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GOETHE'S FAUST  
A STUDY  
IN  
SOCIALIST CRITICISM

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MARCUS HITCH



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# GOETHE'S FAUST

A Fragment of Socialist Criticism

BY  
MARCUS HITCH



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The "Divinity that shapes our ends" is Mankind itself, which is both the author and actor of its own drama (Marx). But in the class society called "Civilization" what is comedy for the rich is tragedy for the poor. The class character of this civilization is reflected in its poetry, as well as in its other intellectual creations, and a clear understanding of this fact is useful, both to curb the insolent pretensions of the oppressors, who assume to portray "universal" human nature, and to arouse the spirits of the oppressed who are destined to recast the great Human Drama and usher in a different kind of "Civilization" and Literature.

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GERMAN



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# GOETHE'S FAUST.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AN OUTLINE OF PART I.

Goethe's **Faust** is the story of a man in the pursuit of happiness and the satisfaction of his impulses, which pursuit in a broad sense is the chief occupation of all of us. It is in dramatic form and is labeled a tragedy, with as little propriety as Dante's **Vision** is called a comedy. The only tragedy about it is contained in the first part, and this, though it is the shorter and less important part, is the only part that is ever acted on the stage or that is widely known.

Taking both parts together from first to last it will not be denied that a most interesting series of questions is presented by this work and that it furnishes abundant food for reflection. There is the longing of the human soul for freedom, knowledge and

satisfaction, which when allowed to run wild leads to the contract with the devil (so-called); the question of personal responsibility, of free-will and necessity, and their reconciliation; the "perseverance of the saints," or the victory of good over evil in the individual, because the individual is a unit; the reverse of this law in societary life because society is not a unit, and the social institutions prevailing at any particular time are contemplated by the dominant part of society as supernatural instead of having only a local and temporary validity, and hence every material modification thereof which is forced by the march of history appears a victory of the bad; the tragedy based on the effect of one individual's acts upon another under certain social conditions; the question of the direct dealings of supernatural powers with men; the idea of the conquest of nature; of the moral influence of the beautiful; the idea of a perfect or relatively perfect social State based on benevolence; the idea of the salvation of unrepentant men by repentant women; the future life of the soul apart from

the material universe; these are some of the matters which occupied Goethe's mind during the fifty-seven years, off and on, while he was writing **Faust** and which are reflected in the work. We shall comment on some of these matters later. For the present we give a brief outline of Faust's chase after happiness.

Dr. Heinrich Faust, a medieval German professor, is sitting in his dingy study room the Saturday night before Easter. It is late and the moon shines in at the window. He reflects that he has studied philosophy, law, medicine, and alas, also theology. Though he has become a learned doctor in all these branches, he finds himself no wiser and no happier than before. In fact he has lost all pleasure in existence. Much learning hath made him mad. Not only has he failed to gain true knowledge, but he has also failed to gain either wealth or honor among men. In despair he turns to magic, hoping to discover the secret forces of nature, the germs of all power. In brooding over this subject he becomes despondent and is finally on the point of committing suicide by poison when

he is startled by the chiming bells of Easter morning and by a chorus of angels' voices which recall the happiness of his youthful days and cause him to put down the cup and desist from his intention. The Easter chorus is certainly beautiful enough to lift even the hardened sinner clean off the earth.

As Dante, following Christ, descends into hell on the night of Good Friday to rise into the earthly paradise on Easter morning; so Faust on the Saturday night before Easter descends into the mental hell of despair and is aroused to new hope on Easter morning by a chorus of angels. After one has read the *Divine Comedy* and Faust every recurring Easter calls up to his mind the powerful emotions produced by the opening pages of these great works.

A charming picture of Easter holiday in Germany is then given, which, to be fully appreciated, must have been experienced. Faust takes a walk about the suburbs with one Wagner whose dull philistinism contrasts sharply with Faust's dreaminess. They witness the various classes of people amusing themselves in different ways, care-

less and happy. As evening approaches they return. A queer-acting black poodle dog circles round them and finally follows them home to Faust's study and lies down behind the stove.

The peace of mind brought on by Easter does not last long. Faust soon finds himself yearning again for something more than earth affords and seeks the light of divine revelation. He takes the New Testament and proposes to translate it from the original into German. Starting with the Gospel of St. John he writes: "In the beginning was the word." He stops to consider. No, not the "word," the "sense"; no, the "power." Still it does not suit him. Finally he hits it; the "deed." He writes again: "In the beginning was the deed."

The black poodle dog interrupts him so much that he has to stop and watch his actions. He tries to control him by magic and is astonished to see him swell up and undergo a transformation until finally Mephistopheles in the garb of a travelling scholastic steps from behind the stove with

a chipper salutation. This was the 'poodle's kernel.

Mephistopheles is an Evil Spirit, who is described as one who "wills the bad and works the good," and had previously obtained leave of the Lord to tempt Faust in a manner recalling the story of Job in the Bible. The Lord gives him a free hand, having confidence that Faust's innate tendency towards the good will prevail in spite of his errors. "Man will err as long as he strives." Mephistopheles is not so much a direct tempter as the spirit of rebelliousness and self-indulgence. He merely procures for Faust everything he wishes and lets him take the consequences. After Gretchen's imprisonment, when Faust is wild with remorse and is cursing Mephistopheles, he silences Faust by asking, "Did I thrust myself upon you or did you thrust yourself upon me?" Who was it that ruined her, I or you?" Such is the spirit that emanated from the black poodle dog and confronted Faust after he turned to the study of magic.

Faust is so determined to have happiness and satisfaction at any price that he con-

sents to sell his soul to Mephistopheles if ever he shall realize happiness so as to be able to say to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art fair." The bargain is made and signed with Faust's blood. They are about to leave the old study den. While Faust is getting himself ready and changing his clothes for a Mephisto suit, Mephistopheles dons the Doctor's robe, assumes his place and entertains one of Faust's pupils with much wise counsel, delivered with a mock-gravity that could hardly be surpassed by a University professor. In fact, no one but a bourgeois political economist could equal it. A fitting climax is given to this inimitable piece of irony when Mephistopheles in dismissing his pupil finally (with a sardonic grin we imagine) discloses his own identity by writing in the young man's album a quotation from Gen. III. 5: "And ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Being now ready, they sally forth, a noble pair of brothers in deviltry, ready for anything that comes along. They are to see the world; first, the little world of the individual (Part I), and then the greater

world of social life (Part II.) Faust, who has spent his life over books, feels his lack of manners and knowledge of life. Mephistopheles reassures him by the assertion that self-confidence is the only art of life.

In Auerbach's Wine Cellar in Leipzig they meet with a roomful of students whose idea of happiness is to get roaring drunk. Mephistopheles lends a helping hand and this kind of happiness soon reaches its climax in the words of one of the company:

“Happy as the cannibals,

Like five hundred swine we swill.”

This does not satisfy Faust. After being rejuvenated in the witch's kitchen, he is next drawn into a love affair with Gretchen. It is the old, old story of seduction, abandonment, incidental murder of the mother and brother of the girl, infanticide, imprisonment, conviction, insanity and death of the innocent of the two and the escape of the guilty.

After killing Gretchen's brother, Faust and Mephistopheles betake themselves to the Harz mountains to take part in the witches' dance on Walpurgis night. This

and other matters furnish a diversion until they hear that Gretchen after wandering about as an outcast for a year is now in prison awaiting execution for infanticide. This brings Faust to his senses for the time being and he tries to rescue her. But she refuses to leave the jail, trusting herself rather to the judgment of God than to any human aid.

The curtain falls on Part I. Faust has gone through the experience of sensual pleasures. Still he is not happy.

## CHAPTER II.

### OUTLINE OF PART II.

Part I is not divided into regular acts. Part II is divided into five acts, and deals with social and political rather than individual life. It is largely allegorical and is not adapted for production on the stage; but an acquaintance with it is absolutely necessary in order to come to a fair judgment of Goethe and his work.

The opening scene describes the beauty of nature and its healing powers in restoring Faust, after his hard experiences, to a normal mental and moral condition. The wonderful description of a sunrise in the Alps indicates that Faust has made a new start in life. He applies the precept of Marcus Aurelius:—

“Consider thyself to be dead and to have completed thy life up to the present time; and live according to nature the remainder

which is allowed thee," or in the words of Faust to Helena:—

"Let the past be put behind us."

Faust next appears at the Imperial Court, where Mephistopheles assumes the role of clown or court jester. Since all branches of the government are in a bad way for lack of money Faust with the aid of Mephistopheles supplies the deficiency by the issue of paper money, based, as Mephistopheles explains, on the accumulated treasures of the past which lie hidden in the ground ready to be dug up as needed.

Faust now enjoys honor and fame as a court favorite. This unlimited supply of money enables the Emperor to donate to each one money enough to procure what he wants.

One wants a mistress; one a finer grade of wine; one a castle; the miser simply adds his new money to his hoards of old. It does not appear here what Faust would do with his share, but this is brought out in the sequel.

As Ash Wednesday is approaching the Court witnesses the celebration of the Car-

nival. A beautiful Italian masquerade is here given, full of ingenious allegories. The Emperor and his Court are desirous of seeing the play of Helena and Paris, the model forms of male and female beauty. Faust with the help of Mephistopheles, brings them up from the world of spirits and Faust experiences a new sensation of happiness in the contemplation of ideal classical beauty. The play being over, as Helena is about to leave the stage, Faust, unable to restrain himself, reaches out his hands to grasp her. An explosion follows which hurls Faust to the ground, leaving him unconscious, and the spirits of Helena and Paris go off in smoke. We shall meet Helena again in the third act.

Act II. After these fairy scenes at court, they return to Faust's dingy old study den. While Faust is still in a trance from the effect of the explosion, Mephistopheles looks around. The room and surroundings are unchanged, but the traveling scholar who formerly received Mephistopheles' counsel so meekly, has blossomed out into a conceited Bachelor of Arts who imagines

that the earth, sun, moon and stars all leaped into being merely at his behest. He out-trumps Mephistopheles himself by declaring that no devil dare exist except by his (Baccalaureus') permission; that it is youth only which accomplishes anything; that "Man is at thirty dead, or all the same." Whereupon Mephistopheles remarks that there is nothing left here for the devil to say; but adds that the devil is quite an old gentleman and that Baccalaureus after growing older and more experienced will understand him better.

Meanwhile Wagner, the dull, plodding Philistine, has been delving into the deepest secrets of nature and thinks he has finally succeeded in solving the mystery of life by making a homunculus or living manikin in a glass bottle. He declares that he has abolished the love passion and the old way of generation and has discovered the art of making men as one makes crystals. "Well," says Mephistopheles, "there is nothing new about that; I have met crystalized men myself."

[Ah, Goethe, did you realize that in hold-

ing up to ridicule Wagner's Homunculus or little crystalized man in a glass bottle, you were only picturing yourself, the crystalized man of the Property Epoch, corked up in a Property Bottle.

“Essentially distinct, the Natural  
Finds in the Universe no resting place;  
The Artificial needs restricted space.”

Your artificial and crystalized Property, artificial Military State, artificial Contract and Court system, artificial Family and Bastardy system, artificial War and Trade system, are the glass bottle in which the property homunculus lives, moves and has his being. He knows no other atmosphere and denies that any other ever existed or ever can exist. The property homunculus is the true product of the groveling Philistine. Wagner with his **homunculus** solves the mystery of individual life, but does not attempt the mystery of **social organization.**]

The homunculus proposes a visit to the fields of Pharsalus to witness a classical Walpurgis night. So leaving Wagner to plod along at science and discover perhaps

the dot over the letter "i," Homunculus and Mephistopheles take Faust up in the air and head for Thessaly.

In Part I Goethe had introduced a Witches' Dance in the Harz Mountains on Walpurgis Night. As a counterpart to this we have in Part II a classical Walpurgis Night on Mt. Olympus in Thessaly, which occupies the greater part of the second Act. Here, in sight of the world-historic battlefields of Pydna and Pharsalia the poet takes an opportunity to go over almost the entire field of Grecian mythology, particularly that part relating to the ocean and the watery element. For the average reader it is a piece of hard sledding to go through this.

Faust has been in a trance ever since the explosion at the close of the play of Helena and Paris when he tried to grasp Helena with his hands. As his feet are placed upon the ground after his winged voyage to Thessaly, he recovers consciousness and his first words are, "Where is SHE?" He is told that perhaps Cheiron may help him find her. As Cheiron comes rushing by on his white horse, Faust is taken up behind

the rider and learns to his delight that Helena herself was once carried in that same seat — Helena, the ideal of Beauty and Grace. Faust is beside himself to find her and is left by Cheiron with Manto to descend into the lower regions to Persephone and search there. He does not appear on the stage again until the middle of the third act when as lord of a feudal castle near Sparta, he receives Helena as his queen.

Mephistopheles makes love to the Phorcyads and is transformed into one himself. He then makes his exit to appear again in Act III as the embodiment of ugliness in contrast to the beauty of Helena.

The remainder of this act is taken up with scenes in which Anaxagoras and Thales, representing respectively the Plutonic and Neptunian theories of geology, discuss their theories with Homunculus. This part is said to be illustrative of the gradual growth of intelligence and of the idea of Beauty in Art and Religion, beginning with the animal worship and crude notions of Phoenicia and Egypt, and culminating in the grandeur and perfection of Greek art, in

which the Gods were represented in human form, and to which Goethe ascribed a purifying and saving power, scarcely less important than that of the beauty of nature.

Thales takes Homunculus to Nereus, the sea-god. Homunculus wants to enter upon free life, — wants real Existence. Nereus turns him over to Proteus, who assumes the shape of a dolphin and takes Homunculus on his back out to sea. Charmed by the beauty of Galatea, he seeks to play around her feet, but comes to grief; the glass bottle is broken, the living flames spilled out scattering fire over the waves, and Homunculus is no more. The classical Walpurgis night in Thessaly prepares the way for the third act, which takes us back to the dreamy days of the Greek heroic age.

Act III. Faust "gets" Helena. She has just been brought back from Troy by Menelaus and is directed to go up from the coast to Sparta and make everything ready for offering suitable sacrifices to the gods as soon as Menelaus with his companions can follow. She obeys, makes all ready, but is in doubt what is to be the victim for

sacrifice, half suspecting from Menelaus' sullen demeanor that she herself is doomed to the altar. Mephistopheles in the guise of a Phorcyad warns her that this will surely be her fate. There is, however, one means of escape. During the long absence of Menelaus in the Trojan War and since then, his kingly domain has been neglected, a strange, bold folk has come in from the far Cimmerian North and established itself in the mountains above Sparta. It has built there a magnificent castle of Gothic architecture, different from the Cyclopien structures of the Homeric age. Faust is their leader; there is refuge. Helena follows the advice of Mephistopheles to save herself and her attendants by fleeing to this castle, where she is received as Faust's queen. Menelaus and his forces are beaten back and the whole Peloponnesus falls under the sway of Faust who parcels out the provinces among his victorious dukes in feudal fashion.

Faust now experiences all the pleasures which the possession of the Beautiful can bring. The dream of an Arcadian Kingdom

and age is realized. He has a stately castle and a complete regal establishment, such as many have wished for and but few obtained. He feels a father's pride in his son and prospective heir, Euphorion, the brilliant product of the union of the Teutonic with the Greek, the Romantic with the Classical. But his pleasure is not unalloyed. The Byronic Euphorion turns out to be a headstrong youth, heedless of his father's wise admonitions. His career is cut short by an early death, due to his own impetuosity. Faust is once more forced to exclaim that grief follows close upon the heels of pleasure. His queen, Helena, also now leaves him to return to the other world. She finds that Beauty and Bliss do not long remain companions. Ideal perfection even if it were attainable would not be permanent and hence would not be perfect.

Faust's wealth and control of the social organism put him beyond the reach of moral reproach, but cannot save him from the mistake of deifying and worshiping a part instead of the whole. The loss of his wife and child, in whom alone he saw the

embodiment of Beauty, undoes him. He cannot see that he still has the entire and imperishable Universe to worship and that if he had made his idea of Beauty coincide with the Universe (Kosmos) instead of only a fraction of it, he would never have been in danger of losing his ideal.

Goethe has put into **Faust** most of his life experiences, but has omitted one important chapter, his ideal love and comradeship with Charlotte von Stein. In the story of Gretchen he has shown us what a passionate love is; but this is different from that intellectual and spiritual companionship which may exist between a man and woman of similar tastes and equal mental endowment and education, whose mutual understanding creates a confidence between them as great as that arising out of passionate love. Helena is not such a companion but is rather the Grecian ideal of physical beauty. In **Wilhelm Meister**, and especially in the drama, **Torquato Tasso**, Goethe has given examples of this relation, such as he himself had with Charlotte von Stein.

In the two remaining acts we return from Greece to the Christian-Germanic scenes of the middle ages, which form the background of the whole work. In these Faust endeavors to find a method of attaining happiness in an active life in this work-a-day world. He is done with women.

Act IV. Mephistopheles now lures Faust with a graphic picture of the seething life of a great metropolis, say of Parisian proportions, with Faust as the biggest toad in the puddle, admired and envied by hundreds of thousands. It is tempting, but Faust has one serious objection to it: he likes to see the people increase and prosper, but **they invariably turn rebels!** That is the hair in the soup. The problem is how to force people to be grateful to you and remain servants after they have passed the age of servantry. Promethean Faust railing at rebels (himself an arch rebel against all custom and restraint) is as funny as Satan rebuking sin.

Mephistopheles continues his picture of a metropolis, adding a grandiose suburban palace of pleasure in a park, with groves,

hills, lawns, gardens, water-falls, fountains, and cosy grottoes with women (in the plural, mind you), which causes Faust to exclaim, "Modern and bad!" He has had enough of sensual pleasure and Mephistopheles' influence over him begins to wane. "You," says Faust, "with your sharp, bitter, repulsive nature, what do you know about the needs of a human being?"

Faust feels an impulse to accomplish some great physical work. He wants to acquire dominion of property. He would subdue nature and make it serviceable to man; would reclaim a tract of land from the sea and convert it into a fertile province. To do this he must first obtain the sovereignty of the sea coast from the Emperor. Mephistopheles suggests that the Emperor is now in hard straits. The paper money which Faust once created for him only served to lead him into extravagance and still greater ruin. In Church and State a strife is raging, similar to the French Revolution of later times. An Anti-Emperor of Napoleonic ability has arisen. The subsequent conversation about the decline of the

Emperor's authority gives Goethe the opportunity to put into Faust's mouth some wise platitudes to the effect that rulers should shun pleasures and find their happiness in ruling only. Though the devil's ideal of pleasure no longer has any attraction for Faust he fails to see that his scheme of mastery and property is no less a devil's ideal than pleasure.

Faust and Mephistopheles proceed now and by using various arts and magic and by calling in some bullies, (primitive men of the mountains) offer the Emperor what help they can. The commanding general reports the situation desperate and resigns. The Emperor gives Mephistopheles practically the command of the army and urges him to do what he can, but has scruples against entrusting him with the Marshal's baton; he fears he is not the right man for it. Mephistopheles remarks that the baton would be of no use to him anyway: "**There was a sort of cross thereon!**" The devil was right. The cross is out of place on the insignia of civil war (class war). War is strictly a devil's business.

Affairs now soon take a more favorable turn; a final victory is won and Faust is rewarded with the dominion of the seashore in feudal right.

Act V. With a large force of workmen Faust now proceeds to dike and drain the sea marsh, improve it and make it suitable for a teeming population. (It would be cruel to ask where he got the money to do this work or whether he used paper money.) He also builds a spacious harbor to accommodate foreign commerce.

Mephistopheles and his bullies set out on an expedition with two ships and returned to the harbor with twenty, loaded with the spoils of foreign countries. Might is right.

“Commerce, war and piracy,  
One in spirit are all three.”

Everything is flourishing, — in fact, perfectly lovely, but there is again a hair in the soup. The cottage of Baucis and Philemon, an old couple noted for their simple hospitality, is an eyesore on Faust's domains. They had been living there before Faust was given the seacoast by the Emperor. He needs that location for a terrace and

orders them removed to a better place. Me-  
phistopheles with his bullies undertakes the  
job. They kick the door in; the old people  
faint from fright; a guest who is stopping  
there shows resistance, but is overpowered;  
in the scuffle some coals get scattered and  
the house catches fire; incidentally the in-  
mates perish with it. The history of Na-  
both's vineyard and King Ahab repeats it-  
self. Faust regrets it too late; but how can  
he help it if people will rebel against Fate,  
particularly where the Fate is manipulated  
by the rulers of society?

Four grey women now come at midnight  
to Faust's castle, — Want, Guilt, Misery  
and Care. The door is bolted and they can-  
not get in. The first three turn away but  
Care enters at the key-hole. Faust refuses  
to be affected by her power to annoy and  
states what we might call his confession of  
faith (given hereafter). Thereupon she  
breathes her curse upon him and he be-  
comes blind. But though old and blind he  
is still determined to direct the work of  
reclaiming his land from the sea. One spirit  
can guide a thousand hands. He gives or-

ders to rouse up his workmen from their sleep and stands in the doorway to hurry on the work by torchlight, in every way, — by prizes, pay or force. Unconsciously he is providing his own grave, for Mephistopheles, as overseer, and his husky little devils, instead of constructing a canal, as Faust supposes they are doing, though they pretend to obey his orders, are actually digging his grave right under his nose.

Faust imagines the work is almost done. Only one small swamp remains. Were that drained his triumph would be complete. He foresees in his mind's eye the reclaimed marsh filled with children, adults and aged, living by their honest toil, a free and happy people owing their fortunate condition to his benevolence. In this presentiment he feels the highest pleasure and can say to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art so fair." His role is ended. He sinks to the ground ready to die. Mephistopheles now steps up and claims his soul in accordance with the contract; hell's jaws open to receive it; but swift angels check him and scatter roses about the grave, which drive

back his base crew and scorch them with torments sharper than the flames of hell.

“See! the purple roses borrowed  
From the hands of pious women  
Who had loved and sinned and sorrowed;  
Loved above all human measure,  
Sinned and sorrowed and repented.  
Theirs it was for heaven the treasure  
To win home of that high spirit.”

The lesser devils can't stand it and tumble back again into hell; but Mephistopheles sticks it out and for a time tries to jolly the angels, but soon realizes that in an atmosphere of purity his arts have no effect. His role too is here ended, and he bursts out in a storm of self reproaches.

The angels carry off Faust's soul with the triumphant words:

“Rescued from the evil one,  
This noble spirit see!  
Him who unwearied still strives on  
We have the power to free.”

The closing scene is in heaven and brings to the front again the long-forgotten Gretchen. It is decidedly a woman's scene and

highly characteristic of Goethe, the poet and lover. Gretchen's soul is saved by the prayers and work of Magdalens, and she in turn adds her prayers to theirs in order to save Faust. As Goethe could not put Helena in this class, no mention is made of her, though she occupied a larger space in Faust's life than Gretchen. But to top off the pseudo-tragedy of Part I, it is Gretchen who now welcomes Faust's soul to heaven and claims the privilege of teaching and guiding him in his new life. No reference is made to Christ; the Virgin Mary is the one called upon.

“Aid in man's heart what thou of good,  
Of tender thought and earnest,  
Of holy love, in his best mood,  
Up-breathed to thee, discernest.  
Dost thou command it? Ours is zeal  
And courage all-defying.

Dost thou breathe peace? At once we feel  
The warlike impulse dying.”

The close is a chant by a Mystic Chorus:

“Everything perishing  
Is but a symbol;  
All insufficiency

Here is fulfilled.  
The indescribable  
Turns here reality;  
Eternal Womanhood  
Draws us still on."

## CHAPTER III.

### COMMENTS.

The foregoing outline, though far too brief, is as much of the contents of **Faust** as can be given in such small space. Having come to the end of the story, let us glance back and see what it all means. What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Is it not plain that Faust found his happiness in the commonest kind of **benevolentia vulgaris**? His ideal of human perfection and happiness is to be the feudal lord of a colony on a reclaimed marsh, a sort of artificial or toy village, segregated from the main body of human society and connected with it only by piracy or perhaps commerce. The Pullman Car Shops, the Gary Steel Works and the Krupp Gun Works are examples of such toy villages. We are tempted to exclaim in Faust's own language (slightly modified):—

“The poodle's kernel then is this,  
A Doctor of Philanthropy!  
The idea makes me laugh.”

To make a single individual, Faust, happy, there must exist a vast and permanently dependent population who worship him as a benefactor. This plan of becoming a professional philanthropist with other people's money is enough to raise the laughter of the gods. We shall come back to this subject later.

\* \* \*

In reading **Faust** we should have in mind the only other works which are at all comparable with it, viz: Dante's **Comedy** and Milton's **Paradise Lost**. If the majestic seriousness of Dante has won for his work the appellation of divine, we may justly describe Milton's stern characters as grandly heroic, while Goethe's are almost human and for that reason more modern and interesting. Dante and Milton are both under the spell of dogmatic religion. Goethe is more philosophic. He has freed himself from dogmatism and is feeling about for a new foundation, suspecting that somehow it is to be found in humanity, but is not yet clear whether in all humanity or only the

“good” part of it, or in Eternal Womanhood. We feel that Faust and Mephistopheles and even the Lord himself are all very near to us. But it is human in the individualist sense alone, and herein are found its shortcomings and onesidedness. Whatever the life in heaven may be, whether the individual there is a perfect unit, isolated and independent of social influences or not, one thing is certain, that in this present vale of tears life has two phases, the individual and the social; and the attempt to treat of one and ignore the other while it may be made interesting as an illustration of toy literature, is essentially and fundamentally a failure from the very start. Under class civilization all literature as well as all science may be called toy work; it does not make for human progress directly but only incidentally. The sciences and inventions are exploited by corporations primarily for profit, and all new discoveries merely broaden the field of exploitation and give rise to larger corporations. The toy literature and arts merely serve for the diver-

sion of the same class; they affect the upper surface of society only and do not rise to the dignity of really human productions, because they are not participated in by humanity, nor is it intended that they should be.

—It is precisely the conviction of this truth pressing on Faust's soul that makes him feel disgusted with all his sciences and learning, and realize that he is out of touch with humanity, as many another learned man has also felt. If he had devoted only a portion of that reflective energy, which he lavished so freely in other directions, towards investigating the meaning of individual and social, good and evil, he would not have needed to call in the devil as an instructor in these matters.

\* \* \*

Faust is restless, inquisitive, sticks his nose into everything but is never satisfied. He is as much of a devil as Mephistopheles, but of a different sort. He has more of the characteristics of Milton's Satan than Mephistopheles has; is an open rebel, bold,

straightforward and defiant. When Mephistopheles twits him for pausing in his attempted suicide, at the sound of the Easter bells, Faust admits that he was temporarily under the spell of old recollections, yet knew all the while that it was a delusion. He then bursts out as follows:—

“We are but what the senses make of us,  
And this and all illusion do I curse,  
All that beguiles us, man or boy — that  
winds

Over the heart its nets and chains us here  
In thralldom down or voluntary trance,  
This magic jugglery, that fools the soul —  
These obscure powers that cloud and flatter  
it!

Oh, cursed first of all be the high thoughts  
That man conceives of his own attributes!  
And cursed be the shadowy appearances  
The false delusive images of things,  
That slave and mock the senses! cursed be  
The hypocrite dreams that sooth us when  
we think

Of men—of deathless and enduring names!  
Cursed be all that, in self-flattery,

We call our own, — wife, child, and slave,  
and plough; —

Curse upon Mammon, when with luring  
gold

He stirs our souls to hardy deeds, or when  
He smoothes the couch of indolent repose;  
'A curse upon the sweet grape's balmy juice,  
'And the passionate joys of love, man's high-  
est joys —

And cursed be all hope and all belief;  
And cursed more than all, man's tame en-  
durance."

In the same spirit is what we might call  
Faust's **Confession of Faith**, made to Care  
in the last Act, as follows:—

"I only through the world have flown:  
Each appetite I seized as by the hair:  
What not sufficed me, forth I let it fare,  
And what escaped me, I let go.  
I've only craved, accomplished my delight,  
Then wished a second time, and thus with  
might  
Stormed through my life: at first 'twas  
grand, completely,  
But now it moves most wisely and dis-  
creetly.

The sphere of Earth is known enough to  
me;

The view beyond is barred immutably:  
A fool, who there his blinking eyes direct-  
eth

And o'er his clouds of peers a place ex-  
pecteth!

Firm let him stand, and look around him  
well.

This World means something to the Cap-  
able.

Why needs he through Eternity to wend?  
He here acquires what he can apprehend.  
Thus let him wander down his earthly day;  
When spirits haunt, go quietly his way;  
In marching onwards, bliss and torment  
find,

Though, every moment, with unsated  
mind!"

This has the genuine Satanic ring. There is nothing Mephistophelean about it; it is too deep and heartfelt for that. Not even his chagrin at losing Faust's soul could wring from Mephistopheles such sincere expressions as these. It breathes the true spirit of Aeschylus's Prometheus, defying

the gods of Olympus and aiding the human race in the upward struggle towards freedom. "Prometheus, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom."

Faust struggles forward without remorse and without regard for the effect on others. Both his individual and social progress is made at the expense of others. What we object to is the assumption that this must necessarily and always be so, — that if the power to injure others were cut off there would be nothing left worth striving for, no room for the play of enthusiasm or ambition of any kind. We have no objection to another's amusing himself or advancing himself provided he travels on his own expense. But when he takes his pleasure at the cost of another's ruin; when he becomes generous with other people's money; when he attains his final happiness at the cost of other people's happiness and the ignore-

ment of their condition, we call a halt. Faust's genteel ignorance, which makes him conveniently oblivious of the effects left in the trail of his progress and blind to the certain results of further advance, is as devilish as Mephistopheles' insincerity. His head is once for all ruthlessly set on being a philanthropist regardless of consequences. Faust also has the same self-indulgence as Mephistopheles, but in spite of this and combined with it he still retains his impulse toward striving forward.

Wherein then does Faust's badness differ from that of Mephistopheles? In the fact that it is positive instead of negative; it is temporary only and lays a foundation for subsequent goodness, being merely a step in the course of human progress; whereas Mephistopheles' badness being a negation, stagnation and doing of nothing, cannot serve as a foundation for anything. It contains no element of self-effort, but only self-indulgence. Hence with Mephistopheles the **having been and ceased** is the same as **never having been**. For Faust there is a valid and important difference between these two.

During the Class Era of human society, with its peculiar ethics and its separation of rights and duties, good may be temporary evil and evil ultimate good.

Faust's peculiar merit is supposed to consist in his "unwearied striving," his impulse to go forward, to achieve, to accomplish something, and this impulse is not killed out but still survives after he has become sated with sensual pleasures. This unwearied striving seems all right at first glance. But let us ask, — Striving after what? Why, to get up on the backs of other people, of course! That is the only kind of striving that counts in the Class State or in the ideals growing out of it. "Mastery and property are what I am going to win," says Faust, in rejecting Mephistopheles' offer of still more and greater sensuality. But there is more than one kind of striving. If instead of this, Faust had turned his efforts in another direction and striven unweariedly to study and take part in the world with a view to reconciling the conflict between individual and social life, instead of becoming disgusted with Law, Me-

dicine, Philosophy and Theology, studied simply as disconnected sciences, he would have realized the usefulness of these things, when properly correlated with social life and made subservient to it, and would have arrived at a different conception of progress and perfection.

\* \* \*

Faust learns to his surprise that laws and justice are not peculiar to heaven and earth but are also found in the infernal regions. This had never occurred to him before, though he was a Doctor of Laws himself:

**Faust.**

“Hell has its codes of laws then, — well  
I will think better now of hell,  
If laws be binding and obeyed,  
Then **Contracts** with you may be made.”

**Meph.**

“Made and fulfilled too, nowhere better,—  
We keep our contracts to the letter.”

The Infernal Code has a striking similarity to the Constitution of the United States; it prohibits laws which impair the obligation of **Contracts**. Faust's contract with

Mephistopheles<sup>\*</sup> is merely the converse of the pious man's contract with God. Both are typical of the bourgeois Age of Contract. The pious man contracts to surrender his freedom and to serve God faithfully here if he gets paid for it hereafter. Faust wants his pay, his satisfaction, his freedom here, and in consideration thereof promises to serve the Devil hereafter. Otherwise the two forms of contract are of the same general character. Both are contracts between a helpless human being and a supernatural power and bear all the earmarks of that fairness and equality which are alleged to underlie the contract between a servant and his employer. In every case, it is said, the serving party is perfectly free to contract or not contract as he sees fit. But in the same breath in which we are assured that we are free to choose between God and the Devil, we are also told that there is no other choice; it must be one or the other, yea or nay, a strict metaphysical cinch, excluding any third choice. Not much play for freedom here. We are suspicious of this kind of freedom. It reminds

us of the inalienable right of the citizen to vote for either the Republican or the Democratic party.

If we first assume that there are such supernatural powers, then their blood-sealed contracts and covenants with men would indeed form the basis for a gruesome tragedy. The desperate struggle of Faust's soul for freedom and satisfaction drives him into a compact with Mephistopheles which seems uncanny and repulsive to many worthy people and deters them from the study of this work. But is there anything more uncanny about this than about the pious man's covenant with God, to renounce humanity here for a promised satisfaction hereafter? One is as uncanny as the other.

This idea of present happiness or future salvation by **Contract** runs clear back to the time when Adam was given the garden of Eden upon the condition (contract) that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge or of life, and it is precisely for the purpose of avoiding or overcoming this original and fundamental condition that Faust enters into a contract with Mephistopheles by

which he is to taste knowledge and life for a consideration. With open eyes and fully aware of the consequences, he took the step that Eve was led into by deception.

In the larger and largest sense the story of Faust from first to last, in spite of its happy ending, might be called a tragedy of human existence, the Gretchen episode being a mere incident of the story as a whole. Life may be called either a tragedy or a comedy as best suits the purpose and point of view of each individual.

Dante's glorification of **Divine Law**, as illustrated in his grandiose system of punishment, penitence, and bliss, is only a reflex or adaptation of the institutions of the Civilized Era which were established to confirm and uphold the Rule of Property, and particularly of the age-famed system of Roman jurisprudence and imperial government. This appears clearly enough from the poem itself. It appears still more clearly when the **Vision** is read in connection with Dante's prose work **De Monarchia**. Property is the spirit of all law, both heavenly and earthly.

“Justice the founder of my fabric moved;  
All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”

From this it appears that Dante's hell is merely a part of the machinery of some vast system of laws or “justice.” Most of the punishments in Dante's hell, especially the lower and heavier ones, are for crimes against property, and the heaviest of all is for attempts to overthrow the ruling order of society. According to Dante the crucifixion of Christ was an act of justice, and no blame attaches to those who were guilty of it.

Dante sings the praises of divine and imperial justice in 100 cantos; he justifies the murder of Christ. But we are all human and blind to ourselves. After acting as a dispenser of justice for several years, Dante by a turn of the wheel became himself a fugitive from justice and refused to submit to the decrees of his father-city (he was condemned to the stake), which he denounced to his dying day as a heaven-outraging wrong. Such is the difference between prescribing justice for others and taking the medicine oneself.



But suppose we should find after wider experience and better understanding of things that the assumed fate or supernatural power which determines man's weal or woe is in fact only the organized Economic Power of Society; and that Faust's lack of wealth, honor and worldly power which forces him to a dog's life is not due to divine predestination but to the constitution of Society as moulded by historic evolution; and suppose that by further historical (not "made-to-order") development, Society should become re-constituted in a way that would assure to Faust his full share of wealth, honor and power and remove the cause of his complaint, making him feel like a man instead of a dog. What would happen then? Nothing; only the bottom would drop out of the so-called human tragedy; the supernatural would vanish and the clarified soul would find its satisfaction not in despising this life and looking forward to a bourgeois heaven, free from the curse of labor, where all are capitalists and none laborers, but in the breadth and variety of its activity here, the joy of co-

operation with others and the consciousness of being able both to learn of them and in turn to improve and instruct them, which Faust found himself unable to do; there would be no place then for the fate tragedy, in the sense of servile and despairing awe; but there would be a certain intelligent serenity and cheerfulness based on an understanding of the Known and a moral conviction and certainty that the now Unknown, when finally grasped, will be like to the already Known.

In saying this we have perhaps said but little more than is contained in Napoleon's terse remark to Goethe himself:—"Policy is Fate."

\* \* \*

Let us now take a glance at Mephistopheles. He appears at different times in somewhat different roles, but there is a general similarity running through them all. In the Prologue he appears as a sort of clown or jester at a reception held by the Lord in heaven, and in this capacity contrasts strongly with the glory and dignity

of the Archangels, Raphael, Gabriel and Michael. The scene opens with the celebrated chorus of the Archangels, which cannot fail to remind the reader of the Nineteenth Psalm. No translation of this chorus which we have seen gives the spirit of it so well as Addison had previously done in No. 465 of the *Spectator*.

Addison's verses are as follows:—

“The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim:  
The unwearied sun from day to day,  
Does his Creator's power display,  
And publishes to every land,  
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And nightly to the list'ning earth  
Repeats the story of her birth:  
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though, in solemn silence, all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
What though no real voice nor sound  
Amid their radiant orbs be found?  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine,  
"The hand that made us is divine."

Goethe has added one important thought, — the inconceivably swift whirling of the earth with its succession of paradisaical splendor by day and gloomy darkness at night, and especially the perpetual conflict of the elements, which is typical of the lifelong struggle of the soul to overcome its material environment until it finds peace at last in discovering and becoming reconciled to the wisdom of natural and divine (i. e. social) law, and leads a life of serenity in spite of all inner and outer conflicts.

Goethe's meaning, but not his poetry may be given as follows: —

"Though o'er the earth the tempests rage,  
The waves beat high against the cliffs,

The lightnings flash and thunders roar,  
And land and sea and air and fire  
Wage with each other ceaseless war;  
Yet earth pursues its even course,  
Regardless of the elements,  
And over all reigns peace supreme  
Imposed by God's eternal laws;  
The sight makes angels' hearts rejoice."

After hearing this chorus Mephistopheles feels himself out of place, but remembers that the Lord has generally been glad to see him on these occasions. He cannot sing any chant about suns and planets, but reports to the Lord that mankind is still groveling about on the earth the same as on the day of creation. Though gifted with reason they use their reason so perversely that they would be better off without it. Their condition is so miserable that Mephistopheles really hasn't the heart to annoy them.

The Lord speaks kindly to him; invites his attention to Dr. Faust as being a likely specimen of humanity; gives him leave to draw Faust away from the right path if he

can, and is confident that in spite of his errors Faust will prove himself true to his consciousness of what is right. Mephistopheles takes the bet and is sure of winning. The Lord says he has never hated Mephistopheles, but has in fact made him a companion to man to arouse him from slothfulness. Mephistopheles remarks (aside) that he likes to see the "Governor" from time to time and is careful not to break with him completely.

It will be seen at once that Mephistopheles is not the typical Satan. He is a modern and degenerate devil, smart and pessimistic. He is described by the Lord as one who denies, — a rogue, caviller, scoffer and dissembler. He describes himself as one who wills the wrong and works the right; as "Old Iniquity." A more accurate name would be "Old Insincerity." He is frivolous, a hypocrite, a scoffer at every serious thing; without purpose, ambition or aspiration of any kind. He forbids the witch to call him Satan. He has laid aside horns, tail and claws; he has become modernized and got "culture." His title is "Herr Baron." He

wears a long rapier at his side and is a cavalier like other cavaliers. His ideal of happiness is sensual pleasure, something of the Versailles type, as described in the beginning of Act IV. After Faust's death he tries to flirt with the angels who come for Faust's soul, but feels his own powerlessness when brought face to face with pure love. It is as hard for him to scoff in this atmosphere as it was for Gretchen to pray when he was around, and he reproaches himself for losing Faust's soul by carrying his smartness too far and not knowing when to stop.

This picture of the devil is rather too modern to harmonize well with the general medieval-Catholic setting of the whole drama. As a personification of Evil it is a failure. It is erroneous to hold up the frivolity and sexual indulgences of fashionable society as being the quintessence of wickedness. To do so is to make the same mistake as to confound the vices of the slum proletariat with the real wickedness of the revolutionary working class. The slum proletariat of the barrel houses and the slum-

mers of fashionable society, say at Newport or Versailles, are both excrescences on the social body and are simply vicious and foolish, that is all. They are not really dangerous to any one except themselves.

To properly contrast good and evil you have to line up the moral, benevolent and pious capitalists (the so-called honest business men) on one side and the revolutionary union labor class on the other side — men who preach sedition, slug scabs, destroy property and care nothing for capitalist laws, courts or contracts. This is no parlor deviltry; it is real wickedness comparable to Satan's sin against God, as represented by Milton. It is outside the realm of jokes. In this contrast, on one side all crimes dwindle into insignificance compared with the fundamental crime of class subjection; and on the other side all sins are peccadilloes compared with the attempt to interfere with the Rule of Property.

Mephistopheles is not maliciously bad, but is insincere and indifferent. As Gretchen says, he has no sympathy or interest in anything. His enmity to God does not

take an active form. Milton's Satan is an older and far stronger type. He is a fierce and defiant Archangel, in grim earnest, thoroughly sincere. His crime was that he failed in an attempt to gain the rulership of Heaven and he remains God's open and implacable enemy. He attempts to ruin Adam and Eve, for the purpose of thwarting God's plans, not because he has any dislike of them. He is a typical rebel. Faust himself has more of the Satanic defiance about him than Mephistopheles has. Satan's acts are not ordinary vices, but sins against God himself. Apart from these he is a strong and manly character. In his discussion with Christ during the temptation in "Paradise Regained" Satan has decidedly the best of the argument. Milton was something of a rebel himself, on all fields except the religious; his training in this prevented him from seeing how his political and social views would look if applied to the celestial realm.

For Part II of *Faust* what Goethe really needed was a new sort of devil. Mephistopheles plays the role very well for Part I,

representing the evil of self-indulgence in the individual life. But for the broader social world of Part II and especially in Acts IV and V, he is a failure. However, Faust alone with the unerring instinct of an erring mortal hits the right trail here. He sets out for "dominion and property." This is something worthy of a truly Satanic nature. Mephistopheles lends what assistance he can, but his heart is not in this work. He calls it foolishness. From Goethe's own standpoint the right sort of a devil here would be one who would have drawn Faust over to the revolutionary army and made him leader of the Sansculottes, bringing about a victory over the Emperor and the ruin of Society. But that would not be literature. All literature of the Property Age must stop this side of the brink of social ruin. And the same limit is set to the much vaunted bourgeois science. According to this all things may be made the object of scientific study except politics. The science of politics spells the doom of class rule and hence is excluded from the domain of "legitimate" science. Goethe himself was as

great in the toy sciences as in toy literature, but it never occurred to him to apply scientific methods to the study of political phenomena. What does the ruling class care for a little thing like science unless it serves either for profit or to strengthen its supremacy? To expect this class to put itself out of existence for the sake of being scientific, is as foolish as to expect it to reform itself away by legislation or benevolence, or to observe the law to its own destruction.

When we go over all the wonderful discoveries and inventions of the past century we should expect to find the mass of the human race correspondingly elevated, as was predicted over and over again every time an important invention was brought out. Yet such has not been the result; and were it not for the smouldering hope that sometime somehow a change will be wrought, the words of Mephistopheles would have to be admitted as substantially true and not sufficiently refuted by the Lord's pointing to Faust as an example of one good man:—

“I only see how men fret on their day;  
The little God of Earth is still the same  
Strange thing he was, when first to life he  
came;

That life were somewhat better, if the light  
Of heaven had not been given to spoil him  
quite.

Reason he calls it—see its blessed fruit,  
Than the brute beast man is a beastlier  
brute.”

When we see little children working like mules, and see men and women in an unnecessary struggle for the necessaries of life while these great scientists piddle along with their little hobbies like telephones, turbines and tupenny tubes, which benefit the mass nothing, is it not right to say that they are only “fiddling while Rome burns”? But after all this is only one more proof that the working class will never be free unless it frees itself.

\* \* \*

This personification of evil in Mephistopheles as an absolute, active force is taken from the old theology; but it strikes us as

inconsistent with Goethe's representation of man as having an ineradicable inclination towards the good which eventually saves him. If this were true, none would perish. This would not be consistent with the doctrines of the old theology on the damnation and punishment of the wicked. It would seem to us more logical from Goethe's own standpoint to represent Good as the active, positive force and Evil as the passive, negative side of the same force; i. e., instead of good versus evil, say struggle versus sloth, self-control versus self-indulgence.

If on the other hand Faust is to be considered not as a type of all men, but only of a "capable" man, as he calls himself, or of a "good" man, as the Lord calls him, then Goethe has begged the question right at the start. He has selected a "good" man to show us how a good man can be saved. This does not interest us. What we want to know is how one can get to be good and capable in the first place before one is pitted against the devil. This Goethe forgot to tell us.

"Man errs as long as he strives," says the

Lord in the Prologue. In other words, Faust in contrast to Mephistopheles wills the good, but in groping blindly for it works the bad, and is saved for the sake of his good intentions in spite of his misdeeds. Instead of picturing man as fallen and requiring a Redeemer, Goethe represents him as possessing innate germs of goodness so indestructible that even the devil himself cannot ruin him. But this applies only to the good and capable. The idea that the good and capable individual arises as an accidental or self-created product, independent of heredity, education and environment, is enough to bring a smile from a saint.

Now the fact is that this personification of Evil as an active force, attacking the Good, is not applicable to the individual life at all. Nature does not establish moral laws, distinguishing the good from the evil. This is done by Society. The individual is a unit and is not divided into two parts, one bad and the other good.

"In my breast  
Alas! two souls dwell — all there is unrest;  
Each with the other strives for mastery,

Each from the other struggles to be free.  
One to the fleshly joys which coarse earth  
yields,  
With clumsy tendrils clings, and one would  
rise  
In native power and vindicate the fields,  
Its own by birthright — its ancestral skies.”

If these two souls are to be understood as typifying Good and Evil we take exception to the sentiment. The earthly soul is not evil; in moderation and under self-mastery it is good. It is only in its excesses that it is evil. It is only through the existence of favorable conditions for the earthly soul that the heavenly soul itself can be properly developed. The heavenly soul is not unqualifiedly good, regardless of time. If it were, suicide would be the immediate duty of all. These two souls are not striving with each other for mastery but are bound inseparably together, and man must unwearied still strive on for the good which both afford and for mastery over the extremes which each one alone would lead to. There is nothing particularly heavenly about draining a sea marsh and providing

food and homes for a colony of poor people. Yet Faust found good in this.

The conception of Good and Evil in a moral or social sense was not developed until the coming in of the Property Age and the division of society into two classes, the possessing or good class, and the propertiless or bad class; and afterwards these terms were applied to individuals according to their attitude towards the property class, as being friendly or hostile to it.

It is remarkable that Plato, the first real philosopher in a civilized State, in his **Republic** when he sets out to define what is good or just, postpones the application of these terms to the individual until after he has first determined what is just as applied to the State, saying that after we have thus learned to read **JUSTICE** in large letters we can more readily decipher it when written small in the individual. He then proceeds to show in a roundabout way what in substance amounts to this, viz: that those who rule or ought to rule are good and those who serve are bad. Then coming down to the individual he shows that by

analogy the governing part of man, i. e. his reason, is good and the serving parts, the appetites and passions, are bad; and the good man, being himself ruled by his reason, will recognize the right of the "reasonable class" to rule in the State, otherwise he would not be good. All of which amounts to this: that inasmuch as only those can rule in a State who either control its property or are the retainers of those who do, and only those can be forced to serve who do so from economic necessity, the good, broadly speaking, are the property owners, including their retainers who constitute the military force, and the bad are the propertyless.

Plato does not represent the State as a magnified individual, as many have erroneously interpreted him; on the contrary, like Menenius Agrippa in his fable to the Roman Plebeians, taking the class State as a norm, Plato represents the individual as a miniature class State and applies the attributes of the State to the individual. Such is the power of social environment to shape un-

consciously what appears to be the free play or self-directed activity of the mind.

What is called reason is, however, itself a variable quality; people do not agree on what is reasonable nor on what persons are wise and best fitted to govern. To say with Goethe that a man who is good in the beginning will turn out good in the end, and if he fails to do so, then he was not really good in the beginning; or to say with Plato that the wise man is just and the just man is wise, is only marking time, shifting from one foot to the other without getting forward; but when we connect justice with the material world and human life by saying that it is only the interest of the dominant economic class, or from the opposite standpoint that it is the interest of the subject class, we have got past the stage of tautology and invaded the realm of Property; the hair begins to bristle and the fur begins to fly; poetry and philosophy, morality and reason give way to vile denunciations, coarse threats and physical force, and we then get our first taste of pure justice unsugarcoated.

Plato's analogy between the State and the Individual is of course lame. Under civilization the State is not an institution existing for the common benefit of all, as assumed by Plato and by all other philosophers down to the present time, but is an exploitative, military organization which is only the tool of the property class; its function is to protect this class against its so-called "fellow"-citizens at home and to aid it in conquering and subjugating its neighbors abroad. The art of managing this State is classed by the philosophers as a separate profession and the knowledge required for this is called the sum of all wisdom. But when exploitation comes to an end this particular kind of wisdom will appear foolishness and will die out. The final supremacy of the working class pre-supposes its training by evolution to the point where it is competent for industrial administration, but not for exploitative government, as "philosophers"; hence this class can never become wise and good in Plato's sense nor in Goethe's either, which is fundamentally the same. Faust became at the close of his

life as perfect a philosopher and ruler as Plato could wish for; but he required the assistance of the Devil to execute his orders.

To personify the subject class as an Evil Being, seeking to destroy the ruling class, would be perfectly correct. With what undisguised gusto could Mephistopheles, embodying the spirit of the despised bourgeoisie of the 18th Century, scoff at everything which was sacred to the then ruling class, the feudal nobility! For a picture of the Devil Triumphant we must turn to the Communist Manifesto:—

“The bourgeoisie (class devil), wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved

personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade (and Free Contract). In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers.”

We are told by Bayard Taylor that Goethe intended in the second part of **Faust** to treat of politics, but gave it up and substituted finance and paper money instead. If this be true it shows that Goethe had at least an inkling of the truth that somehow or other man's social life has something to do with his development as an individual. But Goethe knew enough to drop a hot potato. He would not have to study political history very long until he made the discovery that in the class war of politics it is the so-called Evil which ultimately

overthrows the Good and that this is the law of social progress. The reason of this is that an individual, being a physical unit, may be reformed or changed and still retain its identity; while a class by its very nature can never be reformed: the only way to change it is to supplant it by a different class, which change in the case of a ruling class amounts to a revolution and to a transposition of the words "good and evil," "right and wrong" and their use in a different sense from before; we have then crossed the social equator and the words "summer" and "winter" have the reverse of their former meaning.

This is the very opposite of Goethe's "good man" theory and of course he could make no use of politics in his celebrated "tragedy." All of Mephistopheles' irony, sarcasm, scorn, sly innuendoes, sneers, venom, cynicism, contempt and pessimism, which when applied in individual life are unjustified and are properly described as evil, are applied with perfect propriety and justice by a subject class struggling for its life against the oppression of a domineering class.

“— — — Force with force

“Is well ejected when the conquered can,” says Milton. As the accepted rules of war do not apply between a civilized nation and savages, so also they do not apply in a war of one class against another. In this war there are no proprieties. Everything is fair. No quarter is asked or given. The class which is down has nothing to lose. The ruling class has already done its worst and fears its subjects as the only devil and loss of power as the only hell. This quality of the working class never to acquiesce in its condition short of obtaining complete mastery of its masters is the one redeeming characteristic which puts it on a par with Faust's ceaseless striving, which ultimately saves him. Such is the Class Devil as he really exists and ultimately prevails over the Good. The individual devil that we read about as tempting the good man to do evil is merely a poetic license and of course never wins a final victory, — at least not over a “good” and “capable” man. He is only allowed temporary successes to keep up the interest in the play.

Why did it never occur to Goethe to let his typical man seek happiness in the role of Wagner, the servant, or Valentine, the common soldier, or one of the laborers who with pick and shovel drained the marsh? Because in the eye of a Property Society these are not human beings, but are merely pawns, like Gretchen, who exist only for the purpose of allowing a real human being like Faust to work out what is pompously called the tremendous "problems of life" that present themselves to the bourgeois mind. This overpowering sense of the "tremendosity" of human "problems" is one of the manifestations of that hypocrisy which has ever characterized the domineering class. These problems are nothing more nor less than how to keep down the subject class and make it believe itself incompetent to assume control and make itself happy. Overwhelmed by the "tremendosity" of this problem, the bourgeois mind seeks to solve it by formulas more difficult than the problem itself. For instance, ostensibly the principal problem of the capitalist class is to provide for the employment, prosperity

and happiness of the working class; and this is the problem that Faust finally undertook to solve by reclaiming the marsh. Instead of doing this in the direct way by simply giving the working class the choicest land and the entire product, the capitalist class withholds a large part of this product for foreign commerce; then it builds an expensive navy of both merchantmen and battleships, establishes a vast consular system, commercial treaties, tariff systems to "protect" labor from every one except those who are robbing it, sends armies abroad to conquer colonies and markets, irrigates deserts at home or drains marshes *a la Faust*. What is all this for, anyhow? Answer: "We are extending our commerce so as to provide for the employment and welfare of our working class." We repeat, this is what is called solving a problem by a formula more difficult than the problem itself. No wonder it causes headaches for the bourgeoisie.

Why does bourgeois literature always represent the struggle with the supernatural as an individual affair? Instead of con-

ceiving this contract as made between an individual and a supernatural power, let us try to conceive it as made between the ruling class and a supernatural power, say with God, for future happiness or with Satan for present happiness. Then it will at once be seen that the supernatural power is nothing but the ruling class itself. For as to future happiness, when and where did a ruling class ever efface itself here to win the hereafter? And as for present happiness, what more could Satan give the ruling class than it now gives to itself?

\* \* \*

Some years ago the producing class in Egypt began to agitate this question of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, not from an individual standpoint, but from a class standpoint. They had been rescued from starvation by the ruling class of Egypt and had been treated so well that they had multiplied enormously. Yet, just as Faust says, they turned rebels. They were wholly dead to any feeling of gratitude towards their benefactors. They decided that the prerequisite of all justice and righteousness

from their standpoint was economic independence, and to accomplish this end all crimes were justifiable, if contributing to that end and not done out of mere wantonness. The most shocking measures were taken against the Egyptians. The French Revolution with its Reign of Terror was mild compared with the ten plagues and the slaughter of the first-born. Finally, with the aid of a supposed supernatural power the end was accomplished; the leading civilized nation of the then world was humbled and one step forward was taken in social progress by the victory of Evil over Good. And, mark well, it was only by being offered present economic advantage that the dependent class could be induced to place any reliance on the supernatural leader in this struggle. Classes are not moved by promises of the hereafter, though individuals sometimes are. The deity of a class must and does invariably stand for the economic interests of that class. That the working class and the master class cannot worship the same god was as true in the days of the Pharaohs as it is today.

Let us suppose now that some Egyptian Goethe, a councilor at the court of Karl August Pharaoh, should wish to write a great tragedy on the dealings of supernatural powers with the human race and the conflict between Good and Evil in all the phases of human life; but instead of taking for his theme this world historic class struggle, should select some obscure member of the Egyptian hierarchy and detail his individual life and fidelity to his caste as showing the final victory of Good over Evil; could anything be more ridiculous? And yet he would only be doing what Goethe has done in ignoring the epochal social conflict of his day and writing the biography of a professor as an illustration of the conflict between Good and Evil, — a professor, who though he pretends to renounce his religion and play the role of tough boy on the surface, yet in fact remains sound to the core on the one vital point of class domination.

\* \* \*

When we consider the mighty longing of Goethe's soul for real life and freedom, like

the longing of the Homunculus, and see how he was hemmed in by the narrow circle of life at Weimar, and aside from that hemmed in by the property organization of society, prevailing among all the advanced portions of the human race, with its iron-clad customs, laws and institutions, evolved and administered not to promote human freedom, but to maintain the supremacy of a small class against the ceaseless struggles of the suppressed mass of mankind and against the single-handed efforts of here and there a Titanic individual, always resulting in his own destruction:—

“Who may dare  
To name things by their real names? The  
few  
Who did know something and were weak  
enough  
To expose their hearts unguarded — to ex-  
pose  
Their views and feelings to the eyes of men,  
They have been nailed to crosses — thrown  
to flames.”

And when we consider further that this

had been the condition of humanity during all those periods of history about which in Goethe's time anything definite was known; and that Goethe clearly realized the fact of this oppression and sympathized with the oppressed, as many passages in his works show, but could not attain to an understanding of what this mysterious and apparently absurd social phenomenon meant and could not trace its source nor outcome; and when we consider further what Goethe had seen and suffered under the French Revolution and the wars arising out of it; and the fact that though he had become sufficiently emancipated on the religious and philosophical side, his social standing as well as the backward political condition of the Fatherland prevented him from sympathizing with the democracy or seeing any hope in it; in view of all this, is it any wonder that Goethe despaired of finding happiness in the sphere of normal human society under these conditions, but like a monk who renounces civil life, Goethe let his hero find his ultimate happiness in a secluded corner of the world, inflicting so-

called benefits upon those who do the actual work of his microcosmic community while he himself stands aloof from them.

Faust, notwithstanding his delusions to the contrary, ended about where he began. He began as a book worm, and complained that although he knew books he knew nothing of men and the world. He therefore proceeds to go through what he is pleased to call a course of experience in the world, in which he experiences everything except the one thing necessary to experience, viz., producing his own livelihood side by side with his fellowmen and cooperating with them politically. He winds up not as one of the world himself but as a benefactor of the world from the outside. He goes, as it were, into the old clothes donation business on a large scale; instead of clothes he donates second rate scraps of land to the homeless or to those few of the homeless that he can directly reach, and claims the gratitude due to a benefactor. But the literary and scientific labors of a bookworm inure ultimately to the benefit of others and entitle him also to the rank of a

benefactor. So that Faust has changed himself from a benevolent distributor of knowledge into a benevolent distributor of marsh land. He began as a four-times doctor. He quit with one additional title,—Doctor of Philanthropy; that is all. Were it not for the fact that he acts as gravedigger for his ideals as well as his body, the remark of Mephistopheles would be true, viz: that his death left things just the same as if he had never lived. He is still outside of real productive society, real life, and his benevolence produces merely a happiness of despair, the same as the Stoic philosophy and Christian religion (when confined to private life only) are the consolation of a soul resigned, either temporarily or permanently to a condition of mental servitude which despairs of working class emancipation, i. e. race emancipation. It is the condition of the resigned, confirmed and incorrigible pessimist with a forced cheerfulness in his despair, suggestive of the "Smile that won't come off", which is only a modification of the Mephistophelean grin. He postpones all his noble aspirations until

the future life and so far as this world is concerned he is as completely without faith or hope as the Old Sinner himself. It is only with reference to the future life that hope finds a place in his bosom. The "depravity of human nature" is the broad cloak with which he covers and excuses not only the vices and crimes of individuals, but also the injustice of the governing class, thus maintaining that class government is an inherent part of "human nature."

Dr. George Weber in his **Universal History** recognizes the unsatisfactory character of the concluding part of **Faust**, without knowing the seat of the difficulty. He puts the matter thus:

"In order to bring the Faust poem (Part I) to a satisfactory close it would be necessary to bring about a reconciliation between man's spiritual freedom and development and his sensual nature; for only in this harmony of the highest spiritual development with the strong passions of a healthy nature is found the ideal of a perfect man. To establish this harmonious union, and to guide man, so organized, into real and active

life,—to let deeds follow upon the heels of knowledge and enjoyment,—this would have been the problem of the Second Part of **Faust**. But neither the numerous continuations which Goethe himself invited others to attempt, (which, moreover, were only repetitions), nor Goethe's own Second Part, which betrays the marks of old age and of changed views, can be considered as a successful solution of this problem."

We reply that Goethe has solved the problem as well as it can be solved from a class standpoint. He has represented economic charity, class charity, as the pinnacle of human happiness,—higher than justice, because justice between classes is a thing inconceivable to the bourgeois mind. In fact "justice" in its technical sense is a product of class civilization and is hence irreconcilable with Social Solidarity. Social justice is a negation of the idea of justice in the same way that common or public property is a negation of the idea of property. The difficulty exists not in Goethe's old age nor in the method of the solution, but in the fact that the problem

itself, which Weber states, is unsolvable until classes have been abolished. Until then the perfect or near-perfect man must divide his life between profit grinding on one hand and charity dispensing on the other, as Carnegie and Rockefeller have done. No reconciliation between man's spiritual development and his sensual nature can take place until after there has been a reconciliation between the individual and society, for the reason that man's spiritual freedom and development involve questions relating to social life, upon which depend our definitions of Good and Evil.

We cannot therefore agree with Bayard Taylor when he says that in **Faust** we find the problem of Good and Evil simply stated and sublimely solved, by the discovery that only in working for the benefit of his fellow beings can man taste happiness. This is a luxury which very few can enjoy in the manner that Faust employed. It is all right for these few, but it is hard, bitter hard on the multitude who are the victims of this artificial and essentially selfish happiness. Not in working "for" others as their

domineering benefactor but in working "with" others as an equal comrade is happiness to be found. If we must have benevolence, let it not be one sided, but reciprocal.

Our conclusion, then, is that Goethe judged from a socialist standpoint, although his intentions were all right and he did as well as any one could in his circumstances, nevertheless undertook too big a job for a Property Homunculus. In attempting to treat of Good and Evil as absolute qualities, he made a botch of it. The Property Age is not the absolute age, much less is the Bourgeois Division of it the final resting stage of humanity. The Working Class Devil will overthrow it and establish a different kind of happiness and a different kind of good and of evil.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MODEL COLONY: FREEDOM.

Goethe began to work on **Faust** in 1774 when he was twenty-five years old. Part I was substantially finished before the outbreak of the French Revolution, though it was not published till 1790. Faust's restless and defiant spirit is typical of the seething activity of the intellectual world in those pre-revolutionary years. Part II occupied Goethe at intervals during the rest of his life and was finished in 1831, a few months before he died at the ripe age of eighty two years. When he began this work French Rationalism was at its height; all of the old institutions of society were subjected to unsparing criticism. So far as this was directed against the church and priestcraft Goethe joined heartily in it. He never lets an opportunity slip to take a fling at the priests. But he drew the line at democracy and materialism. He had been elevated to

the ranks of the nobility and was an idealist. Democracy was at that time exclusively political, and materialism was gross and physical. Goethe could not foresee that democracy was to expand so as to include modern industry and afford a basis for a universal nobility, and that materialism was to expand so as to include the world of mind and imagination and become idealistic. Too enlightened and honest to accept the catechism, too sentimental to be satisfied with the then current one-sided rationalism, he found in the heart of woman that self-sacrificing, unquenchable, all-forgiving and all-forgetting love and inspiration which for him answered the purpose of both philosophy and religion.

As for politics, he got as far as benevolent paternalism and let it rest at that. After the victory over the Anti-Emperor and his forces the Archbishop, in the double role of Archbishop and Chancellor, impresses on the Kaiser the magnitude of his sin in allying himself with the powers of darkness. To atone for this nothing will suffice except the most liberal donations to the Church and

tithes from the whole realm; and it is only with difficulty that he is prevented from claiming tithes from the sea which overflows Faust's land. But the worm at last turns, and this is refused. Whatever the defects of Faustdorf were, Goethe with masterful satire rescued it from the clutches of the Church, though he could not shake off Mephistopheles. But if the class-state is forever compelled to choose between an alliance with the Church on one hand and the Devil on the other, it is truly in a sorry plight.

Between the time of beginning **Faust** in 1774 and finishing it in 1831 the French Revolution had come and gone (apparently); the Napoleonic wars were all over; democracy had failed; the Bourbons were back on the throne and the Holy Alliance had reached the height of its power. All that even well-intentioned men of those times asked for was that the people be treated with mercy and benevolence, but ruled with a strong hand. The watchword was, "Everything for the people, nothing by the people." There is no doubt that in

Part II of **Faust** Goethe has caught the true spirit of the times and environment in which he lived as regards the relations of ruler and ruled. We see reflected here the spirit of feudal reactionism as truly as the struggles of the English Revolution are reflected in **Paradise Lost**, or as the spirit of universal empire, joined but not subject to a universal church, is reflected in the work of Dante, the Ghibelline. All these works are by men who were more than poets; they had absorbed all history, literature and science down to their respective times and combined and moulded this mass into their immortal works, tinged with the characteristics both of the individual authors and of the social organizations in which they lived.

In order to be fair towards Goethe we here give Faust's last words, his Swan Song in full:—

“Below the hills a marshy plain  
Infects what I so long have been retrieving:  
This stagnant pool likewise to drain  
Were now my latest and my best achieving.  
To many millions let me furnish soil,  
Though not secure, yet free to active toil;

Green, fertile fields, where men and herds  
go forth

At once, with comfort, on the newest Earth,  
And swiftly settled on the hill's firm base,  
Created by the bold, industrious race.

A land like Paradise here, round about;  
Up to the brink the tide may roar without,  
And though it gnaw, to burst with force the  
limit,

By common impulse all unite to hem it.  
Yes! to this thought I hold with firm  
persistence;

The last result of wisdom stamps it true:  
He only earns his freedom and existence,  
Who daily conquers them anew.

Thus here, by dangers girt, shall glide away  
Of childhood, manhood, age, the vigorous  
day:

And such a throng I fain would see,—  
Stand on free soil among a people free!

Then dared I hail the Moment fleeing:  
"Ah, still delay—thou art so fair."

The traces cannot, of mine earthly being,  
In acons perish,—they are there!—

In proud fore-feeling of such lofty bliss,  
I now enjoy the highest Moment,—this!"

The subjection of external nature to the needs of man which Faust aims at in reclaiming the marshy sea coast is a good thing. It is one element of human progress. It can be accomplished by **social** effort only. Faust makes use of social power but seems entirely blind to its significance, as blind as if he had already been stricken by Care, as he finally was. This subjugation of Nature should be considered as only preliminary to the emancipation of the race from the Kingdom of necessity, giving it the conscious control of its own destiny. This result Faust does not aim at. He perverts his subjugation of Nature to his own glorification and to providing his colony with the material comforts of life, accompanied by what he calls Freedom. Nothing is said about the education of these people. The education of successive generations by means of written language and numerals is in a certain sense an artificial and compulsory process, but it is a necessary part of freedom. And this is only elementary; next comes their education in other matters, particularly in political affairs. Then it is

all over with, the model colony of Freedom, Feudalism and Filanthropy.

If in a class society the acme of happiness is found in the hopeless social conditions which force the tender hearted to take refuge in philanthropy, so much the worse for class society and the literature it produces; for this benevolence is exercised without affecting the prime source of wretchedness, class subjection. Philanthropists are non-factional as between the different factions of the property class, but are not non-partisan. There are no philanthropists but such as oppose the working class revolution in its positive activity. As soon as a philanthropist opposes property rule and advocates working class supremacy he is dropped off the list of philanthropists. Philanthropy is based on property rule. If the essential product of present society is to be simply a crop of philanthropists on one hand and an ever recurring crop of helpless victims on the other, the society will wither away as did ancient society and bring forth no offspring capable of independent life and of becoming its legitimate successor. The

problem is not how to supply the world with benefactors, but how to eliminate benefactors from the world entirely (and substitute social justice instead).

Faust's work however, in draining the marsh, required sacrifices:—

“Human victims bled and suffered  
Nights was heard the cry of woe.”

If you think that progress and the conquest of nature, made under class conditions for profit or to satisfy the cupidity of a morbid philanthropist, is a matter of holiday sport, read the construction reports of the Chicago Drainage Channel or any similar work and learn how the men were treated; how they worked; what food and shelter they had; what form of recreations; how they were mutilated, suffered, died, their bodies thrown away and forgotten, all for the sake of “human” progress, they themselves of course not being human.

O Progress, what crimes are committed in thy name! Faust's colony was won by war, drained by slaughter, enriched by piracy and supported by the permanent subjection of the people.

In our most advanced industries (the Steel Works, for example) it has become necessary to enclose the grounds with a wall and establish private hospitals inside for the victims of "progress"; and the records of these so-called "accidents" are concealed from the public with the connivance of the civil authorities as being so horrible that their exposure would endanger the foundations of society.

Or read the history of the Homestead strikes and learn how Philanthropist Carnegie worked for human progress. We are not told how Faust managed his strikes, but we can easily see that Mephistopheles and his rustlers would be ideal strike breakers, from the way they treated Baucis and Philemon.

Mephistopheles' devil-may-care report on this exploit of making away with these helpless old people forms a striking passage. Instead of allowing the old couple to make themselves happy in their own way, Faust was determined to make them happy in his own way, so as to have the selfish pleasure of seeing them grateful to him for economic

blessings bestowed after he had first reduced them to want.

“They soon will learn to thank me and to  
praise  
For all life’s blessings in life’s closing days ;  
Feel how much I have served them and the  
sight  
Of their contentment will give me delight.”

The result is, they are killed by the cure. One of the deepest lessons of life and one that Faust never learned is to allow others not only the naked right, but also the independent and inalienable means to make themselves happy in their own way, and not insist on forcing them into a position where they will have to be thankful to you for helping them.

In Faust’s treatment of Baucis and Philemon Goethe pictures the covetousness of the rich in robbing the poor as being the Great Evil. Again he has missed the mark. He strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. Faust’s fundamental crime was not in ruining two old people, but in the exercise of political power to organize a whole colony

into a perpetual condition of servitude and degradation. The crimes of a great individual are as insignificant as his benevolence. It is not the occasional crimes of the rulers that hurt. Their Old and Standing Iniquity consists in their class honesty and goodness. It is when the honesty and goodness of the ruling class are shown at their best that the hopeless condition of the working class stands out convincingly in all its horrid reality, because then it is all the more inexcusable.

The quintessence of Faust's wisdom is expressed in the lines:—

“He only **earns** his **freedom** and his living  
Who daily conquers them anew.”

It reads right. But Faust himself in another place has raised a question which, slightly modified, applies here:

“Ja was man so ‘**verdienen**’ heisst  
“Wer darf das Kind beim rechten Namen  
nennen?”

“What is hight ‘**earning**’, who will dare  
“To call the child by its right name?”

From whom are we to “earn” and “con-

quer", our freedom and livelihood? Say, from the master class? And these latter, from whom do they "conquer" their livelihood. Well, let that pass for now.

Freedom is something which can neither be earned nor conquered by anybody from anybody. Neither can it be the gift of a benefactor; nor can it be found in any secluded corner, sheltered from fierce social struggles. It can only be won by the evolution of the main stream of human society through successive class supremacies, based on advances in industrial development, and culminating in the almost miraculous perfection of machinery and the final supremacy of the all-inclusive and class-abolishing working class.

We think we do Goethe no injustice when we assume that by the word "Freedom" he means that kind of political freedom which in his own life-time the bourgeois class was trying to establish in lieu of the previously existing feudal system of government. At that time freedom looked good. What this "freedom" means we are now able to judge. It is no longer a question

of theory, as it was in Goethe's time. It has been tested in practice, has exhausted the good which it was capable of developing and has now become intolerable, being a clog to further progress. It means the freedom of the strong to destroy the freedom of the weak. The pen of Goethe himself would be inadequate to describe the travesty of freedom which Goethe's ideal freedom has resulted in. Bourgeois freedom means freedom of exploitation, which involves economic dependence; hence effective, economic freedom is a negation of bourgeois freedom and is called the "Coming Slavery".

It may appear to some that our comments are flippant and savor too much of Goethe's *Baccalaureus*. Perhaps so. Nothing which attacks the present order of society could be in good form, no matter what shape it took. An attack on proprietorship necessarily involves a violation of the proprieties. But we speak not by our own power, we are pleading the cause of a class; and if our words have any weight it will be owing to that fact. And we are willing to

pit our flippancy against that genteel ignorance, intellectual dishonesty and silent denial of daylight facts, which form the distinguishing characteristic of ruling class moralists to-day, and make the frank brutality of the slavery age appear almost a virtue. What in Goethe's time might be excused as owing in some degree to an honest ignorance or unconsciousness is to-day nothing but pure cussedness, (say simulated unprejudice, or class interest concealed). This agnosticism or apodictic uncertainty of capitalist moralists as to the claims of the proletariat appears all the more ridiculous when contrasted with their positive support of the "vested rights" of their patrons. This pride of assumed impartiality which declines to be classified is simply a cheap form of self-flattery.

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The final and ticklish problem before Goethe was how to smuggle Faust into heaven and thus bring the story to a happy conclusion, like getting the lovers married at the end of a novel. He cannot get in by the door of Christ, so much is certain. His

confession of Faith, as delivered to Care, has not a very striking similarity to the Apostles' Creed; Baucis and Philemon will not help him to get in, nor will the workmen whose lives were ruthlessly sacrificed in draining the marsh. Helena is of no use to him. We would have expected that the Lord, who turned him over to Mephistopheles in the beginning would now appear and say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" but no Lord appears. So he must fall back on Gretchen, the magdalens and *mater gloriosa*. It is her unfathomable love which saves Faust's soul without any mediation of Christ. The Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary fits in nicely with Goethe's idea of Eternal Womanhood as the elevating and saving force. It would further appear from the characters in the last scene that a woman has to repent before she gets into heaven, but a man doesn't. This is a striking commentary on the peculiar ethical code by which a sin, common to both, ruins the woman but leaves the man unscathed.

Woman's love deified is certainly a very

pretty idol. If we had to choose as an idol some fraction of the Universe we think we should choose this. But we make the same objection to it that we make to Helena's beauty—viz. it is transitory. In order to make it eternal it must be transferred to heaven. But if Helena's beauty had been transferred to heaven it too would have been eternal and might have served Faust for an idol just as well. But as there is some doubt whether there is any heaven which can exist outside of and beyond the infinite Universe, the only thing left which is eternal is the ever changing and ever identical Kosmos or totality of all idols, both material and ideal, earthly and heavenly, considered as a Unit; and the man who worships this will never be in danger of having his idol taken away from him.

But after all we have no desire to criticize Goethe's plan of salvation. In fact we are able to derive some comfort from it. If Infinite Love, working spontaneously, will save such as Faust, who lived a life of unrestrained self-indulgence at the expense of others (accompanied, it is true, by a laud-

able striving for advancement) without remorse and without any apparent effort to sharpen his conscience or even to have any conscience of any kind, we may certainly rest easy as to the future of those who hold themselves responsible not only for their acts, but also to some extent for the state of their conscience itself, and do not satisfy themselves with the approval of a conscience which has never been aroused from a comatose or morbid state. A man is responsible for the healthy condition of his conscience, no less (and no more) than for the healthy condition of his body. His control over both, though not absolute, is considerable.

It is generally assumed that conscience is a uniform, invariable factor, always right. Yet some of the greatest crimes of history have been committed under mistake of conscience. The uprightness of "conscience" is as much a myth as its opposite, called the "depravity of human nature". In the Prologue the Lord skilfully dodged this point by saying that the conscience of a good man will keep him in the right way.

Yes, a good man will go right without any conscience. But as the Lord omitted to define a good man we will here supply that oversight:— A man whose conscience is moulded by the ruling class is a good man; and one whose conscience is moulded by the subject class is a bad man, an undesirable citizen. Faust, when he became old and wise fulfilled the Lord's prophecy. He assisted the Emperor to put down the revolution and took good care to provide for his own colonists in such a way that they would never revolt, (so he hoped).

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GRETCHEN TRAGEDY.

Let us now go back to the pseudo-tragedy of Gretchen, which occupies about one half of Part I in space and more than that in popular interest.

If Goethe's idea of women does not coincide with that of Euripides, viz., that one man is worth ten thousand women, it is certain that in Goethe's time their social position and learning sank into insignificance when compared with an intellectual giant like Faust. We cannot discuss here the large question of the wretched position of the female sex during the entire Property Age. But we shall take exception to the practice of treating seduction as the subject of a tragedy, no matter how beautifully it may be handled. If it be excused as a necessary part of a great man's experience in class society then again we say, so much the worse for class society.

Gretchen was a pure, young girl, a devout Catholic, almost a child in experience. Her mother is a widow and poor, of course. Necessarily poor, or you couldn't make the tragedy. Gretchen's education has been neglected and she is overworked from dawn till dark.—No need of going any farther. There is the tragedy right there! Stop and think a moment. A girl "past fourteen"; no father, no property, no education, no experience.

"Must cook, knit, sew, must wash and dry;  
Run far and near—rise ere the light,  
And not lie down till late at night."

Isn't that tragedy enough? One would think so for a person of normal taste. But the morbid taste of class society demands "hot stuff". It finds its highest entertainment in the unhappy condition of its own victims.

The first step, of course, towards winning Gretchen's attention is to give her what she lacks most,—property. A casket of jewels is sent her. Why that? If Gretchen is a human being in the pursuit of happiness, why shouldn't she give Faust a box of

jewelry,—gold watch, cuff buttons, diamond stud and all. Think what pleasure it would have given her to witness Faust's gratitude for such a gift. But that is not the way to make a tragedy; Gretchen is not a human being and has no right to pursue happiness. Faust monopolizes this business for himself.

What would an economically independent girl, with an economically independent mother and the education and training which this implies, care for a casket of jewels from a stranger? It would be resented as an insult. That the underlying cause of seduction in a majority of cases is an economic one is so generally recognized as to need no proof. The overworked and underpaid department store and sweat shop girls are regularly, almost proverbially, cited in illustration of this. But not only in the inception of the evil is the economic cause predominant. In its ultimate results it is the economic condition of the unfortunate one which becomes so unbearable as to lead to despair. She is deprived of the opportunity to earn an honorable livelihood, even if she is able and willing to do so.

That Gretchen's moral defect is not fatal, Goethe himself has shown by landing her in heaven, and if she is good enough for heaven, why should she not be given a chance on earth instead of being served up as material for a tragedy? Her love is so pure that it saves Faust in spite of himself.

When Mephistopheles, seeing her at Martha's house with the box of jewelry, pretends to take her for a "lady" she and Martha are perfectly dumfounded, and inform him that she is nothing but a "poor girl." The seduction of a "lady" might furnish material for the yellow newspapers, but it could not afford the basis for a high grade literary "tragedy." It lacks the element of Economic "Fate." The seduction tragedy is based on the fictitious necessity of poverty and ignorance.

It requires no great insight to see that most of the little romances and love tragedies which Goethe experienced in his own life and which caused him and others that infinite suffering which only sensitive natures can understand, were owing to economic (and hence social) differences in

the situation of the respective parties interested.

If the victim in these cases were given a chance to become again a useful member of society, doing her share of the work and receiving her share of the good things of life, she would, it is true, carry a sad heart in her bosom, but all the other noble qualities of a human being would still be hers,—intelligence, skill, gentleness, helpfulness, kindness, truthfulness, courage, justice, yes, even “benevolence”. Just think of that! Do all these count for nothing? Is the mere animal side of woman of such paramount importance that when this is once marred, nothing is left of her? This is the characteristic bourgeois view of woman as an instrument of production and sensuality. Her impairment for such purposes is looked upon as depreciating her commercial value, is called her “ruin”.

So deep seated is this commercial estimation of woman and so ruthless and irresistible is the property instinct that it has falsified the teaching of Christ and created a sole and only “scriptural” ground for

divorce, viz: throwing suspicion on the genuineness of a paternal heir to the family estate. Tolstoy has clearly shown that according to Christ's teaching there is no scriptural ground for divorce whatever. It is strange that his acuteness did not reveal to him the reason why this particular ground, out of so many, was interpolated as the one necessary concession to the Property State; and this would have led to the further discovery that not religion moulds the ruling class, but on the contrary the ruling class moulds religion. Instead of the Christian marriage being adopted by society, the property marriage has been foisted upon Christianity.

The working up of this so-called "ruin" of a lower member of society into a factitious and frenzied tragedy is the highest delight of those who think that the economic conditions created by their own class rank the same for tragic purpose as those arising from the uncontrollable workings of nature. This, of course, is much nicer than to allow the victim to become recuperated through the beneficent in-

fluences of nature and start with an Alpine sunrise to begin life over again, as did Faust. The essence of the Tragic is that it appear inevitable. The moment it appears to be avoidable, it loses its tragic force and is detected as a spurious article.

There is another point that must not escape us. Gretchen got to heaven and welcomed Faust on his arrival there. But what became of the baby that was thrown into the pond? Did Faust welcome it in heaven? It is the constant boast of modern society that it protects the sanctity of motherhood. But here is a large class of mothers whose sufferings are ignored, and who are looked upon as a burden to the taxpayers and who, in many cases, have no other course but to abandon or murder their off-spring, for which a merciful God may forgive them, but Society never does. This circumstance gives simply additional zest to the tragedy in the eyes of a bourgeois audience. It flatters the ruling class to reflect that its laws are as immutable as fate.

Why not have Gretchen appear as a

Madonna with her child in her bosom, as she welcomes Faust, and he taking it and tossing it in his arms for joy. But no, the bourgeois heaven, modeled after the bourgeois earth, will not stand for any foolishness on the bastardy question; it touches a property right,—the right of inheritance.

Faust's love affair with Helena in the castle near Sparta, though a greater breach of morality than that with Gretchen, occasioned no tragedy, not even a ripple. The child, Euphorion, instead of being drowned in a pond was the pride and joy of the entire household. That is the difference between the law of the castle and the law of the "plain room". Wealth stands above the moral law. It is wealth (the wealthy class) that moulds the moral law as it pleases and pays those who teach it as so moulded. "She was not the first one", Goethe lets Mephistopheles say. No, Goethe, and (leider!) she will not be the last one. So long as the Property Age endures there will be thousands like her every year in spite of your Gretchen tragedy. Even if this were played in all the theaters of the land every

night in the year as a moral lesson, it could have but little effect so long as economic conditions remain unchanged; and while these are ignored, we do not care to have you try your skill in working up our pity. It is not a fit subject for that purpose and the effort falls flat upon one who has seen the light.

This method of teaching virtue is as roundabout and maladroit as the capitalists' famous plan of making workingmen happy by extending commerce, etc., It consists of these steps.

1. Provide a large class of girls oppressed by poverty and ignorance and overwork.
2. Provide a class of wealthy and idle men seeking sensual pleasure.
3. The natural result will then happen.
4. Provide a great poetical genius to write a tragedy involving a seduction.
5. Have it played in the theaters as a moral lesson and warning to all "good" men and girls.

6. Influence on the aforesaid working girls=0.

We object therefore to seduction as a subject of tragedy for the same reason that we object to the tramp and the hobo as a subject of comedy either on the stage or in the illustrated papers. The reason is, that in both cases the victim of social injustice is utilized for the entertainment of the class which is responsible for the wrong. Viewed in this light, there is nothing comic about the one nor tragic about the other.

It is a hopeful sign that the working class has now reached a stage where it no longer enjoys being either laughed at or pitied by its masters. It is imbued with a seriousness which does not admit that its inferior condition is to remain an accepted fact—much to the discomfort and unrest of the class whose highest literature is rooted in the assumption of the helplessness of women and the degradation of the wealth producers.

But it will be said that we have criticized a poem, a work of art, as if it were a philosophical treatise. No, we have simply

shown that in Class Society the highest poetry reflects merely class ideas,—is merely class poetry, toy poetry, and gets its recognition, its standing from that fact alone.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GOETHE AND MILTON.

Goethe and Milton were separated by about one hundred and fifty years. It is worth while with a few rough strokes to compare these two men. Both were born in important cities and belonged to the well-to-do burgher class. Goethe's father was a councilor, Milton's a scrivener, combining probably the work of an attorney and conveyancer. Both were most carefully educated in the classics from early youth, finished the University and continued their studies for a considerable time thereafter. Both were students of Italian literature and visited Italy. Milton did this earlier in life, when his youthful enthusiasm led him even to vie with the native poets in their own tongue. Goethe made the journey later in life and devoted more attention to matters of art. Milton was the more intellectual; his mind (and we had almost said his body)

was scholarly and classical of the purest type and his whole education tended to develop this character. Aside from music, in which he was proficient, he does not seem to have cultivated the arts, nor the sciences either. In his **Paradise Lost**, perhaps for poetic reasons, he still uses the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. Goethe's range of studies was wider and embraced all the arts and sciences. Also the influence of French literature was much greater on Goethe than on Milton, as was to be expected, for reasons that are apparent. Both exhibited in early life great talent for dramatic writing. Although Milton's trend in this direction was checked by external circumstances, his ability was unquestioned. Goethe was able to give full swing to his genius in this field.

In their marriage relations both were unfortunate. Milton, having experienced the domestic inferno, was too honest and courageous to tamely submit in silence, as many do, but straightway wrote his treatises on Divorce, proved the righteousness of divorce for incompatibility by the infall-

ible authority of the Bible and set the ideal of domestic liberty on a par with religious and civil liberty. Finding polygamy justified by the Old Testament, he justified polygamy. He did not assume to be wiser than the God of Abraham. Goethe, having entered into an unfortunate domestic relation, bore it to the end with a fortitude and constancy which commands our profoundest respect. He wrote his **Elective Affinities**, which, contrary to popular opinion, teaches that marriage is or should be indissoluble upon any ground whatever. On the marriage question we should say that the supposed Epicurean stands on as high a plane of morality as the pretentious Christian, if not higher.

Milton's supposed puritanism is as distasteful to the Germans as Goethe's supposed libertinism is to the English, and prejudice in both cases has no doubt prevented many from appreciating these two men. Goethe's Teutonic physique and exuberant spirits and vitality would make poets like Spenser and Milton seem to him squeamish, cold and self-righteous. The

heartly, lusty humanness and animalism of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Byron was more congenial to the poet who could write the scene in Auerbach's Cellar, a feat which we venture to say would have been utterly impossible for Milton to accomplish. He could be coarse when necessary for serious purposes, as he was in his reply to Salmasius, but not out of mere frivolity. In order to contrast Milton's daintiness with the revelry of the wine cellar, let us quote here his sonnet giving his idea of conviviality:—

“Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son,  
Now that the fields are dank and ways are  
    mire,  
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by  
    the fire  
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won  
From the hard season gaining? Time will  
    run  
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire  
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire  
The lilly and rose, that neither sowed nor  
    spun.  
What neat repast shall feast us, light and  
    choice,

Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may  
    rise  
To hear the lute well touched, or artful  
    voice  
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?  
He who of those delights can judge and  
    spare  
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

Goethe's inner life was full of storm and stress. Milton, so far as we can judge, never had to go through the fierce struggle for self-mastery which Goethe has so vividly pictured in Faust's advances to Gretchen, and he was consequently spared the humiliation of such a fall as Faust suffered. In Milton's case continence was no great virtue. He never realized in his own experience the full meaning of the truth that the man who stops in a downward course is greater than he who successfully resists the first temptation.

Each of these men occupied an official position in the government and lived through a period of great political upheaval. Goethe's position was insignificant and

needs no further notice. Milton, hearing the rumblings of the approaching conflict while in Italy, hastened home from his travels, dropped his cherished studies and his poetry and threw himself with absolute devotion on the side of what was then progress. He was ill-fitted for such rough and tumble strife, a thing which many of us make into an excuse for shirking duty at the present time. Even when using his pen in support of the commonwealth as Cromwell's Foreign Secretary, he felt as though he were working only with his left hand, as he expresses it. Yet with this left hand he wrote the **Defense of the English People** and completely demolished Salmasius and the whole crew of royal apologists.

Read his stern protest in Cromwell's name to the Prince of Piedmont against the massacre of the Waldenses and warning against any further attempt to coerce them on account of their religion (which was heeded); compare this vigorous action with the passive attitude of the so-called American Commonwealth towards the massacres that have been going on now for

years in Russia and see how faint censure here amounts to practical approval of those atrocities; see how our milksop statesmen and presidential candidates, traveling in Russia, hobnob with the authorities who are responsible for these things; and then figure out if you can, how long it will take at this rate of backsliding for bourgeois democracy to reach the goal of Liberty.

For twenty years Milton fought the good fight, and after working himself blind and seeing his cause temporarily defeated, he withdrew to devote himself again to the Muses. Another in his place might easily have given up hope and lent his genius to the victorious reaction. But not Milton. Although he had got a little ahead of the procession, it was not for him to go back to the mass. He looked forward to the time when the body of the procession would catch up with him and appreciate his work. His last piece, the Grecian-modeled drama **Sampson Agonistes**, breathes a spirit of defiance rather than defeat. Though unsuccessful he had made no mistake.

What Goethe would have done had he

been drawn into the vortex of a first rate social war such as the English Commonwealth, the French Revolution or the struggle now going on in Russia, it is impossible to say. He was never put to the test. As a spectator beyond the border he witnessed the French Revolution. The enlightenment which took place in the intellectual world preceding that outbreak had its influence on him. Its restless and defiant spirit is reflected in the character of Faust in Part I. But in later years when the popular cause had apparently failed, Goethe seems to have had no higher political ideal than a benevolent paternalism. His moral courage and convictions cannot be questioned; but his environment was unpropitious and his mission seemed to lie in another direction. It was the ambitious scope of Part II of Faust, intended to cover the whole social activity of man, which forced Goethe to venture to some extent on political ground, with indifferent success, as we have tried to show.

Goethe could have learned something from Milton about politics and also about

cultivating the sense of duty and educating the conscience, instead of merely running through the world, as Faust boasts to Care. But in some things Goethe shows a long advance over Milton:—he had freed himself not only from scholastic austerity and the slavish imitation of classical literature, but also from dogmatic theology. For Milton the Bible was the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; although he did pretty much as he pleased, his argumentative skill was always equal to the task of reconciling his acts and views with the Bible. Goethe too was familiar with the Bible, but in his day the influence of the dogmatic-metaphysical was on the wane and the effect of the evolutionary method was already noticeable. Goethe's combination of the romantic and the classical, of the spirit and the flesh, gave him broader human sympathies. If it was the merit of the Greeks to have first represented the gods in human form instead of in the earlier forms of animals and monsters, we may say it was Goethe's merit to have drawn both Lord and Devil from

the far away regions in which they dwelt in the strained imaginations of Dante and Milton, and brought them down to earth to talk and act like human beings.

Milton sings of woman's fall as the cause of all our woe, and his estimation of woman is strictly patriarchal. She is an inferior being. The race ruined by her must be redeemed by a male, the first-born of God.

Goethe's story is the reverse of this. He shows us a man, and a strong one at that, yielding to the devil and his salvation by a daughter of Eve instead of by the son of God. And the woman makes the vicarious atonement too; she so loved the man that she not only gave up all for him in her life time, but died on the block that the requirements of "justice" might be fulfilled to the strict letter of the law. It was this that made her prayers to the *mater gloriosa*, the Queen of Heaven, effectual to save Faust's soul.

The duality of sex seems to be as great a stumbling block in religion as the duality of mind and matter formerly was in philosophy. This difficulty has now been over-

come in philosophy, by the work of Dietzgen and others, not by denying to one the right of existence or by sacrificing one to the other or trying unnaturally to force one into the category of the other; but by referring both mind and matter to a genus high enough to include both, viz. the unifying Infinity or infinite Universe. Nature is large enough to contain and unify all differences and apparent opposites. The next great poet who attempts anything on these lines will have to reconcile this duality of sex. The abolition or reconciliation of economic classes will go far towards clearing the way for the reconciliation of the sexes; and we suspect that instead of being compelled to resort to the expedient of having one sex save the other by the sacrifice and death of the innocent to atone for the guilty, our future poet will be able to find a way by which the whole race can co-operate in harmony for the salvation of all its members of both sexes without the unnecessary sacrifice of any.

Goethe had no use for Christianity. Although Jesus was human enough to be

attractive, yet in his genuine, original character he was too radical and plebeian for Goethe's purposes; and in the distorted and monstrous character which has been foisted upon him by the political hierarchy called the Church, putting the seal of heaven's approval on every form of oppression, he is more like Mephistopheles than Jesus. Hence Goethe had to get along without him.

Milton's theme is now dead. **Paradise Lost** was once quite generally used as a reading and parsing book in schools; but that day is past. Goethe's theme however is still fresh and will continue to occupy reflecting minds until the abolition of class society has enabled mankind to eat the forbidden fruit of Knowledge and has revealed the mystery of human "government" and of Plato's "wisdom" and at the same time revealed the mystery of so-called Good and Evil.





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