THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

JOHN MILTON,

FROM THE TEXT OF

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WITH

A CRITICAL ESSAY,

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THE

FIRST BOOK

OF

PARADISE REGAIN'D.
PARADISE REGAIN'D.

BOOK I.

I
Who ere while the happy garden sung
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
Recover'd Paradise to all mankind,
By one man's firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation, and the Tempter foil'd
In all his wiles, defeated and repuls'd,
And Eden rais'd in the waste wilderness.

Thou Spirit, who ledst this glorious eremite
Into the desert, his victorious field,
Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,
As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute,
And bear, through highth or depth of Nature's bounds,
With prosperous wing full summ'd, to tell of deeds
Above heroick, though in secret done,
And unrecorded left through many an age;
Worthy to have not remain'd so long unsung.

Now had the great Proclaimer, with a voice
More awful than the sound of trumpet, cried
Repentance, and Heaven's kingdom nigh at hand

To all baptis'd: to his great baptism flock'd
With awe the regions round, and with them came
From Nazareth the son of Joseph deem'd
To the flood Jordan; came, as then obscure,
Unmark'd, unknown; but him the Baptist soon
Descried, divinely warn'd, and witness bore
As to his worthier, and would have resign'd
To him his heavenly office; nor was long
His witness unconfirm'd: on him baptis'd
Heaven open'd, and in likeness of a dove

The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice
From Heaven pronounce'd him his beloved Son.
That heard the Adversary, who, roving still
About the world, at that assembly fam'd
Would not be last, and, with the voice divine
Nigh thunder-struck, the exalted Man, to whom
Such high attest was given, a while survey'd
With wonder; then, with envy fraught and rage,
Hies to his place, nor rests, but in mid air
To counsel summons all his mighty peers,
Within thick clouds and dark ten-fold involv'd,
A gloomy consistory; and them amidst,
With looks aghast and sad, he thus bespake.

O ancient Powers of air, and this wide world,
(For much more willingly I mention air,
This our old conquest, than remember Hell,
Our hated habitation;) well ye know
How many ages, as the years of men,
This universe we have possess'd, and rul'd,
In manner at our will, the affairs of earth,

Since Adam and his facile consort Eve
Lost Paradise, deceiv'd by me; though since
With dread attending when that fatal wound
Shall be inflicted by the seed of Eve
Upon my head: Long the decrees of Heaven
Delay, for longest time to him is short;
And now, too soon for us, the circling hours
This dreaded time have compass'd, wherein we
Must bide the stroke of that long threaten'd wound,
(At least if so we can, and by the head
Broken be not intended all our power
To be infringing'd, our freedom and our being,
In this fair empire won of earth and air;
For this ill news I bring, the Woman's Seed,
Destin'd to this, is late of Woman born:
His birth to our just fear gave no small cause;
But his growth now to youth's full flow'r, displaying
All virtue, grace, and wisdom to achieve
Things highest, greatest, multiplies my fear.
Before him a great Prophet, to proclaim
His coming, is sent harbinger, who all
Invites, and in the consecrated stream
Pretends to wash off sin, and fit them, so
Purified, to receive him pure, or rather
To do him honour as their king; all come,
And he himself among them was baptiz'd;
Not thence to be more pure, but to receive
The testimony of Heaven, that who he is
Thenceforth the nations may not doubt; I saw
The prophet do him reverence; on him, rising
Out of the water, Heaven above the clouds
Unfold her crystal doors: thence on his head
A perfect dove descend, what-e'er it meant,
And out of Heaven the sovran voice I heard,
"This is my Son belov'd, in him am pleas'd."
His mother then is mortal, but his Sire
He who obtains the monarchy of Heaven,
And what will he not do to advance his Son?
His first-begot we know, and sore have felt,
When his fierce thunder drove us to the deep:
Who this is we must learn, for Man he seems
In all his lineaments, though in his face
The glimpses of his Father's glory shine.
Ye see our danger on the utmost edge
Of hazard, which admits no long debate,
But must with something sudden be oppos'd,
(Not force, but well couch'd fraud, well woven snares,)
Ere in the head of nations he appear,
Their king, their leader, and supreme on earth.
I, when no other durst, sole undertook
The dismal expedition to find out
And ruin Adam; and the exploit perform'd
Successfully: a calmer voyage now
Will waft me; and the way, found prosperous once
Induces best to hope of like success.

He ended, and his words impression left
Of much amazement to the infernal crew,
Distracted and surpris'd with deep dismay
At these sad tidings; but no time was then
For long indulgence to their fears or grief:
Unanimous they all commit the care
And management of this main enterprize
To him, their great dictator, whose attempt
At first against mankind so well had thriv'd
In Adam's overthrow, and led their march
From Hell's deep vaulted den to dwell in light,
Regents, and potentates, and kings, yea Gods
Of many a pleasant realm and province wide.
So to the coast of Jordan he directs
His easy steps, girded with snaky wiles,
Where he might likeliest find this new-declar'd,
This Man of men, attested Son of God,
Temptation and all guile on him to try;
So to subvert whom he suspected rais'd
To end his reign on earth, so long enjoy'd:
But, contrary, unweeting he fulfill'd
The purpos'd counsel, pre-ordain'd and fix'd,
Of the Most High, who in full frequence bright
Of Angels, thus to Gabriel smiling spake.

Gabriel, this day by proof thou shalt behold,
Thou and all Angels conversant on earth
With
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With man or men's affairs, how I begin
To verify that solemn message, late
On which I sent thee to the Virgin pure
In Galilee, that she should bear a son,
Great in renown, and call'd the Son of God;
Then toldst her doubting how these things could be
To her a virgin, that on her should come
The Holy Ghost, and the power of the Highest
O' er-shadow her: this Man, born and now up-grown,
To show him worthy of his birth divine
And high prediction, henceforth I expose
To Satan; let him tempt, and now assay
His utmost subtlety, because he boasts
And vaunts of his great cunning to the throng
Of his apostasy: he might have learnt
Less overweening, since he fail'd in Job,
Whose constant perseverance overcame
Whate'er his cruel malice could invent.
He now shall know I can produce a man
Of female seed, far abler to resist
All his solicitations, and at length
All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell;
Winning, by conquest, what the first man lost,
By fallacy surpris'd. But first I mean
To exercise him in the wilderness;
There he shall first lay down the rudiments
Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
To conquer Sin and Death, the two grand foes,
By humiliation and strong sufferance:
His weakness shall overcome Satanick strength,
And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh;
That all the Angels and ethereal Powers,
They now, and Men hereafter, may discern,
From what consummate virtue I have chose
This perfect Man, by merit call'd my Son,
To earn salvation for the sons of men.

So spake the Eternal Father, and all Heaven
Admiring stood a space, then into hymns
Burst forth, and in celestial measures mov'd,
Circling the throne and singing, while the hand
Sung with the voice, and this the argument.

Victory and triumph to the Son of God
Now entering his great duel, not of arms,
But to vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles!
The Father knows the Son; therefore secure
Ventures his filial virtue, though untried,
Against whate'er may tempt, whate'er seduce,
Allure, or terrify, or undermine.
Be frustrate all ye stratagems of Hell,
And, devilish machinations, come to nought.

So they in Heaven their odes and vigils tun'd:
Mean while the Son of God, who yet some days
Lodg'd in Bethabara, where John baptiz'd,
Musing, and much revolving in his breast,
How best the mighty work he might begin
Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
Publish his God-like office now mature,
One day forth walk'd alone, the Spirit leading,
And his deep thoughts, the better to converse
With solitude, till, far from track of men,
Thought following thought, and step by step led on,
He enter'd now the bordering desert wild,
And with dark shades and rocks environ'd round,
His holy meditations thus pursu'd.

O, what a multitude of thoughts at once
Awaken'd in me swarm, while I consider
What from within I feel myself, and hear
What from without comes often to my ears,
I'll sorting with my present state compar'd!
When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be publick good; myself I thought
Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
All righteous things: therefore above my years,
The law of God I read, and found it sweet,
Made it my whole delight, and in it grew
To such perfection, that ere yet my age
Had measur'd twice six years, at our great feast
I went into the temple, there to hear
The teachers of our law, and to propose
What might improve my knowledge of their own;
And was admir'd by all: yet this not all
To which my spirit aspir'd; victorious deeds
Flam'd in my heart, heroick acts; one while
To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
Then to subdue and quell, o'er all the earth,
Brute violence and proud tyrannick power,
Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd:
Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first
By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear;
Book I. PARADISE REGAIN'D.

At least to try, and teach the erring soul,
Not wilfully mis-doing, but unware
Misled; the stubborn only to subdue.
These growing thoughts my mother soon perceiving
By words at times cast forth, inly rejoic'd,
And said to me apart, "High are thy thoughts
O Son, but nourish them, and let them soar
To what highth sacred virtue and true worth
Can raise them, though above example high;
By matchless deeds express thy matchless Sire,
For know, thou art no son of mortal man;
Though men esteem thee low of parentage,
Thy father is the Eternal King who rules
All Heaven and Earth, Angels and Sons of men;
A messenger from God foretold thy birth
Conceiv'd in me a virgin; he foretold
Thou shouldst be great, and sit on David's throne,
And of thy kingdom there should be no end.
At thy nativity, a glorious quire
Of Angels, in the fields of Bethlehem, sung
To shepherds, watching at their folds by night,
And told them the Messiah now was born,
Where they might see him, and to thee they came.
Directed to the manger where thou lay'st,
For in the inn was left no better room;
A star, not seen before, in Heaven appearing
Guided the wise men thither from the east,
To honour thee with incense, myrrh, and gold;
By whose bright course led on they found the place,
Affirming it thy star, new graven in Heaven,
By which they knew the King of Israel born.
Just Simeon and prophetic Anna, warn'd
By vision, found thee in the temple, and spake
Before the altar and the vested priest,
Like things of thee to all that present stood.'''—
This having heard, straight I again revolv'd
The Law and Prophets, searching what was writ
Concerning the Messiah, to our scribes
Known partly, and soon found, of whom they spake
I am; this chiefly, that my way must lie
Through many a hard assay, even to the death,
For I the promis'd kingdom can attain,
Or work redemption for mankind, whose sins'
Foul weight must be transfer'd upon my head.
Yet, neither thus dishearten'd or dismay'd,
The time preferr'd I waited: when behold
The Baptist (of whose birth I oft had heard, Not knew by sight) now come, who was to come Before Messiah, and his way prepare!
I, as all others, to his baptism came,
Which I believ'd was from above; but he Straight knew me, and with loudest voice proclaim'd Me him (for it was shown him so from Heaven) Me him, whose harbinger he was; and first Refus'd on me his baptism to confer,
As much his greater, and was hardly won:
But, as I rose out of the laving stream,
Heaven open'd her eternal doors, from whence The Spirit descended on me like a dove,
And last, the sum of all, my Father's voice, Audibly heard from Heaven, pronounc'd me his, Me his beloved Son, in whom alone He was well pleas'd; by which I knew the time Now full, that I no more should live obscure,
But openly begin, as best becomes The authority which I derived from Heaven.
And now by some strong motion I am led Into this wilderness, to what intent I learn not yet; perhaps I need not know;
For what concerns my knowledge God reveals.

So spake our Morning Star, then in his rise,
And, looking round, on every side beheld
A pathless desart, dusk with horrid shades;
The way he came not having mark'd, return
Was difficult, by human steps untrod;
And he still on was led, but with such thoughts
Accompanied of things past and to come
Lodg'd in his breast, as well might recommend
Such solitude before choicest society.

Full forty days he pass'd, whether on hill
Sometimes, anon in shady vale, each night
Under the covert of some ancient oak,
Or cedar to defend him from the dew,
Or harbour'd in one cave, is not reveal'd;
Nor tasted human food, nor hunger felt
Till those days ended; hunger'd then at last
Among wild beasts: they at his sight grew mild,
Nor sleeping him nor waking harm'd; his walk
The fiery Serpent fled, and noxious worm,
The lion and fierce tiger glar'd aloof.
But now an aged man in rural weeds,
Following, as seem'd, the quest of some stray ewe,
Or wither'd sticks to gather, which might serve
Against a winter's day, when winds blow keen,
To warm him wet return'd from field at eve,
He saw approach, who first with curious eye
Perus'd him, then with words thus utter'd spake.

Sir, what ill chance hath brought thee to this place
So far from path or road of men, who pass
In troop or caravan? for single none
Durst ever, who return'd, and dropt not here
His carcass, pin'd with hunger and with drouth.
I ask the rather, and the more admire,
For that to me thou seem'st the Man, whom late
Our new baptizing Prophet at the ford
Of Jordan honour'd so, and call'd thee Son
Of God; I saw and heard, for we sometimes,
Who dwell this wild, constrain'd by want, come forth
To town or village nigh, (nighest is far)
Where aught we hear, and curious are to hear,
What happens new; fame also finds us out.

To whom the Son of God. Who brought me hither,
Will bring me hence; no other guide I seek.

By miracle he may, replied the swain;
What other way I see not; for we here
Live on tough roots and stubs, to thirst inured
More than the camel, and to drink go far,
Men to much misery and hardship born:
But, if thou be the Son of God, command
That out of these hard stones be made thee bread,
So shalt thou save thyself, and us relieve
With food, whereof we wretched seldom taste.

He ended, and the Son of God replied.

Think'st thou such force in bread? Is it not written
(For I discern thee other than thou seem'st)
Man lives not by bread only, but each word
Proceeding from the mouth of God, who fed
Our fathers here with manna? In the mount
Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank;
And forty days Elijah, without food,
Wander'd this barren waste; the same I now:
Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,
Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?

Whom thus answer'd the Arch-Fiend, now undisguis'd.

'Tis true I am that Spirit unfortunate,
Who, led on'd with millions more in rash revolt,
Kept not my happy station, but was driven
With them from bliss to the bottomless deep, 
Yet to that hideous place not so confin'd 
By rigour unconniving, but that oft, 
Leaving my dolorous prison, I enjoy 
Large liberty to round this globe of earth, 
Or range in the air; nor from the Heaven of Heavens 
Hath he excluded my resort sometimes. 
I came among the sons of God, when he 
Gave up into my hands Uzzean Job 
To prove him, and illustrate his high worth; 
And, when to all his Angels he propos'd 
To draw the proud king Ahab into fraud 
That he might fall in Ramoth, they demurring, 
I undertook that office, and the tongues 
Of all his flattering prophets glibb'd with lies 
To his destruction, as I had in charge; 
For what he bids I do. Though I have lost 
Much lustre of my native brightness, lost 
To be belov'd of God, I have not lost 
To love, at least contemplate and admire, 
What I see excellent in good, or fair, 
Or virtuous, I should so have lost all sense: 
What can be then less in me than desire
To see thee and approach thee, whom I know
Declard the Son of God, to hear attend
Thy wisdom, and behold thy Godlike deeds?
Men generally think me much a foe
To all mankind: why should I: they to me
Never did wrong or violence; by them
I lost not what I lost, rather by them
I gain'd what I have gain'd, and with them dwell,
Copartner in these regions of the world,
If not disposer; lend them oft my aid,
Oft my advice by presages and signs,
And answers, oracles, portents, and dreams,
Whereby they may direct their future life.
Envy they say excites me, thus to gain
Companions of my misery and woe.
At first it may be; but long since with woe
Nearer acquainted, now I feel, by proof,
That fellowship in pain divides not smart,
Nor lightens aught each man's peculiar load.
Small consolation then, were man adjoin'd:
This wounds me most, (what can it less?) that Man,
Man fall'n shall be restor'd, I never more.
To whom our Saviour sternly thus replied.

Deservedly
Deservedly thou griev'st, compos'd of lies
From the beginning, and in lies wilt end;
Who boast'st release from Hell, and leave to come
Into the Heaven of Heavens: thou com'st indeed,
As a poor miserable captive thrall
Comes to the place where he before had sat
Among the prime in splendour, now depos'd,
Ejected, emptied, gaz'd, unpitied, shunn'd,
A spectacle of ruin, or of scorn,
To all the host of Heaven: the happy place
Imparts to thee no happiness, no joy,
Rather inflames thy torment; representing
Lost bliss, to thee no more communicable,
So never more in Hell than when in Heaven.
But thou art serviceable to Heaven's King!
Wilt thou impute to obedience what thy fear
Extorts, or pleasure to do ill excites?
What but thy malice mov'd thee to misdeem
Of righteous Job, then cruelly to afflict him
With all infictions? but his patience won.
The other service was thy chosen task,
To be a liar in four hundred mouths;
For lying is thy sustenance, thy food.
Yet
Yet thou pretend'st to truth; all oracles
By thee are given, and what confess'd more true
Among the nations? that hath been thy craft,
By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies.
But what have been thy answers, what but dark,
Ambiguous, and with double sense deluding,
Which they who ask'd have seldom understood,
And, not well understood, as good not known?
Who ever by consulting at thy shrine
Return'd the wiser, or the more instruct,
To fly or follow what concern'd him most,
And run not sooner to his fatal snare?
For God hath justly given the nations up
To thy delusions; justly, since they fell
Idolatrous: but, when his purpose is
Among them to declare his providence
To thee not known, whence hast thou then thy truth,
But from him, or his Angels president
In every province? who, themselves disdaining
To approach thy temples, give thee in command
What to the smallest tittle thou shalt say
To thy adorers? thou, with trembling fear,
Or like a fawning parasite, obey'st:

Then
Then to thyself ascrib'st the truth foretold.
But this thy glory shall be soon retrench'd;
No more shalt thou by oracular abuse
The Gentiles; henceforth oracles are ceas'd,
And thou no more with pomp and sacrifice
Shalt be inquir'd at Delphos, or elsewhere;
At least in vain, for they shall find thee mute.
God hath now sent his living oracle
Into the world to teach his final will,
And sends his Spirit of truth henceforth to dwell
In pious hearts, an inward oracle
To all truth requisite for men to know.

So spake our Saviour; but the subtle Fiend,
Though inly stung with anger and disdain,
Dissembled, and this answer smooth return'd.

Sharply thou hast insisted on rebuke,
And urg'd me hard with doings, which not will
But misery hath wrested from me: where
Easily canst thou find one miserable,
And not enforc'd oft-times to part from truth,
If it may stand him more in stead to lie,
Say and unsay, feign, flatter, or abjure?
But thou art plac'd above me, thou art Lord;

From
From thee I can, and must, submiss, endure
Check or reproof, and glad to 'scape so quit.
Hard are the ways of truth, and rough to walk;
Smooth on the tongue discours'd, pleasing to the ear,
And tuneable as sylvan pipe or song;
What wonder then if I delight to hear
Her dictates from thy mouth? Most men admire
Virtue, who follow not her lore: permit me
To hear thee when I come, (since no man come-
And talk at least, though I despair to attain.
Thy Father, who is holy, wise, and pure,
Suffers the hypocrite or atheous priest
To tread his sacred courts, and minister
About his altar, handling holy things,
Praying or vowing, and vouchsaf'd his voice
To Balaam reprobate, a prophet yet
Inspir'd: disdain not such access to me.
To whom our Saviour, with unalter'd brow:
Thy coming hither, though I know thy scope,
I bid not, or forbid; do as thou find'st
Permission from above: thou canst not more.
He added not: and Satan, bowing low
His gray dissimulation, disappear'd

Into
Into thin air diffus'd: for now began
Night with her sullen wings to double-shade
The desart; fowls in their clay nests were couch'd;
And now wild beasts came forth the woods to roam.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK.
THE
SECOND BOOK
OF
PARADISE REGAIN'D.
PARADISE REGAIN'D.

BOOK II.

Mean while the new-baptiz'd, who yet remain'd At Jordan with the Baptist, and had seen Him whom they heard so late expressly call'd Jesus Messiah, Son of God declar'd, And on that high authority had believ'd, And with him talk'd, and with him lodg'd; I mean Andrew and Simon, famous after known, With others though in Holy Writ not nam'd; Now missing him, their joy so lately found, (So lately found, and so abruptly gone,) Began to doubt, and doubted many days, And, as the days encreas'd, encreas'd their doubt: Sometimes they thought he might be only shown, And for a time caught up to God, as once Moses was in the mount, and missing long; And the great Thisbite, who on fiery wheels
Rode up to Heaven, yet once again to come.
Therefore, as those young prophets then with care
Sought lost Elijah, so in each place these
Nigh to Bethabara, in Jericho
The city of palms, Ænon, and Salem old,
Machærus, and each town or city wall’d
On this side the broad lake Genezaret,
Or in Pææa; but return’d in vain.
Then on the bank of Jordan, by a creek,
Where winds with reeds and osiers whispering play,
Plain fishermen, (no greater men them call)
Close in a cottage low together got,
Their unexpected loss and plaints out breath’d.

Alas, from what high hope to what relapse
Unlook’d for are we fall’n! our eyes beheld
Messiah certainly now come, so long
Expected of our fathers; we have heard
His words, his wisdom full of grace and truth;
Now, now, for sure, deliverance is at hand,
The kingdom shall to Israel be restor’d:
Thus we rejoic’d, but soon our joy is turn’d
Into perplexity and new amaze:
For whither is he gone, what accident
Hath
Hath rapt him from us? will he now retire
After appearance, and again prolong
Our expectation? God of Israël,
Send thy Messiah forth, the time is come;
Behold the kings of the earth, how they oppress
Thy chosen; to what highth their power unjust
They have exalted, and behind them cast
All fear of thee; arise, and vindicate
Thy glory; free thy people from their yoke.
But let us wait; thus far he hath perform'd,
Sent his Anointed, and to us reveal'd him,
By his great Prophet, pointed at and shown
In publick, and with him we have convers'd;
Let us be glad of this, and all our fears
Lay on his Providence; he will not fail,
Nor will withdraw him now, nor will recall,
Mock us with his blest sight, then snatch him hence;
Soon we shall see our Hope, our Joy, return.

Thus they, out of their plaints, new hope resume
To find whom at the first they found unsought:
But, to his mother Mary, when she saw
Others return'd from Baptism, not her son,
Nor left at Jordan, tidings of him none,
Within her breast though calm, her breast though pure,
Motherly cares and fears got head, and rais’d
Some troubled thoughts, which she in sighs thus clad.

O, what avails me now that honour high
To have conceiv’d of God, or that salute,
“Hail highly favour’d, among women blest!”
While I to sorrows am no less advanc’d,
And fears as eminent, above the lot
Of other women, by the birth I bore;
In such a season born, when scarce a shed
Could be obtain’d to shelter him or me
From the bleak air; a stable was our warmth,
A manger his; yet soon enforc’d to fly
Thence into Egypt, till the murderous king
Were dead, who sought his life, and missing fill’d
With infant blood the streets of Bethlehem;
From Egypt home return’d, in Nazareth
Hath been our dwelling many years; his life
Private, unactive, calm, contemplative,
Little suspicious to any king; but now,
Full grown to man, acknowledg’d, as I hear,
By John the Baptist, and in publick shown,
Son own’d from Heaven by his Father’s voice;
I look'd for some great change; to honour? no,
But trouble, as old Simeon plain foretold,
That to the fall and rising he should be
Of many in Israël, and to a sign
Spoken against, that through my very soul
A sword shall pierce; this is my favour'd lot,
My exaltation to afflictions high;
Afflicted I may be, it seems, and blest;
I will not argue that, nor will repine.
But where delays he now? some great intent
Conceals him: when twelve years he scarce had seen,
I lost him, but so found, as well I saw
He could not lose himself; but went about
His Father's business; what he meant I mus'd,
Since understand; much more his absence now
Thus long to some great purpose he obscures.
But I to wait with patience am inur'd;
My heart hath been a store-house long of things
And sayings laid up, portending strange events.
Thus Mary, pondering oft, and oft to mind
Recalling what remarkably had pass'd
Since first her salutation heard with thoughts
Meekly compos'd awaited the fulfilling:
The while her son, tracing the desart wild,
Sole, but with holiest meditations fed,
Into himself descended, and at once
All his great work to come before him set;
How to begin, how to accomplish best
His end of being on earth, and mission high:
For Satan, with sly preface to return,
Had left him vacant, and with speed was gone
Up to the middle region of thick air,
Where all his potentates in council sat;
There, without sign of boast, or sign of joy,
Solicitous and blank, he thus began.

Princes, Heaven's ancient Sons, ethereal Thrones,
Demonian Spirits now, from the element
Each of his reign allotted, rightlier call'd
Powers of fire, air, water, and earth beneath,
(So may we hold our place and these mild seats
Without new trouble,) such an enemy
Is risen to invade us, who no less
Threatens than our expulsion down to Hell;
I, as I undertook, and with the vote
Consenting in full frequence was impower'd,
Have found him, view'd him, tasted him; but find
Far other labour to be undergone
Than when I dealt with Adam, first of Men,
Though Adam by his wife’s allurement fell,
However to this Man inferiour far;
If he be Man by mother’s side, at least
With more than human gifts from Heaven adorn’d,
Perfections absolute, graces divine,
And amplitude of mind to greatest deeds.
Therefore I am return’d, lest confidence
Of my success with Eve in Paradise
Deceive ye to persuasion over-sure
Of like succeeding here; I summon all
Rather to be in readiness, with hand
Or council to assist; lest I who erst
Thought none my equal, now be over-match’d.

So spake the old Serpent, doubting; and fro all
With clamour was assur’d their utmost aid
At his command; when from amidst them rose
Belial, the dissolutest Spirit that fell,
The sensuallest, and, after Asmodai,
The fleshliest Incubus, and thus advis’d.

Set women in his eye, and in his walk,
Among daughters of men the fairest found:

Many
Many are in each region passing fair
As the noon sky; more like to Goddesses
Than mortal creatures, graceful and discreet,
Expert in amorous arts, enchanting tongues
Persuasive, virgin majesty with mild
And sweet allay'd, yet terrible to approach,
Skill'd to retire, and, in retiring, draw
Hearts after them tangled in amorous nets.
Such object hath the power to soften and tame
Severest temper, smooth the rugged'st brow,
Enerve, and with voluptuous hope dissolve,
Draw out with credulous desire, and lead
At will the manliest, resolute'st breast,
As the magnetic hardest iron draws.
Women, when nothing else, beguil'd the heart
Of wisest Solomon, and made him build,
And made him bow to the Gods of his wives.
To whom quick answer Satan thus return'd.
Belial, in much uneven scale thou weigh'st
All others by thyself; because of old
Thou thyself doit'dst on womankind, admiring
Their shape, their colour, and attractive grace,
None are, thou think'st, but taken with such toys.

But...
Before the flood thou with thy lusty crew,
False titled sons of God, roaming the earth
Cast wanton eyes on the daughters of men,
And coupled with them, and begot a race.

Have we not seen, or by relation heard,
In courts and regal chambers how thou lurk'st,
In wood or grove, by mossy fountain side,
In valley or green meadow, to way-lay
Some beauty rare, Calisto, Clymene,
Daphne, or Semele, Antiopa,
Or Amymone, Syrinx, many more
Too long, then lay'st thy scapes on names ador'd,
Apollo, Neptune, Jupiter, or Pan,
Satyr, or Faun, or Sylvan? But these haunts
Delight not all; among the sons of men,
How many have with a smile made small account
Of beauty and her lures, easily scorn'd
All her assaults, on worthier things intent?
Remember that Pellean conqueror,
A youth, how all the beauties of the east
He slightly view'd, and slightly overpass'd;
How he, surnam'd of Africa, dismiss'd,
In his prime youth, the fair Iberian maid.
For Solomon, he liv'd at ease, and full
Of honour, wealth, high fare, aim'd not beyond
Higher design than to enjoy his state;
Thence to the bait of women lay expos'd:
But he, whom we attempt, is wiser far
Than Solomon, of mere exalted mind,
Made and set wholly on the accomplishment
Of greatest things; what woman will you find,
Though of this age the wonder and the fame,
On whom his lei-ure will vouchsafe an eye
Of fond desire; or should she, confident,
As sitting queen ador'd on Beauty's throne,
Descend with all her winning charms begirt
To enamour, as the zone of Venus once
Wrought that effect on Jove, so fables tell;
How would one look from his majestick brow.
Seated as on the top of Virtue's hill,
Discountenance her despis'd, and put to rout
All her array; her female pride deject,
Or turn to reverent awe! for beauty stands
In the admiration only of weak minds
Led captive; cease to admire, and all her plumes
Fall flat, and shrink into a trivial toy.
At every sudden slighting quite abash'd.
Therefore with manlier objects we must try
His constancy; with such as have more show
Of worth, of honour, glory, and popular praise;
Rocks whereon greatest men have oftest wreck'd;
Or that which only seems to satisfy
Lawful desires of nature, not beyond;
And now I know he hungers, where no food
Is to be found, in the wide wilderness;
The rest commit to me; I shall let pass
No advantage, and his strength as oft assay.

He ceas'd, and heard their grant in loud acclaim;
Then forthwith to him takes a chosen band
Of Spirits, likest to himself in guile,
To be at hand, and at his beck appear,
If cause were to unfold some active scene
Of various persons, each to know his part;
Then to the desert takes with these his flight;
Where, still from shade to shade, the Son of God
After forty days fasting had remain'd,
Now hungring first, and to himself thus said.

Where will this end? four times ten days I've pass'd
Wandering this woody maze, and human food
Nor tasted, nor had appetite; that first
To virtue I impute not, or count part
Or what I suffer here: if nature need not,
Or God support nature without repast
Though needing, what praise is it to endure:
But now I feel I hunger, which declares
Nature hath need of what she asks: yet God
Can satisfy that need some other way,
Though hunger still remain: so it remain
Without this body's wasting, I content me,
And from the sting of famine fear no harm,
Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts, that feed
Me hungering more to do my Father's will.

It was the hour of night, when thus the Sun
Command'd in silent walk, then had him down
Under the hospitable covert high
Of trees thick interwoven: there he slept,
And dream'd, as appetite is wont to dream.
Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet;
Him thought, he by the brook of Cherith stood,
And saw the ravens with their hungry beaks
Food to Elijah bringing, even and morn,
Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought:
He saw the prophet also, how he fled
Into the desart, and how there he slept
Under a juniper; then how awak'd
He found his supper on the coals prepar'd,
And by the Angel was bid rise and eat,
And eat the second time after repose,
The strength whereof suffic'd him forty days;
Sometimes that with Elijah he partook,
Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.
Thus wore out night; and now the herald lark
Left his ground-nest, high towering to desery
The Morn's approach, and greet her with his song;
As lightly from his grassy couch up rose
Our Saviour, and found all was but a dream;
Fasting he went to sleep, and fasting wak'd.
Up to a hill anon his steps he rear'd,
From whose high top to ken the prospect round,
If cottage were in view, sheep-cote, or herd;
But cottage, herd, or sheep-cote, none he saw,
Only in a bottom saw a pleasant grove,
With chant of tuneful birds resounding loud: 290
Thither he bent his way, determin'd there
To rest at noon, and enter'd soon the shade
H'gh roof'd, and walks beneath, and alleys brown,
That open'd in the midst a woody scene;
Nature's own work it seem'd, Nature taught Art,
And, to a superstitious eye, the haunt
Of Wood-Gods and Wood-Nymphs: he view'd it round,
When suddenly a man before him stood;
Not rustic as before, but seemlier clad,
As one in city, or court, or palace bred,
And with fair speech these words to him address'd.

With granted leave officious I return,
But much more wonder that the Son of God
In this wild solitude so long should bide
Of all things destitute, and well I know,
Not without hunger. Others of some note,
As story tells, have trod this wilderness;
The fugitive bond-woman, with her son
Out-cast Nebaioth, yet found here relief
By a providing Angel; all the race
Of Israel here had famish'd, had not God
Rain'd from Heaven Manna; and that Prophet bold,  
Native of Thebez, wandering here was fed  
Twice by a voice inviting him to eat:  
Of thee these forty days none hath regard,  
Forty and more deserted here indeed.

To whom thus Jesus. What conclud'st thou hence?  
They all had need; I, as thou seest, have none.

How hast thou hunger then? Satan replied.  
Tell me, if food were now before thee set,  
Would'st thou not eat?—Thereafter as I like  
The giver, answer'd Jesus. Why should that  
Cause thy refusal? said the subtle Fiend.  
Hast thou not right to all created things?  
Owe not all creatures by just right to thee  
Duty and service, not to stay till bid,  
But tender all their power? Nor mention I  
Meats by the Law unclean, or offer'd first  
To idols, those young Daniel could refuse;  
Nor proffer'd by an enemy, though who  
Would scruple that, with want oppress'd? Behold,  
Nature asham'd, or, better to express,  
Troubled, that thou should'st hunger, hath purvey'd  
From all the elements her choicest store
To treat thee, as beseems, and, as her Lord,
With honour: only deign to sit and eat.

He spake no dream; for as his words had end,
Our Saviour lifting up his eyes beheld,
In ample space under the broadest shade
A table richly spread, in regal mode,
With dishes pil'd, and meats of noblest sort
And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
In pastry built, or from the spit, or boil'd,
Gris-amber-steam'd; all fish, from sea or shore,
Freshet, or purling brook, of shell or fin,
And exquisitest name, for which was drain'd
Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.
(Ahas, how simple, to these cates compar'd,
Was that crude apple that diverted Eve!)
And at a stately side-board, by the wine
That fragrant smell diffus'd, in order stood
Tall stripling youths rich clad, of fairer hue
Than Ganymed or Hylas; distant more
Under the trees now tripp'd, now solemn stood,
Nymphs of Diana's train, and Naiades

With

*Gris-amber-steam'd*—Scented with ambergris; an import of luxury in Milton's time.
With fruits and flowers from Amalthea's horn,
And ladies of the Hesperides, that seem'd
Fairer than feign'd of old, or fabled since
Of faery damsels, met in forest wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.
And all the while harmonious airs were heard
Of chiming strings, or charming pipes; and winds
Of gentlest gale Arabian odours fann'd
From their soft wings, and Flora's earliest smells.
Such was the splendour; and the Tempter now
His invitation earnestly renew'd.

What doubts the Son of God to sit and eat?
These are not fruits forbidden; no interdict
Defends the touching of these viands pure;
Their taste no knowledge works, at least of evil,
But life preserves, destroys life's enemy,
Hunger, with sweet restorative delight.
All these are Spirits of air, and woods, and springs,
Thy gentle ministers, who come to pay
Thee homage, and acknowledge thee their Lord:
What doubt'st thou, Son of God? Sit down and eat.

To whom thus Jesus temperately replied.

Said'st
Said'st thou not that to all things I had right?
And who withholds my power that right to use? 380
Shall I receive by gift what of my own,
When and where likes me best, I can command?
I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou,
Command a table in this wilderness,
And call swift flights of Angels ministrant
Array'd in glory on my cup to attend:
Why should'st thou then obtrude this diligence,
In vain, where no acceptance it can find?
And with my hunger what hast thou to do?
Thy pompous delicacies I contemn,
And count thy specious gifts no gifts but guiles.

To whom thus answer'd Satan malecontent.
That I have also power to give, thou seest;
If of that power I bring thee voluntary
What I might have best ow'd on whom I pleas'd,
And rather opportunely in this place
Chose to impart to thy apparent need,
Why should'st thou not accept it? but I see
What I can do or offer is suspect:
Of these things others quickly will dispose,
Whose pains have earn'd the far-set spoil. With that
Both table and provision vanish'd quite
With sound of harpies wings, and talons heard;
Only the impőrtune Tempter still remain'd,
And with these words his temptation pursu'd.

By hunger, that each other creature tames,
Thou art not to be harm'd, therefore not mov'd;
Thy temperance, invincible besides,
For no allurement yields to appetite,
And all thy heart is set on high designs,

High actions; but wherewith to be achiev'd?
Great acts require great means of enterprize;
Thou art unknown, unfriended, low of birth,
A carpenter thy father known, thyself
Bred up in poverty and straits at home,
Lost in a desert here and hunger-bit:
Which way, or from what hope, dost thou aspire
To greatness? whence authority deriv'st?
What followers, what retinue canst thou gain,
Or at thy heels the dizzy multitude,

Longer than thou canst feed them on thy cost?
Money brings honour, friends, conquest, and realms:
What rais'd Antipater the Edomite,
And his son Herod plac'd on Judah's throne,

(Thy
(Thy throne) but gold that got him puissant friends?
Therefore, if at great things thou would'st arrive,
Get riches first, get wealth, and treasure heap,
Not difficult, if thou hearken to me:
Riches are mine, fortune is in my hand;
They whom I favour thrive in wealth amain,
While virtue, valour, wisdom sit in want.

To whom thus Jesus patiently replied,
Yet wealth, without these three, is impotent
To gain dominion, or to keep it gain'd.
Witness those ancient empires of the earth,
In bigness of all their flowing wealth dissolv'd:
But men endued with these have oft attain'd
In lowest poverty to highest deeds:
Gideon, and Jephtha, and the shepherd lad.
Whose offspring on the throne of Judah sat

So many ages, and shall yet regain
That seat, and reign in Israel without end.
Among the Heathen, till throughout the world
To me is not unknown what hath been done
Worthy of memorial: canst thou not remember
Quintus, Fabrius, Curius, Regulus?
For I esteem those names of men so poor.
Who could do mighty things, and could contemn
Riches though offer'd from the hand of kings,
And what in me seems wanting, but that I
May also in this poverty as soon
Accomplish what they did, perhaps and more?
Extol not riches then; the toil of fools,
The wise man's cumbrance, if not snare; more apt
To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,
Than prompt her to do ought may merit praise.
What if with like aversion I reject
Riches and realms? yet not, for that a crown,
Golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns,
Brings dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights
To him who wears the regal diadem,
When on his shoulders each man's burden lies;
For therein stands the office of a king,
His honour, virtue, merit, and chief praise,
That for the publick all this weight he bears.
Yet he, who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
Subject himself to anarchy within,  
Or lawless passions in him which he serves.  
But to guide nations in the way of truth  
By saving doctrine, and from error lead  
To know, and knowing worship God aright,  
Is yet more kingly; this attracts the soul,  
Govern the inner man, the nobler part;  
That other o'er the body only reigns,  
And oft by force, which, to a generous mind,  
So reigning, can be no sincere delight.  

Besides, to give a kingdom hath been thought  
Greater and nobler done, and to lay down  
Far more magnanimous, than to assume.  
Riches are needless then, both for themselves,  
And for thy reason why they should be sought,  
To gain a scepter, oftest better miss'd.

THE END OF THE SECOND BOOK.
THE

THIRD BOOK

OF

PARADISE REGAIN'D.
PARADISE REGAIN'D.

BOOK III.

So spake the Son of God; and Satan stood
A while, as mute, confounded what to say,
What to reply, confuted, and convinced
Of his weak arguing, and fallacious drift;
At length, collecting all his serpent wiles,
With soothing words renew'd, him thus accosts,
I see thou know'st what is of use to know,
What best to say canst say, to do canst do;
Thy actions to thy words accord, thy words
To thy large heart give utterance due, thy heart
Contains of good, wise, just, the perfect shape.
Should kings and nations from thy mouth consult,
Thy counsel would be as the oracle
Urim and Thummim, those oraculous gems
On Aaron's breast; or tongue of seers old
Infallible: or wert thou sought to deeds
That might require the array of war, thy skill
Of conduct would be such, that all the world
Could not sustain thy prowess, or subsist
In battle, though against thy few in arms.

These God-like virtues wherefore dost thou hide,
Affecting private life, or more obscure
In savage wilderness? wherefore deprive
All earth her wonder at thy acts, thyself
The fame and glory, glory the reward
That sole excites to high attempts, the flame
Of most erected spirits, most temper'd pure
Ethereal, who all pleasures else despise,
All treasures and all gain esteem as dross,
And dignities and powers all but the highest:

Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe; the son
Of Macedonian Philip had ere these
Won Asia, and the throne of Cyrus held
At his dispose; young Scipio had brought down
The Carthaginian pride; young Pompey quell'd
The Pontic king, and in triumph had rode.
Yet years, and to ripe years judgement mature,
Quench not the thirst of glory, but augment.
Great Julius, whom now all the world admires,
The more he grew in years, the more inflam'd
With glory, wept that he had liv'd so long
Inglorious: but thou yet art not too late.

To whom our Saviour calmly thus replied.

Thou neither dost persuade me to seek wealth
For empire's sake, nor empire to affect
For glory's sake, by all thy argument.
For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people's praise, if always praise unmix'd?
And what the people but a herd confus'd,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things vulgar, and, well weigh'd, scarce worth the praise?

They praise, and they admire, they know not what,
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
And what delight to be by such extoll'd,
To live upon their tongues and be their talk,
Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise?
His lot who dares be singularly good.
The intelligent among them and the wise
Are few, and glory scarce of few is rais'd.
This is true glory and renown, when God
Looking on the earth, with approbation marks
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
To all his Angels, who with true applause
Recount his praises: thus he did to Job,
When, to extend his fame through Heaven and Earth,
As thou to thy reproach may'st well remember,
He ask'd thee, "Hast thou seen my servant Job?"
Famous he was in Heaven, on Earth less known;
Where glory is false glory, attributed
To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame. 70
They err, who count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide, to over-run
Large countries, and in field great battles win,
Great cities by assault: what do these worthies,
But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
Peaceable nations, neighbouring, or remote,
Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
Than those their conquerors, who leave behind
Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,
And all the flourishing works of peace destroy: 80
Then swell with pride, and must be titled Gods,
Great Benefactors of mankind, Deliverers,
Worshipt with temple, priest, and sacrifice?
One is the son of Jove, of Mars the other;
Till conqueror Death discover them scarce men,
Rolling in brutish vices and deform’d,
Violent or shameful death their due reward.
But if there be in glory ought of good,
It may by means far different be attain’d,
Without ambition, war, or violence;
By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance: I mention still
Him, whom thy wrongs, with saintly patience borne,
Made famous in a land and times obscure;
Who names not now with honour patient Job?
Poor Socrates, (who next more memorable?)
By what he taught, and suffer’d for so doing,
For truth’s sake suffering death, unjust, lives now
Equal in fame to proudest conquerors.
Yet if for fame and glory aught be done
Aught suffer’d; if young African for fame
His wasted country freed from Punic rage;
The deed becomes unprais’d, the man at least,
And loses, though but verbal, his reward.
Shall I seek glory then, as vain men seek,
Oft not deserve’d? I seek not mine, but his
Who sent me; and thereby witness whence I am.

To
To whom the Tempter murmuring thus replied.

Think not so slight of glory; therein least
Resembling thy great Father: He seeks glory,
And for his glory all things made, all things
Orders and governs: nor content in Heaven
By all his Angels glorified, requires
Glory from men, from all men, good or bad,
Wise or unwise, no difference, no exemption;
Above all sacrifice, or hallow'd gift,
Glory he requires, and glory he receives
Promiscuous from all nations, Jew, or Greek,
Or barbarous, nor exception hath declar'd:
From us, his foes pronounced, glory he exacts.

To whom our Saviour fervently replied.

And reason; since his Word all things produc'd.
Though chiefly not for glory as prime end,
But to show forth his goodness, and impart
His good communicable to every soul
Freely; of whom what could he less expect
Than glory and benediction, that is, thanks,
The slightest, easiest, readiest recompence
From them who could return him nothing else.
And, not returning that, would likeliest render
Contemp
Contempt instead, dishonour, obloquy?
Hard recompence, unsuitable return
For so much good, so much beneficence!
But why should Man seek glory, who of his own
Hath nothing, and to whom nothing belongs,
But condemnation, ignominy, and shame?
Who, for so many benefits receiv'd,
Turn'd recreant to God, ingrate and false,
And so of all true good himself despoil'd,
Yet, sacrilegious, to himself would take
That which to God alone of right belongs:
Yet so much bounty is in God, such grace,
That who advance his glory, not their own.
Them he himself to glory will advance.

So spake the Son of God; and here again
Satan had not to answer, but stood struck
With guilt of his own sin; for he himself,
Insatiable of glory, had lost all,
Yet of another plea bethought him soon.

Of glory, as thou wilt, said he, so deem,
Worth or not worth the seeking, let it pass:
But to a kingdom thou art born, ordain'd
To sit upon thy father David's throne;
By mother’s side thy father; though thy right
Be now in powerful hands, that will not part
Easily from possession won with arms:
Judæa now and all the Promis’d Land,
Reduc’d a province under Roman yoke,
Obeys Tiberius: nor is always rul’d
With temperate sway; oft have they violated
The temple, oft the law, with foul affronts,
Abominations rather, as did once
Antiochus: and think’st thou to regain
Thy right, by sitting still, or thus retiring?
So did not Maccabeus: he indeed
Retir’d unto the desert, but with arms;
And o’er a mighty king so oft prevail’d,
That by strong hand his family obtain’d,
Though priests, the crown, and David’s throne usurp’d,
With Modin and her suburbs once content.

If kingdom move thee not, let move thee zeal
And duty; zeal and duty are not slow,
But on occasion’s forelock watchful wait:
They themselves rather are occasion best;
Zeal of thy father’s house, duty to free
Thy country from her Heathen servitude;
So shalt thou best fulfil, best verify
The Prophets old, who sung thy endless reign;
The happier reign, the sooner it begins:

Reign then; what canst thou better do the while?

To whom our Saviour answer thus return'd.
All things are best fullfil'd in their due time,
And time there is for all things, Truth hath said.
If of my reign prophetic Writ hath told,
That it shall never end, so, when begin,
The Father in his purpose hath decreed,
He in whose hand all times and seasons roll.
What if he hath decreed that I shall first
Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,
By tribulations, injurious, insults,
Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,
Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting,
Without distrust or doubt, that he may know
What I can suffer, how obey? Who best
Can suffer, best can do; best reign, who first
Well hath obey'd; just trial, ere I merit
My exaltation without change or end.
But what concerns it thee, when I begin
My everlasting kingdom? Why art thou

Solicitous?
Solicitous? What moves thy inquisition?

Know'st thou not that my rising is thy fall,
And my promotion will be thy destruction?

To whom the Tempter, inly rack'd, replied.

Let that come when it comes; all hope is lost

Of my reception into grace: what worse?

For where no hope is left, is left no fear:

If there be worse, the expectation more

Of worse torments me than the feeling can.

I would be at the worst: worst is my port,

My harbour, and my ultimate repose;

The end I would attain, my final good.

My error was my error, and my crime

My crime; whatever, for itself condemn'd;

And will alike be punish'd, whether thou

Reign, or reign not; though to that gentle brow

Willingly I could fly, and hope thy reign,

From that placid aspect and meek regard,

Rather than aggravate my evil state,

Would stand between me and thy Father's ire,

(Whose ire I dread more than the fire of Hell)

A shelter, and a kind of shading cool

Interposition, as a summer's cloud.
If I then to the worst that can be haste,
Why move thy feet so slow to what is best,
Happiest, both to thyself and all the world,
That thou, who worthiest art, should'st be their king?
Perhaps thou linger'st, in deep thoughts detain'd
Of the enterprize so hazardous and high;
No wonder; for, though in thee be united
What of perfection can in man be found,
Or human nature can receive, consider,
Thy life hath yet been private, most part spent
At home, scarce view'd the Galilean towns,
And once a year Jerusalem, few days'
Short sojourn; and what thence could'st thou observe?
The world thou hast not seen, much less her glory,
Empires, and monarchs, and their radiant courts,
Best school of best experience, quickest insight
In all things that to greatest actions lead.
The wisest, unexperienced, will be ever
Timorous and loth, with novice modesty,
(As he who, seeking asses, found a kingdom)
Irresolute, unhardy, unadventurous:
But I will bring thee where thou soon shalt quit
Those rudiments, and see before thine eyes
The monarchies of the earth, their pomp and state;
Sufficient introduction to inform
Thee, of thyself so apt, in regal arts,
And regal mysteries, that thou may'st know
How best their opposition to withstand.

With that (such power was given him then) he took
The Son of God up to a mountain high.
It was a mountain at whose verdant feet
A spacious plain, out stretch'd in circuit wide,
Lay pleasant; from his side two rivers flow'd,
The one winding, the other straight, and left between
Fair champain with less rivers intervein'd,
Then meeting join'd their tribute to the sea:
Fertile of corn the glebe, of oil, and wine;
With herds the pastures throng'd, with flocks the hills;
Huge cities and high tower'd, that well might seem
The seats of mightiest monarchs; and so large
The prospect was, that here and there was room
For barren desart, fountainless and dry.
To this high mountain top the Tempter brought
Our Saviour, and new train of words began.

Well have we speeded, and o'er hill and dale,
Forest and field and flood, temples and towers,
Cut shorter many a league; here thou behold'st
Assyria, and her empire's ancient bounds,
Araxes and the Caspian lake; thence on
As far as Indus east, Euphrates west,
And oft beyond: to south the Persian bay,
And, inaccessible, the Arabian drouth:
Here Nineveh, of length within her wall
Several days journey, built by Ninus old,
Of that first golden monarchy the seat,
And seat of Salmanassar, whose success
Israel in long captivity still mourns;
There Babylon, the wonder of all tongues,
As ancient, but rebuilt by him who twice
Judah and all thy father David's house
Led captive, and Jerusalem laid waste,
Till Cyrus set them free; Persepolis,
His city, there thou seest, and Bactra there;
Ecbatana her structure vast there shows,
And Hecatompylos her hundred gates;
There Susa by Choaspes, amber stream,
The drink of none but kings; of later fame
Built by Emathian, or by Parthian hands,
The great Seleucia, Nisibis, and there
Artaxata, Teredon, Ctesiphon,
Turning with easy eye, thou may'st behold.
All these the Parthian, (now some ages past,
By great Arsaces led, who founded first
That empire,) under his dominion holds,
From the luxurious kings of Antioch won.
And just in time thou com'st to have a view
Of his great power; for now the Parthian king
In Ctesiphon hath gather'd all his host
Against the Scythian, whose incursions wild
Have wasted Sogdiana; to her aid
He marches now in haste; see, though from far,
His thousands, in what martial equipage
They issue forth, steel bows and shafts their arms
Of equal dread in flight, or in pursuit;
All horsemen, in which fight they most excel;
See how in warlike muster they appear,
In rhombs, and wedges, and half-moons, and wings.
He look'd, and saw what numbers numberless
The city gates out-pour'd, light armed troops
In coats of mail and military pride;
In mail their horses clad, yet fleet and strong,
Fanciing their riders bore, the flower and choice
Of many provinces from bound to bound;
From Arachosia, from Candaor east,
And Margiana to the Hyrcanian cliffs
Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales,
From Atropatia and the neighbouring plains
Of Adiabene, Media, and the south
Of Susiana, to Balsara’s haven.

He saw them in their forms of battle rang’d,
How quick they wheel’d, and flying behind them shot
Sharp sleet of arrowy showers against the face
Of their pursuers, and overcame by flight;
The field all iron cast a gleaming brown:
Nor wanted clouds of foot, nor on each horn
Cuirassiers all in steel for standing fight,
Chariots, or elephants indors’d with towers
Of archers; nor of labouring pioneers
A multitude, with spades and axes arm’d
To lay hills plain, fell woods, or valleys fill,
Or where plain was raise hill, or overlay
With bridges rivers proud, as with a yoke;
Mules after these, camels and dromedaries,
And waggons, fraught with utensils of war.
Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,
When Agrican with all his northern powers
Besieg'd Albracca, as romances tell,
The city of Gallaphrone, from whence to win
The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
His daughter, sought by many prowest knights,
Both Paynim, and the peers of Charlemain.
Such and so numerous was their chivalry:
At sight whereof the Fiend yet more presum'd,
And to our Saviour thus his words renew'd.

That thou may'st know I seek not to engage
Thy virtue, and not every way secure
On no slight grounds thy safety; hear, and mark,
To what end I have brought thee hither, and shown
All this fair sight: Thy kingdom, though foretold
By Prophet or by Angel, unless thou
Endeavour, as thy father David did,
Thou never shalt obtain; prediction still
In all things, and all men, supposes means,
Without means us'd, what it predicts revokes.
But, say thou wert possess'd of David's throne,
By free consent of all, none opposite,
Samaritan or Jew; how could'st thou hope
Long to enjoy it, quiet and secure,

Between
Between two such enclosing enemies
Roman and Parthian? Therefore one of these
Thou must make sure thy own; the Parthian first
By my advice, as nearer, and of late
Found able by invasion to annoy
Thy country, and captive lead away her kings,
Antigonus, and old Hyrcanus, bound,
Maugre the Roman: It shall be my task
To render thee the Parthian at dispose,
Choose which thou wilt, by conquest or by league.
By him thou shalt regain, without him not,
That which alone can truly reinstall thee
In David's royal seat, his true successor,
Deliverance of thy brethren, those ten tribes,
Whose offspring in his territory yet serve,
In Habor, and among the Medes dispers'd;
Ten sons of Jacob, two of Joseph, lost
Thus long from Israel, serving, as of old
Their fathers in the land of Egypt serv'd,
This offer sets before thee to deliver.
These if from servitude thou shalt restore
To their inheritance, then, nor till then,
Thou on the throne of David in full glory,
From Egypt to Euphrates, and beyond,
Shalt reign, and Rome or Cæsar not need fear.

    To whom our Saviour answer'd thus, unmov'd.
Much ostentation vain of fleshly arm,
And fragil arms, much instrument of war
Long in preparing, soon to nothing brought,
Before mine eyes thou hast set; and in my ear

    Vented much policy, and projects deep
Of enemies, of aids, battles and leagues,
Plausible to the world, to me worth nought.
Means I must use, thou say'st, prediction else
Will unpredict, and fail me of the throne:
My time, I told thee, (and that time for thee
Were better farthest off) is not yet come;
When that comes, think not thou to find me slack
On my part aught endeavouring, or to need
Thy politick maxims, or that cumbersome

    Luggage of war there shown me, argument
Of human weakness rather than of strength.
My brethren, as thou call'st them, those ten tribes
I must deliver, if I mean to reign
David's true heir, and his full scepter sway
To just extent over all Israel's sons;

    But
But whence to thee this zeal, where was it then
For Israel, or for David, or his throne,
When thou stood'st up his tempter to the pride
Of numb'ring Israel, which cost the lives
Of threescore and ten thousand Israelites
By three days pestilence? such was thy zeal
To Israel then; the same that now to me!
As for those captive tribes, themselves were they
Who wrought their own captivity, fell off
From God to worship calves, the deities
Of Egypt, Baal next and Ashtaroth,
And all the idolatries of Heathen round,
Besides their other worse than heath'nish crimes;
Nor in the land of their captivity
Humbled themselves, or penitent besought
The God of their forefathers; but so died
Impenitent, and left a race behind
Like to themselves, distinguishable scarce
From Gentiles, but by circumcision vain;
And God with idols in their worship join'd.
Should I of these the liberty regard,
Who, freed, as to their ancient patrimony,
Unhumbled, unrepentant, unrefor'm'd,
Headlong would follow; and to their Gods perhaps 
Of Bethel and of Dan? No; let them serve 
Their enemies, who serve idols with God. 
Yet he at length, (time to himself best known,) 
Remembering Abraham, by some wondrous call 
May bring them back repentant and sincere, 
And at their passing cleave the Assyrian flood, 
While to their native land with joy they haste; 
As the Red Sea and Jordan once he cleft, 
When to the Promis’d Land their fathers pass’d: 
To his due time and providence I leave them. 

So spake Israel’s true king, and to the Fiend 
Made answer meet, that made void all his wiles. 
So fares it, when with truth falsehood contends.
THE

FOURTH BOOK

OR

ST.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.
PARADISE REGAIN'D.

BOOK IV.

Perplex'd and troubled at his bad success
The Tempter stood, nor had what to reply,
Discover'd in his fraud, thrown from his hope
So oft, and the persuasive rhetorick
That sleek'd his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
So little here, nay lost; but Eve was Eve;
This far his over-match, who, self-deceiv'd
And rash, before-hand had no better weigh'd
The strength he was to cope with, or his own:
But as a man, who had been matchless held
In cunning, over-reach'd where least he thought,
To salve his credit, and for very spite,
Still will be tempting him who foils him still,
And never cease, though to his shame the more;
Or as a swarm of flies in vintage time,
About the wine-press where sweet must is pour'd,

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Bea
Beat off, returns as oft with humming sound;
Or surging waves against a solid rock,
Though all to shivers dash'd, the assault renew,
(Vain battery!) and in froth or bubbles end;
So Satan, whom repulse upon repulse
Met ever, and to shameful silence brought,
Yet gives not o'er, though desperate of success,
And his vain importunity pursues.
He brought our Saviour to the western side
Of that high mountain, whence he might behold
Another plain, long, but in breadth not wide,
Wash'd by the southern sea, and, on the north,
To equal length back'd with a ridge of hills,
That screen'd the fruits of the earth, and seats of men,
From cold Septentrion blasts, thence in the midst
Divided by a river, of whose banks
On each side an imperial city stood,
With towers and temples proudly elevate
On seven small hills, with palaces adorn'd,
Porches, and theatres, baths, aqueducts,
Statues, and trophies, and triumphal arcs,
Gardens, and groves, presented to his eyes,
Above the highth of mountains interpos'd:
(By what strange parallax, or optick skill
Of vision, multiplied through air, or glass
Of telescope, were curious to inquire:)
And now the Tempter thus his silence broke.

The city, which thou seest, no other deem
Than great and glorious Rome, queen of the earth,
So far renown'd, and with the spoils enrich'd
Of nations; there the Capitol thou seest
Above the rest lifting his stately head
On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel
Impregnable; and there mount Palatine,
The imperial palace, compass huge, and high
The structure, skill of noblest architects,
With gilded battlements, conspicuous far,
Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires:
Many a fair edifice besides, more like
Houses of Gods, (so well I have dispos'd
My aery microscope) thou may'st behold
Outside and inside both, pillars and roofs,
Carv'd work, the hand of fam'd artificers,
In cedar, marble, ivory, or gold.
Thence to the gates cast round thine eye, and see
What conflux issuing forth, or entering in,
Prætors, proconsuls to their provinces
Hasting, or on return, in robes of state,
Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power,
Legions and cohorts, turms of horse and wings:
Or embassies from regions far remote,
In various habits, on the Appian road,
Or on the Emilian, some from farthest south,
Syene, and where the shadow both way falls,
Meroe, Nilotic isle, and, more to west,
The realm of Bocchus to the Black-moor sea;
From the Asian kings, and Parthian among these;
From India and the golden Chersonese,
And utmost Indian isle Taprobane,
Dusk faces with white silken turbans wreath'd;
From Gallia, Gades, and the British west;
Germans, and Scythians, and Sarmatians, north
Beyond Danubius to the Tauric pool.
All nations now to Rome obedience pay,
To Rome's great emperor, whose wide domain,
In ample territory, wealth, and power,
Civility of manners, arts and arms,
And long renown, thou justly may'st prefer
Before the Parthian. These two thrones except,
The rest are barbarous, and scarce worth the sight,
Shar'd among petty kings too far remov'd;
These having shown thee, I have shown thee all
The kingdoms of the world, and all their glory.
This emperor hath no son, and now is old,
Old and lascivious, and from Rome retir'd
To Capreae, an island small, but strong
On the Campanian shore, with purpose there
His horrid lusts in private to enjoy;
Committing to a wicked favourite
All publick cares, and yet of him suspicious;
Hated of all, and hating. With what ease,
Endued with regal virtues, as thou art,
Appearing, and beginning noble deeds,
Might'st thou expel this monster from his throne,
Now made a stye, and, in his place ascending,
A victor people free from servile yoke!
And with my help thou may'st; to me the power
Is given, and by that right I give it thee.
Aim therefore at no less than all the world;
Aim at the highest, without the highest attain'd
Will be for thee no sitting, or not long,
On David's throne, be prophesied what will.
To whom the Son of God, unmov'd, replied.

Nor doth this grandeur and majestick show
Of luxury, though call'd magnificence,
More than of arms before, allure mine eye,
Much less my mind; though thou should'st add to tell
Their sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts
On citron tables or Atlantic stone,
(For I have also heard, perhaps have read,)
Their wines of Setia, Cales, and Falerne,
Chios, and Crete, and how they quaff' in gold,
Crystal, and myrrhine cups, emboss'd with gems
And studs of pearl; to me should'st tell, who thirst
And hunger still. Then embassies thou show'st
From nations far and nigh: what honour that,
But tedious waste of time, to sit and hear
So many hollow compliments and lies,
Outlandish flatteries? Then proceed'st to talk:
Of the emperor, how easily subdued,
How gloriously; I shall, thou say'st, expel
A brutish monster: what if I withal
Expel a Devil who first made him such?
Let his tormenter conscience find him out;
For him I was not sent; nor yet to free

That
That people, victor once, now vile and base;
Deservedly made vassal; who, once just,
Frugal, and mild, and temperate, conquer'd well,
But govern ill the nations under yoke,
Peeling their provinces, exhausted all
By lust and rapine; first ambitious grown
Of triumph, that insulting vanity;
Then cruel, by their sports to blood inur'd
Of fighting beasts, and men to beasts expos'd,
Luxurious by their wealth, and greedier still,
And from the daily scene effeminate.
What wise and valiant man would seek to free
These, thus degenerate, by themselves enslav'd.
Or could of inward slaves make outward free?
Know therefore, when my season comes to sit
On David's throne, it shall be like a tree
Spreading and overshadowing all the earth;
Or as a stone shot shall to pieces dash
All monarchies besides throughout the world;
And of my kingdom there shall be no end:
Means there shall be to this, but what the means,
Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell.
To whom the Tempter, impudent, replied.
I see all offers made by me how slight
Thou valuest, because offer'd, and reject'st:
Nothing will please the difficult and nice,
Or nothing more than still to contradict:
On the other side know also thou, that I
On what I offer set as high esteem,
Nor what I part with mean to give for nought;
All these, which in a moment thou behold'st,
The kingdoms of the world, to thee I give,
(For, given to me, I give to whom I please,)
No trifle; yet with this reserve, not else,
On this condition, if thou wilt fall down,
And worship me as thy superiour lord,
(Easily done,) and hold them all of me;
For what can less so great a gift deserve?

Whom thus our Saviour answer'd with disdain.
I never lik'd thy talk, thy offers less;
Now both abhor, since thou hast dar'd to utter
The abominable terms, impious condition;
But I endure the time, till which expir'd
Thou hast permission on me. It is written,
The first of all commandments, Thou shalt worship
The Lord thy God, and only him shalt serve;
And dar'st thou to the Son of God propound
To worship thee accurs'd? now more accurs'd
For this attempt, bolder than that on Eve,
And more blasphemous; which expect to rue.
The kingdoms of the world to thee were given?
Permitted rather, and by thee usurp'd;
Other donation none thou canst produce:
If given, by whom but by the King of kings,
God over all supreme? if given to thee,
By thee how fairly is the giver now
Repaid! But gratitude in thee is lost
Long since. Wert thou so void of fear or shame,
As offer them to me, the Son of God?
To me my own, on such abhorred pact,
That I fall down and worship thee as God?
Get thee behind me; plain thou now appear'st
That Evil one, Satan for ever damn'd.
To whom the Fiend, with fear abash'd, replied.
Be not so sore offended, Son of God,
Though sons of God both Angels are and Men,
If I, to try whether in higher sort
Than these thou bear'st that title have propos'd
What both from Men and Angels I receive,
Tetrarchs of fire, air, flood, and on the earth,
Nations besides from all the quarter'd winds,
God of this world invok'd, and world beneath;
Who then thou art, whose coming is foretold
To me so fatal, me it most concerns;
The trial hath indamag'd thee no way,
Rather more honour left and more esteem:
Me nought advantag'd, missing what I aim'd.
Therefore let pass, as they are transitory,
The kingdoms of this world; I shall no more
Advise thee; gain them as thou canst, or not.
And thou thyself seem'st otherwise inclin'd
Than to a worldly crown; addicted more
To contemplation and profound dispute,
As by that early action may be judg'd,
When, slipping from thy mother's eye, thou went'st
Alone into the temple; there was found
Among thegravest Rabbies, disputant
On points and questions fitting Moses' chair
Teaching, not taught. The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day. Be famous then
By wisdom; as thy empire must extend,
So let extend thy mind o'er all the world
In knowledge, all things in it comprehend.
All knowledge is not couch'd in Moses' law,
The Pentateuch, or what the Prophets wrote;
The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach
To admiration, led by Nature's light;
And with the Gentiles much thou must converse,
Ruling them by persuasion, as thou mean'st;
Without their learning, how wilt thou with them,
Or they with thee, hold conversation meet?
How wilt thou reason with them, how refute
Their idolisms, traditions, paradoxes?
Error by his own arms is best evinc'd.
Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount
Westward, much nearer by southwest, behold
Where on the Ægean shore a city stands
Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil;
Athens the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess.
City or suburban, studious walks and shades;
See there the olive grove of Academe,
Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long;
There flowery hill Hymettus, with the sound
Of bees' industrious murmur, oft invites
To studious musing; there Ilissus rolls
His whispering stream: within the walls, then view
The schools of ancient sages: his, who bred
Great Alexander to subdue the world,
Lyceum there, and painted Stoa next:
There shalt thou hear and learn the secret power
Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit
By voice or hand; and various-measur'd verse,
Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,
And his, who gave them breath, but higher sung,
Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer call'd,
Whose poem Phoebus challeng'd for his own.
Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
In Chorus or Jambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight receiv'd
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life;
High actions, and high passions best describing:
Thence to the famous orators repair,
Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence
Wielded at will their stroke democratic,
Shook the arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece,
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne:
To sage Philosophy next lend thine ear,
From Heaven descended to the low-roofed house
Of Socrates; see there his tenement,
Whom well inspir'd the oracle pronounc'd
Wisest of men; from whose mouth issued forth
Mellifluous streams, that water'd all the schools
Of Academics old and new, with those
Sirnam'd Peripatetics, and the sect
Epicurean, and the Stoic severe;
These here revolve, or, as thou lik'st, at home,
Till time mature thee to a kingdom's weight;
These rules will render thee a king complete
Within thyself, much more with empire join'd.

To whom our Saviour sagely thus replied.
Think not but that I know these things, or think
I know them not; not therefore am I short
Of knowing what I ought: he who receives
Light from above, from the fountain of light,
No other doctrine needs, though granted true;
But these are false, or little else but dreams,
Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm.
The first and wisest of them all profess'd
To know this only, that he nothing knew;
The next to fabling fell, and smooth conceits;
A third sort doubted all things, though plain sense;
Others in virtue plac'd felicity,
But virtue join'd with riches and long life;
In corporal pleasure he, and careless ease;
The Stoic last in philosophic pride, 300
By him call'd virtue; and his virtuous man,
Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing,
Equals to God, oft shames not to prefer,
As fearing God nor man, contemning all
Wealth, pleasure, pain or torment, death and life,
Which, when he lists, he leaves, or boasts he can.
For all his tedious talk is but vain boast,
Or subtle shifts conviction to evade.
Alas! what can they teach, and not mislead,
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more, 310
And how the world began, and how man fell
Degraded by himself, on grace depending?
Much of the soul they talk, but all awry,
And in themselves seek virtue, and to themselves
All glory arrogate, to God give none;
Rather accuse him under usual names,
Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
Of mortal things. Who therefore seeks in these
True wisdom, finds her not; or, by delusion,
Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
An empty cloud. However many books,
Wise men have said, are wearisome; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
(And what he brings what needs he elsewhere seek?)
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep vers'd in books, and shallow in himself,
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge;
As children gathering pebbles on the shore.
Or, if I would delight my private hours
With musick or with poem, where, so soon
As in our native language, can I find
That solace? All our law and story strewn
With hymns, our psalms with artful terms inscrib'd,
Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon
That pleas'd so well our victors' ear, declare
That rather Greece from us these arts deriv'd;
ill imitated, while they loudest sing
The vices of their Deities, and their own,
In fable, hymn, or song, so personating
Their Gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.
Remove their swelling epithets, thick laid
As varnish on a harlot's check, the rest,
Thin sown with outh of profit or delight.
Will far be found unworthy to compare
With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
Where God is prais'd aright, and God-like men,
The Holiest of Holies, and his Saints,
(Such are from God inspir'd, not such from thee,)
Unless where moral virtue is express'd
By light of Nature, not in all quite lost.
Their orators thou then extoll'st, as those
The top of eloquence, statists indeed,
And lovers of their country, as may seem;
But herein to our prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government,
In their majestick unaffected style,
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.

Plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,
What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat;
These only with our law best form a king.

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

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

So saying he took (for still he knew his power
Not yet expir'd) and to the wilderness
Brought back the Son of God, and left him there,
Feigning to disappear. Darkness now rose,
As day-light sunk, and brought in lowering Night,
Her shadowy off-spring, unsubstantial both,
Privation more of Light and absent day.

Our Saviour meek, and with untroubled mind
After his aery jaunt, though hurried sore,
Hungry and cold, betook him to his rest,
Wherever, under some concourse of shades,
Whose branching arms thick intertwined might shield
From dews and damps of night his shelter'd head;
But, shelter'd, slept in vain: for at his head
The
The Tempter watch'd, and soon with ugly dreams
Disturb'd his sleep. And either tropic now
'Gan thunder, and both ends of Heaven; the clouds
From many a horrid rift abortive pour'd
Fierce rain with lightning mix'd, water with fire
In ruin reconcil'd: nor slept the winds
Within their stony caves, but rush'd abroad
From the four hinges of the world, and fell
On the vex'd wilderness, whose tallest pines,
Though rooted deep as high, and sturdiest oaks,
Bow'd their stiff necks, loaden with stormy blasts,
Or torn up sheer ill wast thou shrouded then,
O patient Son of God, yet only stood'st
Unshaken! Nor yet stay'd the terror there,
Infernal ghosts, and hellish furies, round
Environ'd thee, some howl'd, some yell'd, some
shriek'd,
Some bent at thee their fiery darts while thou
Satst unappall'd in calm and sinless peace!
Thus pass'd the night so foul, till Morning fair
Came forth, with pilgrim steps in anrice gray;
Who with her radiant finger still'd the roar
Of thunder, chas'd the clouds, and laid the winds,
And grisly spectres, which the Fiend had rais'd
To tempt the Son of God with terrors dire.
And now the sun with more effectual beams
Had cheer'd the face of earth, and dried the wet
From drooping plant, or dropping tree; the birds,
Who all things now behold more fresh and green,
After a night of storm so ruinous,
Clear'd up their choicest notes in bush and spray,
To gratulate the sweet return of morn;
Nor yet, amidst this joy and brightest morn,
Was absent, after all his mischief done,
The Prince of darkness, glad would also seem
Of this fair change, and to our Saviour came;
Yet with no new device, (they all were spent,)
Rather by this his last affront resolv'd,
Desperate of better course to vent his rage,
And mad despite to be so oft repell'd.
Him walking on a sunny hill he found,
Back'd on the north and west by a thick wood;
Out of the wood he starts in wonted shape,
And in a careless mood thus to him said
Fair morning yet betides thee, Son of God,
After a dismal night; I heard the wrack
As earth and sky would mingle; but myself
Was distant; and these flaws, though mortals fear them
As dangerous to the pillar'd frame of Heaven,
Or to the earth's dark basis underneath,
Are to the main as inconsiderable,
And harmless, if not wholesome, as a sneeze
To man's less universe, and soon are gone;
Yet as being oft times noxious where they light
On man, beast, plant, wasteful and turbulent,
Like turbulencies in the affairs of men,
Over whose heads they roar, and seem to point,
They oft fore-signify and threaten ill:
This tempest at this desart most was bent;
Of men at thee, for only thou here dwell'st.
Did I not tell thee, if thou didst reject
The perfect season offer'd with my aid
To win thy destin'd seat, but wilt prolong
All to the push of fate, pursue thy way
Of gaining David's throne, no man knows when,
For both the when and how is no where told?
Thou shalt be what thou art ordain'd, no doubt;
For Angels have proclaim'd it, but concealing
The time and means. Each act is rightliest done,

Not
Not when it must, but when it may be best:
If thou observe not this, be sure to find,
What I foretold thee, many a hard assay
Of dangers, and adversities, and pains,
Ere thou of Israel's scepter get fast hold;
Whereof this ominous night, that clos'd thee round,
So many terrors, voices, prodigies
May warn thee, as a sure fore-going sign.

So talk'd he, while the Son of God went on
And stay'd not, but in brief him answer'd thus.

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

To
To whom the Fiend, now swoln with rage replied,
Then hear, O Son of David, Virgin-born,
For Son of God to me is yet in doubt;
Of the Messiah I had heard foretold
By all the Prophets; of thy birth at length,
Announc'd by Gabriel, with the first I knew,
And of the angelick song in Bethlehem field,
On thy birth-night that sung thee Saviour born.
From that time seldom have I ceas'd to eye
Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred;
Till at the ford of Jordan, whither all
Flock to the Baptist, I, among the rest,
(Though not to be baptiz'd,) by voice from Heaven
Heard thee pronounc'd the Son of God belov'd.
Thenceforth I thought thee worth my nearer view
And narrower scrutiny, that I might learn
In what degree or meaning thou art call'd
The Son of God; which bears no single sense.
The Son of God I also am, or was;
And if I was, I am; relation stands:
All men are Sons of God; yet thee I thought
In some respect far higher so declar'd.
Therefore
Therefore I watch'd thy footsteps from that hour,
And follow'd thee still on to this waste wild;
Where by all best conjectures, I collect
Thou art to be my fatal enemy:
Good reason then, if I before-hand seek
To understand my adversary, who
And what he is; his wisdom, power, intent;
By parli or composition, truce or league,
To win him, or win from him what I can:
And opportunity I here have had
To try thee, sift thee, and confess have found thee
Proof against all temptation, as a rock
Of adamant, and, as a center, firm;
To the utmost of mere man both wise and good.
Yet more; for honours, riches, kingdoms, glory,
Have been before contemn'd, and may again.
Therefore, to know what more thou art than Man,
Worth naming Son of God by voice from Heaven,
Another method I must now begin.

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

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

To whom thus Jesus: Also it is written,
"Tempt not the Lord thy God." He said, and stood:
But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell.
As when Earth's son Antæus (to compare
Small things with greatest) in Irassa strove
With Jove's Alcides, and oft foil'd, still rose,
Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,
Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple join'd,
Throttled at length in the air, expired and fell;
So, after many a foil, the Tempter proud,
Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride,
Fell whence he stood to see his victor fall:
And as that Theban monster, that propos'd
Her riddle, and him who solv'd it not devour'd,
That once found out and solv'd, for grief and spite
Cast herself headlong from th' Isemienian steep;
So, struck with dread and anguish, fell the Fiend.
And to his crew, that sat consulting, brought
(Joyless triumphals of his hop'd success,)
Ruin, and desperation, and dismay,
Who durst so proudly tempt the Son of God.
So Satan fell; and straight a fiery globe
Of Angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
Who on their plumy vans receiv'd him soft
From his uneasy station, and upbore,
As on a floating couch, through the blithe air;
Then, in a flowery valley, set him down
On a green bank, and set before him spread
A table of celestial food, divine,
Ambrosial fruits, fetch'd from the tree of life,
And, from the fount of life, ambrosial drink.
That soon refresh'd him wearied, and repair'd
What hunger, if aught hunger, had impair'd,
Or thirst; and, as he fed, angelick quires
Sung heavenly anthems of his victory
Over Temptation, and the Tempter proud.

True image of the Father; whether thron'd
In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
Conceiving, or, remote from Heaven, enshrin'd
In fleshly tabernacle, and human form,
Wandering the wilderness; whatever place,
Habit, or taste, or motion, still expressing
The Son of God, with God-like force endued
Against the attempter of thy Father's throne,
And thief of Paradise! Him long of old
Thou didst debel, and down from Heaven cast
With all his army, now thou hast aveng'd
Supplanted Adam, and by vanquishing
Temptation, hast regain'd lost Paradise,
And frustrated the conquest fraudulent.
He never more henceforth will dare set foot
In Paradise to tempt; his snares are broke:
or though that seat of earthly bliss be fail'd,
A fairer Paradise is founded now.
For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou,
A Saviour, art come down to re-install
Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be,
Of Tempter and temptation without fear.
But thou, infernal Serpent! shalt not long
Rule in the clouds; like an autumnal star,
Or lightning, thou shalt fall from Heaven, trod down
Under his feet: for proof, ere this thou feel'st
Thy wound, (yet not thy last and deadliest wound,)
By this repulse receiv'd, and hold'st in Hell
No triumph: in all her gates Abaddon rues
Thy bold attempt. Hereafter learn with awe
'To dread the Son of God: He, all unarm'd,
Shall chace thee, with the terror of his voice,
From thy demoniac holds, possession foul,
Thee and thy legions; yelling they shall fly,
And beg to hide them in a herd of swine,
Lest he command them down into the deep,
Bound, and to torment sent before their time.—
Hail, Son of the Most High, heir of both worlds,
Queller of Satan. On thy glorious work
Now enter; and begin to save mankind.
Thus they the Son of God, our Saviour meek,
Sung victor, and, from heavenly feast refresh'd,
Brought on his way with joy; he, unobserv'd.
Home to his mother's house private return'd.

The End
SAMSON AGONISTES,

A

DRAMATIC POEM.


Tragedia est imitatio actionis seriae, &c. per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.
of that sort of dramatic poem which is called tragedy.

Tragedy, as it was anciently compos'd, hath been ever held the gravest, most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in physic things of melancholic hue and quality are us'd against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humours. Hence philosophers and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch, and others, frequently cite out of tragic poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the text of Holy Scripture, 1 Cor. XV. 33. and Paræus, commenting on the Revelation, divides the whole book, as a tragedy, into acts distinguish'd each by a chorus of heavenly harpings and song between. Heretofore men in highest dignity have labour'd not a little

* The verse here quoted is "Evil communications corrupt good manners."
little to be thought able to compose a tragedy. Of that honour Dionysius the elder was no less ambitious, than before, of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Cæsar also had begun his Ajax, but unable, to please his own judgment with what he had begun, left it unfinish'd. 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 is intituled Christ Suffering. This is mention'd to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infancy, 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 ancient tragedy use no prologue, yet using sometimes, in case of self-defence, or explanation, that which Martial calls an epistle; in behalf of this tragedy coming forth after the ancient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much before-hand may be epistled; that chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner, not ancient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the modeling therefore
therefore of this poem, with good reason, the Ancients and Italians are rather follow'd, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of verse used in the chorus is of all sorts, call'd by the Greeks Monostrophic, or rather Apolelymenon, without regard had to Strophe, Antistrophe, or Epod, which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the musick, 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 call'd Allæostropha. 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 stile and uniformity, and that commonly call'd the plot, whether intricate or explicit, which is nothing indeed but such òconomy, or disposition of the fable, as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum; they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three tragic poets unequal'd yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy. The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is according to ancient rule, and best example, within the space of 24 hours.
THE ARGUMENT.

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

Samson.
Manoah, the Father of Samson.
Dalila, his Wife.
Harapha of Gath.
Publick Officer.
Messenger.
Chorus of Danites.

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.
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 Heaven 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 offering 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 Heaven-gifted strength? O glorious strength
Put to the labour of a beast, debas'd
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
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries;
So many, and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail; but chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eas'd,
Inferiour to the vilest now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me;
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, expos'd
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 the eye confin'd,
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
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
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.

[Enter] chorus.

This, this is he; softly a while,
Let us not break in upon him;
O change beyond report, thought or belief!
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,
With languish'd 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;
Han on embattled armies clad in iron;
And, weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer’d cuirass,
Chaly’bean temper’d steel, and flock of mail
Adamantéan proof;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advance’d,
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 warriours 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 Heaven.
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 oit without cause com-
plain)
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 unparalied!
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wonderous 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
But thee whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.

SAMSON.

I hear the sound of words; their sense the an
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 troubled 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

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I would
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,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwreck'd
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.

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

**SAMSON.**

The first I saw at Timna, 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 accomplish'd snare.  
I thought it lawful from my former act,  
And the same end; still watching to oppress  
Israel's.
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquish'd 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 the other side
Used 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 in 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:
Mean while 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
Touch'd 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 lوردed 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 vanquish'd kings:
And how ingrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess 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 roll;
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 wandering 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 the Interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstruction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
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 Manoah: Advise
Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him.

SAMSON.

Ay me! another inward grief, awak'd

With mention of that name, renews the assault.

MANOAH.

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

CHORUS.

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

MANOAH.

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
Duel'd their armies rank'd 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
Deceivable 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, given 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

373. "Appoint not heavenly disposition,"—Arraign not—

summon not to answer.
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 profess'd, 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
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself;
Yet the fourth time, when, mustering all her wiles,
With blandish'd parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me over-watch'd, 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'd
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.

MANGAII.
MAVOAH.

I cannot praise thy marriage choices, Son,
Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how they 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 soonest
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 bearest
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 magnified, and God,
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with idols,
Dis-glorified, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have 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'd 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.

MANOAH.

With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
I as a prophecy receive; for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done!
Thou must not, in the mean while here forgot,
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight,
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom: well they may by this

n 2

Have
Have satisfied their utmost of revenge
By pains and slaveries, worse than death inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

SAMSON.

Spare that proposal, Father; spare the trouble
Of that solicitation; let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have 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.

MANOAH.

Be penitent, and for thy fault contrite,
But act not in thy own affliction, Son:
Repent the sin; but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids;
Or the execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thyself; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
Who ever more approves and more accepts;
510
(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 mayst bring thy offerings, to avert
His further ire, with prayers and vows renew'd?
520

SAMSON.

His pardon I implore; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it? when in strength
All mortals I excelled, and great in hopes
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from Heaven foretold, and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and 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 swell'n with pride into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Soft'n'd 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,
Shaven, and disarm'd among mine 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.

O. "None daring my effronter"—to front or face me in
Or taste that chears the heart of Gods and men,  
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

S A M S O N.

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

C H O R U S.

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

S A M S O N.

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’d? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heaven 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 clustering 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 draft of servile food
Consume me, and oft-invocated death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

MANOAH.

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

SAMSON.

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

MANOAH.

Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy. I however
Must not omit a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance

By
By ransom, or how else: mean while 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 the inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.

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

Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heaven's 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 thriv'd 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'd,
Left me all helpless with the 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
SAMSON AGONISTES.

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

CHORUS.

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

God of our fathers, what is man!
Thou turn’st towards him with but so many.
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as thou rulest
The angelick orders, and inferiour creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That wandering loose about
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
Heads without name no more remember'd,
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 toward these thus dignified, thou oft,
Amidst their highth 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 doth degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
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 carcases
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 spare, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease thou bawst them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd,
In crude old age:
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
The punishment of dissipate 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 in a canst, to peaceful end.—

But who is this, what thing of sea or land:
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, orange, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for the 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 Traitors, let her not come near me.

CHORUS.

Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About to have spoke, but now, with head declin'd,
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.
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 slacken'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 recompence
My rash, but more unfortunate, misdeed.

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 principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Entangled 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 the 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 nought,
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 mind towards thee,
Can'st what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st leave me
As hot as Timna, sought by all means therefore

How
How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest:
No better way I saw than by impórtuning
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, unhazardèd abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.

These reasons in love's law have past 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.
How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither,
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, the example,
I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;
I to myself was false ere thou to me:
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it 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 constrained thee: call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to have love:
My love how couldst thou hope, who took'st the way
To save in me inexpiable hate.

Knowing,
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, Here 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
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. 870

SAMSON.

I thought where all thy circling wilds 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: unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but over-power'd
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;

Yet
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then
Did'st thou at first receive me for thy husband,
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd?
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 recompence
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 domestick ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance, to which
Eye-sight 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 shalt miss.

SAMSON.

No, no; of my condition take no care;
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;
Nor think me so unwary or accurs'd,
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 enchantéd cup, and warbling charms
No more on me have power; their force is null'd;
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could'st hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me;
SAMSON AGONISTES.

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 would'though 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 hasted widowhood with the gold Of matrimonial treason! so farewell.

DALILA.
I see thou art implacable, more dear
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 denounce'd?
To mix with thy concerns I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame, if not double-fac'd, 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'd.
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 record'd, 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 nam'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 secrery, my safety, and my life.

**CHORUS.**

Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,  
After offence returning, to regain  
Love once possess’d, 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 endang’ring life.

**CHORUS.**

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

If any of these, or all, the Timnian bride

P 5  
Had
Had not so soon preferr’d
Thy paranymph, worthless to thee compar’d, 1020
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? 1030
Or was too much of self-love mix’d,
Or constancy no root infix’d,
That either they love nothing, or not long?
Whatever it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once joint’d, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestate, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms 1040
Drives him away, enslave d
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm?

Favour'd of Heaven, who finds
One virtuous, rarely found,
That in domestick 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 despotick 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.
But this another kind of tempest brings.

Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.

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.

Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives.

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.

The 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 with other arms,

Or
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 unforeskin'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.

HARAPHA.

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

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, 1120
Vant-brace and greves, and gauntlet, add thy spear,
A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield,
I only with an oaken 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 wouldst have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

HARAPHA.

Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn, 1131
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'lr
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 chaf'd wild boars, or ruffled 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, invocate his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magick spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With the utmost of his Godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather, to thy sorrow,
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or 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 deliver'd up
Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind
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 subdued.

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

HARAPHA.

Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A Murderer, a Revolter, and a Robber!

SAMSON.

Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou prove me
these?

HARAPHA.

Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd 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, threatening 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 Heaven
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me, their deliverer sent, would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for nought,
The unworthy they; whence to this day they serve.

I was to do my part from Heaven assign'd,
And had perform'd it, if my known offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant, 1220
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. 1230

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

HARAPHA.

By Astaroth, ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries, in irons loaden on thee. [Exit.]

CHORUS.

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

SAMSON.

I dread him not, nor all his giant-brood,
Though fame divulge him father of five sons,
All of gigantick 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 sweetest friend, my death to me hence;
The sooner that he cut, gave 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 oppress'd!
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressor,
The brute and boisterous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth;
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats,
With plain heroick magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd,
Their armories and magazines contemnns,
Renders them useless; while
With winged expedition,
Swift as the lightning glance, he executes
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd

Lose
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 endued
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 scepter 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
Hebrews, the prisoner Samson here I seek.

CHORUS.

His manacles remark him, there he sits.

OFFICER.

Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say; 1310
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 hearten'd, and fresh clad,
To appear as fits before the illustrious lords.

SAMSON.

Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them,
Our Law forbids at their religious rites 1320
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 every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Juglers 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. [Exit.]

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 1350
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperious,
More lordly thundering than thou well wilt bear.

SAMSON.

Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression, so requite
Favour 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 detest not.

SAMSON.

Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds,
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging I 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 ought 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 darst 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.
I praise thy resolution: doff these links:
By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

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:
Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our Law, my Nation, or myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

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 Manoah in such haste
With youthful steps? much livelier than ere while
He seems: supposing here to find his son,
Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

MANOAH.

Peace with you, Brethren; my inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.
I heard all as I came, the city rings,
And numbers thither flock: I had no will,
Lest I should see him 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.

MANOAH.

I have attempted one by one the lords
Either at home, or through the high street passing,
With supplication prone and father's tears,
To accept of ransom for my son their prisoner.
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverend Dagon and his priests:
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both God and State
They easily would set to sale: a third
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough reveng'd; having reduc'd
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.

MANOAH.

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 fix'd not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

CHORUS.

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

MANOAH.

It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobled
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down those looks
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 thenee ridiculous about him.
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him: ye-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.
SAMSON AGONISTES.

MANOAH.

I know your friendly minds and—O what noise! Mercy of Heaven, what hideous noise was that! Horribly loud, unlike the former shout. 1510

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.

MANOAH.

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

CHORUS.

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

MANOAH.

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

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? 1530

**Manoah.**

That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

**Chorus.**

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

**Manoah.**

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

**Chorus.**

Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;
For evil news rides post, while good news bates.

And
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe. 1540

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 Manoah, and to these
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror, 1550
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

MANOAH.

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.

MANOAH
MANOAH.

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.

MANOAH.

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

MESSENGER.

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

MANOAH.

Relate by whom.

MESSENGER.

By Samson.

MANOAH.

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

MESSENGER.

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

**MANOAH.**

Suspense in news is torture, speak them out.

**MESSENGER.**

Take then the worst in brief, Samson is dead.

**MANOAH.**

The worst indeed, O all my hope's defeated
To free him hence! but death, who sets all free
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.
What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
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.
MANOAH.

Wearied with slaughter then or how? explain.

MESSENGER.

By his own hands.

MANOAH.

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

MESSENGER.

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

MANOAH.

O lastly over-strong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.
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'd,
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 placed, scarcely 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 publick 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, stupendous force;
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As 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, unsuspicuous, led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head a while inclin'd,
And eyes fast fix'd 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,
"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 immix'd, 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 ly'st victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd,
Not willingly, but tangled 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 hath slain before.

I 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.

s 3

1670

1680
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'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue rous'd
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an evening 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, given for lost,
Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird
In the Arabian woods embost,
That no second knows nor third,
And lay ere while a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem’d,
Revives, refLOURishes, then vigourous most
When most unactive deem’d,
And though her body die, her fame survives
A secular bird ages of lives.

M A N O A H.

Come, come; no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroickly hath finish’d
A life heroick, 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
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'd 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 the unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent;
His servants he, with new acquist
Of true experience, from this great event
With peace and consolation hath dismiss,
And calm of mind all passion spent.
A Mask

Presented at

Ludlow-Castle, 1634;

Before

The Earl of Bridgewater,

Then President of Wales.
The Mask was presented in 1634, and consequently in the 26th year of our author's age. In the title page of the first edition printed in 1637, it is said that it was presented on Michaelmas night, and there was this motto,

_Eheu quid volui miser mihi! floribus austrum Perditus_

In this edition, and in that of Milton's poems in 1645, there was prefixed to the Mask the following dedication.

_To the Right Honourable John Lord Viscount Brackly son and heir apparent to the Earl of Bridgewater, &c._

**My Lord,**

This poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a final dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the publick view; and now to offer it up in all rightful devotion to those fair hopes, and rare endowments
endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet Lord, to be the honour of your name, and receive this as your own, from the hands of him, who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all real expression

Your faithful and most humble Servant,

H. LAWES.
THE PERSONS.

The Attendant Spirit, afterwards in the habit of Thyrsis.

Comus with his crew.

The Lady.

First Brother.

Second Brother.

Sabrina the Nymph.

The chief Persons, who presented, were.

The Lord Brackly.

Mr. Thomas Egerton his brother.

The Lady Alice Egerton.
COMUS,

A

MASK.

The first scene discovers a wild wood.

The Attendant Spirit descends or enters.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aëreal Spirits live insph'er'd
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth; and, with low thoughted care
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pin-fold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
10
Amongst the enthron'd Gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key,
That opes the palace of Eternity:
To such my errand is; and but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep,
Which he, to grace his tributary Gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents: but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair off-pring, nurs'd in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted scepter; but their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horroour of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovran Jove
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard:
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell: (Who knows not Circe
The daughter of the Sun? whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a groveling swine)
This Nymph that gaz'd upon his clustring locks
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus nam'd:
Who ripe, and frolick of his full grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood;
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbrow’d
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phæbus; which as they taste,
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the Gods, is chang’d
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore when any, favour’d of high Jove,
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from Heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off

These
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain,
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

Comus enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his
glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters,
headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise
like men and women, their apparel glistering; they
come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with
torches in their hands.

COMUS.

The star, that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of Heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the East.
Mean while welcome Joy, and Feast,
Midnight Shout, and Revelry,
Tipsy Dance, and Jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain brim,
The Wood-Nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep;
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.—
Hail, Goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto! to whom the secret flame
Of mid-night torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep
From her cabin'd loophole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.—

Come,
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

(The Measure.)

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms, 150
And to my wily trains; I shall ere long
Be well-stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spungy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course;
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends, 160
And well plac'd words of glozing courtesy
Baited with reasons not un plausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

(The Lady enters.)

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now: Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,
Such as a jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds;
When for their teeming locks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the Gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence,
Of such late wassailers; yet O! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My Brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stept, as they said, to the next thicket side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the gray hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me: else, O thievish Night,
Why should'st thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That nature hung in Heaven, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find,
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names,
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.—
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering Angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistening guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.

Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my Brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.
SONG.

SWEET Echo, sweetest Nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy aery shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider’d vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parlcy, daughter of the sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.

Enter COMUS.

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence:
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness, till it smii'd! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium; Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.—I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed.
Unless the Goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Silvan; by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.
Nay, gentle Shepherd, ill is lost that praise,
That is address'd to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?

Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Could that divide you from near- ushering guides?

They left me weary on a grassy turf.

By falshood, or discourtesy, or why?

To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.
COMUS, A MASK.

COMUS.
And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?

LADY.
They were but twain, and purpos'd quick return.

COMUS.
Perhaps fore-stalling night prevented them.

LADY.
How easy my misfortune is to hit!

COMUS.
Imports their loss, beside the present need?

LADY.
No less than if I should my Brothers lose.

COMUS.
Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

LADY.
As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

COMUS.
Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,

And
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood:
I took it for a faëry vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was aw-struck,
And, as I past, I worshipt; if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heaven,
To help you find them.

LADY.
    Gentle Villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?

COMUS.
    Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

LADY.
    To find out that, good Shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet.
COMUS, A MASK.

COMUS.

I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray-attendance be yet lodg'd,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch't pallat rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

LADY.

Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended: In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it. —

Eye

313. "bosky bourn"—woody stream.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion’d strength.—Shepherd, lead on. 350

[Exeunt.]

The two Brothers.

ELDER BROTHER.

Unmuffle, ye faint Stars; and thou, fair Moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benizion,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light; 340
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

SECOND BROTHER.

Or, if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their watled cotes,

341. "Star of Arcady, or Tyrian Cynosure"—Greater or lesser Bear.
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering
In this close dungeon of innumeros boughs.
But O that hapless virgin, our lost Sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement, and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

ELDER BROTHER.

Peace, Brother; be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion?
I do not think my Sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into mis-becoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the center, and enjoy bright day:
But he, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

SECOND BROTHER.

'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desart cell,
Far from the chearful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of misers' treasure by an out-law's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned Sister.
ELDER BROTHER.

I do not, brother,
Infer, as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt, or controversy:
Yet where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My Sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength
Which you remember not.

SECOND BROTHER.

What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

ELDER BROTHER.

I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis Chastity, my Brother, Chastity:
She, that has that, is clad in complete steel;
And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very Desolation dwells
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
Blue meager hag, or stubborn un laid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at Curfew time,
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true Virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' th' woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried Angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream, and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal: But when Lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lend and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.

Such
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp, 470
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

SECOND BROTHER.

How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

ELDER BROTHER.

List, list; I hear
Some far off halloo break the silent air. 481

SECOND BROTHER.

Methought so too; what should it be?

ELDER BROTHER.

For certain
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour wood-man, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Second Brother.

Heaven keep my Sister. Again, again, and near! Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Elder Brother.

I'll halloo; if he be friendly, he comes well; if not, Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

Enter the attendant Spirit, habited like a shepherd.

That halloo I should know; what are you? speak; Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else. 491

Spirit.

What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.

Second Brother.

O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.

Elder Brother.

Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft delay'd The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale. How cam'st thou here, good swain? hath any ram Slipt
Slpt from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling weather the pent flock forsook?
How could'st thou find this dark sequester'd nook?

SPIRIT.

O my lov'd master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs, is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

ELDER BROTHER.

To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

SPIRIT.

Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.

ELDER BROTHER.

What fears, good Thyrsis? Pr'ythee briefly shew.

SPIRIT.

I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmolding reason's mintage
Charácter'd in the face; this have I learnt
'Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.

Yet
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeding by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honey-suckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill; but ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy flighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep;
At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death: but O! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear Sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till guided by mine ear I found the place,
Where that damn'd wisard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wish'd prey;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here,
But further know I not.

SECOND BROTHER.

O night and shades!

How
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot, 581
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, Brother?

ELDER BROTHER.

Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,—
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd;

Yea, even that, which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when at last
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consumed: if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.—But come, let's on.
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven 600
May
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Curs'd as his life.

SPIRIT.

Alas! good venturous Youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise; 610
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms, and other weapons must
Be those, that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

ELDER BROTHER.

Why pr'ythee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?
SPIRIT.

Care, and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant, and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray:
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstacy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;

He
He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bad me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.
I purs'd it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul inchanter though disguis'd,
Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off: if you have this about you,
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandish'd blade, rush on him; break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
But seise his wand; though he and his curs'd crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

ELDER BROTHER.

Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee;
And some good Angel bear a shield before us.
The scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft musick, tables spread with all dainties. Comus appears with his rabble, and the Lady set in an enchanted chair to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

COMUS.

Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound that fled Apollo.

LADY.

Fool, do not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.

COMUS.

Why are you vext, Lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: See, here be all the pleasures,
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.

And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames, and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm, and fragrant syrups mix'd:
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you receiv'd on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair Virgin,
This will restore all soon.
LADY.

'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty,
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver;
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood, and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish baits, fit to insnare a brute?
Were it a draft for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none
But such as are good men can give good things;
And that, which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

COMUS.

O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoick fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynick tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth, 710
With such a full and unwithstanding hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch'd the all-worship't ore, and precious gems
To store her children with: If all the world 720
Should in pet of temperance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unprais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth;
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with
plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List Lady; be not coy, and be not cosen'd
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;  
Think what, and be advis'd; you are but young yet.

**Lady.**

I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips  
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler  
Would think to charm my judgement, as mine eyes,  
Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb.  
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,  
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.  
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,  
As if she would her children should be riotous  
With her abundance; she, good cateress,  
Means her provision only to the good,  
That live according to her sober laws,  
And holy dictate of spare Temperance:  
If every just man, that now pines with want,  
Had but a moderate and beseeming share  
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury  
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit incumber'd with her store;  
And
And then the Giver would be better thank'd, 
His praise due paid: for swinish Gluttony 
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast, 
But with besotted base ingratitude 
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on? 
Or have I said enough? To him that dares 780 
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words 
Against the sun-clad Power of Chastity, 
Fain would I something say, yet to what end? 
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend 
The sublime notion, and high mystery, 
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage 
And serious doctrine of Virginity, 
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know 
More happiness than this thy present lot. 
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetorick, 790 
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence, 
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd; 
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth 
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits 
To such a flame of sacred vehemence, 
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize, 
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake, 
Till
Till all thy magick structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

COMUS.

She fables not, I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superiour power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more;
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

The Brothers rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass
out of his hand, and break it against the ground;
his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven
in: The Attendant Spirit comes in.
What, have you let the false enchanter scape?
O ye mistook, ye should have snatcht his wand
And bound him fast; without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless:
Yet stay, be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be us'd,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains.
There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the scepter from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That staid her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The Water-Nymphs, that in the bottom play'd,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers, strew'd with asphodel;
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river: still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elfe delights to make,
Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals;
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustick lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils,
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the humming spell,
If she be right invok'd in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,

Listen where thou art sitting

Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,

In twisted braids of lilies knitting

The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;

Listen for dear honour's sake,

Goddess of the silver lake,

Listen and save.

Listen, and appear to us,

In name of great Oceanus;

By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,

And Tethys' grave majestick pace,

By hoary Nereus wrinkled look,

And the Carpathian wizard's hook,

By scaly Triton's winding shell,

And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell,

By Leucothea's lovely hands,

And her son that rules the strands,

By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,

And the songs of Syrens sweet.

By
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answer'd have.

Listen, and save.

Sabrina rises, attended by water-nymphs, and sings.

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow, and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agat, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emrald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Liburnia victa

From "Liber Amoris"

Engraved by J. T. Smith
Gentle Swain, at thy request
I am here.

SPIRIT.

Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distrest,
Through the force, and through the wile.
Of unblest enchanter vile.

SAERINA.

Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help insnared chastity:
Brightest Lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

Sabrina descends, and the Lady rises out of her seat.

SPIRIT.

Virgin, daughter of Locrine
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth, or singed air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl, and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrhe, and cinnamon.

Come, Lady, while Heaven lends us grace.
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste, or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground;
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence; and beside,
All the swains that near abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer;
Come let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle; then come in country dancers, after them the Attendant Spirit, with the two Brothers and the Lady.
SONG.

SPIRIT.

Back, Shepherds, back, enough your play,
Till next sun-shine holiday;
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,
With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight;
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
COMUS, A MASK.

To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual Folly, and Intemperance.

*The dances [being] ended, the Spirit epiloguizes.*

SPIRIT.

To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;
That there eternal Summer dwells,
And West-Winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen;
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her fam’d son, advanc’d,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranc’d,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the Gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy: so Jove hath sworn.

But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth’s end,
Where the bow’d welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.

Mortals
Mortals that would follow me,

Love Virtue; she alone is free:

She can teach ye how to clime

Higher than the sphery chime;

Or if Virtue feeble were,

Heaven itself would stoop to her.