

on the scene, and identified with the characters portrayed, and with all that befalls or happens: a sunny light, for the most part, lies over the landscape, and umbrageous woods wave their huge branches above our heads and wandering footsteps, or while we recline by some stream, whose voice is scarcely heard in that intense sunlight, and under that sleeping foliage.

Spenser wrote in the quaint old English style, which, with its antique spelling, suits admirably, while it enhances the charm of his great allegory. He contemplated other six books in addition to the six we already possess, but it is thought to be not a matter of regret that these were never completed—the poem being perhaps too long as it is—the poet's mind already flagging under the vast attempt. We do not pretend ourselves to have read all the six books, and therefore we do not offer any analysis of their subjects. Any interpretation of the allegory, or allegories, too, were out of place in our brief sketch.

The prominent characteristics of Spenser, in his great poem, are luxuriance of fancy, and exuberance, not to say strength, of imagination, with a never-failing power of quaint suggestion, and faithful moral reflection. His imagination was not intense or impassioned: it was picturesque and meditative. It is inventive or creative in the highest degree: all the beings of elf-land are obedient to its summons: all fair things in heaven and earth muster at its call, and are plastic under its touch: every form and feature of nature take shape at its will, and group or arrange themselves into the loveliest and most enchanting scenes, or express all the horror of the wildest and most forbidding: a dreamy light lies upon creation, or wierd shadows creep over its surface: nature is vocal with the finest notes of forest and woodland—with the rustle of leaves and the murmur of fountains,—or the thunder rolls above, and the rocks and caverns reply beneath: sunlight or starlight is in the sky, or the heavens are black with the scowl of darkest storms: good and evil spirits are agents in his plot, and contribute to the development of his story. His language, steeped in the colours of imagination, and suffused with the light of fancy, gives to his poetry all the effect of the most exquisite painting. He is the painter among poets, and he has been happily called the Rubens of English Poetry.

The stanza of the "Fairy Queen," called after himself the "Spenserian Stanza," is just the "*Ottava rima*" of Italian poetry, with an added Alexandrine line, giving a finer cadence and finish to its close. The Alexandrine forms a kind of base or pediment to the stanza—speaking architecturally—or it is like the swell of the trumpet or the organ at the close of a bar or piece, gathering into itself the whole strain—the prolonged cadence of the individual notes that had already died away upon the ear. This stanza, so rythmical, so finely adapted to more meditative compositions, has been adopted into our verse, and has been employed by our best writers—Thomson in his "Castle of Indolence," Beattie in his "Minstrel," Shenstone in his "Schoolmistress," Byron in his "Childe Harold," and Campbell in his "Gertrude of Wyoming." It is also the stanza of Burns in his "Cotter's Saturday Night," and Scott has frequently employed it in those fine verses with which he introduces the different cantos of several of his poems.

Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar," a pastoral in twelve eclogues—an eclogue for every month in the year—a happy idea, if it had been successfully carried out—contains some fine poetry, and in many parts exhibits the true attributes of the Pastoral—the rusticity, the simplicity, the style of thought of shepherd swains; but it is by no means equal. It is rugged in its verse and structure: there is a want of finish and of care in the verses; and the shepherds are