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The Literary Criticism of Alfred Tennyson

Peter L. Decker
Loyola University Chicago

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THE LITERARY CRITICISM

OF

ALFRED TENNYSON.

Thesis presented to the Graduate School of Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

by

Peter L. Decker, S. J.

1938.
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BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.

Peter Louis Decker, S. J., was born in Detroit, Michigan, on December 4th, 1905. His primary education was received at St. Elizabeth's and St. Anthony's parochial schools of that city from 1912 to 1919. From 1919 to 1923 he attended St. Joseph's Commercial College of Detroit and spent the two years following as assistant editor of the Detroit Produce Bulletin. From 1925 to 1927 he attended the School of Commerce and Finance at the University of Detroit, at the same time filling the position of book-keeper for the National Pattern and Manufacturing Company of Detroit. In September, 1927, he entered St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas, where he spent one year before entering the Society of Jesus on August 6th, 1928.

From 1928 to 1932 he attended Xavier University of Cincinnati at the Milford Novitiate and Milford Juniorate divisions. In September, 1932, he entered St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in June, 1933 and spending the following year in the Graduate School of that university. The year 1934-35, as well as the summers of 1935 and 1936 were spent at West Baden College of Loyola University and the year 1935-36 in regency at St. Xavier High School, Cincinnati, Ohio. He is now a student of Divinity at St. Mary's College, School of Divinity, St. Marys, Kansas.
PART I.

INTRODUCTION.

The advice of experts in any field is always acceptable to those interested in that field. Therefore it was felt that the comments, the critical judgments of an outstanding poet, such as Lord Tennyson, would be of considerable value if they could be collected and arranged so as to be easy of access.

The collection and synthesis of the numerous dicta scattered through the "Memoirs" and "Tennyson and His Friends", both edited by his son, was the task set for the writer of this thesis. To this was added the task of attempting to draw, from the collected dicta as well as from various poems dealing with the subject of Poetry, the Critical Theory held by Tennyson.

When the investigation was begun, it was felt that little of value would be found; for it was known that Tennyson had written nothing of importance in prose and little which could be considered as criticism, in verse. The prejudice of those who look with dismay and disapproval at all things Victorian and especially at the idealism of Tennyson's poetry need not be overcome however, for a thorough study of Tennyson's poetry had revealed a depth and beauty which could only be attributed to the depth of character and beauty of life which make Tennyson a fit subject for admiration and study.

All students of literature are interested in the opinion of an outstanding poet regarding the poetry of another and feel that, other things being equal, the true poet's opinion is to be esteemed of greater value than that of a critic who does not follow the Muse. This thesis should prove interesting, therefore, inasmuch as it presents a complete synthesis of Tennyson's critical dicta. Whether the author's deductions are correct
and whether his criticisms correspond with the opinions of other critics cannot be discussed at length in this thesis.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson is considered a great poet; but few writers, even those who profess to be scholars of the Victorian period, mention him as a critic of literature. A reference here, a few quotations there, a comment in another place, and we find that the matter is dismissed as of little importance. It is the purpose of this thesis to supply, in a small way, this apparent lack of attention to the critic and to add to the body of critical literature what may perhaps be regarded as a modest contribution toward the study of literary criticism by gathering and arranging Tennyson's dicta into a workable synthesis. It is not the purpose of this study to utter the final word or even to discuss in detail the results of the investigation. That would be impossible within the limits of the present study.

After some research, it was found that the field presented problems far greater than could be treated in a Master's Thesis. This thesis must, therefore, be limited. Tennyson's philosophy, even his philosophy of criticism as such, cannot be considered. The antecedents of Tennyson's critical theory cannot be considered or can be considered in cursory fashion only, for there, too, the field is too large. A comparison or comparative study of Tennyson's criticism with the criticism of literary experts, prior, contemporaneous or subsequent, so as to ascertain his proper position in the field of criticism, is another subject that must be passed over.

The scope of this thesis is limited to Tennyson's words recorded by himself, his son, or one of his many friends. Other opinions are derived from various poems whose words clarify many of the comments of friends and vice versa. The summary at the end of the thesis will attempt to give, as concisely as possible, what the author considers to be Tennyson's critical theory.
The prejudice which would exclude Tennyson from consideration as one of the great poets of English literature may, by the transference of ideas, immediately exclude him from consideration as a literary critic. The idea that "Tennyson was a superficial writer, egotistical, lacking a definite system of thought, a plagiarist," although applied to him as a poet, may also be applied to him as a critic. This opinion, held by a few, can be dispelled and refuted by a careful study of Tennyson's works and the comments of Tennyson's friends and associates. The opinions of such men as Aubrey De Vere, W. E. Gladstone, F. T. Palgrave, W. E. H. Lecky, Benjamin Jowett, Frederick Locker-Lampson, Lord Selborne, John Tyndall, Edward Fitzgerald, Frederick W. H. Myers, the Duke of Argyll, Arthur Sidgwick, Morton Luce, Raymond Alden and others of note are definitively contrary and must be accepted by students of literature.

F. T. Palgrave writes:

Of all critics known to me, Tennyson most surely and fairly would point out for praise the successful touches in minor poetry. (1)

Mr. Gladstone accepted Tennyson's criticism as spoken by an authority which I take to be conclusive, for he was one who would be at once candid and a strict and even fastidious judge. (2)

Mr. Lecky found Tennyson to be the best critic of verse I have ever known. His ear for all the delicacies of rhythm has, I suppose very seldom been equalled. (3)

Not a man of the world (writes Benjamin Jowett) but a man who had the greatest insight into the world and often in a word or sentence would flash a light. (4)

Arthur Sidgwick believed that although Matthew Arnold was a fine critic and a poet of high distinction .... I have always felt, if we compare his somewhat severe attitude towards the earlier school
with that of Tennyson, that it was the latter who showed the truer insight, the wider sympathy, the juster appreciation. (5)

Other writers have made similar comments and the reader, if he considers Tennyson's criticism without too great bias, will subscribe to the opinions quoted above.

Many may try to place Tennyson in a definite school of thought; others will try to trace Tennyson's critical ancestry and the influences which helped to form his thought. Tennyson, however, followed no definite school of thought in his critical estimates. He was acquainted with Horace, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others, it is true, but his critical standards were the result of a real knowledge and appreciation of the literature of all ages, not only of English literature but of the literature of continental countries as well as of that of ancient Greece and Rome.

A study of Tennyson's life as related in the authoritative "Memoir" edited by his son and of the criticism as recorded in this thesis will, it is hoped, confirm the opinion here stated.

The aim of this thesis is, therefore, first to give a complete synthesis of Tennyson's critical dicta, even that which has no direct bearing on poetry; second to construct, as well as possible, Tennyson's Critical Theory. With regard to the former, the author is confident that he has succeeded in achieving the completeness aimed at. As to the latter, he feels that he can but scratch the surface of a literary problem, as yet untouched, but worthy of further study and research.
REFERENCES.


(2) op. cit. Vol. 2, p. 284.


(4) Tennyson, Hallam, TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 186.

(5) (id.,) op. cit., p. 324.
PART II.

A. TENNYSON'S CRITICAL OPINION OF PARTICULAR POETS.

CHAPTER I.

Greek Classical authors: Homer; Pindar.

Homer.

Only a few quotations are recorded, although they will show in part what Tennyson thought of Homer.

He was sitting with an Iliad on his knee and the talk naturally turned on Homer. "You know," he said to Mr. Walter Leaf, "I never liked that theory of yours about the many poets." Leaf spoke about his "splendid translation" of the simile at the end of II. viii., three lines of which recur in II. xvi., and asked him if he did not think they were far more appropriate in the latter book, and had the appearance of being borrowed in viii. "Yes," he said, "I have always felt that, I must say": and he then enlarged for some time on the greatness of Homer, quoting many lines from both the Iliad and Odyssey. (1)

Mr. Palgrave records in his notes that we took Homer, however, so much for granted, that I do not recall many discussions in honor of Iliad and Odyssey. It would have seemed like praising 'Monte Rosa.' (2)

Pindar.

On Pindar he once said, "He is a kind of Australian poet, has long tracts of gravel, with immensely large nuggets imbedded." This was in reference to the obscurity and inequality in the Odes; a hasty judgment, perhaps, on that colossal genius, if his work be closely studied as a whole. (3)

When Palgrave suggested the translation of Pindar, Tennyson smiled and said that "in his mind the benefit of translation rested with the translator." These were memorable words; but I (Palgrave) fancy that ancient poets were at the moment before him. (4)

A note by Edward Fitzgerald:

I am not sure if you were not startled at hearing that Eutropius was the greatest lyric poet except Pindar. You hadn't known he was a poet at all. (5)
Greek Drama.

My father (writes Hallam) told us that he thought the Agamemnon, the Prometheus and the Oedipus Coloneus the finest of the Greek plays, adding, "Fitzgerald's version of the Agamemnon is most remarkable!" (6)
REFERENCES.

(1) MEMOIR. Vol. 2. p. 419
(2) op. cit. Vol. 2, p. 499.
(3) loc. cit.
(4) loc. cit.
(5) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 36.
(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 385.
CHAPTER II.

Latin classical authors: Virgil; Horace; Catullus.

Virgil.

Of Latin writers he read Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus and Horace. He was fond of pointing out the music of Virgil's lines, quoting

"Dixit, et avertens rosa servit refuisset,  
Ambrosiaeque comae divinum vertice odorem  
Spiravere, pedes vestis defluxit ad imos,  
Et vera inessu patuit dea. Ille ubi matrem  
Agnovit, tali fugientem eat voce secutus;"

as giving a good specimen of his ear for pauses. In the poem written for the nineteenth century of Virgil's death, he praises his phrasing and his diction.  
"All the chosen coin of fancy flashing out from many a golden phrase;"

and  
"All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word."

But what seems most to have dwelt in his mind was the pathos of the poet:  
"Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind." (1)

Hallam Tennyson has gathered together from many sources more of his father's comments on Virgil. To Mr. Warren, President of Magdalen, Oxford, my father spoke of Virgil saying, Milton had evidently studied Virgil's verse. Warren mentioned the "lonely word" in the Ode to Virgil. "Yes," my father said, and quoted "Cunctantem ramum" in Book VI. as an instance. (2)

People accused Virgil of plagiarizing, but if a man made it his own there is no harm to that. Look at the great poets, Shakespeare included. (3)

Virgil's finest hexameters, he thought, occurred in the Georgics, and in that noble sixth book of the Aeneid; for instance for descriptive beauty and fine sound he would quote:  
"Fluctus et, in medio coepit quum albescere ponto,  
Longius, ex altoque simum trahit; utque volutus  
Ad terras, immene sonat per saxa, neque ipso  
Monte minor procumbit: at ima exaestuat unda  
Vorticibus, nigrumque alte subjectat arenam;"

and  
"Romanos rerum dominos gentemque togatam;"

and  
"Demens qui nimbos et non imitabile fulmen  
Aere et cornipedum pulsu simularat equorum." (4)
F. T. Palgrave contributes his reminiscences to this criticism of Virgil:

More than once did Tennyson impress upon me that Milton, our "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies", must have framed his metre upon that "ocean-roll of rhythm" which underlies the hexameters of Virgil: quoting as a perfect example the four lines, "Continuo ventis surgentibus ....... " (Georg. I. 356), in which the rising of a storm is painted. (5)

After quoting two passages from Milton, Tennyson added:

This is very like Virgil in its movement. If Virgil is to be translated it ought to be in this elaborate kind of blank verse. (6)

Twice in the first two lines of the first Aeneid, and elsewhere perpetually, quantity is contradicted by accent. (7)

Horace.

He was deeply moved by the Roman dignity which Horace has imparted to the Sapphic in the "Non enim gazae ......." (Book II, 16): although in general Tennyson did not admire the Horatian treatment of that metre, which he would audaciously define, alluding to the "Adonic" fourth line, as "like a pig with its tail tightly curled." (8)

Catullus.

One time Tennyson said to Thakeray: "I love Catullus for his perfection in form and for his tenderness, he is the tenderest of the Roman poets" and quoted lines from Quintilia's death ending with

"Quo desiderio veteres renovamus amores
Atque olim amissas flemus amicitias." (9)

Catullus says that a poet's lines may be impure provided his life is pure. I don't agree with him: his verses fly much further than he does. There is hardly any crime greater than for a man with genius to propagate vice by his written words. I have always admired him: "Acme et Septimus" is lovely. Then he has very pretty metres. "Collis O Heliconii" is a beautiful metre. I wrote a great part of my "Jubilee Ode" in it. (10)
REFERENCES.

(1) Benson, A. C., ALFRED TENNYSON, p. 131.
(2) MEMOIR, Vol. 2, pp. 384-5.
(3) loc. cit.
(4) op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 12-3.
(6) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 414.
(7) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 12, footnote.
(8) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 500.
(9) op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 266.
(10) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 400.
CHAPTER III.

Middle English authors: Chaucer.

Chaucer was to him a kindred spirit, as a lover of nature and as a word-painter of character; and he enjoyed reading him aloud more than any poet except Shakespeare and Milton. (1)

Petrarch's own contemporary English admirer .... supplied Tennyson with another favorite passage; that in the "Knight's Tale" where Arcite, dying, commends his soul as a legacy to his love, Emilie:

"Alas the wo! alas the peines strong ....

*   *   *   *   *

What is this world? what axen men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave,
Alone withouten any compagnie."

It is a doubly pathetic echo that the tone, amorously lingering which this dear friend always rendered Chaucer's last line, now returns to me. (2)
REFERENCES.


(2) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 502.
CHAPTER IV.

Sixteenth and seventeenth century authors:
Shakespeare; Milton; Dryden; others.

**Shakespeare.**

Tennyson's critical comments on the works of William Shakespeare are grouped with regard to the sonnets and the plays. The former will take precedence here, after which the more important and more lengthy comments on the plays will be treated.

Edward Fitzgerald remembered Tennyson having quoted Hallam, the historian, as pronouncing Shakespeare "the greatest man." Fitzgerald thought such dicta rather peremptory but Tennyson replied:

> Well, the man one would wish perhaps to show as a sample of mankind to those in another planet. (1)

Tennyson held Shakespeare's sonnets in very high esteem.

> Sometimes I think Shakespeare's sonnets finer than his plays -- which is, of course, absurd. For it is the knowledge of the plays that makes the sonnets so fine. (2)

Perhaps in his weaker moments, writes his son, he used to think Shakespeare greater in his sonnets than in his plays. But soon he returned to the thought which is indeed the thought of all the world. He would have seemed to me to be reverting for a moment to the great sorrow of his own mind; and in that peculiar phase of mind he found the Sonnets a deeper expression of the never-to-be-forgotten love which he felt, more than any of the many moods of many minds which appear among Shakespeare's dramas. (3)

Between Shakespeare's sonnets he hardly liked to decide, all were so powerful. (4)

He would translate Catullus' lines from Quintilia's death ending with

> Quo desiderio veteres renovamus amores
> Atque olim amissas flemus amicitias

with the four lines from one of Shakespeare's Sonnets,

> Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow
> For precious friends hid in death's dateless night
> And weep afresh Love's long since cancell'd woe,
> And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight. (5)
Of Shakespeare's sonnets he would say,

Henry Hallam made a great mistake about them: they are noble. Look how beautiful such lines as these are:
The summer flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die
and
And peace proclaims olives of endless age. (6)

We have here completed the comments of Tennyson on Shakespeare's sonnets and before continuing with the direct comments on the plays we wish to establish, in a small way, the reliability of Tennyson's criticisms and the authority with which they were accepted in his own day by Shakespearean scholars. F. J. Furnivall, one of the younger contemporaries of Tennyson and himself a Shakespearean scholar of that day says that Tennyson, in his undergraduate days, used to read the genuine parts of Pericles to his friends in college.

He read them to me last December, 1873. He picked them out by ear and his knowledge of Shakespeare's hand. Last April, Mr. Fleay sent me, as genuine, the same parts, got at mainly by working metrical tests. (7)

Furnivall adds that Tennyson also pointed out Fletcher's hand in Henry VIII and that this idea,

pooh-poohed by Hallam, was afterwards tested and made the subject of a published paper by Tennyson's friend, Spedding. (8)

This critical display on the part of our poet may have been in the mind of Fleay when, in 1876, he dedicated his Shakespeare manual

To Alfred Tennyson, who, had he not elected to be the greatest poet of his time, might easily have become the greatest critic. (9)

We now continue with Shakespeare's drama. First we quote Tennyson's comments on the verse and poetry in general. Later we list particular passages on whose beauty Tennyson has commented, and questionable passages whose authenticity he has discussed.
Of Shakespeare's blank verse he said,

almost any prose can be cut
up into blank verse, but blank verse becomes the finest vehicle
of thought in the language of Shakespeare and Milton. As far
as I am aware, no one has noticed what great Aeschylean lines
there are in Shakespeare, particularly in King John, for
instance,

    The burning crest
Of the old, feeble, and day-wearied sun,
or again,

    The sepulchre
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws. (10)

Tennyson would point out three instances of repartee in Shakespeare which
he thought outstanding for their simplicity.

One is in King Lear when
Lear says to Cordelia, "So young and so untender," and Cordelia
lovingly answers, "So young, my lord, and true." And in the
Winter's Tale when Florizel takes Perdita's hand to lead her
to the dance and says, "So turtles pair that never mean to
part," and the little Perdita answers, giving her hand to
Florizel, "I'll swear for 'em." And in Cymbeline, when Imogen
in tender rebuke says to her husband,
    Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?
    Think that you are upon a rock; and now
    Throw me again!
and Posthumus does not ask forgiveness, but answers, kissing
her,
    Hang there like fruit, my soul,
    Till the tree die. (11)

After reading Pericles, Act V., aloud, Tennyson said:

That is

    glorious Shakespeare, most of the rest of the play is poor,
and not by Shakespeare, but in that act the conception of
Marina's character is exquisite. (12)

Other comments recorded in the same place on other of Shakespeare's
plays are

I am certain that Henry VI, is in the main not Shakespeare's,
though here and there he may have put in a touch, as he undoubtedly
did in the Two Noble Kinsmen. There is a great deal of fine
Shakespeare in that.

I have no doubt that much of Henry VIII, also is not Shakespeare.
It is largely written by Fletcher, with passages unmistakably
by Shakespeare, notably the first two scenes in the first act,
which are sane and compact in thought, expression and simile.
I could swear to Shakespeare in the Field of the Cloth of Gold:

All clinquant, all in gold like heathen gods,
Shone down the English; and tomorrow they
Made Britain India; every man that stood
Show'd like a mine.

Hamlet is the greatest creation in literature that I know of, though there may be elsewhere finer scenes and passages of poetry. Ugolino and Paolo and Francesca in Dante equal anything anywhere. It is said that Shakespeare was such a poor actor that he never got beyond his ghost in this play, but then the ghost is the most real ghost that ever was. The Queen did not think that Ophelia committed suicide, neither do I.

Is there a more delightful love-poem than Romeo and Juliet? yet it is full of conceits. One of the most passionate things in Shakespeare is Romeo's speech:

Amen, amen! but come what sorrow can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That one short minute gives me in her sight, etc.

More passionate than anything in Shelley. No one has drawn the true passion of love like Shakespeare. (12)

In 1892, Tennyson wrote:

I have just had a letter from a man who wants my opinion as to whether Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon. I feel inclined to write back: Sir, don't be a fool. The way in which Bacon speaks of Love would be enough to prove that he was not Shakespeare. "I know not how, but martial men are given to Love. I think it is but as they are given to wine, for perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures." How could a man with such an idea of love write Romeo and Juliet? (13)

For natural conversation between husband and wife he would quote the scene between Hotspur and Lady Percy (King Henry IV, Part I), and would exclaim:

How deliciously playful are these words:
In faith, I'll break thy little finger, Harry,
An if thou wilt not tell me all things true." (14)

Macbeth is not, as is too often represented, a noisy swashbuckler; he is a full-furnished, ambitious man. In the scene with Duncan, the excess of courtesy adds a touch to the tragedy. It is like Clytemnestra's profusion to Agamemnon; who, by the way, always strikes me as uncommonly cold and haughty to his wife whom he has not seen for years. (15)

King Lear cannot possibly be acted, it is too titanic. At the beginning of the play Lear, in his old age, has grown half
mad, choleric and despotic, and therefore cannot brook Cordelia's silence. This play shows a state of society where men's passions are savage and uncurbed. No play like this anywhere -- not even the Agamemnon -- is so terrifically human. (16)

Actors do not comprehend that Shakespeare's greatest villains, Iago among them, have always a touch of conscience. You see the conscience working -- therein lies one of Shakespeare's pre-eminences. Iago ought to be as the "honest Iago," not the stage villain; he is the essentially jealous man, not Othello. (17)

Parts of The Two Noble Kinsmen Tennyson considered were by Shakespeare.

For instance such lines as these bear his impress: That makes the stream seem flowers, and

Who dost pluck
With hand armipotent from forth blue clouds
The mason'd turrets: that both mak'st and break'st
The stony girths of cities. (18)

The Tempest has been dreadfully damaged by scenes intercalated by some common stage-adapter .... Some of the noblest things are in Troilus and Cressida. (19)

There is a great deal of Shakespeare that Shakespeare never wrote, e.g. the speeches of Antonio and Sebastian, "Behold you baggage," etc. (20)

Hallam Tennyson records that his father said to him on more than one occasion:

Some critics object to Shakespeare's Aristocratic view of his clowns, because he makes them talk such poor stuff, but they forget that his clowns occasionally speak as real truths as Hamlet, and that sometimes they utter very profound sayings. That is the glory of Shakespeare, he can give you the incongruity of things. (21)

In a letter to his wife, before their marriage, Tennyson wrote:

I dare not tell how high I rate humour which isgenerally most fruitful in the highest and most solemn human spirits. .... Shakespeare .... and almost all the greatest have been pregnant with this glorious power. (22)

Milton.

0, mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
0, skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starred from Jehovah’s gorgeous armouries,
    Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset, --
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring
    And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o’er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
    And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even. (23)

When Tennyson was asked to name the outstanding writers of English prose he placed Milton there along with Bacon, Ruskin, DeQuincey, Jeremy Taylor, and Hooker, (24) and when he talked of

the "grand style" of

poetic diction he would emphasize his opinion that he considered that of Milton even finer than that of Virgil, "the lord of language." "Verse," he said, "should be Beau comme la Prose." (25)

Hallam Tennyson records that his

father also read .... Milton:
saying that Lycidas was a test of any reader’s poetic instinct, (26)

and Edward Fitzgerald writes that Tennyson

thought that Lycidas was a touchstone of all poetic taste. (27)

In his Recollections of Tennyson, F. T. Palgrave notes that

more than once did Tennyson impress upon me that Milton, our "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies" must have framed his metre upon that "ocean-roll of rhythm" which underlies the hexameters of Virgil: quoting as a perfect example, the four lines, "Continuo ventis surgentibus ...." in which the rising of a storm is painted." (28)

Arthur Coleridge adds a jotting on "Il Penseroso",

Have you observed

a solecism in Milton’s Penseroso?
    But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale
And love the high embowed roof
With antique pillars massy proof, etc. (29)
According to Frederick Locker-Lampson, Tennyson compared Pope's Homer to Milton. He judged it "lower" than the supreme power and sublime music of Paradise Lost, about which Locker-Lampson often heard him quote Polixines in the Winter's Tale:

This is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature. (30)

F. T. Palgrave notes in his Recollections,

Milton, .... he read aloud by preference; always coming to Paradise Lost with manifest pleasure and reverent admiration: like Keats, devoted to

Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness: nor did voice and manner ever serve him better. I may name the passages describing the Gate of Heaven (31) specially singled out for delicate beauty; and the great vision of Eden (32) which he read aloud .... dwelling always on the peculiar grace of lines 246-263. (33)

When Hallam Tennyson was still a boy, his father went through Paradise Lost with him making comments on the various passages selected as outstanding. These passages were marked and the comments inserted by the boy. In an appendix to the second volume of the memoirs these notes are included under the title

MY FATHER'S TALK ON MILTON'S PARADISE LOST TO ME WHEN A BOY AT MARLBOROUGH. (34)

These passages, or rather this Appendix is here included verbatim from the Memoirs.

Book I. 60. Our English language alters quickly. This great line would be almost commonplace now:

The dismal situation waste and wild.

Book I. 211. I hope most of us have a higher idea in these modern times of the Almighty than this:

The will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation.
Book I. 725. I always like this, it is mystical:

From the arched roof
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets.

Book II. 634. What simile was ever so vast as this?

Then soars
Up to the fiery concave towering high.
As when far off at sea a fleet descried
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs; they, on the trading flood,
Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape,
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole: so seem'd
Far off the flying fiend.

Then the next passage, the picture of sin that seems to be
alluring at first, hideous afterwards, is fine.

Book II. 879. A good instance of onomatopoeia:

On a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
Of Erebus.

Book IV. 127. When Uriel saw Satam .... This shows a fine
dramatic feeling in Milton,

Disfigured, more than could befal
Spirit of happy sort; his gestures fierce
He marked, and mad demeanour, then alone,
As he supposed, all unobserved, unseen.

A few lines below, "Sylvan Scene" (35) and the gentle gales
"fanning their odoriferous wings" (36) are undoubtedly commonplace now, but Milton introduced the style. I hate the lines about "the spouse of Tobit's son." (37) They are objectionable. I do not object to the thief simile as some do. (38) "Blooming ambrosial fruit" (39) - blooming is bold. In the description of the garden he quoted "flowers worthy of Paradise" down to "without thorn the rose." (40)

Book IV. 242. "Where the unpierced shade" is the right
reading not 'th' unpierc'd shade' in those beautiful lines
about flowers which

Nature boon
Pour'd forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierced shade
Imbrow"n'd the moon tide bowers.
BooK IV. 248. What liquid lines these too --

Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,
or
And sweet reluctant amorous delay,
or Book IV. 354.

And in the ascending scale
Of heaven, the stars that usher evening rose.

This last line is lovely because it is full of vowels, which are all different. It is even a more beautiful line than those which the repetition of the same vowels or of the same consonants sometimes makes so melodious.

Book IV. 810. This is a wonderful simile --

Him thus intent Ithuriel with his spear
Touch'd lightly, for no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness; up he starts
Discover'd and surpris'd. As when a spark
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, laid
Fit for the tun, some magazine to store
Against a rumour'd war, the smutty grain,
With sudden blaze diffused, inflames the air;
So started up in his own shape the fiend.

Book V. 277. "A seraph winged" to "colours dipt in Heaven" he would quote with admiration.

Book V. 336 and 396. And my father would humoursly quote of the French cooks abroad --

Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change --

No fear lest dinner cool,

adding, that is a terrible bathos after the beautiful imagery but shows Milton's simplicity.

Book V. 525. My father said: "Certainly Milton's physics and metaphysics are not strong -- though I fully agree with

To persevere
He left it in thy power; ordain'd thy will,
By nature free, not over-ruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity.
Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated; such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how
Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?
My father liked the gathering of the host "by imperial summons called," and the "mystical dance" which the "starry sphere of planets resembles nearest." (41) The angels' feast (42) he called delicious, and said "Old Milton the puritan must have been a bit of a sensualist in his nature."

Book V. 745. Of the coming of Satan with his host

Innumerable as the stars of night,
Or stars of morning, dewdrops, which the sun
Impearls on every leaf and every flower ----

and Satan mounting his royal seat, my father said: "What an imagination the old man had! Milton beats everyone in the material sublime."

Book V. 791. "Milton could not help adding his political comment

If not equal all, yet free,
Equally free; for orders and degrees
Jar not with liberty, but well consist."

Book V. 896. My father quoted the famous lines about Abdiel as very fine ---

Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmoved
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
.... From amidst them forth he passed
Long way through hostile scorn.

Book VI. 372. "Milton's proper names are often chosen for their full sounds,

Ariel and Arioch and the violence
Of Ramiel."

Book VI. 771. The following is what made Wordsworth admire Milton's imagination (The Messiah)

He onward came; far off his coming shone.
...... Under his burning wheels
The steadfast empyrean shook throughout
All but the throne itself of God.
What a grand pause in the blank verse after 'God' !

And this is a rushing line that describes the lightning course of his wrath

Eternal wrath
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.

Book VII. 216. This is a magnificent line,

Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou, deep, peace!
How much finer than 'and, billows, peace,' the proper scansion, this break is, and the alliteration how subtle, 'and thou, deep, peace!'

Book VII. Full of notable lines, e.g. 298:

Wave rolling after wave, where way they found --
If steep, with torrent rapture, if through plain,
Soft-ebbing..
Then herbs of every leaf, that sudden flower'd,
Opening their various colours, and made gay
Her bosom, smelling sweet....

Book VII. 431.

The air
Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd plumes;
From branch to branch the smaller birds with song
Solaced the woods.

Then my father would quote the pictures of the nightingale,
the swan and the peacock as beautiful. "How much finer than Thomson's lines are those on the peacock! They are as fine as can be."

The crested cock, whose clarion sounds
The silent hours, and the other whose gay train
Adorns him, coloured with the florid hue
Of rainbows and starry eyes.

Book VIII. The first three lines of this book are "beautifully expressed"

The angel ended, and in Adam's ear
So charming left his voice, that he awhile
Thought him still speaking, still stood fix'd to hear.

Book IX. 568. Satan begins well too

Empress of this fair world, resplendent Eve.

This seems to be rather poor however --

The blasted stars looked wan, etc.

Book XII. 491. I hate inversions, but this line (after the many mighty lines about the many ways that lead to death's grim cave,) is strong in the inversion -

And over them triumphant Death his dart
Shook.

Book XI. 553. And my father often quoted

Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest
Live well. (34)
This completes the notes on Paradise Lost given to his son. A few more notes will round out Tennyson's appreciation of Milton.

On his eighty-third birthday he quoted some of Milton's blank verse with profoundest admiration:

That proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a cherup ball
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
The imperial ensign; which full high advanced,
Showed like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed,
Seraphic arms and trophies; all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.

"What a grand line!" he said of the first. Then he quoted:

Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the visionled
His eye survey'd the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah.

"This is very like Virgil in its movement," he continued, "If Virgil is to be translated it ought to be in this elaborate kind of blank verse." (43)

On several occasions he referred to the same similes. Fitzgerald notes that he used sometimes to quote Milton as the sublimest of all poets, and two of Milton's similes, one about the "gunpowder ore" and the other about the fleet as the grandest of all similes. (44)

Dryden.
The Memoirs in several places records comments made by Tennyson on Dryden and other poets of this period. In a jotting by Edward Fitzgerald, Tennyson is quoted as having said:

I don't know how it is, but Dryden always seems greater than he shows himself to be. (45)

In another part of the Memoirs:

In Dryden's time they did not understand or anyhow had forgotten how to write blank verse. Yet his paraphrase of Virgil is stronger than any of the translations. (46)

What a difference between Pope's little poisonous barbs and Dryden's strong invective! And how much more real poetic force there is in Dryden! Look at Pope.
He said, observant of the blue-eyed maid,
Then in the sheath return'd the shining blade:

Then at Dryden:

He said: with surly faith observed her word,
And in the sheath reluctant plunged the sword. (47)

Other writers.

Tennyson was asked in which authors would he say that one could find
the stateliest English prose, apart from the Bible, The Psalms, and the
Book of Common Prayer. His answer was:

Probably in Hooker, Bacon,
Milton, Jeremy Taylor, De Quincey, Ruskin. Some of Sir Thomas
Browne too is very stately; and some of the Acts of Elizabeth,
Froude tells me, are written in the grandest language that he
knows. Listen to this from Bacon: "It is a heaven upon earth
when a man's mind rests on Providence, moves in Charity, and
turns upon the poles of truth." (48)

Of Bacon's Essays he said:

There is more wisdom compressed into that
small volume than into any other book of the same size. (49)

After praising some of Ben Jonson's lyrics, Tennyson remarked:

To me he appears to move in a wide sea of glue. (50)

One of Sir Philip Sidney's songs to Stella he especially admired with
its refrain:

Only Joy now here you are,
Fit to hear and ease my care ....
Take me to thee, and thee to me:
"No, no, no, no, my Dear, let be! (51)

From Donne he would quote the "Valediction, forbidding Mourning,"
the last four stanzas: "Only two souls ...." where the poet compares
himself to the moving leg, his love to the central, of the compass when
describing a circle: praising its wonderful ingenuity. (51)

F. T. Palgrave, in his long and rather detailed recollections, notes:
I seem to remember more or less special praise of Lodge's
"Rosaline," of "My love in her attire...."; and the "Emigrant's
Song," of Marvell. For some of the poems by that writer then with difficulty accessible, he had a special admiration: delighting to read, with a voice hardly yet to me silent, and dwelling more than once, on the magnificent hyperbole, the powerful union of pathos and humor in the lines "To his coy Mistress," where Marvell says that

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime •••
I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews •••
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast Eternity •••

Youth, therefore, Marvell proceeds, is the time for love:

Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:

on this line remarking that he could fancy "grates" would have intensified Marvell's image. (52)
REFERENCES.

(1) MEMOIR. Vol. 1. p. 36

(2) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 145.

(3) MEMOIR. Vol. 1. p. 152.

(4) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 500.

(5) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 266.

(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 289.

   The reference here is to Furnival, F. J., THE SUCCESSION OF
   SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS, N.S.S., 1876.

(8) loc. cit., Spedding's paper is in the publications of the New
   Shakespeare Society.

(9) loc. cit.,

(10) MEMOIR. Vol. 2. p. 289.

(11) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 290.

(12) loc. cit.

(13) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 423-4. The authenticity of Bacon's words
   could not be verified as the quotation could not be found.
   Therefore the quotation must be taken on Tennyson's authority.

(14) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 291.

(15) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 292.

(16) loc. cit.

(17) loc. cit.

(18) loc. cit.

(19) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 265.

(20) MEMOIR. Vol. 2. p. 402.

(21) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 42. footnote.

(22) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 167.
(23) THE POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS OF ALFRED LORD TENNYSON. Experiment on quantity, "Milton", p. 268.


(26) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 152.

(27) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 36.

(28) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 500.

(29) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 265.


(32) ibid., Book IV. 11. 205-311.

(33) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 503.

(34) op. cit. This is the heading of a series of quotations from page 21 to page 25 of the thesis which are found in the MEMOIR, Vol. 2, pp. 516-23, (Appendices). In the portion which follows we will give the exact lines of quotations, giving as our reference the notation at the beginning of each quotation which is that of the text in the MEMOIR.

Book I. 211 --- lines 211-5.
   I. 725 --- lines 726-8.
   II. 634 --- lines 634-43.
   II. 879 --- lines 879-83.
   IV. 127 --- lines 127-30.

(35) Book IV. 1. 140.

(36) " " 1. 157.

(37) " " 11. 169-70.

(38) " " 11. 188-93.

(39) " " 1. 219.

(40) " " 11. 241-56.

Book IV. 242 --- lines 242-6.
   IV. 248 --- lines 248 & 311.
   IV. 354 --- lines 354-5.
   IV. 810 --- lines 810-9.
   V. 277 --- lines 277-83.
   V. 336 --- line 336.
   V. 396 --- lines 396.
   V. 926 --- lines 925-34.
(41) Book V. 11. 620-2.
(42) " " 11. 630-41.

Book V. 745 --- lines 745-7.
Book V. 791 --- lines 791-3.
V. 896 --- lines 897-9 and 902-3.
VI. 372 --- lines 371-2.
VI. 771 --- lines 768, 832-4, and 865-6.
VII. 216 --- line 216, 298-300, and 317-9.
VII. 431 --- lines 431-4, 443-6.
IX. 558 --- line 568.
XI. 491 --- lines 491-2.
XI. 553 --- lines 553-4.


(44) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 36. also in TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 146. The lines referred to are from Paradise Lost, Book IV. lines 810-9 and Book II. line 634.

(45) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 36.
(47) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 287.
(48) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 415.
(49) loc. cit.

(50) Benson, A. C., ALFRED TENNYSON. p. 130.
(51) MEMOIR. Vol. 2. p. 503.
(52) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 500.
CHAPTER V.

Eighteenth century authors: Crabbe; Gray; Collins; Cowper; S. Johnson; Goldsmith; Burns; Pope.

Crabbe. He liked Crabbe very much, and thought that there was great force in his homely tragic stories. "He has a world of his own. There is a 'tramp, tramp, tramp' a merciless sledge-hammer thud about his lines which suits his subjects." And in speaking of him he would cite Byron's Nature's sternest painter yet the best. (1)

Crabbe has given us the most varied and numerous portraits of character after Shakespeare. (2)

Gray. Of Gray he said:

Gray in his limited sphere is great, and has a wonderful ear.

The following he held to be among the most liquid lines in any language:

Thou he interit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion
That the Theban eagle bear,
Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air.

Also:

And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds. (3)

Collins. I admire the "Ode to Evening" but what a bad, hissing line is that in the poem on the death of Thomson,

The year's best sweets shall duteous rise. (4)

Cowper. After reading Cowper's "Poplar Field" Tennyson remarked:

People nowadays, I believe, hold this style and metre light; I wish there were any who could put words together with such exquisite flow and evenness.

And when he came to the same poet's stanzas to Mary Unwin, Palgrave says:

He read them, yet could barely read them, so deeply was he touched by their tender, their almost agonizing pathos. (5)
Samuel Johnson.

Tennyson admired Samuel Johnson's grave earnestness, and said that certain of his couplets for this quality and for their "high moral tone," were not surpassed in English satire. However, he ventured to make merry over:

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru.

Why did not he say "Let observation, with extended observation, observe extensively?" (6)

Goldsmith.

When Tennyson was asked, "Do you like Goldsmith's 'When lovely woman stoops to folly'?" he replied: "I love it." He also greatly praised the Vicar of Wakefield. (7)

Burns.

W. E. H. Lecky records that:

In eighteenth century he (Tennyson) especially admired the poetry of Burns, whom he placed, I think, on almost as high a level as Carlyle did, and his admiration was rather increased than diminished by the skill with which Burns, by a few strokes of Genius, immortalised so many of the old songs of Scotland and incorporated great parts of them in his own poetry. "Burns did for the old songs of Scotland," he said, "almost what Shakespeare has done for the English drama that preceded him." (8)

Arthur Coleridge quotes these sentences of Tennyson:

Burns was a great genius but dreadfully coarse, sometimes. When he attempts to write in pure English, he breaks down utterly. (9)

In his "Reminiscences of Tennyson in his early days," Aubrey de Vere, says:

Ardent was his enthusiasm for Burns. And here an incident of no small significance recurs to me. "Read the exquisite songs of Burns," he exclaimed, "in shape, each of them has the perfection of a berry; in light the radiance of the dewdrop; you forget for its sake those stupid things, his serious pieces." (10)

Pope.

In that portion of the Memoirs entitled "Reminiscences of Frederick Locker-Lampson," we find that Tennyson
said that as a boy he had delighted in Pope's Homer, but that he added, though "Pope is a consummate artist, in the lower sense of the term," he could not read him. I suppose he means "lower" as compared with the supreme power and sublime music of Paradise Lost. (11)

And in "Criticism of Poets and Poetry"

what a difference between Pope's little poisonous barbs and Dryden's strong invective! And how much more real poetic force there is in Dryden! Look at Pope:

He said, observant of the blue-eyed maid,
Then in the sheath return'd the shining blade:

Then at Dryden:

He said, with surly faith observed her word,
And in the sheath reluctant plunged the sword. (12)

The Elegy of the Unfortunate Lady is good, but I do not find much human feeling in him, except perhaps in Eloisa to Abelard. (13)

He felt what Cowper calls the "musical finesse" of Pope, and admired single lines and couplets very much, but he found the "regular da da, da da, of his heroic metre monotonous." He quoted

What dire offence from amorous causes springs.

"Amrus causiz springs, horrible! I would sooner die than write such a line!" ....
"Pope here and there has a real insight into Nature, for example about the spider, which

Feels at each thread and lives along the line.

His lancet touches are very fine.

Now night descending, the proud scene was o'er
But lived in Settle's numbers one day more." (14)

Tennyson would often quote the lines from the "Dunciad" upon the evening of Lord Mayor's day:

Now Night descending, the proud scene was o'er,
But lived in Settle's numbers one day more. (15)
References.

(1) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 287.

(2) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 505.

(3) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 288.

(4) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 289.


(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 73.

(7) loc. cit.

(8) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 201-2.

(9) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 267.

(10) MEMOIR, Vol. 1. p. 211.

(11) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 69.

(12) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 287.

(13) loc. cit.

(14) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 286.

(15) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 503.
CHAPTER VI.

Novelists.

He would read and re-read .... Walter Scott's and Miss Austen's novels. His comment on Walter Scott and Miss Austen was: "Scott is the most chivalrous literary figure of the century, and the author with the widest range since Shakespeare. I think 'Old Mortality' is his greatest novel. The realism and life-likeness of Miss Austen's 'Dramatis Personae' comes nearest to those of Shakespeare. Shakespeare however is a sun to which Jane Austen, tho' a bright and true little world, is but an asteroid." (1)

Of Sir Walter Scott he said,

I would have given anything to have seen Walter Scott. (2)

Sir Walter Scott's short tale "My Aunt Margaret's Mirror" he once spoke of as the finest of all ghost or magical stories. (3) His "Maid of Neidpath," greatly moved him. This he read and after the last stanza added,

almost more pathetic than a man has the right to be. (4)

Minor Poets.

Rogers and Moore.

Frederick Locker-Lampson hazarded the remark that Roger's best short poems were as good as Moore's. "No," said Tennyson, "Rogers is not as good as Moore. Moore has a wilder fancy, but still hardly anything that Moore wrote is altogether what it should be." He gave as an instance: "She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps." (5)

Tennyson was much struck by the plain force of Moore's "Light of Other Days;" saying "O si sic omnia!" (6) He said that perhaps some of Roger's shorter poems would last longer than the ambitious efforts of more important writers. (7)

Wolfe and Hood.

In Wolfe's noble "Burial of Sir John Moore" he wished the last line but two could be changed; at the close of Hood's "Bridge of Sighs" "Her evil
behavior" was a slight defect in that masterpiece. (8)

Campbell.

Tennyson admired the bold swing of the "Battle of the Baltic" though he thought it had some very faulty lines. He took John Tyndall up rather quickly when he referred to the verse beginning

But the might of England flushed
To anticipate the scene;

remarking that it was the most faulty line in the piece. Tyndall did not, however, intend to detach the line from its context. He meant to refer to the whole passage.

Hearts of oak! our captain cried; when each gun
From its adamantine lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships,
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

These lines Tennyson considered very fine. (9)

Tennyson lamented that Campbell in "The Battle of the Baltic" had spoilt the intense reality and truthfulness of one of the noblest patriotic odes in the language by one false and jarring note:

And the mermaid's song consoles. (10)

He said:

How easily could a little blot like this be cured? If we had but Tom Campbell in the room to point it out to him:

adding, however a tale how Rogers had done the same office for another poem;

and how Campbell had bounced out of the room with a

Hang it! I should like to see the man who would dare to correct me. (11)

Tennyson liked Campbell's "Odes." But his unquantitative line

The sentinel stars set their watch in the sky

Tennyson thought to be as bad as the following line is good:

The weary to sleep and the wounded to die. (12)
Byron and Shelley, however mistaken they were, did yet give the world another heart and new pulses; and so we are kept going. (15) Of course, Byron's merits are on the surface.... As a boy I was an enormous admirer of Byron, so much so that I got a surfeit of him, and now I cannot read him as I should like to. (14)

Hallam Tennyson writes:

In early boyhood he had been possessed by Byron's poetry, but he could not read it later in life, except perhaps the "Vision of Judgment," and parts of "Childe Harold," and of "Don Juan." He would say: "Byron is only an artist or a thinker, or a creator in the higher sense, but a strong personality; he is endlessly clever, and is now unduly depreciated." "One must distinguish" he would add, "Keats, Shelley, and Byron from the great sage poets of all, who are great thinkers and great artists, like Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and Goethe." (15)

Byron, he seemed to place on a lower level, and considered his poetry too much akin to rhetoric. In a discussion one day, W. E. H. Lecky quoted the passage in the "Giaour" beginning

He who hath bent him o'er the dead
Ere the first day of death is fled,

comparing Greece to the dead man in the moment of death. Tennyson admitted its beauty, but said that to his taste the idea was too beaten out.

A Greek poet would have conveyed it by a single stroke. He would have said: "The face of the land is as the smile of the dead." (16) Tennyson was also struck by the "plain force of Byron's "Elegy of Thyrza." (17)

Frederick Locker-Lampson suggested that Byron's "Isles of Greece" might have been admitted into the "Golden Treasury:" Tennyson thought so, but supposed that the editor had discovered some defect in it, of which he was not aware because he had not read it for years. He then repeated the first stanza and said:

That's very fine, but Thackeray tells me that Samian wine is very wretched stuff. (18)
Byron and Shelley... however mistaken they may be, yet did give the world another heart and new pulses, and so we are kept going. (19)

There is a great wind of words in a good deal of Shelley, but as a writer of blank verse he was perhaps the most skilful of the moderns. Nobody admires Shelley more than I once did, and I still admire him. (20) I think I like his "Epipsychidion" as much as anything by him. (21)

He is often too much in the clouds for me, I admire his "Alastor," "Adonais," "Prometheus Unbound," and "Epipsychidion," and some of his shorter poems. As for the "Lover's Tale," that was written before I had ever seen a Shelley, though it is called Shelleyan. (22)

About Shelley's "Life of Life" Tennyson said that it was one of those flights in which the poet "seemed to go up, and burst." (23)

One must distinguish Keats, Shelley, and Byron from the great sage poets of all time, who are both great thinkers and great artists, like Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe. (24)

Keats promised securely more than any English poet since Milton. (26) Keats with his high spiritual vision, would have been, if he had lived, the greatest of us all, though his blank verse lacked originality of movement. (27) Keats would have been among the very greatest of us if he had lived. There is something of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he ever wrote. (28)

Tennyson gave the unfinished "Eve of St. Mark," and the following lines from the "Ode to a Nightingale" in illustration of the above:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, She stood in tears amid the alien corn; The same that oft-times hath Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. (29)
If the beginning of the "Hyperion," as now published, were shorter, it would be a deal finer: that is, if from "not so much" to "feathered grass" were omitted. (30)

Keats has a keen physical imagination; if he had been here (at Murren) he would, in one line, have given us a picture of that mountain. (The Monch, opposite) (31)

While reading an article in the "Spectator" on blank verse, Tennyson observed:

I have been reading in the "Spectator" that Wordsworth and Keats are great masters of blank verse, who are also great in rhyme. Keats was not a master of blank verse. (32)

Wordsworth.

Frederick Locker-Lampson remembered Tennyson having said something to this effect:

You must not think because I speak plainly of Wordsworth's defects as a poet that I have not a very high admiration of him. I shall never forget my deep emotion the first time I had speech with him. I have a profound admiration for "Tintern Abbey." (33)

And yet even in that poem he considered the old poet had shown a want of literary instinct, or whatever it may be called. He thought it too long.

He pointed out that the word "again" occurred four times in the first fourteen lines, and that the sixth and seventh lines might have been more terse. "Something like this," he said extemporising on the spur of the moment:

That makes a lone place lonelier. (33)

Tennyson greatly praised the famous line "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns" and "The permanent in the transitory" and continued by saying emphatically, that putting aside a great deal that Wordsworth had written which was not by any means first rate, he thought that Wordsworth's very best is the best in its way that has been sent out by the moderns. (34)

Tennyson said that Wordsworth attempted to give descriptions in blank verse in the "Excursion," but not successfully; for instance:
And sitting on the grass partook
The fragrant beverage drawn from China's herb.

Why could he not have said, "And sitting on the grass had tea?"
There is no doubt that Wordsworth injured fine passages by the introduction of flat and essentially prosaic phrases, such as "for several hours" which occurs in his Prelude in the description of the Simplon. (35)

After his appointment as Poet Laureate, Tennyson was meditating his first Laureate poem, "To the Queen," and was especially thinking of a stanza in which

the empire of Wordsworth should be asserted: for he was a representative Poet Laureate, such a poet as kings should honour, and such a one as would do honour to kings; making the period of a reign famous by the utterance of memorable words concerning that period. (36)

Tennyson, Edward Fitzgerald recalls, said that he remembered the time when he could see nothing in "Michael" which he then read in admiration; though he thought Wordsworth often clumsy and diffuse. There was no end of "this Thorn" in the piece which bears the name; and Tennyson remarked:

Such hammering to set a scene for so small a drama. (37)

It was with a sort of reverence that he would name certain poets of supreme dignity. Thus with Wordsworth. Yet critical truth compelled him, when the point was raised, to confess the inequality of Wordsworth's work, the heaviness of style seen somewhat too often in poems, the subjects of which more or less defied successful treatment. In this he would say, Wordsworth seemed to him thick-ankled. (38)

His son records that Tennyson had a hearty admiration for Wordsworth, the purity and nobility of whose teaching he highly reverenced. Tennyson would say:

He seems to me, at his best, on the whole the greatest English poet since Milton. He is too often diffuse and didactic to me; for instance in "Tintern Abbey" the repetition of "that blessed mood, that serene and blessed mood" becomes ridiculous. The line

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
is almost the grandest in the English language, giving the sense of the abiding in the transient. (39) You must love Wordsworth ere he will seem worthy of your love. (40)

For Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" he had a profound admiration, yet even in that poem he thought

The old poet had shown a want of literary instinct,

and he would touch upon some defects of composition, but he always ended by saying emphatically that Wordsworth's very best was the best in its way that had been sent out by the moderns. (41)

I have been reading the Spectator that Wordsworth and Keats are great masters of blank verse, who are also great in rhyme. .... It might be true of Wordsworth at his best. Blank verse can be the finest mode of expression in our language. (42)

He often quoted from Wordsworth and was always greatly moved by "Yarrow Revisited" and particularly by the following stanza:

And if, as Yarrow, through the woods And down the meadow ranging, Did meet us with unaltered face Though we were changed and changing: If, then, some natural shadows spread Our inward prospect over, The soul's deep valley was not slow, Its brightness to recover. (43)
REFERENCES.

(2) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 402.
(3) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 505.
(4) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 502.
(5) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 71.
(7) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 72.
(9) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 475.
(12) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 289.
(13) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 357.
(14) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 69.
(15) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 287.
(16) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 201-2.
(18) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 71.
(19) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 357; also, MEMOIR, Vol. 1. p. 141.
(20) op. cit., p. 368; also MEMOIR, Vol. 1. p. 69.
(21) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 69.
(22) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 285.
(23) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 500.
(24) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 287.
(25) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 269.
(27) Tennyson and His Friends, p. 357.


(29) loc. cit.

(30) loc. cit.

(31) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 70.

(32) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 421.

(33) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 70.

(34) loc. cit.

(35) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 71.

(36) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 338.


(38) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 504-5.

(39) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 288.

(40) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 69.

(41) Tennyson and His Friends, p. 368.


(43) loc. cit.
Tennyson had told Disraeli that the "silly sooth" of love was given perfectly in "Henrietta Temple." However, he did not admire "Lothair" although it is written to stir up the English gentry and nobility to be leaders of the people.

To this end Disraeli had shown them as a handsome set of fellows who did nothing, but had in them the stuff to be leaders of men if they would only exert themselves. (1)

He would always talk of Thackeray's novels, "Esmond," "Pendennis," and "The Newcomes" as being delicious: they are so mature. But now the days are so full of false sentiment that, Thackeray has said, one cannot draw a man as he should be. (2)

Of "Clarissa Harlowe" he would say:

I like those great still books. I wish there were a great novel in hundreds of volumes that I might go on and on. I hate some of your modern novels with numberless characters thrust into the first chapter and nothing but modern society talk; and also those morbid, and introspective tales, with their oceans of sham philosophy. To read these last is like wading through glue. (3)

With regard to contemporary novels he had a very catholic taste. In his later years he read Stevenson and George Meredith with great interest. He also read Walter Besant, Black, Hardy, Henry James, Marion Crawford, Anstey, Barrie, Blackmore, Conan Doyle, Miss Brandon, Miss Lawless, Cuida, Miss Broughton, Lady Margaret Mejendie, Hall Caine, and Shorthouse. He liked Edna Lyall's "Autobiography of a Slander," and the "Geier-Wally" by Wilhelmina von Hillern; and often gave his friends "Surly Tim" to read, for its "concentrated pathos."

Miss Oliphant's prolific work (he would observe) is amazing, and she is nearly always worth reading. (4)
In George Meredith's first volume he was delighted by the "Love in a Valley" as printed in 1851. (5) Although he was not a great reader of William Morris, he liked "The Life and Death of Jason." (6)

Fitzgerald.

F. T. Palgrave, in his "Recollections," gives us some interesting comments of Tennyson on his friend Edward Fitzgerald.

Euphanor, that little dialogue, lively and discursive, by his gifted friend Edward Fitzgerald, which, here and there, in style comes so near Plato, he also highly esteemed; admiring especially (and no wonder!) the brilliant closing picture of a boat-race, with its glimpse of Whewell, "the high crest and blowing forelock of Phidippus's mare, and he himself shouting encouragement to his crew, conspicuous over all."

Tennyson, about the same time commended warmly Fitzgerald's famous "Omar" paraphrase, in which old Oriental thought is so marvellously refracted through the atmosphere of modern English style. This poem, at that time, was very scantily accessible to general readers in that limited first edition which contains the original preface in prose, one hardly knows whether more exquisite for its subtlety or its simplicity and a text not, perhaps, always altered in later issues to advantage. To the "Omar," and its highly valued author, Tennyson afterwards did public honour in the Prologue and Epilogue to "Tiresias." (7)

In the poem "Tiresias" after having commented on Fitzgerald's vegetarian diet, Tennyson continues:

But none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well;
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar; and your Omar drew
Full handed plaudits from our best
In modern letters, ...... (8)

Browning.

A. C. Benson in his book "Alfred Tennyson", comments on the fact that Robert Browning, who was a close personal friend of Tennyson, was, as a poet, always a problem to him. Tennyson said of him that he had a mighty intellect; he has plenty of music in him, but he cannot get it out. (9)
Tennyson could not understand the apparent neglect of form going hand in hand with such prodigality of language and such facility of execution.

The "Memoir" gives us this same thought, amplified in Tennyson's own words.

Browning never greatly cares about the glory of words or beauty of form: he has told me that the world must take him as it finds him. As for his obscurity in his great imaginative analyses, I believe it is a mistake to explain poetry too much, people really have a pleasure in discovering their own interpretations. He has a mighty intellect, but sometimes I cannot read him. He seldom attempts the marriage of sense with sound, although he shows a spontaneous felicity in the adaptation of words to ideas and feelings. I wish I had written his two lines:

The little more and how much it is
The little less and what worlds away. (10)

Tennyson would cite "Rabbi Ben Esra," "Death in the Desert," "Caliban upon Setebos," "The Englishman in Italy," and "A Grammarians's Funeral," as poems of fine thought, and "Mr. Sludge, the Medium" as an example of exceeding ingenuity of mind. The last, however, he said to Browning is "two-thirds too long." (11)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
He noted about Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh," this fault that, striking as it was in many phases, it might be defined as "organizable lymph" rather than as compacted and vertebrate poem. (12) He also liked some of the "Sonnets from the Portugese." (13)

Other Poets.
Tennyson said that Alexander Smith, "a poet of considerable promise," went too far when he spoke of the "wave, a bride wooing the shore." He said the same of Kingsley, that "the cruel, crawling wave" was too much like a live creature. (14)

In Rosetti the passion and imaginative power of the sonnet "Nuptial Sleep" impressed him deeply. (15) Of Swinburne, he said, He is a reed through which all things blow into music. (16)
Among contemporary sonnets he liked some of Rossetti's, Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and Charles Turner's. For Christina Rossetti, as a true artist, he expressed profound respect. (17)

Tennyson admired Matthew Arnold as a poet, and after reading "Literature and Dogma" somewhat unkindly sent a message to him:

no more of these prose things. (18)  
Tell him to give us
REFERENCES.


(2) loc. cit.

(3) loc. cit.

(4) loc. cit.

(5) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 504.

(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 286.

(7) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 505.


(9) ALFRED TENNYSING by A. C. Benson, p. 130.


(11) loc. cit.

(12) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 506.


(14) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 73.

(15) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 504.


(17) loc. cit.

(18) Benson, A. C., op. cit., p. 130.
CHAPTER VIII.

American authors: Poe, Whitman, Emerson.

Edgar Allan Poe.

I know several striking poems by American poets, I think Edgar Poe is (taking his poetry and prose together) the most original American Genius. (1)

When asked to write an epitaph of one line for Poe's monument in Westminster Churchyard, Baltimore, Tennyson answered:

How can so strange and so fine a genius and so sad a life, be expressed and compressed in one line. (2)

Tennyson believed that Edgar Allan Poe's "Raven" with all its skill, was too artificial for genuine poetry. That writer's ingenious narrative, in one of his prose essays, as to the origin of the poem: first from the vowel "O" then from the word "more," and so forth even to the details, he would not accept: it was another piece of artificiality. (3)

Walt Whitman.

Speaking of Walt Whitman, Tennyson said:

Walt neglects form altogether, but there is a fine spirit breathing through his writings. Some of them are quite unreadable from nakedness of expression. (4)

Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Tennyson said that he did not believe in Emerson's pretty lines:

Only to children children sing,
Only to youth the Spring is Spring.

For age does feel the joys of spring, though age can only crawl over the bridge while youth skips the brook. (5)
REFERENCES.

(2) loc. cit.
(3) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 504.
(4) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 424.
Laura were singled out by Tennyson.

Non com ne fiamma che per forza e spenta,
Ne che per se medesma si consume,
Se n' ando in pace l' anima contenta;
A guisa d'un soave e chiaro lume,
Cui nutrimento a poco a poco manca,
Tenendo al fin il suo usato costume.

And Palgrave continues:

I remember still the tenderness with which he dwelt on the words, the sigh of delight -- almost, perhaps, the tears -- that came naturally to the sensitive soul, as he ended. "It is the pathos of beauty, as Chateaubriand finely remarks, which is the most perfectly pathetic." (4)

6. German: Goethe.

In his smaller poems such as those in "Wilhelm Meister," Goethe shows himself to be one of the greatest artists of the world. He is also a great critic; yet he always said the best he could about an author. Good critics are rarer than good authors. (5)

Professor Sidgwick noted that he remembered sitting near Tennyson at a dinner of the Metaphysical Society, when Tennyson talked very interestingly about poets and poetry. After some remarks on Goethe's dramatic work, noting its limitations, Tennyson said that he placed him foremost among the moderns as a lyrical poet. One of his hearers demurred, mentioning great lyrics by other writers. Tennyson answered:

Yes, but Goethe

is consummate in so many different styles.

He then referred rapidly to four or five examples ("Kennst du das Land?" and "Ueber allen Gipfeln" were two of them) dwelling on their great diversity of tone and character. (6)

Goethe lacked the divine intensity of Dante, but he was among the wisest of mankind as well as a great artist. He could not quite overcome the harshnesses of the German language. "Kennst du das Land?" is a perfect poem, but "Beschützer ziehm" is a hideous sound in the middle. Goethe was supposed to be cold. I can only say that when told of his son's death he seemed quite calm, but shortly afterwards, from repressed emotion, he broke a blood-vessel.
Goethe thought it a sign of weakness to lose faith in Immortality, and said, "I hope I shall never be so weak-minded as to let my belief in a future life be torn from me." "Edel sei der Mensch" is one of the noblest of all poems. (7)

Tennyson often spoke of Goethe's poetry. Much might be inferior; but as a lyrist certain pieces put him in the first rank. Amongst these favorites were the "Nachgefühl:" "Der Abschied," admired for its exquisite tenderness. When reading the second stanza of the latter he had tears in his voice,

Traurig wird in dieser Stunde ...

He, perhaps, prized even more the song "An den Mond." This he had underlined in Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" when he was criticising it before its publication. (8)

The poems chosen are from Goethe's early "Lieder," and are of the type of the later "Elegie." Of the latter Tennyson quoted two poems which showed, what he called, "Shakespearean beauty." These stanzas begin with

Du hast gut reden ....

and end with

Da bleibt kein Rath als grenzenlose Tranen. (9)

Highly rated also, for solemn thought and deep calm insight into human life, were the well known "Grenzen der Menschheit" and "Das Gottliche." Another poem, valued for its stately beauty and tender feeling for a friend, was that upon the sight of Schiller's skull. The Prologue and songs in "Faust" Tennyson often quoted with lavish praise. (10)
REFERENCES.

(1) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 422.
(2) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 214-5.
(3) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 290.
(4) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 501.
   The reference to the death of Laura is in Chapter 1, of "Triomfio della Morte."
(5) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 422.
(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 391-2, footnote.
(8) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 504.
(9) loc. cit.
(10) loc. cit.
PART II.
B. TENNYSON'S CRITICAL THEORY IN GENERAL.

CHAPTER X.

Introductory: Beauty; knowledge (truth); goodness; their interrelation (love).

Beauty, Good and Knowledge are three sisters
That dote upon each other, friends to man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sunder'd without tears. (1)

Herein lies the kernel of Tennyson's literary theory, in so far as we can say that he had a theory of literature; but before we can proceed with our discussion of his literary opinions it may be well to see what Tennyson meant by beauty, goodness, and knowledge.

Beauty.
Tennyson believed that the beauty of poetry consisted in the proper use of words and phrases, in the sensation which comes from the use of words for their own sake, and from the sensation of sound; a fortiori from the heightened feeling which comes from the harmonious and expressive arrangement of words in rhythmic structure. This is beauty considered in its material aspect or, we might say, sensuous beauty.

Knowledge (truth).
The second faculty which Tennyson thought necessary for a good writer was intellection, the proper object of which was knowledge. Knowledge, for Tennyson, was truth. An increase in one's knowledge was an increase in one's capacity for truth, and truth was necessary for the proper expression of any emotion. For example, Tennyson felt that a poet could not treat of foreign subjects, because he did not have sufficient knowledge of the temperament and customs of the people of whom he wrote; he criticised
George Eliot's "Romola" (2) because he said that she did not understand the Italian temperament sufficiently well. For that reason she did not represent her subjects truthfully.

Goodness.

Tennyson felt that knowledge and beauty alone were not sufficient for great poetry; wedded to each other they did not suffice. Here, one might say, Tennyson revealed his nobility of soul and the high ideals which were always before his mind. Goodness was necessary and this seemed to have been singularly English in its conception. He spoke of reverence for duty as the supreme law of life; the subordination of all ideals to the moral ideal. In one of his earliest poems, "Oenone" he tells us

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power. (3)

He indicated the rules of life in the following lines:

... to live by law
Acting the law we live by without fear,
And because right is right, to follow right. (4)

In many of his poems Tennyson treated of sensual love, and regarded this passion, when refined and idealized, as a powerful factor in goodness of life: its office

... not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thoughts and amiable words,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man. (5)

Severe criticism has been leveled at Tennyson because of this attitude, but he felt, -- and the writings of the greatest poets in the English language will witness the universality of this conception, -- that the object of poetry is to convey to the mind of man a message which shall lift him above himself and make him not only happier but better.
Their interrelation (love). Considered in the light of Tennyson's philosophical background, one can see how he blended these three concepts of beauty, knowledge or truth, and goodness into a unit. While, in the abstract, one can distinguish with a certain clarity the emotional, the intellectual, and the moral life, they so fuse and blend when considered in the concrete that even the imperfect fusion of them in linguistic endeavors, according to Tennyson, lessened the quality of these endeavors.

This idea was reiterated by Matthew Arnold, fifty years after Tennyson expressed it, in the words:

Human nature is built up of three powers, a power for beauty, a power for conduct, and a power for knowledge, and they cannot be isolated. (6)

Knowledge is the substance of the intellectual life, beauty of the emotional, and goodness of the moral, while science can be regarded as the minister and the expression of knowledge, art as the minister and expression of beauty, and, from one angle at least, religion will be recognised as the minister and expression of a morality that extends through and beyond human experience into the regions of the Infinite and the Eternal.

When these three (beauty, knowledge, and goodness) blended harmoniously Tennyson felt that one had the materials for a perfect poem. He felt that no self-realization or self-expression could consistently or progressively be recorded unless it had reference to the interests of the whole human family; and since art, science, and morality were modes of self-realization and self-expression, it followed that each of the three embraced the general progressive good of mankind. Therefore none of them was independent of the others, for none might neglect a power which worked equally for the general good.
When Tennyson said he that shuts love out, in turn shall be shut out from love,

he was speaking of the harmonious relations between man and man, between man and his surroundings. In other words, if in the pursuit of art the mind aims at the higher good, the work of art will be of the highest order as well as of the highest perfection. If on the other hand, the artist aims only at artistic effect he will probably fall short of that mark. Stated in another form, one must say that art, science, morality, are not antagonistic until one or more of the three make an attempt to dominate another or the others.

This then would be Tennyson's theory of literature, and more particularly of poetry. In the succeeding portion of this thesis we will try to show, principally in Tennyson's own words, the poet's vocation, and the relation of beauty, knowledge, and goodness in forming what Tennyson would call true poetry.
REFERENCES.

(1) POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS, "To ....", Introductory poem to the "Palace of Art," p. 42.


(3) POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS, "Oenone," lines 142-3, p. 40.

(4) loc. cit., lines 145-7.

(5) loc. cit.

(6) Luce, TENNYSON HANDBOOK, p. 36.
CHAPTER XI.

The poet's vocation.

Introduction.

The poet in a golden clime was born
With golden stars above;
Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love. (1)

Thus Tennyson begins his poem on "The Poet", and in it the fundamental qualifications of the poetic nature are very well expressed. The poet must be born, but as Tennyson often said, he must also be made. (2) Perhaps the most beautiful expression of this birth and training is found in "Merlin and the Gleam." Tennyson speaks of the poet, waking to the touch of the wizard and learning from him the magic of poetry, learning it from nature, from humanity, from everything about him because all things are illuminated by the poetic imagination, by the "Gleam."

Mighty the Wizard
Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me
And learn'd me Magic!
Great the Master,
And sweet the Magic,
When over the valley,
In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Float the Gleam. (3)

One is here tempted to quote the passage from Schelling which contains, essentially, the same thought. He writes:

The artist, however full of design he is, yet, in respect of that which is properly objective in his production, seems to stand under the influence of a power which separates him from all other men and compels him to declare or represent things which he himself has not completely seen through, and whose import is infinite. (4)

We have seen that Tennyson divided the content of poetry into beauty, knowledge, and goodness. We will now proceed with his concept of the
The poet and beauty.

Tennyson contends that the poet must be born and made. In considering the first division of poetic content with relation to the poet, we must consider him in his sensitive faculties. Tennyson would have the poet develop his poetic facility rather than rely on innate abilities. He felt that artistic facility must be acquired, but he would hardly deny Coleridge's dictum that the poet must be born with a certain delight in richness and sweetness of sound -- a sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it. (5)

He would only say that the poet, to become a real artist, must acquire a command over this sense as well as over language; that the artist must have his sensitive faculties under control, for beauty cannot be given free rein, but must be subservient to the common good, must be content to be one of the "three sisters."

Experience had taught Tennyson the indispensableness of material skill to one who seeks to express himself in the forms of art. He recognized that a poet must be master of the medium through which he gives his ideas substance. He believed that, although the poet must have the natural endowments for his work, he must also labor to gain artistic skill. Several times during his life he made comments on writers in whom he deplored the fact that they did not discipline their minds, that they did not observe a certain self-restraint, that they had not learned to wed sense and sound; in other words he felt that a poet had been born but had done little or nothing to improve his talent.
The poet and knowledge.

Knowledge, we can infer from Tennyson's writings, consists in a liberal education, an interest in the classics, in science, in philosophy, plus a continued reading in these fields. Judging from Tennyson's methods of study, one may infer that he did not demand a thorough research in any one field, but rather a sufficient knowledge about various fields of learning to prevent the poet from falling into serious error. The poet, in other words, must have a sufficiency of knowledge to enable him to express the truth.

The poet must know that his work is like seed from which spring truths, until

Truth was multiplied on truth, the world
Like one great garden show'd
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd
Rare sunrise flow'd. (6)

Nature and a knowledge of nature are requisites for authentic poets. The poet must learn to commune with nature, to observe the various phases of nature, and read in them the thoughts, the hidden meanings which he in turn conveys to his readers.

It is not till after this communing with nature in her secrecy that the soul will be fit to live among the shining treasures of art. (7)

Above all, the poet must possess a deeper insight, his mind must see higher, grander thoughts than it is given to the ordinary man to see, and when he has completed his course of life, we must be able to say that he

Saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,
He saw thro' his own soul,
The marvel of the everlasting will
An open scroll,
Before him lay. (8)
The poet and goodness.
A poet, according to Tennyson, could not write great poetry which was morally clean unless he himself were pure of heart. As for the poetry, Tennyson once said:

Catullus says that a poet's lines may be impure, provided his life is pure. I don't agree with him; his verses fly much farther than he does. (9)

Time and again, Tennyson is insisting on the necessity for morality both in the life of the writer and in the work produced. The poet must be
dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love. (10)

The rarer powers of feeling must also be known to him above other men. He must have felt the buffets of experience, yet the vision of the ideal must have remained ever before him. In the midst of the disturbances of life, he must surmount the material things, and, as a spirit communing with a spirit, he must sense the divine reality back of it all.

The poet's mission.
It was Tennyson's belief that every great poet had a mission in the proper sense of the word. He marked off from his fellows, the poet who must have what Cicero calls "magna et divina bona," great and singular endowments. These endowments were distinct from temperament, from environment, from heredity. One cannot easily sum this up in a formula or explain by analysis, but among the highest and truest qualities we must reckon what Krause calls "Schauen:" vision and intuition. The poet is, in a sense, a seer; a man whose eyes are opened. He speaks that which he knows, he testifies that which he has seen flashing in his soul or soaring in his fancy. Wordsworth has expressed this in some lines of the "Prelude":

Poets, even as prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each of his own peculiar faculty;
Heaven's gift. (11)
Tennyson's conception of the poet's mission was, rightly or wrongly, the conception of a new age which he envisioned as enlightened and fructified by the poet's thoughts. In this age the august figure of Freedom would rise to inaugurate a rule of wisdom that was to supplant the old tyranny of force.

No sword
Of wrath her right arm whirled,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word
She shook the world. (12)

In other words, Tennyson believed that the great poet would not anticipate the thoughts of his age, he would only anticipate their expression. He would say what is in the heart of the people, and say it so beautifully, so lucidly, so strongly, that he would become their voice.

The poet's vocation is not only to produce that which delights but that which enlightens and uplifts. Knowledge must enter through the senses, and beauty will facilitate this entrance. When truth has entered, goodness should follow, because it is meant to be inseparable from true knowledge.

(Unfortunately Tennyson does not consider here, that man's free will must play its part. To know the truth of purity is not necessarily and inseparably to choose the goodness of purity. Horace's "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor" shows that poet's recognition of this truth. Tennyson, like Arnold and others of his time and ours, did not distinguish between what they wished should be, and what, in reality, was. It is not our purpose here as we unfold Tennyson's critical thought, to endorse everything he says. It is our purpose to unfold that thought as we feel Tennyson would have expressed it, had he synthesized his own critical ideas.)

In the introduction to "The Palace of Art," the poet asks himself as he searches for his duty, "Shall I love art and beauty which I shape in art for the sake of art alone, beauty for beauty only; knowledge for the
sake of the beauty it brings to me? Shall I live, apart from the world of men, and work with no desire to help, exalt, or console the blind and ugly herd of men?" This question is still asked by poets, and some answer, "Yes, beauty only, beauty for its own sake; art without any aim of love in it; art in isolation from mankind?" Then they retire to a sheltered solitude and sing their song, alone, refusing to hear, behind their hushed tapestries, the cry of human sorrow for human love. What is their fate? They lose love, for love is only gained by loving; and they lose the beauty they desire to grasp, for beauty is the child of love. Finally, having none to love, and therefore nothing to take them out of themselves, they are wholly thrown upon themselves. Their only companion is self, and this leads to frustration, disappointment, discontent.

The poet may not live alone, apart from the world; he has a duty to his fellows and, to perform this duty, he must remain in contact with them; he must make his message as pleasant as possible, but must keep in mind that the matter of poetry is truth and that the end of poetry is goodness, because

for this
Was common clay ta'en from common earth
Moulded by God, and temper'd with the tears
Of angels to the perfect shape of man. (13)

The poet's vocation is to achieve this end with the means provided for him, means which are his partly as a natural endowment (genius) and partly through his own study and practice (artistic ability).

Tennyson considered that the poet must be inspired in his writing. He could not, as some would have him, "write to order." Those who wish this think that a poet can write poems to order as a bootmaker makes boots. (14)

He also criticised the magazines and newspapers of the day because "they pounce upon everything they can get hold of" and thus "demoralize literature."
Having recorded his inspiration, the author must correct and revise it, in other words, must allow it to mature into a perfect whole. Yet, in this he must go counter to the wishes of the people for "this age gives an author no time to mature his works." (15)

A poet who rejects the principles laid down by Tennyson, especially in regard to the co-ordination between beauty, knowledge, and goodness, and in interest in his fellow men, is as

A sinful soul possess'd of many gifts,
A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
A glorious devil, large in heart and brain,
That did love Beauty only, (Beauty seem
In all varieties of mould and mind)
And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,
Good only for its beauty. (16)

However, the poet who follows the principles enunciated, who controls his genius and increases his artistic attainments, will produce work of which we must acknowledge that others have sung many songs,

But never a one so gay,
For he sings of what the world will be
When the years have died away. (17)

Summary.
In Tennyson's conception of the poet, thought takes precedence over emotion, morality over beauty. It is much the same in "The Palace of Art." Had he been a musician, or a painter, or both, had he possessed Browning's appreciative fondness for those arts, he might have done more justice to the singer as such, and have claimed for him (or demanded of him) first the faculty of song. In other words, he would have distinguished the emotional beauty of the artist and the moral or intellectual beauty that the artist shares with less comprehensive souls. The greater includes the less; the poet must be a singer first, as was Tennyson. Fortunately his theories did not affect his practice.
A fitting close to this treatise on the poet and his mission or vocation comes in the advice given by Tennyson to the poets who will follow him.

Ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam. (18)
REFERENCES.


(2) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, op. cit., p. 218. In Mrs. Butler's diary the following words are recorded: "Though a poet is born, he will not be much of a poet if he is not made too." These words are written as they were heard from Tennyson's lips.


(4) Lilly, W. S. STUDIES IN RELIGION AND LITERATURE, p. 36.

(5) Pyre, THE FORMATION OF TENNYSON'S STYLE, p. 12. The reference here given is to "Coleridge, BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA, Ch. XII, p. 376."


(7) Waugh, Arthur, ALFRED LORD TENNYSON, A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND WORK, p. 56.


(9) Benson, A.C. op. cit., p. 132.


(11) Lilly, W. S., op. cit., P. 34-5.


(13) op. cit., "To ----," (Introductory Poem to the "Palace of Art"). p. 42.


(15) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 422.

(16) POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS, "To ----," p. 42.


CHAPTER XII.

Beauty, or the form of poetry.

a. Metrical elements.

Introduction.

The treatment of this phase of poetry falls into two natural divisions, the treatment of meter and the treatment of language. Contrary to the expectations of many, Tennyson does not deal mainly with metrical and linguistic criticism. However, he has cited quotations from a number of poems from almost every period of literature to emphasize his opinions and this will, I hope, prove of interest.

Poetry is an art because its first object is to give pleasure through the perfection of form. Without delight it is a vain thing. (1)

Thus writes Van Dyke, and Coleridge:

To please me, a poem must be either music or sense; if it is neither, I confess I cannot interest myself in it. (2)

Tennyson agreed with Van Dyke's dictum, or rather, Van Dyke's dictum agrees with the opinion held by Tennyson, but the latter gives positive opinions while Van Dyke's statement is negative. Tennyson admired the sound of German, its great sonorous words,

but he confessed it to be untranslatable, and held that its music could not be rendered in English. (3)

This seems to have been Tennyson's opinion of all foreign languages.

It was Tennyson's opinion that metrical schemes used in foreign languages could not be used with the same effect in English. He felt that the meter must be adapted to the language and that certain meters were especially adapted to each language. English was best fitted for use in blank verse and it is on this subject that he commented most.
Hexameter.

With regard to the use of hexameters in English, he felt that they were fit only for comic subjects, though of course you might go on with perfect hexameters of the following kind, but they would grow monotonous:

High woods roaring above me, dark leaves falling about me. (4)

The experiment in quantity, entitled "On Translations of Homer" emphasizes this point.

These lame hexameters the strong wing'd music of Homer!
No -- but a most burlesque barbarous experiment.
When was a harsher sound ever heard, ye Muses, in England?
When did a frog coarser croak upon our Helicon?
Hexameters no worse than daring Germany gave us,
Barbarous experiment, barbarous hexameters. (5)

A few stray dicta may be recorded here before we take up the subject of blank verse. Tennyson felt that

Milton, our "mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies" must have framed his meter upon that "ocean-roll of rhythm" which underlies the hexameters of Vergil, quoting as a perfect example the four lines, "Continuo ventis surgentibus" (Geor. I. 356), in which the rising of a storm is painted. (6)

Similarly he was deeply moved by the Roman dignity which Horace imparted to the Sapphic in the "non enim gazae ..." (Book II; 16), although in general Tennyson did not admire the Horatian treatment of that meter, which he would audaciously define, alluding to the "Adonic" fourth line, as "like a pig with its tail tightly curled." (7)

Tennyson admired Keats' use of meter very much. He once said:

Compare the heavy handling of my workmanship with the exquisite lightness of touch in Keats! (8)

And of Burns:

Read the exquisite songs of Burns, in shape, each of them has the perfection of a berry; in light the radiance of the dewdrop. (9)
Tennyson said of writing poetry:

Simple poems with simple thoughts and in simple language are most difficult to write. I might say that in blank verse "the easiest things are hardest to be done." (10)

He compared it to Gothic architecture. The latter is like blank verse, it will suit the humblest cottage and the grandest cathedral. (11)

Yet he felt that the English people, the reviewers, the literati, and the common people, did not understand the perfection which could be achieved by blank verse, nor did they understand the variations which must be employed and the labor which the finest blank verse demands of the writer.

The English public think that blank verse is the easiest thing in the world to write, mere prose cut up into five-foot lines; whereas it is one of the most difficult. In a blank verse you can have from three up to eight beats; but, if you vary the beats unusually, your ordinary newspaper critic sets up a howl. The varying of the beats, of the construction of the feet, of the emphasis, of the extra-metrical syllables, of the pauses, helps to make the greatness of blank verse. (12)

Variations of the meter were disliked by ordinary readers, such as

Dust, and the points of lancers bicker in it,

the short syllables expressing the movement of the light. He instanced Virgil's "Et vera incessu patuit dea," and wondered how many scholars saw the greatness of movement of such a line. (13)

Almost any prose can be cut up into blank verse, but blank verse becomes the finest vehicle of thought in the language of Shakespeare and Milton. As far as I am aware, no one has noticed what great Aeschylean lines there are in Shakespeare, particularly in King John. For instance:

The burning crest
Of the old, feeble, and day-wearied sun,

or again,

The sepulchre
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws. (14)

As an example of Milton's power in the use of blank verse, he quoted, on his eighty-third birthday, "with profoundest admiration,"
That proud honour claimed
Azazel as his right, a cherub ball
Who forthwith from glittering staff unfurl'd
The imperial ensign, which full high advanced,
Showed like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden lustre rich emblazoned,
Seraphic arms and trophies; all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.

"What a grand line!" Then he quoted:

What wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led
His eye survey'd the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah.

This is very like Virgil in its movement (he continued). If Virgil is to be translated it ought to be in this elaborate kind of blank verse. (15)

To this reference to the translation of Virgil, we may add another reference by Tennyson to the subject.

In Dryden's time they did not understand, or anyhow had forgotten how to write blank verse. Yet his paraphrase of Virgil is stronger than any of his translations. (16)

It is very difficult in blank verse to give descriptions, such as "so that sport -- the patron with his curls," from the Princess and at the same time to retain poetical elevation. (17)

Tennyson insisted that the employment of rhyme would have made this much easier.

In criticizing an article on blank verse which appeared in the "Spectator," he observed:

I have been reading in the Spectator that Wordsworth and Keats are great masters of blank verse. It might be true of Wordsworth at his best. Blank verse can be the finest mode of expression in our language. (18)

Alliteration.

Another subject treated by Tennyson is that of alliteration. In this respect, Tennyson would reply to the opinion of "how studiously alliterative" his verses were.

When I spout my lines first they come out so alliteratively that I have sometimes no end of trouble in getting rid of the alliteration. (19)
The "s-sound" seemed to him the most common offense, and the one which called for correction before all others. He quoted from Pope:

"What dire offense from amorous causes springs."

"Amrus causiz springs," horrible! I would sooner die than write such a line! Archbishop Trench was the only critic who said of my first volume, "What singular absence of the s!" (20)

Tennyson called the elimination of the 's'

kicking the geese out of the boat (i.e., doing away with sibilations); .... I never put two 's' together in any verse of mine. My line is not, as often quoted

And freedom broadens slowly down
but
And freedom slowly broadens down. (21)

When this fault appeared in William Collins' poetry:

What a bad, hissing line is that in the poem on the death of Thomson,
The year's best sweets shall duteous rise. (22)

Campbell's unquantitative line

The sentinel stars set their watch in the sky,
is as bad as the following line is good:
The weary to sleep and the wounded to die. (23)

In discussing Poe's "Raven" Tennyson said he thought it too artificial, and as regards that writer's ingenious narrative, in one of his prose essays, how the whole poem had been generated first from the vowel 'o', then from the word more, and so forth even to the details, he would not accept; it was another piece of artificiality. (24)
b. Linguistic elements.

Words. All the charm of all the muses often flowering in a lonely word. (25) Thus the poem "To Virgil" suggests the importance which Tennyson placed on the use of words. Speaking of an unpublished poem of his own, Tennyson quoted the line

That all the thrones are clouded by your loss
and asked his companion if he

saw why he had used the word clouded instead of darkened or another. "It makes you think of a great mountain," he said. (26)

Tennyson spoke of the richness of the English language due to its double origin, the Norman and the Saxon words, commenting, for example, on the difficulty which would be experienced by a foreigner in seeing the difference between

An infant crying for the light (27)
and
A baby crying for the light,
yet the first was beautiful while the second would have been ridiculous.

Phrases. Again his poem to "Virgil" speaks of

All the chosen coin of fancy flashing out from many a golden phrase. (28)

On this subject, also, his remarks are enlightening. W. E. H. Lecky speaks of Tennyson's admirable verbal memory for the poetry of others and for his own and on the true instinct of a genius for detecting among the commonplace surroundings some happy phrase and original metaphor. (29)

Tennyson pointed out the line in Wolfe's "Burial of Sir John Moore"

From the field of his fame, fresh and gory; (30)
and wished that it had been changed. To one who reads this poem attentively this defect, once pointed out, becomes apparent. The line strikes a
Commenting unfavorably on "The Bridge of Sighs" by Thomas Hood and the "Battle of the Baltic" by Thomas Campbell, Tennyson noted similar defects. In the first poem the phrase "her evil behavior" was considered a defect while "the infelicitous 'mermaid's song condolences' of the latter" tempted him to remark,

How easily could a little blot like this be cured! (31)

He lamented that Campbell in the "Battle of the Baltic" had spoilt the intense reality and truthfulness of one of the noblest patriotic odes in the language of the poem by one false and jarring note:

And the mermaid's song condole. (32)

On another occasion, after reading aloud the poem "Go not, happy day," from "Maud", Tennyson pointed out how his "red man" and "red babe" were effective points of crimson in that rosy landscape. (33)

In Wordsworth's works, there was a certain inequality, a heaviness of style seen somewhat too often in poems, the subjects of which more or less defied successful treatment. In these, Wordsworth seemed thick-ankled. (34)

Tennyson ventured also, to make merry over the following lines of Samuel Johnson:

Let observation with extensive view
Survey mankind, from China to Peru.

Why did he not say "let observation, with extensive observation, observe extensively?" (35)

This poem of Samuel Johnson met with a similar criticism from Coleridge.

Tennyson thought that Wordsworth was justified in saying "The moon looked round her with delight when the heavens were bare," but that Alexander Smith, "a poet of considerable promise," went too far when he spoke of the wave, "a pride wooing the shore." He said the same of Kingsley, that "the cruel, crawling wave" was too much like a live creature. (36)
When he talked of the "grand style" of poetic diction he would emphasize his opinion that he considered that of Milton even finer than that of Virgil "the lord of language." (37) Yet he did not wish language to be distorted or forced. To an aspiring poet he wrote,

you make our good old English tongue crack and sweat for it occasionally, but time will chasten that. (38)

Comparing Pope and Dryden, his comment was

what a difference between Pope's little poisonous barbs and Dryden's strong invective!
And how much more real poetic force there is in Dryden! Look at Pope;

He said, observant of the blue-eyed maid,
Then in the sheath return'd the shining blade:

Then at Dryden:

He said, with surly faith observed her word
And in the sheath reluctant plunged the sword. (39)

W. E. H. Lecky, in discussing Byron, once quoted the passage in "The Giaour" beginning,

He who hath bent him o'er the dead
Ere the first day of death is fled,
comparing Greece to the dead man in the moment after death. Tennyson admitted its beauty, but said that to his taste the idea was too beaten out.

A Greek poet would have conveyed it by a single stroke.
He would have said "The face of the land is as the smile of the dead." (40)

Tennyson admired the form and tenderness of Catullus. He is the the tenderest of Roman poets, he would say, and quote the lines from Quintilian's death ending with

Quo desiderio veteres renovamus amores
Atque olim amissas flemus amicitias;

lines which he would translate by four lines from one of Shakespeare's sonnets
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight. (41)

He pointed out the following lines of Gray, as being among the most liquid lines in any language:

Tho' he interit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion
That the Theban eagle bear,
Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air. (42)

Also

And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds. (43)

He had a profound admiration for "Tintern Abbey" but even in that poem he considered Wordsworth had shown a want of literary instinct, or whatever it may be called. He thought it too long. He pointed out that the word "again" occurs four times in the first fourteen lines, that the sixth and seventh lines might have been more terse. "Something like this," he said extemporising on the spur of the moment:

That makes a lone place lonelier. (44)

Tennyson greatly praised the line "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns" .... "the permanent in the transitory;" and said emphatically that putting aside a great deal that Wordsworth had written which was not by any means first rate, he thought

Wordsworth's very best is the best in its way that has been sent out by the moderns. (45)

There were passages where Wordsworth injured the beauty of his poetry by the introduction of flat and essentially prosaid phrases, such as "for several hours" which occurs in his "Prelude" in the description of the Simplon. (46)

At other times he attempted to translate prosaic thought into poetic language and became too diffuse as in "The Excursion", where Tennyson cites
as an example "and sitting on the grass partook the fragrant beverage drawn from China's herb."

Why could he not have said "and sitting on the grass had tea?" (47)

A reference was made to the lines, in Campbell's "Battle of the Baltic,"

But the might of England flushed
To anticipate the scene;

and Tennyson remarked that "it was the most faulty line in the piece." But when reference was made to the entire passage:

Hearts of oak! our captains cried; when each gum
With its adamantine lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun;

Tennyson considered these lines very fine. (48)

His criticism of Milton, is the most complete we have. It is quoted at length in its proper place, but a few notes here will suffice. With regard to the language of Milton, he pointed out, in Paradise Lost, Book II, line 635,

Up to the fiery concave towering high,
and said
What simile was ever so vast as this? (49)

In Book IV, about line 130, he said that the sylvan scene and the gentle gales "fanning their odoriferous wings" were undoubtedly commonplace expressions in his own time but that Milton had introduced the style. (50)

He pointed out the lines:

Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,
and
And sweet reluctant amorous delay,

And in the ascending scale
Of Heaven, the stars that usher evening rose;

and said,

What liquid lines! (51)
And of the last line quoted,

This is lovely because it is full of vowels, which are all different. It is even a more beautiful line than those where the repetition of the same vowels or of the same consonants sometimes are so melodious. (52)

Milton's proper names are often chosen for their full sounds,

Ariel and Ariooh and the violence of Ramiel. (53)

This is a rushing line that describes the lightning course of his (God's) wrath --

Eternal wrath
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit. (54)

This is a magnificent line,

Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou, deep, peace!

How much finer than "and, billows, peace," the proper scansion, this break is, and the alliteration how subtle, "and thou, deep, peace."! (55)
C. Tennyson's practice in regard to the form of poetry.

Tennyson has refined, enriched, beautified, in some sense almost remade our poetic language; he has shown that the classic eighteenth-century finish is not incompatible with the nineteenth-century deeper and wider thought; and, in a word, he has interwoven the golden thread of poetry with the main texture of the life, knowledge, feeling, experience, and ideals of the years whereof we are all alike inheritors.

Numerous examples from "The Palace of Art," "The Idylls of the King," and others of Tennyson's poems could be quoted. Considering the "Idylls of the King" we can only say that in beauty of diction, in music of rhythm, in richness of illustration, they are unsurpassed. Even Swinburne, himself a master of words, confesses a cordial admiration for their "exquisite magnificence of style." The phrase is well chosen, for they combine in a rare degree, two qualities which seem irreconcilable, delicacy and grandeur, the power of observing the most minute details and painting them with absolute truth of touch, and the power of clothing large thoughts in simple, vigorous, sweeping words.
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(1) Van Dyke, op. cit., Preface, p. xi.

(2) Saintsbury, G. E., HISTORY OF CRITICISM AND LITERARY TASTE IN EUROPE, p. 225.

(3) Benson, A. C., op. cit., p. 132.


(7) loc. cit.


(9) loc. cit.

(10) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 293.

(11) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 218.


(13) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 403.

(14) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 289.

(15) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 414.

(16) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 384.

(17) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 70.

(18) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 421.


(20) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 486.


(22) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 289.

(23) loc. cit.

(24) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 504.


(26) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 218.
(27) loc. cit.

(28) POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS, "To Virgil," p. 511.


(33) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 504.

(34) loc. cit.

(35) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 73.

(36) loc. cit.

(37) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 284.

(38) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 405.

(39) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 287.

(40) op. cit., Vol. 2. pp. 201-2.

(41) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 266.

(42) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 288.

(43) loc. cit.

(44) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 70.

(45) loc. cit.

(46) loc. cit.

(47) loc. cit.

(48) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 475.

(49) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 518.

(50) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 519. The "Sylvan Scene" referred to is in PARADISE LOST, Book IV. line 140; the quotation "fanning their odoriferous wings" is in line 157.

(51) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 520. The lines quoted are from PARADISE LOST Book IV, lines 248, 311, and 354 respectively.
(52) loc. cit.

(53) op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 521. The line quoted is from PARADISE LOST, Book VI, line 372.

(54) loc. cit.

(55) loc. cit., The line quoted is from PARADISE LOST, Book VII, line 216.
CHAPTER XIII.
Knowledge (truth), or the matter of poetry.

a. Introductory observations.

The highest object of poetry is to convey to the mind of man a message which shall lift him and make him not only happier but better. The central idea of a poem must be vital and creative; it must have power to sustain itself in our minds while we read; it must be worked out coherently and yet it must suggest that it belongs to a larger truth whose depths are unexplored and inaccessible.

The message of art is not to be confounded with its ultimate aim or its ideal. Unfortunately, the ideal of art is often obscured by the crime of sense. The function of art is to express the splendor of truth, and the modern man in large part has either denied outright or become skeptical of truth. The ideal lost, he has been thrown back upon the mechanism of art. We therefore have much finished painting, wrought to an exquisite nicety of detail, but barren of the ideal; we have elaborate versification, but little true poetry; much building, but little architecture; a vast deal of formal symbolism, but little true spirituality. There is neither inspiration nor aspiration where there is no ideal; no ideal where truth is neglected or denied. Truth is the root of art. Sapless and barren, therefore, the product of the art effort without it. We must have more art and less artifice.

This, in summary, is an expression of what Tennyson believed. It is a belief recorded in such a way as to show forth these principles and these ideas. Based principally on a study of Tennyson's poetry, they are really the same as his judgments pronounced on the poetry of others.

In Tennyson's poem "The Poet" metaphor and imagery are often confused;
but we gather that the poet in his theory attaches more importance to truth in poetry than to beauty; yet, as a matter of fact, no artist in verse has laboured harder than Tennyson to attain perfection of beauty.
b. Tennyson's theory in regard to the matter of poetry.

Choice of subject.

Tennyson said that excepting the poems suggested by the simple, old-world classical subjects, he had mostly drawn his scenes in England, because he could not truly portray the atmosphere of foreign lands. (1)

He added that he thought "Romola" a mistake, because George Eliot had not been able to enter into the complex Italian life and character, however much she might have studied them in books. He held the necessity of familiarity with the subject one wishes to treat, yet he also felt that there were subjects which could be treated without the knowledge whose absence he regretted in George Eliot's book. His son writes that he purposely chose those classical subjects from mythology and legend, which had been before but imperfectly treated, or of which the stories were slight, so that he might have free scope for his imagination. (2)

After a study of the subject matter of Tennyson's poetry, one would conclude that he would not recommend the treatment of classical subjects if the author had not by study and meditation, been able to enter into the Greek thought and spirit. That he, himself, was able to do this is scarcely questioned by anyone familiar with his works.

Imagination.

In the discussion of imagination, Tennyson has made several very interesting comments. He said on one occasion,

I am told by a certain gentleman that this mill is the original mill in the "Miller's Daughter," and that oak was the "Talking Oak," and that hall "Locksley Hall." Never anything of the sort. Why do they give the poet no credit for imagination? The power of poetical creation seems to be utterly ignored now. This modern realism is hateful, and destroys all poetry. No man with an imagination can be tied down for his ideal. Turner was an imaginative painter, and how absurd it would be to account for some of his works. (3)
Again, in answer to the Bishop of Ripon's question whether they were right who interpreted the three ladies who accompanied King Arthur on his last voyage as Faith, Hope, and Charity, he replied "with a touch of intellectual impatience:"

They do and they do not. They are those graces, but they are much more than those. I hate to be tied down to say, "This means that," because the thought in the image is much more than the definition suggested or any specific interpretation advanced. The truth is wider than the form, yet the form was a shelter for the truth. It is this meaning, but not only this; truth must be able to transcend any form in which it may be presented. (4)

Here the second Lord Tennyson records, that

as for many meanings of the poem my father would affirm, "Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colors. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet." (5)

This is probably the reason why he replied to one who had asked him to write an ode for a particular occasion,

No, certainly not; writing to order is what I hate. They think a poet can write poems to order as a bootmaker makes boots. (6)

In reply to an aspiring poet who sent him a volume of poetry in order to secure his opinion, he wrote:

My joy was all the fresher and the greater in thus suddenly coming on a poet of such fine lyrical impulse and of so rich half-oriental an imagination. (7)

In a letter to Miss Sellwood (later his wife) he wrote:

I dare not tell how high I rate humor which is generally most fruitful in the most solemn human spirits. Dante is full of it, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and almost all the greatest have been pregnant with this glorious power. You will find it even in the gospel of Christ. (8)
Plagiarism.

Humor and imagination will, doubtless, bring to mind the oft-repeated charge of plagiarism which is pronounced by those not entirely in sympathy with Tennyson's works. On this point, the poet speaks clearly.

People accused Virgil of plagiarising, but if a man made it his own, there is no harm in that (look at the great poets, Shakespeare included) ... He quoted Goethe's "Du bist ein Narr?" (9)

He himself had been "most absurdly accused of plagiarising," e.g., "The moanings of the homeless sea," "Moanings" from Horace, "homeless" from Shelley.

As if no one else had heard the sea moan except Horace. He quoted also from the "Princess" "like bottom agates in clear seas," etc., and said that he had been accused of taking it partly from Beaumont and Fletcher, and partly from Shakespeare, but that he himself invented the simile (while bathing in Wales.) (10)

His admiration for Burns was rather increased than diminished by the skill with which this poet, by a few strokes of genius, immortalized so many of the old songs of Scotland and incorporated great parts of them in his own poetry.

Burns did for the old songs of Scotland almost what Shakespeare has done for the English drama that preceded him. (11)

Translation.

He was asked, or at any rate it was suggested, by F. T. Palgrave, that he translate Pindar.

He smiled and said that in his mind the benefit of translation rested with the translator. These were memorable words; but I fancy that ancient poets were at the moment before him. A decision even more trenchant by Shelley on the practical impossibility of translating poetry will be remembered by some readers. (12)

"Why do you not write an Idyll upon the story of Ruth?" he was asked. He answered with a tone of deep conviction: Do you think I could make it
more poetical?" (13)

Selection.

On another occasion, speaking about reticence in art, he said,

I agree with Wordsworth that art is selection. Look at Zola for instance; he shows the evils of the world without the Ideal. His art becomes monstrous, therefore, because he does not practice selection. In the noblest genius there is need of self-restraint. (14)

Yet again:

I have just had a letter from a man who wants my opinion as to whether Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon. I feel like writing back: "Sir, don't be a fool." The way in which Bacon speaks of love would be enough to prove that he was not Shakespeare. "I know not how, but martial men are given to love. I think it is but as they are given to wine, for perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures." How could a man with such an idea of love write "Romeo and Juliet?" (15)

Method of composition.

When asked how he composed, more than once he said that his poems sprang from a "nucleus;" some word, may be, or brief melodious phrase which floated through the brain, as it were, unbidden. And perhaps at once whilst walking they were presently wrought into a little song. But if he did not write it down on the spot, the lyric fled from him irrecoverably. (16) In some of the shorter lyrics one can detect or at least imagine this to be true. Mrs. Butler reiterates these ideas in her diary: Tennyson told me that his lines "came to" him; and he did not make them up, but that, when they came, he wrote them down, and looked into them to see what they were like. (17)

Examples cited.

The dicta in the section on knowledge or truth in poetry and the correlated topics are confirmed by Tennyson's judgments on various poets, a few of which can be quoted here. He would point out passages in Milton, as especially admirable. One of these is from Book V of "Paradise Lost."
Of the coming of Satan with his host:

Innumerable as the stars of night,  
Of the stars of morning, dewdrops, which the sun  
Impearls on every leaf and every flower ....

And Satan mounting his royal seat, my father said: (writes Hallam Tenmyson) "What an imagination the old man had! Milton beats everyone in the material sublime." (18)

He read from Shakespeare and Milton aloud by preference; always coming to Paradise Lost with manifest pleasure and reverent devotion: like Keats, devoted to Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness:

nor did his voice and manner ever serve him better. I may name the passage describing the Gate of Heaven specially singled out for delicate beauty: the great vision of Eden which he read aloud, dwelling always on the peculiar grace of lines 246-63. (19)

Tennyson disagreed with Emerson, or rather, he did not believe in Emerson's lines:

Only to children children sing,  
Only to youth the Spring is Spring.

For age does feel the joys of spring, though age can only crawl over the bridge while youth skips the brook. (20)

Of Shakespeare, we find several similar criticisms, for example:

King Lear cannot possibly be acted, it is too titanic. This play shows a state of society where men's passions are savage and uncurbed. No play like this anywhere, not even the Agamemnon, is so terrifically human. (21)

Actors do not comprehend that Shakespeare's villains, Iago among them, have always a touch of conscience. You see the conscience working, therein lies one of Shakespeare's preeminences. Iago ought to be acted as the "honest Iago," not the stage villain; (22) it is said that Shakespeare was such a poor actor that he never got beyond his ghost in his plays, but then the ghost is the most real ghost that ever was. (23)

To Edward Fitzgerald, Tennyson once said:

Sometimes I think that Shakespeare's Sonnets are finer than his plays, which is, of course, absurd. For it is the knowledge of the plays that makes the Sonnets so fine. (24)
It remains now for us to show how Tennyson carried out the ideals which he set down and to show, if possible, Tennyson's criterion of knowledge or truth as carried out in his own poetic work.

In commenting on Tennyson's work, A. E. Powell says that

Tennyson

loved the real warm bodies of things and expressed them in their individual beauty. (25)

Coleridge maintained that one

promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge of genuine poetic power. (26)

If we follow Coleridge here, we must admit that great imaginative power is indicated in Tennyson's works. However, we have seen that Tennyson did not entirely agree with this opinion. He felt that the classical subjects, which were not very well known and which could be treated with a free rein of the author's imagination, were very good subjects for poetic treatment; but he felt also that those things which came within the range of immediate experience and which were well known to the writer, were probably best fitted for treatment. This opinion he carried out in his dialect poems and his poems about Victorian England. "In Memoriam" certainly is an outstanding example, and also his patriotic poems and others. Yet we feel that many of his best works are those treating of classical subjects.

We note also in Tennyson a self-restraint, an artistic finish, a fine mature taste, a deep reverence for the past, a pervading sympathy with the broad currents of the best thought and feeling of the time. Sometimes this is a weakness, but it is also a source of his greatest strength. He has not, like Wordsworth, given men a new insight, what we might almost call
a new religion: but he has a wider range than Wordsworth and a surer poetic touch.

The following statement by Arthur Sidgwick might well round out this portion of the thesis:

Tennyson's greatest achievement has been to show us that in the study of science we have one of the bases of the fullest poetry, a poetry which appeals at the same time to the deepest emotions and the highest and broadest intellects of mankind. Tennyson, in short, has shown that science and poetry, so far from being antagonistic, must forever advance side by side. (27)
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(2) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 13.
(3) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 422.
(4) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, pp. 301-2.
(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 420.
(7) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 405.
(8) op. cit., Vol. 1. p. 167.
(9) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 384.
(10) loc. cit.
(11) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 201.
(12) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 499.
(13) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 500.
(14) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 337.
(16) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 496.
(17) loc. cit.
(18) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 520.
(19) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 503.
(20) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 407.
(21) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 292.
(22) loc. cit.
(23) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 291.
(24) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 145.
(26) Pyre, J. F. A., op. cit., p. 17. (Quotation from Coleridge's "Biog. Lit.," Ch. XII, p. 376 - reference given by Pyre)
(27) TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS, p. 342.
CHAPTER XIV.

Goodness, or the end of poetry.

a. Introductory observations.

The French critic, Ronsard, in his essay on poetry, tells the artist that since the Muses are not willing to reside in a soul unless it be kindly, saintly, virtuous, you should act always with kindness, never with meanness, sullemess, or chagrin; moved by a fine spirit, let nothing enter your soul which is not superhuman, divine. You are to bear in highest regard conceptions which are elevated, grand, beautiful -- not those that lie round the earth. (1)

When Conde B. Pallem wrote his essay of criticism on the "Idylls of the King" a copy was sent to Tennyson who said that it was the truest criticism of the poem which he had yet seen. The introduction to this essay can be summarised in a few words. In speaking of the Victorian period, Pallem feels that not only had the ideal of poetry and poetic outlook been abandoned, but in the errant madness of the hour an idol had been erected in its stead, and so arose the fetish worship of the ugly in the school of Naturalism. This was not the adoration of the golden calf, but of a beast of clay. It was worse than mere artifice, it was a parody of art. The abode of its choice was with the swine, and it no longer sighed for the glory of the Father's house. The crime of sense had become the crime of malice. To depict man, not with the splendor or the glory of truth upon his brow, but man, the beast, amid the husks and swine, had become the avowed intent and end. The ugly, the gloom of falsehood, not the beautiful, the splendor of truth, was its sodden idol. It was without an ideal. Here sense was no longer at war with soul; but a beast was victorious.

However, Pallem contrasted Tennyson and his poetry with the prevailing spirit of the times in which he lived. He offers his praises to Tennyson,
to whom,

in an age whose literature has become replete with the gross spirit of realism, we are indebted for a noble poem whose theme is the exaltation of the beauty of purity, and this where the age is most blind to it, in man. (2)
b. Tennyson's theory in regard to morality in poetry.

Art for art's sake.

Departing from the opinions of others and our own opinion, let us see what Tennyson himself thought of this subject of morality or goodness in poetry. When adverse critics discovered that throughout all the "Idylls of the King" there was a great moral significance, he was attacked with the cry: "Art for art's sake!" After reading one of these attacks he reeled off this epigram:

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ART FOR ART'S SAKE
(instead of Art for Art and Man's Sake)

Art for Art's sake! Hail, truest Lord of Hell!
Hail Genius, Master of the Moral Will!
"The filthiest of all paintings painted well
Is mightier than the purest painted ill!"
Yes, mightier than the purest painted well,
So prone are we toward the broad way to Hell. (3)
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These lines, writes his son,

in a measure expressed his strong and sorrowful conviction, that the English were beginning to forget what was, in Voltaire's words, the glory of the English literature: "No nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." (4)

Background of Tennyson's moral ideas.

Before continuing with Tennyson's opinions on morality in art, let us digress for a moment in order to show how deeply religious he was and in what his religion consisted. This will be an aid toward understanding the concept of morality and goodness which will be recorded later.

When Tennyson was sixty years old he said:

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Yes, it is true that there are moments when the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the spiritual to be the only real and true. Depend upon it, the spiritual IS the real: it belongs to one more than the hand and foot. You may tell me that my hand and my foot are only imaginary symbols of my existence, I could believe you; but you never, never can convince me that the I is not an eternal reality, and that the spiritual is not the true and real part of me. (5)
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This will help us to understand the importance which the presence of morality and a high moral tone in poetry held in his concept of true art. If poetry was for man, and man's spirituality of far more importance than his materiality, then the poetry must be written, not for sensual enjoyment only, but rather for intellectual pleasure, and still more for the spiritual happiness of the "ego" or, as we say, the soul.

Art divorced from morality. With this in mind, we can understand why he had no sympathy for the theory which would divorce art from morals. Few literary men have manifested a more uniformly high sense of duty in connection with their work. This was a sense of duty not only to the present and future generations, but a very decided reverence for those who had passed away.

Tennyson felt that

the higher moral imagination enslaved to sense is like an eagle caught by the feet in a snare, baited with carrion, so that it cannot use its wings to soar. (6)

Knowledge or morality? In importance which should we place first, knowledge or morality? This question is answered in "In Memoriam." The quotation is a lengthy one, but must be taken in its entirety in order that the true significance can be understood.

Who loves not knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper? Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire;
She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain --
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain
Of demons? fiery-hot to burst  
All barriers in her onward race  
For power. Let her know her place;  
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,  
If all be not in vain, and guide  
Her footsteps, moving side by side  
With wisdom, like the younger child;

For she is earthly of the mind,  
But wisdom heavenly of the soul.  
O friend, who camest to thy goal  
So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,  
Who grewest not alone in power  
And knowledge, but by year and hour  
In reverence and in charity. (7)

From this quotation we see that Tennyson placed wisdom above knowledge  
and that his idea of wisdom includes reverence and charity. In other words,  
wisdom might be said to be the true moral sense, including, as it must,  
a knowledge of man's proper relations to his fellow-men and to his God.

Ethical creed.  
It is on the great theory of progress that Tennyson's ethical creed  
rested. Here he follows, or is at least influenced by Darwin's theory of  
evolution. He held that the surest law of man's nature must be, as Plato  
has expressed it, "I must be as good and noble as I can." Necessity was  
laid upon mankind, and mankind must, in Tennyson's words,

Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die. (8)

Tennyson was peculiarly and completely English in his cast of thought,  
He is distinguished, in a high degree, by what can be regarded as the  
dominant English characteristic -- reverence for duty as the supreme law  
of life: the subordination of all ideals to the moral ideal. In one of  
his earliest poems, "Oenone" -- he tells us

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Here also he indicates a rule of life:

  to live by law,
  Acting the law we live by without fear,
  And because right is right, to follow right. (9)

With Tennyson also, rightly or wrongly, the passion of sexual love, refined and idealized, is the chief instrument of ethical life: its office is

  not only to keep down the base in man,
  But teach high thoughts and amiable words,
  And love of truth, and all that makes a man. (10)

We have already quoted a comment on Catullus' saying "that a poet's lines may be impure provided his life is pure," and Tennyson's reply:

I don't agree with him; his verses fly much further than he does. There is hardly any crime greater than for a man of genius to propagate vice by his written words. (11)

In "The Poet's Mind," Tennyson's thought is of poetry's purity; in the "Poet's Song" poetry's charm depends upon faith in the immortal future. Here the poet

  sings of what the world will be,
  When the years have died away. (12)

The Sophist, in "The Poet's Mind," who would sneer at, or doubt, all things which are good and noble must stay away from the poet, from the poet's mind, for

In the heart of the garden the merry bird chants.
It would fall to the ground if you came in.
In the middle leaps a fountain
Like sheet lightning,
Ever brightening
With a low melodious thunder;
All day and all night it is ever drawn
From the brain of the purple mountain
Which stands in the distance yonder;
It springs on a level of bowery lawn,
And the mountain draws it from Heaven above,
And it sings a song of undying love;
And yet, tho' its voice be so clear and full,
You never would hear it; your ears are so dull;
So keep where you are: you are foul with sin;
It would shrink to earth if you came in. (13)
This is the confession of the poet's faith in the ideal, it is the cry of the prophet to the younger singers of a faithless and irresolute generation. We find in Tennyson's poetry, a great union of thought, particularly on moral themes, and imaginative beauty. In this he is like the majority of important poets of the English peoples.

The Palace of Art.

Tennyson's theory of the nature and function of art is popular, rather than artistic or profound. In "The Palace of Art," for example, he has laid foundations on which both ethical and aesthetic structures may be built up in a modern fashion. Though addressed in the first instance to an artist, the poem was afterwards dedicated to an unprofessional friend; at least the word "artist" was removed.

The ethical lesson of "The Palace of Art" is one that should be learned by every educated man or woman who forgets that

There's nothing we can call our own but love. (18)

It ought to be learned by the poet himself if he remains "orbed in his desolation."

What the poem especially condemns is the tendency to turn to a merely selfish aesthetic account the most solid virtues known to men; to live above and away from the "darkening droves of swine," those humbler brethren of the plain; to shut oneself up in a palace of art where we may feast in our isolated ease on artistic dishes made yet more delectable by sweet spices extracted from despised and mutilated memorials of human achievement and goodness.

To set forth this thesis, Tennyson pictured the palace of art, and its magnificent assemblage of the world of architecture and painting, amid which the soul might sit,
Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joyful to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five; (19)

rejoicing too, in her isolation from the low, swineherd of humanity and in her immunity from the struggles which come, through effort, to solve the "riddle of the painful earth."

I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all. (20)

This is the central thought of the poem; for this is the heart of the heresy which the poet is depicting -- the self-sufficiency of art, or, as it used to be called, the theory of "art for art's sake."

After exaltation comes the fall, the punishment, full of human interest, wrought with an emotion which lifts it above the level of mere symbolism. Despair, confusion of mind, fear and hatred of solitude, self-scorn, terrible silence, hatred of life, and death, entombment in fire within, falls upon the soul until she cries:

What is it that will take away my sin
And save me lest I die? (21)

Out of the repentant cry comes escape from the dread comradeship of her own self. "I will return to humility and to love, to lowly life with men and women, I will

Make me a cottage, in the vale," she cried,
"Where I may mourn and pray." (22)

"Love is of the valley," and when love is learned them will the soul return to her palace. When "I love, and return with others there, bringing all I love with me to enjoy with me -- the beauty which turned to corruption when I was alone will live again in glory."

As Tennyson later recorded, this poem was the result of "the simple
memory of a word spoken in college days by my friend Richard Tremoy:
'Tennyson, we cannot live in art.' (23)
c. Morality in Tennyson's poetry.

When Professor Butcher, a close friend of Tennyson, wrote of Virgil, Sophocles and Tennyson as representatives of Latin, Greek, and English poetry respectively, he believed that each of the three had in him the immost heart of poetry, beating with a full humanity and instinct with human tenderness; each remained true to his calling as an artist and pursued throughout life the vision of beauty; and each achieved, in his own way, a noble and harmonious beauty of thought and form, of soul and sense.

Toward the end of Tennyson's life the moral and religious content of the poems becomes fuller with his deepening sense of the grandeur and the pathos of man's existence. If we eliminate this element from art, how much great poetry is removed from the realm of art! Now and then, it must be confessed, the ethical aim in Tennyson seems to be unduly prominent, but very rarely does the artist lose himself in the teacher or the preacher. Tennyson has a message to deliver, but it is not a moral lesson, it is a true appeal to the imagination. Put it in prose and it is no longer his.
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(3) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 92.

(4) loc. cit.

(5) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 90.

(6) op. cit., Vol. 2. p. 337.

(7) POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS, "In Memoriam," # CXIV, p. 192.

(8) Lilly, W. S., op. cit., p. 48.

(9) loc. cit.

(10) loc. cit.

(11) MEMOIR, Vol. 2. p. 400; also in Benson, op. cit., p. 132.


(15) op. cit., p. 518.

(16) op. cit., p. 292.


(19) loc. cit.

(20) loc. cit.

(21) loc. cit.

(22) loc. cit.

(23) Alden, TENNYSON, p. 13.
PART III.
CONCLUSION.

A. SUMMARY OF TENNYSON'S LITERARY CRITICISM.

Tennyson's criticism covers the entire field of literature, but most especially that of poetry. It covers every form of poetry, in some cases rather sketchily, with emphasis on the work of particular authors. For example, in his criticism of the drama he confines himself almost entirely to Shakespearean drama. In it Tennyson does not base his criticism on the dramatic but on the poetic element of the drama.

The portion of this thesis which records the criticism of particular poets includes, without special comment, dicta concerning literature other than poetry. This was for the sake of completeness.

The criticism recorded might have been thought entirely textual --metrical and linguistic -- criticism. This is an error. Tennyson, had he overlooked this phase of poetry, would not be considered a real critic of literature. However, the greater portion of his criticism, and the more important part, is on the thought element of poetry and on the subject of morality in poetry. When the latter was considered, we spoke of it in the general sense of the end of poetry.

In resume we vindicate Tennyson's ability as a critic by quoting Aubrey de Vere who considered him a very competent critic of poetry.

De Vere noted that

in our many conversations, we spoke chiefly of poetry, a subject on which Tennyson could say nothing that was not original. It was easy to see that to discern the beautiful around us, and to reveal that beauty to others, was his special poetic vocation. (1)

We feel, however, that Tennyson expressed no new critical theory. How many critics have expressed new thoughts, new conceptions, a new theory? They
have merely reiterated the older formulas in new forms against the background of their times.

In this thesis we recorded a collection of opinions drawn from the whole gamut of classical, of English, German, French and Italian poetry, from the Medieval, Renaissance, Neo-Classic, and Romantic schools of thought. These opinions were gathered together and fused into the Tennysonian—Victorian criticism. In this sense Tennyson's criticism was original and will be found of value for the understanding and appreciation of literature.

No one will say that Tennyson stood alone as a critic of the Victorian era, or that his opinions can stand undisputed. A dedication such as that of Mr. Fleay in his Shakespeare Manual,

To Alfred Tennyson, who, had he not elected to be the greatest poet of his time, might easily have become the greatest critic, (2)

certainly points to the fact that Tennyson, the critic, was highly esteemed in his own time and that, today, his criticism should indicate to us the Victorian trend in literary criticism and literary opinions.

In summarizing Tennyson's criticism, we would say that poetry is not only the most beautiful, but also the most legitimate and most facile instrument of education. It is the most pleasant and efficient means of building up intellectual character. At least this was Tennyson's opinion. His verse "Poets whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world," emphasizes this statement.

After a study of Tennyson's criticism we must conclude that the first and highest aim of art, as clearly perceived by Tennyson, was moral. He had an eye and a soul for beauty, but he was not an artist "that did love beauty only" in the restricted sense of the term. To him beauty was "a kind of goodness." (3)
Tennyson could not believe that a man was disqualified for poetry either by thinking more deeply than others or by having a keener perception of moral beauty. There can be no doubt that this view represents, with a reasonable accuracy, the opinion of Tennyson. We repeat, that, in his own time, as his son tells us, he expressed the fear that the English were beginning to forget what was, in Voltaire's words, the glory of English literature; "No nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." (4)
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(2) Pyre, op. cit., p. 69, footnote.

(3) Luce, op. cit., pp. 41-2.

B. SUGGESTIONS AS TO FURTHER INQUIRY.

In perusing this thesis, the reader may feel that several fields or divisions of the subject were not touched or, at least, plumbed to their depths. He may feel that Tennyson's philosophy of criticism was not formally considered, nor was his philosophical background treated adequately. The antecedents of Tennyson's critical theory were considered only cursorily, while the comparison of Tennyson with contemporary critics or with the critics who preceded or followed him was not touched. Therefore Tennyson's place in the field of literary criticism was not established.

All these fields remain open for further investigation. There remains also the evaluation of the merit of Tennyson's criticism and, perhaps, a clearer statement of Tennyson's critical theory.

The critical dicta herein contained could be compared with the dicta of other critics. For example, one might compare Tennyson's evaluation of Milton and Milton's poetry or of Shakespeare and his sonnets and dramas with the evaluation of other critics, antecedent to, contemporaneous with, or subsequent to the Victorian period in which Tennyson wrote.

What effect the Victorian period had on Tennyson and what influence he exercised over the writers of that period and the period immediately following could also be considered.

One caution, however, must be given to the prospective investigator. He must be careful not to over-rate Tennyson as a critic or the criticism herein recorded. True, it is that Tennyson's contemporaries, especially his friends, lauded him to the skies, but the recorded remains of his dicta are not sufficient to warrant more detailed investigations. Tennyson's criticism is, no doubt, of value but it can hardly be organized in such a
way as to give a well-organized theory, without a certain amount of inconsistency. Some further investigation and amplification of the matter contained in this thesis should be undertaken but no attempt should be made to place Tennyson on a par with the really great critics of literature especially when they enunciate their theories of literary criticism.
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The thesis, "The Literary Criticism of Alfred Tennyson," written by Peter L. Decker, S.J. has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Rev. Allan P. Farrell, S.J. March, 1938
Rev. Alfred Brickel, S.J. March, 1938