

Frozen in a moment¹ — a dead whirlpool's image :
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake — where the clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by —
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils ;
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes, for to-night
Is our great festival — 'tis strange they come not.

A Voice without, singing.

The Captive Usurper,
Hurl'd down from the throne,
Lay buried in torpor,
Forgotten and lone ;
I broke through his slumbers,
I shiver'd his chain,
I leagu'd him with numbers —
He's Tyrant again !

With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a nation's destruction — his flight and despair.

Second Voice, without.

The ship sail'd on, the ship sail'd fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast ;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his wreck ;
Save one, whom I held, as he swam, by the hair,
And he was a subject well worthy my care ;
A traitor on land, and a pirate at sea —
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me !

FIRST DESTINY, answering.

The city lies sleeping ;
The morn, to deplore it,
May dawn on it weeping :
Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it —
Thousands lie lowly ;
Tens of thousands shall perish —
The living shall fly from
The sick they shall cherish ;
But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from.
Sorrow and anguish,
And evil and dread,
Envelope a nation —
The blest are the dead,
Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation —
This work of a night —
This wreck of a realm — this deed of my doing —
For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing !

Enter the SECOND and THIRD DESTINIES.

The Three.

Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves ;
We only give to take again
The spirits of our slaves !

¹ [“ Came to a morass ; Hobhouse dismounted to get over well ; I tried to pass my horse over ; the horse sunk up to the chin, and of course he and I were in the mud together ; bemired, but not hurt ; laughed and rode on. Arrived at the Grindenwold ; mounted again, and rode to the higher glacier — like a frozen hurricane.” — *Swiss Journal.*]

² [This stanza we think is out of place, at least, if not out of character ; and though the author may tell us that human

First Des. Welcome ! — Where's Nemesis ?
Second Des. At some great work ;
But what I know not, for my hands were full.
Third Des. Behold she cometh.

Enter NEMESIS.

First Des. Say, where hast thou been ?
My sisters and thyself are slow to-night.
Nem. I was detain'd repairing shatter'd thrones,
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties,
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge ;
Goading the wise to madness ; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh, for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance, and to speak
Of freedom, the forbidden fruit. — Away !
We have outstay'd the hour — mount we our clouds !²
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

*The Hall of Arimanes — Arimanes on his Throne, a
Globe of Fire, surrounded by the Spirits.*

Hymn of the SPIRITS.

Hail to our Master ! — Prince of Earth and Air !
Who walks the clouds and waters — in his hand
The sceptre of the elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command !
He breatheth — and a tempest shakes the sea ;
He speaketh — and the clouds reply in thunder ;
He gazeth — from his glance the sunbeams flee ;
He moveth — earthquakes rend the world asunder.
Beneath his footsteps the volcanoes rise ;
His shadow is the Pestilence ; his path
The comets herald through the crackling skies ;³
And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
To him War offers daily sacrifice ;
To him Death pays his tribute ; Life is his,
With all its infinite agonies —
And his the spirit of whatever is !

Enter the DESTINIES and NEMESIS.

First Des. Glory to Arimanes ! on the earth
His power increaseth — both my sisters did
His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty !
Second Des. Glory to Arimanes ! we who bow
The necks of men, bow down before his throne !
Third Des. Glory to Arimanes ! we await
His nod !
Nem. Sovereign of Sovereigns ! we are thine,
And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
And most things wholly so ; still to increase
Our power, increasing thine, demands our care,
And we are vigilant — Thy late commands
Have been fulfill'd to the utmost.

calamities are naturally subjects of derision to the ministers of vengeance, yet we cannot be persuaded that satirical and political allusions are at all compatible with the feelings and impressions which it was here his business to maintain. — JEFFREY.]

³ [“ The comets herald through the {crackling} skies.” — MS.]

Enter MANFRED.

A Spirit. What is here ?
A mortal ! — Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship !
Second Spirit. I do know the man —
A Magian of great power, and fearful skill !
Third Spirit. Bow down and worship, slave ! —
What, know'st thou not
Thine and our Sovereign ? — Tremble, and obey !
All the Spirits. Prostrate thyself, and thy con-
demned clay,
Child of the Earth ! or dread the worst.
Man. I know it ;
And yet ye see I kneel not.

Fourth Spirit. 'Twill be taught thee.
Man. 'Tis taught already ; — many a night on the
earth,
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes ; I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.

Fifth Spirit. Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his Glory ? — Crouch ! I say.
Man. Bid him bow down to that which is above
him,
The overruling Infinite — the Maker
Who made him not for worship — let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.

The Spirits. Crush the worm !
Tear him in pieces ! —

First Des. Hence ! Avaunt ! — he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible ! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote ; his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature, like
Our own ; his knowledge and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the ethereal essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne ; his aspirations
Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know —
That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.
This is not all — the passions, attributes
Of earth and heaven, from which no power, nor
being,

Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart ; and in their consequence
Made him a thing, which I, who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine,
And thine, it may be — be it so, or not,
No other Spirit in this region hath
A soul like his — or power upon his soul.

Nem. What doth he here then ?
First Des. Let him answer that.
Man. Ye know what I have known ; and without
power

I could not be amongst ye : but there are
Powers deeper still beyond — I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek.

Nem. What would'st thou ?
Man. Thou canst not reply to me.
Call up the dead — my question is for them.

Nem. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch
The wishes of this mortal ?
Ari. Yea.
Nem. Whom would'st thou
Uncharnel ?
Man. One without a tomb — call up
Astarte.

NEMESIS.

Shadow ! or Spirit !
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which return'd to the earth,
Re-appear to the day !
Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm.
Appear ! — Appear ! — Appear !
Who sent thee there requires thee here !
[*The Phantom of ASTARTE rises and stands
in the midst.*]

Man. Can this be death ? there's bloom upon her
cheek ;

But now I see it is no living hue
But a strange hectic — like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.
It is the same ! Oh, God ! that I should dread
To look upon the same — Astarte ! — No,
I cannot speak to her — but bid her speak —
Forgive me or condemn me.

NEMESIS.

By the power which hath broken
The grave which enthrall'd thee,
Speak to him who hath spoken,
Or those who have call'd thee !

Man. She is silent,
And in that silence I am more than answer'd.
Nem. My power extends no further. Prince of air !
It rests with thee alone — command her voice.
Ari. Spirit — obey this sceptre !
Nem. Silent still !
She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal ! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.

Man. Hear me, hear me —
Astarte ! my beloved ! speak to me :
I have so much endured — so much endure —
Look on me ! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee : we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not — that I do bear
This punishment for both — that thou wilt be
One of the blessed — and that I shall die ;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence — in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality —
A future like the past. I cannot rest.
I know not what I ask, nor what I seek :
I feel but what thou art — and what I am ;

And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music — Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd
boughs,

And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answer'd me — many things answer'd me —
Spirits and men — but thou wert silent all.
Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness — Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around — they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone —
Speak to me! though it be in wrath; — but say —
I reckon not what — but let me hear thee once —
This once — once more!

Phantom of Astarte. Manfred!

Man. Say on, say on —
I live but in the sound — it is thy voice! [ills.]
Phan. Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly
Farewell!

Man. Yet one word more — am I forgiven?

Phan. Farewell!

Man. Say, shall we meet again?

Phan. Farewell!

Man. One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

Phan. Manfred!

[*The Spirit of Astarte disappears.*]¹

Nem. She's gone, and will not be recall'd;
Her words will be fulfill'd. Return to the earth.

A Spirit. He is convulsed — This is to be a mortal,
And seek the things beyond mortality.

Another Spirit. Yet, see, he mastereth himself,
and makes

His torture tributary to his will.

Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.

Nem. Hast thou further question
Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?

Man. None.

Nem. Then for a time farewell.

Man. We meet then! Where? On the earth? —
Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!

[*Exit MANFRED.*]

(*Scene closes.*)

¹ [Over this fine drama, a moral feeling hangs like a sombrous thunder cloud. No other guilt but that so darkly shadowed out could have furnished so dreadful an illustration of the hideous aberrations of human nature, however noble and majestic, when left a prey to its desires, its passions, and its imagination. The beauty, at one time so innocently adored, is at last soiled, profaned, and violated. Affection, love, guilt, horror, remorse, and death, come in terrible succession, yet all darkly linked together. We think of Astarte as young, beautiful, innocent — guilty — lost — murdered — buried — judged — pardoned; but still, in her permitted visit to earth, speaking in a voice of sorrow, and with a countenance yet pale with mortal trouble. We had but a glimpse of her in her beauty and innocence; but, at last, she rises up before us in all the mortal silence of a ghost, with fixed, glazed, and passionless eyes, revealing death, judgment, and eternity. The moral breathes and burns in every word, — in sadness, misery, insanity, desolation, and death. The work is "instinct with spirit," — and in the agony and distraction, and all its dimly imagined causes, we behold, though broken up, confused, and shattered, the elements of a purer existence. — WILSON.]

² [The third Act, as originally written, being shown to Mr. Gifford, he expressed his unfavourable opinion of it very distinctly; and Mr. Murray transmitted this opinion to Lord Byron. The result is told in the following extracts from his letters: —

ACT III.²

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Castle of Manfred.

MANFRED and HERMAN.

Man. What is the hour?

Her. It wants but one till sunset,
And promises a lovely twilight.

Man. Say,
Are all things so disposed of in the tower
As I directed?

Her. All, my lord, are ready:
Here is the key and casket.

Man. It is well:
Thou may'st retire. [Exit HERMAN.]

Man. (alone). There is a calm upon me —
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon," found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once:
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down
That there is such a feeling. Who is there?

Re-enter HERMAN.

Her. My lord, the abbot of St. Maurice craves
To greet your presence.

Enter the ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.

Abbot. Peace be with Count Manfred!
Man. Thanks, holy father! welcome to these walls;
Thy presence honours them, and blesseth those
Who dwell within them.

Abbot. Would it were so, Count! —
But I would fain confer with thee alone.

Man. Herman, retire. — What would my reverend
guest?

Abbot. Thus, without prelude: — Age and zeal,
my office,

And good intent, must plead my privilege;
Our near, though not acquainted neighbourhood,

"Venice, April 14, 1817. — The third Act is certainly d—d bad, and, like the Archbishop of Grenada's homily, (which savoured of the palsy,) has the dregs of my fever, during which it was written. It must on no account be published in its present state. I will try and reform it, or re-write it altogether; but the impulse is gone, and I have no chance of making any thing out of it. The speech of Manfred to the Sun is the only part of this Act I thought good myself; the rest is certainly as bad as bad can be, and I wonder what the devil possessed me. I am very glad indeed that you sent me Mr. Gifford's opinion without deduction. Do you suppose me such a booby as not to be very much obliged to him? or that I was not, and am not, convinced and convicted in my conscience of this same overt act of nonsense? I shall try at it again; in the mean time, lay it upon the shelf — the whole Drama I mean. — Recollect not to publish, upon pain of I know not what, until I have tried again at the third act. I am not sure that I shall try, and still less that I shall succeed if I do."

"Rome, May 5. — I have re-written the greater part, and returned what is not altered in the proof you sent me. The Abbot is become a good man, and the Spirits are brought in at the death. You will find, I think, some good poetry in this new Act, here and there; and if so, print it, without sending me farther proofs, under Mr. Gifford's correction, if he will have the goodness to overlook it."

May also be my herald. Rumours strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,
And busy with thy name; a noble name
For centuries: may he who bears it now
Transmit it unimpair'd!

Man. Proceed, — I listen.

Abbot. 'Tis said thou holdest converse with the
things

Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the shade of death,
Thou communest. I know that with mankind,
Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely
Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
Is as an anchorite's, were it but holy.

Man. And what are they who do avouch these
things?

Abbot. My pious brethren — the scared peasantry —
Even thy own vassals — who do look on thee
With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril.

Man. Take it.

Abbot. I come to save, and not destroy —
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there still is time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee [heaven.
With the true church, and through the church to
Man. I hear thee. This is my reply: whate'er
I may have been, or am, doth rest between
Heaven and myself. — I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator. Have I sinn'd
Against your ordinances? prove and punish!¹

Abbot. My son! I did not speak of punishment,
But penitence and pardon; — with thyself

¹ [Thus far the text stands as originally penned: we sub-
join the sequel of the scene as given in the first MS. : —

"*Abbot.* Then, hear and tremble! For the headstrong
Who in the mall of innate hardihood [wretch
Would shield himself, and battle for his sins,
There is the stake on earth, and beyond earth eternal —
Man. Charity, most reverend father,
Becomes thy lips so much more than this menace,
That I would call thee back to it: but say,
What wouldst thou with me?"

Abbot. It may be there are
Things that would shake thee — but I keep them back,
And give thee till to-morrow to repent.
Then if thou dost not all devote thyself
To penance, and with gift of all thy lands
To the monastery —

Man. I understand thee, — well!
Abbot. Expect no mercy; I have warned thee.
Man. (opening the casket). Stop —
There is a gift for thee within this casket.

[*MANFRED opens the casket, strikes a light, and
burns some incense.*

Ho! Ashtaroth!

The DEMON ASHTAROTH appears, singing as follows: —

The raven sits
On the raven-stone,
And his black wing flits
O'er the milk-white bone;
To and fro, as the night-winds blow,
The carcass of the assassin swings;
And there alone, on the raven-stone,*
The raven flaps his dusky wings.

The fetters creak — and his ebon beak
Croaks to the close of the hollow sound;
And this is the tune, by the light of the moon,
To which the witches dance their round —
Merrily, merrily, cheerily, cheerily,
Merrily, speeds the ball:
The dead in their shrouds, and the demons in clouds,
Flock to the witches' carnival.

* "Raven-stone (Rabenstein), a translation of the German
word for the gibbet, which in Germany and Switzerland is
permanent, and made of stone."

The choice of such remains — and for the last,
Our institutions and our strong belief
Have given me power to smooth the path from sin
To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
I leave to heaven, — "Vengeance is mine alone!"
So saith the Lord, and with all humbleness
His servant echoes back the awful word.

Man. Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer — nor purifying form
Of penitence — nor outward look — nor fast —
Nor agony — nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep despair,
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of heaven — can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit, the quick sense
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.

Abbot. All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place,
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity. — Say on —
And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
And all we can absolve thee shall be pardon'd.

Man. When Rome's sixth emperor² was near his
last,
The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
To shun the torments of a public death³

Abbot. I fear thee not — hence — hence —
Avant thee, evil one! — help, ho! without there!
Man. Convey this man to the Shreckhorn — to its peak —
To its extremest peak — watch with him there
From now till sunrise; let him gaze, and know
He ne'er again will be so near to heaven.
But harm him not; and, when the morrow breaks,
Set him down safe in his cell — away with him!
Ash. Had I not better bring his brethren too,
Convent and all, to bear him company?
Man. No, this will serve for the present. Take him up.
Ash. Come, friar! now an exorcism or two,
And we shall fly the lighter.

ASHTAROTH disappears with the ABBOT, singing as follows: —
A prodigal son, and a maid undone,
And a widow re-wedded within the year;
And a worldly monk, and a pregnant nun,
Are things which every day appear.

MANFRED alone.
Man. Why would this fool break in on me, and force
My art to pranks fantastical? — no matter,
It was not of my seeking. My heart sickens,
And weighs a fix'd foreboding on my soul:
But it is calm — calm as a sullen sea
After the hurricane; the winds are still,
But the cold waves swell high and heavily,
And there is danger in them. Such a rest
Is no repose. My life hath been a combat,
And every thought a wound, till I am scarr'd
In the immortal part of me. — What now?²

² Otho, being defeated in a general engagement near
Brixellum, stabbed himself. Plutarch says, that, though he
lived full as badly as Nero, his last moments were those of a
philosopher. He comforted his soldiers who lamented his
fortune, and expressed his concern for their safety, when they
solicited to pay him the last friendly offices. Martial says:
"Sit Cato, dum vivit, sane vel Cesare major,
Dum moritur, numquid major Othone fuit?"

[*To shun {not loss of life, but } public death.
{the torments of a }
Choose between them.* — MS.]

From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
With show of loyal pity, would have stanch'd
The gushing throat with his officious robe;
The dying Roman thrust him back, and said—
Some empire still in his expiring glance,
"It is too late—is this fidelity?"

Abbot. And what of this?

Man. I answer with the Roman—
"It is too late!"

Abbot. It never can be so,
To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
And thy own soul with heaven. Hast thou no hope?
'Tis strange—even those who do despair above,
Yet shape themselves some fantasy on earth,
To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men.

Man. Ay—father! I have had those earthly visions
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither—it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss,
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies,)
Lies low but mighty still.—But this is past,
My thoughts mistook themselves.

Abbot. And wherefore so?

Man. I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway—and soothe—and
sue—

And watch all time—and pry into all place—
And be a living lie—who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdain'd to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

Abbot. And why not live and act with other men?

Man. Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation:—like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone simoom,
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,

¹ [This speech has been quoted in more than one of the sketches of the Poet's own life. Much earlier, when only twenty-three years of age, he had thus prophesied:—"It seems as if I were to experience in my youth the greatest misery of old age. My friends fall around me, and I shall be left a lonely tree before I am withered. Other men can always take refuge in their families—I have no resource but my own reflections, and they present no prospect, here or hereafter, except the selfish satisfaction of surviving my betters. I am, indeed, very wretched. My days are listless, and my nights restless. I have very seldom any society; and when I have, I run out of it. I don't know that I sha'n't end with insanity."—*Byron Letters*, 1811.]

² ["Of the immortality of the soul, it appears to me that there can be little doubt—if we attend for a moment to the action of mind. It is in perpetual activity. I used to doubt it—but reflection has taught me better. How far our future state will be individual; or, rather, how far it will at all resemble our present existence, is another question; but that the mind is eternal seems as probable as that the body is not so."—*Byron Diary*, 1821.—"I have no wish to reject Christianity without investigation; on the contrary, I am very desirous of believing; for I have no happiness in my present unsettled notions on religion."—*Byron Conversations with Kennedy*, 1823.]

³ [There are three only, even among the great poets of modern times, who have chosen to depict, in their full shape and vigour, those agonies to which great and meditative

And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly; such hath been
The course of my existence; but there came
Things in my path which are no more.

Abbot. Alas!

I 'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would—

Man. Look on me! there is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,
Without the violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure—some of study—
Some worn with toil—some of mere weariness—
Some of disease—and some insanity—¹
And some of wither'd, or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are number'd in the lists of Fate,
'Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! for even of all these things
Have I partaken; and of all these things,
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or having been, that I am still on earth.

Abbot. Yet, hear me still—

Man. Old man! I do respect
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain:
Think me not churlish; I would spare thyself,
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy—and so—farewell.²

[Exit MANFRED.]

Abb. This should have been a noble creature³: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A godly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,
Mix'd, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive: he will perish,
And yet he must not; I will try once more
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.
I'll follow him—but cautiously, though surely.

[Exit ABBOT.]

intellects are, in the present progress of human history, exposed by the eternal recurrence of a deep and discontented scepticism. But there is only one who has dared to represent himself as the victim of those nameless and undefinable sufferings. Goethe chose for his doubts and his darkness the terrible disguise of the mysterious Faustus. Schiller, with still greater boldness, planted the same anguish in the restless, haughty, and heroic bosom of Wallenstein. But Byron has sought no external symbol in which to embody the inquietudes of his soul. He takes the world, and all that it inherit, for his arena and his spectators; and he displays himself before their gaze, wrestling unceasingly and ineffectually with the demon that torments him. At times, there is something mournful and depressing in his scepticism; but oftener it is of a high and solemn character, approaching to the very verge of a confiding faith. Whatever the poet may believe, we, his readers, always feel ourselves too much ennobled and elevated, even by his melancholy, not to be confirmed in our own belief by the very doubts so majestically conceived and uttered. His scepticism, if it ever approaches to a creed, carries with it its refutation in its grandeur. There is neither philosophy nor religion in those bitter and savage taunts which have been cruelly thrown out, from many quarters, against those moods of mind which are involuntary, and will not pass away; the shadows and spectres which still haunt his imagination may once have disturbed our own;—through his gloom there are frequent flashes of illumination;—and the sublime sadness which to him is breathed from the mysteries of mortal existence, is always joined with a longing after immortality, and expressed in language that is itself divine.—WILSON.]

SCENE II.

Another Chamber.

MANFRED and HERMAN.

Her. My lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
He sinks behind the mountain.

Man. Doth he so?
I will look on him.

[MANFRED advances to the Window of the Hall.
Glorious Orb! the idol

Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseas'd mankind, the giant sons¹
Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits who can ne'er return.—
Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they pour'd
Themselves in orisons! Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown—
Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
Even as our outward aspects;—thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature.² He is gone:
I follow. [Exit MANFRED.]

SCENE III.

The Mountains—The Castle of Manfred at some
distance—A Terrace before a Tower.—Time,
Twilight.

HERMAN, MANUEL, and other Dependants of
MANFRED.

Her. 'Tis strange enough; night after night, for
years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness. I have been within it,—
So have we all been oft-times: but from it,

¹ "And it came to pass, that the *Sons of God* saw the daughters of men, that they were fair," &c.—"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the *Sons of God* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."—*Genesis*, ch. vi. verses 2 and 4.

² ["Pray, was Manfred's speech to the Sun still retained in Act third? I hope so: it was one of the best in the thing, and better than the Coliseum."—*Byron Letters*, 1817.]

³ ["Some strange things in these few years."—MS.]

⁴ [The remainder of the third Act, in its original shape, ran thus:—

Her. Look—look—the tower—
The tower's on fire. Oh, heavens and earth! what sound,
What dreadful sound is that? [A crash like thunder.
Manuel. Help, help, there!—to the rescue of the Count,—
The Count's in danger,—what ho! there! I approach!
[The Servants, Vassals, and Peasantry approach,
stuffed with terror.

If there be any of you who have heard

Or its contents, it were impossible
To draw conclusions absolute, of aught
His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
One chamber where none enter: I would give
The fee of what I have to come these three years,
To pore upon its mysteries.

Manuel. 'T were dangerous;
Content thyself with what thou know'st already.

Her. Ah! Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And couldst say much; thou hast dwelt within the
castle—

How many years is't?

Manuel. Ere Count Manfred's birth,
I served his father, whom he nought resembles.

Her. There be more sons in like predicament.
But wherein do they differ?

Manuel. I speak not
Of features or of form, but mind and habits;
Count Sigismund was proud,—but gay and free,—
A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
With books and solitude, nor made the night
A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
From men and their delights.

Her. Beshrew the hour,
But those were jocund times! I would that such
Would visit the old walls again; they look
As if they had forgotten them.

Manuel. These walls
Must change their chieftain first. Oh! I have seen
Some strange things in them, Herman.³

Her. Come, be friendly;
Relate me some to while away our watch:
I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happen'd hereabouts, by this same tower.

Manuel. That was a night indeed! I do remember
'T was twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening;—yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's pinnacle, so rested then,—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings—her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The Lady Astarte, his—⁴

Hush! who comes here?

And love of human kind, and will to aid
Those in distress—pause not—but follow me—
The portal's open, follow. [MANUEL goes in.

Her. Come—Who follows?
What, none of ye?—ye recreants! shiver then
Without. I will not see old Manuel risk
His few remaining years unaided. [HERMAN goes in.

Vassal. Hark!—
No—all is silent—not a breath—the flame
Which shot forth such a blaze is also gone:
What may this mean? Let's enter!

Peasant. Faith, not I,—
Not that, if one, or two, or more, will join,
I then will stay behind; but, for my part,
I do not see precisely to what end.

Vassal. Cease your vain prating—come.
Manuel (speaking within). 'T is all in vain—
He's dead.

Her. (within). Not so—even now methought he moved;
But it is dark—so bear him gently out—
Softly—how cold he is! take care of his temples
In winding down the staircase.

Enter the ABBOT.

Abbot. Where is your master?

Her. Yonder, in the tower.

Abbot. I must speak with him.

Manuel. 'Tis impossible; He is most private, and must not be thus intruded on.

Abbot. Upon myself I take The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be— But I must see him.

Her. Thou hast seen him once This eve already.

Abbot. Herman! I command thee, Knock, and apprise the Count of my approach.

Her. We dare not.

Abbot. Then it seems I must be herald Of my own purpose.

Manuel. Reverend father, stop— I pray you pause.

Abbot. Why so?

Manuel. But step this way, And I will tell you further. [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.¹

Interior of the Tower.

MANFRED alone.

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful! I linger yet with Nature, for the night Hath been to me a more familiar face Than that of man; and in her starry shade Of dim and solitary loveliness, I learn'd the language of another world. I do remember me, that in my youth, When I was wandering,—upon such a night I stood within the Coliseum's wall,² Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome; The trees which grew along the broken arches Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar The watchdog bay'd beyond the Tiber; and More near from out the Cæsars' palace came The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly, Of distant centinels the fitful song Begun and died upon the gentle wind. Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach Appear'd to skirt the horizon, yet they stood

Re-enter MANUEL and HERMAN, bearing MANFRED in their arms.

Manuel. Hie to the castle, some of ye, and bring What aid you can. Saddle the barb, and speed For the leech to the city—quick! some water there!

Her. His cheek is black—but there is a faint beat Still lingering about the heart. Some water.

[They sprinkle MANFRED with water: after a pause, he gives some signs of life.]

Manuel. He seems to strive to speak—come—cheerly, Count!

He moves his lips—canst hear him? I am old, And cannot catch faint sounds.

[HERMAN inclining his head and listening.]

Her. I hear a word

Or two—but indistinctly—what is next?

What 's to be done? let 's bear him to the castle.

[MANFRED motions with his hand not to remove him.]

Manuel. He disapproves—and 't were of no avail— He changes rapidly.

Her. 'T will soon be over.

Manuel. Oh! what a death is this! that I should live To shake my gray hairs over the last chief

Of the house of Sigismund.—And such a death!

Alone—we know not how—unshriv'd—untended—

Within a bowshot—where the Cæsars dwelt, And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst A grove which springs through levell'd battlements, And twines its roots with the imperial hearths, Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;— But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands, A noble wreck in ruinous perfection! While Cæsar's chambers, and the Augustan halls, Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.— And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon All this, and cast a wide and tender light, Which soften'd down the hoar austerity Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up, As 't were anew, the gaps of centuries; Leaving that beautiful which still was so, And making that which was not, till the place Became religion, and the heart ran o'er With silent worship of the great of old!— The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule Our spirits from their urns.—

'T was such a night! 'T is strange that I recall it at this time; But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight Even at the moment when they should array Themselves in pensive order.

Enter the ABBOT.

Abbot. My good lord!

I crave a second grace for this approach; But yet let not my humble zeal offend By its abruptness—all it hath of ill Recoils on me; its good in the effect May light upon your head—could I say heart— Could I touch that, with words or prayers, I should Recall a noble spirit which hath wander'd; But is not yet all lost.

Man. Thou know'st me not; My days are number'd, and my deeds recorded: Retire, or 't will be dangerous—Away!

Abbot. Thou dost not mean to menace me?

Man. Not I;

I simply tell thee peril is at hand, And would preserve thee.

Abbot. What dost mean?

Man. Look there!

What dost thou see?

Abbot. Nothing.

Man. Look there, I say, And stedfastly;—now tell me what thou seest.

With strange accompaniments and fearful signs— I shudder at the sight—but must not leave him.

Manfred (speaking faintly and slowly). Old man! 't is not so difficult to die.

[MANFRED having said this expires.]

Her. His eyes are fixed and lifeless.—He is gone.— Manuel. Close them.—My old hand quivers.—He departs—

Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone!]

¹ [The opening of this scene is, perhaps, the finest passage in the drama; and its solemn, calm, and majestic character throws an air of grandeur over the catastrophe, which was in danger of appearing extravagant, and somewhat too much in the style of the "Devil and Dr. Faustus."—WILSON.]

² ["Drove at midnight to see the Coliseum by moonlight: but what can I say of the Coliseum? It must be seen; to describe it I should have thought impossible, if I had not read 'Manfred.' To see it aright, as the Poet of the North tells us of the fair Melrose, one 'must see it by the pale moonlight.' The stillness of night, the whispering echoes, the moonlight shadows, and the awful grandeur of the impending ruins, form a scene of romantic sublimity, such as Byron alone could describe as it deserves. His description is the very thing itself."—MATTHEWS'S *Diary of an Invalid*.]

Abbot. That which should shake me,—but I fear it not—

I see a dusk and awful figure rise, Like an infernal god, from out the earth; His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form Robed as with angry clouds: he stands between Thyself and me—but I do fear him not.

Man. Thou hast no cause—he shall not harm thee—but

His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.

I say to thee—Retire!

Abbot. And I reply—

Never—till I have battled with this fiend:—

What doth he here?

Man. Why—ay—what doth he here?—

I did not send for him,—he is unbidden. [these

Abbot. Alas! lost mortal! what with guests like

Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake:

Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?

Ah! he unveils his aspect: on his brow

The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye

Glares forth the immortality of hell—

Avault!—

Man. Pronounce—what is thy mission?

Spirit. Come!

Abbot. What art thou, unknown being? answer!—

speak!

Spirit. The genius of this mortal.—Come! 't is

time.

Man. I am prepared for all things, but deny

The power which summons me. Who sent thee here?

Spirit. Thou 'lt know anon—Come! come!

Man. I have commanded

Things of an essence greater far than thine,

And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!

Spirit. Mortal! thine hour is come—Away!

I say.

Man. I knew, and know my hour is come, but not

To render up my soul to such as thee:

Away! I 'll die as I have lived—alone.

Spirit. Then I must summon up my brethren.—

Rise! [Other Spirits rise up.]

Abbot. Avaunt! ye evil ones!—Avaunt! I say,—

Ye have no power where piety hath power,

And I do charge ye in the name—

Spirit. Old man!

We know ourselves, our mission, and thine order;

Waste not thy holy words on idle uses,

It were in vain: this man is forfeited.

Once more I summon him—Away! away!

Man. I do defy ye,—though I feel my soul

Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;

Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath

To breathe my scorn upon ye—earthly strength

To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take

Shall be ta'en limb by limb.

Spirit. Reluctant mortal!

Is this the magian who would so pervade

The world invisible, and make himself Almost our equal?—Can it be that thou Art thus in love with life? the very life Which made thee wretched!

Man. Thou false fiend, thou liest!

My life is in its last hour,—that I know, Nor would redeem a moment of that hour; I do not combat against death, but thee And thy surrounding angels; my past power Was purchased by no compact with thy crew, But by superior science—penance—daring— And length of watching—strength of mind—and skill

In knowledge of our fathers—when the earth

Saw men and spirits walking side by side,

And gave ye no supremacy: I stand

Upon my strength—I do defy—deny—

Spurn back, and scorn ye!—

Spirit. But thy many crimes

Have made thee—

Man. What are they to such as thee?

Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,

And greater criminals?—Back to thy hell!

Thou hast no power upon me, that I feel;

Thou never shalt possess me, that I know:

What I have done is done; I bear within

A torture which could nothing gain from thine:

The mind which is immortal makes itself

Requital for its good or evil thoughts—

Is its own origin of ill and end—

And its own place and time—its innate sense,

When stripp'd of this mortality, derives

No colour from the fleeting things without;

But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,

Born from the knowledge of its own desert.

Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not

tempt me;

I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—

But was my own destroyer, and will be

My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!

The hand of death is on me—but not yours!

[The Demons disappear.]

Abbot. Alas! how pale thou art—thy lips are

white—

And thy breast heaves—and in thy gasping throat

The accents rattle—Give thy prayers to Heaven—

Pray—albeit but in thought,—but die not thus.

Man. 'T is over—my dull eyes can fix thee not;

But all things swim around me, and the earth

Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well—

Give me thy hand.

Abbot. Cold—cold—even to the heart—

But yet one prayer—Alas! how fares it with thee?

Man. Old man! 't is not so difficult to die.¹

[MANFRED expires.]

Abbot. He's gone—his soul hath ta'en his earthless

flight—

Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone.²

of such a man as Goethe, whether favourable or not, are always interesting—and this is more so, as favourable. His Faust I never read, for I don't know German; but Matthew Monk Lewis, in 1816, at Coligny, translated most of it to me *viva voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it: but it was the Steinbach and the Jungfrau, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write Manfred. The first scene, however, and that of Faustus are very similar."

The following is the extract from Goethe's *Kunst und Aetherium* (i. e. Art and Antiquity) which the above letter enclosed:—

"Byron's tragedy, 'Manfred,' was to me a wonderful phe-

¹ [In the first edition, this line was accidentally left out. On discovering the omission, Lord Byron wrote to Mr. Murray—"You have destroyed the whole effect and moral of the poem, by omitting the last line of Manfred's speaking."]

² [In June, 1820, Lord Byron thus writes to Mr. Murray:—"Enclosed is something which will interest you; to wit, the opinion of the greatest man in Germany—perhaps in Europe—upon one of the great men of your advertisements (all 'famous hands,' as Jacob Tonson used to say of his ragamuffins)—in short, a critique of Goethe's upon Manfred. There is the original, an English translation, and an Italian one: keep them all in your archives; for the opinions

nomenon, and one that closely touched me. This singularly intellectual poet has taken my Faustus to himself, and extracted from it the strongest nourishment for his hypochondriac humour. He has made use of the impelling principles in his own way, for his own purposes, so that no one of them remains the same; and it is particularly on this account that I cannot enough admire his genius. The whole is in this way so completely formed anew, that it would be an interesting task for the critic to point out, not only the alterations he has made, but their degree of resemblance with, or dissimilarity to, the original: in the course of which I cannot deny, that the gloomy heat of an unbounded and exuberant despair becomes at last oppressive to us. Yet is the dissatisfaction we feel always connected with esteem and admiration.

"We find thus, in this tragedy, the quintessence of the most astonishing talent born to be its own tormentor. The character of Lord Byron's life and poetry hardly permits a just and equitable appreciation. He has often enough confessed what it is that torments him. He has repeatedly portrayed it; and scarcely any one feels compassion for this intolerable suffering, over which he is ever laboriously ruminating. There are, properly speaking, two females whose phantoms for ever haunt him, and which, in this piece also, perform principal parts—one under the name of Astarte, the other without form or actual presence, and merely a voice. Of the horrid occurrence which took place with the former, the following is related:—When a bold and enterprising young man, he won the affections of a Florentine lady.* Her husband discovered the amour, and murdered his wife; but the murderer was the same night found dead in the street, and there was no one on whom any suspicion could be attached. Lord Byron removed from Florence, and these spirits haunted him all his life after.

"This romantic incident is rendered highly probable by innumerable allusions to it in his poems. As, for instance, when turning his sad contemplations inwards, he applies to himself the fatal history of the king of Sparta. It is as follows:—Pausanias, a Lacedæmonian general, acquires glory by the important victory at Plataea, but afterwards forfeits the confidence of his countrymen through his arrogance, obstinacy, and secret intrigues with the enemies of his country. This man draws upon himself the heavy guilt of innocent blood, which attends him to his end; for, while commanding the fleet of the allied Greeks, in the Black Sea, he is inflamed with a violent passion for a Byzantine maiden. After long resistance, he at length obtains her from her parents, and she is to be delivered up to him at night. She modestly desires the servant to put out the lamp, and, while groping her way in the dark, she overturns it. Pausanias is awakened from his sleep—apprehensive of an attack from murderers, he seizes his sword, and destroys his mistress. The horrid sight never leaves him. Her shade pursues him unceasingly, and he implores for aid in vain from the gods and the exorcising priests.

"That poet must have a lacerated heart who selects such a scene from antiquity, appropriates it to himself, and burdens his tragic image with it. The following soliloquy, which is overlaid with gloom and a weariness of life, is, by this remark, rendered intelligible. We recommend it as an exercise to all friends of declamation. Hamlet's soliloquy appears improved upon here."—Goethe here subjoins Manfred's soliloquy, beginning, "We are the fools of time and terror," in which the allusion to Pausanias occurs.

The reader will not be sorry to pass from this German criticism to that of the Edinburgh Review on Manfred.—"This is, undoubtedly, a work of great genius and originality. Its worst fault, perhaps, is that it fatigues and overawes us by the uniformity of its terror and solemnity. Another, is the painful and offensive nature of the circumstance on which its distress is ultimately founded. The lyrical songs of the Spirits are too long, and not all excellent. There is something of pedantry in them now and then; and even Manfred deals in classical allusions a little too much. If we were to consider it as a

* ["The grave confidence with which the venerable critic traces the fancies of his brother poet to real persons and events, making no difficulty even of a double murder at Florence to furnish grounds for his theory, affords an amusing instance of the disposition so prevalent throughout Europe, to picture Byron as a man of marvels and mysteries, as well in his life as his poetry. To these exaggerated, or wholly false notions of him, the numerous fictions palmed upon the world of his romantic tours and wonderful adventures, in places he never saw, and with persons that never existed, have, no doubt, considerably contributed; and the consequence is, so utterly out of truth and nature are the representations of his life and character long current upon the Continent, that it may be questioned whether the real 'flesh and blood' hero of these pages,—the social, practical-minded, and, with all his faults and eccentricities, *English* Lord Byron,—may not, to the over-exalted imaginations of most of his foreign admirers, appear but an ordinary, unromantic, and prosaic personage."—MOORE.]

proper drama, or even as a finished poem, we should be obliged to add, that it is far too indistinct and unsatisfactory. But this we take to be according to the design and conception of the author. He contemplated but a dim and magnificent sketch of a subject which did not admit of more accurate drawing or more brilliant colouring. Its obscurity is a part of its grandeur;—and the darkness that rests upon it, and the smoky distance in which it is lost, are all devices to increase its majesty, to stimulate our curiosity, and to impress us with deeper awe.—It is suggested, in an ingenious paper in a late number of the Edinburgh Magazine, that the general conception of this piece, and much of what is excellent in the manner of its execution, have been borrowed from 'The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus,' of Marlow †; and a variety of passages are quoted, which the author considers as similar, and, in many respects, superior to others in the poem before us. We cannot agree in the general terms of the conclusion; but there is no doubt a certain resemblance, both in some of the topics that are suggested, and in the cast of the diction in which they are expressed. Thus, to induce Faustus to persist in his unlawful studies, he is told that the Spirits of the Elements will serve him,—

"Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy browes,
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love."

And again, when the amorous sorcerer commands Helen of Troy to revive again to be his paramour, he addresses her, on her first appearance, in these rapturous lines—

"Was this the face that launcht a thousand ships,
And burn'd the toplest towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen! make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul!—see where it flies.
Come, Helen, come give me my soul againe,
Here will I dwell, for heaven is on that lip,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
O! thou art fairer than the evening ayre,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
More lovely than the monarch of the skies,
In wanton Arethusa's azure arms!"

The catastrophe, too, is bewailed in verses of great elegance and classical beauty—

"Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burn'd is Apollo's laurel bough
That sometime grew within this learned man.
Faustus is gone!—regard his hellish fall,
Whose sinful torture may exhort the wise,
Only to wonder at unlawful things!"

But these, and many other smooth and fanciful verses in this curious old drama, prove nothing, we think, against the originality of Manfred; for there is nothing to be found there of the pride, the abstraction, and the heart-rooted misery in which that originality consists. Faustus is a vulgar sorcerer, tempted to sell his soul to the devil for the ordinary price of sensual pleasure, and earthly power and glory; and who shrinks and shudders in agony when the forfeit comes to be exacted. The style, too, of Marlow, though elegant and scholarlike, is weak and childish compared with the depth and force of much of Lord Byron; and the disgusting buffoonery and low force of which his piece is principally made up, place it more in contrast, than in any terms of comparison, with that of his noble successor. In the tone and pitch of the composition, as well as in the character of the diction in the more solemn parts, Manfred reminds us much more of the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus †, than of any more modern performance. The tremendous solitude of the principal person—the supernatural beings with whom alone he holds communion—the guilt—the firmness—the misery—are all points of resemblance, to which the grandeur of the poetic imagery only gives a more striking effect. The chief differences are, that the subject of the Greek poet was sanctified and exalted by the established belief of his country, and that his terrors are nowhere tempered with the sweetness which breathes from so many passages of his English rival.]"

† [On reading this, Lord Byron wrote from Venice:—"Jeffrey is very kind about Manfred, and defends its originality, which I did not know that any body had attacked. As to the germs of it, they may be found in the Journal which I sent to Mrs. Leigh, before I left Switzerland. I have the whole scene of Manfred before me, as if it was but yesterday, and could point it out, spot by spot, torrent and all."

‡ ["Of the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus I was passionately fond as a boy (it was one of the Greek plays we read thrice a year at Harrow); indeed, that and the 'Medea' were the only ones, except the 'Seven before Thebes,' which ever much pleased me. The Prometheus, if not exactly in my plan, has always been so much in my head, that I can easily conceive its influence over all or any thing that I have written; but I deny Marlow and his progeny, and beg that you will do the same."—Byron Letters, 1817.]

Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice:

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.¹

"DUX inquieti turbidus Adriæ."—HORACE.

PREFACE.

THE conspiracy of the Doge Marino Faliero is one of the most remarkable events in the annals of the

¹ [On the original MS. sent from Ravenna, Lord Byron has written:—"Begun April 4th, 1820—completed July 16th, 1820—finished copying August 16th-17th, 1820; the which copying makes ten times the toil of composing, considering the weather—thermometer 90 in the shade—and my domestic duties." He at the time intended to keep it by him for six years before sending it to the press; but resolutions of this kind are, in modern days, very seldom adhered to. It was published in the end of the same year; and, to the poet's great disgust, and in spite of his urgent and repeated remonstrances, was produced on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre early in 1821. The extracts from his letters sufficiently explain his feelings on this occasion.

Marino Faliero was, greatly to his satisfaction, commended warmly for the truth of his adhesion to Venetian history and manners, as well as the antique severity of its structure and language, by that eminent master of Italian and classical literature, the late Ugo Foscolo. Mr. Gifford also delighted him by pronouncing it "English—genuine English." It was, however, little favoured by the contemporary critics. There was, indeed, only one who spoke of it as quite worthy of Lord Byron's reputation. "Nothing," said he, "has for a long time afforded us so much pleasure, as the rich promise of dramatic excellence unfolded in this production of Lord Byron. Without question, no such tragedy as Marino Faliero has appeared in English, since the day when Otway also was inspired to his masterpiece by the interests of a Venetian story and a Venetian conspiracy. The story of which Lord Byron has possessed himself is, we think, by far the finer of the two,—and we say *possessed*, because we believe he has adhered almost to the letter of the transactions as they really took place."—The language of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviewers, Mr. Jeffrey and Bishop Heber, was in a far different strain. The former says—

"Marino Faliero has undoubtedly considerable beauties, both dramatic and poetical; and might have made the fortune of any young aspirant for fame: but the name of Byron raises expectations which are not so easily satisfied; and, judging of it by the lofty standard which he himself has established, we are compelled to say, that we cannot but regard it as a failure, both as a poem and a play. This may be partly accounted for from the inherent difficulty of uniting these two sorts of excellence—of confining the daring and digressive genius of poetry within the forms and limits of a regular drama, and, at the same time, imparting its warm and vivifying spirit to the practical preparation and necessary details of a complete theatrical action. These, however, are difficulties with which dramatic adventurers have long had to struggle; and over which, though they are incomparably most formidable to the most powerful spirits, there is no reason to doubt that the powers of Lord Byron would have triumphed. The true history of his failure, therefore, we conceive, and the actual cause of his miscarriage on the present occasion, is to be found in the bad choice of his subject—his selection of a story which not only gives no scope to the peculiar and commanding graces of his genius, but runs continually counter to the master currents of his fancy. His great gifts are exquisite tenderness, and demoniacal sublimity: the power of conjuring up at pleasure those delicious visions of love and beauty, and pity and purity, which melt our hearts within us with a thrilling and ethereal softness—and of welding, at the same time, that infernal fire which blasts and overthrows all things with the dark and capricious fluminations of its scorn, rancour, and revenge. With the consciousness of these great powers, and as if in wilful perversity to their suggestions, he has here chosen a story which, in a great measure, excludes the agency of either; and resolutely conducted it, so as to secure himself against their intrusion;—a story without love or hatred—

most singular government, city, and people of modern history. It occurred in the year 1355. Every thing about Venice is, or was, extraordinary—her aspect is like a dream, and her history is like a romance.

misanthropy or pity—containing nothing voluptuous and nothing terrific—but depending, for its grandeur, on the anger of a very old and irritable man; and, for its attraction, on the elaborate representations of conjugal dignity and domestic honour,—the sober and austere triumphs of cold and untempted chastity, and the noble propriety of a pure and disciplined understanding. These, we think, are not the most promising themes for any writer whose business is to raise powerful emotions; nor very likely, in any hands, to redeem the modern drama from the imputation of want of spirit, interest, and excitement. But, for Lord Byron to select them for a grand dramatic effort, is as if a swift-footed racer were to tie his feet together at the starting, or a valiant knight to enter the lists without his arms. No mortal prowess could succeed under such disadvantages.—The story, in so far as it is original in our drama, is extremely improbable, though, like most other very improbable stories, derived from authentic sources; but, in the main, it is original; being, indeed, merely another 'Venice Preserved,' and continually recalling, though certainly without eclipsing, the memory of the first. Except that Jaffier is driven to join the conspirators by the natural impulse of love and misery, and the Doge by a resentment so outrageous as to exclude all sympathy,—and that the disclosure, which is produced by love in the old play, is here ascribed to mere friendship,—the general action and catastrophe of the two pieces are almost identical; while, with regard to the writing and management, it must be owned that, if Lord Byron has most sense and vigour, Otway has by far the most passion and pathos; and that though his conspirators are better orators and reasoners than the gang of Pierre and Reynault, the tenderness of Belvidere is as much more touching, as it is more natural, than the stoical and self-satisfied decorum of Angiolina."

After an elaborate disquisition on the Unities, Bishop Heber thus concludes:—

"We cannot conceive a greater instance of the efficacy of system to blind the most acute perception, than the fact that Lord Byron, in works avowedly and exclusively intended for the closet, has piqued himself on the observance of rules, which (be their advantage on the stage what it may) are evidently, off the stage, a matter of perfect indifference. The only object of adhering to the unities is to preserve the illusion of the scene. To the reader they are obviously useless. It is true, that, in the closet, not only are their supposed advantages destroyed, but their inconveniences are also, in a great measure, neutralised: and it is true also, that poetry so splendid has often accompanied them, as to make us wholly overlook, in the blaze of greater excellences, whatever inconveniences result from them, either in the closet or the theatre. But even diminished difficulties are not to be needlessly courted, and though, in the strength and dexterity of the combatant, we soon lose sight of the cumbersome trappings by which he has chosen to distinguish himself; yet, if those trappings are at once cumbersome and pedantic, not only will his difficulty of success be increased, but his failure, if he fails, will be rendered the more signal and ridiculous.

"Marino Faliero has, we believe, been pretty generally pronounced a failure by the public voice, and we see no reason to call for a revision of their sentence. It contains, beyond all doubt, many passages of commanding eloquence, and some of genuine poetry; and the scenes, more particularly, in which Lord Byron has neglected the absurd creed of his pseudo-Hellenic writers, are conceived and elaborated with great tragic effect and dexterity. But the subject is decidedly ill-chosen. In the main tissue of the plot, and in all the busiest and most interesting parts of it, it is, in fact, no more than another 'Venice Preserved,' in which the author has had to