

THE SPELLING BEE AT ANGEL'S.

REPORTED BY TRUTHFUL JAMES.

Waltz in, waltz in, ye little kids, and gather round my knee,
And drop them books and first pot-hooks, and hear a yarn from me.
I kin not sling a fairy tale of Jinny's fierce and wild,
For I hold it is unchristian to deceive a simple child;
But as from school yer driftin' by I thowt ye'd like to hear
Of a "Spellin' Bee" at Angel's that we organized last year.
It warn't made up of gentle kids—of pretty kids—like you,
But gents ez hed their reg'lar growth, and some enough for two.
There woz Lanky Jim of Sutter's Fork and Bilson of Lagrange,
And "Pistol Bob," who wore that day a knife by way of change.
You start, you little kids, you think these are not pretty names,
But each had a man behind it, and—my name is Truthful James.

Thar woz Poker Dick from Whisky Flat and Smith of Shooter's Bend,
And Brown of Calaveras—which I want no better friend.
Three-fingered Jack—yes, pretty dears—three fingers—you have five.
Clapp out off two—it's sing'lar, too, that Clapp aint now alive.

'Twas very wrong, indeed, my dears, and Clapp was much to blame;
Likewise was Jack, in after years, for shootin' of that same.

The nights was kinder lengthenin' out, the rains had jest begun,
When all the camp came up to Pete's to have their usual fun;
But we all sot a kinder sad-like around the bar-room stove,
Till Smith got up, permiskis-like, and this remark he hove:
"That's a new game down in Frisco, that ez far ez I kin see,
Beats euchre, poker and van-toon, they calls the 'Spellin' Bee.'"

Then Brown of Calaveras simply hitched his chair and spoke:
"Poker is good enough for me," and Lanky Jim sez "Shake!"
And Bob allowed he warn't proud, but he "must say right thar
That the man who tackled euchre hed his education squar."
This brought up Lenny Fairchild, the schoolmaster, who said
He knew the game and he would give instructions on that head.

"For instance, take some simple word," sez he, "like 'separate,'
Now who can spell it?" Dog my skin, ef thar was one in eight.
This set the boys all wild at once. The chairs was put in row,
And at the head was Lanky Jim, and at the foot was Joe,
And high upon the bar itself the schoolmaster was raised,
And the bar-keeper put his glasses down, and sat and silent gazed.

The first word out was "parallel," and seven let it be,
Till Joe waltzed in his double "l" betwixt the "a" and "e."
For, since he drilled them Mexicans in San Jacinto's fight,
Thar warn't no prouder man got up than Pistol Joe that night—
Till "rhythm" came! He tried to smile, then said, "they had him there,"
And Lanky Jim, with one long stride got up and took his chair.

O little kids! my pretty kids, 'twas touchin' to survey
These bearded men, with weppings on, like school-boys at their play.
They'd laugh with glee, and shout to see each other lead the van,
And Bob sat up as monitor with a one for a rattan,
Till the chair gave out "incinerate," and Brown said he'd be darned
If any such blamed word as that in school was ever learned.

When "phthisis" came they all sprang up, and vowed the man who rung
Another blamed Greek word on them be taken out and hung.
As they sat down again I saw in Bilson's eye a flash,
And Brown of Calaveras was a-twistin' his mustache,
And when at last Brown slipped on "gnosis" and Bilson took his chair,
He dropped some casual words about some folks who dyed their hair.

And then the Chair grew very white, and the Chair said he'd adjourn,
But Poker Dick remarked that he would wait and get his turn;
Then with a tremblin' voice and hand, and with a wan derin' eye,
The Chair next offered "sider-duck," and Dick began with "I."
And Bilson smiled—then Bilson shrieked! Just how the fight begun
I never knowed, for Bilson dropped and Dick he moved up one.

Then certain gents arose and said "they'd business down in camp,"
And "ez the road was rather dark, and ez the night was damp,
They'd"—here got up Three-fingered Jack and looked the door and yelled:
"No, not one mother's son goes out till that thar word is spelled!"
But while the words were on his lips, he groaned and sank in pain,
And sank with Webster on his chest and Worcester on his brain.

Below the bar dodged Poker Dick and tried to look ez he
Was huntin' up authorities that no one else could see;
And Brown got down behind the stove allowin' he "was cold,"
Till it upset and down his legs the cinders freely rolled,
And several gents called "Order!" till in his simple way
Poor Smith began with "O"—"R"—"or"—and he was dragged away.

O little kids, my pretty kids, down on your knees and pray!
You've got your eddication in a peaceful sort of way;
And bear in mind that they may be sharps ez slings their spellin' square,
But likewise slings their bowie-knives without a thought or care—

You wants to know the rest, my dears? That's all! In me you see
The only gent that lived to tell about that Spellin' Bee!

He ceased and passed, that truthful man; the children went their way
With downcast heads and downcast hearts—but not to sport or play.
For when at eve the lamps were lit, and supperless to bed
Each child was sent, with tasks undone and lessons all unsaid,
No man might know the awful woe that thrilled their youthful frames,
As they dreamed of Angel's Spelling Bee and thought of Truthful James.

Bret Harte, in November Scribner.

SELLING THE SOUL.

"This word 'Damnation' terrifies not me,
For I confound Hell in Elysium.
A sound Magician is a demi-god!"

—[Marlowe's Faustus.

"CYPRIAN. Oh, could I possess that woman,
To my aid from Hell I'd summon
A potent Devil—and my soul
Give by bond to his control!
Suffering, whoso'er he swept it,
Endless tortures!"
DEMON (from below, I accept it."

—[Calderon's Magico Prodigioso.

"And had not his own wilfulness
His soul unto the Devil bound,
He must, with certainly no less,
His self-damnation soon have found."

—[Goethe's Faust.

Without seeking to fix the exact date when the greatest of Spanish poets wrote his lyrical tragedy of "El Magico Prodigioso," it is certain that one of the greatest of our English dramatists had previously written "The Tragic Life and Death of Doctor Faustus." It appears to have been first published in 1604 (black-letter 4to), and Calderon de la Barca was not born till 1601. The subject or ruling principle of each of these extraordinary dramas is essentially the same, and is in some respects identical with the "Faust" of the greatest poet of Germany. There are no signs whatever that Calderon knew anything of Marlowe's tragedy, either in the original or through translation. That Goethe was conversant with both the above dramas is more than probable, although there is only a general resemblance in some of his earlier scenes. Howbeit, in our own period the richly-adorned poem of Goethe has (very unjustly, in our opinion) concentrated and absorbed the exclusive attention of the literary public in his version of the profoundly interesting legend, of Dr. Faustus. The learned and admirable story by Dr. Hueffer is scarcely an exception.

The theological and philosophical arguments in the German drama differ from those of the Spanish poet, chiefly in their great breadth and their variety of illustration; as also from those of the English Faustus, who contents himself, for the most part, with certain scholastic problems in cosmogony and astronomy, and a declaration of his determination to become a great magician. To obtain this power he is ready to barter his soul. He says:

"Why should he not—is not his soul his own?"

A Good Angel and a Bad Angel appear to him and advance their several arguments. The latter prevails with him, and then the magnificent Kit Marlowe puts these words into the mouth of Faustus:

"Had I as many souls as there are stars,
I'd give them all."

The Bad Angel exhorts him to "despair in God, and trust to Belzebub." Still, he is not without serious misgivings; and when he is about to sign the deed of gift with his blood, the influence of the Good Angel prevails, and the blood suddenly stops flowing—

"My blood congeals, and I can write no more!"

He had previously asked himself:

"Why waverest thou?
Oh, something sounded in mine ear—
Abjure that magic—turn to God again!"

Suddenly he sees the words "Homo, fuge!" written upon his arm. It vanishes. He does not fly. It returns! Yet he will not fly. He has duly read the Latin Incantation; and in the end, after stipulating for four-and-twenty years of magical power and human enjoyments of every kind, he signs a deed of gift in regular legal form, which gives it a ghastly air of diabolical reality.

In the "Magico Prodigioso," the sale of "the immortal soul" is effected by a similar bond, which Cyprian signs with his blood; but the preliminaries are very different from the above, and the main incentive and object are different. The Mephistopheles is also a far more learned, philosophical and courtly person. On his first appearance, as Shelley translated it (in the *Liberal*), we read, "Enter the Devil as a fine Gentleman." The surrender of Cyprian's soul to the Demon, though preceded by intense intellectual struggles, dissatisfactions with the results of philosophical studies, theological arguments, and a yearning after forbidden knowledge, is nevertheless finally determined upon for the sake of obtaining personal possession of a certain beautiful and virtuous lady. This lady (Justina) exercises an influence upon the hero (Cyprian) throughout the drama, far surpassing that of Helen in Marlowe's tragedy, and quite equal to the influence Margaret exercises over Faust. But it is of a very different kind in some respects, for Justina, besides being a boldly-

reasoning theologian, placing her life in peril as a heretic, is pursued in the first instance by two lovers before Cyprian sees her. Other situations are also in the highest style of the Spanish comedy of intrigue. These two lovers are prevented from fighting a mortal duel by the mediatorial reasonings of Cyprian, who takes so much interest in what is said of the lady that he is quite prepared to fall in love with her himself. This happens shortly after. Justina's character being regarded as of immaculate purity by these three adorers, the Demon adopts a peculiarly Spanish *treta fraudulenta* in order to damage, if not destroy, her reputation. He secretes himself in the balcony of her bed-chamber, and, when the two former lovers are advancing from opposite sides under the cover of the night, down slips the Demon by a rope, and suddenly diving into the earth, the two lovers come close upon each other, each one believing the other had just descended by the rope! A second duel is also prevented by the entrance of Cyprian. His love is, of course, much troubled by what they tell him. In some sort he is glad of it, as they agree to give her up as an unworthy object, and this relieves him of their rivalry; but partly he disbelieves the scandalous statement, and in any case his passion is too engrossing to be turned aside. He throws off his student's dress, and orders a rich court-suit, with sword and feathers; away with books and studies, for "love is the homicide of genius." He calls to his servants Moscon and Clarin:

"Moscon, prevenime mañana
Galas; Clarin, traeme luego;
Espada y plumas; que amor
Se regala en el objeto,
Atraco y lucido. Y ya
Ni libros ni estudios quiero;
Porque digan, que es amor
Homicida del ingenio."

—[Jornada, I.

From this point in the drama Cyprian pursues Justina with devoted passion. She does not encourage his hopes, and the Demon, by reason of her purity and holiness of spirit, has no real power over her. Nevertheless, he promises her to Cyprian. And the "juggling fiend" brings the meeting about in the following fashion: In a lonely wood a phantom figure of Justina appears, which Cyprian embraces, and presently carries off in his arms—when the following scene occurs:

"CYPR. Ya, bellisimi Justina,
En este sitio que oculto,
Ni el sol le penetra a rayos," etc.

—[Jornada, III.

"CYPR. Now, O beautiful Justina,
In this sweet and secret covert,
Where no beam of sun can enter,
Nor the breeze of heaven blow roughly;
Now the trophy of thy beauty
Makes my magic toils triumphant,
For here, folding thee, no longer
Have I need to fear disturbance.
Fair Justina, thou hast cost me
Even my soul! But in my judgment,
Since the gain has been so glorious,
Not so dear has been the purchase.
Oh! unveil thyself, fair goddess,
Not in clouds obscure and murky,
Not in vapors hide the sun—
Show its golden rays refulgent!"

(He draws aside the cloak, and discovers a skeleton.)

In the brief space at our disposal in the present paper it must be obvious that no attempt can be made to give more than a syncretical view of this wonderful poem; sufficient, however, has been presented to show that it takes rank, together with Marlowe's tragedy, as the earliest of the high-class poetical, magical, amatory, philosophical, and theological treatment to which the remarkable old legend of Dr. Faustus is so manifestly open. And this would be the most palpable with respect to "El Magico Prodigioso" if we would give some of the argumentative discussions between Cyprian and the Demon; but for these as well as the love-scenes, the reader must be referred to the original, or to the translations of Shelley as the most beautifully poetical, and to those of Mr. D. F. MacCarthy as the most complete and literal.

Highly, and justly, has Milton been eulogized for his portrait of Satan, thus redeeming the "Prince of Darkness" from the old grotesque monster with horns and tail, as described and "illuminated" in monastic missals and legends. But in the intellectual sorrow and retrospective pangs of the "archangel ruined," Milton was preceded in some degree by Marlowe, and in a direct and sustained manner, both in sorrow and intellectual grandeur, by Calderon:

"Tan galan fui por mis partes,
Por mi lustre tan heroica,
Tan noble por mi linage,
Y por mi ingenio tan docto," etc.
El Magico Prodigioso.

—[Jornada, II.

Here is Shelley's noble translation:

"Since thou desirest, I will then unveil
Myself to thee; for in myself I am
A world of happiness and misery:
This I have lost, and that I must lament
Forever. In my attributes I stood
So high and so heroically great,
In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
Which penetrated with a glance the world
Beneath my feet, that, won by my high merit,
A king—whom I may call the King of kings
Because all others tremble in his pride
Before the terrors of his countenance,
In his high palace roofed with brightest gems
Of living light—call them the stars of heaven—
Named me his Counsellor. But the high praise
Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition, to ascend
His seat and place my foot triumphantly
Upon his subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls: too mad
Was the attempt, and yet more mad were now
Repentance of the irrevocable deed:
Therefore I choose this ruin with the glory
Of not to be subdued, before the shame
Of reconciling me with him who re-igns.
By coward passion."

So powerful in its features and individuality is the portrait of Satan drawn and painted by Milton, that one can not suppose he was at all indebted to "El Magico Prodigioso" for the hero of "Paradise Lost;" but the coincidence is surely very remarkable, and remarkable also as never having been noticed before, so far as I am aware; but I say this under correction. The Demon proceeds in a strain equally Miltonic:

"Nor was I alone,
Nor am I now, nor shall I be alone;
And there was hope, and there may still be hope,
For many suffrages among his vassals
Hailed me their lord and king, and many still
Are mine, and many more, perchance, shall be.
Thus vanquished, though in fact victorious,
I left his seat of empire, from mine eye
Shooting forth poisonous lightning, while my words
With inauspicious thunders shook Heaven,
Proclaiming vengeance, public as my wrong,
And imprecating on his prostrate slaves
Rapine, and death, and outrage."

We must admit that Shelley's translation, being in his stately and harmonious blank verse, makes the resemblance to Milton far greater than the *asonante* lyrics of the original (or those of the literal translation of Mr. MacCarthy)—for neither of them sound at all like Milton; the sense and purport, however, are not affected by the difference in the genius and style of the two languages.

Without searching ancient classic times, or times yet more remote, for philosophers and other celebrated men who had a "familiar demon" in frequent attendance, we may regard it as pretty certain that the sale of the human soul to the devil in order to obtain forbidden knowledge, together with magic powers enabling the possessor to work wonders, and also to obtain unlimited enjoyments of life during a specified number of years, originated in German towns, and probably in the form of itinerant plays and puppet-shows, as early as 1404. Some of these, or of similar kind, were subsequently printed. There was the "Wahrhaftigen Historien von denen graulichen Sunden Dr. Johann Faustens," Hamburg, 1599. There was "Doctor Faustus," von J. Widman, printed in Berlin, 1587; and another in the same year by Spiess. Plays on this subject, if not printed, were acted in travelling shows in Poland and in France; and it was probably not long after this period that Marlowe wrote his tragedy, and had it produced on the stage, though it seems not to have been printed till some years later.

This subject was produced in various forms during the next twenty years, but it is remarkable how closely they all held to the main principle of the early legend. A curious old theatrical pamphlet is now before me, entitled "The Necromancer, or Harlequin Doctor Faustus, as performed at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's-inn-fields. Printed and Sold at the Bookseller's Shop at the corner of Searle street, and by A. Dodd, at the Peacock, without Temple Bar, 1723." It is preceded by "The Vocal Parts of the Entertainment." The reader of the present day, having before his mind the vulgar comic stuff that is "said and sung" at three-fourths or more of the London theatres, and at nine-tenths of our provincial theatres, and of the theatres in all English-speaking countries—for which London managers are directly answerable—will naturally anticipate that these "Vocal Parts," introductory to the Necromantic Entertainment of "Harlequin Doctor Faustus," can be nothing less than a burlesque, and one of the most unmitigated kind. It is no such thing. The title, no doubt, is not a little misleading; but the treatment of the old legend is worthy of all respect, as the opening scene will testify:

"SCENE—A study. The Doctor discovered reading at a table. A good and bad Spirit appear:

"GOOD SPIRIT.

O Faustus! thy good Genius warns;
Break off in time; pursue no more
An Art that will thy Soul ensnare!

"BAD SPIRIT.

Faustus, go on! That Fear is vain:
Let thy great Heart aspire to trace
Dark Nature to her secret Springs,
Till Knowledge make thee deemed a God.

(Good and Bad Spirits disappear. The Doctor uses magical motions, and an Infernal Spirit rises.)

This infernal Spirit informs the Doctor that his spells have been successful, and that the "King of Night" proposes to divide his power with the Magician. The infernal Spirit then significantly shows a paper. The good Spirit then appears, and warns Faustus; but in vain, and we then have the following:

"INCANTATION.

Arise! ye subtle Forms that sport
Around the Throne of sable Night,
Whose Pleasures in her silent Court,
Are unprofaned with baleful Light."

As the Doctor still hesitates to sign the fatal "paper," the infernal Spirit "strikes the table, and it appears covered with gold, crowns, sceptres, etc." All sorts of promises are then made, and finally the apparition of the beautiful Helen of Troy is called up. The Doctor's scruples being overcome by that, he is "preparing to address Helen with fondness," when the infernal Spirit "interposes," and, conditionally, "offers the paper!"

The Doctor—"gazing at Helen"—signs the bond, but after this, on "attempting to approach Helen," she vanishes, together with the infernal Spirit, "who sinks laughing," in the most dishonorable manner. The next scene is called "The Doctor's School of Magic," and pupils are seated on each side of the stage to receive lessons, and "see the Power of his Art,"