

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

Edmund Spenser, a typical representative of his age, has been hailed by Charles Lamb as "the poets' poet" because all great poets of England have been indebted to him. "Spenser", Rickett remarks, "is at once the child of Renaissance and Reformation, on one side we may regard him with Milton as "the sage and serious Spenser," on the other, he is the humanist, alive to the finger tips with sensuous beauty of Southern romance."

Spenser's main works are 'The Shepherd's Calendar' (1579), a pastoral romance, 'Amoretti', a collection of eighty-eight Petrarch Sonnets, 'Epithalamion' (1595), a magnificent ode commemorating his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle, 'Astrophel' (1596), an elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney, Four Hymns (1576), glorifying

love and honour, and his 'magnum opus *Fairie Queene*' (1589-1609).

Spenser's poetry is characterized by sensuousness and picturesqueness. He is a matchless painter in words. His contribution to poetic style, diction and versification is memorable. He evolved a poetic style which the succeeding generations of English poets used. The introduction of Spenserian stanza, which had been adroitly used by almost all poets, is his most remarkable contribution to poetry. He is great because of the extraordinary smoothness and melody of his verse, the richness of his language, a golden diction which he drew from every source new words, old words and obsolete words.

Spenser is "the poets' poet" in the real sense. All great poets have been influenced by him.

Renwick says, "Shakespeare himself might not have achieved so much, if Spenser had not lived and laboured." Dryden acknowledge that Spenser had been his master in English. Thompson referred to him as "my master Spenser." Wordsworth praised him as the embodiment of nobility, purity and sweetness. Byron, Shelley and Keats are his worthy followers. The pre-Raphaelites were inspired by his word painting and picturesque descriptions.

The end.

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