hibit in translation now, but which was a rarer and more significant accomplishment when Surrey and Sackville were the highest models in post-Chaucerian English.

Little is known of Spenser’s Cambridge career, except that he was a sizar of Pembroke Hall, took his bachelor’s degree in 1572, his master’s in 1576, and left Cambridge without having obtained a fellowship. Mr Grosart’s inquiries have elicited the fact that his health was not good,—college allowances while he was in residence being often paid “Spenser ægrotanti.” One of the fellows of Pembroke strongly influenced his destiny. This was Gabriel Harvey, a prominent figure in the university life of the time, an enthusiastic educationist, vigorous, versa­tile, not a little vain of his own culture and literary powers, which had gained him a certain standing in London society. The revival and advancement of English literature was a passion of the time, and Harvey was fully possessed by it. His fancy for reforming English verse by discarding rhyme and substituting unrhymed classical metres, and the tone of his controversy with Thomas Nash, have caused him to be regarded as merely an obstreperous and pragmatic pedant ; but it is clear that Spenser, who had sense enough not to be led astray by his eccentricities, received active and generous help from him and probably not a little literary stimulus. Harvey’s letters to Spenser@@1 throw a very kindly light on his character.

Three years after leaving Cambridge, in 1579, Spenser issued his first volume of poetry, the *Shepherd's Calendar.* Where and how he spent the interval have formed subjects for elaborate speculation. That most of it was spent in the study of his art we may take for granted. That he lived for a time in the “ north parts ” of England ; that there or elsewhere he fell in love with a lady whom he celebrates under the anagram of “ Rosalind ” ; that his friend Harvey urged him to return south, and introduced him to Sir Philip Sidney ; that Sidney took to him, dis­cussed poetry with him, introduced him at court, put him in the way of preferment,—are ascertained facts in his personal history. Mr Grosart conjectures with consider­able plausibility that he was in Ireland in 1577 in the service of Sir Henry Sidney, Philip’s father, and returned to England with that administrator in 1578.

The interest of the *Shepherd's Calendar* is mainly personal to Spenser. Its twelve poems continue to be read chiefly because they were the first published essays of the author of the *Faery Queen,* the poems in which he tried and disciplined his powers. They mark no stage in the history of pastoral poetry. Spenser had too strong a genius not to make his own individuality felt in any form that he attempted, and his buoyant dexterity in handling various schemes of verse must always afford delight to the con­noisseur in such things. But a reader not already interested in Spenser, or not already familiar with the artificial eclogue, would find little to attract him in the *Shepherd's Calendar.* The poems need a special education ; given this, they are felt to be full of charm and power, a fresh and vivid spring to the splendid summer of the *Faery Queen.* The diction is a studiously archaic artificial compound, partly Chaucerian, partly North Anglian, partly facti­tious ; and the pastoral scenery is such as may be found in any country where there are sheep, hills, trees, shrubs, toadstools, and running streams. That Spenser, having been in the north of England, should have introduced here and there a touch of north country colour is natural enough, but it is not sufficient to give a character to the poems as pastoral poems. As such they follow continuously and do not violently break away from Latin, Italian, and French predecessors, and Mr George Saintsbury is undoubtedly right in indicating Marot as the most immediate model. At the same time one can quite understand on historical grounds why the *Shepherd’s Calendar* was hailed with enthusiasm as the advent of a “new poet.” Not only was it a complete work in a form then new to English literature, but the execution showed the hand of a master. There had been nothing so finished, so sustained, so masterful in grasp, so brilliant in metre and phrase, since Chaucer. It was felt at once that the poet for whom the age had been waiting had come. The little coterie of friends whose admiration the young poet had won in private were evidently concerned lest the wider

public should be bewildered and repelled by the unfamiliar pastoral form and rustic diction. To put the public at the right point of view the poems were published with a commentary by “E. K.,”— supposed to be one Edward Kirke, who was an undergraduate with Spenser at Pembroke. This so-called “glosse” explained the archaic words, revealed the poet’s intentions, and boasted that, as in the case of Virgil, the pastoral poetry of the “new poet” was but “a proving of the wings for higher and wider flights.” The “new poet’s” name was withheld; and the identification of the various “shepherds”—of Cuddie and Roffy and Diggon Davie, and the beauteous golden-haired “ widow’s daughter of the glen ”— was fortunately reserved to yield delight to the ingenious curiosity of a later age.@@2

The *Shepherds Calendar* was published at Gabriel Harvey’s instance, and was dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney. It was one out of many poetical schemes on which the young poet was busy in the flush of conscious power and high hopes excited by the admiration of the literary authorities whose approval was then most to be coveted. His letters to Harvey and Harvey’s letters to him fur­nish hints for a very engaging fancy picture of Spenser at this stage of his life,—looking at the world through rose-coloured spectacles, high in favour with Sidney and Leicester, dating his letters from Leicester House, gaily and energetically discussing the technicalities of his art, with some provision from his powerful friends—certain, but the form of it delightfully uncertain,—going to court in the train of Leicester, growing pointed beard and mustachios of fashionable shape, and frightening his ever-vigilant friend and mentor Harvey by the light courtier-like tone of his references to women. The studious pastoral poet from “north parts ” had blossomed with surprising rapidity in the image of the gay fortune-seeking adventurers who crowded the court of the virgin queen in those stirring times. Some of the poems which he mentions to Harvey as then completed or on the anvil—his *Dreams,* his *Nine Comedies,* his *Dying Pelican,* and his *Stemmata Dudleiana* (singing the praises of the noble family which was be­friending him)—have not been preserved, at least in any form that can be certainly identified. He had sent Harvey a portion of the *Faery Queen,* which he was eager to continue ; but Harvey did not think much of it—a judgment for which Harvey is often ridiculed as a dull pedant, as if we knew for certain that what was submitted to him was identical with what was published ten years later.

Spenser was appointed secretary to the lord-deputy of Ireland in 1580, and was one of the band of adventurers who, with mixed motives of love of excitement, patriotism, piety, and hopes of forfeited estates, accompanied Lord Arthur Grey of Wilton to Ireland to aid in the suppression of Desmond’s rebellion. Regret is sometimes expressed that the author of the *Faery Queen,* who ought to have been dreamy, meditative, gentle, and refined, should have been found in such company, and should have taken part in the violent and bloody scenes of Lord Grey’s two years’ attempt at “pacification.” But such things must be judged with reference to the circumstances and the spirit of the time, and it must be remembered that England was then 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, 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 considered 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

@@@1 *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey,* Camden Society.

@@@2 See Mr Grosart’s *Complete Works of Spenser,* vol. i.