

the *Abraham Sacrifiant*, though we cannot agree with M. Fagnet that it shows "la rigoureuse unité des tragédies proprement classiques" for, as we have seen, there is an interval of three days between the early and the later scenes, and at least two widely separated places are represented. The 'cantiques' which are in themselves very beautiful, are not closely related to the action, but they occur before the dramatic tension has become acute. The language of the *dénouement* is especially convincing. Abraham in his fierce determination to do the will of God is a type of the sterner Calvinists, though his character is softened and made much more interesting by his deep natural affection for his son. The struggle that goes on in his soul engages the sympathy of the reader entirely, and is infinitely more effective than the long monologues of the older plays. This result is brought about by the introduction of Satan, a character of whose presence none of the other *dramatis personae* are conscious, but who serves a double function—that of dramatically representing in his speeches the struggle of Abraham's weaker human nature against the commandment of God, and of engaging our sympathies effectively on the side of duty. The moral significance of temptation, when the worst is made to seem the better reason, is in this way vividly suggested, and the effect is very powerful. As far as I am aware the function of the devil in this play is original with Beza. In the English moralities "the office of the devil . . . . . is on the whole, limited to one thing, namely, that of giving their agents, the vices, their hellish commissions."<sup>1</sup> In *Mankind* the devil, Tytivullus, whispers his evil suggestions in the ear of mankind—a situation paralleled in some other English plays,—but nowhere do we find the devil playing a rôle so artistically conceived as is that of the *Abraham Sacrifiant*. The similarity of some of the speeches of the devil in *The Disobedient Child* to those of Satan in Beza's play, with which it is almost exactly contemporary, is perhaps worthy of note. Compare for example the following lines :

<sup>1</sup> Cushman, *The Devil and the Vice*, Halle, 1900, p. 51