

## THE CHARACTER OF PROSPERO.

" His life was gentle ; and the elements  
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, *This was a man.*"



THESE words, which Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Mark Antony, when the great orator delivers his famous panegyric over the corpse of Brutus, may, with perhaps even more truth, be applied to another wonderful creation of the immortal bard, Prospero, the hero of "The Tempest."

Prospero's character is one of the most admirable to be met with in the whole range of literature. He represents the ideal man, the personified union of "the elements," combining all those qualities that are best and noblest. It is a noteworthy fact that the meaning of the word "elements" has become much changed since Shakespeare's day. But the fourfold division of man's nature still remains. Instead of earth, water, air and fire, philosophy substitutes Intelligence, Will, Imagination and Sensibility. It is the right combination of these four faculties that is the principle of human excellence. The mere union of them, however, is not enough. They must necessarily possess a certain fixed hierarchy. The Intelligence should be in supreme control, restraining the Imagination and guiding the Will, while the latter has itself a particular duty, to govern the Sensibility. None of them, however, should preponderate to the detriment of the others. This is the most perfect form in which the human faculties can be combined, securing the proper proportion and harmony, and thus do we find them blended in the character of Prospero.

The intellectual power with which Prospero was gifted, was really wonderful. He had passed beyond the usual limits which confine man, and had attained a height reached by few. Within the inner circle, face to face with the mysterious veil which bounds the knowable, he stood. Reason, in him, could not indeed attain the degree of perfect truth to which it aspired, but, nevertheless, it revelled in the wondrous treasures which it found capable of its comprehension. Long and deeply did Prospero drink from the