



FAUSTUS.—FROM A DRAWING BY E. A. ABBEY.

*See Poem, Page 115.*

## FAUSTUS.

A WINTER midnight: in his lumbered room  
 Faustus, the great magician, sat alone;  
 A magic lamp flared ghastly through the gloom  
 On instruments, books, papers, round him strown;  
 Smote not his ear the north wind's hollow boom,  
 Nor rattling sleet against the window blown.  
 Wrapped in stern thought, the Master, strong and  
 wise,  
 Sat wrinkling his gray brows down o'er his eyes.

It was the last hour of the fatal day  
 That closed the number of his years misspent;  
 For he whose word the spirits must yet obey  
 That live and work in every element  
 Must soon lay by that supernatural sway.  
 He can not now repair, nor even repent;  
 While o'er the storm the clock's remorseless call  
 To the swift moments echoes from the wall.

And Faustus murmured: I must listen to it—  
 Time's footfalls—though I fain would stop my ears;  
 Fain would I dash it down, but will not do it;  
 I can not hush the wail of wasted years,  
 And bootless, when my life is drained, to rue it;  
 Prayer can not help, else would I pray; nor tears,  
 Else would I weep. Time will not stay his pace,  
 And Death and I shall soon stand face to face.

My scholars they have left me here alone  
 To wrestle with my doom—for me to pray;  
 For I, sometime to outward seeming grown  
 Indifferent if it hasten or delay,  
 Chid them, because I sank to hear their moan;  
 For well I know, ere night shall pass away,  
 My soul shall enter that dread realm of pain  
 Whose brazen vault makes prayer forever vain.

I am not grown indifferent that I know  
 My doom is certain as eternity;  
 Bound to a rack whose tortures ever grow,  
 From which I never more can wrest me free:  
 Not worse to plunge at once in infinite woe,  
 What I must, suffer, be what I must be,  
 Than linger, mid dead hopes and joys and fears,  
 The wreck and ruin of my wasted years.

I would I might not think, yet think I must;  
 I can not, what I most desire, forget.  
 O were I nothing more than senseless dust,  
 Or like a day which when its sun has set  
 Sleeps, ne'er to wake! Alas! that holy trust  
 Of happy sleep, after life's fume and fret,  
 I know it not; there's nothing holy mine:  
 Repining all my days, I still repine.

Remorse, remorse, thou sharpest sting of fate!  
 The thoughts which I have never dared to think  
 Now swell my heart, and grow articulate  
 In words I can not smother. On the brink  
 Of life and death, o'erlooking both, I wait,  
 And living thus in both, from either shrink;  
 Yet could I welcome now hell's fiery doom,  
 If those fierce flames these memories might consume.

Is there forgetfulness in hell? I live  
 Life o'er again these moments, each a year.  
 O fearful power of memory that can give  
 Life back again, though only on its bier!  
 Life that ran through the years, as through a sieve  
 Runs water, leaving nothing. Why, so near  
 The end of all, should Time turn back again  
 To wring my spirit with remorseful pain?

Alas! I dreamed not to have ended so!  
 A golden, burning goal had made me blind.  
 I dreamed of bringing good to man below,  
 And thought to leave a glorious name behind;  
 To strip from knowledge all the empty show,  
 And strike to the great centre through the  
 rind;  
 To make the spirits serve me, and compel  
 Time to yield all his secrets to my spell.

Ah, well I mind me of that summer day  
 When, driven by the demon of unrest,  
 I passed the city gate, and took my way  
 Toward the haunted forest in the west  
 That like a cloud on the horizon lay;  
 And with my purpose only half confessed,  
 Dreading to linger o'er what I would shun,  
 I hastened forward in the setting sun.

And at the corner of four roads that met  
 Just in the border of that haunted wood  
 I stayed my feet what time the sun had set.  
 It was a grim, unholy neighborhood,  
 And all about were fearful things that whet  
 My horror: close at hand a gallows stood,  
 And underneath it was a murderer's grave,  
 And in the forest's edge a witches' cave.

The mystic circle and the signs I drew;  
 And then I waited for the deepening night,  
 Until the screeching owl above me flew  
 With her wild cry of warning and affright.  
 The grass around was wet with holy dew,  
 Save where I stood; and then I struck a light  
 With magic implements, and spake a spell  
 That cleft the world and echoed down in hell.

Then darkness thickened round me like a wall,  
 Hiding the world, but not the starry sky;  
 And from it I could hear the demons call  
 My name, but I would yield them no reply;  
 And then there fell a silent interval  
 Of nameless horror; not a sound nor cry  
 Was heard, but spectral eyes that froze my blood  
 Glared into the strong circle where I stood.

Then suddenly the swarming air was full  
 Of unimaginably frightful shapes:  
 Led by a skeleton that bore his skull  
 Under his arm, a crowd of dragon apes  
 Whirled round me, stretching out their arms to pull  
 Their master from his vantage. Then a lapse  
 Of utter darkness; while, with folded arms,  
 I waited for the end of these alarms.

It came. A radiance like a summer dawn  
 Disclosed a vision out of fairy-land—  
 An overshadowed arbor on a lawn,  
 Where lay a lovely lady, with a band  
 Of fair attendants, and a milk-white fawn  
 Crouching beside her feet. She raised her hand  
 And greeted me and smiled. Not Eve so fair  
 In Eden as that daughter of the air.

Toward me she cast her large and lustrous eyes,  
 And smiled, and drew me to her with her hand;  
 Her red lips parted with voluptuous sighs,  
 And her alluring beauty half unmanned  
 My spirit, and o'ercame me with surprise;  
 But I had nobler favors to demand  
 Of the dread Powers than love, however sweet;  
 And darkness swallowed soon the fair deceit.

A pause: then stood the Tempter at my side.  
 He promised me the gift of spirit-sight,  
 That I might know whate'er the world may hide,  
 And pierce the farthest region of the night;  
 Might loose the secrets wisest men had tried  
 In vain to loose, and learn the awful might  
 That rules the universe and all beyond  
 My mortal range. And then we made that bond.

With him I sought the regions under-ground,  
 And passed the boundaries of eternal pain;  
 Saw Death on his white horse, that made no sound,  
 Though rushing by with all his ghastly train;  
 Searched through the universe from bound to bound,  
 Only to find my utmost knowledge vain.  
 The heights and depths were subject to my will,  
 But the dread secret was a secret still.

Knowledge! what gav'st thou but the power to see  
 That nothing could be known? What profit all  
 The arts that bound the spirits under me?  
 I grope, a blind man on a doorless wall,  
 Where all is mystery and perplexity,  
 And where alike the wise and foolish fall.  
 Ah, Nature's open book! was ever sage  
 Could tell the meaning of the simplest page?

O mother Nature! kind to lowly wants,  
 Thou giv'st the husbandman due sun and rain,  
 Seed-time and harvest, fair and bounteous plants,  
 For use and show, and mak'st no labor vain;  
 But when the heart of man for knowledge pants,  
 And when, with tears and sighs and spirit-pain,  
 He casts abroad the seed of earnest thought,  
 Ah! wherefore ever mock his hopes with naught?

Alas, that I became so basely proud,  
 And gave my soul to bitterness and scorn;  
 That, when I found I could not grasp the cloud,  
 I, who once thought me for high purpose born,  
 Should play the common juggler for the crowd,  
 Amuse them with low tricks with cup and horn,  
 And be the chief buffoon at emperors' courts!  
 Yet, ah! my heart was never in those sports.

O loathsome pandering to gaping boors  
 And royal fools! O impotence of pride,  
 Which drove me into woods and lonely moors!  
 For, ah! the universe is not so wide

That one can fly those merciless pursuers,  
 Remorse and Shame, nor from them ever hide,  
 Though one should seek in hell the deepest cave;  
 And cruel even the rest they give their slave.

Even Death, that makes all earthly troubles well,  
 An ever-haunting phantom, mocked my prayer;  
 And that sweet apparition, sent from hell,  
 Lured me but certain moments from despair,  
 Most beautiful of phantoms, and most fell;  
 Was never earthly maiden half so fair;  
 I might have deemed her fresh from paradise,  
 Yet knew she was a demon in disguise.

No more! no more! It makes my senses reel.  
 It almost makes me wish for life again.  
 Yet surely life, like a revolving wheel,  
 Could but turn on to this same hour of pain.  
 Rouse, Faustus! rouse thyself, and set thy heel  
 On bitter-sweet remembrances and vain  
 Remorse: for thee the past is ever past,  
 And for the time to come the die is cast.

'Tis cast! The Judge in heaven has closed His ear.  
 I will not pray vain prayers, will not repent.  
 Away with memory and away with fear!  
 Not with loud blasphemy will I resent  
 My doom, but with calm mind and will austere  
 Await my adversaries malevolent:  
 They'll come to rend me limb from limb ere long,  
 But, though I am their prey, will find me strong.

Shall I, who once have forced those brazen doors  
 Where the doomed spirit supplicates in vain,  
 And breathed the hot breath of those parchèd shores,  
 Now quake to see those portals yawn again,  
 And face the lake that ceaseless flames and roars?  
 Not loss of heaven, nor hell's eternal pain—  
 Nay, nay, not that I grieve, not this I fear,  
 But his triumphant and malignant jeer.

And must I evermore lie crushed and dumb,  
 Vanquished, and emptied of my vaunted skill?  
 In many a struggle have I overcome  
 This Lucifer, and bent him to my will;  
 And wherefore in that lower world succumb?  
 Shall I not Faustus be, and Master still?  
 Him I defy, with all his brood accursed!—  
 It strikes! My time is finished! Do your worst!