

Having reached a window, Mephisto, addressing Faust, says :—

"You, as a stranger, might do worse than cast
A glance inside: most probably, your last."

Just then Faust overhears an angelic conversation, and, looking in, discovers

"Two human lovers, who, by sudden fate,
Full early from the yoke of life being freed,
Renewed their vows in that celestial state."

Of these Immortal Spirits he asks for news of what is going on in heaven. The "Youth Angelic" replies that they know nothing concerning heavenly affairs save that there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage there, and that they being determined to marry are scheming to get back to earth. The only hindrance is their garb, which would cause comment. Hearing this, the shrewd Mephisto proposes that the lovers exchange wardrobes with himself and Faust. This done, Faust and his Familiar enter heaven by the window, while the "bright fugitives" tireless fare until they descry this orb

"Hung like a fairy lamp with timid gleam
From the great branches of the solar scheme.

* * * * *
So, on the earth, as angels they remained,
Yet more than angels, being lovers too;
All their celestial loveliness retained,
And evermore in earthly sweetness grew.

* * * * *
"And still they tarry. I have met them oft,
With their pure voices and caressing eyes.
You hear the rustle of their raiment soft;
And looking up, behold with no surprise
The coronal they never yet have doffed,
The lucid aureole worn in Paradise:
Nor can you marvel that they never cared
For joys which only idle angels shared."

Returning from their sojourn in heaven, Mephisto observes that the place

"has hardly changed one bit
Since the old days before the historic split,"

while Faust remarks that they

"have just been privileged to see
The dulness of entire felicity."

Among the extracts given here are to be seen the best features of the poem. It is amusing, perhaps. It is capricious, certainly. With our great admiration for Mr. Watson's poetry, we wish he had not allowed these angels to elope; but since he has done so, we earnestly hope that he will never receive them back again into the hallowed realm of his imagination, whence heretofore have come to us only such things as are lucid and lovely.

Literature

Mr. Watson's "Caprice"

The Eloping Angels: A Caprice. By William Watson. 75 cts. Macmillan & Co.

WITH THE EXCEPTION of a few epigrammatic phrases and admirably turned lines, and perhaps two or three brief, serious passages, we have been unable to find in this "caprice" anything at all characteristic which would lead one to attribute it to the same mind that conceived the beautiful poems in the two volumes, "Wordsworth's Grave" and "Lachrymæ Musarum." The very title is ominous of something infelicitous, considered in connection with serious poetry. "The Eloping Angels" suggests a comic opera, and the subtitle, "A Caprice," does not modify the suggestion to any considerable degree. Mr. Watson, doubtless, believed there was some good in the poem. Those who are familiar with his writing, both in poetry and in criticism, need not to be reminded that it is never devoid of purpose and meaning. To such persons, as to us, the caprice will be sure to present the difficult question:—*What, exactly, does it mean?* In the dedicatory note the author alludes to its "somewhat hazardous levity," and expresses a hope that Mr. Grant Allen may recognize beneath such levity "a spirit not wholly flippant." It is as though he had been flirting with the Muse and were not quite sure whether he had been really in earnest during the flirtation. The levity in these twenty-nine stanzas is ponderous rather than hazardous: Mr. Watson's capabilities for "quips and cranks and wanton wiles" are fortunately small enough to save him from the humiliating popularity that is a natural consequence of being funny or trivial in verse.

"The Eloping Angels" is what we should call a mild sort of allegory. Briefly told, the story is this:—Faust and Mephistopheles are feeling "supremely bored"; so Faust suggests that Mephisto procure them a half-hour's visit in heaven. To this "the great artificer of sin" replies that "Peter is stony as his name" and that there is no chance of getting through the gate, but by peeping through the windows a glimpse of heaven could be had.

"So, on the wings of magic power, these twain
Ascended through the steep and giddy night;
And soon this earth and all it doth contain
Shrank to a point of hesitating light,
Till, as they climbed those altitudes inane,
The battlements celestial dawned in sight,
And domes and turrets made one golden gleam
Splendid beyond all splendor born of dream."