



# The Shepherdes Calender

*Edmund Spenser*

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## **The Shepheardes Calender** Edmund Spenser

A LONDON publisher has brought out in excellent style a facsimile of the first (1579) edition of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, edited by Mr. H. Oskar Sommer, whose introduction is a really valuable addition to critical literature, inasmuch as it settles the question of the authorship of the "Glosse," or explanatory commentary, accompanying the poem. This is professedly written by one "E. K.," who represents himself as a friend of the unknown author—for it was not until [1611, when the poem was reprinted for the sixth time, that Spenser's name was attached to it. In 1579 no one seems to have cared to know who the anonymous poet's friend might be; but many years afterwards people began to inquire about "E. K." and, finding that a certain Edward Kirke (or Kerke) was at Cambridge at the same time with Spenser and in the very same college, hastily decided that he must be the man.

There was not then, nor has there since been found, a particle of evidence that Kirke and Spenser were friends; but nearly all the editors and critics have nevertheless assumed that the identity of the initials settled the question. Hales, for instance, in his useful "Globe" edition of the poet, says: "These poems were ushered into the world by Spenser's college friend (in Cambridge), Edward Kirke, for such no doubt is the true interpretation of the initials, 'E. K.'" A few critics, among whom was Craik, ventured, however, to suggest that "E. K." might be Spenser himself; and Mr. Sommer has now practically proved that they were right. We can refer here to only one bit. of evidence out of many that he adduces; but this alone is conclusive. In the comments on the Eclogue of May, "E. K." quotes a Latin couplet, of which he gives his own translation thus:

"All that I take did I joy, and all that I greedily gorged  
As for the many goodly matters left I for others."

In a letter to Harvey, dated April 10, 1580, Spenser gives the same couplet (except for the change of "all that" to "that which") as his own "extempore" translation of the Latin.

The reproduction of the poem in the present edition is by photography from one of the four copies of the original now in existence. The text is in black letter, with quaint woodcuts as vignettes to the twelve divisions, or months. The mechanical execution is of the daintiest, and only 520 numbered copies are issued.

– *The Literary World*, Vol. 20 [1889]

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