

The finished models of surpassing genius demand from the earnest literary student, as a sacred duty, long and deep study, and literary study requires time for consecutive thought, and space to put the results of the inquiry on paper, if that step be required. This statement holds specially true of De Vere. Hear that most competent witness, Sir Henry Taylor, on this important point: "No man's poetry was ever more diverse in kind than his. And what is true of one kind, would be distinctly untrue, and the very opposite of the truth, if said of another. He can be gracefully light as well as profoundly obscure, pathetically simple as well as profoundly ornate." The poet really presents a field of choice which is practically boundless. He has voice in volume, he has execution, the fire is in him—sometimes only the fire of the flint, perhaps, but of a flint struck by the steel of genius—his measures give heat and light, his music changes as frequently as the strains of a wind-harp, and his moods are very many and widely different.

In framing this brief estimate—a short single article can be nothing more—I have been very careful to eschew artificial panegyric, and I have rigorously shunned undeserved eulogium. Of all the many forms assumed by satire, that which wears the mask of flattery is the most destructive while true praise, like the nourishing rains upon which vegetation feeds, produces growth. Indeed, I hold Emerson was just when he said that to poets, of all men, the severest criticism is due. The numerous merits of our poet speak for themselves for the most part with tongues most eloquent. Hence, I have kept my adjectives under something like control, no easy task for one who, like myself, is an ardent admirer of the poet. But in avoiding Scylla I may have run sheer upon Charybdis, as that is what usually happens in all the channels of life. I have by no means shut my eyes to De Vere's faults as a writer. Perhaps, I have dwelt upon them unduly, thereby doing him a wrong. Notwithstanding those dangers, I venture to hold, the judgment herein rendered is in the main correct, and if that be so, the Chief of living Irish Bards possesses and brings to his work that masterful union of art and spiritual power which always forms the essential characteristic of a poet entirely great.

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