The Complete Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser by R. E. Neil Dodge; Edmund Spenser

Review by: Percy W. Long

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But we do not wish to take leave of Miss Hammond in a tone of fault-finding. Her work on the whole is admirably conceived and excellently performed, and it cannot fail to further the interests of the study to which she has devoted herself.

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The Complete Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser. Cambridge Edition. By R. E. NEIL DODGE. Boston, Mass., U.S.A.: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1908. 8vo. xxiii + 852 pp.

Readers of Spenser should welcome this excellent edition for its large type, exceptionally accurate text¹, catalogue of persons, places, etc., 'in or connected with' *The Faerie Queene*, and ample glossary with precise references. In these respects it is a substantial advance on previous editions. Particulars more open to question are: (1) the relegation of much glossarial matter to the notes, though the resulting inconvenience to the 'general reader' is partly compensated by the advantage of having a purer list of Spenser's archaisms; (2) the placing of the *Complaints* (publ. 1591) before *The Faerie Queene* (publ. 1590 and 1596). This is due to the prevalent view that the *Complaints* are largely a reworking of earlier material (see p. 57¹)—a consideration which applies with equal propriety to no small part of *The Faerie Queene*. Prof. Dodge thus departs from the historical order of the impressions produced by Spenser on the public. It may be maintained, even, that the *Complaints* would not have assumed their present form had Burghley received more favourably *The Faerie Queene*.

The *Biographical Sketch* and the critical discussions preceding each poem are, on the whole, careful, judicious, and well-informed²: satisfactory for the purposes of a popular edition. It is to be regretted that the editor chose to withhold the names of scholars supporting the views which he has occasion to discuss. The absence of these creates an air of vagueness. But this is not, what is much to be desired, an edition of Spenser addressed primarily to scholars, digesting the evidence and argument of research. Within Prof. Dodge's space limits, discussion of controverted points, illustration of sources, and record of more than the most important readings, were inadmissible. Nor is there any bibliography. These omissions are vexatious to the serious student, and render it difficult to recognize the editor's contribution to critical opinion.

¹ The careful collation and recollection of first editions is so stressed by Prof. Dodge, that one is surprised at his statement in the *Preface* that copies of the original editions of *Daphnaida* and the *Prothalamion* are not accessible in the United States. Copies of both may be consulted at the Boston Public Library.

² An exception appears where Prof. Dodge states (p. xix) that in 1589: 'He [Spenser] and the old fame of his *Shepherd's Calendar* were "quite forgot".' This does not accord with Puttenham's familiar allusion and praise in 1589 (ed. Arber's Reprints, p. 77), or Webbe's in 1586 (ed. Arber, p. 35).

One important point on which I differ from Prof. Dodge is the date of Spenser's departure from England either shortly before or sometime after the publication of the *Complaints* (1591)¹. It has been customary, and Prof. Dodge adheres to the custom, to understand by the 'Printer's' prefatory allusion to Spenser's 'departure over sea,' his departure subsequent to receiving his grant of a pension in February, 1591. The objections are: (1) we have no other evidence that Spenser had departed; (2) the departure is not distinguished as his *late* departure by contrast with his departure in 1580; (3) the context becomes implausible if a recent departure is assumed. The 'Printer' declares that the poems composing the *Complaints* 'were disperst abroad in sundrie hands; and not easie to bee come by, by [the poet] himselve; some of them having been diverslie imbeziled and purloyned from him, since his departure over sea.' Diverse imbezillings, purloinings, communication between author and printer, the author's vain attempt and the printer's successful attempt at collection, imply a passage of time befitting an allusion to 1580, but inapplicable to a departure shortly before publication. Moreover, according to Prof. Dodge (p. 58¹) the collection had been made, and 'the copy must have been at least approximately complete,' before Spenser can have left London, since it was entered in the Stationers' Register under December 29, 1590. The 'Printer,' therefore, alludes to Spenser's departure in 1580.

Prof. Dodge seeks to escape this conclusion by holding (I think rightly) that this address of *The Printer to the Gentle Reader* is a subterfuge inspired by the poet himself. If so, whether Spenser's motive was diffidence (as suggested by Prof. Dodge, p. 58¹) or a desire to shield himself from counter-attack², his disingenuousness would make him wish to seem plausible. He would, therefore, allude to his departure of 1580, and not to his departure which, on this hypothesis, was yet to take place.

We have, therefore, no evidence that Spenser left London until after the publication of the *Complaints*. Indeed, having avoided responsibility, he might wish to enjoy his triumph. Again, his grant of Kilcolman was not secured till October 26, 1591, and business connected with this is not unlikely to have kept him in London. Finally, he dates the dedicatory letter prefixed to *Daphnaïda*, at London, January 1, 1591 (modern style 1592). Prof. Dodge, in common with previous editors

¹ See *Spenser's Dating of Colin Clout*. N.Y. *Nation*, Nov., 1906. Prof. Dodge alludes to this (p. 678²).

² The unlikelihood that Spenser did not keep, or could not procure, copies of these poems, dedicated to his relatives or most intimate patrons, satirizing his chief enemy (Burghley), circulating at most in a limited group of court folk—and yet that a printer could obtain them—is very great. It is heightened by the representation of the 'Printer' that Spenser, though present in London, had no hand in the publication. The inference, that this is a subterfuge, is made probable by the circumstance that the *Complaints* are largely complaints against Burghley. Personal malice could not be urged against or visited upon the 'Printer,' while these indiscretions of the author would appear to have been 'purloined' (not circulated at his wish), and no longer 'easie to bee come by.' In this contingency, Spenser would wish them to appear to be juvenile indiscretions, and would therefore refer to his departure in 1580.

and biographers, explains this as a mistake or exceptional following of continental usage, claiming that Spenser meant 1591, modern style. The assumption is made to avoid two seeming difficulties: one created by the dating of *Colin Clout* (see note 1, above), the other by the date of Daphne's death (August, 1590). This, too, is easily met, for the dedicatory letter need not date from the first completion of the poem¹. An assumption that the poem circulated for a time in manuscript or was written toward the end of 1591, involves less difficulty than to suppose it ready for publication on January 1, 1591: for in that case it should have formed a very appropriate part of the *Complaints*.

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Die Inszenierung des deutschen Dramas an der Wende des sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhunderts. Von C. H. KAULFUSS-DIESCH. (*Probefahrten*, VII.) Leipzig: Voigtländer, 1905. 8vo. viii + 236 pp.

Many problems of interest to the student of the drama have arisen in connection with the appearance of English players in Germany in the sixteenth century; none are, however, of greater interest just at present than that connected with the stage itself, especially as during the last few years the contemporary English stage has been the subject of numerous monographs². The present volume offers a thorough investigation on this question—the *mise en scène* of the English Comedians. The author has, moreover, undertaken his task with an extensive knowledge of the German stage prior to the arrival of the English players: indeed, his introductory paragraphs on the stage of the mediæval drama, the shrove-tide, school, and master-singer plays may be pronounced without hesitation the best concise treatment of the subject. And regarding the stage-setting of the plays of the English Comedians and of Herzog Heinrich Julius of Braunschweig, he has brought forward much new and valuable material and has also admirably arranged the old, especially in those paragraphs that deal with the actors and the acting. With the actual staging of the plays, however, he has not been, as I believe, so successful.

That the English Comedians brought with them what was to all intents and purposes the Shakespearean stage is the current opinion. But many matters of detail relating to this are still, and perhaps always will be, the subject of controversy. According to our best present

¹ Spenser's explanation in this letter of 'the occasion why I wrote the same [poem]' appears to connote a lapse of time.

² Cf. William Archer in the *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 208, p. 442, where a discussion and criticism of six recent publications on the Elizabethan stage (1904–1907), and the announcement of a seventh, which has since appeared in part, is to be found.