Chief of the Ten. What debt did he owe you?
Lor. A long and just one; Nature's debt and mine. [Curtain falls.] 1

1. [Here the original MS. ends. The two lines which follow, were added by Gifford. In the margin of the MS. Byron has written, "If the last line should appear obscure to those who do not recollect the historical fact mentioned in the first act of Lordno's inscription in his book, of 'Doge Foscari, debtor for the deaths of my father and uncle,' you may add the following lines to the conclusion of the last act:-

Chief of the Ten. For what has he repaid thee?
Lor. For my father's
And father's brother's death—by his son's and own!
Ask Gifford about this."]

2. [The Appendix to the First Edition of The Two Foscari consisted of (i.) an extract from F. Daru's Histoire de la Republique Francaise, 1821, ii. 520–537; (ii.) an extract from J. C. L. Simonelle de Simonetti's Histoire des Republicques Italiennes du Moyen Age, 1815, x. 36–46; and (iii.) a note in response to certain charges of plagiarism brought against the author in the Literary Gazette and elsewhere; and to Southey's inditement of the "Satanic School," which had recently appeared in the Preface to the Laureate's Vision of Judgment (Poetical Works of Robert Southey, 1838, x. 209–207). See, too, the "Introduction to The Vision of Judgment, Poetical Works, 1834, iv. pp. 479–480.]

"Now the Serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."

Genesis, Chapter 3rd, verse 1.
Cain was begun at Ravenna, July 16, and finished September 9, 1821 (vide MS. M.). Six months before, when he was at work on the first act of Sardanapalus, Byron had "pondered" Cain, but it was not till Sardanapalus and a second historical play, The Two Foscari, had been written, copied out, and sent to England, that he indulged his genius with a third drama—on "a metaphysical subject, something in the style of Manfred" (Letters, 1901, v. 189).

Goethe's comment on reading and reviewing Cain was that he should be surprised if Byron did not pursue the treatment of such "biblical subjects," as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Conversations, etc., 1879, p. 62); and, many years after, he told Crabb Robinson (Diary, 1869, ii. 435) that Byron should have lived "to execute his vocation . . . to dramatize the Old Testament." He was better equipped for such a task than might have been imagined. A Scottish schoolboy, "from a child he had known the Scriptures," and, as his Hebrew Melodies testify, he was not unwilling to turn to the Bible as a source of poetic inspiration. Moreover, he was born with the religious temperament. Questions "of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate," exercised his curiosity because they appealed to his imagination and moved his spirit. He was eager to plunge into controversy with friends and advisers who challenged or rebuked him, Hodgson, for instance, or Dallas; and he responded with remarkable amenity to the strictures and exhortations of such orthodox professors as Mr. Sheppard and Dr. Kennedy. He was, no doubt, from first to last a heretic, impatient, not to say contemptuous, of authority, but he was by no means indifferent to religion altogether. To "argue about it and about" was a necessity, if not an agreeable relief, to his intellectual energies. It would appear from the Ravenna diary (January 28, 1821, Letters, 1901, v. 190, 191), that the conception of Lucifer was working in his brain.
before the "tragedy of Cain" was actually begun. He had been recording a "thought" which had come to him, that "at the very height of human desire and pleasure, a certain sense of doubt and sorrow"—an amari aliquid which links the future to the past, and so blots out the present—"mingles with our bliss," making it of none effect, and, by way of moral or corollary to his soliloquy, he adds three lines of verse headed, "Thought for a speech of Lucifer in the Tragedy of Cain":

"Were Death an Evil, would I let thee live?
Fool! live as I live—thy father lives.
And thy son's son shall live for evermore."

In these three lines, which were not inserted in the play, and in the preceding "thought," we have the key-note to Cain. "Man walketh in a vanity shadow"—a shadow which he can never overtake, the shadow of an eternally postponed fruition. With a being capable of infinite satisfaction, he is doomed to realize failure in attainment. In all that is best and most enjoyable, "the rapacious moment and the placid hour," there is a foretaste of "Death the Unknown"! The tragedy of Manfred lies in remorse for the inevitable past; the tragedy of Cain, in revolt against the limitations of the inexorable present.

The investigation of the "sources" of Cain does not lead to any very definite conclusion (see Lord Byron's Cain and Stein Quellen, von Alfred Schaffner, 1880). He was pleased to call his play "a Mystery," and, in his Preface (vide post, p. 207), Byron alludes to the Old Mysteries as "those very profane productions, whether in English, French, Italian, or Spanish." The first reprint of the Chester Plays was published by the Roxburghe Club in 1818, but Byron's knowledge of Mystery Plays was probably derived from Dodsley's Plays (ed. 1780, l., xxxii.-xlii.), or from John Stevens's Continuation of Dugdale's Monasticon (vide post, p. 207), or possibly, as Herr Schaffner suggests, from Warton's History of English Poetry, ed. 1871, ii. 222-230. He may, too, have witnessed some belated Rappresentazioni of the Creation and Fall at Ravenna, or in one of the remoter towns or villages of Italy. There is a superficial resemblance between the treatment of the actual encounter of Cain and Abel, and the conventional rendering of the same incident in the Ludus Coenovitria, et in the Maitre du Viel Testament; but it is unlikely that he had closely studied any one Mystery Play at first hand. On the other hand, his recollections of Gessner's Death of Abel, which "he had never read since he was eight years old," were clearer than he imagined. Not only in such minor matters as the destruction of Cain's altar by a whirlwind, and the substitution of the Angel of the Lord for the Deus of the Mysteries, but in the Teutonic domesticities of Cain and Adah, and the evangelical piety of Adam and Abel, there is a reflection, if not an imitation, of the German idyll (see Gessner's Death of Abel, ed. 1792, pp. 80, 102).

Of his indebtedness to Milton he makes no formal acknowledgment, but he was not ashamed to shelter himself behind Milton's shield when he was attacked on the score of blasphemy and profanity. "If Cain be blasphemous, Paradise Lost is blasphemos" (letter to Murray, Pisa, February 8, 1822), was, he would fain believe, a conclusive answer to his accusers. But apart from verbal parallels or coincidences, there is a genuine affinity between Byron's Lucifer and Milton's Satan. Lucifer, like Satan, is "not less than Archangel ruined," a repulsed but "unvanquished Titan," marred by a demonic sorrow, a confessor though a rival of Omnipotence. He is a majestick and, as a rule, a serious and solemn spirit, who compels the admiration and possibly the sympathy of the reader. There is, however, another strain in his ghostly attributes, which betrays a more recent consanguinity: now and again he gives token that he is of the lineage of Mephistopheles. He is sometimes, though rarely, a mocking as well as a rebellious spirit, and occasionally indulges in a grim persiflage beneath the dignity if not the capacity of Satan. It is needless to add that Lucifer has a most lifelike personality of his own. The conception of the spirit of evil justifying an eternal antagonism to the Creator from the standpoint of a superior morality, may, perhaps, be traced to a Manchean source, but it has been touched with a new emotion. Milton's devil is an abstraction of infernal pride—

"Sole Positive of Night! Antipathist of Light! 
Fate's only essence! primal scorpion rod—
The one permitted opposite of God!"

Goethe's devil is an abstraction of scorn. He "maketh a mock" alike of good and evil! But Byron's devil is a spirit, yet a mortal too—the traducer, because he has suffered for his sins; the deceiver, because he is self-deceived; the hoper against hope that there is a ransom for the soul in perfect self-will and not in perfect self-sacrifice. Byron did not uphold Lucifer, but he "had passed that way," and could imagine a spiritual warfare not only against the Deus of the Mysteries or of the Book of Genesis, but against what he
believed and acknowledged to be the Author and Principle of good.

Autres temps, autres mœurs! It is all but impossible for the modern reader to appreciate the audacity of Cain, or to realize the alarm and indignation which it aroused by its appearance. Byron knew that he was raising a tempest, and pleads, in his Preface, "that with regard to the language of Lucifer, it was difficult for me to make him talk like a clergyman," and again and again he assures his correspondents (e.g. to Murray, November 23, 1821, "Cain is nothing more than a drama;" to Moore, March 4, 1822, "With respect to Religion, can I never convince you that I have no such opinions as the characters in that drama, which seems to have frightened everybody?" Letters, 1901, v. 469; vi. 30) that it is Lucifer and not Byron who puts such awkward questions with regard to the "politics of paradise" and the origin of evil. Nobody seems to have believed him. It was taken for granted that Lucifer was the mouthpiece of Byron, that the author of Don Juan was not "on the side of the angels."

Little need be said of the "literature," the pamphlets and poems which were evoked by the publication of Cain: A Mystery. One of the most prominent assailants (said to be the Rev. H. J. Todd (1763-1845), Archdeacon of Cleveland, 1837, author inter alia of Original Sin, Free Will, etc., 1818) issued A Remonstrance to Mr. John Murray, respecting a Recent Publication, 1822, signed "Oxoniensis." The sting of the Remonstrance lay in the exposure of the fact that Byron was indebted to Bayle's Dictionary for his mythological legends, and that he had derived from the same source his Manichaean doctrines of the Two Principles, etc., and other "often-repeated sophisms" with regard to the origin of evil. Byron does not borrow more than a poet and a gentleman is at liberty to acquire by way of raw material, but it cannot be denied that he had read and inwardly digested more than one of Bayle's "most objectionable articles" (e.g. "Adam," "Eve," "Abel," "Manichees," "Paulicians," etc.). The Remonstrance was answered in A Letter to Sir Walter Scott, etc., by "Harrowiensis." Byron welcomed such a "Defender of the Faith," and was anxious that Murray should print the letter together with the poem. But Murray belittled the "defender," and was upbraided in turn for his slowness of heart (letter to Murray, June 6, 1822, Letters, 1901, vi. 76).

Fresh combatants rushed into the fray: "Philo-Milton," with a Vindication of the "Paradise Lost" from the charge of exculpating "Cain: A Mystery," London, 1822; "Britannicus," with a pamphlet entitled, Revolutionary Causes, etc., and A Postscript containing Strictures on "Cain," etc., London, 1822, etc.; but their works, which hardly deserve to be catalogued, have perished with them. Finally, in 1830, a barrister named Harding Grant, author of Chancery Practice, compiled a work (Lord Byron's "Cain," etc., with Notes) of more than four hundred pages, in which he treats "the proceedings and speeches of Lucifer with the same earnestness as if they were existing and earthy personages."

But it was "a week too late." The Coryphaeus of the Satanic School had passed away, and the tumult had dwindled to a calm.

Cain "appeared in conjunction with" Sardanapalus and The Two Foscari, December 19, 1821. Last but not least of the three plays, it had been announced "by a separate advertisement (Morning Chronicle, November 24, 1821), for the purpose of exciting the greater curiosity" (Miscellaneous of the Life, etc. [by John Watkins], 1822, p. 38), and it was no sooner published than it was pirated. In the following January, "Cain: A Mystery, by the author of Don Juan," was issued by W. Benbow, at Castle Street, Leicester Square (the notorious "Byron Head," which Southey described as "one of those preparatory schools for the brothel and the gallows, where obscenity, sedition, and blasphemy are railed in drams for the vulgar").

Murray had paid Byron £270 for the three tragedies, and in order to protect the copyright, he applied, through counsel (Lancelot Shadwell, afterwards Vice-Chancellor), for an injunction in Chancery to stop the sale of piratical editions of Cain. In delivering judgment (February 12, 1822), the Chancellor, Lord Eldon (see Courier, Wednesday, February 13, replying to Shadwell, drew a comparison between Cain and Paradise Lost, "which he had read from beginning to end during the course of the last Long Vacation—sollicita juventis ab obtutis vitiis") No one, he argued, could deny that the object and effects of Paradise Lost were "not to bring into disrepute," but "to promote reverence for our religion," and, per contra, no one could affirm that it was impossible to arrive at an opposite conclusion with regard to "Cain."

It was a question for a jury. A jury might decide that Cain was blasphemous and void of copyright; and as there was a reasonable doubt in his mind as to the character of the book, and a doubt as to the conclusion at which a jury would arrive, he was compelled to refuse the injunction. According to Dr. Smiles (Memoir of John Murray, 1891, i. 428), the decision of a jury was taken, and an injunction eventually granted. If so, it was ineffectual, for Benbow issued

"Cain," said Moore (February 9, 1822), "has made a sensation." Friends and champions, the press, the public "turned up their thumbs." Gifford shook his head; Hobhouse "launched out into a most violent invective" (letter to Murray, November 24, 1821); Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh*, was regretful and horatiorily; Heber, in the *Quarterly*, was fault-finding and contemptuous. The "parsons preached at it from Kentish Town to Pisa" (letter to Moore, February 20, 1822). Even "the very highest authority in the land," his Majesty King George IV, "expressed his disapprobation of the blasphemy and licentiousness of Lord Byron's writings" (*Examiner*, February 17, 1822). Byron himself was forced to admit that "my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain" (*Don Juan*, Canto XI. stanza Ivi. line 2). The many were unanimous in their verdict, but the higher court of the few reversed the judgment.

Göthe said that "its beauty is such as we shall not see a second time in the world" (*Conversations*, etc., 1874, p. 261); Scott, in speaking of "the very grand and tremendous drama of Cain," said that the author had "matched Milton on his own ground" (letter to Murray, December 4, 1821, *Wide World*, p. 306); "Cain," wrote Shelley to Gisborne (April 10, 1822), "is apocalyptic; it is a revelation never before communicated to man.

Uncritical praise, as well as uncritical censure, belongs to the past; but the play remains, a singular exercise of "poetic energy," a confession, *ex animo*, of "the burthen of the mystery, . . . the heavy and the weary weight Of all this unintelligible world."


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**TO SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.**

**THIS MYSTERY OF CAIN**

**IS INSCRIBED,**

**BY HIS OBLIGED FRIEND**

**AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,**

**THE AUTHOR.**

*"On the 13th December (1821) Sir Walter received a copy of *Cain*, as yet unpublished, from Murray, who had been instructed to ask whether he had any objection to having the "Mystery" dedicated to him. He replied in these words—"Edinburgh, 4th December, 1821.

"My dear Sir,—I accept, with feelings of great obligation, the flattering proposal of Lord Byron to prefix my name to the very grand and tremendous drama of 'Cain.' I may be partial to it, and you will..."

*"However, the praise often given to Byron has been so exaggerated as to provoke, perhaps, a reaction in which he is unduly disparaged. 'As various in composition as Shakespeare himself, Lord Byron has embraced,' says Sir Walter Scott, 'every topic of human life, and sounded every string on the divine harp, from its slightest to its most powerful and heart-astounding tones. . . . In the very grand and tremendous drama of Cain,' etc. . . . 'And Lord Byron has done all this,' Scott adds, 'while managing his pen with the exquisite and negligent ease of a man of quality.' —"Poetry of Byron, chosen and arranged by Matthew Arnold, 1881, p. xiii.*

Scott does not add anything of the kind. The comparison with Shakespeare was written after Byron's death in May, 1824; the appreciation of *Cain* in December, 1821 (*vide supra*); while the allusion to "a man of quality" is to be found in an article contributed to the *Quarterly Review* in 1816*]
allow I have cause; but I do not know that his Muse has ever taken so lofty a flight amid her former soarings. He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground. Some part of the language is bold, and may shock one class of readers, whose line will be adopted by others out of affection or envy. But then they must condemn the 'Paradise Lost,' if they have a mind to be consistent. The fiend-like reasoning and bold blasphemy of the fiend and of his pupil lead exactly to the point which was to be expected—the commission of the first murder, and the ruin and despair of the perpetrator.

"I do not see how any one can accuse the author himself of Manichaeism. The Devil talks the language of that sect, doubtless; because, not being able to deny the existence of the Good Principle, he endeavours to exalt himself—the Evil Principle—to a seeming equality with the Good; but such arguments, in the mouth of such a being, can only be used to deceive and to betray. Lord Byron might have made this more evident, by placing in the mouth of Adam, or of some good and protecting spirit, the reasons which render the existence of moral evil consistent with the general benevolence of the Deity. The great key to the mystery is, perhaps, the imperfection of our own faculties, which see and feel strongly the partial evils which press upon us, but know too little of the general system of the universe, to be aware how the existence of these is to be reconciled with the benevolence of the great Creator.

"To drop these speculations, you have much occasion for some mighty spirit, like Lord Byron, to come down and trouble the waters; for, excepting "The John Bull,"* you seem stagnating strangely in London.

"Yours, my dear Sir,

"Very truly,

"WALTER SCOTT.

"To John Murray, Esq.—Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott,

by J. G. Lockhart, Esq., 1838, iii. 93, 94.]

* [The first number of John Bull, "For God, the King, and the People," was published Sunday, December 17, 1800. Theodore Hook was the editor, and it is supposed that he owed his appointment to the intervention of Sir Walter Scott. The raison d'être of John Bull was to write up George IV., and to write down Queen Caroline. "The national movement (in favour of the Queen) was arrested; and George IV. had mainly John Bull to thank for that result."—A Sketch, by J. G. Lockhart, 1852, p. 45 .]

PREFACE.

The following scenes are entitled "A Mystery," in conformity with the ancient title annexed to dramas upon similar subjects, which were styled "Mysteries, or Moralties." The author has by no means taken the same liberties with his subject which were common formerly, as may be seen by any reader curious enough to refer to those very profane productions, whether in English, French, Italian, or Spanish. The author has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this is but rarely) taken from actual Scripture, he has made as little alteration, even of words, as the rhythm would permit. The reader will recollect that the book of Genesis does not state...
that Eve was tempted by a demon, but by "the Serpent." I and that only because he was "the most subtle of all the beasts of the field." Whatever interpretation the Rabbins and the Fathers may have put upon this, I take the words as I find them, and reply, with Bishop Watson upon similar occasions, when the Fathers were quoted to him as Moderator in the schools of Cambridge, "Behold the Book!"—holding up the Scripture. It is to be recollected, that my present subject has nothing to do with the New Testament, to which no reference can be here made without anachronism. With the poems upon similar topics I have not been recently familiar. Since I was twenty I have never read Milton; but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference. Gesner's "Death of Abel" I have never since I was eight years of age, at Aberdeen. The general impression of my recollection is delightful; but of the contents I remember only that Cain's wife was called Mahala, and Abel's Thirza; in the following pages I have called them "Adah" and "Zillah," the earliest female names which occur in Genesis. They were those of Lamech's wives: those of Cain and Abel are not called by their names. Whether, then, a coincidence of subject may have caused the same in expression, I know nothing, and care as little. I am prepared to be accused of Manichæism, or some other hard name ending in ism, which makes a formidable figure and awful sound in the eyes and ears of those who would be as much puzzled to explain the terms so bandied about, as the liberal and pious indulgers in such epithets. Against such I can defend myself, or, if necessary, I can attack in turn. "Claw for claw, as Conan said to Satan and the devil take the shortest nails" (Waverley).

The reader will please to bear in mind (what few choose to recollect), that there is no allusion to a future state in any of the books of Moses, nor indeed in the Old Testament. For a reason for this extraordinary omission he may consult Warburton's "Divine Legislation."
whether satisfactory or not, no better has yet been assigned. I have therefore supposed it new to Cain, without, I hope, any perversion of Holy Writ.

With regard to the language of Lucifer, it was difficult for me to make him talk like a clergyman upon the same subjects; but I have done what I could to restrain him within the bounds of spiritual politeness. If he disclaims having tempted Eve in the shape of the Serpent, it is only because the book of Genesis has not the most distant allusion to anything of the kind, but merely to the Serpent in his serpentine capacity.

Note.—The reader will perceive that the author has partly adopted in this poem the notion of Cuvier, that the world had been destroyed several times before the creation of man. This speculation, derived from the different strata and the bones of enormous and unknown animals found in them, is not contrary to the Mosaic account, but rather confirms it; as no human bones have yet been discovered in those strata, although those of many known animals are found near the remains of the unknown. The assertion of Lucifer, that the pre-Adamite world was also peopled by rational beings much more intelligent than man, and proportionably powerful to the mammoth, etc., etc., is, of course, a poetical fiction to help him to make out his case.

I ought to add, that there is a "trameologeda" of

Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Faith; from the omission of the Doctrine of a Future State of Reward and Punishment in the Hebraic Dispensation. (See, more particularly (ed. 1741, Vol. II. pt. ii. bl. v. sect. s. pp. 449-451, and bl. vi. pp. 569-608.) Compare the following passage from Dieu et les Hommes (Euvres, etc., de Voltaire, 1767, vi. 276, chap. xx.): "Notre Warburton s’est épuisé à ramasser dans son fauteuil de la Divine légion, toutes les preuves que l’auteur du Pont-Saint-Esprit, n’a jamais partagé d’une vie à venir, et il n’a pas eu grande peine: mais il en tire une plaisante conclusion, et digne d’un esprit aussi luex que le sien.”

1. (See Recherches sur les Ossements Fossiles, par M. le Dr G. Cuvier, Paris, 1821, i. “Discours Préliminaire,” pp. iv. vii.; and for the thesis, “Il n’y a point d’os humains fossiles,” see p. lixiv.; see, too, Cuvier’s Discours sur les révolutions de la surface du globe, ed. 1814, p. 282: “Si l’on peut en juger par les différents ordres d’animaux dont on y trouve les dépouilles, ils avaient peut-être abîmé jusqu’à deux ou trois rotations de la terre.” It is curious to note that Moore thought that Cuvier’s book was “a most desolating one in the conclusions to which it may lead some minds” (Lyon, p. 554.)
DRA¥ATI~
J>E,;RSON,£.
ADAM.
CAIN.
ABEL.

SPRİNTS.
ANGEL OF THE LORD.
LUCIFER.

WOMEN.
EVE.
ADAH.
ZILLAH.

CAIN:
A MYSTERY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—The Land without Paradise.—Time, Sunrise.

ADAM, EVE, CAIN, ABEL, ADAH, ZILLAH, offering a Sacrifice.

Adam, God, the Eternal! Infinite! All-wise!—Who out of darkness on the deep didst make
Light on the waters with a word—All Hail!—Jehovah! with returning light—All Hail!
Eve, God! who didst name the day, and separate
Morning from night, till then divided never—Who didst divide the wave from wave, and call
Part of thy work the firmament—All Hail!
Abel, God! who didst call the elements into
Earth, ocean, air and fire—and with the day
And night, and worlds which these illuminate,
Or shadow, madest beings to enjoy them,
And love both them and thee—All Hail! All Hail!
Adah, God! the Eternal parent of all things!
Who didst create these best and beauteous beings,
To be beloved, more than all, save thee—
Let me love thee and them:—All Hail! All Hail!
Zillah, Oh, God! who loving, making, blessing all,
Yet didst permit the Serpent to creep in,
And drive my father forth from Paradise,
Keep us from further evil:—Hail! All Hail!  
Adam. Son Cain! my first-born—wherefore art thou silent?  
Cain. Why should I speak?  
Adam. To pray.  
Cain. Have ye not prayed?  
Adam. We have, most fervently.  
Cain. And loudly: I have heard you.  
Adam. So will God, I trust.  
Cain. Amen!  
Adam. But thou my eldest born? art silent still?  
Cain. 'Tis better I should be so.  
Adam. Wherefore so?  
Cain. I have not sought to ask.  
Adam. Nor ought to thank for?  
Cain. No.  
Adam. Dost thou not live?  
Cain. Must I not die?  
Eve. Alas!  
The fruit of our forbidden tree begins 30  
To fall.  
Adam. And we must gather it again.  
Oh God! why didst thou plant the tree of knowledge?  
Cain. And wherefore plucked ye not the tree of life?  
Ye might have then defied him.  
Adam. Oh! my son,  
Blaspheme not: these are Serpent's words.  
Cain. Why not?  
The snake spoke truth; it was the Tree of Knowledge;  
It was the Tree of Life: knowledge is good,  
And Life is good; and how can both be evil?  
Eve. My boy! thou speakest as I spoke in sin,  
Before thy birth; let me not see renewed  
My misery in thine. I have repented,  
Let me not see my offspring fall into  
The snares beyond the walls of Paradise,  
Which even in Paradise destroyed his parents.  
Content thee with what is. Had we been so,  
Thou now hadst been contented.—Oh, my son!  
Adam. Our orisons completed, let us hence,
Yet of a sterner and a sadder aspect
Of spiritual essence: why do I quake?
Why should I fear him more than other spirits,
Whom I see daily wave their fiery swords
Before the gates round which I linger oft,
In twilight's hour, to catch a glimpse of those Gardens which are my just inheritance,
Ere the night closes o'er the inhibited walls
And the immortal trees which overtop
The Cherubim-defended battlements?
If I shrink not from these, the fire-armed angels,
Why should I quail from him who now approaches?
Yet—he seems mightier far than them,
Nor less Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful
As he hath been, and might be: sorrow seems
Half of his immortality. 1 And is it
So? and can aught grieve save Humanity?
He cometh.

Enter Lucifer.

Lucifer. Mortal!
Cain. Spirit, who art thou?
Lucifer. Master of spirits.
Cain. And being so, canst thou
Leave them, and walk with dust?
Lucifer. I know the thoughts 100
Of dust, and feel for it, and with you.
Cain. You know my thoughts?
Lucifer. They are the thoughts of all
Worthy of thought;—tis your immortal part 2

1. [Compare—"... his form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appears
Less than Arch-angel mind, and the excess
Of glory obscure." Paradise Lost, i. 591-593.

Compare, too—"... but his face
Deep scars of thunder had entrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek." ibid., i. 600-602.]

2. [According to the Manicheans, the divinely created and immortal

SCENE 1.] CAIN.
Which speaks within you.

Cain. What immortal part?
This has not been revealed: the Tree of Life
Was withheld from us by my father's folly;
While that of Knowledge, by my mother's haste,
Was plucked too soon; and all the fruit is Death!
Lucifer. They have deceived thee; thou shalt live.
Cain. But live to die: and, living, see no thing
To make death hateful, save an innate clinging,
A loathsome, and yet all invincible
Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I
Despise myself, yet cannot overcome—
And so I live. Would I had never lived!
Lucifer. Thou livest—and must live for ever. Think
not
The Earth, which is thine outward cov'ring, is
Existence—it will cease—and thou wilt be—
No less than thou art now.
Cain. No less! and why
No more?
Lucifer. It may be thou shalt be as we.
Cain. And ye?
Lucifer. Are everlasting.
Cain. Are ye happy?
Lucifer. We are mighty.
Cain. Are ye happy?
Lucifer. Thou livest—and must live for ever.
How! Thou look'st almost a god; and—
Lucifer. One who aspired to be what made thee, and
Would not have made thee what thou art.
Cain. Thou look'st almost a god; and—
Lucifer. I am none:
And having failed to be one, would be nought
soul is imprisoned in an alien and evil body. There can be no harmony
between soul and body.]
SCENE I

CAIN.

Innumerable, more endurable,

By the unbounded sympathy of all

With all! But He! so wretched in his height,

So restless in his wretchedness, must still

Create, and re-create—perhaps he'll make

One day a Son unto himself—as he

Gave you a father—and if he so doth,

Mark me! that Son will be a sacrifice!

Cain. Thou speak'st to me of things which long have

swum

In visions through my thought: I never could

Reconcile what I saw with what I heard.

My father and my mother talk to me

Of serpents, and of fruits and trees: I see

The gates of what they call their Paradise

Guarded by fiery-sworded Cherubim,

Which shut them out—and me: I feel the weight

Of daily toil, and constant thought: I look

Around a world where I seem nothing, with

Thoughts which arise within me, as if they

Could master all things—but I thought alone

This misery was mine. My father is

Tamed down; my mother has forgot the

Mind Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk

Of an eternal curse: my brother is

A watching shepherd boy, who offers up

The firstlings of the flock to him who bids

The earth yield nothing to us without sweat;

My sister Zillah sings an earlier hymn

Than the birds' matins; and my Adah—my

Own and beloved—she, too, understands not

The mind which overwhelms me: never till


1. A droving husbandman who offers up
   The first fruits of the earth to him who made
   That earth ——: [MS. M. erased.]

2. [According to the Encyclopaedia Biblica, the word "Abel" signifies
   "shepherd" or "herdman." The Massorites give "breath," or
   "vanity," as an equivalent.]
Now met I aught to sympathise with me.
'Tis well—I rather would consort with spirits.
Lucifer. And hadst thou not been fit by thine own soul
For such companionship, I would not now
Have stood before thee as I am: a serpent
Had been enough to charm ye, as before.
Cain. Ah! didst thou tempt my mother?
Lucifer. I tempt none,
Save with the truth: was not the Tree
Of Knowledge? and was not the Tree
Of Life? Did I bid her pluck them not?
Cain. They were, as I have heard.
In thunder.
Lucifer. Then who was the Demon? He
Who would not let ye live, or he who would
Have made ye live for ever, in the joy
And power of Knowledge?
Cain. Would they had snatched both!
The fruits, or neither!
Lucifer. One is yours already,
The other may be still,
Cain. How so?
Lucifer. By being
Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing can
Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself
And centre of surrounding things—tis made
to sway.
Cain. But didst thou tempt my parents?
Lucifer. Poor clay—what should I tempt them for, or how?
Cain. They say the Serpent was a spirit.
Lucifer. Who

---

1. Have stood before thee at I am: but choaten
The serpent's charming symbol.—[MS. M. erased.]
Cain.

Says he is something dreadful, and my mother
Weeps when he’s named; and Abel lifts his eyes
To Heaven, and Zillah casts hers to the earth,
And sighs a prayer; and Adah looks on me,
And speaks not.

Lucifer. And thou?

Cain. Thoughts unspeakable
Crowd in my breast to burning, when I hear
Of this almighty Death, who is, it seems,
Inevitable. Could I wrestle with him?
I wrestled with the lion, when a boy,
In play, till he ran roaring from my gripe.

Lucifer. It has no shape; but will absorb all things
That hear the form of earth-born being;

Cain. I thought it was a being: who could do
Such evil things to beings save a being?

Lucifer. Ask the Destroyer.

Cain. Who?

Lucifer. The Maker—Call him
Which name thou wilt: he makes but to destroy,

Cain. I knew not that; yet thought it, since I heard
Of Death: although I know not what it is—
Yet it seems horrible. I have looked out
In the vast desolate night in search of him;
And when I saw gigantic shadows in
The umbrage of the walls of Eden, chequered
By the far-flashing of the Cherubs’ swords,
I watched for what I thought his coming; for
With fear rose longing in my heart to know
What ’twas which shook us all—but nothing came.
And then I turned my weary eyes from off
Our native and forbidden Paradise,
Up to the lights above us, in the azure,
Which are so beautiful: shall they, too, die?

Lucifer. Perhaps—but long outlive both thine and
thee.

Cain. ’Tis my good fortune: I would not have them die—
They are so lovely. What is Death? I fear,
I feel, it is a dreadful thing; but what,
I cannot compass: ’tis denounced against us,
Cain.

I never bowed unto my father's God.

Although my brother Abel oft implores
That I would join with him in sacrifice:
Why should I bow to thee?

Lucifer.

Hast thou ne'er bowed to him?

Cain.

Have I not said it—need I say it?

Could not thy mighty knowledge teach thee that?

Lucifer.

He who bows not to him has bowed to me.

Cain.

But I will bend to neither.

Lucifer.

Ne'er the less, thou art my worshipper; not worshipping Him makes thee mine the same.

Cain.

And what is that?

Lucifer.

Follow where I will lead thee.

Cain.

But I must retire to till the earth—for I had promised—

Lucifer.

What?

Cain.

To cull some first-fruits,

Lucifer.

Why?

Cain.

To offer up with Abel on an altar.

Lucifer.

Said'st thou not thou ne'er hadst bent to him who made thee?

Cain.

Yes—

But Abel's earnest prayer has wrought upon me;
The offering is more his than mine—and Adah—

Lucifer.

Why dost thou hesitate?

Cain.

She is my sister, 330

1. [Dr. Arnold, speaking of Cain, used to say, "There is something to me almost awful in meeting suddenly, in the works of such a man, so great and solemn a truth as is expressed in that speech of Lucifer, 'He who bows not to God hath bowed to me" (Stanley's Life of Arnold, ed. 1887, i. 203, note). It may be awful, but it is not strange. Byron was seldom at a loss for a text, and must have been familiar with the words, 'He that is not with Me is against Me.' Moreover, he was a man of genius!]

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CAIN.

[ACT I.

Born on the same day, of the same womb; and She wrung from me, with tears, this promise; and Rather than see her weep, I would, methinks, Bear all—and worship ought.

Lucifer.

Then follow me!

Cain. I will.

Enter Adah.

Adah.

My brother, I have come for thee;
It is our hour of rest and joy—and we Have less without thee. Thou hast laboured not This morn; but I have done thy task: the fruits Are ripe, and glowing as the light which ripens:

Cain.

Come away.

Adah.

Are there, then, others?

But he is welcome, as they were: they deigned To be our guests—will he?

Lucifer.

Wilt thou?

Cain (to Lucifer).

I ask thee to be mine.

Lucifer.

I must away with him.

Adah.

And leave us?

Cain.

Aye. And me? She doesn't want to be left.

Beloved Adah!

Adah.

No, she must not.

Adah.

Art thou that steppest between heart and heart?

Cain.

He is a God.

Adah.

How know'st thou?

Cain.

A God.

Adah. So did the Serpent, and it lied.

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Lucifer. Thou errest, Adah!—was not the Tree that
Of Knowledge?
Adah. Aye—to our eternal sorrow.
Lucifer. And yet that grief is knowledge—so he lied not:
And if he did betray you, 'twas with Truth;
And Truth in its own essence cannot be
But good.
Adah. But all we know of it has gathered
Evil on ill: expulsion from our home,
And dread, and toil, and sweat, and heaviness;
Remorse of that which was—and hope of that
Which cometh not. Cain! walk not with this Spirit.
Bear with what we have borne, and love me—
Love thee.
Lucifer. More than thy mother, and thy sire?
Adah. I do. Is that a sin, too?
Lucifer. No, not yet.
Adah. In one day will be in your children.
Lucifer. What!
Adah. Must not my daughter love her brother Enoch?
Lucifer. Not as thou lovest Cain.
Adah. Oh, my God! Shall they not love and bring forth things that love
Out of their love? have they not drawn their milk
Out of this bosom? was not he, their father, Born of the same sole womb, in the same hour
With me? did we not love each other? and
In multiplying our being multiply
Things which will love each other as we love
Them?—And as I love thee, my Cain! go not
Forth with this spirit; he is not of ours.
Lucifer. The sin I speak of is not of my making, And cannot be a sin in you—whate'er
It seem in those who will replace ye in

1. ["The most common opinion is that a son and daughter were born together; and they go so far as to tell us the very name of the daughters. Cain's twin sister was called Calmana (see, too, Le Mistère du Viel Testament, lines 1883-1926, ed. 1875), or Caimana, or Debora, or Aazrum; that of Abel was named Debora or Awina."—Bayle's Dictionary, 1732, 2v. 854, art. "Eve," D.]

SCENE I.]  CAIN.  227

Mortality. 1
Adah. What is the sin which is not
Sin in itself? Can circumstance make sin
Or virtue?—if it doth, we are the slaves Of—
Lucifer. Higher things than ye are slaves: and higher
Than them or ye would be so, did they not
Prefer an independency of torture
To the smooth agonies of adulation,
In hymns and harpings, and self-seeking prayers,
To that which is omnipotent, because
It is omnipotent, and not from love,
But terror and self-hope.
Adah. Omnopenence.
Must be all goodness.
Lucifer. Was it so in Eden?
Adah. Fiend! tempt me not with beauty; thou art fairer
Than was the Serpent, and as false.
Lucifer. As true.
Ask Eve, your mother: bears she not the knowledge
Of good and evil?
Adah. Oh, my mother! thou
Hast plucked a fruit more fatal to thine offspring
Than to thyself; thou at the least hast passed
Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent
And happy intercourse with happy spirits:
But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden,
Are girt about by demons, who assume
The words of God, and tempt us with our own
Dissatisfied and curious thoughts—as thou
Wert worked on by the snake, in thy most flushed
And heedless, harmless wantonness of bliss.
I cannot answer this immortal thing
Which stands before me; I cannot abhor him;
I look upon him with a pleasing fear,
And yet I fly not from him: in his eye
There is a fastening attraction which

1. [It is impossible not to be struck with the resemblance between many of these passages and others in "Marfred," e.g. act ii. sc. 1, lines 24-28, Poetical Works, 1901, iv. 99, note 1.]
The Cherubs and the Seraphs

The Seraphs

Fixes my fluttering eyes on his; my heart
Beats quick; he awes me, and yet draws me near,
Nearer and nearer—Cain—Cain—save me from him!

Cain. What dreads my Adah? This is no ill spirit.
Adah. He is not God—nor God's: I have beheld
The Cherubs and the Seraphs; he looks not
Like them.

Cain. But there are spirits loftier still—
The archangels.

Lucifer. And still loftier than the archangels,
Adah. Aye—but not blessed.
Lucifer. If the blessedness
Consists in slavery—no.

Adah. I have heard it said,

The Seraphs love most—Cherubim know most—
And this should be a Cherub—since he loves not.

Lucifer. And if the higher knowledge quenches love,
What must he be you cannot love when known?
Since the all-knowing Cherubim love least,
The Seraphs' love can be but ignorance:
That they are not compatible, the doom
Of thy fond parents, for their daring, proves.

Choose betwixt Love and Knowledge—since there is
No other choice; your sire hath chosen already:
His worship is but fear.

Adah. Oh, Cain! choose Love.
Cain. For thee, my Adah, I choose not—It was
Born with me—but I love nought else.

Adah. Our parents?
Cain. Did they love us when they snatched from the
Tree
That which hath driven us all from Paradise?

Adah. We were not born then—and if we had been,
Should we not love them—and our children, Cain?

1. What can be be who places love in ignorance?—[MS. M.]
2. ["One of the second order of angels of the Dionysian hierarchy,
reputed to excel specially in knowledge (as the seraphim in love). See
Bacon's Advancement of Learning, i. 48: 'The first place is given to
the Angels of love, which are termed Seraphim, the second to the
Angels of light, which are termed Cherubim."
"N. Ang. Dist., art.
"Cherub."]
Who could be happy and alone, or good?
To me my solitude seems sin; unless
When I think how soon I shall see my brother,
His brother, and our children, and our parents.

Lucifer. Yet thy God is alone; and is he happy?

Adah. He is not so; he hath
The angels and the mortals to make happy,
And thus becomes so in diffusing joy.
What else can joy be, but the spreading joy?¹

Lucifer. Ask of your sire, the exile fresh from Eden;
Or of his first-born son: ask your own heart;
It is not tranquil.

Adah. Alas! no! and you—
Are you of Heaven?

Lucifer. If I am not, enquire
The cause of this all-spreading happiness
(Which you proclaim) of the all-great and good
Maker of life and living things; it is
His secret, and he keeps it. We must bear,
And some of us resist—and both in vain,
His Seraphs say: but it is worth the trial,
Since better may not be without: there is
A wisdom in the spirit, which directs
To right, as in the dim blue air the eye
Of you, young mortals, lights at once upon
The star which watches, welcoming the morn.

Adah. It is a beautiful star; I love it for
Its beauty.

Lucifer. And why not adore?

Adah. Our father
Adores the Invisible only.

Lucifer. But the symbols
Of the Invisible are the loveliest
Of what is visible; and you bright star
Is leader of the host of Heaven.

Adah. Our father
Said that he has beheld the God himself
Who made him and our mother.

Lucifer. Hast thou seen him?

i. What else can joy be—[MS. M.]
[ACT I.]

CAIN.

Show in an hour what he hath made in many,
Or hath destroyed in few?

CAIN. Lead on.

Adah. In sooth, return within an hour?

Lucifer. He shall.

CAIN. With us acts are exempt from time, and we
Can crowd eternity into an hour:
Or stretch an hour into eternity:
We breathe not by a mortal measurement—
But that's a mystery. Cain, come on with me.

Adah. Where dost thou dwell?

Lucifer. Throughout all space. Where should I dwell?

Where are Thy God or Gods—there am I: all things are
Divided with me: Life and Death—and Time—
Eternity—and heaven and earth—and that
Which is not heaven nor earth, but peopled with
Those who once peopled or shall peopled both—
These are my realms! so that I do divide
His, and possess a kingdom which is not
His. If I were not that which I have said,
Could I stand here? His angels are within
Your vision.

Adah. So they were when the fair Serpent
Spoke with our mother first.

Lucifer. Cain! thou hast heard.

If thou dost long for knowledge, I can satiate
That thirst; nor ask thee to partake of fruits
Which shall deprive thee of a single good

1. [Lucifer was evidently indebted to the Manicheans for his theory of the duplura terra—an infernal as well as a celestial kingdom.]
Cain. Oh God! or Demon! or what'ever thou art,
Is yon our earth?
Lucifer. Dost thou not recognise
The dust which formed thy father?
Cain. Can it be?
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far ether,
With an inferior circlet purpler it still,
Which looks like that which lit our earthly night?
Is this our Paradise? Where are its walls,
And they who guard them?
Lucifer. Point me out the site
Of Paradise.
Cain. How should I? As we move
Like sunbeams onward, it grows small and smaller,
And as it waxes little, and then less,
Gathers a halo round it, like the light
Which shone the roundest of the stars, when I
Beheld them from the skirts of Paradise:
Methinks they both, as we recede from them,
Appear to join the innumerable stars
Which are around us; and, as we move on,
Increase their myriads.
Lucifer. And if there should be
Worlds greater than thine own— inhabited
By greater things—and they themselves far more
In number than the dust of thy dull earth,
Though multiplied to animated atoms,

1. Yon round blue circle swinging in far ether
   With an inferior circlet dimmer still.—[MS. M. erased.]

1. [Compare—
   "And, fast by, hanging in a golden chain,
   This pedent World, in dignity as a star
   Of smallest magnitude, close by the moon."—
   Paradise Lost, ii. 1054-1055.

Compare, too—
   "The magic car moved on.
   Earth's distant orb appeared
   The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens;
   Whilst round the chariot's way
   Innumerable systems rolled,
   And countless spheres diffused
   An ever-varying glory."
   Shelley's Queen Mab, Poetical Works, 1869, p. 106.]

SCENE I.]

Cain. All living—and all doomed to death—and wretched,
What wouldst thou think?
Cain. I should be proud of thought
Which knew such things.
Lucifer. But if that high thought were
Linked to a servile mass of matter—and,
Knowing such things, aspiring to such things,
And science still beyond them, were chained down
To the most gross and petty paltry wants,
All foul and fulsome—and the very best
Of thine enjoyments a sweet degradation,
A most enervating and filthy cheat
To lure thee on to the renewal of
Fresh souls and bodies,1 all foredoomed to be
As frail, and few so happy—
Cain. Spirit! I
Know nought of Death, save as a dreadful thing
Of which I have heard my parents speak, as of
A hideous heritage I owe to them
No less than life—a heritage not happy,
If I may judge, till now. But, Spirit! if
It be as thou hast said (and I within
Feel the prophetic torture of its truth),
Here let me die: for to give birth to those
Who can but suffer many years, and die—
Methinks is merely propagating Death,
And multiplying murder.
Lucifer. Thou canst not
All die—there is what must survive.
Cain. The Other
Spake not of this unto my father, when
He shut him forth from Paradise, with death
Written upon his forehead. But at least
Let what is mortal or immaterial
I may be in the rest as angels are.
Lucifer. I am angelic: would'st thou be as I am?

1. "Several of the ancient Fathers, too much prejudiced in
favour of virginity, have pretended that if Man had persevered in
innocence he would not have entered into the carnal commerce of
matrimony, and that the propagation of mankind would have been
effected quite another way." [See St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, xiv.
CAIN. I know not what thou art; I see thy power,
And see thou show'st me things beyond my power.

Beyond all power of my born faculties,
Although inferior still to my desires
And my conceptions.

Lucifer. What are they which dwell
So humbly in their pride, as to sojourn
With worms in clay?

So haughtily in spirit, and canst range
Nature and immortality—and yet
Seem'st sorrowful?

Lucifer. I seem that which I am;
And therefore do I ask of thee, if thou
Wouldst be immortal?

Cain. Thou hast said, I must be
Immortal in despite of me. I knew not
This until lately—but since it must be,
Let me, or happy or unhappy, learn
To anticipate my immortality.

Lucifer. Thou didst before I came upon thee.

Cain. How?

Lucifer. By suffering.

Cain. And must torture be immortal?

Lucifer. We and thy sons will try. But now, behold!

Is it not glorious?

Cain. Oh thou beautiful
And unimaginable ether! and
Ye multiplying masses of increased
And still-increasing lights! what are ye? what
Is this blue wilderness of interminable
Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?
Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye
Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
Through an aerial universe of endless
Expansion—at which my soul aches to think—
Intoxicated with eternity?

1. [Compare—

"Below lay stretched the universe!
There, far as the remoted line

Oh God! Oh Gods! or whatsoever ye are!
How beautiful ye are! how beautiful
Your works, or accidents, or whatsoever
They may be! Let me die, as atoms die,
(If that they die), or know ye in your might
And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour
Unworthy what I see, though my dust is;
Spirits! Let me expire, or see them nearer.

Lucifer. Art thou not nearer? look back to thine
earth!

Cain. Where is it? I see nothing save a mass
Of most innumerable lights.

Lucifer. Look there!

Cain. I cannot see it.

Lucifer. Yet it sparkles still.

Cain. That!—yonder!

Lucifer. Yea.

Cain. And wilt thou tell me so?

Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms
Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks
In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world
Which bears them.

Lucifer. Thou hast seen both worms and worlds,
Each bright and sparkling—what dost think of them?

Cain. That they are beautiful in their own sphere,
And that the night, which makes both beautiful,
The little shining fire-fly in its flight,
And the immortal star in its great course,
Must both be guided.

Lucifer. But by whom or what?

Cain. Show me.

Lucifer. Dar'st thou behold?

Cain. I dare not gaze upon it further.

Lucifer. How know I what

I dare behold? As yet, thou hast shown not
I dare not gaze on further.

Lucifer. On, then, with me.

Shelley's Queen Mab, p. 107.]
Wouldst thou behold things mortal or immortal?

Cain. Why, what are things?

Lucifer. Both partly: but what doth
Sit next thy heart?

Cain. The things I see.

Lucifer. But what
Sale nearest it?

Cain. Nor ever shall—the mysteries of Death.

Lucifer. What, if I show to thee things which have
died,
As I have shown thee much which cannot die?

Cain. Do so.

Lucifer. Away, then! on our mighty wings!

Cain. Oh! how we cleave the blue! The stars fade
from us!

The earth! where is my earth? Let me look on it,
For I was made of it.

Lucifer. 'Tis now beyond thee,
Less, in the universe, than thou in it;
Yet deem not that thou canst escape it; thou
Shalt soon return to earth, and all its dust:
'Tis part of thy eternity, and mine.

Cain. Where dost thou lead me?

Lucifer. To what was before thee!

The phantasm of the world; of which thy world
Is but the wreck.

Cain. What! is it not then new?

Lucifer. No more than life is; and that was ere thou
Or I were, or the things which seem to us
Greater than either: many things will have
No end; and some, which would pretend to have
Had no beginning, have had one as mean
As thou; and mightier things have been extinct
To make way for much meaner than we can
Surmise; for moments only and the space
Have been and must be all unchangeable.
But changes make not death, except to clay;
But thou art clay—and canst but comprehend
That which was clay, and such thou shalt behold.


SCENE I.]

Lucifer. Away, then!

Cain. But the lights fade from me fast,
And some till now grew larger as we approached,
And wore the look of worlds.

Lucifer. And such they are.

Cain. And Edens in them?

Lucifer. It may be.

Cain. And men?

Lucifer. Yea, or things higher.

Cain. Aye! and serpents too?

Lucifer. Wouldst thou have men without them? must

Cain. Breathe, save the erect ones?

Cain. How the lights recede!

Where fly we?

Lucifer. To the world of phantoms, which
Are beings past, and shadows still to come.

Cain. But it grows dark, and dark—the stars are gone!

Lucifer. And yet thou seest.

Cain. 'Tis a fearful light!

No sun—no moon—no lights innumerable—
The very blue of the em purpled night
Fades to a dreary twilight—but I see
Huge dusky masses; but unlike the worlds
We were approaching, which, begirt with light,
Seemed full of life even when their atmosphere
Of light gave way, and showed them taking shapes
Unequal, of deep valleys and vast mountains;
And some emitting sparks, and some displaying
Enormous liquid plains, and some begirt
With luminous belts, and floating moons, which took,
Like them, the features of fair earth:—instead,
All here seems dark and dreadful.

Lucifer. But distinct.

Thou seekest to behold Death, and dead things?

Cain. I seek it not; but as I know there are
Such, and that my sire's sin makes
And all that we inherit, liable
To such, I would behold, at once, what I
Must one day see perforce.

1. And with serpents too?—[MS. M.]
Lucifer. Behold! 'Tis darkness!
Cain. Lucifer. And so it shall be ever—but we will
Unfold its gates!
Cain. Enormous vapours roll
Apart—what's this?
Lucifer. Enter! Can I return?
Lucifer. Return! be sure: how else should Death be
peopled?
Its present realm is thin to what it will be,
Through thee and thine.
Cain. The clouds still open wide
And wider, and make widening circles round us!
Lucifer. Advance!
Cain. And thou!
Lucifer. Fear not—without me thou
Couldst not have gone beyond thy world. On! on!
[They disappear through the clouds.]

SCENE II.—Hades.

Enter Lucifer and Cain.

Cain. How silent and how vast are these dim worlds!
For they seem more than one, and yet more peopled
Than the huge brilliant luminous orbs which swung
So thickly in the upper air, that I
Had deemed them rather the bright populace
Of some all unimaginable Heaven,
Than things to be inhabited themselves; but
That on drawing near them I beheld
Their swelling into palpable immensity
Of matter, which seemed made for life to dwell on,
Rather than life itself. But here, all is
So shadowy, and so full of twilight, that
It speaks of a day past.
Lucifer. It is the realm
i. Rather than things to be inhabited.—[MS. M.

SCENE II.]

Cain. Of Death.—Wouldst have it present?

Cain. Till I know
That which it really is, I cannot answer.
But if it be as I have heard my father
Deal out in his long homilies, 'tis a thing—
Oh God! I dare not think on't! Cursed be
He who invented Life that leads to Death!
Or the dull mass of life, that, being life,
Could not retain, but needs must forfeit it—
Even for the innocent!
Lucifer. Dost thou curse thy father?
Cain. Cursed he not me in giving me my birth?
Curst he not me before my birth, in daring
To pluck the fruit forbidden?
Lucifer. Thou say'st well: The curse is mutual 'twixt thy sire and thee—
But for thy sons and brother?
Cain. Let them share it
With me, their sire and brother! What else is
Bequeathed to me? I leave them my inheritance!
Oh, ye interminable gloomy realms
Of swimming shadows and enormous shapes,
Some fully shown, some indistinct, and all
Mighty and melancholy—what are ye?
Live ye, or have ye lived?
Lucifer. Somewhat of both.
Cain. Then what is Death?
Lucifer. What? 'Hath not he who made ye
Said 'tis another life? Cain. Till now he hath
Said nothing, save that all shall die.
Lucifer. Perhaps
He one day will unfold that further secret.
Cain. Happy the day!
Lucifer. Yes; happy! when unfolded,
Through agonies unspeakable, and clogged
With agonies eternal, to innumerable
Yet unborn myriads of unconscious atoms,
All to be animated for this only!
Cain. What are these mighty phantoms which I see
Floating around me?—They wear not the form

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SCENE II.]

CAIN.

In its dull damp degeneracy, to
Thee and thy son;—and how weak they are, judge
By thy own flesh.

Cain.    Ah me! and did they perish?
Lucifer. Yes, from their earth, as thou wilt fade from
          this
Cain.    But was mine theirs?
Lucifer.  It was.
Cain.    But not as now.
It is too little and too lowly to
Sustain such creatures.

Lucifer.  True, it was more glorious.
Cain.    And wherefore did it fall?
Lucifer.  Ask him who tells. 1
Cain.    But how?
Lucifer.  By a most crushing and inexorable
          Destruction and disorder of the elements,
          Which struck a world to chaos, as a chaos
          Subsiding has struck out a world: such things,
          Though rare in time, are frequent in eternity.—
          Pass on, and gaze upon the past.
Cain.    'Tis awful!
Lucifer.  And true. Behold these phantoms! they were
          once
Material as thou art.

Cain.    And must I be
Like them?

Lucifer.  Let He 2 who made thee answer that.
I show thee what thy predecessors are,
And what they were thou feelest, in degree
 Inferior as thy petty feelings and
Thy pettier portion of the immortal part
Of high intelligence and earthly strength.
What ye in common have with what they had
Is Life, and what ye shall have—Death: the rest
Of your poor attributes is such as suits

1. ["I have . . . supposed Cain to be shown in the rational pre-
Adamites, beings endowed with a higher intelligence than man, but
70
totally unlike him in form, and with much greater strength of mind
and person. You may suppose the small talk which takes place
between him and Lucifer upon these matters is not quite canonical."—

2. ["Let He." There is no doubt that Byron wrote, or that he
should have written, "Let Him."]
Cain.

[ACT II.

Reptiles engendered out of the subsiding Slime of a mighty universe, crushed into A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled with Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness— A Paradise of Ignorance, from which Knowledge was barred as poison. But behold What these superior beings are or were; Or, if it irk thee, turn thee back and till The earth, thy task— I'll waft thee there in safety. Cain. No; I'll stay here.

Lucifer. How long?

Cain. For ever. Since I must. Ollilax. Let return from the earth, I rather would remain: I am sick of all That dust has shown me—let me dwell in shadows.

Lucifer. It cannot be: thou now beholdest as A vision that which is reality. To make thyself fit for this dwelling, thou Must pass through what the things thou seest have passed— The gates of Death.

Cain. By what gate have we entered Even now?

Lucifer. By mine! But, plighted to return, My spirit buoys thee up to breathe in regions Where all is breathless save thyself. Gaze on; But do not think to dwell here till thine hour Is come!

Cain. And these, too—can they ne'er repass To earth again?

Lucifer. Their earth is gone for ever— So changed by its convulsion, they would not Be conscious to a single present spot Of its new scarcely hardened surface—twas— Oh, what a beautiful world it was!

Cain. And is! It is not with the earth, though I must till it, I feel at war— but that I may not profit By what it bears of beautiful, untolling, Nor gratify my thousand swelling thoughts With knowledge, nor allay my thousand fears Of Death and Life.

Lucifer. What thy world is, thou see'st, But canst not comprehend the shadow of That which it was.

Cain. And those enormous creatures, Phantoms inferior in intelligence (At least so seeming) to the things we have passed, Resembling somewhat the wild habitants Of the deep woods of earth, the hugest which Roar nightly in the forest, but ten-fold In magnitude and terror; taller than The cherub-guarded walls of Eden—with Eyes flashing like the fiery swords which fence them— And tusks projecting like the trees stripped of Their bark and branches— what were they?

Lucifer. That which The Mammoth is in thy world;— but these lie By myriads underneath its surface.

Cain. But None on it?

Lucifer. No: for thy frail race to war With them would render the curse on it useless— They must be destroyed so early.

Cain. But why war?

Lucifer. You have forgotten the denunciation Which drove your race from Eden— war with all things, And death to all things, and disease to most things, And pangs, and bitterness; these were the fruits Of the forbidden tree.

Cain. But animals— Did they, too, eat of it, that they must die?

Lucifer. Your Maker told you, they were made for you, As you for him. —You would not have their doom Superior to your own? Had Adam not Fallen, all had stood...

Cain. Alas! the hopeless wretches! They too must share my sire's fate, like his sons; Like them, too, without having shared the apple; Like them, too, without the so dear-bought knowledge! It was a lying tree— for we know nothing.

At least it promised knowledge at the price
Of death—but knowledge still: but what knows man?

Lucifer. It may be death leads to the highest knowledge;
And being of all things the sole thing certain,*
At least leads to the surest science: therefore
The Tree was true, though deadly.

Cain. These dim realms! I see them, but I know them not.

Lucifer. Because Thy hour is yet afar, and matter cannot
Comprehend spirit wholly—but 'tis something
To know there are such realms.

Cain. We knew already
That there was Death.

Lucifer. But not what was beyond it.

Cain. Nor know I now.

Lucifer. Thou knowest that there is
A state, and many states beyond thine own—
And this thou knewest not this morn.

Cain. But all
Seems dim and shadowy.

Lucifer. Be content; it will
Seem clearer to thine immortality.

Cain. And yon immeasurable liquid space
Of glorious azure which floats on beyond us,
Which looks like water, and which I should deem a, u
The river which flows out of Paradise
Past my own dwelling, but that it is bankless
And boundless, and of an ethereal hue—
What is it?

Lucifer. There is still some such on earth,
Although inferior, and thy children shall
Dwell near it—'tis the phantasm of an Ocean.

Cain. 'Tis like another world; a liquid sun—
And those inordinate creatures sporting o'er
Its shining surface?

Lucifer. Are its inhabitants,
The past Leviathans.

Cain. And yon immense

1. And being of all things the sole thing sure.—[MS. M.]
2. Which seems like water and which I should deem.—[MS. M.]
Cain.

My sister Adah.—All the stars of heaven,
The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
The hues of twilight—the Sun's gorgeous coming—
His setting indescribable, which fills
My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold
Him sink, and feel my heart float softly with him
Along that western paradise of clouds—
The forest shade, the green bough, the bird's voice—
The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
And mingles with the song of Cherubim,
As the day closes over Eden's walls;—
All these are nothing, to my eyes and heart,
Like Adah's face: I turn from earth and heaven
To gaze on it.

Lucifer. 'Tis fair as frail mortality,
In the first dawn and bloom of young creation,
And earliest embraces of earth's parents,
Can make its offspring; still it is delusion.

Cain. You think so, being not her brother.

Lucifer. My brotherhood's with those who have no
children.

Cain. Then thou canst have no fellowship
With us.

Lucifer. It may be that thine own shall be for me.
But if thou dost possess a beautiful
Being beyond all beauty in thine eyes,
Why art thou wretched?

Lucifer. Why do I exist?

Cain. Why art thou wretched? why are all things so?

Ev'n he who made us must be, as the maker
Of things unhappy! To produce destruction
Can surely never be the task of joy,
And yet my sire says he's omnipotent:
Then why is Evil—he being Good? I asked
This question of my father; and he said,
Because this Evil only was the path
To Good. Strange Good, that must arise from out
Its deadly opposite. I lately saw
A lamb stung by a reptile: the poor sucking
Lay foaming on the earth, beneath the vain
And piteous bleating of its restless dam;
CAIN.

[ACT II.

My father plucked some herbs, and laid them to
The wound; and by degrees the helpless wretch
Resumed its careless life, and rose to drain
The mother's milk, who o'er it tremulous
Stood licking its reviving limbs with joy.
Behold, my son! said Adam, how from Evil
Springs Good! 1

Lucifer. What didst thou answer?
Cain. Nothing; for
He is my father: but I thought, that 'twere
A better portion for the animal
Never to have been stane at all, than to
Purchase renewal of its little life
With agonies unutterable, though
Dispelled by antidotes.
Lucifer. But as thou saidst
Of all beloved things thou loveth her
Who shared thy mother's milk, and giveth hers
Unto thy children—
Cain. Most assuredly:
What should I be without her?
Lucifer. What am I?
Cain. Dost thou love nothing?
Lucifer. What does thy God love? 310
Cain. All things, my father says; but I confess
I see it not in their allotment here.
Lucifer. And, therefore, thou canst not see if I love
Or no—except some vast and general purpose,
To which particular things must melt like snows.
Cain. Snows! what are they?
Lucifer. Be happier in not knowing
What thy remoter offspring must encounter;

1. ["If you say that God permitted sin to manifest His wisdom, which shines the more brightly by the disorders which the wickedness of men produces every day, than it would have done in a state of innocence, it may be answered that this is to compare the Deity to a father who should suffer his children to break their legs on purpose to show to all the city his great art in setting their broken bones; or to a king who should suffer seditions and factions to increase through all his kingdom, that he might purchase the glory of quelling them.... This is that doctrine of a Father of the Church who said, "Felix culpa quae tales Redemptorum meruit!"—Bayle's Dictionary, 1737, art. "Psalms," note B, 25, iv. 515.]

SCENE II.]

Cain.

But bask beneath the clime which knows no winter.
Cain. But dost thou not love something like thyself?
Lucifer. And dost thou love thyself?
Cain. Yes; but love more 320
What makes my feelings more endurable,
And is more than myself, because I love it!
Lucifer. Thou lovest it, because 'tis beautiful,
As was the apple in thy mother's eye;
And when it ceases to be so, thy love
Will cease, like any other appetite. 1
Cain. Cease to be beautiful! how can that be?
Lucifer. With time.
Cain. But time has passed, and hitherto
Even Adam and my mother both are fair:
Not fair like Adah and the Seraphim—
But very fair.
Lucifer. All that must pass away
In them and her.
Cain. I'm sorry for it; but
Cannot conceive my love for her the less:
And when her beauty disappears, methinks
He who creates all beauty will lose more
Than me in seeing perish such a work.
Lucifer. I pity thee who lovest what must perish.
Cain. And I thee who lovest nothing.
Lucifer. And thy brother—
Sits he not near thy heart?
Cain. Why should he not?
Lucifer. Thy father loves him well—so does thy God.
Cain. And so do I.
Lucifer. 'Tis well and meekly done.
Cain. Meekly!
Lucifer. He is the second born of flesh,
And is his mother's favourite.

1. [Lucifer does not infect Cain with his cynical theories as to the origin and endurance of love. For the antidote, compare Wordsworth's sonnet "To a Painter" (No. 1), written in 1841—

"Morn into noon did pass, soon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the young.
As welcome, and as beautiful—in sooth
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy," etc.
Words, 1899, p. 272.]
Let him keep Her favour, since the Serpent was the first To win it.

Lucifer. And his father's?

Cain. What is that To me? should I not love that which all love?

Lucifer. And the Jehovah—the indulgent Lord, And bounteous planter of barred Paradise— He, too, looks smilingly on Abel.

Cain. I never saw him, and I know not if he smiles.

Lucifer. But you have seen his angels.

Cain. Rarely.

Lucifer. But sufficiently to see they love your brother: His sacrifices are acceptable.

Cain. So be they! wherefore speak to me of this?

Lucifer. Because thou hast thought of this ere now.

Cain. And if I have thought, why recall a thought that—(he pauses as agitated)—Spirit!

Here we are in thy world; speak not of mine. Thou hast shown me wonders; thou hast shown me those Mighty Pre-Adamites who walked the earth Of which ours is the wreck: thou hast pointed out Myriads of starry worlds, of which our own Is the dim and remote companion, in Infinity of life: thou hast shown me shadows Of that existence with the dreaded name Which my sire brought us—Death;* thou hast shown me much But not all: show me where Jehovah dwells, In his especial Paradise—or thine:

Where is it?

Lucifer. Here, and o'er all space,

Cain. But ye Have some allotted dwelling—as all things; Clay has its earth, and other worlds their tenants; All temporary breathing creatures their Peculiar clement; and things which have

* Which my sire shrinks from—Death ——.[MS. erased.]

Long ceased to breathe our breath, have theirs, thou say'st?

And the Jehovah and thyself have thine— Ye do not dwell together?

Lucifer. No, we reign Together; but our dwellings are asunder.

Cain. Would there were only one of ye! perchance An unity of purpose might make us

In elements which seem now jarred in storms, How came ye, being Spirits wise and infinite, To separate? Are ye not as brethren in Your essence—and your nature, and your glory?

Lucifer. Art not thou Abel's brother?

Cain. We are brethren, And so we shall remain; but were it not so, Is spirit like to flesh? can it fall out— Infinity with Immortality?

Jarring and turning space to misery— For what?

Lucifer. To reign.

Cain. Did ye not tell me that Ye are both eternal?

Lucifer. Yea! And what I have seen—

Yon blue immensity, is boundless?

Lucifer. Aye. Cain. And cannot ye both reign, then?—is there not Enough?—why should ye differ?

Lucifer. We both reign.

Cain. But one of you makes evil. Which?

Lucifer. Thou! for If thou canst do man good, why dost thou not?

Lucifer. And why not he who made? I made ye not;

Ye are his creatures, and not mine. Then leave us

His creatures, as thou say'st we are, or show me Thy dwelling, or his dwelling.

Lucifer. I could show thee Both; but the time will come thou shalt see one
Cain.

And why not now?

Lucifer. Thy human mind hath scarcely grasp to gather The little I have shown thee into calm And clear thought: and thou wouldst go on aspiring To the great double Mysteries! the two Principles! And gaze upon them on their secret thrones! Dust! Limit thy ambition; for to see Either of these would be for thee to perish!

Cain. And let me perish, so I see them!

Lucifer. The son of her who snatched the apple spake! But thou wouldst only perish, and not see them; That sight is for the other state.

Cain. Lucifer, That is the prelude.

Lucifer. Then I dread it less, Now that I know it leads to something definite.

Cain. Lucifer, and now I will convey thee to thy world, Where thou shalt multiply the race of Adam, Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep, sleep—and die!

Cain. And to what end have I beheld these things Which thou hast shown me?

Lucifer. Didst thou not require Knowledge? And have I not, in what I showed, Taught thee to know thyself?

Cain. Nothing.

Alas! I seem

1. [In Byron's Diary for January 28, 1821, we find the following entry—]

"Thought for a speech of Lucifer, in the Tragedy of Cain.

"Were Death an evil, would I let thee live? For I live as I live—as thy father lives, And thy sons' sons shall live for evermore!"

Letters, 1901, v. 191.]

2. [Matthew Arnold (Poetry of Byron, 1881, p. xxii.) quotes these lines as an instance of Byron's unknownness and want of humour. It cannot be denied that he leaves imbedded in his facile lumps of unshapen material, which mar the symmetry of his art. Lucifer's harangue involves a reference to "hard words ending in tim." The spirit of error, not the Manichean heresy, should have proceeded out of his lips.]

3. ["Cain is a proud man: if Lucifer promised him kingdoms, etc.,]
Evil; but what will be the Good he gives?
Were I the victor, his works would be deemed
The only evil ones. And you, ye new
And scarce-born mortals, what have been his gifts
To you already, in your little world?
Cain. But few; and some of those but bitter.
Lucifer. With me, then, to thine earth, and try the rest
Of his celestial boons to you, and yours.
Evil and Good are things in their own essence,
And not made good or evil by the Giver;
But if he gives you good—so call him; if
Evil springs from him, do not name it mine,
Till ye know better its true fount; and judge
Not by words, though of Spirits, but by the fruits
Of your existence, such as it must be.
One good gift has the fatal apple given—
Your reason—let it not be overthrown
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:
Think and endure, and form an inner world
In your own bosom—where the outward fails;
So shall you nearer be the spiritual
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—The Earth, near Eden, as in Act I.
Enter Cain and Adah.

Adah. Hush! tread softly, Cain!
Cain. I will—but wherefore?
Adah. Our little Enoch sleeps upon this bed
Of leaves, beneath the cypress.
Cain. Cypress! 'tis
A gloomy tree, which looks as if it mourned
O'er what it shadows; wherefore didst thou choose it
For our child's canopy?

Adah. Because its branches
Shut out the sun like night, and therefore seemed
Fitting to shadow slumber.
Cain. Aye, the last—
And longest; but no matter—lead me to him.

[They go up to the child.

How lovely he appears! his little cheeks,
In their pure incarnation, 1 vying with
The rose leaves strewn beneath them.
Adah. And his lips, too,
How beautifully parted! No; you shall not
Kiss him, at least not now: he will awake soon—
His hour of mid-day rest is nearly over;
But it were pity to disturb him till
'Tis closed.

Cain. You have said well; I will contain
My heart till then. He smiles, and sleeps!—sleep on,
And smile, thou little, young inheritor
Of a world scarce less young: sleep on, and smile!
Thrice are the hours and days when both are cheering
And innocent! thou hast not plucked the fruit—
Thou know'st not thou art naked! Must the time
Come thou shalt be merced for sins unknown,
Which were not thine nor mine? But now sleep on!
His cheeks are reddening into deeper smiles,
And shining lids are trembling o'er his long
Lashes, 2 dark as the cypress which waves o'er them;
Half open, from beneath them the clear blue
Laughs out, although in slumber. He must dream—
Of what? Of Paradise!—Aye! dream of it,
My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream;
For never more mayst thou, thy sons, nor fathers,
Shall walk in that forbidden place of joy!
Adah. Dear Cain! Nay, do not whisper o'er our son
Such melancholy yearnings o'er the past:

1. An obsolete form of carnation, the colour of flesh.
2. Her dewy eyes are closed.

'Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark-blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillow'd.'

Shelley's Queen Mab. i. iii. p. 104.
Why wilt thou always mourn for Paradise? Can we not make it better? Where? Here, or where'er thou wilt: where'er thou art, I feel not the want of this so much regretted Eden.

Cain. Yes—Death, too, is amongst the debts we owe her. Cain! that proud Spirit, who withdrew thee hence, Hath saddened thine still deeper. I had hoped The promised wonders which thou hast beheld, Visions, thou say'st, of past and present worlds, Would have composed thy mind into the calm Of a contented knowledge; but I see Thy guide hath done thee evil: still I thank him, And can forgive him all, that he so soon Hath given thee back to us...

Cain. ...So soon?

Adah. Tis scarcely two hours since ye departed; two long hours To me, but only hours upon the sun. Cain. And yet I have approached that sun, and seen Worlds which he once shone on, and never more Shall light; and worlds he never lit; methought Years had rolled o'er my absence.

Adah. Hardly hours. Cain. The mind then hath capacity of time, And measures it by that which it beholds, Pleasing or painful; littler or Almighty.

1. "Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind... One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours, another sleeps soundly in his bed. The difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half an hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony."—Shelley's note to the lines—

SCENE I.] CAIN.

I had beheld the immemorial works Of endless beings; skirred extinguished worlds; And, gazing on eternity, methought I had borrowed more by a few drops of ages From its immensity: but now I feel My littleness again. Well said the Spirit, That I was nothing! Wherefore said he so?

Cain. No: he contents him With making us the nothing which we are; And after flattering dust with glimpses of Eden and Immortality, resolves It back to dust again—for what?

Adah. Thou know'st—Even for our parents' error.

Cain. What is that To us? they sinned, then let them die!

Adah. Thou hast not spoken well, nor is that thought Thy own, but of the Spirit who was with thee. Would I could die for them, so they might live! Cain. Why, so say I—provided that one victim Might satiate the Insatiable of life, And that our little rosie sleeper there Might never taste of death nor human sorrow, Nor hand it down to those who spring from him.

Adah. How know we that some such atonement one day May not redeem our race?

Cain. By sacrificing the harmless for the guilty? What atonement? Were there? why, we are innocent; what have we Done, that we must be victims for a deed Before our birth, or need have victims to Atone: for this mysterious, nameless sin—If it be such a sin to seek for knowledge?

Adah. Ailas! thou sinnest now, my Cain: thy words Sound impious in mine ears.

Cain. Then leave me!

Adah. Never, he knows that he's dangerous in this state.
Though thy God left thee.  

Cain. Say, what have we here?  

Adah. Two altars, which our brother Abel made  
During thine absence, whereupon to offer  
A sacrifice to God on thy return.  

Cain. And how knew he, that I would be so ready  
With the burnt offerings, which he daily brings  
With a meek brow, whose base humility  
Shows more of fear than worship—as a bribe.  

To the Creator?  

Adah. Surely, 'tis well done.  

Cain. One altar may suffice; I have no offering.  

Adah. The fruits of the earth, the early, beautiful,  
Blossom and bud—and bloom of flowers and fruits—  
These are a goodly offering to the Lord.  

Given with a gentle and a contrite spirit.  

Cain. I have toiled, and tilled, and sweated in the sun,  
According to the curse:—must I do more?  
For what should I be gentle? for a war  
With all the elements ere they will yield  
The bread we eat?  
For what must I be grateful?  
For being dust, and groveling in the dust;  
Till I return to dust? If I am nothing—  
For nothing shall I be an hypocrite,  
And seem well-pleased with pain? For what should I  
Be contrite? for my father's sin, already  
Expiate with what we all have undergone,  
And to be more than expiated by  
The ages prophesied, upon our seed.  
Little deems our young blooming sleeper, there,  
The germs of an eternal misery.  
To myriads is within him! better 'twere  
I snatched him in his sleep, and dashed him 'gainst  
The rocks, than let him live to—  

Adah. Oh, my God!  

1. [It is Adah, Cain's wife, who suggests the disastrous compromise,  
not a "burnt-offering," but the "fruits of the earth," which would cost  
the giver little or nothing—an instance in point of Lucifer's cynical  
reminder (vide ante, act ii. sc. 2, line 210, p. 247) "that there are some  
things still which woman may tempt man to." ]

Scene I.  

Cain.  

Touch not the child—my child! thy child! Oh, Cain!  

Cain. Fear not! for all the stars, and all the power  
Which sways them, I would not accost you infant  
With rudor greeting than a father's kiss.  

Adah. Then, why so awful in thy speech?  

Cain. I said,  
'Twere better that he ceased to live, than give  
Life to so much of sorrow as he must  
Endure, and, harder still, bequeath: but since  
That saying jars you, let us only say—  
'Twere better that he never had been born.  

Adah. Oh, do not say so! Where were then the  
Joys,  
The mother's joys of watching, nourishing,  
And loving him? Soft! he awakes. Sweet Enoch!  

[SHE goes to the child.  

Oh, Cain! look on him; see how full of life,  
Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and of joy—  
How like to me—how like to thee, when gentle  
For then we are all alike; 'tis not so, Cain?  
Mother, and sire, and son, our features are  
Reflected in each other; as they are  
In the clear waters, when they are gentle, and  
When thou art gentle. Love us, then, my Cain!  
And love thyself for our sakes, for we love thee.  
Look! how he laughs and stretches out his arms,  
And opens wide his blue eyes upon thine,  
To hail his father; while his little form  
Flutters as winged with joy. Talk not of pain!  
The childless cherubs well might envy thee  
The pleasures of a parent! Bless him, Cain!  
As yet he hath no words to thank thee, but  
His heart will, and thine own too.  

Cain. Bless thee, boy!  

If that a mortal blessing may avail thee,  
To save thee from the Serpent's curse!  

Adah. It shall.  
Surely a father's blessing may avert  
A reptile's subtlety.  

Cain. Of that I doubt;  

But bless him ne'er the less.
Adah. Our brother comes.
Cain. Thy brother Abel.

Enter Abel.

Abel. Welcome, Cain! My brother, the peace of God be on thee.
Cain. Abel, hail!
Abel. Our sister tells me that thou hast been wandering, in high communion with a Spirit, far beyond our wonted range. Was he of those we have seen and spoken with, like to our father?
Cain. No.
Abel. Why then commute with him? he may be a foe to the Most High.
Cain. And friend to man. Has the Most High been so—
Abel. Term him! your words are strange to-day, my brother.
My sister Adah, leave us for awhile—we mean to sacrifice.
Adah. Farewell, my Cain; but first embrace thy son. May his soft spirit, and Abel’s pious ministry, call thee to peace and holiness! [Exit Adah, with her child.
Abel. Where hast thou been?
Cain. I know not.
Abel. Nor what thou hast seen?
Cain. The dead—The Immortal—the Unbounded—the Omnipotent—the overpowering mysteries of space—the innumerable worlds that were and are—a whirlwind of such overwhelming things, suns, moons, and earths, upon their loud-voiced spheres singing in thunder round me, as have made me unfit for mortal converse: leave me, Abel.
Abel. Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light.

1. [“From the beginning the woman is ineligible for the priesthood—‘He for God only, she for God in him’” (Paradise Lost, iv. 299). “Let the women keep silence in the churches” (Corinthians, i. 31, 34.)]
The firstlings of the flock, and fat thereof—
A shepherd's humble offering.

Cain. I have no flocks;
I am a tiller of the ground, and must
Yield what it yieldeth to my till—its fruit:

Behold them in their various bloom and ripeness.
[They dress their altars, and kindle a flame upon them.]

Abel. My brother, as the elder, offer first
Thy prayer and thanksgiving with sacrifice.

Cain. No—I am new to this; lead thou the way,
And I will follow—as I may.

Abel (kneeling).
Oh, God!
Who made us, and who breathed the breath of life
Within our nostrils, who hath blessed us,
And spared, despite our father's sin, to make
His children all lost, as they might have been,
Had not thy justice been so tempered with
The mercy which is thy delight, as to
Accord a pardon like a Paradise,
Compared with our great crimes:—Sole Lord of light!
Of good, and glory, and eternity!
Without whom all were evil, and with whom
Nothing can err, except to some good end
Of thine omnipotent benevolence!
Ineradicable, but still to be fulfilled!
Accept from out thy humble first of shepherds'
First of the first-born flocks—an offering,
In itself nothing—as what offering can be
Aught unto thee?—but yet accept it for

1. [Compare the following passage from La Representazione di Abel ed di Cain (in Firenze l'anno MDCCLXXI).—]

"Abel parla a Dio tutto il sacrificio,
Rendendogli laude.
Signor pre, e tutto bene abbandono
Le ch'ai sommamente mio conselio.
Tanto mi piace, et tanto me' giocondo
Quando delle tue grandezze tu vedi
El più graso, e miglior nel mondo
Ti do con lieto core come tu vedi
Tu vedi la intensione con lielual vegna," etc.

The thanksgiving of him who spreads it in
The face of thy high heaven—bowing his own
Even to the dust, of which he is—in honour
Of thee, and of thy name, for evermore!

Cain (standing erect during this speech). Spirit what'ee
or whosee'er thou art,
Omnipotent, it may be—and, if good,
Shown in the exemption of thy deeds from evil;
Jehovah upon earth! and God in heaven!
And it may be with other names, because
Thine attributes seem many, as thy works:
If thou must be propitiated with prayers,
Take them! If thou must be induced with altars,
And softened with a sacrifice, receive them;
Two beings here erect them unto thee,
If thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's shrine, which smokes
On my right hand, hath shed it for thy service
In the first of his flock, whose limbs now reek
In sanguinary incense to thy skies;
Or, if the sweet and blooming fruits of earth,
And milder seasons, which the unstained turf
I spread them on now offers in the face
Of the broad sun which ripened them, may seem
Good to thee—inasmuch as they have not
Suffered in limb or life—and rather form
A sample of thy works, than supplication
To look on ours! If a shrine without victim,
And altar without gore, may win thy favour,
Look on it! and for him who dresseth it,
He is—such as thou mad'st him; and seeks nothing
Which must be won by kneeling: if he's evil,
Strike him! thou art omnipotent, and may'st—
For what can he oppose? If he be good,
Strike him, or spare him, as thou wilt! since all
Rests upon thee; and Good and Evil seem
To have no power themselves, save in thy will—
And whether that be good or ill I know not,
Not being omnipotent, nor fit to judge
Omnipotence—but merely to endure
Its mandate; which thus far I have endured.

i. Which must be won with prayers—if he be evil.—[MS. IV.]
[The fire upon the altar of Abel kindles into a column of the brightest flame, and ascends to heaven; while a whirlwind throws down the altar of Cain, and scatters the fruits abroad upon the earth.]

Abel (kneeling). Oh, brother, pray! Jehovah's wroth with thee.

Cain. Why so?

Abel. Thy fruits are scattered on the earth.

Cain. From earth they came, to earth let them return; their seed will bear fresh fruit there ere the summer:

Thy burnt flesh-offering prospers better; see How Heaven licks up the flames when thick with blood!

Abel. Think not upon my offering's acceptance, but make another of thine own—before it be too late.

Cain. I will build no more altars, nor suffer any—

Abel (rising). Cain! what meanest thou?

Cain. To cast down yon vile flatterer of the clouds,
The smoky harbinger of thy dull prayers—

Jehovah, with its blood of lambs and kids,

Which fed on milk, to be destroyed in blood.

Abel (opposing him). Thou shalt not;—add not impious works to impious words! let that altar stand—tis hallowed now by the immortal pleasure of Jehovah, in his acceptance of the victims.

Cain. His pleasure! what was his high pleasure in the fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood?

To the pain of the bleating mothers, which still yearn for their dead offspring; or the pangs of the sad ignorant victims underneath.

Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody record shall not stand in the sun, to shame creation!

Abel. Brother, give back! thou shalt not touch my altar

With violence: if that thou wilt adopt it,

To try another sacrifice, 'tis thine.

1. [See Genesis' Death of Abel.]
Abel. Then may God forgive him! Cain, Comnfort poor Zillah!—she has but one brother. Now.

Cain. And I none!—Who makes me brotherless? His eyes are open! then he is not dead! Death is like sleep;—and sleep shuts down our lids. His lips, too, are apart; why then he breathes: And yet I feel it not.—His heart!—his heart!—Let me see, doth it beat? methinks—No!—no! This is a vision, else I am become The native of another and worse world.
The earth swims round me:—what is this?—tis wet;

[puts his hand to his brow, and then looks at it.]
And yet there are no dews! Tis blood—my blood—
My brother's and my own! and shed by me!
Then what have I further to do with life,
Since I have taken life from my own flesh?
But he can not be dead!—Is silence death?
No; he will wake; then let me watch by him.
Life cannot be so slight, as to be quenched
Thus quickly!—he hath spoken to me since—
What shall I say to him?—My brother!—No;
He will not answer to that name; for brethren
Smile not each other. Yet—yet—speak to me. Oh! for a word more of that gentle voice,
That I may hear to hear my own again!

Enter Zillah. Zillah. I heard a heavy sound; what can it be?
'Tis Cain, and watching by my husbant. What
Dost thou there, brother? Dost he sleep? Oh, Heaven!
What means this paleness, and you stream?—No, no! 361
It is not blood; for who would shed his blood?
Abel! what's this?—who hath done this? He moves not;
He breathes not: and his hands drop down from mine

1. [Compare—

"How wonderful is Death—
Death and his brother Sleep!"

Queen Mab, i. lines 1, 2.]

SCENE I.]

Cain.

With soty lifelessness! Ah! cruel Cain!
Why camest thou not in time to save him from
This violence? Whatever hath assailed him,
Thou wert the stronger, and shouldst have stepped in
Between him and aggression! Father!—Eve!—Adah!—come hither! Death is in the world!

[Exit Zillah, calling on her Parents, etc.]

Cain ( soliloquy). And who hath brought him there?—I—
Who abhor
The name of Death so deeply, that the thought
Empoisoned all my life, before I knew
His aspect—I have led him here, and given
My brother to his cold and still embrace,
As if he would not have asserted his
Inexorable claim without my aid.
I am awake at last—a dreary dream
Had maddened me;—but he shall ne'er awake!

Enter Adam, Eve, Adah, and Zillah.

Adam. A voice of woe from Zillah brings me here—

What do I see?—Tis true!—My son!—my son!

Woman, behold the Serpent's work, and thine! [To Eve.

Eve. Oh! speak not of it now! the Serpent's fangs
Are in my heart! My best beloved, Abel!
Jehovah! this is punishment beyond
A mother's sin, to take him from me!

Adam. Who, Or what hath done this deed?—speak, Cain, since thou
Wert present; was it some more hostile angel,
Who walks not with Jehovah? or some wilde Brute of the forest?

Eve. Ah! a livid light
Breaks through, as from a thunder-cloud! ye brand
Massy and bloody! snatched from off the altar,
And black with smoke, and red with——

Adam. Speak, my son!

Speak, and assure us, wretched as we are,
That we are not more miserable still.

Adah. Speak, Cain! and say it was not thou!

Eve. It was:
I see it now—he hangs his guilty head,  
And covers his ferocious eye with hands  
Incarnadine!  

Adah.  Mother, thou dost him wrong—  
Cain! clear thee from this horrible accusal,  
Which grieves wrings from our parent,  

Eve.  Hear, Jehovah!  
May the eternal Serpent’s curse be on him!  
For he was fitter for his seed than ours,  
May all his days be desolate!  May—  

Adah.  Hold!  
Curse him not, mother, for he is thy son—  
Curse him not, mother, for he is my brother,  
And my betrothed.  

Eve.  He hath left thee no brother—  
Zillah no husband—me no son! for thus  
I curse him from my sight for evermore!  
All bonds I break between us, as he broke  
That of his nature, in you—Oh Death! Death!  
Why didst thou not take me, who first incurred thee?  
Why dost thou not so now?  

Adam.  Eve! let not this,  
Thy natural grief, lead to impiety!  
A heavy doom was long foreshadowed to us;  
And now that it begins, let it be borne  
In such sort as may show our God, that we  
Are faithful servants to his holy will.  

Eve (pointing to Cain).  His will! the will of yon  
Incarnate Spirit  
Of Death, whom I have brought upon the earth  
To strew it with the dead.  May all the curses  
Of life be on him! and his agonies  
Drive him forth o’er the wilderness, like us  
From Eden, till his children die by him  
As he did by his brother! May the swords  
And wings of fiery Cherubim pursue him  
By day and night—snakes spring up in his path—  
Earth’s fruits be ashes in his mouth—the leaves  
On which he lays his head to sleep be strewed  
With scorpions! May his dreams be of his victim!  
His waking a continual dread of Death!

SCENE I.  

Cain.  
May the clear rivers turn to blood as he  
Stoops down to stain them with his raging lip!  
May every element shun or change to him!  
May he live in the pangs which others die with!  
And Death itself was far less than Death  
To him who first acquainted him with man!  
Hence, fratricide! henceforth that word is Cain,  
Through all the coming myriads of mankind,  
Who shall abhor thee, though thou wert their sire!  
May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods  
Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust  
A grave! the sun his light! and heaven her God!  

Adam.  Cain! get thee forth: we dwell no more  
together.  
Depart! and leave the dead to me—I am  
Henceforth alone—we never must meet more.  

Adah.  Oh, part not with him thus, my father: do not  
Add thy deep curse to Eve’s upon his head!  

Adam.  I curse him not; his spirit be his curse.  
Come, Zillah!  

Zillah.  I must watch my husband’s corse.  

Adam.  We will return again, when he is gone  
Who hath provided for us this dread office.  
Come, Zillah!  

Zillah.  Yet one kiss on yon pale clay,

1. [Compare—"And Water shall hear me,  
And know thee and fly thee;  
And the Winds shall not touch thee  
When they pass by thee. . . .  
And thou shalt seek Death  
To release thee in vain.”  
The Curse of Kehama, by R. Southey, Canto II.]  

2. [The last three lines of this terrible denunciation were not in the original MS. In forwarding them to Murray (September 12, 1821, Letter, 1901, v. 361), to be added to Eve’s speech, Byron says,  
"There’s as pretty a piece of Imprecation for you, when joined to the lines already sent, as you may wish to meet with in the course of your business. But don’t forget the addition of these three lines, which are climbers to Eve’s speech.”]  

3. [If Byron had read his plays aloud, or been at pains to revise the proofs, he would hardly have allowed “corse” to remain in such close proximity to “curse.”]
And those lips once so warm—my heart! my heart!

[Exeunt Adam and Zillah weeping.

Adah. Cain! thou hast heard, we must go forth. I am ready.

So shall our children be. I will bear Enoch,
And you his sister. Ere the sun declines
Let us depart, nor walk the wilderness
Under the cloud of night.—Nay, speak to me.
To me—thine own.

Cain. Leave me!

Adah. Why, all have left thee. 460

Cain. And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear
To dwell with one who hath done this?

Adah. I fear
Nothing except to leave thee, much as I
Shrink from the deed which leaves thee brotherless,
I must not speak of this—it is between thee
And the great God.

A Voice from within exclaims. Cain! Cain!

Adah. Hear'st thou that voice?

The Voice within. Cain! Cain!

Adah. It soundeth like an angel's tone.

Enter the Angel of the Lord.1

Angel. Where is thy brother Abel?

Cain. Am I then

My brother's keeper?

Angel. Cain! what hast thou done?
The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out,

Even from the ground, unto the Lord!—Now art thou
Cursed from the earth, which opened late her mouth

1. [*I have avoided introducing the Deity, as in Scripture (though Milton does, and not very wisely either); but have adopted his angel as sent to Cain instead, on purpose to avoid shocking any feelings on the subject, by falling short of what all unprovided men must fall short in, viz. giving an adequate notion of the effect of the presence of Jehovah. The Old Mysteries introduced him literally enough, and this is avoided in the New."—Letter to Murray, February 8, 1822.

Letters, 1803, vi. 13. Byron does not seem to have known that in the older portions of the Bible "Angel of the Lord" is only a name for the Second Person of the Trinity.]
Thou slew'st was gentle as the flocks he tended.

Cain. After the fall too soon was I begotten;
Ere yet my mother's mind subsided from
The Serpent, and my sire still mourned for Eden.
That which I am, I am; I did not seek
For life, nor did I make myself; but could I
With my own death redeem him from the dust—
And why not so? let him return to day,
And I lie ghastly! so shall be restored
By God the life to him he loved; and taken
From me a being I ne'er loved to bear...

Angel. Who shall heal murder? what is done, is done;
Go forth! fulfil thy days! and be thy deeds
Unlike the last!

Adah. He's gone, let us go forth;
I hear our little Enoch cry within
Our bower.

Cain. Ah! little knows he what he weeps for!
And I who have shed blood cannot shed tears!
But the four rivers would not cleanse my soul,
Think'st thou my boy will bear to look on me?

Adah. If I thought that he would not, I would—
Cain (interrupting her). No,
No more of threats; we have had too many of them:
Go to our children—I will follow thee.

Adah. I will not leave thee alone with the dead—
Let us depart together.

Cain. Oh! thou dead
And everlasting witness! whose un sinking
Blood darkens earth and heaven! what thou now art
I know not! but if thou seest what I am,
I think thou wilt forgive him, whom his God
Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul.—Farewell!
I must not, dare not touch what I have made thee,
I, who sprung from the same womb with thee, drained
The same breast, clasped thee often to my own,
In fondness brotherly and boyish, I
Can never meet thee more, nor even dare
To do that for thee, which thou shouldst have done

1. [The "four rivers" which flowed round Eden, and consequently
the only waters with which Cain was acquainted upon earth.]