

**THE SECOND PART
OF GOETHE'S
FAUST. PP. 1-284**

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The Second Part of Goethe's Faust. pp. 1-284 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe & John Anster

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JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE & JOHN ANSTER

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THE SECOND PART

Johann Wolfgang von
OF
GOETHE'S FAUST

TRANSLATED BY

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INTRODUCTION.

IN the close of the "Prelude at the Theatre" with which Goethe called the public to his show, before opening with the Prologue in Heaven in his First Part of Faust, the manager indicates the spirit of the whole design :

Only engage, and then the mind grows heated—
Begin it, and the work will be completed.

• • • • •
Strut on our narrow stage with lofty stature,
As moving through the circle of wide Nature.
With swiftest speed, in calm thought weighing well
Each movement,—move from Heaven, through Earth, to Hell.

What is known as the First Part of Goethe's Faust, is a complete work, dealing with man's individual life as the poet felt it in his earlier years. But the use of the Faust legend for poetic contemplation of this stage of life on which we all are players, had fascination for Goethe. He went on to a second play on the same subject, parallel in many respects with the first, in which Helena takes the place of Gretchen, the problem of the race is the main theme, and the final triumph of good, evil itself shaping unconsciously the future good, leads to the close in Heaven. The Prologue also was in Heaven: all begins and ends in God. As a play, the Second Part is feebler than the First, deficient in that individual life and action which is inseparable from any play meant to be acted, and, in some parts, wholly unactable. The poet has chosen to sound in his own way the depths in the great stream of life and sport over its shallows, without suffering his invention to be bounded by conditions proper to one form of art. The genius of a great master is lavished upon every part of the design. One individuality is never absent, that of Goethe himself. The whole man is in the two parts of Faust; and from that point of view the Second Part is even stronger than the First. As the utterance of riper life, its scope of thought

is larger, its temper calmer. It is, in some sense, as an *Odyssey* after an *Iliad*. It abounds more in the thoughts and images that men take with them as companions in life. It is more a *Morality Play* than a true *Drama*, but a *Morality Play* that joins philosophy to faith, and applies to the dissection of life a range of power to which the best of the old morality writers could make no approach.

Goethe, born in 1749, began to work on *Faust* in 1774, when his age was five-and-twenty; in the days when the French Revolution was on its way, and problems of life in every form vexed all who thought. Goethe, like most other young poets of the time, could say of those days with the *Solitary* in Wordsworth's *Excursion*—

Then my soul
Turned inward to examine of what stuff
Time's fetters were composed, and life was put
To inquisition long and profitless.

"*The Sorrows of Young Werther*," written at that time, show clearly enough that Goethe's inquisition would have been long indeed and profitless if his mind had not grown as the work proceeded. Goethe was incapable of writing the *Second Faust* when he began the *First*. He knew that his whole design was beyond the years he then had, but he set boldly to work, as every man must who would within a lifetime bring some large and worthy labour to an end. The scenes in the *First Part* were not written consecutively. In 1790 a fragment was published of which every part had been written before 1776. The complete play of *Faust*—known as the *First Part*, but not the less a complete play—was first printed in 1808 in an edition of Goethe's works published at Tübingen in thirteen volumes. The second *Faust* had then been for at least eight years in his mind. He was working in 1800 upon *Helena* scenes for the second *Faust*, when he had not yet written the *Walpurgis Night* or the scene of *Valentine's* death for the first. Long afterwards, in 1827, Goethe published for the first time, in the fourth volume of a collected edition of his works, some eighty pages of *Helena*, a classic-romantic *Phantasmagoria*. The second *Faust* was not finished until the 20th of July 1831, and Goethe died on the 22nd of March 1832. He would have completed his eighty-third year if he had lived to his next birthday on the 28th of *August*; but he was within a month of eighty-two when he put

the last touch to his second Faust, the composition of the two Faust poems having occupied his mind at intervals during fifty-seven years of the long life of which it was meant to be, and is, the fullest utterance.

Goethe called his *Helena*, when published separately as an Interlude to Faust, a "Classico-romantic Phantasmagoria," and it is at any rate clear that a healing influence is ascribed to Greek art when wedded to the Teutonic mind. The child of Faust and *Helena*, *Euphorion*, mounts high. Goethe did consider Byron to have mounted high, and had Byron in mind at times when dwelling on *Euphorion*. But *Euphorion* is as much an ideal as his parents; and if we speak of the union of Faust with *Helena* as union of the Teutonic with the Classical, we still limp behind the genius of the poet, who looked behind those words to abiding attributes of human life. The reader who begins this second Faust with clear conception of the opening scene, in which man is surrounded by the beneficent powers of Nature, and then follows to the contrast in the succeeding pictures of "the world's vain mask," may think his way through the book, finding much to dwell on at the first reading, more at the second, and yet more at the third. Of a really great work the enjoyment grows with the familiarity that breeds contempt of what is trivial. We have now included in this Library both Fausts, Goethe's whole work, in as clear, vigorous and true a version as the English language is likely to furnish. The frequent happiness of Dr. Anster's lines was the result of studious care where the case may be thought greatest, and it was the care of a good scholar with a lively wit who loved the poets, and might have set up as a minor poet on his own account if he had thought that worth while. But the dainty charm of Goethe's own verse, which puts thought to music following the lightest change of mood, is wholly untranslatable. To attempt to translate some of his songs is as hopeless as if one were to attempt to translate into English

the sweet sound
That breathes across a bank of violets.

Allowance made for this inevitable loss, the whole Faust can be read and felt and pondered over, and grown into, in English or in German. Shakespeare deals with the problems of life in his plays with an absolute insight, and to the utmost of

man's power leaves each problem duly solved. In Faust the debate is ever present and the process of solution is less clear.

Let me add here a few words written by Goethe himself, in his "Kunst und Alterthum," when he was about to print the Helena Interlude :

"Faust's character, in the elevation to which latter refinement, working on the old rude tradition, has raised it, represents a man who, feeling impatient and imprisoned within the limits of mere earthly existence, regards the possession of the highest knowledge, the enjoyment of the fairest blessings, as insufficient, even in the slightest degree, to satisfy his longing : a spirit, accordingly, which struggling out on all sides, ever returns the more unhappy. . . .

"I could not but wonder that none of those who undertook a completion of my Fragment had lighted on the thought, which seemed so obvious, that the composition of a Second Part must necessarily cleave itself altogether away from the hampered sphere of the First, and conduct a man of such a nature into higher regions under worthier circumstances.

"How I for my part had determined to essay this, lay silently before my own mind, from time to time exciting me to some progress ; while, from all and each, I carefully guarded my secret, still in hope of bringing the work to the wished-for issue."

A life prolonged to more than fourscore years seemed the fulfilment of a hope that must have been very doubtful when Goethe was about to print the Helena scenes as a fragment. The whole work is now before us. In his comment upon the Helena scenes in the "Foreign Review" of 1828 (it is to be found in the first volume of his "Miscellanies"), Thomas Carlyle said wisely, that "everywhere in life the true question is not what we gain, but what we do; so also in intellectual matters, in conversation, in reading, which is more precise and careful conversation, it is not what we receive, but what we give." Therefore the student of these two Fausts, comparing them, observing the significant contrasts and analogies between them, as well as following their sequence, if after all he should find that he has not got much out of them, might go on to reflect with satisfaction upon all the power of thought they have got out of him.

H. M.