

THE BAD BARGAIN;

OR,

THE WORLD SET UP TO SALE.

The devil, as the Scriptures show,
Tempts sinful mortals high and low;
And acting well his various part,
Suits every bribe to every heart:
See where the Prince of Darkness stands
With baits for souls in both his hands.

To one he offers empires whole,
And gives a sceptre for a soul;
To one he freely gives in barter,
A peerage, or a star and garter;
To one he pays polite attention,
And begs him just to take a pension.

Some are so fired with love of fame,
He bribes them by an empty name;
For fame they toil, they preach, they write,
Give alms, build hospitals, or fight;
For human praise renounce salvation,
And sell their souls for reputation.

But the great gift, the mighty bribe,
Which Satan pours amid the tribe—
Which millions seize with eager haste,
And all desire at least to taste,
Is—plodding reader!—what d’ye think?
Alas!—’tis money—money—chink!

Round the wide world the tempter flies,
Presents to view the glittering prize;
See how he hastes from shore to shore,
And how the nations all adore:
Souls flock by thousands to be sold,
Smit with the fond desire of gold.

See, at yon needy tradesman’s shop,
The universal tempter stop;
“Would’st thou,” he cries, “increase thy treasures?
Use lighter weights and scantier measures;
Thus thou shalt thrive:” the trader’s willing,
And sells his soul to get a shilling!

Next Satan to a farmer hies:
“I scorn to cheat!” the farmer cries;
Yet, still his heart on wealth is bent,
And so the devil is content;
Now markets rise, and riches roll,
And Satan quite secures his soul.

Mark next yon cheerful youth so jolly,
So fond of laughter and of folly;
He hates a stingy griping fellow,
But gets each day a little mellow;
To Satan too he sells his soul,
In barter for a flowing bowl.

But mark again yon lass a-spinning,
See how the tempter is beginning;
Some beau presents a top-knot nice,
She grants her virtue as the price:
A slave to vanity’s control,
She, for a ribbon, sells her soul!

Thus Satan tries each different state—
With mighty bribes he tempts the great;
The poor, with equal force he plies,
But wins them with a humbler prize;
He has gentler arts for young beginners,
And fouler sins for older sinners.

Of too he cheats our mortal eyes,
For Satan father is of lies;
A thousand swindling tricks he plays us,
And promises, but never pays us;
Thus we, poor fools, are strangely caught,
And find we’ve sold our souls for nought.

Nay, oft, with quite a juggler’s art,
He bids the proffered gift depart;
Sets some gay joys before our face,
Then claps a double in its place;
Turns up some loss for promised gain,
And conjures pleasure into pain.

Be wise, then, oh! ye wordly tribe,
Nor sell your conscience for a bribe;
When Satan tempts you to begin,
Resist him, and refuse to sin:
’Tis the bargain on the whole,
To gain the world and lose the soul!

HYMN 185.

