

The blustering Boreas did enroach  
 And beat upon the solitary Brere,  
 For now no succour was seen him near.  
 Now 'gan he repent his pride too late;  
 For naked left and disconsolate,  
 The biting frost nipt his stalk dead,  
 The watery wet weighed down his head,  
 And heaped so burthened him so sore  
 That now upright he can stand no more;  
 And being down is trod in the dirt  
 Of cattle, and bruised, and sorely hurt.  
 Such was the end of this ambitious Brere  
 For scorning Eld."

We have here Spenser in the possession of all his gifts and endowments, if not in the full exercise of them. We see his marvellous command of the language, and his great skill in metres, along with his fondness for older forms of expression, doubtless arising from his reverence for the earlier poets, and especially for Chaucer. Here, too, already we see the pictorial and the musical united as they have hardly ever been; and, even if we find touches of pedantry and mannerism, these peculiarities belong rather to the age in which he lived than to the genius of the poet. It would be difficult to find verses more musical than those of Spenser.

We are now coming to the time of Spenser's sojourn in Ireland; but, before going further into this, we must direct attention to a very remarkable poem, entitled, "Prosopopoeia; or, Mother Hubbard's Tale," the story of the Fox and the Ape, which, although it was not published until 1591, when it appeared along with a number of his shorter poems, was undoubtedly written long before, as he intimates in the dedication of the poem to Lady Compton, in which he states that it was "long sithens composed in the raw conceipt of my youth." It was probably written, or at least undertaken, during his residence in London, and is thought to display the force of his middle period rather than the mature beauty of his later work. The poem is a satire not

unworthy of a place beside the writings of the same class by Chaucer and Dryden.

Spenser had got to know the Court of Elizabeth on its real, as well as on its ideal, side. If he could speak of Cynthia's Court as a kind of heaven, he could also see the craving for advancement, the envy of others by which many were distinguished, and the unworthy means by which they sought to raise themselves. Sometimes his condemnation of the vices of the age is conveyed in gentle satire or even humour, sometimes with great seriousness. But here, as in the "Shepherd's Calendar," and still more in the great "Faerie Queene," we see the deep moral and religious motive by which he was continually actuated. Here—to go no further—is a picture of the misery of the suitor at court:

"Full little knowest thou, that hast not  
 tried,  
 What hell it is in suing long to bide;  
 To lose good days that might be better  
 spent;  
 To waste long nights in pensive discontent;  
 To speed to-day, to be put back to-mor-  
 row;  
 To feed on hope, to pine with fear and  
 sorrow;  
 To have thy Prince's grace, yet want her  
 peers';  
 To have thy asking, yet wait many years;  
 To fret thy soul with crosses and with  
 cares;  
 To eat thy heart through comfortless de-  
 spairs;  
 To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,  
 To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.  
 Unhappy wight, borne to disastrous end,  
 That doth his life in so long tendence  
 spend.

"Whoever leaves sweet home, where mean  
 estate  
 In safe assurance, without strife or hate,  
 Finds all things needful for contentment  
 meek,  
 And will to court for shadows vain to seek,  
 Or hope to gain, himself will a daw try.  
 That curse God send unto mine enemy!

Spenser was not himself apparently without experiences of the uncertainty of court favour.