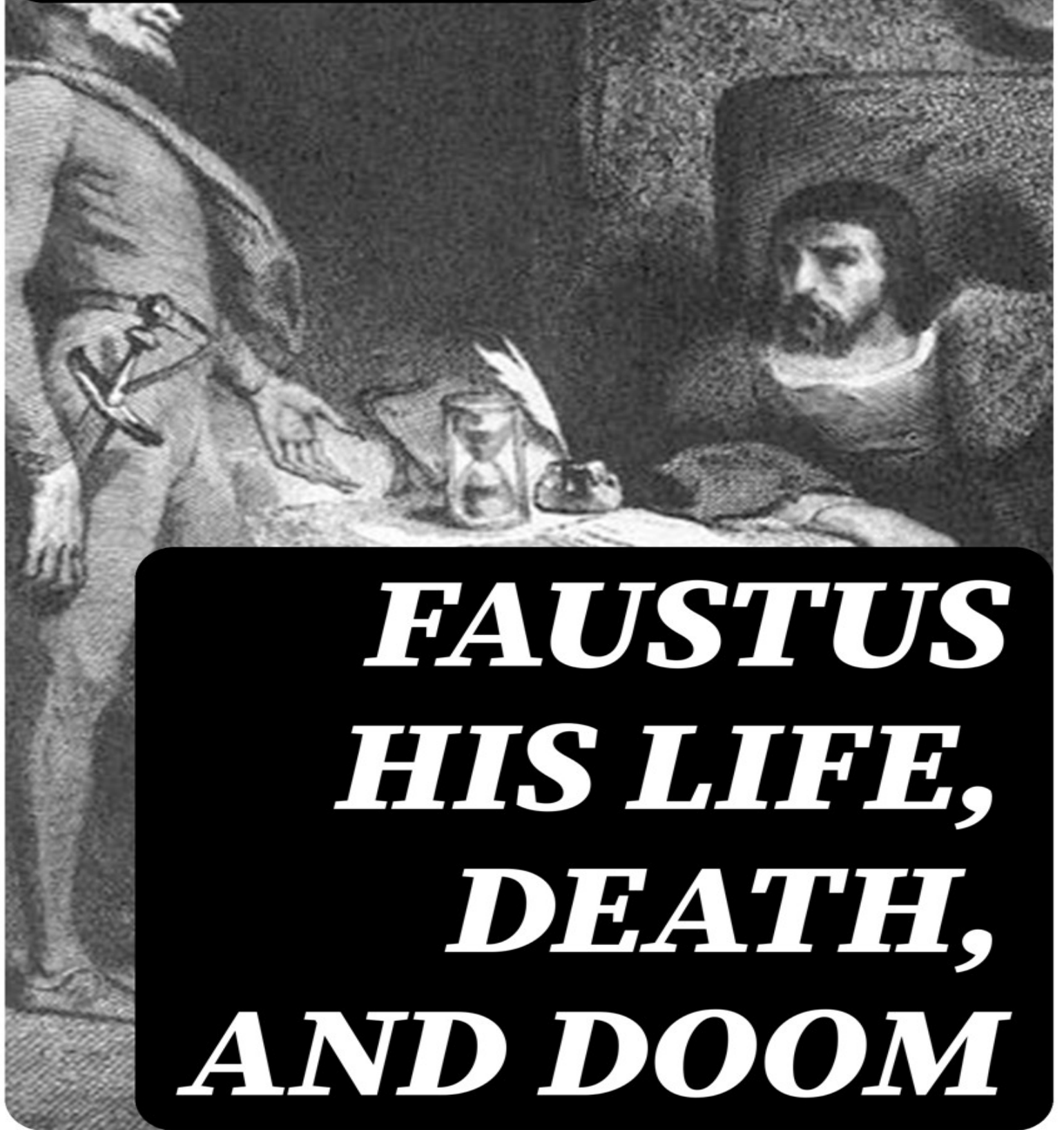


***FRIEDRICH
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***FAUSTUS
HIS LIFE,
DEATH,
AND DOOM***

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Faustus his Life, Death, and Doom

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CHAPTER I.

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Faustus, having long struggled with the shadows of Theology, the bubbles of Metaphysics, and the *ignes-fatui* of Morality, without being able to bring his mind to a firm conviction, at length cast himself into the dark fields of Magic, in the hope of forcing from Nature what she had so obstinately withheld from him. His first attainment was the remarkable invention of Printing; but his second was horrible. He discovered, almost fortuitously, the dreadful formula by which devils are called out of hell, and made subservient to the will of man. But as yet he had not exerted his power, out of love to his immortal soul, for whose welfare every Christian is so anxious. At this period he was in the full bloom of manhood. Nature had favoured him in his person, and had given him a noble and expressive countenance. Here was enough to bespeak his happiness in the world; but she superadded pride and untamable impetuosity of mind, which displayed itself in deep determination of purpose, and in the constant workings of a heated imagination, which was never satisfied with the present, but affected to discover the emptiness and insufficiency of the acquired object, even in the zest of its enjoyment.

Faustus soon lost the path by which moderation leads frail mortals to the abode of true happiness. He soon felt the narrow limits of humanity, and endeavoured to burst their bonds. By what he had learnt and believed in his youth, he entertained a high opinion of the capacity and moral worth

of man; and, in comparing himself with others, he naturally laid the greatest part of the sum-total to his own account. Here were fine materials for greatness and glory: but true greatness and true glory generally fly from him who is on the point of attaining them, just before he can separate their fine pure forms from the mist and vapour which delusion has shed round them. It appeared to Faustus that, in his situation, the nearest and most convenient way to honour and reputation would be the sciences; yet scarcely had he tasted their enchantment when his soul became inflamed with an ardent passion after truth. Every one who is acquainted with these sirens, and has heard their deceitful song, must know that, provided he does not make a mere trade of them, he must infallibly miss his aim, from the necessity of assuaging the burning thirst with which they inspire him. Faustus, after he had for a long time groped about in the labyrinth, found that his earnings were doubtful; displeasure at the short-sightedness of man; and discontent and murmuring against the Being who had formed him. He might still have been comparatively happy had he had only these feelings to combat: but when the perusal of the sages and the poets awakened a thousand new wants in his soul, and his now winged and artificial imagination conjured up before his eyes the many intoxicating enjoyments which gold and reputation could only procure him, his blood ran like fire through his veins, and all his faculties were soon swallowed up by this sensation.

By the discovery of Printing, Faustus thought he had at length opened the door to riches, honour, and enjoyment.

He exerted himself to the utmost, in order to bring the art to perfection, and he now laid his discovery before mankind; but their lukewarmness quickly convinced him that, although the greatest inventor of his age, he and his family would soon perish with hunger unless his genius continually displayed itself in some new forms. Hurlled from the pinnacle of hope, oppressed by heavy debts,—which he had incurred by generosity and extravagant living, and by his becoming security for false friends,—he now surveyed the world through a gloomy medium. His domestic ties, when he no longer knew how to support his family, became an intolerable burden. He began to think that there was a malign influence in the distribution of men's fortunes: or how did it happen that the noble and intellectual man was every where oppressed, neglected, and in misery; whilst the knave and the fool were rich, prosperous, and honoured in life?

In this melancholy state of mind Faustus wandered from Mayence to Frankfort, intending to sell one of his printed Latin Bibles to the magistracy, and then to return and buy with the produce food for his hungry children. He had been able to accomplish nothing in his native city, because at that time the Archbishop was at war with the whole Chapter, and all Mayence found itself in the greatest confusion. The cause was as follows: a Dominican monk had dreamt that he passed the night with his penitent, the lovely Clara, who was a white nun, and a niece of the Archbishop. In the morning it was his turn to read mass; he did so, and, unabsolved from the night of sin, received the host in his profane hands. At eve-tide, after a cup or two of Rhenish, he

related his dream to a young novice. The dream tickled the imagination of the novice: he told it with some additions to a monk; and in this manner the story, embellished with horrors and licentiousness, ran through the convent, until it came to the ears of the Prior himself. This holy man, who hated Father Gebhardt on account of his intimacy with the most respectable houses, was shocked at the scandalousness of the affair, which he considered as a profanation of the holy sacrament; and, refusing to decide on such a weighty matter, he referred it to the Archbishop. The Archbishop, wisely concluding that whatever sinful man wishes or thinks by day he dreams of by night, denounced the ban of the Church against the monk. The Chapter, whose hatred to an Archbishop always increases the longer he lives, and gladly seizes every opportunity to annoy him, took Father Gerhardt under its protection, and opposed the ban on these grounds: "It is well known that the Devil tempted St. Anthony with the most licentious representations and voluptuous enticements; and if the Devil dared to act so with a saint, whose equal was not to be found in the calendar, what should prevent him from playing off his pranks with a Dominican? We must therefore advise the monk to follow the example of the holy Anthony, and, like him, to oppose the temptations of the fiend with the weapons of prayer and fasting. It is, however, much to be lamented, that Satan should have so little respect for the Archbishop as to make the instrument of his wiles assume the figure of one of his reverence's family." The Chapter conducted itself in this case exactly in the same manner as hereditary princes do whose fathers live too long. But what

served more completely to confuse the case was a report from the nunnery. The nuns had assembled in the refectory, and were busied in dressing up a Madonna for the next festival, hoping to surpass by its magnificence their rivals the black nuns, when suddenly the old porteress entered, told the licentious story, and added, that the Dominican, whose name she had forgot, would certainly be burnt alive, for that the Chapter had even then assembled for the purpose of trying him. Whilst the porteress was relating the tale with its various circumstances, the faces of the young nuns were violently flushed, and Sin, who never loses an opportunity of corrupting innocent hearts, shot into their blood, and hastily pictured the dangerous scene to their imaginations. Fury and consternation, in the mean time, deformed the features of the old ones. The abbess trembled and leaned on her staff, while the spectacles fell from her face. But when the porteress added, that it was the sister Clara whom the fiend had brought to the Dominican in his dream, a dreadful shriek filled the whole hall. Clara alone remained tranquil, and when the uproar had ceased, she said, smiling: "Dear sisters, why do you shriek so fearfully? I myself dreamt that I passed the night with Father Gebhardt, my confessor; and if it was the work of the fiend" (here she and all the rest made the sign of the cross), "why, we must give him the discipline." "The Father Gebhardt!" cried the porteress; "now, all ye saints and angels, that is the very person who dreamt of you; that is he whom they are about to burn." The porteress having thus expressed herself, this second version of the dream was immediately circulated through the city. The Madonna was allowed to remain

naked, for the sisters cared now very little if the black nuns bore away the palm. The abbess did all in her power to spread the news abroad, the housekeeper followed her example, the portress harangued an audience beneath the gateway, and Clara candidly replied to the yet more candid questions of her companions. The last trumpet could not have diffused in Mayence more terror and confusion than did this extraordinary tale.

No sooner did the Dominican prior hear of this accident than he ran to the assembled Chapter, and gave, by his information, a new turn to the affair. The Archbishop would willingly have suppressed the whole business; but it was now time for the Chapter to take it up, and all the canons were unanimously of opinion, that so strange a circumstance ought to be communicated to the Holy Father at Rome. They now became infuriated, and nothing but the midday bell had power to separate them. From that moment, all Mayence, clergy and laity, divided into two parties; and for many years nothing was heard, spoken, or dreamt of, but the Devil, the white nun, and Father Gebhardt. The matter was argued from the pulpit of every sect: mountebanks, Capuchins, and dog-doctors, made it their theme; while the lawyers, after having taken the depositions of the nun and the father, and confronted them with each other, wrote folio volumes concerning the sinful and unsinful chances of the dream. Was this a time for Faustus and his discoveries to succeed?

In Frankfort, which is at the present day the asylum of science, Faustus, however, hoped for better fortune. He offered his Bible to the reverend Town Council for two

hundred gold guilders; but, as a large sum had just been expended in purchasing five hogsheads of prime Rhenish for the council cellar, his demand came rather unseasonably. He paid his court to the town-clerk, to the speaker, and to the senators,—from the proud patrician to the yet prouder head of the shoemaker guild. He was promised by all favour, protection, and assistance.

At length he attached himself to the then presiding mayor, from whom he for a long time gained nothing; but, as if in recompense, the lady-mayoress kindled a violent passion in his susceptible heart. One evening the mayor assured him that the council, on their next day of meeting, would come to a determination, by virtue of which the assembled members would most probably pay down the sum for the Bible. Faustus replied, that his children might very possibly die of hunger before so enlightened an assembly had decided; and, maddened with despair, he now returned to his solitary apartment. In this moment he suddenly recollected his magic formula. The thought of running some bold risk, and of purchasing independence of man by an alliance with the Devil, rushed more vividly than ever through his brain. Yet the idea terrified him. With hasty steps, furious gestures, and fearful cries, he strode up and down the chamber, struggling with his rebellious spirit, which urged him to penetrate the surrounding darkness; still his soul shuddered and was unresolved. The clock struck eleven from the neighbouring tower. Black night hung about the earth. The north-wind howled, and clouds obscured the face of the full moon. Nature now appeared in a second chaos. A night more suited to bewilder an excited

imagination could not be conceived. Yet was the beam of his mind balanced. In one scale hung religion and its firm supporter—the hope of immortality; while thirst for independence and knowledge, pride, pleasure, malevolence, and bitterness filled the other.

At length Faustus, according to the custom of magic, drew the horrible circle which was for ever to remove him from the providential care of the Omnipotent, and from the sweet ties of humanity. His eyes sparkled, his heart beat louder, and his yellow tresses stood erect on his head. At this moment he thought he saw his aged father and his blooming wife and children wring their hands in despair, and fall down upon their knees to pray for him to that Being whom he was about to renounce. “It is their misery, it is their situation, that maddens me,” he wildly shrieked, and stamped on the ground with his foot. He now became enraged at the weakness of his heart, and advanced towards the circle; the storm rattled against the windows, the foundation of the house trembled: a noble angelic figure appeared before him, exclaiming, “Stay, Faustus!” and the following colloquy ensued:

Faustus. Who art thou, that disturbest my daring work?

Figure. I am the Genius of Man, and will save thee, if thou art to be saved.

Faustus. What canst thou give me to assuage my thirst for knowledge, and my desire for freedom and enjoyment?

Figure. Humility, resignation in suffering, content, and a proper estimation of thyself; above all, an easy death, and light in the world to come.

Faustus. Begone, vision of my heated fancy! I know thee by the cunning with which thou wouldst deceive the wretches whom thou hast made subservient to power. Begone, and hover around the brows of the beggar, of the monk, of the debased slave, and of all those who have their hearts fettered by unnatural bonds; and who keep their senses locked up, in order to escape from the claws of despair. The powers of my soul require room, and let Him who has given me it answer for its workings.

“Farewell, unhappy man,” sighed the Genius, and disappeared.

Faustus cried, “Am I to be frightened on the very brink of hell by nursery-tales? But they shall not prevent me from piercing the darkness; I will know what the gloomy curtain conceals, which a tyrannical hand has drawn before our eyes. And who is to blame, I repeat? Was it I that formed myself so that trifling exertion exhausts my strength? Did I plant in my bosom the seeds of passion? Did I place there that impulse for aggrandisement which never lets me rest? Did I fashion my soul, so that it will not submit, and will not bear contempt? Perhaps I am like the earthen pot, which, formed by a strange hand, is broken into pieces, because it does not hit the fancy of the maker, and because it does not answer the use for which it appears to have been designed. Alas! I am a mere vessel; yet wherefore then this struggle with my destiny, which would fetter my noblest resolves? And was mind given for no purpose? Surely not! The bull trusts in his horns, and the stag in his swiftness to escape from the hunter; and is that which so eminently distinguishes man less his own? Mind I possess; I employed

it for the benefit of my fellow-men, and neglect was my reward; perhaps the devils will respect it more.”

Here he sprung furiously into the circle; while the lamentations of his wife, father, and children seemed to echo, in the deep tones of despair, “Lost! for ever lost!”

Satan, ruler of hell, had, by the hoarse sound of his trumpets, which echoed even to the glowing sides of the sun, announced to all the fallen spirits dispersed through the upper and lower world, that he intended on this day to give a great festival. The spirits assembled at the mighty call. Even his envoys at the papal stool, and at the different courts of Europe, forsook their posts; for the invitation led them to expect something great and important.

Already the monstrous vaults of hell resounded with the wild cries of the fiendish populace, while myriads seated themselves upon the scorched ground. The princes then stepped forth, and commanded silence to the multitude, whilst Satan heard the intelligence brought by his envoys from the upper world. The devils obeyed, and a death-like stillness prevailed amid the thick, misty darkness, interrupted only by the groans of the damned. In the mean time the slaves of the fiends—shades who are neither worthy of happiness nor damnation—prepared the immeasurable tables for the banquet; and they deserved to be under the thralldom of such a task. When they were yet in flesh and blood, and ate the fruits of the earth, they were of that equivocal kind, who seem the friends of all men and yet are the friends of none; whose tongues continually prattle of the noble precepts of virtue, which they feel not in their hearts; who only abstain from evil because it is

accompanied by danger, and from doing good because it requires courage and self-denial; who traffic with religion, and, like avaricious Jews, lay out their capital at interest, for the purpose of securing a comfortable berth for their miserable souls; and who worship God from fear, and tremble before Him like slaves.

The devils, who, to say the truth, are no better masters than the Polish, Livonian, and Hungarian nobility, drove them about in hell at a furious rate. Others were sweating in the infernal kitchen, and cooking the meal for their haughty lords—an unpleasant service for a soul which had once supported its own human body by eating and drinking. For although the devils originally neither ate nor drank, yet they had learnt from men the custom of celebrating every solemnity by means of the glass and platter; and on such occasions they feast on souls. The general of each legion (for hell is arranged on a military footing, and in this respect resembles every despotic government, or rather every despotic government in this respect resembles hell) chooses a certain number of damned souls, as food for his subalterns. These are delivered over to the slaves, who stew, broil, and baste them with infernal sauce. It frequently happens that these wretches have to stick their own wives, daughters, fathers, sons, or brothers upon the spits, and to keep up the purgatorial fire beneath them; a truly horrible and tragic employment, rendered yet more so, since their overseer, a capricious devil, like all understrappers of great lords, stands behind them with a whip in order to expedite the work. On the present occasion two popes, a conqueror, a celebrated philosopher, and a recently canonised saint,

were intended to feast the palates of Satan, his viziers, and his favourites. Abundance of fresh victuals had just arrived for the common people. The pope had a little time before set by the ears two armies of French, Italians, Spaniards, and Germans, in order to fish up in the tumult certain districts, to add to the patrimony of St. Peter. They fought like heroes, and fell by thousands into the infernal regions. What happiness would it be for the souls intended for these devilish repasts, if they were thereby to find an end to their torments! But no sooner are they swallowed, digested, and returned piecemeal into the pools of hell than they are regenerated, and arise to become the patients of new suffering.

While these victims were writhing on the spits, the cellarers and butlers, slaves of the above-mentioned order, decked out the sideboards. The flasks were filled with tears of hypocrites, of would-be saints, of pretenders to sensibility, and of persons who repent from weakness of soul; with tears which envy squeezes out on hearing of another's prosperity; with tears of egotists who weep for joy because they themselves have escaped the misfortunes by which others are overwhelmed; and of sons who weep over the palls of their harsh and avaricious fathers. The flasks on the supper-table were filled with the tears of priests, who, like actors, play a part in the pulpit, in order to move their auditors; and to give the liquor a sharper flavour, it was mingled with tears of courtesans, who walk the streets weeping for hunger, until some inexperienced youth barter his dollar with them for sin. Reserved for Satan and his princes stood, on various sideboards, flasks of the noblest

drink. This was heady and foaming, being a mixture of the tears of monarchs, who weep for the misery of their subjects, whilst they issue commands only calculated to perpetuate it; of the tears of maidens who weep for the loss of their chastity with streaming eyes; and of the tears of favourites who have fallen into disgrace, and now weep because they can no longer rob and oppress under the protection of their masters.

No sooner had the slaves decked the table, and stationed themselves behind the chairs of their masters, than the grandees poured forth from the chambers of Satan. The furies went foremost; the body-guards followed them, and were succeeded by the chamberlains. Then came pages bearing lighted torches, woven out of the souls of monks who entrap wives, and press round the deathbed of husbands to force them to leave their property to the Church, without reflecting that their own illegitimate spawn must beg for bread through the land. Then came Satan himself, closely followed by the remaining nobility of his court, according to their rank and favour. The devils bowed their heads in reverence, the pages placed the torches upon the table of their sovereign; while Satan, with a triumphant air, mounted his high throne, and delivered the following speech:

“Princes, potentates, immortal spirits, welcome! thrice welcome! Rapturous emotions glow through me when I cast my eyes along your squadrons of countless heroes. We are yet what we were when, for the first time, we awoke in this pool from the stunning consequences of our fall, and for the first time assembled here. Only one feeling still rules,—

unanimity alone maintains her sway, and in this place only do all devote themselves to the same end. He who has the happiness of commanding you may easily forget all other glory. I own we have suffered, and still suffer, much, especially since the full exercise of our powers is restrained. But in the feeling of the vengeance which we take on the sons of dust,—in the contemplation of their madness and crimes, by which they continually thwart the purposes of their being,—lies a recompense for our suffering. Welcome, thrice welcome, all ye whom this sentiment inflames.

“Hear now the occasion of the festival which I intend this day to celebrate with you. Faustus, a daring mortal, who, like us, is at war with the Eternal, and who, through the strength of his spirit, may at some future period be deemed worthy to dwell along with us here, has discovered the art of multiplying, on an easy principle, a thousand and a thousandfold, those things denominated books,—those dangerous toys of men,—those vehicles of delusion, of error, of lies, and of horror,—those sources of pride and of painful doubt. Until now they have been too costly, and only in the hands of the rich, whom they filled with fancies, and from whom they chased that humility which God had for their happiness infused into their hearts. Triumph! Soon will the poison of knowledge and inquiry be communicated to all classes. New cravings, new wants, will arise; and I doubt whether my enormous kingdom will be able to contain all those who will destroy themselves by this delicious poison. But this were only a slight victory: my eye pierces deeper into that distant period, which is to us no more than an hour is to man. Soon will cavillers and haters of the established

Church spread about like the plague: pretended reformers of heaven and earth will arise, and their doctrines, from the facility of communication, will penetrate even into the hut of the beggar. They will think to do good, and to purify the object of their hope from falsehood. But, if men begin well, how long do they continue to act so! Sin is not more inseparable from them than are ill consequences from their noblest pursuits. The well-beloved people of God, whom he endeavoured to snatch from evil by the sacrifice of his only Son, will quarrel about tenets which no one understands, and will tear each other to pieces like wild-beasts. Horrible atrocities, surpassing all the abominations perpetrated by men since they first sprung into existence, will desolate unhappy Europe. My hopes appear to you too bold,—I read it in your doubting countenances; but listen to me whilst I explain. Religious disagreements will give rise to these frenzies. Then first will Fanaticism, the wild son of Hatred and Superstition, untie all the bonds of nature and humanity. The father will murder the son, and the son the father; kings will joyfully dip their fingers in the blood of their subjects, and place the sword in the hands of bigots, in order that they may slaughter their brothers by thousands, because their opinions are different. Then will the water of the rivers turn into streams of blood, and the shrieks of the murdered will shake hell to its very centre. We shall see wretches come down to us stained with crimes for which we have had hitherto neither names nor punishments. Already do I see them attack the papal chair, which keeps together the fragile fabric through treachery and deceit, whilst it undermines itself through crime and luxury. The great props

of the religion which we dread give way; and, if the sinking structure be not sustained by means of new miracles, it will disappear from the face of the earth, and we shall once more shine in the temples as worshiped divinities. Where will the spirit of man stop, when he has once undertaken to illumine that which he formerly honoured as a mystery? He will dance on the grave of the tyrant, at whose frown he the day before trembled. He will break to pieces the altar on which he lately sacrificed, if he once endeavour to find the way to heaven by his own wisdom. Will the Creator take home to himself a human being, who is not a million times more allied to us than to him? Man abuses every thing, even the strength of his soul as well as of his body. He abuses all that he sees, hears, feels, or thinks; and all with which he trifles, or with which he is seriously engaged. Not content with deforming whatever he can seize with his hands, he soars upon the wings of imagination into worlds to him unknown, and arrays them in ideal deformity. Even freedom, the noblest of his treasures, to obtain which he has shed rivers of blood, he readily sells for gold and pleasure, before he has tasted its sweets. Incapable of good, he yet trembles at evil, he heaps horror upon horror to escape it, and then destroys his own handiwork.

“After the bloodshed of war, mankind, wearied with slaughter, will take a few moments’ repose, and then their venomous hatred will be displayed in petty and private bickerings. Some, indeed, will every now and then raise piles of wood and fagot, and burn those alive who disagree with them in religion; others will attempt the solution of inexplicable riddles; and those born for darkness will dare to