

## Cain :

A MYSTERY.<sup>1</sup>

"Now the Serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."—*Gen. ch. iii. ver. 1.*

TO  
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

THIS MYSTERY OF CAIN IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS OBLIGED FRIEND, AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

## PREFACE.

THE following scenes are entitled "A Mystery," in conformity with the ancient title annexed to dramas

<sup>1</sup> ["CAIN" was begun at Ravenna, on the 16th of July, 1821—completed on the 9th of September—and published, in the same volume with "Sardanapalus" and "The Two Foscari," in December. Perhaps no production of Lord Byron has been more generally admired, on the score of ability, than this "Mystery;"—certainly none, on first appearing, exposed the author to a fiercer tempest of personal abuse. Besides being unmercifully handled in most of the critical journals of the day, "Cain" was made the subject of a solemn separate essay, entitled "A Remonstrance addressed to Mr. Murray respecting a recent Publication—by Oxoniensis;" of which we may here preserve a specimen:—

"There is a method of producing conviction, not to be found in any of the treatises on logic, but which I am persuaded you could be quickly made to understand; it is the *argumentum ad crumenam*; and this, I trust, will be brought home to you in a variety of ways; not least, I expect, in the profit you hope to make by the offending publication. As a bookseller, I conclude you have but one standard of poetic excellence—the extent of your sale. Without assuming any thing beyond the bounds of ordinary foresight, I venture to foretell, that in this case you will be mistaken: the book will disappoint your cupidity, as much as it discredits your feeling and discretion. Your noble employer has deceived you, Mr. Murray; he has profited by the celebrity of his name to palm upon you obsolete trash, the very off-scourings of Bayle and Voltaire, which he has made you pay for as though it were first-rate poetry and sound metaphysics. But I tell you (and if you doubt it, you may consult any of the literary gentlemen who frequent your reading-room) that this poem, this 'Mystery,' with which you have insulted us, is nothing more than a *cento* from Voltaire's novels, and the most objectionable articles in Bayle's Dictionary, served up in clumsy cuttings of ten syllables, for the purpose of giving it the guise of poetry. Still, though 'Cain' has no claims to originality, there are other objects to which it may be made subservient; and so well are the noble author's schemes arranged, that in some of them he will be sure to succeed.

"In the first place, this publication may be useful as a financial measure. It may seem hard to suspect, that the high-souled philosophy, of which his Lordship makes profession, could be 'servile to the influence' of money; but you could tell us, Sir, if you would, what sort of a hand your noble friend is at a bargain; whether Plutus does not sometimes go shares with Apollo in his inspirations.

"In the second place (second I mean in point of order, for I do not presume to decide which motive predominates in his Lordship's mind), the blasphemous impieties of 'Cain,' though nothing more in reality than the echo of often refuted sophisms, by being newly dressed and put forth in a form easy to be remembered, may produce considerable effect; that is, they may mislead the ignorant, unsettle the wavering, or confirm the hardened sceptic in his misbelief. These are consequences which Lord Byron must have contemplated; and with what degree of complacency he alone can tell.

"But, in the third place, if neither of these things happens, and 'Cain' should not prove either lucrative or mischievous,

upon similar subjects, which were styled "Mysteries, or Moralities." 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

there is another point which Lord Byron has secured to himself, so that he cannot be deprived of it,—the satisfaction of insulting those from whom he differs both in faith and practice. . . . Now, at last, he quarrels with the very conditions of humanity, rebels against that Providence which guides and governs all things, and dares to adopt the language which had never before been attributed to any being but one, 'Evil, be thou my good.' Such, as far as we can judge, is Lord Byron."

This critic's performance is thus alluded to in one of Lord Byron's letters to Mr. Douglas Kinnaird:—"I know nothing of Rivington's 'Remonstrance' by the 'eminent Churchman,' but I suppose the man wants a living." On hearing that his publisher was threatened with more serious annoyances, in consequence of the appearance of the "Mystery," Lord Byron addressed the following letter to Mr. Murray:—

"Pisa, February 8. 1822.

"Attacks upon me were to be expected; but I perceive *one* upon you in the papers, which I confess that I did not expect. How, or in what manner, you can be considered responsible, for what I publish, I am at a loss to conceive.

"If 'Cain' be 'blasphemous,' Paradise Lost is blasphemous; and the very words of the Oxford gentleman, 'Evil, be thou my good,' are from that very poem, from the mouth of Satan; and is there any thing more in that of Lucifer in the *Mystery*? 'Cain' is nothing more than a drama, not a piece of argument. If Lucifer and Cain speak as the first murderer and the first rebel may be supposed to speak, surely all the rest of the personages talk also according to their characters—and the stronger passions have ever been permitted to the drama.

"I have even 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 unimpaired men must fall short in, viz. giving an adequate notion of the effect of the presence of Jehovah. The old *Mysteries* introduced him liberally enough, and all this is avoided in the new one.

"The attempt to bully you, because they think it won't succeed with me, seems to me as atrocious an attempt as ever disgraced the times. What! when Gibbon's, Hume's, Priestley's, and Drummond's publishers have been allowed to rest in peace for seventy years, are you to be singled out for a work of *fiction*, not of history or argument? There must be something at the bottom of this—some private enemy of your own: it is otherwise incredible.

"I can only say, 'Me, me; en adsum qui feci';—that any proceedings directed against you, I beg, may be transferred to me, who am willing, and *ought*, to endure them all;—that if you have lost money by the publication, I will refund any or all of the copyright;—that I desire you will say that both you and Mr. Gifford remonstrated against the publication, as also Mr. Hobhouse;—that I alone occasioned it, and I alone am the person who, either legally or otherwise, should bear the burden. If they prosecute, I will come to England; that is, if, by meeting it in my own person, I can save yours. Let

enough to refer to those very profane productions,<sup>1</sup> whether in English, French, Italian, or Spanish.

me know. You sha'n't suffer for me, if I can help it. Make any use of this letter you please. Yours ever, &c.

"BYRON.

"P.S.—I write to you about all this row of bad passions and absurdities with the *summer* moon (for here our winter is clearer than your dog-days) lighting the winding Arno, with all her buildings and bridges,—so quiet and still!—What nothings are we before the least of these stars!"

An individual of the name of Benbow having pirated "Cain," Mr. Shadwell (now, 1836, Sir Lancelot, and Vice-Chancellor) applied to the Lord Chancellor (Eldon) for an injunction to protect Mr. Murray's property in the *Mystery*. The learned counsel, on the 9th of February, 1822, spoke as follows:—

"This work professes to record, in a dramatic poem of three acts, the story contained in the book of Genesis. It is meant to represent the state of Cain's mind when it received those temptations which led him to commit the murder of his brother. The actors in the poem are few: they consist of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and their two wives, with Lucifer, and, in the third act, the angel of the Lord. The book only does that which was before done by Milton, and adheres more closely to the words contained in Scripture. The book, in the commencement, represents Cain in a moody, dissipated disposition, when the Evil Spirit tempts him to go forth with him to acquire knowledge. After the first act, he leads him through the abyss of space; and, in the third, Cain returns with a still more gloomy spirit. Although the poet puts passages into his mouth, which of themselves are blasphemous and impious; yet it is what Milton has done also, both in his *Paradise Lost*, and *Regained*. But those passages are powerfully combated by the beautiful arguments of his wife, Adah. It is true that the book represents what Scripture represents,—that he is, notwithstanding, instigated to destroy the altar of his brother, whom he is then led on to put to death; but then the punishment of his crime follows in the very words of the Scripture itself. Cain's mind is immediately visited with all the horror of remorse, and he goes forth a wanderer on the face of the earth. I trust I am the last person in the world who would attempt to defend a blasphemous or impious work; but I say that this poem is as much entitled to the protection of the court, in the abstract, as either the *Paradise Lost* or the *Paradise Regained*. So confident am I of this, that I would at present undertake to compare it with those works, passage by passage, and show that it is perfectly as moral as those productions of Milton. Every sentence carries with it, if I may use the expression, its own balsam. The authority of God is recognised; and Cain's impety and crime are introduced to show that its just punishment immediately followed. I repeat, that there is no reason why this work, taken abstractedly, should not be protected as well as either of the books I have mentioned. I therefore trust that your Lordship will grant this injunction *in limine*, and then the defendants may come in and show cause against it."

The following is a note of the Lord Chancellor's judgment:—

"This court, like the other courts of justice in this country, acknowledges Christianity as part of the law of the land. The jurisdiction of this court in protecting literary property is founded on this,—that where an action will lie for pirating a work, there the court, attending to the imperfection of that remedy, grants its injunction; because there may be publication after publication which you may never be able to hunt down by proceeding in the other courts. But where such an action does not lie, I do not apprehend that it is according to the course of the court to grant an injunction to protect the copyright. Now this publication, if it is one intended to vilify and bring into discredit that portion of Scripture history to which it relates, is a publication with reference to which, if the principles on which the case of Dr. Priestley, at Warwick, was decided, be just principles of law, the party could not recover any damages in respect of a piracy of it. This court has no criminal jurisdiction; it cannot look on any thing as an offence; but in those cases it only administers justice for the protection of the civil rights of those who possess them, in consequence of being able to maintain an action. You have alluded to Milton's immortal work: it did happen in the course of last long vacation, amongst the *solicite jucunda oblivia vite*, I read that work from beginning to end; it is therefore quite fresh in my memory, and it appears to me that the great object of its author was to promote the cause of Christianity; there are undoubtedly a great many passages in it, of which, if that were not its object, it would be very improper by law to vindicate the publication; but, taking it all together, it is clear that the object and effect were not to bring into disrepute, but to promote, the reverence of our religion. Now the real question is, looking at the work before me, its preface, the poem, its manner of treating the subject, particularly with reference to the fall and the atonement, whether its intent be as innocent as that of the other with which you have compared it; or

The author has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this

whether it be to traduce and bring into discredit that part of sacred history. This question I have no right to try, because it has been settled, after great difference of opinion among the learned, that it is for a jury to determine that point; and where, therefore, a reasonable doubt is entertained as to the character of the work (and it is impossible for me to say I have not a doubt, I hope it is a reasonable one), another course must be taken for determining what is its true nature and character. There is a great difficulty in these cases, because it appears a strange thing to permit the multiplication of copies by way of preventing the circulation of a mischievous work, which I do not presume to determine that this is; but that I cannot help; and the singularity of the case, in this instance, is more obvious, because here is a defendant who has multiplied this work by piracy, and does not think proper to appear. If the work be of that character which a court of common law would consider criminal, it is pretty clear why he does not appear, because he would come *confitens reus*; and for the same reason the question may perhaps not be tried by an action at law; and if it turns out to be the case, I shall be bound to give my own opinion. That opinion I express no further now than to say that, after having read the work, I cannot grant the injunction until you show me that you can maintain an action for it. If you cannot maintain an action, there is no pretence for granting an injunction; if you should not be able to try the question at law with the defendant, I cannot be charged with impropriety if I then give my own opinion upon it. It is true that this mode of dealing with the work, if it be calculated to produce mischievous effects, opens a door for its dissemination; but the duty of stopping the work does not belong to a court of equity, which has no criminal jurisdiction, and cannot punish or check the offence. If the character of the work is such that the publication of it amounts to a temporal offence, there is another way of proceeding, and the publication of it should be proceeded against directly as an offence; but whether this or any other work should be so dealt with, it would be very improper for me to form or intimate an opinion."

The injunction was refused accordingly. The reader is referred to Mr. Moore's Notices for abundant evidence of the pain which Lord Byron suffered from the virulence of the attacks on "Cain," and the legal procedure above alluded to.

Sir Walter Scott announced his acceptance of the dedication in the following letter to Mr. Murray:—

"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 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 affectation 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 Manicheism. 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—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."

<sup>1</sup> [See note to "Hints from Horace," *post*; Payne Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol. i.; the "Histoire du Théâtre Français," vol. ii., &c.]

\* [The pungent Sunday print so called had been established some little time before this letter was written, and had excited a sensation unequalled in the recent history of the newspaper press.]

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;" and that only because he was "the most subtil 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*.<sup>1</sup> 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 read since I was eight years of age, at Aberdeen. The general impression of my recollection is delight; 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> For a reason for this extraordinary omission he may consult Warburton's "Divine Legation;" 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 any thing 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,

<sup>1</sup> ["I never troubled myself with answering any arguments which the opponents in the divinity-schools brought against the Articles of the Church, nor ever admitted their authority as decisive of a difficulty; but I used on such occasions to say to them, holding up the *New Testament* in my hand, 'En sacrum codicem! Here is the fountain of truth; why do you follow the streams derived from it by sophistry, or polluted by the passions, of man?'" — *Bp. Watson's Life*, vol. i. p. 63.]

<sup>2</sup> [Here follows, in the original draught,—"I am prepared to be accused of Manicheism, or some other hard name ending in *ism*, which make 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."]

<sup>3</sup> [There are numerous passages dispersed throughout the Old Testament, which import something more than "an

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, &c. &c. is, of course, a poetical fiction to help him to make out his case.

I ought to add, that there is a "tramelogedia" of Alfieri, called "Abele."—I have never read that, nor any other of the posthumous works of the writer, except his *Life*.

Ravenna, Sept. 20. 1821.

#### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

*Men.* — ADAM.  
CAIN.  
ABEL.

*Spirits.* — ANGEL OF THE LORD.  
LUCIFER.

*Women.* — EVE.  
ADAH.  
ZILLAH.

### Cain:

A MYSTERY.<sup>4</sup>

#### 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 —

allusion to a future state." In truth, the Old Testament abounds in phrases which imply the immortality of the soul, and which would be insignificant and hardly intelligible, but upon that supposition. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it." — *Eccl. xii. 7.* "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame: and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." — *Dan. x. 2.* "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth: and though after my skin worms shall destroy my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." — *Job xix. 25.* — *Brit. Rev.*]

<sup>4</sup> [Lord Byron has thought proper to call this drama a "Mystery;" the name which was given in our own country, before the Reformation, to those scenic representations of the

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.<sup>1</sup>

*Cain.* Have ye not pray'd?

*Adam.* We have, most fervently.

*Cain.* And loudly: I Have heard you.

*Adam.* So will God, I trust.

*Abel.* Amen!

*Adam.* But thou, my eldest born, art silent still.

*Cain.* 'Tis better I should be so.

*Adam.* Wherefore so?

*Cain.* I have nought to ask.<sup>2</sup>

*Adam.* Nor aught to thank for?<sup>3</sup>

*Cain.* No.

*Adam.* Dost thou not live?

*Cain.* Must I not die?

*Eve.* Alas!

The fruit of our forbidden tree begins

To fall.<sup>4</sup>

*Adam.* And we must gather it again.

Oh, God! why didst thou plant the tree of knowledge?

*Cain.* And wherefore pluck'd ye not the tree of life?

Ye might have then defied him.

*Adam.* Oh! my son,

Blaspheme not: these are serpents' 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?

mysterious events of our religion, which, indecent and unedifying as they seem to ourselves, were, perhaps, the principal means by which a knowledge of those events was conveyed to our rude and uninstructed ancestors. But, except in the topics on which it is employed, Lord Byron's *Mystery* has no resemblance to those which it claims as its prototypes. — *HEBER.*]

<sup>1</sup> ["Prayer," said Lord Byron, at Cephalonia, "does not consist in the act of kneeling, nor in repeating certain words in a solemn manner. Devotion is the affection of the heart, and this I feel; for when I view the wonders of creation, I bow to the majesty of Heaven; and when I feel the enjoyment of life, health, and happiness, I feel grateful to God for having bestowed these upon me." — *KENNEDY'S Conversations*, p. 135.]

<sup>2</sup> ["Say then, shall man, deprived all power of choice, Ne'er raise to Heaven the supplicating voice? Not so; but to the gods his fortunes trust; Their thoughts are wise, their dispensations just. What best may profit or delight they know, And real good for fancied bliss bestow; With eyes of pity they our frailties scan; More dear to them, than to himself, is man." — *Juv.*]

<sup>3</sup> ["Though the Deity is inclined," says Owen, "by his own

*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 e'en in Paradise destroy'd 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, Each to his task of toil — not heavy, though Needful: the earth is young, and yields us kindly Her fruits with little labour.

*Eve.* Cain, my son, Behold thy father cheerful and resign'd, And do as he doth. [*Exeunt ADAM and EVE.*]

*Zillah.* Wilt thou not, my brother?

*Abel.* Why wilt thou wear this gloom upon thy brow,

Which can avail thee nothing, save to rouse The Eternal anger?

*Adah.* My beloved Cain,

Wilt thou frown even on me?

*Cain.* No, Adah! no;

I fain would be alone a little while.

Abel, I'm sick at heart; but it will pass.

Precede me, brother — I will follow shortly.

And you, too, sisters, tarry not behind;

Your gentleness must not be harshly met:

I'll follow you anon.

*Adah.* If not, I will

Return to seek you here.

*Abel.* The peace of God

Be on your spirit, brother!

[*Exeunt ABEL, ZILLAH, and ADAH.*]

*Cain (solus).* And this is Life! — Toil! and wherefore should I toil? — because My father could not keep his place in Eden.

What had I done in this? — I was unborn:

I sought not to be born; nor love the state

To which that birth has brought me. Why did he

Yield to the serpent and the woman? or,

Yielding, why suffer? What was there in this?

The tree was planted, and why not for him?

If not, why place him near it, where it grew,

The fairest in the centre? They have but

One answer to all questions, "T was his will,

And he is good." How know I that? Because

He is all-powerful, must all-good, too, follow?

benignity, to bless his creatures, yet he expects the outward expressions of devotion from the rational part of them." This is certainly what Juvenal means to inculcate: hence his earnest recommendation of a due regard to the public and ceremonial part of religion. — *GIFFORD.*]

<sup>3</sup> ["I took out my 'Ogden on Prayer,' and read some of it. Dr. Johnson praised him. 'Abernethy,' said he, 'allows only of a physical effect of prayer upon the mind, which may be produced many ways as well as by prayer; for instance, by meditation. Ogden goes farther. In truth, we have the consent of all nations for the efficacy of prayer, whether offered up by individuals or by assemblies; and revelation has told us it will be effectual.'" — *BOSWELL*, vol. iv. p. 66. ed. 1835.]

<sup>4</sup> [This passage affords a key to the temper and frame of mind of Cain throughout the piece. He disdains the limited existence allotted to him; he has a rooted horror of death, attended with a vehement curiosity as to his nature; and he nourishes a sullen anger against his parents, to whose misconduct he ascribes his degraded state. Added to this, he has an insatiable thirst for knowledge beyond the bounds prescribed to mortality; and this part of the poem bears a strong resemblance to Manfred, whose counterpart, indeed, in the main points of character, Cain seems to be. — *CAMPBELL.*]

I judge but by the fruits—and they are bitter—  
Which I must feed on for a fault not mine.  
Whom have we here?—A shape like to the angels,  
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-arm'd 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.<sup>1</sup> And is it  
So? and can aught grieve save humanity?  
He cometh.

Enter LUCIFER.<sup>2</sup>

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  
Of dust, and feel for it, and with you.  
Cain. How!  
You know my thoughts?  
Lucifer. They are the thoughts of all  
Worthy of thought;—'tis your immortal part  
Which speaks within you.  
Cain. What immortal part?  
This has not been reveal'd: the tree of life  
Was withheld from us by my father's folly,  
While that of knowledge, by my mother's haste,  
Was pluck'd too soon; and all the fruit is death!  
Lucifer. They have deceived thee; thou shalt live.  
Cain. I live,

<sup>1</sup> [Cain's description of the approach of Lucifer would have shone in the "Paradise Lost." There is something spiritually fine in this conception of the terror of presentiment of coming evil.—JEFFREY.]

<sup>2</sup> [Of Lucifer, as drawn by Lord Byron, we absolutely know no evil; on the contrary, the impression which we receive of him is, from his first introduction, most favourable. He is not only endued with all the beauty, the wisdom, and the unconquerable daring which Milton has assigned him, and which may reasonably be supposed to belong to a spirit of so exalted a nature, but he is represented as unhappy without a crime, and as pitying our unhappiness. Even before he appears, we are prepared (so far as the poet has had skill to prepare us) to sympathise with any spiritual being who is opposed to the government of Jehovah. The conversations, the exhibitions which ensue, are all conducive to the same conclusion, that whatever is *evil*, and that, had the Devil been the Creator, he would have made his creatures happier. Above all, his arguments and insinuations are allowed to pass uncontradicted, or are answered only by overbearing force, and punishment inflicted not on himself but on his disciple. Nor is the intention less apparent, nor the poison less subtle, because the language employed is not indecorous, and the accuser of the Almighty does not descend to ribaldry or scurrilous invective.—HEBER.]

The Satan of Milton is no half-human devil, with enough of earth about him to typify the malignant sceptic, and enough of heaven to throw a shade of sublimity on his very malignity. The Lucifer of Byron is neither a noble-fiend, nor yet a villain-fiend—he does nothing, and he seems nothing—there is no poetry either of character or description about him—he is a poor, sneaking, talking devil—a most wretched metaphysician, without wit enough to save him even from the damnation of criticism—he speaks neither poetry nor common

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! [not  
Lucifer. Thou livest, and must live for ever: think  
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. No: art thou?

Cain. How should I be so? Look on me!

Lucifer. Poor clay!

And thou pretendest to be wretched! Thou!

Cain. I am:—and thou, with all thy might, what art thou?

Lucifer. One who aspired to be what made thee, and would not have made thee what thou art.

Cain. Ah!

Thou look'st almost a god; and—

Lucifer. I am none:

And having fail'd to be one, would be nought

Save what I am. He conquer'd; let him reign!

Cain. Who?

Lucifer. Thy sire's Maker, and the earth's.

Cain. And heaven's,

And all that in them is. So I have heard

His seraphs sing; and so my father saith.

Lucifer. They say—what they must sing and say,  
on pain

Of being that which I am—and thou art—

Of spirits and of men.

Cain. And what is that?

Lucifer. Souls who dare use their immortality—<sup>3</sup>

sense. Thomas Aquinas would have flogged him more for his bad logic than his unbelief; and St. Dunstan would have caught him by the nose ere the purblind fiend was aware.—BLACKWOOD.]

The impiety chargeable on this Mystery consists mainly in this—that the purposeless and gratuitous blasphemies put into the mouth of Lucifer and Cain are left unrefuted, so that they appear introduced for their own sake, and the design of the writer seems to terminate in them. There is no attempt made to prevent their leaving the strongest possible impression on the reader's mind. On the contrary, the arguments, if such they can be called, levelled against the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, are put forth with the utmost ingenuity. And it has been the noble poet's endeavour to palliate as much as possible the characters of the Evil Spirit and of the first Murderer; the former of whom is made an elegant, poetical, philosophical sentimentalist, a sort of Manfred,—the latter an ignorant, proud, and self-willed boy. Lucifer, too, is represented as denying all share in the temptation of Eve, which he throws upon the Serpent "in his serpentine capacity;" the author pleading, that he does so, only because the book of Genesis has not the most distant allusion to any thing of the kind, and that a reference to the New Testament would be an anachronism.—ECL. REV.]

<sup>3</sup> [In this long dialogue, the tempter tells Cain (who is thus far supposed to be ignorant of the fact) that the soul is immortal, and that "souls who dare use their immortality" are condemned by God to be wretched everlastingly. This sentiment, which is the pervading moral (if we may call it so) of the play, is developed in the lines which follow.—HEBER.] "There is nothing against the immortality of the soul in 'Cain' that I recollect. I hold no such opinions;—but, in a drama, the first rebel and the first murderer must be made to talk according to their characters."—BYRON LETTERS.]

Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in  
His everlasting face, and tell him, that  
His evil is not good! If he has made,  
As he saith—which I know not, nor believe—  
But, if he made us—he cannot unmake:  
We are immortal!—nay, he'd have us so,  
That he may torture:—let him! He is great—  
But, in his greatness, is no happier than  
We in our conflict! Goodness would not make  
Evil; and what else hath he made? But let him  
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,  
Creating worlds, to make eternity  
Less burthensome to his immense existence  
And unparticipated solitude!  
Let him crowd orb on orb: he is alone  
Indefinite, indissoluble tyrant!<sup>1</sup>  
Could he but crush himself, 'twere the best boon  
He ever granted: but, let him reign on,  
And multiply himself in misery!  
Spirits and men, at least we sympathise—  
And, suffering in concert, make our pangs,  
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—<sup>2</sup>

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

Now met I aught to sympathise with me.

'Tis well—I rather would consort with spirits. [soul

Lucifer. And hadst thou not been fit by thine own

For such companionship, I would not now  
Have stood before thee as I am: a serpent  
Had been enough to charm ye, as before.<sup>3</sup>

Cain. Ah! didst thou tempt my mother?

Lucifer. I tempt none,

Save with the truth: was not the tree, the tree

Of knowledge? and was not the tree of life

Still fruitful? Did I bid her pluck them not?

Did I plant things prohibited within

The reach of beings innocent, and curious

By their own innocence? I would have made ye

Gods; and even He who thrust ye forth, so thrust ye

Because "ye should not eat the fruits of life,

And become gods as we." Were those his words?

Cain. They were, as I have heard from those who  
heard them,

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 snatch'd 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. I?

Poor clay! what should I tempt them for, or how?

Cain. They say the serpent was a spirit.

Lucifer. Who

Saith that? It is not written so on high:

The proud One will not so far falsify,

Though man's vast fears and little vanity

Would make him cast upon the spiritual nature

His own low failing. The snake was the snake—

No more; and yet not less than those he tempted,

In nature being earth also—more in wisdom,

Since he could overcome them, and foreknew

The knowledge fatal to their narrow joys.

Think'st thou I'd take the shape of things that die?

Cain. But the thing had a demon?

Lucifer. He but woke one

In those he spake to with his forked tongue.

I tell thee that the serpent was no more

Than a mere serpent: ask the cherubim

Who guard the tempting tree. When thousand ages

Have roll'd o'er your dead ashes, and your seed's,

symbol or sacrament of that celestial principle which nourishes the soul to immortality?—BISHOP HORNE.]

<sup>3</sup> [The Eclectic reviewer, we believe the late Robert Hall, says,—"Innocence is not the cause of curiosity, but has, in every stage of society, been its victim. Curiosity has ruined greater numbers than any other passion; and as, in its incipient actings, it is the most dangerous foe of innocence, so, when it becomes a passion, it is only fed by guilt. Innocence, indeed, is gone, when desire has conceived the sin. Cain, in this drama, is made, like the Faust of Goethe, to be the victim of curiosity; and a fine moral might have been deduced from it."—Dr. Johnson, on the contrary, says, "A generous and elevated mind is distinguished by nothing more certainly than by an eminent degree of curiosity. This passion is, perhaps, regularly heightened in proportion as the powers of the mind are elevated and enlarged. Curiosity is the thirst of the soul; it inflames and torments us, and makes us taste every thing with joy, however otherwise insipid, by which it may be quenched."]

The seed of the then world may thus array  
 Their earliest fault in fable, and attribute  
 To me a shape I scorn, as I scorn all  
 That bows to him, who made things but to bend  
 Before his sullen, sole eternity;  
 But we, who see the truth, must speak it. Thy  
 Fond parents listen'd to a creeping thing,  
 And fell. For what should spirits tempt them? What  
 Was there to envy in the narrow bounds  
 Of Paradise, that spirits who pervade  
 Space — but I speak to thee of what thou know'st  
 not,

With all thy tree of knowledge.

*Cain.* But thou canst not  
 Speak aught of knowledge which I would not know,  
 And do not thirst to know, and bear a mind  
 To know.

*Lucifer.* And heart to look on?

*Cain.* Be it proved.

*Lucifer.* Darest thou to look on Death?

*Cain.* He has not yet  
 Been seen.

*Lucifer.* But must be undergone.

*Cain.* My father  
 Says he is something dreadful, and my mother  
 Weeps when he is 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 bear the form of earth-born being.

*Cain.* Ah!

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 look'd out  
 In the vast desolate night in search of him;  
 And when I saw gigantic shadows in  
 The umbrage of the walls of Eden, chequer'd  
 By the far-flashing of the cherubs' swords,  
 I watch'd for what I thought his coming<sup>1</sup>; for  
 With fear rose longing in my heart to know  
 What 't was which shook us all — but nothing came.  
 And then I turn'd 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. [die—]

*Cain.* I'm glad of that: I would not have them  
 They are so lovely. What is death? I fear,  
 I feel, it is a dreadful thing; but what,

<sup>1</sup> [It may appear a very prosaic, but it is certainly a very  
 obvious criticism on these passages, that the young family of  
 mankind had, long ere this, been quite familiar with the death  
 of animals — some of whom Abel was in the habit of offering

I cannot compass: 't is denounced against us,  
 Both them who sinn'd and sinn'd not, as an ill —  
 What ill?

*Lucifer.* To be resolved into the earth.

*Cain.* But shall I know it?

*Lucifer.* As I know not death,  
 I cannot answer.

*Cain.* Were I quiet earth

That were no evil: would I ne'er had been  
 Aught else but dust!

*Lucifer.* That is a grovelling wish,  
 Less than thy father's, for he wish'd to know.

*Cain.* But not to live, or wherefore pluck'd he not  
 The life-tree?

*Lucifer.* He was hinder'd.

*Cain.* Deadly error!

Not to snatch first that fruit: — but ere he pluck'd  
 The knowledge, he was ignorant of death.

Alas! I scarcely now know what it is,

And yet I fear it — fear I know not what!

*Lucifer.* And I, who know all things, fear nothing:  
 see

What is true knowledge.

*Cain.* Wilt thou teach me all?

*Lucifer.* Ay, upon one condition.

*Cain.* Name it.

*Lucifer.* That  
 Thou dost fall down and worship me — thy Lord.

*Cain.* Thou art not the Lord my father worships.

*Lucifer.* No.

*Cain.* His equal?

*Lucifer.* No; — I have nought in common with him!  
 Nor would: I would be aught above — beneath —  
 Aught save a sharer or a servant of  
 His power. I dwell apart; but I am great: —  
 Many there are who worship me, and more  
 Who shall — be thou amongst the first.

*Cain.* I never

As yet have bow'd 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 bow'd

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 bow'd 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.* Thou 'lt know here — and hereafter.

*Cain.* Let me but

Be taught the mystery of my being.

*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.

up as sacrifices; so that it is not quite conceivable that they  
 should be so much at a loss to conjecture what *Death* was.  
 — JEFFREY.]

*Lucifer.* Saidst 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,

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 aught.

*Lucifer.* Then follow me!

*Cain.* I will.<sup>1</sup>

Enter ADAH.

*Adah.* My brother, I have come for thee;

It is our hour of rest and joy — and we

Have sleep without thee. Thou hast labour'd not

This morn; but I have done thy task: the fruits

Are ripe, and glowing as the light which ripens:

Come away.

*Cain.* See'st thou not?

*Adah.* I see an angel;

We have seen many: will he share our hour

Of rest? — he is welcome.

*Cain.* But he is not like

The angels we have seen.

*Adah.* Are there, then, others?

But he is welcome, as they were: they deign'd

To be our guests — will he?

*Cain (to Lucifer).* Wilt thou?

*Lucifer.* I ask

Thee to be mine.

*Cain.* I must away with him.

*Adah.* And leave us?

*Cain.* Ay.

*Adah.* And me?

*Cain.* Beloved Adah!

*Adah.* Let me go with thee.

*Lucifer.* No, she must not.

*Adah.* Who

Art thou that steppeth between heart and heart?

*Cain.* He is a god.

*Adah.* How know'st thou?

*Cain.* He speaks like

A god.

*Adah.* So did the serpent, and it lied. [that

*Lucifer.* Thou errest, Adah! — was not the tree

Of knowledge?

*Adah.* Ay — to our eternal sorrow.

*Lucifer.* And yet that grief is knowledge — so he

lied not:

And if he did betray you, 't was with truth;

And truth in its own essence cannot be

But good.

*Adah.* But all we know of it has gather'd

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 — I

Love thee.

*Lucifer.* More than thy mother, and thy sire?

*Adah.* I do. Is that a sin, too?

*Lucifer.* No, not yet:

It one day will be in your children.

*Adah.* What!

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

Mortality.<sup>2</sup>

*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 — [higher

*Lucifer.* Higher things than ye are slaves: and

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.* Omnipotence

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 pluck'd a fruit more fatal to thine offspring

Than to thyself; thou at the least hast pass'd

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 work'd on by the snake, in thy most flush'd

And heedless, harmless wantonness of bliss.

I cannot answer this immortal thing

Which stands before me; I can not 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

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!<sup>3</sup>

*Cain.* What dreads my Adah? This is no ill spirit.

*Adah.* He is not God — nor God's: I have beheld

spearian speech in Lord Byron's tragedies, seems cold enough.

He says, "Adah, the wife of Cain, enters, and shrinks from

the daring and blasphemous speech which is passing between

him and the Spirit. Her account of the fascination which he

exercises over her is magnificent."