**CHAPTER** **17**

*The Egyptian darkness.*

**1** For thy judgments, O Lord, are great, and thy words cannot be expressed: therefore undisciplined souls have erred.

**2** For while the wicked thought to be able to have dominion over the holy nation, they themselves being fettered with the bonds of darkness, and a long night, shut up in their houses, lay there exiled from the eternal providence.

**3** And while they thought to lie hid in their obscure sins, they were scattered under a dark veil of forgetfulness, being horribly afraid and troubled with exceeding great astonishment.

**4** For neither did the den that held them, keep them from fear: for noises coming down troubled them, and sad visions appearing to them, affrighted them.

**5** And no power of fire could give them light, neither could the bright flames of the stars enlighten that horrible night.

**6** But there appeared to them a sudden fire, very dreadful: and being struck with the fear of that face, which was not seen, they thought the things which they saw to be worse:

**7** And the delusions of their magic art were put down, and their boasting of wisdom was reproachfully rebuked.

**8** For they who promised to drive away fears and troubles from a sick soul, were sick themselves of a fear worthy to be laughed at.

**9** For though no terrible thing disturbed them: yet being scared with the passing by of beasts, and hissing of serpents, they died for fear: and denying that they saw the air, which could by no means be avoided.

**10** For whereas wickedness is fearful, it beareth witness of its condemnation: for a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things.

**11** For fear is nothing else but a yielding up of the succours from thought.

**12** And while there is less expectation from within, the greater doth it count the ignorance of that cause which bringeth the torment.

**13** But they that during that night, in which nothing could be done, and which came upon them from the lowest and deepest hell, slept the same sleep,

**14** Were sometimes molested with the fear of monsters, sometimes fainted away, their soul failing them: for a sudden and unlooked for fear was come upon them.

**15** Moreover if any of them had fallen down, he was kept shut up in prison without irons.

**16** For if any one were a husbandman, or a shepherd, or a labourer in the field, and was suddenly overtaken, he endured a necessity from which he could not fly.

**17** For they were all bound together with one chain of darkness. Whether it were a whistling wind, or the melodious voice of birds, among the spreading branches of trees, or a fall of water running down with violence,

**18** Or the mighty noise of stones tumbling down, or the running that could not be seen of beasts playing together, or the roaring voice of wild beasts, or a rebounding echo from the highest mountains: these things made them to swoon for fear.

**19** For the whole world was enlightened with a clear light, and none were hindered in their labours.

**20** But over them only was spread a heavy night, an image of that darkness which was to come upon them. But they were to themselves more grievous than the darkness.