

## EDMUND SPENSER.

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Edmund Spenser, the "Prince of Poets," was born in London, probably in the year 1552, and died at Westminster, January 16, 1599, almost three hundred years ago, when he was scarcely forty-seven years of age. Of Spenser it may be said that he was the greatest figure but one in the greatest past age of English literature, the greatest between Chaucer and Milton, with the exception of that one who towers above all predecessors and successors, William Shakespeare. Almost of Spenser, as of his mighty contemporary, it may be said, "He was not of an age, but for all time." Of him it is true, as of Burns, that he gained the ear and the heart of his countrymen at once, and never lost them.

Spenser was the first great modern poet of England. Chaucer belonged to the Middle Ages, and the Wars of the Roses had quenched the voice of song in the nation. The poets who preceded Spenser, in the revival of the art, are not unworthy of honour, but they hardly even prepared the way for Spenser, who drew his inspira-

tion chiefly from Chaucer, whom, in his "Faerie Queene," he called,

"Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled,  
On fame's eternal beadroll worthy to be  
filed."

It is chiefly owing to this admiration for his great predecessor that the language of Spenser is so much more archaic than that of his contemporaries.

If Spenser was not greatly indebted to his immediate predecessors, he was certainly not unaffected by the character of the age in which he lived. Born about the end of the reign of Edward VI., he was but six years of age when Elizabeth came to the throne, and he died four years before the Queen. It is superfluous to dwell on the greatness of the Elizabethan period, but it is well to remember the wonderful surroundings of the poet. Sir Walter Raleigh was born in the same year; Hooker a year later, and lived also forty-seven years. Sir Philip Sidney was born in 1554, and became one of Spenser's dearest friends, dying at the early age of thirty-two, of the wounds received at the battle of Zutphen (1586). Bacon was but nine years later than Spenser, and after him, at an interval of three years, came Shakespeare; and then Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Heywood, and Massinger, and many more. The Renaissance and the Reformation had stirred the minds of men to their depths, and the spirit of patriotism and chivalry had awakened and put on its strength as it had not for many a day, for

NOTE.—In the month of January will be celebrated throughout Christendom the tercentenary anniversary of the death of the great English poet who gave the world the "Faerie Queene." We, therefore, requested Professor Clark, of Trinity University, who is so justly famed for his studies in the literature of the "spacious times of Queen Elizabeth," to favour this magazine with a paper on Edmund Spenser. Although one of the busiest of men, Dr. Clark kindly acceded to that request, and has furnished the accompanying admirable paper—one of many similar evidences of his kindness and good-will to the Methodist Church in Canada.—ED.