engaged in a fierce struggle for existence against the Catholic powers of the Continent. Of Lord Grey’s character his secretary was an enthusiastic admirer, exhibiting him in the *Faery Queen* as Arthegal, the personification of justice; and we know exactly what were his own views of Irish policy, and how strongly he deplored that Lord Grey was not permitted to carry them out. Spenser’s *View of the State of Ireland* drawn up after fourteen years’ experience, but first printed in 1633 by Sir James Ware, who complains of Spenser’s harshness and inadequate knowledge *(History of Ireland,* appendix), is not the work of a gentle dreamer, but of an energetic and shrewd public official.

The *View* is not a descriptive work; there is nothing in the style to indicate that it was written by a poet; it is an elaborate state paper, the exposition in the form of a dialogue of a minutely con- sidered plan for the pacification of Ireland, written out of zeal for the public service for the eyes of the government of the day. A very thoroughgoing plan it is. After passing in review the history and character of the Irish, their laws, customs, religion, habits of life, armour, dress, social institutions and finding “ evil usages ” in every department, he propounds his plan of “ reformation.” Reformation can be effected only by the sword, by the strong hand. The interlocutor in the dialogue holds up his hands in horror. Does he propose extermination? By no means; but he would give the Irish a choice between submission and extermination. The government had vacillated too long, and, fearing the cost of a thorough operation, had spent twice as much without in any , way mending matters. Let them send into Ireland 10,000 foot and 1000 horse, disperse them in garrisons—a complete scheme of localities is submitted—give the Irish twenty days to come in; if they did not come in then, give no quarter afterwards, but hunt them down like wild beasts in the winter time when the covert is thin; “ if they be well followed one winter, ye shall have little work to do with them the next summer famine would complete the work of the sword; and in eighteen months’ time peace would be restored and the ground cleared for plantation by English colonists. There must be no flinching in the execution of this plan—“ no remorse or drawing back for the sight of any such rueful object as must thereupon follow, nor for compassion of their calamities, seeing that by no other means it is possible to recover them, and that these are not of will but of very urgent necessity.” The government had out of foolish compassion drawn back before when Lord Grey had brought the recalcitrant Irish to the necessary extremity of famine; the gentle poet warns them earnestly against a repetition of the blunder.

Such was Spenser’s plan for the pacification of Ireland, pro­pounded not on his own authority, but as having support in “ the consultations and actions of very wise governors and counsellors whom he had sometimes heard treat thereof.” He knew that it was “ bloody and cruel ”; but he contended passionately that it was necessary for the maintenance of English power and the Protestant religion. The method was repugnant to the kindly nature of average Englishmen; from the time of Lord Grey no English authority had the heart to go through with it till another remorseless zealot appeared in the person of Cromwell. That Cromwell knew the treatise of “ the sage and serious Spenser,” perhaps through Milton, is probable from the fact that the poet’s Irish estates were secured to his grandson by the Protector’s intervention in 1657. These estates had been granted to Spenser as his share in the redistribution of Munster —3000 acres of land and Kilcolman Castle, an ancient seat of the Desmonds, in the north of the county of Cork. The elaborate and business-like character of the *View* shows that the poet was no sinecurist, but received his reward for substantial political services. He ceased to be secretary to the lord-deputy when Lord Grey was recalled in 1582; but he continued in the public service, and in 1586 was promoted to the onerous position of clerk to the council of Munster.

Amidst all the distractions of his public life in Ireland Spenser kept up his interest in literature, and among proper subjects for reforn included Irish poetry, of which he could judge only through the medium of translations. He allows it some merit— “ sweet wit,” “ good invention,” “ some pretty flowers ”— but laments that it is “ abused to the gracing of wickedness and vice.” Meanwhile he seems to have proceeded steadily with the composition of the *Faery Queen,* translating his varied experience of men and affairs into the picturesque forms of his allegory, and expressing through them his conception of the immutable principles that ought to regulate human conduct. He had, as we have seen, conceived a work of the kind and made a beginning before he left England. The conception must have been very much deepened and widened and in every way. enriched by his intimate daily contact with the actual struggle of conflicting individuals and interests and policies in a great crisis. Some four or five years later, being asked in a mixed company of English officials in Ireland (as recorded in Lodowick Bryskett’s *Discourse of Civil Life)* to give off-hand a short sketch of “ the ethical part of moral philosophy ” and the practical uses of the study, Spenser explained to these simple- minded men that the subject was too intricate for an impromptu exposition, but that he had in hand a work called the *Faery Queen* in which an ethical system would be exhibited in action. The respect paid by his official brethren to Spenser as a man, “ not only perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in philosophy, both moral and natural,” is an interesting item in his biography. \* Some years later still, when Spenser was settled at Kilcolman Castle, Sir Walter Raleigh found him with three books of the *Faery Queen* completed, and urged him to come with them to London. London accordingly he revisited in 1589, after nine years’ absence. There is a very pretty record of this visit in *Colin ClouFs Come Home Again,* published in i535λ but written in 1591, immediately after his return to 'Kilcolman. The incidents of the visit, by that time matters of wistful memory, are imaged as a shepherd’s excursion from his quiet pastoral life into the great world. Colin Clout calls round him once again the masked figures of the *Shepherd's Calendar,* and describes to them what he saw, how he fared, and whom he met at the court of Cynthia, and how, through the influence of “ the Shepherd of the Ocean,” he was admitted at timely hours to play on his oaten pipe in the great queen’s presence.

How much is pure fiction and how much veiled fact in this picture cannot now be distinguished, but it is undoubted that Spenser, though his chief patrons Leicester and Sidney were now dead, was very graciously received by the great world on his return to London. Not only did the queen grant him an audi­ence, hut many ladies of the court, several of whom he after- wards honoured with dedications, honoured him with their patronage. The first three hooks of the *Faery Queen,* which were entered at Stationers’ Hall on the 1st of December 1589, were published in 1590, and he was proclaimed at once with remarkable unanimity by all the writers of the time as the first of living poets.

From the first week of its publication the literary world has continued unanimous about the *Faery Queen,* except on minor points. When romanticism was at its lowest ebb Pope read Spenser in his old age with as much delight as in his boyhood. Spenser speakε himself of having had his detractors, of having suffered from the venomous tooth of the Blatant Beast, and he seems to have had in more than ordinary share the poet’s sensitiveness to criticism; but the detraction or indifference have generally been found among men who, like the lord high treasurer Burghley, have no liking for poetry of any kind. ∖ The secret of Spensers enduring popularity with poets and lovers of poetry lies specially in this, that he excels in the poet’s peculiar gift, the instinct for verbal music. Shakespeare, or the author of the sonnet usually assigned to him, felt and expressed this when he drew the parallel between “ music and sweet poetry ”—

“ Thou lovest to hear the sweet melodious sound That Phoebus’ lute, the queen of music, makes; And I in deep delight am chiefly drowned Whenas himself to singing he betakes.”

This is an early word in criticism of Spenser, and it is the last word about his prime and unquestionable excellence—a word in which all critics must agree. Whether he had imagination in the highest degree or only luxuriant fancy, and whether he could tell a story in the highest epic manner or only put together a richly varied series of picturesque incidents, are disputable points; but about the enchantment of his verse there can be no difference of opinion. It matters not in the least that he gains his melody often by archaic affectations and licences of diction; there, however purchased, the marvellously rich music is. In judging of the structure of the *Faery Queen* we must always remember that, long and diffuse as it is, what we have is but a fragment of the poet’s design, and that the narrative is regulated by an allegorical purpose; but, however intricate, however confused, the reader may feel the succession of incidents to be, when he studies the succession of incidents, it is only at the call of duty that he is likely to occupy himself with such a study in reading Spenser.