

that I have done him injustice. 'Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.' I should have liked to have taken up the same ground in a great degree with Jeffrey; but, as it will never do to build on another man's foundation, I have been obliged to break ground on a different side of the fortress, though not, I think, so favourable a one, and with the disadvantage of contending against a rival, who has conducted his attack with admirable taste and skill."

The following extract is from Mr. Campbell's Magazine:—

"'Cain' is altogether of a higher order than 'Sardanapalus' and the 'Two Foscari.' Lord Byron has not, indeed, fulfilled our expectations of a gigantic picture of the first murderer; for there is scarcely any passion, except the immediate agony of rage, which brings on the catastrophe; and Cain himself is little more than the subject of supernatural agency. This piece is essentially nothing but a vehicle for striking allusions to the mighty abstractions of Death and Life, Eternity and Time; for vast but dim descriptions of the regions of space, and for daring disputations on that great problem, the origin of evil. The groundwork of the arguments on the awful subjects handled is very common-place; but they are arrayed in great majesty of language, and conducted with a frightful audacity. The direct attacks on the goodness of God are not, perhaps, taken apart, bolder than some passages of Milton; but they inspire quite a different sensation; because, in thinking of Paradise Lost, we never regard the Deity, or Satan, as other than great adverse powers, created by the imagination of the poet. The personal identity which Milton has given to his spiritual intelligences,—the local habitations which he has assigned them,—the material beauty with which he has invested their forms,—all these remove the idea of impurity from their discourses. But we know nothing of Lord Byron's Lucifer, except his speeches: he is invented only that he may utter them; and the whole appears an abstract discussion, held for its own sake, not maintained in order to serve the dramatic consistency of the persons. He has made no attempt to imitate Milton's plastic power;—that power by which our great poet has made his Heaven and Hell, and the very regions of space, sublime realities, palpable to the imagination, and has traced the lineaments of his angelic messengers with the precision of a sculptor. The Lucifer of 'Cain' is a mere bodiless abstraction,—the shadow of a dogma; and all the scenery over which he presides is dim, vague, and seen only in faint outline. There is, no doubt, a very uncommon power displayed, even in this shadowing out of the ethereal journey of the spirit and his victim, and in the vast sketch of the world of phantasms at which they arrive: but they are utterly unlike the massive grandeur of Milton's creation. We are far from imputing intentional impiety to Lord Byron for this Mystery; nor, though its language occasionally shocks, do we apprehend any danger will arise from its perusal."

So much for the professed Reviewers. We shall conclude with a passage from Sir Egerton Brydges's "Letters on the Character and Genius of Lord Byron:—

"One of the pieces which have had the effect of throwing the most unfavourable hues, not upon the brilliancy of Lord Byron's poetry, but upon its results to society, is 'Cain.' Yet, it must be confessed, that there is no inconsiderable portion of that poem which is second only to portions of similar import in Milton,—and many of them *not second*; in a style still sweeter and more eloquent, and with equal force, grandeur, and purity of sentiment and conception; such as the most rigidly-religious mind would have read, if it had come from Milton, or any other poet whose piety was not suspected, as the effusion of something approaching to holy inspiration.

"Let us then task our candour, and inquire of ourselves, whether he who could write such passages could *mean* wrong? Let us recollect, that as the rebellious and blasphemous speeches he has put into the mouths of Lucifer and Cain are warranted by Milton's example, and the fact of Cain's transgression recorded in the Bible, the omission of the design and filling up a character who should answer all those speeches might be a mere defect in the poet's judgment. He might think that Lucifer's known character as an *Evil Spirit* precluded his arguments from the sanction of authority; and that Cain's punishment, and the denunciations which accompanied it, were a sufficient warning. I know not that any objection has been made to 'Heaven and Earth.' It has the same cast of excellence as the more perfect parts of 'Cain,' but, perhaps, not quite so intense in degree.

"It seems as if Lord Byron persuaded himself, with regard to his own being, that he had always within him two contrary spirits of good and evil contending for the dominion over him, and thus reconciled those extraordinary flights of intellectual elevation and purity with a submission to the pride, the ferocity, the worldly passions, the worldly enjoyments, the corporeal pastimes, the familiar humour, the vulgarisms, the rough and coarse manliness, to which he alternately surrendered himself, and which the *good-natured* public chose to consider as the sole attributes of his personal character. Much of his time, however, must have been spent in the musings by which these high poems, so compacted of the essence of thought, were produced; and, in all this large portion of his existence here, his imagination must have borne him up on its wings into ethereal regions, far above the gross and sensual enjoyments of this grovelling earth. Did he deal, as minor poets deal, in mere splendour of words, his poetry would be no proof of this; but he *never* does so:—there is always a breathing soul beneath his words,

'That o'er-informs the tenement of clay.'

It is like the fragrant vapour that rises in incense from the earth through the morning dew; and when we listen to his lyre,

'Less than a God we think there cannot dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That sings so sweetly and so well!'

"If Lord Byron thought that, however loudly noisy voices might salute him with a rude and indiscriminate clamour of applause, they merited, and that severe and cruel comments were attached to them by those who assumed to themselves authority, and who seldom allowed the genius without perverting it into a cause of censure, that more than outweighed the praise; those fumes of flattery which are imputed as the causes of a delirium that led him into extravagancies, outraging decorum and the respect due to the public, never, in fact, reached him. To confer 'faint praise' is 'to damn'; to confer praise in a wrong place is to insult and provoke. Lord Byron, therefore, had not, after all, the encouragement that is most favourable to ripen the richest fruit; and it was a firm and noble courage that still prompted him to persevere.

"For this reason, as well as for others, I think his foreign residences were more propitious to the energies of his Muse than a continued abode in England would have been. The poison of the praises that were insidious did not reach him so soon; and he was not beset by teacherus companions, mortifying gossip, and that petty intercourse with ordinary society which tames and lowers the tone of the mind. To mingle much with the world is to be infallibly degraded by familiarity; not to mingle, at least, among the busy and the known, is to incur the disrespect to which insignificance is subjected. Lord Byron's foreign residence exempted him from these evils: he saw a few intimate friends, and he corresponded with a few others; but such an intercourse does not expose to similar effects. The necessary knowledge and necessary hints may thus be conveyed; but not all the pestilent chills which general society is so officious to unveil.

"If Lord Byron had not had a mind with a strong spring of virtue within it, I think that he would have thrown down his pen at some of the attacks he received, and given himself up to the sensual pleasures of his rank for the remainder of his life. The finer parts of his poems were of such spiritual splendour, and so pure, though passionate, an elevation, that they ought to have redeemed any parts which were open to doubt from a malevolent construction, and even have eclipsed and rendered unnoticeable many positive faults. Lord Byron's style, like his thoughts, had every variety: it did not attempt (as is the common practice) to make poetry by the metaphorical and the figurative; it followed his thoughts, and was a part of them: it did not fatigue itself to render clear by illustration or important by ornament, because the thought was clear or important in itself.

"I remember, when I first read 'Cain,' I thought it, as a composition, the most enchanting and irresistible of all Lord Byron's works; and I think so still. Some of the sentiments, taken detachedly, and left unanswered, are no doubt dangerous, and therefore ought not to have been so left; but the class of readers whom this poem is likely to interest are of so very elevated a cast, and the effect of the poetry is to refine, spiritualise, and illumine the imagination with such a sort of unearthly sublimity, that the mind of these, I am persuaded, will become too strong to incur any taint thus predicted, from the defect which has been so much insisted on."

Werner; or the Inheritance:

A TRAGEDY.¹

TO

THE ILLUSTRIOUS GOETHE,

BY ONE OF HIS HUMBLEST ADMIRERS,

THIS TRAGEDY IS DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE following drama is taken entirely from the "*German's Tale, Kruitner*," published many years ago in *Lee's Canterbury Tales*; written (I believe) by two sisters, of whom one furnished only this story and another, both of which are considered superior to the remainder of the collection.² I have adopted the characters, plan, and even the language, of many parts of this story. Some of the characters are modified or altered, a few of the names changed, and one character, Ida of Stralenheim, added by myself; but in the rest the original is chiefly followed. When I was young (about fourteen, I think,) I first read this tale, which made a deep impression upon me; and may, indeed, be said to contain the germ of much that I have since written. I am not sure that it ever was very popular; or, at any rate, its popularity has since been eclipsed by that of other great writers in the same department. But I have generally found that those who *had* read it, agreed with me in their estimate of the singular power of mind and conception which it develops. I should also add *conception*,

¹ [The tragedy of "Werner" was begun at Pisa, December 18th, 1821, completed January 20th, 1822, and published in London in the November following. The reviews of "Werner" were, without exception, unfavourable. One critique of the time thus opens:—

"Who could be so absurd as to think, that a dramatist has no right to make free with other people's fables? On the contrary, we are quite aware that that particular species of genius which is exhibited in the construction of plots, never at any period flourished in England. We all know that Shakspeare himself took his stories from Italian novels, Danish sagas, English Chronicles, Plutarch's Lives—from any where rather than from his own invention. But did he take the *whole* of Hamlet, or Juliet, or Richard the Third, or Antony and Cleopatra, from any of these foreign sources? Did he not *invent*, in the noblest sense of the word, all the *characters* of his pieces? Who dreams that any old Italian novelist, or ballad-maker, could have formed the imagination of such a creature as Juliet? Who dreams that the HAMLET of Shakspeare, the princely enthusiast, the melancholy philosopher, that spirit refined even to pain, that most incomprehensible and unapproachable of all the creations of human genius, is the same being, in any thing but the name, with the rough, strong-hearted, bloody-handed AMLETT of the north? Who is there that supposes Goethe to have taken the character of his Faust from the nursery rhymes and penny pamphlets about the Devil and Doctor Faustus? Or who, to come nearer home, imagines that Lord Byron himself found his Sardanapalus in Dionysius of Halicarnassus?

"But *here* Lord Byron has *invented* nothing—absolutely NOTHING. There is not one incident in his play, not even the most trivial, that is not to be found in Miss Lee's novel, occurring exactly in the same manner, brought about by exactly the same agents, and producing exactly the same effects on the plot. And then as to the characters—not only is every

rather than execution; for the story might, perhaps, have been developed with greater advantage. Amongst those whose opinions agreed with mine upon this story, I could mention some very high names: but it is not necessary, nor indeed of any use; for every one must judge according to his own feelings. I merely refer the reader to the original story, that he may see to what extent I have borrowed from it; and am not unwilling that he should find much greater pleasure in perusing it than the drama which is founded upon its contents.

I had begun a drama upon this tale so far back as 1815, (the first I ever attempted, except one at thirteen years old, called "*Ulric and Ivina*," which I had sense enough to burn,) and had nearly completed an act, when I was interrupted by circumstances. This is somewhere amongst my papers in England; but as it has not been found, I have re-written the first, and added the subsequent acts.

The whole is neither intended, nor in any shape adapted, for the stage.³

Pisa, February, 1822.

one of them to be found in 'Kruitner,' but every one is to be found there more fully and powerfully developed. Indeed, but for the preparation which we had received from our old familiarity with Miss Lee's own admirable work, we rather incline to think that we should have been unable to comprehend the gist of her noble imitator, or rather copier, in several of what seem to be meant for his most elaborate delineations. The fact is, that this undeviating closeness, this humble fidelity of *imitation*, is a thing so perfectly new in any thing worthy of the name of *literature*, that we are sure no one, who has not read the Canterbury Tales, will be able to form the least conception of what it amounts to.

"Those who have never read Miss Lee's book, will, however, be pleased with this production; for, in truth, the story is one of the most powerfully conceived, one of the most picturesque, and at the same time instructive stories, that we are acquainted with.

"Kruitner, or the German's Tale," possesses mystery, and yet clearness, as to its structure; strength of characters, and admirable contrast of characters; and, above all, the most lively interest, blended with and subservient to the most affecting of moral lessons."

The reader will find a minute analysis, introduced by the above remarks, in Blackwood, vol. xii. p. 710.]

² [This is not correct. "The Young Lady's Tale, or the Two Emily's," and "the Clergyman's Tale, or Pembroke," were contributed by Sophia Lee, the author of "The Recess," the comedy of "The Chapter of Accidents," and "Almedya, a Tragedy," who died in 1824. The "German's Tale," and all the others in the Canterbury Collection, were written by Harriet, the younger of the sisters.]

³ [Werner is, however, the only one of Lord Byron's dramas that proved successful in representation. It is still (1836) in possession of the stage.]

I want for nothing which I cannot want ;
You seem devoid of this—wilt share it ?

[GABOR pulls out his purse.

Wer. Who
Told you I was a beggar ?

Gab. You yourself,
In saying you were a soldier during peace-time.

Wer. (looking at him with suspicion). You know
me not ?

Gab. I know no man, not even
Myself : how should I then know one I ne'er
Beheld till half an hour since ?

Wer. Sir, I thank you.
Your offer's noble were it to a friend,
And not unkind as to an unknown stranger,
Though scarcely prudent ; but no less I thank you.
I am a beggar in all save his trade ;
And when I beg of any one, it shall be
Of him who was the first to offer what
Few can obtain by asking. Pardon me. [Exit.

Gab. (solus). A goodly fellow by his looks, though
worn,

As most good fellows are, by pain or pleasure,
Which tear life out of us before our time ;
I scarce know which most quickly : but he seems
To have seen better days, as who has not
Who has seen yesterday ?—But here approachès
Our sage intendant, with the wine : however,
For the cup's sake I'll bear the cupbearer.

Enter IDENSTEIN.

Iden. 'T is here ! the supernaculum ! twenty years
Of age, if 't is a day.

Gab. Which epoch makes
Young women and old wine ; and 't is great pity,
Of two such excellent things, increase of years,
Which still improves the one, should spoil the other.
Fill full—Here's to our hostess !—your fair wife !
[Takes the glass.

Iden. Fair !—Well, I trust your taste in wine is
equal

To that you show for beauty ; but I pledge you
Nevertheless.

Gab. Is not the lovely woman
I met in the adjacent hall, who, with
An air, and port, and eye, which would have better
Besem'd this palace in its brightest days
(Though in a garb adapted to its present
Abandonment), return'd my salutation—
Is not the same your spouse ?

Iden. I would she were !
But you're mistaken :—that's the stranger's wife.

Gab. And by her aspect she might be a prince's :
Though time hath touch'd her too, she still retains
Much beauty, and more majesty.

Iden. And that
Is more than I can say for Madame Idenstein,
At least in beauty : as for majesty,
She has some of its properties which might
Be spared—but never mind !

Gab. I don't. But who
May be this stranger ? He too hath a bearing
Above his outward fortunes.

Iden. There I differ.
He's poor as Job, and not so patient ; but
Who he may be, or what, or aught of him,
Except his name (and that I only learn'd
To-night), I know not.

Gab. But how came he here ?

Iden. In a most miserable old caleche,
About a month since, and immediately
Fell sick, almost to death. He should have died.

Gab. Tender and true !—but why ?
Iden. Why, what is life
Without a living ? He has not a stiver.

Gab. In that case, I much wonder that a person
Of your apparent prudence should admit
Guests so forlorn into this noble mansion. [make

Iden. That's true ; but pity, as you know, does
One's heart commit these follies ; and besides,
They had some valuables left at that time,
Which paid their way up to the present hour ;
And so I thought they might as well be lodged
Here as at the small tavern, and I gave them
The run of some of the oldest palace rooms.
They served to air them, at the least as long
As they could pay for fire-wood.

Gab. Poor souls !
Iden. Ay,
Exceeding poor.

Gab. And yet unused to poverty,
If I mistake not. Whither were they going ?
Iden. Oh ! Heaven knows where, unless to heaven
itself.

Some days ago that look'd the likeliest journey
For Werner.

Gab. Werner ! I have heard the name :
But it may be a feign'd one.

Iden. Like enough !
But hark ! a noise of wheels and voices, and
A blaze of torches from without. As sure
As destiny, his excellency's come.
I must be at my post : will you not join me,
To help him from his carriage, and present
Your humble duty at the door ?

Gab. I dragg'd him
From out that carriage when he would have given
His barony or county to repel
The rushing river from his gurgling throat.
He has valets now enough : they stood aloof then,
Shaking their dripping ears upon the shore,
All roaring " Help ! " but offering none ; and as
For duty (as you call it)—I did mine then,
Now do yours. Hence, and bow and cringe him here !
Iden. I cringe !—but I shall lose the opportunity—
Plague take it ! he'll be here, and I not there !
[Exit IDENSTEIN hastily.

Re-enter WERNER.

Wer. (to himself). I heard a noise of wheels and
voices. How

All sounds now jar me !
Still here ! Is he not [Perceiving GABOR.

A spy of my pursuer's ? His frank offer
So suddenly, and to a stranger, wore
The aspect of a secret enemy ;
For friends are slow at such.

Gab. Sir, you seem rapt ;
And yet the time is not akin to thought.
These old walls will be noisy soon. The baron,
Or count (or whatsoever this half-drown'd noble
May be), for whom this desolate village and
Its lone inhabitants show more respect
Than did the elements, is come.

Iden. (without). This way—
This way, your excellency :—have a care,

The staircase is a little gloomy, and
Somewhat decay'd ; but if we had expected
So high a guest—Pray take my arm, my lord !

Enter STRALENHEIM, IDENSTEIN, and Attendants—
partly his own, and partly Retainers of the Domain
of which IDENSTEIN is Intendant.

Stral. I'll rest me here a moment.
Iden. (to the servants). Ho ! a chair !

Instantly, knaves ! [STRALENHEIM sits down.
Wer. (aside). 'T is he !

Stral. I'm better now.
Who are these strangers ?

Iden. Please you, my good lord,
One says he is no stranger.

Wer. (aloud and hastily). Who says that ?
[They look at him with surprise.

Iden. Why, no one spoke of you, or to you !—but
Here's one his excellency may be pleased
To recognise. [Pointing to GABOR.

Gab. I seek not to disturb
His noble memory.

Stral. I apprehend
This is one of the strangers to whose aid
I owe my rescue. Is not that the other ?
[Pointing to WERNER.

My state when I was succour'd must excuse
My uncertainty to whom I owe so much.

Iden. He !—no, my lord, he rather wants for rescue
Than can afford it. 'T is a poor sick man,
Travel-tired, and lately risen from a bed
From whence he never dream'd to rise.

Stral. Methought
That there were two.

Gab. There were, in company ;
But, in the service render'd to your lordship,
I needs must say but one, and he is absent.
The chief part of whatever aid was render'd
Was his : it was his fortune to be first.
My will was not inferior, but his strength
And youth outstripp'd me ; therefore do not waste
Your thanks on me. I was but a glad second
Unto a nobler principal.

Stral. Where is he ?
An Atten. My lord, he tarried in the cottage where
Your excellency rested for an hour,
And said he would be here to-morrow.

Stral. Till
That hour arrives, I can but offer thanks,
And then—

Gab. I seek no more, and scarce deserve
So much. My comrade may speak for himself.

Stral. (fixing his eyes upon WERNER : then aside).
It cannot be ! and yet he must be look'd to.

'T is twenty years since I beheld him with
These eyes ; and, though my agents still have kept
Theirs on him, policy has held aloof

My own from his, not to alarm him into
Suspicion of my plan. Why did I leave
At Hamburg those who would have made assurance

If this be he or no ? I thought, ere now,
To have been lord of Siegendorf, and parted
In haste, though even the elements appear
To fight against me, and this sudden flood
May keep me prisoner here till—

[He pauses, and looks at WERNER ; then resumes.
This man must

Be watch'd. If it is he, he is so changed,

His father, rising from his grave again,
Would pass him by unknown. I must be wary :
An error would spoil all.

Iden. Your lordship seems
Pensive. Will it not please you to pass on ?

Stral. 'T is past fatigue which gives my weigh'd-
down spirit

An outward show of thought. I will to rest.
Iden. The prince's chamber is prepared, with all
The very furniture the prince used when
Last here, in its full splendour.

(Aside.) Somewhat tatter'd,
And devilish damp, but fine enough by torch-light ;
And that's enough for your right noble blood
Of twenty quarterings upon a hatchment ;
So let their bearer sleep 'neath something like one
Now, as he one day will for ever lie.

Stral. (rising and turning to GABOR). Good night,
good people ! Sir, I trust to-morrow
Will find me apter to requite your service.
In the mean time I crave your company
A moment in my chamber.

Gab. I attend you.
Stral. (after a few steps, pauses, and calls WERNER). Friend !

Wer. Sir !
Iden. Sir ! Lord—oh Lord ! Why don't you say
His lordship, or his excellency ? Pray
My lord, excuse this poor man's want of breeding :
He hath not been accusom'd to admission
To such a presence.

Stral. (to IDENSTEIN). Peace, intendant !
Iden. Oh !

I am dumb.
Stral. (to WERNER). Have you been long here ?
Wer. Long ?
Stral. I sought

An answer, not an echo.
Wer. You may seek
Both from the walls. I am not used to answer
Those whom I know not.

Stral. Indeed ! Ne'er the less,
You might reply with courtesy to what
Is ask'd in kindness.

Wer. When I know it such,
I will requite—that is, reply—in unison.

Stral. The intendant said, you had been detain'd
by sickness—
If I could aid you—journeying the same way ?

Wer. (quickly). I am not journeying the same way !
Stral. How know ye

That, ere you know my route ?
Wer. Because there is
But one way that the rich and poor must tread
Together. You diverged from that dread path
Some hours ago, and I some days : henceforth
Our roads must lie asunder, though they tend
All to one home.

Stral. Your language is above
Your station.

Wer. (bitterly). Is it ?
Stral. Or, at least, beyond
Your garb.

Wer. 'T is well that it is not beneath it,
As sometimes happens to the better clad.

But, in a word, what would you with me ?
Stral. (startled). I ?
Wer. Yes—you ! You know me not, and question
me,