

found residing on the farm of one of his tenants. It is here that Elsie, beyond doubt, as beautiful a conception as ever was formed in the mind of any poet, chooses her fate. This scene is by far the the most pathetic in the drama; and it is in passages like these, that Longfellow's genius manifests itself; because in them all is nature, and there is no indication of a model. Lucifer again appears; taking the priest's place in the confessional he gives unholy advice to the prince, which strengthens him to accept Elsie's offer. This scene is rather repulsive; being too forced; though it is conducted with admirable skill. The prince being persuaded, he and Elsie set out for Salerno, where the sacrifice is to take place. By means of this journey, the poet makes good use of the dioramic method; we are treated to scenes of crusaders, monks, pilgrims who pass before us, in varied succession. The student of literature, who wishes to know something about those old miracle plays so popular in the Middle Ages, will find an excellent one presented here, in the Cathedral of Strasburg. Our poet, while preserving the interest of the old mysteries, has added much by the beauty of his composition.

Salerno is reached. The opening scenes described here will be thoroughly enjoyed by those who have studied scholastic philosophy. Much humor is displayed by the poet in hitting off the extreme acerbity of those who went too far in their zeal for knowledge. He gives a laughable picture of the war long waged in the Middle Ages, between the Nominalists and Realists, on the question of universals, and a not less amusing one of the fury which at times possessed the souls of hostile grammarians.

An ambitious scholastic wished to know:

“Whether angels in moving from place to place
Pass through the intermediate space.
Whether God himself is the author of evil
Or whether that is the work of the devil.
When, where, and wherefore Lucifer fell
And whether he now is chained in hell.”

The following pages describe how Elsie's life was preserved, and the powers of Satan overthrown. The drama ends with the marriage of Prince Henry and Elsie.

Although the *Golden Legend* cannot be called a great work; yet it exhibits many proofs of genius, accomplishments, power of expression and learning. It has been aptly compared to an ornament in which some gems of the purest lustre are set, side by side with fragments of colored glass, and even inferior substances. We must regret that the beautiful language and sentiments scattered through the drama, do not constitute part of a grand work which would make these passages more popular. Perhaps the story was too legendary to form the material of a good drama; hence several critics claim that Longfellow's radical error could be traced to two things—the want of a life-like plot, and the introduction of supernatural machinery.

There is undoubtedly much in the manner of telling a story, but the matter of the story is obviously of greater consequence. Still, the *Legend* is highly pleasing, and instructive as a whole; the beautiful scenes predominate; virtue and vice are properly distinguished. Lucifer's digressions and liberties seem offensive at times; but we can say with the *Angel of Evil Deeds* :—

It is Lucifer
The son of mystery;
And since God suffers him to be
He, too, is God's minister,
And labors for some good,
By us not understood.”

JOHN R. O'BRIEN, '95.

