

whole of little artistic value, although striking situations and passages of rare poetic merit occasionally occur.

Not to enter into a detailed analysis or comparison of them all, it may be said that the only thread which pervades and binds the whole together, is Faust's surrender of himself to evil, allegorized by his conjuration of and bargain with the Devil in various forms. His motive is generally a selfish one. It is to gratify his baser desires; to see the world; to better his worldly circumstances; to take vengeance on his enemies; or oftener to gain unlimited knowledge, which the Devil cannot always grant. He also uses his power for philanthropic purposes, for the benefit of his relatives or country; or of humanity at large. These well meant efforts, though at first crowned with apparent success, finally end in disappointment and disaster, as if the end did not always justify the means. Generally, in accordance with poetic justice, Faust pays his forfeit, even when he seeks to benefit his fellows. When he is saved, it is through the intercession of the souls of departed friends, suggested, doubtless, by the similar catastrophe of Goethe's poem.

Let us now turn our attention to this work. The production of it extends over the whole period of the poet's literary activity. Goethe was born in 1749, and he died in 1832. He began his Faust in 1773, and finished shortly before his death. The poem is, in a measure, the reflection of his own life, on its reflective as well as on its active side, and to a certain extent that of humanity. Between the two parts of which it is composed, there is a marked difference, corresponding to the poet's life. The first part, a great portion of which was composed during the author's youth, is animated by the glow and vigor of early manhood, and contains the most poetical and powerful passages of the drama, while the action scarcely lags for a moment. In the second part, the product of later years and riper experience, the verse, lofty as it generally is, is often frigid, the allegory complicated, the disquisitions numerous, and, as we shall see, unity of action, though not of idea, largely wanting. Yet of the two parts this is, perhaps, the greater, if not the better known, and the one which should give the poem its high place in the literary productions of the world.

The action of the whole play may be said, in the words of the "Prelude at the Theatre," to move from Heaven through Earth to Hell. Its motive is placed in Heaven, where, in imitation of the book of Job, permission to tempt Faust is given by the Lord to Mephistopheles, the spirit of negation, who appears amongst his angels with the request, because, as he says:

"His fancy hurries him afar,
Of Heaven he asks its highest star,
Self-willed and spoiled in mad pursuit,
Of earth demands its fairest fruit,
And all that both can give supplied,
Behold him still unsatisfied."

The permission is given, but the Lord warns that "A good man, clouded though his senses be by error, is no willing slave to it."

The subject of this discussion appears by night in his study in cap and gown as an old university professor, bewailing the barren results of his extensive studies in

philosophy, law, medicine, and theology. As a consequence he has devoted himself to magic, by means of which he now summons before him the mighty spirit of earth, that is, of nature. But at the sight of his consternation, this terrible vision vanishes with the contemptuous words: "Man, thou art like the spirit whom thou conceivest not me." As he breaks out into reproaches against himself for his weakness, he is interrupted by the entrance of his assistant, Wagner, the spirit of pedantry, who imagined he had heard his master declaiming a Greek tragedy. But after this interruption, his thoughts revert to their former object. His real impotence compared with his unbounded aspirations, depresses him so that he resolves to seek in the other world that enlightenment which is denied him in this one.

"Let this last draught, the product of my skill,
My own free choice be quaffed with resolute will,
A solemn festive greeting to the coming day."

But the church bells on Easter morning, calling the faithful to prayer, and the sound of a chorus of voices remind him of the fair faith of his childhood, and cause him to arrest his hand and to bear longer with the limitations of life.

On the afternoon of this same Easter Sunday a motley throng of citizens are promenading before the city gate enjoying the balmy air of spring. Accompanied by Wagner, Faust joins them, but looks upon their gayety with contempt. Many of his fellow-citizens, nevertheless, greet him warmly as they recognize in him the generous benefactor who, with his father, a celebrated physician, had liberally dispensed assistance and medicine in a time of distress and sickness. This praise sounds like mockery to Faust, who knows that their medicine had killed more than it cured. On their way home in the evening the strange movements of a black poodle following them attract their attention. Somewhat soothed by his walk, Faust is disposed to treat this friendless cur kindly and takes him into his study. Here his doubts and yearnings return. To still them he has recourse to Revelation, which he thinks is nowhere so manifest as in the New Testament. He opens it in the original at the beginning of John, which he translates into his mother tongue: "In the beginning was the word." But as "word" does not seem to bring him to the first source, he tries "sense," then "power." "Power," however, does not bring him to the fountain head, so, by a peculiar process of reasoning, he arrives at "act." "In the beginning was the act." The poodle who, during these attempts, had been showing sighs of restlessness, now swells out to the dimensions of an enormous beast, which confirms Faust's first suspicions as to his nature. He, thereupon, proceeds to exorcise him when he assumes the form of a travelling scholar, Mephistopheles by name, who, in explanation of what he is, says:

"Part of the part am I which at the first was all,
A part of darkness which gave birth to light,
Proud light who now his mother would enthrall."

Without success he adds, for light is bound up with matter, and he says further:

"And so I trust when comes the final wreck,
Light will ere long the doom of matter share."