

# Samson Marrying

Samson at Timnah

Samson Hybristes Samson Blinded

*Four Dramatic Poems by*

EDWIN T. WHIFFEN



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Samson Blinded

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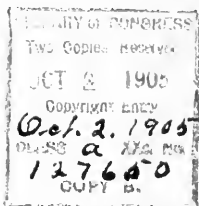
BY

EDWIN T. WHIFFEN



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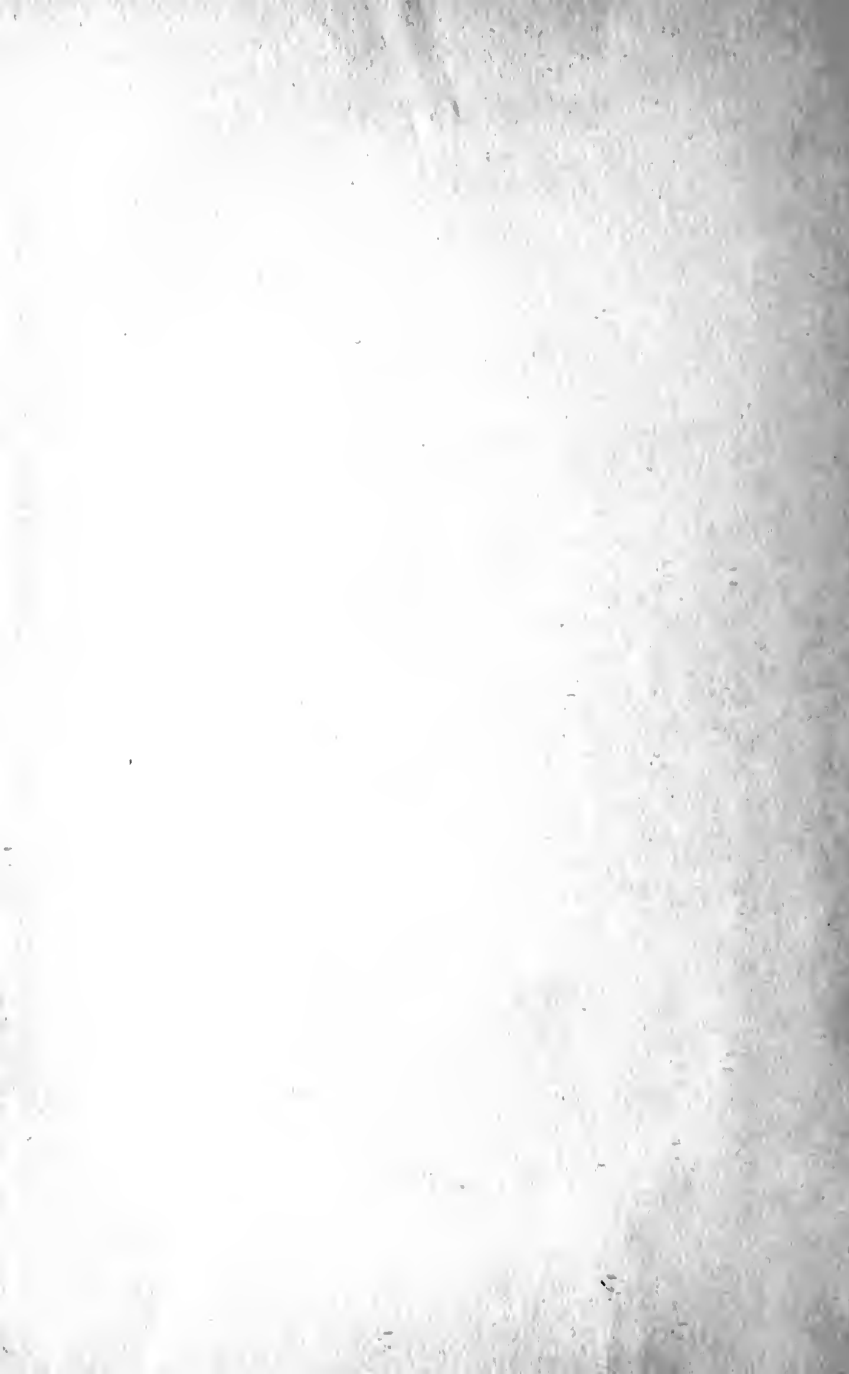
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# SAMSON MARRYING

## THE ARGUMENT

Samson, having espoused a woman of Timnah, departs to that place with his father and feastful friends to celebrate the nuptials. During the last day of the marriage-feast, the solution of the riddle put forth before by Samson is earnestly sought by the bridal courtiers, who form the chorus, assigned from the Philistian youth. Samson's father, ill-treated by them to force the secret, departs home-ward in anger, accompanied by the friends of his nation. At last the bride, having wrested the secret, reveals it to the chorus; whereupon Samson departs to Ascalon, slays thirty, and carries their garments to Timnah as the wagered forfeit. A messenger, coming in shortly, tells the story of Samson's performance; whereat the chorus bewail their nation's loss, and threaten vengeance upon Samson; which concludes the drama.

## THE PERSONS

### *Samson*

*Manoah*, father of Samson.

*Lilith*, his wife.

Messenger. Chorus of Philistines. Servant.

Attendant.

### *The Scene at Timnah*

## SAMSON MARRYING

*Manoah.* With wavering hope and doubtful  
resolution

Of what before so oft by me essayed,  
I have drawn thee to this place, where friendly  
silence

Will not inform against us, nor espial  
Descry our posture and close secrecy  
Here at this vacant hour of morning prime,  
Samson, once more, ere lastly thou determine  
That marriage to thy country's foe conjoined,  
This daughter of the Timnian infidel,  
If supplication and a father's tears  
May bend thy purpose, ere, too late, achieved  
Thy own undoing and thy country's shame.  
Too well thou knowest, against thy mother's wish  
And mine express these bonds consummated;  
Hence I could well desist my vain attempts  
To move thee, as heretofore, could I my auguries  
Draw from successes past, or yet my heart  
Forego the dear regard which yet it bears thee.  
Canst thou, then, yet respect a mother's tears,  
These aging locks, that plead more loud than  
words

Of vehement speech, as in our law enjoined,  
To leave thy purposes, yet unperformed?  
I could be well content with this regard  
The marriage-ransom paid quite to forego,  
And willingly, no, glad to scape so quit.

*Samson.* Father, break off; since, though the  
love I bear thee

In measure as our near relation ask,  
Yet herein, as I thus far have begun,  
So shall I finish, cast in heart, be sure,

To cross thy hopes, or disappoint thy purpose ;  
But higher inspirations from above,  
Promptings divine, compel me, unwillingly,  
Into those paths, which else I should abhor,  
If to my own free counsel left inclining.  
Otherwise, never should I so persist  
To disregard that dear respect of love  
Which links me to thee, nor so far presume  
Apparent disrespect and seeming lack  
Of duty, with bold deed, to all appearance  
Contrary to our laws and laws of God,  
And wishes to my parents thus opposed.

*Man.* Consider, son, ere thou decide, while yet  
The thought is umpire to the purposed act,  
Lest thou too late the rash decision rue  
After decree gone forth beyond recall.  
Though I thy honesty of heart misdeem not,  
And forward purpose, yet thus far I question,  
Though not thy prompting, yet the motive to it,  
So main against our customs and our laws.  
And other reasons, also, I adduce.  
For know, not unannounced, as ordinary,  
Thy birth; but the high messenger of Heaven  
Foretold thee to thy mother in the field,  
There as she sat reclined after the day;  
To me the angel also was revealed,  
Who, to confirm the tidings high imparted,  
Rode up in flames from off the burning altar,  
After conception assured of him destined  
To free his country, break her enemies.  
Of this no question can arise, for plain  
The omen; but this other that thou sayest,  
In this may not some error lurk? since doubtful  
The mind of man and full of wandering ever,  
And ever least assured of highest purpose,  
Then most uncertain when most certain deemed.  
I question not thy honor, but I question

Thy immaturity, inexperience, youth.  
 These must weigh some with thee ; let also weigh  
 Thy duty and thy service and thy love.  
 Shalt thou not be surmised of other parents,  
 And not from us derived, as now reputed,  
 If to our wishes thou oppose thyself thus?  
 As thou art known my son, desist thy purpose.

*Sams.* Father, I do acknowledge thee my sire,  
 And in all willing duty have I served,  
 Even unto this, my parents ; but herein  
 The voice of God so plainly in my ear  
 I cannot but regard ; for not through love,  
 Fondly by passion moved, have I urged on  
 This marriage, but from hence that I might find  
 Hostile occasion on them who oppress  
 God's people, and his deity despise.  
 And this not all ; for, while as yet a child,  
 Heroic thoughts flamed at my heart, that I  
 Should Israel from Philistian yoke redeem,  
 The task whereto I was divinely set.  
 Which task enjoined, and with high purpose cher-  
 ished

Through all my years, the rudiments laid down,  
 With ripe determination now I enter,  
 Nothing to be deterred from this great end.  
 Whence now begins this mission, thus esteemed  
 And purposed, from this day and from this deed.  
 Herein if I should fail, or now draw back  
 From this great entering, should not also fail  
 The glorious task on me by Heaven imposed,  
 To set my people free? Not to be thought.  
 No ; though in this naught but regretful sorrow  
 To cross thy hopes I find, yet so the more  
 Myself should I misdeem, herein should I  
 Waver for parents' love, or parents' tears,  
 Or aught than these more dear—private regards,  
 And hence not rightly weighed or yielded to—

Thus recreant to my purpose and my trust.

*Man.* Thy faith seems not unfounded; and I  
yield

That for his people God of old hath wrought  
Wonders incredible; yet such wherein  
Obedience and firm faith and fealty held,  
And not, as now, dishonor and contempt,  
With bold disloyalty and base presumption.  
Herein, so main against God's law, how couldst  
thou

Hope for his aid, since against his thy will  
Opposed, and purpose set to his transverse?  
For well thou knowest, God hath pronounced it  
sin

To yoke in wedlock with the uncircumcised.  
How, then, in this by his aid to come off  
Thou canst presume, I own surmounts my reach.

*Sams.* Be of good courage, father, nor to doubt  
So easily resign thyself. Things strange,  
To us uncertain, darkly are ordained,  
Sometimes, to work from evil into good;  
As in this instance may perhaps be found.  
Save what I have advanced, no more I can,  
Except a certain presage of the mind,  
Which puts to something out of wont my  
thoughts,

That this day aught remarkably shall be done  
By me, and from this hoped occasion rise,  
Worthy our God, our nation, and myself.  
Else why this purpose, though expressly opposed  
To God's high law, that strictly still forbade  
Such union with the uncircumcised conjoined,  
Set on, and furthered thus as by his aid?  
Which had not been, except his counsel served.

*Man.* Since thus thy perseverance, to no pur-  
pose  
These admonitions, now, as first, repulsed.



But other secret matter would I mention  
 Before thy notice, haply to thee known.  
 The stripling youths that follow thee about,  
 Thy nuptial tendance, move somewhat against  
 thee,

Cast from their hope to solve thy riddle set ;  
 For, as thou knowest, this now the seventh day  
 finds them

Still unresolved, unsettled, still to seek.  
 Black looks and muttered threats, thought undis-  
 cerned,

Have I perceived, not, certain, to thy face,  
 For thee they hate, yet fear thy haughty limb  
 And higher courage ; but thy absence gives them  
 Cause and occasion. Here then be advised—  
 To what avail, if, the one danger shunned,  
 Thou on the other strike and suffer wrack ?

*Sams.* What blind suspicion, father, puts thee  
 on thus ?

They will not dare against their oath assured  
 Of friendship and of league with us conjoined  
 In strictest amity, with their dread lords  
 By solemn oath confirmed, nor aught intend  
 Upon me, lest the penalties that attach  
 To those that thus dissolve allegiance sworn  
 And faith be visited upon their deed.  
 Yet should they so on me thus girt with friends  
 Endeavor treachery, or shrewd use contrive,  
 What could be else than blank discomfort gained,  
 And ruin drawn on those who attempt the deed—  
 The wished occasion to hostility,  
 Perhaps, that should Israel's deliverance  
 Begin, as the angel thus to thee affirmed ?

*Man.* I cannot, son, yet reconcile myself  
 To this thy marriage-choice ; and how thy foes  
 May plot thy ruin hence, or how distasteful  
 To them such union, though under show of love

Now masking and of fair and open front,  
 I know not; nor can see from this derived  
 Aught to advantage pure or honorable,  
 Worthy our God, our nation, or thyself.  
 For between vanquished and the vanquisher  
 What faith can hold, or what engagements stand,  
 Since they who faith engage thereto compelled  
 By nothing that assures their holding safe;  
 Or how can that turn good by express law  
 Enjoined us absolutely not to do?  
 Reasons enough, as might seem, to dissuade,  
 Perhaps, a stronger purpose than thou holdest.  
 And more I cannot urge, unless to suasion  
 Force added, which I still were loth to use,  
 If still were in my power, since thy age  
 Now to the prime and flower of youth attained;  
 Yet fain I still would say, if to some purpose.  
 But now enough; and I perhaps too much  
 Herein have said, since every circumstance,  
 The place, the hour, and this close secrecy,  
 Informs against and sets suspicion on,  
 If not unmarked, as now. For list, I hear  
 (So apprehension quick hath sharpened more  
 The ear of age than youth's unwary sense)  
 The tread of hasty steps that steer this way,  
 And yonder through the shade by glimpse discern  
 Thy bridal friends and guests, doubtless now  
 come  
 Here at this grateful hour to gratulate  
 Thy love consummated. Be circumspect,  
 And put thee to thy guard with extreme care.  
*Chorus.* O hospitable house, whose happy roof  
 With prosperous shade protects  
 That couple, fairest found in love's consort,  
 Who shall this day fulfil their bonds espoused!

*Semi-cho.* And happy chance that brings thee  
to thy bride,

Samson, more favored now,  
And more rejoiced than when, to oppose thy path,  
The solitary fierce beast proud,  
That wons in wild,  
Beset thy single steps,  
And with no spousal grasp, or dalliant arm,  
Griped in each paw thy form;  
But thou, with mighty hold  
Tearing the lion as the lion tears the kid,  
Shored'st off both tawny hide and crested mane,  
Spurning, with insupportable foot,  
The carcass, left for bees to hive therein.

*Semi-cho.* What shall I higher praise,  
Thy might, or chance in love?  
Since thee thy happy hazard thus assigns,  
Nor less thy lot esteem,  
Among the daughters of the Philistines,  
The fairest and the choicest, virtuous, best;  
Who waits, this now the seventh day's sun  
Chiding the heavy time,  
Her spousal consumations and thy own.

*Cho.* Thrice happy bride and house! Yet hap-  
pier deem  
What prosperous roof shall shade  
Thy marriageable bed,  
That, rich with fruitful pleasures, shall bring  
forth

Large issue, increase fair  
Of goodly sons and daughters chaste,  
Likest to thee and to thy wedlock mate;  
Happy, if to their nuptial lot be linked  
Like issue of success in wedded love.

*Sams.* Peace with you, comrades. Your in-  
ducement hither  
Since not unfriendly, say why ye are here.

*Cho.* Peace with thee, reverend Manoah, and  
with thee,  
Samson, esteemed strongest of mortal men.  
We come, thy bridal courtiers and thy friends,  
To gratulate thy love consummated;  
And, as we have in charge, and were assigned,  
To aid with wished assistance to thy will;  
Say, therefore, what task now thou hast enjoined  
On us, who only wait thy word to do.

*Sams.* Your coming, friends, is timely; for  
this day,  
Though now the marriage-feast known largely  
given,  
Sees much performed, if all in order due  
Accomplished, ere night bring the grateful end.  
Now, therefore, haste, and, as I gave in care,  
Have strict attendance on those timely tasks,  
Such as become your office best assigned,  
And to my kindred chief. I, the meanwhile,  
Must hasten conference with those who have  
In charge this last day's glad solemnity,  
And now, perhaps, my wished arrival wait.

*Cho.* Then thee our grateful task thus enter-  
tains,  
Grave Manoah; for so may well befit  
The bridal friends and comrades to thy son,  
With pride, indeed, thus named; since well art  
thou  
Happy in such a son, above example  
Present or past the mightiest born of men;  
Since not in all Philistian borders reckoned,  
Askelon, Ecron, Asdod, Gaza, Gath,  
Not, though thou add the list of Anak's sons  
Famous and blazed, whose giant stature vast  
Might well with terror strike, and win the name  
Of highest eminence for feats of arms  
And tests of strength endured, his like accounted,

Much less equal or second, at whose coming  
 The mightiest and the bravest of our land  
 Let fall the crest, with less self-conscionable stride  
 And lower courage stalking, or slink by,  
 Not braving his affront. Is he thy sole  
 Wonder, and country's boast, or others worthy  
 Compare with him and equal praise assigned?

*Man.* Our sole accompt and paragon; his like,  
 Much less his equal or superior,  
 As not among the Philistines, not in Israel,  
 Of whom he also bears the highest name  
 For feats of strength and valiant deeds performed.

*Cho.* Thy moderation to enlarge his worth,  
 Since by such ties thus nearly to thee joined,  
 Accredits thee; and to much ampler merit  
 Thou might'st have raised his name, and yet come  
 short

Of his desert and due for sleights of strength  
 And strenuous feats displayed, nor so his cunning  
 Stinted of equal praise. For, when he came  
 Hither to his marriage, he a riddle set,  
 Framed with so curious and so hidden skill,  
 His first propounded, none till now can boast  
 Solution and the wagered forfeit won.  
 And some are moved against him, but as yet  
 The more part speak him well and wish him fair,  
 Whose spousals thus to grace they have assembled—

Where of some tidings would we might but learn,  
 By his departure thus deprived. Yet see!  
 For yonder to this place I now discern  
 One by his garb and look perhaps hath come  
 With news of what but lately hath befallen.

*Servant.* I come not, friends, for such are ye  
 discerned  
 To Samson and this house wherein I serve,

With tidings which may hit with joy your ears,  
 As some perhaps, yet cannot else relate,  
 Than as I have received, howe'er adjudged;  
 And as they are will tell, if ye desire,  
 Though haply wished unknown, the news I bring.

*Cho.* Evil, or good? superfluous yet to ask.

*Serv.* Foreboding ill; so thick a tempest  
 draws.

*Cho.* The morning promised fair, nor threat-  
 ened aught.

*Serv.* Yet gathers darkly now, and noises loud.

*Cho.* Still no concern; foul days have oft  
 turned fair.

*Serv.* But this with other kind of storm por-  
 tends.

*Cho.* Resolve thy drift; no second riddle  
 needs.

*Serv.* Look not for tidings now of happy sort,  
 Your question thus, perhaps, yet soon explained,  
 If so may be explained what still unknown,  
 Nor wonder at so strange relation heard,  
 Ill suiting nuptial time and marriage-feast,  
 Though of the happy consummation lack  
 To honor this glad feast and fair occasion  
 Of this day's spousals, now so long preparing,  
 Nothing voluptuous of soft or sweet,  
 Or pleasing to sight, sound, or smell, or taste,  
 So sumptuous the feast and lavish planned.  
 For first, that all their nuptial rites be passed  
 In order, and their spousals due observed,  
 Along the tall grove's edge they have upraised  
 A spacious tent, whose curtains fast enclosed  
 Deny all sight not bidden, and high roof,  
 Ample and round, of richest texture woven,  
 With state of regal luster spreads above,  
 O'erdoming as a sky. Within, dispersed  
 At grateful intervals, rich palms, and shrubs

Odorous, grateful both to sight and smell,  
Jasmine and rose and myrtle, acanthus, laurel,  
Iris, as grown in ordered place disposed ;  
And music, touch of harp and timbrel mixed  
With pipe and warbling song, invites the dance,  
Pleasing the ear, as sight and smell were pleased.  
Nor other senses want ; Autumn and Spring,  
As due at once, have heaped their choicest  
bearth—

Bright apples of the Hesperides, with rind  
Of golden burnish clad, pomegranate, quince,  
All fruits of the earth, with choicest flowers in-  
mixed—

Upon the grassy table, by whose side  
Couches of softest touch, and carpets, rich  
In texture, and in tint damask, recline ;  
While at the fragrant wine, in order ranged,  
Fair stripling youths, rich-clad, of ruddy hue.  
Such is the luxury, it seems no strife  
Nearby could dwell, no riot rude endure,  
But would be calmed to quiet, and forget  
Its brawling noise, still to be so entranced.  
Yet they, for whom all this, with jangling war  
And wordy discord jar, within the house  
Close in a chamber got, though not so sore  
The bridegroom ; him the bride loudly upbraids  
With love's disrelish cloyed, because some secret,  
So loud her cries not long a secret kept,  
To her denied ; wherefore she weeps by turns,  
Upbraids him next with lack of proper love  
Toward her espoused, but this day made his bride,  
Next threatens, then cajoles ; that all the house  
Rings with the tumult loud. How it shall end  
I may not know, so stubborn she, so fixed  
Not to give o'er her siege until success,  
And he as fixed on his part to withstand.  
But longer to delay my task permits not,

Upon me joined with speed as not deferring.

*Cho.* What it can be divides them holds my thought;

No serious rupture; some love-quarrel, doubtless,

That soon the firmler but joins who jar;

Not like the marriage-riddle he so guards,

Though that not unforgiven, if divulged

In gamesome sport, not wanton treacherous malice.

But thou hast known perhaps, at hazard gained,

Or by relation heard, what mystic sentence

Resolves the marriage-riddle that he set?

*Man.* Some question else inquire, if thou wouldst gain

Reply; since this not rightful to reveal.

*Cho.* If some convenient matter were proposed—

*Man.* I should not so less resolution hold.

*Cho.* Yet without harm to thee, or danger, done,

This nuptial time and glad occasion warrant.

*Man.* Yet so the occasion and the time abuse

Befits not—though urged hard, betraying thus

To you, his friends, yet rivals in the secret.

Nor were it seemly ye should so persist,

After refusal offered, to affront

Hospitable rites, presuming thus insistence

Upon superior age. Have ye no fear,

Regard, of those just penalties that attach

To reverence outraged and abused respect,

Unmeditated now, perhaps, yet so

Not less offensive, when obtruded thus

Against all decency, all regard to years?

Forbear such purpose, then, so main opposed

To justice, rights of hospitality.



*Cho.* Yet once again, and while in time thou mayest—

*Man.* Urge me no further ; so ye do not well,  
With such assaults hard-pressed and sieges  
girded,

Seeking to make me traitor to my son,  
That firm esteems his confidence reposed  
On me, who now assuredly not betray it,  
Revealing thus that secret sacred given ;  
I know it not, nor, if I did, should tell.

*Cho.* Hence with thy gray dissimulation ! Pre-  
tense

Of ignorance feigned, or reverence due to age,  
Alike we disregard, since we perceive  
Thou knowest it, well enough, and think'st to  
hide,

Fearful to be compelled against thy will ;  
Which we are fain to do, if thou persist.  
For, plain enough, thou seest our throng too many  
And our advantages to force thee to it.  
Consider with thyself ; be wise and yield ;  
Or we shall straight such terms of force pro-  
pound,

As shall compel thee to a quick result.

*Man.* Would but my son here present, whose  
high strength

Ye are not unknowing of ! Ye would not venture  
Violence upon this head, which ye were better,  
He absent, leave untouched. When he but learn,  
As thus he shall, that be assured, ere long,  
These deeds of violence, contumacious acts—

*Sams.* Peace, friends ; were best with no dis-  
turbance here,

Now in this nuptial hour and nuptial place,  
Where quiet best consorts. Ye meant no harm,  
As I am well assured, upon my sire,  
But as the time stirs up your minds more quick

To apt occasion ; yet unseemly so  
 This offered violence and these ventured hands  
 Towards any head, and most against a guest's.  
 Abuse not so the occasion and the time.  
 Which also, father, deem the full excuse  
 And sole extenuation of their fault,  
 Done in the wanton heat of youth, as ever,  
 So now, to ill-considered rashness bent.

*Man.* So slightly should it scape? I thought  
 more loudly

Thy arm, and not thy tongue, expostulates.  
 Shall such a fact, so heinous in itself,  
 Reckoned against the rated law of nations,  
 But here most, where to wont and usage joined  
 A solemn truce and sacred marriage-rites,  
 Be ventured so—unpunished, unrepentant,  
 After a crime so gross, on allied head  
 Laid violent hands and rude, these sons of Belial,  
 Incestuous, sacreligious, thus escape  
 That justest vengeance, punishment deserved?  
 If this thou thus endure without protest  
 More than thy daunted tongue thus far dares  
 vaunt,

I lower esteem thy valor than erewhile,  
 And hold it slackened, cheap, vile, and debased ;  
 Nor will I longer tarry in such presence  
 Of hostile insolence and unfilial shame.

*Sams.* Peace, father ; nor in wrath forget thy-  
 self thus.

*Man.* Counsel not peace with whom no peace  
 can hold.

*Sams.* Yet these the licensed time, if not excus-  
 ing,

At least condones in their offended fault.

*Man.* Not for a moment given ; lest, this pre-  
 sumed,  
 More open impudence they venture on.

*Sams.* Yet till the finished feast thy parting  
stay;

When if thou must, at least in peace depart.

*Man.* Not longer than the preparation ask  
Will I defer, or stay my parting hence.

*Sams.* Then by the dear respect of love I venture,

Though with unfilial seeming, thy restraint.

*Man.* Not so, forbear it! lest my anger also  
Curse thee in sudden wrath distinguished not.  
Should I be so enforced, against my will  
And by my son enforced, as these were fain,  
My enemies, and so a second time  
More openly and to more shame exposed,  
These looking on, their gaze and scorn repeated?  
Presume not so upon the near relation  
That nature gives, which here I disavow,  
With all propinquity disclaimed of kindred,  
Or ties of blood, to one so lightly holding  
That dear respect. Thou art not son of mine,  
Though such esteemed, and with delight once  
cherished,

But no more, if thou tamely thus endure,  
And shall resent not, with more strenuous anger,  
Such insult to a father ventured on,  
Thine or another's not thy near concern.  
Have I begotten thee my sharpest curse,  
Cherished thy years, tended about thy care  
With fondest diligence, to find thee, now  
Heartened and warmed, a deadly bosom-serpent,  
Ungrateful, base, stinging the hand that reared  
thee?

Or by the bait of woman snared, and tamed,  
Thy sacred freedom lost that should assure  
Our hoped deliverance, must I regard thee,  
Tangled by fond desire in amorous net,  
A prisoner to her wish, or lightest word

Let fall, with faith and rightful due forgot,  
 Thy glorious purpose quite foregone or lost,  
 And mission high neglected as despised—  
 Thee must I then bewail thus, once esteemed  
 My one delight, that should (but fondly hoped!)  
 Stay my declining years and nurse my age—  
 But now my sharp reproach and shame discerned?

Be other than thou art, or be not mine.  
 Nor so expect my presence, how besought,  
 Or to occasion whatso'er desired,  
 Out of the dear regard of love, for such  
 As to thy shame thou now art found, unworthy  
 Nation or God, thy father or thyself.

*Sams.* Go, then, as best, ere soon occasion  
 further

These find to annoy thee, advantaged in my absence;

And for thy conduct safe and safe convoy  
 I will dispatch along these chosen youth,  
 My nuptial tendance from our nation chosen;  
 Nor shall I sorrow much, nor much afflict me  
 At thy departure, matters as they hold,  
 But bring thee, as befits, upon thy way,

*Cho.* I cannot like this pliant conduct, friends,  
 And outrage slightly overpassed; from such  
 Omission but evil springs. More wroth at first  
 Should be who pardons, or condones. Nor such  
 His wont; since quenched not easily we know  
 His anger waked, nor for the main suppressed  
 In smiling looks and fair persuading words.  
 But what have we to fear of harm, or dread,  
 So many, and with youthful vigor armed  
 Against him single for his kindred gone?  
 He will not dare against us now, nor venture  
 Violence or force, nor more contrary aught,  
 Among his foes thus single and unarmed;

His error, and the wished occasion found,  
As he shall find perhaps ere this day end.  
But yonder through the shade I now discern  
A bevy of fair damsels, richly dressed  
In gems and waving robes, with steps well-timed,  
As they in dance came on, and amorous ditties  
Sung to the harp, tokens that well infer  
The bridal train, the bride among them chief ;  
And, driving now full-sail, this way they steer,  
Like a rich fleet of vessels, fair addressed  
To Tarsis, or the isles of utmost Ind—  
One o'er the rest proudly pre-eminent  
In stature, beauty, speed, a towering ship,  
The pride and stately boast of her convoy—  
With tackle hoised, sails filled, and streamers  
flaunting,  
That court the spicy winds to waft their way ;  
And now, on nearer view more sure discerned,  
Though yet unthought what purpose or intait  
Induces, known the bride and bridal train.

*Lilith.* Greeting and welcome, bridal friends  
and comrades

To him who hath espoused me, and this day  
With me fulfilled those nuptial vows engaged.

*Cho.* O happy chance, that brings thee to this  
place

To listen our hymeneal,  
Thy nuptial ode assigned  
And holy spousal hymn,  
Befitting best occasion sacred thus  
Of amorous consort,  
That celebrates this day conjoined  
With his thy vows in faith and wedlock bands,  
That goodliest man of men,  
Whom this day brings to consummate his love,  
Happy in thee and thy possession fair,  
Our flower of beauty, and pride ;

Linked in whose love so dear,  
 Prosperous be thou as fair, thy spousal bed  
 Fruitful with nuptial pleasures pure  
 And beauteous offspring, consummation glad  
 Of all thy bliss and solace of thy love.

Nor less thy lot esteem, which thee assures  
 Thy spouse and wedlock mate,  
 That mightiest of earth's sons,  
 By whose dear side to shade thee and protect  
 Through all thy hazards of life,  
 Possess thy bliss devised,  
 His love to thee, and thine to him, assured,  
 Long life, and happy days, and issue fair.

*Lil.* I came not for your spousal greetings,  
 friends,

Though not unmindful for them, but to share  
 With you my tidings of success unhop'd,  
 Scarcely this day but gained and in this hour,  
 His secret wrested from him in his height  
 Of resolution not to yield; I urged him  
 With many reasons, brought forth many proofs  
 To win him, long in silence combated,  
 Pressed him with amorous arts and amorous  
 words,

And long in vain, though fixed not to give o'er,  
 Still mindful for your threat, until success.  
 At length that plea, twixt wedded man and wife  
 No secret, and with all assurance given,  
 Confirmed by solemn oath and solemn faith,  
 To you divulged not, wrought with him, and he,  
 Importuned, over worn and wearied out,  
 Opened me all his bosom and my will.  
 But he who cannot his own secret hold  
 Locked in his breast, with constant resolution  
 And purpose not to yield, whatever urged  
 Against him, or, with what persuasion armed,  
 Cunning, or fraud, or force, how should he hope

Who then shall keep it for him, when revealed,  
 By his inducements not enforced, or held,  
 Not to betray the secret, not to yield—  
 How think that sacred trust, to him committed,  
 In silence kept, if he in silence keep not,  
 Though upon sworn assurance, solemn oath?  
 And which the firmlier, bonds of civil duty,  
 Or bonds of wedlock, to whomever, bind?  
 Whom, then, should I regard or fear, a stranger  
 Of hated race and vanquished, an inferior  
 Held by our lords a thrall, given by my father,  
 Embraced against my will, or rather you,  
 My friends and countrymen, whose ties of kin-  
     dred

Firmlier bind than faith of wedlock bands?  
 And by your word assured, and by your presence,  
 That safe assures more than your word assures,  
 No harm to me, whatever harm devised,  
 I have not much to fear what he can do  
 Against me, or what harm on me contrive,  
 Single among his enemies and unarmed;  
 Small danger which infers, if I reveal,  
 As without more I shall. A swarm of bees,  
 Hived in the lion's carcass, solves the riddle.  
 Now ye may boast your wagered forfeit won.

*Cho.* Yet softly; for I see approach,  
 But now returned after his kindred parted,  
 Samson, who, when his secret known betrayed,  
 Doubtless found highly incensed;  
 Advise, then, well  
 Thy conduct, that his wrath inflame not more.

*Lil.* Samson, well may we spare each other's  
     presence,  
 If, after parted thus, desire again  
 Unite as now, so much thy sight hath cheered me  
 Ignorant of thy going and the cause,  
 That, for society and human sight,

Hither I was constrained to these thy friends,  
 With whom some cheering found, some little so-  
 lace ;

And to repay whose entertainment given  
 I have bestowed what thou so well canst spare  
 And feel no lack, that secret thou impartedst  
 At my solicitation, hardly gained,  
 Yet gained with wonder so reluctant given  
 As much, so small the consequence attached ;  
 Neither upbraid, that I in this may boast,  
 Out of the dear regard for me thou hast,  
 But this day linked with thee in bonds of love,  
 Thy favor, as these now thy forfeit boast.

*Sams.* But not thy nuptial fealty, faithless  
 monster,

Who swore with solemn oath, and pressed me  
 strongly

Against my will and quick suspicion held,  
 Not to divulge, not to betray the trust  
 Deposited ; but thou with reasons urgedst me  
 So many and with such persuasions armed,  
 That to my better purpose I proved false,  
 As thou to me hast proved. Accomplished fraud,  
 Couldst thou not more oaths swear, more faith  
 confirm,

To make thy sin less heinous by enormity,  
 That men might more admire the magnitude  
 Than thy degree of vice and mind depraved ?  
 Yet what more couldst thou swear or what con-  
 firm,

More than thou hast, vile traitress ? Thou ad-  
 juredst me

By all the bonds of love, so faithful held,  
 And bonds of spousal duty, nuptial faith,  
 What but to yield me and betray, a scorn  
 Among my enemies, utmost contempt  
 To all my kindred, all my friends endeared,



Proverbed a fool, to all time an example?

*Lil.* Bear with me, Samson, while I shall endeavor

To lessen or extenuate my fault,  
So held, committed, yet in all duty done  
To thee, and fair intent. I feared thee change-  
ful,

Since of thy own tribe women found so fair,  
Of various fancy, dreaded thou wouldst leave me,  
Perhaps, ere this day consummate our vows ;  
Rightly sought, therefore, how to hold thee firm-  
est

To me ; and to this end thy cherished secret  
Obtained ; to these, thy friends, revealed it,  
A further hold intended, in their knowledge  
An added bond ; the forfeit rightly judged  
So trivial, of such little worth esteemed,  
That I could rather lose, than lose thy love ;  
Which now I ne'er will urge again so hard,  
If in this test but faithful it be found.  
Pronounce forgiveness, therefore, on my fault,  
By thee so held, but not by me intended,  
Through which if I with thee am lower esteemed,  
Restore me to my place and favor lost.

*Sams.* Out, traitress, out ! I can as soon re-  
store thee

To new acceptance, as thou canst restore  
Thy fealty and thy trust of silence lost.  
Even were thy words sincere, how couldst thou  
hope

Would go my faith, or favor, or my love,  
Where my esteem could not and confidence,  
Or long remain, where these could not remain ;  
How could they, where no worth or value found,  
So heinous is thy sin that thou hast sinned ?  
I before all the daughters of my nation

Esteemed thee and loved; unlocked thee all my  
heart;

Not as a trial designed of marriage-faith,  
But overcome by importunity

And strong assurance of thy wifely love.

Was this thy wifely duty, wifely love

Assured, thus to desert me, thus forego me,

Slight me as naught, betray me to my friends

Esteemed, but now as foes and hostile held,

Then to beseech me, and with feigned remorse

Entreat my new acceptance and new love?

Thou shouldst not so direct against my notions

Presume thyself, and then presume forgiveness;

Or, if thou dost, know thy presumption false.

*Lil.* Yet further hear me, Samson; that my  
love

In this not slackened, but the more assured,

Know, through my fear for thee I have revealed

What, but for this, had never been disclosed.

I saw thee here among thy enemies,

For such they are, though friends to thee pre-  
tended,

Single and unarmed and thence against them  
weak;

I feared what harm they might inflict upon thee,

Cast from their hope to solve thy riddle set,

And deemed that thou might'st easier lose thy  
forfeit

Than spare thy life, with thy lost love to me,

And all the pain that love deprived attends

For this have I misdome, if must be deemed

What for thy own best good and highest end

Intended, by regard for thee impelled

Through love, which, if well meaning though  
harm wrought,

No blame attends, but pity rather and pardon.

These pleadings satisfy the laws of love,

And therefore thee, if thou to love a subject.  
 Let this appease thy wrath and thou the rather  
 Applaud my dauntless resolution bold,  
 That against thy displeasure sought thy welfare,  
 Than censure the light holding of my faith  
 To thee engaged, not to thy harm engaged.  
 These reasons, then, these, these, and more be-  
 side,

May well, if not deserve, at least implore  
 Thy pardon and thy favor and thy love.

*Sams.* Since thou wilt cling still to that odious  
 plea

Of love, pretended, faith to me, abjured,  
 Hear me, if I pronounce thy refutation.  
 No token of thy faith could I esteem  
 Of higher proof, or love to me engaged,  
 Than the maintaining of that faith and love  
 By firm hold on thy word to me assured.  
 For where is found no faith of man and wife,  
 Mistrust and fear must lurk, inconstancy,  
 Mutual doubt, suspicion, that shake sore  
 Their inward peace of mind and wonted calm.  
 My welfare was thy thought; what if my welfare  
 I lower held than faith of marriage-bonds?  
 Of which the one thou shouldst have kept to me,  
 The other left to whom it most concerns;  
 Or how couldst thou presume what I, thy head,  
 Had charged thee absolutely not to do,  
 And then not raise in me utmost displeasure,  
 Knowing, as needs thou should, so disobeying?  
 Thou only seek'st fresh opportunity,  
 On pardon granted, to insult me more,  
 And with more open impudence betray me.  
 Thy acted parts and feignings I contemn,  
 And count thy specious pleas not pleas, but lies.

*Lil.* Then if these reasons win thee not, let win  
 thee

What else I suffered, ere I could consent,  
 What snares were set, what sieges girded round ;  
 Some small commiseration this may gain me,  
 Perhaps, from thee, not from my hope quite  
 cast.

It was not wanton disregard of faith,  
 As thou inferest, or I of thee infer,  
 Slackening of wedlock duty, wifely love,  
 Still firm my faith to thee as first, but weakness  
 Against their importunity to oppose  
 Is my excuse. Thy bridal friends and guests,  
 Thy friends esteemed, hence firm to thee es-  
 teemed,

And toward thy interest, set upon me, pressed  
 me,

Urged me by all the ties of civil duty  
 And of relation, to obtain thy secret  
 And give to them, when once I had obtained ;  
 Assuring me, not against thee designed  
 Occasion of quarrel ; but dishonorable  
 Thus to permit an alien to our race,  
 And our inferior held, to advantage thus  
 Upon my kindred, on my countrymen.  
 These proving vain, they threatened cruel death,  
 Constraining me to wrest thy secret from thee  
 And tell to them, that solved thy riddle set.  
 With such assaults hard pressed, though scrup-  
 ling much

To circumvent my faith, at last I yielded,  
 Unlocked them all thy secret and their will.  
 But let me find some place to show contrition,  
 Samson ; reject me not thus for my fault,  
 By sad event so found, not deemed at first,  
 Loss of thy love and thy displeasure gained.  
 Upon my known offence and sin allot  
 Whatever punishment, and I will pay  
 To the full reckoning set my heavy score,

So I may still to favor be restored ;  
 And in thy anger be some mercy shown,  
 How small ; nor from all hope cut me quite off.  
 Regard my weaker sex and weaker years,  
 If in thy heart some pity harbor still,  
 And bear with me in my infirmities,  
 Which with thy help I shall in time o'ercome,  
 Perhaps ; without thy aid and favor not.  
 So shalt thou, as thou dost in strength excel,  
 In mercy and compassionate pardon so.

*Sams.* Such punishment, as on my own I take,  
 To thy sin I allot ; and if no more,  
 Thou wilt not readily seek like penalty,  
 Loss of all love, and sharp mistrust engendered.  
 Thou wouldst not for thy husband wish me, thus  
 Loveless and unendeared, a mock and scorn  
 Among unperjured women, faithful wives.  
 Forego they seeking, then, or own it feigned,  
 After a fact so heinous, to thy husband  
 Unchaste, unfaithful ; for a deed so faithless  
 Argues a heart like faithless and unchaste ;  
 Nor can their pled constraint absolve thy sin,  
 Since under my protection, as thy husband,  
 Thou first obedience owed'st to me, not them,  
 Who thence thy countrymen no more, nor kin-  
 dred,  
 Though they to thy refusal had attached  
 A threat more cruel, joined a heavier doom.  
 Yet much I marvel that my friends and com-  
 rades  
 Could move against me thus, the wagered for-  
 feit  
 Esteemed so slight, not worth a life to lose.

*Cho.* Thou wouldst not wonder long, couldst  
 thou but learn  
 The occasion of our importunity.  
 Our politic lords assigned us as thy spies,

Though bridal friends and guests to thee pre-  
tended,

Fearing some fraud on us by thee contrived,  
Not friendly heretofore, but hostile found.

Guile, then, with guile, as best, they have op-  
posed,

Cunning have matched with cunning, since force  
with force

Single they could not; from whose wished event  
Infers that strength, unless to wisdom joined,

Made only to subserve where wisdom rules;

A lesson, Samson, which to thee we care not

If we reveal, since thus from thee we learned;

Whom much we need not fear from this attest.

*Sams.* Was this that solemn oath and faith af-  
firmed

By your dread lords to me, and me to them,

So to requite with perjured guile the trust

In them reposed by acquiescence given

To their request, though strange and out of wont,

My nuptial tendance from their nation chosen,

Not mine, as custom old and use obtains?

Where, also, was that oath to me assured,

By you assured, of faith and friendship firm,

When I received you for my bridal friends,

Not with reluctance, as I feared in aught,

But openly, as numbered of my nation,

When ye by cruel force constrained my bride

To wrest from me and tell to you my secret,

Thereto set on by your designing lords,

Themselves not true, but in false league combined

To wrest their oath and break their pledge se-  
cured?

This was your honor and Philistian faith,

Wherein, put to the test, how dully shows

The coin debased of friendship counterfeit,

And when with mine compared how foul appears!

Among the daughters of your nation found  
 I sought a bride, which proved in me no guile,  
 And here among you held my nuptial feast,  
 So further my sincerity attesting.  
 If aught against me, then, your lords have moved,  
 They did it impiously, against the laws  
 Of nations, laws of hospitality,  
 Violating thus their country's fairest ends.  
 With such no league can hold, since disregarded  
 Those principles that base and found a state,  
 Honor and faith and fair intent to all,  
 Without which none begins, or long endures.  
 Too much I cannot gratulate my chance,  
 In time discovered both a faithless wife  
 And faithless nation, both alike in fraud  
 Exceling, found unfaithful as unchaste;  
 Nor shall I greatly sorrow, if to both  
 My faith I break, since both to me have broken,

*Cho.* Thou wouldst not dare, except thou dost  
 presume

Upon our suffrance, thus abuse our patience  
 With insult to our lords and us avouched,  
 Pretending broken faith and oath outraged  
 By us, when thou occasion only sought'st  
 To do the like, but never couldst surprise,  
 And which through fear of us durst never seize.  
 False pretext, since from us to thee needs hold  
 No faith, victor to vanquished, lord to slave;  
 Since in fierce battle we thy nation vanquished,  
 Regaining thus the glory of prowess lost  
 Of Palestine from thine, who thence our subject,  
 Toward whom we hold what faith soe'er and  
 league,

As to a race inferior and enthralled.

**N**or think we greatly dread, as thou presumest,

What the utmost of thy might on us can do,  
 Would fortune but fair opportunity.  
 Afford, as once before, soon should'st thou show  
 A lower courage, use a smoother tongue,  
 Spite of thy vaunted strength and valor framed.  
 Let this be warning, then, that may suffice,  
 And not need force, or stronger, to impress.

*Sams.* I fear ye not, nor all your force; the  
 rather

Welcome such contest, what ye dare against  
 The merited assay of this right arm  
 Provoked, though first, yet not the last, reward,  
 Of faith-breach, league thus loosely disallied;  
 Nor other time I know, or like to be,  
 Or other place, so suitable as this,  
 To show you what this vengeful arm intends,  
 Or to receive your utmost brunt of battle,  
 Whatever, then, your sudden valor prompt,  
 Sit on, nor deem that I shall hence be far.

*Cho.* Not long should hesitation hang, nor sequel

Delay thy vaunt with force returned, wert thou  
 Our equal, worth our valor to assail,  
 Not rather insult and declined emprise  
 By us accounted, thus with thee engaged,  
 Our subject, our inferior, our thrall,  
 Beneath all notice, worthy but contempt,  
 Or best chastised by those whose pride, as thine,  
 In lips unrazored and like boistrous locks,  
 Thus by a woman, not by men, subdued.

*Sams.* I thought thy circling pretense thus  
 would end

In vouched disdain, insult to valor offered,  
 Tongue-doughty, whom no insult ventured on,  
 No force, could more, except with idle breath,  
 To venture or return, if offered fight;  
 And, as might well be thought, as ye in fraud



Excel, so now in cowardice, since thus  
The hand maintains not what the tongue pre-  
sumed,

Thus insolent, untractable, unquenchable,  
Not worthy notice, beneath all contempt,  
And likest those who profit by respect  
Of sex against all honor and fair faith;  
So now with futile answer like returned.

*Lil.* Samson, once more, ere lastly thou pro-  
nounce,

Let me obtain forgiveness for my fault,  
Which I confess, and well could wish not done,  
So unforeseen the sad event derived;  
Nor thus disjoin our vows, this day conjoined.

*Sams.* No, no; it suits not thou and I were one,  
Twain now in heart and soul as twain in race;  
Nor frame thy thoughts to speech in artful mode,  
As to her spouse by faithful wife and dear.

Thy amorous nets no more shall tempt my feet,  
Once in the snare, and well-nigh fatal, caught;  
Nor thy unfaith my credulous faith betray.

On thee, who art a woman, and exempt,  
I will enforce no violence, nor on these  
Aids to thy fraud, respecting both thy sex  
And their false oath; but others of thy nation,  
Since all perceived set on like enmity,  
Will not exempt this, but will deal toward them  
As enemies, wherever chanced or found.

Yet think not for the base return ye made  
To my regarded faith I shall as base  
Return, or for that waged forfeit set,  
By you so foully gained with perjured sleight,  
Ye have long time to wait, or I to seek.

*Cho.* Which if thou gain within time boasted  
thus

Will prove a shrewder riddle than thy last  
With search to find the satisfying solution.

*Sams.* O double breach of faith to me presumed,  
 And insult dire returned  
 To my regarded trust,  
 Which with as greater shame must on me show,  
 If tamely and ingloriously endured  
 Affront so vile esteemed  
 And foul indignity presumed  
 From heathen and profane,  
 Yet no return attempted on my foes!

Was it for this that plighted faith secured  
 And mutual pledge engaged  
 Assured your firm regard sincere, when I  
 With fair and open intent  
 Sought league with you and mutual amity,  
 And, further to assure the bond sincere,  
 Among you chose a bride,  
 Approving thus my steadfast loyalty  
 To that pledged word assured?  
 Which by you basely broken  
 Compels me, unwilling else,  
 From the dear side and loved society  
 Of her but this day linked  
 With me in faith of wedlock bands.

Yet not through fear seduced or drawn, I go,  
 Of what your utmost  
 On me may inflict;  
 But to requite such faith-breach offered  
 And insult foul presumed  
 With what becomes of extreme vengeance urged,  
 My purpose, and, by right, studied revenge.

*Cho.* Go, then, nor think we greatly dread  
 What the utmost of thy might  
 On us is able,  
 Though to thy vaunted strength were joined  
 The total force of those that serve thy God,  
 With the utmost of his deity seconded;

Whose puissance we ere this have proved,  
 And found it against Dagon  
 Useless and vain, ridiculous, despised.  
 Go therefore, where thy heart inclines,  
 Whether to death, or some more shameful fate,  
 For strict necessity naught less  
 Upon thee allots,  
 In that direful fold self-tangled.

*Lil.* He's gone; and how he may revenge him-  
 self

By stirring up his wrath to hostile deeds,  
 My heart misgives me, sore divine of ill,  
 Since readily he passes no affront,  
 However slight; how, then, should this escape,  
 Se heinous in his sight and foul esteemed?  
 Who could have thought he would so strictly hold  
 The urged offense, my broken faith to him,  
 Given but by way of jest, and not intended  
 Binding on me, since not on him constraining?  
 Yet since he could persist in his affront  
 After my suit for pardon, I shall not  
 Greatly deject myself for my offense,  
 No reasily care to gain his love endangered,  
 So readily shaken as not worthy deemed,  
 Only our schemes miscarried I deplore,  
 To draw him into our power and through my love  
 Render him our subservient and our thrall;  
 Captive at home, a prisoner to love  
 Esteemed, so held, more in our power secured.

*Cho.* Be not disturbed; no serious harm upon  
 us

He can inflict, how much his anger chafe;  
 What strength soe'er live in those mighty limbs,  
 Though doubled more than now, he cannot cope,  
 Single and unarmed, against a nation armed;  
 For, as thou knowest, he long ere this dispatched  
 Homeward in haste his countrymen and sire,

Fearing some further affront upon them offered.  
 Nor to the citizens much harm can lurk  
 In his displeasure visited upon them  
 Perhaps before the popular tidings published.  
 For with his father and his kindred parted,  
 And the known cause therefor, the city rings ;  
 Him also present sole the city knows,  
 And with prevention will ward off all harm.  
 That he hath now departed all our bounds  
 And hath arrived his father's house, were likelier,  
 Than tarried in the midst of enemies,  
 Thus from his kindred and from succor far.  
 Be not disheartened, then, and have no care,  
 Either for self, or kindred, or thy nation ;  
 But rather like thy lot which hath prevented  
 A wedlock so distasteful to thyself,  
 Yet rather to thy friends, his paranymphs,  
 Of whom thou mayest a second mate select  
 Suitable to thy choice, since now thy former  
 By express word and action hath divorced thee  
 Constrained to bonds by force against thy will.

*Lil.* Then, chiefly by your kind assurances given,

Pledges of dear regard, I take no fear  
 Upon myself for what I have misdone,  
 Not so intended, since I other deemed  
 The event, and him, not now, as heretofore,  
 Subservient to my asking and my will.  
 And since by his own act and express word  
 He hath divorced me and left, so let him go ;  
 I can as easily find another mate  
 As he, and one of better faith, perhaps,  
 To take affront upon so slight offense,  
 Not for some breach of faith endangering life.  
 And though with his my fame may stand traduced  
 Pattern of most unconjugal unfaith,  
 Yet here, among my kindred and my friends,

And all my tribe, what I could more esteem,  
 I shall be famed of those faithful women,  
 Who, to promote her cherished welfare, chose  
 To set their country's faith above their own.  
 Nor shall I much repine, if I receive  
 The favor of my nation and my friends  
 To recompense my zeal for country shown.  
 If he at this take envy or despite,  
 I leave him to his lot, and cleave to mine.

*Cho.* Nor less thy fortune hold; since not un-  
 grateful

To thee or us or all thy nation numbered.  
 Thou in thy country's favor satisfied  
 Shalt need no husband, that to thee a husband  
 Less ready to abjure thee and forsake  
 Than he, who, for his perjury done this day,  
 Merits no name of husband and no wife.  
 Nor dread thou long the sting of love disprized,  
 Soon in a second passion comforted,  
 More faithful than thy first, and more endeared.

*Lil.* Still less, then, shall my choice repent or  
 change,

That firm assures my country's favor gained  
 For his, to whom in wedlock joined were shame  
 Unutterable, intolerable, and worse  
 Than fancy might conceive or fear might feign—  
 Not, therefore, to be sought, but every way  
 Avoided, as what worse to me might fall,  
 Nor in my present mind to prosecute,  
 Thus unsurmised, unworthy, undesirable,  
 But by what means soe'er to circumvent.

*Cho.* Yet see! for yonder comes in haste  
 That famed, that renowned,  
 Invincible Samson,  
 Manoah's mighty son:  
 Though not, as when he parted,  
 Cloudy defiance lowering on his brow,

But in his look more mild sits calm serene.  
 His burden borne the wagered forfeit deemed,  
 Doubtless full satisfaction and discharge  
 Of his sworn oath and faith to us engaged.  
 Remain; for thou with him shalt see some sport  
 Perhaps, nor shall he work thy harm in aught.

*Lil.* Whom I with all persuasion will assault,  
 All amorous arts and fair enticing words,  
 If in my power still to appease his mind  
 With what amends, so highly incensed against  
 me,

Yet now perchance by time elapsed more mild,  
 Or, if not so, still to our purpose bent.

*Cho.* Howe'er the event may turn, alike im-  
 ports.

*Sams.* I come not, comrades, to accuse my  
 chance,  
 Though ill perhaps, or wish it had not been,  
 As of unfriendly event. For, where effect  
 Hath ended hope, the former mind forgets,  
 As though desire or wish had not been known.  
 Wonder not, then, though wonder well were  
 moved

Perhaps at this so sudden change perceived,  
 That I, who late such heat of anger felt,  
 Then justly deemed, now show of different mind  
 And different purpose changed so soon. For so  
 It suited not that I, who late conjoined  
 Friendship and league with you, and fealty firm,  
 By solemn pledge confirmed, should all disjoin,  
 For one slight difference held, one trivial breach,  
 Though first but hardly held, friendship so dear  
 And amity, nor that your just reproach  
 Resented my slack failure to fulfil  
 That bond secured, since I not then refused  
 The trial, as I now the forfeit not,  
 Best surety of my pledge. Wherefore behold

The wagered forfeit ye had won of me,  
And say if this be satisfaction deemed,  
As I to you engaged, or wanting still.

*Cho.* Full and complete adjudged, nor lacking  
aught ;

And worthy thus thy fame, that in brief space  
Incredible thy pledge thou couldst redeem.  
Yet much I marvel that in time so short  
Accomplished thus, despite thy vigor known,  
Since to thy place and here return accounted  
No journey of a sabbath, loaded so  
A wonder well thy might so much endured.  
Who, then, shall ravel this aright, and set,  
To me shall seem of fame no less deserving,  
Than who thy former riddle rightly searched.

*Sams.* That thou hast gained thy forfeit gaged  
suffices ;

Further concerns thee not. But much I marvel  
How chances yet my wife upon this place,  
Not in the riddling contest now concerned.  
Say, woman, hadst thou not enough offended  
By treason to me and hate unconjugal,  
That thou shouldst more contumely and reproach  
Heap on my head, thus witness to my shame?  
Or dost thou further seek to excuse thy fault,  
Rather to approve thy innocence confirmed,  
Open to all, and easily apparent?

*Lil.* Samson, by sad experience well I know  
How little force with thee my words can find ;  
And that my own perverseness I may thank  
No interpreter than thy displeasure needs.  
But granting all, I still beseech thy love,  
Earned by repentance and by penance sore,  
Loss of thy love to me, not mine to thee,  
That still remains, and strives in thee to raise  
Like measure of itself. Forsake not thus  
Her, whom thy love once chose to recompense,

Nor easily repulse, lest thou shalt feel  
 With me the secret sting of love refused  
 Too late, when mine to thee no more endures.

*Sams.* My love I gave thee once, but thou  
 didst use

With what abuse! How, therefore, could I ven-  
 ture

That love again, fearful of like return?

Thy infidelity have I refused

And treason most unconjugal, not thy love.

These, then, forbid my love's return, not I,

Who only pleasure should own and new delight,

Once more if love should knit our vows disjoined,

So linked anew in willing wedlock-bands.

Yet that this once could be I cannot think,

After offense, so unprovoked committed,

That mutual amity and faith could grow

Where fires of fierce mistrust have burned so  
 deep.

Such reasons, then, should warn thee to forbear

Imploral of love and mutual faith renewed,

Howe'er desirable and fair appearing,

Lest by a second lapse and heavier fall

In hate thou deeper plunge, with second shame

Drawn on thee, thy renewed reproach and mine.

*Lil.* That I toward thee no harm or ill in-  
 tended

Witness the love I bear thee! Let me find

Some place to show fit recompense, nor thus

Repulse my penitence, disregard my tears!

Though I herein offended, not so deem

Ever I shall again—such agony

Of love and inward pain, amorous remorse,

Till now I never felt, nor shall again,

Since never more I mean to try, once tried

With sad event, the pain of thy displeasure,

That teaches me not lightly thus to hold



Thy faithful love to me, so dear, unequalled;  
 Lacking which, how shall I endure to live,  
 Lost from the consolation of thy love,  
 Joyless and unendeared, hopeless and sad?  
 As when a traveler, at shut of day  
 Faint and belated, scans the landskip round  
 For shelter gainst the night; meanwhile sun  
     sinks,

Sky lovers apace, and sullen-rising winds  
 Moan wandering round their vast aerial hall.  
 My fault performed I acknowledge, here abjure,  
 And falling at thy feet, I clasp thy knees,  
 A suppliant, and beg thee, as a boon,  
 Not with displeasure and contempt returned  
 My proffer of peace and amity renewed.

*Sams.* Hence from my feet! nor think thy  
     acted parts  
 More shall with me prevail, though once pre-  
     vailing.

I know thy amorous arts and amorous wiles,  
 Though nearly to my cost, thy toils and trains,  
 The wont of every woman, like thee, false.  
 Didst thou not break all vows, deceive, betray,  
 Once to obtain my secret in thy power,  
 Then, with what speed thou couldst, post straight  
     to these,

My spies and rivals, and as a thing of naught  
 Reveal, abjuring bonds of marriage-faith?  
 Yet now on my weak credence couldst pretend  
 Repentance, feign remorse, what but in hopes  
 To win me to thee again, when thou wouldst hold  
     me

Uxorious to thy power, thy thrall complete!  
 Once more thy odious pretense I contemn,  
 And count thy spurious pleas not pleas, but lies.

*Lil.* Then since thou wilt renounce me, thus  
     against

Thy marriage-faith, thee I renounce, disown,  
 Nor hold my husband, but account it free  
 To choose as likes my choice; nor think the slight  
 Thou set'st upon me easily overpassed  
 And no return attempted. In thy stead,  
 Thy paranymp, whom thou hast used thy friend,  
 I here espouse, and trust to find of faith  
 Not to desert upon so slight offense,  
 Not breach of wedlock-faith engendering hate.  
 This if thou like not, since thou art sole cause,  
 Thou must endure, since no redress is found.  
 Full leave of me thou hast to do the like,  
 If thou canst find, my doubt, a second mate,  
 After thy faith to me and fealty shown.  
 However, then, it likes, or likes thee not,  
 Thou to thy lot may'st cleave, as I to mine.

*Sams.* Whatever, then, thy inclination bids  
 thee,

Do therefore, now no more with me at one.  
 So less than ever by this last act of thine,  
 That teaches plain, if still were need to learn  
 After thy former proof sufficient had,  
 How miserable lot with thee to live  
 Were mine, thus with a noxious bosom-snake  
 Entangled, had I not cut thee quickly off,  
 Before the threatened sting received. Nor less  
 Knowledge to choose a second mate I know,  
 In thy example warned, not by the bait  
 Of beauty snared, that falsest sign of virtue;  
 Then only fair, where goodness, virtue, shines,  
 That even the plainest lineaments illumines,  
 True beauty; other, lacking these assured,  
 Comely or homely, with indifference gazed,  
 Or trivial passion felt and notice passed;  
 Not truly beautiful, save truly good.  
 But I too long in this unfriendly place  
 Have stayed, nor yet delaying. Ye, who take

These pledges won, though now to have gained  
 esteeming,  
 And with imagined triumph flown discerned,  
 Think me not so unpractised or unskilled  
 To set the hazard on a single throw—  
 A second riddle set, but the solution  
 Not now so easily gained, since on yourselves  
 Depends, if ye would have; though now not far  
 It yet remains to learn, nor, would ye know  
 Whence were these gotten spoils, long time to  
 wait.

In such concerns I leave ye. So, farewell.

*Cho.* So let him go, a riddler to the last.  
 But where in time so brief his forfeit gained  
 Now entertains my thoughts. Yet is most likely,  
 Since of Philistian mode, some wandering mer-  
 chant,  
 By force constrained or gold, hath furnished  
 them;

Since other means or other place, than thus  
 To obtain them in his power, none appears,  
 And he on us durst no reprisal venture;  
 For had he thus, by this and here the attempt.

*Lil.* Thy thoughts I fain would share, but can-  
 not hope;  
 For, at his parting first, a surly chafe  
 Possessed him, thus defrauded, as he thought,  
 With wrested honor where he felt secure  
 His faith; and, though more calm of mind ap-  
 pearing  
 At his last coming, somewhat in his look  
 And action moved uncertain, that hath left  
 Doubtful and dark my mind; not easily, thus  
 By cunning overreached, will he defer  
 His vengeance, if already not exacted  
 Whate'er return or chosen recompense.  
 Expect, then, soon to hear tidings unwished,

And for of other import than now deemed—  
 Some horrid deed, or dismal accident,  
 And sad to us in the end, not joyful proving.

*Cho.* Yet if thus found, or no, it cannot long  
 Hang in suspense thus doubtful, whether we  
 Erring be proved or thou, between whom now  
 The sure event must arbitrate,  
 And so, perhaps, not far defered.  
 For now I see approaching,  
 With altered garb disordered  
 And visage uncomposed,  
 One in port and mien announcing news;  
 Draws on a pace, and in his look  
 Tidings of other sort than late received;  
 By his habit known a Philistine,  
 As well as I may guess,  
 One of our nation, sure, though not of ours.

What wind hath driven him hither conjecture  
 fails,

But, by his frown, not fraughted well for us.

*Attendant.* Ye, that upon this place now present  
 stand,

One here attends with message to you brought  
 Of what hath chanced from Samson, for such  
 gained

While he the place inquired, for Timna bound;  
 And now awaits assurance, here at hand.

*Mes.* Men of Philistia, since that such ye are  
 Appearance testifies and rumor, say  
 What city this, and who the habitants?

*Cho.* Think then at once both inquiries satis-  
 fied,

Though thou not yet declared, if Timma known,  
 The habitation of the sons of Caphtor.

*Mes.* Then ye to whom the sad concern per-  
 tains.

Yet miserable, that to my lot should fall

The dread relation strange to be imparted,  
 Though haply to your ears by this the tale  
 Has come; so ill the news, it travels post.

*Cho.* Nothing we know in aught concerns us  
 sad;

Nothing to startle or astound, except  
 Thy strange demeanor and thy outcry strange,  
 As though on ours some dire calamity fallen.

*Mes.* Nor far at variance deem thy guess from  
 truth.

*Cho.* Intends thy speech the full significance?

*Mes.* Not less esteem; though yet so strange  
 the event

Ocurring, slow belief will credit scarce.

*Cho.* I am curious what this riddle may im-  
 port.

*Mes.* Perhaps thy wish gains unthought satis-  
 faction.

*Cho.* Tell us at once; for so suspense in news  
 Tortures, the worst at once were better known.

*Mes.* So dire a tale would soon proclaim it-  
 self,

Nor ask a tongue. But, if to full repletion  
 By rumor unconfirmed already filled,  
 Urge not so hard, nor with so keen desire  
 Seek what remains behind, lest evil tidings  
 In full relation heard bring grief in surfeit.

*Cho.* Yet still set out thy news, whate'er thou  
 knowest.

*Mes.* Hither from Ascalon am I, to which city,  
 Past midday as we kept about our thrift,  
 Came Samson, peaceful then to us as seemed,  
 Though otherwise the event approved, so dread,  
 So direful; whom our rabble straight assailed,  
 Matter of scorn to them and gaze, untried,  
 Though not unheard from rumor and report,

What dreadful might stored in those massy  
limbs.

Yet for a time he seemed unchafed, but stood  
With eyes fast fixed upon the ground, nor no-  
tice

Gave, nor attention, to their insolent rout,  
As is their wont to strangers and alone.  
At last, with head erect, and eyes uplift,  
That blazed with burning light and sparkles dire  
Shot forth, he uttered voice to this effect:

Hitherto, as your inclination led,  
Ye have performed, and I unmoved beheld;  
Now in my turn I mean to try, if ye  
Stand as unmoved, while I my part acquit.  
So saying, nor with further voice vouchsafed,  
But stern regard on his tormentors bent,  
Fierce as a chafed wild boar from out the wood,  
When hounds and huntsmen, galling, rouse, he  
set,

Single and unarmed, upon his enemies;  
Whom when among, smiting with mighty force,  
He felled to the earth, as mountain oaks and pines  
Felled by fierce winds, when, rushing forth from  
all

The quartered earth, they vex the wilderness  
With forests whole crushed down or torn up  
sheer;

So he whome'er he chanced upon opposed  
Buffeted low, or, raised in air, dashed down  
To the hazard of their heads and ruined sides.  
None might with hope oppose, or long withstand  
Such onset, as, now roused and raging fierce,  
He seized on trunks, or limbs, or heads, or arms,  
And crushed, or bruised, or swung and dashed to  
death,

Till thirty, of our choice and flower esteemed,  
Lay numbered slain; till when his anger burned

Unslackened, unexhausted, unappeased.  
Lastly, such fierce destruction to oppose,  
Weening his triumph, since he thought recoiled  
And wearied by so mighty number slain  
Who by his prowest acts had wrought such harm,  
Ahiman, of the mighty Anakim,  
Come towering, armed in gorgeous panoply,  
Helmet, and greaves, and brazen shield, and spear  
Whose staff a weaver's beam and massy head,  
Chalybean-tempered steel, a talent's weight,  
Vant-brace, and gauntlet, brigandine, clad en-  
tire—

And cased from head to feet in perfect mail.  
Whom, when he saw, disdain, as before,  
Advantage save in strength, or weapon's aid,  
Samson, whom now transcendent valor raised  
To highest deeds, with mighty force rushed on;  
And, little recked or none what warlike toils,  
Thrust spear, or brandished blade, or javelin  
poised,

Threatened him, or what towering bulk opposed,  
The pillars main that bore the edifice  
Caught in his grasp, and tugging to and fro  
The haughty pile, with fierce convulsion shook,  
As waters pent, till down the structure drew,  
Felled to the ground in ruinous heap—a mass,  
Shattered and maimed and wrecked, of shudder-  
ing flesh,

Crushed plate and broken mail and ruined sides,  
Mangled with ghastly hurts in head and limb  
Pent in and bruised by all his armor bent.  
After which fearful slaughter, in our streets  
Standing alone, since all had fled aloof,  
Fearing yet harm, he raised a mighty voice  
And cried aloud: If hitherto ye sought  
Reason of what I do, since unprovoked  
By you esteemed, know that in Timna found

Both these your robes and of my deed the cause.  
 Or, if ye further seek and more desire,  
 These tidings carry to your lords, intended  
 My answer to their acts and vindication  
 Of what themselves provoked and drew, which  
 more

Fully the ill befallen ye can explain.  
 Then, stripped their robes and as a burden placed,  
 He, disappearing, vanished from our sight  
 Suddenly, and as strangely as he came.  
 Ye have the account of his performance, then,  
 Full and complete, wherein if thee be found  
 Matter of joy, rejoice and gratulate.

*Cho.* O fearful vengeance on thy foes inflicted,

Samson, by proof strongest of mortal men!  
 Alas, if such thy tale, no cause of triumph  
 In this appears, occasion more to wail  
 And knock the breast; nothing but ill and foul,  
 Nor aught to quiet us in a loss so shameful.  
 Nothing remains for joy, naught but dispraise,  
 Dishonor, fear, and shame, and foes' contempt;  
 Since never from one so dire a chance hath fallen  
 us,

Wherein no glimpse of hope, none of revenge  
 On him, the dread occasion of our loss  
 And cause, with all best speed by this departed  
 And from our borders passed beyond pursuit;  
 Since evening, rising now, begins to tell  
 Her starry rubric. Nothing, then, remains,  
 Nothing but lamentation, then, remains  
 For so great loss, and after to confer  
 With counsel plotting how to reach revenge,  
 Since never overpassed with disregard  
 So foul dishonor stuck upon our front,  
 This day's disgrace, our sad reproach and shame.



# SAMSON AT TIMNAH

## ARGUMENT

Samson, his wife having been made the bride of another, his paranymp, taketh vengeance by setting foxes and fire brands among the corn and vineyards of the Philistines, who either in revenge, or as an act of justice, burn the Timnite and his daughter. While conversing of his exploits with the chorus, his friends and comrades at Zorah, his mother enters, and begs him to be reconciled with his father for their difference during the marriage at Timna. Samson hesitates, but at last consents, going, as it may be, to his death, yet departing, before his father arrives, upon tidings of the outrage to his wife. For Samson, either desiring vengeance for the slight put upon him, or not accepting the deed as justice in full, parts to Timna, slays the Philistines with great slaughter, and thence withdraws to the rock Etham. Manoah comes in during his son's absence, making inquiry of his whereabouts, explaining that he now desires to be reconciled to Samson for their difference at Timna. While thus occupied, a messenger, an Edrew, entering, relates the story of Samson's exploits; and the drama concludes.

## PERSONS

*Samson*

*Manoah*, his father.

*His Mother*.

First Messenger.

Second Messenger.

Chorus of Danite Youths.

Servant.

*The Scene, at Zorah.*

## SAMSON AT TIMNAH

*Samson.* O what a swarm of restless thoughts  
aroused

Awakens in me, while I contemplate  
From earliest years my strange eventful life,  
Well suiting to that mission high imposed!  
For first, as I have heard my parents tell,  
My birth by messenger divine was brought  
Unto my mother, hitherto, though loth,  
Childless and barren, and before had prayed  
A son from Heaven, as she sat reposed  
Amid the field at cool decline of day;  
Next to my father, then much moved by doubt  
Of what the showing meant, if vision true,  
Or false presenting as a pretext urged,  
Since open vision or prophetic dream  
Long since were not, and this might startle well  
With so strange tidings, hard for slow belief,  
A second message also was vouchsafed,  
Confirmed by solemn miracle, the seal  
And sign of truth; for, when the kindling flame  
Rose with the sacrifice from off the altar,  
The angel, mounting, rode thereon to heaven,  
After conception assured of me foretold  
To free my nation, break her cruel foes.  
And so, when due time was, and all fulfilled,  
My birth arrived, as late declared, the earnest  
Of doubtful cherished hope. But this not all;  
For still in youthful years and yet a child,  
Heroic actions warmed my heart, when seeing  
My nation subject to their heathen lords,  
Myself ordained, perhaps, to set them free,  
That I should Israel from such yoke redeem,  
My sacred task divine imposed from Heaven.  
At this perceived my mother much rejoiced,  
Heartening thus my youthful hopes: O son,  
Cherish thy thoughts so high, but not presump-  
tuous,

As might be deemed, since not as ordinary  
Thy birth, nor unannounced; but to me seated  
Amid the field, thence gone for solitude  
And prayer for children, childless then and barren,  
The messenger of God appeared, who told  
That thou shouldst be and when, thy mission  
high,  
To rescue Israel from Philistian yoke.  
Hence I thy thoughts from earliest days have  
eyed,  
Awaiting what best time to set before thee  
That high annunciation and divine  
Mission on the enjoined, that I might show thee  
Thy marvelous birth and dedicated life.  
But this remember sure, that in thy hair  
The sacred secret hangs both of thy might,  
Wondrous beyond compare, and safety placed.  
This, therefore, ponder well, that naught may  
tempt  
Thy ruin, and thou unadmonished fall.  
Then, when my years were grown to man, strange  
promptings,  
Fulfilment of my youthful thoughts, which  
yearned  
With hopes heroic inflamed, that I, perhaps,  
Might free my nation from Philistian yoke,  
Roused me to more among my enemies,  
The Philistines, those proud oppressors cruel,  
Where easily all their prowess I surpassed  
In tests of strength and strenuous feats displayed,  
That they, stirred up by quick revenge and  
hatred,  
Endeavored oft to get into their power  
The secret of my safety, sought in vain,  
Until, through passion frail and amorous snare,  
Once I beheld and loved, as they supposed,

The daughter of the Timnian infidel,  
And sought her, though against my parents' wish,  
Who saw this not, as I, as sent from God,  
The occasion of my glorious task enjoined,  
To be my wife, through passion? no, but urged,  
I knew not how, by movings unexplained,  
Certain in this, from God, and therefore followed  
Rightly, as his divine behest. Then going  
To claim my bride, the lion roared against me;  
But him I caught with mighty hold, and shore  
Easily off both hide and crested mane,  
Tearing him as he tore the yeanling kid.  
Whence was that riddle hard, by me propounded,  
When to the place arrived, to those choice youth  
Assigned me as pretended friends, but spies  
And rivals by their actions after found  
To gain solution sought, long mused in vain,  
Last through base sleight secured, my bride en-  
forced

To wrest from me and tell to them the secret  
That solved my riddle set, the pretext furnished  
My great work on our enemies to begin;  
Of whom thirty, their flower and choice esteemed,  
At Ascalon I slew, bearing their robes  
To Timna, as the wagered forfeit won.  
Where, at my visitation last, her father  
My bride refused, upon my paranymp,   
Whom I had used my friend, bestowed, avering  
To her my utter hate supposed, and offering  
Her younger sister, fairer claimed—a blot  
Purged by the fires the foxes bore, when flamed  
Both shock and standing corn with vineyards  
grown

Amid the olive orchards, theirs, whose toil  
Had eared the field, as false aduress found.  
And now I wait what further may be moved  
Among the Philistines, by this aroused

More than the former insults on them offered,  
 Certain of this, that good to ours shall come  
 Through yet occasion to hostility  
 Upon our foes, herein so highly incensed.  
 What this may be I know not now, perhaps  
 Not need as yet, since in due time revealed ;  
 For what concerns me then God will disclose.  
 But yonder through the trees I now discern,  
 With rivalry of steps that steer this way,  
 A friendly troop, my chosen companions dear,  
 Auxiliars and associates to my hope,  
 In many a hard task set my surest aid ;  
 Whose purpose, if some sudden wonder move  
 Now of their coming at this hour unused,  
 Their fraught, whate'er it be, will soon disclose.

*Cho.* Where shall we find whom long our  
 search hath sought,  
 But to our sorrow in vain,  
 Through all his wonted haunts and known fa-  
 miliar paths,  
 In Zorah and the vale of Eshtaol,  
 That witnessed his annunciation high  
 And marvelous mission enjoined ;  
 Then after saw his might prodigious grown  
 To manhood and prime of strength,  
 The promise well fulfilled of youthful years ?  
 There now perhaps he wanders, thus withdrawn  
 Remote from sight of men,  
 And meditates what more  
 Upon our foes to inflict,  
 That may fulfill deliverance begun  
 Of Israel and our freedom lost restore,  
 His mighty work foretold,  
 And task from Heaven imposed.  
 Mountains, and all ye caverns, that may hold  
 Deep in some far recess  
 Our mighty champion wandered,

His earliest view at infancy and last  
Vision departing beheld,  
If anywhere he harbor in your fastness  
From us him long awaiting,  
Restore him safe back to his friends and home.

*Sams.* Comrades, and ye that seek, suppose  
your search,

If whom ye sought I am, here finds an end.

*Cho.* Can this indeed be he,  
That famed, that blazed,  
Invincible Samson, promised long  
Our land's deliverer? whom we sought  
So long our quest and baffled search, at last  
With joy and rapture beheld,  
Whose glorious might, our nation's bulwark  
reared

Unbroken by hostile brunt, discomfit sore  
Wrought hard upon our foes,  
When thirty, their flower and choice,  
By Ascalon fell, our champion strong approv-  
ing

Matchless in might, the miracle of men?  
And thus fulfilled that early promise, shown  
Beyond question sure,  
When, to debate his path, the lion proud,  
Roaring against him, reared  
His mighty bulk opposed;  
But he, with violence insupportable  
Tearing him, cast aside  
The carcase, a hive for bees;  
The perplexed riddle set and stubborn test,  
That taxed their utmost,  
And stumbled many, beyond question fallen.  
If thus, beyond our hope,  
After long search and anxious quest,  
To us indeed thou come,  
So long awaiting,

Resolved at last of fears and timorous doubt,  
 Say, then, what great intent had rapt thee from  
 us.

*Sams.* My mission known and purpose high  
 imposed

In our dread lords and cruel foes impeled me  
 To fresh occasions of hostility;  
 From which but now arrived and now returned,  
 To me, your friend and comrade, as thou saidst,  
 This grateful welcome comes as not unkindly,  
 After a passion cold and bed unchaste.  
 What therefore ye would know, boldly inquire;  
 And I, as far as may with self-esteem  
 Consort, will satisfy your thoughts put forth.

*Cho.* Thy former injuries on our foes inflicted  
 To us think not unknown; for who so far  
 Retired from frequent haunts of men, or tongue  
 Of popular fame, by notice as not known  
 Thy bold deeds on our enemies performed,  
 At least of thy own countrymen and kindred?  
 To whom thy marriage-choice unfortunate  
 In sad event, as seemed, not more unknown,  
 Though most approve the consequence, avering  
 Better no wife than one so faithless found;  
 In which opinion also we concur.  
 But such as thou yet lately hast accomplished,  
 By common fame nor tidings yet arrived  
 Brought to our ears, these then to us divulge,  
 Since yet unheard from rumor or report,  
 Much less the true relation and distinct.  
 Wherein if aught be sad, as from thy words  
 Thus much perhaps infered, then share with us  
 The full load of the sorrow that thou bearest,  
 That fellowship in grief divide the smart,  
 And not upon thy shoulders all the burden,  
 Too much for one, as best becomes our office.  
 To hearten with aid, as body, so of mind.



*Sams.* Your purpose, friends, is kindly, and approves.

A wonted zeal and care for my concerns,  
Though sore and hard desired recital given;  
For who could wish, though to whom friendly  
told,

His own remorse and grief set forth, whence thus  
Repeated and redoubled to more shame?

Yet fairly have ye asked, nor shall ye lose  
Desired relation, though old griefs, awaked  
By memory of those deeds, with fresh assault  
Besieging, without intermission urge.

Words, kindly meant, but unadvised cast forth,  
Salve not my sores, but, like unskillful hands  
That would be medicinal, yet lack the art,  
To further aggravation only tend,

Opening afresh a wound new-healed. Yet so  
I shall delay desire nor slack in aught

Relation of those deeds which God by me  
Singly hath done upon our conquerors,  
So told, as late accomplished, that, as due,  
Though ours the advantage all, to him the praise  
Who of his special favor thus vouchsafed.

Ye knew that I had chosen my bridal choice,  
Prompted thereto by God, impulse divine,

Among the daughters of the Philistines  
Idolatrous, unclean, unceremonial,

Much to my parents' wish opposed, who saw not  
Herein, as I, as sent from God, by occasion

My great work on our enemies begun,  
The task whereto I was by Heaven proposed.

Hence they beset me sore, and urged me hard  
Such purpose to forego, and quite give over

Intent so main esteemed against our laws.  
But I persisted blind, and would not notice

Or mother's tears or father suppliant,  
Deeming it ill-advised, if not unfaithful,

After impulse divine, prompted by God,  
 My mission to forsake, or now draw back  
 From this great entering on my task proposed,  
 Thus recreant to that high injunction given.  
 Nor still repent me of my choice, by God  
 Urged and set on, though it cost me all that pain  
 Of conjugal infidelity endured;  
 Which, though forseen not, still approved as fair,  
 If so his purposes may best be furthered,  
 My mission, and great end of being on earth.

*Cho.* Yet furthered thus my mind misdoubts,  
 against

God's strictest law and thy vowed purity  
 To seek a bride of stock idolatrous,  
 Uncircumcised, unchaste—a thing forbid,  
 Scandalous, and esteemed in the highest unworthy  
 Our nation or our God, and in our law  
 With pains and penalties severest punished;  
 Yet disregarded late by some, who mix,  
 In such ill-mated marriage as obtains,  
 Their blood with heathen, which abhor to join,  
 Join with result thou seest, our nation slaved  
 And painful servitude. Well, then, may it chance  
 That thou upon thyself draw'st thy own ills,  
 And more shalt draw, by this uncounseled act  
 So opposite to our customs and our laws.  
 Yet so it may turn out, since thy intent  
 Found worthy, that God will of favor rule  
 Good from this act to come, not else ordained.

*Sams.* All things are best done when they may  
 be best,

And as they may be; means not much import;  
 So they suffice the time, no question needs.  
 If wrong herein were found, God had not so  
 Have prompted or permitted to an act  
 Against his own best good and highest end  
 That champion, for this purpose reared express,

To free his nation from their chiefest foes ;  
So by this act his contradiction proving  
With evil wrought for good—not thought of  
God.

*Cho.* I oft had wonder at thy marriage-choice,  
Since of thy own tribe women given so fair  
Who willingly had yoked with thee in bonds ;  
The more, because thy separation known  
To God and mission imposed seemed to forbid  
License or choice to thee, else overlooked  
With small respect, or unregarded quite.  
But now thy vouched permission and command  
Might well excuse in thee, if else, a fault  
Not to be overpassed, or unrespected  
In one by Heaven's gifts adorned so highly,  
And more in one to such great service missioned.

*Sams.* Then to the feastful marriage gone, my  
father  
Abused, as known, departed thence in anger,  
Because I would not, for that insult offered,  
Wreak vengeance upon those who thus had ven-  
tured  
Violence against him ; deeming not as yet  
Sufficient provocation, since no breach  
To me of faith, nor that Heaven-gifted strength,  
Bestowed to public benefit, not private  
Respect, rightly here used ; nor still was ripe  
My purposed deed, since yet my sire and kindred  
Sojourned at Timna, which on them might draw  
My punishment provoked, if, they found present,  
Violence I presumed ; whence came that breach  
Between us opened, nor yet closed entire.  
But when I saw my bride unchaste and faithless,  
My secret on fair pretext gained, then basely  
Given to my spies and rivals, and perceived  
How impudently and with what insolence

Their faith-breach first confessed, then of their  
 lords,

By them set on and urged unto the act,  
 Knowing by this all put on enmity,  
 Since disregarded quite their solemn faith,  
 Toward them I dealt as enemies, where chanced,  
 And parting thence to Ascalon, I slew  
 Thirty, their flower and choice, bearing their  
 robes

To Timna, as their wagered forfeit set ;  
 Whence parted, here in anger I returned.  
 But she, the hateful source of all that strife,  
 My bride espoused and wed, unknowing taken  
 From me, as basely was bestowed upon  
 My paranymp, whom I had used my friend,  
 Exampling well boasted Philistian faith,  
 Unfaithful, unregarded, unobserved.  
 Therefore, in time of harvest parted hence.  
 And passed to Timna, I found my bride refused,  
 Espoused another, and, which was far worse  
 Than insult yet presumed, her father proffered  
 A younger sister, fairer, in her stead,  
 Either by way of justice, though thus viewed  
 Scarcely, or else, which seems presumption fairer,  
 And to their apter mind, more to enrage,  
 Already chafed and sore, my passion roused.

*Cho.* But for such dire affront and insult stud-  
 ied,

Ere this perhaps, thou hast made some dreadful  
 way

To satisfy the full of thy revenge.

*Sams.* I paid my enemies in their own coin,  
 No counterfeit, be sure, as this may show.  
 For, after their pretended given amends,  
 Not to be so deceived, or cheated yet  
 Of what by right my own, nor still to show  
 Regard, more than I felt for one so faithless,

Yet here more than the Philistines blameless  
found

Though unto them so sore displeasure done,  
With friendly assistance furnished, thrice a hundred

Foxes I caught, yoked two and two with brands  
Fast-fixed, that, touched with nimble fire, shot  
forth

Flames thick and fast among the vines and corn.  
They, as they ran, with heat incestuous seized  
Whatever adverse chanced, which violate,  
Both vines and standing corn adulteress played,  
Cheating whose hard-used toil had eared the field,  
(Their falsities in turn how well repaid!)

Nor ceased, until that marriage-ransom given  
At least not to the takers more remained.

Of what from this may spring, or how their lords  
Will move, doubtless herein highly incensed,  
I have no thoughts; but still of this feel certain;  
Not long will they endure so foul affront  
Put on them, and not more somewhat in answer,  
If by no more set on than merest shame;

To me the sooner come the better liked,  
Since thus occasion to hostility  
Means what but freedom reft sooner regained?

God having long since given them justly up  
For their delusions and idolatries

Into our hand, had we not headlong followed  
To idols, and transgressed command imposed  
So strictly, as not lightly to be held;

Nor humbled yet ourselves, but persevered  
To evil, though God oft of favor raised

Deliverers, by us as oft contemned,  
Choosing ignoble ease to strenuous freedom,  
(O folly and extreme of weakness found!)

Who, with a tittle of valor shown before,  
Might easily have shaken off their yoke

And ruled o'er them, as they o'er us now rule.  
 But vile unmanly weakness held us bound  
 To serve; servility rewarded well  
 With servitude and servile punishment.

*Cho.* Thy deeds heroic bring to mind  
 How famous champions else, by Heaven endued,  
 With strenuous effort have assayed  
 To free their nation from a cruel yoke,  
 The mighty Gideon, nor so far  
 By time removed, brave Jephtha famed;  
 Others of less renown, but equal merit,  
 Shangar, Anath's bold son, and later named,  
 Barak and Tola,  
 Champions yet approved,  
 Though of their fame unlike memorial known,  
 Yet these, ungratefully received,  
 Ungrateful more were left, despised, suspected  
 By whom their valor freed, deserving  
 Far better thanks repaid,  
 Which yet their lot obtained,  
 Than shame and shown contempt on glorious  
 deeds.

Yet these in part achieved; reserved perhaps  
 For thee, our known deliverance raised,  
 And thence acceptable found, as fit,  
 Our total reprieve to accomplish.

*Sams.* Yet to the men of Israel not so,  
 Witness their slack indifference to my deeds,  
 Worse than their hate, or envy, or suspicion  
 To me, their great deliverer ordained;  
 Rather than whom receive, they sit in bonds  
 Under a hateful yoke, abject, despised,  
 Disglorified and shamed, disprized, dishonored,  
 Though to what glorious freedom once destined.  
 Yet so perhaps God's purpose high fulfilled,  
 Time to himself best known and instrument,  
 If by a single arm their bondage broken,

That his be all the praise, none due to them,  
Who held so faithless covenant express  
Unworthy, unregarded, unobserved,  
And God's high gifts despised as valued naught.

*Cho.* Dark are the ways of God,  
And darkly ordained  
His counsels, yet his purpose vindicates them,  
Designed our test of faith  
And trial of fortitude.  
He had not else, except his purpose served,  
Prolonged our expectation  
With sure deliverance offered thus postponed,  
Nor left so long unsuccored  
His chosen people under heathen yoke  
Abject, despicable, unworthy, vile,  
So chosen once to rule  
The land where now they serve.

*Semi-cho.* But they forsook his yoke, though  
just and mild,  
And bowing down to worship wood and stone,  
The work of human hands,  
Served after other gods,  
Brutish and foul, Baal and Ashtaroth,  
With others many more,  
The dark idolatries among the heathen round,  
Insensate, and provoked their Living Strength  
To turn away his holy eyes  
And leave them to his judgments;  
Who, thus incensed, hath justly given them up  
To serve the worshipers who served their gods.  
But they repented not, nor yet sincere  
Received the mighty ministers he raised  
To their deliverance;  
But treacherously dealt, and God contemned,  
Which caused them added woe,  
And wrought their deeper shame,  
To extreme pitch of abject fortune fallen.

*Semi-cho.* So let not like ingratitude afflict thee,

Samson, by trial approved  
Strongest of mortal men;  
Rather may he, whose minister thou art  
And mighty imaged strength,  
Regard thy toils and to thy labors place,  
For thus he only can,  
As to thy hopes thus far, successful end.

*Cho.* But see! from forth the house retired,  
With face where hope and fear contend  
Thy mother comes; advise  
With her what converse thou holdest.

*Sams.* Her fraught I part may guess, though  
still unknown.

*Cho.* Some sorrow, needs, for so her looks infer,  
Fallen and dark, and doubtful speech essayed,  
Which, ere it frame to words, on the pausing  
tongue  
Dissolves to sighs. But now she moves to speak.

*Mother.* With lingering steps and doubtful sad  
persuasion

I came, still fearful of thy absence, Samson;  
Whom when I knew, belief would credit scarce  
What my ears evidenced and eyes received,  
My dearest expectation thus returned  
Beyond my thought, the crown of all my hope.  
And now, arrived from some great purpose done  
Upon our foes, since thus far I infer,  
Knowing thy task divine on thee imposed,  
Grant me, as first to these perhaps, relation  
Of what remarkably thou late hast done,  
That, as thy youthful hopes I shared, fulfilment  
I now may share by this recital given.

*Sams.* Since ended scarce to these my actions  
done,



Defer request, till more convenient time  
Permit relation fuller, that, alone  
With thee, if once again my deeds recited  
To thy sole ear, I shall not seem to boast,  
As haply so, if now again recounted  
My exploits on our enemies performed ;  
Which would convert my glory to contempt,  
Though worthy all renown and highest praises,  
To ridicule and scorn, with laughter moved  
Of all who heard, and shameful title gained  
Of babbler, on my front the mark of fool,  
Doughty in words, not deeds, which of themselves  
Declare their doer's praise, if praise attached,  
But savoring thus dishonor done to God,  
Rancor and pride, impatience of renown,  
That comes itself, unsought, if truly so,  
And on my mission drawn contempt deserved—  
The height of folly found, and height of sin.

*Mother.* Then, thus returned from purpose  
high achieved

Upon our enemies, since from report  
Thus much I gather, grant me, as of old,  
Though with event more unrepined, be hoped,  
My first petition, Jephtha his daughter gave  
Up to his vow, a maiden consecrate,  
Virgin and dedicated all her days—  
Thus thou my prayer accept, and to thy father  
Be reconciled, who, hoping against hope  
Of thy forgiveness granted, knowing both  
His great indignity on thee and thy  
As strong resentment roused contrary, yet hopes  
Thy pardon, and through me desires be made  
Reconciled to his son, whom yet he loves.

*Sams.* I did not, mother, at the first offend ;  
Nor do I now, as then I did not, hold  
Resentment, though such well might be provoked  
By such offense, and in such presence offered,

Debased among my fellows, disesteemed  
 With lack of filial seeming thus avouched.  
 Nor am I loth in aught, if might be healed  
 The wide breach opened by his acts between us,  
 Nor, still the fault not mine, yet closed entire.  
 But I am not as when by due and custom  
 Pardon to seek the first was mine, the offense  
 Rightly not so, with reconciliation moved,  
 As to a superior power owing reverence,  
 Which well might sort with youthful duty held ;  
 But now a man mature and grown to years,  
 With rights and honors rightly due to man,  
 Somewhat belongs to me of self-regard,  
 Self-estimation ; which if thus my father  
 Have disrespected, as the offense not mine,  
 So also the first suit for pardon not,  
 Nor easily to grant, as slightly offended.

*Mother.* Yet still bethink thee, son ; though  
 here be deemed  
 Some nice regard to thy asserted right,  
 As to thy proper guidance now arrived,  
 He is thy father still, to whom belong  
 As first by debt of nature, now of age,  
 Thy duty and thy service and thy love ;  
 Which bonds by time relaxed not, what thy years,  
 Constrain thee, son, against thy present holding,  
 Both to my granted prayer and his forgiveness ;  
 Nor can I think thy mind, though stubborn now  
 And firm of purpose, long will persevere  
 Against that better-natured self, thy wont,  
 As not by entreaty moved and mother's asking,  
 So now, as first, a son obedient.

*Sams.* I cannot else reply than what I have,  
 And still retain that dignity of soul  
 With self-esteeming thought, my pride and weak-  
 ness,  
 If rightly judged a weakness, and not rather

The sure strength and most firm prop to the mind,  
Which lacking, lacks all worthy objects else ;  
For, where esteem of self is wanting, wants  
Respect of others, nor is ever won,  
Until the dignity, that builds within,  
Create an awe and conscience of true worth,  
Informing both the soul and outward sense :  
Nor can I do my conscience thus far wrong  
As plead a fault, wherein no fault exist  
By my esteem and right esteem of all,  
To pleasure thee, a mother yet known dear.  
This, then, my purpose chosen and firmly held  
Despite what yet thou hast had to bear against,  
May teach thee to desist thy vain attempt,  
As found before, to move me, with reason armed,  
Truth on my side and justice, as thou seest,  
Thus, with my quarrel righteous, trebly proof.

*Mother.* Is this thy final answer, then, re-  
turned?

*Sams.* So take it, with what sad reluctance giv-  
en.

*Mother.* I am sorry what this stubbornness may  
cost thee,

Samson, so persevered against regard  
Had to his proffered suit, by me so proffered  
As to thy right meet estimation had ;  
Nothing but ill, be sure ; which, though repented,  
Shall not escape whatever consequence,  
When thou in act, not less than apprehension,  
Shalt feel the pangs of love repulsed severe,  
Or to thyself some like offense presumed,  
The rights that love obtains regarded not  
Or outraged by some foul indignity,  
Which on thyself in no long time shall fall  
Perhaps, when thou too late repent'st thy crime ;  
My warning then regarded, but too late.

*Sams.* My crime it is, thou sayest, not first to  
move

Repentance, and first reconciliation seek  
Now with my father, at thy instance urged,  
Rather than disregard entreaty thus,  
Though of thy asking. Stands there no excuse  
Then on my part, no cause or reason found?  
Was it no injury on his side performed,  
When at the marriage-feast and all in sight  
Of those who stood attending, bridal friends  
And comrades of my nuptials, in their presence  
Who waited to exult over my ill,  
Thus to debase me, slight me, and forego me,  
Insult, denounce me with reproaches heaped  
Of cowardice and heart unvalorous—  
The chief indignity of youth, and shame—  
Lastly to disinherit and disown me,  
Cut off from hope of honor, disavow me,  
With infamy upon my name denounced?  
Yet, after these indignities, and worse,  
Heaped on me with contempt, to sue his grace  
With pardon moved, beseech his love renewed  
And favorable face, his due offense  
Mine, not as his, acknowledged—the extreme re-  
proach,  
Yet now with all assurance on me presumed?  
If access to my pardon thou hast sought,  
An erring way thou took'st. I will not grant it.

*Mother.* Be circumspect, and of thy honor nice,  
But urge not to thy own contrition, Samson;  
Deplore the offense, but not so rigorous hold  
Against the offender, whose extreme fault goes  
No further than a certain over-haste  
And heat, or ardor, in his right presumed,  
Not fitting to his age or place, perhaps,  
Nor due to some defect of mind, infered  
Broken with age or overworn, but rather

The workings of a pride surprised and hurt  
 By question or denial of authority  
 Once had, and still presumed, still thought pos-  
 sessed.

Rather than anger raise, then, or despite,  
 It should obtain indulgence, make for pardon,  
 As but the spark the virtuous temper strikes,  
 Random and hasty, not the settled blaze  
 Of steady hate, unquenchable, untamed;  
 And will so, in the truly noble mind.

*Sams.* Thou arguest aimless; since thou canst  
 not know

The just cause and due motive of my wrath,  
 Not present on the place, nor knowing aught  
 The offensive unextenuate circumstance,  
 Hadst thou been there, or here the offense, thou  
 wouldst not

Have wonder at my anger or fixed mind  
 Not to sue first or reconciliation move,  
 No cause of wrong in me or error found;  
 Rather wouldst well approve and right aver.  
 What I had done deserved no such return,  
 Nor wouldst thou, in my place, gloss it o'er thus.  
 Cease, then, to urge me more with pardon moved;  
 Thou but thy labor lovest. I will not grant it.

*Mother.* I do not, son, reproach thee that thou  
 bearest

Too heavily on his charge, for his default  
 Exact'st too much, too far thy right presumest,  
 That thou thyself rejectedst and disownedst  
 First, ere thy father, and regardedst not  
 God or thy country's law, that still forbade  
 That false league with thy country's foe con-  
 joined

Of wedlock, to all thy ills the fount and source  
 Now proving; not thus for my wrath extends.  
 But yet I tell thee thou hast wrong, if thus

Thou stand upon thy due, and give no heed  
 To kindly admonition or reproof,  
 Intended for thy good and welfare best.  
 I thought thy ill-event in marriage-choice  
 Had taught thee some regard unto my word,  
 Then disregarded with result thou seest ;  
 But now I see some false imagined pride  
 Of thy due right and honor nicely held  
 Weighs with thee more than all that I can say,  
 And though I thought to do thee some small ser-  
 vice

Between thy father, I am moved to leave thee  
 Unto that curse by him on thee pronounced,  
 And add my own, to see how then may prosper  
 That high pride against curses doubly heaped.  
 Yet thou art still my son ; that still forbids  
 What I with fond presumption thought to do ;  
 By which relation dear I strongly adjure thee  
 Now with thy father to be reconciled ;  
 For he is more in years than thou, and deems it  
 Not his to make suit unto thee, nor more  
 First reconciliation with his son,  
 As to his age and office an indignity.  
 Though thou couldst not before, yet canst thou  
 now

Respect thy mother's tears, which how they flow  
 Thou seeest, to leave thy stubborn purpose held  
 By suit for pardon, now in time besought ?  
 And who knows to what perils thou mayest go  
 By reason of thy mighty deeds achieved  
 Upon our enemies, thy task assigned ?  
 Shouldst thou not stronglier do, and more achieve,  
 If by our prayers and wishes seconded,  
 Than striving against what ill curse may fall  
 From God, because of thy refusal shown  
 To grant what still from him thou must receive,  
 Through thy temptation fallen, and not restored ?

Consider, then, if well thou canst withhold  
 What for thyself in no long time besought,  
 And of another be not more exacting,  
 So found in like offense, than of thyself.

*Sams.* Give o'er thy tedious siege, thus only  
 found

To this time, uneffectual, unavailing,  
 Despite what powerfulest thou hadst to bear,  
 And like to end as vain, so fixed my mind,  
 So armed, so proof against extreme assault ;  
 I cannot, nor I will not, grant thy asking.

*Mother.* Have I besought, and vainly then be-  
 sought thee,  
 Humbled myself, where well I might command,  
 Implored thy easiest gift, yet find me scorned,  
 Denied, repulsed as thou were not my son,  
 Ill treated worse than by an enemy,  
 The pains, which purchased dear thy life, be-  
 mocked,

And what thy constant love had well secured,  
 Yet now as naught regarded, valules?   
 O why do men, in whom the spirit pretends  
 Of wisdom, with no due regard or fear  
 Before them, by example still untaught,  
 Implore, beseech, and beg desirable  
 The doubtful gift of children, fondly deeming  
 Barrenness found in wedlock a reproach?  
 For, when with answered prayer and given re-  
 quest

Obtained, our anxious life is filled entire  
 With fears, if well or ill they shall turn out,  
 And ofttest shall, be sure, the latter end,  
 Unkindly, unregardful, slack in duty.  
 Or, worse, a deep reproach and wounding shame ;  
 And, if by death deprived, what surcease then  
 Of sorrow, loveless, joyless, desolate,  
 Nothing desirable in life, and death

Not ready, though so ready found before?  
 Which infinite woe hath brought to human life,  
 And shall bring, by experience unschooled;  
 But some ill destiny, or nature's bent,  
 Impels. Which now my bitter lot obtains,  
 One son, and one by one too many found.

*Cho.* Samson, if we may venture, nor offend  
 By privilege of friendship ventured thus  
 And wonted old regard, consider well,  
 Rightly if thou refuse offer thus tendered  
 To reconcile, while yet occasion serves,  
 And pardon more, while yet in time thou mayest,  
 Before too late, and vainly then, besought.

*Sams.* I had no thought to have replied again  
 To what thou mayest have said, but thy strong  
 sorrow

And ruthless passion felt the like have raised  
 In me, though not to overbear my purpose,  
 Going into such peril, as thou saidst.  
 But though I cannot all concede thee, yet  
 Thus far I grant thee, though thus only, that  
 To thy entreaty so much I will yield,  
 As to be reconciled, if he will seek.  
 More than this can I not, nor ask thou more.

*Mother.* If this thy resolution, to no purpose  
 My supplications, which I cease, perforce,  
 Vain only and of such prevailment found  
 As idle breath breathed forth against the wind;  
 But, going to thy father, will entreat.  
 Thus far forbearance and his duty owed  
 As to forego his elder right, and sue thee  
 For pardon, as his first offense requires.  
 Wherein with him if better I succeed not  
 Than now with thee, matters no worse at least,  
 If not improved, as yet my hope assures  
 Of my entreaty again to him preferred,  
 By me assailed, as lightly not refused;



Which now shall first concern me. So, farewell.

*Sams.* Misdeem not, friends, if herein I persisted,

Perhaps beyond what just and right were held,  
To disregard entreaties deemed so dear ;  
But after offense so sore and unprovoked  
If pardon asked, not mine the first to move,  
And reconciliation seek with what amends.  
I had not else have kept what faith and honor  
Due to myself I owe, and before you,  
After the full relation heard, had fallen  
With disesteem ; for where offense so great  
So easily pardoned, what can else be deemed,  
Save that who pardon grants himself thus values  
Cheaply, or none at all ; as I could not  
And still retain what self-esteem I have ;  
I should have so lost all virtuous regard.

*Cho.* Thy conduct still approves thy wisdom,  
Samson,

Herein to reconcile thyself, though late  
Repenting thee the former mind thou hadst  
Not to be first to move, or herein grant  
Reconciliation easy, for who knows,  
Which late thy mother said to move thy purpose,  
What perilous enterprises unforeseen.  
Await thee, now our lords so justly roused  
By thy late acts more than thy former offered ?  
For they will not defer to wreak their vengeance  
So as to touch thee nearly, if perhaps  
To quell thy hostile force, having once learned  
Thy harass bold upon their land presumed.

*Sams.* It cannot be too soon by my desire,  
The sooner come the better to my liking,  
For this express and purpose moved against them,  
To tempt them to their ruin who have provoked  
Justly God's anger by his chosen enslaved,  
Whatever, then, their sudden valor prompt,

Let them set on, to try whose found the stronger,  
Their god, or whom Israel's sons adore ;  
Then, after trial had, let him be boasted  
Whose champion's prowess best approves his  
own.

*Cho.* O glorious strength, the means by Heav-  
en endued  
To our deliverance,  
As God oft before  
In his high purpose raised  
Mighty deliverers  
To free his nation from the heathen and profane,  
Who out of smallest things had well ordained  
Unquenchable force to quell the oppressor's vio-  
lence,  
The boistrous power of evil men,  
When, all their arms and mighty force contem-  
ning,  
On them surprised, amazed,  
Raft of defense,  
And by their folly to their own ruin drawn,  
So smitten with wrath divine,  
He executes his errand of destruction.  
Yet so his purpose high he oft delays,  
Proving his instrument.  
As fit to his great purpose  
By trial unsusposed,  
Some testing of his means, if they suffice  
To serve his mighty mission  
And purpose high decreed ;  
Yet, after trial had, if stedfast found,  
And fixed secure his faith,  
By peril or dread unshaken,  
But purposed resolute,  
He, in return, wants not some witness left,  
Some glorious proof of high regard bestowed  
And favor shown by Heaven.

Which still may be thy lot and chance endured,  
Samson, by proof esteemed  
Strongest of mortal men,  
Subjected thus to what indignities  
The tyranny of fortune can afflict ;  
Though yet may he avert,  
If so his counsel  
His purpose serve,  
From thee, our freedom ordained  
And mighty champion raised ;  
Though if he else determined,  
His counsel still his cause will vindicate.

But now I see approaching  
One whose garb disordered  
And altered mien proclaim  
No uncertain news of what may late have hap-  
pened,  
Perhaps the consequences of thy deed.  
He will not far defer, nor much delay  
His tidings, whatsoe'er he may have gained ;  
Which to receive expect ere no long time.

*Mes.* Samson, for such I knew thee by report  
If yet these eyes had not thy might beheld,  
Tidings I have that touch thy near concern,  
More than perhaps thou mayest imagine now,  
And for of other import than thou deemest ;  
So best related to thy ear alone.

*Sams.* Sad must they be supposed, or joyful  
rather  
Esteemed, as to demand sole audience thus ?

*Mes.* Sad to the sad, but to the joyful not ;  
Among which latter known I reckon thee.

*Sams.* So much the less relation asks delay.

*Mes.* So with like surety of the present audi-  
ence.

*Sams.* Put forth thy tale ; no hesitation needs ;  
Friendly are all who stand, or like to hear.

*Mes.* Hither from Timna come I, whither occasions

Drew me of late, where, as my business sped,  
 Following the distant quest of some stray beast,  
 Came rumor of thy acts, which had laid waste  
 That harassed region whence thy bride thou hadst.  
 Meanwhile thy bridal friends, with others more—  
 For so I learned from such as present stood—  
 By inquiry made now gained thy motive thereto,  
 Thy bride by marriage faith-breach with false bed  
 To thee unchaste, came up, her only seeking  
 Who had provoked thy anger, thus unchaste.  
 But when they knew her sire also concerned  
 In her unchastity and violate oath,  
 By him bestowed upon thy paranymp, Whom  
 thou hadst used thy friend, excuse avering  
 To her thy utter hate and shown contempt,  
 Which argued thee no more her wedlock mate  
 And thee no more regarding her as thine,  
 Not that they much repented thy affront,  
 But dreaded repetition of thy deed,  
 Either to clear from their connival deemed  
 The guilt of wedlock bands thus disallied,  
 Or else terror to strike into their foe  
 Who by his prowest deeds had wrought such  
 harm,

With fire they burned her and her father's house.  
 Yet here to thee no cause of grief supposed,  
 Though nearly in the sad event concerned  
 Fortunate to have lost so faithless bride;  
 Rather more cause for joy to have thus escaped.

*Cho.* Stand not so silent, Manoah's mighty son,

As sore offended by such tidings heard,  
 Or by pretended sorrow much distressed,  
 Since here not due the wonted signs of grief  
 That custom for so near a death demands.

Or happiness, or what forbids thy utterance?  
Not sorrow, to have heard so joyful tidings.

*Sams.* Alas, that favor high, to have received  
Command from Heaven imposed,  
As missioned to some great service,  
And by some acts of valor in part approved,  
If now to me, God's minister ordained  
And mighty imaged strength,  
Such insult ventured  
And foul affront presumed  
By heathen and profane,  
Thus disesteemed as naught who me commis-  
sioned!

Was it for this those tidings high descended  
By messenger divine,  
Who charioted in flames from off the altar  
After my birth foretold  
And mission high asserted,  
To break my nation's cruel foes,  
Task thus divinely set,  
As with attest of Heaven destined  
To some great work and glory  
By hopes beyond heroic thus unflamed?  
Yet now, alas, forsaken;  
Abandoned to foe's contempt  
Whose might I was ordained to quell,  
All helpless left  
To irreparable sense of shame;  
Thus given to draw out miserable days,  
To foes ridiculous,  
A gazed and pitied object  
To all my friends and kindred,  
As not of force such insult to return  
Redoubled on my foes.

Rather than which endured, so shameful, vile  
Wound to my honor esteemed  
Beyond all hoped relief,

This one petition, might I but he heard,  
 Some violent death or evil end,  
 Or aught, if aught, more dread  
 Than perished unknown, ignoble,  
 So cut off from remembrance of my shame ;  
 To me the cure of my great woes regarded  
 And welcome end of all my miseries.

*Cho.* All is of God, to some great end or-  
 dained,  
 Though darkened oft by doubt  
 If thus his counsel best his purpose serve ;  
 Who, as a trial designed of faith  
 And tested fortitude,  
 Submits to some affliction  
 His chosen, that his glory may appear  
 More glorious, and his counsel vindicate,  
 When, after testings hard, he them appoints  
 Enlarged deliverance,  
 For their fault repented  
 Favor renewed,  
 Tempering so his justice with his mercy,  
 Which chance may be thy lot and chance ap-  
 pointed,  
 Samson, thus visited  
 With what indignities  
 The tyranny of fortune may afflict.  
 Deject not, therefore, overmuch  
 Thyself, as lost entire  
 And wholly given to shame ;  
 Think to thy ill some good, however small,  
 Conjoined at least, since now no longer found  
 Thy linked and wedlock mate  
 One so foully disregarding  
 The faith of marriage-bands ;  
 Better thy lot, endured whate'er, thus freed,  
 Though by so hard mischance,  
 From her, the cause of all thy miseries ;

Whom so to have lost esteem thee fortun'd high-  
ly,

And willingly receive what grief conjoined,  
Of smaller moment found, if justly weigh'd,  
To raise thy prosperous scale in counterpoise.

*Sams.* Aye me! so soon that direful punish-  
ment

Visited on her disregarded faith?

Yet none to plead for mercy, and no place

For pardon found? Stood there not one her  
friend,

One on her part? Must all have thus conjoined

To her destruction, all in hate conjoined?

Which, had I present stood, had else not been,

Or more had rued the bitter consequence.

But here no place for words or boastful talk;

Rather by deeds to learn if disregarded

Marital rights and dues a husband holds

With wanton outrage unprovoked presumed,

Yet no return attempted. They shall feel

Soon my displeasure heavy and fierce wrath

Upon their heads, whose skill no further knew

Than slaughter of the unoffending helpless

To satisfy the vengeance their own acts

Of faithlessness and broken league provok'd;

Nor on the unsuspecting innocent

Redounds this punishment, but they, whose acts

Offended, they shall feel what wrath themselves

Drew on them with unlooked for, dire return.

Which now shall be my task, when preparation

Suffices to my matters ordered right.

*Cho.* Consider, Samson, into what hazard thou  
goest,

If perilous enterprise thus draw thee forth;

All by this roused, thou seest, as not before,

And hardly shall they deal toward thee, the cause

Of all their harm, by this their deed performed

Thy ruin perhaps intended, in the snare  
 So easily drawn, if singly thou adventure  
 Among thy enemies thus fierce aroused.  
 Forego thy purpose, or, if still thou holdest,  
 Select, at least, some friendly aid who, under  
 Thy conduct, will assist to thy revenge,  
 And thus insure thy safe protection owed,  
 As our foretold deliverance, to thy nation,  
 And not to so rash valor victim fall,  
 As well might chance, if singly thou adventure.

*Sams.* Thy words are not unreasoned, but they  
 fail

Of purpose either that I should forego,  
 Or share with proffered aid the high emprise.  
 For what dread danger can so sore beset,  
 As menace or much threat with serious harm  
 Him to his land's foretold deliverance raised?  
 And to whom else, or by whose hand more fitly,  
 Than who received the insult, either due,  
 Or with stern compt exacted, the revenge  
 Through what dread perils or shrewd toils pur-  
 sued?

Which if on one presumed, so much the more,  
 If equal force sufficient in him found,  
 Boldly, through opposition whatsoever, sought.  
 I, therefore, I alone will undertake  
 This hazardous enterprise, if hazard be,  
 And not redounded glory on the deed,  
 My presage, nor with other share the shame  
 If I shall fail, or praise if I succeed.  
 Nor long shall separate so sudden purpose  
 Now entertained from swift accomplishment;  
 Which good or ill fallen out expect soon tidings.

*Cho.* Go, and be Israel's God  
 Thy sure defense and shield,  
 And strengthen thee with might in the inner man,  
 That thou fail not;



With us may he abide,  
 Who, reft of thee, know double need  
 Of succor and the Almighty's firm defense,  
 But now I see old Manoah here approaching  
 With hasty steps, doubtless thus come to seek  
 Reconcilement desired; though tardily moved  
 Repentance, since his son new parted hence.  
 This his intent or no we now shall learn.

*Manoah.* Friends to my son, since that ye are  
 appears

Both from report and what before I held,  
 If anywhere he harbor hereabout,  
 To me, his father, as perhaps ye thought,  
 Impart some tidings of his presence known,  
 Approving both your friendship to my son  
 And me, his erring sire, but now repentant.

*Cho.* Thy son stood here but now, and parted  
 hence,

Bound on a mission difficult and obscure,  
 Upon some tidings that concerned him nearly.  
 About his soon return or no, I know not;  
 But how the event fell out he promised notice.

*Man.* What news so sudden hath bereft him  
 hence?

*Cho.* Touching his bride some tidings late ar-  
 rived.

*Man.* Evil were they, or well pronounced and  
 fair?

*Cho.* Both good and evil as the circumstance.

*Man.* But how with him? well took he them,  
 or hardly?

*Cho.* Not hardly, though he purposed quick  
 revenge.

*Man.* And parted suddenly, so late returned?

*Cho.* But now he stood just here, and now is  
 gone.

*Man.* I am curious what this mystery may import.

*Cho.* What it portends in part I may reveal,  
 But cannot all, for still the sequence doubtful.  
 Shortly ere thou arrived, came one returned  
 From Timna with strange tidings unsuspected,  
 That told how to requite thy son's incursions  
 Upon our foes the Philistines came up  
 With gathered powers to inquire the cause  
 Of his bold deeds and forays on them done ;  
 Where to was answered that because her father  
 His bride had late bestowed upon his friend  
 And paronymph, thus disregarding quite  
 His due esteemed, therefore he had begun  
 The harass of their land, as in revenge.  
 Whereat incensed both at the deed and cause,  
 And as an act of justice meant inflicted,  
 Or of revenge in turn designed, or both,  
 With fire they burned her and her father's house.  
 Whence he, in turn aroused and worse provoked,  
 Hath parted hence on our dread enemies  
 Satisfaction for so foul affront to seek.

*Man.* Went he in wrath, as though in passion  
 crossed,  
 Or rather in his face and mien appeared  
 Sad resolution settled, as who seeks  
 Not rashly, but with hate plotting revenge?

*Cho.* A while he stood uncertain what to do,  
 But stood not long; wrath prompted him at  
 length,  
 And rage to find his rights deprived of husband  
 Roused him the more and to a fierce vengeance  
 Upon his foes to a worse doom reserved.  
 Breathing out wrath he went, nor would accept  
 Offered assistance, but departed straight  
 Upon the purpose bound which we have said ;  
 Yet not so soon as not with promised tidings

Of how the event fallen out, or good or ill.

*Man.* Ay me! too late I then arrived, too late,  
Both to forgive and be forgiven in turn  
By him now gone whom present I forgave not  
And wished not here, yet now forgive to find  
Not present whom to find I now would seek.  
But so my folly is my punishment,  
My stubbornness my shame, and worse becomes  
If he return and wounded by my coldness  
Not wish forgiveness, or if, ill befallen him,  
He never shall return, but sooner perish  
Than my repentance tardy might prevent  
With knowledge of my recompense, though late  
With what amends were in my power, that thence  
More eased in mind and somewhat raised he part;  
Which now becomes my torment and my shame,  
Yet my just punishment and due confessed  
That have refused occasion, till too late.

*Cho.* If aught of consolation may be drawn  
From this, take what for thee may be obtained,  
How small. His mother late, as thou hast known  
Perhaps, came to this place, and urged him hard  
To seek with thee first reconciliation,  
Avouching that from thy superior age  
Thou wouldst not make suit unto him, nor more  
First reconcilment, but still ready stood  
To grant his pardon, if he would but seek.  
He also was thus minded, and refused  
To entertain such thought, as first to move;  
But rather seemed disposed, if absolutely  
Pardon refused not, long to be implored  
At least, and urged with many a forceful plea,  
Before he would consent to thy forgiveness;  
Nor hotly spoke in wrath, but with that spirit  
Settled, and of all consequence secure,  
Less to be moved than any passion can;  
Yet by entreaty strong she last prevailed

That he consented, but to this extent,  
 As to be reconciled, if thou would seek.  
 More than this would he not, nor might she gain,  
 Howe'er by entreaty urging and strong plea.  
 From which infered thy pardon granted quite,  
 If thou but first would move, thy present mind,  
 Since thus much he could not and not yield all;  
 Which consolation gather, if thou canst  
 From this relation, of thy son's intent,  
 Whose fuller pardon must await return.

*Man.* With hope thy words relieve me for my  
 fault

Doubtful of pardon all, so sore provoked  
 His anger, which my passion had aroused,  
 Shamed by him, as I thought, before my foes.  
 I knew me in the wrong, when passion cooled  
 Had left a wonted calmness to the spirit,  
 And to implore his pardon was I minded;  
 But age, though slow to wrath, unwilling yields;  
 Though to the wrong part drawn, when once  
 aroused;

And hence my purpose, cherished long before,  
 Of humble penitence and pardon implored,  
 Till now deferred—perhaps my lasting sorrow,  
 The punishment deserved and well rewarded  
 Folly to have been so causelessly provoked.

*Cho.* Some difference risen with thee thy son  
 touched on,

In his desired recital of his deeds  
 To us, his friends and comrades thus desiring,  
 But not enough, nor with relation clear,  
 As fully to enlighten what the cause,  
 Thus glanced at as much more yet lay behind,  
 Which not to us he meant so to impart.

*Man.* Then what from him ye gained not take  
 of me,  
 Though to my shame the cause to you set forth.

At Timna, as we kept the marriage-feast,  
Samson put forth a riddle, whose solution  
Long sought, and mostly by his bridal comrades,  
But vainly by fair means, at last by foul  
Determined found; and taking me unawares,  
They would have gained the secret, though un-  
known

To me, as I avered, which they received not;  
But next with cruel force would have constrained  
me

And violent hands, had not my son, late parted,  
Timely arrived, forcing them to forego  
So foul advantage; who, wishing, as supposed,  
Since thus far prospered all, not easily  
Broken in upon the order of the feast,  
Dismissed the affair with small regard or none.  
But I could not endure so foul affront  
Put on me, by such means abominable  
Seeking to make me traitor to my son,  
With no return, and would have parted thence,  
Stirred up with bitter passion at the outcome,  
To Zorah, had not my son with kindly intent  
Striven to detain me, whereat I, incensed  
With folly, which is now my chief reproach,  
Broke roughly from him, and denounced him,  
there

Before them known his bridal friends and guests,  
Ingrate, unfilial, traitor to his duty;  
That he, amazed, but still with kindness shown,  
Suffered me thence to part, and sent a convoy,  
His nuptial tendance from our tribe intended,  
Which brought me on my way. Later, as learned,  
His bride perfidious gained by some base sleight  
And gave his secret to those bridal spies,  
His friends assigned pretended; by which means  
Deceived and wounded, cheated out of all,  
Where most esteem and faith he most presumed,

Towering in wrath, to Ascalon he parted,  
 Whence he exacted all that marriage-forfeit,  
 Leaving them blank of joy and blank of boast,  
 Who traitorously had thus requited faith.  
 But further have I learned not, nor in full  
 What purpose or intent employs him now.

*Cho.* After her nuptial faith so disregarded,  
 For thus of him we gained, to Timna gone,  
 He found his bride refused given to another,  
 His paranymph, and what to him far worsened  
 The insult offered, by her father given,  
 Who first with plea avered to her supposed  
 His utter hate, nor hence his wife regarded;  
 Next offered, as by way of justice thought,  
 Or insult, further to extend reproach,  
 A sister, fairer claimed; whereat incensed,  
 As thought of small account by the esteemed,  
 So having put on him whome'er they wished not,  
 Or found not to their purpose or desire,  
 The harass of their country he began,  
 Nor ceased, till for that marriage-ransom paid  
 They had atoned in full the heavy score;  
 That they, in turn aroused, came up and sought  
 Her death who had wrought their reputed harm.  
 These tidings, then, to him recited late,  
 Roused him once more to more about revenge;  
 Whose outcome, good or ill, we here await.

*Man.* It cannot be in aught save good, since  
 now  
 Repented of his sin, that sought a bride,  
 Contrary to our laws and laws of God,  
 Among the idolatrous, unclean, unchaste,  
 And from his known repentance thence forgiven,  
 God will of favor bring him thus restored  
 Where he some mighty service shall perform,  
 Such as perhaps may gain deliverance promised,  
 The divine task whereto he was ordained.

What if, even while we speak, among his foes  
Arrived, he now be wreaking dreadful wrath  
And dealing death upon his enemies?

*Cho.* Not doubtful, since to God is nothing  
hard,

Much less impossible, who of himself  
Unaided could have wrought our promised free-  
dom,

Yet rather chose to rear this mighty champion  
Ordained to our deliverance by his choice.

*Man.* Whom since God so hath reared and  
high ordained,

What better chance to do his mighty task  
Allotted than now, by revenge exacted  
Of his insulters, to accomplish thus  
Both his own private vengeance and God's will,  
With punishment upon their heads redounded,  
Who in their arrogance respected none  
Either God's law or man's due right, which gave  
The husband o'er his wedlock mate all power,  
Nor to another given delegate,  
Of conjugal unfaith, thence rightly punished  
As foe to God and man—their added sin  
Who justly had provoked God's fiercest wrath  
With slavery of his chosen, to whom now  
Deliverance he appoints and bounds enlarged?  
Presumptuous thought, perhaps, yet not unhop'd.  
His might we know is limitless, and well  
Accords his purpose to redeem his people  
From their chief enemies by his champion's  
hand—

On whom why else this wondrous might be-  
stowed?—

Nor shall his high intent be frustrate found.

*Cho.* His friendly mind we know, and know  
our state

Untoward, until his purpose high fulfilled.

But tidings of the event somewhat by this  
Should come, so long he parted hence as easily  
Permits his full discomfiture or theirs,  
Which, whate'er known, were better far endured  
Than thus suspense and apprehensive doubt.  
This to remit I would some news arrived.

*Man.* In which desire I also share, as fits.  
But who is this? For now I see approach  
One by his mien and act perhaps hath come  
With tidings of what lately hath befallen.

*Cho.* Thine eyes deceive thee not; there does  
approach  
One by his mien and act expressly come  
With tidings of what lately hath befallen.  
Expect, then, soon to hear tidings desired,  
Which, good or bad, the full relation clears.  
And now he nearer draws, and now at hand  
Delays his traveled steps; with what for us?

*Servant.* Manoah, and ye that tend upon this  
place,  
Some messenger from Samson here is come  
With tidings of what fate hath him befallen;  
And now with inquiry of you attends,  
To render full recital, as befits.

*Mes.* Old Manoah, and ye friends that stand  
about,  
If such ye are, and not descriptions err,  
To you my message, if this place and ye  
Whom thus by chance I find; resolve my doubt.

*Man.* Zorah the town, and we whom thou hast  
sought;  
Say, then, from whom, and what to us thou hast,  
That thus thou hast inquired our place and name.

*Mes.* From Samson, and late tidings of his  
deed.

*Man.* Fair are they, then, or foul must we sup-  
pose?



*Mes.* Fair to whom good imports; foul to whom ill.

*Man.* Of which then may we deem to us thou bringest?

*Mes.* Not foul, to have received so joyful tidings.

*Man.* Which we not yet receive till thou declare.

Defer not, then, what soonest comes too late  
More than what, at the latest, comes too soon.

*Mes.* Take, then, at once the sum; Samson yet lives.

*Man.* Lives, but captived or free, and how? explain.

*Mes.* Both lives and now is free, as this assures.

After his false bride and her father burned  
By no more time than swift dispatch sufficed  
Samson was made acquainted with the tidings,  
Which doubtless ye have heard, his bride destroyed,

By what foul means no more, and who the cause;  
Which, as ye knew, incensed him to the height,  
His due he thought of husband disrespected,  
And he dishonored by so foul affront  
Unwarranted, unworthy, unprovoked.

Soon in that region, whence his bride he had,  
Arrived, where now awaited all that force  
Collected to destroy who, thus unchaste,  
Had drawn his wrath and their accomplished harm,

He saw, among them first, those bridal spies,  
Whose baneful arts had wrought his chiefest wrong

With practise foul, and yet to cost them dear;  
Whom, then, unmoved beholding, thus he spake:  
Why have ye, Philistines, thus far presumed

Beyond your power and right to disregard  
My due as husband, when ye punished thus  
One under my protection as my wife,  
Nor owning your authority, but mine?  
And what intends your purpose, recompense  
Awarded, as by due, or forcibly  
Exacted, as my just pretense demands?  
Whereto with ready words his foes replied:  
Samson, since thus thou hast inquired our right  
To do this deed, know that thy thought concern  
Hath here no part, since neither of thy tribe  
The woman was, nor still thy wife regarded;  
Which, as thy self, deem that we also knew,  
Nor knew ourselves not free to exercise  
Right on our own, though wheresoever found,  
Or to whom joined, as in this instance done:  
Which, if thou think to question, asks but trial  
Such as we here both offer and accept.  
What hinders, then, with final proof to try  
Thy right or ours the stronger, force with force,  
That we may know whose right be found su-  
preme?

So speak they, heightened in their victory deemed,  
Surveying him with eyes that only saw  
Success assured, whene'er his onset chanced;  
As when a mountain oak, or forest pine,  
Or cedar, from the haunts of men remote,  
Some woodsmen in a mountain valley see,  
And, with awakened wonder seen, survey,  
Pondering where best to fell, in what part hewn.  
Whereto, still unabashed, he thus returned:  
Though thus far ye have done, yet not enough  
Connival deemed to clear from that foul blot  
Of wedlock disallied, by you abeted,  
If not set on; wherefore I still on you  
Will be avenged, and after will I cease.  
So Samson spake, and from his eyes shot forth

Confusion, as when lightning glares from heaven,  
That withered all their force and courage drained.  
Instant, without delay, straight he advanced  
Upon his foes helpless to vengeance left,  
Until their first he gained, when, smiting forth  
With strenuous might, their foremost he assailed,  
Felling them with a fury unopposed,  
As, seizing on whatever part first met,  
Head, trunk, or limb, as chanced, naked or armed,  
He bruised, or crushed, or swung and dashed to  
death

Whomever nearest stood, or dared make head,  
Though but with vain attempt, against his force.  
Such onset fierce they might not long endure,  
But turning fled, or groveled in the dust,  
Though warriors old and well to arms inured,  
Their plated backs under his naked heel,  
Such fury on them broke and wrath aroused.  
Soon to full flight their host he turned, dismayed  
By reason of such mighty number slain,  
Their choice and flower of chivalry, not only  
Of Timna, but each neighbored region round,  
Met from all parts to this great task imposed,  
To wreak fierce vengeance on their mighty foe ;  
Yet contrary proved their ruin and dismay  
From him, whose thus to compass they assembled.  
He, after victory won, his virtue worn  
Reposes, safe to Etham's rock retired ;  
Where now he waits what further may be moved  
Against him, if, after such attest of strength,  
They yet intend upon him, thus annoyed,  
Or meditates by what more force or guile  
Still to infest his enemies thus quelled  
With fierce compulsion. Well may they by this  
Rue bitterly the direful consequence  
Of their false acts and his attempted harm,  
Thus perished, all without exception fallen

Who braved his brunt; they live alone who fled.

*Cho.* O glorious vengeance on our foes inflicted,

Samson, by trial approved

Strongest of mortal men!

Set on thereto by him whose counsel high

And hidden purpose

Endued thy mighty strength,

Ordained to our deliverance

When heathen and profane attempted thee

Proof against all assault,

Attempted to their ruin,

Who only thought to quell thy force;

Yet contrary wrought their shame,

While thou, their feats and mighty force con-  
temning,

Against them gone,

Sudden o'erthrew'st them as a flood,

To them naught leaving but thy fare increased,

And him high celebrating

Who had ordained thy might and wondrous force.

Now easier task awaits thee; seconded

By all thy nation roused,

Back on thy foes victorious to return

And fully accomplish thy great work begun,

The mission high ordained

And task by Heaven imposed

That shall redound thy universal praises.

*Man.* Come, friends, there seems not much for  
sorrow here,

And lamentation; more cause to rejoice

That God, of his great favor, hath vouchsafed.

Such recognition of his mighty champion,

Who, by this prowest act, hath vindicated

His office high bestowed; as much deserving

To be rewarded well of all his nation,

Whom, under God, he justly hath delivered

From their chief foes, upon whom now is found  
Naught but dishonor, fear, shame, and contempt ;  
To us deliverance he hath brought and freedom,  
If, without wonted slackness, now be seized  
So glorious occasion on our enemies  
Defenceless thus, of might to be opposed.  
And all this, yet God with him, as we hoped,  
With favor and assistance in his task.  
Nothing wants now, but that his nation roused  
Back on their foes return, with sore discomfit  
Breaking their force who them so long enslaved,  
And fully accomplishing his task begun,  
Theirs now as well, since all therein concerned.

Cho. All is best, though oft endured  
Our grievous ills with questioned doubt,  
As undiscerned whereto they tend ;  
Yet after trial, to our good  
Intended found and welfare best ;  
As now for us, when long matured  
His high intent his purpose serves,  
With vindication full and fair event.



## SAMSON HYBRISTES

### THE ARGUMENT

Samson, for his incursions into the land of the Philistines and his hostile deeds, is preëmtorily demanded of the men of Judah for vengeance to be inflicted upon him. He consents to be bound, and is brought before the elders of Judah, who form the chorus, at Hebron, there to be tried. Against their accusation of violating their law in taking to wife a woman of the Philistines, he urges his promptings from God, his marvelous birth, and dedicated life. While his trial is going on, the real cause whereof is yet not announced, he is visited by his mother, who at first upbraids him for his marriage contrary to the wishes of his parents, but at last urges him to fulfill the will of God concerning him, at the same time relating the story of his divine annunciation and mission, namely, to free his people. Samson, who had refused with absolute denial, at last relents to go with the herald sent to fetch him. After his departure, enters his father, Manoah, with anxious inquiry concerning his son and wife. His sorrow at the tidings is interrupted by the arrival of a messenger who, at first hesitatingly, afterward with more spirit, relates what hath befallen the Philistines from Samson; wherewith the drama ends.

· THE PERSONS ·

*Samson*

*Manoah*, father of Samson.

Hebrew Messenger.

*His mother*.

The Philistine Messenger.

Chorus of Judean Elders.

*Scene*:—*Before the Gates in Hebron.*



## SAMSON HYBRISTES

*Philistine Messenger.* From utmost bound of Judah's land I come  
To Hebron old, the seat of Anakim.  
Whether occasion draws these hastened steps  
Unto the governors and heads of tribes  
O'er Judah set, one Samson to demand—  
A mighty champion, bold above compare,  
For that, though our due thrall, he hath dared  
presume  
On acts rebellious, and done hostile deeds,  
Whose loud report at length hath roused our  
lords,  
That now, entering Judea with gathered powers,  
On him or all his tribe their purpose holds  
To wreak their wrath to the utmost point exact  
Of penalty. And therefore justice mete  
Render, he must, freeing the forfeiture  
Of wont allotted unto those rebellious,  
Or all his kind shall render in his room.  
But wherefore stirs no human shape abroad  
From yonder town or city nigh, since now  
The point of day? I will along and seek  
Who may inform these unfamiliar steps  
Unto the prime of Judah and her chief  
In rule, that I may take their purposed will.

*Chorus.* A little onward lies the toilsome path  
For these faint step of age,  
A little further on,  
To yonder wayside place, our wonted seat  
There daily we resort  
And sit, dispensing justice—  
Rather say, bewailing  
The servitude of Israel and his sons,  
Despicable, abject, unworthy, vile,  
Whene'er, as now, the insulting light removes  
Night's charitable mantle from our woes,  
Showing them naked

To the shame of day.

O thou, that, with surpassing splendor adorned,  
Risest rejoicing, as the strong man in his might,  
To run thy golden race,  
To thee we call, O sun!

Whose flaming progress on thine eastern road  
With gladness all the earth  
Beholds, rejoicing in thy joy.  
O'er many an awful mount  
Unused to servile yoke,  
And over all the inviolable main,  
All sea-girt isles, that stud,  
Like starry archipelagoes  
Of night, old ocean's nether firmament,  
Unweariedly thy golden eye shall run  
Till eve's dim eyelid seal thy sight again.

*Semi-cho.* Yet us no rapture fills  
For thy glad sight, no heart's bright incense, joy,  
Grateful shall rise, no praise.  
Thereof instead shall wailing and lament  
Vex all the burdened air,  
Aidless, unhappy, dark;  
For thou, whene'er thou risest,  
Usherest in 'no joy  
To us, no hope, no gladness,  
But, in saddest stead,  
Despair and pain, anguish, and sorrow, and woe,  
When day leads back our night.

*Semi-cho.* Thy cheerful advent blythe,  
Which most men hail as long release to joy  
And glad purliens of light,  
To us (O miserable!)  
Is but the coming of the taskmaster  
Unto the fearful and o'erlabored slave,  
Waking the stinging thought  
To goad along the barren toil  
Of memory, and recall

The glory of the past, the present shame.

*Cho.* Yet now, perhaps, fresh grief draws hard behind.

For I discern this way

Some stranger tending, so I deem

His habit tells, a Philistine;

His hand a herald's sceptre bears;

Bent all on haste, he nearer draws,

And now, at hand, his traveled steps he stays,

But, by his frown, with no good fraught for us.

*Philistine Mes.* Ebrews, the Judean elders here  
I seek,

Whom ye reports account. Say if I err.

*Cho.* Thou aimest dextrously; discharge thy purpose.

*Philistine Mes.* Elders, to you our lords thus  
bid me say:

Are ye our slaves, our vassals, held our thralls

By right of war to do whate'er we bid?

See on our sending ye deliver bound

Into our hand Samson, forfeit and due,

Since, though our bondman, he hath dared pre-  
sume

On acts rebellious, and done hostile deeds,

In that with fire our fields he hath laid waste,

Harassed our land, harried and slain our men,

And chief those thirty there at Ascalon.

So gross a stain, touching so near our name,

Must in no wise be glossed with smooth excuse;

Hence, as our due, to take him are we come,

And those ill deeds to recompense in kind.

Thus much of him. The one command imposed

Duly if ye perform, our purpose hither

To other imports no violence or spoil.

But so deceitful hope, or stubborn pride

Obdurate, shall the execution slack

Or respite, is the hazard thereby earned

No less than threatens Samson, be assured,  
By chance he come into our power and hand.

*Cho.* Such insolence like answers best befit,

*Philistine Mes.* Such the command your law-  
ful lords have set.

*Cho.* But have they not proved to their hurt  
his power

Surpassing human rate, above the strength  
Of numbers to oppose, or banded might,  
So that our most avails not to perform  
The task imposed? And therein if we fail,  
What but our own destruction can portend?  
Return thy way; thou seest we cannot do it.

*Philistine Mes.* But this reply, be sure, will not  
suffice them.

*Cho.* Perforce it will, so be it a better lack.

*Philistine Mes.* Nothing is here for words, be  
sure; for is not

Your nation held subjected to our lords  
Their vassals, and by right of war their thralls?  
And shall ye at our sending and demand  
Refuse our sending? Not, if well ye know,  
Your pretence thus by place of office deemed,  
That duty which to you by right pertains,  
To guard the public safety and your own;  
Which, if thus rashly your refusal hold  
Against our just pretense assumed, alike  
Upon the utmost edge of hazard stand.

*Cho.* True is, our nation is subjected held  
To your dread lords, deservedly, since we  
By force of arms defeated and enthralled,  
Who thence to you all due subjection owe  
As masters, and to your commands imposed.  
But that we here may satisfy your will  
Lawful enjoined, and, won by force or guile,  
Against the people yield into your hand  
Their champion, and the popular idol held,

Thou mayest not think, since not in us disposed  
 Either superior force to overcome  
 Or civil power to compel his will,  
 Since of another tribe, nor hence to us  
 Owing obedience or judicial fear.  
 Yet who subserves the public good, no mean  
 Service, thereby not only honor bears,  
 But hazard, due alike, and due the more  
 As the degree in office higher stands.  
 And wherefore should we here our risk involve  
 With his, who hath denied and held our law  
 In absolute contempt, as if in scorn  
 Yoking base wedlock with the uncircumcised?  
 And which should we the more esteem and weigh,  
 His safety, or the general, which by right  
 Our first and our sincerest care demands?  
 For where the public to mischance exposed  
 Lies through default of one, his doom should free  
 Their danger, nor should all with him involve,  
 As he shall find perhaps who thus offends.  
 Wherefore bid send with best dispatch, and Sam-  
 son

Summon, to try if he perhaps be found  
 Submissive to our need, if thus with him  
 Persuasion may prevail to free his people  
 From hazard, which his acts on them induced,  
 Or else, though doubtful, if our force suffice  
 To win him, or win from him what he can  
 In power, since thus alike to us imports  
 Destruction, from your force, or from his hand.  
 These tidings therefore bear to your dread lords,  
 Which may somewhat perhaps prevail to ease  
 Our punishment, or dull, herein if we  
 Not slack be found, but forward to obey  
 Their bidding, whom by right of war we serve.

*Philistine Mes.* I thought your reasons better  
 would instruct,

And force compel perforce what erst denied,  
 With fear of worse conjoined, since all must yield  
 To strict necessity, that governs all.  
 But, how the event may turn, of this be sure,  
 That favorable compliance more will gain  
 Indulgence, and more favor will effect,  
 That slackness or than flat refusal more  
 Will hazard, if against your will perforce  
 Unable to perform what now enjoined.  
 This therefore ponder well, and be your speed  
 So as ye hope your safety, that your toil  
 May teach your minds obedience; nor, thus fond,  
 Vainly refuse again what with all ease  
 Exacted, if our purpose that way tend;  
 Nor further warning think to you vouchsafed.

*Cho.* High are the ways of God,  
 And high to human sense expressed,  
 Above the reach of erring man to know,  
 Alloting doubtful oft, as in despite,  
 Or contradicting to his deity  
 And edicts right ordained;  
 For on the race of men his purpose holds  
 To good, as oft appears, or else, with hand  
 And favor changed, causeless his heavier judg-  
 ments light,  
 With no regard, as seems, of service past  
 From man to him, or him to man of promise.

Nor only upon them who disregard  
 And impiously blaspheme  
 His tents, and his deity despise,  
 The idolatrous rout that hold his name in scorn,  
 Fond, dissolute, profane,  
 Visits his sovereign will inscrutable  
 And fiery wrath reserved;  
 But such as he of favor hath elected  
 By grace his chosen,  
 And peculiar people held,

Them he alike subjects to like event,  
Though dignified by choice,  
Nor aught of difference weighs for their default,  
As might his grace beseen,  
But rather more exacts, and worse allots  
Of punishment, the more his favor given  
And grace divine vouchsafed,  
Or at the utmost brings, as in despite  
Of what himself decreed,  
Just and unjust alike to evil end.

Which oft confusion works, and brings to fear  
The pondering heart, that ventures not beyond  
The present state of good or ill bestowed,  
But yields, assailed by doubt, unmindful thus  
Of former mercies past, and faints, depressed

With sense of Heaven's desertion.

Thus fond is mortal man  
Fallen upon ire divine,  
As on himself his ruin to invoke,  
So smitten with folly dire,  
Insensate strook, or to sense left depraved,  
And with vision internal blind,  
When God upon his head,  
Surprised, distract, amazed,  
Reft of defense,  
Executes his high errand of destruction.  
But who repents, and after pardon seeks,  
His eye is gracious to admit ;  
His ear is ever open to the suppliant.

So let not thus his wrath consume his people,  
Though drawn to paths of ill,  
And strook with ire divine ;  
Rather regard their toils calamitous,  
The merited punishment of sins,  
And turn to pitying truth.

But soft ; for yonder to our wish  
Samson behold !

As yet, is every way unfit  
 Our purposed intent to inform him.

*Samson.* I come not, elders, though ye might  
 suppose,  
 As overpowered by fear, nor though it seem,  
 Superior force constraining, but that I own  
 Your reverend sway, and yield thereto respect,  
 As meet. So now your purpose with me say.

*Cho.* Whence camest thou hither, and from  
 what feats performed?  
 For in thy efforts to provoke our foes,  
 The Philistines, thou never wast remiss,  
 As many a slain thou slewest them witness bears  
 thee ;  
 And often have I heard thy mighty acts,  
 But never true relation, and distinct.

*Sams.* After the slaughter of the uncircum-  
 cised,  
 I to the rock of Etham safe retired ;  
 Not that I feared what harm the event might draw,  
 But meditated by what force or guile  
 Still more to infest our enemies. Meanwhile these,  
 Your men of arms and officers dispatched,  
 Drew nigh, relating brief your ordered will  
 Imposed, to have me bound into your presence.  
 And, though with wonder seized what sudden  
 cause  
 Hath moved so violent haste, hither behold  
 Me come, not fearing what the event might gain  
 From strict refusal to your offered will,  
 But that I would no wrong or injury  
 Done in despite, or from the wanton heat  
 Of youth, offered against your reverend office,  
 Where honor only and regard pertains.  
 With this persuasion, then, and chiefly assured  
 By what your pledge secures and faith express,  
 Yourselves will not exact a penal forfeit,



The willinger I came, though yet unknown  
 What cause or what intent hath thus occasioned ;  
 Which yet informs me not my purpose here.

*Cho.* Was there no other cause to offend our  
 foes,

No further act, that by occasion hence  
 Might wrench the temper of the uncircumcised ?

*Sams.* Such hesitation shown to manifest  
 Your purpose with me well might question raise  
 Whether ye hide some further intent or not,  
 Importing more than on the face appears.

But whether thus it be or no, let pass ;  
 For ye are gone in age, that old respect  
 Is due, allotted unto years of wont.

Ye knew that I had chosen to wife—by then  
 Arrived the prime of marriageable love—

The daughter of a Timnian infidel ;

Yet me she pleased, my parents not. But now,

In time of harvest parted hence and passed

To Timna, I found my faithless bride refused,

Spouse to another. Hence that I might be

Blameless more than the Philistines, though to  
 them

Done a displeasure, thrice a hundred foxes

I caught, with sportive aid on mischief bent,

Yoking them two and two with fast-fixed brand,

In circle ranged, touched with the nimble flame.

Then ye might see the dry, flame-amorous corn

Seized by the ruffian fire, and, violate

Both shock and standing corn—nor less the vines

Amid the olives grown—adulteress play,

Cheating the uncircumcised who eared the field ;

That Timna, disappointed of her wine,

Would fare the Nazarite that season, needs,

The uncircumcised be, as the circumcised,

Despoiled. Yet so a dire revenge they found,

Unwarranted, unworthy, unproportionate,

And out of all regard to the offense.  
 For when they knew their careful tillage wasted  
 Wantonly, as might seem, and unprovoked,  
 Either to clear their guilt from deemed connival  
 In nuptial bands thus loosely disallied,  
 Or else to strike dismay into their foe.  
 Who by his prowest acts had wrought their harm,  
 Father and daughter both they burned with fire.

*Cho.* But doubtless in requital for such deed  
 Thou hast found some fearful way to thy revenge.

*Sams.* I paid my underminers in their own  
 coin,

Be sure, as this relation witness bears.  
 When next I came, and knew the shameful deed  
 Done in despite and out of wished revenge.  
 On her, my love so late and dear delight,  
 For my requital, sudden anger seized  
 Me as a tempest, that, in my phrenzied wrath,  
 Uncased in brass, naked my limbs of steel,  
 Right on I drove, smiting them hip and thigh,  
 Who had done the deed, with slaughter—as who  
 would else

Than be avenged on such vindicative hate?  
 But now, after relation heard of deeds  
 Done on the foreskinned race singly by me,  
 Set forth your plain intent that brings me hither.

*Cho.* Why hast thou, Samson, broke the bounds  
 prescribed

By laws of God, in that presumptuous choice  
 Of thine, that chose among the foreskinned race,  
 Slackening thy strictest vow of purity  
 To yoke in wedlock with the uncircumcised?  
 Was never there a woman of the daughters  
 From out thy own tribe found, or all our na-  
 tion,

That thou shouldst make thy wedlock mate among  
 The uncircumcised Philistines, our dread foes?

Whereby great scandal unto God thou hast  
brought,  
And to his people diffidence and doubt,  
Though given enough before from the true God  
To waver and fall off, with idols joined.

*Sams.* Against the Philistines, our country's  
foes,

I sought occasion to our deliverance ;  
Therefore I urged the marriage on, that I  
Might Israel from Philistian yoke redeem,  
The task to which I was divinely set.  
True is, some amorous remorse I felt  
For the perverse event ; and this I yield,  
The act had outcome other than my thought.

*Cho.* Was this, then, all thy care, the pains of  
love

Disprized, and naught for wrath of justice  
roused ?

So far presumptuous pride or lust had borne thee  
Against our canon straitly that forbade  
Conjunction joined with the uncircumcised—  
Which how hast thou obeyed ? Of alien stock  
Was sprung the woman thou hast known thy  
wife—

Would that thou never hadst, too late, alas !—  
Even she of Timna, whom thy roving choice,  
Impetuous, unbridled, uncontroled ;  
Settled upon. Prince cause indeed hast thou,  
Or hadst, to love who in her nuptial height  
Of love professed—proof of no love in her !—  
Thy riddle given betrayed. Thy facile heart,  
Ease-amorous, unweeting, stood no siege,  
Or but so much still more as draws assault,  
And, like a fearful fortress, not one stroke  
Strenuous opposed, yielded the garrison,  
The secret of the riddle thou hadst set,  
That she conveyed, with hasty impudence,

To the fair-spoken paranymp, who usurped  
 Thy bed—fit guerdon to thy folly! Yet  
 Even thus, even when the facile key displayed  
 Evidenced the betrayal, and her smile,  
 Mingled with other half but hidden, flouted  
 Thy shame, against her blazed not thy slavish an-

ger,

But thou, by mastering terror quite o'ercome,  
 To such effect repliedst as showed thy mind  
 Craven and unapt, unfit for highest things.  
 And after, thou stealth-gone to Ascalon,  
 Thy jeer-stung heart, to gain the forfeit gaged,  
 Mustered its might on thirty men unarmed,  
 Who ne'er to thee had offered harm; yet thou,  
 Against our fact of peace expressly, slew'st them,  
 Then, like a robber, stripped'st and spoiled'st their  
 robes.

In such rash toils and ill-considered snares  
 Hath love, or rather lust, entangled thee,  
 Not love, as from thy words infers. For how  
 Could love, that only seeks her object's good,  
 Impel thee to thy dearest enemy,  
 Who sought thy capital secret to thy hurt?

*Sams.* Sharply have ye insisted on my sin,  
 Elders, falsely as ye assert, it seems.

Not wantoness it was, nor fond desire  
 Drew me, with purpose unabashed, wherein  
 Our law forbade approving to transgress.  
 Far other cause it was, other design;  
 I have done what I have done, motioned of God;  
 This plea the deeds themselves valid applaud;  
 Wherein if I be shown to have done amiss,  
 Thus contrary to our laws and laws of God,  
 Have all your will; ye see it in your hand.

*Cho.* What folly passed thy lip, Samson per-  
 verse!

Thy plea the deeds themselves condemn unjust,

Invalid, false, to partial error swerving ;  
 This their event approves, and plain enough,  
 Which when thou seest, I wonder whence thou  
     hast found

Presumption thus to hide thy sin ; for sin  
 It still appears, though even of thy hand done.

*Sams.* With ignorance hast thou spoken. The  
     due act

Draws not approval from the event, as good  
 Or bad ; the prompting motive this affirms.  
 Else might the act of ill intent, o'er-ruled  
 By arbitrament divine and of result  
 Thence fair, assert itself above the good  
 That finds perverse event through chance not  
     seen.

But that plea urged to extenuate my deeds  
 The deeds themselves partial condemn, unjust !  
 I was to do my part from Heaven proposed,  
 Not question consequence ; here if I erred,  
 The error was not mine, but his who sent me.

*Cho.* O argument presumptuous, fond, and  
     proud !

Error is not attributable to God,  
 As thou blasphemest, so to cloak thy sin ;  
 Though oft, with specious plea of God's will done,  
 Do men, erring from right, approve their path.  
 Which way thy sin hath led thee ; first, thy love  
 Settled upon choice forbidden ; then, insolence  
 Hath borne thee on to insult who bear the rule ;  
 Last, with a God blasphemed thou hast closed the  
     tale.

Know, in a word, all this of woman sprung.  
 For diverse as her various outward show  
 Affects her influence o'er her wedlock choice ;  
 And oft, by fair idolatresses ensnared,  
 As thine, are men's uxurious hearts beguiled  
 From truth and purity and good and God ;

In part they effect the ruin of their lives,  
Haply they make not shipwrack of the whole.

*Sams.* If, then, to you thus reprehensible  
My deeds appear, thus gone from right and good,  
Though in the highest intent on my part done,  
Forbear to mix yourselves with my concerns.  
Henceforth, as I shall hence from yours forbear.

*Cho.* Wise, who of old affirmed  
Him Heaven-favored that hath found  
A virtuous wife, who joins,  
Her honor chief, domestic praise.

Hence, in thy proper kind  
And order, choose thy mate;  
Beyond thy walk in life restrain thy step,  
Uplift no amorous eye—  
Rather, lower not—  
To her, whose outward shape though fair,  
Informed with beauty, and adorned  
With comeliness,  
Nathless the inward show,  
Ugly with spotted sin, taints like the snake;  
Never will she list to good,  
However musicaly the charmer breathe.

For, howsoever found, with thus fond,  
Empty of real goodness, real worth,  
Adverse to virtue,  
Stubborn, shameless, loud  
And turbulent, thus given  
Little or none to household good,  
Wherein consist  
Woman's chief honor and domestic praise,  
But knowing well,  
With trolling tongue and wanton roving eye,  
Joined with asking look and act,  
To tempt the weak unwary  
To dalliance, or to worse dishonoring,  
Of whom shame is ashamed—

With such a pilot at the helm embarked,  
 What voyage but would needs in ruin end?

But whom desire and reason alike approves,  
 Veiled with virginity, demure and meek,  
 To God and good submiss,  
 Yet chastely wroth, if amorous play  
 Attempt, or overt act,  
 With license to offend her maiden awe,  
 Her wed, and to her cleave  
 Through all the hazards incident to life,  
 Unwavering, unswerving, unseduced.

But who is this? What form draws hither fast,  
 As when a timorous doe,  
 Whose curious fawn had slipped her slumbering  
 side

To stray the perilous wild,  
 O'er wooded hill and moory dale  
 Begins her roam, seeking her wandered young?  
 And now, at nearer view, may seem  
 Some Ebrew matron, and perhaps thy mother;  
 Her face distressed and dark, she steers to us.

*Sams.* Ay, with what other eyes must she me  
 now

Behold, unseemly sight, in bonds abused!

*Mother.* From Zorah and the vale of Eshtaol  
 Desire to see thy face and learn thy state—  
 Maternal love o'er woman's anxious fears  
 Prevailing, since fame also found me out  
 With tidings of what lately had befallen thee—  
 Hath led me, Samson, by a various path,  
 For still report, erring, my steps beguiled,  
 Whither I find thee now. But why these bonds?

*Sams.* Ask elsewhere, or question else in-  
 quire,

If thou wouldst answer gain; of these perhaps  
 Thou mayst, on their occasion since I came.

*Cho.* Pretends that plea till now of ignorance  
 feigned,  
 Counterfeit innocence, smooth hypocrisy?  
 But feign no more; for thou, be sure, shalt learn  
 Thy fault adjudged thee plain. Know sin, and  
 sin

By thee confessed, thy doom severe hath drawn.  
 For now those robes are like to cost thee dearer  
 Than the estimation on the purchase set,  
 As this, the rigid score, approves. Dispatch  
 Hastened a message late to have thee bound.  
 And given into the hand of our dread lords  
 To do as likes their utmost will. The worst  
 At once were best known ever; hence without  
 Swerving equivocation have I spoke.

*Mother.* Alas, both for the day and for the  
 deed,  
 Son, that bereaves me thee! Ah wherefore, thus  
 Violating the law, didst thou espouse  
 The daughter of an infidel, against  
 Both then thy father's wish and mine express,  
 Whereby this loss of life to thee thou hast  
 wrought

To us of thee? But let me pardon obtain,  
 Idly upbraiding thus, the woman's way.  
 Half of her sorrows woman would avert,  
 Could she withhold the word she knew unwise,  
 No, resolved not to utter. But anguish then  
 Enforced me losing thee, anguish the more  
 As thou art sole my child. Silence henceforth  
 Must be my portion, woman's wonted lot.

*Sams.* Was this that solemn pledge and vow  
 engaged,  
 With glozing words and baited lies to draw me  
 Into assassination's wily snare,  
 So to requite, with treacherous guile, the faith  
 In you adjudged by acquiescence shown



To your commands, though void and reasonless?  
 Henceforth let none, kindled with kindly zeal  
 Through hard assays toil for the general good,  
 Hoping therefrom even gratitude, the spur  
 That raises generous minds to noblest acts;  
 For him his envious fellows will suspect,  
 Despise, mistrust, cavil, reproach, contemn;  
 And, if he aught remarkably begin,  
 They to their power will thwart or straight de-  
 sert,  
 Heaping contumely on kindest deeds.

*Cho.* That we are false, thou sayest, urgest on  
 us

That specious plea, ingratitude, betrayal,  
 Yet, if thou seek, well shalt thou find, that first  
 Thou led'st the way, thou led'st the example give;  
 Ere we to thee, thou to thyself wast false  
 And God. For hadst thou not with slackened  
 vow,

Yoked alien wedlock, which our statutes ban,  
 And treasonable league with our oppressors,  
 Permitting, in thy unbridled insolence,  
 Unreined desires and passions governless,  
 Catching the rule, reduce to servitude  
 Reason, in thee therefrom obscured, were now  
 No strict compulsion fallen on thee or us,  
 For which or we or thou must satisfy.

*Sams.* Yet better to be vile esteemed than vile.  
 For wherein have I sin? Can open slaughter  
 Of those oppressors be as treason construed,  
 Or treasonable league? Still I affirm,  
 The marriage that ye censure, as before  
 Affirmed, was prompted by impulse divine.  
 The end thereof though sorrow, as I own,  
 Proves not my sin nor disapproves my plea.  
 Wherefore, then, have I blame, or why are  
 deemed

As contrary to our laws and laws of God  
 My acts, which ye condemn, but I approve  
 The gifts of God, and mean to learn, before  
 My plea I yield, the fault I am charged to have  
 done?

*Cho.* Thou knowest the uncircumcised our  
 lords,

That bonds of civil duty thee constrained  
 To observe the fact of peace and amity  
 Mutual that subsists. Our plight undone  
 Thou seest, and seest into how evil case  
 Our state is come, not through our motioned act,  
 But thine; thy deeds our peril have induced,  
 Thy doom should free, or else a common foe  
 Lie under judgment, slain without stain of crime  
 By whatsoever hand. And plead'st thou still  
 Divine impulsion prompting thee to acts  
 Whose ends were given of God? Know then, as  
 thou

Wouldst know, were thine true plea, the gifts of  
 God

Are good and perfect, not, as graces feigned,  
 Desirable, but, given with solemn hand,  
 Drawing a sting. Hadst thou of God been  
 prompted,

Thy odious pretense, but now soon discerned,  
 Be sure thy acts other results had brought  
 Answering. Only the good can give good gifts;  
 Since, be the giver so, the gift is good  
 Perforce; and contrariwise the ill desires,  
 For evil springs whence but from evil source?

*Sams.* The uncircumcised our lords I knew,  
 thou sayest,

And knew that civil duty me constrained  
 To observe obedience owed to those who have  
 Our nation in their civil power. The force  
 It was of subjugation. Force o'er force

Prevails but where the conqueror can. If ye,  
 Deservedly enthralled your outward freedom,  
 The inward lost, liberty would regain,  
 Ye ought not thus deliverance sent refuse,  
 But second rather those my high attempts  
 To break the yoke under which now ye chafe;  
 Which to throw off, your minds ye must erect  
 To nobler counsels, raise to higher thoughts,  
 Knowing that none, of inward servitude  
 Enthralled and yoked, can outward violence free.  
 But, those great acts, which God by me hath  
 wrought

Upon your conquerors, acknowledged not,  
 Nor aught considered, if your servile minds  
 Me, your deliverance given, will not accept,  
 Ye are not capable ye should possess  
 Freedom, thus nicely or thus cautiously  
 Rejected, but deservedly will serve.

*Cho.* O folly and shame! What government  
 have we,

What state, wherein those who are set to rule  
 If one, a private, may o'erbear, impune,  
 Rebellion raise, and levy single war—  
 Thou most, whose acts perverse have thus pro-  
 voked

Our peril, and whose deeds our doom have  
 drawn??

Us, set of God and in his stead, if thou  
 Dishonor, whom hast thou dishonored, whom  
 Despised, but God? Whose wrathful jealousy  
 Thine unrepentant sin shall ne'er forgive,  
 But visit soon with punishment condign.  
 Thus if thou thinkest to deceive, or draw  
 Aside from right with hollow argument,  
 Or specious show of zeal for public good,  
 The common theme of those who value least,  
 Widely thou errest, and wanderest from the truth,

*Sams.* Our government thou knowest, when  
 thou hast known  
 That state, wherein what serves his purpose best  
 Each works, not far to learn. But, to the main,  
 Had what I motioned been averse to God,  
 Though contrary to our laws and his ordained,  
 Why was it then permitted? Just cause he had  
 To enmity, and had not wanted means  
 To set his people free. Had this act, then,  
 Unlawful thus been held, adjudged to stain  
 My vow of Nazarite, he had not so  
 Have prompted me, permitted, to an act  
 Against our law declared, unchaste, unclean;  
 Rather his swiftest vengeance had pronounced  
 In certain tones his anger and my doom,  
*Cho.* That God permitted, thou sayest, mo-  
 tioned thee toward,  
 Against that strictest vow of purity,  
 This act, of freedom for his people wrought  
 Plead'st divine purpose high. Fair argument!  
 Reason how sound approved! Could not his  
 strength,  
 Of right adjudged almighty, other means  
 Have wrought, invented other arts to this,  
 Not contradictory thus to his edicts found,  
 Thus to his deity? This caption, then,  
 Explodes thy plea, and reads thee false or fond.  
 The trial of thy fortitude it was,  
 To prove thy faith and firm obedience owed  
 In recompense for the high gift of God,  
 Not license to a gross, forbidden sin.  
 But grant thee so; stands in no stead for thee  
 That now he hastens not, his patient wrath  
 Precipitates not thy augmented doom;  
 Omittance is not quittance. Doubtless he  
 Out of thine evil still can bring forth good;  
 But should he so, it argues not thy acts

Approved divinely, or quits thee of unclean.  
If thus be held, all who contemn his law,  
Challenge his providence, reject his good,  
Crimes which thou knowest to the height held im-  
pious,

And worthy not to escape adjudged, yet so  
In naught unchaste, vile, reprehensible.  
Of such malfasants thou art in the list.  
Wherefore thou oughtest free thy forfeit pledged  
To us, and yield thyself to have our will ;  
Knowing that, when the public lies exposed  
To danger, one for many should redeem.  
Which, wert thou innocent, would still prevail ;  
How much more, when thy fault stands plain ad-  
judged.

For that thy blind, unbridled lust impeled thee,  
And not zeal for thy God, by this appears,  
That in extenuation of thy act  
Thou urgedst plea of prompting from above  
To seek in marriage that perfidious bride,  
A Canaanite, thy country's enemy,  
Yet first love for the woman thou hadst avowed.  
And further, since thou movest more that plea  
Prompted of God to do his will, then learn  
He only is elect to do God's will  
Who does it ; other choice or voice is none  
Divine or human. Witness thy own instance.

*Sams.* Are ye not they who, solemnly elect  
Of God, his law having impiously transgressed  
And fallen to idols foul, by him are sold  
To servitude as foul and bondage vile ?  
Which I, your great deliverer, when sent  
To rescue Israel from Philistian yoke,  
Having in some part ransomed with high acts—  
Yet now am judged a public enemy,  
Outcast from law, contemned an alien, deemed

As worthy death; though what chance now ye  
bear

Falls, not from mine, but your incestuous acts,  
Adulteries, murders, blasphemies, and lies,  
With prayers to Adon, Baal, and Ashtaroth,—  
The gods adored of Israel's heathen foes,  
Whose might availed not yet to stay their fall—  
And impious bowings down to stock and stone,  
Dispising of God's law and sanctuary,  
The habitation of his holiness

In Shiloh where he shines; therefore ye sunk  
Bowed down beneath their despicable spear  
In battle, when ye strove. Still Israel serves,  
(O shameful servitude), with all his sons,  
Cease, then, so strict insistence on my sin  
Thus called, nor foist my fault over your own.

*Cho.* Then, when, thou standest pure, our sin  
arraign;

It suits not now. For, while vain speech thou  
bandiest

Of boasted purity and feigned innocence,  
Peril impeled by thy own hand the state  
Threatens with harm, which thine is to remove.  
Nor is the law unjust that so ordains.  
If aught against the pact, as plainly appears,  
Unwarranted of us thou hast done, self-moved,  
Then hast thou violated, in thy deed,  
The law of nations, which, affronted thus,  
Thou oughtest yield thyself to satisfy.  
This, and not less than this, the least thou canst;  
Whate'er and whence thy might, thou canst not  
more.

Nor still upon us pretend thy sin, nor charge  
Weakly, by this to shift thy proper blame.  
Thou to no purpose cloakest sin with sin;  
Thy vain erasions but uncover more.

*Sams.* I have done what I have done, motioned  
of God,  
Under whose eye mine innocence I maintain,  
Wherein I say, as first, these hands are clean ;  
And hence ye nothing hold me herein found  
Free and accountable to none but God.

*Cho.* Mortal, and made of mortal flesh, dost  
thou  
Dispute the points of purity with him  
In whose pure sight no mortal flesh is pure ?  
And comest thou with such an one to judgment,  
And plead'st thou purity in whose pure sight  
His holy heavens are contemned unclean ?  
Then shall frail, sinful flesh assert itself  
Above the solemn edicts which of old  
Obtained with God? Hence, while in time thou  
mayest,

Hasten repentance toward that God incensed  
Justly, knowing of surety this thy sin  
Shall never, unrepentant, pardon find.  
For thee necessity nor God compeled  
Unto thy act, nor any man enforced,  
Since force upon free will can have no place,  
Else no free will. Hence, that which thou hast  
done,

Freely thou didst it ; force or fear none was.  
Free in thy power it lay, since free thy will,  
Obedience or revolt ; but, that now passed,  
In other hands the sequel lies, beyond  
Thy choice. Hence, be assured that, to our  
pledge,

Ourselves will not exact a penal forfeit ;  
But for our peril, which thy acts induced,  
And for thy solemn pledge of faith engaged,  
We will deliver thee bound into their hand.

*Sams.* O miserable and fond, unfaithful, weak,  
So to renounce your faith to God engaged,

Violating your country's dearest ends!  
 And wherefore, but to gain slight respite, deemed  
 Than honor more, than freedom, duty, virtue?  
 Fools, not to know that firm resistance made  
 On tyrant foes obedience is to God,  
 And slackened virtue rankest blasphemy!  
 Yet not unusual, among men declined  
 From God so far, thus to forego their vows,  
 Nor unexpected is, where ignorance  
 Of such prevails, safety to set before,  
 Honor behind—and yet how few prefer  
 Hard freedom over easy servitude!  
 Yet still this folly may convert to wisdom.  
 Will Judah now but join, or one half tribe,  
 We shall this day possess the gates of Gath,  
 And lord it over those we now obey.  
 Let not, then, slip occasion, which now serves,  
 But by your wisdom prove your worthy office.

*Cho.* Samson, thou hadst no name of wise, I  
 knew,

But never thought folly would lead so far  
 Thy youth astray, with solemnest advice  
 Such hazard on such warrant weak to urge.  
 Thou knowest the people is unnerved to war,  
 Sinews unbraced, and heart by servitude  
 Softened effeminately, the wont effect.  
 Such then the state, madness it were, self-death,  
 So to propose, much more the motioned act,  
 Though thyself even, with all-puissant arm,  
 Stood'st present to discharge thy chiefest aid;  
 As soon could we, or all, as thou alone,  
 Boaster, who doubtless thence wert furthest  
 found.

*Sams.* My acts then of my faith were best the  
 warrant,  
 Which of its surety present witness vouches,  
 For, will ye but release me from my pledge



Assured, myself with unassisted might,  
Which I withhold not, now occasion serves,  
Engage this arm to wrest in sole attempt,  
And ye at home, whole and unhazarded,  
Not life alone, but freedom general,  
So on your part ye dare the hazard set.

*Cho.* Think not thy strength entire, as when  
thou stood'st,  
Impenetrably armed of innocence ;  
Thy prowess then, when thou no more wast pure,  
Departed thee, and now thy might but none  
Thou knowest, disallied and drawn from good ;  
Wicked therefrom and weak, though clad thou  
stood'st

And locked in mail proofer than adamant.

*Sams.* This mighty strength, given at my birth,  
abides  
Diffused through joint and limb, while I preserve  
My vow inviolate, these locks unshorn.

*Cho.* For not in mighty bone or massy flesh,  
Though oft so deemed, vigor resides alone,  
Nor those robustious locks clustering thy head ;  
But rather dwells with virtue, her ally  
Divine, and the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts.  
Full soon thy attempt this lesson must enforce,  
How weak, how vain thy might divorced of these ;  
And we, too fondly on thy force relying,  
Destroyed in thy destruction should be found,  
Such an ambitious heat thy heart hath fired !  
This knowing, wherefore further urge thy plea,  
Or scheme proposals worthiest of naught ?

*Sams.* Then take upon yourselves to satisfy  
The penalty imposed. I will not do it,

*Cho.* Wilt thou, then, leave us answerable to  
those ills  
Thy deeds on us induced, so to requite  
Favor vouchsafed, protection to thy tribe ?

Besides what act more impiously unclean,  
 More than thy former, sum of unchastity,  
 So to betray and basely to desert  
 Thy nation's utmost need, us, and thy God?  
 Be not thus impious, Samson, but consider  
 This act the glorious ending of thy toil,  
 Self-conquest, as than whom none mightier  
                   known,

So much the more the conquest glorious deem.

*Sams.* But led in chains captived, or tamed by  
                   cold

And hunger, wherein could I serve my work  
 From Heaven imposed, to set my people free?  
 For this did the angel twice appear, for this  
 Declare my wondrous birth and wondrous life  
 Of God allotted? And shall I frustrate thus  
 His divine gift of strength, favor vouchsafed  
 Thus recompensing? Rather let me strive,  
 While strength lives in these limbs, against my  
                   foes,

That this miraculous might be not for naught,  
 Nor God's high gift be given to purpose vain.

*Cho.* Consider, Samson, matters now are come  
 Into evil case. What better couldst thou serve  
 Thy mission, if thy mission thus thou hast,  
 Whereof thy wondrous might avouches much,  
 Than by thy mind and act to satisfy,  
 Freely as thy offense, thy fault adjudged thee,  
 Working deliverance thy nation, plea  
 Now held, and making thence thy glorious name?  
 Hence not of vain revenge, or vulgar spite,  
 But for our peril, which thy acts induced,  
 And for thy solemn pledge of faith engaged,  
 We will deliver thee bound into their hand,

*Mother.* Is this the end, then, of my prayers  
                   and vows,  
 My fond maternal fears? Yet yield thee, son,

For thus may be what offered means who knows  
 But God hath given before thee to set free  
 His people, as the oracle affirmed?

*Cho.* What may this mean—the oracle thou  
 sayest?

Tell us the tale; thou seest we thirst to hear.

*Mother.* An angel told his wondrous birth di-  
 vine

From God, which, after days accomplished, came.  
 This to be truth his might miraculous vouches,

*Cho.* But set the tale at length with circum-  
 stance,

Wherein conviction, if not truth, resides.

*Mother.* Then hear me, though in much amaze-  
 ment stands

My mind, that such as ye should know it not,

A marvel so unwonted, so miraculous,

Divine; though other had I deemed the end

Than thus, inglorious, infamous, contrary

To those high hopes preferred. I prayed a son,

Holding a barren wedlock a reproach;

I bore a son, that all esteemed me happy.

Who envies now my lot as fortunate?

Was my request too fond, or self too much

Inmixed, that God devised this punishment

Upon my sin doubting his ways not just?

Yet not as thus announced; for to me gone

Into the field, there as by wont retired

To solitude and prayer for children, then

Childless and barren, as I sat reposed

Apart, the messenger of God appeared,

Who first to me revealed, next to my husband,

To whom a second vision was vouchsafed,

The divine mystery high, that from our loins

Should spring him who should set his people free;

Then, to assure the message high imparted,

Ascended all in flames from off the altar

Whereon an offering burned, after fortelling  
 Conception sure of him who was destined  
 To free his country from her enemies.  
 And so, when due time was and all fulfilled,  
 I bore a son, whose name bestowed foretold  
 His mission, that he should with might set free  
 His people—since the angel so affirmed  
 At least, though now the event puts much in  
 doubt.

*Cho.* A marvelous tale, indeed, from which  
 thy faith

On hopes well-founded seemed, nor less to us  
 Agreeably conceived; yet now perverse  
 Through his default, and void of reason found.

*Mother.* It had been my delight to view his  
 home  
 With offspring filled, whose childish laughter  
 sweet,  
 Choicer to mother's ear than soothest pipe  
 Of stop, should charm the parent heart and mine;  
 My husband, also, crowned with age serene,  
 Had summoned complete our circled household  
 hearth.

Ay me!  
 Never must thou call any woman wife,  
 Son, nor must I, with second mother love,  
 Dandle thy babes upon my knees, nor clap  
 Their cheeks, with fondest care pore every part,  
 Eyes, ears, and nose, and mouth, and hands, and  
 feet,

If mother's touch, or father's, more survive;  
 But separate in age, alone, unloved—  
 This then must be my lot, it seems, deserted  
 And solitary; since of thee bereft,  
 Whom have I? Kindred, kindly friends, and  
 home

No more to me remain, thou then no more.

Alas, how other seemed it late, when I  
Stood cheered by all that hope or comfort  
showed!

But now one sorrow by another sits,  
And all the doleful sisterhood of grief  
Surrounds me, from the light of hope cut off.  
Ah, with what other thoughts must I go hence  
Than those in which I came! Thus with each  
morn

Light shall return, but ne'er to me return  
Peace, or glad thoughts, or thy fond eyes to mine.

*Cho.* Give not to utter sorrow, but consider  
Kindred thou hast yet, kindly friends remain,  
And where thy husband is think there thy home.

*Mother.* Shall I, then, thus esteem thy loss as  
naught,  
Or valued slight, and absence soon restored,  
By other charities of life supplied,  
Relations dear of husband, friend, or home?  
Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh thou art,  
Life of my life, by sad experience dear  
As well I know. For not with wonted pangs  
And throes of travail felt I thee to light,  
Fruit of my body, bore; but griping pains  
And tortures more than death were mid-wife to  
me.

Yet words avail me nothing now, nor tears.  
Ay me! my members fail, and eyes, that thus  
With swift oppression seized, I can no more.

*Cho.* Let some convey her hence, and tend her  
care,  
As fits the need, with nursing diligence  
Bestowed, that nothing seemly lack, becoming  
Of wont a matron's honorable state.

*Sams.* Alas, those lofty hopes divine,  
To have set free  
Israel wrested from Philistian yoke!

Was it for this that word descended,  
Twice by an angel told  
Who rode in flames up from the burning altar,  
After conception assured,  
With nurture holy ordained, and solemn care  
Enjoined, as of a plant  
Select and dedicated?

Why was my heart from earliest years inflamed  
To high, heroic deeds,  
Magnanimous fortitude,  
If now, alas forsaken, betrayed,  
And by my faithless nation,  
As by an alien foe,  
All aidless given, I must pay on  
My hapless penalty imposed?  
Unseemly recompense to most men deemed,  
But doubly to the champion endued  
With the high gift of God.

Who now will credence yield  
Unto our holy oracles, that foretold  
Miraculous birth, to me vouchsafed,  
And wondrous strength sufficient  
To set my people free,  
That solemn task divine  
Gloriously entrusted from above?  
Alas, whom God's high choice hath once elected  
Chiefest in his regard, not vilely thus  
He should desert, as never known,  
And sell to servitude,  
Be it but for promise made.  
For whom God's favor hath chosen  
To some great work and glory,  
When but in part achieved  
So if he whelm and thrall, subjecting him  
To foul indignities, how stands therein  
Judgment approved, or vindicated  
Above the unjust the just?

Since both alike come to like evil end.

*Cho.* Wondrous the works of God,  
His many marvelous ways  
Beyond the searching out of man,  
Yet some there be who deem no God at all,  
Insensate, to their own blind thought inclining,  
Others upbraid his providence adjudged  
Partial, or to the erring  
Indulgent, judgment perverse misdeemed,  
Then cast the rein to roving doubt,  
Unmindful of his former mercies past,  
Which fills with anxious fears  
The credulous, vain heart of man.

Yet for the trustful soul,  
Assured his gracious eye divine,  
God hath bid dwell remote all anxious cares  
That spoil the sweet of being,  
And in his service pure  
Shine golden days fulfilled with golden deeds  
Acceptable, which is the calmest life.

Which chance had been thy chance and lot secured,

Samson, in wondrous might  
The miracle of men,  
With added favor joined of freedom wrought,  
And heavy yoke bereft  
From off thy people,  
Now in vilest bondage found,  
Had not thy pride and weak ambition ruled,  
When thou with impious foot didst pass  
The sacred bounds ordained  
Which God of old had set to right,  
Forgetful of thy task in part achieved,  
The close of all thy labors and the crown.

Yet other lot on thee at length fallen,  
By vanity or erring pride enticed  
From that high purpose given

And trust on thee imposed,  
With ruin conjoined, that nulls those mighty  
deeds,

The pledge and surety of thy task bestowed,  
Though late in part accomplished  
Yet now at last defeated,  
And through thy own default,  
Turning thy labors to disastrous end.

*Sams.* Alas, how otherwise my life portends  
Than that it late possessed, when I in might  
All mortal men exceled, with thoughts divine,  
Magnanimous instincts, to mighty deeds  
By hopes beyond heroic thus inflamed!  
Now shamed, dishonored, captive, and betrayed  
By my own nation,—and which now becomes  
My worst affliction—wherein can I serve  
That work imposed, to set my people free?  
So much I feel that mighty purpose fail  
Till now that urged me on, my hopes all vain,  
My plea rejected, and myself contemned  
Alien, outcast, disgrorified, disprized.

*Cho.* Yet thou hadst hope to gain the govern-  
ment

And rule thy brethren, after freedom wrought—  
Fond, and incapable of place or rule,  
Since lewdly to thy lust thou wert enthralled,  
Not seeing, in thy headlong arrogance,  
Others who fain would rule must first himself.

*Sams.* What, then, prevailed my abstinence,  
not armed

To all allurements proved however pleasing  
To appetite, though one it could resist?  
Things in our law unclean, and thence forbid,  
The surety of my vow inviolate  
And pledge of hallowed life, with like regard  
Of all deliciousness, all weak desires  
That soften and effeminate the soul,



How held seduction sweet, my taste could spurn ;  
 Yet, though my mighty strength knew no com-  
 peer,

Though force, unforced, in me her fortress held  
 Impregnable, myself I could not rule ;  
 Which now I rue ; for, womanly o'ercome,  
 Enticed by erring vanity and pride,  
 Whereon men have perhaps most often ruined,  
 I, like a heedless pilot, have shipwrecked  
 That glorious task divine enjoined from Heaven.  
 Wherefore call no man strong who rules not self,  
 Though strength, informed with every motion,  
 stalk

Preëminent—weak, worthless, and despised.

*Cho.* Thou mightst have made for honor and  
 for good,

Been high esteemed thy land's deliverer, famed  
 In the universal mouth. Now the worse part  
 Chosen thou hast, through giddy headiness  
 Erring, and, virtue lost, thou lovest all.

*Sams.* I see the evil on which, presumptuously  
 Erring, I fell. When most I felt secure,  
 Lax in my strength, from the unsuspected sky  
 The cloudless thunder bolts upon my head.  
 Yet none the less anguish I feel and shame,  
 Betrayed by my own nation and my friends,  
 Who to their utmost should have seconded  
 My high attempts, not striven to have undone  
 them,

Snaring my unsuspection with my words,  
 This not my least affliction and reproach.

*Cho.* We knew thy force, that thou determinest  
 No power but strength of body—our main hold  
 Lay therefore to assay thee what thou art,  
 Wherein thy true might summed, by guile or skill  
 To win thee or win from thee what thou hast

Of strength, that we might know; as is the  
part

Of wisdom, when force wavers, with discretion  
To conquer wherein force effected not.  
But thou of self didst come, beyond our hope,  
And we in might presumed no match of thine:  
Hence we had need what only aid remains  
To weakness, and must lack of force supply  
With cunning, or by what name else best called.

*Sams.* Dishonor rightlier called, impiety—  
Since disregarded quite those mighty acts  
By God through me vouchsafed—neglect and  
scorn,

Rancor and pride and enmity and spite,  
Or whatso'er be else of ill and vile,  
Not fitting virtuous hearts or generous minds  
Aiming at freedom from a hated yoke,  
But worthy most dispraise, contempt, and shame.  
Yet I to other thoughts had schooled my mind,  
Into your hand to yield myself, since ye  
Resolve me that yourselves will not exact  
A penal forfeit, so I am content.  
That I to other purpose wrought the deed  
Avails me nothing; hence do I repent  
The error, which is now become my crime  
And your occasion, basely, as it seems.

*Cho.* I see thou art not slack of virtue, false  
To what high worth within thee still remains,  
Though dim through thy default, but well re-  
solved

Of purpose, as the unyielding center firm,  
Nor wilt revoke thy word sincere engaged,  
Though dearly to thy cost, if well discharged  
That heavy score through thy own acts incurred.  
Yet other would I choose thy end, than thus  
Disglorified, disprized, and lastly death  
Perhaps, or worse than death, inflicted on thee.

*Sams.* Yet otherwise to me my lot portends ;  
 For, though by you my plea contemned, despised,  
 Although those mighty acts by me performed  
 Attested well that mission high imposed,  
 Yet I persuade me God will not reject  
 As traitorously his champion, but will still  
 Favor vouchsafe and strength, as times before,  
 To vindicate the glory of his name,  
 Whence now, if aught from presage be fore-  
 warned,

Or there be premonition in the mind,  
 This day shall be remarkable, or my last.

*Cho.* May God thy plea accept, his law dis-  
 pense,  
 For so he can, not we, and thy petition  
 Prosper ; though otherwise my thoughts por-  
 tend,

The anguish of my soul, and chief affliction.  
 Yet, what may some avail to raise thy mind,  
 Since wisest men no more have oft aspired  
 Than to the common good, by that regard  
 For which our country is esteemed so dear  
 Thou diest ; thus much of excellence and praise  
 Attaches to thy deed. Free choice thou hadst  
 To save thyself, hast chosen the better part,  
 Her safety, which, be sure, gains due regard,  
 The gratitude and thanks of all thy nation—  
 No small mark, if at glory thou hast aimed.  
 Let this appease thy mind, and thou the rather  
 Accept what fate, lest heavier on thyself  
 That deadlier curse, thy land's destruction, light.

*Sams.* I could be well content with that award  
 Which fame appoints to wait on virtuous deeds ;  
 But marked with brand of treason, and the stain  
 Of infamy upon my name pronounced,  
 No prize esteemed, yet must by me be held  
 Indifferent like ; glory and shame are one

To men who for their country's welfare strive;  
 And like by me are held, and valued like,  
 So best accomplished that great work imposed,  
 For which my life bestowed, and willing offered.  
 But other reasons urge, and other thoughts.  
 For yonder she, of whom I drew to live,  
 Now droops, anguished, and spent, and quite sunk  
     down,  
 With sad forebodings fraught and seized with  
     fears,  
 So strong the mother in her works. Wherefore  
 Comfort and speak her fair; omit no means  
 That wait on woman's gentler ministeries.  
 The man may draw his own strength from him-  
     self,  
 And of his own live to himself, secure  
 Through chance in life and change; the woman  
     not,  
 But in man lives her best and happiest life,  
 At least his care requires and kindly aid.

*Cho.* Nourish thy hopes; nor deem us so un-  
     grateful,  
 So lacking in the common decencies  
 Of life, which reverence to distress enjoin,  
 And most in woman solitary in grief,  
 As not to guard her care to extreme shift.

*Sams.* With cause thy words relieve me for  
     her welfare  
 Fraught with forboding fears. This makes  
     amends,  
 Somewhat, for your ingratitude that sends me,  
 Dishonored, shamed, disgrorified, disprized,  
 A prey to cruel foes. Thus much assured,  
 More eased in mind and somewhat raised, I part.

*Cho.* For now thy time arrives; the man re-  
     turns.

*Her.* Elders, the Ebrew Samson here I seek.

*Cho.* His fetters may inform him where he stands.

*Her.* Samson, by this doubtless thou hast the cause

Wherefore I come. Haste, therefore, and prepare  
Thy journey. Hesitatest? Come without  
Delay, or thou shall learn, and to thy cost,  
We can find means to quench thy insolence.  
Regard thyself, and school thee to consider  
Whether of self thou comest, or, from thy place  
By violence moved, trailed through your common streets

Like a wild beast, a gross indecency,  
And one which for thy honor best were spared.

*Sams.* Thy thought and tongue at variance  
plain are set.

*Her.* Prat'st thou so boldly now? Soon hast  
thou cause

Justly to rue the insolence thou showest.

*Sams.* Threaten not how thou wilt, but, as  
thou canst,

Do now; so fair a chance comes not in haste.

*Her.* Dost thou already chafe? I thought thee  
tamed.

Yet ways enough under the yoke to tame  
Even thy gamesome spirit. Thou shalt groan,  
Loaden with chains, in Gaza's prison-house  
Pent in dolorous dungeon, thy comrades  
Gaunt slaves and asses, which thou shalt not see,  
Thy eyes bored out—no woman then shall set  
Those orbs agape!—disgraceful there to grind.  
And still to anger more, oft shalt thou play  
At our high festivals to make our mirth,  
Abused, maltreated, to the multitude  
A gross unpitied object gazed and scorned;  
If thou art backward to obey, the worst  
That torment can devise, scourgings and whips,

Racks, branding fire, and cold, the extremest  
pains ;

Last, like a labored beast thy chance-fallen car-  
cass

Stenching the common air, to die a death  
Ignoble, unknown, unenvied, unavenged.

*Sams.* No terrors have thy threats to shake my  
soul

Armed to endure, with firmest constancy,  
The extremest ills on me thine can inflict.

Before have I considered, and the score  
To the utmost will discharge, if God's high will  
Demand, that heavy satisfaction, death.

But I persuade me God will not desert  
Thus traitorously his champion, since his task  
Yet unperformed, but strength will still vouch-  
safe

To vindicate the glory of his name.

*Her.* Reckon not on thy God. Thee he no  
more

Considers or regards, thus to permit  
Thy kin to sieze, with all indignity,  
And yield to alien foes, his foes as thine,  
Besides, were he so minded, he could not  
Assist thee, weaker found and less of force  
Than Dagon and the gods by us adored  
With trial of combat, when, in battle joined  
For proof, your heads bowed down beneath our  
spears ;

Not all your force sufficed, nor us subdued  
That day, though Israel's fiercest might con-  
tended

With the utmost of his deity seconded.  
Cease then from hope, nor in thy fond expectance  
Await deliverance destined ne'er to come ;  
But rather principle thyself to bear  
Whatever chance may fall, which I assert thee

Shall not be less than thy extremest thought.

*Sams.* Were not thy coat and person by consent

Of custom sacred, what withholds my hand  
To spare thy dastard life, and not at once  
Buffet thy structure low, or, raised, dash down  
To the hazard of thy head and ruined sides?  
So should it soon be known, in this attest  
At least, whose god were stronger, thine or mine,  
Or thus deserted found that champion raised,  
By his high acts on thine avouched, as well  
Of thy false words the contradiction proving.

*Cho.* Stir not, with vain breath of thy airy threats,

The man's grim fires of wrath, already waked.  
And, Samson, hear thou us, nor in thy anger  
Give wisdom's rule to folly, as thy wont.

*Sams.* Elders, farewell and peace. Though ye  
this day

To me have shown but scant respect, dishonoured

My plea, and held in all contempt, yet now  
Only fair words and comfortable I speak.  
Whate'er may come I arm me to endure  
With constant resolution, and perhaps  
I yet shall gain my chance by you withheld;  
For so is presage in my mind, at least.  
As for this impudent boaster, o'er-assured  
My ignominious life and shameful death,  
Whether your force be dextrous to subdue  
The power of Israel's God, to me vouchsafed  
And manifested in my wondrous night,  
Twixt thee and me the event must arbitrate.

*Cho.* O miserable change thou fallest upon,  
Samson, though with might endued  
More than the sons of men!  
So far presumption in thee wrought

To wrest, through pride, the laws of God ;  
 Yet so repentance moved may still  
 Reverse the solemn edict passed  
 That dooms thy meted punishment,  
 Though doubt much moves my tardy mind  
 If justice roused be thus appeased ;  
 Which yet the sure event must arbitrate.  
 But who comes thus in heated haste, as far  
 He fared? an Ebrew, sure, but not of ours.

*Manoah.* Elders and men of Judah, since to  
 me

Such were ye shown, behold one hither come  
 Supposing here to find a son and wife—  
 Since rumor thus gave out, hence then my guest  
 Directed—whom my tardy presence here  
 Seems not to find. Say, therefore, where to seek.  
 Yet lest relation thus declare me not,  
 Nor serve acquaintance, since my place not  
 known,

I am of Zorah, Manoah is my name.  
 But after knowledge gained, thus clear of doubt,  
 Why guard ye silence, and with asking looks  
 Gaze each on other, without uttered speech?

*Cho.* Then learn thy son's reproach, the worst  
 that ever

Could have befallen him and his father's house,  
 Because he hath broken the law of God express  
 By alien wedlock, which our statutes ban,  
 And by his impious acts peril on us  
 Induced from our dread lords, the Philistines,  
 Therefore have we, and no dispraise to us,  
 Delivered him bound with bonds into their hand.  
 Of what hath fallen him notice yet is none ;  
 But doubtless he by this hath paid his score  
 And satisfied the extreme of their revenge  
 In pains and penalties inflicted on him.

*Man.* O miserable hope! was this that trust



I had conceived as fits a father's love  
 And care? Why was I mocked with specious  
     good,  
 As of a gift bestowed desirable,  
 Yet in the end discerned drawing a sting?  
 Is this that just requittal of my faith  
 That prayed a son, and gained, and such a son,  
 Purposed by Heaven's attest to our deliverance?  
 Yet now himself deliverance most hath need,  
 Incapable and vain against his foes.  
 Alas, if such their import when received,  
 Such gifts, it seems, were best withheld, not giv-  
     en.

But cancel now in part this grief with joy,  
 Fair tidings of my wife and hope, or must  
 Thou add to this hard sum another score  
 Of woe more grievous still to satisfy?

*Cho.* Ah, Manoah, it irks me sore to say  
 The heavy tidings, which thou yet must bear;  
 Yet summon now thy most of man the worst  
 Of grief to learn that e'er thy ear shall strike.  
 Thy wife, when she had known the sad relation.  
 Which thou but late hast learned, quite spent  
     through grief,  
 Sunk down with sense distraught, whence some  
     have borne her

Unto a house hard by, where still she lies;  
 Her state, or life or death, I cannot say.  
 Yet never shroud in silence thus thy face  
 With mantled robe, but give thy grief to speech,  
 Lest with too rude irruption burst thy heart.

*Man.* Ay me, the worst! God's favor thus  
     withdrawn  
 And face, how shall I fear to pass my days?  
 Why should I longer live, since life prolonged  
 Insures but added grief and more remorse?  
 Death now inherits all my hopes conceived

Of barren joy and fond expectancy,  
 Vain all and fruitless; wherefore let him now  
 Seize on me also, since desire is gone  
 Of life bereft and solitary thus.  
 Yet I would be resolved the worst; for still  
 The half woe lies in the uncertainty.  
 Though of my son can tidings be but ill,  
 Hope still would hope, and faith would fain be-  
 lieve.

But let me hence, and learn what chance attends  
 My wife, in strait distress by your report.  
 The man, where dangers or dishonors press,  
 Nobliest and needliest by the woman stays,  
 And from or with her guards or shares the worst.

*Cho.* Hold, for I hither speeding to thy wish  
 Discern who may report thy son with news.

*Ebrew Messenger.* O miserable sight these eyes  
 beheld,

And still behold, and miserable to hear  
 The ruinous noise that yet peals on my ears!  
 So lively still imagination shows,  
 And fancy, the dread horror late I passed,  
 But accident, or instinct, or some chance,  
 Seems to have led me hither back again  
 To you, my countrymen, though how scarce  
 known,

Who doubtless also heard, the noise so dire.

*Cho.* Nothing we heard, except thy rueful out-  
 cry,

From whose loud tumult comes no perfect wit-  
 ness

Of what remarkably hath late been done;  
 Though from thy aspect thus much we infer,  
 That aught unusual hath happened late,  
 Which we must gain of thee, if still we learn.

*Ebrew Mes.* If I shall truly say what late I  
 saw,

Doubtful report will contradict belief.

*Cho.* Set forth thy news at once, whatever known.

No hesitation needs ; belief will weigh  
Thy tidings, after due relation heard.

*Ebrev Mes.* Which thus far ask report, though  
hard to think,  
That all the host of Philistines is fallen.

*Cho.* Fallen, and by whom? Since never of  
themselves

Fell such a host, nor yet by all our force.

*Ebrev Mes.* Then learn, though little credence  
gain and faith,  
At Samson's mighty hand they met their doom.

*Cho.* Little indeed, since late these eyes beheld  
His bonds of death. Yet still, if truth thou sayst,  
Proceed, relate the fact how it befell.

*Ebrev Mes.* Know, therefore, when our cham-  
pion parted hence  
By order of our lords to satisfy  
For us and our awarded forfeiture  
Redeem, that I obscurely fared aloof,  
Not, though in danger, thus to be deterred  
That I might know the end of this sad day.  
But not far ; for, with earliest glimpse of dawn  
Removed his camp, the Philistine had bent  
With hastened expedition through the bounds  
To Judah portioned, weening to overpower  
Our faint surprise ; and, with hot haste disdain-  
ing

Order and rank, his gross adventurous bands  
Now with high noon drew to our city nigh.  
And soon, near in the south, first met our view  
A fierce array of aspect battailous,  
The banded powers of Caphtor hastening on,  
Both horse and foot, archers and slingers, spears,  
The choice and flower of their chivalry

Met from all parts to this great task, who straight  
 Assembled stood at sight of their grand foe  
 Bound, and so tame, delivered into their hand ;  
 Whom when they saw, they raised a mighty shout  
 Against him, as when thunder speaks from Heav-  
 en.

Roused by the sound, Samson upheaved his head  
 With eyes uplift, as one who prayed, till then  
 Upon the ground fast-fixed, as in despair,  
 Or meditating some great purpose high.  
 And ere he scarce had raised them, when behold,  
 The Spirit of God fell on him, and each orb  
 Shot fire, as lightning glares from justling clouds,  
 That withered all their strength and vigor  
 drained.

Then from those mighty arms the binding cords  
 Parted, as touched with flame. On their whole  
 host

He drove, with trivial weapon armed, the jaw  
 Of a dead ass, which, in that glorious hand  
 Fallen swift with tempest on his enemies,  
 Slew largely of their chief and choicest youth.  
 Chill horror froze their spirits ; down idly drop-  
 ped

Their weapons, vain resistance were they raised ;  
 He, over helmed heads and dead prostrate  
 Fierce rushing, without let or hindrance slew,  
 None daring opposition, all amaze,  
 Such mighty execution wrought, and fear,  
 The sword and wrath of Samson on his foes  
 Strook with dismay, despaired, spiritless, fallen.  
 So ranged our mighty champion through their  
 host ;

So fixed, so trembling, so of vigor drained,  
 A thousand foreskins fell, their flower and prime.

*Man.* Come, thou ; no cause for lamentation  
 here,

Far less occasion. Samson like himself  
Himself hath quit, and vindicated quite  
His Heaven-attested mission; on his enemies  
Defeat hath wrought, dishonor, fear, and shame;  
To Israel hath brought freedom, so but they  
Seize the occasion, cause of still further woe  
Upon our foes. Gaza in all her gates  
Deplores the rued attempt, for which shall rise  
Mourning and lamentation through the bounds  
Of Caphtor, and in Asdod, and in Gath,  
Among the daughters of the Philistines;  
For never hath so dire a stroke befallen them,  
Since Israel first bowed beneath his yoke.  
Nothing wants now to joy, but that my wife,  
The associate and auxiliari of my hope,  
Share in these tidings glad and common mirth;  
To whose dear side sad duty still enjoins me,  
So in my son's concern too much remiss.

*Cho.* All is of God, though oft with doubt  
Is Heavenly disposition dark,  
Aiming at ends unsearchable;  
Yet not amiss against its mark  
His counsel flies, how distant far;  
As now for us, whose chance hath proved  
Happy, and that his high intent  
Good out of evil brings forth still;  
The event the purpose vindicates.



## SAMSON BLINDED

### THE ARGUMENT

Samson, having espoused and wedded Dalila, a woman of the Philistines, in the vale of Sorec, is earnestly importuned by her to reveal the secret of his strength; which he for some time refuses to do, putting her off either by pretense or by absolute denial. Meanwhile he chances to be visited by certain young men of the tribe of Dan—who make the chorus—as their former custom was, resorting to him for converse; and afterward by his father, Manoah, who, under premonition of danger, warns Samson of evil to befall him from Dalila; which warning Samson scorns. Shortly after, Samson departs under pretense of some onset or act upon the Philistines that shall complete the deliverance of Israel. Then enters Dalila to the chorus, inquiring for Samson, and, after some conversation, endeavoring his secret, which they refuse; whereupon Dalila, repeating her determination to succeed in her quest, goes out. Shortly after, Manoah again appears, with anxiety for Samson, having seen some Philistine liers-in-wait; and is still more troubled to learn of Dalila's attempt upon the chorus to gain the secret. While in suspense as to what should be done, a messenger, an Ebrew, enters, relating what hath befallen Samson; who is soon brought in, his eyes put out, in bonds, a prisoner to the Philistines; Dalila afterward appears also, and seeks reconciliation, but is rejected with scorn, and then withdraws, glorying in her deceit; whereupon the chorus seek to comfort Samson what they can, that, less in despair, he is led away, a captive, to Gaza: and the drama concludes.

## THE PERSONS

*Samson*

*Manoah*, father to Samson.

Messenger.

*Dalila*, his wife.

Chorus of Danite Youths.

Servant.

Public Officer.

*The Scene: Dalila's house, in the vale of Sorec.*



## SAMSON BLINDED

*Dalila.* Once more with doubtful hope and wav-  
ering purpose,  
Although my oft repulse contrary warn  
And promise like went, if I persist,  
Samson, once more, ere lastly thou pronounce,  
Let me renew my pleaded suit, imploring  
That secret thou refusedst to impart  
At my solicitation, wondering much  
Of thy so strange refusal, for to me  
Thou mayest with safety, as to thyself, reveal,  
Since I on thee no advantage could presume,  
The partner of my soul and other self,  
In whom I live my life, without thee not,  
But to no end exist, and days prolong  
With fruitless purpose. If, as to me thou sayest,  
Thou lov'st me yet, dost hold me yet endeared  
Thy wife, esteem'st me yet and cherishest ;  
Thou wilt not longer my request defer,  
But wilt reveal what I so long have sought,  
Wherein thy strength consists and safety placed,  
Thy capital secret held, and citadel  
Which I with constant hope so long have tried,  
Yet vainly to my sorrow, thus assuring,  
Beyond a shadow of doubt, thy heart sincere,  
And trust in me reposed faithful, approved,  
The solace and sure seal of this our love.  
For, where twixt faith of wedded man and wife  
Some secret stands, no perfect union joins,  
But discord, fear, suspicion, lastly hate,  
That all their fair domestic peace confounds.  
If thou canst use me thus, thy wife esteemed  
And dear delight, as thou hast oft professed,  
Thou lov'st me not, and but in scorn dost hold  
me,  
As thou didst fear me false, or over-fond,  
So to reveal, and thus thine anger assured,  
Thy wrath, thy scorn, displeasure, if revealed

The secret of thy safety and thy life.

*Samson.* Not that I trust thee not, or fear thee  
false,

Disloyal to thy faith and fealty sworn,  
Have I refused thee, and still refuse, though  
such

Might well be warned, as easily not surprised,  
By first experience. Did not she of Timna  
Betray her solemn trust and solemn faith,  
When in her prime of spousal love professed  
She basely to my spies and rivals gave  
The imparted secret, on whose issue hung not  
The hazard of my safety and my life,  
As here depending? She, with like assurance  
Of wifely love to me and faith maintained,  
Yet scrupled not, hard pressed and sore beset,  
Basely my secret for her gain to barter,  
O'ercome by mastering importunity.  
Not, therefore, that I fear thy false intent  
Do I refuse thee; but I fear thy weakness,  
Lest, in like case of sore beseting need,  
Not willingly, perhaps; but for thy life,  
Whose loss at moments even the bravest fears,  
Or in a time when unprepared, which all,  
The best, most principled with good, have felt,  
Thou also, with like error, do what thou,  
Or armed with wonted virtue, or by knowledge  
Made stronger, never couldst consent to do.  
Nor should I, as thy husband, thus expose  
Thy virtue to temptation, that assails  
Unsought; trial enough, be sure, will come,  
Without thy seeking, to approve thy faith,  
Which will require thy utmost to oppose,  
And not by curious knowledge to divide  
That strength, to thee for other use imparted.  
So shall I best my love to thee approve  
By love maintained from trial unsecure,

Not by indulgence weak to work thy fall,  
Or, at the least, confusion somewhat raise,  
Which might our peace and household faith con-  
found.

Nor does thy happiness upon that knowledge  
Depend; thy love sincere to me remains  
Without that secret, which revealed might raise  
Trouble, which raised thou wouldst avoid, yet  
raised

Would work perhaps what thou would'st vainly  
repent;

Seek not then what cannot thy happiness  
Increase, but might diminish, or destroy  
Our love; which to maintain should be thy care.

*Dal.* Deny me not thus, Samson, not thy wont,  
Who still thy thoughts to me art used to impart,  
My solace and sole comfort, since to thee  
United from my nation cuts me off,  
By this degraded, as they hold, to thee,  
Of race inferior, joined; though joined to thee  
Assures me not the favor yet of thine,  
Who evermore repulse my friendly motions,  
Jealous of thee perhaps and of my love,  
Whereof good proof to thee that day I gave,  
When I against my country and my faith  
(For so the priest rang ever in my ear,  
Preaching how impious to my country's gods  
It would be to espouse an enemy,  
Our fiercest, most inveterate, who had slain  
Such numbers of our nation and the flower)  
Received thee for my husband, loved thee, served  
thee

In all good faith, and still thy welfare seek,  
Would still in quiet love, with thee would live,  
My highest happiness and peace accounted,  
Asking thee only to approve thy faith  
As mine to thee, by yielding this last proof,

This secret that divorces me from thee,  
 Still separates our union, mine from thine,  
 Whose heart entire I covet, nor would share,  
 Except against my will, with aught; repulse  
 No longer her so long who justly sues.

*Sams.* With sorrow I refuse thee; and could  
 wish

Some other question of my love, some proof  
 Whose surety I could readily vouchsafe,  
 Thou wouldst prefer, and not thus constant urge  
 So hard my secret, the one citadel  
 I must not yield, too long, if without rudeness  
 I may presume, too long by thee assailed;  
 Thy importunity too far hath borne thee  
 Against thy constant service and thy love.  
 Desist, then, to prefer thy oft request,  
 That must, if too far urged, but more divide  
 Division, and the rupture slight increase.

*Dal.* If such thy purpose, then in vain I have  
 sought

To heal our wounded love, and have but widened,  
 Though to my sorrow and grief—more than to  
 thine,

I fear, since ever so the woman feels  
 The most, and suffers most love's parting pain;  
 But suffering can bear and silent hide  
 Her sorrow and heart-grief; and I no less  
 Will suffer, as I loved, with due regard  
 That no extreme be known, howe'er the smart;  
 To bear without complaint is woman's lot,  
 And silently endure her chiefest praise.  
 But see! for yonder through the shade discerned  
 A youthful troop steering this way their steps;  
 Perhaps thy friends, who for thy wished con-  
 verse

Are wont to come; whom fitly to receive  
 Thou must with favor meet, and I retire.

*Cho.* This, this is whom we sought,  
The dread invincible of Israel's foes,  
The glory of his nation and the boast,  
With matchless might endued  
And heavenly vigor armed,  
Whose dread heroic might,  
Now blazed and famous through remotest bounds  
of earth,  
No ode, or choicest lyric song,  
Or storied legend told in lofty verse,  
Can to the height of his true worth exalt,  
Crowning his name with universal praises.

*Semi-cho.* For first, his flowering youth yet  
scarcely blown  
And virtue yet unapproved,  
With strenuous might he slew  
The solitary beast that wons in wild,  
Tearing him, as the lion tears the kid.

*Semi-cho.* Then, to avenge the riddle's dastard  
stealth  
And wagered forfeit redeem,  
Thirty, the flower and choice of Ascalon, he slew,  
Alone, and without aid  
Armed in himself complete,  
Scorning their weapons proud and martial tools.

*Semi-cho.* Then, for his wrested bride and  
faith profaned,  
Upon his hapless foes,  
Surprised, distract, amazed,  
Weaponless and unarmed he singly fell,  
Though clad in mail they stood, proudly secure  
Of him whose dreaded might and wondrous force  
They sought to o'erthrow;  
But contrary wrought their shame,  
When on their battled might  
His anger with impetuous fury smote,  
And quelled their pride.

*Semi-cho.* Then, armed with trivial weapon  
 largely slew  
 The choice and prime of their Philistine youth  
 In Ramath-Lechi, where the bidden spring  
 With kindly rupture burst from the dry ground,  
 After the brunt of battle, to allay  
 His thirst, and virtue restore.

*Semi-cho.* Then on his shoulders took,  
 And by main strength upbare,  
 The massy gates of Gaza, post and door,  
 No trivial burden borne, or distance passed,  
 Toward Hebron, ancient seat of Anakim.

*Cho.* Where shall I first extol  
 Thy dread heroic might,  
 With plain celestial fortitude adorned,  
 And heavenly vigor armed,  
 Worthiest all renown and highest glory?  
 For thee I reckon chiefest in estate,  
 Whose strength by Heaven endued  
 And wondrous might bestowed,  
 By wondrous acts expressed and wondrous deeds,  
 The miracle of men,  
 Declare their doer's worth, and highest tell  
 His fame and loftiest praises.

*Sams.* Your presence, friends, is kindly; for I  
 gain  
 Now by experience dear how current runs  
 The coin debased of friendship counterfeit.  
 For not, as once they used, hither resort  
 Frequent my friends for oft converse, where from  
 I drew fresh virtue, vigor new derived,  
 To work my mighty mission. Tell me, comrades,  
 Whence is this falling off, this strange defection,  
 No ancient enmity or new offense  
 Between us known? Why am I slighted thus,  
 Cut off from all my nation, disavowed  
 As sprung of hated stock idolatrous,

Or held unclean? Other return is due  
 For those great acts which God by me hath  
     wrought

Upon our conquerors; gratitude and thanks  
 And no small praise better beseem than thus  
 Neglected and discarded, as though held  
 Alien, outcast, uncircumcised, despised.

*Cho.* Be not offended, Samson, if plainly set  
 The reason, which perhaps, though hard to hear,  
 May work thy remedy, since apt words, though  
     harsh,

Unpalatable, ungrateful, undesirable,  
 Yet, spoken with sincere intent, as herbs  
 Bitter to the taste, but healing of effect,  
 Oft medicine and alleviate the ill;  
 For, to say truth, men deem thee fallen away  
 To our oppressors, since thy hated wedlock,  
 Now twice-repeated, which persuades the more,  
 Forbidden with the uncircumcised to join,  
 Argues no longer thee of ours esteemed,  
 Or over-proud toward us to condescend.  
 Much wonder have I felt, and often heard,  
 That thus thou hast twice espoused an infidel,  
 Uncircumcised, unclean, unceremonial,  
 So main against thy God and country's law;  
 The more that sad event in nuptial choice  
 And lot unfortunate might well deter  
 Thee from attempting what so near thy ruin  
 Once wrought, thus hardly from the snare es-  
     caped.

*Sams.* Doubtful it seems, I own; yet still must  
     plead,

My sole extenuation and excuse,  
 Divine impulsion prompting me to find  
 Some cause upon our foes that might redeem  
 Our hated yoke. For not through fondest love,  
 Vanquished by passion weak, have I urged on

The former marriage, or this second joined;  
 But that I might my mission prosecute,  
 To free my nation from Philistine yoke,  
 The task divine on me enjoined from Heaven;  
 My own advantage weighed not, what might best  
 Serve my own end of pleasure, thus conjoined  
 With her who had my wished destruction plan-  
 ned,

And once had well nigh wrought; but I escaped  
 Her snare, when she, my former, basely sold  
 My secret to those bridal spies and rivals,  
 Who sought my undermining, but their own  
 Achieved, importunate of death, and rash,  
 When I on them fierce vengeance executed  
 For violated oath and right profaned.  
 Nor in this other seems more faith, who urges  
 Against denial to besiege the secret  
 Wherein my seal of strength and safety placed.  
 Now thrice, with blandishment and woman's  
 tears,

She hath essayed me, summoning all her wiles  
 And feminine allurements, sly assaults;  
 And thrice have refused her, thrice withstood  
 Her wordy batteries, to idle sport  
 Turning her utmost importunity.  
 By she, by all her failure undeterred,  
 Though better taught by ill successes past,  
 Surceases not to storm me day nor night  
 With her assaults, out-watched and over-worn,  
 Adjuring me by all the ties of love,  
 And ties of wedlock duty, nuptial faith,  
 Professing first my duty wanting to her  
 And her great love toward me, then threatening  
 high

To leave me, if I refuse, as more with me  
 To live no pleasure, since my passion cooled  
 And trust in her destroyed, or undermined



At least, thus nicely or thus cautiously  
 Her suit denied. Thus she assaults me sore  
 Now this fourth time, and stronger the assault—  
 But vainly, since I never will reveal,  
 Thus impiously and weakly, the strict pledge  
 And vow inviolate, wherein reposed  
 The surety of my safety and my life.

*Cho.* Wisely hast thou determined, wisely held  
 Though urged, thy bosom-purpose; since before,  
 And often, wisest men have been deceived  
 By some bad woman, once in wedlock joined,  
 Or, over-fond, reposing firm their trust,  
 Thinking no evil where no evil seemed,  
 Or holding cheap the peril of woman's power  
 To frustrate, or divert, or undermine  
 Their inmost counsels. Well hast thou once come  
 off,

Hast once escaped the toils, though to thy cost,  
 The wonder thus of many that again  
 Thou set'st thy feet so near a second snare.

*Sams.* Unduly are they moved, and for my  
 welfare

Too far concerned, who ever have left off  
 To follow, where I led them first the way  
 That guides to freedom; which they, over cau-  
 tious,

Or loving more their lives than liberty,  
 Servitude more than generous liberty—  
 Hard liberty and easy servitude—  
 Neglect, and like despise that champion raised  
 To their deliverance; whom, if he aught begin  
 They will suspect, and envy, and desert,  
 Holding my glorious actions in contempt,  
 Though destined their deliverance foretold,  
 And on my task heaping inglorious shame.  
 Yet had they, when I motioned first our freedom,  
 Joined with me then, or later as I moved,

We had long since possessed the gates of Gath,  
 And lorded over those we now obey.  
 Wherefor let them now serve, who have rejected  
 Offered assistance thrice, and be themselves  
 Sufficient to themselves, if they suffice  
 To gain their freedom scorned, since they from  
 me  
 Refused that glorious boon. For me refused  
 Means what but God refused, whose purpose high  
 Endured my strenuous might and vigor gave,  
 His counsels scorned, and him, not me, despised,  
 His covenant rejected, and those gods,  
 Whom meanly now they serve, to him preferred?  
 Just cause of wrath and their deserving sin.

*Cho.* Dark are the minds of men,  
 And darkly endued  
 Their counsels, struck insensate or depraved,  
 To wrath divine given over,  
 And by their folly drawn to their own hurt,  
 With sight internal dark,  
 When on their hapless heads,  
 Defenseless left, or struck with sense deject,  
 Surprised, bereft, amazed,  
 God visits all his might and vents his wrath  
 In tempests of fierce destruction.  
 Yet they not more instruct, but preserve  
 To evil, though God oft of favor warn  
 By prodigies and signs of portent, visioned  
 dreams,  
 Seeking to make acquainted his high purpose ;  
 Until his anger waked  
 And patience quite o'er-passed,  
 Deserted and depraved, to ill given over,  
 On ruin they strike,  
 Wrecking their vessel gloriously given from  
 above,  
 And partly their faith affect,

Haply they make not shipwreck of their lives.

Else had not been, except his counsel served,  
Those visitings of wrath, and fierce avenging  
stroke

Of servitude beneath our cruel foes,  
Nor thus our expectation fair prolonged  
With sure deliverance offered,  
Nor we so long unsuccored  
Under a hateful yoke, abject, despised,  
Though chosen once to rule  
The land where now we serve.

But we his easy government forsook,  
And, joined with idols foul,  
Provoked his righteous wrath,  
Whose instant stroke denounced, though oft de-  
layed,

Hath now o'erwhelmed ;  
Yet, pitying our sad plight  
And lost undone estate,  
Many a mighty champion oft he raised  
To our deliverance ;  
Yet we received them not, nor yet sincere  
Repented of our sin, but God contemned,  
Which more increased our shame,  
And wrought our deeper woe,  
To lowest pitch of object misery fallen.

But see ! for hither bent in haste,  
As on some purposed errand bound,  
Thy father, Manoah, comes ;  
Whose here intent, if friendly or adverse,  
The sure event will inform us.

*Man.* Samson, before and oft have I essayed  
thee,  
And urged thee hard with deeds which thou main-  
tainedst  
Not will, but strong impulsion, set thee on,  
Though to thy own undoing ; but thou didst plead

Divine permission given thee from above  
With purpose to infest our grievous foes,  
That thou might'st work Israel's deliverance,  
The task whereto thou wast ordained by Heaven.

Yet the outcome never hath approved thy plea,  
But contrary warned thee to desist those acts  
Sinful by law pronounced, and in the end  
Causing thy grief and shame, and to thy foes  
Occasion to their triumph, though thy might  
Hath changed their harm, the ruling will of  
Heaven.

Nor in thy marriage choices hath appeared  
Other; but, contrary to our law express,  
Unschool'd in prudence aught, in life unskilled  
Secure, to passion giving headlong rein,  
Thou didst espouse and wed an infidel,  
An alien to our race and thence forbid,  
Whence all thy ills have sprung and grievous  
woes;

Nor in thy second choosing hast been warned  
Aught by thy first, but joined her like, or worse,  
Whence ruin must needs ensue and still worse  
harms.

Yet came I not with purpose to upbraid thee  
For thy default and sin, rather to warn,  
Lest in thy thought sufficient some worse thing  
Some way or other yet further to annoy thee  
Might rise, and thou, not warned, careless might  
fall;

Not that I know undoubted, or have gained  
By hearsay or report, for seldom come  
Such to my ears, but, if aught presage warn,  
Or there be premonition in the mind,  
Some harm or grievous ill impends upon thee,  
Which haply thy foreknowing might prevent,  
Or, warned and thus aware, thou might'st escape.

Wilt thou, then, be advised, or, unaware,  
Continue, till at length in ruin fallen?

*Sams.* That danger may impend surprises not,  
And from what foe or source not far to learn;  
For, since my mighty acts upon our foes  
Performed, they have not ceased to seek my harm.  
But I have still escaped, have still maintained  
Entire my strength, have kept my secret whole  
And fortress safe, by oft surprisal tried  
And oft attempt. Hence admonition warns not  
Or danger or from whom it may arise.  
Yet for thy kindly interest in my welfare,  
Not often now expressed or often shown,  
Think me not so ungrateful, lost to shame,  
As not to feel some stirrings of regard  
For my behoof; though, as thou seest, not needed  
Anxiety or fear for my concern.

*Man.* Be not too careless, over-confident,  
Secure in thy own knowledge, thy own strength,  
But let another's judgment, not thy own,  
Sway, or at least assist thy purpose formed;  
For thus becomes the office of a friend,  
To warn, admonish, still reprove, though harsh  
Often reproof or admonition given;  
Yet so to avoid offence, if without harm  
May be avoided, as I doubt if now.  
For I express am come and for this purpose,  
To warn thee of this woman thou hast joined  
To be thy wife, and to admonish thee  
Of danger, if thou longer preserve  
With her to live, and not at once shall leave;  
Sorrowful, if offence by this must come  
Between us, but no less this to endure,  
Or worse, if worse there be that may arise,  
Contented only if at last I win thee  
To thy true good and welfare, as I aim.

*Sams.* Thy warning I repulse not, but receive,

For so in kindness meant, yet follow not ;  
 Since, to myself myself sufficient deemed  
 And now to proper age arrived, I yield not  
 Unduly to another, but myself  
 Regard, and follow what to me deemed right.  
 But, though thy labor useless, yet not lost,  
 Since never lost the act of kindly intent.  
 Yet that I ever will desert the wife  
 Myself have joined, and still have held endeared,  
 Still cherished, loved, esteemed, thou mayest not  
 think,  
 Since other counsel, other act, becomes  
 The virtuous husband, whom though his wife he  
 love not,  
 While faithful she remains, due right demands  
 And faith sincere constrains he should receive  
 And cherish, still should foster, nor desert,  
 But still his wife consider loved, endeared.

*Man.* Of those our law forbids not, women  
 found

Of our own tribe or nation, sentence holds ;  
 But this, of alien stock derived, adjudged  
 Uncircumcised, unclean, unceremonial,  
 Not only not enjoined, but straitly forbid,  
 To wed, or wedded cleave to, her no law  
 Commands thee still to keep, with her to live,  
 Rather forbids thee not ; no reason then  
 Why thou shouldst longer love, or with her live ;  
 The more, because thy enemy accounted  
 And sprung of heathen stock, our foe professed,  
 Warns thee the rather now to null those bonds  
 Which may, if I mistake not, work thy ruth.  
 Nor is opinion only to my cause.  
 Already she hath tried thee, tasted, sought  
 To undermine thy welfare by obtaining  
 Thy secret in her power ; and that thou  
 Was proof against her argues not the less

Her wicked act, solicitous attempt  
 To work thy ruin, nor assures that thou  
 More than thy former will refuse to her  
 The object of her importunity ;  
 Thy weakness, if may without reproach  
 Remind thee, as thou knowest, too nearly wrought  
 Thy ruin once, against my warning pled  
 When thou didst persevere and headlong join  
 That woman, who confusion to thee brought  
 And wished thy harm. Nor deem this other else,  
 Or seeking more thy good, how'er she descant  
 Of wifely duty, wifely love and faith.  
 Be warned, then, while in time thou mayest, be-  
 fore  
 The threatened ruin fall, and thou repent  
 Too late, when thou receiv'st what once thou hadst  
 scorned.

*Sams.* That thou believ'st some danger threat-  
 ens near

I well can think, yet cannot all receive  
 What thou so main hast urged, or false or fond  
 The woman I have joined to be my wife ;  
 For, though thy reasons from our law hold good  
 And capable in ordinary, yet here,  
 Where God hath prompted, urged the act express,  
 With purpose to redeem his chosen people  
 From servitude, they argue not my sin,  
 Thus with the uncircumcised in wedlock joined,  
 Nor urging to invalidate or null  
 The bonds of spousal faith conjoined, though here  
 With one of race by law forbid, nor lastly  
 So to desert, on nothing proved thus grounding  
 Some faint suspicion had of ill or harm  
 Offered by whom such first from me prevented.  
 But grant thy reasons good, and that to me  
 Danger impends, if I reveal the secret  
 Wherein my safety placed and life secure ;

No peril yet impends, while I hold fast  
 My fixed determination not to yield,  
 Not to divulge by word or motioned act,  
 Nor by expression aught betray, thus fond,  
 The fortress of my silence to a woman,  
 Wherein my safety garrisoned and life.  
 And this thou mayest with more assurance have,  
 Because I, once essayed, escaped the snare,  
 Which warns me, and the warning well received,  
 Never to trust nor to another give,  
 Although my wife sincere and true accounted,  
 What by myself best known. Herein if I  
 Persist, what danger or what harm can threat  
 While I remain but faithful to myself?

*Man.* I praise thy resolution, while I fear  
 Thy former weakness to the mastering charms  
 Of powerful beauty. Virtue is safest untried,  
 But liable to fall, proudly secure ;  
 Nor loses aught her worth, if but discretion,  
 Her best ally, she grapple and hold fast—  
 For to avoid is better than escape  
 The danger, and the more assurance gives  
 Of safety, valorous, yet found discreet—  
 But entered in the toils, and once entangled,  
 Finds hard escape. Nor canst thou, once em-  
     broiled,  
 Gain hope or respite that thy nation roused  
 To thy deliverance will afford thee aid,  
 The less, that, when thou stood'st in height of  
     fame,  
 Full of magnanimous instincts, high thoughts,  
 After some acts of proof indeed heroic  
 And favor shown upon thy ways by Heaven,  
 Thence by such proof and favor shown impeled  
 To work thy country's freedom, they the sooner,  
 Or false, or over-fond, or impotent,  
 Resigned thee to thy foes, who had demanded



The satisfaction of thy life for deeds  
Which thou by express appointment hadst performed

For their behoof who traitorously yielded  
Thee to those cruel enemies provoked  
By those same acts which rightly viewed had wrought

Allies to aid thy task enjoined from Heaven.  
Then since thou for thy own behoof must stand  
Sufficient to thyself, and of thy own  
Live to thyself, the livelier reason bids  
That caution thou conjoin with hardihood,  
Lest unawares thou work thyself much harm  
By weak dependence placed where none is found.  
Nor this alone. Thy mission high asserted,  
To wrest thy nation from Philistine yoke,  
Delayed or quite forgot, thou long forgoest,  
Since long indeed the time thy last assault  
Humbled their high-built pride, and dashed their hope

To frustrate, or destroy, or render naught  
That mighty strength on the endued from Heaven—

To other purpose given and other end  
Than to sit weakly on the household hearth  
In luxury and slothfulness and ease,  
Thus vassal to a woman, in the toils  
Of amorous snare, the wonder and reproach  
Of all thy kindred, all thy nation slaved,  
Whom thou wast sent expressly to redeem,  
And to thy foes contemned a gaze and scorn.  
Whence some have fallen away to our dread lords  
And joined their worship foul, by thee seduced  
And bad example drawn, thus diffident  
Leaving their Living Strength, enough before  
Given to waver and fall off to idols.

*Sams.* Whole to myself I well can live, nor  
 ask,  
 Nor need, their godless aid who have rejected,  
 More traitorously than I, that covenant  
 Between Jehovah joined and Israel's sons,  
 Expressly joined. Nor shall I sorrow aught,  
 Nor aught repine or dread, if I shall live  
 Sufficient from my own, and from myself  
 Draw my own strength, sufficient while I keep  
 My vow inviolate and locks unshorn.  
 Nor have I held my mission light, despised ;  
 But thrice our heads and governors of tribes  
 Have slighted, or neglected, or opposed  
 My high attempts to break the cruel yoke  
 Under which now they chafe, forgetful thus  
 That those who aim at freedom and essay  
 Deliverance from a hated servitude  
 Themselves must first their inward freedom work,  
 Before their outward liberty attained.  
 Hence they deserve naught else but to obey  
 With painful servitude those cruel lords  
 Who have enslaved them, since themselves not  
 free,  
 But slaves to passion, hate, mistrust, and guile.  
 Nor would it much avail, should I again  
 Move aught upon our foes to their deliverance,  
 Thrice in event so proving, justly held  
 The shame and deep reproach of all our nation,  
 Though theirs the fault, not mine, since they re-  
 fused  
 Ungratefully the gift to them designed.

*Man.* I am sorry what this resolution cost thee.

*Sams.* Perhaps to others cause of sorrow also.

*Man.* Wouldst thou then still maintain as now  
 determined ?

*Sams.* No less than if by God himself enjoined.

*Man.* Regard thyself; this may work near thy ruin.

*Sams.* Yet so I preserve, nor aught abate.

*Man.* I cannot praise thy purpose, though I admire

What strict determination hath impelled thee  
And held thee firm; nor deem me yet offended,  
Or hurt by thy refusal, nor let rise  
Occasion of quarrel, which would but more defeat

My end, to work thy good and welfare best,  
The purpose and wished aim that still I seek.

*Sams.* Mistake not, friends, if strictly I refuse

The object of such importunity,  
Though moved toward me in all sincere intent,  
Nor yield, though by solicitation urged  
And father's asking, since in this myself,  
And not another, must of right determine  
What for my own best welfare deemed and good.  
Nor should I, as of age accountable  
And ripened of experience, to another  
Give o'er the reins of rule, as to myself  
Not trusting aught, or easily thus moved,  
But casting so right reason from her office,  
Distrusting or not countenancing her due;  
Thence weak, and of her exercise deprived,  
Unable to determine or deter,  
If aught of moment rise to be resolved,  
When on herself depending. I should so  
Myself work my own harm, and be myself  
The cause of my own ruin, thus unwares  
Bereft of reason's aid, unapt, unfit,  
Unprompted aught of merit or of praise;  
Which would be to determine my own fall,  
Too easily swayed, or without reason drawn  
From my own counsel, what concerns me most,

And on my mission bring utmost contempt.

*Cho.* I cannot praise thy resolution, Samson,  
Yet neither blame, both praise and blame must  
mix.

For counsel, though well-meaning, hath wrought  
harm,

If over-trusted, nor sufficient weighed ;

Yet, contrary, some, too stiff in self-opinion,

Or seeing not their good, by passion blinded,

Or thinking them sufficient to themselves,

Led on by vanity and high ambition,

Rocks on which men perhaps have ofttest wrecked,

Wrought sooner their own ruin, unaware,

Proudly secure of self, unthought to fall.

But thou of self take counsel, and determine

What best may serve thy end, that thou, at least,

Have but thyself to censure or reproach,

If the outcome answer not thy purposed thought.

*Sams.* At least no blame on other could at-  
tach,

And I pretend surprisal, unforewarned,

Or led on by false light of erring counsel

Until in ruin dashed—far from my thought.

For never would the woman I have joined

Desire or seek my harm, however urged,

Or with what strong persuasion hard assailed ;

And in this seeking purposes but to hold me

More to herself endeared, to her secure,

Fearing, perhaps, lest one day I should leave

As once at Timna, counseling only then

To keep me safe, whole to herself and love ;

Though yet to her I will not weakly yield

What nearly to my safe concern pertains,

Lest, unawares, or in some evil moment

Strongly assailed, she may as weakly yield.

But other purpose moves me importuned

By thoughts which late my father had let fall—

Not weakly to lie idle, and thence scorned,  
 Contemned, despised, but, once more recollecting  
 That mission high enjoined, with summoned  
 might

But sudden act or onset to surprise  
 Israel's oppressors, and from them to wrest  
 Entire our freedom, since long time secure  
 From inroad, careless grown, indifferent,  
 Esteeming me their vassal or ally,  
 Unwilling, or not heartened to such task,  
 So long at ease sojourning in their land  
 And by the ties of wedlock indisposed  
 To aim at hostile acts or work their harm—  
 Good reason, then, if unaware surprised  
 And faint, unfortified by warning fear,  
 I upon them some sudden act determine  
 That may complete secure deliverance.  
 This would revenge, indeed, and close the mouths  
 Of those who cease not to forewarn destruction,  
 If I persist in what I have allied,  
 This wedlock, and compel perforce their praise,  
 Who only ruin forbode and blame foretell—  
 Reason well to induce at least the trial.

*Cho.* Thy purpose still approves thy wisdom,  
 Samson,

Thus to determine; for I oft have heard  
 Men wonder that thou didst not quite complete  
 Thy task, from Heaven pretended, whose right  
 proof

Not argument or idle talk affords,  
 But to assure thy boast, make good thy plea,  
 By freedom entire wrought. If this be done,  
 And thou by proof approve thy mission high,  
 No longer will they waste in idle breath,  
 But, silent and confuted, own thy right  
 By silence, nor yet longer thee annoy,  
 Pretending falsely assumed thy task preferred,

Or blame thee arrogant and over-proud.

*Sams.* I long had meditated and before  
 Determined on this task, nor to myself  
 Attach the blame deferred; but our due lords,  
 Ill-meaning, politic, neglected still,  
 Despised, mistrusted, hated, to our foes  
 Gave me a welcome prey, nor cared in aught  
 Whether that act should end me or should spare,  
 But sacrificed me for their welfare deemed,  
 Unmindful of their future state, preferring  
 Hard servitude to easy liberty.  
 Nor do they now, although their judge ordained,  
 Respect me, serve me, cherish and assist me,  
 By their free sufferance in this office placed.  
 But I too long have wavered, and kept back  
 From this my glorious mission, held by thoughts  
 That nulled my purpose; since, though they found  
     slack,  
 Effeminate, idle, obligation holds  
 Upon me still to work my mighty task,  
 While still this strength remains, the surety giv-  
     en,  
 Garrisoned in my hair inviolate,  
 Nor should the gift of God lie useless thus.

*Cho.* With cause this resolution, since avered  
 By some that, in despite those high attempts  
 To break our yoke, freedom no nearer gained,  
 No nearer wrought thy task assumed from Heav-  
     en,  
 Since Israel still serves with servitude.  
 Yet other reasons to this act induce,  
 And well according purpose held. Perhaps  
 This gifted might remains no more, unused,  
 As like despised, disdained, contemned and  
     scorned.  
 The glorious faculties that Heaven endues,  
 Neglected, or but slackly exercised,

Are suffered not to waste in idle sloth,  
 But taken to assure them not our own,  
 Thus lent of Heaven, that strict account requires;  
 The more inducement, then, to this high task,  
 Before too late, and vainly thence, essayed.  
 Yet not upon thy single strength attempted  
 So dangerous enterprise, as on one act  
 Casting the hazard, thence repulsed, defeated  
 Our hope entire and end; but to thyself  
 Some strength sufficient join and aid, who, under  
 Thy conduct, will insure total success,  
 And quite redeem our yoke, the aim designed.

*Sams.* Thy reason is not unfounded, but must  
 fail

Of purpose, that I should with others' aid  
 Prosecute thus my lofty task determined;  
 For, as my counsel no auxiliar needed  
 Although by father's asking wrought and fears,  
 So also not my strength, judged in itself  
 Sufficient to whatever task; superfluous  
 Either by wiles to work, or to itself  
 Conjoin assistance; whereof soon good proof  
 This selfsame day affords, since I no longer  
 Will vouchsafe to delay, already now  
 Too long delaying, but will prosecute  
 This mission, so that all who hear may own  
 My courage yet undamped, nor strength impaired.  
 Farewell, then; and of me expect to hear  
 Nothing unworthy, unvalorous, impure,  
 But such as may become our God and Law,  
 Beseeming both my nation and myself.

*Cho.* O glorious gift of strength and match-  
 less might

By will of Heaven endued  
 To our foretold deliverance!  
 As God's prevailing counsel oft decreed  
 And wisdom high ordained

His strenuous champions raised  
 To work his mighty purpose,  
 With heavenly vigor adorned  
 And plain celestial virtue armed,  
 When they his purposed wrath have visited  
 Upon his hapless foes,  
 Who, reft of strength, distracted and surprised,  
 Upon ruin have struck,  
 Insensate, spiritless, despairing, fallen.

Which had our promised freedom long secured  
 And reft our captive yoke,  
 Abject, unworthy, vile;  
 But them our father owned not, nor received,  
 Although those mighty acts  
 Attested well their mission high imposed  
 And task divine asserted,  
 To set his people free;  
 And, these despised, with justice high incensed  
 His favor God withdrew  
 And turned his holy eyes,  
 Visiting thence upon their scorn  
 The wrath reserved and destined for their foes—  
 Just punishment inflicted,  
 And their deserving sin,  
 Ungratefully who had received  
 His champions high ordained,  
 Yet more ungrateful left,  
 Despised, contemned, deserted,  
 Visiting all contempt upon their deeds.

Which task his favor high hath thee appointed,  
 Samson, by merit approved  
 Strongest of mortal men,  
 With heavenly vigor thus endued  
 And celestial virtue armed  
 To break thy nation's cruel foes,  
 Thy mission high asserted  
 And work by Heaven imposed,



Except some evil chance, or thy weak sin,  
That might thy strength o'ercome, or virtue im-  
pair

Insensibly, thence struck with sense depraved,  
Draw thee aside, defeating his high purpose.

So let not like mischance befall thee, Samson,  
With wondrous might endued above the sons of  
men;

Rather may God regard those mighty deeds,  
The surety of thy mission high enjoined  
And pledge of task imposed,  
Already now in part achieved,  
With hopeful recompense  
Turning thy labors to successful end.

But softly, for behold where yonder comes  
Some Philistine woman, as I guess,  
So by her habit deemed;  
And now, on nearer view, no other known  
Than Dalila, his wife.

*Dal.* My coming, friends, was not to pry, or  
gain  
Some notice of your doings or your words,  
Of unforeseen approach thus unaware,  
If haply I might learn, but to obtain  
Some tidings of my husband, parted late  
From me, and busied in converse with you,  
For so from some I had; yet here not found  
My hopeful search. Say, therefore, where to  
seek,

*Cho.* But late with us he stood, yet now is  
parted,  
Bound on some purpose that concerned him near-  
ly,  
For so to us but lately he vouchsafed;  
Whereof much wonder is if thus to thee  
Imparted not, or not to the revealed  
What might suffice thy knowledge, since his wife

Esteemed gave thee some title to have known  
 His doings, though perhaps his soon departure  
 May have prevented him determined thus.

*Dal.* Doubtless; though yet of late he gives no  
 care

For my behest, not much concerns himself  
 In my behoof or comfort, since from me  
 He long withholds a secret I have still  
 Endeavored, but in vain; though, if he grant,  
 Not less to him my love, but only more  
 Assured, and firmlier fixed my faith. Yet he  
 Delays me, still refuses, puts me off,  
 One while pretending to have plain revealed,  
 Yet found on trial false; again, implored,  
 With like pretence deceiving, so that I  
 Am vexed, thus made a fool and still o'erborne.  
 Thrice have I thus assailed him, thrice have  
 sought

To win from him the secret that he guards;  
 And thrice he hath deluded, thrice denied,  
 Turning to sport my importunity.  
 Again, now this fourth time, have I besieged  
 His secret, but thus far with like success,  
 Unhoping, but still stubborn to succeed;  
 Since never can I cease or quiet rest  
 Until this final hindrance that remains  
 Between us, and divorces our close union,  
 Give way, and nothing still divide our love.  
 For betwixt faith of wedded man and wife  
 Of right no secret stands, or, standing, breeds  
 Mistrust, at least, suspicion, if not hate,  
 And wrecks all happiness, and peace confounds.  
 But ye perhaps have learned, by knowledge  
 gained

Or some relation heard, and can reveal  
 The secret I have sought, approving thus  
 Your friendly mind to him, and like to me

Imparting on what most my peace depends.

*Cho.* Neither his leave we have, nor deem it right,

Thus to reveal what by him closely guarded,

His bosom-secret held and purpose fixed—

Thus by revealing only to divide

And more the rupture widen, now enough

Divided, as thou deem'st, which could but worsen

What gladly thou wouldst better; so insure

To us his wrath, and thou no richer left,

But poorer, by his anger thus obtained.

Good reason then to give thy seeking o'er,

And rest contented, if not satisfied,

With what thou hast, his love to thee assured

And faith maintained, nor lose by seeking all.

*Dal.* Is not some way or other to move this mind?

*Cho.* We still are firm and fixed in our dissent.

*Dal.* Bethink yourselves; this may give high offence.

*Cho.* Yet with like resolution still maintained.

*Dal.* I am sorry if this mind work near your ruin.

*Cho.* Think not to move us aught, or daunt by threats

Idle, as thou preceivest, or to thyself

More danger holding; since toward thee his wrath

Aroused and anger waked, if thou shouldst force

Against his will the secret he so guards,

Nor will reveal. Hence double rage expect,

If thou through treachery, or craft, or guile,

Win from another what from him thou couldst not,

Just cause to him of anger not to pass.

*Dal.* I thought to have gained the secret, and  
 am purposed  
 Still to possess, not out of levity  
 Inquisitive, with curiosity  
 As over-powered, but only to remove  
 The great desire I have more to insure  
 And fix his moving fancy, not enough  
 Secure to my regard, as now I deem.  
 For I cannot endure longer to live  
 With him, and not possess him all my own ;  
 Either must leave, or, better lot, secure  
 His secret by whatever means, not caring  
 Much what may happen, if success assure not  
 His heart entire to me and faith secure  
 Unalterably fixed, so much I feel  
 The bond of nature draw me, soul to soul,  
 That we must be one heart, one flesh, one mind ;  
 To be without him were to lack myself.

*Cho.* Consider, if his wrath awake, and thou  
 Draw thy own ruin, persevering thus.

*Dal.* Yet that could not dissuade, nor daunt  
 me aught,  
 So fixed to gain my purpose sought I feel,  
 So bent upon success, determined, steadfast,  
 Fearing not death, nor aught than death more  
 dread,

So only I secure him to myself  
 Entire, nor thus divided share his love,  
 The purpose and fixed aim that now I seek.

*Cho.* Wise, who hath well conjoined  
 His lot in nuptial choice,  
 Not meekly drawn aside by beauty's snare,  
 Nor to frail passion yielding  
 Wisdom's chief sway and sovereign place as-  
 signed ;

But who hath well determined, chosen well  
 A virtuous choice in woman, that combines

Domestic care with virtue, chiefest good  
In woman found, assuring  
Happy that house, his path to virtue smooth.

If otherwise he choose, or other choice,  
Or comeliness of form, or beauty's shape,  
Pleasing to the eye and lovely,  
Of outside fair,  
But the inward show deformed, abhorred, and  
vile,

To passion weakly yielding reason's sway,  
By wisdom unapproved,  
Him shall no pleasure find, once joined  
In nuptials hateful, to a hateful bride  
Fast linked and wedlock bound,  
Adverse to virtue,  
Turbulent and loud,  
His shame and sharp reproach, an inward thorn  
Too late perceived, thus by her charms ensnared  
And drawn to folly,  
Or wrought to sense reprov'd,  
Or dotage, which in ruin surest ends.

But her whom reason and desire conjoined  
Approves, with all perfections fair adorned  
And heavenly virtue armed,  
Modest and meek, demure,  
Yet so with goodness principled,  
That neither weak suggestion from within  
Nor from without temptation frail o'ercomes,  
Happy indeed pronounced, who thus hath found  
One virtuous that conjoins  
Domestic good, and highly favored held  
Of Heaven indeed who thus secures ;  
For she will do him evil not, but good,  
All the days of her life.

But see! for hither bent in haste,  
Though parted late as not with soon return,  
Old Manoah comes ;

Supposing here perhaps to find his son,  
Or of his welfare bringing else some news.

*Man.* My purpose, friends, is not, as first, to  
urge

My son on presage only to beware  
The woman joined his wife, mere premonition  
Unwarranted by likelihood or proof,  
But to impart more valid argument,  
Reasons more sound adduce, if haply thus  
I might prevail upon him to forego  
His purpose fixed, and danger to avoid,  
While yet in time. But him I see not here.

*Cho.* But late he was, yet now is parted hence,  
Bound on some purpose difficult and uncouth,  
Yet not to us displeasing or averse.  
For, after thy departure, something moved  
His mind, and purpose altered, held so fixed  
Before and different, that put him on  
Some desperate adventure to relieve  
Our ills, and our entire deliverance work;  
Haply by this, on high emprise drawn forth  
Thus from the snare, he hath escaped the toils  
Of that bad woman, who so clearly purposed  
His ruin, and to seeming near had wrought,  
Importune, curious, inquisitive  
To know his secret, where his vigor summed  
And mighty hidden strength, no reason known  
Why she should wish, except to work his harm,  
As oft before attempting; whence if foiled,  
Perhaps some overt act she may presume,  
Something too open try, that clear may warn him,  
Infatuate, blind, and captive to her will.  
This would be joy indeed, and valid cause  
For gratitude, our gratitude as his;  
Since, thus entangled in her snare, he cannot  
Hearten him wholly to his task, but wastes  
In idle ease those mighty powers endued

To our deliverance; thence from this achieved  
 Perhaps his gifted strength again to act,  
 Not captive in the toils and hence withheld.

*Man.* Thy hopes are not ungrateful, and thy  
 fears

For what of harm might happen well accord  
 With that I late received; for, as I passed  
 Homeward in haste, with fruitless task deject,  
 I marked where lay in hidden close recess  
 Some of our foes, not singly, as disjoined  
 In purpose, but combined upon some task  
 Whose object and intent not clearly gained,  
 Yet could be what than aught upon my son,  
 Their hated foe, on whom not yet revenged  
 Their injuries inflicted at his hand?  
 This sight it is hath moved me to return,  
 Although my first repulse not kindly worn,  
 But argue like event, if I persist  
 A second time, after refusal offered,  
 And make attempt, at least, to put him on  
 The lurking danger, though, from your report,  
 Not to be dreaded now, since his departure,  
 If so accomplished, hath removed him safe  
 From what might undermine him and destroy;  
 If so indeed departed, and not lingered  
 On some pretext or other by this woman,  
 Who never hath left off to seek his harm;  
 I fear, unwilling, still some dread event.

*Servant.* O friends, that here now stand, at-  
 tend my news.

The Philistines, but late in ambush laid,  
 Within the house now hide, to what intent  
 Unknown, though not unguessed, foreboding ill  
 To Samson feared; whose place, alike unknown,  
 But more distrust excites of what may chance  
 From them, if he unwares return within,  
 Or, he not parted, what yet worse ensues

To him unwarned; for such my fears infer  
Of them his ruin seeking still to wreak.

*Cho.* Thy fears I also share; and well could  
wish

He were departed quite, ere unaware  
Caught in assassination's wily net,  
Since they no less on him, should chance occur,  
Would venture, as their oft attempt assures.  
For what thou hast related brings to mind,  
When late his wife stood present, how she sought  
To gain his careful secret, and on us  
Presumed her wiles, if haply she might gain.  
But we refused her, fearing what might fall  
From bad compliance. Yet, if he have gained  
not

The danger where he stands, nor parted yet,  
It would be, on our part, received but friendly  
To warn, if so perchance he win escape.  
And time not much permits, if warned in time  
Intending, since so long he parted hence  
Permits their trial. What cry was that within?

*Man.* Perhaps his foemen shouting to behold  
Their mighty dread, unbound and armed upon  
them,  
Whom they had thought to seize; yet now, ar-  
rived

Among his enemies, dealing dreadful dole  
And over slaughterous heaps walking his way.  
Again! again! more loud! What should it be?

*Cho.* That shout was not of fear, but rather tri-  
umph,  
Nor of one voice, but many. What it bodes  
I dread to think.

*Man.* Ruin is in that noise,  
And dread destruction, whose the time yet gives  
not.

Some danger, sure, impends. How should we do?



Best keep together here, or go and seek?

*Cho.* I know not how to counsel, thus with fears

Assailed, that reason null. But long remains not  
Our doubt, since hither speeding to our wish  
One by his mien and act hath left but late  
The scene of horror; whom I may not wish  
To hear, nor yet refuse the tidings brought,  
Though dreading much to learn complete relation,  
An Ebrew, of our tribe, if I may guess,  
Which some assures to us no present danger.

*Messenger.* O miserable to see, the sight I saw,  
That drove me, filled with terror and with dread  
Of like destruction, from that horrid place  
And sight more horrid still, which yet I see,  
By fancy or imagination fixed  
Still on my mind confused, though loathing much;  
Yet not thus, but that reason, scarce consulted,  
Or chance, or instinct, though divined not how,  
Hath brought me to this place, where now I find  
Thee, Manoah, and ye, my countrymen,  
Too much, alas, in the like woe concerned.

*Man.* Thy news would much relieve us to partake,  
Since apprehension shows more dark than knowledge.

Set forth, then, what thou hast, while we attend.

*Mess.* Ah, friends, if truly said what late I saw,  
I fear lest evil tiding pierce too deep.

*Man.* Suspense in news more tortures than relation;

Delay no more thy tidings; speak them out.

*Mess.* Take, then, what to my horror I have gained,  
And well could wish not known, so dire the tale,  
Told only that your knowledge may suffice.

Due service had compeled my here attendance  
Within this house, where long time I endured  
To see what chanced, and suffered much to see ;  
But duty to my master held me faithful,  
Though marveling much his patience thus could  
bear

And hold out firm against the constant siege  
That sore assaulted. For, as well ye know,  
His wife hath rested not by day or night  
To vex him, harass, press him, urge him hard  
To yield to her the secret he so keeps  
Wherein his safety placed and strength contained.  
But he hath still withstood her, still put off,  
(Would that he had till now—fond wish, alas !)  
Still borne her irksome importunity.  
The wonder still of all, so much endured.  
But this day she hath urged him hard, and pressed  
him

To weariness, with blandishments and cries  
Hath stormed him sore, till he at length, out-worn,  
Weary and over-watched, out-harassed, vexed,  
Yielding at last to words and woman's tears,  
Opened her all his heart and gave her will ;  
That he, whom not their whole united force,  
In camp, or listed field, or ambuscade,  
Could vanquish and o'ercome, hath weakly now  
Given up his key of silence to a woman ;  
Who well hath recompensed, hath well returned  
His trust in her reposed. For when she knew  
His secret sure revealed, and now perceived,  
Accordant to her wish, that he was laid,  
Weary and over-watched, out-worn and toiled,  
Asleep secure of harm, she hastened then,  
Forgetful of her solemn faith engaged,  
And shore those mighty locks wherein contained  
The surety of his strength ; then called his foes,  
And to them gave him up, a welcome prey,

Shorn of his mighty strength, afflicted, fallen,  
Disprized, dishonored, shamed, discovered thus  
Naked and disarmed among his enemies.  
Yet when he heard her cries, and saw his foes,  
He wist not of his might departed him,  
But as before assayed, and rising stood  
Like a wild beast, whom hounds and huntsmen  
rouse,

And galling darts; then, as the foremost came  
Incautious, caught and raised him high in air,  
And dashed him down to death; like measure  
found

The second, coming; but at length, o'er-borne  
By numbers, that each moment thicker grew,  
Surroundsd by his foes mistrustful still  
And fearful of his strength, departing now,  
Though still endeavoring, struggling to make  
head,

But now with less and still less hostile force,  
They seized upon him—head, or limbs, or arms,  
What part where each might chance, binding him  
fast;

Then put out both his eyes, and fettered held him,  
That he no more should use that mighty strength,  
Thus captive, poor, and blind, of sight bereft,  
Their danger once and dread, to work their harm.  
What further hath befallen him I have gained  
not;

But that I have related true, behold him  
Where yonder now he stands, and this his state,  
Shaven and despoiled before his enemies.

*Man.* O sight detested! sight of grief and  
shame!

Thy nation's glory late and nation's boast,  
Now snared, assaulted, captive, and betrayed,  
Of all thy wonted vigor thus deprived,  
Naked and disarmed among thy enemies!

How wilt thou now thy nation serve, how work  
 That glorious mission trusted from above?  
 How rather curse that fatal weakness, curse  
 Thy yielding, that hath left thee, sight bereft,  
 Ridiculous, shamed, broken, miserable!  
 But peace! for without added burden joined  
 Heavy enough imposed, and deep the smart,  
 Nor needs from me, whose office better found  
 To lighten of thy load, and ease thy pains.

*Cho.* O miserable hope! is this the man,  
 That mighty Samson far renowned  
 The fear of Caphtor's sons,  
 Famous and blazed his nation's boast and glory,  
 Whose matchless fortitude  
 And wondrous might bestowed  
 No banded strength opposed of man, or fiercest  
 beast,  
 Could chasten or subdue?  
 Yet now, incapable and vain,  
 Bereft, captived, betrayed,  
 The gaze and scorn of those same cruel foes  
 Whose might he was ordained to quell,  
 Thus miserable, assaulted, snared, and blind!

*Sams.* Alas, from what high hopes and lofty  
 thoughts  
 Conceived unlooked for fallen? Was it for this  
 The angel twice descended  
 With solemn word declared  
 And sacred task bestowed,  
 To work my land's deliverance foretold,  
 And thus divinely set  
 As by attest of Heaven?

Yet now assaulted, captive, poor, and blind,  
 Made of mine enemies the mock and gaze,  
 A shame and deep reproach  
 To all my friends and kindred,  
 My eyes put out, and, that high strength bereaved

Foretold to our deliverance,  
 Reserved to be repeated  
 Their cruelty and scorn,  
 Deserted thus by him who had ordained  
 My strength and wondrous force!

What then availed that favor high pronounced  
 Of wondrous strength and mighty force endued,  
 If, when he gave me these,  
 God wisdom left disjoined,  
 Or ill proportioned gave, not balanced just  
 To immeasurable might;  
 But left on me that burdenous work imposed,  
 The source of all my evils, pains, and wrongs,  
 Who glad would life forego, too heavy weight  
 Under such task assigned, and gladlier death  
 Invoke, as my chief good and final end?  
 Wherefore let God now also take my life,  
 Sight vilely thus bereft,  
 The worst indignity that could befall,  
 And most to me, his minister ordained,  
 Yet without hope remaining.

*Cho.* Just are the ways of God,  
 And justly ordained  
 His purposes, though darkened oft by doubt  
 What Heavenly disposition may allot  
 And right decree ordain;  
 So oft to men appearing  
 Partial his judgments high, condemned perverse,  
 To the erring indulgent,  
 Afflictive to the just,  
 Yet in the end approved, when clearly seen  
 The aim of justice triumphant.

But to the afflicted, bowed beneath the stroke  
 Of punishment, no consolation seems,  
 Or solace to his pains,  
 Though justly found afflicted,  
 Nor penance slackly urged,

Of hope bereaved, of mercy,  
 To despair given over  
 With fainting spirits depressed.  
 Yet thus, perhaps, God's counsel high fulfilled  
 And purpose best ordained,  
 Allotted justly so his punishment,  
 Whose fierce, avenging stroke, though long de-  
     layed,  
 Yet fallen at length, approves his justice sure,  
 Nor to his enemies occasion leaves  
 To murmur, or to chide him, or upbraid,  
 Since on his chosen, as on them, assigned,  
 If they be erring found,  
 Like punishment allotted,  
 And both alike brought to like evil end.

    Which on thee, Samson, now at length hath  
     come,  
 In over-weening thought  
 Perhaps and pride secure  
 Unmindful thus of harm that might befall;  
 Either too insecure with thought sufficient  
 Of strength on thee bestowed,  
 Or else too far presuming  
 The suffrance high of God,  
 Which, too for tried, hath cast thee,  
 Blind, naked, miserable,  
 Off to those cruel enemies provoked  
 By his appointment,  
 But through thy weak offense  
 Suffered at last to work thy ruin,  
 Bitter mischance and hard, yet not unearned.

    But yonder, since those eyes no more perceive,  
 Deprived their visual ray,  
 The occasion of thy woes; and now toward us  
 Holding her steps, thy wife, Dalila, comes.

*Sams.* My wife? my viper and accursed hate!

*Dal.* Be not offended, Samson, if I come

With hopes of thy relief, though sorrowing much  
At this thy lot untoward and captive state  
Undone, blind, poor, and lonely, yet still purposed  
To give what aid remains to thy offense,  
This loss of sight, which ne'er I would have  
wrought,

Had I foreseen the sad event derived ;  
But now too late perceived prevents to spare  
What thou hast dearly lost, my grief as thine ;  
Yet not refused thy pardon, that my service,  
Which gladly shall attend thy life, may make  
Some small amends for what I have misdone,  
Not so intending, since I other deemed  
The end. Thy hurtful loss my purpose holds  
In part to null at least, if not entire,  
By loving tendance visited upon thee,  
The service of my life and willing offered,  
If by this means some slight redress secured  
To thee, my consolation sole and hope.

*Sams.* Let her approach and touch my hand  
for pardon.

Would I had caught thee, as I had designed  
And purposed, but this loss of eyes prevented,  
And these slow chains unused that thus retard !  
I would have torn the lingering joint by joint,  
That thou no more shouldst flatter and deceive,  
Or work my further ruin, now enough  
By thy false practise ruined, fittest end  
Of thee and of thy fraud, that hath accomplished  
The ruin of my mission and my hopes,  
Caused my offence to God, and weakly left me,  
At times when men went most in vigor found,  
Slight, miserable, disarmed, betrayed, captived,  
Of all my wonted strength bereft, sight lost,  
Dishonored, poor, and blind, disprized, dispoiled,  
Naked and ashamed among my enemies.  
Reason enough, if I refuse to love thee,

But rather leave, nor more avow my wife,  
 As I had long, but some blind chance withheld me  
 Against example warned and those who sought  
 My good, but I refused; whence now I marvel  
 Or greater what weak, folly hath betrayed me  
 And wrecked my hopes, or this unwifely hate  
 Of thine, that wrought with greed of gold surren-  
       dered

Basely my secret given wherein contained  
 My hopes and mission—hopes, alas, how vain,  
 And mission how defeated, since by me  
 As basely and as impiously delivered  
 Up to a faithless woman (O what weakness!)  
 The secret of my safety and my life!

*Dal.* Since thou hast so determined, I shall not  
 Again assay thy wrath that wrought so near  
 My fierce destruction, but I, wariar found  
 Than thou, or better seeing, since to me  
 The clearer sight, escaped the danger feared,  
 Knowing thee, as I do, and thy blind anger;  
 But rest me satisfied with what performed,  
 Which shall, doubt not, assure my future safe,  
 Thus grateful to my nation and our lords,  
 Whom I o'er thee have chosen, nor repent  
 The choice, my country's faith preferred to thine.  
 But now, if I mistake not, thou must go  
 To Gaza, in our prison-house to grind  
 With slaves and asses, thy adjudged compeers,  
 For so thy wisdom hath approved, incautious,  
 Infatuate, rash, impetuous, blind, where thou  
 Shalt other mission find and other task,  
 More suited to thy state, to exercise  
 That vaunted strength, than to destroy our land  
 With ravage; whence shall be my greatest boast  
 Singly to have o'ercome that fierce destroyer,  
 And in an hour, whom not my nation banded  
 In years entire could vanquish and o'ercome,



And though thy favor I have lost, and love,  
 Yet I have gained, what I much more esteem,  
 The favor of my kindred and my nation  
 To recompense my zeal for duty shown.  
 Whether this like thee then, or like thee not,  
 I to my lot will cleave, and thou to thine.

*Cho.* Have comfort, Samson; yet thy friends  
 thou hast,  
 And kindred yet remain, who may perhaps  
 Work out thy ransom and redeem thee quite  
 Forth from their loathsome prison-house confined,  
 Though there intended now to woe and pain ;  
 Or else thy might, returning with thy hair,  
 Garrisoning thy shoulders yet again,  
 May of thyself enable thy deliverance,  
 Nor frustrate thus thy lofty mission found ;  
 Which would be joy indeed and well revenge.

*Sams.* Yet otherwise to me my lot portends ;  
 God's favor thus withdrawn and eyesight lost,  
 This light of life continues not for long,  
 Since the other light bereft, nor do I wish,  
 Rather implore for death, which my own hands  
 Would visit on myself, were they but free,  
 Their kindest office deemed and chiefest service,  
 Hastening thus the cure of all my pains.

*Man.* Deject not thus thyself, nor, over-strict,  
 Exact thus from thyself the penal forfeit ;  
 For God may yet, if by sincere repentance  
 Appeased, quit thee his claim and quite relent ;  
 From whom consider that thou hadst this  
 strength,  
 Which, though now lost, may yet again return  
 With eyesight, if he will who all things can ;  
 And since thy appointed task not yet performed,  
 He may renew thy might, and cause again  
 The light within thy eyes—else why thus spared  
 Thy life, which he as well had thee deprived,

Had not his purpose still prevailed, and held  
 In some great service or other yet to use thee?  
 Cast then not thus away thy hope entire,  
 Nor God reject, who may again receive thee,  
 By true repentance and sincere assaying  
 Restored to favor by his suffrance thus,  
 That thou mayest serve him better than thou hast.  
 Thy life continues in thee not for naught,  
 Nor shall thy mission high be thus frustrate.

*Sams.* Thy words are not unkindly, and accord

With that high suffrance which hath long endured  
 May weak presumptuous sin, that hath delayed  
 The task on me imposed, and last defeated;  
 But me they little ease afford and hope,  
 Since not myself perhaps alone must bear  
 The heavy burden of my fault, but others  
 Also perhaps in the like ruin joined.  
 What if with me in chains a father dragged,  
 And countrymen, companions to my fall,  
 Innocent of my sin, yet drawn to waste  
 Their years entire, confined to woe and pain?  
 This would be woe indeed, and worse afflict  
 Than what already felt, or might befall,  
 And well would merit fiercest curses heaped  
 Upon my head, as cause of all their harm;  
 Just reason, if their hate against me hold.

*Officer.* Be of more courage, Samson, nor de-  
 ject

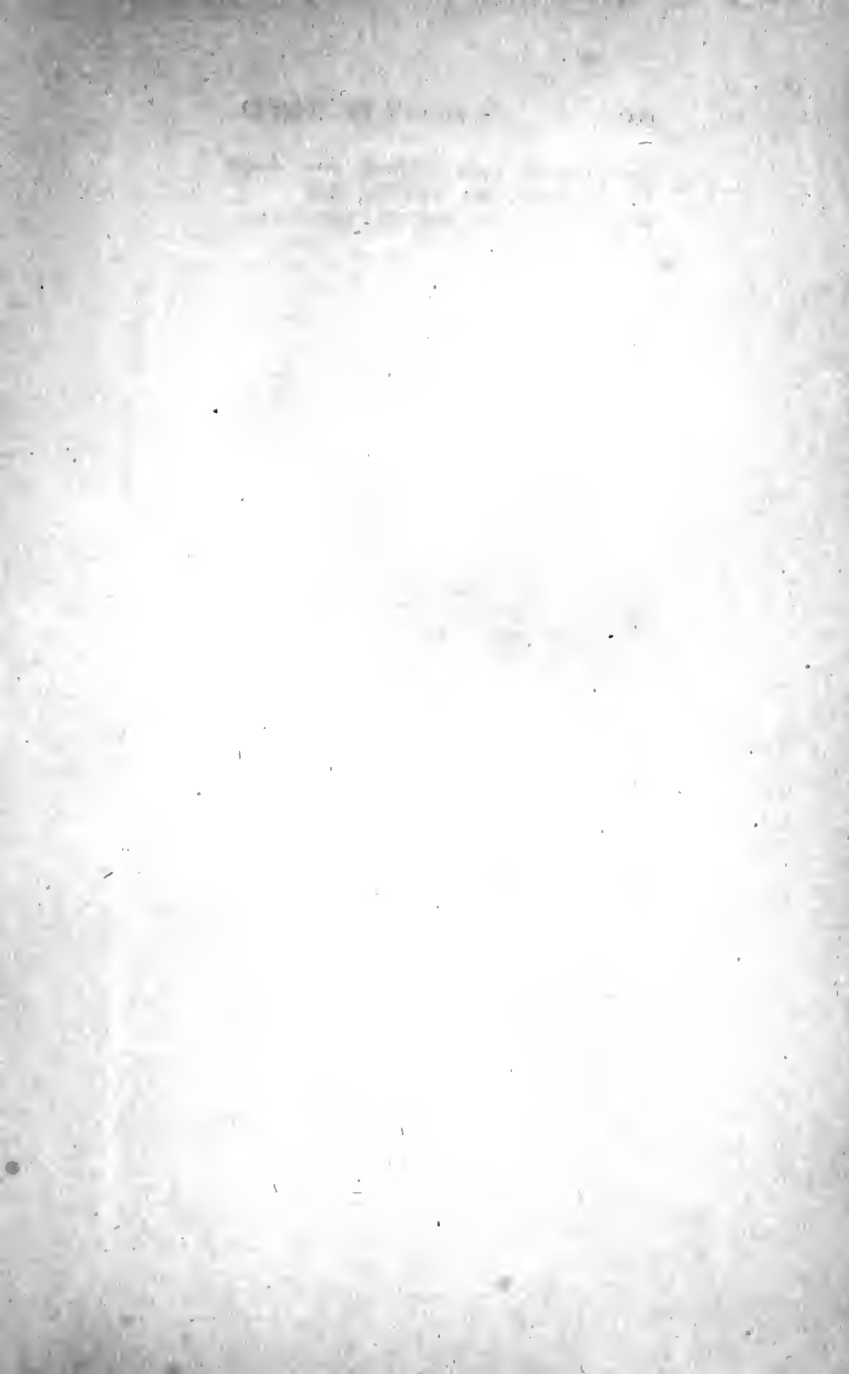
O'er-much thyself; since here our purpose holds  
 Upon thee only, and, thou once secured,  
 To other intends no violence or harm.  
 Therefore this fear dismiss, and less dishearten,  
 Enough disheartened, if thyself regarded,  
 And not to so great burden add the more  
 Of fault on these performed, thy present mind.

*Sams.* Thy words with hope relieve me, and  
their thoughts

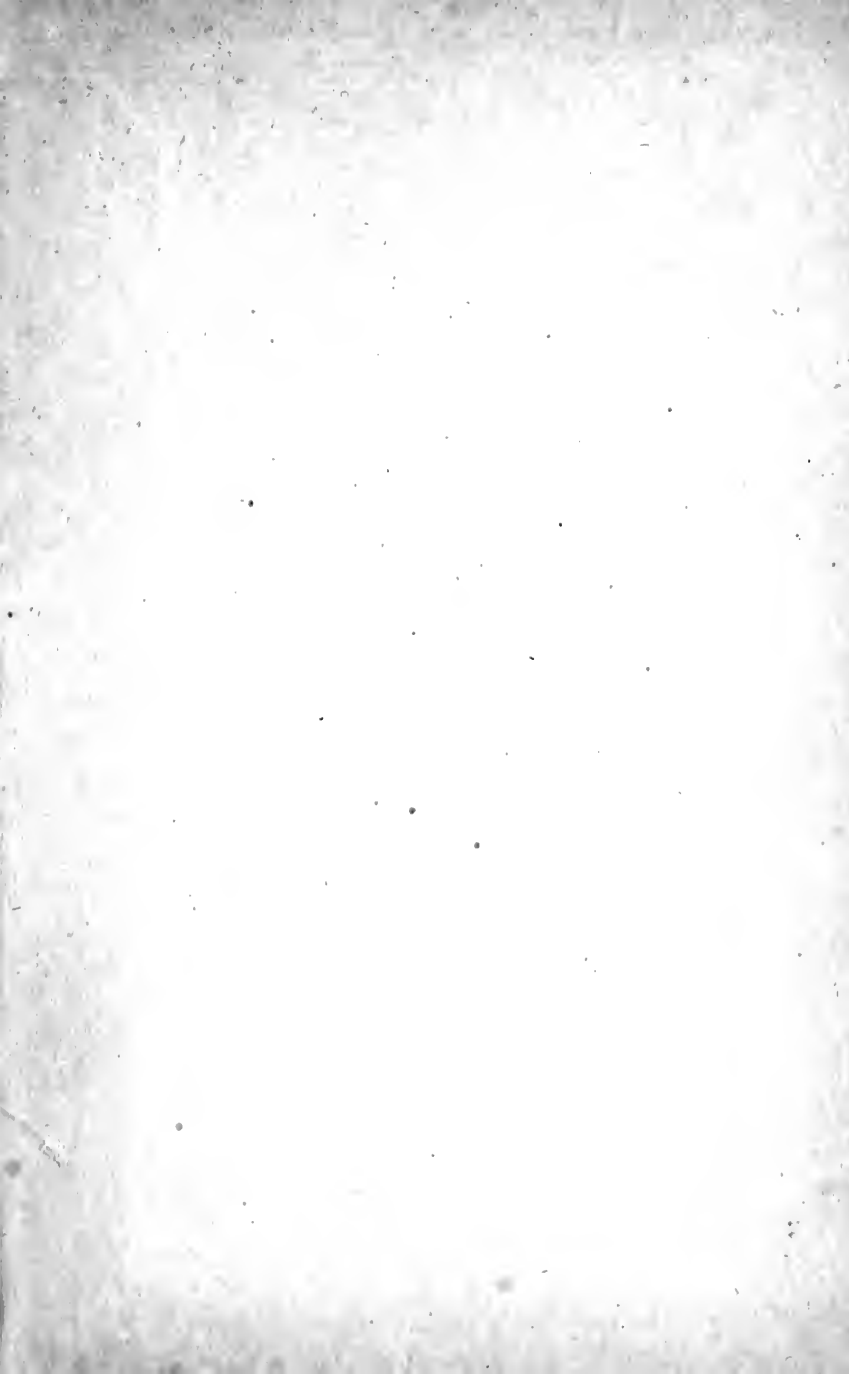
I as a grateful prophecy account ;  
Nor more shall dread my life, nor shall be bent  
To lay it down, too burdensome to bear,  
Which would be to defeat in me God's will,  
And double thus my sin, already found  
Too great, thus weakly and thus impiously  
If I presume my life, after betraying  
Secrets by God imparted, act profane,  
Not savoring thus of piety to God,  
But rancor and impatience to his rule ;  
And now, thus cheered in hopes and elevate,  
The willinger shall go, nor all repine,  
Arming my breast with patience to endure  
Whatever ills, and comforted with thought  
Not all defeated yet that mission high  
On me imposed, which to have so put off  
Was my chief sin ; for whose accomplishment,  
If I repent sincere, and shall forsake  
My weak offending, God will still vouchsafe  
To vindicate his name and me uphold  
With favor and assistance to the end,  
My sole sustaining hope and solace found.  
But now farewell ; for I begin to feel  
Some rousing motions round me that forewarn  
Departure, which by me shall not delay,  
But hasten rather, heartened thus and cheered  
With what of hope allows, or what is else  
Not to be overborne, more bent to do  
My task assigned, and strong in fortitude  
By heavenly consolation thus imparted  
To bear, to strive, to feel, nor be o'ercome.

*Cho.* All is dark, and filled with doubt  
Of what unsearchably disposed  
And all inscrutably ordained ;  
Yet in the close not contradicting

His purpose high decreed, chief hope  
To us remaining, and the end  
With vindication full and fair event.



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