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Edited by Lilian Winstanley

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SPENSER
THE FAERIE QUEENE

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EDMUND SPENSER

THE
FAERIE QUEENE

BOOK I

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PREFACE

THE introduction to this volume is not intended for young students, but for older students and teachers; the latter will, I hope, find material which may be of service to them in the task of understanding and explaining Spenser.

The historical interpretation of the allegory in Book I is, I believe, the most important contribution I have been able to make to Spenserian scholarship and will, I trust, prove of general interest. I have spared no pains to make it accurate.

L. W.

ABERYSTWYTH.

October 1914.

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INTRODUCTION

I. TABLE OF DATES

- 1552? Birth of Edmund Spenser.
 1558 Accession of Elizabeth.
 1569 Spenser enters Pembroke College, Cambridge.
 1572 Massacre of St Bartholomew.
 1578 Elizabeth helps the Netherlands.
 1579 Spenser publishes *The Shepherds Calender*.
 1580 Spenser goes to Ireland.
 1581 Publication of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.
 1584 Assassination of William the Silent.
 1585 Drake sails round the world.
 Leicester goes to the Netherlands.
 1587 Death of Sir Philip Sidney.
 Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.
 1588 Defeat of the Armada.
 1589 Sir Walter Raleigh in Ireland.
 Accession of Henry IV of France.
 1590 Spenser publishes *The Faerie Queene* (Books I—III).
 1591 Spenser publishes *Complaints* ("Ruins of Time,"
 "Tears of the Muses," "Mother Hubbard's Tale,"
 "Muiopotmos," etc.).
 1595 Spenser publishes *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*,
Astrophel, Amoretti and *Epithalamion*.
 1596 Second edition of *The Faerie Queene*, including Books
 IV—VI, *Fowre Hymnes*, *Prothalamion*.
 1598 Rebellion in Munster.
 Spenser's flight from Ireland.
 1599 Spenser dies in Westminster.
 1633 *A View of the Present State of Ireland*.

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II. HISTORICAL ALLEGORY OF BOOK I

The ethical meaning of the allegory in the first book of *The Faerie Queene* is not difficult to trace; though different editors have put varying constructions on certain minor details, the main outline is clear.

The Redcrosse Knight represents man in his search for Holiness; his great task is the slaying of the dragon of sin which keeps mankind (i.e. the parents of Una) in subjection.

The Redcrosse Knight is the patron saint of England and stands for the country's religious faith. He is guided by Una who typifies the Truth or, in the practical aspect, Protestantism or the Reformed Faith.

He struggles against Error and, with the aid of Truth, conquers.

He is separated from Una by the wiles of Archimage who is, as the author plainly states, in the moral sense Hypocrisy but who seems to represent also one form of Catholicism (i.e. the papal or ecclesiastical form).

He falls in with Duessa—false faith—or Roman Catholicism and is by her led to the House of Pride from which he with difficulty escapes.

Una or Truth is found and defended by the Lion, who seems to stand for the power of Reason; these two together terrify Corceca—Blind Devotion—and Abessa—Superstition. Truth is threatened with destruction by Lawlessness (Sans Loy) but is rescued by the Satyrs who stand obviously for plain uncultivated mankind, for the poorer classes receiving the Truth when the wealthier cast it out.

In the meantime the Redcrosse Knight falls a victim to Orgoglio who, as his name implies, is another type of Pride, sometimes interpreted as spiritual and ecclesiastical pride contrasted with the more worldly pride of Lucifera.

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He is delivered by Truth and by Arthur who represents Heavenly Grace :

“‘ Ay me, ’ how many perils doe enfold
The righteous man, to make him daily fall ?
Were not, that heavenly grace doth him uphold,
And stedfast truth acquite him out of all.’ ”

The wicked Duessa is stripped and exposed. In the next canto the Redcrosse Knight very nearly falls a victim to Giant Despair, i.e. he is weakened by the consciousness of his sin and has lost his courage and moral confidence. Una takes him to the House of Holiness where, by repentance and penance, he is purified ; he is fortified by the three cardinal virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity ; he leads for some time a life of contemplation and then, strengthened and refreshed, is ready to set out once more upon his quest. He succeeds in his great task, slays the dragon of Sin and is rewarded by his marriage to Truth, typifying without doubt the final acceptance of Protestantism by the English nation.

It remains to be asked if there is any other allegory besides the ethical one. That there is a historical allegory in much of Spenser’s work is indubitable. He began, even in the *Shepherds Calender*, by including actual events in the form of allegory ; it has recently been shown in a most convincing manner that *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* is an allegory dealing with Burghley and the Duc d’Alençon and Elizabeth’s projected French marriage². Again there is much historical allegory in *The Faerie Queene* itself ; the whole of Book v is such an allegory and much of the meaning lies on the surface, being sufficiently suggested by the names : Belgé, Irene, Bourbon, etc.

Nor is there any doubt that, even when the names give no direct clue, many of them stand for actual personages. Spenser himself tells us that both Gloriana and Belpheobe are types of Elizabeth ; so, obviously, is Mercilla

¹ viii l.² E. A. Greenlaw, *Mod. Lang. Ass. Am.* xxv.

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and, in all probability, Britomart. The Duessa of the fifth book is certainly Mary, Queen of Scots¹; so, most probably, is Radegund; Grantorto is undoubtedly Philip II; Artegall is certainly Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton and, undoubtedly also, Leicester²; Braggadocchio is generally accepted as being the Duc d'Alençon. Timias is Raleigh and Sir Calidore probably the Earl of Essex. Arthur is Leicester.

With all these identifications practically certain it seems probable that there should be real personages typified also in the first book, the more so as we know that Spenser intended it to emblem forth the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism which would naturally embody itself in real personages and real events.

I believe that the historical meaning has been concealed by a too early identification of Duessa with Mary, Queen of Scots, and that the real clue to the allegory of the first book is to be found in the identification of Duessa with Mary Tudor and her cause with Mary's cause.

There is nothing improbable in Duessa's standing for two persons. Artegall, we know, stands for both Lord Grey and Leicester since he undertakes alike Lord Grey's adventures in Ireland and Leicester's in the Netherlands, and similarly Spenser may easily intend Duessa to typify the two queens: both bore the same name—Mary—both embodied the Catholic faith, both were dangerous rivals to Elizabeth, the one very nearly putting her to death and the other plotting against her life. But there is one incident which seems to show conclusively that the earlier Duessa is not the same as the later. Mary, Queen of Scots, does not really enter the arena as the rival of Elizabeth until, at Elizabeth's accession, she laid claim to the English crown, but this is almost certainly the incident referred to in Canto XII where the Redcrosse Knight is about to be wedded to Una, and Duessa sends a messenger to claim his pledge and declare that he is betrothed to her; but all the events of the first book

¹ v ix.² v v.

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have already elapsed before this comes to pass¹. Moreover it would be impossible to explain why Mary Queen of Scots should be playing an active *political* part at the time of the suppression of the monasteries, or what is meant by her close alliance with Orgoglio who seems unmistakably to represent Philip II and the power of Spain; Mary Queen of Scots in all her early life, *before* she laid claim to the throne of England, was identified with France which was the great rival of Spain. Moreover it is noticeable how often Spenser dwells on the *physical* unpleasantness of the earlier Duessa. He continually tells us how magnificently she was attired, how richly she was adorned with gems, but again and again he lays stress on the *physical* loathsomeness. Now he does not stress this in the later portion of the poem; the Duessa who is tried before Mercilla, really is a lady of "rare beautie" though she mars it by wickedness.

This physical repulsiveness of the earlier Duessa does not suit with Mary, Queen of Scots, but it does suit with poor Mary Tudor who was exceedingly fond of jewels and splendid attire but who was very plain and suffered during the greater part of her married life from a disfiguring and even disgusting disease. The scene of Duessa's unmasking by Arthur is the most loathsome in *The Faerie Queene*² but it is not one whit worse than the insults which, at the time of her disappointment in maternity, were hurled at the unhappy Mary by her own subjects³.

Duessa's own account of herself is that she was :

"Borne the sole daughter of an Emperour,
He that the wide West under his rule has,
And high hath set his throne, where Tiberis doth pas.
He in the first flowre of my freshest age,
Betrothed me unto the onely haire

¹ XII 26—34.² VIII 45—50.³ Froude, Chap. XXXIII.

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Of a most mighty king, most rich and sage.
 ...But ere my hoped day of spousall shone,
 My dearest Lord fell from high honours staire,
 Into the hands of his accursed fone—¹."

The first three lines obviously mean that Duessa was a daughter of the Pope (i.e. a loyal member of the Catholic Church), but the latter portion is much more appropriate to Mary Tudor than to Mary, Queen of Scots.

Mary Tudor had been betrothed in infancy itself to the Dauphin ;

"In the first flowre of my freshest age";

bridal ceremonies had actually taken place at Greenwich in 1518 and Mary received a betrothal ring from the Dauphin's proxy²; the betrothal was, however, afterwards dissolved.

Mary, Queen of Scots, on the other hand was not only *betrothed* to the Dauphin, she was married to him; when he succeeded to the throne of France, she was, for the brief space of his reign, his queen-consort.

Why should Duessa, who is a boastful person, claim only to have been betrothed to a king's heir when she could really claim the far greater dignity of having ascended a throne ?

It is noticeable too how often the 'Duessa of the first book refers to herself as a virgin and *untouched* by all her numerous suitors; this was really true of Mary Tudor; her betrothal had been continually suggested by her father and her ministers but repeatedly came to nothing; she often laid stress on her maidenhood which qualified her like a second Virgin Mary to bear the great Catholic leader who should re-convert Europe³; hence no doubt the continual emphasis Spenser lays on this claim which could not have been made by Mary Stuart and must have especially displeased Protestants.

¹ II 22—3.

² *Dic. Nat. Biog.* "Mary."

³ Froude, Chaps. XXXII—III.

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If Duessa be really Mary Tudor, the chief crisis of the first book—the imprisonment of the Redcrosse Knight in the dungeons of Orgoglio—becomes unmistakable; it refers, of course, to the Spanish marriage.

The Redcrosse Knight has laid aside his sacred armour; he has drunk of a fountain which makes him weak and slack and thus, unarmed and robbed of his true courage, he falls an easy victim to the giant. The allegory is manifest. The Redcrosse Knight represents the religious genius of England; during the disgraceful period of the Protectorate the Protestant cause had almost wholly lost honour; its moral fibre had, indeed, weakened and slackened; on the accession of Mary the country became nominally Catholic (i.e. the sacred armour was laid aside) and Mary half tricked the country into the Spanish marriage (i.e. Duessa betrayed the Knight to Orgoglio).

The account of the Redcrosse Knight before his dreadful foe exactly resembles the demoralised condition of England at the end of Edward VI's reign:

“Disarmd, disgrast, and inwardly dismayde,
And eke so faint in every joynt and vayne,
That scarcely could he weeld his bootlesse single blade¹.”

Orgoglio is an excellent type for Philip II. His huge stature suggests the great power of Spain, then the mightiest empire in the world; he is represented quite fairly as being three times as great as ordinary human size:

“That with his talnesse seemd to threat the skye,
...His living like saw never living eye,
Ne durst behold: his stature did exceed
The hight of three the tallest sonnes of mortall seed².”

He is proud of his high descent and his great power, and approaches in all confidence the desolate England:

¹ vii 11.² vii 8.

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“through arrogant delight
Of th’high descent, whereof he was yborne,
And through presumption of his matchlesse might,
All other powres and knighthood he did scorne,
Such now he marcheth to this man forlorne¹.”

His name “Orgoglio” typifies the Spanish pride, always regarded as that nation’s most essential quality. England does not even attempt an effective resistance; it is “haplesse and eke hopelesse.” Froude tells us that Philip was so unspeakably hated and dreaded that the English regarded him rather as a monster than as a human being, and the common people were positively surprised to find that he had a human form. The marriage was hated by all classes in the country, even the Catholics, and all men lamented that the queen was giving the country “bound hand and foot” into the power of Spain.

An anonymous pamphlet appeared written by some English nobleman: “The writer pictured England, bound hand and foot, at the mercy of the insolent Philip, whose first step on entering the country, would be to seize the Tower and the fleet, the next to introduce a Spanish army and suppress Parliament. The free glorious England of the Tudors would then be converted into a prostrate appanage of the dominions of Don Carlos. The pamphlet was but the expression of the universal feeling².”

This is exactly what happens in Spenser’s poem, for the Redcrosse Knight is utterly overcome and is flung into the dungeons of Orgoglio.

Duessa, we may also note, behaves exactly like Mary Tudor; she does not need any wooing from the giant, it is she who is the most eager; she claims his love and he accepts her.

She does not wish the giant to destroy the Redcrosse Knight (i.e. England) but she gives him into Orgoglio’s power

¹ vii 10.² Froude, Chap. xxx.

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for ever, and Mary Tudor, as we know, not only desired to marry Philip, but also to make him her heir and successor.

“O great Orgoglio, greatest under skye,
 O hold thy mortall hand for Ladies sake,
 Hold for my sake, and do him not to dye,
 But vanquisht thine eternall bondslave make,
 And me thy worthy meed unto thy Leman take.
 He hearkned, and did stay from further harmes,
 To gayne so goodly guerdon, as she spake:
 So willingly she came into his armes,
 Who her as willingly to grace did take,
 And was possessed of his new found make.
 Then up he tooke the slombred sencelesse corse,
 And in a Dongeon deede him threw without remorse¹.”

Could any words describe the political situation better as it certainly must have appeared to the men of the time? By the “monstrous beast ybred in filthy fen” on which Orgoglio seats Duessa, Spenser probably means the religious persecution which at once began, “all embrewd in bloud, his eyes did shine as glas,” and which the popular opinion ascribed, naturally enough, to the influence of Philip.

When Una hears the terrible news of her knight's evil plight she falls swooning upon the ground, laments bitterly and cannot be comforted. It resembles one of the most tragic scenes in English history. When Elizabeth was ordered to the Tower before Philip's arrival even her great heart failed her; her country's plight and her own helplessness were too much and she sank down in the rain on a wet stone and refused for some time to move. So Una laments:

“Tempestuous fortune hath spent all her spight,
 And thrilling sorrow throwne his utmost dart².”

It is the only time when Spenser represents her heart as failing her.

¹ vii 14—15.² vii 25.

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On Una's behalf Prince Arthur fights against the giant Orgoglio and, after a terrific combat, slays him¹.

Spenser really was quite reasonably well warranted in representing his hero—Leicester—as fighting with Orgoglio.

The Dudley family did conspire against Mary and the Catholic rule, and Robert Dudley—not then Earl of Leicester—was attainted and condemned to death; he was not executed but he was imprisoned in the Tower until the accession of Elizabeth. The terrific blow which beats Arthur to the earth and nearly slays him is probably a reference to his attainder and sentence². It is noticeable that Spenser represents the crucial part in the conflict as being played by Arthur's shield, i.e. Truth, for both the giant and his monster are overwhelmed by it; they are blinded by its dazzling brilliance and cannot fight further³.

In other words it was the re-conversion of England to Protestantism which really broke the power of Spain. Philip had, as a matter of fact, hoped to retain the country in his control, even after the death of Mary, but the change of religion thwarted him.

The whole description of Orgoglio's castle is an account of England under the Marian persecution.

Duessa's many-headed beast when it rushes out upon Arthur is

“Bloudie mouthed from late cruell feast⁴.”

The account of the castle itself combines the splendour of the Court with the savage cruelty shown to the Protestants—men, women and even children burnt to death or flung into prison:

“There all within full rich arayd he found,
With royall arras and resplendent gold.
...But all the floore (too filthy to be told)
With bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trow,
...Defiled was, that dreadfull was to vew,
And sacred ashes over it was strowed new.

¹ See Harrison's tract, *England armed by Elizabeth after being unarmed by Mary* (Arber Reprints).

² VIII 18.

³ VIII 19—21.

⁴ VIII 6.

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And there beside of marble stone was built
 An Altare.....
 On which true Christians blood was often spilt,
 And holy Martyrs often doen to dye.
 With cruell malice and strong tyranny :
 Whose blessed sprites from underneath the stone
 To God for vengeance cryde continually¹."

The sufferings of those in the prisons, we are told, were perhaps even more dreadful than the sufferings of the martyrs: "In the sad winter months the poor men and women, who, untried and uncondemned, were crowded into the bishop's prisons, experienced such misery as the very dogs could scarcely suffer and survive. They were beaten, they were starved, they were flung into dark fetid dens, where rotting straw was their bed, their feet were fettered in the stocks, and their clothes were their only covering, while the wretches who died in their misery were flung out into the fields where none might bury them²."

"Hooper had been confined in the Fleet prison for eighteen months—where with a wicked man and a wicked woman for his companions, with a bed of straw and a rotten counterpane, the prison-sink on one side of his cell and Fleet Ditch on the other, he waited till it would please Parliament to permit the dignitaries of the Church to murder him."

We may compare this with Spenser's account. Arthur goes to rescue the Redcrosse Knight :

"his foot could find no flore,
 But all a deepe descent, as darke as hell,
 That breathed ever forth a filthie banefull smell.
 But neither darknesse fowle, nor filthy bands,
 Nor noyous smell his purpose could withhold,
 ...He found the meanes that Prisoner up to reare.
 Whose feeble thighes, unable to uphold
 His pined corse, him scarce to light could beare.
 A ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly dreere.

¹ VIII 35—6.² Froude, Chap. XXXIII.

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His sad dull eyes deepe sunck in hollow pits,
 ...His bare thin cheekes for want of better bits,
 And empty sides deceived of their dew...
 His rawbone armes...
 Were cleane consum'd, and all his vitall powres
 Decayd, and all his flesh shronk up like withered flowres¹."

The strange watchman—Ignaro—represents, of course, the ignorance which presides over superstition and persecution.

If he has a definite reference to any living person, which may not be the case, it is probably to Bonner who was always regarded as the presiding genius of the persecution and who was singularly rough and uncouth in his manners: once when he had been sent on an embassy to Francis I of France he was so insolent that Francis, the most courteous of monarchs, told him that, if it were not for his master, he would have had a hundred strokes of the halberd².

"Bonner showed" says Froude "an entire insensibility to the finer perceptions."

We may compare this with the extreme rudeness shown by Ignaro to the courteous Prince Arthur.

Just as Duessa is one type of Mary Tudor, so it seems probable that Lucifera is another. Mary was always characterized by her intense Spanish pride and by her love of jewellery, ceremony and display; after the Puritan severity of the court of Edward VI she returned once more to the gorgeous brilliance favoured by Henry VIII, and her court, so far as dress and display were concerned, was one of the most splendid in the world.

Take, for instance, this description of her as she was when she received Philip: "She received him in the great hall of the Bishop's palace, surrounded by the whole of her Court and attended by fifty ladies attired in purple velvet.—Mary must have looked as magnificent as fine clothes could make her, for her purple velvet robe and

¹ VIII 39—41.

² *Dic. Nat. Biog.* "Bonner."

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cloth of gold petticoat were all aglow with precious stones, and the coif, neck, breast and wrists, were stiff with pearls and diamonds¹.”

With the contrast between this splendour and the hatred of her people Spenser might well depict Mary as *Lucifera* with her gorgeous palace upon its hill of sand. She is represented as :

“ A mayden Queene, that shone as Titans ray,
In glistening gold, and peerelesse pretious stone:
...Lo underneath her scornfull feete, was layne
A dreadfull Dragon with an hideous trayne².”

Here again the dragon probably represents religious persecution, the formidable monster which lay in wait beneath Mary's glory.

Spenser proceeds :

“ Of griesly Pluto she the daughter was,
And sad Proserpina the Queene of hell;
Yet did she thinke her pearelesse worth to pas
That parentage, with pride so did she swell,
And thundring Jove, that high in heaven doth dwell,
And wield the world, she claymed for her syre³.”

This is probably an allusion to the controversies which raged around Mary's birth and legitimacy. After the king's marriage with Anne Boleyn Mary was declared illegitimate and deprived of her rank as princess, but she refused to acquiesce and always claimed, even from her father himself, her full legitimate dignities.

“ And proud *Lucifera* men did her call,
That made her selfe Queene, and crownd to be,
Yet rightfull kingdome she had none at all,
Ne heritage of native soveraintie,
But did usurpe with wrong and tyrannie
...Ne ruld her Realmes with lawes, but pollicie,
And strong advizement of six wizards old⁴.”

¹ Martin Hume, *Two English Queens and Philip*.

² iv 10.

³ iv 11.

⁴ iv 12.

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Spenser would naturally, since the legitimacy of Elizabeth had unfortunately been made to depend upon the illegitimacy of Mary, regard Mary as having no real right to the throne; this is confirmed by the circumstance that in the second book, where Spenser treats of the Tudor dynasty, he makes no allusion whatever to Mary's reign. We know, moreover, that Mary showed a strong disposition to reign without the sanction of the law but by Spanish methods "pollicie," and that the only advisers she admitted were the members of her Council: Gardiner and the rest.

All the Deadly Sins follow in Lucifera's train, but we observe that Spenser begins with Idleness clad as a monk¹ and, as a matter of fact, one of Mary's first acts was to restore the monasteries.

If the Duessa of the first book is to be interpreted as Mary Tudor it is not difficult to find the identity of Archimage.

In his ethical aspect he is plainly an embodiment of Hypocrisy²; as regards his human identity we have, to guide us, that he is evidently an ecclesiastic of the Church of Rome, that he works "hand in glove" with Duessa throughout the book and is always on her side. He is extraordinarily cunning, subtle and ruthless; he is the bitterest and most ingenious of all the enemies of Una; furthermore he must be an Englishman because he disguises himself for a time in the arms of the Redcrosse Knight (i.e. he poses for a while as belonging to the Reformed Church). This deception brings upon him overthrow from Sans Loy (Lawlessness) and he almost perishes, but revives and is once more the bitter and skilful enemy of Una.

There is only one man who really fulfils these conditions and that is Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester. Froude describes his character as follows: "The Bishop of Winchester had hated heresy and hated all who protected

¹ iv 17.

² See 1, introductory verse.

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heresy with a deep hatred. He passed the Six Articles Bill;—he lent himself to the schemes of Surrey and the Catholics upon the regency—he obtained, by unremitting assiduity, the re-enactment of the persecuting laws, which he himself launched into operation with imperious cruelty.—He was vindictive, ruthless, treacherous but his courage was indomitable.—He would have murdered Elizabeth with the forms of law or without—he was a man of clear eye and hard heart who had a purpose in life which he pursued with unflagging energy¹.”

This corresponds almost precisely with the character of Spenser's Archimage and the details of the poem lend themselves no less admirably to the identification. Gardiner was always on the side of Catharine of Aragon and of Mary, and Mary trusted him more than any other man. He did for a time accept Henry's Reformation and remained on the bench of bishops; he was thus enabled to pass the Six Articles Bill and re-enact the persecution laws (i.e. he assumes the armour of the Redcrosse Knight for the purpose of working against him); owing to his Catholic intrigues he was imprisoned in the reign of Edward VI.

The means Archimage employs to separate Una from the Redcrosse Knight are probably an allusion to the story of the unhappy Anne Boleyn.

It must be remembered that in Spenser's day the mother of Elizabeth was regarded as having been practically a Protestant martyr. It was through her, though indirectly, that Protestantism had first obtained its hold upon Henry and upon the nation, and it was generally considered that she had fallen a victim to the machinations of her Catholic enemies who invented false evidence against her and so brought about her destruction. Recent historians incline to the belief that this view is substantially accurate².

Among the most notorious and embittered of Anne

¹ Froude, Chap. xxxiii.

² See *Dic. Nat. Biog.*, also Froude, *Anne Boleyn*.

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Boleyn's enemies was Stephen Gardiner and it was only natural that Spenser should represent him as having by his devices brought about her destruction. Anne Boleyn was accused of having been shameless and forward with Henry himself, of having lived in immoral relations with him before their marriage¹ and, when the charge of adultery was brought against her, it was said that she had been "taken" with Mark Smeton exactly as Una is said to have been taken.

The correspondences can scarcely be quoted in detail but they are very close. Archimage creates a false image of Una who first acts shamelessly towards the Redcrosse Knight himself and then is "taken" in the actual embrace of another who is, like Mark Smeton, a "young squire," and the Redcrosse Knight is summoned:

"Come see, where your false Lady doth her honour staine²."

It would be difficult to find a better allegory for the historic slander. Spenser refers to her fate with compassion and tenderness:

"Nought is there under heav'ns wide hollownesse,
That moves more deare compassion of mind,
Then beautie brought t'unworthy wretchednesse
Through envies snares or fortunes freakes unkind."

And protests against the injustice of it:

"my fraile eyes these lines with teares do steepe,
To thinke how she through guilefull handling,
Though true as touch, though daughter of a king,
Though faire as ever living wight was faire,
Though nor in word nor deede ill meriting,
Is from her knight divorced in despaire³."

We may remark in this connection that Anne Boleyn was, through the Duke of Norfolk, of royal descent on her mother's side.

The curious incident of Abessa which follows close upon this looks like a symbolic treatment of the story of the

¹ *Dic. Nat. Biog.*

² II 4.

³ III 1—2.

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Nun of Kent. The so-called Nun was a servant-girl, by name Elizabeth Barton; she was of country birth, quite untaught and ignorant and was afflicted with some illness which gave her psychopathic powers; it was commonly reported that she told in the most marvellous manner of things done and said in places quite distant from herself. She was also, in a superstitious way, exceedingly religious. It occurred to certain unscrupulous members of the clergy that she might be made the centre of a Catholic reaction. Under their tuition the "voices within her spoke also many things for the confirmation of pilgrimages and trentals, hearing of masses and confession and many other such things¹."

She issued boldly in the name of God a solemn prohibition against the king, threatening that if he divorced his wife he should not reign a month but should die a villain's death. If her own word is to be accepted the king had tried to conciliate her by offering to make her an abbess.

She embarked next on a desperate career of treason and became the centre of a wide-spread conspiracy. Few things in sixteenth century superstition are more remarkable than the way in which really distinguished people, including More and Fisher, listened to and revered the absurdities of the Nun of Kent. Between 1528 and 1532 the nun was recognised throughout England as the chief champion of Queen Catharine and of the Catholic Church in England².

The conspiracy of which she was, in a manner, the centre revealed so thoroughly the disaffection and disloyalty of the clergy that it did much to urge Henry on to the dissolution of the monasteries.

These things seem plainly represented in the story of Abessa; the name itself may be derived from her own statement that Henry offered to make her an abbess.

¹ Froude, Chap. iv.

² *Dic. Nat. Biog.* "Elizabeth Barton."

She is represented as a country girl of extreme ignorance and stupidity :

“ A damzell spyde, slow footing her before,
 That on her shoulders sad a pot of water bore.
 To whom approching she to her gan call,
 To weet, if dwelling place were nigh at hand ;
 But the rude wench her answer'd nought at all,
 She could not heare, nor speake, nor understand¹.”

She is also abjectly superstitious, represented as the very daughter of Superstition—Corceca or blind devotion, given over, like the Nun of Kent, to all the empty mummeries of a decaying faith.

“ Nine hundred Pater nosters every day,
 And thrise nine hundred Aves she was wont to say².”

Abessa, however, notwithstanding all her stupidity, knows enough to be in league with the bold church-robber—Kirkrapine—who is slain by Una's indignant lion.

Here, it is generally agreed, Spenser is referring to the dissolution of the monasteries, and the lion is Henry himself³.

We may remember in this connection that the abbots and other important church dignitaries were repeatedly accused of robbing their own churches and the shrines of the saints by appropriating the gold and jewels. Froude quotes many examples, among others the charges against the Abbot of St Alban's: “ You have stolen and made away with the chalices and other jewels of the church. You have sacrilegiously extracted the precious stones from the very shrine of St Alban etc.”

Kirkrapine or the church-robber without doubt represents the monks and abbots themselves. The Lion, as we have said, has been generally identified with Henry VIII. Mr Padelford⁴ suggests Cromwell who certainly took a most

¹ iii 10—11.

² iii 13.

³ Suggested by Upton.

⁴ *Allegory of the First Book of The Faerie Queene*.

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prominent part in the suppression of the monasteries and was generally known as the "malleus monachorum," but the former explanation is the more plausible since the Lion was so generally accepted as the symbol of royalty, especially of royalty when wrathful and executing justice.

Thus when Elizabeth (Mercilla) is represented as judging Mary, Queen of Scots, she has a lion beneath her throne, a lion in this case "chained" because Spenser is at that particular moment asserting the absence of malevolence in his queen.

"underneath her feete, ther as she sate
An huge great Lyon lay, that mote appall
An hardie courage, like captived thrall
With a strong yron chaine and coller bound,
That once he would not move, nor quich¹ at all²."

When we turn to the adventures of the Redcrosse Knight we come across the extraordinary incident of Fraelissa and Fradubio turned to trees.

It probably refers to the story of Cranmer and his wife. The name "Fradubio" in itself suggests Cranmer since it plainly refers to one who was not a strong character and who hesitated between the two faiths, Catholicism and Protestantism. As we know, Cranmer, notwithstanding his many great qualities, was less resolute than other men; he did hesitate and, under the fear of death, recant.

Cranmer made an uncanonical marriage in Germany which caused a great deal of scandal; the king, almost immediately afterwards, insisted on creating him Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cranmer was obliged to keep his wife in strict seclusion and, after the passing of the Six Articles Bill which enforced celibacy upon the clergy, to put her away altogether.

"It was said by contemporaries that he carried her about in a chest perforated with air-holes to let her breathe; and that on one occasion she and the chest being removed

¹ Stir.² v ix 33.

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by an unconscious porter and deposited wrong side up, she was compelled to disclose her situation by a scream¹.”

It is easy to see how admirably this situation is depicted in Spenser's allegory. Fradubio tells how in his youth he loved a gentle lady :

“whom ye see,
Now not a Lady, but a seeming tree².”

Duessa, in envy of this lady, and in order to separate her from Fradubio, first dims her beauty and then changes her into a tree : “ enclosed in wooden wals full faste³.”

Fradubio himself remains for some time in Duessa's favour but one day he sees her revealed in all her foulness, bathing herself in “ origane and thyme ” ; he realises that her beauty is borrowed, that she is, in reality, a wicked witch and, because he knows her in her true aspect, she punishes him by changing him also into a tree⁴.

Here again the historical interpretation is not difficult. It was Cranmer who, in his position as Archbishop, annulled Catharine's marriage, thus making Mary illegitimate and cutting her off from her due place in the succession ; this might well be represented as seeing Duessa in her true form ; Mary bore him a bitter grudge ever after and, as soon as she found herself able, she flung him into prison and got him condemned to death. Fradubio warns others to take example by his wretched fate and have nothing to do with Duessa⁵ and, as we know, Cranmer's last breath was spent in abjuring Catholicism and regretting that he had ever yielded. The Redcrosse Knight is overwhelmed with horror by this tragic adventure of Fradubio : “ Full of sad feare and ghastly dreriment⁶,” he thrusts the bleeding bough into the ground : “ that from the bloud he might be innocent⁷.”

¹ *Dic. Nat. Biog.*, “ Cranmer ”

² II 35.

³ II 42.

⁴ This ending of the story has been altered from Ariosto's version.

See notes.

⁵ II 31.

⁶ II 44.

⁷ II 44.

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Even Duessa moans with fear lest this terrible adventure should alienate the Knight.

We may compare this with what a distinguished historian¹ has said concerning the death of Cranmer: "It was with the unerring instinct of a popular movement that, among a crowd of far more heroic sufferers, the Protestants fixed, in spite of his recantations, on the martyrdom of Cranmer as the death-blow of Catholicism in England. For one man who felt within him the joy of Rowland Taylor at the prospect of the stake, there were thousands who felt the shuddering horror of Cranmer—the sad pathos of the Primate's humiliation and repentance struck chords of sympathy and pity in the hearts of all. It is from that moment we may trace the bitter remembrance of the blood shed in the cause of Rome."

It remains to be asked if we can identify Duessa's three champions . the Paynims Sansfoy, Sansloy and Sansjoy, and Night the "grandmother of all."

The Redcrosse Knight meets Sansfoy in the company of Duessa. Sansfoy makes no attack upon the Redcrosse Knight but the latter, perceiving from his shield that he is a pagan, at once prepares to assail him. Duessa warns her champion and he

"prickt with pride
And hope to winne his Ladies heart that day,
Forth spurred fast²."

They fight and Sansfoy is slain, his head being cleft.

"He tumbling downe alive,
With bloody mouth his mother earth did kis,
Greeting his grave³."

This deed, more than any other he performs, awakens enmity against the Redcrosse Knight; his opponents count it as a most great and capital crime; Sansjoy and Sansloy—

¹ J. R. Green.

² II 14.

³ II 19.

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Duessa herself—are all especially eager to avenge the dead Sansfoy.

Sansloy, when he thinks he has conquered the Redcrosse Knight, explains his vengeance :

“ Lo there the worthie meed
Of him, that slew Sansfoy with bloudie knife¹.”

Duessa exhorts Sansjoy to punish the Redcrosse Knight and instances the slaying of Sansfoy as his worst crime². They lay stress on the fact that Sansfoy's body has received no burial, that therefore his soul cannot pass over “ Lethe lake ” but wanders lamenting on the shore. Duessa tells Night :

“ now the pray of fowles in field he lyes,
Nor wayld of friends, nor layd on groning beare³.”

There is certainly one man with whose story all this quite well accords and that is Sir Thomas More. It would be natural that Spenser should describe him as “ Sansfoy ” since he had made himself exceedingly conspicuous as a Catholic champion ; it was Sir Thomas More who really began the persecution for heresy ; Wolsey had compelled heretics to recant, but he was exceedingly ingenious in finding ways by which recantation might be possible, whereas Sir Thomas More imprisoned and put to death. More had identified himself with the cause of Catharine and Mary and they both most bitterly regretted his fate. He took no overt step against the king but, because of his known opinions, he was attacked and put to death by the device of an oath specially arranged to entrap him. This would explain in the allegory the Redcrosse Knight attacking without provocation (unusual in him) and simply because of the device upon Sansfoy's shield⁴. The description of Sansfoy's death suggests execution by beheading. It should also be remembered that, of all Henry's executions, this

¹ III 36.² V 23.³ IV 48.⁴ II 12—14.

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was the one that caused the widest dismay ; More's character stood so high and his reputation was so great that his death sent a thrill of horror through the whole of Europe ; Henry was often reproached with it as with the greatest of his crimes ; he was repeatedly threatened with vengeance on this account and it was considered as a special aggravation of the circumstances that More's body was not allowed burial but that his head as the head of a traitor was exposed upon the Tower.

With regard to the next champion—Sansjoy—we find that he also is closely associated with Duessa.

He is the assailant and attacks the Redcrosse Knight ferociously and bitterly because he wishes to avenge the dead Sansfoy. He fights also as he says for Duessa. The Redcrosse Knight, however, wounds him severely and would have slain him but that, at the critical moment, Duessa snatches him away and conceals him. The Redcrosse Knight looks eagerly around in all directions but cannot find him. Sansjoy, however, is sorely wounded and Duessa transports him on a long journey (to Hades) and with infinite difficulty and trouble gets him healed of his wound. Much stress is laid on the fact that he—Sansjoy—belongs to a very great and ancient family, is of the noblest existing lineage and of a house older than that of Jove (i.e. Henry VIII).

Duessa does ultimately succeed in getting him healed of his wound.

Here again the circumstances of the allegory seem to point clearly to one man : Reginald Pole. He was one of the chief living representatives of the Plantagenet blood and was formidable and powerful because of his family connections. The name "Sansjoy" corresponds to his ascetic and gloomy temperament ; he fasted often, was a rigid celibate and so stern, uncompromising and fanatical that even Gardiner feared his influence and dreaded his recall. He assailed Henry in the most bitter and ferocious manner in his book *On the Unity of the Church* and held him up to the execration of all Europe. He made himself what he

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considered the missionary of a holy war against the infidel king. He threatened Henry with the judgment of heaven for his many crimes and especially for the execution of More. "Thomas More, the wisest, the most virtuous of living men, was slain for silence."

"How will you be cast out among the curses of mankind. When you die you shall have no lawful burial and what will happen to your soul I forbear to say."

We may compare this with the speech of Sansjoy in Spenser :

"Goe caytive Elfe, him quickly overtake,
And soone redeeme from his long wandring woe;
Goe guiltie ghost, to him my message make,
That I his shield have quit from dying foe¹."

Reginald Pole was, of course, one of the staunchest champions and defenders of Mary; he had also been suggested as a husband for her; she herself seems to have been willing at one time to contemplate the marriage, but Pole preferred his ecclesiastical career.

Henry was so greatly infuriated against Pole that he got an act of attainder passed and demanded his extradition, though unsuccessfully, both from Charles V and from the king of France. This is probably what Spenser refers to when he speaks of the Redcrosse Knight as wounding Sansjoy and of Sansjoy being carried off in a dark cloud by Duessa so that the Redcrosse Knight looks around for him in vain.

Pole spent a great many years of exile in different parts of Europe, but he was protected from Henry's wrath by the Pope and the influence of Catharine and Mary exerted through Charles V on his behalf. Compare Spenser :

"Therewith his heavie hand he high gan reare,
Him to have slaine; when loe a darkesome clowd
Upon him fell: he no where doth appeare,
But vanisht is. The Elfe him cals alowd

¹ v ll.