.

MESSENGER.

It would burst forth, but I recover breath
 And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

MANOAH.

Tell us the sum; the circumstance defer

MESSENGER.

Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fallen;
 All in a moment overwhelmed and fallen.

MANOAH.

Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest,
 The desolation of a hostile city.

MESSENGER.

Feed on that first: there may in grief be surfeit.

MANOAH.

Relate by whom?

MESSENGER.

By Samson

MANOAH.

That still lessens

The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

MESSENGER.

Ah! Manoah, I refrain too suddenly
 To utter what will come at last too soon;
 I est evil tidings with too rude irruption
 'fitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

MANOAH.

Suspense in news is torture; speak them out.

MESSENGER.

Take then the worst in brief; Samson is dead!

MANOAH.

The worst indeed. Oh, all my hope's defeated

¹ Is wanting, as in *Paradise Lost*, x. 80.

To free him hence ! but death, who sets all free,
 Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.
 What windy joy this day had I conceived,
 Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
 Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring¹
 Nipped with the lagging rear of winter's frost!
 Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first,
 How died he? death to life is crown or shame
 All by him fell, thou say'st; by whom fell he?
 What glorious hand gave Samson his death's wound!

MESSENGER.

Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

MANOAH.

Wearied with slaughter then, or how? explain.

MESSENGER.

By his own hands.

MANOAH.

Self-violence? What cause
 Brought him so soon at variance with himself
 Among his foes?

MESSENGER.

Inevitable cause
 At once both to destroy and be destroyed.
 The edifice, where all were met to see him,
 Upon their heads and on his own he pulled

MANOAH.

O lastly over-strong against thyself!
 A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
 More than enough we know; but while things yet
 Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
 Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
 Relation more particular and distinct

MESSENGER.

Occasions drew me early to this city,
 And as the gates I entered with sunrise,

¹ Warburton has noticed the imitation of Shakspeare, Henry VIII
 act iii. sc. 6:—

“This is the state of man; to-day he puts forth
 The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
 And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:
 The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
 And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
 His greatness is a ripening, nips his root;
 And then he falls, as I do”

The morning trumpets festival proclaimed
 Through each high street: little I had despatched,
 When all abroad was rumoured that this day
 Samson should be brought forth, to show the people
 Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;
 I sorrowed at his captive state, but minded
 Not to be absent at that spectacle.
 The building was a spacious theatre,
 Half round, on two main pillars vaulted high,
 With seats where all the lords and each degree
 Of sort, might sit in order to behold;
 The other side was open, where the throng
 On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand,
 I among these aloof obscurely stood.
 The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
 Had filled their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine;
 When to their sports they turned. Immediately
 Was Samson as a public servant brought,
 In their state livery clad: before him pipes
 And timbrels; on each side went armed guards,
 Both horse and foot; before him and behind,
 Archers and slingers, cataphracts¹ and spears.
 At sight of him the people with a shout
 Rifted the air, clamouring their god with praise,
 Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
 He, patient but undaunted, where they led him,
 Came to the place, and what was set before him,
 Which without help of eye might be assayed,
 To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still performed
 All with incredible, stupendous force.
 None daring to appear antagonist.
 At length for intermission sake they led him
 Between the pillars; he his guide requested
 (For so from such as nearer stood we heard),
 As overtired, to let him lean awhile
 With both his arms on those two massy pillars,
 That to the archéd roof gave main support.
 He, unsuspecting, led him; which when Samson
 Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclined,
 And eyes fast fixed, he stood, as one who prayed,
 Or some great matter in his mind revolved:
 At last, with head erect, thus cried aloud

¹ Men or horses fully equipped.

"Hitherto, lords, what your commands imposed
 I have performed, as reason was, obeying,
 Not without wonder or delight beheld:
 Now, of my own accord, such other trial
 I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater,
 As with amaze shall strike all who behold."
 This uttered, straining all his nerves he bowed,
 As with the force of winds and waters pent,
 When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
 With horrible convulsion to and fro
 He tugged, he shook, till down they came and drew
 The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,
 Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
 Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
 Their choice nobility and flower, not only
 Of this but each Philistian city round
 Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
 Samson, with these immixed, inevitably
 Pulled down the same destruction on himself,
 'The vulgar only 'scaped who stood without.

CHORUS.

Oh, dearly bought revenge, yet gloricus!
 Living or dying thou hast fulfilled
 The work for which thou wast foretold
 To Israel, and now liest victorious
 Among thy slain, self-killed,
 Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
 Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined
 Thee with thy slaughtered foes in number more
 Than all thy life had slain before.¹

SEMICHORUS.

While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
 Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,
 And fat regorged of bulls and goats,
 Chanting their idol, and preferring
 Before our living Dread who dwells
 In Silo his bright sanctuary;
 Among them he a spirit of frenzy sent,
 Who hurt their minds,
 And urged them on with mad desire
 To call in haste for their destroyer;
 They, only set on sport and play,

¹ Judges xvi. 30.

Unweetingly importuned
 Their own destruction to come speedy upon them,
 So fond are mortal men,
 Fallen into wrath divine,
 As their own ruin on themselves to invite,
 Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
 And with blindness internal struck.

SEMICHORUS.

But he, though blind of sight,
 Despised and thought extinguished quite,
 With inward eyes illuminated,
 His fiery virtue roused
 From under ashes into sudden flame;
 And as an evening dragon came,
 Assailant on the perch'd roosts,
 And nests in order ranged
 Of tame villatic fowl;¹ but as an eagle
 His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
 So virtue given for lost,
 Depressed, and overthrown, as seemed,
 Like that self-begotten bird,
 In the Arabian woods imbost,²
 That no second knows nor third,
 And lay erewhile a holocaust,
 From out her ashy womb now teemed,
 Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
 When most unactive deemed,
 And though her body die, her fame survives,
 A secular bird, ages of lives.

MANOAH.

Come, come! no time for lamentation now;
 Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
 Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
 A life heroic, on his enemies
 Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning
 And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor³
 Through all Philistian bounds; to Israel
 Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them

¹ Barn-door, farm-house fowls.

² Concealed, covered. Johnson is very sharp upon our author for the incongruity of this allusion to the Phoenix. See Rambler, No. 140.

³ The Philistines.

Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
 To himself and father's house eternal fame,
 And which is best and happiest yet, all this
 With God not parted from him, as was feared,
 But favouring and assisting to the end.
 Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
 Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
 Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
 And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
 Let us go find the body where it lies
 Soaked in his enemies' blood; and from the stream,
 With lavers pure, and cleansing herbs, wash off
 The clotted gore. I with what speed the while
 (Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
 Will send for all my kindred,¹ all my friends,
 To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
 With silent obsequy and funeral train
 Home to his father's house: there will I build him
 A monument, and plant it round with shade
 Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
 With all his trophies hung, and acts enrolled
 In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
 Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
 And from his memory inflame their breasts
 To matchless valour, and adventures high;
 The virgins also shall, on feastful days,
 Visit his tomb with flowers, only bewailing
 His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
 From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

CHORUS.

All is best, though we oft doubt,
 What the unsearchable dispose
 Of highest wisdom brings about,
 And ever best found in the close.
 Oft he seems to hide his face,
 But unexpectedly returns,
 And to his faithful champion hath in place
 Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns;
 And all that band them to resist
 His uncontrollable intent;
 His servants he, with new acquist²

¹ See Judges xvi. 31.² Acquisitio

Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind all passion spent.¹

¹ On the conclusion of this tragedy, Dr. Johnson has the following remarks:—"While Samson is conducted off by the messenger, his father returns with hopes of success in his solicitation; upon which he confers with the chorus till their dialogue is interrupted, first by a shout, and afterwards by screams of horror and agony. As they stand deliberating where they shall be secure, a man who had been present at the show enters, and relates how Samson, having prevailed on his guide to suffer him to lean against the main pillars of the theatrical edifice, tore down the roof upon the spectators and himself. This is undoubtedly a just and regular catastrophe, and the poem therefore has a beginning and an end which Aristotle himself could not have disapproved; but it must be allowed to want a middle, since nothing passes between the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Samson. The whole drama, if its superfluities were cut off, would scarcely fill a single act; yet this is the tragedy, which ignorance has admired, and bigotry applauded."—*Rambler*, No. 139.

Poems on Seberal Occasions.

"Baccare frontem"
Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro.
VIRGIL, Eclog. 1

X.

ANNO ÆTATIS XVII.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT¹ DYING OF A COUGE.

I.

O fairest flower! no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst out-lasting
Bleak Winter's force that made thy blossom dry;
For he being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But killed, alas! and then bewailed his fatal bliss

II.

For since grim Aquilo, his charioteer,
By boisterous rape the Athenian damsel² got.
He thought it touched his deity full near,
If likewise he some fair one wedded not,
Thereby to wipe away the infamous blot
Of long-uncoupled bed, and childless eld,³
Which 'mongst the wanton gods a foul reproach was held

III.

So mounting up in icy-pearled car,
Through middle empire of the freezing air
He wandered long, till thee he spied from far;

¹ The daughter, and probably the first child, of the poet's sister.

² Orithyia, daughter of Erectheus, king of Athens, was drowned while crossing the Ilissus in a high wind: hence the fable that she was carried off by Boreas or Aquilo.

³ Old age.