THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE,
AND OTHER POEMS

1858

1. Unsigned notice, Spectator

February 1858, xxxi, 238

For a discussion of these reviews, see Introduction, pp. 6–7.

The Poems of Mr. William Morris chiefly relate to the knights and ladies of King Arthur’s time, and nearly all the rest of the pieces belong to the vaguely fabulous age of chivalry; though the author has introduced into his poems touches of what modern research or judgment has shown to be its real coarseness and immorality. To our taste, the style is as bad as bad can be. Mr. Morris imitates little save faults. He combines the mawkish simplicity of the Cockney school with the prosaic baldness of the worst passages of Tennyson, and the occasional obscurity and affectation of plainness that characterize Browning and his followers. Some of the smaller poems are less unpleasing in their manner than the bulk of the book, and a poetical spirit runs through the whole, save where it is unskilfully overlaid. We do not, however, augur much promise from this power; the faults of affectation and bad taste seem too deeply seated.