INTRODUCTION.

The literary life of Milton may be divided into four distinct periods. The first extends from about 1624 to 1632, during which time he produced his juvenile poems; it begins with the paraphrases of the 104th and 136th Psalms, and it ends chronologically with the composition of the Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester. The second period extends from 1632 to 1638, and comprises the poems written during his residence at Horton. The third extends from 1638 to 1662, and is the period of the production of a few of the Sonnets and of almost all his prose-writings. The fourth extends from 1662 to his death in 1674, and between these dates appeared Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes.

Each of these periods has its own essential characteristics; each has its own history. We are here concerned only with the last. At its commencement Milton was in his fifty-fourth year. For nearly a quarter of a century he had been in the van of contemporary history. He had abandoned poetry and polite letters. He had dedicated himself entirely to the service of his country and of his cause. Controversy after controversy had engaged him, and when he was not actually in the arena the duties of a responsible public post had left him little leisure for loftier avocations. The death of Cromwell in September, 1658, ended this period of prosperous activity. In little more than a year the wreck of the Puritans was complete. The Restoration found Milton under an accumulation of misfortunes such as have rarely pressed simultaneously on one man. Every object for which he had lived and laboured had been defeated. The Republic was in ruins; the principles which he had vindicated with so much passionate eloquence, and which were dearer to him than his own heart's blood, had lost all their life and efficacy. Puritanism had become a by-word: its shrines had been overturned; its gospel was a jest, and the Kingdom of the Saints was the prey of an obscene and impious rabble. For a while his life was in jeopardy. Discontent and misery reigned in his home.
Pecuniary losses had crippled his fortune, and the terrible affliction which had befallen him in 1652 was now aggravated by gout. In the midst of these calamities he composed Paradise Lost, which was published in the autumn of 1667. A little more than three years afterwards appeared together Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes. The volume was a small octavo of 220 pages, and the title-page runs thus: Paradise Regain'd. A Poem in IV Books. To which is added Samson Agonistes. The Author John Milton. London, Printed by J. M. for John Starkey at the Mitre in Fleet Street, near Temple Bar, mdcclxxi. It was entered on the registers of the Stationers' Company on the 20th of September, 1670, and it was licensed, as a note on the fly-leaf at the beginning informs us, on the 2nd of July, 1670. The proof-sheets had evidently been very imperfectly revised, the printing is slovenly, and the punctuation singularly loose and careless. The Samson Agonistes has a separate title-page, and that title-page we have reprinted in its proper place.

The date of the composition of this drama it is now impossible to ascertain. It may have been written side by side with Paradise Lost, or side by side with Paradise Regained. From internal evidence we should be inclined to assign it to the later date. In its austere and simple majesty, in the stern self-suppression evident throughout the whole work, in the occasional harshness of the verse, and, above all, in the exquisite harmony of the frame-work of the drama, compared with the almost jejune simplicity of the diction, it has certainly more in common with Paradise Regained than with the mightier epic. Like Paradise Regained it is the work of a consummate artist whose intellectual faculties were still in their fullest vigour, but whose enthusiasm and imaginative energy were beginning to flag. It is of course possible that in both these works the poet deliberately refrained from giving the reins to his genius, and that what appear to us indications of decadence may have arisen in the case of Paradise Regained from his determination to adhere scrupulously to Gospel tradition, and in the case of Samson Agonistes from his intention to reproduce exactly the diction and spirit of the Greek drama. However that may be, Paradise Regained and Samson have much in common, and we shall probably not be far wrong if we assign its composition to some date between 1667 and 1670.

The idea of dramatising some portion of the story of Samson was not new to Milton; for in memoranda drawn up as early as 1641 we find among the subjects noted by him as appropriate for dramatic
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treatment no less than three suggested by that legend,—'Samson Pursophorus' or 'Hybristes,' or 'Samson Marrying,' or 'Ramath-Lechi.' It is noticeable that the portion ultimately chosen did not then suggest itself. As yet the last days of the blind and lonely Nazarite had no allegorical significance to the poet.

The drama itself has a threefold interest; first, as an important experiment in English poetry; secondly, as a work of a high order of intrinsic excellence; and, thirdly, as shadowing the personal history and the personal feelings of the poet himself. It is an attempt to transplant Attic Tragedy in its most perfect form, in the form that is to say which it assumes in the dramas of Sophocles, into English literature. On these dramas therefore it is modelled, reproducing with exact fidelity their structure, their diction, their tone and spirit, animated throughout with the same ethical purpose, and evolving itself under the same metaphysical conditions. It is not necessary to institute a minute analytical parallel between the Sophoclean drama and the drama of Milton. A few general remarks must suffice. And first for the structure. It may be analysed thus:—Prologue, line 1-114; Parados, 115-175; first stasimon, 293-329, which closes the first episodion, or, in modern phraseology, the first act; 654-724 second stasimon, marking the termination of the second episodion; 1010-1061 third stasimon, terminating the third episodion; 1267-1307 fourth stasimon, closing the fourth episodion; 1427-1444 fifth stasimon, marking the commencement of the Exodus or fifth act. Lines 1660-1707 form the Commos or dirge.

The action is simple and entire, for it deals solely with the triumph and destruction of Samson and the circumstances—essentially and immediately connected with that catastrophe. It has a definite beginning (1-331); a definite middle—the interviews between Samson and Manoah (332-605), between Samson and Dalila (725-996), between Samson and Harapha (1076-1243); and each of these interviews is an essential part of the action, the first paving the way for the catastrophe—see particularly Manoah's remark (434-437) and Samson's reply (468-471); the second raising our interest in the hero of the tragedy, as well as illustrating the pathos and distress of the story; and the third not only drawing out the

1 The influence of Euripides is, it is true, discernible throughout, in the form of the Chorus, in the rhetorical cast of the speeches, in the all-pervading misogyny, and pre-eminently in the habitual tendency to condense reflection into aphorism.
character of Samson, but immediately ushering in the catastrophe—see lines 1250-1253\(^1\). The end is marked by the entrance of the officer, line 1308, the catastrophe occurring during the dialogue between Manoah and the Chorus not taking place in the presence of the audience, but being announced by a messenger.

Again, the action is not only symmetrically entire, it is important and of proper magnitude. In a word, it is in accordance with the Aristotelian canon prefixed by Milton as the motto to the play. Nor has he observed only unity of action. 'The circumscription of time,' to quote his own words, 'wherein the whole drama begins and ends is according to ancient rule and best example within the space of twenty-four hours.' The unity of place too is, as in the masterpieces of his great model, carefully observed, the scene never changing as long as Samson remains an interlocutor. In the conduct of the Chorus he also follows Sophocles, making it one of the persons in the drama—an integral portion of the whole—as well as 'the ideal spectator.' The diction is severely simple, austerely chaste, though at the same time essentially elevated and dignified, and was evidently framed studiously on the style of Sophocles, imitating his turns of expression, occasionally even his verbal idiosyncrasies, though it has, we must admit, none of his sweetness and none of his grace. In one respect indeed Milton deserts his master, and that is in the metrical construction of the choruses, which are not strophic and antistrophic, but monostrophic. In this he follows Euripides, and it is very difficult to see why; for by the innovation much of the distinctness and symmetry which are the essence of the highest form of Greek dramatic art is sacrificed. The resemblance in tone and spirit is seen in the mingled optimism and despair, in the co-existence of a keen and haunting sense of the misery and helplessness of man with a pious confidence in the ultimate justice of the Powers Above which runs through the play,—compare especially the passage beginning 'God of our Fathers,' line 667 seqq., and the last Chorus,—in the constant inculcation of the doctrine of resignation, and in the employment of tragic irony, see particularly the dialogue between Manoah and the Chorus at the very time the catastrophe is occurring, a dialogue conceived and conducted in the very spirit of Sophocles.

The ethical purpose of the work is explained by Milton himself in language borrowed from the famous passage in the Poetics of Aristotle. It was 'by raising pity and fear or terror to purge the

\(^1\) See Cumberland's admirable remarks in the Observer, No. 76.
mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to such measure with a kind of delight stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.’ In other words, his ethical purpose was identical with that of the Greek tragedians, and pre-emminently with that of the prince of Attic dramatists in every play which has come down to us. And the art with which this purpose has been worked out is as consummate as the genius which informs it. In the language of Cumberland’s eloquent commentary, ‘Samson possesses all the terrific majesty of Prometheus Chained, the mysterious distress of Oedipus, and the pitiable wretchedness of Philoctetes. His properties, like those of the first, are something above human; his misfortunes, like those of the second, are derivable from the displeasure of Heaven and involved in oracles; his condition, like that of the last, is the most abject which human nature can be reduced to from a state of dignity and splendour. Of the catastrophe there remains only to remark that it is of unparalleled majesty and terror.’ (Observer, No. 76.)

This brings us to the last point—the metaphysical conditions under which the action evolves itself. The theology of the play is Sophoclean. Samson is neither contemplated as expiating the crimes of deceased ancestors, nor as the sport of a cruel and capricious destiny. For his sufferings he has to thank himself; they sprang from his own weakness, and he acknowledges it. Up to a certain point he was a free agent, he could choose his path; he mis-chose it, and he was in the toils of necessity (ἀνάγκη)—

‘Self-kill’d
Not willingly, but tangl’d in the fold
Of dire Necessity’ (1664–1666).

It remains to say a few words about the characters before we quit this part of our subject. In a well-known passage of the Poetics Aristotle has observed that the hero—for he is alluding no doubt to the principal figure—should be ‘a person neither eminently virtuous or just, nor yet involved in misfortune by deliberate vice or villainy, but by some error of human frailty, and this person should also be some of high fame and flourishing prosperity.’ How exactly does Milton’s protagonist Samson fulfil all these conditions? The other persons of the drama, though in accordance with classical canons strictly subordinate to the principal figure, are admirably discriminated—the mild and pious Manoah, the syren-tigress Dalila, the tongue-doughty coward Harapha.

Such is the character of this magnificent drama, a drama from
which the unlearned reader will gain a better idea of the masterpieces of the Greek stage than he could derive from any translation however faithful, a drama which no scholar would hesitate to pronounce as not unworthy of comparison with the great originals themselves. Well might Goethe say after re-perusing it that he knew of hardly any work which had been composed so entirely in the spirit of the ancients. In this attempt to graft on modern literature so noble an exotic Milton had no predecessors, for the Italian plays and such plays as Gorboduc (1562) and Jocasta (1566) are modelled rather on the rhetorical exercises of Seneca than on the tragedies of Greece. Since Milton many similar attempts have been made, as in the Elfrida (1751) and Caractacus (1759) of Mason, in the Medea (1761) of Glover, in the Prometheus Unbound and Hellas of Shelley, and in our day in the Merope of Matthew Arnold, and in the Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus of Swinburne. But none of these works will as representations of Greek dramatic art bear comparison with Milton’s noble achievement.

But apart from its literary value and its historical importance the Samson Agonistes will always be regarded with peculiar interest by students of Milton. We have already alluded to the circumstances under which the works produced subsequently to the Restoration were written. The Past lay in ruins behind him; the Present was fraught with calamity; to the Future only he could look for Divine justice to declare itself. In the composition of his epics he had found perhaps some solace in the pressure of affliction, and some refuge from distressing thoughts. But even in them his dissatisfaction and sorrow had found utterance; we need scarcely refer to Par. Lost, iii. 13-55, vii. 25-39. These utterances were however only occasional. But in Samson Agonistes his passionate egotism finds full scope. In Mr. Pattison’s just and happy phrase it is ‘the intensest utterance of the most intense of English Poets.’ Like the great Nazarite, the poet too had been dedicated to God; he had had his day of triumph; he had been the thrall of a frivolous, disobedient, and perhaps treacherous wife; he had been deprived of sight; he stood impotent among godless and ignominious foes; old age was creeping on and the night was near. That Milton is himself speaking in such passages as the lines in which Samson soliloquises on his blindness (67-114), as the lines in which he mourns his imbecility (563-572), and comments on the ingratitude and folly of his countrymen in ignoring his services and warnings
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(241-261), as the lines in which he gives voice to his dejection and sense of impending death (590-598), as the lines in which he describes his dedication to God's service and the tragical result (688-691), must be obvious to every one. Not less obvious is the parallel between Samson's relations with Dalila and Milton's relations with Mary Powell; while the mingled contempt and dislike with which the female sex, except where they are good house-wives, are regarded both by Samson and the Chorus exactly correspond with Milton's known opinions: indeed, the remarks of the Chorus beginning with line 1025 and ending with line 1060 are little more than poetical paraphrases of passages in the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce. Sometimes the allusions to himself and his contemporaries are minute and particular, as where he refers to his gout (700-703), to the fate of the Regicides at the Restoration and to the brutal indignities offered to their remains (687-696), to the rabble of harlots, ropedancers and buffoons who crowded the court of the second Charles (1323-1325). In Samson's challenge to the giant Harapha, Professor Masson discerns the expression of Milton's own 'unabated pugnacity, his longing for another Salmasius to grapple with, his chafing under the public silence to which he was enforced in the midst of repeated attacks and insults.' Farther than this it would perhaps be hazardous to stretch the allegory.

With regard to the versification, which many eminent critics, Hallam for example, Macaulay, Landor, and Mr. Pattison have pronounced to be intolerably harsh, it may be fairly said that a great deal depends on the manner in which it is read. The Choruses are, plainly not metrical but rhythmical, and their rhythm will best be discernible if they be read very slowly and very solemnly, in a grave measured voice. Thus—

'Or do my eyes mísrepresént? Can this be hé,
That heroíc, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson? whom únárm'd
Nó stréngth of mán or fiérest wíld beast could withstand;
Who tore the lion, as the lion teares the kid;
Rán on embattled ármies clád in íron,
And weaponless himself,
Made ármus ridiculous, useless the fórgery
Of brázen shíeld and spéar, the hámmér'd cuírass,
Chalýbean témpér'd steel and fróck of máil
Adamantéan proof.'

What he seems to have aimed at was precisely what Mr. Matthew Arnold describes himself as aiming at in the choruses of his Merope.
Finding it impossible to adapt Greek measures to English verse he followed rhythms which produced on his own feeling a similar impression to that produced on it by the rhythms of Greek choric poetry. But the versification is throughout deficient in grace and is frequently, with all its majestic impressiveness, rugged and harsh. The text of the drama is that of 1671, which was evidently printed with great care, and as it was the only edition published in Milton's life-time, and as the manuscript is not extant there are no variants requiring notice. It was reprinted in folio in 1688 and again in 1695, but the variants in these editions having no authority need no record. It was translated into Greek in 1788 by G. A. Glasse and in 1832 by Edward Greswell. Handel's Oratorio founded on it was first performed in 1743.

It is much to be regretted that this noble work does not hold a more important place in the curriculum of English studies. In our classical schools it might with advantage be read side by side with the Greek plays, on which in the hands of a skilful teacher it would form an excellent commentary. We are now happily beginning to understand that it is not sufficient to approach the Greek and Roman classics merely on the philological side—that a play of Aeschylus or Sophocles is not simply an exercise in grammar, syntax, and etymology, but a work of art; and that to know something about the principles of that art is an essential portion of a liberal education. The Samson Agonistes properly interpreted would not only render the Greek plays more intelligible to junior students, but it would enable those whose studies do not extend to ancient languages to form some conception of the masterpieces in which dramatic art has found consummate expression.
SAMSON AGONISTES

A

Dramatic Poem

THE AUTHOR

JOHN MILTON


Τραγῳδία μίμησις πρᾶξεως σπουδαλας &c.

Tragœdia est imitatio actionis serie &c. Per misericordiam
et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.

LONDON

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Fleet-street, near Temple-Bar

MDCLXXI
Samson made captive, blind, and now in the prison of 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 nigh, somewhat retired, there to sit awhile to 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 proclaimed by the Philistins as a day of thanksgiving for their 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 time 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 shew 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 now came the second time with great threatenings to fetch him: the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoa returns full of joy hopeful, to procure ere long his son's deliverance: in the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste; confusedly at first and afterwards more distinctly relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistins, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.
OF THAT SORT OF DRAMATIC POEM

WHICH IS CALLED

TRAGEDY.

Τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας... δι’ ἑλέου καὶ φόβου περαινοῦσα τὴν
tῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. Aristotle, Poet. vi

Tragoedia est imitatio actionis seriae... per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium
affectuum illustrationem.

TRAGEDY, as it was antiently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, mora’iest, 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 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 melancholy 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. xiv. 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 ambitions, than before of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Caesar 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 unbeseeming the sanctity of his person.
to write a tragedy, which he 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 poet's 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 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 beforehand may be epistled; that Chorus is here introduced 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 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 Allcaostropha. 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 economy or disposition of the fable as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum; they only will best judge who are not acquainted 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 antient rule, and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours.
SAMSON AGONISTES.

THE PERSONS.

SAMSON.
MANOA, the Father of Samson.
DALILA, his Wife.
HARAPHA of Gath.
Public Officer.
Messenger.
Chorus of Danites.

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.

SAMSON.

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 toil,
Daily in the common prison else enjoin'd me;
Where I, a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,
The breath of Heav'n fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon, their sea idol, and forbid
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 arm'd, no sooner found alone,
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
From off the altar, where an off'ring burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His god-like presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
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
With this Heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength
Put to the labour of a beast, debas't
Lower than bond-slave! 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 fulfill'd 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 lodg'd, 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
Annul'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, expos'd
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.
O 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 bereav'd 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.
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 th' eye confin'd,
So obvious and so easy to be quench't?
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,
And buried; but (O 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.

Chorus. This, this is he; softly awhile;
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,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
O'er-worn and soil'd;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renown'd,
Irresistible 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 embattl'd armies clad in iron,
And weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and flock of mail
Adamantine proof;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanc't,
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel;
Or groveling soil'd 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 fore-skins fell, the flower of Palestine,
In Ramath-lechi famous to this day:
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore
The gates of Azza, post and massy 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.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)
The dungeon of thyself; thy soul
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
Imprison'd 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, unparallel'd,
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
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphere of fortune raises;
But thee, whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
Might have subdu’d the Earth,
Universally crown’d 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’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 tumours of a troubl’d mind,
And are as balm to fester’d 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 enclos’d me round;
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,
Blindness; for had I sight, confus’d with shame,
Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwreck’t
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg’d, and for a word, a tear,
Fool! have divulg’d 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;
This with the other should, at least, have pair’d;
These two proportion’d ill drove me transverse.
Chorus. Tax not divine disposal. Wisest men have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd; 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 should'st 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, and she pleas'd me, not my parents that I sought to wed the daughter of an infidel: they knew not that what I motion'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, 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. 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, vanquisht with a peal of words (O 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 Israel 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, Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd deliverance offer'd. I on th' other side
Us'd no ambition 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 gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea, seeking me, 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;
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 Uncircumcis'd a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords. But cords to me were threads
Toucht with the flame: on their 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,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom they now 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 rais'd
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 contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquisht kings:
And how ingrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
SAMSON AGONISTES.

Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle when so many died
Without reprieve, adjudg'd to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

Samson. Of such examples add me to the rolls.
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's propos'd 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 wandring thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution,
Till, by their own perplexities involv'd,
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
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
Whomso it pleases him by choice
From national obstruction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.
He would not else who never wanted means,
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,
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 Manoa: advise
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.

Samson. Ay me, another inward grief, awa'k't
With mention of that name, renews th' assault.

Manoa. 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 inform'd
Your younger feet, while mine, cast back with age,
Came lagging after, say if he be here.

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

Manoa. O miserable change! is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels walk'd their streets,
None offering fight; who, single combatant,
Duell'd their armies rankt in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length? O ever-failing trust
In mortal strength! and, oh, what not in man
Deceivahle and vain! nay what thing good
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,
And such a son as all men hail'd me happy;
Who would be now a father in my stead?
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 scorpion's tail behind?
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,
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. Appoint not heavenly disposition, father;
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n 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 profan'd
The mystery of God, given me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
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 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 offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd
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;
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
Than undissembl'd hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself.
Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles,
With blandisht parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me over-watcht, and wearied out,
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
Her bond-slave; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion! servile mind,
Rewarded well with servile punishment!
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,
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 serv'd.

Manoa. I cannot praise thy marriage-choices, son,
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
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 day 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 deliver'd
Thee, Samson, bound and blind, into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.
So Dagon shall be magnifi'd, and God,
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with idols,
Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
By th' 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 befall'n 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 advance'd his praises high
Among the heathen round—to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and op't the mouths
Of idolists, and atheists; 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 presum'd,
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 provok'd,
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.
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 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 meanwhile, 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 satisfi’d 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 reveal’d Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend, How heinous had the fact been, how deserving Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded 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 publish’d, impiously, Weakly at least, and shamefully; a sin That Gentiles in their parables condemn, To their abyss and horrid pains confin’d.

Manoa. 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 th’ 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 pleas'd 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-displeas'd,
For self-offence, more than for God offended.
Reject not, then, what offer'd means; who knows
But God hath set before us to return thee
Home to thy country and his sacred house?
Where thou may'st bring thy off'rings, to avert
His further ire, with prayers and vows renew'd.

Samson. 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,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak; famous now and blaz'd,
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about admir'd of all, and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
Then, swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell
Of fair, fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Soft'nd with pleasure and voluptuous life;
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine, who shore me
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies.

Chorus. Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warrior overturns,
Thou could'st repress; nor did the dancing ruby,
Sparkling out-pour'd, 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 flow'd
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heav'ns fiery rod,
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
Thirst, and refresht: nor envied them the grape
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

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

Samson. But what avail'd 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 vanquish't? by which means,
Now blind, disheart'nd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful? wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd?
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 clustring down,
Vain monument of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numbness craze 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-invocated death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

Man. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
Which was expressly giv'n thee to annoy them?
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground 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 naught,
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 th' 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 at rest.

**Manea.** 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.

**Samson.** O! that torment should not be confin'd
To the body's wounds and sores,
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast, and reins;
But must secret passage find
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,
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, arm'd with deadly stings,
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts;
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb
Or med'cinal liquor can assuage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o'er
To death's benumbing opium as my only cure:
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heav'ns desertion.
I was his nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd 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 uncircumcis'd, our enemies:
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
The subject of their 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,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

Chorus. 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,
All chances incident to man's frail life,
Consolatories writ
With studied argument, and much persuasion sought,
Lenient of grief and anxious thought;
But with th’ 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?)
Temper’st 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 wand’ring loose about,
Grow up and perish, as the summer-fly;
Heads without name, no more rememberèd;
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn’d
To some great work, thy glory,
And people’s safety, which in part they effect:
Yet towards these thus dignifi’d, thou oft
Amidst their hight 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
To life obscur’d, 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 captiv’d;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
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;
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 bedeckt, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles
Of Javan or Gadire,
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 scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem;
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 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 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 slack'n'd, though my pardon
No way assur'd. 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 suffer'st, 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, hyæna! 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 reconcilement 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, 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 beguil'd, With goodness principl'd not to reject The penitent, but ever to forgive, Are drawn to wear out miserable days, Entangl'd with a pois'rous 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 th' other side if it be weigh'd
By itself, with aggravations not surcharg'd,
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd,
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 naught,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
To what I did thou show'dst me first the way.
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not.
Nor should'st 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,
Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st 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 reveal'd? I was assur'd by those
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 sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night,
Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines',
Whole to myself, un hazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.

These reasons in love's law have pass'd for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;
And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much woe,
Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.
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, th' 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 feign'd: 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 constrain'd thee: call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust; love seeks to have love;
My love how could'st thou hope, who tookst the way
To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?
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,
What sieges girt me round, ere 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
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'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
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
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 respects must yield, with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevail'd;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

Samson. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end,
In feign'd 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, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,
Too well; unboson'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but overpow'r'd
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 country's foe profest?
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 obey'd. But zeal mov'd 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 pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd.
These false pretexts and varnish'd 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 misdone,
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, enjoy'd
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 cheer’d, and so supplied
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shall 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 accurst
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 charms
No more on me have power; their force is null’d;
So much of adder’s wisdom I have learnt
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 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 contemn’d, and scorn’d,
And last neglected! How wouldst thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will,
In perfect thraldom! 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 hasten'd 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 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 myself, and suing
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.
Fame, if not double-fac't, is double-mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.
My name perhaps among the Circumcis'd
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defam'd,
With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc't.
But in my country where I most desire,
In Ecron, 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
Above the faith of wedlock-bands; my tomb
With odours visited, and annual flowers.
Not less renown'd than in mount Ephraim
Jael, who with inhospitable guile
Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous 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 whoever envies or repines,
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

Chorus. She's gone,—a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

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 secrésy, my safety, and my life.

Chorus. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once posset, nor can be easily
Repuls'd 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, wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or ampest 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 preferr'd
Thy paranymph, worthless to thee compar'd,
Successor in thy bed;
Nor both so loosely disallied
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mixt,
Of constancy no root infix't.
That either they love nothing, or not long?
Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent; or by her charms
Draws him awry, enslav'd
With dotage, and his sense depriv'd
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck,
Imbark'd with such a steersmate at the helm?
Favour'd of Heav'n! 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,
And all temptation can remove,
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 sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.
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 honied 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.

_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, of stock renown'd
As Og, or Anak and the Emims old
That Kiriathaim held; thou know'st me now
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 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_. Thy way to know were not to see, but taste.

_Harapha_. Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves 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 ass's jaw;
I should have forc'd thee soon wish other arms,
Or left thy carcass 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,
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee.
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.
Samson. Boast not of what thou would'st have done, but do
What then thou would'st; thou seest it in thy hand. 1105

Harapha. To combat with a blind man I disdain;
And thou hast need much washing to be toucht.

Samson. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me, assassinated and betray'd;
Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,
Nor in the house with chamber-ambushes
Close-banded durst attack 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
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-brace and greves, and gauntlet; add thy spear,
A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield;
I only with an oak'n staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd 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 would'st 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 spells,
And black enchantments, some magician's art,
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heaven
Feign'dst at thy birth was given thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back
Of chaft wild boars, or ruffl'd porcupines.

Samson. 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
No less through all my sinews, joints, and bones,
Than 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
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 th’ utmost of his godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow
Soon feel, whose god is strongest, thine or mine.

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 thine enemies’ hand; permitted them
To put out both thine eyes; and fetter’d 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 boist’rous 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 subdu’d.

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.
Har. 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, how dost thou prove me these?

Harapha. Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess 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
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 armed powers 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 threat'ning 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,
As on my enemies, wherever chanc'd,
I us'd 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 conquer'd can.
But I a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd
Single rebellion and did hostile acts.
I was no private but a person rais'd
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,  
But to their masters gave me up for naught,  
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.  
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,  
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,  
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

*Harapha.* With thee a man condemn'd, a slave enroll'd,  
Due by the law to capital punishment?  
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

*Samson.* 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.

*Harapha.* O Baal-zebub! can my ears unus'd  
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 fetter'd, but my fist is free.

*Harapha.* This insolence other kind of answer fits.

*Samson.* 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.

*Harapha.* By Astaroth, ere long thou shalt lament  
These braveries, in irons loaded on thee.

*Chorus.* His giantship is gone somewhat crest-fall'n,  
Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,  
And lower looks, 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, Goliah chief.
Chorus. He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

Samson. 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.
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 opprest!
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might,
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
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.
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats,
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd;
Their armouries and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless, while
With winged expedition
Swift as the lightning glance he executes
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd
Lose their defence, distracted and amaz'd.
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 endu'd
Above the sons of men! but sight bereav'd
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.

Officer. Ebreus, the pris'ner Samson here I seek.

Chorus. His manacles remark him, 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 heart'nd and fresh clad,
To appear as fits before th' illustrious lords,

Samson. Thou know'st I am an Ebrew; therefore tell them,
Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.
OFFICER. This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.

SAMSON. Have they not sword-players, and ev'ry sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers, and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out, with shackles tir’d,
And over-labour'd at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
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 debas’d
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
Join’d with extreme contempt? I will not come.

OFFICER. My message was impos’d 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 strain’d
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 thund’ring 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 renew’d, 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,  
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, 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 constraints. 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 dispense 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 resolv'd; 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 fasten'd than a rock.

_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' commands 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 fir'd
With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd;
No less the people on their holy-days
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
Happ'n 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 rush'd 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,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.
But wherefore comes old Manoa 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?

Manoa.

Manoa. Peace with you, brethren. My inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords now 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 forc'd to things unseemly.
But that which mov'd 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.

Manoa. 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 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 seem'ning, 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 confess'd
They had enough reveng'd, having reduc't
Their foe to misery beneath their fears;
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.
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.

Manoa. His ransom, if my whole inheritance
May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd 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 fixt 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 are 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 eye-sight lost.

Manoa. It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobl'd
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down those iocks,
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd:
And I persuade me, God had not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair
Garrison'd 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 eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

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

Manoa. I know your friendly minds and—O what noise!
Mercy of Heav'n! What hideous noise was that!
Horribly loud, unlike the former shout.

Chorus. 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.

Manoa. 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.

Manoa. 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 fall'n;
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 eye-sight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?

Manoa. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

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

Manoa. 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;
For evil news rides post, while good news baits.
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,—
An Ebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe.

Messenger. O whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,
Which erst my eyes beheld, and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.
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 countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

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

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

Manoa. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

Messenger. Gaza yet stands; but all her sons are fall'n;
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

Manoa. 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 surfei

Manoa. Relate by whom.

Messenger. By Samson.

Manoa. That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Messenger. Ah! Manoa, I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon,
Lest evil tidings, with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear, should pierce too deep.
Manoa. Suspense in news is torture; speak them out.

Messenger. Take then the worst in brief, Samson is dead.

Manoa. The worst indeed; O all my hopes 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
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring
Nipt 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.

Manoa. Wearied with slaughter then, or how? explain.

Messenger. By his own hands.

Manoa. 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 destroy'd,
The edifice, where all were met to see him,
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.

Manoa. O lasty 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 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
Samson should be brought forth to show 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
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 fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine,
When to their sports they turn'd. 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, cataphracts 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 assay'd,
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,
(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 massy pillars
That to the arched roof gave main support.
He unsuspicous led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head a while inclin'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 cried aloud.
“Hitherto, lords, what your commands impos’d
I have perform’d, 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 utter’d, straining all his nerves he bow’d;
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugg’d, 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 immixt, inevitably
Pull’d down the same destruction on himself;
The vulgar only scap’d who stood without.

Chorus. O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill’d
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel; and now liest victorious
Among thy slain self-kill’d;
Not willingly, but tangl’d in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin’d
Thee with thy slaughter’d 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 regorg’d of bulls and goats,
Chaunting their idol, and preferring
Before our living Dread who dwells
In Silo his bright sanctuary:
Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urg'd them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer:
They only set on sport and play
Unweetingly importun'd
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.
So fond are mortal men
Fall'n into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves to invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

2 Semichorus. But he, though blind of sight,
Despis'd and thought extinguish't quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue rous'd
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
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
So virtue giv'n for lost,
Deprest, and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird
In the Arabian woods embost,
That no second knows nor third,
And lay erewhile a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem'd.
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd;
And, though her body die, her fame survives,
A secular bird, ages of lives.

Manoa. Come, come; no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finish'd
A life heroic, on his enemies
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 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 fear'd,
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
Soak'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 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 enroll'd 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 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;
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 acqurst
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.
NOTES.

Preface.

Line 3. Said by Aristotle, &c. This is an allusion to the famous passage in the Poetics, section vi, ἕστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεωσ σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἑκούσης... δρώντας καὶ οὗ δὲ ἀπαγγέλιας δι’ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαινοῦσα τὴν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. ‘Tragedy then is the imitation of some action that is important, entire, and of a proper magnitude... in the way not of narration but of action effecting through pity and terror the purging of such passions.’

1. 8. For so in physic. An allusion to the doctrine of Signatures introduced by Paracelsus between 1530 and 1540, which inferred the propriety of the use of any vegetable or mineral in medicine from the similarity of colour, shape, or appearance which these remedies might bear to the part affected; thus yellow things, as saffron, turmeric, and the like, were to be prescribed in liver complaints (Dunster).

1. 15. A verse of Euripides, &c. Ἡ τῆς χρῆσθος ὁμιλίαι κακαί, ‘evil communications corrupt good manners.’ This is generally supposed to be a verse in the Thais of Menander, though the historian Socrates attributes it to Euripides. (See Meineke, edit. of Menander, ad loc.)

1. 16. Paraeus. David Paraeus, an eminent Calvinist theologian (1548-1622). Cf. The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy: ‘And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies; and this my opinion the grave authority of Paraeus, commenting that book, is sufficient to confirm.’ Milton’s object in making these remarks was to propitiate the Puritans, whose prejudice against dramatic representations was notorious.

1. 20. Dionysius the elder. Tyrant of Syracuse, born B.C. 431, died 367, the most famous of those who bore the name. He repeatedly contended for the prize of tragedy at Athens, and succeeded just before his death in bearing away the first prize at the Lenaea.


1. 24. Seneca. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, born a few years before
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Christ, died A.D. 65. It is still open to question whether the ten tragedies which go under his name were really written by him.

1. 26. Gregory Nazianzen. One of the most famous of the Greek Fathers, who played a very important part in the religious controversies of the fourth century, born at Arianzus near Nazianzus, of which place his father was bishop, died A.D. 389 or 390. The play which Milton refers to was an attempt to Christianise the Greek drama. The work is little better than a cento of verses, principally from Euripides.

1. 31. With other common interludes, &c. This is an attack on the romantic drama, with an oblique allusion to the tragi-comedies of Dryden and Dryden's contemporaries.

1. 37. That which Martial calls, &c. An allusion to a passage in the preface to the second book of the Epigrams, 'Video quare tragoedi epistolam accipiant, quibus pro se loqui non licet.' It was usual on the Greek and Roman stage to prefix prologues or 'excusations of the author' to comedies, but not to tragedies.

1. 42. Still in use among the Italians. As in the dramas of Andreini (the poet whose Adamo may possibly have given Milton the hint for Paradise Lost), Lancetta, and other contemporaries of Milton. Italian tragedy, from its first appearance in the hands of Galeotto del Carretto in 1502, continued to cling to the Greek model.

1. 47. Apolelymenon. A Greek word, ἀπολελυμένον, 'loosed from,' i.e. from the fetters of, strophe, antistrophe, or epode; monostrophic (μονόστροφος) meaning literally 'single stanzaed,' i.e. a strophe without answering antistrophe. So alloëostrophic (ἀλλοϊδόστροφος) signifies stanzas of irregular strophes, strophes not consisting of alternate strophe and antistrophe.

1. 55. Beyond the fifth act. Cf. Horace, Ars Poetica, 299 'Neve minor, neu sit quinto productioni actu Fabula.'

Text.

Agonistes. The word is purely Greek, ἀγωνιστὴς signifies 'one who contends in public games,' in the sense of an athlete, player, or performer. Here it means one who contends as an athlete. The term is peculiarly appropriate to Samson, for he is the hero of the drama (the protagonistes, or principal performer), and the catastrophe results from the exhibition of his strength in the public games of the Philistines.

1. 2. These dark steps. These exactly equals the Greek τοῖχος. Dark is here used in the sense of 'that cannot see,' the words caecus and τυφλός having the same meaning in Latin and Greek. Perhaps the term was immediately suggested by Euripides, Phoenissae, 834 ὃς τυφλῷ ποδὶ ὅφθαλμος εἰ σὺ.
NOTES, II.  2-31.  67

1. 5.  Servile toil.  Exactly the Latin 'servilis labor,' toil which slaves perform.  Here my task of 'toiling like a slave.'

1. 6.  Else enjoined me, 'at other times.'  The Latin alias, with which it is etymologically connected.  Thus Sax. elles, Germ. alles, Goth. alis.  Cf. for the sense in which it is here used, Par. Lost, viii. 96 'There first received, His beams, unactive else, their vigour find.'

1. 9.  Draught.  Properly 'what is drawn in' or breathed, derived from the A.S. dragan, 'to draw.'  Grammatically it stands in apposition to 'air' in the preceding line.

1. 11.  With day-spring born, &c., 'born with the dawn.'  Milton is fond of this synonym for dawn.  See, among many other instances, Par. Lost, vi. 521 'So all ere day-spring, under conscious night.'

1. 13.  Dagon their sea-idol.  The famous god of the Philistines, who was represented as half man and half fish; regarded by Milton as a sea-god.  Par. Lost, i. 463 'Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man And downward fish, yet had his temple high Rear'd in Azotus dreaded through the coast Of Palestine.'  Cf. too 1 Sam. v. 4.

1. 16.  The popular noise.  Here in the Latin sense, the noise made by the people.  So in Par. Lost, ii. 313 'For so the popular vote Inclines'; i.e. the vote given by the people.

1. 20.  Hornets armed.  An insect peculiarly formidable in Palestine.  See Exodus xxiii. 28, where they are represented as the scourge of God.  Milton's expression is somewhat similar to one used by Sidney, in the Arcadia, 13th edit. p. 164, 'A new swarm of thoughts stinging her mind.'  The language is a little involved; in the clause 'no sooner found alone,' 'found' is grammatically connected with 'me,' and both are governed by 'rush upon.'

1. 24.  Twice by an angel.  Once to his mother, see Judges xiii. 3; and subsequently to both his mother and his father Manoah, see same chapter, verses 11 seqq.; the angel ascending on the second occasion in the flame of the altar.

1. 27.  Charioting his god like presence.  That is, removing as in a chariot.  The idea was probably suggested by the translation of Elijah, 2 Kings ii. 11.  Possibly Milton may have had in his mind Josephus, Antiq. Jud. lib. v. cap. x (cap. viii. Dindorf) καὶ ὁ ἀγγέλος διὰ τοῦ καπνοῦ ὡσπερ ἄχριματος ἄνιων ἐλς οὐράνον αὐτοῖς φανερὸς ἤν.

1. 28.  And from some.  The word 'as' must be understood after 'and,' and (ascended) as from, i.e. as though he had revealed, &c.

1. 31.  Separate.  Set apart; this abbreviation of the perfect participle is very common with our old writers; among innumerable instances may be mentioned 'instruct,' 'contract,' 'suspect,' 'create,' 'convict.'  Samson was 'to be a Nazarite unto God from the womb, Judges xiii. 5, that is, was to be set apart for God.  See Numb. vi. 2
for an explanation: 'When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord.' The word Nazarite, according to some scholars, is derived from a Hebrew word meaning 'to be separated'; according to others from a Hebrew word meaning 'crown,' in allusion to the long hair of the order.

1. 33. Captived. The word is accented, as often in our old writers, on the penultimate. Cf. Fairfax, Tasso, xix. st. 95 'Free was Erminia but captiv'd her heart.'

1. 35. Under task. 'An order imposing a certain portion of labour.' The word is derived from the Latin taxare, 'to rate,' or 'appraise.' Cf. too the Old North French tasque, Modern tâche, Pr. Ital. tasca, Ital. tasca.

1. 39. Should Israel from Philistian yoke. An allusion to Judges xiii. 5, where the angel says that Samson shall begin to deliver Israel from out of the hands of the Philistines.

1. 41. Eyeless, in Gaza. The reader will not need either Landor or De Quincey to point out how admirably this line sums up in a graduating climax the woes of Samson, and how exquisitely the rhythm harmonises with the sense: 'Eyeless—in Gaza—at the mill—with slaves.' Compare an equally admirable climax in the Verrine Orations of Cicero, Act. ii. lib. v. cap. lxii 'Caedebatur—virgis—in medio foro—Messanae—civis Romanus—Judices.'

1. 45. But through. Except for, save for; a not uncommon use of the word. See Shakspere, King John, iii. 1 'But on this day let seamen fear no wreck.'

1. 47. Who this high gift. The relative here has exactly the force of the Latin relative with the subjunctive; 'Inasmuch as I could not be silent about the gift committed to me, about where it was lodged, about the fact that it was easy to deprive me of it.' Bereft = taken from. The word bereave, of which this is the past part., is derived from the Anglo-Saxon bereiðian, 'to strip or deprive of.'

1. 53. But what is strength, &c. Obviously a reminiscence of Horace, Odes, iii. 4. 65 'Vis consili expers mole ruit sua.' The poet may have been thinking of the Ajax of Sophocles, cf. Ajax, lines 1250-53 οὐ γὰρ οἱ πλατεῖς | οὐδὲ εὐρύνωτοι φῶτες ἀσφαλέστατοι, | ἄλλοι φρονοῦντες εὖ κρατοῦσι πανταχοῦ, as the following lines closely recall Ajax 1078-79.

1. 57. Subserve. In the Latin sense, to serve in a subordinate capacity.

1. 59. Hung it in my hair. See Judges xvi. 17.

1. 63. Suffices that to me. An elliptical expression for 'it suffices (for me to know).'
ll. 66-114. The application of these majestically pathetic verses to Milton's own state and position at the time this drama was composed is obvious. See Masson's remarks on the subject, Life of Milton, vol. vi. p. 672.

1. 70. The prime work. Light was the first creation of God; 

Genesis i. 3.

1. 75. Dark in light. One of those oxymora which, in Sophocles especially, amount almost to a mannerism.

1. 77. Still. In the sense of ever or continually, a sense commonly borne by the word till the middle of the eighteenth century.

1. 80. Dark amid the blaze of noon. Recalls Comus, 384 'Be-nighted walks under the mid-day sun.'

1. 81. Irrecoverably dark. Note here, as in Greek tragedy, as emotion gathers passion the iambics break into lyrics. The particular passage running in Milton's mind was no doubt Oedipus Rex, 1313 seqq.

1. 84. The reference to Genesis i. 3 is obvious.

1. 85. Bereaved. Deprived of. See note on l. 47. This is the more usual form of the past participle. The word is generally followed by the preposition of. For a similar use cf. Par. Lost, x. 918 'Bereave me not Whereon I live, thy gentle looks.'

1. 87. Silent as the moon, &c. By an interchange of metaphors not uncommon in classical poetry, a word which properly applies only to sound is here applied to sight, and silent = dark, devoid of light. Precisely the same expression is used by Dante, Inferno, i. 60 'Mi ripingeva la dove il sol tace.' But the word has here a technical meaning: the phrase 'silens Luna' was employed by the Romans to denote the moon during that period which elapses between the disappearance of the old moon and the appearance of the new. Cf. Pliny, Nat. Hist. i. 16. 39 'Quem diem alii interlunii, alii silentis Lunae appellant.' 'Interlunar cave' is simply a poetical expression for the moon in this eclipsed state, and the epithet 'vacant' is used because the moon is as it were useless or emitting no light, the poet remembering no doubt the expression of Pliny, xvi. 39 'luna ibi vacat opera et ministerio suo.'

1. 95. Obvious. In the Latin sense, 'exposed to' or 'offering itself.' 'Not obvious, not obtrusive.' Par. Lost, viii. 504.

1. 100. A living death. A stock expression among our older poets. Todd gives abundant illustrations. Milton uses it again Par. Lost, x. 788.

1. 106. Obnoxious. In the Latin sense exposed, or liable. Cf. Par. Lost, ix. 168 'obnoxious first or last To basest things.'

1. 111. Steering this way. The word properly means to direct or guide. A.S. stiebran, stibran, so 'directing their course.' Cf. Nativity, Ode, 147 'With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering.'
1. 118. At random carelessly diffus'd. At random is simply a translation of the Latin *temere* (‘sub pinu jacentes *temere,*’ Hor. Odes, ii. 11, 14). Diffused means stretched languidly, sprawling, and was suggested no doubt by a similar use of *fusus* in Latin. (‘*Fusaque erant toto languida membra toro,*’ Ovid, *Ex Ponto,* iii. 3. 7.) Cf. Shelley, Alastor, ‘His limbs did rest Diffus'd and motionless.’ Spenser’s *Pour’d out in looseness* on the grassy ground,’ Faery Queen, i. 7, 7, may serve as a comment on the word.

1. 122. Weeds. Garments, clothes (A.S. *wêde*); very common in poetry even now. In vulgar parlance we still speak of ‘a widow’s weeds.’

1. 128-131. Who tore the lion ... made arms ridiculous. Cf. respectively Judges xiv. 5-6 and xv. 15.

1. 133. Chalybean. The penultimate is here shortened, as Milton elsewhere shortens the penultimate of Aegean (Par. Lost, i. 746) and Thyestean (Id. x. 688). The Chalybes, a people who lived about Pontus, south of the Black Sea, were so famous for their iron-works that Chalybs became a synonym for steel.

1. 136. Insupportably his foot advanc’d. Coleridge has appropriated this fine expression in his France, an Ode, ‘Insupportably advancing Her arm made mockery of the warrior’s tramp.’

1. 139. His lion ramp. The word is from the French *ramper,* to climb, and means to rear up on the hind legs, the idea of fierceness being associated with the attitude. See Par. Lost, iv. 343 ‘Sporting the lion ramp’d.’ So in Psalm xxii. 13 we have ‘a ramping and a roaring lion.’ Here it is a substantive, and means his attack fierce as a lion rampant, as a lion rearing for the spring.

1. 142. Trivial. See note on line 263.

1. 144. A thousand fore-skins. A metonymy for Philistines, as the Philistines were uncircumcised.

1. 145. In Ramath-lechi. Cf. Judges xv. 17 ‘He cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand and called that place Ramath-lechi.’ That is, the lifting up or the casting away of the jaw-bone.

1. 147. The gates of Azza. For the circumstance alluded to see Judges xvi. 3. Azza is another name for Gaza, one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. It was the last town on the S.W. of Palestine, on the frontier towards Egypt. Its name signifies ‘the strong.’

1. 148. The hill by Hebron. The original name of Hebron, which was a city of Judah, twenty Roman miles south of Jerusalem and the same distance north of Beersheba, was Kirjath-Arba. Milton calls it the ‘seat of giants old’ because it was named from Arba the father of Anak and progenitor of the giant Anakim.

1. 149. Journey of a Sabbath-day. A sabbath-day’s journey, as
settled by Jewish custom, was three-quarters of a mile; the distance from Gaza to Hebron was about thirty miles.

1. 150. Like whom the Gentiles. i.e. like him whom. The reference is to Atlas. The Gentiles in the sense it bears here are those who have not received the faith or law of God, those who were not Jews and circumcised; Pagans or Heathen. Here of course it alludes especially to the Greeks. The student will note this and other similar anachronisms in the course of the drama.

1. 153. Prison within prison. Samson’s blindness made an inner prison within that of the bondage in which he lay, causing together a general hopeless darkness (Church).

1. 156. Oft without cause complain. ‘Complain means to commiserate. The word is here active. Cf. Dryden, Fables, ‘Who could’s}t so well in rhyme complain The death of Richard.’ The ‘which’ here refers not simply to the soul, but to the fact of the soul being imprisoned, for which imprisonment, i.e. in the body, men often commiserate the soul. The idea of the body being the prison of the soul was common with the Platonists of ancient times. So Virgil, Aen. vi. 733–4, thus speaks of men while in the body, ‘Hinc metuunt cupiuntque, dolent gaudentque, neque auras Prospiciunt, clausi tenebris et carcere caeco.’ Cf. also what Porphyry says of Plotinus, Life of Plotinus, cap. i, έτώκει μὲν αἰσχυνομένω ὅτι εν σώματι εἶν, ‘he was like one ashamed of being in a body.’

1. 163. Visual beam; i.e. ray of light which gives the power of seeing, or occasions vision. Pope has a similar expression in his Messiah 39 ‘He from thick films shall purge the visual ray.’

1. 164. O mirror. Notice how peculiarly Greek, both in phraseology and construction, the remaining verses of this Chorus are.

1. 165. Since man on earth. Either an elliptical expression for ‘since man was placed on earth,’ or an imitation of a well-known Latin idiom (post urbem conditam, occisus Caesar, &c.), an idiom certainly imitated in Par. Lost, i. 573 ‘Never since created man Met such embodied force;’ i.e. never since the creation of man. Here paraphrase ‘Never since the appearance of man on earth.’ The remainder of this Chorus bears some resemblance to the fine Chorus (Oedipus Rex, 1211 sqq.) beginning ἄ γενεσὶ βροτῶν.

1. 169. Pitch. This word, like the Latin altus and praeceps, signifies distance below as well as position above.

1. 170. It is curious that Milton should, both in this place and in other places in this Drama, have employed rhyme, which he had long abandoned and which in the Preface to Paradise Lost he had contemptuously described as ‘the invention of a barbarous age’ and as ‘a thing of itself to all judicious ears trivial and of no true musical delight.’
l. 172. The sphere. In the Latin sense of a circular globe or wheel. Fortune was sometimes represented by the ancients as standing on a globe (σφαῖρα), and sometimes described as having a wheel, both being emblematical of her instability.

l. 177. But thee. But thee I should have reckoned as being in high estate, whose strength might have subdued, &c.


l. 178. The glory, &c. Strongly recalls a line in Fletcher’s play The False One, act ii. sc. 1 ‘The glory of the world once, now the pity.

l. 181. Eshtaol and Zora’s fruitful vale. Eshtaol was a town in the low country—the Shefelah—of Judah, where Samson spent his boyhood and experienced the first impulses of the spirit of Jehovah, and hither after his last exploit his body was brought up the long slopes of the western hills to its last rest in the burying-place of Manoah his father (Smith’s Dict. of Bible).

Zora, or Zorah, was one of the towns in the allotment of the tribe of Dan, and was not far from Eshtaol. In the Onomasticon it is mentioned as lying some ten miles north of Eleutheropolis on the road to Nicopolis. It may possibly be identified with the modern village of Surah.

l. 184. Apt words, &c. An allusion no doubt to Aeschylus, Prometh. Vinct. 377 οὐκὸν Προμηθέω τούτο γιγνώσκεις οτι | Ὄργης νοσοῦσης εἶχεν ἰατροὶ λόγοι; Cf. also Horace, Epist. i. 1. 34–35. It would be easy to accumulate parallel passages.

Swage is of course for assuage, a word derived from the Old French verb assoager or assouager, which is in its turn connected with the Latin assuaviare, suavis. Cf. also Middle English assuagen. The word in its contracted shape is common in our old writers. See the instances collected by Todd.

l. 185. Tumours. In the Latin sense of tumores, a word employed to express mental perturbations.

l. 189. Bear in their superscription. A metaphor taken from the title or superscription of a book; who have the title of friends, as a book carries its title. Possibly the image is from a coin; cf. St. Matthew xxii. 20 ‘Whose is this image and superscription?’

l. 190. Of the most. The of πολλοί.

l. 191. In prosperous days. Of the innumerable parallels which could be brought to illustrate this passage one may be selected, ‘Donec cris felix, multos numerabis amicos; Tempora si fuerint nubila, solus cris; Ovid, Trist. i. 9. 5–6.

l. 197. Heave, ‘to lift.’ From the A.S. hebban; cf. the Dutch heffen and the Danish have.

l. 203. Proverb’d for a fool. Am I not mentioned in proverbs as a
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fool? Has not my folly passed into a proverb? Cf. Job xxx. 9 'I am their song, yea I am their by-word.'

1. 207. More than mean. Nothing more than a moderate share. What he means is that his wisdom to match his strength ought to have been in excess, but unfortunately, while his strength was that of a giant, his wisdom was only that of an ordinary or average man.

1. 209. Transverse. A metaphor from a ship, meaning, across or out of the direct course. Cf. Par. Lost, iv. 487 'A violent cross wind from either coast Blows them transverse.'

1. 210. Tax not. 'Blame not,' 'cease not.' From the Latin taxare, 'to rate,' or 'assess.'

Wisest men, &c. An allusion probably to Solomon, whom he describes in Paradise Lost (i. 444) as 'That uxorious king, whose heart though large, Beguil'd by fair idolatresses, fell.' Compare also what he says about marriage choices in the Tetrachordon, 'The best and wisest men amidst the sincere and most cordial designs of their hearts do daily err in choosing.' See too an interesting passage in Par. Lost x. 896 908.

1. 212. Pretend they, &c. It is not easy to determine the exact meaning of this. It may mean 'however wise their intention may be;' 'pretend' being sometimes almost synonymous with 'intend.' Cf. Spenser, Faery Queen, vi. 4. 10 'Yet now no less encumbrance she did see, And peril by this salvage man pretended.' So in Shakspeare, Two Gentlemen of Verona (ii. 6), 'pretended flight.' Or it may mean, however wise they pretend or profess to be, and may thus be explained by a Latin idiom, as in Livy, xxv. 8 'Hannibal aegrum simulabat,' i.e. Hannibal shammed sickness.

1. 219. I saw at Timna. See Judges xiv. 2-4. It is thought by some Commentators that Milton is here covertly alluding to his own first wife, Mary Powell, who belonged to a royalist family.

1. 222. Motioned. This is exactly the Latin moveo; it means 'proposed.' Cf. our word 'moved,' as applied to measures. He uses it in the same sense in Par. Lost, ix. 229 'Well hast thou motion'd, well thy thoughts compared.' This is a correction, in the Errata, of mentioned, which is the reading in the text of the first edition.

1. 226. Divinely. From or by heaven. (Lat. divinitus.) Cf. Par. Lost, viii. 900 'divinely brought.'

1. 228. Fond. 'Vain,' 'foolish,' as often.

1. 229. Vale of Sorec. It is not possible to identify the site of this place now; it appears to have belonged to the Philistines, and was probably nearer to Gaza than any other of the Philistine cities. The word properly means a peculiarly choice kind of vine (see Smith's Dict. of the Bible).

1. 230. Specious monster. In the Latin sense of 'handsome,' 'beau-
tiful' (speciosus). In the words 'my accomplished snare' there seems to be a quibble intended. Milton is not superior to this verbal trifling; see in Par. Lost, i. 575, where, speaking of the Pygmies, he calls them 'the small infantry'; and see the famous passage in bk. vi. 557-567, and again in the same book, 608-625. Addison justly censures such play on words as being out of place in grave poetry, and yet there is no great poet who has not similarly offended.

1. 232. And the same end. I.e. 'And I had the same end in view.'

1. 235. A peal of words. The word 'peal,' properly 'appeal,' means a succession of loud sounds. In P. L. ii. 656, it is used of the barking Sin's monstrous dogs, 'full loud, and rung A hideous peal.' Cf. too P. L. iii. 239.

1. 236. Fort of silence, or 'the stronghold I possessed so long as I kept silent,' i.e. so long as he did not divulge that his strength depended upon his hair being unshorn.

1. 237. Provoke. In the Latin sense of provocare, 'to challenge.'

1. 240. In the following lines Jortin thinks that Milton was covertly referring to the weakness of his countrymen in restoring Charles II, which he accounted the restoration of slavery.

1. 247. Used no ambition. In the strictly Latin sense. Going about to sue for favour, 'canvassing' (ambitus).

1. 249. They persisted deaf. A Greek idiom; they persisted in remaining deaf. Cf. Par. Lost, ix. 792 'And knew not eating death.'

1. 253. The rock of Etham. For the circumstance alluded to see Judges xv. 8-9. The rock of Etham, or, as it is generally spelt, Etam. was in the tribe of Judah. Possibly it is to be identified with the city fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 6), in the midst of that uneven and broken country round the modern Urtas. (Smith's Dict. of the Bible.)

1. 257. The harass of their land. I.e. the wasting or despoilment. The word is here used as a substantive. The derivation of the word is of disputed origin; it is most likely only an extension of the Old French word havre, 'to hound' a dog on—havre un chien.

1. 258. Upon conditions. The conditions were that the men of Judah should only bind him and not fall upon him themselves. See Judges xv. 11-13.

1. 263. A trivial weapon. From the Latin trivialis, meaning properly that which is picked up on the cross-roads (trivium), so, slight, valueless, such as happens to come to hand. For the incidents alluded to see the latter half of the fifteenth chapter of Judges.

1. 265. Had Judah that day, &c. The allusion to the collapse of Milton's party, to the weakness and treachery of those republicans who joined in restoring Charles II, is here obvious. Landor (Imaginary Conversations—Southey and Landor) eloquently and justly says of these verses, 265-276, 'Reminiscences of many sad afflictions have already
burst upon the poet, but instead of overwhelming him they have endued him with redoubled might and majesty. Verses worthier of a sovran poet, sentiments worthier of a pure, indomitable, inflexible republican, never issued from the human heart than these referring to the army in the last effort made to rescue the English nation from disgrace and servitude.'

l. 266. Gath. One of the five round cities of the Philistines; the site of it has never yet been identified with certainty.

l. 273. Whom God. An allusion to Cromwell.

l. 275. How frequent, i.e. how frequent or common it is for them, &c.

l. 276. To heap ingratitude, &c. Refers to the fickle multitude who crowded 'to scoff and shout round the gibbeted remains of the greatest prince and soldier of the age.' The reader will note the subdued intensity, the majestic self-restraint of these sublime verses; will note how they embody, like the prose of Demosthenes, passion at white heat in austerely simple expression.

l. 278. How Succoth and the fort of Penuel. The men of Succoth and of the tower of Penuel refused to give loaves of bread to Gideon and his three hundred men who were pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. See Judges viii. 4–9 (Newton). Penuel probably lay somewhere between the torrent Jabbok and Succoth. Succoth has been identified with tolerable certainty at Sakût.

l. 282. How ungrateful Ephraim, &c. Jephthah subdued the children of Ammon; and he is said to have 'defended Israel by argument not worse than by arms' on account of the message which he sent to the king of the children of Ammon. See Judges xi. 15–27 (Newton).

l. 287. In that sore battle. The battle Jephthah fought with Ephraim. See Judges xii. 4.

l. 288. When so many died. The allusion is to Jephthah and the men of Gilead possessing themselves of the passages of the Jordan and refusing those Ephraimites who could not rightly pronounce the word Shibboleth to cross over, massacring them at the same time. See Judges xii. 5–6.

l. 295. Unless there be, &c. I.e. Unless there be those who think that there is no God at all. An adoption of an idiom common both in Latin and Greek. Cf. the use of νομίζειν and ἄγεισθαι, as in Aeschylus, Persæ, 497 θεοῖς νομίζειν οὐδαμοῦ.

l. 300. Doubt his ways, &c. I.e. who doubt whether his ways are just. See note on l. 295.

l. 301. As to. With regard to.

l. 303. His glory's diminution. A Latin idiom and a Latin phrase.
'Majestatem populi Romani minuere' (Cic. de Orat. ii. 39) is the same as 'crimen laesae majestatis,' that is 'high treason;' so here, regardless of committing high treason against God.

l. 305. They ravel more. Ravel is here a neuter verb, and means 'fall into confusion,' 'become perplexed.' Cf. Shakspeare, Two Gentlemen of Verona, iii. 2 'unwind her love from him Lest it should ravel.' The word probably means 'to entangle.' Resolved is 'resolute.'

l. 312. National obstringo. That is to say from laws which bind the generality of mankind. 'National' simply means general or public, as opposed to private and particular. Obstringo is from the Latin obstringo, 'to bind,' or 'to lay under an obligation.'

l. 319. Strictest purity. That is, purity in the technical sense of the Law of Moses, whereby a woman not belonging to the Hebrew community was held to be unclean.

l. 321. Unchaste. There is no warrant in Scripture for supposing that Dalilah was unchaste, but in Milton's stern code frowardness or 'continual headstrong behaviour as tends to plain contempt of the husband' constituted fornication. See the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, book ii. chap. xviii. Of this Dalilah had certainly been guilty.

l. 324. That moral verdit, &c. This is the proper form of the word; it is an Old French word verdit, used by Chaucer and others. Skeat says it has been pedantically altered to verdict to bring it nearer to the Latin dictum, from which the latter part of the word is derived, vere dictum being the original form. The phrase means: by the law of nature a Philistine woman was not unclean, yet the law of Moses held her to be so.

l. 328. Advise, 'consider.' Cf. Par. Lost, ii. 376 'Advise if this be worth Attempting.'

l. 333. Uncouth. The word properly means 'unknown,' and is directly from the A.S. uncud, from cypan, gececydan, 'to know.' See Skeat, and cf. Browne Britannia's Pastorals, i. 3, 'An uncouth place fit for an uncouth mind.'

l. 334. Gloried. Either 'in whom you gloried,' or 'possessed of glory,' 'covered with glory,' on the analogy of 'storied,' 'moneyed,' &c. Cf. also for 'renowned.'

l. 335. Inform'd. I.e. instructed or guided.


l. 341. That invincible. Note invincible. Milton here resorts to the accent of the Latin, the word being directly derived from the Late Latin invincibilis; cf. inquisitive, l. 775, and inexorably, P. L. ii. 91.

l. 344. Duell'd their armies. The word is derived from the Latin duellum, which is merely an older form of bellum; duelled may therefore simply mean 'engaged in combat.' There is probably an idea of single combat implied, as on the side of Samson it was a single combat. The word occurs in an old ballad (Ritson, Engl. Metr. Romances, vol. iii, p. 297) 'With the king of France duell'd he.'
I. 347. A coward arm'd, &c. Against a coward, who being in possession of arms could come within a spear's length of him.

I. 350. Proves our woe, &c. The whole of Juvenal's tenth satire is a fine comment on these verses.

I. 354. And such a son, &c. Cf. Terence, Andria, i. i. 69 'Cum id mihi placebat tum uno ore omnes Bona diceere, et laudare fortunas meas Qui natum haberem tali ingenio praeditum.' The first edition read the line without the 'and,' which was inserted among the errata.

As all men. 'As' here = that. So Bacon, quoted by Latham. 'The relations are so uncertain as they require a great deal of examination.'

I. 360. Graces. Latin gratiae, 'favours,' 'free gifts.'


I. 365. Ensnared, assaulted, &c. Notice the pathetic effect of these disjointed participles, and cf. I. 563 and Par. Lost vi. 851 for similar metrical effects. It was an effect not unknown to Shakespeare, but habitually employed by the Greek tragedians.

I. 368. Alas! methinks. The insult offered by the Royalists in 1660 to the remains of Cromwell is plainly alluded to. Cf. Landor's admirable commentary on this passage (Imaginary Convers.—Southey and Landor): 'How very much would literature have lost if this marvellously great and admirable man had omitted the various references to himself and his contemporaries. He had grown calmer at the close of life, and saw in Cromwell as a fault what he had seen before as a necessity or a virtue. The indignities offered to the sepulchre and remains of the greatest of English sovran's by the most ignominious made the tears of Milton gush from his darkened eyes and extorted from his generous and grateful heart these verses.'

I. 373. Appoint not. It is not easy to determine the exact force of this word. Warburton interprets it as 'to arraign,' or 'summon to answer'; and Todd hesitates between interpreting it as 'limit' or 'direct,' and 'blame,' 'lay the ault on.' N. E. D. explains it as 'arraign' or 'impute blame to,' quoting Harington's Nuga Antiquae 'If anye of these wants be in me I beseeche your lordship appoint them to my extreme state,' and this is no doubt the right explanation.

I. 380. A Canaanite. The Philistines, Dalilah's countrymen, were not Canaanites, but, as the term came to be applied to all those nations whom the Israelites were to dispossess, Milton can scarcely be accused of error.

I. 382. She of Timna. For the circumstance referred to see Judges ch. xiv, where the story is told at length.
1. 389. Vitiated with gold. Lat. *vitiatus*, a word often used to express the loss of chastity in women; 'corrupted.'

1. 390. *By the scent conceived.* Samson we must remember is in Scripture given to jesting. Possibly there is an allusion to Juno's conception of Mars, who was in some sense spurious as not being by her husband, but by the smell of a flower. Ovid, Fasti, v. 229 seq. (Keightley).

1. 391. *Treason against me.* Keightley takes these words as being the name of the spurious offspring, observing that such phraseology is in the Hebrew manner, and after the humour of Samson. It would be more natural to take it in the usual sense, and as standing in apposition to the whole of the preceding lines.

1. 394. *Capital secret.* In the double meaning of my 'chief or principal secret,' and 'the secret lying in my head.' Obviously a play on the word. For the latter sense of the word see Par. Lost, xii. 383 'The serpent now his capital bruise Expects.'

1. 403. *Blandish'd parlies.* Conversations stored with blandishments or flatteries (Lat. *blandimenta*). Cp. Drayton, Polyolbion, xiii 'And how she blandishing by Dunsmore drives along.'

1. 404. *Surceas'd.* The word simply means 'cess'd.' It is connected with the French *surseoir* and with the Latin *supersedecio*, whereas the simple word 'cease' comes from *cessare*.

1. 423. *Infest.* 'Harass,' 'disturb,' 'plague.' Cf. Spenser, Faery Queen, ii. 149 'The bitter pangs that do your heart *infest.*' The word is derived from the Latin *infendo, infestus*.

1. 424. *I state not that.* 'I enter not into that question,' 'I say nothing about that.'

This I am sure, i.e. of this I am sure.

1. 439. *Who slew'st them many a slain.* The 'them' is a sort of dative of reference, or, as it is sometimes called, the Ethic dative, and is very common in Greek and in French; it cannot be translated, but must be paraphrased. Thus in Thucydidès, iii. 98 μειχρι μεν ουν οι τοιοται ειχον βελα αντοις, where the force of this dative can only be brought out by paraphrase, 'So long as they saw that their archers had arrows.' So La Fontaine, 'Le père mort, les fils vous retournent le champ.' So here, 'whom they saw slaying,' &c. Cf. Shakspeare, 2 Henry IV, act iv. sc. 1, where Falstaff speaking of sherris says, 'It ascends me into the brain, drives me there all the foolish,' &c. Possibly it may be what the grammarians call the dativus commodi, 'who was for them the slayer of many an one who was slain.'

1. 442. *Disglorified.* Milton appears to be very fond of this negative prefix. Todd gives as instances of similar compounds to be found in his works, 'disexercising' for 'depriving of exercise,' 'disinused,'
‘disallied,’ ‘disespoused,’ ‘disconsenting,’ ‘disgospelling,’ ‘disworship, ‘disalleige.’

1. 444. Which to have come to pass. A somewhat awkward imitation of an idiom common in Greek. Paraphrase, ‘And the fact that this has come to pass,’ &c.

1. 454. Dissidence of God. Distrust in God.

1. 463. Me overthrown. An imitation of the Latin ablative absolute. Lists were the enclosures in which, in mediaeval chivalry, the tilts were run and the combats fought. (French lice.)

1. 466. Connive. From the Latin connivere, a word meaning ‘to wink the eyes;’ here it means ‘to shut his eyes.’

1. 471. Blank his worshippers. ‘Blank’ is derived directly from the French blanc, and means ‘to make pale or white;’ so here ‘pale with dismay or terror.’ Cf. Hamlet, act iii. sc. 2 ‘Each opposite that blanks the face of joy.’ So in Par. Lost, ix. 890, we have the adjective ‘astonied stood and blank.’

1. 473. I as a prophecy receive. The receiving of words said as an omen was a common custom among the Greeks. See this use of δέκομαι (Liddell and Scott s.v.). See too Aeneid vii. 117, where Aeneas seizes on the word casually spoken by Ascanius as prophetic, or rather as fulfilling what had been prophesied.

1. 477. God be Lord, &c. I.e. whether God (i.e. the true God) be, as we maintain, our God, Lord (i.e. Jehovah), or their God Dagon. (Keightley). Or perhaps more simply, whether Jehovah be God, or Dagon; whether our God be Lord, or Dagon.

1. 484. Their utmost of revenge. Their fullest vengeance. ‘Utmost’ is here, as well as in other places in our older writers, used as a substantive. Cf. Coriolanus, act i. sc. 1 ‘Though he perform to the utmost of a man.’

1. 489. Pay on. Continue to pay; the preposition marks present and uninterrupted action.

1. 493. How heinous. Hateful or atrocious. The word is derived from the French hain, ‘to hate.’

1. 495. A blab. The word was once more classical than it is now, as it is used in dignified composition by Bacon and by several of the Elizabethan writers. It is probably connected with the German plapern. Thus Bacon, ‘Who will open himself to a blab or babbler?’ Essay on Simulation and Dissimulation. Cf. also Comus, 138 ‘Ere the blabbing Eastern scout, The nice morn.’

1. 500. The Gentiles in their parables. The allusion here is to Tantalus, whose well-known punishment is said by Ovid and others to have been imposed upon him because he revealed the secrets of the Gods. See Ovid, Ars Amatoria, ii. 605-6; Cic. Tusc. Disput. iv. 16;
and Euripides, Orestes, 8-11. For the other legends connected with Tantalus see the article in Smith's Dictionary.

l. 505. Bids, i.e. bids thee avoid the punishment.

l. 508. Exact that penal forfeit, &c, i.e. exact from you the fine due as punishment. Cf. the Latin phrase 'poenam exigere ab.'

l. 509. Quit thee all his debt, that is, 'acquit thee of the debt due to him.'

ll. 514-15. The meaning is, 'Which (i.e. the fact that he considers that death is his due) shows that he is over-just and displeased with himself more on account of the wrong he has done himself than on account of the wrong he has done God.' 'God offended,' is a Latinism for 'the fact that God is offended.' See note on 165.

ll. 516-17. What offer'd means. 'What' is here used for 'those which,' and the meaning is, 'Reject not those means of ransom which, for anything one can tell, God may have set before us or suggested to us in order to return thee,' &c. (Hurd.)

l. 528. Blaz'd. Blaze is to spread far and wide, to proclaim. 'Blasen' is used by Chaucer to express the loud sounding of a trumpet. It is probably derived from the A.S. blésan, 'to blow.' Cf. the Icel. blasa, 'to blow a trumpet'; the Dutch blazen. See Skeat on the word. The image was not improbably suggested by the blowing of a trumpet. Cf Milton's paraphrase of Psalm cxxxvi, 'Let us blaze his name abroad.'

l. 531. Affront. None daring to 'confront' or 'face' me. For this use of the word see Par. Lost, i. 391 'And with their darkness durst affront his light.'

l. 533. Venereal trains. Artifices of love. 'Trains' are wiles or artifices. The word is from the French trainer, 'to draw,' which is in its turn derived from the Latin tvahere; it means that which is 'drawn' or 'spread out,' so 'a snare.' Cf. Par. Lost, 624 'To the smiles and to the trains Of these fair atheists.' Possibly it simply means 'attractive.'

l. 537. Who shore me. The dative, 'for me.' See note on 439.

l. 543. The dancing ruby. Cf. Par. Lost, v. 633 'Rubied nectar.'

l. 547. Against the eastern ray. With these exquisitely beautiful lines cf. the lines quoted by Thyer from Tasso, Il Mondo Creato, Giornata Terza 135 sqq. 'Ma più salubre è se, tra vive pietre Rompendo l'argentate e fredde corna, Incontra il nuovo sol che il puro argento Co' raggi indora.'

l. 549. With touch ethereal, &c. Possibly a reminiscence of Euripides, Supplices, 652 λαμπρά μὲν ἅκτις ἕλιον, κανὰν σαφῆν | ἐβαλε γαίαν, of which the line in Comus 'Long levell'd rule of streaming light' most certainly was. Pope has adopted the phrase 'touch ethereal,' Essay on Man, iii. 68, though he attaches a different meaning to it.
1. 552. Turbulent liquor. This probably means 'confusing' or 'maddening'; turbidus and turbulentus being often applied in Latin to express mental confusion.

1. 557. Whose drink was only. As Samson was a Nazarite he was forbidden to drink wine. See Numbers vi. 3.

1. 569. Robustious. Latin robustus. The word usually means 'forcible' or 'violent,' but here simply 'strong.'

1. 571. Craze. The word means 'to weaken,' or 'break.' Cf. the Middle English word erassen, 'to break,' or 'crack, and the French éraser.

1. 574. Draft of servile food. 'Refuse.' Perhaps derived from the A.S. dráfan, 'to drive,' so what is driven out. Cf. the Dutch drabbe, and the Danish drae, meaning 'dregs.' Cf. Par. Lost, x. 630 'To lick up the draff and filth.'

1. 582. But God who caus'd, &c. For the circumstance see Judges xv. 19. Newton remarks that Milton here follows not the translation of the Bible, which says that 'God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw,' but the Chaldee paraphrase and the best commentators, who understand it that God made a cleft in some part of the ground or rock in the place called Lehi; Lehi signifying both a jaw and a place so called.

1. 585. And I persuade me so. The student will notice the tragic irony in these lines.

II. 592–598. All otherwise. These lines are the sublime of pathos. Here the poet—who can doubt it?—is speaking in propria persona. He would be a bold critic who would offer any other comment on such a passage than reverenceal silence. In the phrase 'race of shame' the sense of course is not to be pressed too closely, for though in its literal sense it would be applicable to Samson, it could not in its literal sense be applicable to Milton.

1. 605. Healing words. The expression was no doubt suggested by Euripides, Hippolytus, 478 εἶδεν δ' ἐπαθαί καὶ λόγοι θελητήρως, or possibly by Aeschylus, Supplices, 447; and it is again used in Par. Lost, ix. 290.

II. 606 seq. Notice the change of the metre, and see note on line 81.

1. 612. Accidents. Either in the scholastic sense of separable qualities, i.e. the powers and qualities which are not of the essence of the subject; or, more probably, it is to be understood as = attacks of disease. The N. E. D. quotes Bacon, Henry VII. 9 'There began . . . a disease then new: which of the Accidents and manner thereof they called the Sweating-sickness.'

1. 614. Entrails. Probably in the sense of the Latin viscera, 'the flesh.'

1. 624. Apprehensive. Such as can 'perceive or understand'; here perhaps 'such as can most freely feel,' i.e. the nerves.

1. 627. Medicinal. The rhythm requires a line of five feet, so it would seem that the word should be pronounced medicinal, as in
Shakspeare, Othello, act v. sc. 10 'Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees Their medicinal gum.' But it is curious that Milton spelt the word medicinal in the first edition, so it is spelt in Comus (636), and so, according to Todd, Milton repeatedly spells it in his prose works when he has occasion to use the word.

1. 628. Alp. Here used as synonymous with 'mountain,' as in Par. Lost, ii. 620 'O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp.' This habit of substituting the local for the general is in the manner of the Latin poets.

1. 635. Twice descending. The third time this circumstance has been emphasised. See above, 24 and 361.

1. 637. Abstemious. In its literal Latin sense, 'abstaining from wine,' abs and temetum.

Amain, 'with vigour.' A. S. on and magn, 'in vigour,' on representing 'a' in such a phrase as 'afoul.'

1. 645. Repeated, i.e. 'repeatedly' (Keightley). Possibly it may mean to be 'constantly spoken of' or 'called to mind as,' cf. the Latin use of repetere, and compare what he had said before in lines 203-4.

1. 652. Many are the sayings. Keightley pertinently observes that the poet seems to have forgotten that Samson's was not a literary age. Innumerable illustrations of the sayings alluded to will crowd on the memory of every well-read student, but what Milton is particularly alluding to is doubtless the Cynic doctrine of καρπετία, τλημοσίνα.

II. 657. 8. I.e. 'Consolatories are written with studied arguments, and much persuasion is sought'; the verb is repeated from line 652.

1. 661. Seem a tune. An allusion to Ecclesiasticus xxii. 6 'A tale out of season is as music in mourning.' Mood is the Latin modus, 'measure' or 'tune,' as in Par. Lost, ii. 550 'To the Dorian mood Of flutes.' Cf. too the Greek νόμος.

1. 667. God of our fathers. There is no need to suppose with the commentators that the fine but gloomy lines which follow were suggested by the Chorus at the end of the fourth act of Seneca's Hippolytus, admirable and impressive though that Chorus is, and such as Milton is scarcely likely to have forgotten. His own experience was his inspiration. It is the old enigma, which weighed as heavily on him, Christian though he was, as it has on every thoughtful man before and since. 'I found Him in the shining of the stars, I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields, But in His ways with men I find him not.' Tennyson, The Passing of Arthur. It is difficult to believe that Milton is here speaking merely as a dramatist, and that in the last Chorus only we find his authentic philosophy.

1. 677. Heads without name. 'Heads' is a common synonym in Greek and Latin for 'persons.' Cf. Homer's ἀμηνηρά κάρινα, and Livy's 'ignota capita.'

1. 678. But such as thou. An obvious reference to the heads of the Puritan party.
NOTES, II. 628-717.

1. 681. Which in part they effect. That is by the overthrow of the monarchy, without being able to raise their projected republic (Warburton).

II. 683-704. These lines are full of particular allusions to the fate of the Puritan party. Thus changest thy countenance refers to the revolution which broke up all the plans of the Independents; the trespass (691) refers to the quarrels which broke out among the leaders of the Puritan party, the omission to their not making a clear stage in the constitution and new-modelling the law as well as the national religion, as Ludlow advised; their carcases to dogs and fowls a prey, to the brutal indignities offered to the remains of the three chief Regicides; captivated (694) to the imprisonment of several of them, Lambert and Martin for example; the unjust tribunals, to the trials and condemnations of Vane and others. See Warburton's admirable commentary on these lines, quoted by Newton in his valuable edition of Milton's Poems.

1. 697. Perhaps in poverty, &c. Milton is here plainly alluding to his own fate.

1. 700. Crude old age. Not in the Virgilian sense, 'cruda senectus,' but in its proper sense of 'unripe,' 'premature.' Cf. the 'cruda funera' of Statius, Theb. ix. 391, and the 'morte acerba' of Dante and Tasso; but what immediately suggested the expression was no doubt the άρθρων γήρας of Hesiod, Works and Days, 704.

1. 701. Though not disordinate, &c. Though they—the sufferers—have not been disordinate, i.e. led irregular lives, still they suffer, without however having given cause for it, what is the usual result of dissolute days. Milton is here alluding to his gout, usually the result of intemperance, but arising in his case from other causes.

1. 715. Tarsus. Milton was no doubt thinking of the ships of Tarshish so often mentioned in the Bible, but wishing to avoid the jarring so wrote Tarsus, thinking the Biblical Tarshish was Tarsus in Cilicia, though it is generally identified with Tartessus in Spain. In the Bible the phrase 'ships of Tarshish' signifies large sea-going vessels in general (see Keightley's note), but was subsequently used to signify the Phoenician trading ships that went to Tartessus.

1. 715. Bound for the isles, &c. I.e. the isles of Greece and Asia Minor, for Javan or Ion, the fourth son of Japhet, is said to have peopled Greece and Ionia.

Gadire, the Greek Πάδερα, the Latin Gades, the modern Cadiz.


Tackle trim, i.e. having her tackle all well set and in good order. Keightley appositely compares the following passage in Milton's Of Reform in England, bk. ii: 'They (the Bishops) would request us to endure still the rustling of their silken cassocks, and that we would
burst our midriffs rather than laugh to see them under sail in all their lawn and sarcenet, their shrouds and tackle, with a geometrical rhomboides upon their heads.'

1. 719. Courted by all, &c. Todd compares a passage in the Adamo of Pona, 'Servita dall’ aura, corteggia da' venti.'

1. 720. An amber scent. Amber is ambergris, a favourite perfume with the ladies of the seventeenth century. Thus in Herrick’s Address to his Mistresses, ‘Put on your silks; and piece by piece Give them scent of ambergreece.’

II. 726–730. With these beautiful verses compare the verses not less beautiful in the Antigone, 526–530, plainly in Milton’s mind, καὶ μὴν πρὸ πυλῶν ἡδ’ Ἰσμήνη | φιλέδελφα κἀτω δάκρυ’ εἰδομένη, | νεφέλη δ’ οὐφρύων ὑπὲρ αἰματῶν | βέθος αἰσχύνει | τέγγουο’ εὐώπα παρείαν.

1. 727. Like a fair flower. A simile first employed by Homer, II. viii. 206. Since become a commonplace among poets.

1. 732. The student will notice how thoroughly Euripidean the whole of the following scene is, not merely in the fact that two of the dramatis personae are pitted dialectically against one another, but in the cast of the language and in the quality of the sentiment.

1. 734. Which to have merited, &c. The meaning is, ‘I cannot but acknowledge that I have merited this displeasure, and I have nothing to say by way of excuse.’

1. 736. Though the fact, &c. I.e. though more evil followed in what unexpectedly happened than I foresaw.

1. 748. Hyaena. There is peculiar propriety in this sobriquet, for, according to Solinus (an author well known to Milton—in his Tractate on Education he mentions him as one of those writers whose work ought to form a portion of the curriculum of classical study), the animal learns to imitate the sounds of the human voice, and will treacherously lure men out at night and tear them in pieces. ‘Sequitur statuta pastorum et auditu assiduo addiscit vocamen quod exprimere possit imitatione vocis humanae ut in hominem astu accitum nocte saeviat.’ Polyhistor. cap. xxvii.

1. 752. Remorse. ‘Pity,’ a sense common in our older writers. Cf. Par. Lost, 605 ‘Signs of remorse and passion.’

1. 760. With goodness principled. I.e. endowed with good principle. The reference to Milton’s first ill-sorted marriage with Mary Powell, to their estrangement, and subsequent reconciliation, a reconciliation fraught with happiness to neither, is obvious.

1. 775. Inquisitive. Obs. inquisitive, and see note on 1. 341.

Importune of secrets. I.e. importunate with regard to secrets, importunately desirous of learning them.

1. 785. Como to parle. The French parler. It is here used in the
NOTES, II. 719-934.

sense of 'agreement' or 'reconciliation.' Cf. Milton's Hist. of England, bk. vi, 'Knute finding himself too weak began to parle.' The substantive occurs in Par. Reg. iv. 529 'By parle, or composition,' &c.

1. 790. And what if love, &c. The position here assumed by Dalila is exactly that of Deianira in the Trachinia of Sophocles.

1. 803. That made for me. 'That was in my favour,'
1. 812. Fond. In the common sense of 'foolish.'

1. 826. Which when thou seest, &c. The antecedent to the 'which' is pardon, or rather the idea involved in pardon: 'when you see that with regard to the pardon I gave myself I was impartial, &c., you will not seek to obtain from me the pardon I gave myself.'

1. 840. Knowing by thee betrayed, 'knowing that I was betrayed by thee.' A Greek idiom. Cf. Thucydides ii. 14 ἐν πολυτρόποις ἐπιστανταί τραφέντες, and the participial construction habitual with λανθάνειν, συνειδέαν and similar verbs. The same idiom is used Par. Lost, ix. 792 'And knew not eating death.'

1. 850. Thou know'st the magistrates. For the circumstance see Judges xvi. 5 'And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her and said unto her, Entice him and see wherein his great strength lieth.'

1. 857. And the priest. This is an addition of Milton to the scriptural account; there is no need to suppose it intended as glancing at the clergy, though Milton had no affection for that body.

1. 867. That to the public good. There is no particular allusion, the maxim is of the essence of ancient politics; every intelligent student will be at no loss to find illustrations for himself.

1. 896. Gods unable, &c. I.e. Gods who are unable to acquit themselves as Gods and prosecute their foes except by ungodly deeds. 'To acquit' is to clear oneself of accusation or perform any bounden duty. It is derived from the Low Latin adquietare, which means 'to give rest to a person accused either of crime or debt.'

1. 926. Thy peals. See note on 235.

1. 920. To the lords. The usual preposition with 'intercede' is with. There is perhaps here a mixture of two constructions, I will go to the lords and intercede with them, 'to' being used in the pregnant sense so common with prepositions of motion in Greek and Latin.

1. 925. Tend about. Move or wait about thee. The word is derived immediately from the Latin tendo, which in its neuter sense means 'to advance or travel towards.'

1. 928. The words of Dalila might have softened a harder heart than Samson's, and the first words of his reply show in their milder tone that he was not insensible to the charmer; but reflection comes to his aid and he gradually returns to his former ferocity, his wrath gathering with his words.

1. 932. Trains. See note on 533.

1. 934. Thy fair enchanted cup, &c. Milton was thinking no doubt
of the story of Circe and the Sirens, but as he does not mention them, it is
absurd to charge him, as the commentators do, with impropriety and
anachronism, though he has offended in this way more than once in
the course of the drama. See note on l. 150.

l. 936. Adder’s wisdom. The allusion to Psalm lviii. 4 is obvious.
l. 948. Gloss upon. ‘To comment upon.’ Derived from the Greek
γλῶσσα, which originally signified the word which demanded an ex-
planation, then it came to signify the explanation itself, the commentary.
Hence it came to be used as a verb.
l. 950. To thine. ‘Compared with thine.’
l. 972. Contrary. The accent is on the penultimate, as often in our
old writers, and still in provincial dialects. Thus Habington, Castara,
‘By virtue of a cleane contrary gale.’
l. 977. On both his wings. It is curious that Milton should make Fame
masculine, when among the ancients she is always spoken of as feminine.
Possibly he was thinking of her for the moment in the abstract, and
‘his’ is for the neuter. In describing her as having two wings, one
white and the other black, he is also unwarranted by classical tradi-
tion. He has probably, as Dunster observes, borrowed one wing from
Victory (‘niveis Victoria concolor alis,’ Sil. Ital. Punica, xv. 97), and the
other, the black wing, from Infamy (‘alvis . . . volitans Infamia pennis,’
Id. 95).
l. 981. Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath. Ecron was the most
northerly of the five great Philistine towns. Its modern representative
is Akir, which is on the northern side of the valley Wady Surar. For
Gaza see note on l. 147. Ashdod was another of the five confederate
states of the Philistines. It was situated about thirty miles from the
southern frontier of Palestine, three from the Mediterranean Sea, and
nearly midway between Gaza and Joppa. For Gath see note on l.
266.

l. 982. Among the famousest. In this passage Milton was doubtless
thinking of the words which Iolaus addresses to Macaria in the Heraclidae
of Euripides 597–599 ἄλλ, ὡ μέγιστον ἐκπρέπουσ’ εἰψχιά, | πασῶν γυναι-
κῶν ἵσθι τιμωτάτη | καὶ ἥ’ ἤτοι ἣρμῶν καὶ θανοῦ ἔσει πολύ.
Ephraim cf. Judges iv. 5 ‘And Deborah dwelt between Ramah and
Bethel in Mount Ephraim,’ and here Jael’s act was celebrated in
Deborah’s famous song (Judges v).

ll. 995–6. At this whoever, &c. An adaptation of a couplet in the
Ajax, 1038–9 ὑπὶ δὲ μῆ ταῦ’ ἵστιν ἐν γνώμῃ φίλα | κεῖνος τ’ έκείνα στερ-
γίτω, κάγω τάκε.
l. 1008. Lovo quarrels, &c. From the famous line in Terence,
Andria, iii. 3. 23 ‘Amantium irae amoris integratio est.’
1. 1012. Inherit. 'Possess.' Cf. Shakspeare, Romeo and Juliet, act i. sc. 2 'Such delight Shall you this night inherit at my house.'

1. 1015. Refer it. In the Latin sense of the word, 'relate it' or tell it.


1. 1018. If any of these, &c. That is, 'if any or all of these fancies could win or possess a woman's love, the Timnian bride would not have preferred,' &c. The circumstance alluded to is the fact that Samson's first wife, the woman of Timnath, was given to his companion. Pararymph is 'a bridegroom's companion.' It was usual at the marriage feasts of the Jews to have a select band of young men to keep the bridegroom company and to conduct the bride to the bridegroom's house. The word is derived from ἐρατα and νυμφή.

1. 1025. Is it for that, &c. The bitter misogyny of these lines is the more apparent as they are placed, not in the mouth of Samson, to whom they might be dramatically appropriate, but in the mouth of the Chorus, who deliver them as cool and well-weighed truths. Milton was probably again remembering the troubles he had had with his first wife.

1. 1027. For haste, i.e. 'by reason of,' 'in consequence of.'

1. 1038. Intestine. In the Latin sense, 'within,' 'internal,' in the flesh.

1. 1039. Within defensive arms. The meaning is that while nesting in her husband's protecting embraces she is like the poisoned tunic of Nessus, the 'cleaving mischief.'

1. 1046. Favour'd of Heav'n, who, &c. 'He is favoured by Heaven who,' &c. An imitation of a use of the relative common in Greek and Latin; cf. Sophocles, Antig. 582 εὐδαίμονες, ὥσι κακῶν ἁγενστὸς αἰῶν.

1. 1062. Contracted. In the Latin sense of the word, to collect or gather.

1. 1068. The giant Harapha. For this character and for the scene which follows Milton had no warrant in the Biblical history of Samson. The name of Harapha he got from 2 Samuel xxi. 18, where certain Philistian champions are spoken of as the sons of Rapha or Harapha; though it is doubtful whether the name is a proper name, or whether it simply means 'the giant,' as the Authorised Version translates it.

1. 1069. Pile. Exactly the Latin moles, 'bulk.'

1. 1072. The sumptuous, &c. The scanion of this line seems desperate.

1. 1075. His fraught. i.e. 'freight' or 'lading.' Cf. Othello, iii. 2 'Swell bosom with thy fraught.' For an account of this curious word see Skeat, or the New English Dictionary, sub voce.

1. 1076. Compare the entrance of Harapha with the entrance of Creon, Oed. Rex, 1422.

1. 1080. As Og or Anak, &c. For Og who was the king of Basan,
and who was of the race of the giants. see Deut. iii. 11. The giant Anak was the father of the Anakims. The Emims was a name given by the Moabites to the Anakims, Deut. ii. 10-11; and they are mentioned as dwelling in Shaveh Kiriathaim in Gen. xiv. 5.

I. 1081. Thou know'st me. Cf. Par. Lost, iv. 830 'Not to know me argues yourself unknown.'

I. 1092. Single me, i.e. Challenge me to single combat.

I. 1093. Gyves. 'Fetters,' here 'handcuffs.' The word is a M.E. word give, of obscure origin.

I. 1109. Assassinated. The word means here 'craftily betrayed,' not 'murdered.' Cf. a similar use of the word in the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, i. 12: 'And the law which gives not all freedom of divorce to any creature endowed with wisdom so assassinated is next in cruelty.' For the very curious history of this word see Skeat and Brachet. It was originally derived from a set of men in Palestine, who flourished in the thirteenth century—the Haschischin or Drinkers of Haschisch, an intoxicating liquor. These men were formed into a band of secret murderers by the famous Scheik Haschischin or Old Man of the Mountain: so the word became a synonym for secret murdering.

II. 1120-1121. Brigandine, a coat of mail. Habergeon, or in the correcter form haubergeon, mail for the neck and shoulders. A Middle English word; cf. the Old French hauberon. Vant-brace, armour for the arms (Fr. avant and bras). Groves, armour for the legs. Littre derives the word from the Arabic jawrab, 'a shoe or sandal'; cf. the Spanish grebas, and the Old French greve, meaning the shin or forepart of the leg. Gauntlet, armour for the hands (from the French gant, a glove).

I. 1132. Had not spells, &c. He here alludes to the superstitious belief of the Middle Ages that it was possible by means of spells and charms to render the body secure against wounds: on which account the champions in the judicial combats were obliged to make oath that they had not had recourse to such unlawful means (Keightley).

I. 1138. Ruffled porcupines. Cf. Hamlet, act i. sc. v. 'And each particular hair to stand on end Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.'

I. 1143. While I preserved. I.e. so long as I should preserve.

I. 1156. This is the punctuation of the first edition. Todd places a semicolon instead of a comma after the word 'be.'

I. 1164. Boist'rous. The word here has pretty much the same meaning as 'robustious' in 1. 569. It is probably derived from the Welsh buyst, 'wildness or fierceness,' through the adjective buystus, 'brutal or ferocious.' See Skeat.

I. 1181. Tongue-doughty. 'Tongue-valiant.' A.S. dohtig, brave,


1. 1186. Those thirty men. I.e. the thirty men slain by Samson at Askelon, whose clothes he gave to those who had guessed his riddle. See Judges xiv. 19.

1. 1197. Thirty spies. In the Bible these are described as simply being companions; Judges xiv. 11. Milton here follows Josephus, who says that these young men were sent as spies to watch Samson.

1. 1203. I used hostility. See note above l. 1186.

1. 1220. Appellant. A term in chivalry. The appellant was the one who challenged another to combat on some stated issue. Cf. 2 Henry IV, act ii. sc. 3, as the person challenged was the defendant: 'And ready are the appellant and defendant.' See Richard II, act i. sc. 3, Mr. Aldis Wright's note.

1. 1228. Descant. Properly a musical term, to play variations upon; so, to discuss a subject under several heads. (From dis and canere.)

1. 1243. Braveries, 'brags,' or 'boasts.' So Sidney, quoted by Richardson, 'Never could man with more unmanlike braverie use his tongue to her disgrace.'

1. 1245. Unconscionable. The word properly means 'exceeding the limits of any just claim,' 'unreasonable.' Here it means 'enormous' or 'vast.' The word is derived from the modern and theological signification of the Lat. conscientia, and apparently means 'not guided or influenced by conscience,' or, as we should say, 'conscientious scruples.'

1. 1248. Divulge him. In its proper Latin sense, 'spread abroad among the people,' 'proclaim.' Cf. 2 Sam. xxii. 15-22 'These four were born to the Giant [or to Harapha] in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and his servants.' The fifth son was Goliath.

1. 1253. Offered flight. See for this Latinism note on l. 165.

1. 1294. Sight bereaved. See note on l. 165.

1. 1298. Labouring. Here an active verb, 'causing thy mind to labour.'

1. 1303. Quaint staff. 'Handsome,' 'nice,' 'curious.' The word is derived from the French coint, which comes in its turn from the Latin comptus, 'adorned,' 'tricked out,' 'neat.' Cf. Nativity Ode, 194 'The Flamens at their service quaint'; and Arcades, 47 'With ringlets quaint.' So too Comus, 156 'And my quaint weeds breed astonishment.'

1. 1309. Remark him. 'Distinguish' or 'point out.' Possibly an imitation of the intensive force of the prefix re in Latin.

1. 1313. Human rate. 'Calculation' or 'value.' (Latin ratus, Old Fr. rate.) 1. 1317. Heartened. Encouraged, animated.

ll. 1323-25. Sword-players, professional fencers, to 'play' after
meaning in our old writers to practise, particularly with weapons. Gymnic artists, tumblers. Jugglers, those who practise sleight of hand. The word, which is derived from the French jongleurs, originally meant those who sang ballads and romances to their own musical accompaniment. Antics, clowns or buffoons. Mummers, actors in dumb show, derived from the old interjection mum, 'be silent,' 'hush.' Mimics, 'actors of pantomime,' from the Latin minus, 'a comic actor.'

1. 1337. Absurd. In the Latin sense, 'silly,' 'senseless.' [Ab intensive, surdus, 'deaf,' 'very deaf,' so 'dull,' 'stupid.]

1. 1346. Stoutness. 'Obstinacy.' Cf. Shakspeare, Coriolanus, iii. 2 'Fear Thy dangerous stoutness.'

1. 1365. Not in their, &c. In these lines Milton may possibly be alluding to his own position in submitting quietly to the power of the Royalists.

1. 1367. Civil. In the Latin sense, 'political' (Lat. civilis).

1. 1375. Which, i.e. which act.

1. 1376. Unrepented, if not repented of.

1. 1387. If there be aught of presage, &c. Sir Egerton Brydges well observes, 'This change of purpose from a sudden internal presage of the mind is magnificently imagined, and the hinge on which the whole catastrophe turns.' These intuitive anticipations of calamity at hand are common in the Greek tragedies. Milton has carefully marked them in the course of this drama; cf. lines 1266 and 1347.

1. 1396. Engines. 'Means' or 'devices.' For the same use of the word see Par. Lost, i. 749 'Nor did he scape For all his engines.' Cf. the Greek μηχαναι.

1. 1408. Yet this. This refers back to line 1403, and is addressed to the Chorus; the intervening lines being parenthetic and addressed to the messenger.

1. 1410. Doff these links. 'Do off,' 'put off'; opposed to don, 'do on,' 'put on.'

1. 1418. Lords are lordliest, &c. This is probably a covert attack on the opulent nobility, whom, as a Republican, Milton despised, and on the opulent hierarchy, whom, as a Puritan and a Calvinist, he hated.

1. 1420. If aught. An imitation of the Greek idiom ει τι or the Latin si quid.

1. 1426. The last of me, &c. This harsh and obscure line seems to mean, Whether this will be the last that you will hear of me or not I cannot certainly say.


1. 1457. I have attempted, &c. In the following passage Mr. Masson thinks that Milton is hinting at the negotiations for his escape.
from punishment and the variety of opinion in Parliament and at Court on the question. (Life of Milton, vol. vi. p. 676.)

I. 1464. Others more moderate, &c. Possibly a glance at the Presbyterian party who had joined the Royalists and Courtiers.

I. 1492. And on his shoulders, &c. Milton was here thinking of some lines in his favourite poet Ovid, Met. viii. 8 'Cui splendidus ostro Crinis inhaerebat, magni fiducia regni.'

I. 1497. Garrison'd, &c. As Samson's strength lay in his hair, the poet fancifully compares his locks to a garrison of soldiers; in other words, Samson's hair is as it were a sort of strength, the single hairs corresponding to single soldiers. A conceit which savours more of Donne than of the Greek tragedians.

I. 1512. Inhabitation. The inhabited world, ἡ οἰκουμένη.

I. 1514. Ruin. The crashing down of edifices. Latin ruina, which is in its turn derived from rūo, 'to fall precipitately.' Cf. Par. Lost, 46 'Hideous ruin and combustion.'

I. 1529. Dole. 'Sorrow,' 'mourning.' Latin dolor. For this sense of the word see Par. Lost, iv. 894 'And scornest recompense Dole with delight.' Others take it as meaning a portion, that which is dealt, distributing his gifts and portions among his enemies.

II. 1527-1535. These lines were wanting in the text of the original edition, but were supplied in the Errata; so also was line 1537.

I. 1538. Baits. Tarries or lingers. 'To bait' is properly to make to bite, to feed, from Middle English bāiten, 'to feed.' Then it came to be used in a neuter sense, 'to stop at a place to take refreshment'; so 'to linger or dally,' as here.

I. 1554. No preface needed. No preface is necessary, or is needed. The word is often used even now in this neuter sense.

I. 1569. Take then the worst, &c. This formula is imitated from the Greek tragedians. Cf. Soph. Electra, 673 τέθηκ' ὸρίστης· ἐν βραχεῖ ἐνθέεις λέγω: and cf. also Oed. Rex, 1234-5.

I. 1575. Windy joy. Empty, vain; possibly suggested by the Platonic ἄνεμαίων, the metaphor being not from the wind, but from a wind-egg; but more probably by the common Homeric epithet ἄνεμωλίος, 'windy'—so, 'vain,' 'idle.'

I. 1576. Abortive as the first-born, &c. Cf. Love's Labour's Lost, i. 1 'An envious sneaping frost That bites the first-born infants of the spring.'

I. 1608. Sort. 'Quality.' A common sense in Shakspeare; cf. Midsummer Night's Dream, 'None of noble sort would so offend a virgin,' and Measure for Measure, iv. 4.

I. 1610. Banks. 'Benches.' French banc.

I. 1619. Cataphracts. Men and horses clad in armour, heavy-armed
cavalry, the Latin 'cataphracti equites' (Greek κατάφρακτοι). 'Cataphracti equites dicuntur qui et ipsi ferro muniti sunt et equos similiter munitos habent.' Servius in Virg. Aen. xi. 770.

l. 1621. Riffed. Tore or rent. Cf. Middle English riven, 'to split or tear.'

l. 1622. Thrall. 'Captive' or 'slave.' From the Icel. þræli, meaning a 'serf' or 'slave,' lit. 'runner.' Skeat says it is formed from the base of Gothic thragjan, A.S. þrægan, 'to run,' allied to the Greek τρέχειν.

l. 1642. Beheld. I.e. I having been beheld not without, &c.

l. 1645. Strike all. Probably a play on the word. See note on l. 23. With Milton's graphic and magnificent narrative should be compared the biblical account, Judges xvi. 25-30.

l. 1666. Dire necessity. Notice how in the true spirit of Greek tragedy Milton emphasises the operation of Necessity, ναγκη, on the action of the drama. The image is a favourite one with Aeschylus.

l. 1667. In number more, &c. Cf. Judges xvi. 30 'So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.'

l. 1669. Sublime. In the Latin sense (sublimis), 'lifted up,' 'elate.' Cf. in this sense Horace, Ars Poetica, 195, where the young man is described as 'sublimis cupidusque.' Cf. too the Greek μετέωρος.

l. 1671. Regorged. For the force of 're' see note on l. 1309.

l. 1675. A spirit of phrenzy sent, &c. Cf. the famous line, 'Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.' The origin of this line is stated in a note in Boswell's Life of Johnson (one vol. edit. page 718, Croker) to be a Latin rendering of a verse in one of the fragments of Euripides, ὅν θεὸς θέλει ἀπόλεσαι, πρῶτ' ἀποφρενοί. No such line, however, is to be found there. It is probably a translation of the idea in the following couplet, ὅταν δὲ δαιμόνια τοιμα συνὴ κακά | τὸν νοῦν ἐβλαφῆ πρῶτον, attributed to Euripides, Frag. Ex Ed. Barnes xxv. But the passage of which Milton is here thinking is Sophocles, Antig. 620 σοφιά γάρ ἐκ τοῦ | κλείσων ἐποκ πέφανται, | τὸ κακὸν δοκεῖν ποτ' ἐσθλὸν | τῷ ἐρμεν ὁτὸς φέρει | θεὸς ἄγει πρὸς ἄγαν.

l. 1674. In Silo, his bright sanctuary. 'The ark was at that time in Shiloh. He probably terms it bright on account of the Shekinah, which was supposed to rest on the ark.' Keightley. Cf. too Judges xxi. 19 on the position of Shiloh, 'On the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebanon.'

l. 1692. And as, &c. It seems almost certain that Milton must have dictated nor instead of and, otherwise there is no meaning in 'but' in line 1695. The meaning being, he did not come as a serpent comes in the evening, but as an eagle suddenly descending with the thunderbolt.
An evening dragon is a Latinism for a dragon (or serpent) in the evening, the adjective for the adverb.

1. 1694. Nest. A metonymy probably for young chickens. Cf. the Latin use of *nidus*.

1. 1695. Villatic foowl. Fowl belonging to the farm-house (Lat. *villa*); Pliny's 'villaticas aves' (Nat. Hist. xxiii. sect. 17), 'barn-door fowl.'

1. 1696. His cloudless thunder. 'His lightning,' thunder being placed by *enallage* for lightning. 'Bolt' is here an active verb; 'shot like an arrow.' 'Cloudless' implies that it was sudden and unexpected, the image being taken from lightning darting from a cloudless sky.

1. 1699. That self-begotten bird. The Phoenix. The legend is too well known to need explanation. The student should read Clodian's eloquent and ingenious poem on this fabulous bird.

1. 1700. Embost. This word has in our old writers three distinct meanings: it sometimes signifies 'to swell' or 'arise in bunches' (from the French *embosser*); it is also used as a hunting term, thus to 'emboss a deer' is 'to run it till it is weary and foams at the mouth'; a meaning no doubt derived from the French. And thirdly, it means 'to enclose in a wood,' in which last sense it is derived from the Old French *embosquer* and the Italian *emboscare*. Here it has the last meaning. In this sense Milton uses it in his Reformation in England, ch. i. *ad finem*, 'They seek the dark, the bushy, the tangled forest; they would *imbosk*.'

1. 1702. Holocaust. A whole burnt-offering (usually only part of the beast was burnt); from the Greek *ἱλασμός* and *καλω*. See Psalm li. 19.

1. 1706. Survives. Intransitive. What is meant by this simile is that Virtue, like the Phoenix, though apparently effete, is always re-viving its career, a constant succession of depressions and survivals.

1. 1707. Secular bird. Secular properly means lasting for a century or for an indefinite term of years—for ages; *saeculum* meaning in Latin 'a lifetime,' 'a century,' 'an age.' So Tennyson, In Mem. xli, 'Through all the secular to-be.'

1. 1708. No time for lamentation. Thus Hecuba checks herself on hearing of the death of her daughter Polyxena; Hecuba, 591-2.

1. 1713. Sons of Caphtor. I.e. the Philistines, who were said to have colonists from the island of Caphtor or Crete.

1. 1722. Or knock the breast. An imitation of the Greek use of *κόπτεσθαι*, meaning 'to beat oneself,' to beat (the breast) for oneself, and so 'to mourn or bewail.' So *κόπτεσθαι τινα*, 'to mourn for or bewail any one.'

1. 1732. Obsequy. Funeral rites. The word is generally used in the plural, like the Latin *obsequiae*, from which it is derived.

1. 1745. All is best, &c. The pious optimism of this grand Chorus is partly no doubt the embodiment of that righteous confidence in God's justice and wisdom which, as a Christian philosopher, Milton naturally
felt; but it is due mainly to the technical exigencies of his work. It is proper for tragedy, when terror and pity have done their work, to conclude tranquilly; a principle recognised in the masterpieces of Sophocles and Euripides—Milton’s models. But Milton, like Sophocles, is not merely a consummate artist, but a prophet and interpreter. Nobler verses never flowed from the pen of man.

1. 1746. Dispose. ‘Dispensation.’

1. 1755. Acquist. ‘Acquisition.’ Cf. Ital. acquisto. It is sometimes written ‘acquest,’ and is, in that form, not uncommon among prose writers contemporary with Milton. See the instances collected by Todd.

1. 1758. Calm of mind, &c. Cf. the words of Milton’s preface: ‘Tragedy... is of power by raising pity and terror to purge the mind of those and such like passions; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure.’ See also note on l. 1744.

THE END.