

# George Gordon, Lord Byron 1788-1824

## CAIN: A MYSTERY *scanned and edited by* *Jeffrey D. Hoeper, Fall 2000*

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

*Genesis,  
Chapter 3rd,  
verse 1.*

### PREFACE.

The following scenes are entitled "A Mystery" in conformity with the ancient title annexed to dramas upon similar subjects, which were styled "Mysteries, or 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 enough to refer to those very profane productions, whether in English, French, Italian, or Spanish. The author has endeavored to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this is but rarely) taken from actual *Scripture*, he has made as little alteration, even of words, as the rhythm would permit. The reader will recollect that the book of Genesis does not state that Eve was tempted by a demon, but by "The Serpent" 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[1] upon similar occasions, when the Fathers were quoted to him as Moderator in the schools of Cambridge, "Behold the Book!" - holding up the Scripture. It is to be recollected, that my present subject has nothing to do with the *New Testament*, to which no reference can be here made without anachronism. With the poems upon similar topics I have not been recently familiar. Since I was twenty I have never read Milton [2], but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference. Gesner's "Death of Abel"[3] 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. I am prepared to be accused of Manicheism [4], or some other hard name ending in *ism*, which makes a formidable figure and awful sound in the eyes and ears of those who would be as much puzzled to explain the terms so bandied about, as the liberal and pious indulgers in such epithets. Against such I can defend myself, or, if necessary, I can attack in turn. "Claw for claw, as Conan said to Satan, and the deevil take the shortest nails" (Waverley) [5].

The reader will please to bear in mind (what few choose to recollect), that there is no allusion to a future state in any of the books of Moses, nor indeed in the Old Testament. For a reason for this extraordinary omission he may consult Warburton's "Divine Legation" [6]; whether satisfactory or not, no better has yet been assigned. I have therefore supposed it new to Cain, without I hope, any

perversion of Holy Writ.

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

*Note*--The reader will perceive that the author has partly adopted in this poem the notion of Cuvier [2] that the world had been destroyed several times before the creation of man. This speculation, derived from the different strata and the bones of enormous and unknown animals found in them, is not contrary to the Mosaic account, but rather confirms it; as no human bones have yet been discovered in those strata, although those of many known animals are found near the remains of the unknown. The assertion of Lucifer, that the pre-Adamite world was also peopled by rational beings much more intelligent than man, and proportionably powerful to the mammoth, etc., etc., is, of course, a poetical fiction to help him to make out his case.

I ought to add, that there is a "tramelogedia" of Alfieri, called "Abele" [8]. I have never read that, nor any other of the posthumous works of the writer, except his Life.

#### CHARACTERS

MEN.  
ADAM.  
CAIN.

SPIRITS.  
ANGEL OF THE LORD.  
LUCIFER.

ABEL.

WOMEN.

EVE.  
ADAH.  
ZILLAH.

#### ACT I.

SCENE 1. - *The Land without Paradise. - Time, Sunrise.*

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

ADAM. God the Eternal! Infinite! All-wise! -  
Who out of darkness on the deep didst make  
Light on the waters with a word - All Hail!  
Jehovah! with returning light - All Hail!

EVE. God! who didst name the day, and separate  
Morning from night, till then divided never -  
Who didst divide the wave from wave, and call  
Part of thy work the firmament - All Hail!

ABEL. God! who didst call the elements into  
Earth, ocean, air and fire - and with the day  
And night, and worlds which these illuminate,  
Or shadow, madest beings to enjoy them,  
And love both them, and thee - All Hail! All Hail!

ADAM. God! the Eternal parent of all things!  
Who didst create these best and beauteous beings,  
To be beloved, more than all, save thee-

Let me love thee and them: - All Hail! All Hail!  
 ZILLAH. Oh, God! who loving, making, blessing all,  
 Yet didst permit the Serpent to creep in,  
 And drive my father forth from Paradise,  
 Keep us from further evil:- Hail! All Hail!  
 ADAM. Son Cain! my first-born - wherefore art thou silent?  
 CAIN. Why should I speak?  
 ADAM. To Pray.  
 CAIN. Have ye not prayed?  
 ADAM. We have, most fervently.  
 CAIN. And loudly: I  
 Have heard you.  
 ADAM. So will God, I trust.  
 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.  
 ADAM. Nor aught to thank for?  
 CAIN. No.  
 ADAM. Dost thou not *live*?  
 CAIN. Must I not die?  
 EVE. Alas!  
 The fruit of our forbidden tree begins  
 To fall.  
 ADAM. And we must gather it again.  
 Oh God! why didst thou plant the tree of knowledge;  
 CAIN. And wherefore plucked ye not the tree of life?  
 Ye might have then defied him.  
 ADAM. Oh! my son,  
 Blaspheme not: these are Serpent's words.  
 CAIN. Why not?  
 The snake spoke *truth*; it was the Tree of Knowledge;  
 It was the Tree of Life: knowledge is good,  
 And Life is good; and how can both be evil?  
 EVE. My boy! thou speakest as I spoke in sin,  
 Before thy birth: let me not see renewed  
 My misery in thine I have repented.  
 Let me not see my offspring fall into  
 The snares beyond the walls of Paradise,  
 Which even in Paradise destroyed his parents.  
 Content thee with what is. Had we been so,  
 Thou now hadst been contented. - Oh, my son!  
 ADAM. Our orisons[9] 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 labor.  
 EVE. Cain - my son -  
 Behold thy father cheerful and resigned -  
 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 [10] 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 planted, and why not for him?  
If not, why place him near it, where it grew  
The fairest in the center? They have but  
One answer to all questions, "'Twas his will,  
And he is good." How know I that? Because  
He is all-powerful, must all-good, too, follow?  
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 [11] battlements?  
If I shrink not from these, the fire-armed angels,  
Why should I quail from him who now approaches?  
Yet - he seems mightier far than them, nor less  
Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful  
As he hath been, and might be: sorrow seems  
Half of his immortality. And is it  
So? and can aught grieve save, humanity?  
He cometh.

[*Enter LUCIFER.*]

LUCIFER. Mortal!

CAIN. Spirit, who art thou?

LUCIFER. Master of spirits.

CAIN. And being so, canst thou

Leave them, and walk with dust?

LUCIFER. I know the thoughts

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 revealed: the Tree of Life  
Was withheld from us by my father's folly,  
While that of Knowledge, by my mother's haste,  
Was plucked too soon; and all the fruit is Death!

LUCIFER. They have deceived thee; thou shalt live.

CAIN. I live,

But live to die; and, living, see no thing  
To make death hateful, save an innate clinging,  
A loathsome, and yet all invincible  
Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I  
Despise myself, yet cannot overcome -  
And so I live. Would I had never lived!

LUCIFER. Thou livest - and must live for ever. Think not

The Earth, which is thine outward cov'ring, is  
Existence - it will cease - and thou wilt be -  
No less than thou art now.

CAIN. No 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 failed to be one, would be nought  
Save what I am. He conquered; 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 -  
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;  
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 sympathize -  
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 - perhaps he'll make  
One day a Son unto himself - as he  
Gave you a father - and if he so doth,  
Mark me! that Son will be a sacrifice!

CAIN. Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum  
In visions through my thought: I never could  
Reconcile what I saw with what I heard.  
My father and my mother talk to me  
Of serpents, and of fruits and trees: I see  
The gates of what they call their Paradise  
Guarded by fiery-sworded Cherubim,  
Which shut them out - and me: I feel the weight  
Of daily toil, and constant thought: I look  
Around a world where I seem nothing, with  
Thoughts which arise within me, as if they  
Could master all things - but I thought alone  
This misery was *mine*. My father is  
Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind  
Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk  
Of an eternal curse; my brother is  
A watching shepherd boy, who offers up  
The firstlings of the flock to him who bids  
The earth yield nothing to us without sweat;  
My sister Zillah sings an earlier hymn  
Than the birds' matins; and my Adah - my  
Own and beloved - she, too, understands not  
The mind which overwhelms me: never till  
Now met I aught to sympathize with me.

'Tis well - I rather would consort with spirits.

LUCIFER. And hadst thou not been fit by thine own soul  
For such companionship, I would not now  
Have stood before thee as I am a serpent  
Had been enough to charm ye, as before.

CAIN. Ah! didst *thou* tempt my mother?

LUCIFER. I tempt none,

Save with the truth: was not the Tree, 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 snatched both  
The fruits, or neither!

LUCIFER. One is yours already,  
The other may be still.

CAIN. How so?

LUCIFER. By being  
Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing can  
Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself  
And center 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 forky 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 rolled o'er your dead ashes, and your seed's,  
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 listened 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 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's named; and Abel lifts his eyes  
To Heaven, and Zillah casts hers to the earth,  
And sighs a prayer; and Adah looks on me,  
And speaks not.

LUCIFER. And thou?

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

LUCIFER. It has no shape; but will absorb all things  
That 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 looked out  
In the vast desolate night in search of him;  
And when I saw gigantic shadows in  
The umbrage of the walls of Eden, checkered  
By the far-flashing of the Cherubs' swords,  
I watched for what I thought his coming; for  
With fear rose longing in my heart to know  
What 'twas which shook us all - but nothing came.  
And then I turned my wary eyes from off  
Our native and forbidden Paradise,  
Up to the lights above us, in the azure,  
Which are so beautiful: shall they, too, die?

LUCIFER. Perhaps - but long outlive both thine and thee.

CAIN. I'm glad of that: I would not have them die -  
They are so lovely. What is Death? I fear,  
I feel, it is a dreadful thing; but what,  
I cannot compass: 'tis denounced against us,



Both them who sinned and sinned 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 wished to know!

CAIN. But not to live - or wherefore plucked he not  
 The life-tree?

LUCIFER. He was hindered.

CAIN. Deadly error!  
 Not to snatch first that fruit: - but ere he plucked  
 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. Aye, 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 bowed unto my father's God.  
 Although my brother Abel oft implores  
 That I would join with him in sacrifice: -  
 Why should I bow to thee?

LUCIFER. Hast thou ne'er bowed  
 To him?

CAIN. Have I not said it? - need I say it?  
 Could not thy mighty knowledge teach thee that?

LUCIFER. He who bows not to him has bowed to me.

CAIN. But I will bend to neither.

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

CAIN. And what is that?

LUCIFER. 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.  
LUCIFER. Said'st thou not  
Thou ne'er hadst bent to him who made thee?  
CAIN. Yes-  
But Abel's earnest prayer has wrought upon me;  
The offering is more his than mine - and Adah -  
LUCIFER. Why dost thou hesitate?  
CAIN. She is my sister,  
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.

[Enter ADAH.]

ADAH. My brother, I have come for thee;  
It is our hour of rest and joy - and we  
Have less without thee. Thou hast labored not  
This morn; but I have done thy task: the fruits  
Are ripe, and glowing as the light which ripens:  
Come away.  
CAIN. Seest 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 deigned  
To be our guest - 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. Aye.  
ADAH. And me?  
CAIN. Beloved Adah!  
ADAH. Let me go with thee.  
LUCIFER. No, she must not.  
ADAH. Who  
Art thou that steppest 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.  
LUCIFER. Thou errest, Adah! - was not the Tree that  
Of Knowledge?



Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent  
 And happy intercourse with happy spirits:  
 But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden,  
 Are girt [12] about by demons, who assume  
 The words of God, and tempt us with our own  
 Dissatisfied and curious thoughts - as thou  
 Wert worked on by the snake, in thy most flushed  
 And heedless, harmless wantonness of bliss.  
 I cannot answer this immortal thing  
 Which stands before me; I cannot abhor him;  
 I look upon him with a pleasing fear,  
 And yet I fly not from him: in his eye  
 There is a fastening attraction which  
 Fixes my fluttering eyes on his; my heart  
 Beats quick; he awes me, and yet draws me near,  
 Nearer and nearer: - Cain - Cain - save me from him!  
 CAIN. What dreads my Adah? This is no ill spirit.  
 ADAH. He is not God - nor God's: I have beheld  
 The Cherubs and the Seraphs; he looks not  
 Like them.  
 CAIN. But there are spirits loftier still -  
 The archangels.  
 LUCIFER. And still loftier than the archangels.  
 ADAH. Aye - but not blessed.  
 LUCIFER. If the blessedness  
 Consists in slavery - no.  
 ADAH. I have heard it said,  
 The Seraphs *love* most - Cherubim *know most* -  
 And this should be a Cherub - since he loves not.  
 LUCIFER. And if the higher knowledge quenches love,  
 What must *he be* you cannot love when known?  
 Since the all-knowing Cherubim love least,  
 The Seraphs' love can be but ignorance:  
 That they are not compatible, the doom  
 Of thy fond parents, for their daring, proves.  
 Choose betwixt Love and Knowledge - since there is  
 No other choice: your sire hath chosen already:  
 His worship is but fear.  
 ADAH. Oh, Cain! choose Love.  
 CAIN. For thee, my Adah, I choose not - It was  
 Born with me - but I love nought else.  
 ADAH. Our parents?  
 CAIN. Did they love us when they snatched from the Tree  
 That which hath driven us all from Paradise?  
 ADAH. We were not born then - and if we had been,  
 Should we not love them - and our children, Cain?  
 CAIN. My little Enoch! and his lisping sister!  
 Could I but deem them happy, I would half  
 Forget - but it can never be forgotten  
 Through thrice a thousand generations! never  
 Shall men love the remembrance of the man  
 Who sowed the seed of evil and mankind  
 In the same hour! They plucked the tree of science  
 And sin - and, not content with their own sorrow,  
 Begot me - thee - and all the few that are,  
 And all the unnumbered and innumerable

Multitudes, millions, myriads, which may be,  
To inherit agonies accumulated  
By ages!-and I must be sire of such things!  
Thy beauty and thy love - my love and joy,  
The rapturous moment and the placid hour,  
All we love in our children and each other,  
But lead them and ourselves through many years  
Of sin and pain - or few, but still of sorrow,  
Interchecked with an instant of brief pleasure,  
To Death - the unknown! Methinks the Tree of Knowledge  
Hath not fulfilled its promise: - if they sinned,  
At least they ought to have known all things that are  
Of knowledge - and the mystery of Death.  
What do they know? - that they are miserable.  
What need of snakes and fruits to teach us that?

ADAH. I am not wretched, Cain, and if thou  
Wert happy -

CAIN. Be thou happy, then, alone -  
I will have nought to do with happiness,  
which humbles me and mine.

ADAH. Alone I could not,  
Nor *would* be happy; but with those around us  
I think I could be so, despite of Death,  
Which, as I know it not, I dread not, though  
It seems an awful shadow - if I may  
Judge from what I have heard.

LUCIFER. And thou couldst not  
*Alone*, thou say'st, be happy?

ADAH. Alone! Oh, my God!  
Who could be happy and alone, or good?  
To me my solitude seems sin; unless  
When I think how soon I shall see my brother,  
His brother, and our children, and our parents.

LUCIFER. Yet thy God is alone; and is he happy?  
Lonely, and good?

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

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

ADAH. Alas! no! and you -  
Are you of Heaven?

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

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

LUCIFER. And why not adore?

ADAH. Our father  
Adores the Invisible only.

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

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

LUCIFER. Hast *thou* seen him?

ADAH. Yes - in his works.

LUCIFER. But in his being?

ADAH. No-

Save in my father, who is God's own image;  
Or in his angels, who are like to thee -  
And brighter, yet less beautiful and powerful  
In seeming: as the silent sunny noon,  
All light, they look upon us; but thou seem'st  
Like an ethereal night, where long white clouds  
Streak the deep purple, and unnumbered stars  
Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault  
With things that look as if they would be suns;  
So beautiful, unnumbered, and endearing,  
Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,  
They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou.  
Thou seems't unhappy: do not make us so,  
And I will weep for thee.

LUCIFER. Alas! those tears!

Couldst thou but know what oceans will be shed -

ADAH. By me?

LUCIFER. By all.

ADAH. What all?

LUCIFER. The million millions -  
The myriad myriads - the all-peopled earth -  
The unpeopled earth - and the o'er peopled Hell,  
Of which thy bosom is the germ.

ADAH. O Cain!

This spirit curseth us.

CAIN. Let him say on;

Him will I follow.

ADAH. Whither?

LUCIFER. To a place  
*Whence* he shall come back to thee in an hour;  
But in that hour see things of many days.

ADAH. How can that be?

LUCIFER. Did not your Maker make  
Out of old worlds this new one in few days?  
And cannot I, who aided in this work,  
Show in an hour what he hath made in many,  
Or hath destroyed in few?

CAIN. Lead on.

ADAH. Will he,

In sooth, return within an hour?

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

ADAH. Will he return?

LUCIFER. Aye, woman! he alone  
Of mortals from that place (the first and last  
Who shall return, save ONE) [13] shall come back to thee,  
To make that silent and expectant world  
As populous as this: at present there  
Are few inhabitants.

ADAH. Where dwellest thou?

LUCIFER. Throughout all space. Where should I dwell? Where are  
Thy God or Gods - there am I: all things are  
Divided with me: Life and Death - and Time -  
Eternity - and heaven and earth - and that  
Which is not heaven or earth, but peopled with  
Those who once peopled or shall people both -  
These are my realms! so that I do divide  
*His*, and possess a kingdom which is not  
*His*. If I were not that which I have said,  
Could I stand here? His angels are within  
Your vision.

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

LUCIFER. Cain! thou hast heard.  
If thou dost long for knowledge, I can satiate  
That thirst nor ask thee to partake of fruits  
Which shall deprive thee of a single good  
The Conqueror has left thee. Follow me.

CAIN. Spirit, I have said it.

*(Exeunt LUCIFER and CAIN.)*

ADAH *(follows exclaiming)*. Cain! my brother! Cain!

## ACT II.

### SCENE 1.-The Abyss of Space.

CAIN. I tread on air, and sink not - yet I fear  
To sink.

LUCIFER. Have faith in me, and thou shalt be  
Borne on the air, of which I am the Prince.

CAIN. Can I do so without impiety?

LUCIFER. Believe - and sink not! doubt - and perish! thus  
Would run the edict of the other God,  
Who names me Demon to his angels; they  
Echo the sound to miserable things,  
Which, knowing nought beyond their shallow senses,  
Worship the *word* which strikes their ear, and deem  
Evil or good what is proclaimed to them  
In their abasement. I will have none such:  
Worship or worship not, thou shalt behold  
The worlds beyond thy little world, nor be  
Amerced [14] for doubts beyond thy little life,

With torture of *my* dooming. There will come  
An hour, when, tossed upon some water-drops,  
A man shall say to a man, "Believe in me,  
And walk the waters;" and the man shall walk  
The billows and be safe. *I* will not say,  
Believe in *me*, as a conditional creed  
To save thee; but fly with me o'er the gulf  
Of space an equal flight, and I will show  
What thou dar'st not deny, - the history  
Of past - and present, and of future worlds.  
CAIN. Oh God! or Demon! or whate'er thou art,  
Is yon our earth?

LUCIFER. Dost thou not recognize  
The dust which formed your father?

CAIN. Can it be?  
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far ether,  
With an inferior circlet near it still,  
Which looks like that which lit our earthly night?  
Is this our Paradise? Where are its walls,  
And they who guard them?

LUCIFER. Point me out the site  
Of Paradise.

CAIN. How should I? As we move  
Like sunbeams onward, it grows small and smaller,  
And as it waxes little, and then less,  
Gathers a halo round it, like the light  
Which shone the roundest of the stars, when I  
Beheld them from the skirts of Paradise:  
Methinks they both, as we recede from them,  
Appear to join the innumerable stars  
Which are around us; and, as we move on,  
Increase their myriads.

LUCIFER. And if there should be  
Worlds greater than thine own - inhabited  
By greater things - and they themselves far more  
In number than the dust of thy dull earth,  
Though multiplied to animated atoms,  
All living - and all doomed to death - and wretched,  
What wouldst thou think?

CAIN. I should be proud of thought  
Which knew such things.

LUCIFER. But if that high thought were  
Linked to a servile mass of matter - and,  
Knowing such things, aspiring to such things,  
And science still beyond them, were chained down  
To the most gross and petty paltry wants,  
All foul and fulsome - and the very best  
Of thine enjoyments a sweet degradation,  
A most enervating and filthy cheat  
To lure thee on to the renewal of  
Fresh souls and bodies, all foredoomed to be  
As frail, and few so happy

CAIN. Spirit! I  
Know nought of Death, save as a dreadful thing  
Of which I have heard my parents speak, as of  
A hideous heritage I owe to them



No less than life - a heritage not happy,  
If I may judge, till now. But, Spirit! if  
It be as thou hast said (and I within  
Feel the prophetic torture of its truth),  
Here let me die: for to give birth to those  
Who can but suffer many years, and die -  
Methinks is merely propagating Death,  
And multiplying murder.

LUCIFER.                   Thou canst not  
*All* die - there is what must survive.

CAIN.                        The Other  
Spake not of this unto my father, when  
He shut him forth from Paradise, with death  
Written upon his forehead. But at least  
Let what is mortal of me perish, that  
I may be in the rest as angels are.

LUCIFER. *I* am angelic: wouldst thou be as I am?

CAIN. I know not what thou art: I see thy power,  
And see thou show'st me things beyond my power,  
Beyond all power of my born faculties,  
Although inferior still to my desires  
And my conceptions.

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

CAIN.                        And what art thou who dwellest  
So haughtily in spirit, and canst range  
Nature and immortality - and yet  
Seem'st sorrowful?

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

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

LUCIFER. Thou didst before I came upon thee.

CAIN.                        How?

LUCIFER. By suffering.

CAIN.                        And must torture be immortal?

LUCIFER. We and thy sons will try. But now, behold!  
Is it not glorious?

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

How beautiful ye are! how beautiful  
 Your works, or accidents, or whatsoever  
 They may be! Let me die, as atoms die,  
 (If that they die), or know ye in your might  
 And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour  
 Unworthy what I see, though my dust is;  
 Spirit! let me expire, or see them nearer.  
 LUCIFER. Art thou not nearer? look back to thine earth!  
 CAIN. Where is it? I see nothing save a mass  
 Of most innumerable lights.  
 LUCIFER. Look there!  
 CAIN. I cannot see it.  
 LUCIFER. Yet it sparkles still.  
 CAIN. That! - yonder!  
 LUCIFER. Yea.  
 CAIN. And wilt thou tell me so?  
 Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms  
 Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks  
 In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world  
 Which bears them.  
 LUCIFER. Thou hast seen both worms and worlds,  
 Each bright and sparkling - what dost think of them?  
 CAIN. That they are beautiful in their own sphere,  
 And that the night, which makes both beautiful,  
 The little shining fire-fly in its flight,  
 And the immortal star in its great course,  
 Must both be guided.  
 LUCIFER. But by whom or what?  
 CAIN. Show me.  
 LUCIFER. Dar'st thou behold?  
 CAIN. How know I what  
 I *dare* behold? As yet, thou hast shown naught  
 I dare not gaze on further.  
 LUCIFER. On, then, with me.  
 Wouldst thou behold things mortal or immortal?  
 CAIN. Why, what are things?  
 LUCIFER. *Both* partly: but what doth  
 Sit next thy heart?  
 CAIN. The things I see.  
 LUCIFER. But what  
*Sate* nearest it?  
 CAIN. The things I have not seen,  
 Nor ever shall - the mysteries of Death.  
 LUCIFER. What, if I show to thee things which have died,  
 As I have shown thee much which cannot die?  
 CAIN. Do so.  
 LUCIFER. Away, then! on our mighty wings!  
 CAIN. Oh! how we cleave the blue! The stars fade from us!  
 The earth! where is my earth? Let me look on it,  
 For I was made of it.  
 LUCIFER. 'Tis now beyond thee,  
 Less, in the universe, than thou in it;  
 Yet deem not that thou canst escape it; thou  
 Shalt soon return to earth, and all its dust:  
 'Tis part of thy eternity, and mine.  
 CAIN. Where dost thou lead me?

LUCIFER. To what was before thee!  
The phantasm of the world; of which thy world  
Is but the wreck.

CAIN. What! is it not then new?

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

CAIN. Clay - Spirit - what thou wilt - I can survey.

LUCIFER. Away, then!

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

LUCIFER. And such they are.

CAIN. And Edens in them?

LUCIFER. It may be.

CAIN. And men?

LUCIFER. Yea, or things higher.

CAIN. Aye! and serpents too?

LUCIFER. Wouldst thou have men without them? must no reptiles  
Breathe, save the erect ones?

CAIN. How the lights recede! Where fly we?

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

CAIN. But it grows dark, and dark - the stars are gone!

LUCIFER. And yet thou seest.

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

LUCIFER. But distinct.  
Thou seekest to behold Death, and dead things?

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

LUCIFER. Behold!

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

SCENE II. - *Hades.*  
*Enter LUCIFER and CAIN.*

CAIN. How silent and how vast are these dim worlds!  
     For they seem more than one, and yet more peopled  
     Than the huge brilliant luminous orbs which swung  
     So thickly in the upper air, that I  
     Had deemed them rather the bright populace  
     Of some all unimaginable Heaven,  
     Than things to be inhabited themselves,  
     But that on drawing near them I beheld  
     Their swelling into palpable immensity  
     Of matter, which seemed made for life to dwell on,  
     Rather than life itself. But here, all is  
     So shadowy, and so full of twilight, that  
     It speaks of a day past.  
 LUCIFER. It is the realm  
     Of Death. - Wouldst have it present?  
 CAIN. Till I know  
     That which it really is, I cannot answer.  
     But if it be as I have heard my father  
     Deal out in his long homilies, 'tis a thing -  
     Oh God! I dare not think on't! Cursed be  
     He who invented Life that leads to Death!  
     Or the dull mass of life, that, being life,  
     Could not retain, but needs must forfeit it -  
     Even for the innocent!  
 LUCIFER. Dost thou curse thy father?  
 CAIN. Cursed he not me in giving me my birth?  
     Cursed he not me before my birth, in daring  
     To pluck the fruit forbidden?  
 LUCIFER. Thou say'st well:  
     The curse is mutual 'twixt thy sire and thee -  
     But for thy sons and brother?  
 CAIN. Let them share it  
     With me, their sire and brother! What else is

Bequeathed to me? I leave them my inheritance!

Oh, ye interminable gloomy realms  
Of swimming shadows and enormous shapes,  
Some fully shown, some indistinct, and all  
Mighty and melancholy - what are ye?  
Live ye, or have ye lived?

LUCIFER. Somewhat of both.

CAIN. Then what is Death?

LUCIFER. What? Hath not he who made ye  
Said 'Tis another life?

CAIN. Till now he hath  
Said nothing, save that all shall die.

LUCIFER. Perhaps  
He one day will unfold that further secret.

CAIN. Happy the day!

LUCIFER. Yes; happy! when unfolded,  
Through agonies unspeakable, and clogged  
With agonies eternal, to innumerable  
Yet unborn myriads of unconscious atoms,  
All to be animated for this only!

CAIN. What are these mighty phantoms which I see  
Floating around me? - They wear not the form  
Of the Intelligences I have seen  
Round our regretted and unentered Eden;  
Nor wear the form of man as I have viewed it  
In Adam's and in Abel's, and in mine,  
Nor in my sister-bride's, nor in my children's:  
And yet they have an aspect, which, though not  
Of men nor angels, looks like something, which,  
If not the last, rose higher than the first,  
Haughty, and high, and beautiful, and full  
Of seeming strength, but of inexplicable  
Shape; for I never saw such. They bear not  
The wing of Seraph, nor the face of man,  
Nor form of mightiest brute, nor aught that is  
Now breathing; mighty yet and beautiful  
As the most beautiful and mighty which  
Live, and yet so unlike them, that I scarce  
Can call them living.

LUCIFER. Yet they lived.

CAIN. Where?

LUCIFER. Where

Thou livest.

CAIN. When?

LUCIFER. On what thou callest earth  
They did inhabit.

CAIN. Adam is the first.

LUCIFER. Of thine, I grant thee - but too mean to be  
The last of these.

CAIN. And what are they?

LUCIFER. That which  
Thou shalt be.

CAIN. But what were they?

LUCIFER. Living, high,  
Intelligent, good, great, and glorious things,  
As much superior unto all thy sire,

Adam, could e'er have been in Eden, as  
The sixty-thousandth generation shall be,  
In its dull damp degeneracy, to  
Thee and thy son; - and how weak they are, judge  
But thy own flesh.

CAIN. Ah me! and did they perish?

LUCIFER. Yes, from their earth, as thou wilt fade from thine.

CAIN. But was *mine* theirs?

LUCIFER. It was.

CAIN. But not as now.

It is too little and too lowly to  
Sustain such creatures.

LUCIFER. True, it was more glorious.

CAIN. And wherefore did it fall?

LUCIFER. Ask him who fells.

CAIN. But how?

LUCIFER. By a most crushing and inexorable  
Destruction and disorder of the elements,  
Which struck a world to chaos, as a chaos  
Subsiding has struck out a world: such things,  
Though rare in time, are frequent in eternity. -  
Pass on, and gaze upon the past.

CAIN. 'Tis awful!

LUCIFER. And true. Behold these phantoms! they were once  
Material as thou art.

CAIN. And must I be  
Like them?

LUCIFER. Let He who made thee answer that.

I show thee what thy predecessors are,  
And what they *were* thou feelest, in degree  
Inferior as thy petty feelings and  
Thy pettier portion of the immortal part  
Of high intelligence and earthly strength.  
What ye in common have with what they had  
Is Life, and what ye shall have - Death: the rest  
Of your poor attributes is such as suits  
Reptiles engendered out of the subsiding  
Slime of a mighty universe, crushed into  
A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled with  
Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness -  
A Paradise of Ignorance, from which  
Knowledge was barred as poison. But behold  
What these superior beings are or were;  
Or, if it irk thee, turn thee back and till  
The earth, thy task - I'll waft thee there in safety.

CAIN. No: I'll stay here.

LUCIFER. How long?

CAIN. Forever! Since

I must one day return here from the earth,  
I rather would remain; I am sick of all  
That dust has shown me - let me dwell in shadows.

LUCIFER. It cannot be: thou now beholdest as

A vision that which is reality.  
To make thyself fit for this dwelling, thou  
Must pass through what the things thou seest have passed -  
The gates of Death.

CAIN.                   By what gate have we entered  
Even now?

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

CAIN.        And these, too - can they ne'er repass  
To earth again?

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

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

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

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

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

CAIN.                   But  
None on it?

LUCIFER.        No: for thy frail race to war  
With them would render the curse on it useless -  
'Twould be destroyed so early.

CAIN.                   But why *war*?

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

CAIN.                   But animals -  
Did they, too, eat of it, that they must die?

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

CAIN.                   Alas! the hopeless wretches!





LUCIFER. Your father saw him not?

CAIN. No: 'twas my mother

Who tempted him - she tempted by the serpent.

LUCIFER. Good man! whene'er thy wife, or thy sons' wives,

Tempt thee or them to aught that's new or strange,

Be sure thou seest first who hath tempted *them*!

CAIN. Thy precept comes too late: there is no more

For serpents to tempt woman to.

LUCIFER. But there

Are some things still which woman may tempt man to,

And man tempt woman: - let thy sons look to it!

My counsel is a kind one; for 'tis even

Given chiefly at my own expense; 'tis true,

'Twill not be followed, so there's little lost.

CAIN. I understand not this.

LUCIFER. The happier thou! -

Thy world and thou are still too young! Thou thinkest

Thyself most wicked and unhappy - is it

Not so?

CAIN. For crime, I know not but for pain,

I have felt much.

LUCIFER. First-born of the first man!

Thy present state of sin - and thou art evil,

Of sorrow - and thou sufferest, are both Eden

In all its innocence compared to what

*Thou* shortly may'st be; and that state again,

In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise

To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating

In generations like to dust (which they

In fact but add to), shall endure and do. -

Now let us back to earth!

CAIN. And wherefore didst thou

Lead me here only to inform me this?

LUCIFER. Was not thy quest for knowledge?

CAIN. Yes - as being

The road to happiness!

LUCIFER. If truth be so,

Thou hast it.

CAIN. Then my father's God did well

When he prohibited the fatal Tree.

LUCIFER. But had done better in not planting it.

But ignorance of evil doth not save

From evil; it must still roll on the same,

A part of all things.

CAIN. Not of all things. No -

I'll not believe it - for I thirst for good.

LUCIFER. And who and what doth not? *Who* covets evil

For its own bitter sake? - *None* - nothing! 'tis

The leaven of all life, and lifelessness.

CAIN. Within those glorious orbs which we behold,

Distant, and dazzling, and innumerable,

Ere we came down into this phantom realm,

Ill cannot come: they are too beautiful.

LUCIFER. Thou hast seen them from afar.

CAIN. And what of that?

Distance can but diminish glory - they,

When nearer, must be more ineffable.  
LUCIFER. Approach the things of earth most beautiful,  
And judge their beauty near.

CAIN. I have done this -  
The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest.

LUCIFER. Then there must be delusion. - What is that  
Which being nearest to thine eyes is still  
More beautiful than beauteous things remote?

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

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

CAIN. You think so, being not her brother.

LUCIFER. Mortal!  
My brotherhood's with those who have no children.

CAIN. Then thou canst have no fellowship with us.

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

CAIN. Why do I exist?  
Why art thou wretched? why are all things so?  
Ev'n he who made us must be, as the maker  
Of things unhappy! To produce destruction  
Can surely never be the task of joy,  
And yet my sire says he's omnipotent:  
Then why is Evil - he being Good? I asked  
This question of my father; and he said,  
Because this Evil only was the path  
To Good. Strange good, that must arise from out  
Its deadly opposite. I lately *saw*  
A lamb stung by a reptile: the poor suckling  
Lay foaming on the earth, beneath the vain  
And piteous bleating of its restless dam;  
My father plucked some herbs, and laid them to  
The wound; and by degrees the helpless wretch  
Resumed its careless life, and rose to drain  
The mother's milk, who o'er it tremulous  
Stood licking its reviving limbs with joy.  
Behold, my son! said Adam, how from Evil  
Springs Good!



CAIN. Meekly!

LUCIFER. He is the second born of flesh,  
And is his mother's favorite.

CAIN. Let him keep  
Her favor, since the Serpent was the first  
To win it.

LUCIFER. And his father's?

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

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

CAIN. I  
Ne'er saw him, and I know not if he smiles.

LUCIFER. But you have seen his angels.

CAIN. Rarely.

LUCIFER. But  
Sufficiently to see they love your brother:  
*His sacrifices are acceptable.*

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

LUCIFER. Because thou hast thought of this ere now.

CAIN. And if  
*I have thought, why recall a thought that - (he pauses as agitated) - Spirit!*  
*Here we are in thy world; speak not of mine.*  
Thou hast shown me wonders: thou hast shown me those  
Mighty Pre-Adamites who walked the earth  
Of which ours is the wreck: thou hast pointed out  
Myriads of starry worlds, of which our own  
Is the dim and remote companion, in  
Infinity of life: thou hast shown me shadows  
Of that existence with the dreaded name  
Which my sire brought us - Death; thou hast known me much  
But not all: show me where Jehovah dwells,  
In his especial Paradise - or *thine*:  
Where is it?

LUCIFER. *Here*, and o'er all space.

CAIN. But ye  
Have some allotted dwelling - as all things;  
Clay has its earth, and other worlds their tenants;  
All temporary breathing creatures their  
Peculiar element; and things which have  
Long ceased to breathe *our* breath, have theirs, thou say'st;  
And the Jehovah and thyself have thine -  
Ye do not dwell together?

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

CAIN. Would there were only one of ye! perchance  
An unity of purpose might make union  
In elements which seem now jarred in storms.  
How came ye, being Spirits wise and infinite,  
To separate? Are ye not as brethren in  
Your essence - and your nature, and your glory?

LUCIFER. Art not thou Abel's brother?

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

Jarring and turning space to misery - For what?  
LUCIFER. To reign.  
CAIN. Did ye not tell me that  
Ye are both eternal?  
LUCIFER. Yea!  
CAIN. And what I have seen -  
Yon blue immensity, is boundless?  
LUCIFER. Aye.  
CAIN. And cannot ye both *reign*, then?-is there not  
Enough? - why should ye differ?  
LUCIFER. We *both* reign.  
CAIN. But one of you makes evil.  
LUCIFER. Which?  
CAIN. Thou! for  
If thou canst do man good, why dost thou not?  
LUCIFER. And why not he who made? *I* made ye not;  
Ye are *his* creatures, and not mine.  
CAIN. Then leave us  
*His* creatures, as thou say'st we are, or show me  
Thy dwelling, or his dwelling.  
LUCIFER. I could show thee  
Both; but the time will come thou shalt see one  
Of them for evermore.  
CAIN. And why not now?  
LUCIFER. Thy human mind hath scarcely grasp to gather  
The little I have shown thee into calm  
And clear thought: and *thou* wouldst go on aspiring  
To the great double Mysteries! the *two Principles*! [16]  
And gaze upon them on their secret thrones!  
Dust! limit thy ambition; for to see  
Either of these would be for thee to perish!  
CAIN. And let me perish, so I see them!  
LUCIFER. There  
The son of her who snatched the apple spake!  
But thou wouldst only perish, and not see them;  
That sight is for the other state.  
CAIN. Of Death?  
LUCIFER. That is the prelude.  
CAIN. Then I dread it less,  
Now that I know it leads to something definite.  
LUCIFER. And now I will convey thee to thy world,  
Were thou shalt multiply the race of Adam,  
Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep, sleep - and die!  
CAIN. And to what end have I beheld these things  
Which thou hast shown me?  
LUCIFER. Didst thou not require  
Knowledge? And have I not in what I showed,  
Taught thee to know thyself?  
CAIN. Alas! I seem  
Nothing.  
LUCIFER. And this should be the human sum  
Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness;  
Bequeath that science to thy children, and  
'Twill spare them many tortures.  
CAIN. Haughty spirit!  
Thou speak'st it proudly; but thyself, though proud,

Hast a superior.

LUCIFER. No! By heaven, which he  
Holds, and the abyss, and the immensity  
Of worlds and life, which I hold with him - No!  
I have a Victor - true; but no superior.  
Homage he has from all - but none from me:  
I battle it against him, as I battled  
In highest Heaven - through all Eternity,  
And the unfathomable gulfs of Hades,  
And the interminable realms of space,  
And the infinity of endless ages,  
All, all, will I dispute! And world by world,  
And star by star, and universe by universe,  
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great  
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,  
Which it ne'er shall, till he or I be quenched!  
And what can quench our immortality,  
Or mutual and irrevocable hate?  
He as a conqueror will call the conquered  
*Evil*, but what will be the *Good* he gives?  
Were *I* the victor, his works would be deemed  
The only evil ones. And you, ye new  
And scare-born mortals, what have been his gifts  
To you already, in your little world?

CAIN. But few; and some of those but bitter.

LUCIFER. Back

With me, then, to thine earth, and try the rest  
Of his celestial boons to you and yours.  
Evil and Good are things in their own essence,  
And not made good or evil by the Giver;  
But if he gives you good - so call him; if  
Evil springs from him, do not name it mine,  
Till ye know better its true fount; and judge  
Not by words, though of Spirits, but the fruits  
Of your existence, such as it must be.  
One good gift has the fatal apple given, -  
Your reason: - let it not be overruled  
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith  
'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:  
Think and endure, - and form an inner world  
In your own bosom - where the outward fails;  
So shall you nearer be the spiritual  
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.

[*They disappear.*]

### ACT III.

#### SCENE 1. - *The Earth, near Eden, as in Act I.*

*Enter CAIN and ADAH.*

ADAH. Hush! tread softly, Cain!

CAIN. I will - but wherefore?

ADAH. Our little Enoch sleeps upon yon bed  
Of leaves, beneath the cypress.

CAIN. Cypress! 'Tis  
A gloomy tree, which looks as if it mourned  
O'er what it shadows; wherefore didst thou choose it  
For our child's canopy?

ADAH. Because its branches  
Shut out the sun like night, and therefore seemed  
Fitting to shadow slumber.

CAIN Aye, the last -  
And longest; but no matter - lead me to him.  
[*They go up to the child.*]  
How lovely he appears! his little cheeks,  
In their pure incarnation,[17] vying with  
The rose leaves strewn beneath them.

ADAH. And his lips, too,  
How beautifully parted! No; you shall not  
Kiss him, at least not now: he will awake soon -  
His hour of mid-day rest is nearly over;  
But it were pity to disturb him till  
'Tis closed.

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

ADAH. Dear Cain! Nay, do not whisper o'er our son  
Such melancholy yearnings o'er the past:  
Why wilt thou always mourn for Paradise?  
Can we not make another?

CAIN. Where?

ADAH. Here, or  
Where'er thou wilt: where'er thou art, I feel not  
The want of this so much regretted Eden.  
Have I not thee - our boy - our sire, and brother,  
And Zillah - our sweet sister, and our Eve,  
To whom we own so much besides our birth?

CAIN. Yes - Death, too, is among the debts we owe her.

ADAH. Cain! that proud Spirit, who withdrew thee hence,  
Hath saddened thine still deeper. I had hoped  
The promised wonders which thou hast beheld,  
Visions, thou say'st of past and present worlds,  
Would have composed thy mind into the calm  
Of a contented knowledge; but I see  
Thy guide hath done thee evil: still I thank him,

And can forgive him all, that he so soon  
Hath given thee back to us.

CAIN. So soon?

ADAH. 'Tis scarcely

Two hours since ye departed: two *long* hours  
To *me*, but only *hours* upon the sun.

CAIN. And yet I have approached that sun, and seen  
Worlds which he once shone on, and never more  
Shall light; and worlds he never lit: methought  
Years had rolled o'er my absence.

ADAH. Hardly hours.

CAIN. The mind then hath capacity of time,  
And measures it by that which it beholds,  
Pleasing or painful; little or almighty.  
I had beheld the immemorial works  
Of endless beings; skirred [18] extinguished worlds;  
And, gazing on eternity, methought  
I had borrowed more by a few drops of ages  
From its immensity: but now I feel  
My littleness again. Well said the Spirit,  
That I was nothing!

ADAH. Wherefore said he so?  
Jehovah said not that.

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

ADAH. Thou know'st -  
Even for our parents error.

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

ADAH. Thou hast not spoken well, nor is that thought  
Thy own, but of the Spirit who was with thee.  
Would *I* could die for *them*, so they might live!

CAIN. Why, so say I - provided that one victim  
Might satiate the Insatiable of life,  
And that our little rosy sleeper there  
Might never taste of death nor human sorrow,  
Nor hand it down to those who spring from him.

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

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

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

CAIN. Then leave me!

ADAH. Never!  
Though thy God left thee.

CAIN. Say, what have we here?

ADAH. Two altars, which our brother Abel made



During thine absence, whereupon to offer  
A sacrifice to God on thy return.

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

ADAH. Surely, 'tis well done.

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

ADAH. The fruits of the earth, the early, beautiful,  
Blossom and bud -and bloom of flowers and fruits -  
These are a goodly offering to the Lord,  
Given with a gentle and a contrite spirit.

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

ADAH. Oh, my God!

Touch not the child - my child! *thy* child! Oh, Cain!

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

ADAH. Then, why so awful in thy speech?

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

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

[*She goes to the child.*]

Oh, Cain! look on him; see how full of life,  
Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and of joy -  
How like to me - how like to thee, when gentle -  
For *then* we are *all* alike; is't not so, Cain?  
Mother, and sire, and son, our features are  
Reflected in each other; as they are  
In the clear water, when *they* are *gentle*, and  
When *thou* art *gentle*. Love us, then, my Cain!  
And love thyself for our sakes, for we love thee.

Look! how he laughs and stretches out his arms,  
And opens wide his blue eyes upon thine,  
To hail his father; while his little form  
Flutters as winged with joy. Talk not of pain!  
The childless cherubs well might envy thee  
The pleasures of a parent! Bless him, Cain!  
As yet he hath no words to thank thee, but  
His heart will, and thine own too.

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

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

CAIN. Of that I doubt;  
But bless him ne'er the less.

ADAH. Our brother comes

CAIN. Thy brother Abel.

[*Enter ABEL.*]

ABEL. Welcome, Cain! My brother,  
The peace of God be on thee!

CAIN. Abel, hail!

ABEL. Our sister tells me that thou hast been wandering,  
In high communion with a Spirit, far  
Beyond our wonted range. Was he of those  
We have seen and spoken with, like to our father?

CAIN. No.

ABEL. Why then commune with him? he may be  
A foe to the Most High.

CAIN. And friend to man.  
Has the Most High been so - if so you term him?

ABEL. *Term him!* your words are strange today, my brother.  
My sister Adah, leave us for awhile -  
We mean to sacrifice.

ADAH. Farewell, my Cain;  
But first embrace thy son. May his soft spirit,  
And Abel's pious ministry, recall thee  
To peace and holiness!

[*Exit ADAH, with her child.*]

ABEL. Where hast thou been?

CAIN. I know not.

ABEL. Nor what thou hast seen?

CAIN. The dead -  
The Immortal - the Unbounded - the Omnipotent -  
The overpowering mysteries of space -  
The innumerable worlds that were and are -  
A whirlwind of such overwhelming things,  
Suns, moons, and earth, upon their loud-voiced spheres  
Singing in thunder round me, as have made me  
Unfit for mortal converse: leave me, Abel.

ABEL. Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light -  
Thy cheek is flushed with an unnatural hue -

Thy words are fraught with an unnatural sound -  
What may this mean?

CAIN. It means - I pray thee, leave me.

ABEL. Not till we have prayed and sacrificed together.

CAIN. Abel, I pray thee, sacrifice alone -  
Jehovah loves thee well.

ABEL. *Both* well, I hope.

CAIN. But thee the better: I care not for that;  
Thou art fitter for his worship than I am;  
Revere him, then - but let it be alone -  
At least, without me.

ABEL. Brother, I should ill  
Deserve the name of our great father's son,  
If, as my elder, I revered thee not,  
And in the worship of our God, called not  
On thee to join me, and precede me in  
Our priesthood - 'tis thy place.

CAIN. But I have ne'er  
Asserted it.

ABEL. The more my grief; I pray thee  
To do so now: thy soul seems laboring in  
Some strong delusion; it will calm thee.

CAIN. No;  
Nothing can calm me more. *Calm!* say I? Never  
Knew I what calm was in the soul, although  
I have seen the elements stilled. My Abel, leave me!  
Or let me leave thee to thy pious purpose.

ABEL. Neither; we must perform our task together.  
Spurn me not.

CAIN. If it must be so - well, then,  
What shall I do?

ABEL. Choose one of those two altars.

CAIN. Choose for me: they to me are so much turf  
And stone.

ABEL. Choose thou!

CAIN. I have chosen.

ABEL. 'Tis the highest,  
And suits thee, as the elder. Now prepare  
Thine offerings.

CAIN. Where are thine?

ABEL. Behold them here-  
The firstlings of the flock, and fat thereof -  
A shepherd's humble offering.

CAIN. I have no flocks;  
I am a tiller of the ground, and must  
Yield what it yieldeth to my toil - its fruit;

*[He gathers fruits.]*

Behold them in their various bloom and ripeness.

*[They dress their altars, and kindle a flame upon them.]*

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

CAIN. No - I am new to this; lead thou the way,

And I will follow - as I may.

ABEL [*kneeling*]. Oh, God!

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

CAIN [*standing erect during this speech*]. Spirit whate'er or whose'er thou art,

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

Omnipotence - but merely to endure  
Its mandate; which thus far I have endured.

*[The fire upon the altar of ABEL kindles into a column of the brightest flame, and ascends to heaven; while a whirlwind throws down the altar of CAIN, and scatters the fruits abroad upon the earth.]*

ABEL [kneeling]. Oh, brother, pray! Jehovah's wroth with thee.

CAIN. Why so?

ABEL. Thy fruits are scattered on the earth.

CAIN. From earth they came, to earth let them return;

Their seed will bear fresh fruit there ere the summer:

Thy burnt-flesh offering prospers better; see

How Heaven licks up the flames, when thick with blood!

ABEL. Think not upon my offering's acceptance,

But make another of thine own - before

It is too late.

CAIN. I will build no more altars,

Nor suffer any -

ABEL [*rising*]. Cain! what meanest thou?

CAIN. To cast down yon vile flatterer of the clouds,

The smoky harbinger of thy dull prayers

Thine altar, with its blood of lambs and kids,

Which fed on milk, to be destroyed in blood.

ABEL [*opposing him*]. Thou shalt not: - add not impious works to impious

Words! let that altar stand - 'tis hallowed now

By the immortal pleasure of Jehovah,

In his acceptance of the victims.

CAIN. *His!*

*His pleasure!* what was his high pleasure in

The fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood,

To the pain of the bleating mothers, which

Still yearn for their dead offspring? or the pangs

Of the sad ignorant victims underneath

Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody record

Shall not stand in the sun, to shame creation!

ABEL. Brother, give back! thou shall not touch my altar

With violence: if that thou wilt adopt it,

To try another sacrifice, 'tis thine.

CAIN. Another sacrifice! Give way, or else

That sacrifice may be -

ABEL. What mean'st thou?

CAIN. Give -

Give way! - thy God loves blood! - then look to it: -

Give way, ere he hath *more!*

ABEL. In *his* great name,

I stand between thee and the shrine which hath

Had his acceptance.

CAIN. If thou lov'st thyself,

Stand back till I have strewed this turf along

Its native soil: - else -

ABEL [*opposing him*]. I love God far more

Than life.

CAIN [*striking him with a brand, on the temples, which he snatches from the altar*].

Then take thy life unto thy God,

Since he loves lives.

ABEL [*falls*].           What hast thou done - my brother?

CAIN. Brother!

ABEL.           Oh, God! receive thy servant! and  
Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what  
He did - Cain, give me - give me thy hand; and tell  
Poor Zillah -

CAIN [*after a moment's stupefaction*].  
My hand! 'tis all red, and with -  
What?

[*A long pause. - Looking slowly round.*]

Where am I? alone! Where's Abel? where  
Cain? Can it be that I am he? My brother,  
Awake! - why liest thou so long on the green earth?  
'Tis not the hour of slumber: - why so pale?  
What hast thou! - thou wert full of life this morn!  
Abel! I pray thee, mock me not! I smote  
Too fiercely, but not fatally. Ah, why  
Wouldst thou oppose me? This is mockery;  
And only done to daunt me: - 'twas a blow -  
And but a blow. Stir - stir - nay, only stir!  
Why, so - that's well! - thou breathest! breathe upon me!  
Oh God! Oh God!

ABEL [*very faintly*]. What's he who speaks of God?

CAIN. Thy murderer.

ABEL.           Then may God forgive him! Cain,  
Comfort poor Zillah: - she has but one brother  
Now.

[*ABEL dies.*]

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

[*Puts his hand to his brow, and then looks at it.*]

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

[Enter ZILLAH.]

ZILLAH. I heard a heavy sound; what can it be?  
'Tis Cain; and watching by my husband. What  
Dost thou there, brother? Doth he sleep? Oh, Heaven!  
What means this paleness, and yon stream? - No, no!  
It is not blood; for who would shed his blood?  
Abel! what's this? - who hath done this? He moves not;  
He breathes not: and his hands drop down from mine  
With stony lifelessness! Ah! cruel Cain!  
Why camest thou not in time to save him from  
This violence? Whatever hath assailed him,  
Thou wert the stronger, and shouldst have stepped in  
Between him and aggression! Father! - Eve! -  
Adah! - come hither! Death is in the world!

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

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

[Enter ADAM, EVE, ADAH, and ZILLAH.]

ADAM. A voice of woe from Zillah brings me here -  
What do I see? - 'Tis true! - My son! - my son!  
[To EVE.] Woman, behold the Serpent's work, and thine!

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

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

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

ADAM. Speak, my son!  
Speak, and assure us, wretched as we are,  
That we are not more miserable still.

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

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

ADAH. Mother, thou dost him wrong -

Cain! clear thee from this horrible accusal,  
Which grief wrings from our parent.

EVE. Hear, Jehovah!

May the eternal Serpent's curse be on him!  
For he was fitter for his seed than ours.  
May all his days be desolate! May -

ADAH. Hold!

Curse him not, mother, for he is thy son -  
Curse him not, mother, for his is my brother,  
And my betrothed.

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

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

EVE [*pointing to CAIN*]. His *will!* the will of yon Incarnate Spirit  
Of Death, whom I have brought upon the earth  
To strew it with the dead. May all the curses  
Of life be on him! and his agonies  
Drive him forth o'er the wilderness, like us  
From Eden, till his children do by him  
As he did by his brother! May the swords  
And wings of fiery Cherubim pursue him  
By day and night - snakes spring up in his path -  
Earth's fruits be ashes in his mouth - the leaves  
On which he lays his head to sleep be strewed  
With scorpions! May his dreams be of his victim!  
His waking a continual dread of Death!  
May the clear rivers turn to blood as he  
Stoops down to stain them with his raging lip!  
May every element shun or change to him!  
May he live in the pangs which others die with!  
And Death itself wax something worse than Death  
To him who first acquainted him with man!  
Hence, fratricide! henceforth that word is *Cain*,  
Through all the coming myriads of mankind,  
Who shall abhor thee, though thou wert their sire!  
May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods  
Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust -  
A grave! the sun his light! and heaven her God!

[*Exit EVE.*]

ADAM. Cain! get thee forth: we dwell no more together.

Depart! and leave the dead to me - I am  
Henceforth alone - we never must meet more.

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



ADAM. I curse him not: his spirit be his curse.

Come, Zillah!

ZILLAH. I must watch my husband's corse.[1'9]

ADAM. We will return again, when he is gone

Who hath provided for us this dread office.

Come, Zillah!

ZILLAH. Yet one kiss on yon pale clay,

And those lips once so warm - my heart! my heart!

[*Exeunt ADAM and ZILLAH weeping.*]

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

So shall our children be. I will bear Enoch,

And you his sister. Ere the sun declines

Let us depart, nor walk the wilderness

Under the cloud of night. - Nay, speak to me.

To *me* - *thine own*.

CAIN. Leave me!

ADAH. Why, all have left thee.

CAIN. And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear

To dwell with one who hath done this?

ADAH. I fear

Nothing except to leave thee, much as I

Shrink from the deed which leaves thee brotherless.

I must not speak of this - it is between thee

And the great God.

A VOICE *from within* exclaims. Cain! Cain!

ADAH. Hear'st thou that voice?

THE VOICE WITHIN. Cain! Cain!

ADAH. It soundeth like an angel's tone.

[*Enter the ANGEL of the Lord.*]

ANGEL. Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN. Am I then

My brother's keeper?

ANGEL. Cain! what hast thou done?

The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out,

Even from the ground, unto the Lord! - Now art thou

Cursed from the earth, which opened late her mouth

To drink thy brother's blood from thy rash hand.

Henceforth, when thou shalt till the ground, it shall not

Yield thee her strength; a fugitive shalt thou

Be from this day, and vagabond on earth!

ADAH. This punishment is more than he can bear.

Behold thou drivest him from the face of earth,

And from the face of God shall he be hid.

A fugitive and vagabond on earth,

'Twill come to pass, that whoso findeth him

Shall slay him.

CAIN. Would they could! but who are they

Shall slay me? Where are these on the lone earth

As yet unpeopled?

ANGEL. Thou hast slain thy brother,

And who shall warrant thee against thy son?

ADAH. Angel of Light! be merciful, nor say

That this poor aching breast now nourishes  
A murderer in my boy, and of his father.  
ANGEL. Then he would but be what his father is.  
Did not the milk of Eve give nutriment  
To him thou now seest so besmeared with blood?  
The fratricide might well engender paricides. -  
But it shall not be so - the Lord thy God  
And mine commandeth me to set his seal  
On Cain, so that he may go forth in safety.  
Who slayeth Cain, a sevenfold vengeance shall  
Be taken on his head. Come hither!

CAIN. What  
Wouldst thou with me?

ANGEL. To mark upon thy brow  
Exemption from such deeds as thou hast done.

CAIN. No, let me die!

ANGEL. It must not be.

[*The ANGEL sets the mark on CAIN 's brow.*]

CAIN. It burns  
My brow, but nought to that which is within it!  
Is there more? let me meet it as I may.

ANGEL. Stern hast thou been and stubborn from the womb,  
As the ground thou must henceforth till; but he  
Thou slew'st was gentle as the flocks he tended.

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

ANGEL. Who shall heal murder? what is done, is done;  
Go forth! fulfil thy days! and be thy deeds  
Unlike the last! [The ANGEL *disappears.*]

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

CAIN. Ah! little knows he what he weeps for!  
And I who have shed blood cannot shed tears!  
But the four rivers [20] would not cleanse my soul.  
Think'st thou my boy will bear to look on me?

ADAH. If I thought that he would not, I would -

CAIN [*interrupting her*]. No,  
No more of threats: we have had too many of them:  
Go to our children - I will follow thee.

ADAH. I will not leave thee lonely with the dead -  
Let us depart together.

CAIN. Oh! thou dead  
And everlasting witness! whose unsinking  
Blood darkens earth and heaven! what thou *now* art  
I know not! but if *thou* seest what *I* am,

I think thou wilt forgive him, whom his God  
Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul. - Farewell!  
I must not, dare not touch what I have made thee.  
I, who sprung from the same womb with thee, drained  
The same breast clasped thee often to my own,  
In fondness brotherly and boyish, I  
Can never meet thee more, nor even dare  
To do that for thee, which thou shouldst have done  
For me - compose thy limbs into their grave -  
The first grave yet dug for mortality.  
But who bath dug that grave? Oh, earth! Oh, earth!  
For all the fruits thou hast rendered to me, I  
Give thee back this. - Now for the wilderness!

[ADAH *stoops down and kisses the body of ABEL.*]

ADAH. A dreary, and an early doom, my brother,  
Has been thy lot! Of all who mourn for thee,  
I alone must not weep. My office is  
Henceforth to dry up tears, and not to shed them;  
But yet of all who mourn, none mourn like me,  
Not only for thyself, but him who slew thee.  
Now, Cain! I will divide thy burden with thee.

CAIN. Eastward from Eden will we take our way;  
'Tis the most desolate, and suits my steps.

ADAM. Lead! thou shalt be my guide, and may our God  
Be thine! Now let us carry forth our children.

CAIN. And *he* who lieth there was childless! I  
Have dried the fountain of a gentle race,  
Which might have graced his recent marriage couch,  
And might have tempered this stern blood of mine,  
Uniting with our children Abel's offspring!  
O Abel!

ADAH. Peace be with him!

CAIN. But with *me*!-  
[*Exeunt.*]

[1822]

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NOTES

1 Richard Watson (1737-1816) was appointed Moderator of the Schools in 1762, Regius Professor of Divinity in 1771, and Bishop of Llandaff in 1782.

2 The allusion is to *Paradise Lost* (1667).

3 Solomon Gesner's "Death of Abel (trans. by Mary Collyer) was published in 1791.

4 The Manicheans in the third century A.D. held that the world is governed by two competing deities: a god of darkness who made the body and a god of light who was responsible for the soul.

5 The quotation is from Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814).

6 Thomas Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist* (1741).

7 Cuvier's studies of fossilized bones were being published in France at about the same time that Byron was writing *Cain*.

8 See *Opere Inediti* (1804) by Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803).

- 9 Prayers.
- 10 Willingly.
- 11 The Cherubs are members of the second order of angels, just below the Seraphs.
- 12 Girdled, surrounded
- 13 That One, of course, will be Jesus.
- 14 Punished.
- 15 Judge or conclude.
- 16 These two Principles may be an instance of the Manicheism that Byron confessed to putting in the poem: light and dark, good and evil, God and Lucifer, heaven and hell all take on such Manichean aspects in *Cain*.
- 17 Both blood-red and of the flesh.
- 18 Passed swiftly through.
- 19 Corpse.
- 20 Four rivers were said to encircle Eden.