

LORD BYRON

CAIN

CAIN: 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.
Why do I exist? Why art all things wretched?
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!
But I thought, that 'twere a better portion for the animal
Never to have been stung at all than to
Purchase renewal of its little life
With agonies unutterable, though
Dispelled by antidotes.