Spenser's The Faerie Queene, Book I

Edmund Spenser

MUNDO DE LIBROS

Vista previa gratuita · Mundo de Libros · tiendamundodelibros.com

Spenser's The Faerie Queene, Book I

Edmund Spenser

Edición digital de dominio público.
Texto original: Project Gutenberg.
Mundo de Libros

E-text prepared by Charles Franks, Keith Edkins, and the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team

SPENSER'S THE FAERIE QUEENE

BOOK I

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
GEORGE ARMSTRONG WAUCHOPE, M.A., Ph.D.

Professor of English in the South Carolina College

Velut inter ignes luna minores

New York
The Macmillan Company
London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd.
1921
Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1903.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:
I. The Age which produced the Faerie Queene
II. The Author of the Faerie Queene
III. Study of the Faerie Queene:
1. A Romantic Epic
2. Influence of the New Learning
3. Interpretation of the Allegory

4. The Spenserian Stanza
5. Versification
6. Diction and Style
IV. Chronological Table of Events

THE FAERIE QUEENE. BOOK I:
Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh
Sonnet to Sir Walter Raleigh
Dedication to Queen Elizabeth
Canto I
Canto II
Canto III
Canto IV
Canto V
Canto VI
Canto VII
Canto VIII
Canto IX
Canto X
Canto XI
Canto XII

NOTES

GLOSSARY

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

I. THE AGE WHICH PRODUCED THE _FAERIE QUEENE_

The study of the _Faerie Queene_ should be preceded by a review of the great age in which it was written. An intimate relation exists between the history of the English nation and the works of English authors. This close connection between purely external events and literary masterpieces is especially marked in a study of the Elizabethan Age. To understand the marvelous outburst of song, the incomparable drama, and the stately prose of this period, one must enter deeply into the political, social, and religious life of the times.

The _Faerie Queene_ was the product of certain definite conditions which existed in England toward the close of the sixteenth century. The first of these national conditions was the movement known as the _revival of chivalry_; the second was the _spirit of nationality_ fostered by the English Reformation; and the third was that phase of the English Renaissance commonly called the _revival of learning_.

The closing decade of Queen Elizabeth's reign was marked by a strong reaction toward romanticism. The feudal system with its many imperfections had become a memory, and had been idealized by the people. The nation felt pride in its new aristocracy, sprung largely from the middle class, and based rather on worth than ancestry. The bitterness of the Wars of the Roses was forgotten, and was succeeded by an era of reconciliation and good feeling. England was united in a heroic queen whom all sects, ranks, and parties idolized. The whole

country exulting in its new sense of freedom and power became a fairyland of youth, springtime, and romantic achievement.

Wise and gallant courtiers, like Sidney, Leicester, and Raleigh, gathered about the queen, and formed a new chivalry devoted to deeds of adventure and exploits of mind in her honor. The spirit of the old sea-kings lived again in Drake and his bold buccaneers, who swept the proud Spaniards from the seas. With the defeat of the Invincible Armada, the greatest naval expedition of modern times, the fear of Spanish and Catholic domination rolled away. The whole land was saturated with an unexpressed poetry, and the imagination of young and old was so fired with patriotism and noble endeavor that nothing seemed impossible. Add to this intense delight in life, with all its mystery, beauty, and power, the keen zest for learning which filled the air that men breathed, and it is easy to understand that the time was ripe for a new and brilliant epoch in literature. First among the poetic geniuses of the Elizabethan period came Edmund Spenser with his _Faerie Queene_, the allegory of an ideal chivalry.

This poem is one of the fruits of that intellectual awakening which first fertilized Italian thought in the twelfth century, and, slowly spreading over Europe, made its way into England in the fifteenth century. The mighty impulse of this New Learning culminated during the reign of the Virgin Queen in a profound quickening of the national consciousness, and in arousing an intense curiosity to know and to imitate the rich treasures of the classics and romance. Its first phase was the _classical revival_. The tyrannous authority of ecclesiasticism had long since been broken; a general reaction from Christian asceticism had set in; and by the side of the ceremonies of the church had been introduced a semi-pagan religion of art--the

worship of moral and sensuous beauty. Illiteracy was no longer the style at court. Elizabeth herself set the example in the study of Greek. Books and manuscripts were eagerly sought after, Scholars became conversant with Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and the great tragic poets Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus; and translations for the many of Vergil, Ovid, Plautus, Terence, and Seneca poured forth from the printing-presses of London. The English mind was strongly tempered by the idealistic philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and the influence of Latin tragedy and comedy was strongly felt by the early English drama.

Along with this classical culture came a higher appreciation of the _beauty of mediaevalism_. The romantic tendency of the age fostered the study of the great epics of chivalry, Ariosto's _Orlando Furioso_ and Tasso's _Jerusalem Delivered_, and of the cycles of French romance. From the Italian poets especially Spenser borrowed freely. Ariosto's fresh naturalness and magic machinery influenced him most strongly, but he was indebted to the semi-classical Tasso for whole scenes. On the whole, therefore, Spenser's literary affinities were more with the Gothic than the classical.

Spenser was also the spokesman of his time on religious questions. The violent controversies of the Reformation period were over. Having turned from the beliefs of ages with passionate rejection, the English people had achieved religious freedom, and were strongly rooted in Protestantism, which took on a distinctly national aspect. That Calvinism was at that time the popular and aristocratic form of Protestantism is evident from references in the _Faerie Queene_.

Spenser lived in the afterglow of the great age of chivalry. The

passing glories of knighthood in its flower impressed his imagination like a gorgeous dream, and he was thus inspired to catch and crystallize into permanent art its romantic spirit and heroic deeds. Into the framework of his romance of chivalry he inserted a veiled picture of the struggles and sufferings of his own people in Ireland. The _Faerie Queene_ might almost be called the epic of the English conquest of Ireland. The poet himself and many of his friends were in that unhappy island as representatives of the queen's government, trying to pacify the natives, and establish law and order out of discontent and anarchy. Spenser's poem was written for the most part amidst all these scenes of misery and disorder, and the courage, justice, and energy shown by his countrymen were aptly portrayed under the allegory of a mighty spiritual warfare of the knights of old against the power of evil.

Spenser's essay on _A View of the Present State of Ireland_ shows that, far from shutting himself up in a fool's paradise of fancy, he was fully awake to the social and political condition of that turbulent island, and that it furnished him with concrete examples of those vices and virtues, bold encounters and hair-breadth escapes, strange wanderings and deeds of violence, with which he has crowded the allegory of the _Faerie Queene_.

II. THE AUTHOR OF THE _FAERIE QUEENE_

Edmund Spenser was born in London near the Tower in the year 1552. His parents were poor, though they were probably connected with the Lancashire branch of the old family of Le Despensers, "an house of ancient fame," from which the Northampton Spencers were

also descended. The poet's familiarity with the rural life and dialect of the north country supports the theory that as a boy he spent some time in Lancashire. Beyond two or three facts, nothing is known with certainty of his early years. He himself tells us that his mother's name was Elizabeth, and that London was his "most kindly nurse." His name is mentioned as one of six poor pupils of the Merchant Taylors' School, who received assistance from a generous country squire.

At the age of seventeen, Master Edmund became a student in Pembroke Hall, one of the colleges of the great University of Cambridge. His position was that of a sizar, or paid scholar, who was exempt from the payment of tuition fees and earned his way by serving in the dining hall or performing other menial duties. His poverty, however, did not prevent him from forming many helpful friendships with his fellow-students. Among his most valued friends he numbered Launcelot Andrews, afterward Bishop of Winchester, Edward Kirke, a young man of Spenser's own age, who soon after edited his friend's first important poem, the _Shepheards Calender_, with elaborate notes, and most important of all, the famous classical scholar, a fellow of Pembroke, Gabriel Harvey, who was a few years older than Spenser, and was later immortalized as the Hobbinoll of the _Faerie Queene_. It was by Harvey that the poet was introduced to Sir Philip Sidney, the most accomplished gentleman in England, and a favorite of Queen Elizabeth.

Spenser's residence in Cambridge extended over seven years, during which he received the usual degrees of bachelor and master of arts. He became one of the most learned of English poets, and we may infer that while at this seat of learning he laid the foundations for his wide scholarship in the diligent study of the Greek and Latin classics,

the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Vergil, and the great mediaeval epics of Italian literature. On account of some misunderstanding with the master and tutors of his college, Spenser failed to receive the appointment to a fellowship, and left the University in 1576, at the age of twenty-four. His failure to attain the highest scholastic recognition was due, it is supposed, to his being involved in some of the dangerous controversies which were ripe in Cambridge at that time "with daily spawning of new opinions and heresies in divinity, in philosophy, in humanity, and in manners."

On leaving the University, Spenser resided for about a year with relatives in Lancashire, where he found employment. During this time he had an unrequited love affair with an unknown beauty whom he celebrated in the _Shepheards Calender_ under the name of Rosalind, "the widow's daughter of the glen." A rival, Menalchas, was more successful in finding favor with his fair neighbor. Although he had before this turned his attention to poetry by translating the sonnets of Petrarch and Du Bellay (published in 1569), it was while here in the North country that he first showed his high poetic gifts in original composition.

After a visit to Sir Philip Sidney at Penshurst, Spenser went down to London with his friend in 1578, and was presented to Sidney's great uncle, the Earl of Leicester. He thus at once had an opportunity for advancement through the influence of powerful patrons, a necessity with poor young authors in that age. An immediate result of his acquaintance with Sidney, with whom he was now on relations of intimate friendship, was an introduction into the best society of the metropolis. This period of association with many of the most

Hasta aqui llega la vista previa gratuita.

Sigue leyendo este libro completo en tu biblioteca:

compralo por $20 MXN o leelo con la Membresia ($149 / 30 dias).

tiendamundodelibros.com