The ethical value of the allegory has been very variously esti­mated. The world would probably never have divined that there was any allegory if he had not himself drawn attention to it in a prose dedication and in doggerel headings to the cantos. It \*was apparently at his friend Raleigh’s suggestion that the poet con- descended to explain his ethical purpose in *A Letter of the Author's* addressed to Sir Walter and dated the 23rd of January 1589-1590; otherwise it would have been as problematical as the similar intention in the case of the *Idylls of the King* before that intention was expressly declared. It is almost to be regretted, as far as the allegory is concerned, that the friendly “ E. K.” was not employed to furnish a “ glosse ” to the *Faery Queen* as he had done to the *Shepherd's Calendar.* Undoubtedly the peculiar “ poetic luxury ” of the *Faery Queen* can be enjoyed without any reference to the allegory; even Professor Dowden, the most eloquent champion of Spenser’s claims as a “ teacher,” admits that it is a mistake to look for minute correspondence between outward symbol and underlying sense, and that the poet is least enjoyable where he is most ingenious. Still the allegory governs the structure of the poem, and Spenser himself attached great importance to it as determining his position among poets. The ethical purpose is distinctive of the poem as a whole; it was foremost in Spenser’s mind when he conceived the scheme of the poem, and present with him as he built up and articulated the skeleton; it was in this respect that he claimed to have “ overpassed ” his avowed models Ariosto and Tasso. If we wish to get an idea of Spenser’s imaginative force and abundance, or to see his creations as he saw them, we must not neglect the allegory. It is obvious from all that he says of his own work that in his eyes the ethical meaning not only heightened the interest of the marvel­lously rich pageant of heroes and heroines, enchanters and monsters, but was the one thing that redeemed it from romantic common­place. For the right appreciation of many of the characters and incidents a knowledge of the allegory is indispensable. For example, the slaughter of Error by the Red Cross knight would be merely disgusting but for its symbolic character; the iron Talus and his iron flail is a revolting and brutally cruel monster if he is not regarded as an image of the executioner of righteous law; the Blatant Beast, a purely grotesque and ridiculous monster to outward view, acquires a serious interest when he is known to be an impersonation of malignant detraction.

Notwithstanding its immense range, the *Faery Queen* is pro- foundly national and Elizabethan, containing many more or less cryptic allusions to contemporary persons and interests. It has never been popular abroad, as is proved by the fact that there is no complete translation of it in any of the Continental languages. This is doubtless on account of a certain monotony in the subject-matter, which is only partially relieved by subtle variations. The same objection applies to the famous “ Sρen- serian stanza ” (see below) with its concluding Alexandrine. It was by no means a happy invention, but its infelicity is dis- guised by its author’s marvellous skill in rhythm, and thus recommended it was adopted by Byron and Keats. In his own day Spenser was criticized by Sidney, Ben Jonson, Daniel and others for the artificiality of his language, his “ aged accents and untimely words,” but Ben Jonson went further—“ Spenser’s stanza pleased him not, nor his matter.” Milton, on the other hand, duly appreciated “ our sage and serious poet,” and he has been followed by a long line of distinguished judges. It was Charles Lamb who named Spenser “ the poet’s poet.”

After the publication of the *Faery Queen* Spenser seems to have remained in London for more than a year, to enjoy his triumph. It might be supposed, from what he makes the Shep­herd of the Ocean say in urging Colin Clout to quit his banishment in Ireland, that Raleigh had encouraged him to expect some permanent provision in London. If he had any such hopes, they were disappointed. The thrifty queen granted him a pension of £50, which was paid in February 1591, but nothing further was done for him. Colin Clout’s explanation that the selfish scrambling and intriguing of court life were not suited to a lowly shepherd swain, and that he returned to country life with relief, may be pastoral convention, or it may have been an expression of the poet’s real feelings on his return to Kilcolman, although as a matter of fact there seems to have been as much scrambling for good things in Munster as in London. Certain it is that he did return to Kilcolman in the course of the year 1591, having probably first arranged for the publication of *Daphnaida* and *Complaints. Daphnaida* is a pastoral elegy on the death of the niece of the mistress of the robes. The fact implied in the dedication that he was not personally known to the lady has more than once provoked the solemn remark that the poet’s grief was assumed. Of course it was assumed; and it is hardly less obvious that sincerity of personal emotion, so far from being a merit in the artificial forms of pastoral poetry, the essence of which lies in its dreamy remoteness from real life, would be a blemish and a discord. Any suggestion of the poet’s real personality breaks the charm; once raise the question of the poet’s personal sincerity, and the pastoral poem may at once be thrown aside. The remark applies to all Spenser’s minor poetry, including his love­sonnets; the reader who raises the question whether Spenser really loved his mistress may have a talent for disputation, but none for the full enjoyment of hyperbolical poetry. *Complaints,* also published in 1591, is a miscellaneous collection of poems written at different periods. The volume contained *The Ruins of Time; The Tears of the Muses, Virgil's Gnat; Mother Hubbard's Tale; The Ruins of Rome; Muiopotmos; Visions of the World's Vanity; Bellay's Visions; Petrarch's Visions.* Some of these pieces are translations already alluded to and interesting only as the exercises of one of our greatest masters of melodious verse; but two of them, *The Tears of the Muses* and *Mother Hubbard's Tales,* have greater intrinsic interest. The first is the complaint of the decay of learning alluded to in *Midsummer Night's Dream,* v. i. 52—

“ The thrice three Muses mourning for the death

Of Learning late deceased in beggary.”

The lament, at a time when the Elizabethan drama was “ mew­ing its mighty youth,” was not so happy as some of Spenser’s political prophecies in his *View of Ireland;* but it is idle work to try to trace the undercurrents and personal allusions in such an occasional pamphlet. *Mother Hubbard's Tale,* a fable in Chaucerian couplets, shows a keenness of satiric force not to be paralleled in any other of Spenser’s writings, and suggests that he left the court in a mood very different from Colin Clout’s.

Spenser returned to London probably in 1595. He had married in the interval a lady whose Christian name was Elizabeth—Dr Grosart says Elizabeth Boyle. The marriage, celebrated on the nth of June 1594, was followed by a rapid succession of publications. The first was a volume (entered at Stationers’ Hall, on the 19th of November 1594; published 1595) containing the *Amoretti,* a series of exquisite sonnets commemorative of the moods and incidents of his courtship, and the magnificent *Epithalamion,* incomparably the finest of his minor poems. As in the case of the *Complaints,* the publisher for obvious reasons issued this volume nominally without his authority. *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* was published in the same year, with a dedication to Sir WaIter Raleigh, dated 1591. Early in 1596 the second three books of the *Faery Queen* were entered in the register of Stationers’ Hall, and in the course of the same year were published his *Four Hymns,* his *Prothalamion,* and his *Astrophel,* a pastoral lament for Sir Philip Sidney, which he dedicated to the countess of Essex.

That Spenser wrote more of the *Faery Queen* during the last two years of his life, and that the MS. perished in the sack of Kilcolman Castle by the rebels, may plausibly be conjectured, but cannot be ascertained. During those years he would seem to have been largely occupied with political and personal cares. He describes himself in the *Prothalamion* as a disappointed suitor at court. He drew up his *View* *of Ireland* in 1596 when he was in London, and from various circumstances it is evident that he had hopes of some kind from the favour of Essex. The *View,* with its urgent entreaty that Essex should be sent to Ireland, was entered at Stationers’ Hall in April 1598, but he did not obtain leave to publish it. Burghley, who had long stood in his way, died in August of that year, and next month Spenser, who seems to have returned to Ireland in 1597, was appointed sheriff of Cork. In October Tyrone’s rebellion broke out, and Spenser’s house was sacked and burned. The poet himself escaped, and in December was sent to London with despatches. Again he ventured to urge upon the queen his plan for the thorough “ reformation ” of Ireland. But his own