

# Samson Agonistes

by

**JOHN MILTON**

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**Milton**

**Table of Contents**

Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy . . . . . 1  
The ARGUMENT. . . . . 2  
The Persons. . . . . 3  
SAMSON Agonistes. . . . . 4



## Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy

Tragedy, as it was antiently compos'd, 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, stirr'd up by reading 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 us'd against melancholy, sower against sower, 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 thir discourse. The Apostle *Paul* himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of *Euripedes* into the Text of Holy Scripture, *I Cor.* 15.33. and *Paræus* commenting on the *Revelation*, divides the whole Book as a Tragedy, into Acts distinguish'd each by a Chorus of Heavenly Harpings and Song between. Heretofore Men in highest dignity have labour'd not a little to be thought able to compose a Tragedy. Of that honour *Dionysius* the elder was no less ambitious, then before of his attaining to the Tyranny. *Augustus Cæsar* also had 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 he entitl'd, *Christ suffering*. This is mention'd 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; hap'ning through the Poets error of intermixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which by all judicious hath bin counted absurd; and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratifie the people. And though antient 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 antient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much before-hand may be Epistl'd; that *Chorus* is here introduc'd after the Greek manner, not antient only but modern, and still in use among the *Italians*. In the modelling therefore of this Poem, with good reason, the Antients and *Italians* are rather follow'd, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of Verse us'd in the Chorus is of all sorts, call'd by the Greeks *Monostrophic*, or rather *Apolelymenon*, without regard had to *Strophe*, *Antistrophe* or *Epod*, which were a kind of Stanza's fram'd only for the Music, then us'd with the Chorus that sung; not essential to the Poem, and therefore not material; or being divided into Stanza's or Pauses, they may be call'd *Allæstrophæ*. 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 produc't beyond the fift Act, of the style and uniformitie, and that commonly call'd 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 *Æschulus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripedes*, the three Trajic Poets unequal'd 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 antient rule, and best example, within the space of 24 hours.

**The ARGUMENT.**

SAMson *made Captive, Blind, and now in the Prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common work-house, on a Festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open Air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd there to sit a while 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 Manoa, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this Feast was proclaim'd by the Philistins as a day of Thanksgiving for thir deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him Manoa 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 publick Officer to require his coming to the Feast before the Lords and People, to play or shew his strength in thir presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the publick Officer with absolute denyal to come; at length perswaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatnings to fetch him; the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoa returns full of joyful hope, to procure e're long his Sons deliverance: in the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste confusedly at first; and afterward more distinctly relating the Catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistins, and by accident to himself; wherewith the Tragedy ends.*



**The Persons.**

Samson.  
Manoa.  
Manoa *the Father of Samson.*  
Dalila *his Wife.*  
Harapha *of Gath.*  
Publick Officer.  
Messenger.  
Chorus *of Danites.*



## SAMSON Agonistes.

*The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.*

*Sams.* A little onward lend thy guiding hand  
 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 toyl, 5  
 Daily in the common Prison else enjoyn'd me,  
 Where I a Prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw  
 The air imprison'd also, close and damp,  
 Unwholsom draught: but here I feel amends,  
 The breath of Heav'n fresh-blowing, pure and sweet, 10  
 With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.  
 This day a solemn Feast the people hold  
 To *Dagon* thir Sea-Idol, and forbid  
 Laborious works, unwillingly this rest  
 Thir Superstition yields me; hence with leave 15  
 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 arm'd, no sooner found alone, 20  
 But rush upon me thronging, and present  
 Times past, what once I was, and what am now.  
 O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold  
 Twice by an Angel, who at last in sight  
 Of both my Parents all in flames ascended 25  
 From off the Altar, where an Off'ring burn'd,  
 As in a fiery column charioting  
 His Godlike presence, and from some great act,  
 Or benefit reveal'd to *Abraham's* race?  
 Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd 30  
 As of a person separate to God,  
 Design'd for great exploits; if I must dye  
 Betray'd, Captiv'd, and both my Eyes put out,  
 Made of my Enemies the scorn and gaze;

To grind in Brazen Fetters under task 35  
 With this Heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength  
 Put to the labour of a Beast, debas't  
 Lower than bondslave! Promise was that I  
 Should *Israel* from *Philistian* yoke deliver;  
 Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him 40  
 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 fulfilld but through mine own default, 45  
 Whom have I to complain of but my self?  
 Who this high gift of strength committed to me,  
 In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,  
 Under the Seal of silence could not keep,  
 But weakly to a woman must reveal it, 50  
 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, burdensom,  
 Proudly secure, yet liable to fall 55  
 By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,  
 But to subserve where wisdom bears command.  
 God, when he gave me strength, to shew withal  
 How slight the gift was, hung it in my Hair.  
 But peace, I must not quarrel with the will 60  
 Of highest dispensation, which herein  
 Happ'ly 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 65  
 Would ask a life to wail, but chief of all,  
 O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
 Blind among enemies, O worse then chains,  
 Dungeon, or beggery, or decrepit age!  
 Light the prime work of God to me is extinct 70  
 And all her various objects of delight  
 Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,  
 Inferiour to the vilest now become  
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,  
 They creep, yet see, I dark in light expos'd 75  
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,  
 Within door, or without, still as a fool,  
 In power of others, never in my own;  
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more then half.

O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
 Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse  
 Without all hope of day! 80  
 O first created Beam, and thou great Word,  
 Let there be light, and light was over all;  
 Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree? 85  
 The Sun to me is dark  
 And silent as the Moon,  
 When she deserts the night  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.  
 Since light so necessary is to life, 90  
 And almost life it self, 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 th'eye confin'd?  
 So obvious and so easie to be quench't, 95  
 And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,  
 That she might look at will through every pore?  
 Then had I not been thus exil'd from light;  
 As in the land of darkness yet in light,  
 To live a life half dead, a living death 100  
 And buried; but O yet more miserable!  
 My self, my Sepulcher, a moving Grave,  
 Buried, yet not exempt  
 By priviledge of death and burial  
 From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs, 105  
 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 110  
 The tread of many feet stearing this way;  
 Perhaps my enemies who come to stare  
 At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,  
 Thir daily practice to afflict me more. 115  
*Chor.* This, this is he; softly a while,  
 Let us not break in upon him;  
 O change beyond report, thought, or belief!  
 See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,  
 With languish't head unpropt,  
 As one past hope, abandon'd, 120  
 And by himself given over;  
 In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds  
 O're worn and soild;  
 Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be hee,

That Heroic, that Renown'd, 125  
 Irresistable *Samson*? whom unarm'd  
 No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand;  
 Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the Kid,  
 Ran on embattelld Armies clad in Iron,  
 And weaponless himself, 130  
 Made Arms ridiculous, useless the forgery  
 Of brazen shield and speare, the hammer'd Cuirass,  
*Chalybean* temper'd steel, and frock of mail  
 Adamantean Proof;  
 But safest he who stood aloof, 135  
 When insupportably his foot advanc't,  
 In scorn of thir proud arms and warlike tools,  
 Spurn'd them to death by Troops. The bold *Ascalonite*  
 Fled from his Lion ramp, old Warriors turn'd  
 Thir plated backs under his heel; 140  
 Or grovling soild thir 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 fore-skins fell, the flower of *Palestin*  
 In *Ramath-lechi* famous to this day: 145  
 Then by mainforce pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore  
 The Gates of *Azzi*, Post, and massie Bar  
 Up to the Hill by *Hebron* seat of Giants old,  
 No journey of a Sabbath day, and loaded so;  
 Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n. 150  
 Which shall I first bewail,  
 Thy Bondage or lost Sight,  
 Prison within Prison  
 Inseparably dark?  
 Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!) 155  
 The Dungeon of thy self; thy Soul  
 (Which Men enjoying Sight oft without cause complain'd  
 Imprison'd now indeed,  
 In real darkness of the body dwells,  
 Shut up from outward light 160  
 To incorporate with gloomy night;  
 For inward light alas  
 Puts forth no visual beam.  
 O mirror of our fickle state,  
 Since man on earth unparallel'd? 165  
 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 fall'n.

For him I reckon not in high estate 170  
 Whom long descent of birth  
 Or the spear of fortune raises;  
 But thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate,  
 Might have subdu'd the Earth,  
 Universally crown'd with highest praises. 175

*Sam.* I hear the sound of words, thir sense the air  
 Dissolves unjointed e're it reach my ear.

*Chor.* Hee speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,  
 The glory late of *Israel*, now the grief;  
 We come thy friends and neighbours not unknown 180  
 From *Eshtaol* and *Zora's* 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 tumors of a troubl'd mind, 185  
 And are as Balm to fester'd wounds.

*Sam.* 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 190  
 I would be understood) in prosperous days  
 They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head  
 Not to be found, though sought. Yee see, O friends,  
 How many evils have enclos'd me round;  
 Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me, 195  
 Blindness, for had I sight, confus'd with shame,  
 How could I once look up, or heave the head,  
 Who like a foolish Pilot have shipwrack't,  
 My Vessel trusted to me from above,  
 Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear, 200  
 Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God  
 To a deceitful Woman: tell me Friends,  
 Am I not sung and proverbd for a Fool  
 In every street, do they not say, how well  
 Are come upon him his deserts? yet why? 205  
 Immeasurable strength they might behold  
 In me, of wisdom nothing more then mean;  
 This with the other shouldould, at least, have paird,  
 These two proportiond ill drove me transverse.

*Chor.* Tax not divine disposal, wisest Men 210  
 Have err'd, and by bad Women been deceiv'd;  
 And shall again, pretend they ne're so wise.  
 Deject not then so overmuch they self,  
 Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;

Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder 215  
 Why thou shouldst wed *Philistian* women rather  
 Then of thine own Tribe fairer, or as fair,  
 At least of thy own Nation, and as noble.  
*Sam.* The first I saw at *Timna*, and she pleas'd  
 Mee, not my Parents, that I sought to wed, 220  
 The daughter of an Infidel: they knew not  
 That what I mention'd was of God; I knew  
 From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd  
 The Marriage on; that by occasion hence  
 I might begin *Israel's* Deliverance, 225  
 The work to which I was divinely call'd;  
 She proving false, the next I took to Wife  
 (O that I never had! fond wish too late.)  
 Was in the Vale of *Sorec*, *Dalila*,  
 That specious Monster, my accomplisht snare. 230  
 I thought it lawful from my former act,  
 And the same end; still watching to oppress  
*Israel's* oppressours: of what now I suffer  
 She was not the prime cause, but I my self,  
 Who vanquisht with a peal of words (O weakness!) 235  
 Gave up my fort of silence to a Woman.  
*Chor.* In seeking just occasion to provoke  
 The *Philistine*, thy Countries Enemy,  
 Thou never wast remisse, I bear thee witness:  
 Yet *Israel* still serves with all his Sons. 240  
*Sam.* That fault I take not on me, but transfer  
 On *Israel's* Governours, and Heads of Tribes,  
 Who seeing those great acts which God had done  
 Singly by me against their Conquerors  
 Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd 245  
 Deliverance offerd: I on th'other side  
 Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,  
 The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the dooer;  
 But they persisted deaf, and would not seem  
 To count them things worth notice, till at length 250  
 Thir Lords the *Philistines* with gather'd powers  
 Enterd *Judea* seeking mee, who then  
 Safe to the rock of *Etham* was retir'd,  
 Not flying, but fore-casting in what place  
 To set upon them, what advantag'd best; 255  
 Mean while the men of *Judah* to prevent  
 The harrass of thir Land, beset me round;  
 I willingly on some conditions came  
 Into thir hands, and they as gladly yield me

To the uncircumcis'd a welcom prey, 260  
 Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threds  
 Toucht with the flame: on thir whole Host I flew  
 Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd  
 Their choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.  
 Had *Judah* that day join'd, or one whole Tribe, 265  
 They had by this possess'd the Towers of *Gath*,  
 And lorded over them whom now they serve;  
 But what more oft in Nations grown corrupt,  
 And by thir vices brought to servitude,  
 Then to love Bondage more then Liberty, 270  
 Bondage with ease then strenuous liberty;  
 And to despise, or envy, or suspect  
 Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd  
 As thir Deliverer; if he aught begin,  
 How frequent to desert him, and at last 275  
 To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?  
*Cho.* Thy words to my remembrance bring  
 How *Succoth* and the Fort of *Penuel*  
 Thir great Deliverer contemn'd,  
 The matchless *Gideon* in pursuit 280  
 Of *Madian* and her vanquisht Kings:  
 And how ingrateful *Ephraim*  
 Had dealt with *Jephtha*, who by argument,  
 Not worse then by his shield and spear  
 Defended *Israel* from the *Ammonite*, 285  
 Had not his prowess quell'd thir pride  
 In that sore battel when so many dy'd  
 Without Reprieve adjudg'd to death,  
 For want of well pronouncing *Shibboleth*  
*Sam.* Of such examples adde mee to the roul, 290  
 Mee easily indeed mine may neglect,  
 But Gods propos'd deliverance not so.  
*Chor.* Just are the ways of God,  
 And justifiable to Men;  
 Unless there be who think not God at all, 295  
 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, 300  
 As to his own edicts, found contradicting,  
 Then give the rains to wandring thought,  
 Regardless of his glories diminution;  
 Till by thir own perplexities involv'd

They ravel more, still less resolv'd, 305  
 But never find self-satisfying solution.  
 As if they would confine th'interminable,  
 And tie him to his own prescript,  
 Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,  
 And hath full right to exempt 310  
 Whom so it pleases him by choice  
 From National obstruction, without taint  
 Of sin, or legal debt;  
 For with his own Laws he can best dispence.  
 He would not else who never wanted means, 315  
 Nor in respect of the enemy just cause  
 To set his people free,  
 Have prompted this Heroic *Nazarite*,  
 Against his vow of strictest purity,  
 To seek in marriage that fallacious Bride, 320  
 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. 325  
 But see here comes thy reverend Sire  
 With careful step, Locks white as doune,  
 Old *Manoah*: advise  
 Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him.  
*Sam.* Ay me, another inward grief awak't, 330  
 With mention of that name renews th'assault.  
*Man.* Brethren and men of *Dan.*, for such ye seem,  
 Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,  
 As I suppose, toward your once gloried friend,  
 My Son now Captive, hither hath inform'd 335  
 Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age  
 Came lagging after; say if he be here.  
*Chor.* As signal now in low dejected state,  
 As earst in highest, behold him where he lies.  
*Man.* O miserable change! is this the man, 340  
 That invincible *Samson*, far renown'd,  
 The dread of *Israel*'s foes, who with a strength  
 Equivalent to Angels walk'd thir streets,  
 None offering fight; who single combatant  
 Duell'd thir Armies rank't in proud array, 345  
 Himself an Army, now unequal match  
 To save himself against a coward arm'd  
 At one spears length. O ever failing [trust]  
 In mortal strength! and oh what not in man

Deceivable and vain! Nay what thing good 350  
 Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?  
 I pray'd for Children, and thought barrenness  
 In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a Son,  
 Such a Son as Men hail'd me happy;  
 Who would be now a Father in my stead? 355  
 O wherefore did God grant me my request,  
 And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?  
 Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt  
 Our earnest Prayers, then giv'n with solemn hand  
 As Graces, draw a Scorpions tail behind? 360  
 For this did the Angel twice descend? for this  
 Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a Plant;  
 Select, and Sacred, Glorious for a while,  
 The miracle of men: then in an hour  
 Ensnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound, 365  
 Thy Foes derision, Captive, Poor, and Blind  
 Into a Dungeon thrust, to work with Slaves?  
 Alas methinks whom God hath chosen once  
 To worthiest deed, if he through frailty err,  
 He should not so o'rewhelm, and as a thrall 370  
 Subject him to so foul indignities,  
 Be it but for honours sake of former deeds.  
*Sam.* Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,  
 Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me  
 But justly; I my self have brought them on, 375  
 Sole Author I, sole cause; if aught seem vile,  
 As vile hath been my folly, who have profan'd  
 The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge  
 Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,  
 A *Canaanite*, my faithless enemy. 380  
 This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,  
 But warn'd by oft experience: did not she  
 Of *Timna* first betray me, and reveal  
 The secret wrested from me in her highth  
 Of Nuptial Love profest, carrying it strait 385  
 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 offer'd only, by the sent conceiv'd 390  
 Her spurious first-born; Treason against me?  
 Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and sighs,  
 And amorous reproaches to win from me  
 My capital secret, in what part my strength

Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that she might know: 395  
 Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport  
 Her importunity, each time perceiving  
 How openly, and with what impudence  
 She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse  
 Then undissembl'd hate) with what contempt 400  
 She sought to make me Traytor to my self;  
 Yet the fourth time, when mustring all her wiles,  
 With blandisht parlies, feminine assaults,  
 Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night  
 To storm me over-watch't, and wearied out. 405  
 At times when men seek most repose and rest,  
 I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,  
 Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd  
 Might easily have shook off all her snares:  
 But foul effeminacy held me yok't 410  
 Her Bond-slave; O indignity, O blot  
 To Honour and Religion! servil mind  
 Rewarded well with servil punishment!  
 The base degree to which I now am fall'n,  
 These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base 415  
 As was my former servitude, ignoble,  
 Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,  
 True slavery, and that blindness worse then this,  
 That saw not how degeneratly I serv'd.  
*Man.* I cannot praise thy Marriage choises, Son, 420  
 Rather approv'd 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 425  
 Thir Captive, and thir 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 430  
 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 day the *Philistines* a popular Feast  
 Here celebrate in *Gaza*; and proclaim 435  
 Great Pomp, and Sacrifice, and Praises loud  
 To *Dagon*, as their God who hath deliver'd  
 Thee *Samson* bound and blind into thir hands,  
 Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.

So *Dagon* shall be magnifi'd, and God, 440  
 Besides whom is no God, compar'd with Idols,  
 Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn  
 By th'Idolatrous rout amidst thir wine;  
 Which to have come to pass by means of thee,  
*Samson*, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest, 445  
 Of all reproach the most with shame that ever  
 Could have befall'n thee and thy Fathers house.

*Sam.* Father, I do acknowledge and confess  
 That I this honour, I this pomp have brought  
 To *Dagon*, and advanc'd his praises high 450  
 Among the Heathen round; to God have brought  
 Dishonour, obloquie, and op't the mouths  
 Of Idolists, and Atheists; have brought scandal  
 To *Israel*, diffidence of God, and doubt  
 In feeble hearts, propense anough before 455  
 To waver, or fall off and joyn with Idols;  
 Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,  
 The anguish of my Soul, that suffers not  
 Mine eie to harbour sleep, or thought to rest.  
 This only hope relieves me, that the strife 460  
 With me hath end; all the contest is now  
 'Twixt God and *Dagon*; *Dagon* hath presum'd,  
 Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,  
 His Deity comparing and preferring  
 Before the God of *Abraham*. He, be sure, 465  
 Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,  
 But will arise and his great name assert:  
*Dagon* must stoop, and shall e're long receive  
 Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him  
 Of all these boasted Trophies won on me, 470  
 And with confusion blank his Worshippers.

*Man.* 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 475  
 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 loathsom plight 480  
 Neglected. I already have made way  
 To some *Philistian* Lords, with whom to treat  
 About thy ransom: well they may by this  
 Have satisfi'd thir utmost of revenge

By pains and slaveries, worse then death inflicted 485  
 On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.  
*Sam.* Spare that proposal, Father, spare the trouble  
 Of that sollicitation; let me here,  
 As I deserve, pay on my punishment;  
 And expiate, if possible, my crime, 490  
 Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd  
 Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,  
 How hainous had the fact been, how deserving  
 Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded  
 All friendship, and avoided as a blab, 495  
 The mark of fool set on his front?  
 But I Gods counsel have not kept, his holy secret  
 Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,  
 Weakly at least, and shamefully: A sin  
 That Gentiles in thir Parables condemn 500  
 To thir abyss and horrid pains confin'd.  
*Man.* 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; 505  
 Or th'execution leave to high disposal,  
 And let another hand, not thine, exact  
 Thy penal forfeit from thy self; perhaps  
 God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;  
 Who evermore approves and more accepts 510  
 (Best pleas'd with humble and filial submission)  
 Him who imploring mercy sues for life,  
 Then who self-rigorous chooses death as due;  
 Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd  
 For self-offence, more then for God offended. 515  
 Reject not then what offerd means, who knows  
 But God hath set before us, to return thee  
 Home to thy countrey and his sacred house,  
 Where thou mayst bring thy off'rings, to avert  
 His further ire, with praiera and vows renew'd. 520  
*Sam.* His pardon I implore; but as for life,  
 To what end should I seek it? when in strength  
 All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes  
 With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts  
 Of birth from Heav'n foretold and high exploits, 525  
 Full of divine instinct, after some proof  
 Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond  
 The Sons of *Anac*, famous now and blaz'd,  
 Fearless of danger, like a petty God

I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded 530  
 On hostile ground, none daring my affront.  
 Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell  
 Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
 Softn'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;  
 At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge 535  
 Of all my strength in the lascivious lap  
 Of a deceitful Concubine who shore me  
 Like a tame Weather, all my precious fleece,  
 Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,  
 Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies. 540  
*Chor.* Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,  
 Which many a famous Warrior overturns,  
 Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing Rubie  
 Sparkling, out-pow'rd, the flavor, or the smell,  
 Or taste that cheers the heart of Gods and men, 545  
 Allure thee from the cool Crystalline stream.  
*Sam.* Where ever fountain or fresh current flow'd  
 Against the Eastern ray, translucent, pure.  
 With touch ætherial of Heavn's fiery rod  
 I drank, from the clear milkie juice allaying 550  
 Thirst, and refresht; nor envy'd them the grape  
 Whose heads that turburlent liquor fills with fumes.  
*Chor.* O madness, to think use of strongest wines  
 And strongest drinks our chief support of health,  
 When God with these forbid'n made choice to rear 555  
 His mighty Champion, strong above compare,  
 Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.  
*Sam.* But what avail'd this temperance, not compleat  
 Against another object more enticing?  
 What boots it at one gate to make defence, 560  
 And at another to let in the foe  
 Effeminatly vanquis't? By which means,  
 Now Blind, disheartn'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,  
 To what can I be useful, wherein serve  
 My Nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd, 565  
 But to sit idle on the houshold hearth,  
 A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,  
 Or pitied object, these redundant locks  
 Robustious to no purpose clustring down,  
 Vain monument of strength; till length of years 570  
 And the sedentary numness craze my limbs  
 To a contemptible old age obscure.  
 Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,  
 Till vermin or the draff of servil food

Consume me, and oft-invocated death 575  
 Hast'n the welcom end of all my pains.  
*Man.* Wilt thou then serve the *Philistines* with that gift  
 Which was expresly giv'n thee to annoy them?  
 Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,  
 Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age out-worn. 580  
 But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer  
 From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay  
 After the brunt of battel, can as easie  
 Cause light again within thy eies to spring,  
 Wherewith to serve him better then thou hast; 585  
 And I perswade me so; why else this strength  
 Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?  
 His might continues in thee not for naught,  
 Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus. 590  
*Sam.* All otherwise to me my thoughts portend  
 That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,  
 Nor th'other light of life continue long,  
 But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:  
 So much I feel my genial spirits droop, 595  
 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.  
*Man.* Believe not these suggestions which proceed  
 From anguish of the mind and humours black, 600  
 That mingle with thy fancy. I however  
 Must not omit a Fathers timely care  
 To prosecute the means of thy deliverance  
 By ransom or how else: mean while be calm,  
 And healing words from these thy friends admit. 605  
*Sam.* O that torment should not be confin'd  
 To the bodies wounds and sores  
 With maladies innumerable  
 In heart, head, brest, and reins;  
 But must secret passage find 610  
 To th'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, 615  
 Though void of corporal sense.  
 My griefs not only pain me  
 As a lingring disease,  
 But finding no redress, ferment and rage,

Nor less then wounds immedicable 620  
 Ranckle, and fester, and gangrene,  
 To black mortification.  
 Thoughts my Tormenters arm'd with deadly stings  
 Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,  
 Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise, 625  
 Dire inflammation which no cooling herb  
 Or medcinal liquor can asswage,  
 Nor breath of Vernal Air from Snowy *Alp*.  
 Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o're  
 To deaths benumbing Opium as my only 630  
 Thence faintings, swounings of despair,  
 And sense of Heav'ns desertion.  
 I was his nursling once and choice delight,  
 His destin'd from the womb,  
 Promisd by Heavenly message twice descending. 635  
 Under his special eie  
 Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain;  
 He led me on to mightiest deeds  
 Above the nerve of mortal arm  
 Against the uncircumcis'd, our enemies. 640  
 But now hath cast me off as never known,  
 And to those cruel enemies,  
 Whom I by his appointment had provok't,  
 Left me all helpless with th'irreparable loss  
 Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated 645  
 The subject of thir cruelty, or scorn.  
 Nor am I in the list of them that hope;  
 Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;  
 This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,  
 No long petition, speedy death, 650  
 The close of all my miseries, and the balm.  
*Chor.* Many are the sayings of the wise  
 In antient and in modern books enroll'd;  
 Extolling Patience as the truest fortitude;  
 And to the bearing well of all calamities, 655  
 All chances incident to mans frail life.  
 Consolatories writ  
 With studied argument, and much perswasion sought  
 Lenient of grief and anxious thought,  
 But to th'afflicted in his pangs thir sound 660  
 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, 665  
 And fainting spirits uphold.  
 God of our Fathers, what is man!  
 That thou towards him with hand so various,  
 Or might I say contrarious,  
 Temperst thy providence through his short course, 670  
 Not evenly, as thou rul'st  
 The Angelic orders and inferiour creatures mute,  
 Irrational and brute.  
 Nor do I name of me the common rout,  
 That wandring loose about 675  
 Grow up and perish, as the summer flie,  
 Heads without name no more rememberd,  
 But such as thou hast solemnly elected,  
 With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd  
 To some great work, thy glory, 680  
 And peoples safety, which in part they effect:  
 Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft  
 Amidst thir highth of noon,  
 Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no regard  
 Of highest favours past 685  
 From thee on them, or them to thee of service.  
 Nor only dost degrade them, or remit  
 To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismissal,  
 But throw'st them lower then thou didst exalt them high,  
 Unseemly falls in human eie, 690  
 Too grievous for the trespass or omission,  
 Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword  
 Of Heathen and prophane, thir carkasses  
 To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd:  
 Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times, 695  
 And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.  
 If these they scape, perhaps in poverty  
 With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,  
 Painful diseases and deform'd,  
 In crude old age; 700  
 Though not disordinate, yet causless suffring  
 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, 705  
 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? 710  
 Femal of sex it seems,  
 That so bedeckt, ornate, and gay,  
 Comes this way sailing  
 Like a stately Ship  
 Of *Tarsus*, bound for th' Isles 715  
 Of *Javan* or *Gadier*  
 With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
 Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,  
 Courted by all the winds that hold them play,  
 An Amber sent of odorous perfume 720  
 Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;  
 Some rich *Philistian* Matron she may seem,  
 And now at nearer view, no other certain  
 Then *Dalila* thy wife.  
     *Sam.* My Wife, my Traytress, let her not come near me. 725  
     *Chor.* Yet on she moves, now stands & eies thee fixt,  
 About t'have spoke, but now, with head declin'd  
 Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps  
 And words addrest seem into tears dissolv'd,  
 Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil 730  
 But now again she makes address to speak.  
     *Dal.* 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 735  
 May expiate (though the fact more evil drew  
 In the perverse event then I foresaw)  
 My penance hath not slack'n'd, though my pardon  
 No way assur'd. But conjugal affection  
 Prevailing over fear, and timerous doubt 740  
 Hath led me on desirous to behold  
 Once more thy face, and know of thy estate.  
 If aught in my ability may serve  
 To light'n what thou suffer'st, and appease  
 Thy mind with what amends is in my power, 745  
 Though late, yet in some part to recompense  
 My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.  
     *Sam.* Out, out *Hyæna*; these are thy wonted arts,  
 And arts of every woman false like thee,  
 To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray, 750  
 Then as repentant to submit, beseech,  
 And reconciliation move with feign'd remorse,  
 Confess, and promise wonders in her change,  
 Not truly penitent, but chief to try

Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears, 755  
 His vertue 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 beguil'd  
 With goodness principl'd not to reject 760  
 The penitent, but ever to forgive,  
 Are drawn to wear out miserable days,  
 Entangl'd with a poysnous bosom snake,  
 If not by quick destruction soon cut off  
 As I by thee, to Ages and example. 765  
*Dal.* Yet hear me *Samson*; not that I endeavour  
 To lessen or extenuate my offence,  
 But that on th'other side if it be weigh'd  
 By it self, with aggravations not surcharg'd,  
 Or else with just allowance counterpois'd, 770  
 I may, if possible, thy pardon find  
 The easier toward 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 775  
 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 naught,  
 Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety? 780  
 To what I did thou shewdst me first the way.  
 But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not.  
 Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to womans frailty  
 E're I to thee, thou to thy self wast cruel.  
 Let weakness then with weakness come to parl 785  
 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, then in thy self was found.  
 And what if Love, which thou interpret'st hate, 790  
 The jealousie of Love, powerful of sway  
 In human hearts, not less in mine towards thee,  
 Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable  
 Of fancy, feard lest one day thou wouldst leave me  
 As her at *Timna*, sought by all means therefore 795  
 How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest:  
 No better way I saw then by importuning  
 To learn thy secrets, get into my power  
 Thy key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,

Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by those 800  
 Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd  
 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 sate full of cares and fears 805  
 Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;  
 Here I should still enjoy thee day and night  
 Mine and Loves prisoner, not the *Philistines*,  
 Whole to my self, unhazarded abroad,  
 Fearless at home of partners in my love. 810  
 These reasons in Loves law have past for good,  
 Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;  
 And Love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much wo,  
 Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.  
 Be not unlike all other, not austere 815  
 As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.  
 If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,  
 In uncompassionate anger do not so.  
*Sam.* How cunningly the sorceress displays  
 Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine 820  
 That malice not repentance brought thee hither,  
 By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, th'example,  
 I led the way; bitter reproach, but true,  
 I to my self was false e're thou to me,  
 Such pardon therefore as I give my folly, 825  
 Take to thy wicked deed: which when thou seest  
 Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,  
 Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather  
 Confess it feign'd, weakness is thy excuse,  
 And I believe it, weakness to resist 830  
*Philistian* gold: if weakness may excuse,  
 What Murderer, what Traytor, Parricide,  
 Incestuous, Sacrilegious, but may plead it?  
 All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore  
 With God or Man will gain thee no remission. 835  
 But Love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage  
 To satisfie thy lust: Love seeks to have Love;  
 My love how couldst thou hope, who tookst the way  
 To raise in me inexpiable hate,  
 Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd? 840  
 In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,  
 Or by evasions thy crime uncoverst more.  
*Dal.* Since thou determinst weakness for no plea  
 In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,

Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides, 845  
 What sieges girt me round, e're I consented;  
 Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd 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 850  
 And Princes of my countrey came in person,  
 Solicited, commanded, threatn'd, urg'd,  
 Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil Duty  
 And of Religion, press'd how just it was,  
 How honourable, how glorious to entrap 855  
 A common enemy, who had destroy'd  
 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 860  
 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 865  
 So rife and celebrated in the mouths  
 Of wisest men; that to the public good  
 Private respects must yield; with grave authority  
 Took full possession of me and prevail'd;  
 Vertue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoyning. 870  
*Sam.* I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;;  
 In feign'd Religion, smooth hypocrisie.  
 But had thy love, still odiously pretended,  
 Bin, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee  
 Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds. 875  
 I before all the daughters of my Tribe  
 And of my Nation chose thee from among  
 My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well though knewst,  
 Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,  
 Not out of levity, but over-powr'd 880  
 By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;  
 Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then  
 Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband?  
 Then, as since then, thy countries foe profest;  
 Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave 885  
 Parents and countrey; nor was I their subject,  
 Nor under their protection but my own,  
 Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life  
 Thy countrey sought of thee, it sought unjustly,

Against the law of nature, law of nations, 890  
 No more thy countrey, but an impious crew  
 Of men conspiring to uphold thir state  
 By worse then hostile deeds, violating the ends  
 For which our countrey is a name so dear;  
 Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal mov'd thee; 895  
 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 pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd, 900  
 These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,  
 Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear?  
*Dal.* In argument with men a woman ever  
 Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.  
*Sam.* For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath, breath, 905  
 Witness when I was worried with thy peals.  
*Dal.* 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 shew what recompence 910  
 Toward thee I intend for what I have misdome,  
 Misguided; only what remains past cure  
 Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist  
 To afflict thy self in vain: though sight be lost,  
 Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd 915  
 Where other senses want not their delights  
 At home in leisure and domestic ease,  
 Exempt from many a care and chance to which  
 Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.  
 I to the Lords will intercede, not doubting 920  
 Thir favourable ear, that I may fetch thee  
 From forth this loathsom prison-house, to abide  
 With me, where my redoubl'd love and care  
 With nursing diligence, to me glad office,  
 May ever tend about thee to old age 925  
 With all things grateful chear'd, and so suppli'd,  
 That what by me thou hast lost thou least shal miss.  
*Sams.* No, no, of my condition take no care;  
 It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;  
 Nor think me so unwary or accurst 930  
 To bring my feet again into the snare  
 Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains  
 Though dearly to my cost, thy ginns, and toyls;  
 Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms

No more on me have power, their force is lull'd, 935  
 So much of Adders wisdom I have learn't  
 To fence my ear against thy sorceries.  
 If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men  
 Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could hate me  
 Thy Husband, slght me, sell me, and forgo me; 940  
 How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby  
 Deceiveable, in most things as a child  
 Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,  
 And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult  
 When I must live uxorious to thy will 945  
 In perfet thraldom, how again betray me,  
 Bearing my words and doings to the Lords  
 To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile?  
 This Gaol I count the house of Liberty  
 To thine whose doors my feet shall never enter. 950  
*Dal.* Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.  
*Sam.* 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, the pious works 955  
 It hath brought forth to make thee memorable  
 Among illustrious women, faithful wives:  
 Cherish thy hast'n'd widowhood with the gold  
 Of Matrimonial treason: so farewell.  
*Dal.* I see thou art implacable, more deaf 960  
 To prayers, then winds and seas, yet winds to seas  
 Are reconcil'd at length, and Sea to Shore:  
 Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,  
 Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.  
 Why do I humble thus my self, and suing 965  
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?  
 Bid go with evil omen and the brand  
 Of infamy upon my name denounc't?  
 To mix with thy concernments I desist  
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own. 970  
 Fame if not double-fac't is double-mouth'd,  
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds,  
 On both his wings, one black, th'other white,  
 Bears greatest names in his wild ærie flight.  
 My name perhaps among the Circumcis'd 975  
 In *Dan*, in *Judah*, and the bordering Tribes,  
 To all posterity may stand defam'd,  
 With malediction mention'd, and the blot  
 Of falshood most unconjugal traduc't.

But in my country where I most desire, 980  
 In *Acron*, *Gaza*, *Asdod*, and in *Gath*  
 I shall be nam'd among the famousest  
 Of women, sung at solemn festivals,  
 Living and dead recorded, who to save  
 Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose 985  
 Above the faith of wedlock-bonds, my tomb  
 With odours visited and annual flowers.  
 No less renown'd then in Mount *Ephraim*,  
*Jael*, who with inhospitable guile  
 Smote *Sisera* sleeping through the Temples nail'd. 990  
 Nor shall I count it hainous to enjoy  
 The public marks of honour and reward  
 Conferr'd upon me, for the piety  
 Which to my country I was judg'd to have shewn.  
 At this who ever envies or repines 995  
 I leave him to his lot, and like my own.  
*Chor.* She's gone, a manifest Serpent by her sting  
 Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.  
*Sam.* So let her go, God sent her to debase me,  
 And aggravate my folly who committed 1000  
 To such a viper his most sacred trust  
 Of secresie, my safety, and my life.  
*Chor.* Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,  
 After offence returning, to regain  
 Love once possest, nor can be easily 1005  
 Repuls't, without much inward passion felt  
 And secret sting of amorous remorse.  
*Sam.* Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,  
 Not wedlock-trechery endangering life.  
*Chor.* It is not vertue, wisdom, valour, wit, 1010  
 Strength, comliness of shape, or amplest merit  
 That womans love can win or long inherit;  
 But what it is, hard is to say,  
 Harder to hit,  
 (Which way soever men refer it) 1015  
 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 preferr'd  
 Thy Paranymp, worthless to thee compar'd, 1020  
 Successour in thy bed,  
 Nor both so loosly disally'd  
 Thir nuptials, nor this last so trecherously  
 Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.

Is it for that such outward ornament 1025  
 Was lavish't on thir Sex, that inward gifts  
 Were left for hast unfinish't, judgment scant,  
 Capacity not rais'd to apprehend  
 Or value what is best  
 In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong? 1030  
 Or was too much of self-love mixt,  
 Of constancy no root infixt,  
 That either, they love nothing, or not long?  
 What e're it be, to wisest men and best  
 Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil, 1035  
 Soft, modest, meek, demure,  
 Once join'd the contrary she proves, a thorn  
 Intestin, far within defensive arms  
 A cleaving mischief, in his way to vertue  
 Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms 1040  
 Draws him awry enslav'd  
 With dotage, and his sense deprav'd  
 To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.  
 What Pilot so expert but needs must wreck  
 Embarqu'd with such a Stears-mate at the Helm? 1045  
 Favour'd of Heav'n who finds  
 One vertuous rarely found,  
 That in domestic good combines:  
 Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:  
 But vertue which breaks through all oppositions, 1050  
 And all temptation can remove,  
 Most shines and most is acceptable above.  
 Therefore Gods universal Law  
 Gave to the man despotic power  
 Over his female in due awe, 1055  
 Nor from that right to part an hour,  
 Smile she or lowre:  
 So shall he least confusion draw  
 On his whole life, not sway'd  
 By female usurpation, nor dismay'd. 1060  
     *Sams.* Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.  
     *Chor.* But this another kind of tempest brings.  
     *Sams.* Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.  
     *Chor.* Look now for no inchanting voice, nor fear  
 The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue 1065  
 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 then when first I saw 1070  
 The sumptuous *Dalila* floating this way:  
 His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.  
*Sam.* Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.  
*Chor.* His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives.  
*Har.* I come not *Samson*, to condole thy chance, 1075  
 As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,  
 Though for no friendly intent. I am of *Gath*,  
 Men call me *Harapha*, of stock renown'd  
 As *Og* or *Anak* and the *Emims* old  
 That *Kiriathaim* held, thou knowst me now 1080  
 If thou at all art known. Much I have heard  
 Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd  
 Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,  
 That I was never present on the place  
 Of those encounters, where we might have tri'd 1085  
 Each others 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.  
*Sam.* The way to know were not to see but taste. 1090  
*Har.* Dost thou already single me; I thought  
 Gives and the Mill had tam'd thee? O that fortune  
 Had brought me to the field where thou art fam'd  
 To have wrought such wonders with an Asses Jaw;  
 I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms, 1095  
 Or left thy carkass where the Ass lay thrown:  
 So had the glory of Prowess been recover'd  
 To *Palestine*, won by a *Philistine*  
 From the unforeskinn'd race, of whom thou bear'st  
 The highest name for valiant Acts, that honour 1100  
 Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,  
 I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.  
*Sam.* Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do  
 What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy hand.  
*Har.* To combat with a blind man I disdain, 1105  
 And thou hast need much washing to be toucht.  
*Sam.* Such usage as your honourable Lords  
 Afford me assassinated and betray'd,  
 Who durst not with thir whole united powers  
 In fight withstand me single and unarm'd, 1110  
 Nor in the house with chamber ambushes  
 Close-banded durst attaque me, no not sleeping,  
 Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold  
 Breaking her Marriage Faith to circumvent me.

Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd 1115  
 Some narrow place enclos'd, where sight may give thee,  
 Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;  
 Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy Helmet  
 And Brigandine of brass, thy broad Habergeon,  
 Vant-brass and Greves, and Gauntlet, add thy Spear 1120  
 A Weavers beam, and seven-times-folded shield,  
 I only with an Oak'n staff will meet thee,  
 And raise such out-cries on thy clatter'd Iron,  
 Which long shall not with-hold mee from thy head,  
 That in a little time while breath remains thee, 1125  
 Thou oft shalt with thy self at *Gath* to boast  
 Again in safety what though wouldst have done  
 To *Samson*, but shalt never see *Gath* more.

*Har.* Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms  
 Which greatest Heroes have in battel worn, 1130  
 Thir ornament and safety, had not spells  
 And black enchantments, some Magicians Art  
 Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heaven  
 Feigndst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,  
 Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs 1135  
 Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back  
 Of chaf't wild Boars, or ruffl'd Porcupines.

*Sam.* I know no Spells, use no forbidden Arts;  
 My trust is in the living God who gave me  
 At my Nativity this strength, diffus'd 1140  
 No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,  
 Then thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,  
 The pledge of my unviolated vow.  
 For proof hereof, if *Dagon* be thy god,  
 Go to his Temple, invoke his aid 1145  
 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, 1150  
 Offering to combat thee his Champion bold,  
 With th'utmost of his Godhead seconded:  
 Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow  
 Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

*Har.* Presume not on thy God, what e're he be, 1155  
 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 fetter'd send thee

Into the common Prison, there to grind 1160  
 Among the Slaves and Asses thy comrades,  
 As good for nothing else, no better service  
 With those thy boyst'rous locks, no worthy match  
 For valour to assail, nor by the sword  
 Of noble Warriour, so to stain his honour, 1165  
 But by the Barbers razor best subdu'd.

*Sam.* 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 1170  
 Whose ear is ever open; and his eye  
 Gracious to re-admit the suppliant;  
 In confidence whereof I once again  
 Defie thee to the trial of mortal fight,  
 By combat to decide whose god is God, 1175  
 Thine or whom I with *Israel's* Sons adore.

*Har.* Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting  
 He will accept thee to defend his cause,  
 A Murtherer, a Revolter, and a Robber.

*Sam.* Tongue-doubtie Giant, how does thou prove me these? 1180

*Har.* Is not thy Nation subject to our Lords?  
 Thir Magistrates confest it, when they took thee  
 As a League-breaker and deliver'd bound  
 Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed  
 Notorious murder on those thirty men 1185  
 At *Askalon*, who never did thee harm,  
 Then like a Robber stripdst them of thir robes?  
 The *Philistine*, when thou hadst broke the league,  
 Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,  
 To others did no violnce nor spoil. 1190

*Sam.* Among the Daughters of the *Philistines*  
 I chose a Wife, which argu'd me no foe;  
 And in your City held my Nuptial Feast:  
 But your ill-meaning Politician Lords,  
 Under pretence of Bridal friends and guests, 1195  
 Appointed to await me thirty spies,  
 Who threatning cruel death constrain'd the bride  
 To wring from me and tell to them my secret,  
 That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd.  
 When I perceiv'd all set on enmity, 1200  
 As on my enemies, where ever chanc'd,  
 I us'd hostility, and took thir spoil  
 To pay my underminers in thir coin.  
 My Nation was subjected to your Lords.

It was the force of Conquest; force with force 1205  
 Is well ejected when the Conquer'd can.  
 But I a private person, whom my Countrey  
 As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd  
 Single Rebellion and did Hostile Acts.  
 I was no private but a person rais'd 1210  
 With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n  
 To free my Countrey; if their servile minds  
 Me their Deliverer sent would not receive,  
 But to thir Masters gave me up for nought,  
 Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve. 1215  
 I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,  
 And had perform'd it if my known offence  
 Had not disabl'd me, not all your force:  
 These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant  
 Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts, 1220  
 Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,  
 As a petty enterprise of small enforce.  
*Har.* With thee a Man condemn'd, a Slave enrol'd,  
 Due by the Law to capital punishment?  
 To fight with thee no man of arms will deign. 1225  
*Sam.* Cam'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 inform'd;  
 But take good heed my hand survey not thee.  
*Har.* O Baal-zebub! can my ears unus'd 1230  
 Hear these dishonours, and not render death?  
*Sam.* No man with-holds thee, nothing from thy hand  
 Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,  
 My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.  
*Har.* This insolence other kind of answer fits. 1235  
*Sam.* Go baffl'd 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 shatter'd sides. 1240  
*Har.* By Astaroth e're long thou shalt lament  
 These braveries in Irons loaden on thee.  
*Chor.* His Giantship is gone somewhat crestfall'n,  
 Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,  
 And lower looks, but in a sultrie chafe. 1245  
*Sam.* I dread him not, nor all his Giant-brood,  
 Though Fame divulge him Father of five Sons  
 All of Gigantic size, Goliah chief.  
*Chor.* He will directly to the Lords, I fear,

And with malicious counsel stir them up 1250  
 Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.  
*Sam.* He must allege some cause, and offer'd 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'd. 1255  
 Much more affliction then 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. 1260  
 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 thir end  
 Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine 1265  
 Draw thir own ruin who attempt the deed.  
*Chor.* Oh how comely it is and how reviving  
 To the Spirits of just men long opprest!  
 When God into the hands of thir deliverer  
 Puts invincible might 1270  
 To quell the mighty of the Earth, th' oppressour,  
 The brute and boist'rous force of violent men  
 Hardy and industrious to support  
 Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue  
 The righteous and all such as honour Truth; 1275  
 He all thir Ammunition  
 And feats of War defeats  
 With plain Heroic magnitude of mind  
 And celestial vigour arm'd  
 Thir Armories and Magazines contemns, 1280  
 Renders them useless, while  
 With winged expedition  
 Swift as the lightning glance he executes  
 His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd  
 Lose thir defence distracted and amaz'd. 1285  
  
 But patience is more oft the exercise  
 Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,  
 Making them each his own Deliverer,  
 And Victor over all 1290  
 That tyrannie or fortune can inflict,  
 Either of these is in thy lot,  
 Samson, with might endu'd  
 Above the Sons of men; but sight bereav'd

May chance to number thee with those 1295  
 Whom Patience finally must crown.  
 This Idols day hath bin to thee no day of rest,

Labouring thy mind  
 More then the day thy hands, 1300  
 And yet perhaps more trouble is behind.  
 For I descry this way  
 Some other tending, in his hand  
 A Scepter or quaint staff he bears,  
 Comes on amain, speed in his look. 1305  
 By his habit I discern him now  
 A Public Officer, and now at hand.  
 His message will be short and voluble.  
 Off. Ebrews, the Pris'ner Samson here I seek.  
     *Chor.* His manacles remark him, there he sits. 1310  
     *Off.* 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 1315  
 To honour this great Feast, and great Assembly;  
 Rise therefore with all speed and come along,  
 Where I will see thee heartn'd and fresh clad  
 To appear as fits before th' illustrious Lords.  
     *Sam.* Thou knowst I am an Ebrew, therefore tell them, 1320  
 Our Law forbids at thir Religious Rites  
 My presence; for that cause I cannot come.  
     *Off.* This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.  
     *Sam.* Have they not Sword-players, and ev'ry sort 1325  
 Of Gymnic Artists, Wrestlers, Riders, Runners,  
 Juglers and Dancers, Antics, Mummings, Mimics,  
 But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,  
 And over-labour'd at thir publick Mill,  
 To make them sport with blind activity?  
 Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels 1330  
 On my refusal to distress me more,  
 Or make a game of my calamities?  
 Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.  
     *Off.* Regard thy self, this will offend them highly.  
     *Sam.* My self? my conscience and internal peace. 1335  
 Can they think me so broken, so debas'd  
 With corporal servitude, that my mind ever  
 Will condescend to such absurd commands?  
 Although thir drudge, to be thir fool or jester,

And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief 1340  
 To shew them feats, and play before thir god,  
 The worst of all indignities, yet on me  
 Joyn'd with extream contempt? I will not come.  
*Off.* My message was impos'd on me with speed,  
 Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution? 1345  
*Sam.* So take it with what speed thy message needs.  
*Off.* I am sorry what this stoutness will produce.  
*Sam.* Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.  
*Chor.* Consider, Samson; matters now are strain'd  
 Up to the highth, whether to hold or break; 1350  
 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 thund'ring then thou well wilt bear.  
*Sam.* Shall I abuse this Consecrated gift 1355  
 Of strength, again returning with my hair  
 After my great transgression, so requite  
 Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin  
 By prostituting holy things to Idols;  
 A Nazarite in place abominable 1360  
 Vaunting my strength in honour to thir Dagon?  
 Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,  
 What act more execrably unclean, prophane?  
*Chor.* Yet with this strength thou serv'st the Philistines,  
 Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean. 1365  
*Sam.* Not in thir Idol-worship, but by labour  
 Honest and lawful to deserve my food  
 Of those who have me in thir civil power.  
*Chor.* Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.  
*Sam.* Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds; 1370  
 But who constrains me to the Temple of Dagon,  
 Not dragging? the Philistian Lords command.  
 Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,  
 I do it freely; venturing to displease  
 God for the fear of Man, and Man prefer, 1375  
 Set God behind: which in his jealousie  
 Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.  
 Yet that he may dispense with me or thee  
 Present in Temples at Idolatrous Rites  
 For some important cause, thou needst not doubt. 1380  
*Chor.* How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.  
*Sam.* 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, 1385  
 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. 1390  
*Chor.* In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns.  
*Off.* 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 1395  
 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 fastn'd then a rock.  
*Sam.* I could be well content to try thir Art, 1400  
 Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.  
 Yet knowing thir advantages too many,  
 Because they shall not trail me through thir streets  
 Like a wild Beast, I am content to go.  
 Masters commands come with a power resistless 1405  
 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. 1410  
*Off.* I praise thy resolution, doff these links:  
 By this compliance thou wilt win the Lords  
 To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.  
*Sam.* Brethren farewell, your company along  
 I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them 1415  
 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 thir wine;  
 And the well-feasted Priest then soonest fir'd 1420  
 With zeal, if aught Religion seem concern'd:  
 No less the people on thir Holy-days  
 Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable;  
 Happ'n what may, of me expect to hear  
 Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy 1425  
 Our God, our Law, my Nation, or my self,  
 The last of me or no I cannot warrant.  
*Chor.* Go, and the Holy One  
 Of Israel be thy guide

To what may serve his glory best, & spread his name 1430  
 Great among the Heathen round:  
 Send thee the Angel of thy Birth, to stand  
 Fast by thy side, who from thy Fathers field  
 Rode up in flames after his message told  
 Of thy conception, and be now a shield 1435  
 Of fire; that Spirit that first rusht on thee  
 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, 1440  
 As in thy wond'rous actions hath been seen.  
 But wherefore comes old Manoa in such hast  
 With youthful steps? much livelier than e're while  
 He seems: supposing here to find his Son,  
 Or of him bringing to us some glad news? 1445  
*Man.* 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 thir Feast.  
 I heard all as I came, the City rings 1450  
 And numbers thither flock, I had no will,  
 Lest I should see him forc't 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. 1455  
*Chor.* That hope would much rejoyce us to partake  
 With thee; say reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.  
*Man.* I have attempted one by one the Lords  
 Either at home, or through the high street passing,  
 With supplication prone and Fathers tears 1460  
 To accept of ransom for my Son thir pris'ner,  
 Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,  
 Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;  
 That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his Priests,  
 Others more moderate seeming, but thir aim 1465  
 Private reward, for which both God and State  
 They easily would set to sale, a third  
 More generous far and civil, who confess'd  
 They had enough reveng'd, having reduc't  
 Thir foe to misery beneath thir fears, 1470  
 The rest was magnanimity to remit,  
 If some convenient ransom were propos'd.  
 What noise or shout was that? it tore the Skie.  
*Chor.* Doubtless the people shouting to behold

Thir once great dread, captive, & blind before them, 1475  
Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

*Man.* His ransom, if my whole inheritance  
May compass it, shall willingly be paid  
And numberd down: much rather I shall chuse  
To live the poorest in my Tribe, then richest, 1480  
And he in that calamitous prison left.  
No, I am fixt not to part hence without him.  
For his redemption all my Patrimony,  
If need be, I am ready to forgo  
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing. 1485

*Chor.* Fathers are wont to lay up for thir Sons,  
Thou for thy Son art bent to lay out all;  
Sons wont to nurse thir Parents in old age,  
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy Son,  
Made older then thy age through eye-sight lost. 1490

*Man.* It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,  
And view him sitting in the house, enobl'd  
With all those high exploits by him atchiev'd,  
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,  
That of a Nation arm'd the strength contain'd: 1495  
And I perswade me God had not permitted  
His strength again to grow up with his hair  
Garrison'd round about him like a Camp  
Of faithful Souldiery, were not his purpose  
To use him further yet in some great service, 1500  
Not to sit idle with so great a gift  
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.  
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,  
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

*Chor.* Thy hopes are not ill founded nor seem vain 1505  
Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon  
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a Fathers love,  
In both which we, as next participate.

*Man.* I know your friendly minds and-O what noise!  
Mercy of Heav'n what hideous noise was that! 1510  
Horribly loud unlike the former shout.

*Chor.* Noise call you it or universal groan  
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd,  
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,  
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point. 1515

*Man.* Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise,  
Oh it continues, they have slain my Son.

*Chor.* Thy Son is rather slaying them, that outcry  
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

*Man.* Some dismal accident it needs must be; 1520  
What shall we do, stay here or run and see?

*Chor.* Best keep together here, lest running thither  
We unawares run into dangers mouth.  
This evil on the Philistines is fall'n,  
From whom could else a general cry be heard) 1525

The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,  
From other hands we need not much to fear.  
What if his eye-sight (for to Israels God  
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,  
He now be dealing dole among his foes, 1530  
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?

*Man.* That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

*Chor.* Yet God hath wrought things as incredible  
For his people of old; what hinders now? 1535

*Man.* 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.

*Chor.* Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;  
For evil news rides post, while good news baits.  
And to our wish I see one hither speeding, 1540  
An Ebrew, as I guess, and of our Tribe.

*Mess.* O whither shall I run, or which way flie  
The sight of this so horrid spectacle  
Which earst my eyes beheld and yet behold;  
For dire imagination still pursues me. 1545

But providence or instinct of nature seems,  
Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted  
To have guided me aright, I know not how,  
To thee first reverend Manoa, and to these  
My Countrey-men, whom here I knew remaining, 1550  
As at some distance from the place of horreur,  
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

*Man.* The accident was loud, & here before thee  
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not,  
No Preface needs, thou seest we long to know. 1555

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

*Man.* Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

*Mess.* Gaza yet stands, but all her Sons are fall'n,  
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n. 1560

*Man.* Sad, but thou knowst to Israelites not saddest  
The desolation of a Hostile City.

*Mess.* Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfet.

*Man.* Relate by whom.

*Mess.* By Samson.

*Man.* That still lessens

The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

*Mess.* Ah Manoa I refrain, too suddenly 1565

To utter what will come at last too soon;

Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption

Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

*Man.* Suspense in news is torture, speak them out.

*Mess.* Then take the worst in brief, Samson is dead. 1570

*Man.* The worst indeed, O all my hope's defeated

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 conceiv'd

Hopeful of his Delivery, which now proves 1575

Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring

Nipt with the lagging rear of winters frost.

Yet e're I give the rains to grief, say first,

How dy'd 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 deaths wound? 1580

*Mess.* Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

*Man.* Wearied with slaughter then or how? explain.

*Mess.* By his own hands.

*Man.* Self-violence? what cause

Brought him so soon at variance with himself 1585

Among his foes?

*Mess.* Inevitable cause

At once both to destroy and be destroy'd;

The Edifice where all were met to see him

Upon thir heads and on his own he pull'd

*Man.* O lastly over-strong against thy self! 1590

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. 1595

*Mess.* Occasions drew me early to this City,

And as the gates I enter'd with Sun-rise,

The morning Trumpets Festival proclaim'd

Through each high street: little I had dispatch't

When all abroad was rumour'd that this day 1600

Samson should be brought forth to shew the people

Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;

I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded

Not to be absent at that spectacle.

The building was a spacious Theatre 1605  
 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 op'n, where the throng  
 On banks and scaffolds under Skie might stand; 1610  
 I among these aloof obscurely stood.  
 The Feast and noon grew high, and Sacrifice  
 Had fill'd thir hearts with mirth, high cheer, & wine,  
 When to thir sports they turn'd. Immediately  
 Was Samson as a public servant brought, 1615  
 In thir 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, Cataphracts and Spears.  
 At sight of him the people with a shout 1620  
 Rifted the Air clamouring thir god with praise,  
 Who had made thir dreadful enemy thir 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 assay'd, 1625  
 To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd  
 All with incredible, stupendious force,  
 None daring to appear Antagonist.  
 At length for intermission sake they led him  
 Between the pillars; he his guide requested 1630  
 (For so from such as nearer stood we heard)  
 As over-tir'd to let him lean a while  
 With both his arms on those two massie Pillars  
 That to the arched roof gave main support.  
 He unsusitious led him;-which when Samson 1635  
 Felt in his arms, with head a while enclin'd,  
 And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,  
 Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd.  
 At last with head erect thus cryed aloud,  
 Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd 1640  
 I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,  
 Not without wonder or delight beheld.  
 Now of my own accord such other tryal  
 I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater;  
 As with amaze shall strike all who behold. 1645  
 This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,  
 As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
 When Mountains tremble, those two massie Pillars  
 With horrible convulsion to and fro,

He tugg'd, he shook, till down thy came and drew 1650  
 The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder  
 Upon the heads of all who sate beneath,  
 Lords, Ladies, Captains, Councillors, or Priests,  
 Thir choice nobility and flower, not only  
 Of this but each Philistian City round 1655  
 Met from all parts to solemnize this Feast.  
 Samson with these immixt, inevitably  
 Pulld down the same destruction on himself;  
 The vulgar only scap'd who stood without.  
*Chor.* O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious! 1660  
 Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd  
 The work for which thou wast foretold  
 To Israel, and now ly'st victorious  
 Among thy slain self-kill'd  
 Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold 1665  
 Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd  
 Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more  
 Then all thy life had slain before.  
*Semichor.* While thir hearts were jocund and sublime,  
 Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine, 1670  
 And fat regorg'd of Bulls and Goats,  
 Chaunting thir Idol, and preferring  
 Before our living Dread who dwells  
 In Silo his bright Sanctuary:  
 Among them he a spirit of phrenzie sent, 1675  
 Who hurt thir minds,  
 And urg'd them on with mad desire  
 To call in hast for thir destroyer;  
 They only set on sport and play  
 Unweetingly importun'd 1680  
 Thir own destruction to come speedy upon them.  
 So fond are mortal men  
 Fall'n into wrath divine,  
 As thir own ruin on themselves to invite,  
 Insensate left, or to sense reprobate, 1685  
 And with blindness internal struck.  
*Semichor.* But he though blind of sight,  
 Despisd and thought extinguish't quite,  
 With inward eyes illuminated  
 His fierie vertue rouz'd 1690  
 From under ashes into sudden flame,  
 And as an ev'ning Dragon came,  
 Assailant on the perched roosts,  
 And nests in order rang'd

Of tame villatic Fowl; but as an Eagle 1695  
 His cloudless thunder bolted on thir heads.  
 So vertue giv'n for lost,  
 Deprest, and overthrown, as seem'd,  
 Like that self-begott'n bird  
 In the Arabian woods embost 1700  
 That no second knows nor third,  
 And lay e're while a Holocaust,  
 From out her ashie womb now teem'd  
 Revives, reflowerishes, then vigorous most  
 When most unactive deem'd, 1705  
 And though her body die, her fame survives,  
 A secular bird ages of lives.

*Man.* Come, come, no time for lamentation now,  
 Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself  
 Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd 1710  
 A life Heroic, on his Ene'mies  
 Fully reveng'd, hath left them years of mourning,  
 And lamentation to the Sons of Caphtor  
 Through all Philistian bounds. To Israel  
 Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them 1715  
 Find courage to lay hold on this occasion,  
 To himself and Fathers house eternal fame;  
 And which is best and happiest yet, all this  
 With God not parted from him, as was feard,  
 But favouring and assisting to the end. 1720  
 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 1725  
 Sok't 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, all my friends 1730  
 To fetch him hence and solemnly attend  
 With silent obsequie and funeral train  
 Home to his Fathers house: there will I build him  
 A Monument, and plant it round with shade  
 Of Laurel ever green, and branching Palm, 1735  
 With all his Trophies hung, and Acts enroll'd  
 In copious Legend, or sweet Lyric Song.  
 Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,  
 And from his memory inflame thir breasts

To matchless valour, and adventures high: 1740  
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.  
*Chor.* All is best, though we oft doubt, 1745  
What th' unsearchable dispose  
Of highest wisdom brings about,  
And ever best found in the close.  
Oft he seems to hide his face,  
But unexpectedly returns 1750  
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 acquist 1755  
Of true experience from this great event  
With peace and consolation hath dismiss,  
And calm of mind all passion spent.

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