LORD BYRON

MANFRED

WITH BYRON'S BIOGRAPHY

Lord Byron

Manfred (With Byron's Biography)

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Manfred

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"There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio,
 Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Hamlet, Act i. Scene 5, Lines 166, 167.

[*Manfred*, a choral tragedy in three acts, was performed at Covent Garden Theatre, October 29-November 14, 1834 [Denvil (afterwards known as "Manfred" Denvil) took the part of "Manfred," and Miss Ellen Tree (afterwards Mrs. Charles Kean) played "The Witch of the Alps"]; at Drury Lane Theatre, October 10, 1863-64 [Phelps played "Manfred," Miss Rosa Le Clercq "The Phantom of Astarte," and Miss Heath "The Witch of the Alps"]; at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, March 27-April 20, 1867 [Charles Calvert played "Manfred"]; and again, in 1867, under the same management, at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool; and at the Princess's Theatre Royal, London, August 16, 1873 [Charles Dillon played "Manfred;" music by Sir Henry Bishop, as in 1834].

Overtures, etc.

"Music to Byron's *Manfred*" (overture and incidental music and choruses), by R. Schumann, 1850.

"Incidental Music," composed, in 1897, by Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (at the request of Sir Henry Irving); heard (in part only) at a concert in Queen's Hall, May, 1899.

"*Manfred* Symphony" (four tableaux after the Poem by Byron), composed by Tschaikowsky, 1885; first heard in London, autumn, 1898.]

INTRODUCTION TO *MANFRED*

Byron passed four months and three weeks in Switzerland. He arrived at the Hôtel d'Angleterre at Sécheron, on Saturday, May 25, and he left the Campagne Diodati for Italy on Sunday, October 6, 1816. Within that period he wrote the greater part of the Third Canto of *Childe Harold*, he began and finished the *Prisoner of Chillon*, its seven attendant poems, and the *Monody* on the death of Sheridan, and he began *Manfred*.

A note to the "Incantation" (*Manfred*, act i. sc. 1, lines 192-261), which was begun in July and published together with the *Prisoner of Chillon*, December 5, 1816, records the existence of "an unfinished Witch Drama" (First Edition, p. 46); but, apart from this, the first announcement of his new work is contained in a letter to Murray, dated Venice, February 15, 1817 (*Letters*, 1900, iv. 52). "I forgot," he writes, "to mention to you that a kind of Poem in dialogue (in blank verse) or drama ... begun last summer in Switzerland, is finished; it is in three acts; but of a very wild, metaphysical, and inexplicable kind." The letter is imperfect, but some pages of "extracts" which were forwarded under the same cover have been preserved. Ten days later (February 25) he reverts to these "extracts," and on February 28 he despatches a fair copy of the first act. On March 9 he remits the third and final act of his "dramatic poem" (a definition adopted as a second title), but under reserve as to publication, and with a strict injunction to Murray "to submit it to Mr. G[ifford] and to whomsoever you

please besides." It is certain that this third act was written at Venice (Letter to Murray, April 14), and it may be taken for granted that the composition of the first two acts belongs to the tour in the Bernese Alps (September 17-29), or to the last days at Diodati (September 30 to October 5, 1816), when the *estro* (see Letter to Murray, January 2, 1817) was upon him, when his "Passions slept," and, in spite of all that had come and gone and could not go, his spirit was uplifted by the "majesty and the power and the glory" of Nature.

Gifford's verdict on the first act was that it was "wonderfully poetical" and "merited publication," but, as Byron had foreseen, he did not "by any means like" the third act. It was, as its author admitted (Letter to Murray, April 14) "damnably bad," and savoured of the "dregs of a fever," for which the Carnival (Letter to Murray, February 28) or, more probably, the climate and insanitary "palaces" of Venice were responsible. Some weeks went by before there was either leisure or inclination for the task of correction, but at Rome the *estro* returned in full force, and on May 5 a "new third act of *Manfred*—the greater part rewritten," was sent by post to England. *Manfred, a Dramatic Poem*, was published June 16, 1817.

Manfred was criticized by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* (No. lvi., August, 1817, vol. 28, pp. 418-431), and by John Wilson in the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* (afterwards *Blackwood's, etc.*) (June, 1817, i. 289-295). Jeffrey, as Byron remarked (Letter to Murray, October 12, 1817), was "very kind," and Wilson, whose article "had all the air of being a poet's," was eloquent in its praises. But there was a fly in

the ointment. "A suggestion" had been thrown out, "in an ingenious paper in a late number of the *Edinburgh Magazine* [signed H. M. (John Wilson), July, 1817], that the general conception of this piece, and much of what is excellent in the manner of its execution, have been borrowed from the *Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* of Marlow (*sic*);" and from this contention Jeffrey dissented. A note to a second paper on Marlowe's *Edward II*. (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, October, 1817) offered explanations, and echoed Jeffrey's exaltation of *Manfred* above *Dr. Faustus*; but the mischief had been done. Byron was evidently perplexed and distressed, not by the papers in *Blackwood*, which he never saw, but by Jeffrey's remonstrance in his favour; and in the letter of October 12 he is at pains to trace the "evolution" of *Manfred*. "I never read," he writes, "and do not know that I ever saw the *Faustus* of Marlow;" and, again, "As to the *Faustus* of Marlow, I never read, never saw, nor heard of it." "I heard Mr. Lewis translate verbally some scenes of Goethe's *Faust* ... last summer" (see, too, Letter to Rogers, April 4, 1817), which is all I know of the history of that magical personage; and as to the germs of *Manfred*, they may be found in the Journal which I sent to Mrs. Leigh ... when I went over first the Dent, etc., ... shortly before I left Switzerland. I have the whole scene of *Manfred* before me."

Again, three years later he writes (*à propos* of Goethe's review of *Manfred*, which first appeared in print in his paper *Kunst und Alterthum*, June, 1820, and is republished in Goethe's *Sämmtliche Werke* ... Stuttgart, 1874, xiii. 640-642; see *Letters*, 1901, v. Appendix II. "Goethe and Byron," pp. 503-521): "His *Faust* I never read, for I don't know

German; but Matthew Monk Lewis (*sic*), in 1816, at Coligny, translated most of it to me *viva voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it; but it was the *Staubach* (*sic*) and the *Jungfrau*, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write *Manfred*. The first scene, however, and that of Faustus are very similar" (Letter to Murray, June 7, 1820, *Letters*, 1901, v. 36). Medwin (*Conversations, etc.*, pp. 210, 211), who of course had not seen the letters to Murray of 1817 or 1820, puts much the same story into Byron's mouth.

Now, with regard to the originality of *Manfred*, it may be taken for granted that Byron knew nothing about the "Faust-legend," or the "Faust-cycle." He solemnly denies that he had ever read Marlowe's *Faustus*, or the selections from the play in Lamb's *Specimens, etc.* (see Medwin's *Conversations, etc.*, pp. 208, 209, and a hitherto unpublished Preface to *Werner*, vol. v.), and it is highly improbable that he knew anything of Calderon's *El Mágico Prodigioso*, which Shelley translated in 1822, or of "the beggarly elements" of the legend in Hroswitha's *Lapsus et Conversio Theophrasti Vice-domini*. But Byron's *Manfred* is "in the succession" of scholars who have reached the limits of natural and legitimate science, and who essay the supernatural in order to penetrate and comprehend the "hidden things of darkness." A predecessor, if not a progenitor, he must have had, and there can be no doubt whatever that the primary conception of the character, though by no means the inspiration of the poem, is to be traced to the "Monk's" oral rendering of Goethe's *Faust*, which he gave in return for his "bread and salt" at Diodati.

Neither Jeffrey nor Wilson mentioned *Faust*, but the writer of the notice in the *Critical Review* (June, 1817, series v. vol. 5, pp. 622-629) avowed that "this scene (the first) is a gross plagiary from a great poet whom Lord Byron has imitated on former occasions without comprehending. Goethe's *Faust* begins in the same way;" and Goethe himself, in a letter to his friend Knebel, October, 1817, and again in his review in *Kunst und Alterthum*, June, 1820, emphasizes whilst he justifies and applauds the use which Byron had made of his work. "This singular intellectual poet has taken my *Faustus* to himself, and extracted from it the strangest nourishment for his hypochondriac humour. He has made use of the impelling principles in his own way, for his own purposes, so that no one of them remains the same; and it is particularly on this account that I cannot enough admire his genius." Afterwards (see record of a conversation with Herman Fürst von Pückler, September 14, 1826, *Letters*, v. 511) Goethe somewhat modified his views, but even then it interested him to trace the unconscious transformation which Byron had made of his Mephistopheles. It is, perhaps, enough to say that the link between *Manfred* and *Faust* is formal, not spiritual. The problem which Goethe raised but did not solve, his counterfeit presentment of the eternal issue between soul and sense, between innocence and renunciation on the one side, and achievement and satisfaction on the other, was not the struggle which Byron experienced in himself or desired to depict in his mysterious hierarch of the powers of nature. "It was the *Staubach* and the *Jungfrau*, and something else," not the influence of *Faust* on a receptive listener, which called up a new theme, and

struck out a fresh well-spring of the imagination. The *motif* of *Manfred* is remorse—eternal suffering for inexpiable crime. The sufferer is for ever buoyed up with the hope that there is relief somewhere in nature, beyond nature, above nature, and experience replies with an everlasting No! As the sunshine enhances sorrow, so Nature, by the force of contrast, reveals and enhances guilt. *Manfred* is no echo of another's questioning, no expression of a general world-weariness on the part of the time-spirit, but a personal outcry: "De profundis clamavi!"

No doubt, apart from this main purport and essence of his song, his sensitive spirit responded to other and fainter influences. There are "points of resemblance," as Jeffrey pointed out and Byron proudly admitted, between *Manfred* and the *Prometheus* of Æschylus. Plainly, here and there, "the tone and pitch of the composition," and "the victim in the more solemn parts," are Æschylean. Again, with regard to the supernatural, there was the stimulus of the conversation of the Shelleys and of Lewis, brimful of magic and ghost-lore; and lastly, there was the glamour of *Christabel*, "the wild and original" poem which had taken Byron captive, and was often in his thoughts and on his lips. It was no wonder that the fuel kindled and burst into a flame.

For the text of Goethe's review of *Manfred*, and Hoppner's translation of that review, and an account of Goethe's relation with Byron, drawn from Professor A. Brandl's *Goethes Verhältniss zu Byron (Goethe-Jahrbuch, Zwanzigster Band*, 1899), and other sources, see *Letters*, 1901, v. Appendix II. pp. 503-521.

For contemporary and other notices of *Manfred*, in addition to those already mentioned, see *Eclectic Review*, July, 1817, New Series, vol. viii. pp. 62-66; *Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1817, vol. 87, pp. 45-47; *Monthly Review*, July, 1817, Enlarged Series, vol. 83, pp. 300-307; *Dublin University Magazine*, April, 1874, vol. 83, pp. 502-508, etc.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Manfred.
Chamois Hunter.
Abbot of St. Maurice.
Manuel.
Herman.

Witch of the Alps.
Arimanes.
Nemesis.
The Destinies.
Spirits, etc.

The Scene of the Drama is amongst the Higher Alps—partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the Mountains.

MANFRED. [106]

ACT 1.

Scene 1.—Manfred *alone.—Scene, a Gothic Gallery.*[107] *—Time, Midnight.*

Man. The lamp must be replenished, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch:
My slumbers—if I slumber—are not sleep,
But a continuance, of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not: in my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within; and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.
But Grief should be the Instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is Knowledge: they who know the most10
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and science, and the springs[108]
Of Wonder, and the wisdom of the World,
I have essayed, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not: I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men—
But this availed not: I have had my foes,
And none have baffled, many fallen before me—20
But this availed not:—Good—or evil—life—
Powers, passions—all I see in other beings,
Have been to me as rain unto the sands,
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb, that beats with hopes or wishes,

Or lurking love of something on the earth.
Now to my task.—
Mysterious Agency!
Ye Spirits of the unbounded Universe![ap]
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light—30
Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence—ye, to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,[aq]
And Earth's and Ocean's caves familiar things—
I call upon ye by the written charm[109]
Which gives me power upon you—Rise! Appear!
A pause.
They come not yet.—Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you[110]—by this sign,
Which makes you tremble—by the claims of him
Who is undying,—Rise! Appear!—-- Appear!40
A pause.
If it be so.—Spirits of Earth and Air,
Ye shall not so elude me! By a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birthplace in a star condemned,
The burning wreck of a demolished world,
A wandering hell in the eternal Space;
By the strong curse which is upon my Soul,[111]
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will.—Appear!

A star is seen at the darker end of the gallery: it is stationary; and a voice is heard singing.]

First Spirit.

Mortal! to thy bidding bowed,
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of Twilight builds,
And the Summer's sunset gilds
With the azure and vermilion,
Which is mixed for my pavilion;[ar]
Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden,
To thine adjuration bowed:
Mortal—be thy wish avowed!

Voice of the Second Spirit.

Mont Blanc is the Monarch of mountains;
They crowned him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a Diadem of snow.
Around his waist are forests braced,
The Avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.
The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day;
But I am he who bids it pass,
Or with its ice delay.[as]
I am the Spirit of the place,
Could make the mountain bow
And quiver to his caverned base—
And what with me would'st *Thou?*

Voice of the Third Spirit.

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the Wind is a stranger,
And the Sea-snake hath life,
Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells,
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;
O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep Echo rolled—
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

Fourth Spirit.

Where the slumbering Earthquake
Lies pillowed on fire,
And the lakes of bitumen
Rise boilingly higher;
Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,
As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;
I have quitted my birthplace,
Thy bidding to bide—
Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

Fifth Spirit.

I am the Rider of the wind,
The Stirrer of the storm;
The hurricane I left behind
Is yet with lightning warm;
To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
I swept upon the blast:
The fleet I met sailed well—and yet
'Twill sink ere night be past.

Sixth Spirit.

My dwelling is the shadow of the Night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

Seventh Spirit.

The Star which rules thy destiny no
Was ruled, ere earth began, by me:
It was a World as fresh and fair
As e'er revolved round Sun in air;
Its course was free and regular,
Space bosomed not a lovelier star.
The Hour arrived—and it became
A wandering mass of shapeless flame,
A pathless Comet, and a curse,
The menace of the Universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky!

And Thou! beneath its influence born—
Thou worm! whom I obey and scorn—
Forced by a Power (which is not thine,
And lent thee but to make thee mine)
For this brief moment to descend,
Where these weak Spirits round thee bend
And parley with a thing like thee—
What would'st thou, Child of Clay! with me?[112]

The Seven Spirits.

Earth—ocean—air—night—mountains—winds—thy Star,
Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their Spirits are—
What would'st thou with us, Son of mortals—say?

Man. Forgetfulness——

First Spirit. Of what—of whom—and why?

Man. Of that which is within me; read it there—
Ye know it—and I cannot utter it.

Spirit. We can but give thee that which we possess:
Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
O'er earth—the whole, or portion—or a sign
Which shall control the elements, whereof
We are the dominators,—each and all,
These shall be thine.

Man. Oblivion—self-oblivion!
Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
Ye offer so profusely—what I ask?

Spirit. It is not in our essence, in our skill;
But—thou may'st die.

Man. Will Death bestow it on me?

Spirit. We are immortal, and do not forget;
We are eternal; and to us the past150
Is, as the future, present. Art thou answered?

Man. Ye mock me—but the Power which brought ye here
Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!
The Mind—the Spirit—the Promethean spark,[at]
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though cooped in clay!
Answer, or I will teach you what I am.[au]

Spirit. We answer—as we answered; our reply
Is even in thine own words.

Man. Why say ye so?160

Spirit. If, as thou say'st, thine essence be as ours,
We have replied in telling thee, the thing
Mortals call death hath nought to do with us.

Man. I then have called ye from your realms in vain;
Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.

Spirit. Say—[113]
What we possess we offer; it is thine:
Bethink ere thou dismiss us; ask again;
Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length of days—

Man. Accurséd! what have I to do with days?
They are too long already.—Hence—begone!170

Spirit. Yet pause: being here, our will would do thee service;
Bethink thee, is there then no other gift
Which we can make not worthless in thine eyes?

Man. No, none: yet stay—one moment, ere we part,
I would behold ye face to face. I hear
Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
As Music on the waters;[114] and I see
The steady aspect of a clear large Star;
But nothing more. Approach me as ye are,
Or one—or all—in your accustomed forms.180

Spirit. We have no forms, beyond the elements
Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form—in that we will appear.

Man. I have no choice; there is no form on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting—Come!

Seventh Spirit (appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure).[115]

Behold!

Man. Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*[116]
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy. I will clasp thee,
And we again will be——
The figure vanishes.
My heart is crushed!
Manfred *falls senseless*.

(*A voice is heard in the Incantation which follows.*)[117]

When the Moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;[118]
When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answered owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy Spirit shall not sleep;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a Power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gathered in a cloud;

And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turned around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse;
And a Spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall Night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatched the snake,
For there it coiled as in a brake;

From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,240
I found the strongest was thine own.

By the cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathomed gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which passed for human thine own heart;
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,
I call upon thee! and compel[av]250
Thyself to be thy proper Hell!

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together260
Hath the word been passed—now wither!

Scene II.—*The Mountain of the Jungfrau.—Time, Morning.*—Manfred *alone upon the cliffs.*

Man. The spirits I have raised abandon me,
The spells which I have studied baffle me,

The remedy I recked of tortured me
I lean no more on superhuman aid;
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulfed in darkness,
It is not of my search.—My Mother Earth![119]
And thou fresh-breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright Eye of the Universe,10
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;20
I see the peril—yet do not recede;
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live,—
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of Spirit, and to be
My own Soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself—
The last infirmity of evil. Aye,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,30
An Eagle passes.
Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,

Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision.—Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this visible world![120]
How glorious in its action and itself!
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mixed essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our Mortality predominates,
And men are—what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. Hark! the note,
The Shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.
The natural music of the mountain reed—
For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal air,
Mixed with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;[121]
My soul would drink those echoes. Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment[122]—born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Enter from below a Chamois Hunter.

Chamois Hunter. Even so
This way the Chamois leapt: her nimble feet

Have baffled me; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail.—What is here?
Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reached
A height which none even of our mountaineers,
Save our best hunters, may attain: his garb
Is goodly, his mien manly, and his air
Proud as a free-born peasant's, at this distance:
I will approach him nearer.

Man. (*not perceiving the other*). To be thus—
Grey-haired with anguish, like these blasted pines,
Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,[123]
A blighted trunk upon a curséd root,
Which but supplies a feeling to Decay—
And to be thus, eternally but thus,
Having been otherwise! Now furrowed o'er
With wrinkles, ploughed by moments, not by years
And hours, all tortured into ages—hours
Which I outlive!—Ye toppling crags of ice!
Ye Avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me!
I hear ye momently above, beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict;[124] but ye pass,
And only fall on things that still would live;
On the young flourishing forest, or the hut
And hamlet of the harmless villager.

C. Hun. The mists begin to rise from up the valley;
I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
To lose at once his way and life together.

Man. The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep Hell,[aw]
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heaped with the damned like pebbles.—I am giddy.[125]

C. Hun. I must approach him cautiously; if near,
A sudden step will startle him, and he
Seems tottering already.

Man. Mountains have fallen,
Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
Rocking their Alpine brethren; filling up
The ripe green valleys with Destruction's splinters;
Damming the rivers with a sudden dash,
Which crushed the waters into mist, and made
Their fountains find another channel—thus,
Thus, in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg—[126]
Why stood I not beneath it?

C. Hun. Friend! have a care,
Your next step may be fatal!—for the love
Of Him who made you, stand not on that brink!

Man. (*not hearing him*).
Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime—as thus—thus they shall be—
In this one plunge.—Farewell, ye opening Heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully—
You were not meant for me—Earth! take these atoms!

As Manfred *is in act to spring from the cliff, the* Chamois Hunter *seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp.*

C. Hun. Hold, madman!—though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood:
Away with me——I will not quit my hold.

Man. I am most sick at heart—nay, grasp me not—
I am all feebleness—the mountains whirl
Spinning around me——I grow blind——What art thou?

C. Hun. I'll answer that anon.—Away with me——
The clouds grow thicker——there—now lean on me—
Place your foot here—here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub—now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle—softly—well—
The Chalet will be gained within an hour:
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing,
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath washed since winter.—Come,'tis bravely done—
You should have been a hunter.—Follow me.

As they descend the rocks with difficulty, the scene closes.

ACT II.

Scene I.—*A Cottage among the Bernese Alps*.—Manfred *and the* Chamois Hunter.

C. Hun. No—no—yet pause—thou must not yet go forth;

Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other, for some hours, at least;
When thou art better, I will be thy guide—
But whither?

Man. It imports not: I do know
My route full well, and need no further guidance.

C. Hun. Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of high lineage —
One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys—which of these
May call thee lord? I only know their portals;10
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths,
Which step from out our mountains to their doors,
I know from childhood—which of these is thine?

Man. No matter.

C. Hun. Well, Sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come, taste my wine;
'Tis of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thawed my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine—Come, pledge me fairly!20

Man. Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never—never sink in the earth?

C. Hun. What dost thou mean? thy senses wander from thee.

Man. I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,[127]
And this was shed: but still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from Heaven,
Where thou art not—and I shall never be.30

C. Hun. Man of strange words, and some half-maddening sin,[ax]
Which makes thee people vacancy, whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience——

Man. Patience—and patience! Hence—that word was made
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey!
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
I am not of thine order.

C. Hun. Thanks to Heaven!
I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell; but whatsoe'er thine ill,40
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.

Man. Do I not bear it?—Look on me—I live.

C. Hun. This is convulsion, and no healthful life.

Man. I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number: ages—ages—