

Dr. Faustus
Summary and Analysis Scene 8

Summary: Robin and Ralph appear with a silver goblet that Robin has apparently taken from a vintner. Robin is very pleased with this new acquisition, but immediately the vintner appears and demands that the goblet be returned to him. Robin insists that he does not have the goblet and allows himself to be searched. The vintner cannot find the goblet. Meanwhile, Robin begins to read incantations from Faustus' book. These incantations summon Mephistophilis, who appears and puts some firecrackers at their backs and then momentarily disappears. In fright, Robin gives the vintner back his goblet. Mephistophilis reappears and complains that he has had to come all the way from Constantinople because these irresponsible servants used incantations without understanding them. He threatens to change them into an ape and a dog, and then leaves. Robin and Ralph can only think about how much fun and how much food they might have if transformed into these animals.

The chorus [Wagner] enters and reviews Faustus' career. When Faustus has seen all the royal courts, he returns home, where many of his friends seek him out and ask him difficult questions concerning astrology and the universe. Faustus' knowledge makes him famous all through the land. Finally the emperor, Carolus the Fifth, asks him to come to his court.

Analysis: This comic interlude, which actually contributes very little to the development of the play, is the second scene in a row between Ralph and Robin. The two scenes belong together in showing the result of the men's desire to practice conjuring. Some critics believe that these scenes were later inserted by another author, and there is some dispute whether Marlowe is the author of any of the comic scenes. Generally, in the present condition of the text, the safest thing to assume is that these scenes filled in the time element and provided a type of low comedy which appealed to the less intelligent members of the audience.

At the end of the scene, we find out that Faustus has attained a certain amount of fame in the field of astrology. He has also experienced a measure of enjoyment. He is now more concerned with satisfying his immediate pleasure and is no longer interested in being instructed in the good life. By describing Faustus' return to Germany, the chorus also fills in the transition between scenes and prepares us for the next scene, which will take place in Germany.