

PATRONS AND PROFESSIONAL WRITERS UNDER ELIZABETH AND JAMES I.

The priest unpaide can neither sing nor say,
Nor poets sweetlie write excepte they meete
With sounde rewarde, for sermoning so sweete.¹

THE prevalence of a system of literary patronage has usually coincided with the existence of a despotic or at least highly aristocratic and centralized constitution of society. In such a society alone is the bounty of individual benefactors a necessity. In a community where power and wealth are widely distributed, and literary culture within general reach, there are contrived, almost inevitably, means of rewarding literary genius, based upon the fact of its ability to please large classes of men. Thus Thucydides, to whom the general vote of the Athenian citizens decreed at one time a public gift of £2,400, could afford to be independent of individual benefactors. A more commercial age, like our own, makes even its works of genius articles of merchandise, and substitutes for a gratuitous reward the market value of an edition.

On the other hand, among conditions such as

¹ Lodge: 'A Fig for Momus,' Eclogue III.

prevailed at Alexandria under the early Ptolemies, in Rome under Augustus, and in the Italy of the despots, the patron of literature is a necessity. There we find a comparatively small, wealthy, cultured society, under the leadership of men to whom the gratification of literary tastes is a luxury for which they are willing to pay with munificence. And it must be confessed that in such a society literary genius has flourished at least as well as in communities of more wide-spread culture. The list of writers who profited by the enlightened liberality of such patrons as Ptolemy, Augustus, Maecenas, Messala, Lorenzo de Medici, Alfonso of Naples, and Pope Nicholas V, includes some of the most renowned names in literature.

In England the circle of cultivated aristocrats has at all times been far smaller than in Renaissance Italy, nor have we ever been ruled by a monarch who could compare in taste and liberality with the great Italian humanist princes. The Teutonic custom of befriending and honouring genius in the person of the scôp, was, it is true, handed down to later times by rulers such as Alfred, and Henry Beauclerc; and this was, in the fourteenth century, reinforced by the example of Italy. But the practice was confined, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, to the monarch, the royal family, and some of the greater ecclesiastical dignitaries. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, influenced again, no doubt, by the example of Italy, we find a more general recognition, on the part of the nobility, of their obligations as patrons of literature. But the conditions of society differed widely from those of England

of the fourteenth century or Italy of the fifteenth. New commercial ideals, more widespread education, and the rise of a public—if not literary, at least interested in reading, all tended to disturb the relation between patron and man of letters, hitherto accepted as natural. The reigns of Elizabeth and James mark a gradual disintegration of the aristocratic system of literary patronage, and the beginnings of economic independence on the part of the writer. Like all economic transitions, this was attended with very painful experiences for those concerned—both patrons and protégés. Neither side realized the drift of circumstances, and efforts were aimed at the conservation of a dying system, which, rightly directed, might have facilitated the introduction of the new. We shall find that, all through the Elizabethan period, patronage was regarded as the one goal for the writer; hoped for, struggled after, all the more feverishly, because of a sense of its precariousness.

Moreover, apart from the influence of tradition, it was inevitable that literary production, so far as it existed, should still subsist chiefly upon patronage. Books were only just beginning to be recognized in the world of trade, and, in that age, all that fell outside the sphere of buying and selling at recognized prices was matter of patronage. Patronage ruled in every walk of life. The halls of great men, the court-yards of country gentlemen, the antechambers of the court,¹ were thronged with suitors, pleading for every conceivable kind of gift, from the office of

¹ G. Goodman: 'Court of James I' (ed. 1839), i. 320.

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Groom of the Chamber to Her Majesty to the honourable employment of turnspit in a country kitchen. The elaborate mechanism of Civil Service Examinations, promotion by seniority, and registration, which now shields greatness from the importunate, was as yet undreamt-of; and the poet who wanted a sinecure or a dedication fee had to urge his claims personally amidst a crowd of rival applicants. No party government stood in need of his services, as in the time of the more fortunate Addison; no host of periodicals opened their pages to his facile productions, as now; he must gain a patron or renounce his profession. Not a single writer who persevered in his vocation was free from obligations to patrons. Again and again they tell us that patronage alone can save, or has saved them from sheer want. Massinger declares that he could not have subsisted without the support of his patrons;¹ Nash openly entreats that some one will find him meat and maintenance, that he may 'play the paper stainer';² Lodge depicts a recognized type in his portrait of the unfortunate poet, driven by lack of patronage to forsake poetry for the plough.³

The old form of patronage, as experienced by Chaucer and Gower, was a substantial and satisfactory thing. It provided a sufficient income and permanent connection with an exalted family, ensuring protection and affording prestige. It de-

¹ 'Maid of Honour' (Ded.).

² 'Have with you to Saffron Walden.' 'Works' (ed. Grosart), iii. 42.

³ 'Fig for Momus,' Ecl. iii.

manded in return the production of literary works of interest and artistic value, with, possibly, the performance of some few more or less routine or occasional duties, not infrequently delegated. The writer himself was an honoured servant, regarded as reflecting glory upon his patron, and providing for him the highest form of refined pleasure. If the poet ever had to ask, he asked as one possessing a claim; if he suffered vicissitudes, it was that he shared those of his patron.

Times had changed, however, as even Skelton had had to realize, half a century earlier. In Elizabethan days it is rare to find the tie between patron and protégé so close and permanent. The names of those writers who were so fortunate as to meet with lifelong patronage are few indeed: Ascham, Daniel, Jonson—it is doubtful whether another could be found. Even in the case of these favoured three there are signs enough that their needs were but inadequately met. Ascham, in a suit to the queen the year before his death, asks no more than to be enabled to leave £20 a year to each of his two sons, ‘Which,’ he declares, ‘will satisfy my desire, although as small a portion as ever secretary to a prince left behind him.’¹ Jonson was driven more than once to sell part of his library, and grieves that his fortune humbles him to accept even the smallest courtesies with gratitude.² By far the most fortunate seems to have been Samuel Daniel. He finds no more serious complaint to make than that, being employed as a tutor, he is ‘constrained to live with

¹ ‘Cal. State Papers,’ Dom. Add., pt. 41. Oct. 10, 1567.

² ‘To Sackville,’ Underwoods.

children,' when he should be writing 'the actions of men.'¹

The most enlightened and generous patrons of literature known to us were various noble men and women who group themselves around the central figure of Sir Philip Sidney. Though a poor man, Sidney was a devoted lover of the beautiful, and a true friend to the literary artist. Men of letters had special reason to share the almost idolatrous feeling with which he was regarded by his contemporaries. He is honoured with gratitude by nearly every writer of the times, and held up to public view as the ideal patron. Nash gave utterance to the general sentiment when he penned the following lament:

'Gentle Sir Philip Sidney, thou knewest what belonged to a Scholler, thou knewest what paines, what toile, what travell, conduct to perfection: wel couldst thou give every virtue his encouragement, every Art his due, every writer his desert, cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyselfe. But thou art dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the Sonn of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plentie, which thy bountie erst planted.'²

Philip's sister Mary, the wife of W. Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, shared his tastes, and continued, as far as possible, the patronage of his many literary protégés after his early death. Spenser dedicated to her one of the sonnets prefixed to his 'Faery Queene'; Breton expresses passionate devotion to

¹ From a letter to Lord Keeper Egerton, prefixed to a presentation folio of Daniel's works, 1601. See Grosart's ed., i, 10.

² 'Pierce Penillesse,' 1592. Works, ii. 12.

her for having succoured him when in distress; ¹ Daniel acknowledges that she 'first encouraged and framed' him to the service of the Muses, ² and urged him to the choice of higher themes; Abraham Fraunce wrote two poems for her; ³ Nash praises her without stint. ⁴ She was evidently, like her brother, a genuine friend to literary art.

Her son, William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, inherited the tastes of his mother and uncle. He was educated in the love of poetry by his mother's wise choice of Samuel Daniel as his tutor; and many literary men later on owed him gratitude for kindnesses. The poet William Browne lived with him at Wilton; he befriended George Herbert and the dramatist Massinger; John Florio was 'under heavy obligations to him'; Davison, Chapman, Breton, and John Taylor dedicated works to him; Donne was his intimate friend. But the most interesting fact in connection with him is his relation to Shakespeare. To him and his brother Philip was dedicated the famous First Folio of 1623, and he is stated by the editors to have 'persecuted both them (*i.e.*, the works) and their author with much favour'! On this statement has been based a further conjecture that this same William Herbert is the celebrated 'Mr. W. H.' to whom the Sonnets were dedicated—a conjecture not yet completely abandoned. He was of a most generous and attractive nature, like his uncle, as is shown by

¹ 'Pilgrimage to Paradise,' 1592 (Ded.).

² 'Defence of Rime,' 1609. Ded. to Earl of Pembroke.

³ The Countess of Pembroke's 'Ivychurch' and 'Emanuel.'

⁴ Preface to 'Astrophel and Stella,' 1591.

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the following passage in a contemporary private letter: 'My Lord of Pembroke did a most noble act, like himself; for the king having given him all Sir Gervase Elwaies estate, which came to above £1,000 per annum, he freely bestowed it on the widow and her children.'¹ Every New Year's Day the Earl used to send Ben Jonson £20 to buy books.²

Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland, Sidney's daughter, does not seem to have inherited much of his interest in literature. At any rate, though she befriended Jonson, he does not appear enthusiastic about her as a patroness of the arts. He makes appeal to her noble father's memory to stimulate her zeal for letters, reminding her that it would be a sin against her 'great father's spirit' did she not inherit his love unto the Muses.³

Sidney's uncle, the famous Earl of Leicester, was a generous patron of scholars—though preferring those of learned rather than of artistic bent, and especially favouring Puritanical writers. He was friendly to Roger Ascham, whose son Dudley was Leicester's godson; and we are told that many persons were enabled by his generosity to pursue their studies. Works were dedicated to him by Greene, Florio, Edward Hake, and Spenser.⁴ A particular interest, that of mystery, attaches to Leicester's relations with Spenser, as hinted at in the enigmatic dedica-

¹ James Howell: 'Letters,' March 1, 1618.

² Masson: 'Drummond of Hawthornden,' p. 100.

³ 'To Eliz. Countess of Rutland' ('The Forest').

⁴ Greene's 'Planetomachia,' 1585; Florio's 'First Fruits,' 1598; Hake's 'News out of Poules Churchyard'; Spenser's 'Vergil's Gnat,' publ. 1595, 'long since dedicated.'

tion of the translation of 'Virgil's Gnat' to the great nobleman. The little gnat, eager to save the life of a sleeping husbandman, towards whom a 'hideous snake' is making its way, makes use of his only means, his little sting, to awaken the sleeper—and is brushed aside and slain by his first hasty movement. The husbandman is Leicester, the gnat is his humble friend Spenser, who thus allegorically alludes to their relations:

Wrong'd yet not daring to expresse my paine,
 To you (great Lord) the causer of my care,
 In cloudie teares my case I thus complaine
 Unto yourselfe, that onely privie are.
 But if that any Oedipus unaware
 Shall chaunce, through power of some divining spright
 To reade the secret of this riddle rare,
 And know the purport of my evil plight
 Let him rest pleased with his own insight.

But whatso by myselfe may not be shown,
 May by this gnat's complaint be easily knowen.

In the latter part of the poem the ghost of the gnat appears to the husbandman, and reproaches him for the death, which has exiled him from all joy into the 'waste wilderness' of Hades.

Is Spenser referring to his own exile, far from all the joys of cultivated society, in Irish wilds? Was the patronage of Leicester, which sent the poet to Ireland, as secretary to Lord Grey, in reality a convenient mode of freeing himself from a man to whom he owed too much? The riddle is still undeciphered.

Elizabeth's other chief favourite, the Earl of

Essex, was also the recipient of many dedications, and much eulogy from literary men. He was himself something of a poet, a masque-writer, and an artist. It was he who took upon himself the cost of Spenser's funeral; and he was intimate with the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's friend and patron.

Southampton was probably, after Sidney, the most discerning and generous of all the aristocratic patrons of literature at the opening of the seventeenth century. He was devoted to the drama; at one time, when in disgrace, filling his abundant leisure by 'going to plays nearly every day.' He was a generous friend to Nash, Barnabe Barnes, Markham, Florio, Minshew, and Daniel; and he is eulogized by innumerable writers, including Chapman, Sylvester, Wither, Brathwaite, Sir J. Beaumont and Henry Lok. His relations with Shakespeare must have been intimate; there is a perceptible difference of tone between the two dedications (of 'Venus and Adonis' and of 'Lucrece') addressed to him by the great poet; the later of the two clearly expressing not so much gratitude as personal affection. It is most probable that he, and not Pembroke, is the friend who is addressed in the sonnets.

Other noble benefactors must be passed over lightly. Most famous is Lucy, Countess of Bedford, the literary daughter of a literary father, Sir John Harington. During the reign of James I she was the favourite patroness of the literary world, generously helpful to many, and receiving from writers of acknowledged prominence, such as Dray-

ton, Daniel, Jonson, Chapman, and John Davies of Hereford, grateful praises. Donne addressed several of his most beautiful and sincere poems to her. She seems to have been peculiarly happy in her choice of men of real genius as protégés. Another patroness was Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, who engaged Daniel as tutor to her daughter, Lady Anne Clifford, and accepted the dedication of a poem by Spenser; and the Elizabeth Careys, mother and daughter, with whom Spenser claimed relationship in the dedication of his poem 'Muiopotmos,' and to whom Nash twice acknowledges his great indebtedness.¹

It cannot have escaped notice that all these patrons have many protégés; and it will be surmised that, this being the case, their patronage was probably occasional rather than permanent, and limited in amount.

A frequent form of patronage was the bestowal of an annuity, large or small. Jonson had from the Crown an annuity of 100 marks, raised at his own request to £100. Prince Henry gave Michael Drayton a pension of £10, and Joshua Sylvester one of £20. It need hardly be pointed out that, even for the barest subsistence (except in Jonson's case) these annuities could only serve to supplement some other income.

Maintenance at the University was a form of bounty bestowed by many benefactors upon promising youths. It was an old practice, dating from mediaeval University customs, when scholars for

¹ 'Terrors of the Night' (Dedication, 1594). 'Christ's Tears'
²¹ (Dedication, 1593).

the greater part lived upon charity, and when it was a work of piety to bestow upon a talented youth the training which might fit him for holy orders. Camden, and Speght, and many more were thus indebted to private benefactors for their University training. It was not, however, the invariable rule that such patronage was followed up by adequate help later on.

The least burdensome method of bestowing patronage was to confer upon the protégé some official appointment. Spenser, for example, was made secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, and later on a clerk in the Irish Court of Chancery, and to the Council of Munster. Whether such appointments were likely to aid or to thwart the poet in his chief pursuit seems to have been a question rarely considered even in earlier days; in Spenser's case it can hardly be doubted that, though they may for a time have freed him from sordid cares, they seriously encroached upon his leisure. If the duties of the post could be fulfilled by delegation, the evil was, of course, avoided.

Few generous-minded persons would now care to adopt a method of benefaction which appears in the sixteenth century to have been amongst the most frequent—viz., that of affording hospitality to the author. Nash was by no means a tactful or delicate-minded man, yet he was probably housed for some considerable time by the generous Careys.¹ It is to be hoped that they met with some recompense in the caustic wit of his conversation. John

¹ See his reference to them in 'Terrors of Night,' dedication and opening paragraph.

Donne, with his whole family, was hospitably entertained for five years by Sir Robert Drury. Even the dogmatic, arrogant Ben Jonson lived as the guest of Esmé Stuart, Lord d'Aubigny, also for five years. Spenser, too, was certainly at one time the guest of the Earl of Leicester—for how long a period is not known.

Other patrons would bestow gifts of money, varying in amount. King Charles—not usually very generous to literary men, once gave Jonson a present of £100; and Mr. Sidney Lee accepts as trustworthy the anecdote related by N. Rowe, that the Earl of Southampton upon one occasion gave to Shakespere the munificent sum of £1,000.

One fact emerges clearly as the result of study of this period. However widespread was the habit of patronizing men of letters, the bounty provided did not nearly suffice for the existing writers. It reached very few in sufficient amount to satisfy either their expectations or their needs. Nor do the writers scruple to express their discontent. The most outspoken are Nash—who never minced his words—and the writer of the 'Pilgrimage to Parnassus' (1597). Nash describes his fruitless efforts to court patronage by his writings. 'All in vaine I sate up late and rose early, contended with the colde and conversed with scarcitie; for all my labours turned to loss, my vulgar muse was despised and neglected, my paines not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I myselfe (in prime of my best wit) laid open to povertie. Whereupon . . . I accused my fortune, railed on my patrons . . .¹' The unfortunate poet

¹ 'Piers Peniles.' Grosart, Works, ii, 9.

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in the 'Pilgrimage to Parnassus,' spent many years in study, looking still to meeting with 'some good Mecaenas that liberalie would rewarde'; but alas! so long did he feed on hope that he well-nigh starved!¹

Why was this bitter experience so common? Daniel attributes it, not to indifference, but to the barriers between the great and their inferiors in station, which keep from them the knowledge of the need for their bounty.

For would they but be pleased to know, how small
A portion of that overflowing waste
Which runs from them, would turn the wheels, and all
The frame of wit, to make their glory last,
I think they would do something; but the stir
Still about greatness, gives it not the space
To look out from itself, or to confer
Grace but by chance, and as men are in place.²

Daniel speaks charitably. He had indeed himself much cause for gratitude. Others might have spoken as charitably had they realized the facts,—that the demands made upon patronage were too heavy to be met. The system was breaking down under the stress of changed conditions. In olden times, if patrons were few, so also were writers. Moreover there was then absolutely no resource for the would-be writer but patronage or the monastery; failing these a man had to give up the attempt to live the literary life. In the days of Elizabeth and James I,

¹ 'Pilgrimage to Parnassus,' ed. Mackay, p. 20.

² Verses to J. Florio, 1611, prefixed to 'Queen Anne's New World of Words.'

on the other hand, while the latter of these refuges had disappeared, thus leaving patronage to bear an additional burden, other circumstances, newly arisen, tended to increase the number of professional writers beyond the old limits. The growing accessibility of books fostered literary studies and ambitions; the changes taking place in education tended to give more prominence to the Humanities; and further, the fashionable Court interest in literature, and the general popularity of poetry and of drama, seemed to open out alluring prospects of fame and profit to writers.

Hence the class of professional writers increased out of proportion to the class amongst whom patrons were to be found. The only persons who regarded very seriously their obligations as patrons of the literary man were the higher nobility, and the older country gentry. But these were neither very wealthy nor very numerous, and were heavily burdened by increased expenditure due to social conditions. On the other hand, the wealthy *nouveaux-riches* either held such obligations lightly, or held views which rendered them indifferent altogether to *belles lettres*.

Hence, inevitably, changed relations between patron and protégé. Of old, a talented youth would be educated by his natural protector, the great man of his birthplace, and, later on, fostered and encouraged by him in literary production. The return to be made for this beneficence was simply the creation of learned work for the gratification of his patron's immediate circle of friends. Now, he had become merely an unattached suitor, with few or
 21° no special claims, striving amidst a crowd of others

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to snatch for himself a share of the bounty which not all could possibly obtain. He had to live in the midst of perpetual rivalry; he must for ever be striving to bid higher than his fellows. Literary productions become, not a graceful and natural outcome of favourable circumstances contrived by his patron; but eager bids for bounty by the needy. If he is so fortunate as to be able to give thanks for favours received, beneath the gratitude can constantly be detected craven fear lest no more should be forthcoming. The reader is saddened by the inevitable prominence given, in dedications, to the patron's charity, rather than to his taste or judgment. In this, again, Nash is a most shameless offender; see his reason for eulogizing Mistress Elizabeth Carey:¹—'Divine lady, you I must and will memorize more especially, for you recompense learning extraordinarily.'

The bait which the writer holds out is public eulogy. Under earlier conditions of patronage there had been but small occasion for this. A gracefully turned compliment, a promise of lasting remembrance, the choice, as subject for imaginative treatment, of some incident connected with the patron,—this was all that was required. The work itself was sufficient return for benefits received; and the fact that manuscript copies were necessarily few and expensive rendered it impossible to advertise to a world of outsiders the beneficence of the patron. But in the Elizabethan age the poet's work most frequently owned no natural patron; the patron himself had still to be attracted by artificial means.

¹ Dedication, 'Christ's Tears,' 1593.

He must be bribed by the offer of widespread fame, must be extolled for virtues raising him above the common run of benefactors. Hence extravagance of eulogy; hence servile humility in the writer. If any one should care to know to what lengths of exaggerated praise a man of genius could be carried in his desire to earn a patron's good will, let him study the verses addressed by John Donne to the bereaved father of Mistress Elizabeth Drury, a girl of fifteen, and probably unknown to Donne. Transfigured though they are by imaginative power, they yet betray unmistakable signs of the effort to bid high. The verses reached their mark, and Donne became for many years the intimate friend and dependant of the wealthy Mr. Drury.

Further evidence is afforded of the casual nature of the bond between patron and writer, when a still greater poet, Spenser, is found to have written his beautiful but conventional lament 'Daphnaïda,' on a lady whom he had never seen! How different are these two eulogistic mourning poems from Chaucer's simple, touching lament for the death of his patron's wife, Blanche the Duchess! He had known and loved the beautiful, gracious woman whom he honoured in his poem; and his verses, artistically equalled by Donne's and Spenser's, carry off the palm because of their sincerity.

To the student of the inner history of the lives of professional writers in this age, nothing is more saddening than such proofs of the loosening of the personal bond between patron and poet. Many dedications are obviously addressed to complete strangers; more to men whose acceptance of the

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dedication is clearly the utmost that the writer ventures to hope for. Amongst the most pathetic, with its implied reproach to the man on whom the writer conceived he had natural claims, is Philip Massinger's to Charles, Lord Herbert, son of the Earl of Pembroke.

'However I could never arrive at the happiness to be made known to your lordship, yet a desire, born with me, to make a tender of all duties and service to the noble family of the Herberts, descends to me as an inheritance from my dead father Philip Massinger. . . .'¹

It is a sure sign of the lack of effective patronage, when an author dedicates his works to a great variety of patrons. Thus poor Robert Greene has not less than sixteen different patrons for seventeen books. Nash's one brief period of comparative prosperity is marked by the dedication of two successive books² to his generous friends the Careys: his friendlessness is shown by the variety of his other dedications.

Of course, few dedications were in themselves adequate to attract more than a passing charity. A man could not hope for life-long recognition on the strength of an extravagant compliment at the head of a literary trifle. Therefore dedications were not relied upon to do more than procure a sum of money, varying according to the means and disposition of the dedicatee, and his estimate of the work. They might sometimes induce a man of rank to use his

¹ Dedication of 'The Bondman,' 1623. His father's real name was Arthur; in 1624 edition (Bodleian) it is given as 'Arthur.'

² 'Christ's Tears over Jerusalem,' 1593; 'Terrors of the Night,' 1594.

influence in obtaining for the writer some unimportant post: but as such posts were nearly always bestowed simply 'in reversion,' the applicant often preferred a prompt money reward. The uncertain value of such reversions is painfully illustrated by the life-long waiting of the unfortunate John Lyly for the office of Master of the Revels, the holder of which persisted in outliving him. In vain the unlucky writer pleaded for something more substantial,—'some lande, some good fines or forfeitures . . . that seeing nothing will come by the Revells, I may pray (*i.e.* prey) uppon the Rebells. Thirteene yeares your highness' servant, but yet nothing . . . a thousand hopes, but all nothing, a hundred promises but yet nothing . . . my last will is shorter than myne invencion: but three legacies, patience to my creditors, melancholie without measure to my friends, and beggerie without shame to my family.'¹ A humbler instance of the futility of many bits of patronage is afforded by the following letter from Christopher Ocland to Sir Julius Caesar (13th Sept., 1589). Incidentally it throws interesting light upon methods sometimes employed for filling positions under Government:

'I made a book of late in English and did for some especiall causes dedicate the same to my Lorde of Warwicke. I was in consideration of the same to see about the Tower and St. Katherine's for a gunner's roome (*i.e.* a post as gunner) in the Tower (for they be of my Lord of Warwicke's being Master of the Ordnance' gifte) and to finde out a man meete for the same who might give me some

¹ E. Arber: 'Euphues,' Introduction, p. 10.

competent piece of money, and my said Lorde wolde for my sake bestow the same roome upon him. Whilst I seeke this, fifteen or more days be spent, and the time lost. . . . I shall have money for the same gunner's roome at Easter next, and a yeare hence. So frustrate of my purpose I fall into want . . . such is my ill hap and fortune.'¹

A money fee was, then, in most cases preferable, and more usual. It was the sixteenth-century substitute, not so much for genuine patronage, as for the chance charity afforded in mediaeval times to the poor University scholar. The scholar was always poor, and lived as a matter of course upon charity—either that of the individual or of the public in general.

Al that he myghte of his frendes hente
On bookes and on his lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that gaf him wherewith to scoleye.²

The Elizabethan literary man, unlike Chaucer's Scholar, did little praying for souls; but on the other hand he received readily all gifts that fell in his way. The usual fee paid for the dedication of a drama was forty shillings;³ but far smaller sums, as low even as half-a-crown, were thankfully received.

There is no evidence of much desire for dedi-

¹ Camd. Soc., vol. 23, p. 71.

² Chaucer: 'Canterbury Tales,' Prol. 299-302.

³ N. Field: Dedication of 'A Woman is a Weathercock,' 1612. The sum was probably equal to £10 or £12 present money.

cations amongst the wealthy; the supply clearly exceeded the demand. In this, if in nothing else, the sixteenth-century writer was less fortunate than his successor in the later seventeenth century. Then, the universal fashion in the upper classes of parading literary taste and generosity, produced a considerable demand for dedications—so much so that writers were known to pen a dedication, hawk it round to get the highest offer possible, and then write the book as a mere appendage to it.

It is to be noted that the approbation of a great man had a value not to be measured by the bounty actually bestowed upon the writer. Its indirect effect upon the general public was at least equally important. Jonson, pleasing himself by anticipating the acceptance of his verses by Lord Digby, already in imagination sees the public clamouring for copies:

. . . O, what a fame 'twill be,
What reputation to my lines and me!
. . . What copies shall be had,
What transcripts begged!
Being sent to one they will be read of all.¹

It is this consciousness of the power of aristocratic example that causes S. Daniel to make dignified appeal to the

. . . mightie Lords, that with respected grace
Doe at the sterne of faire example stand.

He urges them to 'holde up disgraced knowledge

¹ To *Lady Digby Underwoods*.

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from the ground.' Alas! he is constrained sadly to confess

. . . the small respect
That these great-seeming best of men do give.
(Whose brow begets the inferior sort's neglect.)¹

Some of these great-seeming ones were so fully conscious of the value of their smile, that they considered the unfortunate author amply rewarded by the mere acceptance of a dedication. But, indeed, such acceptance was by no means, in all cases, the simple thing it would appear. Patrons occasionally realized, to their cost, that certain obligations entailed by patronage were not so easily evaded as the money one. Slight as the bond between patron and author had now usually become, the old tradition as to the responsibility of the great lord for his dependants still held sway. The later sixteenth century was a suspicious age, as will be shown later on; and authors relied upon the protection of a powerful patron as a sufficient answer to accusations political or moral. Spenser, dedicating 'Colin Clout' to Raleigh, entreats him to protect it with his good countenance 'against the malice of evil mouths which are always wide open to carp at and misconstrue my simple meaning.' Lodge dare not expose his poems to the ill-will of the world 'except they were graced with some noble and worthy patron.'² Edward Hake, when dedicating to Leicester his 'News out of Paul's Churchyard,' evidently has in view particularly the powerful

¹ 'Musophilus,' 313-19; 659-61.

² 'Fig for Momus'; dedicated to Earl of Derby.

protection thus procured for his book, 'beset with deadly hate.'

This was all very well so long as suspicion did not emanate from, or take root in high places: but occasionally patrons were called upon to face their responsibilities in somewhat serious fashion. If writers sometimes suffered from an unlucky chance allusion to the suspected favourite Essex, Essex himself had at times reason to wish himself less popular with writers. Here is an interesting letter relating a bit of Court scandal in 1595, exalted names being represented by cyphers:

My Lord,

Upon Monday last, 1500 (Q. Elizabeth) shewed 1000 (E. of Essex) a printed book of t—t, Title to a—a. In yt there is, as I here, dangerous praises of 1000, of his Valour and Worthyness, which doth hym harm here. At his coming from Court he was observed to look wan and pale, being exceedingly troubled at this great piece of villanie done unto hym. . . . The book I spake of is dedicated to my Lord Essex, and printed beyond sea, and 'tis thought to be Treason to have it. To wryte of these things are dangerous in so perillous a tyme, but I hope it will be no offence to impart unto you th' actions of this place.¹

Another mischief-making dedication to Essex is noted in March, 1559, in the correspondence of J. Chamberlain.²

Possibly in both these cases Essex was perfectly innocent and had not even seen the objectionable

¹ Letter from Roland Whyte to Sir R. Sidney, 25th Nov., 1595. Collins: 'Sidney Papers,' i, 357.

² Haywards' 'History of Henry IV.'

works. But the Earl of Devonshire found difficulty in disentangling himself from the difficulties in which Daniel, his protégé, had involved him by the acting of his play, 'Philotas' (1604). Malicious persons persuaded the authorities that it bore some reference to the unfortunate Earl of Essex (executed in 1601), and Daniel seems to have tried to prove his innocence by asserting his patron's approbation of the piece. The Earl, having been implicated with Essex, was sensitive, and remonstrated, and Daniel wrote to excuse himself. 'I said I had read some part of it to your honour, and this I said, having none else of power to grace me now in Court, and hoping that you out of your knowledge of books, or favour of letters, and me, might answer that there is nothing in it disagreeing, nor anything, as I proteste there is not, but out of the universal notions of ambition and envy, the perpetual arguments of books and tragedies. I did not say that you encouraged me unto the presenting of it (*i.e.*, on the stage); if I should I had been a villain, for that when I showed it to your honour I was not resolved to have it acted. . . .'¹ It is pleasant to know that between them the culprits must have satisfied the authorities, for 'Philotas' was published in 1605, the following year.

The unfortunate effects of the gradual breaking-up of the old system of patronage are but too patent. The uncertainty of the relation bred uneasiness and discontent. These feelings might be absent in the case of a man in Daniel's position, conscious of feeling and of inspiring genuine respect and confidence.

¹ Quoted by Grosart: Daniel's 'Works,' i, 23.

They are absent, too, in Shakespeare's case. His relations with Southampton, beginning with an ordinary dedication expressive of admiration and hope, ripened very rapidly into the affectionate intimacy which is the theme of his second dedication; and the worshipping love expressed in the Sonnets. There could be no question here of the relation of patron and dependant. The gratitude Shakespeare utters is for affection, not for a patron's benefits; what he asks for and offers is love—not bounty and praise. Jonson also betrays very little sense of holding an uncertain, difficult position. This is due, partly to the consciousness of his greatness, partly also, however, to a certain lack of sensitiveness. He never shrank from asking, because he felt he deserved, and because no delicacy of feeling checked him. Hence he boldly writes his 'Epistle Mendicant,' calling upon the Lord High Treasurer to note that it is 'no less renown' to relieve 'a bedrid wit, than a besieged town.' He feels it no dishonour, but a natural thing to send to King Charles 'The Humble Petition of Poor Ben,' that his pension of 100 marks may be increased to pounds.

But even Jonson takes pride in declaring that, though he accepts, he *chooses* from whom he will accept;¹ and to natures of finer fibre the necessity of asking was very bitter. Spenser was fortunately spared, for the most part, this unpleasing task; but he incurred the keenest humiliation of his life when, following Raleigh's advice, he went to lay his 'Faery Queene' before Elizabeth. Other men might prowl in antechambers day after day in the hopes

¹ To Sackville 'Underwoods.'

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of snatching a little 'court holy water'—*he* has left upon record the bitterest words ever uttered by a suitor at Elizabeth's Court:

Most miserable man, whom wicked fate
Hath brought to Court, to sue for had ywist,
That few have found, and manie one hath mist!
Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide:
To lose good dayes 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 feare and sorrow;
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;
To have thy asking, yet wait manie yeeres;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
To eat thy heart through comfortless despair;
To fawne, to crouch, to waite, to ride, to ronne,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.
Unhappy wight, borne to disastrous end,
That doth his life in so long tendance spend!¹

Such experiences—and it must be remembered that they were the ordinary lot of the literary man—were indeed embittering. John Lyly's despairing appeal to his Royal Mistress has been noted; Nash gives us in detail a picture of the galling treatment experienced by those poets who addressed them—

¹ 'Mother Hubbard's Tale,' ll. 891-908; (Pr. 1591). Perhaps Sidney's unfailing sympathy for the struggling man of letters was to some extent prompted by his own experiences. He, too, knew the bitterness of asking, and asking in vain, for much needed help. There is extant a pathetic letter from him beseeching Sir Charles Hatton to befriend him in a suit to Her Majesty. He hopes Hatton's good services will prevail, but if not, adds Sidney with reluctance, 'I will even shamelessly once in my life bring it to Her Majesty myself: need obeys no law!' (13th Nov., 1581.)

selves to patrons of lower rank. Nash is not thin-skinned; we feel that he would put up with the insults were bounty forthcoming; but contemptuous niggardliness arouses his ire:

‘Alas, it is an easie matter for a goodlie tall fellow that shineth in his silkes, to come and outface a poor simple pedant in a thredbare cloke, and tell him his booke is pretty, but at this time he is not provided for him: marrie, about two or three daies hence if he come that waie, his page shall say that he is not within, or else he is so busy with my Lord How-shall-ye-call-him . . . that he may not be spoken withal. These are the common courses of the world . . . Give . . . a dog but a bone, and he’ll wag his tayle; but give me one of my young masters a booke, and he will put off his hat and blush and so go his waie . . . I know him that had thanks for three years’ work . . . We want an Aretine amongst us that might strip these golden asses.’¹

Lucky, indeed, was Camden, who, more fortunate even than Daniel in having been early placed in a permanent position of independence, could say to Usher:—‘I never made suit to any man, no, not to His Majesty, but for a matter of course incident to my place; neither, God be praised, I needed; having gathered a contented sufficiency by my long labours in the school.’²

Sordid rivalry among authors was the inevitable consequence of the struggle for favour. Daniel, in his noble poem, ‘Musophilus,’ devotes a passage to

¹ ‘Piers Penniles,’ 1592. Grosart: ‘Works,’ ii, p. 130.

² Quoted, D. N. B.

lamenting the undignified competition for patronage. Because the number of writers has grown so great that there is not room for all, they 'kick and thrust and shoulder,' and quarrel 'like scolding wives.' Nicholas Breton expresses the matter in still more homely fashion, in his wish that—

. . . all scholars should be friends,
And Poets not to brawle for puddings' ends.¹

Jonson, with his Court pension, his reputation as masque writer, and his many noble patrons, was a great mark for envy. Nor was he at all grieved by this; in fact, he boasts of it, and uses it as an argument when asking for 'more,'² but he was not himself above envying others. He told Drummond that Samuel Daniel 'was at jealousies with him,' but the feeling seems to have been chiefly on his own side. He called Daniel 'no poet,' he parodied his verses, and he could not refrain from a somewhat childish expression of his annoyance that Daniel should be befriended by the Duchess of Bedford, and be regarded as 'a better verser . . . or poet . . . in the court account,' than himself.³

Nor was Shakspeare, in spite of the tie of strong personal affection which bound him to his patron, free from the literary rivalry which dogged the footsteps of all Elizabethan writers. One poet, at least, seems to have succeeded in stealing from him, by 'the proud full sail of his great verse,' some of

¹ 'No Whipping but a tripping.' Breton. In works, ed. Grosart, i. xxxiv.

² 'Humble Petition of Poor Ben.' Underwoods.

³ To Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland. 'The Forest,' 1616.

his patron's favour; Shakespere was blamed for being less assiduous in eulogy. The greater poet was not above the retort that at least his silence did no harm, whereas the words of others brought 'a tomb' where they were intended to 'give life.' But he betrays sensitiveness under this painful rivalry, beseeching his patron friend to judge 'who it is that says most.' Let others, he pleads, be esteemed for their 'gross painting,' their 'precious phrase,' their 'breath of words'; *he* would be valued for his 'dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.'¹

Amongst other evils entailed upon self-respecting writers by their dependence upon patronage was the inevitable accusation of 'mercenary flattery,' and 'fawning eloquence.' Nor are many of them to be wholly acquitted. When a man so highly placed as Francis Bacon is to be found soliciting from His Majesty a theme for treatment, with the remark:—'I should with more alacrity embrace your Majesty's direction than my own choice,'² we cannot be surprised that meaner writers should at times display servility. Even a writer so high-minded as Massinger apologized for his theme on the ground that his own 'low fortune' prevented his refusing 'what by his patron he was called unto.'³ From Churchyard, as later passages will show, we need not look for much self-respect, but the following shows him, though a writer of some repute in his own day, fallen beneath contempt. He is dedicating to Sir Walter Raleigh,

¹ Sonnets LXXXII-LXXXVI.

² 'Works,' ed. Spedding, 1874, xiv, 358. (20th March, 1620.

³ 'A Very Woman.' Prologue.

and conscious of having shown some servility, thus seeks to justify himself. 'And if the world say . . . I show a kind of adulation, to fawn for favour on those that are happy; I answer that it is a point of wisdom, which my betters have taught me . . . I take an example from the fish that follows the stream.'¹ After such an instance of moral debasement may perhaps fitly follow a reference to the dedication in which James I shows, on the other hand, his sense of his own exalted position. It being impossible for *him* to assume the properly humble attitude of a dedicator to any human being, he actually wrote the following irreverent and bombastic dedication: 'To the Honour of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, the only θεάνθρωπος, Mediator, and Reconciler of mankind. In sign of thankfulness, His most Humble and most obliged servant James, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, doth dedicate and consecrate this his Declaration.'²

On the other hand, as the dedicator tended to fall into servile flattery, so, if he escaped this snare, was he liable to fall into another, that of impudence and shameless effrontery. Dekker points out that authors will without blushing claim acquaintance with men as patrons whom they scarcely know.³ A most flagrant instance of this is familiar to all, in

¹ 'A spark of Friendship,' 1588. Harleian Miscell., Series I, vol. iii, p. 248.

² 'Answer to the work of Conrad Vorstius on the Nature and Attributes of God.' Folio works, 1616.

³ 'News from Hell,' ed. 1606. Grosart: 'Works,' ii. (Dedication.)

the case of Stephen Gosson's impudent unauthorized dedication to Sir Philip Sidney of his attack upon poets and others in the 'Schoole of Abuse'—a piece of impertinence for which, as Gabriel Harvey declares, he 'was for his labour scorned.'¹ It is not perhaps so generally known that, in the year of Sidney's death, he doubled his effrontery by dedicating to the same lover of art another work in which he rendered thanks for the protection which Sidney's name had afforded to the earlier one!¹

Happily there were men who rose superior to these temptations. When we find a writer like Heywood, again and again, making of his dedication 'a due acknowledgement, without the sordid expectation of reward, or servile imputation of flattery';² we welcome the proof that he, at least, preserves the true poet's self-respect. Wither dedicated his 'Shepherd's Hunting,' to all the 'known and unknown sympathisers' who had felt for him during his imprisonment; and we honour the manly lines in which he says:

I have no minde to flatter; though I might
Be made some Lord's companion, or a Knight.
Nor shall my verse for me on begging goe,
Though I might starve, unlesse it did doe so.
. . . Oh! how I scorne
Those Raptures, which are free and nobly borne
Should Fidler-like, for entertainment scrape
At strangers' windows, and goe play the ape
In counterfeiting Passion when there's none.³

¹ 'Ephemerides of Phialo,' 1579. (Dedication.)

² Preface to 'The Fair Maid of the West.'

³ Wither's motto—*Nec habes*. 1621.

His words suggest, what is only too true, that men of weak principle were betrayed by their necessities into even worse than servility—into a deliberate hypocrisy, a degraded pandering to the unworthy. That this was so is clear from the satiric portrait of the poet given in the ‘Pilgrimage to Parnassus.’ Draining his inspiration from the pint-pot, he exclaims: ‘Nowe I am fitt to write a booke! Would anie leaden Mydas, anie mossie patron, have his asse’s ears deified, let him but come and give me some prettie sprinkling to maintaine the expenses of my throate, and I’ll drop out such an enconium on him that shall immortalize him as long as there is ever a booke-binder in Englande.’¹ It is by no means certain that Nash in his necessities was fettered by very high principles; evidently bounty is the one passport to his praises. If any Maecenas will bind Nash to him by his bounty, then will the writer ‘doe him as much honour’ as any poet ‘of his beardless years’ in England.² It is, perhaps, only fair, however, to interpret these and such like reckless utterances in the light of his evidently genuine devotion to art, as shown in other passages of his work.

The more scrupulous writers did their utmost to avoid the slightest imputation of fawning servility. They chose for patrons of their works personages of no particular public reputation; they dedicated to personal friends and benefactors, as thank-offering, not as bait; and they protested against the

¹ ‘Pilgrimage to Parnassus,’ c. 1600, ed. Mackay, p. 6. Is this a satire on Nash himself? See the ensuing quotation.

² ‘Piers Penniles,’ 1592. ‘Works,’ ed. Grosart, ii, 64.

undue servility of their less worthy fellows, by a courteous insistence upon the value of their offerings. Daniel writes to his patrons as to equals.¹ Chapman assures Sir Thomas Howard that the work he presents to him contains matter no less worthy the reading than any others recently favoured by great nobles;² and Webster, in dedicating the 'Duchess of Malfi' to Lord Berkeley, takes still higher ground. 'I am confident,' he says, 'this work is not unworthy your honour's perusal; for by such poems as this poets have kissed the hands of great princes, and drawn their gentle eyes to look down upon their sheets of paper, when the poets themselves were bound up in their winding sheets.' Such words go far to redeem the honour of the professional writer, soiled by such as Gosson and Churchyard!

Nor were these the worst of the evils attendant upon patronage. To servility and effrontery was added fraud. We owe to Dekker an interesting exposure of the tricks played by cheating knaves upon unsuspecting patrons. These rogues first get small pamphlets printed—generally of matter filched from other writers. They then procure the names of some large number of gentry, print copies of a dedicatory epistle with a different patron's name to each; then go round, and obtain as many fees as possible for this single dedication and pamphlet. If the supposed dedicatee is suspicious, and makes

¹ See his noble, thoughtful epistles to Lord Keeper Egerton, and to the Bishop of Winchester, and his Funeral Poem on the Duke of Devonshire. 'Works,' i.

² Dedication of 'Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois,' 1613.

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inquiries amongst the stationers or printers, the wily knaves are prepared for him. They have already distributed amongst the trade a number of copies of the work, but without the dedication—for which, of course, they are awaiting permission! ‘Thus the liberality of a nobleman or of a gentleman is abused; thus their bounty is brought into scorn and contempt: thus men are cheated of their bounty, giving much for that . . . which is common abroad and put away for base prices.’¹

There is another point of view to be considered—that of the patron himself. To him, it is clear, the endless importunity of struggling writers must have presented a serious dilemma. Amid so many, how decide between their claims? How benefit any considerable number in any practical way? Yet how distinguish between them? Here and there a patron of genuine taste, and sufficient leisure could find means of discriminating: here and there chance placed naturally under his protection a man of real genius. But it is obvious that, for one reason or another, many patrons were driven to distribute their benefits widely, rather than to concentrate them and thus confer lifelong benefit, and that many were content with a perfunctory response to direct appeals. Sir Philip Sidney stands out among the men of rank of his time as one whose bounty was always discriminating and generous. Yet, as we know, he was a poor man; constantly in difficulties for lack of means. It was the genuineness and discrimination of his love of literature which earned him such warm and un-

¹ ‘Lanthorn and Candlelight,’ ed. 1609. ‘Works,’ iii. 237.

qualified tributes, and he has come down to posterity as the one literary patron to whom, though no rich man, all writers unite in gratitude. Nor can we forget that it was undoubtedly his influence that gained for Spenser the favour of Lord Grey.

To the average young man of rank or wealth, unburdened with love of art or letters, the perpetual appeal of the professional writer must have been simply an unqualified nuisance. He bore with it, as a burden incident to rank and fashion; he even, to a certain extent, encouraged it as a recognition of his own superiority, but it was inevitable that much patronage should be most grudgingly bestowed. Nash was probably perfectly justified in his complaint that 'there is not that strickt observation of honour which hath bene heretofore. Men of great calling take it of merite to have their names eternized by poets; and whatsoever pamphlet or dedication encounters them, they put it up their sleeve and scarce give him thanks that presents it.'¹ Thorpe's satirical advice to Blount on the correct behaviour of a patron completely bears out Nash's words.² Patronage, as a refuge for the writer, was moribund.

It died hard. Struggling authors could not afford to let it die. They would 'hang upon a young heir like horse-leeches'; they followed up the tracks of gouty patrons as if 'hoping to wring some water from a flint'; they even descended to flattering and pandering to lackeys, in order to gain admission to the presence of an unwilling great

¹ 'Piers Penniles.' 'Works,' ii. 13.

² Dedication of Marlowe's 'Lucan,' 1600.

man. Generations of needy authors begged, starved, and passed away before the day when Swift pilloried their shameless insincerity in his inimitable bookseller's dedication to the 'Tale of a Tub.' Generations were to pass before Johnson gave the *coup de grâce* to the long tottering system, by his scornful retort to Lord Chesterfield. Even a quarter of a century after this the help which Crabbe received from Burke, and through Burke's good offices from Thurlow, shows that neither the need nor the possibility of occasional patronage had quite died out. Though no longer a necessity, to the writer of established fame, it will probably never be quite superseded as long as rich men are generous, and unknown writers poor.

PH. SHEAVYN.