

**WILLIAM HOWITT**

**HOMES AND HAUNTS  
OF THE MOST  
EMINENT BRITISH  
POETS**



**William Howitt**

# **Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets**

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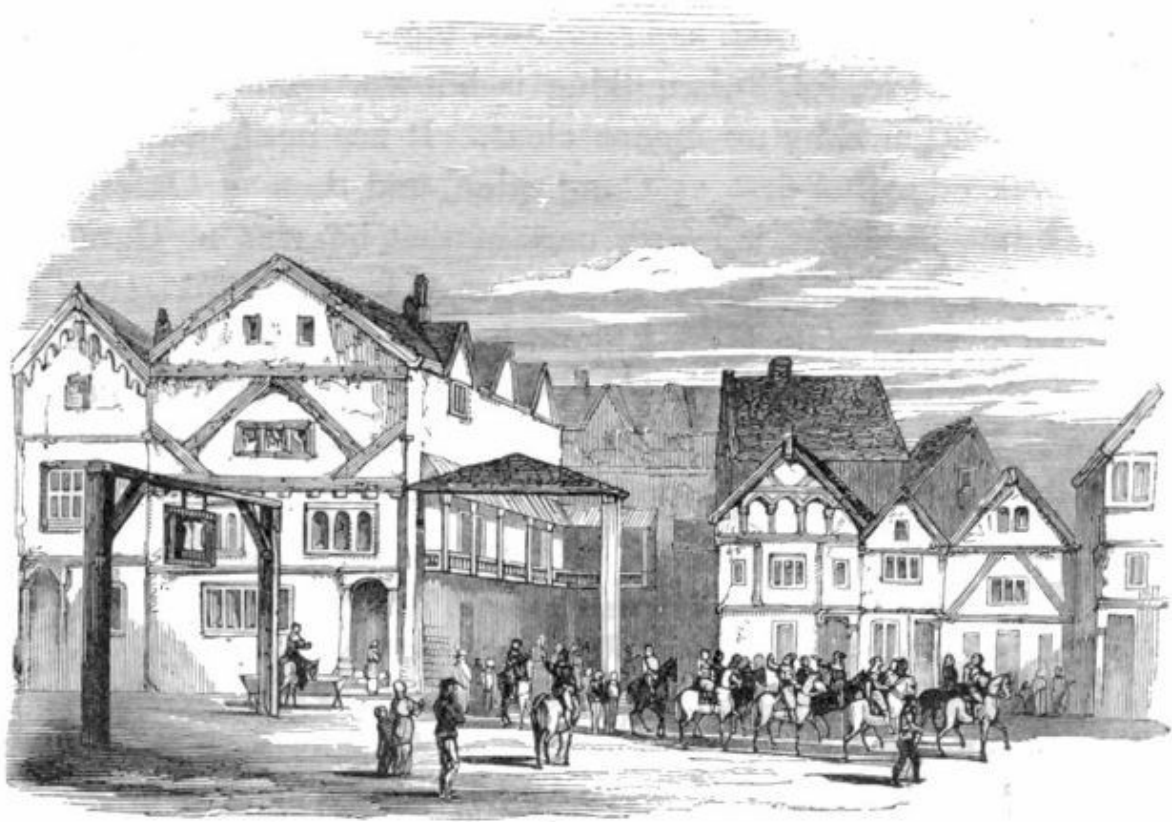
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The subject of the present work is very extensive, and it was soon found necessary to leave out the Dramatic Poets for separate treatment. To them may possibly be added such other of our eminent poets as could not be included in the present work. It will be recollected that it is professedly on the Homes and Haunts of the Poets, and is not strictly biographical. For this reason there are some poets of considerable eminence who will find comparatively small mention; and others none, not because they are not entitled to much notice, but because there is nothing of deep interest or novelty connected with their homes and abodes.

THE ELMS, CLAPTON, *Dec. 18, 1846.*



# **GEOFFREY CHAUCER.**

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The first thing which forcibly strikes our attention in tracing the Homes and Haunts of the Poets, is the devastation which Time has made among them. As if he would indemnify himself for the degree of exemption from his influence in their works, he lays waste their homes and annihilates the traces of their haunts with an active and a relentless hand. If this is startlingly apparent in the cases of those even who have been our cotemporaries, how much more must it be so in the cases of those who have gone hence centuries ago. We begin with the father of our truly English poetry, the genial old GEOFFREY CHAUCER, and, spite of the lives which have been written of him, Tyrwhitt tells us that just nothing is really known of him. The whole of his account of what he considers well-authenticated facts regarding him amounts to but twelve pages, including notes and comments. The facts themselves do not fill more than four pages. Of his birth-place, further than that it was in London, as he tells us himself in *The Testament of Love*, fol. 321, nothing is known. The place of his education is by no means clear. It has been said that he was educated first at Cambridge, and then at Oxford. He himself leaves it pretty certain that he was at Cambridge, styling himself, in *The Court of Love*, "Philogenet of Cambridge, Clerk." Leland has asserted that he was at Oxford; and Wood, in his *Annals*, gives a tradition that, "when Wickliffe was guardian or



warden of Canterbury College, he had for his pupil the famous poet called Jeffrey Chaucer, father of Thomas Chaucer, Esq., of Ewelme, in Oxfordshire, who, following the steps of his master, reflected much upon the corruptions of the clergy."

He is then said to have entered himself of the Inner Temple. Speght states that a Mr. Buckley had seen a record in the Inner Temple of "Geffrey Chaucer being fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet-street." This, Tyrwhitt says, was a *youthful* sally, and points out the fact that Chaucer studied in the Inner Temple on leaving college, and before his travels abroad, which is contrary to the account of Leland, who makes him, *after* his travels, reside in the Inner Temple. These travels even in France resting solely on the authority of Leland, Tyrwhitt disputes, but of their reality there can be little doubt.

Chaucer, having finished his education, became a courtier. The first authentic memorial, says Tyrwhitt, that we have of him, is the patent in Rymer, 41 E. III., by which the king grants him an annuity of twenty marks, by the title of *Valettus noster*. He was then in the 39th year of his age. Speght mentions a succeeding grant by the title of *Valettus hospitii*. By those titles it appears that he was a royal page or groom. In this situation he enjoyed various grants from the king. In the 48 E. III., he had, according to Rymer, a grant for life of a pitcher of wine dayly; in the same year a grant, during pleasure, of the office of Controller of the Custom of Wools, &c., in the port of London. The next year the king granted him the wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's heir, for which he received £104; and in the

following year, some forfeited wool to the value of £71, 4s., 6d. His annuity of twenty marks was confirmed to him on the accession of Richard II., and another annuity of twenty marks was granted him in lieu of the dayly pitcher of wine. It is probable, too, that he was confirmed in his office of controller, though the instrument has not been produced. In the 13th of Richard II. he appears to have been clerk of the works at Westminster, &c., and in the following year at Windsor. In the 17th of Richard II. the king granted him a new annuity of twenty pounds; in the 22d, a pipe of wine. On the accession of Henry IV. his two grants of the annuity of twenty pounds and of the pipe of wine were confirmed to him, with an additional grant of forty marks.

Thus it appears that Chaucer did not miss the profitable part of court patronage. He also reaped some of its honorable employments. Edward III., in the 46th year of his reign, appointed him, with two others, his envoy to Genoa, with the title of *Scutifer noster*, Our Squire. This great and able king, it is evident, regarded Chaucer as a good man of business, and that he proved himself so, is pretty well denoted by the chief grants of his life immediately following his return; namely, that of the pitcher of wine dayly, the controllership of the customs of wool and wine in the port of London, and in the following year of the wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's heir, &c. At the heels of these grants came also another embassy to France, with Sir Guichard d'Angle and Richard Stan, according to Froissart, to treat of a marriage between the Prince of Wales, afterward Richard II., and a daughter of the French king. Other historians assert that the original object of his mission was to complain

of some infringement of the truce concluded with France, and which was so well pushed by Chaucer and his colleagues, that it led to some overtures respecting the marriage. However that may be, it is evident that our poet's part in the transaction met with the royal approbation, for the old king dying, one of the first acts of the prince, on his accession, was to confirm his father's grants to him, with an additional one, as we have observed.

But Chaucer had also his share of life's reverses. In the eleventh year of Richard II. he had the king's license to surrender his two grants of twenty marks each, in favor of John Scalby. It is not really known why he surrendered those grants, but it is supposed that it was owing to his connection with the Lollard cause, and especially to his alliance with John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, and John of Northampton. He was not only attached to the duke on account of their common interest in the reformed opinions, but he was married to a sister of Catharine Swynford, the duke's mistress, and afterward wife. Chaucer, it seems, had exerted himself zealously to secure the re-election of John of Northampton as Lord-mayor of London. There is much mystery attached to the cause of the riot and its consequences which took place; but as this Comberton, or John of Northampton, was a zealous Wickliffite, the supposition that the disturbance arose from the violent opposition of the clergy to him is very probable. Comberton was finally committed to prison, and Chaucer fled, first to Hainault, then to France, and lastly to Zealand. "While in Zealand," says Mr. Chalmers, "he maintained some of his countrymen, who had fled thither on the same account, by

sharing the money he had brought with him, an act of liberality which soon exhausted his stock. In the mean time, the partisans of his cause, whom he had left at home, contrived to make their peace, not only without endeavoring to procure a pardon for him, but without aiding him in his exile, where he became greatly distressed for want of pecuniary supplies. Such ingratitude, we may suppose, gave him more uneasiness than the consequences of it; but it did not lessen his courage, as he soon ventured to return to England. On this he was discovered, and committed to the Tower, where, after being treated with great rigor, he was promised his pardon if he would disclose all he knew, and put it in the power of the government to restore the peace of the city. His former resolution appears now to have failed him; or, perhaps, indignation at the ungrateful conduct of his associates, induced him to think disclosure a matter of indifference. It is certain that he complied with the terms offered; but we are not told what was the amount of his confession, or what the consequences were to others, or who they were that he informed against. We know only that he obtained his liberty, and that an oppressive share of blame and obloquy followed. To alleviate his regret for this treatment, and partly to vindicate his own conduct, he now wrote *The Testament of Love*; and although this piece, from want of dates and obscurity of style, is not sufficient to form a very satisfactory biographical document, it at least furnishes the preceding account of his exile and return."

This account is attended with its difficulties. Chalmers states this exile to have occurred about the 3d or 4th of Richard II.; Tyrwhitt in the eleventh of that reign. One thing

is certain, that if it occurred in the eleventh, the whole period of his exile and troubles lasted only two years; for in the 13th of Richard II. he was in great favor at court, and made clerk of the works at Westminster. Again, the two years during which he claimed protection from the king are stated by Chalmers to be from the 2d of Richard, and by Tyrwhitt, quoting Rymer, are dated from the twenty-first of that reign. It appears, however, pretty certain that he was reduced to great pecuniary distress, and obliged to screen himself from the persecutions of his creditors under the royal grant of protection. There can be little doubt that Rymer is the correct authority, and that it occurred in the 21st of Richard. About the time of the termination of this grant of protection, he would see his protector also reduced to the need of protection himself; which he did not find, but was deposed, and succeeded by Henry IV., who confirmed to our poet the grants of the unfortunate monarch Richard.

Such are the few prominent facts of Chaucer's public life. Where, during his abode in London, he took up his residence, we have no knowledge. During the troubles of the court, and during his own, he is said to have retreated to his favorite Woodstock. This house he had engaged originally, because the court was then much at Woodstock, and he was obliged to be in constant attendance on the king. It became his favorite abode. It was a square stone house, near the Park gate, and long retained the name of Chaucer's House. Many of the rural descriptions in his works have been traced to this favorite scene of his walks and studies. Every trace of it has been long swept away. The other residence which has acquired fame from connection

with Chaucer, is Donnington Castle, in Berkshire. Tyrwhitt doubts whether it ever really belonged to him. If it did, he says, it could not have been till after the 16th of Richard II., for at that time it was in the possession of Sir Richard Abberbury. He observes, that we have no proof of such purchase, and he doubts whether the situation of his affairs admitted of such a purchase. It was five years, however, after this time when these affairs compelled him to seek the king's protection. There are traditions of his having settled all his lands on his son Thomas, for whom he had procured a rich wife. Again, it is true, it is denied that Thomas Chaucer was his son, or that it is known that he had any son but Lewis, said to be born twenty years after his marriage. So dubious is every step in this history. Yet tradition asserts Thomas Chaucer to have been his eldest son. It is known that Donnington Castle was for many years in the hands of this Thomas Chaucer; and may it not have been the fact, that the purchase of Donnington Park, and the settlement of it on his son, must, together with a diminished income from the change of some of his affairs, have been the source of his embarrassments? It is certain that at one time his emoluments were great; he speaks of himself as "once glorified in worldly wellfulnesse, and having suche goods in welthe as makin men riche." He was in a fair way to make a fortune, and plant a family of rank and substance. He was married to the sister of the favorite mistress and subsequent wife of the powerful and liberal John of Gaunt; had the favor of the king, Edward III., and his wife that of the noble Queen Philippa, one of whose maids of honor she had been. Every thing promised prosperity; the promise was

confirmed on the accession of Richard II., but soon, as we have seen, the scene changed. He was involved in the troubles of the times, compelled to sacrifice his offices, and obliged to fly to foreign countries. He then complained, in his Testament of Love, "of being berafte out of dignitie of office, in which he made a gatheringe of worldly godes."

Notwithstanding all this cloud of uncertainty, the belief will always prevail that Donnington was the residence of Chaucer. Evelyn tells us that there was an oak in the Park which tradition asserted to have been planted by Chaucer, and which was still called Chaucer's Oak. As his house at Woodstock is gone, so his castle here is a mere ruin. It is generally supposed to be at Woodstock that he wrote his Canterbury Tales, where he, also, is said to have written his Treatise on the Astrolabe, for the use of his son Lewis; yet if, as asserted, he was upward of sixty when he commenced the Canterbury Tales, he may have been in possession also of Donnington during part of the time that he was writing his great poem. But every thing concerning these particulars is wrapped in the mists of five hundred years. The only branch of his family that he mentions by name is his son *Lowis*. The very name of his wife is a secret. "Historians," says Tyrwhitt, "though they own themselves totally ignorant of the Christian name of his wife, are all agreed that her surname was *Rouet*, the same with that of her father and eldest sister, Catharine Swynford." How *Rouet* and *Swynford* can be the same surname, Tyrwhitt does not tell us. Spite of this, the commentators have pored into the list of nine *Dunicellæ* of the Queen Philippa, to whom the king had granted annuities, and finding no *Rouet* there, have been

resolved to fix, as the future wife of Chaucer, one Philippa Pykard, whom they did find. These are all rash peerings into the dark. As no damsel of the name of Rouet was found, the natural conclusion is that she was already married to Chaucer.

Of Donnington Castle in its present state a few more words may be acceptable, and this is the account we find given by Mr. Britton, in the Beauties of England and Wales. "Donnington Castle rears its lofty head above the remains of the venerable oaks that once surrounded it, on an eminence northeast of Donnington Grove, and nearly opposite to the village of Speen, now Newbury. It was formerly a place of much importance, and, by commanding the western road, gave to its possessors a considerable degree of authority. When it was originally built is uncertain, but, from a manuscript preserved in the Cottonian Library, it appears that it belonged to Walter Abberbury, who paid C. shillings for it to the king. Hither, about 1397, in the 70th year of his age, Geoffrey Chaucer, who had purchased it, retired. Alice, his granddaughter, conveyed it by marriage to William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk." In this line, and, therefore, in the descendants of Chaucer, it continued till the reign of Henry VII., when, by the treasonable practices of the owner, it was escheated to the crown. In the civil wars it was a post of great consequence, being fortified as a garrison for the king. During these troubles it was twice besieged; the second time its siege being raised by the arrival of the king himself. In Camden's time this castle was entire. He describes it as "a small but very neat place, seated on the brow of a woody hill, having a fine prospect, lighted by windows on every



side." The remains now consist of the east entrance, with its two round towers, and a small part of the east wall. The gateway is in good preservation, and the place for the portcullis may still be seen. A staircase winds up the south tower to the summit of the castle, which commands a beautiful view of the Hampshire Hills and the intermediate country.

It has been the fate of the places celebrated by Chaucer in his exquisite Canterbury Tales to retain something of their identity beyond all that might have been expected from the rapid changes, especially of late years, in England. The Tabard Inn, Southwark, from which his pilgrims set out, still exists, or at least partly so, under the name of the Talbot. This old inn is within view of London Bridge, on the left hand going thence down High-street in the borough. It is evidently the very inn which Dickens had in view when he described the one where Pickwick originally encountered Sam Weller. This once famous old hostel has indeed existed, but has fallen into decay, and sunk in rank. London has spread, and changed the importance of its localities. In the city, and at the west end, multitudes of splendid hotels have sprung up: the ancient Tabard is gone down to a very ordinary house of entertainment. Once it occupied, no doubt, the frontage on both sides of its gateway, now it is confined to the right hand; and although the ancient yard and ancient galleries present themselves to your view as you enter, you find the premises occupied by at least half a dozen different tenants and trades. Here is the inn, on the right hand; on the left are offices of wine-merchants and others. Under the old galleries is the warehouse of a London carman, and huge

bales of goods lie before it, to go off by wagon or by railroad. Wagons belonging to this establishment are going in and out, and gigs and chaises are drawn up on the further side of the inn. There are life and trade here still; but the antiquity and dignity of the ancient Tabard are broken up. The frontage, and about half the premises, were once destroyed by fire; the remainder, occupying the lower end of the court, exists in all its antiquity. The old wooden gallery, supported on stout wooden pillars, and with a heavy wooden balustrade, is roofed over; above are steep red-tiled roofs, with dormer-windows, bearing every mark of being very old. In front of this gallery hangs a large painting, long said to be a picture of the pilgrims entering Canterbury. A horseman is disappearing through the city gateway, and others are following; but the whole is so weather-beaten that it is difficult to make out. The painting seems to have possessed considerable merit, and it is a pity it is not restored.

Tyrwhitt says, "They who are disposed to believe the pilgrimage to have been real, and to have happened in 1383, may support their opinion by the following inscription, which is still to be read upon the inn, now called the Talbot, in Southwark: 'This is the inn where Sir Geoffrey Chaucer and the twenty-nine pilgrims lodged in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383.'" Though the present inscription is evidently of a very recent date, we might suppose it to have been propagated to us by a succession of faithful transcripts from the very time; but, unluckily, there is too good reason to be assured that the first inscription of this sort was not earlier than the last century.

We learn from Speght, who appears to have been inquisitive about this inn in 1597, that "this was the hostelry where *Chaucer* and the other pilgrims met together, and with *Henry Bailey*, their host, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury." Within the gallery was a large table, said to be the one where the pilgrims were entertained. It is now divided into four bed-rooms, where the guests of the inn still sleep, on the very floor occupied by the pilgrims upward of 500 years ago. And, indeed, how much longer? The building existed probably long before Chaucer's days, who has been dead 446 years. It is one of the greatest antiquities and curiosities of London, so few of the like kind being spared by the fire, and still fewer by modern changes and improvements.

In Canterbury, also, the pilgrim's inn is said to have continued to the present time, no longer, indeed, existing as an inn, but divided into a number of private tenements in High-street. The old inn mentioned by Chaucer was called the Checkers. It stands in High-street, at the corner of the lane leading to the Cathedral, just below the parade, on the left-hand side going into Canterbury. Its situation was just that which was most convenient for the pilgrims to Thomas à Becket's tomb. It was a very large inn, as was necessary for the enormous resort of votaries to the shrine of this pugnacious saint. It is now divided into several houses, and has been modernized externally, having no longer a trace of having been an inn. The way to the court-yard is through a narrow doorway passage, and round the court you see the only evidences of its antiquity, remains of carved wood-work, now whitewashed over.

The old age of Chaucer, like that of too many men of genius, is said to have been stormy, and not unvisited by necessity. We are informed that he went from Woodstock to Donnington Castle, and thence to London, to solicit a continuance of his annuities, in which he found such difficulties as probably hastened his death. It has been said, how could this be? How could a man with lands and a castle be in such necessity? and it has been attributed to the desire of his biographers to excite an undue sympathy for their subject, that they have represented him in his old age as avaricious. Probably, if we knew all the circumstances, the whole would be clear enough. We know so little of Chaucer's real, and especially of his domestic history, that we may pronounce, as falsely as presumptuously, in saying he could not be in need. Who shall say that because Chaucer casually mentions only one son, that he might not have half a dozen? Who shall say what misfortunes may have visited his old age? These were changeable and troublesome times. His biographers have settled his castle and estate on his son Thomas; and if he had other sons to provide for, and his annuities were not paid, these are causes enough for pecuniary difficulty.

The general opinion is, that he died October 25th, in the year 1400, being seventy-two years of age. According to Wood, he never repented of his reflections on the clergy of his times, but upbraided himself bitterly with the licentious portions of his writings, often crying out at the approach of death, "Woe, woe is me, that I can not recall and annul those things; but, alas! they are now continued from man to man, and I can not do what I would desire." He was buried in

Westminster Abbey, in the great south aisle, but no monument was raised to his memory till a century and a half after his decease, when Nicholas Bingham, a gentleman of Oxford, a poet and great admirer of Chaucer, erected the plain altar, now so well known, having three quatrefoils, and the same number of shields, at the north end of a magnificent recess, formed by four obtuse arched angles. The inscription and figures are now almost obliterated.

Like himself, his great work, the Canterbury Tales, lay buried for upward of seventy years in manuscript. Caxton, the first English printer, selected these tales as one of the earliest productions of his press, and thus gave to the world what it will never again consent to lose. Spite of the rude state of the language when he wrote, the splendor of his genius beams and burns gloriously through its inadequate vehicle. Time, which has destroyed his house at Woodstock, and beaten down his castle at Donnington, has not been able to effect the same ruin on his poems. The language has gone on perfecting and polishing; a host of glorious names and glorious works have succeeded Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales, making England affluent in its literary fame as any nation on earth; but, from his distant position, the father of English poetry beams like a star of the first magnitude in the eternal hemisphere of genius. Like Shakspeare, he has, for the most part, seized on narratives already in existence to employ his art upon, but that art is so exquisite that it has stamped immortal value on the narrative. The life and the characters he has represented to us are a portion of the far past, rescued for us from the oblivion that has overwhelmed all that age besides. We gaze

on the living and moving scenes with an interest which the progress of time can only deepen. To the latest ages men will read and say, "Thus, in the days of Wickliffe, of John of Gaunt, and Richard II., did men and women look, and act, and think, and feel; thus did a great poet live among them, and send them down to us, and to all posterity, ten thousand times more faithfully preserved than by all the arts of Egypt and the East." Quaint as they are, they are the very quintessence of human nature. They live yet, fresh and vivid, passionate and strong, as they did on their way to the tomb of St. Thomas, upward of five hundred years ago. They can never die; they can never grow old; and amid them the poet, Englishman every inch, lives, and laughs, and quaffs his cup of wine, and tells his story, and chuckles over his jokes, or listens to the narratives of all those around him, with a relish of life that he only could feel or could communicate. There is an elastic geniality in his spirit, a buoyant music in his numbers, a soul of enjoyment in his whole nature, that mark him at once as a man of a thousand; and we feel in the charm that bears us along a strength that will outlast a thousand years. It is like that of the stream that runs, of the wind that blows, of the sun that comes up, ruddy as with youth, from the bright east on an early summer's morning. It is the strength of nature living in its own joyful life, and mingling with the life of all around in gladdening companionship. For a hundred beautiful pictures of genuine English existence and English character; for a world of persons and things that have snatched us from the present to their society; for a host of wise and experience-fraught maxims; for a many a tear shed, and emotion

revived, and laugh of merriment; for many a happy hour  
and bright remembrance, we thank thee, Dan Chaucer, and  
just thanks shalt thou receive a thousand years hence.





# EDMUND SPENSER.

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So little is known of the early life of Spenser, that our notice of his haunts will be confined almost wholly to his castle of Kilcolman. He is said to be descended from the ancient family of Spenser; indeed, he says it himself:

"At length they all to mery London came;  
To mery London, my most kyndly nurse,  
That to me gave this life's first native sourse,  
Though from another place I toke my name,  
An house of ancient fame."

### *Prothalamion.*

This was the house of Althorpe, and now also of Marlborough; but however this may be, his parentage was obscure enough. He is said by Fenton to have been born in East Smithfield, near the Tower of London, in 1553; but the parish registers of that time are wanting, and we have no clew to trace more accurately the locality. He was admitted as sizer, the lowest order of students, at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in the year 1569; he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts in January, 1572-3, and that of Master of Arts in June, 1576, in which year he was an unsuccessful candidate for a fellowship, according to some of his biographers, though others deny this. On quitting the University, he went to reside with his relations in the north

of England, but how he was supported does not appear. These relations, it would appear probable, from the communication of a Mr. F. C. Spenser, in the Gentleman's Magazine of August, 1842, quoted by Craik, in his Spenser and his Poetry, were the Spensers, or Le Spensers, of Huntwood, near Burnley, Lancashire, part of which lay united on a little property, still called Spenser's, at the foot of Pendle Hill. This derives confirmation from the fact of Spenser having a son called Lawrence, and of the names of Edmund and Lawrence abounding in the registries of this Lancashire family, as well as of that family only spelling the name with an "s." Here he fell in love with a lady, whom he celebrates under the name of Rosalind, and who deserted him; this is said to be the cause of his writing the Shepherd's Calendar, in which he complains of this faithless mistress. Others, again, think she was a maiden of Kent, a Rose Lynde, the Lyndes being an old family in that county, where he went on his acquaintance with Sir Philip Sidney while in the south; but this can not at all agree with the letter of his friend, Gabriel Harvey, to him. To Sir Philip he was introduced by this old college friend, Gabriel Harvey, and dedicated to him the Shepherd's Calendar. If it be true that the dedication was the cause of introduction, this must have been solicited and decided upon while the poem was only in progress; for it appears pretty clearly that he wrote part of the Calendar at Penshurst; especially the eleventh eclogue, in which he laments the death of a "maiden of great blood," supposed to have been a daughter of the Earl of Leicester. In the tenth eclogue he lauds the Earl of Leicester as "the worthy whom the queen loves best;" so

that he was now got into the very high-road to preferment, and does not appear to have been backward to walk diligently in it. Leicester and Sidney, near kinsmen as they were, were just the two men of the whole kingdom to push the fortunes of a poet. With this early and regular introduction to these two powerful men (powerful in politics and literature, and in favor with the queen), it is difficult to weave in a belief of the fine story of Spenser's pushing his own way with the ninth canto of the first book of the Faërie Queene. It is a pity this should not be true, yet how can it? The story goes thus: One morning Spenser, determined to try his fortune with Sir Philip Sidney, the courtier most celebrated of the time for his intellectual accomplishments, and for his generous disposition, went to Leicester House, an entire stranger, carrying with him this canto of his great poem, in which is contained the fine allegory of Despair. He obtained admission to Sidney, and presented his MS. for his approbation: that great lover and judge of poetry had not read far before he was so much struck with the beauty of a stanza, that he ordered fifty pounds to be given to the author; proceeding to the next stanza, he raised his gift to a hundred, which sum he doubled on reading a third, and commanded his steward to pay instantly, lest he should be induced, by a further delay, to give away his whole estate. Pity so fine a story was not true! some imaginative person must have pleased himself with fancying how such a thing might have been.

However, Spenser was now a regular inmate of Leicester House, and at Penshurst; so that that latter sweet place has the honor of being as well the haunt of our great romantic

poet as of the high-hearted Sidney. By Leicester and Sidney Spenser was introduced to Queen Elizabeth, who, it is said, on his presenting some poems to her, conferred on him a gratuity of a hundred pounds. If this be true, it is so unlike Elizabeth's parsimony that we must set it down as a wonder. Yet it is to this fact that Lord Burleigh's dislike to the *rhymers*, as he called Spenser, is attributed. He deemed the grant so extravagant as to neglect its payment till he received a repetition of the order from his mistress, with a reproof for his delay. There were, there is no doubt, plenty of causes for Burleigh's dislike of Spenser. In the first place, he had not a spark of poetry in his constitution. To him it was sheer nonsense, idle and childish nonsense. But, besides this, Spenser was brought forward by the very party of whom Burleigh was most jealous—Leicester. He appeared at court as the particular friend of Leicester and Sidney; and the incautious poet is said to have aggravated the dislike of Burleigh by some satirical rhymes, which were assiduously carried to the clever but cold-blooded minister. There has not been wanting active vindication of Burleigh, and the discovery of a patent granting him a pension of fifty pounds a year, dated 1590-1, which he enjoyed till his death in 1598-9, has been said to be sufficient refutation of all that has been alleged against Burleigh in Spenser's case. But how does this at all remove the statements of Burleigh's dislike of Spenser and reluctance to his promotion? Not in the least. It merely shows that Spenser had friends, and an interest in the queen's good-will, powerful enough to overrule the minister's opposition. It may, and most likely is, just as true, that on the grant of this pension Burleigh

declared "the pension was a good example, too great to be given to a ballad-maker;" and that when the queen ordered him a hundred pounds, he replied, "What! all this for a song?" These facts are so entirely in keeping with Burleigh's character that we can by no means doubt them. Indeed, Spenser himself has put the truth past a doubt. What means,

"To have thy prince's grace, yet want his  
peer's?"

What those lines at the close of the sixth book of the Faërie Queene?

"Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,  
Hope to escape his venomous despite,  
More than my *former writs*, all were they  
clearest,  
From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite  
With which some wicked tongues did it  
backbite,  
And bring into a mighty peere's displeasure  
That never so deserved to indite."

Again, in the fourth book of the Ruines of Time, written subsequently to the first edition of the Faërie Queene:

"The rugged foremost that with grave foresight  
Wiields kingdom's causes, and affairs of state,  
My looser verses, I wote, doth sharply wite  
For praising love," &c.

Thus, whether Spenser, as alleged or not, gave cause of offense by his satire, one thing is clear, that Burleigh was his bitter and unchangeable enemy. That Spenser had suffered at court is fully shown in his oft-cited verses in his "Mother Hubbard's Tale," the most lively picture of court attendance and its consequent chagrins that ever was painted.

"Full little knowest thou that hast not tryd,  
What hell it is in suing long to byde;  
To lose good days that might be better spent;  
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;  
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;  
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;  
To have thy prince's grace, yet want his peers';  
To have thy asking, yet wait many years;  
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;  
To eat thy bread with comfortless despairs;  
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,  
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone."

Spenser's sole reliance was on Leicester, Sidney, and Raleigh, with whom he became soon acquainted. He is said to have been employed by the Earl of Leicester on a mission to France in 1579; and though this has been questioned, yet his own assertion, in a letter to Gabriel Harvey, confirms it. In 1580 he accompanied Arthur, lord Grey of Wilton, who went as lord-lieutenant to Ireland, as his private secretary. In this post he is said to have displayed great talents for business. He wrote a "Discourse on the State of Ireland,"