

**SPENSER'S POEM, ENTITLED COLIN
CLOUDS COME HOME AGAINE,
EXPLAINED; WITH REMARKS UPON
THE AMORETTI SONNETS, AND ALSO
UPON A FEW OF THE MINOR POEMS OF
OTHER EARLY ENGLISH POETS**

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Spenser's Poem, Entitled Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, Explained; With Remarks upon the Amoretti Sonnets, and Also upon a Few of the Minor Poems of Other Early English Poets by Ethan Allen Hitchcock

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ENGLISH POETS.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"REMARKS ON THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE," TO WHICH
THIS VOLUME IS DESIGNED AS A COMPANION.

(E. A. Hitchcock)

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Remarks upon the Amoretti (or Sonnets) of Spenser will be found in the 2d and 3d chapters of this volume; and the Sonnets themselves, for the convenience of the student, have been added to the volume.

The reader of the author's Remarks on the Shakespeare Sonnets, will find here some striking confirmations of the views there presented; but may discover many more by studying the early English poets in view of several pregnant hints in the Notes of Robert Bell, in his valuable edition of Chaucer's poetical works (London, 1862), particularly the note, vol. 4, page 201 on the following lines in the poem entitled the Assembly of Foules (or Birds) —where the curious reader may see the very Queen, the mystical Lady of so many poets.

“When I was comen ayen [again] into the place [?]
That I of spake, that was so soote [sweet] and greene,
Forth walked I the [then] my selven to solace:
Tho [then] was I ware [aware], where there sate a QUEENE, [N. B.]
That, as of light the somner Sonne shene
Passeth the sterre, [stars], right so over mesure, [or, beyond measure,]
She fairer was than any creature.

And in a launde, [lawn], upon a hill of flowers,
Was sette THIS NOBLE GODDESSE NATURE.

NOTE, BY MR. BELL.

The reader will remark the close resemblance between the structure of this poem [the Assembly of Foules—or Birds—] and that of the Court of Love, already pointed out in the introduction to the latter poem. In these and in many detached passages of Chaucer's other poems, may be detected a TENDENCY TO PANTHERISM, or the worshipping a principle supposed to pervade the Universe, rather than a personal Deity.

Some of the poets see this principle as Lady Nature, their mistress.

CHAPTER I.

HUME tells us, in the brief critical notices of literary works at successive periods embraced in his history, that Spenser's FAERIE QUEENE was a work which every scholar, or man of pretension to literary taste, felt bound to have upon his table; but he adds, that no one felt bound to read it. Whether this criticism, or what, has worked the change we cannot say, but it is quite certain that the once famous allegory of Una and the Lamb is no longer, or but rarely, seen upon the scholar's desk, and is only seen upon the parlor centre-table when richly bound in gilt and illustrated with pictures for the eye, while the book itself is as little read now as it was in the days of David Hume.

That the cold and self-complacent philosophical historian should care but little about the "idle fancies," as he no doubt reputed them, of such a man as Spenser, may not be surprising to those of

his own temper ; but there are others who will be apt to say, after all, that his criticism may be considered as indicating only his own taste, or the want of it, and that of what may be called the visible public of his day ; while we may be sure there must have been then, as there are now, a few to delight in following the spirit of the poet, and with more or less fidelity seek to discover something in nature of an invisible character "correspondent" to it ; the search for which will continue to task and to reward the student in all ages ; for, without adopting the theories or expositions of Swedenborg, it can hardly be denied, except by the most downright fatalist, that there is what may be properly called a spiritual world, where the genuine poet will be found at home in his own Arcadia. Philosophy is not without a clue to the true ground of the poet's dreams and visions ; and it lies chiefly in the dogma, that there can be no *modal* manifestation in nature, which is not based upon the *substantial*—without, or out of which, there is nothing at all : in which *NOTHING*, we will add, a certain class of seekers tell us they find all things.

But we do not propose to discuss these matters, and will enter without farther preface upon the purpose we have in view.

Among the minor poems of Spenser, the reader may have noticed, or may easily turn to, one entitled *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, published in 1591 or 1595. It was addressed or dedicated to Sir Walter Raleigh, by the poet himself, who calls it a "simple Pastoral;" and whilst, in the usual strain of dedications, the poet speaks of the poem as "unworthy" the higher "concept" of his noble friend, for its "meanness of style," he asserts its agreement "with truth, in circumstance and matter:" more than hinting, in the same dedication, at what the poet calls the "malice of evil mouths, which are always [says he] open to carpe at and misconstrue [his] simple meaning."

A modern editor quotes from the *Retrospective Review*, to show that the object of the poet (in *Colin Clouts*) was to give "an account of his return to England, and of his presentation to Queen Elizabeth, and of several persons attached to the Court;" and the Reviewer remarks, that the poem might have been highly interesting at the time it was written, but that its chief interest is now lost, declaring that "it possesses nothing striking, either in character or description, to attract a modern reader"—but he should have added, a modern reader of the Hume

school, who would doubtless see as little to attract in this pastoral as in the more elaborate poem of the *Faerie Queene*.

We will now show, by a few notes, the general purpose of this pastoral, one of the most remarkable poems in the English language, and leave the reader to reflect upon the probable result of a study of the *Faerie Queene* itself, an acknowledged allegory, if pursued from some similar point of view; and as we feel under no obligations of secrecy, we will say at once, that:

The Pastoral, entitled *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, was not designed to refer, in the remotest degree, to Queen Elizabeth; but the poem agrees "with truth in circumstance and matter" (as the dedication reads), with a mental journey by the poet himself, in the very spirit of Christianity, into what may be called the spiritual world—the Arcadia of the ancient poets; where the poet meets with the mystic Queen of Arcadia, the object of so much passionate devotion by a long succession of *spirituelle* poets, who, under the guise of addressing some Delia, or Celia, or Lilia, Phœbe, Daphne, or Chloe, have cloaked a love which, because not generally recognised, except as addressed to some veritable woman,