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I

The name of Spenser has come down to us inseparably linked with the epithets, "poet and teacher" and "the poet's poet". What significance attached to those titles in his own age? In succeeding literary periods? What significance attaches to them in our own day? In what was Spenser a teacher to the Elizabethans? To the Neo-classicists and Romanticists as they came on in turn? In what is he a teacher to us? In what is he a model to our poets? Have we comprehended in its fullness the poetry of this man who has been a teacher to poets and lovers of literature for three centuries and a half with their changing criteria of what makes good literature? If Spenser came honestly by these titles and has served as a teacher of the poetic principles different literary periods deemed of utmost importance, why stint ourselves by making him merely a creator of illusions, a weaver of spells? Why refuse to concede that he was aught but a dreamer of dreams, writing as he did in an enthusiastic age when even courtiers were bent on great achievements? Why should not Spenser concern himself with serious affairs when his friend Sidney was not only knight errant and sonneteer, but soldier, international diplomat, and outrider for English novelists? When his friend Raleigh was exploring and sailing strange streams? When Drake was looting Spanish coasts and bearing the booty to England? When Bacon was seeking to learn the principles of philosophy and at the same time developing the English essay? What is there incongruous in Spenser employing his

gifts for serious purposes even while he delighted his readers? Why insist upon taking Spenser's Faerie Queene, in the words of Herbert Cory, (1) as an "intellectual anesthetic" when there is so much more to it if we are not mentally too lazy to comprehend it?

Perhaps a survey of Spenser's field will enable us to determine whether to cast our decision in regard to Spenser with Dr. Courthope of Oxford, with Milton or with James Russell Lowell. Lowell said, "The true use of Spenser is as a gallery of pictures which we visit as the mood takes us, and where we spend an hour or two at a time, long enough to sweeten our perceptions, not so long as to cloy them....Whenever in the "Faerie Queene" you come suddenly on the moral, it gives you a shock of unpleasant surprise, a kind of grit as when one's teeth close on a bit of gravel in a dish of strawberries and cream." (2)

Disagreeing with Lowell, Dr. Courthope said, "It seems to me impossible to hold with Mr. Lowell that the moral of Spenser's poem counts for nothing; the sense, no less than the form of his allegory is essential and is a characteristic part of his work. But I dissent still more decidedly from those who consider that he is to be primarily recognized as a moral teacher. Allegory is to him mainly interesting in so far as it serves the purpose of poetry. From the first glimpse we obtain of him in his correspondence with Gabriel Harvey down to his last experience at court, recorded in

(1) Edmund Spenser, a Critical Study, pp. 443, by Herbert Cory
(2) Literary Essays, Vol. IV, "Spenser"

"Colin Clout's Come Home Again", the requirements of his art are always in his mind; and the motive of every one of his greater compositions when detached from the cloudy words with which he chooses to cover it, is found to be primarily poetical." (3)

Dr. Courthope says further "Spenser's motives are artistic rather than ethical; his manner of expression more than his matter of thought"....."Spenser's sole original contribution is the beautiful, harmonious form of English verse that is his vehicle of thought". (4)

On the other hand, Milton, who, when he was ready to set about his serious life work, reverted in thought to his master, Spenser, thought of him as no dreamer of idle dreams, but as "our sage and serious Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Socrates or Aquinas." (5) "Milton read in Spenser.

'Of tourneys and of trophies hung;
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.' " (6)

II

EVIDENCE THAT SPENSER IS A SUPREME POET AND TEACHER

Elizabethan Appreciation

That Spenser was looked upon as a supreme poet and teacher

- (3) "A History of English Poetry"
(4) Cambridge History of English Literature" Vol. III, pp. 250
"The Poetry of Spenser".
(5) "Aeropagitics".--"Studies in Philology. 'A Better Teacher Than Aquinas' ", Greenlaw
(6) "Spenser, the Poet and Teacher", Dowden

of his own age we have ample proof. The eulogy of Tom Nash, an early Elizabethan critic, was characteristic of the Spenser worship of the period. He says, "Should the challenge of deep conceit be intruded by any forrainer to bring our English wits to the touchstone of Art, I would prefer divine Master Spenser, the miracle of wit, to bandy line for line for my life in the honor of England against Spain, France, Italy, and all the world." (7)

Frances Meres in 1598, in his *Palladis Tamia*, attempted to prove English poets the greatest singers of all the world, and Spenser the supreme artist of all genres.

Richard Carew would make Spenser one of the four translators to whom he would trust the translation of the literature of the world into English in his plan to eliminate unnecessary study of foreign language and literature. (8)

Spenser's praises were sung in glowing terms by his contemporaries Peele, Breton, Wm. Basse, and Sir John Davies. (9)

Richard Barnsfield, one of the earlier Spenserian imitators, wrote an exquisite sonnet in eulogy of Spenser, preferring the music of his poetry to music as music. (10)

Michael Drayton, a sturdy contemporary Spenserian imitator who showed shrewd judgment of his contemporaries, wrote in his "Epistle to Henry Reynolds, of Poets and Poesy", only words of praise for Spenser;

(7) "Spenser, A Critical Study", pp. 380 *and appendix 1*

(8) "Epistle of the Excellence of the English Tongue", Carew

(9) "Spenser, A Critical Study", pp. 384, Cory *and appendix 2*

(10) See appendix, 3.

"Grave mortal Spenser after these came on,
Than whom I am persuaded there was none
Since the blind bard his Iliads up did make,
Fitter a task like that to undertake,
To set down boldly, bravely to invent,
In all high knowledge, surely excellent."

William Brown of this same Spenserian school of the late Elizabethan and early seventeenth century period, confesses in verse what a master Spenser was to him. Whole stanzas, taken from his "Fido: An Epistle to Fidela", too long to be quoted here, tell of his wandering and resting beside a brook, reading and re-reading the "Faerie Queene". He pillaged from the "Faerie Queene" more widely even than did Drayton, importing characters, episodes and scenes for his best known work, "Brittania's Pastorals".

The world's greatest dramatist, Shakespeare, found Spenser worthy of study and imitation. (11)

Among eulogies of Spenser, Raleigh's sonnet, "A Vision Upon This Conceit of the Faerie Queene," is perhaps the most subtly beautiful, if extravagant, praising as it does, Spenser's sonnet-writing ability, which is not his highest poetic achievement, above that of the Italian Petrarch. (12)

Another bit of praise, not so beautiful, but of more weight because it came from the greatest literary critic as well as famous literateur of his age, a man who exercised sane reason and judgment in an age of enthusiastic indiscretion is that of Sir Philip Sidney in his famous "Defense of Poesy". He says, "With the exception of Sackville's 'The Mirror for Magistrates', Surrey's 'Hymns',

(11) "Cambridge History of English Literature", Vol. V., pp 93, 205, 206

(12) Appendix, No. 4

and Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar' I do not remember but a few printed that have poetical sinews in them". Thus in an age of Elizabethan enthusiasm over English men of letters, Sidney selected Spenser as one of the three outstanding literary figures. And the best of Spenser's work was yet to follow! The "Faerie Queene" was not published until 1590, nine years later. The "Calendar" was his early effort in which he tried his wings in various subjects and form before he undertook his great work. (*Appendix 5*)

Seventeenth Century Appreciation

Influenced by the critical spirit that was born with the Seventeenth century, the formerly harmonious English poets broke up into warring cults, and of these cults, one carried the name of Spenser, none other bore any English poet's name of style. The Spenserian poets, Phineas Fletcher and Wm. Brown, are not important because they plundered the "Faerie Queene" for lines and figures, which they did most assiduously, though poorly, but because they carried Spenser's influence down into the eighteenth century, and especially because they influenced Milton in his decision to write an epic on Divine Providence, "Paradise Lost", rather than an epic on the Arthurian legend. (13)

Waller, who acknowledged Fairfax, the Elizabethan Spenserian, as his model, and who had a first hand acquaintance with Spenser himself, became in turn the model for the classic form to Dryden, Denham and Davenant who in turn handed it down to Pope and Addison, linking Spenser definitely with the classic movement. (14)

(13) Appendix, No. 6
(14) Appendix, No. 7

Dryden, the foremost literary critic of the later part of the Seventeenth century, wrote, "I must acknowledge that Virgil in Latin and Spenser in English have been my two masters." Not content with praise of Spenser as an epic writer of first rank he exalts the "Shepherd's Calendar" to first rank among pastoral poems. (15)

Milton, who owned Spenser as his master, (see Introduction) derived from Spenser's Britomart his ideal of chastity on which he based his "Comus". And he found in the contrasting cheerful and sober reflections of the "Shepherd's Calendar", wherein the mood follows the temper of the month, his idea for his "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", the Happy Man and the Sad Man. And his elegy, "Lycidas" was likewise written in pastoral form as Spenser had written "Astrophel".

At the beginning of this age of anarchy, Joseph Hall, the satirist who believed that the great writers had said all that was to be said, held Edmund Spenser to be one of the supreme poets who had left nothing more to be done. He speaks of

"Renowned Spenser whom no earthly wight
Dares once to emulate....."

and goes on to bid "Salust of France" and "Tuscan Ariosto" yield up "the laurel garlands they have lost". In the same book he throws his "yielding reed" at Colin's feet, showing his opinion of the "Calendar". (16)

(15) Appendix, No. 8

(16) "Virgidemiarum", Jos. Hall

Ben Jonson, the most significant of the early English writers of critical works, and the foremost out and out advocate of classicism, in his masque, "The Golden Age Restored", introduces Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Spenser as the far-famed and sanctified singers of the good old days.

Eighteenth Century Augustan Appreciation

Even the Eighteenth century writers, chary of praise of any but themselves, still praised Spenser. They praised him as a classicist, choosing to overlook his romanticism and appreciate only his classical qualities. Addison, in an onslaught on the Italian romantic poets, classed Milton and Spenser on a level with the ancients and above his beloved Dryden. (17) Again he speaks of Spenser's faery way of writing, (18), and lauds his allegories, praising Spenser again and again as the last writer who had applied himself to the allegory with success. (19)

Prior said, "My two great examples, Horace and Spenser, in many things resemble each other", and mentioned height of imagination, majesty of expression in describing the sublime, ability to sweeten description, to make lovely as well as pompous, and to mix morality with their story, felicity in choice of diction and perfection of diction, imagery, and meter. (20) Prior felt the narrow limitation of the couplet and preferred Spenser's stanza, although he would have added another line to rhyme with Spenser's alexandrine,

(17) The Spectator, No. 62

(18) The Spectator, No. 419

(19) The Spectator, No. 421,--Guardian, Sept. 4, 1713

(20) Preface, "Ode to the Queen", Prior

making a formal couplet at the close. (21)

Steele wrote a prose pastoral in which he made Spenser the son of Virgil and the father of Ambrose Philips, Spenser's Augustan imitator, who was most popular at that time, saying that in their pastorals Philips and Spenser had "improved the beauties of the ancients", ~~and~~ also praised the allegory of the "Faerie Queene". (22)

Pope expressed his admiration for Spenser in his sally to Hughes, (1715); "Spenser has ever been a favorite to me: he is like a mistress whose faults we see, but love her with them all." In a prefix to the 1717 edition of his youthful "Pastorals",--- avowed imitations of Spenser--Pope groups Spenser with Theocritus, Virgil, and Tasso. The lifelong admiration which Pope had for Spenser is attested many times in this prefix. Pope also praised Spenser's sentiments, sentences, style and easy flow of numbers, ranking him above Shakespeare in these. (23)

Later Eighteenth Century Appreciation

Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great dictator, speaking in derision of imitators in his "Life of the West", said, "An imitation of Spenser is nothing to a reader, however acute, by whom Spenser has never been perused. Works of this kind may deserve praise as proofs of great industry and great nicety of observation, but the highest praise, the praise of genius, they cannot claim." Herbert Cory, our contemporary Spenserian critic says that all Augustan

(21) Preface, "Solomon", Prior

(22) Guardian, April 15, and Sept. 4, 1713, and April 17, 1730

(23) Guardian, April 17, 1730--Cam. Hist. Eng. Lit., Vol. III, pp. 225, Vol. IX, pp. 75

imitations of Spenser except Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" and Shenstone's "School Mistress" deserve the doctor's censure. (24) Dr. Johnson also said that Spenser might divide with Shakespeare the praise for first discovering to how much smoothness and harmony the English language may be softened. (25)

Goldsmith praised Spenser's imagination and fairy fancy, and the instruction given through their medium. (26)

Thomson's "Castle of Indolence", published in 1748, is a blend of Augustan and Romantic elements, its moral allegory and its satire being Augustan, its atmosphere Romantic. This is one of the most successful of the imitations of Spenser and comes near being a masterpiece. Thomson credits its inspiration to Spenser. (27)

Joseph and Thomas Warton, usually classed among the early Romanticists, though of the transition period and as truly Augustan as Romantic in imitation and criticism, were imitators of Spenser, (28) though it is as Spenserian critics, rather, that they deserve renown. Their interest in Spenser grew out of love of study of the Middle Ages, a study which naturally led to an appreciation of Spenser through his conservation of the best qualities of medieval times. (29) *(Appendix 9)*

Early Nineteenth Century Appreciation

Hurd, although he praises Spenser's romance spiritedly

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- (24) "Spenser, a Critical Study", pp. 419
 - (25) Preface, Johnson's Edit. of Shakespeare
 - (26) "Criticisms, Letters, Coll. Essays" Goldsmith
 - (27) "Life of Thomson", Shields, (28) Cam.Hist.Eng.Lit. Vol.X, pp. 270
 - (29) Cam. Hist. Eng. Lit. X, pp. 269

and depreciates his allegory, (as did and still do all romanticists), has a fine thing to say of Spenser: "What we have gotten by this revolution, you will say, is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost is a world of fine fabling, the illusion of which is so grateful to the charmed spirit that, in spite of philosophy and fashion, Fairy Spenser still ranks highest among the poets; I mean all those who have either come of that house, or have any kindness for it. (30)

Beattie, whose popular poems greatly influenced Burns, wrote an unfinished allegory, "The Minstrel", in imitation of Spenser. (31)

Sir Walter Scott, also, relates his delightful experiences reading Spenser. He said, "Spenser I could read forever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exterior sense, and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such society." Scott's love of the fanciful kept him reading Spenser, for his romantic nature reveled in strange forests, castles, roads, lovely scenes and beautiful maidens. He strewed his own narratives with allusions to the beautiful pictures in the "Faerie Queene", often recalling characters and scenes and describing them in his own manner, and naming Spenser frequently, as in the passage "Marmion",

(30) "Letters on Chivalry and Romance, 'Plan and Conduct of the Faerie Queene' "--Hurd

(31) "~~Letters on Chivalry and Romance,~~" "~~Plan and Conduct of the Faerie Queene'~~" --Hurd *Cambridge History English Literature* 8:148

"Not she the championess of old,
In Spenser's magic tale enrolled"

Late Nineteenth Century Appreciation

Southey was one of the many poets of his time who admitted the formative influence of Spenser, especially in early life. (32)

Haslett all his life loved Spenser's poetry, "which", he said, "is all fairyland" and with its romance far superior to that of "Orlando Furioso". He said further, "The essence of Spenser's poetry is an endless flow of indescribable beauties like the Galaxy of Milky Way", and eulogized his pathos of sentiment and romance, his imagism and idealism, saying "of all the poets he (Spenser) is the most poetical." (33)

Leigh Hunt tells, in his "Autobiography", how from boyhood he poured over Spenser and from that time on Spenser was his favorite of all the poets.

Cowden Clark told of awakening the poetic impulse in Keats by reading Spenser aloud to him. We know that Spenser was Keats' first master and that his first work, a piece of the Augustan school, was called "Imitation of Spenser", while Keats' later work was so much in Spenser's own spirit that he is called the truest Spenserian that ever lived. (34)

William Vaughn Moody wrote to a friend, "I stick a good round straw into a cask of Spenser or Hardy and suck myself to sleep--to dream of orchards and golden towered romances!" (35)

(32) Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XI, pp. 174
(33) "English Poets", Ch. II--"Chaucer and Spenser"--Haslett pp. 45
(34) "E. Spenser, A Critical Study", pp. 446
(35) Quoted in "Edmund Spenser, a Critical Study", Herbert Cory, pp. 44

No poet has had a more choice or continually loyal audience than has Spenser, yet no age has appreciated him fully. Each age has found in him something different to admire and emulate. His own age worshipped him blindly, ^{and un-} ~~the~~ critically. The Seventeenth century Puritan poets could not accept Spenser's love of the beautiful because they thought beauty savored of paganism; they preferred theology to ethics. The Seventeenth century Cavaliers had no use for his high seriousness. They had no time for moral philosophy. But the Seventeenth century Spenserian poets did appreciate Spenser in all his fullness, and tried in their poor way to imitate him. The eighteenth century neo-classicists admired his allegory, his moral teaching, his classical allusion; but they thought him led astray by Ariosto into wild flights of fancy and imagination that kept him from being the perfect poet. The romanticists of both the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries reveled in the rich imagery and sensuous music of his poetry. To their minds all that stood between Spenser and poetic perfection was his high seriousness and moral teaching.

Twentieth Century Appreciation

Our own age seems uncertain what to decide with regard to Spenser. There appears, however, to be a general tendency to accept the persistent drilling of the romanticists who insist that the reader lose sight of the serious intention of the poet, and satiate himself with the beauties. "Try," says Martha Hale Schackford

(36) "Introduction to Book I, Faerie Queene"

"to feel the glamor of romance without the intolerable weight of allegory. Dwell on the imaginative and picturesque, not on the purely ethical."

But this is neither the fair way nor the proper way to study a writer truly and critically. We must not strive to see in a poet the principles of either romanticism or neo-classicism to the exclusion of the other. Mr. Spingarn says, "Both the masculine school of criticism of the past age, and the feminine school of the present age fall short of their highest power unless mated with the other. Modern constructive criticism answers the questions, 'What has the writer proposed to do? How far has he succeeded in carrying out his plan?' " (27) Let us then make our decision with regard to Spenser by a careful examination into Spenser's conception of his art, his plan for its execution in his greatest work, and its actual working thro his poetic machinery.

III

SPENSER'S CONCEPTION OF HIS ART

Spenser, like Wordsworth and Milton after him, believed himself inspired by a power outside himself to convey a message to the world. He says of poetry, "It is no art, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labor and learning, but adorned by both; and poured into the wit by a certain celestial in-

(37) Spingarn's "The New Criticism"

piration." (38) Spenser states the purpose for which he writes, very plainly in the October eclogue of "The Shepherd's Calendar" where he makes Piers say to Cuddie,

"O! What an honor it is to restrain
The lust of lawless youth with good advice
Or prick them forth with pleasure of thy vaine
Whereto thou list their trayned wills entice."

We may well regret the loss of Spenser's own treatise on his art, entitled "The English Poet". But in lieu of this, the statement of his intent just given is sufficient to tell us that his idea of the purpose of poetry is Sidney's also who said, "the highest end of literature is to instruct and to incite men to virtuous action." We know that Spenser admired Sidney above all men ---Sidney whom he called "the noble, virtuous gentleman most worthy of all titles both of learning and chivalry"; Sidney to whom he dedicated the "Shepherd's Calendar"; Sidney whose death he celebrated in his elegy "Astrophel". So we may well suppose he wrote "The Faerie Queene" in the spirit of Sidney's "Apologie for Poetry". In this Apologie Sidney states that the end of the life of man is virtuous action, and the three branches of learning which are to lead men to this goal are philosophy, history, and poetry, poetry taking the highest place. Philosophy, thinks Sidney is to abstract, laying down the rule but giving no example, therefore teaching the intellect, but not moving the will; history he thinks gives the example but not the principle of action, facts of what have been, not of what should be; but poetry excels both by combining precept and ex-

(38) Originally in Spenser's work, "The English Poet", and quoted by Spenser's dear friend, E. K. in his Argument prefacing the October eclogue of the Shepherd's Calendar. Herein E. K. states that this book has lately come into his hands, and that he means to publish it soon. But the book was lost, unfortunately.)

ample, by harmonizing history and philosophy, and thus inciting men to high attainment. "Poesy", says Sidney, "is an art of imitation, a representing, a counterfeiting, a figuring forth, a speaking picture, with this end--to teach and to delight." In that Defense, Sidney states that he considers epic poetry the highest type of poetry. Shortly before this statement, he says the best poets are the creators of ideals for warning and example--ethical poets, who deal with what may be and should be. Now Spenser has aimed to fulfill all these requirements of Sidney's ideal poet, and how well he has succeeded, Sidney himself testified as we gave example among Spenser's critics of the Elizabethan period. Spenser aimed at edification, and for this reason conceived the idea of setting forth ideal characters to incite men to high attainment.

So our Art for Art's sake cult are forcing their conception of the mission of poetry upon Spenser when they declare (59) his pictures were brought into existence merely to be admired for their external beauty of color, and not for their symbolic beauty as well. His poetry is not a confection; not a mere accomplishment. And it is above mere technical workmanship (though it excels in that too). His technique does not exist for itself alone, but to make a fit instrument to carry Spenser's ^{his} message. His poetry has the inspiration and burden of song as well as the tune and rhythm. As moral philosophy it is a worthy study; as poetry it would beguile a day by the magic of its dreams. But the two factors can be treated apart. When the Classicists tried it, Spenser's fanciful

(39) See essays on Spenser by Lowell, Hunt, and Yeats.

treatment got in the way; when romanticists tried it, his moral teaching interfered. The two are reconciled, harmonized, inarinate, through Spenser's imagination.

IV

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF SPENSER'S GENIUS

Professor Courthope pays high tribute to the comprehensiveness of Spenser's genius. He says, "His imagination received an impulse from everyone of the great sources of thought which in the sixteenth century were agitating the mind of Europe. Catholicism, Medieval Romance, the Philosophy of the Renaissance, the Morality of the Reformation, all contributed elements to the formation of his poetical conceptions. He wanted no quality required to place him in the same class with Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and perhaps, I may add, Chaucer, but that supreme gift of insight and invention which enables the poet to blend conflicting ideas into an organic form. It must be added that to produce such a form out of the materials at his disposal was probably impossible, so that--- apart from a certain defect of judgment implied in the selection of subject--the lack of unity that characterizes Spenser's creations is the result not so much of his own incapacity as of the circumstances of the times. (40)

"None of the supreme poets, except Dante and Goethe, have essayed anything so immense," (41) says *Impresser Cory*

(40) A History of English Poetry (London and N. Y. 1898) Vol. II, 284
(41) Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study, 1918, pp. 41 Cory

The Vastness of Spenser's Plan for "The Faerie Queene"

Spenser's romantic epic, as he tells us in his letter to Raleigh, was to be a "continued allegory, or dark conceit", worked out in twelve different books, representing twelve moral virtues, each with its own hero knight and its own adventures. The super-hero was to be "Arthur, before he came to be king." Arthur was to represent magnificence in his role as a virtue, and some great Englishman who was a candidate for Queen Elizabeth's hand in the "historical fiction" with which Spenser meant to "color" his allegory. Most critics believe that Spenser meant Arthur to represent his patron Lord Leicester, who was favored by Queen Elizabeth. (42) Queen Elizabeth was to be the heroine of the poem, as Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, who held an annual feast for twelve days on which twelve different knights who accomplish their tasks with the final help of King Arthur who enters at the crucial moment. The task set is a large one simply as a romance; as a moral allegory it becomes doubly so; with the addition of a historical allegory the plan becomes very complex. It is made yet more so by Spenser's intention of representing in the same poem, Queen Elizabeth in private life as Belpheobe, the bright sports-loving maiden, and as Britomart, the chaste warrior maiden.)

Truly Spenser was not lacking in inspiration, in ambition, or large conceptions.

His plan embraced three kinds of unity by which he meant to

(42) See lines from Spenser, Appendix 10.

organize the twelve books into a unified poem. First, by making Arthur the super-hero to the twelve books each of which had its particular hero. And the Arthur was not meant to have the twelve virtues in the degree the hero-knights had each, he had as much of each as was necessary to make him a superior character. (43) The second kind of unity, Mr. Hurd points out, consists "in the relation of the several adventures to one common original, the appointment of the Faerie Queene, and to one common end, the completion of the Faerie Queene's injunctions." The third kind of unity, pointed out by Professor Trent (44) is not one invented for the classics as were the other two. Professor Trent says the poem possesses a unity which is peculiar to itself, a unity of tone, of atmosphere.

Whether or not Spenser could have carried out his plan through all twelve books as he did in Books I and II, sustaining both his moral and his historical allegory, had not his super-hero died, is a question. It was while Spenser was writing the third book that Leicester died. This broke the backbone of Spenser's poem, and Spenser's spirit seemed to break with it. (45) The means to finish his poem was gone. The historical allegory ended abruptly. When it was resumed in Book V it was no longer a "continued allegory" but the vindication of Gray's rule in Ireland, and Leicester's campaign in the Low countries. The moral allegory wavered when the historical one crumbled. In the first two books the heroes ful-

(43) "Plan and Conduct of the Faerie Queene"--Hurd

(44) Introduction to an edition of Spenser, N. Y. Crowell, 1903 and reprinted in "Longfellow and Other Essays", N. Y. 1910

(45) Dryden's digression on heroic poetry in his "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire".

filled their quests, but in Book III the achievement of Britomart is a chance encounter, not a quest. The story becomes almost pure romance, many characters being added from romantic legend. Florimel, Marinell, the Squire of Dames, and the false image of Florimel are characters that destroy the continuity of the poem, characters that are not real people but milk-and-water people, weak and vague. The main characters too get side tracked. Arthur, who has steadfastly searched through two books of fairyland for Gloriana suddenly pursues, instead, the chaste but fantastic Florimel. Why should the moral allegory fail? The times were out of joint for our Don Quixote. England was refusing to conform to his Utopian plan for her. (46) In Book One, Spenser pictured the Reformed church as the true church as opposed to the Roman Catholic church and the High Church of England which resembled it. But he was as much opposed to narrow Puritanism as to Catholicism, (witness his Blatant Beast). But the factions which were to stand out in the next century where the cavalier, morally licentious and politically servile, and the Puritan, theologically religious, intolerant, extravagantly sectarian, were emerging out of the factions which already existed instead of adopting a broadly ethical view. Spenser's beloved Reformed Protestantism was not behaving as a true faith should. Intolerant bigotry could not be extolled as a moral virtue. As Spenser lost faith, his moral allegory weakened perforce.

Those who find the later books of the "Faerie Queene" less

(46) "Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study--Herbert Cory, pp. 169, 170

enjoyable than the first two may blame the vastness of the plan which defeated his ends but which challenges our admiration.

Great as was Spenser's plan for his "Faerie queene", it did not mark the limit of his ambition. He planned, if this romance of the private moral virtues were well received, "to frame the other part of politicke virtues, after that Arthur came to be king." (47)

For both works Spenser's ideal was to make the national life of England glorious through "the union of the spiritual and civil virtues practiced by high souled English men." Spenser was disgusted and sickened by the shameless license, petty intrigue, and corrupt dealings of Elizabeth's court. (48) His intention was to censure these evils but not without recommending a corrective----the adoption of his system of ethics.

By courageously pointing out existing evils and indicating the remedy, Spenser planned to show England what she might become through individual enterprise. (49) He would place the fate of society as a whole on each individual, knowing that no nation can rise higher than the individuals that compose it. He would create an ideal of knightly conduct from the perishing institutions of chivalry, point out to enthusiastic but misguided Englishmen how they could satisfy their patriotic desires for a greater England through individual perfection by uniting the forces of the reforma-

(47) ~~the~~ Spenser's letter to Raleigh

(48) Spenser's exposes and censures court vices in "Colin Clout's Home Again."

(49) Spenser's letter to Raleigh

and feats of arms and chivalry, the operations of that virtue whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and all the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves are to be beaten down and overcome." (52) Again in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser says he is following the ancient poets, Homer and Virgil, who wrote the ethics of individual life and of political life.

Ethics is not a study of a thing that has been done, but a study of what ought to be done in the light of the morally possible, to the end of a life of "virtuous action". It is not a study of conventional morality, but of ideal morality.

Not only is Spenser's conception of ethics grand, but his treatment also. He does not teach ethics through a portrayal of struggles of petty virtues against such minor vices as stinginess, rashness, and cowardice. His is a comprehensive treatment of Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy, each book being "a commentary on the whole breadth of human life". (53) The "Faerie Queene" thus becomes a treatise of "ethics from the point of view of heroic youth; not an analysis of the virtues, but an account of the way in which they comport themselves in action." (54) The central figure is Magnificence, "which virtue is the perfection of them all" says Mr. Crothers, who continues, "This is a virtue that has often been overlooked by those who have charge of youth. They make much of prohibitions, and not enough of noble incitements.

(52) "Spenser, the Poet and Teacher, Transcripts and Studies"--Dowden pp. 284.

(53) quoted in Edmund Spenser, a Critical Study," by Herbert Cory, (Dean Kitchen,) pp. 108.

(54) "The Romance of Ethics" in "Among Friends"--Samuel Crothers

They do not picture the good life as a magnificent achievement, ~~and~~ calling into play all the virile powers."

Mr. Crothers points out that Holiness is not pictured by Spenser as a meek, gray bearded palmer, heedless of the world, and by the world unheeded. Holiness, and the other virtues, are positive virtues, using foresight, strength, and skill to oppose the vices that deceive men until they are unmasked and overthrown. Holiness is pictured as a knight in full armor on which we see the dints of war made by his struggle against Error, Hypocrisy, Falsehood, Lawlessness, Joylessness, Faithlessness, Despair, and Sin against the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not ride out alone, to conquer. Beside him, to guide him aright, rides the lovely lady Truth. She is not a Truth of reverie, but of action. Holiness is almost overmastered in Palace of Pride, but finally escapes. Truth saves him from Despair and takes him to the House of Holiness where he learns all the virtues, visits the hill of Contemplation, sees the New Jerusalem, and wants to enter, but cannot do so until he has slain all his enemies.

Temperance is not pictured as a kind of weakness to be protected against alcoholic beverages, or any other thing. It is a strength to be exercised. Temperance is self control brought about by constant struggle to master the desires of the flesh and of the world. The chief mission of Guyon, the personification of Temperance is to destroy the Bower of Bliss, lust of the flesh. In his travels Guyon meets others who have been overcome by the vices he attacks. He stops to help some of them. He conquers Furor and

and Occasion and Ate. He repulses Wanton Frivolity and refuses Mammon's rewards. He puts to flight with Arthur's aid, the passions that assault Alma, the Soul. He conquers Appetite, withstands the alluring Acrasia of the Bower of Bliss, destroys her bower, and carries her, a prisoner, to the Faerie Queene. As Milton said, Spenser did not keep Guyon away from temptation, but took him through the cave of Mammon and tempted him with all worldly goods, to the Bower of Bliss and tempted him with lusts of the flesh, that he might know evil in its most enticing forms, and still abstain. (55)

Chastity is presented as a warrior maiden, not as a cloistered virtue. In the form of chaste Britomart, she is not a vestal vowed to perpetual maidenhood, but a ~~magnificent~~ magnanimous lover who rides forth to seek her knight, meeting dangers on the way, but always maintaining her virtue. No-one can withstand this warrior maiden with her keen intellect, her strong arm, and her sword.

Friendship is treated in too fantastic a manner to be a lesson to the reader. We cannot work magic to preserve friendships as Spenser did in this book, where Spenser lost his grip on his allegory.

Justice, in the form of Artegall, is not the justice that, "in judicial robes" weighs spent deeds of wrong, but justice that rides forth to prevent crimes against weakness. He attacks special privilege and the mob.

Courtesy as Sir Calidore, chases the Blatant Beast of vulgar

(55) *Aeropagitica*, Temple Edition, pp. 22

manners and brutish desires.

The characters of "The Faerie queene" are Spenser's profoundest hopes and fears for England masquerading as knights and ladies, and the principal characters are not, as many critics over-emphasize, shadowy beings. (56) Spenser's principal men characters are individuals, not types, though his women are always more distinctive, according to Miss Kate Warren, (57) One feels Spenser's chivalric reverence of womanhood in his portraiture of them. He makes the outward beauty a manifestation of inward character. Spenser himself realizes he treats his women characters with better success as human personifications than he does his men. Whereas in allegory his men are more likely to become abstract qualities, the allegory never affects his women; they remain women of romance. (58) As an example let us take Una, Truth, whose face is luminous with the beauty with which she lights the world. She is a real woman. When she finds her knight in the giant's dungeon thro betrayal of the woman Duesse, Falsehood, who has supplanted herself, she goes to save him. She is the first to hear his voice in the dungeon. And she surrenders herself to him before she reveals to him in all her shame the hag who has deceived him and supplanted herself through disguise. Then only is she willing to pain and shame him by the revelation of his folly. When Despair has almost induced him to take his life Una scolds him for being untrue to himself, yet she

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- (56) Cory. "Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study, pp. 144.
(57) "The Faerie queene" III, Introduction, xiii-xiv
(58) Dowden, "Heroines of Spenser"

had borne silently his faithlessness to her. She takes him to the House of Holiness where he may regain his strength. She sees that he has rest and refreshment before each encounter. She endures sorrows and joys with equal fortitude. She greets her knight with joy when he has attained a new victory. And when the letter of accusation comes on their bridal day from the false woman to whom he ~~had~~ once succumbed, she does not leave him to explain it to her father. She, herself, explains it in a way that lays all the blame on the false woman.

Spenser's Democracy

Spenser is more democratic than the majority of the writers of his age. True, he appears to cater to the aristocracy when he gives them the greater portion of space in his "Faerie Queene", but we must remember Spenser was not satisfied with the moral and political tenor of his times, and he had to place his ideals for a greater England before those who were in power. He shows his faith in the common people when he pictures them (in the scene of the fawns and satyrs) as giving harborage to Truth (Una) when she was deserted to Lawlessness by the knight sent forth by the queen as her protector. And Satyrane, a knight risen from the common people, fights her battles for her until Prince Arthur finds her recreant knight and restores him to her. Spenser does not make his shepherds and Shepherdesses in his pastoral "The Shepherd's Calendar" princes and princesses as did Sidney in his "Arcadia" and Lodge in his "Rosalynde".

Spirit and Subject Matter of Spenser's Poetry

Through all Spenser's work ran the golden thread of sincerity. He "wrote about that which interested him most deeply, and considering the manifest affectations of speech that were the fashion, wrote with remarkable directness", says *Hugh de Selincourt*. He assumed no affectation in his choice of subject. His personality makes itself felt in his work. "Spenser", says *Mr. de Selincourt* did much to remove the misconceptions which were beginning to throw out their life killing feelers, that poetry must be kept apart from life; that poetry must borrow dignity for its subject from what is called learning, instead of lending dignity to any subject by its own graciousness; that things could exist which were too sacred or too commonplace to be treated in poetry." (59)

In this spirit of sincerity Spenser courageously denounced religious and political corruption and the license of court life. Spenser was a Low Church man of the Anglican church. He was born in Smithfield and was six years old when Elizabeth came to the throne. Just before Elizabeth's accession, Mary martyred three hundred Protestants in Smithfield. The whole-sale slaughter made such an impression on Spenser's mind that he pictured Mary in Book One of his "Faerie Queene" as the false Duessa, a most repulsive character. (60) When Spenser went to college he also ~~also~~ (61) attended Cambridge which was strongly Protestant. While there (1573) Spenser

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- (59) "Cambridge History of English Literature," IV: 172-190
(60) "Political and Ecclesiastical Allegory of Book I, "Faerie
Queene" by Frederick Padelford)
(61) Cory, "Edmund Spenser, a Critical Study," pp. 57

started his earliest serious work, "The Shepherd's Calendar" which he published in 1579, signed "Immerito" rather than his name.

Four of the twelve eclogues of the Calendar were on the subject of morality and religion. The October eclogue contains the allegory of the oak and the briar wherein the young briar (the Anglican church) proud in its summer splendor, complained to the husbandman (the English people) of the old oak which had stood for the sturdy elements of the old Catholic religion. The husbandman cut the oak down. Without its accustomed protection from the giant oak the briar almost froze when winter came. This satire on the state church was Spenser's confession of his fear that the new religion, puffed up by pride and ambition would die out. He saw the need of purification of the established church.

In the July eclogue of the "Calendar" Spenser praised Brindal (whom he calls Algrind) whose refusal to crush the reforming Puritans for Elizabeth, cost him out of court favor. Spenser hated hypocrisy and empty formality in the church. He pointed out that the church did not make the Christian. He said,

"To ~~make~~ the narre
From God more farre
Has been an old sayd sawe."

He attacked the prelates of the Anglican church, who dined sumptuously, dressed luxuriantly, and spent their time in expensive pleasures.

Spenser realized he was courting royal displeasure at the very outset of his career, by attacking the queen's church. He makes

Morrell say.

"Harme may come of melling,
Thou medlest more then shall have thanke."

He made Diggon Davy (September eclogue of the "Calded@r") tell of his trips into the "foreign countries", (London) where he saw feuds and corruption, unscrupulous pastors and parasitic courtiers fattening their purses with church property, and the prelates absolving themselves with holy water while their parishoners worked and ate crusts. That he realized the danger of so intensely stating his convictions concerning political and ecclesiastical conditions, Spenser again tells us in the speech where Hobbinol warns Diggin Davy,

"Nowe Diggon, I see thou speakest to plaine,
Better it were a little to feyne,
And cleanly cover that cannot be cured:
Such ill as is forced, mought nedes be endured."

In the May eclogue Spenser relates Chaucer's tale of the kid and the fox. Professor Greenlaw thinks Spenser is warning both parties in the Anglican church to beware of the plots of Catholicism. (62)

Professor Cory inclines to believe with Dr. Higginson that Spenser was "treating the Anglicans to a thinly disguised attack in this, the most Puritan of his eclogues", by warning young Essex against Lord Burleigh's ecclesiastical policy. (63) The High Anglican church was so similar to the Roman Catholic church that the Puritans often spoke of the Anglicans as Catholics (64). It

(62) "A Better Teacher than Aquinas" by Prof. Greenlaw, "Studies in Philology," 1917)

(63) "Spenser, A Critical Study"--Herbert Cory, pp. 23

(64) "Spenser, A Critical Study"--Herbert Cory, pp. 20, 30 footnote 25

is probable that Spenser's picture of the Red Cross Knight tempted in the House of Pride, was meant to reveal pride in the Anglican as well as in the Catholic church. It is tradition that Spenser's punishment for his temerity in revealing the faults of the church of state was his banishment to Ireland.

If all this seems incompatible with Spenser's praises of Elizabeth sung in the same "Calendar", the reader will do well to recall the spirit of the Elizabethan age when all poets praised their queen. "These panegyrics were not flattery, but an enthusiastic state of mind", says Professor Greenlaw. (65) To praise the queen was to praise England. The reader might well refresh his memory of the Englishman whose hand Elizabeth caused to be severed from his body and who, just before he fainted in anguish, waved his hat with his good hand and cried, "God save the queen!" Spenser's warm loyalty to Elizabeth", says Professor Cory, "was purified by his courageous public recognition of her faults. (66) Spenser fiercely denounced the vices of Elizabeth's court, her army, and her church, in "Mother Hubbard's Tale". (67)

In "Colin Clout's Come Home Again", Spenser and his friends are pictured as shepherds conversing together after Spenser (Colin) and Raleigh ("the shephord of the sea"), have just

(65)

"Spenser and British Imperialism" Modern Philology (1912)
IX:370

(66) "Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study"--Herbert Cory, pp. 54

(67) " " " " " " " " pp. 103

returned to Ireland after taking Spenser's first three books of "The Faerie queene" to London for Elizabeth's perusal. Although Spenser devotes considerable space in this poem to eulogy of his queen, he is not one whit backward in denouncing the scandalous court she keeps.

"All their talk and study is of it. (ie., love.)
Nay any there doth brave and valiant seeme,
Unless that some gay Mistresse badge he beares:
No any one himselfe doth aught esteeme,
Unless he swim in love up to his eares.
But they of love and of his sacred lere,
(As it should be) all otherwise devise,
Than we poor shepherds are accustomed here
And him do sue and serve all otherwise;
For with lewd speeches and licentious deeds,
His mightie mysteries they do prophane,
And use his idle name to other needs."
etc.

Further proof of the audacious courage of Spenser is his dedication of his "Shepherd's Calendar" to Sir Philip Sidney at a time when Sidney was out of the queen's favor. Spenser again championed a friend in adversity when he wrote a sonnet to Gabriel Harvey, former literary light of Cambridge who had fallen into disfavor at that institution. Spenser's loyalty to a friend was also shown when he made Raleigh his hero in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again", at a time when Raleigh was out of favor with the court.

Spenser was audacious in showing his hope for the union of Elizabeth and Leicester, both in "The Faerie queene" and in Cuddie's speech ~~of the ending~~, "For lefty love doth leath a lowly eye". And what daring in Spenser to picture Alencon, the French suitor for Elizabeth's hand, as the cowardly Braggadocio!

Yet William Yeats pictures Spenser as an opportunist! Mr. Yeats accuses Spenser of being a "salaried moralist". He says that Spenser felt it necessary to justify himself to his masters; his art to some serious friend. Otherwise he would have written of shepherdesses always, among whom would have prevailed the morals of the dove cot; that Spenser was not essentially moral or religious and that he should not have occupied himself with moral and religious questions at all, but rather have been a master of revels to mankind! (68)

As a young poet Spenser realized the small pay there was in the kind of work he was setting out to do, for in the October eclogue of the "Calendar" he has Piers reply to the poet who complains that Apollo is a poor paymaster,

"Cuddie, the prayse is better than the pryce,
The glory eke much greater than the gayne."

He felt as did Milton whose song on the death of Lycidas was interrupted by bitter questioning of the rewards of poetry and noble living. That he did not refrain from censuring "his masters" where censure was due, nor from praising those whom his queen chose to disfavor, when he felt the disfavor undeserved, we have shown. That he did it deliberately, his own lines in the July eclogue prove,

"Nought weigh I whom my song doth prayse or blame,
Ne strive to winne renowne, or passe the rest."

(68) Mr. Yeats is quoted in Cory "Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study", pp. 49 and 50.

Spenser's Use of Allegory

No man, however sincere in his convictions and however courageous in expressing them, cares to court unnecessary danger, and by something his thrusts in allegory. Spenser avoided extreme plainness. His "dark conceits" could be readily interpreted by those in political circles, yet who could prove them? Allegory presented a convenient obscurity.

There was plenty of precedent for Spenser's choice of allegorical form to carry his moral and political message, both among ancient classical writers and middle English writers. The allegory was also popular in Spenser's time and for more than a hundred years thereafter. It appears to me, too, that Spenser thought in allegory. For him the practical and the visionary seemed to melt together in perfect harmony. His imaginative mind easily conceived Elizabeth as Gloriana the queen, Belphoebe the maiden citizen, and Britomart the chaste warrior, all at the same time: of the Red Cross Knight both as Holiness and as Lord Lovelace. There is no doubt that the historical allegory was of greater interest to Elizabethans than to us; indeed the political allegory is interesting to the reader of today relatively as he is interested in the history of the Elizabethan period. The political allegory is not essential to the enjoyment of "Faerie Queene". It is not carried out by Spenser, save superficially, beyond the first book.

There is doubt, however, that the moral allegory adds delight to an otherwise fantastic fairy tale, by giving it weight

and substance . The "Shepherd's Calender", too, divested of its allegory, would lose a great deal of its interest and beauty. Professor Saintsbury says, "I am inclined to think that the presence of these under-meanings with the interest which they give to a moderately instructed and intelligent person who, without too desperate a determination to see into millstones, understands 'words to the wise,' is a great addition to the hold of a poem over the attention, and saves it from the charge of mere desultoriness, which some, at least, of the other greatest poems of the kind must undergo (notably its immediate exemplar, the 'Orlando Furioso')." (69)

(70)

William Yeats says Spenser's allegory "disappoints and interrupts our preoccupation with the beautiful and sensuous life he has called up before our eyes." (71) These hedonists who insist on nothing less ephemeral than fairy fancies, and say others afflicted with mental laziness should follow Hazlitt's advice and "not meddle with the allegory" and they will find the romantic story "as plain as pike-staff". (72)

It is too bad that those romanticists and hedonists who object to Spenser's moral teaching and his allegory could not do so in a more tempered and qualifying phrases as does Henry Reynolds, a mystic of 1633, who found Spenser among the few English poets who would endure, although he disapproved of these things. He said,

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- (69) George Saintsbury's "The Faerie Queene", pp. 89. History of English Literature"
 - (70) For consideration of Spenser's moral allegory for its own sake see Appendix No. 13
 - (71) Edmund Spenser, a Critical Study--Cory, pp. 49
 - (72) English Poets, Chapt. II "Chaucer and Spenser", pp. 49

"I must approve the learned Spenser, in the rest of his poems no less than his "Faerie Queene", an exact body of the Ethicks doctrine; tho some good judgments have wished, and perhaps not without cause, that he had therein been a little freer of his fictions and not so closely riveted to his moral." (73)

Professor Courthope believes both the moral and the allegory are an essential part of Spenser's work, but he does not want Spenser regarded primarily as a moral teacher. He believes the allegory interesting to Spenser because it serves the purpose of poetry, and the requirements of his art as he interprets them. But he believes Spenser is primarily poetical. (74)

Professor Dodge says, "Had "The Faerie Queene" been pure Romance it would have been a much less exquisite creation. He says in substance, It is more remote, more strange, more diverse than Romance. It is a world of classic gods and goddesses, Christian knights and ladies, shepherds, giants and monsters, and incarnate abstractions gathered from antiquity, the middle ages and the Renaissance, and harmonized by the serenest of poetic imaginations. It is a world in which we do not crave the energy and movement found in Aristo's "Orlando Furioso". Externally a poem of action, the "Faerie Queene" is at heart but the vision of a contemplative mind---its main realities being beauty and the law of the Spirit. It is a poem that appeals to the "inward eye" which

(73) Spéingarn's Critical Essays of the 17th Century, I, pp. 144, also "Of Poetry" reprinted in Prof. Spingarn's "Sir Wm. Temple's Essays on Ancient and Modern Learning, and on Poetry", 1685, Oxford 1909

(74) "A History of English Poetry"

can read the spirit of the speech, the forms, the hues, the attitude, the features. Thus it is not a paradise of romance, but a revealer thru its peculiar atmosphere, of its author's magic imagination---his spirituality and his humanness." (75)

Spenser and the Pastoral

Often the poetic value of Spenser's pastoral the "Shepherd's Calendar" is lost sight of in the brilliance of his later work. But we must not forget that it marked the beginning of Modern Poetry. Spenser was really the father of the English eclogue, as much so as though Barclay sixty years before, and others since, had not sought to introduce it. For their attempts were insignificant. (76) If the form did not live beyond the eighteenth century it was not because Spenser did not give it the right start. He gave it the light touch he learned from Marot, and in this he was imitated by Drayton, Browne, and other Spenserians, and later and more remotely by Milton in "L'Allegro." If this treatment had been followed, the Pastoral would not probably have gone into oblivion.

Probably the element of humor in the "Calendar" would have been greater if Spenser had not sought to make it more than an Art for Art's sake poem. But he added personality to the Pastoral. His pastoral as we have already shown reflected his interests in church and state, and personal associations. We have previously mentioned (77) that Spenser added realism to the Pastoral by making his characters real shepherds and shepherdesses. He added to the

(75) Professor Dodge is quoted in "Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, pp. 65, and 66.

(76) Cambridge History of English Literature Vol. III: 74

(77) ~~Spenser's Pastoral~~ See "Spenser's Democracy" pp 27 of thesis

Pastoral another element that made for Realism which we shall consider later ^{under} "Archaisms", namely the colloquial speech of the common people. Only the school of the Fletchers realized the magnitude of Spenser's plan for the Pastoral and sought to enlarge upon it.

There is sheer beauty in the "Calendar." Note the singing match between Willie and Perigot; its gayety, buoyancy, fairy grace and simplicity.

Per. "It fell upon a holly eve
Wil. Hey ho, hollidaye!
Per. When holly fathers went to shrieve:
Wil. Now gynneth this roundelay.
Per. Sitting upon a hill so high,
Wil. Hey ho, the high hill!"

And the elegiac verses to Elizabeth in the April eclogue "marked the highest reach of the English lyric when it appeared". (78) The stanzas have a rapturous tone and a wayward buoyancy, yet close with dignity in the four footed last lines. Of course the pastoral is ridiculous since the eighteenth century pastoralists made it absolutely unrealistic by their shepherds and shepherdesses in ruffles and ribbons and silks and patches on their faces. What a disintegration is their purposeless, senescent pastoral after Spenser's fiery anger against the prideful Anglicans! and his "smooth ditties on the delightful miseries of calf love!" (79) Though the beauty of the poetry does not compare with that of Keats who died at the age of Spenser when the Calendar was published, yet compared with that of Wyatt and Surrey and their immediate successors it is exceptionally smooth and graceful. There

(78)"E. Spenser, a Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, pp. 17 and 58
(79)"E. Spenser, a Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, P. 2.

is a quaintness, a vigor, and a vividness to the lines. There is also a daring complexity and consequent confused unit. For Spenser wrote therein of poetry, of love, of patriotism, of politics, and of religion, unifying them through the device of a calendar, the matter for each month reflecting the peculiar character of the time of year.

There is a long list of Spenser's imitators of the pastoral but as we mentioned, those of the eighteenth century were poor. Of seventeenth century imitations still read with pleasure Milton's are most notable; his "Comus", "Lycidas", "L'Allegro", "Il Penseroso".

Spenser's Contribution to Verse Form

One of Spenser's greatest contributions to poetry is his perfection of verse and stanza forms. Patterns of both were scarce when Spenser began to write. True, Chaucer had organized poetry out of the diffuse state in which it had existed through two centuries of experiment. But in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, even with Chaucer as a model, versification went to pieces. It became worse than unpoetic. Rime was its only claim to poetry.

Spenser marked a new era in English versification. He adjusted poetry once more to metrical form and to the ear. (80) He did much more than restore poetry to its Chaucerian position. He added varied metrical stanza form, and adjusted these forms to

(80) Cambridge History of English Literature, VIII: 253

the changed condition of the language. For pronunciation had changed. Notably the final articulate *e* of Chaucerian England had been dropped and the accent on the final syllable of words derived from the French had gradually moved to the first syllable. This had brought about confusion and irregularity.

Preceding Spenser, Wyatt and Surrey had helped to establish order and regularity by applying and adjusting Italian influence to the old patterns of Chaucer and to the new pronunciation. The sonnet form, adapted from Petrarch, was their chief instrument. But they had started no sonnet vogue. A generation passed between their isolated effort and the birth of the Elizabethan sonnet. For after they had furnished the sonnet pattern, Elizabethan writers refused to maintain a distinct form for it. They used the title "sonnet" indiscriminately for four line, six line, and other forms of verse. (81)

Spenser really fathered the English sonnet when, as a boy of seventeen years, he published, anonymously, twenty-six sonnets which, twenty-two years later were republished with some changes under the title "Complaints". (82) These were imitative of the French Joachim du Bellay and Clement Marot, but showed metrical versatility and poetic ability, for the metre was of Spenser's own devising. He never used either the English form adapted by Wyatt and Surrey, (abab, cdcd, efef, gg) or the Italian form (abba, abba, cde, cde.) He used three quatrains, alternately rimed,

(81) Cambridge History of English Literature, III: 281, 282, 323
(82) Cambridge History of English Literature, III, 282, 283, 284, 285

closing with a riming couplet, often an alexandrine, thus producing five rhimes, instead of the seven in the English form (abab, bobe, cdcd, ee). Between the publication of the third and the fourth book of "The Faerie queene" he penned and published the "Amoretta", a collection of 88 sonnets addressed to the lady who was to become his wife. His sonnets had a more idealistic note than did those of any of his contemporaries, who, Sidney and Shakespere among them, addressed their sonnets as Wyatt and Surrey had done, to soul mates, real or imaginary, rather than wife. (83)

But it was not as a sonneteer that Spenser won immortal fame, not only because his sonnet form was not imitated, but because his poetic achievement lent itself to larger, freer development. And though Sidney, Shakespeare, Drayton, and others were his junior school fellows rather than his pupils, his direct influence was immense and all pervading, and as a masterly representative of influences that others felt, there was no one to match him. (84) Spenser's mission was to establish order and regularity of verse and to become the first and the greatest, the impeccable master of rhythm, time, and tune, which Wyatt and Surrey had but imperfectly and tentatively achieved. He had no mixed cadences whether in the variegated lyrical lines of the "Calender", in his sonnets, his septet applied to the "Hymns in Honor of Love and Beauty", "The Ruines of Time", and his "Daphnaida", his eighteen line stanzas of "Epithalamion" and "Prothalamion", his quatrain and

(83) "Cambridge History of English Literature" III:284, 292

(84) "Cambridge History of English Literature" III:325, 326, 327

couplet of "Astrophel" and "The Tears of the Muses", or in his own special stanza of "The Faerie Queene". In spite of the variety of his distinct and combined forms, he maintained regularity of metre and rhythm.

Spenser was among the re-discoverers of rhythmical metrical systems of poetry, and the GREATEST in adjusting it to existing conditions. On account of the change in the accent of a few words, and on account of Spenser's peculiar system of eye-rhyme, it is desirable to retain his spelling, lest the effect he desired to produce be lost, but whatever one does with the spelling, the rhythm will not be altered, whereas if one modernizes Chaucer, the rhythm is lost unless the work is rebuilt.

Spenser's intention of his stanza was a matter of necessity. His epic demanded a freer form than either the couplet or the septet. The ottava rime was too abrupt for "The Faerie Queene". Blank verse was as yet undeveloped. And so Spenser used the eight line stanza which Chaucer and other writers had from the French, and added to it a ninth line which he took from Virgil's dactyl hexameter, and made^{*} iambic hexameter rhyming with the eighth line, thus; abab, bobc, c. He had now united Italian and French influence as adapted to the English language with the classical. Obtuse critics complain because Spenser did not invariably place a caesura after the third foot of the alexandrine! They do not appreciate Spenser's genius in acquiring versatility in that line as well as in all other lines of his stanza. He carried the line to match the thought, with sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes

three and sometimes without a single pause in the line. Sometimes each line of Spenser's stanza is a unit; sometimes a single sentence runs through the entire nine lines, again the fifth line closes the first half of the stanza. In line making and line grouping he was a great teacher. He runs his lines into one another, or holds them apart within the stanza according to the thought. What an innova-

tion to destroy monotony'. Another hindrance to monotony is the great variety of rhyme. And the rhymes are masculine. So seldom does one come upon an evident striving for rhyme in all those forty-thousand odd lines of "The Faerie Queene" that one remarks the exception. And false rhymes are as rare. If there are any objectors to Spenser's rhymes and stanza among my readers, they should read "Christopher North's" spirited reply to such objectors.(85) He says in part, "We will thank you to show us seventy-four cantos of a good many hundred lines each, forming half a poem, so rich in rhymes, without monotony, repetition, or imperfection, as Spenser's seventy-four, which, had he lived, he could with equal ease, grace and power, have made a hundred and fifty."

Professor Saintsbury says of Spenser's stanza, "Its great compass, admitting of an almost infinite variety of cadence and composition, saves it from the monotony from which even the consummate art of Milton could not save blank verse now and then, and from which no writer has ever been able to save the couplet or quatrain, or stanzas ending in a couplet, in narratives of very

(85) Blackwood's Magazine, XXXIV XXXVI & XXXVII, Edinburgh, 1833-35

great length. No poem runs with such an entire absence of effort, with such easy eloquence, with such an effect of flowing water." (86) Beattie says of Spenser's stanza, "I think it the most harmonious that ever was contrived. It admits of more variety of pauses than either the couplet or the alternate rhyme; and it concludes with a pomp and majesty of sound, which, to my ear, is wonderfully delightful. It seems also very well adapted to the genius of our language, which, from its irregularity of inflection and number of monosyllables, abounds in diversified terminations, and consequently renders our poetry susceptible of an endless variety of legitimate rhymes. (87)

Hazlitt says, "His versification is at once the most smooth and the most sounding, in the language. Spenser was the poet of our waking dreams; and he has invented not only a language but a music of his own for them. The undulations are infinite, like those of the waves of the sea; but the effects are still the same, lulling the senses into a deep oblivion of the jarring noises of the world, from which we have no wish to be ever recalled. (88)

Let us cite an example of Spenser's musical stanza:

"And more to lull him in his slumber soft,
a trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,
And ever drizzling raine upon the loft,
Mist with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne;
No other noyse nor people's troublous cryes,
As still are wont t'annoy the walled towne,
Might there be heard; but careless quiet lyes
Wrapt in eternal silence far from enemyes."

(86) Saintsbury, "History of English Literature", Chapter IV

(87) Beattie's letter to Dr. Blackwood, September 22, 1766

(88) Hazlitt's "English Poets" pp. 57

As the reader compares the sounds of trickling stream and swarming bees of the stanza above with the ponderous sound of the dragon's fall in the stanza following, let him bear in mind what North, Beattie, and Hazlitt said of the variety of rime and cadence, the easy eloquence, and the lack of monotony in the stanzas. Let him note especially the variety of pauses brought about by skillful line making and line grouping which results in variety of sound. Let him note how rapidly and lightly the stanza above moves; how slowly and heavily the one following. In the second stanza the long pause after "fell" in both the first and third lines, after "lift" in the fifth, after "and" in the eighth, and "fell" in the ninth produced a majesty of sound that varies delightfully with the grace of the stanza above.

"So downe he fell, and forth his life did breath,
That vanisht into smoke and cloudes swift;
So downe he fell, and th' earth him underneath
Did groane as feeble so great load to lift;
So down he fell as an high rocky clift,
~~Whose-dreadful-poyse-is-fre~~
Whose false foundation waves have waht away,
With dreadful poyse is from the maynland rift,
And, rolling downe, great Neptune doth dismay;
So downe he fell, and like an heaped mountain lay."

For further study of variety in line making and line grouping in accordance with the thought, especially in regard to diversified punctuation both within the lines and marking terminations, let my reader compare stanza forty-six, canto eight, Book Two; stanza one, canto eight, Book Two; stanza 38, canto nine, Book One; stanza five, canto five, Book One. And for variety of pauses in the alexandrine let him consult stanzas forty-two and forty-three, canto eight, Book Two; stanzas thirty-seven and forty-four, canto eight,

Book Two; stanzas forty-seven, canto eight, Book Two; stanza forty-eight, Canto seven, Book Two.

Matthew Arnold says "The verse of Spenser is more fluid, slips more easily and quickly along, than the verse of almost any other English poet." (89) And he cites these lines:

"By this the northern wagoner had set
His seven-fold team behind the steadfast star
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
But firm is fixt, and sendeth light from far
To all that in the wide deep wandering are."

Byron says, "When I began 'Childe Harold' I had never tried Spenser's measure, and now I cannot scribble in any other." (90) But Byron's stanza, while it has vigor, lacks the stately dignity, the slow moving magnificence, the "flow of waters meandering, eddy-ing, sweeping without noise or foam" which is the proper character of Spenser's stanza. (91)

Scott introduced Spenserian stanzas in almost all his narrative poems, generally at the opening of his cantos. The idyllic scenes on the island in the second canto of "The Lady of the Lake" are introduced with this Spenserian stanza:

"At morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay
All Nature's children feel the matin spring
Of life reviging, with reviging day;
And while yon little bark glides down the bay,
Waiting the stranger on his way again,
Morn's genial influence roused a minstrel gray,
And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain
Mix'd with thy sounding harp, O white-hair'd Allan-Bane."

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- (89) Quoted in Cory "Edmund Spenser, a Critical Study, pp. 75
(90) Byron to Lord Holland, September 26, 1812
(91) Cambridge History of English Literature, 13: 261

How often Spenser's stanza has been imitated! First by Richard Barnfield who in 1595 wrote the classical allegory "Cynthia"; by Thomson in his "Castle of Indolence" in 1748; by Shenstone in "The School Mistress", same date; ~~by Goldsmith in his "Deserted Village"~~, ~~by Gray in his "Elegy of the Charnhouseyard"~~; by Byron in his "Childe Harold" and "Pilgrimage"; by Beattie in his "Minstrel"; by Burns in his "Cotter's Saturday Night"; by Shelley in his "The Cenci" and "The Revolt of Islam"; by Keats in his "Eve of Saint Agnes"; and by Walter Scott in his narrative poems. Milton experimented with it by adding the alexandrine to the rime royal. Beside these, Chatterton, the Wartons, Fairfax, and Dryden, all imitated it. (92)

Spenser's Archaisms

At a time when every writer with originality was engaged in beating out for himself an instrument of speech (93) Spenser labored to restore to their rightful heritage natural English words that had gone out of use. (94) At so great a distance from Spenser's time, we do not realize that Chaucerian language had gone out of use only a century before Spenser wrote and that it was quite as natural and certainly more patriotic for him to attempt to restore obsolete and obsolescent words than to accept the general

(92) "Cambridge History of English Literature X:265,XI:228,273,XII:68,XIII:261,264, Cory, 75 to 440

(93) "History of English Literature," Saintsbury, pp. 91

(94) E.K.'s testimony of his dear friend, Spenser's purpose, as set forth in E. K.'s edition of "The Shepherd's Calendar"

practice of the time, a practice to which we are now accustomed and familiarized---that of borrowing French and Latin words to patch up a language that had become otherwise inadequate for prose and not stately enough for poetry. And we forget that very much of the quaint spelling in Spenser was common to his day and used by the very ones who blamed as well as those who defended his restoration of obsolete words. (95) E. K. explains in words almost as antique as Spenser's own. Who can read with more ease Lily's "Euphuesse" written the same year as the "Calendar"? Who can read with much more ease Sidney's "Arcadia" contemporary with Spenser's work? And who can read with as great ease Dr. Still's comedy "Gammer Gurton's Needle", written just four years before the Calendar? (96)

Lowell says, "No man contributed so much to transformation of style and language as did Spenser." (97) J. W. K. Atkins says, "The main sources of influence in the formation of expressions and phrases to which these authors indirectly gave a wide currency and a permanent value, were the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, and the English Bible. Many of the expressions entered into daily conversation while their intimate beauty renders them fit for the highest literary usage. (98)

As we mentioned before, Spenser employed archaisms in "The Shepherd's Calendar" for the purpose of promoting realism in the

(95) See E. K.'s letter to Harvey introducing the Shepherd's Calendar as well as his exposition of the argument of the book.

(96) See Cook's "Literary Middle English" pp. 403, for further use of Middle English

(97) Lowell's "Spenser" Vol. IV, "Literary Essays"

(98) Cambridge History of English Literature, III:518

Pastoral. Spenser believed archaic words would add realism by making the language harmonious with the rusticity of the shepherd's life. (99) Dryden says, "Milton's words were his choice, not his necessity; for therein he imitated Spenser as Spenser imitated Chaucer. And though, perhaps, the love of their master may have transported both too far in the frequent use of them, yet in my opinion words may then be laudably revived when either they are mere sounding, or more significant, than those in practice; and when their obscurity is taken away, by joining other words to them which clear the sense, according to the rules of Horace for the admission of new words. But in both cases a moderation is to be observed in the use of them. For unnecessary coinage, as well as unnecessary revival runs into affectation: a fault to be avoided on either hand." (100)

Thomas Fuller, a foremost writer of the seventeenth century said "though some blame Spenser's writings for many Chancerisms used by him, yet to the learned they are known not to be blemishes but rather beauties of the book? The obsolete words certainly add authority as well as grace to these images of chivalric antiquity. They are an ornament while a part of the machinery. They make the style seem grave and reverend. Mr. Campbell says, "Spenser's language is beautiful in its antiquity, and like the moss and ivy on some majestic building, covers the fabric of his language with romantic and venerable associations." (101)

(99) See Spenser's explanation to Sidney to whom he dedicated the "Calender".

(100) "Discourse concerning the original and Progress of Satire."

(101) "E. Spenser, a Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, pp. 71

Spenser and Tediumness

According to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, the greatest difficulty in writing poetry is keeping the emotional pitch taut throughout the less lofty parts of the poem---the parts which are necessary to carry forward the story. (102) Spenser is a master of sustained tone of music. I have heard the complaint that Spenser's poetry grows tedious through its too continuous music. (happy fault!). It is true that one can hear sustained emotion in the form of either music as music or music as poetry for no great length of time, but this is not the fault of the music but of our physiological make up. If a wonderful opera were to last indefinitely one would tire of it. The reader of Spenser's long epic must learn not to read too long at a stretch. Lander says, "There is no book so delightful to read in, or so tedious to read through, as 'The Faerie Queene'." (103) Mr. Bailey says, "We are not mobile enough, we have not enough music in us to keep mind and ear long traveling with Spenser." (104)

Professor Saintsbury says, "The talk of tediousness, the talk of sameness, the talk of coterie-cultivation in Spenser, shows bad taste no doubt; but it rather shows ignorance. The critic has in such instances stayed outside his author; he speaks but of what he has not seen." (105)

(102) "The Art of Writing", Chapt. IV. The Capital Difficulty in Verse---by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

(103) Quoted by Samuel Crothers, pp. 251, 252 in "The Romance of Ethics" and in the collection of essays called "Among Friends"

(104) "E. Spenser, a Critical Study"--Herbert Cory, pp 257

(105) Saintsbury's "History of Elizabethan Literature", Chapt. IV, "The Faerie Queene"

I agree fully with Professor Saintsbury save in two instances. A canto of royal history from Brutus down (Book Two) is tedious to a reader of our day, though it may have been of interest not only to Queen Elizabeth but to all Elizabethans. The second case of tediousness is the too mechanical and didactic allegorical description of the House of Alma, the Soul. The symbolism of Digestion as the Kitchen clerk and Concoction the cook is too definite. The edges are not softened by imagination.

Spenser's Imagery

Spenser's genius shows itself nowhere more than in his imagery. Lowell says, "Spenser's imagination has been unequalled among poets. (106) Hazlitt says "He lays us in the lap of a Lovellier nature, by the sound of softer streams among greener hills and fairer valleys. He paints nature, not as we find it but as we expected to find it, and fulfills the delightful promise of our youth. (107)

Nowhere, I think has Spenser used his descriptive power to better advantage than in his picture of Acrasia (Desire of the Flesh) in her bower, ⁴with₁er Guyon (Temperance) goes to take her prisoner and destroy her bower. Acrasia was beautiful and beguiling, and naturally affected a setting to further her aims. The reader can close his eyes and almost smell the fragrance of the roses and the ripe grapes and hear the singing birds.

(106) Lowell, "Literary Essays", IV, Spenser
(107) Hazlitt, "English Poets"--Chapter XII, "Spenser" pg. 16

"Upon a bed of roses she was layd,
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtile web Araahne cannot spin,
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched deaw, do not in th'ayre more lightly flee.

Her snowy breast was bare to ready spoyle,
Of hungry eyes, which n'ote therewith be filld;
And yet through langour of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare then nectar, forth distild
That like pure orient perles adowne it trild;
And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not, like starry light
Which, sparkling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright.

The young man, sleeping by her, seemed to be
Some goodly swayne of honorable place
That certes it great pittie was to see
Him his nobility so fowle deface:
A sweet regard and amiable grace,
Mixed with manly sternesse, did appeare
Yet sleeping, in his well proportioned face,
And on his tender lips the downy heare
Did now but freshly spring, and silken blossoms beare."

Nowhere in English poetry do we find anything like this except in Keats, who, in the "Eve of Saint Agnes" approximated Spenser's sensuous poetic beauty. Keats' poems "are examples of the completed fusing of the various elements of the Spenserian imitators. (108) Keats not only borrowed scenes for his poems (ie. the "Islands of Phaedria" ~~and~~ "La Belle Dame Sans Merci") he assimilated Spenser's poetic spirit. Of the influence which Spenser's imaginative conception and treatment have had and are likely to have on poetry, Goldsmith says, "No poet enlarges the imagination more than Spenser. ---Many of our modern writers seem to have studied his manner with

utmost attention; from him their compounded epithets and solemn flow of numbers seem evidently borrowed, and the verses of Spenser may one day be considered the standard of English poetry. (109)

V

INFLUENCES PRESERVED BY SPENSER

We have surveyed the comprehensiveness of Spenser's genius in adding sincerity, personality, regular, varied, and musical verse forms, style and phraseology of language, and latitude in choice of subject matter, to English poetry. We have noted how he added the "faerie" element to allegory; how he made a "Romance of Ethics" that would appeal to youth through its imaginative treatment; how he revived the sonnet and made it a vogue; how he brought the eclogue to English poetry and improved the Pastoral form as he had it from the classical by adding realism. In short we have studied the establishment through Spenser of modern poetry.

Let us see how Spenser conserved for modern poetry, important influences both of his native land and of other countries. He incorporated into our poetry the chivalric element, since immortalized in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King". He took his legend of Arthur from Mallory's stories, a British influence, the legend of knight-hood and chivalric custom with methods and laws of combat from Geoffrey of Monmouth and from the "Chronicles of Holinshed". (110) He preserved the Welsh and Irish mysticism and supernatural trans-

(109) "Criticalisms, Letters, Collected Essays"--Goldsmith, pp 535
(110) "Cam. Hist. of Eng. Lit." III: Chapter XI, pp. 266-274

formations, disguises, magic weapons, magic clouds, dragons, giants, and dwarfs. He interwove with Irish myths classic legends of nymphs, wizards and witches, trips to Hades, the Stygian lake, the waves of Acheron, and mythological gods and goddesses. Milton imitates Spenser's classical allusions, confusing them in happy indifference with Biblical Saints. Spenser says, "Help, holy virgin, chief of nine (muses)! He has Holiness ride forth in knightly armour with Christ's cross upon his shield. He speaks of "Phoebus, fresh as a bridegroom." (lll)

Spenser's reverence for womanhood and for purity of life as reflected in his literature, preserved for us a staunch Anglo-Saxon influence. Of course Spenser's praises to Queen Elizabeth in "Colin Clout", "Shepherd's Calender", and "Faerie Queene", are to his queen as well as to the woman Elizabeth. But how beautifully in "Colin Clout" he praises his own three kinswomen, and Sidney's sister and his wife, as well as others whom we do not know so well. Is there anywhere a more beautiful appreciation of womanhood than Spenser's stanza to his own wife mid-way in the same poem? What other poet has penned eighty-eight sonnets to his wife? Who has written a more adoring one than his sixty-first? And his "Epithalamion" his ~~the-English-lan~~ own marriage ode, is the most beautiful and the most celebrated in the English language. How beautifully he applies the legendary turning of Adonis into a flower by Venus, to Sidney and his wife, whom he pictures turned into one flower when she pined and died at his death.

(lll) Appendix, No. 12

Another Anglo-Saxon influence he preserved in his words, i.e., ~~weat~~, ~~wote~~ (to know), ~~weeds~~ (for clothing), ~~ween~~, ~~eke~~, ~~hight~~, ~~fray~~ (to frighten), ~~digest~~, ~~wood~~ (mad), *dight*.

Another medieval instinct improved upon and preserved by Spenser's imaginative treatment is the pageant or masque.--the world just beyond the real world, called by Shakespeare "the symbol of the evanescent". The masque of the "Seven Deadly Sins" (Book One, Canto Four) with their barbaric opulence, and "The Masque of Cupid" (Book Two, canto twelve) are magnificent examples of the processional masque. The famous descriptions of the ~~dave~~ of Mammon (Book Two, canto seven) and the Bower of Bliss, (Book Two, canto twelve) are such set pieces as Inigo Jones tried to make real to the eye when the masque became a fixture at the end of a great hall. The characters in the House of Holiness are masque characters. Such vivid lines and stanzas as Spenser's "bitter Penance with an Iron whip" call up before us a whole scene. Of course Spenser came before drama as he had not yet added dramatic effects as did his imitators, notably Johnson and Milton. Of these, Milton coming last added still more; music and scenic effects. (112)

We have mentioned the long list of Spenserian imitators of the allegory. Perhaps it is well to tell that they imitated Spenser instead of the numerous other allegorists because of the imaginative elements he added to it. (Compare the "Faerie Queene" and "Piers Plowman" the outstanding allegory of the middle ages.)

(112) "Cam. Hist. Eng. Lit." III: 372, 378, 379
Hazlitt's "Chaucer and Spenser" Chapter II, "English Poets" *at 47*

Nowhere in *Piers Plowman* have we anything to equal the imaginative conception and description of Error as a monster in a dark cave, loving neither purifying sun nor breeze.

In no other English allegory had an author hitherto built castles all beautiful at first sight, but on close examination, so vastly different. The Palace of Pride, so gorgeous at a distance is discovered at close range to be tawdry; the castle of Orgoglio, grand from the roadway, is revealed to the reader as gruesome, dark and gloomy within; the House of Holiness, not so gorgeously alluring as the others, is bright, shining, and splendid throughout.

No other allegorist has drawn the subtle differences in his beautiful women, all of whom are winning enough to beguile the knights. Upon close examination how their personal appearances disclose their characters, Una with calm, pure, luminous face is pitted against Duessa, alluring, bewitching, hypnotic, yet deceitful; Britomart, crystal pure and vigorous, is opposed to Acrasia, sensual, voluptuous, languorous in her beauty.

He brought into English poetry from the French the strong masculine rhymes; from the classical (Virgil) he derived the hexameter for his alexandrine line, making as we said, iambic rather than dactyl. From the Italian he grafted the Romance upon English literature.

CONCLUSION

Now that we have surveyed Spenser's field and noted the most salient of his influences and the most important of his imitators; since we have from the pens of many poets the evidence of Spenser's forming influence upon them, can we agree with Professor Saintsbury who says, "Where Spenser's conception of a great work is looser than Milton's, where he lacks modern touches that appeal to a particular age, and where he lacks the lyrical ability of Shelley, he redeems these defects with far more than counterbalancing merits." (113) And can we agree with Professor Saintsbury's feeling regarding Spenser's epic? He says, in speaking of the unfinished condition of "The Faerie queene", "As it is, 'The Faerie queene' is the only long poem that a lover of poetry can sincerely wish longer." (114) Can we agree with Hazlitt's statement that "of all the poets he (Spenser) is the most poetical"? (115)

Spenser is not a poet whom we can "run and read", and I feel that if the lay reader wishes to know and appreciate his Spenser as the poets and critics have shown he has been appreciated by them, we must believe as Professor Mackail says concerning study of Spenser, "The child's vision must, if it were possible, be combined with the scholar's understanding." (116)

(113) "Hist. Eng. Lit." Chapter 4, pp. 93

(114) "Hist. Eng. Lit." pp. 88

(115) Hazlitt's "English Poets", Chapter II, Spenser, pp. 45

(116) Professor Mackail "Lectures on Poetry"

Appendix 1.

The Elizabethan age dating from Spenser's sixth year until four years after his death was an age of Spenser worship. To be sure the Elizabethan period was one of enthusiastic belief in all things English. England had just become conscious of herself as a great and powerful nation. She had faith in the English language and in English literary men. And she became top heavy. Over enthusiasm and literary youth lead to injudicious literary criticism--to exorbitant self praise and the belittling of her literary sources. Yet in all her praise of Englishmen of letters, Spenser stood out as the supreme object of her adoration.

Appendix 2.

Richard Carew, in his "Epistle on the Excellence of the English Tongue" finds fault with the language and literature of all the continent save the Greek and Latin classics. He says that Italian is delicate but without sinews, the French is over nice, the Spanish majestic but fulsome, the Dutch manlike but very harsh, adding that whatsoever grace any language carries it may be exactly represented in ours. And for the ancient classics, he advises the translations of the fourteenth century by Chaucer, of the early sixteenth by Surrey, and of his own late sixteenth century by Spenser, Sidney, and Davies. There you have then the literature of the world in the hands of a few men, Spenser among them!

Appendix 3.

If music and sweet poetry agree
As they must needs (the Sister and the Brother)
Then must the Love be great, twixt thee and mee,
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is deare; whose heavenly touch
Upon the Lute doeth ravish humane sense;
Spenser to mee; whose deepe Conceit is such,
As passing all conceit, needs no defense
Thou lov'st to hear the sweete melodious sound,
That Phoebus Lute (the Queene of Musique) makes:
And I in deep Delight am chiefly drown'd,
When as himselfe to singing he betakes.
One god is God of Both (as Poets Faigne)
One Knight loves Both, and Both in thee remaine.

-----Richard Barnsfield

Appendix 4.

A Vision Upon This Conceit of The Faerie Queene

Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay
Within that temple where the vestal flame
was wont to burn; and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,
Whose tomb fair love, and fairer virtue kept,
All suddenly I saw the Faery Queen:
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept,
And from henceforth those graces were not seen;
For they this queen attended, in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce:
Where Homer's sprite did tremble all for grief,
And cursed the access of that celestial thief."

-----Walter Raleigh, 1595

Appendix 5.

In his "Defense of Poesy" written in reply to Stephen Gosson's invective against poets and poesy, Sidney states that the only true cause for objection to matter being written in verse rather than in prose is that in England so many incapable folk write verse. He goes on to say "With the exception of "The Mirror for Magistrates" (Sackville's), Surrey's "Hymns", and Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar" ("The Faerie Queene was not published until 1590, nine years later) I do not remember but few printed that have poetical sinews in them."

Appendix 6.

Of Spenser's influence in the period succeeding his own age Abernethy has said "Outside dramatic poetry, the most specific Elizabethan influence was that exerted by Spenser's poems. Jacobean literature (seventeenth century literature up to 1725) has been characterized as Elizabethan literature grown old, reflective and intellectual. With the sophistication of age came doubt. Where Englishmen had unitedly and harmoniously idealized English poetry, they became critical. The result was a gradual breaking up into warring cults. England was to pass in the seventeenth century through an age of Literary Anarchy before she arrived in the eighteenth century to the age of Reason. Reason then stood dominant but not triumphant; neo-classicism which was to unify literature once more, gained ground slowly, and did not triumph under Waller, Denham, and Dryden but struggled until Pope and Addison became dictators in the eighteenth century. This age of Anarchy was necessary for

England to develop literary criticism. At the breaking up into cults, Spenser's and Sidney's flamboyant, Italianate poetry went out of fashion as a national style. Donne, who with Jonson took the place in court circles formerly held by Spenser and Sidney, became the father of affected English poetry. We are not interested in Donne's school of involved poetry and Metaphysical poets, nor in the Cavalier poets. But we are interested in the school of Spenserian poets, who stood outside the realm of the court.

Drayton of the late Elizabethan period formed the connecting link between Spenser and the Spenserian imitators, Giles and Phineas Fletcher, and William Brown (unless we class Brown as we might easily, with Drayton.) These men have been called the truest Spenserians that ever lived, but not because they imitated Spenser most truly! For though they were considered by their contemporaries masters of their craft, literary history has consigned them to the lowly position of "sunken stepping stones from Spenser to Milton". These men, being pre-nec-classicists, cared nothing for Spenser's Romance, and everything for his allegory, so that in their imitations there was no escape from tedious allegory to pure romance as there was in Spenser. Living in the Puritan age, they displaced Spenser's ethics by seventeenth century theology. Their imitations of Spenser's pastorals never were popular after their own age. Nor were their imitative sonnets. Being admirers of Spenser's success in adding the alexandrine to the eight line stanza, they added it to the rime royal, ottava rime, and other forms. Inspired by Spenser's plan for his epic as set forth in his letter to Raleigh and

by his success in "The Faerie Queene", they reared gigantic schemes for mammoth epics. These towers of Babel were absurd and we might say were deliterious in effect if we did not know that Milton was influenced by them to turn from his former notion of writing an epic on Arthur to his stupendous plan of writing of God and Satan in his "Paradise Lost". So that these men did something besides plunder "The Faerie Queene" for lines, stanzas, and figures. They established a distinct school which carried Spenser's influence into the eighteenth century.

"English Literature" by Abernethy, pp. 225; "H. Spenser, a Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, pp. 291, 298, 389

Appendix 7.

Drummond and Fairfax combined an Elizabethan love of sensuousness with interest in truly classical form. Fairfax was an ardent admirer student of Spenser, and was acknowledged model of Waller. Waller, who admired the couplet as did Drummond, its first reviver since Chaucer, also became assiduous in polishing this form which was to become the darling of the neo-classicists. Waller, even in the seventeenth century became the model of all true followers of classicism. Thus Fairfax and Drummond, through Waller, became the connecting link between Spenser and neo-classicism.

Dryden was the inheritor of late seventeenth century inheritor of Waller's classic style, together with Denham and Davenant. He handed it down to Pope and Addison for the finishing touches. Waller, beside considering Fairfax, the Spenserian, one of the divine authorities, showed first hand acquaintance with Spenser himself. This links Spenser definitely with the classic movement.

Dryden, the foremost literary critic of the late seventeenth century, appears on cursory reading to place Waller above Spenser. But close reading proves that it is only in the technique of the couplet that he places Waller above Spenser. (Dryden seems with Waller to have confused the riming of Spenser's eighth and ninth lines with an aim at the couplet). But when Dryden considers poetry in all its aspects, he placed Spenser with Chaucer, Tasso, Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, and Corneills, and does not mention Waller and Denham.

"E. Spenser, a Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, pp. 391, 392, 393
"Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire"-*Dryden*

Appendix 8.

Likewise in his maturity Dryden wrote, "Spenser and Milton are the nearest in English, to Virgil and Horace in Latin; and I have endeavored to form my style by imitating their masters."

Appendix 9

The eighteenth century ushered in the Augustan age when classical ideals became supreme under Pope and Addison. It appears to be a general belief that Spenser was unpopular with the neo-classicists. This is not true. This was an age of satire when no-one was sacred from burlesque, and the articles written in moments of triviality appear to be the ones literary critics have chosen to reflect the attitude of the age toward Spenser. The mature and serious criticisms of the exponents of the age show that the Augustans appreciated Spenser, altho from a different point of view than did the Romanticists. They appreciated his moral allegory and his earnestness. Since the Romanticists came into sway, we have had a moral fear of

didacticism. Whereas the Classicists thought it all good, the Romanticists thought it all bad. There is and was a lack of appreciation of the fact that the golden mean lies in the difference between crude didacticism (Pope's essay on Man) and artistic didacticism (last lines of Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn"). The Augustans as well as the Romanticists appreciated Spenser's simplicity, his copious fancy, his sweetness.

The fundamental doctrines of neo-classicism and of Romanticism are directly opposed. The basic principle of neo-classicism is that the ultimate end of poetry is to teach. The immediate end was to please, not because pleasure was in itself a worthy aim, but that it was necessary to procure an audience to teach! Reason and judgment were to keep a tight rein over fancy and imagination that the fictions of poetry should not burst the bounds of credibility and thus fail in the reader's edification. Romanticism, on the other hand, stands for the exaltation of the imagination over the reason. Its belief is that the ultimate end of art is to give pleasure, with no compelling necessity to be instructive. Romanticism is the renaissance of wonder. The classicists considered Spenser a classic, not always to be followed because he let his imagination lead him into the marvellous. Dryden said he needed a course in Bessu! The Romanticists chose Spenser as most nearly typifying their ideal, and beside, they said he and Milton were the only men who could be ranked with Homer and Virgil. The trouble was that neither cult recognized that all great poets are both classical and romantic, with one temper predominating.

That the classicists held Spenser their model is evident. But they believed him led astray by Ariosto into the ridiculous and magic, rather than the true.

References for Appendices 8 and 9 "Cambridge History of English Literature", by Herbert Cory VIII: 57 and 249
"E. Spenser, a Critical Study" by Herbert Cory, pp. 408
Publication of the Modern Language Association for 1911, Cory, pp. 50 - 91
Edward Fulton in The Nation, 92:445
"The Spectator" No. 62

Appendix 10.

From October eclogue of "The Shepheard's Callender"

"Wither thou list in fayre Elisa rest,
Of if thee please in bigger notes to sing,
Advance the worthy whom she loveth best
That first the white beare to the stake did bring."

* See last two pages
of appendix

Appendix 11.

Milton was the only poet who approached Spenser in his grasp of the fundamental truth that the renaissance and the reformation spring from the same root, one an awakening of the intellect, the other an awakening of the spirit; that each was the complement of the other. Milton combined reformation, renaissance, and patriotism by narrowing and intensifying each. Where Spenser was broadly ethical, Milton was more Puritanical, not in the sense of ^{the} purely theological, but in the sense that he dealt only with the chosen ones of God (the elect); where Spenser was broadly and deeply patriotic, Milton's patriotism concerned itself only with the upper classes: where Spenser united the classical with the romantic spirit, Milton was strictly, pedantically classical. That is, Milton not only chose to write in purely classical form, but wrote self consciously and artificially, never spontaneously. He

modified his feelings through the intellect while Spenser combined emotion and the intellect. Both were alike in that their Puritanism did not interfere with their love of beauty, splendor, innocent delight, and passion, but Spenser's life admitted joy where Milton's was more sober. In comparing our two great epic writers, Milton seems more grand, more majestic, his music more like that of an organ of many stops, the majesty of his music accenting the climaxes of his story, while Spenser's music is more continuous, more spontaneously sweet, more bird-like. Milton's ideas were fewer and more intense. His central thought is that the Providence of God, or that good will triumph through God. He makes virtue triumph over sin in "Comus." Good overmasters evil in "Samson Agonistes"; Heaven overmasters hell in "Paradise Lost". Milton's characters are always sorely beset with temptations, yet God prevails. But his are general evils, and the remedy is God, or good in a general form. We see no effort on the part of his humans. Spenser's characters are beset by manifold kinds of evil which they overcome by various virtues. Spenser is more human, more real. Where Milton chose the temptation in the wilderness as the subject of "Paradise Regained", assuming the complete triumph of Christ's life after the one decisive victory, Spenser makes his heroes meet new trials each day. However victorious they may come off one day they meet new trials the next, and though they are victorious one day, they may fall the next. In this Spenser holds truer to nature.

Grierson's "First Half of the Seventeenth Century", pp. 137, 138

Appendix 12.

Indeed the moral allegory is very worthy of due consideration for

its own sake. As we attempted to make plain in our discussion of Spenser's ethics, Spenser was interested in social service. That was the underlying principle of the moral philosophy of the "Faerie Queene". In comparison with "Pilgrim's Progress", how selfish was the motive of Bunyan! His one concern was to escape the City of Destruction and reach the Celestial City. His only question was, "What shall I do to be saved?" His only recompense lay the other side of the grave. But Spenser conciliates the earthly with the divine. He aims to shape Christian chivalry to fit Elizabethan England.

Spenser's Puritanism did not make him so narrow as it did the seventeenth century allegorist. But the immensity of Spenser's conception would probably fail to convince Mr. Yeats of the superiority of Spenser's allegory over Bunyan's as he finds Bunyan's more satisfying, because more real. Bunyan's allegory could be more real because it was a personal experience while Spenser's was a vision of hope for England.

Lillian Whitstanley in "E. Spenser, a Critical Study," by Cory
"The Four Hymnes", Cambridge History of English Literature, 1907 XI
Yeats, quoted in "E. Spenser, A Critical Study" by H. Cory, pp. 49

Appendix 13.

The blending of mythological and Christian references was natural for several reasons. First, when Christianity was brought by Augustine to England, it was grafted onto old pagan customs to make the acquisition and assimilation of Christianity easier. (The pagan Yule-log in connection with Christmas, etc.) Afterward it was difficult to separate the two. The study of the classics side by side with study of the Bible led to confusion. The blending of Puritanism and Platonism in Spenser's philosophy accentuated the predisposition.

(To be read previous to Appendix No. 11.) *

A teacher of this sort was gravely needed at this time by England, for she seemed unaware of the peril she was facing. Italy, the heart of Christendom and the new seat of learning was being swallowed up by ambition, foul living, avarice, and sensuality. The fact that she had discovered a new world, brought painting to the acme of perfection, discovered to the new world the classic arts, the poetry and eloquence of the old world, and had brought architecture to its culmination, was not saving Italy from immorality and decay. England was taking on this renaissance of learning, this new spirit of discovery, of liberty, of expansion, of reasoning, and she stood in the same danger unless she saved herself. Savonarola had failed in his attempt to reform the morals of the Italians through eloquence. Erasmus and the other humanist reformers of England had plead for a re-awakening of the moral spirit by an appeal to the senses, to reasoning. No-one before Spenser had tried to awaken England to her moral need by an appeal to the imagination. Spenser brought the renaissance of imagination to England with his "Faerie Queens".

Up to this time the reformation had seemed hostile to the imaginative renaissance, in England. Poetry had not been alive since Chaucer's time. During the reign of Henry, Edward, and Mary, there had been too much struggle for attention to be given to creating poetry. The circulation of the Bible had to be attained, service books had to be composed, the contention of the churches had to be settled. During this time Wyatt and Surrey had

made a beginning in poetry; they had brought the first direct influence of Italian poetry to England, but the poetry was great, not in itself, but in that it was a harbinger of the springtime of poetry to come. They had adopted the metrical forms transmitted to them by Chaucer, and had brought in Italian influences, but it required a larger imagination than theirs to "create poetic forms for national aspirations." Now with a united England, with a new consciousness of national life, with church faith outwardly settled, with adventure and enterprise on foot everywhere, England must not be allowed to follow in Italy's footsteps.

In reconciling the reformation and the renaissance Spenser was again fulfilling Sidney's ideal. It is well known to all that Sidney recognized and deplored the gross sexual immorality of Italian life while he recognized its learning. He was one of the few young men of his time who was able to make the "Grand Italian Tour" without bringing back the stain of travel in Italy. It is as well as that he knows that Sidney and Spenser's ideal of the perfect gentleman, as well as that he was the idol of the Elizabethan court, loved in life and mourned in death as a man of extraordinary nobility. Spenser no more than Sidney could see anything irreconcilable in religion with culture, art with moral temper, soul with sense, the Muses with Christian evangelists. So Spenser combined the influence of the classical renaissance with its attendant mythology, with the ethical reformation with its Biblical terms, and he added to both an intense patriotism.

Edmund Spenser, A Critical Study, Herbert Cory, pp. 53
Courtneys, Cam. Hist. Eng. Lit. III: 274
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