

escape by carrying away, on his shoulders, the massive gates and bars of the city, which he leaves on a neighboring hill. By this extraordinary feat the Philistines understood that there must be a great secret in his life, by means of which he obtained aid from his God; and this secret they determined by some means to ascertain. So, when subsequently yielding again to the prompting of his passionate nature, he fell into the toils of the crafty Siren of Sorek, fitly named Delilah, the traitress, instigated by envy, hatred and revenge, they offered her a large bribe to induce her to obtain from the infatuated hero the secret of his strength. This she faithlessly agreed to do, and by various wiles and appeals ultimately succeeded in betraying him to his bitter and relentless enemies, who wreaked their pent-up, long-cherished wrath upon the now weak and defenceless, because God forsaken, hero.

They bind him in fetters, put out his eyes, and place him in prison, among slaves, at menial service. The mighty chieftain, whose terrible prowess had hitherto filled them with dread and dismay, was now an object of scorn, derision and contempt. The puissant champion of Israel, the past favorite of Heaven, was now deserted and desolate and derided. His name, so lately a terror to his foes and a tower to his friends, was now a byword and a jest. The mighty arm which hurled slaughter among his foes was now constrained to grind at the mill for the service of his captors, and, in his blindness, he was compelled to make sport for his tormentors.

In confinement, darkness, and humiliation, he came to himself, and, filled with remorse for his past folly, he repented and turned again to the Lord, and with earnest longings called upon Him. And as formerly in the cleft of Etam, and in the valley of Lehi, so now, in the prison-house, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him—a spirit of quickening and reviving grace, a fresh influx of strength and reawakened hope, and like another blind prisoner long afterward at Damascus, he prayed. How long he was in recovering his faith we can only conjecture, at least a length of time sufficient for his hair to grow—the restored sign of his personal covenant with the Lord. It would be some time before he obtained a clear and comprehensive view of that covenant which he seems so long to have misconceived or forgotten. But at last, the guilty, unhappy and almost despairing backslider realized his condition and relation to God, and with reviving hope his courage and strength began to return. His gifts and graces, too, were restored. A grand religious festival was appointed by the princes of Philistia, to be held in honor of Dagon, their idol god, who, as they superstitiously imagined, had delivered Samson into their hands. The princes, captains and chief men, with a vast multitude, thronged the place. The mighty captive is led forth for their amusement, and is made the butt of derisive jest, bitter taunt, and witty sneer. Wearied in body and troubled in spirit, he leans for rest against the pillars which support the edifice. The past rushes over