

THE
FLOWERS OF LITERATURE;
OR,
ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF ANECDOTE:

A
WELL DIVERSIFIED COLLECTION
IN
History, Biography, Poetry,
AND ROMANCE.

TALES, SERIOUS AND COMIC:

ESSAYS,

JEUX D'ESPRITS, ANECDOTAL MORCEAUX,

TRADITIONAL RELICS,

CRITICAL SCRAPS; (OF "PITH AND MOMENT:")

Translations of Approved Authors,

ANCIENT AND MODERN.

By WILLIAM OXBERRY, COMEDIAN.

—————"An Olio
Compiled from quarto and from folio;
From pamphlet, newspaper, and book."

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FLOWERS OF LITERATURE;

OR,

ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF ANECDOTE.

“ Nihil legebat quod non exciperet ”

A CRITICAL ESSAY ON
GOETHE'S FAUSTUS.—A TRAGEDY.

(Original.)

THE history of Faustus is familiar to most readers, whose studies have gone beyond the horn-book: in England it has afforded to Marlowe materials for a Tragedy, and in Germany, to Lessing, long before the present work of Goëthe; but prior to all these writers, Faustus has figured in the puppet-shows of either country; indeed, like the tales of Jack the Giant Killer, Fortunatus, and other similar worthies, it is, and has long been, an heir-loom in the civilized world; and, while in one shape it has delighted the nursery, in another it has been the amusement of older heads and more sober fancies. Stript of the fables that time has twined round it, as it twines the green moss round the oak, the story is simply this:—Faustus, called by the Germans, Faust, invented, or is said to have invented, The Art of Printing; an art, which, as it went beyond the understanding of his cotemporaries, they wisely concluded must have been borrowed from the Devil. In its principle, this is the story of Prometheus told again,—though its facts are different. In either case, the very essential feature of the tale is, a powerful mind struggling for information, and running so far before its age in attainment, as at once to excite its awe and its hatred; a union which, when it takes place in the public mind, generally engenders a charge of blasphemy. But the illustration of this principle, is not confined to the Prometheus of Greece, or the Faustus of Germany: it occurs a hundred times, and in a hundred shapes, in the Eastern Tales. It is even of older origin; it is the antique story of the first man plucking the forbidden fruit. Ignorance, indeed, was a law in the re-

ligion of other times, and he who dared to transgress that law, was either a robber of the Gods; or a friend of the evil Spirit, according to the faith of the age and nation. The darkness of Polytheism seems for a long time to have thrown its shadows over the light of Christianity:—from the Naiads, Wood Gods, and other divinities of classic and barbarous nations, arose the Nixies, Forest Fiends, Gnomes, Cloud Kings, and the whole troop of more modern elementary agents. Woden, Jupiter, and their kindred, were no longer looked upon as the movers of the elements, but mankind were not a whit nearer to the truth; they had left one error only to embrace another;—devils had succeeded to Deities, and were the supposed rulers of the woods and the sea,—the clouds and the tempests. These hideous figures have been at last only dislodged by philosophy, which, by finding causes for the operations of the elements, rendered supernatural services superfluous. The subject is curious in itself, and well deserves more attention, than we can now bestow upon it, without neglecting our author:—to him and his work we return.

It is upon the fiction, and not upon the real history, of Faustus, that Goëthe has founded his tragedy; or, to speak more correctly, his tragic poem; for, as we shall hereafter see, it is only calculated for the closet. His Hero is a trafficker in unholy things; a practical student of the forbidden arts; and it is not that he only bears this reputation: the fact is so;—the reality corresponds with the report. Goëthe sets before us a human being, who, by means scarcely intelligible, evokes the evil spirits, as a master, at the hazard of finally becoming their slave; but the work will speak best for itself.

The Faustus of Goëthe, in direct, though unacknowledged, imitation of the Faustus of Marlowe, runs through all the sciences and finds their emptiness: but the restless spirit within him will not so be satisfied,—what he has inhaled from the fount of knowledge, irritates, not quenches his thirst; and he feels the circle of his study, the world itself, painfully too narrow for him! The sun shines too feebly upon him: nature fails before his ambition. At first, his indignation is poured forth in satire more nervous than poetical; till, at last, his eye is attracted by the moonlight which falls upon his writing desk, and then his language changes to a

tone of melancholy appeal, as affecting as it is simple. This is precisely that style of writing which loses most in translation, but the task, however hopeless, must be attempted.

“ Oh, thou full moon, whose waxing light
I oft have watch'd in middle night !
Oh, that thy beams were shining now
The last time on this troubled brow !
Then, mournful friend, thy round, full-grown,
Upon my books and papers shone ;
Ah, could I on the mountain's height
But wander in thy lovely light,
In mountain caves with spirits creep,
O'er meadows in thy twilight sweep,
And free from learning's bitter pain,
Bathe in thy dew's to health again.”

By degrees his melancholy from the very depth of its feeling is again excited into bitterness ; he evokes the spirits, who appears in a quivering red flame, and whose terrific figure shakes even his courage.

Spir. Who calls me ?

Faust. (*Turning away.*) Horrible sight !

Spir. Thou hast powerfully evoked me,—long drawn at my sphere ; and now,—

Faust. Woe ! I can not endure thee.

Spir. Thou hast earnestly adjured me, that thou mightest hear my voice, mightest look upon my brow. The anxious prayer of thy soul has moved me ; here I am ! What piteous terror unmans thee ? Where is the soul-sprung call ? Where is the breast that in itself created, and bore, and enclosed, a world ? that swelled with transport to raise itself to us, the spirits ? Where art thou, Faustus ? thou whose voice penetrated to me, who forced thyself upon me with all thy might ? Art thou he ? thou, who art stunned by my breath, who tremblest in all the depths of life, a fearful shrinking worm ?

Faust. Shall I yield to thee, thing of fire ? I am he ! I am Faust ! I am thine equal !

Spir. In the flood of life, in the storm of deeds, I whirl up and down, float here and there, a birth and a grave, an eternal sea, a restless motion, a glowing life. So am I employed at the rustling wheel of time, and work the living garment of the deity.

Faust. Restless spirit, that wanderest about the world, how near I feel myself to thee !

Spir. You are equal to the spirit you comprehend, not to me.

With this the Spirit vanishes, leaving Faustus overwhelmed and indignant. He has at last attained the conviction that a deep gulph is open between human nature and the world of spirits, only to feel that no effort of mortal industry can overleap it. In this critical moment a knocking at the door calls off his attention ; his pupil Wagner enters, whose infe-

riority restores his master to that high station which he had lost in his interview with the Dæmon. Mind is here brought into contrast with learning, with the mere knowledge of books, the recollection of what other men have thought and said. With Wagner learning is an end and not a means, the goal itself and not the road by which the goal is to be attained. With his master it is the reverse; he looks that study should produce some fruit, and when he finds it a barren tree, or at best that its fruit is rotten, he grows weary of its cultivation. In thus raising the mind and objects of Faustus above those of the general world, the author has exalted the Spirit into a gigantic being; what must that power be that could quell such energies of understanding? Indeed Goëthe has lavished all the riches and vigour of his mind upon these two characters, all its subtlety, its proneness to satire, its disdain of life and its usual objects. Each of these qualities is eminently brought forward in this scene; the subtle sophistry and dry pungent satire of his master quite overwhelm poor Wagner; they pull down every thing, but build up nothing on the ruins, and the pupil retreats confounded, not instructed.

Faustus, left by himself, again declines fast into his former tone of feeling, till in the end he is worked up to despair; he takes a bottle of poison from the shelf; the untasted liquor is at his lips; in this very crisis, when only a moment stands between him and death, the church-bells are heard to ring, and the voices of a near choir, chaunting the service of the Easter festival, penetrate to his cell; "Christ is risen!"—He drops the glass from his hand; all the dormant recollections of childhood awake at these sounds to which they have been so firmly linked, and he exclaims in a tone of noble, heartfelt pathos, "the tear flows; earth has me again!" This is altogether one of those strong situations which only genius can create, and which are apt to give any thing rather than pleasure to common apprehensions. Yet it is in the highest and purest tone of poetic feeling; there is a life, a reality about the whole scene, which make the cheeks glow and the ears tingle, though it certainly does not possess any of the lighter graces of poetry, its similes, its metaphors, and its personifications. At the same time, in addition to the general merits of the scene, the verse has a peculiar, wild harmony, the value of which the English reader will be en-

OR, ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF ANECDOTE.

abled to estimate by calling to mind the "Alexander's Feast" of Dryden. In either of these there is little poetic ornament but both have the force and flow of a torrent and carry all before them.

From the strong excitement of this scene, the spectator or reader rather, is introduced to the bustle of an Easter-holyday in the environs of the city which pours forth its multitudes from their dark houses and every-day habits to enjoy the freshness of the country. The pencil of Goëthe has seldom been employed more effectively, than in this picture: it is full of life and truth, and though crowded to excess with figures, yet all tend to one general result, without individuals by their closeness jostling the others, or in any way impeding the general effect. Here a party of servant-girls are playing the coquette, pursued by several students to the sore annoyance of the maidens of better condition, one of whom observes that the young men "might have the best society, and yet run after the wenches." In another part is an old citizen grumbling to his companion about the times, and denouncing the unworthiness of their new Burgomaster. In a third group is one of those happy beings, who believe in no evil that does not actually tread upon their own toes; he enjoys prodigiously the war with the Turks, as long as he himself can sit quietly with his jug and pipe, and hear, without feeling, its thunders. Soldiers, beggars, &c. fill up other portions of the canvass, while beneath the shade of a Linden tree is a party of dancers, whose amusements is described most simply and vividly.

"All is bustle in the ring,
Right and left the dancers spring;
All their garments streaming far.
They are red and they are warm,
Resting breathless, arm in arm,
Hip to elbow join'd—Huzza!
Hip to elbow join'd—Huzza!"

Seated on the top of a neighbouring hill together with his pupil, Faustus for a while gazes, and comments, on the scene. The joy of the people, the warm sun, the freshness of the air, all aid to still the tumult in his breast, till he becomes a part of the nature around him, as mild and as genial; "here," he exclaims, "I am a man; here I dare be one." He descends to the people, who receive him with general applause, leaving the song and the dance to crowd about the object of their

love and veneration. One old man reminds him of the time of the plague, when the father of Faustus by his medical skill saved numbers from death; "you too," the old peasant says, "then a young man, went into every sick house. Many dead bodies were borne away, but you always came out safe. You endured many a hard trial; the helper above helped the helper."

Wagner envies and admires the honours thus paid on all sides to his master. To be so made a public wonder, he declares is the very end and aim of all study, the height of felicity, beyond which he can imagine nothing. Faustus, however, looks on the whole in a very different light; the Dæmon within him is again busy, and every better feeling of his heart seems to be dried up in the thirst for an indefinite enjoyment, the nature of which is hardly intelligible to himself: to him there hardly is a past or present; his eyes are perpetually and intently fixed on the future, and he treats the medical art as a mere quackery, a disease more destructive than even the plague—

"I myself have given the poison to thousands; they withered away, while I must outlive them, that people may praise the impudent assassin."

This conversation is interrupted by the strange appearance of a black spaniel, who, to the eyes of Faustus, seems to go round and round them, each time drawing the circle more closely, as if he were weaving a magic web about their feet; a stream of fire too appears to flame and sparkle upon his steps. The pupil, however, sees nothing of all this; to his sight the dog is no more than a dog, that, with the common habits of his species, flies about them timidly, because they are strangers to him. As the creature approaches more nearly, and fawns upon them, Faustus allows that he has been deceived; he takes the dog with him, and returns home an altered man; the wild feelings of the day are all gone to sleep; the love of God and man again awakes in his breast: and all is as still within, as it is without him. This calm is disturbed only by the snarling of his new companion, who, by his noise, breaks in upon his studies.—

"Be quiet, spaniel, run not up and down :—
 Ah, when within this narrow cell,
 The friendly lamp again burns well,
 Then all within this bosom's bright,
 This heart, that knows itself, is light.—"

The reason speaks, and not in vain,
While hope begins to bloom again."

"Howl not, spaniel. Thy cries suit not with the holy tones that possess my entire soul. It is a custom for men to scoff at that they do not understand, to murmur at the good and the beautiful, which is a burthen to them. But, alas! I already feel that with the best inclination, content no more flows from this bosom. Why must the stream so soon dry up, and I again pine in thirst?"

With heated imagination, he applies to his translation of the Scriptures, but in the very onset, "The Word" is a stumbling-block. He comments upon it, and distorts, and twists it, while the bellowing of the dog becomes louder and louder, and, at length, the creature swells and spreads upwards, till its gigantic form reaches the roof, while its eyes flash fire. A chorus of unseen spirits is heard from the passage without, all of whom fear entering to the assistance of their master. The courage of Faustus does not desert him in this crisis; conceiving the monster to be a spirit of one of the four elements, he attacks him as each successively, but his conjuration is ineffectual; none of the four Elements is in the beast, who lies quiet and grins at him. Faustus then adjures him by the cross:—

“Are you companion,
A fugitive from Hell?
Then see this sign,
To which the herds of darkness
Bow the knee.
Already it swells with bristling hair!
Abandon'd being!
Can you read him?
The self-born,
The unutterable,
Who is spread through Heaven,
Who was pierc'd impiously?
Banish'd behind the furnace,
It swells like an elephant!
It fills the whole room!
It will melt to cloud!
Mount not to the roof.
Lie down at your master's feet!
You see I threaten not in vain;
I burn thee with the holy flame!
Wait not,
The three-times glowing light!
Wait not,
The strongest of my spells!"

(To be resumed in our next.)

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CRITICAL ESSAY ON
GOETHE'S FAUSTUS.—A TRAGEDY.

(Original.)

Resumed from Page 7.

The last spell is too mighty for the Dæmon; the cloud falls away from him and Mephistophilus appears before Faustus as a travelling student. Not only in exterior, but in language, and every thing that makes up identity, does the fiend of Goëthe differ from every fiend that has figured in the world since the first hour of Christianity. He appears neither as the blasted angel of Milton, nor as the saucer-eyed monster of the nursery; he is a part of original chaos, a mere abstract quality for which language has no name,—

“The spirit that denies every thing, and would annihilate every thing.”

He mocks the sublimest mysteries of nature, as comedy mocks the frailties of men. Nothing vexes him so much as that he can not utterly destroy all life from the world, and blend the elements themselves, into their original confusion:—

“And that cursed set, the brood of beasts and men! there is nothing to be done with them. How many have I buried! and yet a new fresh blood is always circulating. So it goes on! 'Tis enough to drive one mad! A thousand seeds unfold themselves from the air and water as from the earth, in dry and moist, in hot and cold! If I had not reserved fire to myself, there would have been no room for me.”

There is something in this dry language quite foreign to all our pre-conceived ideas of the Devil; there seems at first sight to be too much flesh and blood about him. We are not quite sure that we rightly understand the poet's purpose, but according to our ideas, his Dæmon is that principle of decay, or destruction, or by whatever name it is to be called, that is daily, and hourly, and minutely, at work upon life in all its forms, and whose attempts are as constantly frustrated by the perpetual reproduction of things destroyed. Nor has the conversation of the spirit any of that dark grandeur, which has been his usual dialect; every word with him is hard, dry, biting satire; he is a perpetual scoffer and doubter, without ever rising to the sublime and beautiful. The familiarity of Faustus too, is altogether in the same tone; he tells the fiend sans ceremony that there is the win-

dow and the door for him, but more particularly the chimney; and the fiend as frankly replies that he should be glad to take himself off, if it were not for a trifling obstacle, the spell on the door-sill, which it seems was imperfect enough to let him in, but too perfect to let him out. As to the other two modes of exit, to wit, by the window or the chimney, those, it seems, are of no present use to him, as

“It is a law with Devils and Spirits, that where they enter, there they must go out.”

Faustus, however, is inclined to no accommodation, and poor Mephistophilus is at his wit's end; nor does the artifice by which he at last escapes, redound much to the credit of his cunning. He offers his services to amuse his jailor, which being conditionally accepted, he calls up a troop of brother spirits, who fairly sing the persecutor asleep, an art in which many mere mortal singers would not yield precedence to the Devil. Taking advantage of this slumber, he next summons a company of rats to his aid, and they prove more cunning than his infernal majesty; for they actually gnaw asunder the charm which was too powerful for him to injure.

Having thus provided for his personal freedom, (for even the Devil hates slavery,) he returns to ply his proper office of tempter, but not till he has thrice knocked, and thrice been allowed admittance: in truth, it must be allowed, that his previous usage offered no great encouragement to a second visit of intrusion. After all, too, though Faustus falls, he cannot be said to be deceived, or, if so, he is his own deceiver; it is the Dæmon within, not the Dæmon without, that betrays him: it is the restless spirit in his own breast incites him to seal the compact with hell, rather than any persuasion from abroad. He says:—

“The Great Spirit has rejected me; nature is locked against me; the web of thought is torn; I loathe all knowledge. Let me still these glowing passions in the depths of sensuality.”

When the Fiend makes answer, that no bounds will be set to his desires, that his every wish will be gratified, he exclaims vehemently,

“Mind, I don't talk of *happiness*; I devote myself to the whirl of pleasure, to beloved hatred, to refreshing anger. My breast, which is healed from the sting of knowledge, shall for the future be closed to no pain, and that, which is portioned out to all existence, I will enjoy in my

inward self. With my spirit I will grasp the highest and the deepest, will heap up in my own bosom their weal and woe."

When the Dæmon replies, that this is only for a God, he exclaims, sternly,

"But I will! * * * I feel that I have to no purpose collected in myself all the treasures of the human intellect; and when at last I sit down, no new strength flows within. I am not a hair's breadth higher! I am no nearer to the Infinite One!"

The next scene introduces the two travellers to a wine-vault at Leipsic, where a party of drunken students are amusing themselves. Here the Dæmon plays off a few hocus-pocus tricks, all strongly expressive of that restless mocking spirit which constitutes his very essence. He is at first a boon companion, singing songs for the general entertainment; then he makes a parade of his juggling skill, by drawing different sorts of wine from the table, according to the various wishes and appetites of the students: lastly, he converts the wine into fire, to the general annoyance, and, as all are about to fall on him and his friend, he flings over the assailants a second spell, that makes the room show to them like green fields; when the illusion is over, each finds himself holding his neighbour by the nose. Meanwhile Faustus and his infernal friend take advantage of their delusion to fly away upon a cask, according to the testimony borne by one of these worthy sons of Bacchus.

Between this and the following scene there appears to be a great gap of time unfilled; for on a sudden we find Faustus seeking for a draught, which may sling thirty years from him, and renew his youth. For this purpose he is conducted by the Dæmon to the cave of an old Witch. The good old lady herself happens not to be at home; but her servants are busy enough, and strange animals they are, as strange as their occupations, to say the least of them. The English language has no name for these creatures, which are described as being half Cat, half Monkey,—Meerkatze. The male brute is employed in scumming a cauldron that hangs over a low fire, taking heed that it should not boil over, while his female lies beside him with her young, and warms her paws. Faustus views this scene with indignation, and reproaches the Dæmon:—

"Do I want counsel of an old woman? Will this greasy cookery take off thirty years from my body? Woe is me, if you know nothing better! Already hope has left me!"

Meph. Now, my friend, you talk wisely again! Yet there are means to renew youth; but they stand in another book, and the chapter is a wonderful one.

Faust. I will know it.

Meph. Good! To find a means without gold or magic! Betake yourself directly to the fields; begin to cleave and to dig; confine yourself and your senses in a very narrow circle; nourish yourself with unmixed food. Live with the beast as a beast. These, believe me, are the best means to renovate yourself for eighty years.

Faust. I am not used to this; I can not persuade myself to take the spade in my hand; this confined life suits not me.

Meph. Then the Witch must help you.

Faust. But why must it be the old woman? Can you not brew the draught yourself?

Meph. That would be a pretty recreation: I should build a thousand bridges in the time. Not only are art and science, but patience also, requisite to the work. A still spirit is occupied for years; time alone makes effective the delicate fermentation, and all that belong to it are matters truly wonderful. The Devil is indeed acquainted with them, but *the Devil can not create.*

Here again is the developement of that principle of destruction, already mentioned, and which hereafter is so constantly to occur. Goëthe may well make Faustus call the Dæmon a child of Chaos; he is evidently painted from that perpetual tendency in all nature to resolve itself into the original elements, and which is only prevented by the constant and active energies of the reproductive powers. But it will be perhaps better to extend our extracts, for the story never can be so well told as in the language of the author.

Meph. (*Looking at the Beasts.*) See, what an elegant family! That is the maid, and that the footman!—(*To the Beasts.*) It seems your mistress is not at home.

Beasts.—At the feast,
Out of the house,
Up the chimney.

Meph. How long does she revel?

Beasts. As long as we warm our paws.

Meph. (*To Faust.*) How find you the tender animals?

Faust. The most insipid brutes I ever met with.

Meph. Now a conversation such as this is precisely what I most like to carry on.

And he does carry it on for several pages, till the heart grows sick, and recoils, from his perpetual scoffing. His mockery cuts up every thing by the roots, making a leafless desert of life. It is that sort of language, which, if any human being could listen to, he would inevitably put a pistol to

his head and end a life, that, to a heart so wasted, would not be worth the having. This scoffing fiend actually leaves no one feeling for the mind to feed upon; religion, morals, philosophy, the very sense of beauty and of excellence, all are swept away by him. When Faustus, who is gazing at a lovely image in the witch's enchanted mirror, exclaims in the excess of his delight,

“Can such beauty be on earth?”

He replies,

“No! 'Tis natural when a God has plagued himself for six days, and cries bravo to himself, on the seventh, that something excellent should come of it!”

In the mean time the cauldron, left to itself, begins to boil over, in consequence of which the fire swells up the chimney, and the witch tumbles down through the blaze with a horrid shriek. Her first salutation to the company is by sprinkling over them flames which she draws from the magic kettle; at this the beasts retreat, howling; but, fire being the native element of Mephistophilus, he stands his ground bravely, and farther amuses himself with dashing to pieces all her glass and crockery. At first the indignant witch draws back; but, soon recognizing her old master, dances about him in a tumult of joy. At his command she begins to prepare the magic draught that is to renew youth; for this purpose she draws about her a circle, in which the Monkey-cats are placed, by way of reading desk for her folio of the Black Arts, while the glasses and the cauldron ring. Faustus is invited by her to enter into the magic round, but he flatly declares his utter abhorrence of all this mummary. Mephistophilus replies in his usual scoffing tone, and, sooth to say, the poet himself too often plays the Devil with his readers, leaving it no easy task to distinguish between his jest and earnest. Faustus seems more stunned, than convinced, by the fiend's admonitions, but he accepts the draught, which is no sooner placed to his lips than it turns to fire. His companion exclaims;

“Down with it,
Down with it quickly; quaff, friend, quaff;
'Twill make the heart within thee laugh;
Art thou the Devil's friend, yet fear
To share the Devil's fiery cheer?”

(To be concluded in our next.)

A CRITICAL ESSAY ON
 GOËTHE'S FAUSTUS.—A TRAGEDY.

(Original.)

(Concluded from Page 73.)

The witch resolves the circle, and Faustus, under the conduct of Mephistophilus, flies from the cave, and we next meet him in the open street, wrapt up in sudden admiration of a lovely, innocent young creature, who is returning home from church. Without ceremony, he orders the fiend to turn procureur, and when the latter pleads the innocence of the girl as an excuse for inability, he drily observes, that Margaret is upwards of fourteen years old. The Devil then petitions for a fortnight's delay in which to try his skill; but to this also the task-master objects, declaring, that if he had half the time in quiet, he should not need the Devil's aid for her seduction. Poor Mephistophilus, in spite of all his subtlety, seems to have found his match; he is at last forced to compromise matters with Faustus by taking him into his mistress' bed-chamber in her absence, a visit which lays the foundation of Margaret's future ruin; for it is then that the Dæmon conceals in her trunk a heap of trinkets, which, by awaking female vanity, first disturbs the quiet of her pure bosom. The task of seduction is not, however, accomplished all at once; many visits are paid, and many lies told before the work is done; from Faustus she receives a sleeping draught, that she is to give her mother, to prevent her discovery of his visits; and soundly does she sleep upon it, for the draught is poison; but all this and much more interesting matter must be neglected; we must, however reluctantly, use our author as he uses time, passing over pages by the same necessity that he passes over months, and come to the hour when Valentine, the brother of Margaret, makes his appearance on the stage. The rough, high-spirited soldier has learned the disgrace of his sister—not from his own observation;—he was too proud of her even to suspect her fall from virtue;—but from the sneers, the half-told, half-lid scoffs of his companions.

“ Now,” he says—

“ I must sit like a bad debtor, sweating at every chance-word.”

It is in this frame of mind that he hears steps approach-

ing below his sister's window. Mephistophilus and Faustus appear together; and the former says, in his old tone—

“ I will sing a moral song, the better to make a fool of her.”

Valentine rushes forward, sword in hand, to attack the musician, but the Devil proves too hard for him; he parries the thrusts, leaving to Faustus the task of murder, which is at last accomplished by the fall of the gallant soldier, who rolls at their feet mortally wounded. They fly, the crowd collects, and the noise at length brings down Margaret; she exclaims—“ Who lies here?”—“ Your mother's son,”—reply the people. From this hour all happiness is an utter stranger to the breast of the unhappy girl. The Evil Spirit is every where with her, at home and abroad, in the city and in the fields. This gives rise to one of the most powerful and original scenes within the wide circle of modern poesy. Margaret is at church, in earnest and agonizing prayer, endeavouring to reconcile herself to the offended deity, and obtain remission of her sins. Close beside her is the Evil Spirit, his form unseen, his voice unheard, by the assembled multitude.

Evil Spirit. How different was it with you, when,
In innocence to God and men,
You knelt before the altar throne,
And lisp'd forth pray'rs in murmur'd tone,
Half God in heart, half childish play!
Where, Margaret, do thy senses stray?
What evil's in thy bosom now?
Dost for thy mother breathe the vow?
Through thee, fool, she has slept, through thee,
Into the pain that long must be.
Woe! woe!

Marg. That I were free from these thoughts that possess me utterly!

Chorus. That day of wrath, that judgment day,
When all that is shall pass away!

Evil Spirit. Fury seizes thee! The trumpets sound!
The graves are shaken! and thy heart, re-created, rises trembling
From the peace of the tomb to the pains of fire.

Marg. Alas! that I were far away!
It seems as if the organ's play
Had stopt my breath, the choral roll
Had mov'd my very inmost soul.

Chorus. When the day of judgment's here,
All that's hidden shall appear,
Nought shall be from vengeance clear.

Marg. All is so crush'd within this breast!
The columns seem upon me prest!
The vault upon my head to rest!

Air!

Evil Spirit. Conceal thyself! Sin and shame remain not hidden.
Air! light! woe to thee!

Chorus. What then shall the sinner say?
To what patron shall he pray,
When the righteous fear that day?

Evil Spirit. The saints turn away their faces from thee. The pure
ones would shudder to stretch their hands to thee. Woe!

Chorus. What then shall the sinner say?
To what patron shall he pray,
When the righteous fear that day?

Margaret, wrought up to the highest pitch of agony, faints away into the arms of a bystander. Indeed nothing else was left to the poet; for to have stretched the scene beyond this point would hardly have been possible, even to the genius of a Goëthe. A situation more truly forlorn than that of Margaret could never be conceived by the wildest or the saddest imagination. The prayer of the assembled multitude rises to heaven; she, and she only, cannot pray; and all this effect is produced by means apparently the most simple, without the least violence of language, or the slightest exaggeration of ideas.

While this passes, the busy Dæmon is employed in providing fresh pleasures for the eternal restlessness of Faustus, who has enjoyed sensuality till it ceases to be an enjoyment. To dissipate the melancholy of weariness in his pupil, the fiend conducts him to a strange spot, where the witches are celebrating their unholy Sabbath, and opens to the reader a scene, whose terrific wildness beggars all description. The melancholy moon throws a cold, insufficient gleam upon them; they stumble against the rude rocks and the huge roots of the trees, that, serpent-like, twine about the cliffs, and had twined about them since the first disentangling of elements from *primal chaos*. The guide, which Mephistophilus calls up, is no less wild than the mountain maze they are threading; it is the *ignis fatuus*, that he summons from its gambols on the moor and the morass, to light their path, and the reluctant meteor is obliged to marshal them the way. By the glimmer of his torch they climb over rocks and mountains, by the bed of the torrent and the brink of the abyss. The wind howls, the streams roar, the owls cry, and the trees crash and rattle with their blending branches, while—

“ Echo resounds like the tale of other times.”

At length they arrive at the witches' glen, to a scene of

such unutterable wildness, that the head actually turns dizzy in the contemplation. Image is heaped on image, idea upon idea, and all clothed in verse, that sweeps along like a whirlwind. It is a perfect tempest of thoughts and words, in which the reader is utterly confounded, till all at once he is recalled from the torrent by a circumstance of more reality, and of more immediate connexion with the general fable. A variety of magic pictures succeed each other, till at last Faustus fancies he sees the likeness of Margaret, or, as he calls her, with the familiarity of tenderness, Gretchen; he exclaims—

“Mephisto, dost see that pale, lovely girl, standing in the distance? She moves slowly, as though her feet were knit together. I must confess, it seems to me that she resembles the good Gretchen.

Meph. Let it be: no good can come of it. 'Tis a creation of magic, 'tis lifeless, 'tis ideal. To meet it is not good. The human blood is frozen by its cold gaze, and he who looks on it is turned to stone, as you have heard of the Medusa.

Faust. Those are the eyes of one dead—eyes which no loving hand has closed. That is the breast which Gretchen yielded to me; that is the sweet form that I enjoyed.

Meph. Easy fool, 'tis all enchantment.

Faust. What ecstasy! what anguish! I cannot tear myself from that gaze. How strange that lovely neck should be circled with a red collar, not broader than the edge of a knife.”

Faustus learns,—how and when is not distinctly made out,—that Margaret has given birth to a child, and murdered it, in the hope of concealing her shame, a crime which has been followed by discovery, and that discovery by condemnation; on the ensuing morrow she is to perish on the scaffold by the axe of the executioner. Sentence of death, too, has been passed against himself for the murder of Valentine; but the fate of the unhappy girl is predominant over every other idea; one thought occupies his whole soul, and that thought is Margaret. In bitterness of heart he exclaims:—

“A prisoner! In irrevocable misery! Delivered up to evil spirits and human judges insensible of feeling!—And in the meantime you cocker me up in idle dissipations, conceal from me her misery, leave her hopelessly to perish!

Meph. She will not be the first.

Faust. Hound! detested monster! Change him, thou infinite spirit, change him again into his houndlike shape! **** Return him to his darling form, that he may creep on his belly in the sand before me, that I may trample him beneath my feet, him, the rejected one!—Not be the first! Oh, Grief!—Grief not to be comprehended by the soul of man, that more than one creature should sink into this abyss of misery, that

the first sufferer should not, by his agony of death, atone for the sins of all others in the sight of the ever-merciful! The wretchedness of this *single* being pierces through my soul, through the marrow of my bones, while you coolly grin at the fate of *thousands*.

Meph. Why did you make community with us if you could not go through with it? Would you fly, and are not secure from giddiness? Did you force yourself upon us, or we intrude on you?

Faust. Save her, or woe be to you! The most horrible curses be upon you for centuries!

Meph. I cannot loosen the bonds of the avenger, cannot undo his bolts.—Save her! Who was it that plunged her into destruction? I, or you? (*Faustus looks wildly around.*) What, are you grasping after the thunder? Well that it is not given to you wretched mortals!

Faust. Lead me hence, I say, and free her."

Mephistophilus at last yields to his importunities, and they set out for the prison of Margaret, to which the supernatural power of the Dæmon give them ingress. It is midnight when they enter it by means of stolen keys, and concealed by a mist that the magic arts of the fiend have flung about the turrets. Faustus, as he creeps in, hears the voice of Margaret, singing a song, whose grossness sufficiently proves the derangement of her senses, coupled as it is with her former purity of thought and expression. He gently calls upon her, bidding her rise to freedom; but she mistakes his errand, and imagines him to be the messenger of death. When he takes up the fetters to unlock them, she flings herself upon her knees exclaiming:—

“Who, hangman, has given you this power over me? You fetch me already, at midnight! Take pity on me, and let me live! Is not to-morrow time enough? (*She rises.*) And then I am so young! so young! And must I die already? I was handsome too, and that was my ruin! Then my friend was near, but now he is far away. My garland is torn, and its flowers scattered. Grasp me not so violently! Spare me! What have I done to thee? Let me not sue in vain! I have never even seen you before.

Faust. How shall I support her agony?

Marg. I am now wholly in thy power, but only let me suckle my child first; I have hugged it to my heart this live-long night! They took it from me to vex me, and now they say that I destroyed it***.

Faust. (*Flings himself before her.*) Thy lover lies at thy feet; he comes to unlock thy chains.

Marg. (*Kneeling by him.*) Aye, let us on our knees invoke the saints! See! below these steps, and beneath the threshold, hell is seething. The evil one roars with fearful voice.

Faust. (*Aloud.*) Gretchen! Gretchen!

Marg. (*With attention.*) That was the voice of my friend—(*She jumps up and the chains fall off.*) Where is he? I heard him call!

I am free ! Nobody shall keep me in prison ; I will hang about his neck, will lie upon his bosom***. 'Tis he ! 'tis he ! Where now is all my anguish ? where the the torture of the prison, of the chains ? 'Tis thou ! thou comest to save me, and I am saved ! Already is the street before me, where I first saw you, and the smiling garden, where I and Martha used to wait for you.

Faust. Come with me ! come !

Marg. Oh stay. I love to be where thou art.

Faust. Haste ! If you delay, we shall dearly rue it.

Marg. How ! you cannot kiss any more ? My friend, so short a time away from me, and yet has forgotten how to kiss !***

Faust. Come, follow me : take courage, dearest ! I love thee with a thousand-fold ardour ; but follow me ; I ask no more of you than that.

Marg. But is it you ? is it indeed you ?

Faust. It is. Come with me.

Marg. And you will unlock my chains, and take me again to your bosom ? How comes it that you do not shrink from me ? Do you know, my friend, whom you would free ?

Faust. Come, come ! the advanced night is already fading.

Marg. My mother I have killed ; my child I have drowned.—Was it not given to thee and me ?—To thee also—'tis thou ! I scarcely can believe it. Give me thy hand—it is no dream—thy dear hand. Alas, it is damp ! wipe it : methinks there's blood upon it ! Oh God ! what hast thou done ? Put up thy sword, I do entreat you.

Faust. Let the past be past. You kill me.

Marg. No ; you must stay, and I will describe to you the tombs you shall prepare to-morrow. Give the best place to my mother, lay my brother close beside her ; me you will put a little way apart, only not too far, and my little one on my right breast ; no one else must lie near me. It was a joy to me once to nestle by thy side, but that is for me no longer. I feel as if I were dragged towards you while you pushed me back again ; and yet it is you, and your look is so good, so holy !—

Faust. If then you feel that it is I, come.

Marg. Whither ?

Faust. To freedom.

Marg. The grave is without, yonder, and death is watching for me. Then come !—from here to the bed of endless sleep, but not a step farther. Are you going ? O, Henry, if I could go with thee !

Faust. You can, if you will do so : the door stands open.

Marg. I dare not go forth : there is no hope for me. Of what avail is flight ? my steps will be watched. It is so wretched a thing to beg, and that too with an evil conscience ! So miserable to wander in a foreign land, and after all they would lay hold on me.

Faust. I will be with thee.

Marg. Quick, quick ! save thy poor child ! Away ! keep the road along the rivulet, and cross over the bridge into the wood—on the left where the plank stands in the pond—Catch at it instantly ! it will rise, for it is still struggling !—Save ! save !

Faust. Recollect thyself ! One step only, and thou art free.

Marg. Had we but passed the mountain ! There sits my mother

upon a stone *—ice thrills through my brain!—There sits my mother upon a stone, and shakes her head. She signs not, she beckons not: her head is heavy. She has slept so long, she wakes no more. Her sleep was once our joy—those were happy times.

Faust. Nor prayers nor reasoning avail with thee! Then must I force thee hence.

Marg. Let me go.—No: I will submit to no violence. Grasp me not with such force! I have done too much already as you would have me.

Faust. Day dawns! my love, my love!

Marg. Day! Yes, it will soon be day, the last day! it will be the day of my wedding. Tell nobody that you have already been with Margaret. Alas for my garland! it is all over with it! We shall meet again, but not at the dance. The crowd gathers; the marketplace, the streets, will not contain them! The bell calls, the signal is given! How they bind and drag me! I am hurried to the scaffold! *** The world is silent as the grave.***

Meph. (*Appears without.*) Up, or you are lost! Idle fear, delay, and chattering. My horses snort; the morning dawns.

Marg. What is it rises from the earth? 'Tis he! 'tis he! send him hence! What would he in the holy place? He comes for me.

Faust. You must live.

Marg. Tribunal of God! I have yielded myself to thee.

Meph. (*To Faustus.*) Come, come, or I leave thee in the lurch with her.

Marg. Father, I am thine! save me! Ye angels, ye holy legions, encompass me about, to guard me. Henry, I fear for thee!

Meph. She is adjudged.

Voices. (*From above.*) She is saved.

Meph. (*To Faustus.*) Away with me."

The Dæmon vanishes with his companion, while the voice of Margaret is still heard crying out; from the bottom of the cell, "Henry! Henry!" Here the piece ends; but it is easy to see that the author intends Margaret to be reconciled to Heaven by the agonies of a violent death, while her paramour escapes the hands of mortal justice, that he may perish in the soul eternally.

If we look at this extraordinary work as a whole, nothing can be said of it, but that it is a chaos, in which all the ele-

* Madam de Staël is not very correct in her translation of this passage. The original is, "Es fasst mich kalt beym Schopfe." Schopfe is from der Schopf, the top of the head, and not from die Schöpfe, the spring; were it not so, the line would run, Es fasst mich kalt bei der Schöpfe. But, indeed, where she is not positively in error; she too often destroys the author's meaning by her attempts to beautify him, and make him a fit companion for the Parisian circles. Faustus is as completely masked in his French disguise as if he were tricked out for a masquerade, and none but his nearest friends can recognize him.

ments of the sublime and beautiful are blended in utter confusion. That it is not slavishly tied down to the rules of Grecian, or English, or French drama, is a virtue rather than a fault; these are the conventional bonds that chance, or peculiar habits may have imposed; but there are a few general rules inherent in the very nature of poetic composition that can not be violated with impunity; between these, Goëthe seems to have made no distinction; he has abandoned himself, not to fancy, but to the delirium of fancy; he is by turns pathetic, satiric, and sublime, and yet the whole mass is so incongruous, that the mind is more bewildered than satisfied. Often, too, there is no visible connexion between the scenes, and the perpetual change of verse actually wears out the ear, though each metre is in itself of the purest and richest harmony; it is little better than straining the ears for the wild aspirations of the Æolian harp, that fatigue in proportion as they delight.

It is also to be imputed as a defect to Goëthe, that there is too little repose in this poem: the flames of hell seem to be constantly burning around, above and beneath us. The principle of evil is displayed in gigantic measure; but there is no redeeming beneficence, no cool shade for the weary fancy to repose itself. The mind is literally scorched up by this perpetuity of hell; and yet with all these defects, and a hundred others, the perusal of this tragedy is an æra in the life of a literary man; for it is one of the very few original productions of human genius.

SPECIMEN OF MODERN CRITICISM.

GOOSEY GANDER.

WHEN young authors commence giving their works to the public, they ought to take special care that they adhere strictly to the truth, for who is there so blind, but can perceive that in the present instance, this appellation is *not* meant for a *descendant of the guardians of the Roman Capitol*, but implies that a young giddy lad is substituted in its place. If we may venture to give *our* opinion on the similitude of expressions, it will be this; that "Goosey Gander" is not an appellation which may, when applied to a young man, be rendered inapplicable, for we recollect that something pretty similar is very common, viz. a *Goose Cap!*