

THE FOWLER PRIZE ESSAY: 1865.

AN ESSAY

ON

EDMUND SPENSER

AND THE

FAERY QUEEN,

BY

JAMES ROBERTS,

OF THE CLASS OF '65.

PUBLISHED BY THE FRANKLIN LITERARY SOCIETY.

EASTON, PA. :
LEWIS GORDON, PRINTER.
1865.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

REPORT OF THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE.

To the President and Faculty of Lafayette College:—The undersigned Board of Examiners on the "FOWLER PRIZE ESSAYS" of the institution, for the year 1865, hereby respectfully report:

That four literary productions, on "Spenser's Faery Queen," written over the signatures, "Alasco," "Small Hours," "Arno," and "Irving," respectively, have been laid before them for examination. Your committee feel pleasure in being able to make favorable notice of all, as generally well written and creditable efforts. There are classic merits, however, in the Essay, "Small Hours," which in connection with the examination of Mr. James Roberts, its author, have determined the judgment of the Board in giving it precedence.

Your committee, therefore, award the prize to Mr. JAMES ROBERTS, the writer.

MATTHEW HALE JONES,
JAMES W. WOOD,
JAMES R. ECKARD. } Board of Examiners.

EASTON, PA., May 28, 1865.

ACTION OF THE FRANKLIN LITERARY SOCIETY.

FRANKLIN HALL, LAFAYETTE COLLEGE,
EASTON, PA., May 31, 1865.

At a regular meeting of the Franklin Literary Society, held this day, the following resolutions were proposed and adopted:

Resolved, That we regard with pleasure the success of our fellow-member, Mr. James Roberts, in obtaining the Fowler Prize, and do hereby request him to furnish to the Society a copy of the Essay for publication.

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to inform Mr. Roberts of the wish of the Society, and to attend to the publication of the Essay.

We, the Committee, appointed to communicate the above resolutions, in discharging this agreeable duty, express the hope that you will accede to the request of the Society by placing in our hands a copy of the Essay, which has been so favorably noticed both by the Examining Committee and by the Professor of English Language and Lecturer on Comparative Philology.

J. WHITEFIELD WOOD,
WM. G. CAIRNES,
THOS. J. AIKEN. } Committee.

REPLY.

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE,
EASTON, PA., June 6, 1865.

Gentlemen of the Committee:—The manuscript asked for is at your disposal; and in complying with your request, I cannot but express my high appreciation of the Franklin Literary Society, for if I have acquired any facility in expressing my thoughts, with my pen or otherwise, it is mainly due to our Society, through whose excellent system the acquisition has been made, and to our much esteemed Professor, F. A. March, who has been so successful in leading us to those mines of thought, which have been but partly explored in these pages; and who, apart from the Society you represent, has requested the publication of the Essay.

I am, with much respect,

Your fellow Franklin,

JAMES ROBERTS.

To Messrs. J. WHITEFIELD WOOD, WM. G. CAIRNES, THOS. J. AIKEN.

ESSAY.

The reader of a great work always has a curiosity, more or less intense, to know something of the life of the author, whose productions afford so much entertainment and instruction. In regard to most modern writers this desire can be gratified; but the writer of the Faery Queen did not live in an age when diaries were extensively kept and biographies largely written, and hence the facts which I have been able to gather up from Reviews and other sources, respecting the life of our author, are not so numerous nor so interesting as the reader would wish. As it may assist us in appreciating and understanding better the work before us, I propose before discussing the merits of the Faery Queen, to present such of the facts collected as may have a bearing upon our subject.

LIFE OF EDMUND SPENSER.

The distinguished author of the Faery Queen was born in East Smithfield, London, A. D., 1553.* We know very little of his early life, and nothing of his ancestors, except what may be inferred from his own allusions in his writings to "an house of ancient fame." The first event of his life which we know with certainty, is his admission into Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1569, at the early age of sixteen, as a "charity student." At the age of twenty, in 1573, he received the degree of A. B., and three years after, in June 1576, he received the degree of A. M. Tradition tells us that he was an unsuccessful candidate for a fellowship in Pembroke Hall, Lancelot Andrews, afterward Bishop of Winchester, being his competitor. During his collegiate career Spenser was undoubtedly a laborious student of the Latin and Greek classics, Horace, Virgil, Homer and others. He also familiarized himself with the best and most popular of the Italian poets and writers, as Petrarch, Dante, and especially Ariosto. In connection with these he most certainly acquired a thorough acquaintance with the

*Writers differ as to some of the dates, but such as are used in this Essay seem to be approved by the most reliable authorities.

writings of his own country, such as "Morte d'Arthur," "Piers Ploughman," and the works of Chaucer. His productions clearly exhibit an extensive knowledge of all these authors and their writings. After leaving the University he went to live with some of his friends in the north of England, where he remained about two years, probably in the capacity of a tutor. The only fact known respecting his sojourn here, is that he fell desperately in love with a lady of position and importance, whom he celebrates in his writings, under the name of "Rosalind;" but we may infer that while here he wrote his "Shepherd's Calender," a series of twelve eclogues, named after the twelve months of the year, for it was published on his return to London, in 1579. His disappointment in being rejected by "Rosalind" may be considered as the dawn of his greatness, for the publication of the Shepherd's Calender, which might never have been written but for this circumstance, gave him great notoriety as a pastoral poet. In August, 1580, at the age of twenty-seven, he seems to have entered the active business of life. At that time he became Secretary to Lord Grey, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which position he held two years, until Lord Grey was deposed. During the next four years little is known of Spenser, until June, 1586, when he received, doubtless through his friend and patron, Sir Philip Sidney, as a reward for his services to the State, the Castle of Kilcolman, with about three thousand acres of land in the County of Cork, Ireland. This grant, which was willingly accepted, was given on condition that Spenser would occupy the Castle and cultivate the land; hence we find the poet retiring from the bustle and commotion of active life to this lovely retreat, adorned by nature's richest beauties, where he passed his time in study and poetic composition.— Here, secluded from the thronging multitude, he was visited by that amiable man, Sir Walter Raleigh, with whom he sat under the shades of the river Mulla and discoursed on his great literary pursuits. Raleigh, perceiving Spenser's superior excellencies, induced the poet to accompany him to London, where he introduced him to the Queen. This interesting event Spenser has celebrated in his poem entitled "Colin Clouts come Home Againe." The year 1594 has been assigned as the date of his marriage, which event he has sweetly celebrated in his "Epithalamion." The ances-

tors of his wife are, like his own, buried in obscurity, and nothing is now known of her, except her name, Elizabeth.* In 1598, a serious rebellion broke out in Ireland, which compelled Spenser, with many other English inhabitants, to fly for his life. His residence was attacked, plundered and burned. He returned to London, distressed and broken-hearted, and on the 16th of January, 1598, at the age of forty-five years, while yet in the prime of life, he died at an obscure tavern in almost absolute want. At his own request he was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the tomb of Chaucer, the most appropriate spot that could have been selected for his resting place.†

From the above statements we may draw some inferences respecting his character and manners.

I. As to his character. 1. Though Spenser was much engaged in public life, he was naturally fond of retirement. Two facts lead to this conclusion; first, his anxiety to obtain a fellowship in Pembroke Hall, because success would have enabled him to live in retirement and to spend his time exclusively in the pursuit of study, so congenial to his taste; and, secondly, his very willing acceptance of the grant from the crown of the Castle of Kilcolman, which enabled him to live such a life as he coveted.

2. He was ardent in his attachments. This also is substantiated by two facts: first, his frequent allusions to "Rosalind," and the warmth with which he speaks of her, long after she had refused to receive his attentions; and, secondly, the affectionate spirit exhibited throughout the Epithalamion, written in celebration of his marriage.

3. He strongly defended Lord Grey's very severe and harsh policy toward the Irish, from which we judge him to have been a rigid disciplinarian.

4. From the lofty sentiments of his Divine Hymns as well as other writings, and from his admiration of all that was beautiful,

*See an article, "Colin Clout and the Faery Queen," in the Atlantic Monthly, November, 1858, p. 674, ascribed to Prof. Child of Harvard University. The writer by an ingenious train of reasoning, based on various circumstances and passages in Spenser's poetry, makes his wife a lady of rank and the daughter of John Nagle.

†An admirable account of Spenser's life and writings may be found in "Hart's Essay on Spenser and the Fairy Queen."

true, good and noble, we may infer that he possessed a higher and purer standard of religion than most men of his times.

II. As to Spenser's manners, they were certainly refined and pleasing, or he could not have associated with so many distinguished and highly polished gentlemen. He left a good impression on all whose acquaintance he formed; even "Rosalind" was much pleased with his manners, as was also Queen Elizabeth,—and ladies have always been considered good judges in such matters. A further proof of the integrity of his character, the polish of his manners, and his attainments as a scholar, may be seen by noticing more particularly the disposition and standing of a few of his most intimate friends, for from the company with which a man associates, we can form a pretty good estimate of the man himself. "Birds of a feather flock together." From our very first acquaintance with Spenser we find his name linked with such as Andrews, already mentioned, who was one of the learned body to whose labor we owe the present translation of the Bible. During this early period of life, and long after, he was on the most intimate terms with Gabriel Harvey, who became a very learned man.—From his intimacy with these gentlemen in the University much more may be inferred than can be written. In life he enjoyed the companionship of such eminent men as Sir Philip Sidney, to whom he dedicated his Shepherd's Calendar, and who has been reputed not only as "a lord among wits and a wit among lords," but also a judicious thinker, as well as a poet of no mean ability." Sir Walter Raleigh, a distinguished master of the sea, as well as an eminent literary gentleman, and who has been regarded as one of the most remarkable men England has ever produced, was one of his most intimate and confidential friends. Of Raleigh it has been said: "For extent of knowledge and variety of talent he was undoubtedly the first man of his age." Spenser also received the friendship and patronage of some of the most distinguished men of the Court. Among such indeed was Raleigh, to whom must be added Lord Leicester and the Earl of Essex, and the Queen herself, who was one of his warmest admirers. Such a genius as Spenser was well deserving of the esteem and patronage of such distinguished and influential persons, and we may infer from all this that he was a man of no small standing. He was a voluminous writer, and

it would be interesting to dwell awhile upon some of his minor poems. Only one, however, of his many valuable productions now claims our attention:

THE FAERY QUEEN.

This immortal poem was doubtless composed during the poet's residence in Ireland, where he enjoyed every opportunity which nature and leisure could afford for the preparation of such a work. It is an allegorical work, or as the author calls it, "a darke conceit." It receives its name from a dream, which the poet conceives Prince Arthur, the hero of the poem, to have had, in which he saw the Faery Queen, and being ravished with her excellent beauty, "he awaking resolved to seek her out in Faery Land." According to the author: "The general end of all the booke, is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."

The first three books were published at the earnest request of Sir Walter Raleigh, about the year 1590, with the following title page: "The Faerie Queen disposed in XII Books, fashioning XII Moral Vertues." It was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, and appended to it was a letter addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh, containing some explanations as to the design of the poem. In 1596, additional three books appeared, and after the poet's death two unfinished cantos were published. It was the design of Spenser to publish twelve Books, and it has been asserted by some, that the omitted portion was actually written and destroyed in the burning of the Castle of Kilcolman. This, however, is very doubtful. I incline to the opinion, that we have all that Spenser ever wrote.

The whole Faery Queen, as now published, consists of six books, divided into seventy-one cantos, (omitting the two unfinished ones,) each book containing twelve, except the second, which has but eleven. The first book alone has six hundred and fifteen stanzas, or five thousand five hundred and thirty-five (5535) lines, and each of the others about the same number, so that the work in its present state is a gigantic poem. Indeed its magnitude is one of its great faults. It is entirely too long to be generally read. Had Spenser condensed the whole into one or two books of moderate size, he would certainly have had "a very living immortality," and almost every reader of the present day would be familiar with the

Faery Queen, whereas only poets and critics have sufficient patience to follow the story to the end. Perhaps no production in our language has received so much attention and study from the poets as the Faery Queen. It well merits their unbounded devotion and patient study, for there is no poetic excellence, which cannot be found in some part of the poem. In it we find heroes and peerless beauties, decked in the grandest style. All the characteristic features of the human heart are beautifully presented, all the emotions and passions of which the human breast is susceptible are skillfully developed, and especially is love, the most universally active and powerful of our passions, portrayed with great natural force and beauty. The plaintive and pathetic strains too, are elegantly displayed. A writer, speaking of the merits of the Faery Queen, says: "The author's unbounded command of language and his astonishing facility and sweetness of versification have placed him in the first rank of English poets." This is emphatically true, for, since the first appearance of the Faery Queen, it has ranked as one of the finest classics in the English language.

It is a work drawn from real life, written in a highly imaginative style, and perhaps no work, in our language at least, displays a more brilliant imagination than the Faery Queen. It was written in accordance with the style of Ariosto, a very popular writer of that day, and consists of allegories, enchantments and romantic expeditions, in which knights, giants and fictitious beings are the actors. The whole construction of the poem is intensely allegorical, and it is considered the best specimen of allegory in our language, the Pilgrim's Progress excepted. Throughout the poem the author shows his thorough acquaintance with the ancient classics and also with the most popular writers of his own times, some of whom he has freely copied; e. g. the knights in the Faery Queen, setting out on their various expeditions, bear a striking resemblance to the characters in a very popular romance of the time entitled, "The Seven Champions of Christendom." "Morte d'Arthur," a fabulous history of the Life of King Arthur, written in French, but translated into English in 1484, has also been drawn upon pretty largely. From this work he has borrowed several of the names of his characters, as Sir Tristram, Lamoracke, Percivall,

Pelleas and Pellenore; he has also extracted from it several ideas, among which we notice the birth and education of Sir Tristram, which he seems to have copied with considerable minuteness.* Piers Ploughman, an early English work of considerable philological interest, in a moral and social point of view, has been used to some extent, as well as the popular Italian writings of the day, such as the works of Tasso and Ariosto,† especially the Orlando Furioso of the latter writer. Perhaps no writer among them all received more of Spenser's attention and admiration than Chaucer, to whom he is largely indebted.

As already hinted, the Faery Queen was much admired and extensively read when first published; and the question is often asked: Why is it not as much so still? Why is it that we so seldom find it among the books of the ordinary reader? We now propose to answer such interrogations by considering some of the elements in the poem that gave it its original success.

1. Allegories were the order of the day. Virtue and vice were often personified by living actors. Pageants formed the principal entertainment in private, on the stage, and even in the streets on public occasions. Another allegorical scene of the age, from which Spenser seems to have drawn interest to his poem, is the Dumb-Show. This consisted of dumb actors, who, by their dress and actions, prepared the spectators for the matter and substance of each ensuing act respectively.

2. The artificial manners and gallantries of chivalry were still current in the days of Queen Elizabeth, when Spenser wrote. Chivalry was blended with religious earnestness, and the great object of the knights was to avenge injuries: such is the business in which Spenser engages the knights of the Faery Queen. In connection with chivalry, jousts or mock fights, in which one knight engaged with another, each to try his skill, and tournaments, another species of mock fights, in which a larger number of knights engaged, as an exhibition of their address and bravery, were still

*Compare Faery Queen B. I. C. II., S. xxii. with Morte d'Arthur B. II. Chap. I. Quotations from the Faery Queen refer to the edition of Spenser's complete Works. Published by Willis P. Hazard, Philadelphia, 1857.

†So much do the writings of Spenser resemble those of Ariosto that he has been called by some, the Italianized Englishman, by others the English Ariosto.

practiced. These formed attractive material of a fashionable character, of which Spenser availed himself in the preparation of the Faery Queen.*

3. Many of the characters of the Faery Queen seem to us very extravagantly dressed. This apparent extravagance however is drawn from the fashion of the times. The court of Queen Elizabeth was very stylish. The finest of velvets and silks were used by the ladies, and their dresses were adorned and trimmed with most costly laces. The sterner sex, too, were excessively scrupulous in their apparel and carriage. Each gentleman carried his sword, and his breeding was determined by the manner in which it hung by his side. The costume therefore, of the characters of the Faery Queen is not unwarranted, but is drawn from real life, and gave a vividness and life-like coloring to the poem, which we cannot now so well appreciate.†

4. Another and the last element of success which we shall notice in this connection, is the double allegory, which pervades the whole book. While the Faery Queen in its internal sense is a book of religious training, it has a political and personal, as well as a moral bearing. The author himself, in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, says: "In that Faery Queene, I meane Glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine, the Queene and her kingdom in Faery Land. And yet, in some places els, I do otherwise shadow her." Thus Queen Elizabeth is represented, not only by Gloriana, but also by Belpheobe, so that when we have associated her with the former character, we must learn to think of her in connection with the latter. This is the only real character made known by the author, but it was well understood at the time of its publication that other prominent persons were represented in the allegory.

*See Faery Queen B. III., C. XII., S. v., etc. Such descriptions were undoubtedly suggested by the allegorical figures of the day. A very interesting account of the most prominent diversions in the time of Spenser may be found in Drake's Shakspeare. Vol. II., p. 168-200. In connection with Chivalry, see Vol. I., p. 552-556. See the amusements of the times illustrated in Warton's History of English Poetry. Vol. III., p. 136-140. Read also Warton's Spenser. Vol. II., p. 74-82.

†A detailed account of the fashionable dress, manners, customs, etc., is presented in Drake's Shakspeare, Vol. II., Chap. vi.

Critics have generally supposed that Prince Arthur, while he represents magnificence, in "the generall intention" of the author, also represents Lord Leicester. He was certainly one of the most magnificent men of his time, and according to Scott, he was very anxious to marry Queen Elizabeth, Gloriana.* These circumstances would tally very well with the allegorical representations of Spenser, and probably the critics are correct. Again, the Red Cross Knight, who represents Holiness in general, doubtless also represents Sir Philip Sidney. Every one knows how much interest it adds to a book when the reader feels that he knows the real men, who are allegorically represented, and especially if he imagines some character to represent himself. Doubtless every character in the poem was once regarded as the representative of some real known person, then living, or lately deceased. The double allegory, therefore of the Faery Queen, while it now greatly obscures the book, was not without its effect in earlier times. To be able to point out the real men, gave the book a popularity which it would not otherwise have received.

All these elements of success are now elements of obscurity, to some degree at least. Pageants Masques and Dumb-Shows are seldom seen; the days of Knight-hood with jousts and tournaments have passed away; the dress and costumes of Queen Elizabeth's court, are no longer familiar to us, and the allegorical characters and allusions are dark and mysterious. The modern reader, who would understand and appreciate the Faery Queen, must possess more knowledge of the men, the fashions and the times of Spenser, than is usually within the reach of an ordinary reader, and for want of such information the general reader often becomes perplexed, weary and even disgusted with some of the long, tedious stories. In all this will be found an answer to the questions propounded above. With this general idea of the poem before us, we are now prepared to examine particulars and shall notice first,

THE TENDENCY TO USE THE ARCHAIC.

The language of a nation is as a towering monument upon which its history is truthfully recorded; and as the geologist reads the

*See Kenilworth, p. 159. This volume abounds in thoughts of interest to the student of the Faery Queen.

formation, the various changes and early history of our globe from the fossils buried in the bosom of the earth, so the philologist, in tracing the language of a people, deciphers the marked features of their development and history, together with the minor details of life, as their pursuits, attainments, manners and customs. In this respect the Faery Queen is a valuable production, for its language is in some aspects the veritable history of Elizabeth's court. And when we thus view the language of a writer, we rather cherish archaic forms and words, if current when written.

In reading the Faery Queen, the first thing that strikes us as peculiar, is the large number of obsolete words which we meet, and by the way, this is another unpopular element at the present day. The reader who is familiar with Shakspeare, and then turns to read Spenser, can scarcely believe that both writers lived and wrote at the same time, so marked is their difference in the use of words. In view of this marked difference, Ben Jonson said: "Spenser in affecting the ancients writ no language;" but this assertion is, in my opinion, entirely too sweeping. I prefer to agree with a very reliable critic and able philologist of the present day, who says: "*In the mastery of the true English of his time, in acute sensibility of ear and exquisite skill in the musical arrangement of words he (Spenser) has no superior in the whole compass of English literature.*"* All the great poets seem to have a fondness for using the archaic in thought and language. Virgil for example did not write the current Latin of his time; Milton, too, especially in his younger days, shows a great disposition to use obsolete words and old forms of expression; and Gray and Thomson exhibit a tendency in the the same direction. Great writers read diligently the poetry and prose of our early literature, and often make them a special study. They seem to enter into the very soul of these old writers, to imbibe the very spirit with which they wrote and to analyze their every word and thought. In this way modern writers incorporate the style, the forms of expression and words of our ancestors, into their own modes of thinking, and thus

*The English Language and its Early Literature.—G. P. Marsh—Lecture XII, p. 548. The italics are by the author of this Essay. See also Elements of the English Language, by Prof. Clark, of Union College, p. 136.

these archaisms find their way into our later works, from which they ought to be excluded. Thus we find Spenser the laborious and diligent student of Chaucer; and so great is his admiration of him that he writes:

"Dan Chaucer, well of English undefyled,"

Milton in turn admires Spenser, and calls him: "Our sage serious Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas." While we must condemn such writers as Milton and Gray for their use of archaisms, much can be said in extenuation of our author, if we but pause to consider

THE TIMES IN WHICH SPENSER LIVED.

It must not be forgotten that his age was a very peculiar one in a literary point of view. Literature had been long neglected. About two centuries had elapsed since Chaucer, "the Day Star of English Poetry," had flourished; during which time we may regard England as enveloped in a literary darkness. A few names only pierce like rays of light through the gloom, and these were but feeble, when compared with Spenser, "the Sun Rise of English Poetry." During these dark days all the learning was confined to the priests and professional scholars, who made no very good use of it; but on the contrary, seem to have imitated the servant, who received but one talent and hid it in the earth. Persecution, envy, strife and suspicion were the distinguishing features of the interval between Chaucer and Spenser. With the ascension of Queen Elizabeth to the throne a new era began to dawn on English literature. She was a lover of letters herself and passionately fond of the languages. To her people she set a good example,* thus using her position and influence for the advancement of learning. During her reign it became fashionable to be educated and not ignorant, and therefore, a requisite qualification, to the friendship and patronage of Elizabeth, was devotion to learning. Her reign has justly been celebrated as the Augustan age of English

*Drake's Shakspeare, Vol. I., p. 28. See also a paragraph in English Literature, and Language, by G. L. Craik, Professor in Queen's College, Belfast, Vol. I., p. 461.

literature. God seems emphatically to have made this a remarkable age in the history of our literature, for in no other period can we point to three such mighty intellects living together, as Spenser, Bacon and Shakspeare, each increasing the value of the English literature by the richest contributions; enriching and drawing out treasures long concealed in our language; each excelling in his own department, and each stands to this day without a rival. The impress of their genius is indelibly stamped on our literature. They have left us models of poetry and philosophy of which English-speaking people are proud, and which have ever since been imitated, quoted and copied. Among the upper classes of society there was a general thirsting for knowledge of all kinds; even among the ladies of the Court, the Greek, Spanish, Italian and French languages were studied to perfection, and often spoken with accuracy. Among the nobles literature received a new impulse, and libraries sprung up here and there as if by magic.* In the midst of this remarkable transition from indifference to zeal in learning, Spenser was jealous for the English language. The existing literature was inadequate to meet the demands of the people; and as other nations had been advancing in letters while England had been retrograding, the works of foreign authors were called for to gratify the prevailing taste, and to provide a more extensive literature for the people. Accordingly many works were translated into English from the Spanish, French, Latin and Italian. These translations of course introduced a great many new words and forms of expression, entirely foreign to the existing language, and evidently there was a disposition on the part of many English writers to adopt these new words and idioms. At a time like this, there were also many other accidental circumstances which would corrupt the language, as the affectations and notions of influential persons, who, professing to know much more than they really did, would try to control the pronunciation and idiomatic forms of expression. Spenser considered Chaucer the great standard of the English tongue, and he has doubtless introduced many of Chau-

*Drake's Shakspeare, Vol. I., p. 423-471, contains an account of the state of literature during this period. Also, Warton's History of English Poetry, Vol. III., Sec. LXI.

cer's words and combinations, even though they had grown obsolete, for the purpose of arresting the corruption of the language among that class of persons who would be most apt to set themselves up as reformers. Now, when we remember the effect of the double allegory in popularizing the poem, we cannot but admire the sagacity of Spenser in presenting to his countrymen the old English in such an attractive garb. With this view of the times of Spenser and general tendencies of the language, let us examine

THE LANGUAGE OF THE FAERY QUEEN.*

What we have said above may serve as a vindication, to some extent at least, of our author's abundant use of archaisms. But Spenser has not confined himself to the language he so much admired. Either he was not free from the prevailing tendencies of the age, or his vocabulary was not sufficient for his demands, for we find him frequently introducing foreign words, apparently for the consonance or rhyme of his verse. Such words as *visonnie*, *arret* and *soveraince*, are examples. Rhyme often taxes the ingenuity of an English poet, for our language is poorly adapted to rhyming, and perhaps many of Spenser's peculiar words can be thus accounted for, because his genius is often hard set to make out his rhymes. To accomplish this, I think he has taken liberties with the language which are wholly inadmissible, and has mutilated many words to a degree that demands censure. In the following we have examples of vowel changes, which in some instances may be borrowed from old writers, but in most cases they are changes made by our author for the sake of rhyme:

"Timely to joy and carrie smely cheare,
For though this cloud hath now me overcast,
Yet doe I not of better times despayre."[†]

In this example *ie* in "carrie," final *e* in "cheare" and "doe," are in accordance with Chaucer, and *despeyre* for despair has been changed to rhyme with *cheare*. In the following pair of words *ed*

*This subject is thoroughly discussed in Warton on Spenser. London ed., 1807. Vol. I., p. 157-137.

†Faery Queen B. V., C. V., S. xxxviii.

is changed to rhyme with *id*; "accomplishid" to rhyme with "hid." Another obvious example of vowel changes occurs in the following lines:

"And of them all she, that is fayrest found,
Shall have that golden girdle for reward;
And of those knights, who is most stout on ground,
Shall to the fairest ladie be *prefard*."*

There are several words in these lines, of interest to the philologist, as "fayrest" in the first line and "fairest" in the fourth, but we merely wish to call attention to the very obvious vowel change in *prefard*. It is needless to give any more quotations in full. Spenser never hesitated to substitute one vowel for another, or to introduce any other change which pleased his fancy. Such changes as the following are quite numerous: *Yeled* for *yelad*, *darre* for *dare*, *denay* for *deny*, *pervart* for *pervert*, and *heare* for *haire*. But vowel changes are by no means the only changes we find in the Faery Queen; we have *cherish* changed to *cherry* that it may rhyme with *merry*, and *embathe* converted into *embay* to rhyme with *away*; nor does Spenser stop here, he not only shortens, but also lengthens a word, wheuever it suits his purpose. Thus, we find *nobless* lengthened to *nobeless*, and *dazzled* to *dazzeled*. In addition to these changes he coins new words. As examples of this we have *damnify'd*, *wonderment*, *warriment*, *unmercify'd* and *unruliment*. Again, words are sometimes so mutilated that we can scarcely recognize them; as *bight* for *bite* to rhyme with *delight*. We might present many more words, showing the style in which Spenser treated them, but these are sufficient to illustrate the principle changes which he has introduced.

Did the limits of our essay permit, many obsolete phrases and forms of expression peculiar to Spenser, might be pointed out. A few of frequent occurrence, are as follows: *Did hide*, *did seem*, *did seek*, *did chide*, etc. This emphatic form of the imperfect tense, which was obsolete in the time of Spenser, is very often found in the Faery Queen when not required by the sense. The word *full* is very frequently used in the sense of *very*, as "full iolly (jolly) knight." This is no doubt borrowed from Chaucer, but

*B. IV., C. II., S. xxvii.

used in a different sense, as Chaucer would never call a man full jolly, who "of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad," as Spenser designates the individual to whom he applies it. Other examples are found in such expressions as *full low*, *full comely* and *full richly drest*. A final peculiarity to be noticed in this connection is the use of the word *all*. This word is often introduced with good effect, when not absolutely required, and gives a kind of solemn dignity and intensiveness to the line, as in the following:

"I, whether lately through her brightness blynd,
Or through alleageance, and fast fealty,
Which I do owe unto all womankynd,
Feele my hart prest with so great agony,
When such I see, that *all for pity* I could dy."*

The same word is used elsewhere in the poem in the same manner and with great beauty. As there are striking points of agreement and of contrast, between the great allegory of Spenser and the greater allegory of Bunyan, we propose to compare these two productions in two aspects, viz: as to language and style.

THE FAERY QUEEN AND PILGRIM'S PROGRESS COMPARED AS TO LANGUAGE.

In comparing the language of these two writers, I have examined the first hundred words in the First Book of the Faery Queen and find that there are eighty-eight per cent. of these Anglo Saxon, or twelve words of Latin origin. I have also examined the first hundred words in the Pilgrim's Progress, and in these ninety-four per cent. are Anglo Saxon, there being but six words of foreign origin; and it is a remarkable fact that the Anglo Saxon vocabulary does not possess words that Bunyan could have used with equal expressiveness in this passage. Had there been such words in the Anglo Saxon, he would doubtless, very naturally have adopted them. In examining the causes of this difference there are several points to be taken into consideration.

1. Their birth and early training would affect the character of their vocabulary. Spenser was doubtless born in the midst of literature and refinement. His family though perhaps not rich, were very probably of the higher class of society, for he was early fitted

*B. I., C. III., S. i.

for college, and among them he heard a large proportion of Norman words from his childhood. He enjoyed the advantages of Cambridge at a very early period of his life, for at least seven years; and his imagination was cultivated, his taste refined, and his language formed from the best ancient models; for, as already intimated, he was a laborious student of the classics, and incorporated the very essence and spirit of these authors into his own thoughts. The birth and early training of Bunyan was entirely different. He belonged to the poorest and most illiterate class of society. His father was by profession a tinker, the meanest of all occupations at that day. It is even conjectured that he sprung from a race of gypsies, the wandering vagabonds of the earth. He did not enjoy the advantages of a common, to say nothing of a liberal education, and before he arrived at manhood the little he had learned, at the school of his native village, was almost entirely forgotten. These circumstances would necessarily affect their language, for the foundation of our future vocabulary is unavoidably laid in the nursery and developed in the school. Every young man, born in indigent circumstances, who after a certain age enjoys the advantages of a liberal education, feels, for years, that his vocabulary is very limited; he experiences the disadvantages of early acquired incorrect pronunciation and ungrammatical forms of expression, which can with difficulty be reformed only by the greatest watchfulness.

2. Bunyan pursued an entirely different course of reading from Spenser. The former was a thorough student of the Bible. This was no doubt his chief text book from the time of his reformation until his death, and the perusal of it gave tone to his language, and character to his style. If we examine the Gospel of John, Chap. 1: 4-17, it will be found that the percentage of Anglo Saxon is ninety six. In Luke 5th chap. vs. 12-22 the percentage of Anglo Saxon is ninety two. Thus it will be seen from the part of the Pilgrim's Progress that we have examined, that Bunyan adopts a middle course between these two writers with whom he was so familiar, his proportion being ninety four per cent. The language of Bunyan is the good, strong Anglo Saxon tongue, in which he was reared, enlarged and enriched by a profound study of the Bible. In reading the Pilgrim's Progress, we often meet with whole pages of words containing no more than two syllables, and yet

no writer in the English, or any other language, could be more expressive, clear and definite in conveying his ideas than Bunyan. While the Faery Queen is penned in the pompous dialect of the court, the Pilgrim's Progress is clothed in the homely Saxon dialect of the simplest christian; and well has Macaulay said: "There is no book in our literature on which we would so readily stake the fame of the old, unpolluted English language, no book which shows so well how rich the language is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed."*

3. The different classes for whom they wrote would make a difference in the language of these two writers. Spenser unquestionably wrote the Faery Queen for the gratification of the court and the learned of England. He seems to have had constantly before his mind's eye some prominent lord or lady in all his representations, and his characters are numerous enough to represent all the prominent persons of the day. He was of course under the necessity of using such nomenclature as was familiar to them; he was compelled to designate their apparel, their institutions and customs by their own familiar terms, which were of Romanic origin. Bunyan wrote for an entirely different class, who were unacquainted with the Romanic nomenclature, and therefore to make his story available to them, he had to designate things by the simplest terms. He doubtless had before his mind some poor, humble christian, perhaps a sincere member of his own congregation at Bedford, who was striving to keep in the narrow way, with his eye fixed on the "wicket gate," that he might enter the Celestial City, or rather we may consider the story of the Pilgrim, a record, in figurative dress, of his own striking and marvelous history. From these considerations we see how necessary it was that one writer should use more Anglo Saxon than the other.

In studying the nomenclature of our language it is worth observing, that the homely, expressive Anglo Saxon is the rich possession of the poor and less favored portion of our race. In reading Spenser, we find that his characters are *arrayed*, while Bunyan's are *clothed*. The nobles of the Faery Queen are decked with the

*Critical, Historical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. II., pp. 266-267.

robe, vele, stole, mantle, capuccio, etc., garments which change with every whim of fashion, and the Anglo Norman terms, which designate many of them, have now become so antiquated that they are almost unknown. On the other hand, even down to the present day, the vocabulary of the poor abounds with such Anglo Saxon terms as cloak, coat, shirt, shoes, stockings, etc., articles of dress which fashion affects but little, and words upon which time leaves no trace. The Anglo Norman words may be more poetic, but the Anglo Saxon words are decidedly more forcible. In connection with the language of Spenser and Bunyan it is interesting to notice

THE LANGUAGE OF SHAKSPEARE.

Language has never been used with greater power by man than by this mighty genius of the English tongue, whose vocabulary is largely made up of Anglo Saxon. His advantages as to birth and social position were somewhat superior to those of Bunyan, and these circumstances tell upon his language. In Henry IV., Part I., Act II. we find ninety-one per cent. of Anglo Saxon words, and by examining three different parts of his writings it is ascertained that the per centage of Anglo Saxon is eighty-nine, on the average. From this examination we find that Shakspeare uses more Anglo Saxon words than Spenser, whose social and educational advantages were superior to his, and less than Bunyan, over whom his circumstances gave him the advantage; thus proving the correctness of our reasoning, that birth, social position and education affect the language of a writer in the manner we have pointed out.

THE FAERY QUEEN AND PILGRIM'S PROGRESS COMPARED AS TO STYLE.

Both works are allegorical; both tell an expressive tale of morality and religion. Thus far they agree. Spenser's tale exhibits a richer and more vivid imagination, and displays a much more cultivated taste than Bunyan's. But the Pilgrim's Progress, the tale of the uneducated man, is decidedly more simple, more interesting and more fascinating than that of the scholar; its plan is far more simple and better devised than the plan of the Faery Queen; it is a simple allegory, while the Faery Queen is complex in its nature, and contains "a wheel within a wheel." At times

Spenser leaves his moral, forgets his allegory, and becomes a mere romancer. He pays unmerited compliments to such persons as Queen Elizabeth, (Gloriana,) who is represented as the abstract concentration of all glory, and to Lord Leicester, (Prince Arthur,) the representative of the true spirit and essence of pure chivalry. And again, "many of the adventures of the Faery Queen, which describe the struggles of virtue and vice, also shadow forth anecdotes and intrigues of the English Court, invisible to those as Spenser himself insinuates,

'Who note without a hound fine footing trace,'**

Bunyan, on the other hand, seems constantly to be deeply impressed with the sacred importance of his subject. He ever keeps before his mind the struggling christian hastening from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion; and as he sees him in his various circumstances, now in the Slough of Despond, and then upon the Delectable Mountains, he administers to him just such consolation as he needs; and all the wealth or applause of England would not lead Bunyan one iota from that path in which his Pilgrim is traveling. Bunyan's own remarkable religious experience, his mock trial, his bitter persecution and his unjust imprisonment, constituted a fine school for the preparation of such a work, for there is probably no phase of christian experience, which did not at some time belong to him. Such a wonderful history of soul as we find in Bunyan is seldom met, and thus he has produced one of the most wonderful of books; and while the Faery Queen, with its innumerable poetic beauties and mysterious obscurities, may attract the poet and the antiquarian, the Pilgrim's Progress must ever be dear to the philologist and the christian; and it may be truthfully remarked, that while the Pilgrim's Progress is admired by men of every rank and condition in life, none but a true, tempted child of God, can ever fully appreciate the marvelous story of the Pilgrim; he alone can interpret fully its hidden meaning, as his own heart beats in unison with the Pilgrim's at every step. The plain, humble Bible dress of Bunyan's characters is far more imposing to us than the Faery Queen, arrayed in all the paraphernalia of

*London Quarterly Review, Vol. XLIII., p. 487. In this article Spenser and Bunyan are compared.

the Court. While then, the Faery Queen, as to its language and style, is adapted to men of more than ordinary advantages, the Pilgrim's Progress is a book, like the Bible, adapted to the most profound scholar, and a treasure even to a child in learning. It is the most interesting allegory that was ever written, and carries us along chiefly by making us forget that it is an allegory at all. The charm of the Pilgrim's Progress is, that all the persons and all the places in it seem real—that Christian, and Evangelist, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and the Giant Despair, and all the rest, are to our apprehension not shadows, but beings of flesh and blood; and the Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Valley of Humiliation, and the Enchanted Ground, all so many actual scenes or localities which we have, as we read, before us or around us.* While reading the Faery Queen and the Pilgrim's Progress the question has frequently been suggested:

DID BUNYAN COPY FROM SPENSER?

We cannot think that honest Jehn did this, and yet there are some remarkable resemblances. I intended in this Essay to give an account of the story contained in the First Book of the Faery Queen, for the purpose of comparing several passages in it with passages of a similar character in the Pilgrim's Progress, to show that Bunyan must have read the Faery Queen; and it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that he did read it, his own mind being of such an allegorical turn, but our limits will not permit such an account. Two very striking and similar passages, however, must be noticed before leaving this part of our subject. The first is the passage describing the Red Cross Knight's encounter with Giant Orgoglio, who casts him into his castle in the following manner:

"Then up he tooke the slombred senceless corse;
And, ere he could out of his swowne awake,
Him to his castle brought with hastie forse,
And in a dongeon deepe him threw without remorse."†

The whole scene bears a striking resemblance to the Giant Despair and Doubting Castle of Bunyan. The reader should exam-

*See Professor G. L. Craik's English literature and Language, Vol. I., p. 528.
†B. I., C. VII., S. XV.

ine and compare both passages for himself. The passage in which Spenser describes the house of Holiness should be read by every lover of Bunyan, and compared with the account of the Palace Beautiful given in the Pilgrim's Progress. Many points of similarity occur, but we cannot now enlarge on this topic. Among the characters described by Spenser, are Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa, (Faith, Hope, and Charity.) There is a porter at the entrance, just as in the Pilgrim's Progress; the Red Cross knight rests himself and enjoys similar society to that enjoyed by the Pilgrim, and before he departs, is taken to an eminence, from which he sees what can be better told by Spenser himself:

"From thence far off he unto him did shew
A little path, that was both Steepe and long,
Which to a goodly citty led his vew;
Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong
Of perle and precious stone, that earthly tong
Cannot describe, not wit of man can tell;
Too high a ditty for my simple song!
The citty of Greate King hight it well,
Wherein eternall peace and happinesse doth dwell."*

These, with other remarkable coincidences, have led to the opinion, that Bunyan at least read the Faery Queen, or some extracts from it; though I do not believe that he knowingly borrowed from it.

THE SYNTAX OF THE FAERY QUEEN.

Though the syntax of Spenser is as simple and clear as that of any writer in our language, yet, he sometimes uses poetic license too freely and runs into inaccuracies which obscure his sentences. Warton has taken great pains to point out the obscurities of Spenser, and has presented many passages as obscure which are perfectly intelligible; he is entirely too critical, some of his censures being on the omission of a pronoun or some little particle. The inaccuracies of the Faery Queen are neither so numerous, nor so important as have been cited and represented by this critic. The whole construction of Spenser is generally very simple and pleasing; "his adjectives not only qualify the noun, but they are so adapted to it, that they heighten or intensify its appropriate mean-

*B. I., C. X., S. IV.

ing; and they are often used with reference to the radical sense of the noun, which shows that Spenser knew how to press even etymology into use as a means of the embellishment of poetical diction."* Though such is the general character of Spenser's syntax, it cannot be denied that the construction is sometimes difficult. The following is an illustration:

"Till, seeing by her side the Lyon stand,
With sudden feare her pitcher downe she threw,
And fled away: for never in that land
Face of fayre lady she before did vew,
And that dredd Lyon's looke her cast in deadly hew."†

The poet in these lines says, that, she seeing the lion, fled away, because she had never seen a fair lady in that land before, but this is certainly not what the poet means to tell us. The whole connection shows us that his meaning must be, that she fled, because she had never seen so beautiful a lady and a lion together. We now come to the last topic of which we shall treat, viz:

THE STANZA IN WHICH THE FAERY QUEEN IS WRITTEN.

It is called the Spenserian Stanza, from the name of its inventor, and consists of Iambic lines, the Iambic being the predominant foot. This is also called Heroic Measure, because it was used by the ancients in celebrating the deeds of their heroes. The whole stanza contains nine lines, each of the first eight being an Iambic pentameter, but the last line is called an Iambic hexameter, because it contains six measures; it is also called the Alexandrine, because early romances, of great popularity upon the deeds of Alexander of Macedon, were written in this meter. The third line rhymes with the first, the fourth, fifth and seventh with the second, and the eighth and ninth rhyme with the sixth; so that there is no line unrhymed. This stanza is at first difficult to the reader, and at times he fails to bring out the melody; but, as we proceed in the perusal of the poem, we become accustomed to it and admire it; we find its measures are sweet and melodious, "and accord with the humbler, as well as give dignity to the loftiest conceptions."

*The English Language and Its Early Literature.—George P. Marsh, p. 549.
†B. I., C. III., S. xi.

Spenser found considerable difficulty in the construction of this stanza, as we have seen from the peculiar changes of words which he has made, and from the foreign words and new words which he has introduced, yet it seldom seems to be labored, but abounds in simplicity and magnificence of sound. It is eminently well adapted to the Faery Queen, and brings out the richness of the author's vivid imagination with great power. A writer, speaking of the peculiar adaptations of this stanza, says: "If his eye is sensitive to every form of beauty, so is his ear to every sound of music." The following has been considered the most famous passage in English literature, and gives a good idea of the power and beauty of the Spenserian stanza:

"One day, nigh wearie of her yrkesome way,
From her unhastie beast she did alight;
And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay
In secrete shadow, far from all mens sight;
From her fayre head her fillet she undight,
And layd her stole aside: Her angels face,
As the great eye of heaven, shyned bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace."*

We cannot but admire this stanza. It contains unity, variety and beauty, such as we seldom meet in the same number of lines. The third and fourth lines are strikingly beautiful and worthy of "the extremity of admiration." Spenser uses alliteration, the chief element in the Anglo Saxon poetry, very judiciously; few writers, indeed, have used it with so much effect; we read such lines as:

"And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay
In secrete shadow, far from all mens sight,"

and admire their beauty, but can scarcely tell what makes them sound so pleasantly, or whence they derive their music, the "dainty" "did" and "secrete shadow" "sight," all come out so undesignedly and yet so appropriately. Other writers have written in the Spenserian Stanza since the days of Spenser, and have awarded to it great merits. Dr. Beattie says: "Not long ago I began a poem in the style and stanza of Spenser, in which I propose to give full scope to my inclination, and to be either droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical, as the humor strikes me; for, if I mistake not, the measure which I have adopted admits

*B. I., C. III., S. iv.

equally of all these kinds of composition."* Thomson wrote the grandest literary effort of his life, the *Castle of Indolence*, in this stanza; Byron also admired it and wrote *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* after the manner of the *Faery Queen*. In short, "There is no form of verse in our language in which so many successful poems have been written as in this. . . . Spenser is the great master of English versification. We have been told that he who wishes to excel in writing prose should give his days and nights to the study of Addison; more truly might it be said, that the poet who would learn the mysteries of his art, should take Spenser for his master, and drink of his poetry as from a well—not indeed of English undefiled, but of perpetual harmony, pure thoughts, delightful imagery, and tender feeling."†

In bringing our *Essay* to a conclusion we feel that many topics of interest still remain unnoticed, some of which it would be appropriate here to introduce, as Spenser's mythology and his allusions to the Bible, but these pages have already multiplied beyond our expectations, and the examination of such topics must be omitted. The various *Essays*, now condensed and compiled into one, written from week to week and read in the class-room, have afforded the writer much real pleasure and solid entertainment, and it is with reluctance that he parts from Spenser, for a season; but it is with the expectation, that among life's active duties a leisure hour, now and then, may be spent among the beauties of the *Faery Queen*, which still contains treasures unexplored. In studying this poem and comparing it with other writings, one cannot but receive many new impressions respecting the elegance, expressiveness and strength of our good English. From such an investigation as this we learn, that the most interesting and successful English writers and orators are those who have used the largest proportion of good, old Anglo Saxon. And the study of the characters and writings of such intellectual stars as Spenser, Shakspeare, Bunyan, and many others, who though dead, still live to illuminate our literary firmament, opens to the student new fields of thought in the world of history, literature and language, the development of which will amply repay him for all his toil.

*Beattie's *Letters*, or see *Preface to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

†*London Quarterly Review*, Vol. XII., pp. 72-73.