

own power, he has gone among the Philistines to court assault. One exploit after another has confirmed him in the conviction that he can care for himself in any circumstance. He delights in the exhilaration of danger. But the bow that is bent too far never perfectly recovers its elasticity; the moth that hovers about the candle at last burns its wings; and in the end the over-confident giant is beguiled and shorn of strength. Sooner or later he meets the Delilah who works his ruin. Man holds his strength in weakness. He may sin and recover himself; but when he renders up to God's enemies that inward secret of his power, when he loses the outward symbol of his consecration to God, the wall of the soul's defence is broken down, and the enemy may enter where he will. It is vain that every doorway be securely closed save one, if there the foe may gain admission.

To be defiled, blinded, maimed for ever, to be incapacitated for the labor and joy of the higher world, is no trifling matter. To be a martyr without the palm is not a pleasing role; but this is nothing to the bitter reflection that one has brought shame upon a noble cause.

"Father, I do acknowledge and confess
That I this honor, I this pomp have brought
To Dagon, and advanced his praises high
Among the heathen round; to God have brought,
Dishonor, obloquy, and opened the mouths
Of idolists and atheists: have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts, propense enough before
To waver, or fall off, and join with idols;
Which is my chief affliction, shame, and sorrow.
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eyes to harbor sleep, or thoughts to rest.

From confession the thought passes to a consideration of God's dealings in providence. There is, perhaps, not even in Milton, another such awful and comprehensive summary of divine dispensations. He who cares to feel the force of deep and ponderous eloquence will linger over these glowing sentences.

"God of our fathers! what is man,
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temperest thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as thou rul'st."