

"Measure for Measure" words that beautifully express the thought,

"No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure scape."

There is, I think, a certain falling-off in the fourth and fifth Books, but this decline is more in incident than in treatment, as the two books contain a number of the highly wrought episodes where with de Vere's consummate art and opulent fancy have veiled the original bareness of his subject. If they can boast of no great range of imagination, these books can, I believe, be justly admired for their delicacy of expression. It is only by comparison with what has gone before from the same pen that they lose, but they are themselves richly jewelled, and moulded to shapes of pure classic beauty idealized by the bright sunlight of poetic fancy. In a word, they may be reckoned inferior in interest, if not in style, to their great predecessors, as the "Paradise Regained" must be reckoned inferior to the "Paradise Lost," although the authorship of so fine a lot of verses as is the "Paradise Regained" would make the fame of a meaner bard than Milton.

That the most bulky of modern Irish poets approaches to perfection so measurably, should be, I hold, with the conscientious literary workers among his countrymen, an unfailing cause for the liveliest gratitude. If our people would only lay better to heart the careful artistic habits of this poet his works would be a positive benefaction to his race. Irish poetic expression is all too frequently conceived in haste, spasmodic, disjointed, uneven and unpolished. Its prevailing form, or rather formlessness, bans it from the consideration of the educated. That is the rule, to which there are, fortunately, very many exceptions, made by sane literary workers who recognize that it is constructive ability in the best sense—that power of execution which creates, forms and constitutes—not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of imagination—that raises the artist above the novice. Genius may, I venture to suppose, disregard existing literary laws if it perceives a higher object which may thus be attained. But the public has a right to question it rigorously as to whether it has any such result in view, and to refrain from challenging would be to set a premium upon eccen-