FAUST: A DRAMATIC POEM

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Faust: A Dramatic Poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

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Trieste

FAUST

A DRAMATIC POEM,

BY GOETHE,

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN WYNNIATT GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORICAL PICTURES FROM THE CAMPAGNA OF ROME," ETC., ETC.

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All genuine copies bear the signature of the translator.

J. W. Grant.

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DEDICATION.

Ye wavering forms do ye approach again,
  In early prime that sooth'd my anxious mind?
Shall I once more beseech you to remain?
  And is my soul to your fond charms inclin'd?
Ye crowd around me, well your mystic reign,
  Ye may now re-establish unconfin'd!
My bosom heaves with youthful agitation,
As from your features ye flash inspiration.

Ye bring the scenes of many a happier day—
  The vanish'd shades of beings once so dear;
Like to some long-forgotten ancient lay,
  First Love and Friendship to my view appear;
The pain renew'd once more we love to say,
  How strange and mazy is life's sad career—
The good recall, whom, on life's sunny shore,
Betray'd by Fortune, we met never more.

They'll hear no more the music of these songs,
  The souls to whom I oft the first would sing;
Mouldering in dust lie now the friendly throngs,
  Their harp responsive never more they'll string:
Each lay, alas! to unknown crowds belongs,
  And their applause no joy to me can bring;
And many a verse the feeling heart rejoices
Is tun'd now by unsympathizing voices.

A long disuséd look I fain would cast
  To lands where spirits hold their wide domain;
Ah, indistinctly strikes my ear at last,
  My lisping lay like some Æolian strain:
Strange thoughts assail me, tears are falling fast,
  And my stout heartmelts with a tender pain—

Things of the past their ancient forms revealing,
And present things into oblivion stealing.

PRELUDE AT THE THEATRE.

MANAGER—POET—MERRYMAN.

Manager.

Ye two who oft have lent a helping hand
  To me in times of hard necessity,
Think you that, in this our Fatherland,
  This undertaking will successful be?
I fain would please the public every one,
  And more so when in living they let live.
The posts are fix'd, with planks and boards nail'd on,
  And all attend the best cheer you can give;
With eyebrows high there they sit and gaze,
  In expectation you will them amaze.
I know how I can meet the peoples wishes,
  Yet my embarassment is now exceeding;
'Tis true they've not had lately dainty dishes,
  But they are now so deucéd given to reading.
How shall we manage that all fresh and new,
  And of sage import may be pleasing too?
I'd surely like to see the people flow
  Just like a stream, and to our playmart go—
Thrusting—hustling—bustling, to and fro—
  Then squeezing thro' the narrow door of grace.
And only anxious to secure a place;
  At four o'clock ev'n in broad daylight,
Around the pay-box having a good fight—

As round the baker's shop the famish'd poor—
Breaking their necks a ticket to procure.
To cause such a sensation for a play,
Is for the poet—friend, do it to-day!

Poet.

Oh, tell me not of the gay bustling crowds
Whose aspect makes the soul inert and chill;
'Tis better when a veil the throng enshrouds,
That draws us to the gulf against our will:
Oh, let me live where skies unveil'd by clouds,
And heavenly nooks abound the bard with joy to fill;
Where Love and Friendship, to out hearts endear'd,
By hand celestial are brought forth and rear'd.

How oft we've felt within our bosom's core
Things that the timid lips were slow t'express;
They then may have avail'd, or we their loss deplore
Buried by the present in forgetfulness:
And yet perchance, as on time's wings we soar,
Their perfect forms again return to bless;
'Tis glittering tinsel the present engages,
But Truth and Beauty go to after ages.

Merryman.

Now of posterity I want no conversation,
But supposing I had thereto inclination,
Who would then the present times amuse?
If amusement all must have, that you must not refuse.
The presence of a gallant boy,
Besides, is something to enjoy.
He who to please will use his best endeavour,
Is ever sure of gaining public favour;
And then he'll wish to try a wider sphere
To give them ever better cheer.
Be therefore enterprizing with solicitude!
Call Phantasy and all her sister brood,
Reason, Understanding, Feeling, Passion,
And mind you make to Folly some concession!

Manager.

Take also heed ye give abundant fare!
They come to look and something they must see;
Place but plenty once before them there,
The multitude will wonder, gape, and stare,

And with your efforts well contented be.
They'll then express their highest approbation,
And ever hold you in great estimation.
By throngs alone can you the throngs control.
Each panders to his taste whene'er he may.
Who plenty brings to each can something dole,
And all will homeward wend their pleasing way.
When you give a piece, to make sure that it pleases,
Do not give it whole, but cut it up in pieces.
A hash like that will meet a good reception ;—
Quickly serv'd up and of facile conception.
If you give it whole, what does that avail ?
The public will themselves cut it up in detail.

Poet.

And don't you feel that such a pitiful system
Can the true artist not at all beseem ?
You have the maxims of the bungling crew,
Who cannot ev'n cobble, much less make a shoe.

Manager.

Such a reproof I think no reprehension.
When one to shew his skill has the intention,
The best of tools must use that will his purpose fit.
Consider 'tis soft wood you have to split !
And mind what kind of gents it is for whom you write—
And what cheer you must give them to fill them with delight !
Some come who are a prey to spleen and sore vexation ;
And others eat a hearty meal and come for relaxation.
The worst to say however yet remains,
For many come when some strange news has quite upset their brains.
All flock to us like maskers for amusing recreation—
Impatient and inquisitive to see the new sensation.
The ladies too, sweet-smiling dears, without remuneration,
Flare in chignon and headdress gay, beyond imagination.
What do you ever cogitate on Fancy's aerial wing ? [ring?
What can make a house cramm'd full with approbation
Observe your patrons now with accurate inspection !
Some are cold as ice, others have no reflection.
After the play, where one has ev'n taken a nap,
He'll go to spy the pretty flowers on some fair syren's cap.

Another having care no amusement shall be miss'd,
Will go where he can play all night a quiet game at whist.
For such a purpose 'tis no use on Fancy's wings to soar,
Since you must only give them more, and more, and ever
By such a plan you'll never miss the mark; [more.
To try to please the public is like groping in the dark.
Not to vex them you must perplex them.
What are the feelings that now sway your mind?
Are you to ecstacy or to grief inclin'd?

Poet.

You must another craftsman for that end assay!
Shall the poet then his noble art betray?
Pervert on your account his high vocation,
And crush the leaves of nature's laurel wreath?
No more exalting, in each inspiration,
Humanity's dull ploddings here beneath?
By what powerful art can he subdue each heart,
And mastery gain o'er forces elemental?
Is it not Harmony that makes his bosom swell,
And in his heart alone, allures the world to dwell?
When Nature ev'n, to careless mood inclines, [twines;
And heedlessly the length'ning threads around the spindle
When beings in many a jarring multitude,
Their tedious jostlings on his ear intrude.
Who can tell the equal-flowing lines
To glide in rhythmic loveliness away?—
Each word to take its place without delay—
The glorious whole in sweet cadences blending?
Who lets wild passion rage within his soul,
In frantic wilfulness without control?
Who showers spring's fairest blossoms as they blow,
On paths beloved footprints love to know?—
Views even's soft glow with rapture never-ending?
Who, with the green and unassuming leaves,
A laurel-crown for patient Merit weaves?
Who can the gods unite and thus Olympus shield?
In the true poet, man's strength of mind reveal'd!

Merryman.

You practise then the Poet's art sublime—
Display the gifts by Nature sagely lent,
Just like young folks at courtship's giddy time,