

Marlowe's Works

In addition to the poem "Hero and Leander" Marlowe is famous for four dramas, now known as the Marlowesque or one man type of tragedy each revolving about one central personality who is consumed by the lust of power. The first of these is 'Tamburlaine', the story of Timur the Tartar. Timur begins as a shepherd chief, who first rebels and then triumphs over the Persian King. Intimidated by his success, Timur rushes like a tempest over the whole East. Seated on his chariot drawn by captive kings, with a caged emperor before him, he boasts of his power which overrides all things. Then, afflicted with disease, he raves against the gods and would overthrow them as he has overthrown earthly rulers. 'Tamburlaine' is an epic rather than a drama.

but one can understand its instant success with a people only half civilized, fond of military glory, and the instant adoption of its "mighty line" as the instrument of all dramatic expression.

'Faustus', the second play, is one of the best of Marlowe's works. The story is that of a scholar who longs for infinite knowledge, and who turns from Theology, Philosophy, medicine and law, the four sciences of the time to the study of magic, much as a child might turn from jewels to tinsel and colored paper. In order to learn magic he sells himself to the devil, on condition that he shall have twenty-four years of absolute power and knowledge. The play is the story of those twenty-four years. Like 'Tamburlaine', it is lacking in dramatic construction but has an unusual num-

ber of passages of rare poetic beauty. Milton's Satan suggests strongly that the author of 'Paradise Lost' had access to Faustus and used it, as he may also have used 'Tamburlaine' for the magnificent panorama displayed by Satan in 'Paradise Regained'. For instance more than fifty years before Milton's hero says, "Which way I turn is hell, myself am hell, Marlow had written"

Faust. How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

Mephisto. Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.

Hell hath no limits,
nor is circumscribed
In one self place, for
where we are is hell,
And where hell is there
must we ever be.

Marlowe's third play is 'The Jew of Malta', a study of the lust for wealth, which

centres about Barabas, a terrible old money lender, strongly suggestive of Shylock in 'The Merchant of Venice'. The first part of the play is well constructed, showing a decided advance, but the last part is an accumulation of melodramatic horrors. Barabas is checked in his murderous career by falling into a boiling caldron which he had prepared for another, and dies blaspheming, his only regret being that he has not done more evil in his life.

Marlowe's last play is 'Edward II', a tragic study of a King's weakness and misery. In point of style and dramatic construction, it is by far the best of Marlowe's plays and is a worthy predecessor of Shakespeare's historical drama. Marlowe is the only dramatist of the time who

is ever compared with Shakespeare. When we remember that he died at twenty-nine probably before Shakespeare had produced a single great play, we must wonder what he might have done had he out-lived his wretched youth and become a man. Here and there his work is remarkable for its splendid imagination for the statelyness of its verse and for its rare bits of poetic beauty, but in dramatic instinct in wide knowledge of human life, in humor, in delineation of woman's character, in the delicate fancy which presents an Ariel as perfectly as a Macbeth, - in a word, in all that makes a dramatic genius, Shakespeare stands alone. Marlowe we simply prepared the way for the master who was to follow.

The end.

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