



The Character of Cain

in

The Towneley Plays

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I

THE opposition between tears and laughter does not, on closer consideration, appear to be as great as is suggested by the common use of the terms. Once the heart is stirred and the solid crust of indifference that normally encloses it is thawed off, we pass from crying to laughing quickly and easily, so that the real opposition seems to lie rather between indifference and all kinds of feeling than between the several species of emotions.

As it is in common life, so it is in literature, as many a striking scene in Shakespeare and the great English novelists may witness. Though the explanation of these facts is obvious enough, yet they have arrested the attention of critics, among whom the French classicists have been shocked by what seemed to them a tasteless and unnatural combination of repugnant feelings. Strangely enough, we find the sentiment echoed in Ward's *English Dramatic Liter-*

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ature, where, alluding to the comical treatment of the character of Cain in the Towneley Mysteries, that eminent writer does not conceal his disgust at finding an episode of Genesis turned into a ludicrous scene.¹ Apart from a Protestant's reverence for the contents of Scripture, it is hard to understand why Mr. Ward should be unable to appreciate and admire in the Towneley Plays the mixture of tragedy with irony that is so impressive in *King Lear*. Surely he cannot argue that Cain himself or his servant is entitled to any tenderness at the hands of the author or audience of the plays. As for the other *dramatis personæ*, God and Abel, their being scoffed at and abused by Cain is only natural and in agreement with the Bible itself. The dreadful visitation that concludes the tragedy can only leave an impression of unmixed horror on the minds of the audience.

The difficulty felt by Mr. Ward can be solved on a close and sympathetic examination of the second pageant of the Towneley MS. But it leads us on to a wider issue, raised by several continental students of the mediæval drama and discussed at length in a paper read by Prof. Wilmotte at the Paris Congress of Comparative History, in 1900.² Prof. Wilmotte instances the Towneley pageant among many other cases of serious mediæval plays containing ludicrous touches, and contradicts the current opinion, that these touches could not have grown out

¹ Ed. 1899, I., p. 73.

² "La naissance de l'élément comique dans le théâtre religieux," par M. Wilmotte. Lu au Congrès d'Histoire comparée. Paris, 1900. Mâcon, 1901 (Protat frères, imprimeurs).

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of the religious drama itself, but must have been imported from outside.

Here is thus a definite problem of literary history narrowly connected with the psychological question that we started from. Believing that grave and comical feelings naturally intermingle in our souls, we think they also may have been united in the growth of the mystery play. The critics who, from mere internal evidence, deny the possibility of that original association, evidently start from the classical assumption that grave and comical *motifs* do not naturally arise together, and that their combination is an accident, or even a monstrous conjunction.

Of course hardly any student of the mediæval stage would reject all ludicrous episodes as inorganic interpolations, and not one would admit them all as legitimate shoots of the religious drama. Still the two tendencies described above are at present standing against each other, and if we want to understand the mystery play we have to weigh the arguments of both sides. As hardly any external evidence bearing on the question can be adduced, we must rely merely on the texts and on whatever light they afford us. From the words of the second Towneley pageant and a comparison of them with their sources, I think I can prove Creizenach to have been wrong when he maintained that the scenes between Cain and his servant form an episode borrowed from a farce. I have come to the conclusion that all the spirit and much of the expression of those scenes goes back to the tradition of the Middle Ages re-

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garding the character of Cain and has its roots in Genesis itself.

If I have succeeded in reaching the truth in this particular instance, similar demonstrations respecting other ludicrous episodes may yet strengthen the thesis put forward by Prof. Wilmotte, and show that the comical element is as legitimate and genuine in the mystery plays of the Middle Ages as in the Spanish and English stage of the Renaissance.

II

No more powerful and dramatic dialogue can be imagined than that between the Lord and Cain in the fourth chapter of Genesis, and hardly any change was required in it to fit it for the stage. The writers of mystery plays could not make it more forcible or impressive, but they strove, after their fashion, to draw it out into lengthy speeches, thus only weakening dramatic effect. They also added many explanations and comments borrowed from mediæval exponents of the Bible, chiefly from Isidorus Hispalensis and Comestor.

While the moderns think of Cain mainly as the arch-murderer, and take less account of the rejection of his offering by the Lord, our forefathers laid equal stress on the story of the sacrifice and on that of the slaying of Abel.

Two panels of the same size are allotted to the representation of both incidents on the brass doors of the cathedral of Hildesheim, dated 1022. On one is seen the hand of God, with open palm, worshipped by the two brothers; on its right young

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beardless Abel is raising a lamb towards it, and on its left the elder, bearded Cain, with an ugly flat nose and a large mouth, is holding up a sheaf. Another panel below shows Cain swinging his cudgel above the body of Abel, who is tumbling over, and, further to the left, the hand of God, with two fingers extended, cursing Cain, who is gathering his cloak round his shoulders to hide himself.

A later picture, by the brothers Van Eyck, also divides the story into two scenes, which are painted respectively above the portraits of Adam and Eve. The sacrifice, which Abel offers eagerly, while Cain turns away with his sheaf, is placed above Adam, the revered father of mankind, while the murder is placed above the guilty Eve, who brought sin into the world.¹ In the same way, the play of Cain and Abel came to be divided into two scenes, the offering, representing the contents of Chapter XXVI. of Comestor's *Historia scholastica*, and the murder, as described by Comestor in his twenty-seventh chapter.

The sacrifice, being looked upon as an instance of tithing, gained a life-like vividness to the generations with whom tithing was still a regular and important duty. The origin of tithing was referred to Adam, who was said to have advised his children to worship the Lord by offering him one-tenth of his gifts. The tithe of Abel being a little lamb, which he car-

¹ These two panels are in the Royal Museum of ancient painting at Brussels. A still later picture of Cain and Abel, by L. Lombard, in the same museum, shows both incidents on a single medallion, which is inserted into a larger painting of the Holy Supper.

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ried on his arm, he gained a visible likeness to Christ, the Good Shepherd, who fell an innocent victim of the hatred of his brethren the Jews, just as Abel fell the victim of his brother. The poetical charm of Abel, the world's earliest virgin and martyr, is increased by his extreme youth, and, probably, by his shepherd's costume, for Comestor testifies to the bucolic feelings with which he was regarded by an age that was full of the praise of pastoral life inherited from Ovid, and that was attuning the pastoral flute in Christmas songs and plays in honour of the infant Christ.

In the French *Mistère du Viel Testament*, Abel's beautiful wife and sister Delbora being asked to come and look after the cattle, speaks quite in the bucolic strain :

. . . *le temps renouvel*
Fait flourir les douces herbètes ;
Il ne faut plus estre a l'ostel.
La terra a prins son vert mantel,
C'est pour paistre nos brebiettes,
Vaches, veaux, chievres et chevrètes.
Ce pendant que ce beau temps dure,
Deviendront grasses et refaictes ;
Allons les mettre a la pasture.

(*Lines 2138-46.*)

The melancholy nimbus of an early death adds the highest fascination to the appearance of Abel, in the fanciful etymologies of his name collected by Comestor. "Abel sonat *luctus*, vel *mœror*, vel *vapor*, quasi cito transiturus, tanquam nomine prophetatum fuerit, quod de ipso futurum erat ; tamen se-

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cundum Josephum interpretatur *nihil hic*, quia non reliquit semen super terram."¹

We are again reminded of Ovid's account of the golden and iron ages when Comestor adds: "Abel fuit pastor, et Cain agricola. Cum enim esset malignissimus, ut etiam avaritiæ consuleret suæ, primus terram incoluit." One of the commentators of Comestor even mentions labor on the land in the same breath with the shedding of blood, as he praises the undefiled condition of the earth in Adam's time: "Terra proprie adhuc virgo erat, quia nondum corrupta hominum opere, nec sanguine infecta."² The origin of tillage was thus the "lust of gain," which Tennyson brands in the famous lines of *Maud*. The same lust of gain spoiled his sacrifice, for, says Comestor, he kept the best fruits to himself, and the ears that had been broken and damaged on the road he offered to the Lord. On perceiving that the Lord received Abel's offering more graciously than his, he was filled with envy.

About the murder itself and its consequences the commentators have little to add that is of any use to us, except the curious enumeration of Cain's sins that is found in Comestor. As the Lord says in Genesis (IV. 15), *whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold*, it was somehow imagined that Cain

¹ In Migne, *Patrologia*, 198, col. 1076.

² A curious riddle in the Middle English *Cursor Mundi* informs us that Abel

. . . *had his eldmoder maiden-bede*
(E. E. T. S., 1874-93, I, 76.)

The earth, being Adam's mother, was Abel's grandmother. Isidorus Hispalensis explains the earth as an allegory for the church.

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must also have sinned seven times, and this enumeration of his sins is at the bottom of every analysis and description of Cain's character, and consequently of the ludicrous elements appearing in it. As our Towneley plays are supposed to have grown up under French influence, it must be noticed that, in the *Mistère du Viel Testament*, the allegorical character of *Justice* insists on the number of seven :

*Trop a peché plus que son père [viz. Adam.]
Et est, comme bien prouveroye,
Sept fois plus grant son vitupère.
Cayn, qui a tué son frère,
A commis sept pechez mortels.*

(*Lines 2802-6.*)

On inspecting the text, however, I could not find more than six several sins mentioned.

Comestor only reaches the traditional number of seven by dint of over-subtle divisions. The last of the sins, the want of repentance after the crime, indeed is merely negative, and was thus unfit for representation on the stage. Among the six others, three are undoubtedly tragical. They all relate to the murder of Abel, set forth in the twenty-seventh chapter of Comestor, and in the second scene of the Towneley pageant, viz., (1) envy of his brother ; (2) manslaughter ; (3) despair ensuing upon it. No one of the incidents to which those sins give rise can by any means be turned into mere jesting, though they may be mingled with irony as properly as the feelings of King Lear on Dover cliffs, after being driven away by his daughters.

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It would be straining the point to maintain that the three remaining sins of Cain belong exclusively to the domain of comedy, but no one can deny that they are common subjects of comic poets: one is avarice and cheating in the division of the tithe, the second is the deceit practised either upon Abel, in enticing him to come to the fields to be killed, or on the Lord, by dissembling and lying (the passage of Comestor can be interpreted either way), and the third is the impudent denial opposed to the Lord when he inquires for the murdered Abel. Avarice, deceit and impudence are the main stock of feelings described by Plautus and his successors. If they were to be struck out of human nature and literary work, there would be but little left of the whole comic stage.

Of course this was not felt by Comestor himself, but the French dramatists who preceded the authors of the English mysteries could not help noticing it, and to a certain extent working it up into their impersonations of Cain. I have searched the *Mistère du Viel Testament* for comic touches with due diffidence, and without forgetting that many snares surround the seeker for truth in these matters. First of all, the comic spirit is largely subjective, so that other readers may peruse with the utmost gravity the passages that made me smile. Next, different players might give different interpretations of the same words, and altogether alter the tone and business of a scene. Last, the public of the Middle Ages were probably moved to laughter or tears by notions and feelings that we can only partly understand.

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Mockery is expressly mentioned a few times in the words of the *mistère*. After the sacrifice, Abel, blaming his brother's behaviour, says:

*. . . Comme par derrision
Et ainsi que par mocquerie
Il a fait presentation
D'une gerbe toute pourrie.*

(*Lines 2596-9.*)

Cain himself breaks out into a fit of devilish merriment when his children build a city called after Enoch (Gen. IV., 17.), and resolve to defy God and men. He boasts that many shall follow him to Hell in a series of stanzas, each of which concludes with the same burden :

*Comme meschant m'esjouyray
D'avoir avec moy des semblables.*

*Car en enfer plaisir aray
D'avoir avec moy des semblables.*

*Où mon reconfort trouveray
D'avoir avec moy des semblables.*

*Car je me reconforteray
D'avoir avec moy des semblables.*

(*Lines 3202 seq.*)

The player could hardly deliver himself of such words without threatening gestures at his intended prey among the onlookers, accompanied by peals of sarcastic laughter which reminded the audience of the loud outcry of the stage demons in the *diableries*.

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Indeed the founding of the Cainite city named after Enoch gives occasion for a regular *diablerie*, enacted between Cain and his tribe. They encourage one another to all kinds of wickedness, to theft, murder and lust. Enoch exclaims, in the familiar French jesting phrase :

Faison, faison d'un dyable quatre.

(Line 3367.)

and Lameth, having resolved to take two wives, advises the audience to follow this beautiful example :

Qui voudra face comme moy.

(Line 3360.)

No public, modern or ancient, would have refrained from laughter at this entertaining suggestion. Indeed, while the blood-stained and despairing Cain remains dark and bitter even in his dare-devil mood of defiance and mockery, his descendants were given to lewdness and sensuality, and their sinfulness was of a lighter cast than his.

Still in Cain himself, the impudence mentioned by Comestor is a distinctly comic trait, which is felt as such in his reply to God in Genesis: *Am I my brother's keeper?* and which has been broadened and repeated in all the mysteries. The interrogative form of the words, where an answer is expected, is one of the most forcible expressions of scoffing. The *Mistère du Viel Testament* has hit on this form and used it in endless repetitions, so that it is no exaggeration to write that Cain's part consists largely of rhetorical questions, to which no answers are expected. I have

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marked twenty-nine interrogative sentences in Cain's part alone, and about ten in the parts surrounding his. On this evidence of Cain's scoffing and mocking attitude I lay much more stress than on all the other arguments, for it must have affected the whole tone of the player's recitation. Beside it, the other passages that may be calculated to move laughter, such as the coarse jest of line 3128, sink into insignificance.

The expression of avarice, though not so constantly comical as that of impudence, is yet laughable enough in Cain's speech before the sacrifice, when he collects his sheaves of broken straw :

*Ce m'est tout un plaisir et desplaire,
Car bref je ne baillerai point
Mes bons blés, en vella le point ;
Et puis, prenne en gré qui voudra,
Qui le voudra prendre prendra ;
C'est tout un, on n'y peult faillir.
Je vueel meschans espis queillir,
Tous amortis et tous cassez,¹
Desquelz ne peult nul bien saillir,
Et les presenter, c'est assez.
Quoy ! Quant j'ay mes blez amassez,
Que je voyse mettre en cendre
Encore les meilleurs ? Penses
Que cela je ne puis entendre.*

(Lines 2398 seq.)

III

So far we have inquired into the sources which the author of the Towneley pageant probably used, and

¹ *Spicas attristas et corrosas.* (Comestor.)

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into the groundwork of notions which he took over from his predecessors and built up into an interpretation of Cain's character more vivid and striking than any before him. ¹ If we now proceed to examine the Towneley play itself, we shall at once notice that the two scenes into which it is divided are introduced by a prologue and conclude with an epilogue in which the adventitious character of Pyke-Harnes, *Garcio*, Cain's servant, plays a part.

The circumstance of any stage hero's being attended by a *confidant*, or servant, who is entrusted with his private feelings, assists him in his deeds and echoes his sentiments while slightly distorting them, is the commonest of all recurring phenomena in the history of the drama. If Sir John Falstaff could not do with less than four satellites, if Herod in the pageants is surrounded with knights, if even the three shepherds in the Towneley mysteries must have a *Iak Garcio* as a caricature of their rural simplicity, no wonder that Cain too had an attendant, cheeky and cruel like himself. Moreover, this servant was needed to keep and remove the properties of the play, which Cain could not have done himself. For the author of the Towneley pageant has invested his Cain with a powerful reality by putting him before the audience with a plough and horses. The servant runs before to make room for the team and announce

¹ It is worthy of remark that no ludicrous reading of the part of Cain occurs in any of the other mystery plays examined by me; neither in the old Norman *jeu d'Adam*, nor in Greban's *Passion*, nor in the German Corpus Christi play of Eger, nor in the Cornish drama published by Norris. The only exceptions are the English pageants of Chester and York.

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his master's coming with the ranting speech and the coarse jests usual on such occasions. Before beginning his dialogue with Abel, Cain hands his horses over to him with curses and practical jokes such as were relished by our ancestors. The starved animals are beaten, and master and servant offer to fight. While the action between the main characters, God, Abel and Cain proceeds, the servant has to stand mutely aside, minding the horses, and he is only summoned forth again after the murder, to assist in carrying off Abel's corpse and driving away the plough, while Cain takes farewell of the public with a last facetious curse.

The part taken by the servant in the action of the play is thus far from being an episode, as Creizenach maintained: it is quite the reverse, an inevitable consequence of the introduction of the plough and horses into the pageant, in addition to the sheaf that was Cain's attribute in plays and pictures of the Middle Ages. As to the jests relating to the horses' wretched condition and the threats exchanged between master and man, they flowed naturally enough from the greedy and quarrelsome temper of the characters, and it is a mere waste of hypothesis to try to explain them otherwise.

The origin of the jesting in the epilogue is not quite so obvious. After his crime, Cain is afraid of discovery and punishment, and wishes to hide the body of Abel. He calls in his servant to help and bury it, but Pyke-Harnes recoils in horror and fright, and Cain must promise to "make him a release" and to "cry his peasse." He makes a pro-

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clamation of pardon for himself and his man, who all the while stands sneering at his elbow and distorts every sentence he utters. I would not undertake to justify this piece of jesting to our modern taste, but I cannot see that it is out of place in the drama as it stands or that it must have been borrowed from outside. Its germ lies in the text of Genesis, where Cain complains: *It shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me* (IV. 14), and thereupon is promised safety by the Lord. With his usual taste for anachronism, the Towneley author has dressed this promise of safety into the legal form of a proclamation of peace. The servant mimicks it just as he burlesques all his master's defects.

So much for the opinion of Creizenach as to the part of Pyke-Harnes in the pageant. The objection to the whole tenour of the play raised by Mr. Ward rests mainly on a personal dislike which is not liable to any refutation, and I can only say that I do not share it and must decidedly side with Mr. Pollard when he declares that the author of the second Towneley pageant was a man of genius,¹ and with Dr. Eckhardt when he compares Cain's scoffing at the Lord to the sky-climbing audacity of the Titans.² Original though the Towneley dramatist undoubtedly is in his crude realism, he has after all but resumed the three features borrowed by the French *mistère* from Comestor and others, viz., envy, avarice and scoffing, and only heightened their effect by investing them with the rough speech and manners of a

¹ Introduction to Towneley Plays, xxii.
Die lustige Person, etc., 30.

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Northern English booby. He has taken Cain out of the hazy, dull atmosphere of a distant past, and clothed him in shapes and colours that made his heinous sins alive to the audience. That this audience were able to laugh at Cain's jokes while pitying his victim and abhorring his crime I have no doubt whatever, and without pretending altogether to enter into the spirit of an age so distant and different from ours, I can unaffectedly admire the art with which the broad grin of the scoffer, his base self-seeking and gruesome cruelty are mingled with cowardly fear of chastisement after his deed.

As to the means used by the author of the pageant, they are of the simplest. Envy, which lies quite outside the province of comedy, he made ludicrous by the accumulation of indecent jests and bad language used against the pure-minded and gentle Abel. That terms of abuse and cursing on the stage commonly make the public laugh, the reader who doubts may discover for himself by attending any performance of a trivial farce. The effect is extremely vulgar, but in the Towneley pageant it is a proper stroke in the picture of a coarse and spiteful mind.

The incidents illustrating Cain's avarice, such as his leaving his horses without food, his picking out the poorest corn for tithing and his sullen grumbling while telling the sheaves, must have looked much more funny when acted than they now appear to the sedate reader in his study, unless indeed the reader is sufficiently gifted with the dramatic instinct to realise the whole scene. The niggardly offering of the

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tithe was the first touch in Cain's character that struck the authors of the French *mistère* as comical.

Another sin of Cain's, that is only included in Comestor's list under the general term of deceit, is that of hypocrisy. Indeed, as it is not suggested by the words of the Bible, it may only have become apparent when the character was put on the stage. The onlookers must then have wondered how the saucy and miserly ploughman could have been prevailed upon to bend his knee and give up his precious corn to his Maker. The contradiction implied in this act of reverence and self-denial, from a creature so greedy and impudent, could hardly have received any but a comical interpretation from the player, when he walked to the altar with his sheaf, and reluctantly set his property on fire. The Towneley Cain is more outspoken than the French of the *mistère*, and could not be suspected of dissembling when he recited :

*ffor, as browke I thise two shankys
It is full sore, myne unthankys,
The teynd that I here gif to the.*

I cannot imagine a manner and tone suited to these words that would not raise laughter in an average audience.

In this, as in other episodes, the English pageant goes beyond its French predecessor in the expression of the ludicrous. In the French play, Cain controls his secret feelings sufficiently to dissemble and go through his prayer and offering in a serious manner. In fact, all the characters of the *mistère* use the same

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even and fluent speech, which makes very monotonous reading, while the Towneley author strives to stamp every word uttered by his characters with a peculiar accent, unmistakably their own. In the case of Cain, this strenuous effort after individualization has resulted in the repulsive coarseness which has given scandal to Mr. Ward, but which is the proper expression of the arch-murderer and arch-blasphemer.

Though it seems out of place at first sight that blasphemy should be taken jestingly, yet the very words of the Bible warrant the comical interpretation of Cain's reply to the Lord after his crime. The interrogative form of speech has never been regarded as peculiarly reverential, and answering one question by another is the very height of impudence. In the Towneley pageant, the Titanic scoffing at the Lord rises to a devilish grandeur of its own, and is bound up with the interrogative form of the dialogue, of which we counted so many instances in the French *mistère*. Comestor, commenting on the text of Genesis, points out that the Lord did not interrogate Cain from ignorance, but *increpando improperans fratricidium*, so that the five questions asked by the Lord were but rhetorical forms of speech, used to awaken the conscience of the sinner. What was a legitimate form of rebuke in the Creator became the expression of the most shameless defiance in the mouth of the guilty creature. The author of the pageant has so far identified the impudent attitude with the rhetorical question, that he has reduced the number of questions in the part of God from five to two,

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while raising it in Cain's from one to twenty-six. Pyke-Harnes, as a being morally akin to his master, also asks a number of six questions during his short appearance on the stage, and even the innocent Abel is so far influenced by his surroundings as to use that rhetorical form, but only four times, in his very long speeches.

Such statistics of the figures of speech might prove nothing in themselves, but here they convey an accurate idea not only of the style, which in Cain's part is mostly made up of outbursts of temper, coarse jest, and curses, but also of the immoral attitude preserved by the character throughout his appearance on the stage.

This attitude being the only one that is consonant to the deeds ascribed to Cain in Genesis, the Towneley author deserves nothing but praise and admiration for the boldness with which he made his wicked hero alive to his contemporaries. No one of the other Cains in the drama of the Middle Ages rises to the same intensity and truth. The slight jesting in the Chester Plays is at once low and tame; and the corresponding part of the York mysteries is only made up of disconnected fragments.¹ The Towneley pageant alone pictures the Titanic greatness of Cain as he lived in the imagination of the people, as an embodiment of reckless cruelty and stubbornness as a forerunner of the deicide nation of the Jews, as a kind of elder son of Satan himself. "*Plane*," says one of the old commentators, "*qui hunc pastorem bonum (viz.*

¹ See Ungemach, *Die Quellen der fünf ersten Chester Plays*, in *Münchener Beiträge zur roman. und engl. Philologie*.

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Christ), *pastorem magnum despectui habuerunt, praecipue Annas et Caiphas, caeterique fures et latrones qui hunc pastorem ovium occiderunt, omnes omnino cum illo Cain unum corpus fuerunt . . . ; et unus spiritus, unum caput eorum diabolus.*"¹ Accordingly, we see the devil painted at Cain's elbow on a stained glass window at Le Mans, when he raises his hoe to strike his brother dead.²

Cain being so near the devil, what is more natural than to give him the bitter grin and shameless jokes which the Evil One usually displays in the Mysteries? If the modern descendants of the Puritans are shocked at the merriment thus called forth, let

¹ Quoted from Rupert. *in Genes.* [IV., 4-6] by Cahier et Martin, *Vitraux de Bourges*, I., 114, footnote.

² Besides the Hildesheim brass door and the stained glass windows at Le Mans and Tours, many other pictures and sculptors of the Cain and Abel story might, undoubtedly, yield interesting results to the students. Cahier and Martin mention one from Wimpfen im Thal, now at the Darmstadt Museum. We pointed to the pictures by the Van Eycks and Lombard at Brussels. Another, much earlier, in the Church of St. Savin, near Poitiers, has been published with a letter-press. Students of iconography will easily remember more. A short list of representations of Cain and Abel recently examined by me in Italy may be useful to readers. A mosaic at San Vitale in Ravenna, showing the sacrifices of Abel and Melchisedech, accepted by the Lord. A table covered with a white cloth serves as an altar, thus pointing to the Christian Eucharist, of which the sacrifices are prefigurations. At San Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna, a third character (qy. Abraham?) stands near the table, thus adding one more prefiguration of the mass. A third mosaic, in St. Mark's at Venice, substitutes two altars for the Communion table, and puts the rejected sacrifice of Cain in opposition to the accepted one of Abel, leaving out Melchisedech and Abraham. The smoke of Abel's altar rises, while that of Cain's is falling, as in the mysteries and in the sculptures of the Middle Ages.

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them find fault with their own narrowness of mind rather than with the broad and healthy philosophy of the Middle Ages, that was able to look at religious subjects without constrained gravity, and to associate them naturally with all its feelings and experiences.