

**THE RIVERSIDE LITERATURE
SERIES. THE FAERIE
QUEENE. BOOK ONE**

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The Riverside Literature Series. The Faerie Queene. Book One by Edmund Spenser & Marta Hale Shackford

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EDMUND SPENSER & MARTA HALE SHACKFORD

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The Riverside Literature Series

THE FAERIE QUEENE

BOOK ONE

BY

EDMUND SPENSER

*EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES,
AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY*

BY

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U. S. A.

PREFACE

THIS edition of the first book of *The Faerie Queene* has been prepared for use in courses in the history of English literature where the aim in studying Spenser is, first, to lead students, persuasively, to an enjoyment of his poetry; and, second, to give them that initial training in the study of literature which shall develop their intellectual independence. In order to further these ends, the notes have been made very brief. All attempt to identify Spenser's obligations to other authors, or to relate *The Faerie Queene* to his other works, has been omitted, in the belief that these copious references overwhelm young readers with a feeling that Spenser is a poet to be read chiefly by the erudite. Close study of sources may, without great loss, be left for more advanced students. References to the great pagan divinities, Apollo, Jove, Diana, etc., will not be explained, nor will those common archaic words be translated, such as perchance, eek, etc., which should be familiar to every student of literature. Students are expected to turn to the unabridged dictionary for interpretation of such poetic diction. In the explanation of archaic words the intention has been to give those only which possess intrinsic difficulty for the student, while comment on many has been neglected simply for the sake of challenging, as far as possible, the imagination, the reason, and the power of observation. Many words

that are in modern use are hidden under archaic spelling, and, in order to identify these, students are advised to try the following experiments, taking pains always to pronounce the word aloud, for in all study of language we must think of the spoken and not of the written form. 1. Pronounce all the syllables, as in *leke* = *leaky*. 2. Shorten or lengthen the vowels in turn. 3. Soften or harden *c*, *g*, *ch*. 4. Remove prefixes *y*, *be*, *for*, which we no longer use. 5. Transpose letters, as in *crudled* = *curdled*. 6. Omit initial *h*, as in *heben* = *ebon*. 7. Substitute one vowel for another, as in *lilled* = *lolloed*. The burden, also, of interpreting the allegory is thrown upon the student, who, aided by the table of allegories and by certain questions proposed, ought to be able to understand the most important points of Spenser's ethical teaching in the first book. The essential thing is that students of the twentieth century should not have the researches of three hundred years thrust before them, but should be allowed the pleasure of meeting Spenser with a freshness of appreciation allied as closely as possible to that of the young Elizabethans.

M. H. S.

WELLESLEY, MASS.,
December, 1904.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SPENSER

THE circumstances of Spenser's early life are not recorded, and we can, at best, only conjecture what was his native endowment and what the shaping influences that surrounded him. The Lancashire Spensers, from whom he was descended, were people comfortably prosperous and well connected, but it is believed that Spenser's father was unfortunate, and that the boyhood of the poet was familiar with poverty. The year of his birth is uncertain, the date usually accepted being 1552. The place was that part of London called East Smithfield, outside the city walls, where were green meadows and country lanes. The love of nature which characterizes all of Spenser's poetry was doubtless developed in this semi-rustic birthplace and preceded his love for books.

In 1561, probably, he was a pupil at the newly established Merchant Taylors' School, in London, where he studied to some purpose, forming an acquaintance with Greek and Latin, and with French and Italian as well, if the supposition is correct that he was author of certain translations from Petrarch and from Bellay published in 1569 by John Vander Noodt.

From London Spenser went to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge University, and was registered in 1569 as a sizar, a title given to poor students who waited at table. His university life was not eventful; he made enduring friendships with Edward Kirke and Gabriel

Harvey, he listened to the various discussions, theological, political, literary, which echoed about Cambridge, and he read widely, proving himself a serious and able student, with a strong preference for classical literature. Seven years were spent at the university, years in which the beauty of tower and hall beside the slow-flowing river Cam must have impressed the young man as vividly as it did two later poets, Milton and Wordsworth. The degree of Bachelor of Arts was taken in 1573, the degree of Master of Arts in 1576, and then Spenser left Cambridge, disappointed, it may be, that he did not receive a fellowship that would have entitled him to permanent residence at the university.

A visit of about a year, made at this time to his relatives in the north, brought Spenser a knowledge of the landscape and of the dialect of that region, and also introduced him to "Rosalind," whom he loved with a hopeless devotion recorded in *The Shepherdes Calender*. Returning to London, he was introduced to Philip Sidney, the most distinguished young man of the day, famous as scholar, writer, and courtier, who in turn presented Spenser to his father and to his uncle, Lord Leicester. Leicester, Queen Elizabeth's favorite, a man of culture and of influence, received Spenser kindly and gave him a position, with certain clerical duties, in his household. In 1579 *The Shepherdes Calender* was published. This was a pastoral poem composed of eclogues, one for each month in the year, ranging from exquisite description to serious ethical discussion. The work, dedicated to "the noble and vertuous gentleman, most worthy of all titles both of learning and of chevalrie, Maister Philip Sidney," and signed "Immerito," was received

most favorably and won instant recognition for the poet. Various literary interests claimed his attention. He had begun *The Faerie Queene*, he was contemplating the publication of numerous short poems, and he was a member of the "Areopagus," a club formed by Sidney, Sir Edward Dyer, Sir Fulke Greville, and Gabriel Harvey, for the purpose of introducing classical metres into English verse. It was at this period, perhaps, that Spenser knew his greatest happiness. Young, gifted, ambitious, he may reasonably have looked forward to years of brilliant achievement.

Three years passed under the protection of Lord Leicester, and then came an appointment as secretary to Lord Arthur Grey of Wilton, recently made Lord Deputy of Ireland. Preferment of some sort he had desired, but not that which would practically exile him from his dearest interests. From 1580 until his death Spenser lived in Ireland, making but two brief visits to London. Of the details of his life from this moment we know almost nothing. Ireland was in a state of rebellion, and was under harsh military rule so strictly enforced by Lord Grey, that he was, in 1582, recalled. In 1581 Spenser was made Clerk of the Irish Court of Chancery, a position which he held for seven years, until his election as Clerk to the Council of Munster. In 1598 his appointment as Sheriff of Cork County showed the degree of regard England had for his executive power. It may be asserted that no poet ever performed more patiently and carefully work which in its tiresome routine must have been totally uncongenial.

During the first years of residence in Ireland, Spenser lived in or near Dublin, but by 1586 he was