

as something different from what the age had hitherto produced. It was evidently a favourite with Spenser himself. To the end he desired to be known by the name of Colin Clout, as one of his later poems specially testifies.

It is not quite easy to give a proper impression of such a work by brief extracts; but we will venture a few couplets, and they shall be taken from the "Oak and the Briar," a poem which perhaps gives the best early intimation of Spenser's power of pictorial description and narration. The oak was aged. It had been "a goodly oak," but now "his bared boughs were beaten with storms," and "his branches sere." By his side there "grew a bragging briar," "embellished with blossoms fair," which thus addressed the oak :

"Why standest there, guoth he, thou brutish block ?

Nor for fruit nor for shadow stand, thy stock.

Seest how fresh my flowers been spread,  
Dyed in lily white and crimson red,  
With leaves engrained in lusty green,  
Colours meet to clothe a maiden queen. . .  
The mouldy moss which thee accloyeth  
My cinnamon smell too much annoyeth :  
Wherefore soon, I rede thee, hence remove,  
Lest thou the price of my displeasure prove.

So spoke this hold Brere with great disdain.

Little him answered the oak again ;  
But yielded, with shame and grief adawed  
That of a weed he was overerawed.

"It chanced after upon a day  
The husbandman's self to come that way,  
Of custom to surview his ground,  
And his trees of state in compass round.  
Him when the spiteful Brere had espied,  
He causeless complained, and loudly cried  
Unto his lord, stirring up stern strife :—  
O my liege lord ! the god of my life,  
Pleaseth you ponder your suppliant's plaint

Caused of wrong and cruel constraint,  
Which I your poor vassal daily endure ;  
And, but your goodness the same recure,  
Am like for desperate dole to die,  
Through felonous force of mine enemy.

"Greatly aghast with this piteous plea,  
Him rested the goodman on the lea,  
And bade the Brere in his plaint proceed."

This he did with great crafti-

ness, reminding the husbandman that he had been planted by his own hand,

"To be the primrose of all thy land  
With flowering blossoms to furnish th-  
prime,

And scarlet berries in summer-time ?  
How falls it then that this faded oak,  
Whose body is sere, whose branches broke,  
Whose naked arms stretch unto the fire,  
Unto such tyranny doth aspire,  
Hindering with his shade my lovely light  
And robbing me of the sweet sun's sight ?  
So beat his old boughs my tender side.  
That oft the blood springeth from woundes  
wide ;

Untimely my flowers forced to fall  
That been the honour of your coronel ;  
And oft he lets his canker-worms light  
Upon my branches, to work me more spite ;  
And oft his heary locks doth down cast  
Wherewith my fresh flowrets been defast.

"For this and many more such outrage,  
Craving your goodlihead to assuage  
The rancorous rigour of his might,  
Nought ask I but only to hold my right,  
Submitting me to your good sufferance,  
And praying to be guarded from grievance."

The poor old oak did his best to make reply, but the anger kindled in the husbandman could not be appeased; and, taking "his harmful hatchet" in his hand, he proceeded to cut down the oak. It was not quite easy; for

"The axe's edge did oft turn again,  
As half unwilling to cut the grain.  
Seemed the senseless iron did fear,  
Or to wrong holy eld did forbear ;  
For it had been an ancient tree,  
Sacred with many a mystery,  
And often crossed with the Priestes' crew,  
And often hallowed with holy water due ;  
But such fancies weren foolery,  
And broughten this oak to this misery ;  
For nought mought they quitten him  
from decay,

For fiercely the goodman at him did lay.  
The block oft groaned under his blow,  
And sighed to see his near overthrow.  
In fine the steel had pierced his pith,  
Then down to the ground he fell forth-  
with.

His wondrous weight made the ground to  
quake,  
The earth shrunk under him, and seemed  
to shake.

There lieth the oak pitied of none !  
Now stands the Brere like a lord alone,  
Puffed up with pride and vain pleasance.  
But all this glee had no continuance,  
For oftsoons winter 'gan to approach,