



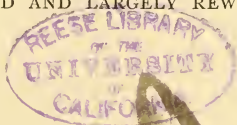
A STUDY OF THE WORKS OF TENNYSON



A
STUDY OF THE WORKS
OF
ALFRED
LORD TENNYSON
POET LAUREATE

BY
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NEW EDITION
COMPLETED AND LARGELY REWRITTEN



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THE original "Study" was dedicated to Tennyson himself, and was published in the year of my marriage. The present volume was thought of before the poet's death, and was partly prepared, in accordance with her own keen desire, during my wife's last illness. In remembrance of the former dedication, and in memory of her whom I hope to meet where ideals shall be fulfilled, I inscribe this book. That which they have done, and which I, herewith, am doing—

"May He within Himself make pure,"

energising all that is true and good, and sterilising all that is false and evil, in the minds and spirits of those whom we shall have influenced.



PREFACE: PARTLY PERSONAL

THE chapter on *General Principles*, and the chapters on the *Early Philosophical Poems* and "*In Memoriam*" stand mainly, though not entirely, as they were in the original "Study." The rest of the book is either new, as dealing with new matter, or has been to a great extent rewritten.

A reader acquainted with the earlier editions of this book may miss the term "mechanical-supernaturalism" in the present edition. The term is absent; the thought is by no means so. It is more fully present, and is more fully discussed in various places, but especially in Chap. XVII. on *The Supernatural or Preternatural in Tennyson*. Concerning it, however, I wish to say one word in this place.

The term was used to challenge certain preternatural features in the *Enoch Arden* volume.

Afterwards, I withdrew the objection in the belief that the preternaturalism was justified by some of the phenomena of spiritualism, in which, through suffering my judgment and will, under very difficult circumstances, to be overborne, I was for a time entangled.

But, later, I saw reason to reaffirm the stricture with emphasis, because I had come to believe that spiritualism, be its phenomena real or spurious, is in itself unclean—unclean with an all-pervading falseness in the persons concerned; unclean with a subtleness of falsity that seems to be itself supernatural.

I said, "under very difficult circumstances," because I should be sorry indeed to seem to countenance, by lightness on my part, the notion that anything but conscience, judgment, the responsible will—anything but the sense of right, of duty—ought to be suffered to determine action in so grave a region. To touch such a thing out of the love of excitement, or even out of curiosity concerning matters spiritual, is to act the part of those who "rush in where angels fear to tread." The absolute "I will not" should stand like a rock against solicitations from within or without, as it should against temptations to definite acts of sin.

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

THE study of a poet may be directed towards either the art forms, or the conceptions, embodied in his works; towards either the beauties of execution and detail by means of which he sets forth the truths and lessons he desires to exhibit, or towards those truths and lessons themselves. In Tennyson, either of these is a rich field. I have chosen but one. Upon the strictly art field, I have but touched, here and there. My main purpose, throughout, has been to bring out the central thought or lesson of each poem. During my work, the constant discovery of fresh art beauties has been a large part of my reward. Of this reward, at all events, the reader who consents to accompany me for a little is not less sure.

The highest poetry—and, indeed, the highest art in general—will within its body of beauty contain a soul of truth. The body of beauty is as essential as the soul of truth—truth without beauty cannot make art. The truth must be moral truth, or, at lowest, emotional, which is akin to moral. With intellectual truth, pure

and simple, poetry has nothing to do. Intellectual truth of a high order will oftentimes be found in a great poem, but it will always be in organic connection with some moral or emotional truth.

A moral truth may be set forth under an abstract or a concrete form. The poet has not much to do with the abstract; the concrete is his sphere. The concrete form of moral truth is character; the poet's chief concern is with character. But there are philosophical poets, and these deal with abstract truths. In their hands, symbol and metaphor form a garment, if not a body, for the abstract, and enable it, in some sort, to become concrete. The very essence of the poet's relation to truth lies in his tendency to give it concrete forms. In this respect, the philosopher absolute and the poet absolute, though both, by their very nature, truth-seekers, are antipodal; the terms *poet*, *philosophical poet*, *poetical philosopher*, and *philosopher*, might be used to express the gradations of the tendency which differentiates them.

As the poet is not a philosopher, so also he is not a moralist. Didactic poetry is almost a contradiction in terms. The poet's appeal is rather to the moral sentiments than to the conscience direct. Rather by the exhibition, than by the prescription, of goodness, he aims to influence the character. He desires, not that you should listen to a sermon, but that, through sympathy with them, you should catch the tone of his noble characters, or that, through healthy moral indignation, there should be awakened in you a keener repugnance to the faults of his baser characters. So, though no moralist, his ultimate aim is wholly moral; and though he never bids you what to do, the direct

tendency of his work is always the ennobling of your practical life.

The moral soul of a poem must live within a body of beauty. Without beauty there is no art. Over both the choice of subjects and their execution, this canon is inflexible. No other consideration in the choice of a subject, and no other merit in its execution, can atone for the neglect of beauty. Mere accuracy of portraiture is draughtsmanship, not art. The artist is he who, above all men, has an eye for the beautiful, who loves the beautiful, and who can embody the beautiful in some art form. To this body of beauty the penetrating power of the poet's teaching is due. A poem is more potent than an essay setting forth the same truth, because, while in the latter the truth still retains, so to say, its solid form, and needs to undergo all the processes of mastication and digestion before it can be taken up into the system, in the former it is dissolved in the nectar of beauty, and woos the lips, and permeates the blood with a thrill of pleasure that is only known to be more than pleasure from the fact that the frame grows strong and puts out its force into worthy action under its influence. But if the beauty be wanting, the poetic form is but a shell put around the truth, and when the shell is broken there is still the mastication and digestion of a solid truth to be accomplished.

There is room for poetry that shall contain no soul of moral truth—which shall be but a body of beauty, but which yet shall not lie outside the region of the educational. All beauty, pure and simple, tends to refinement, and all refinement, pure and simple, to goodness; and so the poet, or, in general, the artist,

who but sets forth forms of beauty, may yet be aiding the growth of the good. Even so much as this is not needed to justify his work; if he give but pure pleasure, his work is far from vain. But it must be rigidly demanded of the poet who aims to create a body of beauty alone, and who holds back from the attempt to breathe into the body a soul of goodness, that he put no other soul therein. All art must be at least negative in relation to the moral. He who sends out a coarse or a mean thought into the world at all, does ill service to his kind; but the *poet* who does this plays the part of the devil. For the poetic solvent of beauty is not less potent in aiding the permeation of the soul by evil than by good. The solid coarseness or meanness of prose will tempt none whose appetites are not already degraded to its liking; but beauty is nectar whatever be dissolved in it, and the frame may be poisoned, unconsciously, or with half-resistance, because the mind was too simple, or the will too feeble, to shut the lips against the wooing death. In the body of beauty may live an angel of light or a devil of darkness; and the poet is he at whose word in this dream-world of his own creation the spirit enters. If he leave the body untenanted, it is well, for it *is* a body of beauty; if he beckon in an angel of light, it is noble, and he has done well for his kind; if the devil of darkness have taken possession at his word, he has earned for his name a place on the scroll of the enemies of our race.

Thus much for the essence of poetry; concerning the form little need be said here. "There are at bottom three kinds of poetry—Dramatic, Epic, Lyric;

Play, Tale, and Song." Each of these must, of course, have a subject-matter; but they differ greatly in the degree in which the personality of the poet is mingled with the subject-matter. In the perfect drama, the poet does not appear at all. He places his characters before you, and suffers them to speak and act and work out their own destinies, unaffected by and uncommented upon by him. Whether they are good or bad, whether they speak wisely or foolishly, what emotions are the proper response to their destinies—of these things he gives you no hint. The drama is before you; judge. It is a bit of the story of life cut out for your contemplation, and life has no interpreter. It is not life represented or narrated; it is life. There is no poet. You are face to face with humanity.

This is the perfect idea of the drama. If once the poet shows himself, the play, as such, is marred. If you feel him selecting, arranging, interpreting or commenting, you feel that the dramatic simplicity is gone. You may be glad, for you may prefer the poet to his subject; but that is not the point; the play is no longer a fragment of life,—it is a show; and the poet is showman and commentator.

The drama is in the present tense; the epic is in the past. In the drama, life is before you; in the epic, the drama has been seen by the poet, and he is telling you the story of what he has seen. Characters, action, plot and catastrophe form the elements of both, but they differ in tense. There is, however, another and a deeper difference. The perfect drama has no room for the personality of the poet; the epic has. The epic is the union of the subject-matter with the personality of the poet. The whole story passes

through the medium of his mind, and becomes coloured by it. You see the characters as he saw them, form his judgments, feel his preferences, move with his emotions. He is not only narrator, he is interpreter, and interpreter not according to the canons of absolute truth, but by the key of his own character and sympathies. The epic is permeated by the poet; it is the union of *it* with *him*.

The drama shows a story; the epic tells it; the lyric, if it be concerned with a story, assumes it to be known, and sings about it. About a story, or about a character, an act, or a sentiment, the lyric may sing. But in the lyric, still more than in the epic, the personality of the poet rises into view. The *purpose* of the poem is to tell how the poet feels within himself or about his subject. You *learn* how he feels about his subject in the epic; but the epic is not made for the purpose of telling you the poet's feelings, but to tell the story. The expression of feeling is incidental. But in the lyric the expression of feeling is all. A story or a character falls upon the mind of the poet, and sets it in vibration; or the mind vibrates subjectively; the vibration rendered audible is a lyric. Hence the lyric is, as nearly as possible, the expression, pure and simple, of the poet's personality.

These are the great kinds of poetry, and these are some of their essential characteristics.

We glance next at the characteristics of Tennyson's poetry in relation to the general principles thus laid down.

That the body of beauty is found everywhere throughout his writings, there can be small doubt.

Of mere sound beauty the poems are full; in metrical beauty and variety they are singularly rich; the very rhymes oftentimes hold you in surprise at their abundance and spontaneity. The eighteenth canto of *Maud* and the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* display a wealth and beauty of rhyming almost unmatched in English poetry.

In the musical combinations of his words, Tennyson is equalled, I think, among English poets, only by Spenser and Shelley, unless, indeed, Keats may be added. And, over and above its music, there is a certain suggestive power about much of our poet's language altogether apart from its meaning, which is especially worthy of notice. The power comes partly out of the matching of sense by sound, but it is not wholly due to this. It is partly this, and it is partly the effect of metre, but it is more than both. (The words seem to bear the same relation to the meaning or sentiment underlying them, that a human face does to the underlying heart and mind.) The fact will make itself felt by every lover of those poems in *In Memoriam* and *Maud* especially.

Tennyson's metrification has been often studied and often praised. Its rich and expressive variety is nowhere better seen than in the *Maud* volume. In *Maud* itself, each change of metre matches, and matches exquisitely, an emotional change. And then the symbolism of the metre in single verses is oftentimes remarkable. To take, for instance, the second verse of the fifth canto, and mark how the lines grow, as the yearning intensifies, while the revulsion of feeling caused by the return to the contemplation of his own poor life and nipped heart finds expression in

the broken line that closes the verse. The third verse of the sixth canto, again, affords a splendid instance of symbolic metrification—

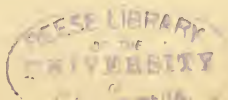
“And thus a delicate spark
 Of glowing and growing light,
 Through the live-long hours of the dark,
 Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams,
 Ready to burst in a coloured flame ;
 Till, at last, when the morning came
 In a cloud, it faded, and seems
 But an ashen-gray delight.”

The steady flow of the words up to the culmination of the long happy fourth line, followed by the broken weary movement of the latter part of the verse, expresses perfectly the growth of the imaginative happiness during the idealising hours of the night, and the ultimate triumph of the daylight with its cold insistence upon facts, even though the words meant nothing.

The *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is a great study in metrification, though the striking suitability of the metre of *In Memoriam* for a poem of which thought and subtle distinctions of thought were to be so large and important an element is not less the result of an instinct true and keen. But upon this and such matters we must not dwell, for our chief business is with the soul rather than the body of our poet's writings.

Yet a little more concerning the body must be said. I spoke of the vague pictorial power of Tennyson's language. A step on from this leads us to the observation of the keen flashing power of his words, due to their often presenting, instantaneously and vividly, just those qualities in the thought or the

thing, pertinent to the situation in which that thought or thing presents itself. Epithets form the crucial test of the poet. Men's nouns and verbs agree much more than their adjectives and adverbs. The poet and the poetaster see the same things, and write about the same things also. But the poetaster sees only the general characteristics of the thing, and to express these the noun alone will suffice. But he dare not use the noun alone, for in doing so he would reveal to himself and to all men that of the true poet's power of seeing he had none. So the poetaster is very given to epithets; but his epithets are either such as by immemorial usage are accredited sound and appropriate (only that by their familiarity they have lost the power of epithets, and, at best, are not the poetaster's any more than they are the reader's), or else they are windy, blustering epithets that but cheat the poetaster and his weakest readers into the belief that they add something to the meaning of the noun about which they shake so turbulently. The epithets of the true poet, on the other hand, are full of revealing power. All men see as much of a thing as the noun expresses. The poet sees more, and his epithet reveals the more which he sees. The power of seeing this "more" is perhaps *the* distinctive power of the poet, or, more generally, of the artist. The power of learning this "more" from the epithet is perhaps the chief and the rarest faculty in the poet's reader. Were this faculty less rare, there would be less confounding of poets and poetasters. The careful reading of such poems as *Godiva*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, and the *Morte d'Arthur* will make clear what is meant by the foregoing remarks.



In studying Tennyson's epithets, then, we should be studying his seeing faculty—his real and personal knowledge of nature and all outer things. Such a study would be rich in both teaching and training—in teaching us what the poet has seen for us; in training us to see for ourselves. The power of seeing deeper than the noun qualities, so to say, is very rare. The man of science teaches us to see deeper; so also does the poet. But except the man of science or the poet be the very highest of his order, they teach us to see very different things. The mere man of science seeks for appearances indicating structure; the mere poet looks for beauty. But the highest man of science sees also with the poet's eyes; the great poet sees with the eyes of the man of science, as well as with his poet eyes. (Each is a great teacher in the art of the true observation of nature and all outer things.)

Tennyson's sympathy with science is remarkable, and colours all his poetry.¹ But it does not cause him to cease to be the poet-observer. All his seeings are transmuted into beauty, or symbol of higher truth. But though, to some readers, the beauty and the symbolism were nothing, none the less his guidance in the art of observing would be invaluable. A friend of mine went through his poems, marking all his references to flowers. The study was a valuable one, and many similar experiments might suggest themselves to the thoughtful reader. The precision of our poet's observations is everywhere remarkable, and, oftentimes, his most incidental references to natural objects are full of point and instruction. He sees, at once, with

¹ Perhaps in his later poems he somewhat surrenders to science. Of this more hereafter.

the precision of the man of science and the intensity of the poet. I do not attempt to give illustrations, for it will make itself apparent to any thoughtful student who turns his attention to the matter.

Possessing an intimate knowledge of nature, Tennyson puts his knowledge to a distinctive use. He rarely makes it the subject of his poetry. Everywhere his poetry is about man. Yet everywhere nature enters largely into his poetry. It enters, too, in a close and peculiar connection with the human characters which form the subjects of the poetry. He does not draw the man, and then draw the nature around him; but he enters into the man, and sees nature through his eyes, nature, at the same time, so adapting herself to the mood of the man, that her spirit and his seem one. This relation I have expressed by the name *sensuo-sympathetic*. There is nothing like it in the poetry of Wordsworth, or of Shelley, or of Keats. In each of these, nature, after one manner or another, masters the man. In Keats she subdues him; in Shelley she transfigures him; in Wordsworth she is his teacher. But in Tennyson she is one with him. As she presents herself to his senses, she is in absolute sympathy with him. His pain and fear, his hopes and questionings, are hers. All through *In Memoriam* one feels this. In such poems as *Mariana* and the *Lotus-Eaters* the spirit of the picture would remain the same, though the human beings were struck out. In *Claribel* the picture is made by nature, yet it is not a natural but a human situation that is pictured. *Maud* is full of the same *sensuo-sympathetic* relation between man and nature. It is altogether characteristic of Tennyson, and it gives a

reality to his similes which otherwise they could not have. You feel, not that he is bringing together two things that happen to have an external resemblance upon some particular point, but that he is bringing out a harmony between things the which you had not before perceived. In such a simile as

“She did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist,
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain,”

there seems to be something deeper than an accidental resemblance.

Concerning our poet's subjects, I wrote in the original Study as follows: “In passing on to notice the subjects which Tennyson has chosen for his poems, we reach a point where it is hard to separate the body of beauty from the soul which it contains. Yet, conceivably, the same truths might have been taught, and taught poetically, through less beautiful subjects. To the setting forth of the lesson of *Enid*, so exquisite a portraiture as that of *Enid* herself was not essential. Were the beauty altogether absent, the truths would not be put poet-fashion at all; but I think it would be hard to find more than one or two English poets whose subjects are so generally harmonious to the taste and sensibilities, and so dear to the heart, as those of our Laureate. If with him Wordsworth, for instance, be compared, the contrast will make itself very distinctly felt.

“Of poetry that is only beauty Tennyson has written very little indeed. Some few poems of this order there are, as we shall see hereafter, but nearly all these were produced quite early in the poet's career.

“Of poems with an evil soul there are none. *Vivien* is no exception to this, as also we shall see hereafter. Everywhere purity, honour, reverence, shine out through the poems.

“There are many philosophical poems, some of them approaching daringly near to the setting forth of purely abstract truths. But in every case that garment of concreteness, made up of symbol and metaphor, of which I spoke, and an abundant richness of colour and atmosphere save the poem from intellectual coldness, and usher it through the portals of the head into the holier chambers of the heart.

“No poet more fully recognises his duty as a teacher than Tennyson, but no poet is less explicitly didactic. He remembers that he is an artist, not a divine—a poet, not a moralist. So his moral teachings are rendered in the concrete not in the abstract form, and shine out from his characters rather than are uttered by or for them. To present a human character radiant with moral beauty—that is his way of preaching a poet-sermon. But this matter is *the* subject of our study; more, therefore, need not be said upon it in this place.”

To this I must now add somewhat. What I have just quoted was, it is true, written after the publication of the *Enoch Arden* and *Aylmer's Field* volume. But in the comment upon *Aylmer's Field* I remarked upon the extreme sadness not only of the poem, but of the volume which contained it. Here then we get the beginning of a considerable, and often a very great change in Tennyson's subjects. Henceforth they are predominantly sad, and sometimes they are very painful.

In the teachings also there is a change. Up to this point, especially after he has purged himself of a tinge of that defect, common in poets, to which I refer hereafter, one may generally surrender oneself to what Tennyson wishes to teach. But in the later poems it is not quite so. Some new ideas have taken possession of him that need to be challenged. In the proper places I have challenged them. But it was necessary, in these general remarks upon the character of the poems to the study of which we are addressing ourselves, to speak of the difference between the earlier and the later poems. I may add that *all* the *Idylls of the King*, though some of them are late in date, group with the earlier poems in respect of this difference.

But even to what I have now said I must add some qualification. *In Memoriam* is of course one of the earlier poems. Yet in it a foreshadowing of the coming change, a tinge of the new mood, beginnings of the new thoughts and tendencies, are to be found. The presence of such characteristics did not, of old, strike me; it is brought out by their fuller presence in the later poems, and, I may add, by the sensitiveness which the wild seethings of current literature and literary art produce in the mind. Some might say that *Maud* also has this new character about it. I, however, do not think so. The hero of *Maud* was, of course, a long way from mentally healthy. But the poem *Maud* I think a thoroughly healthy poem—pronouncedly healthy in that it sets forth a road from semi-madness to sanity. So this last qualification that I have made applies to some parts of *In Memoriam* alone.

Turning now to the subject of poetic form, I venture first of all to define three terms that I need to use. By a *sentiment* I will mean a moral principle held emotionally; by a *ballad* a narrative poem whose *motive* is an incident, an event, a deed, the ballad thus standing related to history; by an *idyll* a narrative poem whose *motive* is an emotion or a sentiment, the idyll thus being more akin to the lyric.

Using the terms thus, and having Tennyson especially in view, I would group poems as follows:—

1. Lyrics proper; lyrics, that is, in which the poet utters his own emotion.
2. Dramatic lyrics; poems, that is, in which a character, not the poet, is made to utter himself—his emotion.
3. Ballads, as above defined.
4. Full historical poems; epics.
5. Idylls (as above defined) proper; idylls, that is, in which the narrator, being the poet, has no relation to the story.
6. Idylls in varying degrees dramatic.
7. Dramatic poems.
8. Dramas proper.

The philosophical poem, at all events as Tennyson writes it, may, I suppose, be thought of as related to the lyric, the poet singing thought instead of emotion, or emotional thought instead of absolute emotion. Of this there may also be two varieties:

9. Philosophical poems proper.
10. Dramatic philosophical poems.

Now in which of these does Tennyson's faculty specially lie?

That he is strongly lyric is a matter of common

observation: one might almost say that, when at his best, he is always lyrical. Yet I do not think that he is truly described as pre-eminently a lyric poet.

For also he is strongly dramatic. This was noticed in him from the first—his power of throwing himself into many types of character. Yet he is not much a dramatist. *In* the character he sings, or makes it sing, not acts, or makes it act. He is a lyric poet, singing with many voices by virtue of the dramatic power through which he is able to project himself into many and diverse characters.

But neither is this the end of the matter, as I once thought it was. For, as I now think, it is in the idyll that Tennyson reaches his highest. The idyll, not the ballad, of course—a story whose *motive* is an emotion or a sentiment, and which is therefore akin to the lyric. And as a story must be about a person or persons, there is play for the dramatic faculty in it, the more as sentiment touches or is one with character. So in the idyll there is room for all the faculties; and in Tennyson's idylls much of his sweetest singing and most vivid portraiture is to be found.

And then the idyll pre-eminently lends itself to what is the especial range of Tennyson's matter. He is not a mere singer: life interests him profoundly. Yet no more in spirit than in form is he a dramatist. Not all sorts and conditions of men in their native hues are his theme. He is, whenever he is at his best, strictly an artist—a seeker and portrayer of beauty. The human beautiful, and in subordination to and sympathy with this, the beauty of nature—these are his proper theme. He is a painter; not an analyst,

like Browning. He shows you the exterior, but so shows it that you learn from it the interior. He is a moralist, but he is not to any great extent a philosophical moralist, sounding depths not before reached; nor is he a casuist. He is an artist moralist, vivifying and intensifying the well-known features of the good. And last, and most special of all, he is the poet, the artist, of woman, and of the moral beauties that relate to her. The ideal of womanhood; the vision of purity; the grace of gentlehood and of loyalty—these make the glory that, above all others, shines out of our poet's writings.

All these faculties and teachings find their best expression through the idyll.

CHAPTER II

CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY—CLASSIFICATION—POETS AND CRITICS

WITH the whole of Tennyson's work now before us, we can definitely group the poems in relation to dates. After that we will classify them according to subject-matter.

The poems written before the death of Arthur Hallam may form our first group. It is marked off, proximately or absolutely, by the *Juvenilia* of recent collected editions. Under this heading are included—

1. Those poems of the 1830 volume which have held their ground ever since.
2. The poems of that volume which, withdrawn for a time, have since been restored to publication.
3. Poems not published till 1832 now incorporated with the 1830 mass.

Also we may think of the 1830 volume as having absorbed into itself elements of thought and expression from the previous "Two Brothers" volume 1827, and perhaps *Timbuctoo*, 1829.

The 1832 volume (dated 1833 on the title-page) does not mark an epoch, because partly some of its

poems are now incorporated with the *Juvenilia* and, partly, others of them when they were republished in 1842 had been a good deal altered. We may therefore count that we have one group only before the death of Arthur Hallam.

The second group consists of poems published between 1833 and 1859. These are—

1. The two volumes of 1842, which afterwards, with some alterations and additions, became the volume familiar for many years as "Poems," before collected editions began to be. [These two volumes were made up of 1830 poems, 1832 poems, greatly altered, with additional poems of nearly the same date, and poems later, and entirely new of course.]
2. *The Princess*, 1847, but afterwards added to.
3. *In Memoriam*, 1850.
4. *Maud* and other poems, including the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, 1855.

In 1859, opening our third period, was published the volume called *Idylls of the King*, containing the first four—or more strictly the matter of five—of the larger set of poems that we now call *Idylls of the King*. The four were *Enid* (now separated into *The Marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid*), *Vivien* (now called *Merlin and Vivien*), *Elaine* (now called *Lancelot and Elaine*), and *Guinevere*. In 1869 came the *Holy Grail* volume (dated 1870), containing *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*. In 1872 were published *Gareth and Lynette* and *The Last Tournament*. These completed the series, except for the short idyll *Balin and Balan*, which did not appear till 1885, in the

Tiresias volume. But long before that the first play, *Queen Mary*, had been published. The date of the publication, namely, 1875, may be held to close the third and to open the fourth of our periods. During the *Idylls of the King* period not much else was published—only indeed the *Enoch Arden* volume, 1864, and some miscellaneous poems in the *Holy Grail* volume, and the *Songs of the Wrens* in 1870.

In 1875 opens, as we have said, our fourth and last period, the period of the Plays. It is a very full period, yielding *Queen Mary*, 1875; *Harold*, 1877; *The Falcon*, 1879; *The Lover's Tale* (made up of two portions, the first youthful, the second published in the *Holy Grail* volume, 1869, under the name *The Golden Supper*), 1879; *Ballads and other Poems*, 1880; *The Cup*, 1881; *The Promise of May*, 1882, afterwards printed in the *Locksley Hall Sixty Years after* volume; *Tiresias and other Poems*, 1885; *Becket*, 1885; *Locksley Hall*, etc. (as above), 1886; *Demeter and other Poems*, 1889; *The Foresters*, 1892; *Death of Ænone*, *Akbar's Dream*, etc., 1892.

Here then, we say, there are four periods. In the following pages the periods, as four, will sometimes be referred to. But for study purposes it will often be convenient to group together the poems of the first and second periods; these will then be called the *Earlier Poems*. Distinguished from these will be the *Idylls of the King*, and from these again all the rest, whether produced during or after the *Idylls of the King* period, and which will be called *Later Poems*. I have already shown (in the previous chapter) that for study purposes the distinction between *Earlier* and *Later* poems is important.

I now proceed to the classification of the poems. In doing this I had no *desire* to attend to date distinctions, nor shall I proceed upon the basis of poetic form. The groups will be made rather upon the intellectual and moral aims or tendencies manifest in the poems. But the distinctions in this region correspond somewhat to differences of form, and the very considerable contrast in intellectual and spiritual character between the earlier and later poems compels me also to recognise times in the making and arrangement of the groups.

With some advantage I hope, but at all events to satisfy my own sense of completeness, I have given every poem a place in the classification, including those upon which I have not further commented.

DIVISION I.

Earlier Poems, with such of the Later Poems as do not characteristically differ from them.

GROUP I. *Poems concerning a Poet.*

The Poet's Song.
The Poet.
The Poet's Mind.

GROUP II. *Poems concerning the Treatment of a Poet.*

Experiment in Hendecasyllabics.
Poets and their Bibliographies.
The Spiteful Letter.
Literary Squabbles.
The Flower.
Poets and Critics.
To —— (You might have won).
The Dead Prophet.

These two groups should be regarded as prefatory. The definite study of the poems begins with the next group.

GROUP III. *Studies.*

(a) *Melody Studies.*

Claribel.
 Song (The winds as at their hour of birth).
 The Owl.
 The Owl, 2nd Song.
 The Sea-Fairies.
 The Merman.
 The Mermaid.
 The Islet.
 The Window.
 Child-Songs, 1 and 2.

(b) *Nature Studies.*

Claribel.
 Song (The winds as at their hour of birth).
 Nothing will Die.
 All Things will Die.
 Leonine Elegiacs.
 The Kraken.
 The Dying Swan.
 The Blackbird.
 The Eagle.
 To E. L.

(c) *Emotion and Mood Studies.*

A Dirge.
 The Deserted House.
 A Song (A spirit haunts).
 Early Sonnets, 10, 11.
 My Life is full of Weary Days.
 Move Eastward.
 Come not when I am Dead.
 The Death of the Old Year.

(d) Portrait Studies.

Lilian.
 Isabel.
 Madeline.
 Adeline.
 Margaret.
 Rosalind.
 Eleänore.
 The May Queen.
 The Grandmother.
 The Spinster's Sweet-Arts.
 The Village Wife.
 A Character.
 Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind.
 Northern Farmer (Old Style).
 Northern Farmer (New Style).
 The Churchwarden and the Curate.
 Northern Cobbler.
 Owd Roä.

GROUP IV. *Nature Lyrics.*

A Farewell.
 The Recurring Song in The Brook.
 Early Spring.
 Progress of Spring.
 The Snowdrop.
 The Throstle.
 The Oak.
 June Bracken and Heather.

GROUP V. *Emotion Pictures.*

Fatima.
 Mariana.
 Mariana in the South.
 Oriana.
 The Sisters.
 Lady Clara Vere de Vere.
 Edward Gray.
 A Farewell.

Break, Break, Break.
 Requiescat.
 In the Valley of Caunteretz.
 In the Garden at Swainston
 To J. S.
 On a Mourner.

GROUP VI. *Earlier Idylls.*

(a) *Happy Idylls.*

The Miller's Daughter.
 The Gardener's Daughter.
 Lady Clare.
 The Beggar Maid.
 The Talking Oak.
 The Brook.

(b) *Idylls with Tears.*

Edwin Morris.
 The Letters.
 Locksley Hall.
 The May Queen.
 Dora.
 The Lord of Burleigh.

GROUP VII. *Personal Poems.*

(a) *To Friends.*

To —— (Clear-headed friend).
 To —— (Early Sonnets, 1).
 To J. M. K. (Early Sonnets, 2).
 To —— (Prologue to The Palace of Art).
 To J. S.
 To —— (You might have won).
 To E. L.
 To Rev. F. D. Maurice.
 A Dedication (To his wife).
 To Alfred Tennyson, my Grandson.
 To Rev. W. H. Brookfield.
 To E. Fitzgerald.
 Prefatory Poem to my Brother's Sonnets.

To W. C. Macready.
 To General Hamley.
 To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava.
 To Professor Jebb.
 To "Ulysses."
 To Mary Boyle.
 In Memoriam, W. G. Ward.
 To ——— (June Bracken and Heather).
 To the Master of Balliol.

(b) *To Public or Royal Persons.*

To the Queen, 1851.
 To the Queen, with completed Idylls.
 To the Prince Consort.
 To the Princess Alice.
 To the Princess Frederica.
 A Welcome to Alexandra.
 A Welcome to the Duchess of Edinburgh.
 To Princess Beatrice.
 Death of the Duke of Clarence.
 The Jubilee of Queen Victoria.
 Sir John Franklin.
 Lord Stratford de Redcliffe.
 General Gordon.
 Caxton.
 To the Duke of Argyll.

(c) *To other Poets.*

To Milton (Experiments).
 To Dante.
 To Virgil.
 To Victor Hugo.
 Frater Ave atque Vale.
 Poets and their Bibliographies.
 To Scott (Bandit's Death).

GROUP VIII. *Historical Sonnets.*

Alexander (Early Sonnets, 4).
 Buonaparte (Early Sonnets, 5).
 Poland (Early Sonnets, 6).
 Montenegro.



GROUP IX. *Historical Ballads.*

The Captain.
 The Charge of the Light Brigade.
 The Charge of the Heavy Brigade.
 The Defence of Lucknow.
 The Revenge.

GROUP X. *Historical Pictures.*

Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.
 Boadicea.
 Sir John Oldcastle.
 Columbus.
 Akbar's Dream.
 Saint Telemachus.
 Kapiolani.

GROUP XI. *Restorations or Reproductions.*(a) *Miscellaneous.*

Recollections of the Arabian Nights.
 Dream of Fair Women.
 Godiva.
 Saint Simeon Stylites.
 Saint Agnes' Eve.
 The Victim.
 The Voyage of Maeldune.
 The Battle of Brunanburh.

(b) *Arthurian.*

The Lady of Shalott.
 Morte d'Arthur.
 Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere.
 Merlin and the Gleam.
 Sir Galahad.

(c) *Classic.*

✓ The Lotus-Eaters.
 ✓ Ulysses.
 Tithonus.

CEnone.
 Tiresias.
 Demeter and Persephone.
 The Death of CEnone.
 Specimen of a Translation of the Iliad in Blank Verse.
 Achilles over the Trench.

GROUP XII. *The Princess and Maud, etc.*

The Princess.
 Maud.
 On One who affected an Effeminate Manner.
 Love and Death.
 Love and Duty.

GROUP XIII. *Political Poems.*

Locksley Hall Sixty Years after.
 You ask me why tho' ill at ease.
 Of old sat Freedom on the Heights.
 Love Thou thy Land.
 England and America in 1782.
 Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.
 To the Queen, 1851.
 Maud.
 The Charge of the Light Brigade.
 The Charge of the Heavy Brigade.
 Epilogue.
 To the Duke of Argyll.
 Hands all Round.
 To the Queen (with Idylls of the King).
 The Fleet.
 Opening of Indian and Colonial Exhibition.
 Freedom.
 Ode sung at the Opening of the International Exhibition.
 Politics.
 Beautiful City.
 Riflemen Form.
 February 3, 1852.

GROUP XIV. *Earlier Philosophical Poems.*

Chap IX

The Poet.
 The Poet's Mind.
 The Poet's Song.
 The Golden Year.
 Locksley Hall.
 The Two Voices.
 The Palace of Art.
 The Vision of Sin.
 Will.
 Early Sonnets, 3.

GROUP XV. *In Memoriam.*

DIVISION II.

*Idylls of the King.*GROUP I. *Idylls of the King.*

The Coming of Arthur
 Gareth and Lynette.
 The Marriage of Geraint.
 Geraint and Enid.
 Balin and Balan.
 Merlin and Vivien.
 Lancelot and Elaine.
 The Holy Grail.
 Pelleas and Ettarre.
 The Last Tournament.
 Guinevere.
 The Passing of Arthur.

DIVISION III.

*Characteristic Later Poems.*GROUP I. *Later Idylls.*(a) *Idylls of Sorrow.*

Enoch Arden.
 In the Children's Hospital.

Forlorn.
 Tomorrow.
 Happy.
 Romney's Remorse.
 Charity.

(b) *Idylls of Lamentation.*

Aylmer's Field.
 The First Quarrel.
 Rizpah.
 The Sisters.
 The Flight.
 The Wreck.
 The Ring.
 The Bandit's Death.

GROUP II. *Poems out of Tune.*

Sea Dreams.
 The Lover's Tale.
 Lucretius.
 Despair.

GROUP III. *Later Philosophical Poems.*

Wages.
 The Voice and the Peak.
 Flower in the crannied wall.
 The Higher Pantheism.
 The Ancient Sage.
 Far, far away.
 De Profundis.
 Locksley Hall Sixty Years after.
 The Dawn.
 The Making of Man.
 The Dreamer.
 Vastness.
 Parnassus.
 By an Evolutionist.
 The Play.
 Crossing the Bar.
 Faith.

The Silent Voices.
 God and the Universe.
 Doubt and Prayer.
 Akbar's Dream.
 Kapiolani.
 Saint Telemachus.

GROUP IV. *Dramatic Poems.*

Walking to the Mail.
 The Ring.
 The Falcon.
 The Cup.
 The Promise of May.
 Queen Mary.
 Harold.
 Becket.
 The Foresters.

SUPPLEMENTARY.

Upon these groups, formed without reference to the periods, no further comment is made.

GROUP I. *Riddles.*

The Goose.
 The Day Dream.
 The Voyage.
 The Flower.
 The Islet.
 A Voice spake out of the Skies.

GROUP II. *Unclassifiable Poems and Trifles.*

Ode to Memory.
 Early Sonnets, 7.
 Early Sonnets, 8.
 Early Sonnets, 9.
 Circumstance.

Audley Court.
 Amphion.
 Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue.
 The Daisy.
 The Sailor Boy.
 Prefatory Sonnet to the Nineteenth Century.
 Helen's Tower.
 The Roses on the Terrace.
 To One who ran down the English.
 Mechanophilus.
 The Tournay.
 The Wanderer.

We will refresh the necessary dryness of this chapter by including in it some notice of the poems which set forth *our* poet's early conception of what *the* poet is or should be, and how he should be treated.

In *The Poet's Song* he reverses the putting of Shelley, who makes the poet envy the skylark as the greater singer. In this, swallow and hawk stop to listen, the snake slips under a spray, and the nightingale thinks—

“I 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,”

sings of the ideal to be some day realised, of the Divine purpose to be some day fulfilled.

The Poet makes not higher, but larger claim. First, elevation of spirit and tone

“Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
 The love of love.”

Then insight into life and death, good and ill, his own soul and

“The marvel of the everlasting will.”

Then the power of utterance, vivid, penetrative, germinal, illuminative, carrying truth and giving wisdom. So that of Wisdom personified he says—

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

Like the last, but pitched in lower key, is the verse in the Epilogue to *The Charge of the Heavy Brigade*—

“And here the Singer for his Art
Not all in vain may plead,
'The song that nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed.'”

The Poet's Mind, which warns the “dark-browed sophist” to keep away from “holy ground,” claims for the poet that he hears all the voices of nature and knows their meaning, while his own heart,

“Flowing like a crystal river,”

is

“Bright as light and clear as wind.”

We see, then, that Tennyson never dreamed of himself as an amusement-monger, or even as a mere pleasure-giver in art. The artist of the true and the good he held himself called to be, and as such the furtherer of truth and goodness. Has he been faithful to his ideal? The mocking voice in *The Two Voices* says—

“Thy dream was good!”

Could any one fling this taunt at Tennyson? These are questions to be answered in another court than that of our judgment. But a tinge of them in the

mind will deepen our reading of the poems, as the full colour of such questions in relation to ourselves will deepen our own lives.

The next group consists of poems that complain of the behaviour of men to poets. The complaint is, for the most part, not very heart-breaking. The experiment in *Hendecasyllabics* is, as towards the critics, only play. The "too many of us" in *Poets and their Bibliographies* is open to a rude answer from any one in a bad temper. Of *The Spiteful Letter* and *Literary Squabbles* it may be said that he who wrote them was not only the better poet, but probably the more successful man. This gives a certain (not very elevated, to be sure) other meaning to the vexation, and makes it that the poet's own conclusion was the true one—

"Surely, after all,
The noblest answer unto such
Is perfect stillness when they brawl,"

or, to put it more tenderly, when they are sore and angry. Of *The Flower* we may say partly, "Imitation is the sincerest flattery," and for the rest the fable is not true to history. The advice given to himself in *Poets and Critics* to ignore estimates, favourable or unfavourable, and to "Hold thine own and work thy will," is good, and disposes of the trouble. So it is only in *To* —— (You might have won) and *The Dead Prophet* that matters grow serious. In the former of these poems we have—

• "For now the poet cannot die,
Nor leave his music as of old,
But round him ere he scarce be cold
Begins the scandal and the cry :

“Proclaim the faults he would not show :
Break lock and seal : betray the trust :
Keep nothing sacred : 'tis but just
The many-headed beast should know ;”

and *The Dead Prophet* has the same thing put more elaborately.

Now for the behaviour above described there could, of course, be no sort of apology. The offence is rank, and, I suppose, increasingly common.

But there is a natural tendency of which it is the exaggeration and perversion. There are many people who would shrink from impertinent curiosity, who do yet take an interest in the personal lives and characteristics of the writers who have moved and influenced them. And *every* one would care to know the essential and all-round character of such a person. Only, who is to report him, and who is to read the report aright when it is made? Who knows his own character? Who then shall presume to know the character of another? The desires, slighter or deeper, remain. If they be kept in check by good manners, loyalty, and reverence, they need not be crushed. But let no one think that the seeming knowledge which he obtains is much to be built upon. Better know a writer by his writings.

But, some will say, “At least we need to know that he was sincere; that what he taught he believed; that his life answered, or that he strove to make it answer, to his teaching.” The reply is that what we *need* to know is that the teaching is true and good. What *he* was is his affair. To know that he was good and true would of course be a joy and a strength. But to build on him is not to go deep enough. We must

build on conviction of truth—see truth by its own light, not by his. Truth, in measure, guarantees a man; God, only, guarantees truth.

And as for sincerity, a man may believe truth and worship good in the imagination, and yet in large measure, at any present time, perhaps always (only then surely the faith of his imagination would die), fail to live by them. Alas! for him, indeed. Yet truth is truth and good is good, and such a man, in a true sense, writes sincerely. Only clearly it is upon the truth, not upon the man, that others must build.

So then it would seem that while we must needs take a warm and reverent interest in those who have helped us and moved our spirits, we are wisest to think that we know them best when we know their best, and if not, to be content with knowing their best. For all other knowledge of them we shall be wise to let it come, or not come, as chances. So the Dead Prophet's beldam will have no place in us.

Yet the longing to repose on a Person is deep in us, and when the repose is attained it turns morality and philosophy into religion.

CHAPTER III

STUDIES

CONSIDERING how large a part melody plays in poetry ; remembering the sensuo-sympathetic use of nature which is so characteristic of our poet ; realising the insensible gradations between thought and emotion, whether the subject of attention be nature or man, it need not surprise us that the boundary lines between the groups dealt with in this chapter are vague and uncertain. Yet it seems probable that each poem does grow out of a definite root, that each is in its genesis from the poet's mind a study or a lyric—a study of melody or nature, or man, or the utterance of an emotion awakened by nature or man. For of course this is the distinction between a study and a lyric ; the study grows out of intellectual interest in the thing or in the work of portraying it, while a lyric is the fruit of emotion stirred by the thing. Emotion—that is, artist emotion ; emotion of the imagination. In the emotion of the heart and in the emotion of the conscience, which turns principles into sentiments, a poet may be no richer, and may be poorer than others. But because of the eminence of his imagination, *ideas*, seen by him more vividly, move him more strongly in the imagination than they move others.

It should not surprise us (though it is often otherwise with young poets) that a large proportion of the *Juvenilia* are studies. In most of them the poet writes as a man collecting his materials and preparing his implements. He consciously puts himself through an apprenticeship to his art. Skill in word-music, the knowledge of the elements of nature and of man, and the power of depicting these elements are the fundamentals of the poetic art; and to the gaining of these he devotes himself. To the fact, and to the skill he had already acquired, his first publication bears witness. It consists almost entirely of studies or study-like pieces. There is but one ambitious poem—*Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind* (and this was suppressed for many years), though also it should be added that there are two poems which, studies, perhaps, in their first conception, do, partly on account of their subjects, and partly through the power with which the subjects are treated, move the reader, and must, I should think, have moved the poet. *Mariana* and *The Ballad of Oriana* are the poems I mean, and they seem to me to have so much emotional force in them that I have not put them among the studies.

The poems which I have called *Melody Studies*, namely—

Claribel.

Song (The winds as at their hour of birth).

The Owl.

Second Song, to the Same.

The Sea-Fairies.

The Merman.

The Mermaid.

The Islet (From this point of view).

The Window.

Child-Songs, 1 and 2.

are those in which the production of word-music is the chief aim. Some of these are full of music. In *Claribel*, for instance, the music is perfect. The poem does not mean much; it would not matter if it meant nothing. But yet it *is* more than a melody; it foreshadows that careful and minute study of nature for which Tennyson is so remarkable, and also his power of producing natural pictures in harmony with the mood of the poem. This is a matter of which I have already spoken, calling it our poet's sensuo-sympathetic use of nature. He has written no "Skylark" or "Sensitive Plant"; some human character is almost always the centre of his picture, and nature is used to aid in intensifying the portraiture of this character or its moods.

In word-music it is doubtless true that many of our poet's later poems are quite as rich as, and many much richer than, most of these, while in them his attention is concentrated upon the thought, and the music comes altogether spontaneously. But this will only happen to one who has trained his ear to a critical sensitiveness to the music in words. Of course I do not mean that any amount of ear-culture will make a poet, or even a musical writer. Even in this lower sense the poet is born, not made. But the intensest natural sense of beauty—whether in colour, or form, or sound, or imagery, or thought—needs culture, and the poet who neglects thus to train his beauty sense is as unfair to his genius as a painter would be who did not study drawing and the harmony of colours. But the culture once accomplished, and the poet's true work entered upon, the music will take care of itself.

There are one or two other poems that I was tempted to put among the *Melodies*; chief of them are

the *Lotus-Eaters* and *Oriana*. They belong elsewhere, but it is manifest that the poet thought much of their sound as he wrote them. *Oriana* must be read aloud, or heard, to be at all fully enjoyed; and in reading it aloud there is a peculiar tolling effect to be got by the almost monotonous intonation of the word "Oriana," while a peculiar length and force is given to the broad *a* in the middle of the word.

What I would call the *Nature Studies* are—

Claribel (again).
 Song (The winds as at their hour of birth).
 Nothing will Die.
 All Things will Die.
 Leonine Elegiacs.
 The Kraken.
 The Dying Swan.
 The Blackbird.
 The Eagle.
 To E. L.

I called *Claribel* a typical melody, yet one feels the minute observation of nature in it, as I have said. In the third, fourth, and fifth of these *Nature Studies* it is obvious how much of human mood there is; ^v they might almost have been called *Emotion Studies*. Some of their statements are true only to the mood, not to the facts of nature. It is the *sensuo-sympathetic* use of nature again.

Emotion and Mood Studies.

A Dirge.
 The Deserted House.
 A Song (A spirit haunts).
 Early Sonnets, 10, 11.
 My Life is full of Weary Days.

Move Eastward.
 Come not when I am Dead.
 The Death of the Old Year.

I would suggest the trying the poems of each of these three groups under the cue of the titles of the other two, for the purpose of testing the extent to which, in these studies, melody, nature, and emotion play into each other. I am not pretending that any of these poems are very interesting; they must be read, as they were written, as studies.

PORTRAIT STUDIES.

WOMEN'S GALLERY.

Descriptive.

Lilian.
 Isabel.
 Madeline.
 Adeline.
 Margaret.
 Rosalind.
 Eleänore.

Dramatic.

The May Queen.
 The Grandmother.
 The Spinster's Sweet-Arts.
 The Village Wife.

MEN'S GALLERY.

Descriptive.

A Character.

Dramatic.

Supposed Confessions of a
 Second-rate Sensitive Mind.
 Northern Farmer (Old Style).
 Northern Farmer (New Style).
 The Churchwarden and the
 Curate.
 Northern Cobbler.
 Owd Roä.

Of these *Portrait Studies* the following things are to be remarked:—

All the later ones are dramatic in form: the tendency to this form, always strong in him, grew with Tennyson's years.

Some in both lists are almost as much narratives as portraits. When the form is dramatic it is hard to draw a line between these two.

The descriptive women's portraits are close reading, and, as far as my experience goes, do not *stay*. They do not stamp or flash an impression upon the mind. (Perhaps as studies they hardly could do so.) One has to, if one can, remember the items. I suppose they were a good exercise for the poet; perhaps also they are for the reader.

I have seen it stated that *Isabel* was a portrait of the poet's mother. If that is true, *it* at least ought to be realisable. Is it? And are the rest? By way of discussing the question I add the impressions of a friend, who did not know what I have just stated about *Isabel*:—

“Lilian. }	}	Adeline.
Madeline. }	}	Margaret.
Rosalind. }	}	

make two groups, which set each other off.

“The three, full of vivacity and movement, with not a particle of mystery about them, are very flesh-and-blood pictures, dashed off without effort, and with perfect success.

“The two, as they stand absolutely still before you, are every bit as living, but it is the haze of mystery about them, softening down the outlines, that makes them appear to live and breathe. I would have been more satisfied if Adeline had ended' interrogatively. One would like to leave the 'why' an open question, till one caught the answer from knowing her.

“ *Isabel*

is a *description* of some one, not a picture.

" *Eleänore*

is lovely poetry. Verse vi. is a wonderful description of the effect of changing moods of mind upon a face.

"The rest is either beyond me at present, or is too complex to show out any clear image."

Eleänore, as I think, closes rather comically in closing, so, rapturously. The rapture seems only of the fancy, not emotion proper—neither of the imagination nor of the heart; not felt as for another, which would be of the imagination; nor for the speaker's self, which would be of the heart. If it be so, it is not surprising; it is where a young poet, because a young man, would be likely to come short. Whatever they may think about it, full emotion is hardly within the range of the young. Nor is imagination far advanced in them; fancy is their region.

All seven of these descriptive women's portraits stand among the *Juvenilia*; and I would ask the reader's more particular attention to them, because in the study of them he is to a great extent inquiring what it was in the poems which the *Juvenilia* proximately represent that convinced competent judges of the faculty of the poet who wrote them.

Quoting from a friend above, I will repeat from another, a young girl, a dainty morsel of appreciative criticism upon *The May Queen*. In the first part of the poem the child, in her high-spirited, half-wayward mood, says, "You must wake and call me early," but when illness has taken her, and the approach of death makes her meek, her words change to, "If you're waking call me early."

The *Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive*

Mind was a very early poem. It was, however, suppressed for many years, and I think it would have been better that it should have remained so. It seems very out of place among the comparative trifles that surround it in the *Juvenilia*. If some one passed through those experiences, they were no trifle to him. In any case, I think the title should have been *Supposed Confessions of a Mind out of Health*.

One would not have wished to miss *The May Queen* of course, nor *The Grandmother*, nor *Owd Roö* (all of them semi-idylls, by the way), and the characters in *The Northern Cobbler* and *The Spinster's Sweet-Arts* exhibit a certain circumscribed portion of humanity within their curious mental organisations. The rest of the dramatic portraits have heroes without hearts. Their language is interesting—any dialect is—and the drawing is clever. But the figures are not pleasing, certainly. Assuming, which I do not doubt, that they are true to nature—true portraits of individuals or of types—and that one did not know such persons before, then one has learned so much by reading the poems. But though one learns much in reading poetry, one does not exactly read poetry to learn—learn in this sense. One uses diagrams, for instance, in science; but diagrams are not art, and one does not expect art to teach, as diagrams do. These portraits, then, are they diagrams or art? Do they do more than teach one certain facts about human nature, and interest one in skill and language?

I think the answer turns upon whether they are humorous or not. Beauty, pathos, moral stimulation, they certainly have not. Shrewd, queer, they are.

Are they humorous? The reader must judge for himself.

But speaking generally, one may safely say that there is not much humour in Tennyson's poetry. With many writers the absence of humour is due to incapacity for it; with Tennyson I think it is due mainly to temperament. The absence is a loss, and the opposing temperament, which grew upon him, is a disadvantage. Absence of humour always indicates defect of power or defect of temperament, except in cases where the work put upon a man by God is of overwhelming gravity. The over-sadness of temperament, which is the main hindering cause in Tennyson, manifests itself in a more positive manner in the later poems.

The poem *A Character* raises another question of faculty in our poet. There are persons whom he, our poet, loves in portraying; there are others whom he abhors in portraying. Both these he, with growing capacity as the poems advance, portrays successfully. But the person in this poem, he more nearly scorns in portraying, and, out of the fact, is not, I think, successful. And, moreover, in several similar cases he is similarly unsuccessful. In the poem under discussion the features do not hang together; in others the words do not fit the speaker, or are crude and below the mark, for the subject. There seems a certain lack of judgment, of sensibility, in the imagination of the poet in these cases. The defect seems at first paradoxical in one the judgment of whose sensibilities is ordinarily so strikingly keen. Paradoxical, also, is crudeness and poorness of expression in one whose phrases are so commonly the very happiest. The

explanation is that he is not quite a humorist — cannot love and laugh; not a satirist—cannot scorn and laugh; sees the wrong of wrong, but not its grotesqueness; in this region is literal—cannot express one thing by saying quite another; can etch the beautiful with perfect skill, but cannot etch the ugly—must put the colours on to *it*; so, deft in his own region, is clumsy in the region not his.

The want of humour is negative; the other lack is positive: I will illustrate it. In the poem *A Character*, from which these remarks started, we have—

“He spake of virtue : not the gods
More purely, when they wish to charm
Pallas and Juno sitting by,”

and

“Stood aloof from other minds
In impotence of fancied power.”

The man could talk well then; was a person of some intellectual pretensions; was not exactly an *ignorant* and *vulgar* humbug: yet elsewhere we have—

“Then looking as ’twere in a glass,
He smoothed his chin and sleeked his hair
And said the earth was beautiful.”

But this is the picture of an ignorant and vulgar humbug. The first quotations did not represent him, or this is caricature.

Again, in *Maud* we have for Maud’s father—

“A gray old wolf, and lean”;

for Maud's brother—

“ That dandy-despot, he,
That jewelled mass of millinery,
That oiled and curled Assyrian Bull
Smelling of musk and insolence ” ;

for her suitor—

“ A lord, a captain, a padded shape,
A bought commission, a waxen face,
A rabbit mouth that is ever agape ” ;

for a peace advocate—

“ This broad-brimmed hawker of holy things,
Whose ear is crammed with his cotton, and rings
Even in dreams to the chink of his pence.”

Now it is true that these words are not spoken by the poet in his own proper person, but are put dramatically into the mouth of another. But whether this is a defence for them or not must depend upon the character of that other, as pictured in the poem. Is Maud's lover such an one as would use them? I think not; and I think that Tennyson, in becoming dramatically Maud's lover, carries with him his incapacity for drawing well a character he wholly dislikes, except in terms of explicit indignation.

Once more, in *Sea Dreams* we have—

“ He dodged me with a long and loose account.
‘ The books, the books ! ’ but he, he could not wait,
Bound on a matter he of life and death :
When the great Books (see Daniel seven and ten)
Were open'd, I should find he meant me well ;
*And then began to bloat himself, and ooze
All over with the fat affectionate smile
That makes the widow lean.* ‘ My dearest friend,
Have faith, have faith ! We live by faith,’ said he ;

‘ And all things work together for the good
Of those ’—it makes me sick to quote him—last
Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-you went.”

Are the lines that I have italicised portraiture or caricature of a man who had, at all events, presence enough to enable him to impose upon his victim? And indeed the picture of a man bloating himself and oozing all over with a smile is one hard enough, in any case, to realise. Would the parenthesis “ See Daniel seven and ten ” be natural in the mouth of even the most loud and consummate hypocrite, in a street conversation? In short, the character being a man of business, and the situation a business interview, is the whole scene nature at all? Of course I know that plenty such drawing is done, and loudly applauded. Multitudes of people no more recognise portraiture until it becomes caricature than they do humour until it becomes buffoonery. But our poet is not wont to draw so. He who wrote—

“ As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely, through all hinderance, finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children ever at its best
And fullest,”

knows better what portraiture is than this.

But perhaps the moral passion, which, with his artist power, makes Tennyson’s force, is *never* found in combination with satire. The satirist must be cool; but, so, he is not a consuming fire. I doubt if he ever purifies. Even Shakespeare teaches like life, not like a prophet.

CHAPTER IV

LYRICS AND PICTURES

IN the preceding chapter we were dealing with melody, nature, emotions, characters, with studies in each. We pass to poems of a higher level on the same themes—to nature lyrics, emotion lyrics or pictures, to idylls, characters in action. Such an advance in the case of Melody of course is not possible, as melody is not a subject, but only a quality in the treatment of the subject. The nature lyrics and emotion pictures or lyrics only will be dealt with in this chapter, the idylls (Early Idylls) will have the next chapter to themselves.

The *Nature Lyrics* on my list are very sweet—

A Farewell.
The Recurring Song in The Brook.
Early Spring.
Progress of Spring.
The Snowdrop.
The Throstle.
The Oak.
June Bracken and Heather.

The first and second of these every one knows and loves ; they make a dainty pair, and are full of emotion—of human mood, though the mood is in con-

trast, not here in harmony, with the character of the natural scene. The contrast is indeed the point of the poem in each.

Early Spring and *The Progress of Spring* are peculiar. The former one might call a hymn, though its range is the natural, not the spiritual. It opens—

“Once more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,”

and then sings on, devout and sweet, in the phenomena of the new making, with a grave, chant-like music. In a little it slides into the human—

“O follow, leaping blood,
The season’s lure !
O heart, look down and up
Serene, secure.
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snowdrops, pure !

“Past, Future glimpse and fade
Thro’ some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
Some far blue fell,
And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell !”

The Progress of Spring is longer, as the subject requires. It is in scenes, and the scenes are in detail, which ask detailed attention and realisation. The poem is an object lesson in the progressive phenomena of spring, but it is a poet’s object lesson made up of pictures, not lists. It would lend itself beautifully to educational uses, to study in poet-natural-history. It is didactic too — deliberately so, like Southey’s *Holly Tree*. But it is a full lyric, not a mere study ; musical and poetical, emotional, though

deliberately analytic. It and *Early Spring* seem to me very distinctive poems.

Didactic, I said. I will give an extract. Spring is speaking—

“ For while my hand exults
 Within the bloodless heart of lowly flowers
 To work old laws of Love to fresh results,
 Thro’ manifold effect of simple powers—
 I too would teach the man
 Beyond the darker hour to see the bright,
 That his fresh life may close as it began,
 The still fulfilling promise of a light
 Narrowing the bounds of night.”

But in this latter poem there is a missing tone. The keynote of *Early Spring* is “the Heavenly Power.” In this poem there is nothing higher than “Holy Spring.” It is inadequate. Not explicitly religious poetry—one does not ask that. But if nature is sung about, and is held as a teacher, one asks in the song the recognition of Him who alone teaches, and without whom nature would bid us wail rather than sing. I do not imagine that this dissatisfaction would have occurred to me had I not been troubled by the way in which, in the later-published poems of which this is one, impersonal progress is often suffered to eclipse the purpose and operation of God. But of this more fully hereafter.

The remaining four on the list are morsels—*The Thrustle* a delicious morsel, musical, playful, and emotional; a *Skylark* brought down to fact; a bird rejoicing, not in mystic wonders beyond the reach even of man, but in the coming of the bird’s highest good, the summer.

And it is worth notice that most of these Nature

Lyrics are the work of a rather sad-hearted man seventy-five years old and more (unless, as the prefatory poem implies, *The Progress of Spring* was earlier). We come now to the

Emotion Pictures.

I call them pictures, and count them on the lyric level, though I do not deny that there are indications of their being studies in intention. But be that as it may, there is, as I have already said about two of them, so much emotional force in them, that I do not doubt their right place to be here. They are—

Fatima.
Mariana.
Mariana in the South.
Oriana.
The Sisters.
Lady Clara Vere de Vere.
Edward Gray.

Here we have a pretty full passage through the gamut of human feelings. First we have the passionate impatience of *Fatima*. Then there is the dreary, weary loneliness of *Mariana*. In the death of hope and the dead disappointment of love and trust she lives, and tears and her unchanging complaint are her only occupation.

“ Her tears fell with the dews at even ;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried ;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.”

Everything reminds her of her sorrow, and life and day and night are all saturated with dreariness. There is no redeeming touch ; the desolation is absolute. Its

absoluteness is intensified fourfold by the fact that it is hopeless and purposeless. He does not come, and her sorrow bears no fruit in the woman's life and character. But this omission is no oversight and provokes no protest. It was *intended* that the picture should be absolute. It is a work of art, in the narrowest sense of the term. The poet is still in his apprenticeship.

There is no better example of our poet's sensuo-sympathetic use of nature than this poem affords. The mood of the whole picture is absolutely identical with that of the woman herself. Indeed, if the woman were withdrawn from the poem altogether, there would be left a picture expressing, in fainter colours, the same sentiment as before. Every detail tells, and the poplar upon the gloomy flats is the very symbol of her life and feelings. At last, weary of weariness, she vanishes in a passion of grief—

“Oh God, that I were dead!”

Mariana in the South is another picture of the same blighted love and loneliness; but how different it becomes by the southern breath that blows through it. The scenery is the rich nature of the south; the woman an Italian woman, passionately conscious of her own slighted beauty, chafing at her desertion, bringing back the past to her memory and dwelling upon the false letters, and, mistaking passion for religion, crying ever to the Madonna to help her. And then while the calmer Mariana but prays for death, in the extremity of her grief, upon the more turbulent sorrow of her southern sister the vision of the great peace falls.

“ At eve a dry cicala sung,
 There came a sound as of the sea ;
 Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
 And leaned upon the balcony.
 There all in spaces rosy-bright
 Large Hesper glittered on her tears,
 And deepening through the silent spheres
 Heaven over Heaven rose the night.
 And weeping then she made her moan,
 ‘ The night comes on that knows not morn,
 When I shall cease to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn.’ ”

Oriana deepens into a still intenser passion. Despair and self-reproach take the place of desolation and wounded love. To the Marianas the present pain is aggravated by the memory of past happiness ; but in *Oriana* the bitterness comes out of the fact that by his own hand the happiness had been brought to an end, and his loved one to her death. For a moment the tender happiness of the past comes back as he says—

“ While blissful tears blinded my sight
 I to thee my troth did plight ” ;

but then the agony sweeps across his heart, as he raves—

“ The bitter arrow went aside,
 The false, false arrow went aside ” ;

and then with set teeth he moans—

“ They should have stabbed me where I lay.”

The passion changes, and he melts in pity for the dear slain one, and for his own sad fate—

“ O breaking heart that will not break !
 O pale, pale face, so sweet and meek ! ”

But even this may not abide, for his grief and remorse harden him, and shut out heaven—

“Thou comest atween me and the skies.”

And all through the wonderful picture “Oriana” tolls its dirge-note, while the intense melancholy of the line

“I hear the roaring of the sea”

ends the poem and rings on in your ears.

Deeper and deeper still we descend to the bitter revenge of *The Sisters*. I know no other so weird a picture, except it be, on a larger scale, the catastrophe of the *Nibelungenlied*. The self-justifying hate in the words—

“Therefore revenge became me well”;

the strange mingling of feelings in the lines—

“I hated him with the hate of hell,
But I loved his beauty passing well”;

the treble stabbing, and the care for and admiration of the murdered body—

“I curled and combed his comely head,
He looked so grand when he was dead”;

with the final ingenuity of revenge which could suggest—

“I wrapt his body in the sheet
And laid him at his mother’s feet”;

make up a picture of bitter and unmatched weirdness. Nor should one fail to notice the effect of the last line of each verse, and of the thoughtful variations in the constant but changing third line also. The return to the calmer word “blowing” in the last verse is a morsel of delicate art.

I said "revenge"; strictly, I should have said "vengeance," for it was an injury done to another, not to herself, that moved her. This, though the conscience of Christendom does not approve it, and the law of Christendom does not allow it, we feel to be a very different thing from revenge. But, *then*, I do not understand the mixture of the love of the earl's beauty. Had there been love first, then injury, then revenge, the survival of some element of the first feeling would have been easily comprehensible. But I should have thought that the initial vengeance would have excluded the possibility of the other.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere mainly exhibits a speaker who knows how to protect himself from a highly respectable and very wicked woman. But the verse

"Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
There stands a spectre in your hall :
The guilt of blood is at your door :
You changed a wholesome heart to gall,"

and the poor mother's passion, make a deep enough emotion picture. I think *Edward Gray* one of the saddest poems ever written. It is as sad as *The Banks of Allan Water*; as bitterly sad as *Auld Robin Gray*. It is touching to notice how the pathos is intensified by the "sweet" applied to Emma Moreland through its indication that it was a living heart, not a stunned one, that suffered, and that was thus indifferent to the maiden so described.

These pictures, *Mariana*, *Mariana in the South*, *Oriana*, *The Sisters*, *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, and *Edward Gray*, might almost have been placed in the group Idylls of Lamentation. But they have the study element in them, and they are hardly full stories.

Their brevity also saves them from the reproach of heart-wounding to which the longer poems are liable.

In contrast with these pictures of the bitterer and more passionate emotions, stand those four exquisitely tender and haunting whispers of sorrow and farewell which follow; I mean—

A Farewell (already referred to in another connection).

Break, break, break.

Requiescat.

In the Valley of Caunteretz.

The feeling of them all is strangely similar. In each picture there is water, in harmony with the sentiment, or in contrast, or in dim, shadowy sympathy. In the *Farewell* the continuity of the rivulet's movements, and of all that befalls it, throws into contrast the fleeting life of man. In the *Valley of Caunteretz* the voice of the stream calls back the voice long since heard in company with it. In the *Requiescat* is a dainty side-glance at the old likeness of life to a river. In *Break, break, break*, the sea stands for nothing specific, but by its perpetual murmur on the shore attunes the soul to the keynote of sorrow, and preaches the relation of suffering to the infinite. And in them all grief seems holier; for be it the child-voice of the rivulet or the ancient tones of the sorrowful sea, self-will and lowness cannot live in this contact, and the soul is soothed to calmness and resignation by the lullaby of the great mother.

1. *In the Garden at Swainston,*

2. *To J. S.,*

3. *On a Mourner,*

complete this group. The first has two notes. The

nightingale makes it a distinctive poem, and the characteristic of the man that is praised is one that always moves Tennyson.

"Shadows of three dead men walked in the walks with me" is a curious expression, though it may seem rather suspicious to say so. The reason for the alertness will appear hereafter.

The poem *To J. S.* is longer and more varied in thought; a little over-analytic perhaps, but also a kind of minor *In Memoriam*. One verse of it has become a household word. The poem throughout shows that the poet knew how grief should be dealt with. *On a Mourner* is more bracing; its lessons might perhaps be thought of as following the still grief time of the preceding poem, and here also the *In Memoriam* track is pursued.

We pass now to the idylls, which the reader will remember are to complete the re-covering, in a higher key, of the ground traversed in the *Studies* chapter. As a matter of fact, only the earlier idylls are here dealt with; the later idylls differ so greatly in subjects and treatment that the consideration of them belongs to a much later stage of our work.

CHAPTER V

EARLIER IDYLLS

SOME of these earlier idylls are among the sweetest of Tennyson's writings. We may also say that they won him the first circle of his lovers. Still earlier poems had arrested the attention of thoughtful judges, but it was as proofs of power rather than for their substantive value that they were regarded. These idylls are valued for themselves, and the value put upon them is justly a high one. But it is the value of perfect art—not of lofty utterance or anything of that sort, but of the beautiful setting of the blessed commonplaces of worthy human life. Nowhere, in the long run, is art so valuable as in the exhibition of the sacredness and tender beauty of that which, were we and the world not such blind and callous fools, might be the everyday experience of most of us.

I distinguish these earlier idylls as

(a) Happy Idylls.

(b) Idylls with Tears.

In both groups women are for the most part the subjects—living, moving women, not portraits—and through them we first become acquainted with Tennyson's dream of womanhood, embodied in verse that

seems made for her soul. It is the most precious of his gifts to us.

The HAPPY IDYLLS call for little comment. *The Miller's Daughter* and *The Gardener's Daughter*, though different, make a pair, the former, however, with its half-pathetic love gossip, being the sweeter and deeper in tone. *Lady Clare* and *The Beggar Maid* make another pair, quaint and dainty, the one a ballad in manner, the other ballad-like in subject. *The Talking Oak* and *The Brook*, lastly, pair well together, both on account of their fancifulness and because of the exceeding grace with which the fancies are worked out. You catch yourself smiling again and again as you read them, not because they amuse you exactly, but because of the exquisite art of their most natural fancifulness. *The Brook* touches you deeper, now and then. The babbling of the rivulet has an echo of pathos in it. *The Talking Oak* keeps tenderly playful all through. That is a dainty line which describes a young girl as

“So slightly, musically made” ;

and that a dainty conceit which says—

“But light as any wind that blows
 So fleetly did she stir,[†]
 The flower she touched on dipt and rose,
 And turned to look at her.”

The damsel in the other poem is less aerial, but surely not less sweet—

“A maiden of our century, yet most meek ;
 A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse ;
 Straight, but as lissom as a hazel wand ;
 Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair

In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

“nor of those
Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,
And nursed by mealy-mouthed philanthropies,
Divorce the Feeling from her mate the Deed.”

There is perhaps one blemish in two or three of these Happy Idylls. The human body should be thought of as a sacrament—the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual person. To praise its beauty, therefore, in terms of the merely physical is, to say the least of it, below the mark. Tennyson knew this well enough, and he is faultless by comparison with many other poets. But he knew it so well that he should have been absolutely faultless. The thing does not even sit naturally on him: he is generally also awkward if he falls below his proper tone. In the sad idylls there is not, I think, any touch of the fault. Of course he might plead that the language was dramatic—put into the mouths of his characters. The plea would be no more than technical. His relation to his congenial characters is such that he cannot be released from sponsorship for their words. However, the fault is confined, I think, to a few of these earlier poems.

For indeed something very different from this is the main characteristic of our poet's writings, in which the spirit of womanhood finds its noble exponent.

In the IDYLLS WITH TEARS the tears are, at first, not very distressing. *Edwin Morris* is semi-comic, or cynical-sad at most. Of the heroine of *The Letters* one thinks what a silly damsel she was to believe so easily what she could so easily forget; and the hero is melodramatic. *Locksley Hall*, spite of the stage

action about it, is really pathetic ; there are of course no pains bitterer than that pictured in it, but it is too familiar for comment, and, moreover, *Sixty Years After* takes the edge off it. *The May Queen*, which I have called a portrait, but which also I must call an idyll, no familiarity can make otherwise than dear—dear and sad, like repentance.

We come to *Dora*, than which—and especially than whom—nothing could be sweeter. She reminds one of Ruth, somehow ; only the end also is pathetic. She could love even out of her meekness.

“ And Dora felt her uncle’s will in all,
And yearned toward William.”

Out of the same, she could obey.

“ And Dora promised, being meek.”

Meek still, she could dare.

“ ‘ I have obeyed my uncle until now,
And I have sinned.’ ”

She was meek, not tame ; so she suffered.

“ She bowed down her head,
Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bowed down
And wept in secret ; and the reapers reaped,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.”

And unloved, she loved to the end.

“ And as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate,
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.”

There was a time when I should have put *The Lord of Burleigh* among the Happy Idylls. For though I was not unmindful of the tears that were

in it, yet the grace of the story and the exceeding sweetness of the woman, and the perfect philosophy of gentlehood contained in the lines—

“And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady,
And the people loved her much,”

charmed and moved me so much that the result in my mind was nearly unmixed pleasure. *Now*, however, I could almost put it among the idylls of lamentation, so full of pain does it seem, and of pain that ought not to have been, and that bore no fruit. For the abundant moral beauty of the poem was the fruit of what at first she was, not of the deception that was practised upon her. The Lord of Burleigh's wisdom went very little below the surface, for he wanted a simple loving heart to which sudden grandeur, with all its duties and the cancelling of an already formed vision of simple household life, should not be a burden and a shock—to win a true woman in untruth—he wanted, that is, an impossible combination. He paid the price of his blunder, but she, dear heart, bore the long burden of it. The husband's

“ ‘Bring the dress and put it on her
That she wore when she was wed,’ ”

is touchingly to the point (how different from Enid's resumption of her maiden dress), but the poet need not have added the superstition

“That her spirit might have rest.”

I have confessed that *The Grandmother* and *Owl Roöi*, as well as *The May Queen*, are semi-idylls. I may say the same for the emotion pictures discussed in the *Lyrics and Pictures* chapter. The fact is that it

is difficult to draw a sharp line between portrait and story, or between lyric and story. The Grandmother is more interesting than her story; Old Roä's story is more interesting than himself; the May Queen *is* her story—the child's character and its changes make the subject of the poem. The expectation of hearing from the grave, and of coming again to see and listen, though herself unseen, in the second part of the poem, are perhaps unnatural as well as uncanny. There is nothing of them in the third part; there she waits in paradise for the coming of mother and sister. If the other notions were meant as pagan fancies in the mind of a child not as yet changed in spirit, their presence would be intelligible.

In these earlier idylls, and in *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, we for the first time come across Tennyson's attitude of mind upon a matter concerning which he blazes into passion in *Aylmer's Field*. The poet, in common with all modest and sensible persons, feels a full and hearty interest in birth. But, if they compete, he feels a fuller and deeper interest in human quality and in human hearts. His attitude in the matter is large and generous, like his attitude in politics, of which we shall presently speak. I say he cares for birth, but if birth is insolent and unjust, then he says—

“Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent,
The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

CHAPTER VI

PERSONAL POEMS—HISTORICAL POEMS—RESTORATIONS

By no organic compulsion do the poems of this chapter stand *here*. But any other place would be less satisfactory. To some of the groups, notes only will be appended.

The Personal Poems are those—

- (a) To Friends.
- (b) To Public or Royal Persons.
- (c) To other Poets.

TO OR CONCERNING INDIVIDUALS—

(a) TO FRIENDS.

To —— (Clear-headed friend).

To J. M. K. (Early Sonnets, 2).

These might have been placed among the portraits.

The praise is rather exuberant in both, but the praiser was young. The satire in the second is coarse, as I point out in the next chapter. Moreover, the badness of bad pulpit ministrations is too obvious and hackneyed to be touched by a poet except with a master-hand.

To —— (Early Sonnets, 1).

A common fancy, if real. But youth is apt to say these things out of the fancy, or to take them on tradition.

To —— (Prologue to *The Palace of Art*).

To J. S.

Dealt with in previous chapter. The last verse seems to express as a settled belief what is put as a question in *In Memoriam* (canto xliii.) The settled belief was probably the earlier.

To —— (You might have won). Discussed in Chap. II.

To E. L. A nature study and a restoration mixed.

To Rev. F. D. Maurice.

Reveals an intimate friendship that is an honour to both the friends. Rather bellicose, again, against the "Churchmen." Tennyson is deeply religious, but his sphere is not the theological or ecclesiastical region. There he loses the artist and becomes a disputant. It is rather a way with poets, perhaps; with an earlier great English poet it certainly was.

A Dedication: to his wife.

To Alfred Tennyson, my Grandson.

To Rev. W. H. Brookfield.

Ends in the key of his later melancholy.

To E. Fitzgerald.

Lines preceding and following *Tiresias*—the former to him as alive, the latter, he having died in

his sleep. Another glimpse of the poet's friendships; the melancholy here being only hypothetical — *if* this life were all. *That* melancholy no one need quarrel with.

Prefatory Poem to my Brother's Sonnets.

No melancholy—

“True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.”

To W. C. Maeready.

To General Hamley.

Prologue to *Charge of the Heavy Brigade.*

To the Marquis of Dufferin.

A touching poem. I wondered at first how the father could be so explicit. But grief has many modes.

To Professor Jebb.

To Ulysses (a nom de plume).

To Mary Boyle.

Another very sweet friend-poem, with one not wise verse in it, I dare to say—

“What use to brood? this life of mingled pains
And joys to me,
Despite of every Faith and Creed, remains
The Mystery.”

“Mystery,” yes. But what is the difference *here* between “faith” and “creed”? The word faith is used objectively, and so the creed expresses the faith. And what is the meaning of “every”? Out beyond Christendom men might think that there was a choice of religions to make. But no man who under-

stands what Christianity is imagines that he has to choose between that and some other religion. He may sadly ask whether he stands to it or rejects it. But *it* has made all other religions impossible. Even Theism, though, in thought, prior to Christianity, seems to sicken and die, as a matter of fact, divorced from it. Now and in Christendom, I mean.

In Memoriam—W. G. Ward.

“Whose faith and work were bells of full accord.”

To —— (June Bracken and Heather).

“To you that are seventy-seven
With a faith as clear as the heights of the June blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer new
As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the heather.”

To the Master of Balliol.

With *The Death of Ænone*, and striking somewhat the note of all our poet's classic reproductions.

(b) TO PUBLIC OR ROYAL PERSONS.

Several of these are laureate poems, and as such tend to be perfunctory. But the poet generally succeeds in finding some human touch in the situation, and so in giving to his verses, however slight, a corresponding reality.

To the Queen—upon being made Poet Laureate.

To the Queen—after the illness of the Prince of Wales, and with the Idylls.

To the Prince Consort—after his death. Added to the first four Idylls.

These are three large-hearted, loyal, temperate poems, profitable to read.

To the Princess Alice—dedicatory, with *The Defence of Lucknow*, after her death. A moving poem, immortalising that kiss whose price was death, but whose power over the human heart will not fail, till the memory of it fails. The poem contains a speculation about the state of the dead, of which more hereafter.

To the Princess Frederica—on her marriage. It contains, not a speculation, but a dogmatic assertion upon a matter of which no man can affirm or deny.

“The blind king (her dead father) sees you to-day,
He blesses the wife.”

Nor, I think, is the *speculation* profitable. But again, more hereafter.

A Welcome to Alexandra. A dainty enough laureate song.

A Welcome to the Duchess of Edinburgh. Graver. Warm, but not hypocritical.

To Princess Beatrice. Very ingenious, and coaxingly put, concerning an experiment that in humbler life, at all events, is not uniformly successful.

Death of the Duke of Clarence. Not the Christian Faith about death. The poem says—

“His true name
Is ‘onward,’ no discordance in the roll
And march of that Eternal Harmony
Whereto the world beats time.”

The Christian Faith says: “The last enemy that

shall be destroyed is death." I do not think the human heart goes with the poet in the matter. Nor did the poet's heart speak so, at a time which I will not presume to name.

The Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Sir John Franklin.

Lord Stratford de Redcliffe.

General Gordon.

Caxton.

To the Duke of Argyll. A political exhortation.
Referred to elsewhere.

(e) TO OTHER POETS.

To Milton (Experiments).

To Dante.

To Virgil.

To Victor Hugo. Gracious and frank: not easy to be both in this case, as the poet loved both son and country. What one should say to the opening pun, I will not decide.

Frater Ave atque Vale.

Poets and their Bibliographies.

To Scott (Bandit's Death).

HISTORICAL SONNETS.

- Early Sonnets—4. *Alexander.*
 „ 5. *Buonaparte.*
 „ 6. *Poland.*
Montenegro.

These need no comment, and perhaps could not claim much.

HISTORICAL BALLADS.

*The Captain.**The Charge of the Light Brigade.**The Charge of the Heavy Brigade.**The Defence of Lucknow.**The Revenge.*

The first of these is grim enough ; the last is fine and stirring. The other three are more considerable, and help to fix great incidents in the national history. They are achievements in a region to which the poet is not quite native, perhaps.

HISTORICAL PICTURES.

*Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.**Boadicea.**Sir John Oldecastle.**Columbus.**Akbar's Dream.**St. Telemachus.**Kapiolani.*

The last three of these I shall discuss later, in another connection. *Boadicea* was called an experiment when it was published. It affected one so ; but in the long run it proved itself a successful experiment ; of it, some further words hereafter.

The Ode on the Duke is a very noble poem. The writing of this was evidently no mere duty work ; it was a labour of love, the poem being written very rapidly (the first draft of it was published within a few days of the Duke's death), and having all the rush of a genuine enthusiasm about it. Not many a hero has

had his praises sung in a nobler ode. The poet was expressing a deep national feeling, and the sorrow was idealised by being linked to such worthy utterance. The portrayal of the character of the national hero, the sketch of his career, the public lessons that his life dictates, the private example that his character affords, the great future in store for him—these, intermingled with expressions of national sorrow, form the theme of the poem. Of that passage beginning—

“This is he that far away
Against the myriads of Assaye,
Clashed with his fiery few and won,”

and ending—

“And down we swept and charged and overthrew,”

it is difficult to say whether it is more wonderfully condensed or more wonderfully vivid. Then the jubilant march-like movement of the couplet—

“Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory,”

leads up to the good hope—

“Till in all lands and through all human story
The path of duty be the way to glory :”

and, for him, to that other hope—

“Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
Until we doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo,
And Victor he must ever be.”

Are *Sir John Oldeastle* and *Columbus* historical studies rather than illuminative pictures ?

Restorations or Reproductions.

The poems that I have brought together in this group are upon subjects old to literature, and, for the most part, to poetry. They may be merely translations, in which nothing but the language is changed, or they may be new poems, retaining only the letter of the old.

I arrange them in three groups:—

- (a) Miscellaneous.
- (b) Arthurian.
- (c) Classic.

Of the Miscellaneous, *Recollections of the Arabian Nights* is interesting as foreshadowing the power of detailed description, vivid and very pictorial, which shows itself fully in *The Palace of Art*. In the *Dream of Fair Women* the same power is manifest, blended with the finished portrait-drawing that makes up the greater part of the poem. Then after the sweetly-told *Godiva* come those two powerful reproductions of the harsh and the tender sides of the old monastic spirit. *St. Simeon Stylites* and *St. Agnes' Eve* are very interesting studies, helpful towards the understanding of the mediæval religious spirit. They are not only the two poles of the spirit, they are its two sexes also. There could have been no woman Stylites; there could hardly have been a man St. Agnes. The intense self-consciousness of the one, and the utter self-forgetfulness, rising into rapture, of the other, are the two extremes and the two sexes of that spirit which separates the religious life from the active life, and finds in the sacrifice of the natural emotions the best service

of God. *St. Simeon* is not very *poetical*; it is too self-conscious and searchingly analytic for that, and the subject is too painful also. To take, for instance, such a passage as—

“O Jesus, if Thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?
Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?
Show me the man hath suffered more than I.
For did not all Thy martyrs die one death?

But I die here
To-day, and whole long years, a life of death.”

And again—

“Bethink Thee, Lord, while Thou and all the saints
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,
And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times
To Christ, the Virgin-mother, and the saints;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake: the chill stars sparkle; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.”

St. Agnes' Eve, on the other hand, is altogether poetical and beautiful, even though less remarkable as a study. It would not be easy to overmatch the stanzas—

“He lifts me to the golden doors;
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strews her lights below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits
To make me pure of sin.



The sabbaths of Eternity,
 One sabbath deep and wide—
 A light upon the shining sea—
 The Bridegroom with his bride.”

The Victim I have put here, not as knowing it to have any older form, but because the setting is that of an ancient pagan belief, while the heart of the poem is human of all time. The form is ballad-like, and the manner is rather stern, so that the story is not at first attractive. But it grows upon one. Does

“He caught her away with a sudden cry”

mean that the king had found out, if choice *must* be made, which was his dearest? No doubt, I suppose. Does the queen's “*I am his dearest*” mean, besides that she saved her child, that she was assured of the first place in her husband's love, which was dearer to her than life? Verse iv. says, pity to waste so precious a life; but verse vi. says more, I think.

Passing by

The Voyage of Maeldune and
The Battle of Brunanburh,

we come to the ARTHURIAN REPRODUCTIONS.

These, however, have been mostly superseded by or absorbed into *The Idylls of the King*. *The Lady of Shalott* certainly shines more as *Elaine*. *The Morte d'Arthur* becomes *The Passing of Arthur*. *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* is a trifle in the light of their fuller treatment. *Merlin and the Gleam* is distinctive. *Sir Galahad* still remains a picture worth preserving.

Sir Galahad is a noble picture of a religious knight. He is almost as much a mystic as a soldier; both a monk and a warrior of the ideal type. He foregoes

the world as much as if he lived within the monastery walls, and esteems his sword as sacred to the service of God as if it were a cross. His rapture is altogether that of a mystic. He is almost a St. Agnes, exchanging only the rapture of passivity for the transport of exultant effort. Yet there is something of the self-consciousness of Stylites about him too. He is just the embodiment of the noblest and the strongest tendencies of the chivalric age.

“The clouds are broken in the sky,
 And through the mountain-walls
 A rolling organ-harmony
 Swells up, and shakes and falls.
 Then move the trees, the copses nod,
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear :
 ‘O just and faithful knight of God !
 Ride on ! the prize is near.’
 So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;
 By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
 All-armed I ride, whate’er betide,
 Until I find the holy Grail.”

As I have said in relation to the *Idylls of the King*, the supernatural elements in such pictures as these of *Stylites*, *St. Agnes*, and *Galahad* must be taken just as parts of legends, ignored in the understanding and suffered only to affect the imagination.

The concluding lines of *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* are—

“A man had given all other bliss,
 And all his worldly worth for this,
 To waste his whole heart in one kiss
 Upon her perfect lips.”

Yet the lips were the lips of Queen Guinevere—a woman no larger-souled than that. What a fool the

man would have been. And what nonsense poet-stuff. The poets write plenty of such: Tennyson has written very little: the vision of womanhood scarcely ever failed him. Compare with these lines these others from *Pelleas and Ettarre*—

“ But while he gazed,
The beauty of her flesh abashed the boy,
As though it were the beauty of her soul :
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to hers,
Believing her.”

In the same way one objects to the rapture expended, in *A Dream of Fair Women*, upon the voice of the most repulsive woman in history.

We now come to the CLASSIC REPRODUCTIONS. Of these, *The Lotus-Eaters* and *Ulysses* form a pair, contrasting as strongly as do *Sir Galahad* and *St. Agnes' Eve*. And the contrast is of a similar character, too—intense activity as opposed to absolute quiescence and passivity. But in the Greek pair of portraits there is no religious element; and so, while the activity of *Sir Galahad* becomes enthusiasm, that of *Ulysses* approaches nearer to restlessness; and while the passivity of *St. Agnes* becomes mystical rapture, that of the *Lotus-Eaters* is half-despairing melancholy. The pairs contrast still further. *Galahad's* activity is noble, and *St. Agnes' passivity* is noble too, for both come out of a deliberate surrender of the heart and life to high faith and hope and aims. *Ulysses' activity* and the *Lotus-Eaters' passivity* both come out of motives that may be found in the circle of human thoughts and wishes.

So, in this case, while the activity may be noble in its measure, the passivity must be contemptible, for it is the surrender of all effort and high aim—the abnegation of true humanity.

In *The Lotus-Eaters* is seen very strongly marked Tennyson's special use of nature, which is also, I believe, the Greek use of nature in relation to art. The essence of the Greek spirit, in this matter, is the identification of nature with the emotions and passions, the joys and sorrows of humanity. The gods of Greek mythology are many of them, at the same time, personified phases of nature and incarnated human passions. Between man and nature the sympathy seems to be so intense that some common symbol will express them both. In *The Lotus-Eaters* one scarcely knows whether to say that nature sympathises with the men, or that the men sympathise with nature—the two together form one perfect picture of absolute passivity. This is what I have spoken of elsewhere, and have called our poet's *sensuo-sympathetic* use of nature. Throughout his poetry nature not only feels with man, she thinks with him, doubts with him, believes with him. She does not put on an outward seeming to match his mood, but she so identifies herself with him that the passion and the pain, the doubt and the struggle, the hope and the conquest are as much hers as his. She is not wise, has not great lessons to teach him, as in Wordsworth, yet, oftentimes, the thoughts and feelings seem to be of her suggesting, and man rather joins in than initiates the yearning and the effort. From *The Lotus-Eaters* up to *In Memoriam* this sensuo-sympathetic use of nature is to be found in our poet, and this characteristic at once

distinguishes him among modern poets, and renders him the most accomplished restorer of the spirit of classic art.

Tithonus is at once statuesque and emotional—a combination by no means easy to achieve, yet always achieved in the highest form of classical art, whether ancient or modern. It has all the chaste severity of a piece of sculpture, yet it can bring the tears into your eyes.

“The homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead,”

haunts you just in proportion to the very reticence of emotion it displays. The poem is a sonata, and is then most powerful in its action upon the feelings, when the intellect has mastered and grown familiar with the outer form. It renders up, at all, the feeling that lies at its heart, only to him who will put himself into intellectual sympathy with its forms.

Enone is warmer. It is still strictly classic, but there is more emotion in it—it is more strongly human. In *Tithonus* you witness the passion and despair of a god; *Enone* is wholly a woman. You could weep for *Tithonus*, but you cannot imagine him shedding tears for himself. *Enone* says—

“My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.”

But that which most distinguishes *Enone* from the other classic reproductions is the moral significance infused into it. A man might take as a maxim for his life-guidance—

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncalled for), but to live by law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear ;
 And because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

After a break of more than twenty years the classic reproductions begin again. The new ones are *Tiresias*, *Demeter and Persephone*, and *The Death of Cœnone*. They are very different from each other. The *Death of Cœnone* is slight—just the revengeful anger and the relenting love of an injured wife ; the old art-skill, however, remains, though the date is that of the poet's death year. The verse of *Tiresias* is in parts laboured, I think, and the matter is cold. *Demeter* is fluent, poetical, and vividly emotional. The maternal passion is finely magnified to superhuman proportions, or, at all events, to superhuman expression. *Tiresias* is cold, I say ; yet neither is it sculpture-like. It is vague, broken ; it lies over the canvas. This is perhaps inherent in the story. The centre of the poem is, I suppose, the passage—

“O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,
 The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
 The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart—
 Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd
 To some great citizen, win all praise from all
 Who past it, saying ‘That was he !’

In vain !

Virtue must shape itself in deed, and those
 Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
 Within themselves, immersing, each, his urn
 In his own well, draw solace as he may.”

This being realised as the centre of it, the poem grows upon one. But also this being the centre of the poem, the story is seen to be wholly pagan, in spirit as in the letter. For *we* trust that

“The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart,”

is not powerless for good.

Demeter seems over-modern in its close: the slightly disguised foretelling of the supercession of the pagan regime in the mouth of a pagan goddess is, is it not, modern and more. To the passage beginning—

“Last as the likeness of a dying man”

—very modern too, I think,—I shall demur in the chapter on the Supernatural.

There is no need to dwell longer upon these beautiful classic poems; but in passing away from the Reproductions we must recur for a moment to a matter upon which we have already briefly dwelt. All these poems exhibit the strong dramatic tendency of Tennyson's genius. That power of projecting himself into many and diverse characters, which, as we have seen, is the dramatic power, he has in a very high degree. Not less is he able to realise times and atmospheres of thought very different from his own. But, unlike Shakespeare, he never leaves his own personality quite behind. Equally unlike Byron, he does not suffer his own personality to swamp that of the character he is exhibiting. To do this, is to have no real dramatic power at all. The personality of Tennyson is rather shown by a manner of interpreting character. Shakespeare does not seem to interpret at all—he just sets

the character before you to interpret itself. Of course he, also, really interprets, but after so many methods that you cannot identify any one as Shakespearian. He may present a character to you under any aspect—measure it by any standard. It may be for his wit or his wisdom, his knavery or his honesty, his practical power or his thoughtfulness, or any of a score of other characteristics, that Shakespeare presents a man to you. It is under one aspect, measured by one standard, that Tennyson's characters always present themselves, and that is the moral. You can scarcely think of a leading character of his in which some great moral feature, good or bad, is not brought out. And generally it is that region of the moral that lies closest to sensibility that is illustrated. It is the *tone* that interests him, and that he makes you feel. Thus there is in him the true dramatic power and habit, but dashed with the tendency to analysis by the special cue of his own mind, which is the characteristic of the subjective poet.

CHAPTER VII

“THE PRINCESS” AND “MAUD”

On One who affected an Effeminate Manner.

Love and Death.

Love and Duty.

The Princess and *Maud* should have come earlier as idylls. I have placed them here because of their semi-philosophical character. The philosophy in them, if the language be not too grandiloquent, is that of the true relation of the sexes. The subject is explicitly dealt with in *The Princess*; implicitly in *Maud*. The other poems named above contribute something to the subject.

The Princess is called a medley. Now and then it is a little discordant; but on the whole it is artistic, opening playfully and warming to earnestness and deep moral beauty as it advances. Lilia, who, in the midst of her brother and his friends, provokes the invention of the story by her championship of the modern woman, is a little gem of English maidenhood—

“Petulant she spoke, and at herself she laughed;
A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her, she.”

Her brother, in the midst of a popular “amusement-

combined-with-instruction" scene, had read of some heroic ancient lady, concluding with—

"Where lives there such a woman now?"

To which Lilia answered—

"There are thousands now
Such women, but convention beats them down";

and thereupon she propounded in comic version a scheme for the regeneration of womanhood—a college and so on, with death for penalty upon "any male thing" who intruded therein. This gives the cue, and the company agree to construct a tale between them, songs—those beautiful songs added later—to separate the parts. Thus the idea of the story arose, and as it advanced it was driven more and more towards a solemn close by the spirit of the women of the party, and when it is finished one of the tale-tellers is commissioned to recast the whole as a poem. So much for the prologue. Next for the story.

A princess and a prince are betrothed in their childhood. The prince, liable, by the way, to strange mystic seizures that mingle with his life dream, grows up in the thought of his affianced, feeding his heart upon her graces, known and imagined. When the time comes he claims his bride. But she has repudiated the betrothal, and, indignant at the position and condition of woman, has founded a college for their education and emancipation, upon the plan of Lilia's idea. This the prince learns; whereupon he forms a plan to go with two friends, all of them disguised as women, and gain entrance into the college, hoping for what may come of it. Their disguise is successful; they are admitted and are enrolled among the students.

The situation of course is a delicate one, and makes one a little anxious in the reading. On the whole, however, it is well managed, and one is free to enjoy the humour and the playful satire of the scene and its incidents.

The princess is all that the prince's imagination had pictured, in however severe a version. And, indeed, the severity is daintily pierced every here and there with woman touches, which make the picture grotesque but keep the woman lovable. I said grotesque, yet the word scarcely does justice to the magnificence of the princess's conception. Her undertaking is no whim; it is a passion with her; and she longs after the liberation and the elevation of her sex with a fervour that belongs to perfect faith and the highest bent of enthusiasm. But as all incongruity is grotesque, so the man-aims and the woman-heart, struggling together as they do in all her speech, cannot fail to have the effect of grotesqueness, or, say, to dash a touch of grotesque through the whole picture. In their pursuit of knowledge, the three friends are present at a lecture by a Lady Psyche, which runs its course in ultra-philosophic style, and ends with—

“ At last

She rose upon a wind of prophecy
Dilating on the future; ‘everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
Of science, and the secrets of the mind:
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more:
And everywhere the broad and bounteous earth
Should bear a double growth of those rare souls,
Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world.’ ”

But Lady Psyche is sister to Florian, one of the three friends. And the lecture being over and her ladyship being about to address some words of encouragement to the new-comers whom she has detained after the rest of the class departed, it came to pass that she

"Was moving on
In gratulation, till as when a boat
Tacks, and the slackened sail flaps, all her voice
Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she cried,
'My brother!' 'Well, my sister.'"

Whereupon the plot gathers apace. Florian and the rest, Lady Psyche and her baby, Melissa, daughter to Lady Blanche, make some very pretty play amongst them. Florian proposes an epitaph for himself, when his sister shall have told (as she says she must), and the sentence of death is carried out—

"Here lies a brother by a sister slain,
All for the common good of womankind."

Lady Psyche does not tell, but the secret comes out nevertheless; a grand crisis occurs, in the midst of which the Princess Ida falls into a stream and is saved by the prince, who emerges from the water bearing in his arm

"The weight of all the hopes of half the world."

Not for this, however, does the princess relent. A judgment court is held; but letters from the fathers of prince and princess intervene (the prince's father has captured the father of the princess and holds him hostage for his son), and so not death but ignominious expulsion is the sentence pronounced and executed.

Thus far all is serio-comic. Henceforth there is

no comic left; all is close-packed pathos of a dream-land sort. Thus far the princess has stood erect, defiant. Betrayed, thwarted, her palace violated, she stands unmoved. The saving of her life by the prince did not alter her, though it left a traitor in the citadel of her heart. But now by all the approaches to her woman's soul she is invaded, and point by point she is beaten down.

The two fathers talk of war, and when it seems that that is uncalled for, a taunt against the prince provokes that there shall be a tourney of fifty against fifty, in the issue of which Ida's fate also is involved. She writes a glowing letter to her brother Arac concerning his championship of her cause, but in it she is obliged to say concerning the prince—

“‘Take not his life: he risked it for my own;
His mother lives.’”

The Lady Psyche, in the *mêlée* of the great discovery, had fled, leaving her child behind her. Of it Ida writes in a postscript to her brother's letter—

“‘I took it for an hour in mine own bed
This morning: there the tender orphan hands
Felt at my heart, and seemed to charm from thence
The wrath I nursed against the world; farewell.’”

The battle being over, the princess throws open her palace for the use and tending of her wounded champions.

But the prince, on his side, was also wounded, well-nigh to the death, as it seemed.

“Then, was it chance
She passed my way. Up started from my side
The old lion, glaring with his whelpless eye,

Silent ; but when she saw me lying stark,
 Dishelm'd and mute, and motionlessly pale,
 Cold ev'n to her, she sigh'd ; and when she saw
 The haggard father's face and reverend beard
 Of grisly twine, all dabbled with the blood
 Of his own son, shudder'd, a twitch of pain
 Tortured her mouth, and o'er her forehead past
 A shadow, and her hue changed, and she said :
 ' He saved my life : my brother slew him for it.'
 No more : at which the king in bitter scorn
 Drew from my neck the painting and the tress,
 And held them up : she saw them, and a day
 Rose from the distance on her memory,
 When the good Queen, her mother, shore the tress
 With kisses, ere the days of Lady Blanche :
 And then once more she look'd at my pale face :
 Till understanding all the foolish work
 Of Fancy, and the bitter close of all,
 Her iron will was broken in her mind ;
 Her noble heart was molten in her breast ;
 She bow'd, she set the child on the earth ; she laid
 A feeling finger on my brows, and presently
 ' O sire,' she said, ' he lives ; he is not dead :
 O let me have him with my brethren here
 In our own palace : we will tend on him
 Like one of these ; if so, by any means,
 To lighten this great clog of thanks, that make
 Our progress falter to the woman's goal.' "

Meantime Lady Psyche has been creeping nearer
 and nearer, hungering for her babe, which presently
 she sees ; and the babe

" Spied its mother and began
 A blind and babbling laughter, and to dance
 Its body, and reach its fatling innocent arms
 And lazy lingering fingers."

The mother cries out demanding her child, and at
 last, pressed past resistance, yet with infinite reluctance,
 Ida has to give it up.

Lady Psyche pleads for more; she asks forgiveness. Ida remains like iron, till her brother and her father cry out against her hardness. But still more, the prince's father, lifting his head from his son's wounds, breaks in—

“O you,
 Woman, whom we thought woman even now,
 And were half-fooled to let you tend our son,
 Because he might have wished it—but we see
 The accomplice of your madness unforgiven,
 And think that you might mix his draught with death
 When your skies change again: the rougher hand
 Is safer: on to the tents: take up the Prince.’”

Ida is conquered; Psyche is forgiven; the prince is entrusted to Ida's nursing; the college is scattered, except the sagest who stay to help in the tending; *all* the wounded are admitted, and the princess mournfully confesses to herself that she is nothing better than a woman after all.

The princess is broken, but not won, and scarcely converted—

“Sadness on the soul of Ida fell,
 And hatred of her weakness, blent with shame,”

though the college itself, turned into hospital, rebloomed with woman's beauty shining out through form and act. Meantime the prince hung between life and death. During this time it is that she is both converted and won—won because she is converted; converted because she is won. Converted and won, but also comforted, for the prince is with her in her longings, though not in her methods. Womanly service brings forth womanly meditations, and womanly meditations yield womanly wisdom, and this being mated with the man's, as his with the woman's, the true path is found. For man is not humanity, but one aspect of

humanity; and woman is not humanity, but one aspect of humanity; and humanity is manhood plus womanhood. The verdict of the princess upon herself was—

“ Ah fool, and made myself a queen of farce !
When comes another such ? never, I think,
Till the sun drop dead from the signs.’ ”

To which the prince—

“ Blame not thyself too much, nor blame
Too much the sons of men and barbarous laws ;
These were the rough ways of the world till now.
Henceforth thou hast a helper . . . that know
The woman's cause is man's.

We too will serve them both in aiding her . . .

to be

All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse.

Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;
The man be more of woman, she of man.

Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words.

Self-reverent each, and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other, even as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men.

In true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal.

Dear,
Look up, and let thy nature strike on mine,
Like yonder morning on the blind half-world.

O we will walk this world,
 Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
 And so through those dark gates across the wild
 That no man knows.' ”

Not “lesser man,” as the *Locksley Hall* hero says. Not “undeveloped man,” as Ida at first said. Not “rival man,” as some modern theorists put it. But harmonious, complementary, “diverse”; this is the doctrine of the poem.

We may add our poet's latest utterance upon the matter—

On One who affected an Effeminate Manner.

“While man and woman still are incomplete,
 I prize that soul where man and woman meet,
 Which types all Nature's male and female plan,
 But, friend, man-woman is not woman-man.”

Maud is a very distinctive poem. It is an idyll; it is full of lyrical beauty; it is highly dramatic, the whole narrative being in the first person—in the mouth of the principal character—and always in the present tense or in the immediate past, because at each advance in the story the speaker shifts his position, so to say, and adjusts himself to the present, or rather (for that is the true notion of the poem) the utterances occur as the story advances—in later editions the poet calls it a *monodrama*: it is very sad, yet not depressing, but bracing: it embodies a doctrine.

In the study of *Maud* it is necessary to clearly realise the character of the man, Maud's lover. The central fact in the conception of him is his predisposition to madness. This at first takes the form of

intense morbidness, giving to all his emotions, whether of sorrow or joy, an intensity possible only under such conditions. The outer facts of his life determine that the emotions shall be painful. The terrible fate of his father and the sad death of his mother haunt him unceasingly. Moreover, he believes his father's failure before his death to have come from treachery on the part of others, and this leads him to brood on the rottenness of the world and the contemptibility of mankind. He includes himself within the range of his scorn. He is not rich enough to have the pleasures and the interests of wealth within his reach, yet not poor enough to have to provide for his own wants. So his whole time is free for these brooding thoughts. The result is an intense self-consciousness, and almost self-hatred, coupled with a gloomy mistrust of the world and its destiny. But all through, it is manifestly not the discontent of a mean mind, but the diseased broodings of a mind that has no centre of thought and of interest outside its own being. For he is lonely and unloved.

Then, upon his life enters Maud, and into his heart love for her. For a long time the old morbid bitterness struggles with the new love, but at last the love conquers. Then he is as happy as before he was sad, and as full of hopeful love for men and the world as before he was scornful and distrustful. The intensity of his happiness and love and gratitude are pictured in those glorious bursts of lyric beauty that make the heart of the poem. The great teaching of the poem, thus far, seems to be that the escape from the sorrows of self, and elevation from lowness of soul are to be found in transferring the centre of gravity, so to speak,

of the thoughts and interests from self into another being and another life. While he interprets the world by the key of his own life and fate—making the world but a second and magnified self—he is unhappy and bitter, contemptuous and despairing. When the centre of the world is, to him, Maud—when she is the first being in the world, and the world is seen in the light of her—he is happy and genial, earnest and full of hope. It was not the change from selfishness to unselfishness that took place in him—he was not selfish before—but rather from self-centredness to self-forgetfulness. The change was not at first moral, but rather emotional; the fruit was a moral change, and new eyes with which to view the world.

The other great lesson of the first part of *Maud* is that, to certain natures, happiness is more morally helpful than sorrow. There is much talk that seems to imply that the one great disciplinal thing in the world is grief. But there are natures from which sorrow seems to sap out all the moral power, and to which joy is as a new life. The fruits of a great joy are oftentimes holier and intenser than those of sorrow. I think that all sorrow that is to be helpful to the moral nature must have some element of joy or hope in it. In unmixed sorrow there is no life. That the profoundest sorrows may have a deep undertone of happiness, every true mourner knows, and this sorrow it is which is nearest to nobleness. Lower sorrows, that are mere fretful pain, have no kinship to holiness. So it is with the contrary emotion. Pleasure that is mere pleasure helps no one; but that profound joy that seems to reach down to the great underlying mystery and pain, this is almost holiness itself. The

truth is that all great emotion, whether of sorrow or joy, is ennobling to the nature, but mere pain or adversity, mere pleasure or prosperity, these have little moral power in them. And of the two great extremes, joy is the higher, and bears the higher fruit. The man who, under the burden of the sorrow of life, creeps slowly upwards to holiness and to God, doubts not that, under the glow of the great joy to come, he shall mount on the wings of rapture into ever higher and higher ranges of spiritual being. And it is when God opens the windows of His heaven, and lets a gleam of divine joy fall upon the heart, that the soul flashes nearest to His face. I think that the only true elevation is in happiness, but it has pleased Him that this ennobling happiness shall often be found at the bottom of a deep draught of sorrow.

During the time of their happiness, Maud's brother has appeared now and then. He is a repulsive figure, and at last, by his coarse violence, a duel is brought about, and the lover has to leave England. He never sees Maud any more, and before very long she dies, and his grief develops his tendency to madness. After a while he recovers, and determines to join the expedition about to sail for the Crimea to commence the war.

This poem is a protest among other things. In parts the complaint is very bitter and the protest very loud. It is a protest against the worldliness overriding love in men and in nations, and a complaint of the misery and degradation resulting therefrom. But it is so much more than a protest, because it contains a philosophy of cure, as I have partly shown. Therefore I have caused it to stand here, leading on from the sad

idylls to the philosophical poems which we shall next consider.

To resume. In this second part the protest is loud. The terrible contrast between the happiness with which the first part ends, and the despair with which the second part begins, is itself a bitter protest against that coarse, worldly, brutal brother, or more truly against the spirit which he embodies and represents.

But, beyond the protest, the two great points in the second part of the poem are, first, that, when he recovers from his madness, it is to a life as healthy, though not as happy as when Maud lived and he loved her, that the man awakens, not to the morbid state of the earlier time; and, second, that England too has been awakened from her self-centred worldly condition into a truer and nobler state of heart, and that by the same means as first saved the man—that is, by throwing her thoughts and interests outside herself into some other nation and its life. How is it that the man, though once more stricken down by grief—grief, too, full of terror and bitter regret—yet keeps the strength and the health of soul that happiness had brought him? Did he take refuge in philosophy—in general arguments concerning what is worthy of man, and due from man? It was not so. There are not many men who can be saved by general considerations. This man was saved by a person, and the love of a person, in the first instance; he is saved by that person and that love still. It is wonderful to think how nearly all that is done upon men is done by the influence of some personal being, and how, nevertheless, men are perpetually wandering away from the person who can help and save them to the system, the

creed, the philosophy that cannot. The deepest Christian teaching is that not by belief in any abstract doctrine, however true, but by contact with a Person men are saved.

It is Maud and her love that saves him still. The centre of his being is still outside himself, and so he is preserved from morbidness and despair. Before her death, he says—

“For years, a measureless ill,
For years, for ever, to part—
But she, she would love me still ;
And as long, O God, as she
Have a grain of love for me,
So long, no doubt, no doubt,
Shall I nurse in my dark heart,
However weary, a spark of will
Not to be trampled out.”

When he knows her dead, he says—

“Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.”

And after he recovers from his madness, he says—

“It fell at a time of year
When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer
And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns
Over Orion's grave low down in the west,
That like a silent lightning under the stars,
She seemed to divide in a dream from a band of the blest,
And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars—
'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee,' and pointed to Mars,
As he glowed like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.
And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight

To have looked, though but in a dream, upon eyes so fair,
 That had been in a weary world my one thing bright ;
 And it was but a dream, yet it lightened my despair,
 When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right."

England's redemption was to come through war. Not through the suffering of war (though this also may be needed by nations as by men), but through those reawakened sympathies, through that departure from self-centredness, which could lead her to voluntarily enter into the loss and suffering of war. For it cannot but be true that, as a man is incapable of nobility while his own life and interests monopolise his attention, so also it must be with a nation. There is a truth in the principle of non-intervention ; but also it may easily pass into a lie ; and a nation has consented to be ignoble when it has resolved that for no causes outside the circle of its own interests it will risk the issues or incur the sacrifices of war.

Love and Death might have been put into the mouth of Maud's lover.

Love and Duty strikes a new chord. In *The Princess* love "found its earthly close." In *Maud* it did not—through the death of one. In *Aylmer's Field* (if we may anticipate) through a bitter parting and the death of both, it did not. In *Love and Duty* it did not, through the interposition of

"Duty, loved of Love,
 . . . beloved but hated,"

and the obedience of the lovers to its commands. What then, asks the poem ?

"What sequel ? Streaming eyes and breaking hearts ?
 Or all the same as if it had not been ?"

"Not so," it answers, "but that it is better to have loved and lost," even in this fashion, than not to have loved. This, and that not love—"love" in the narrower sense under consideration—but duty is lord, these are the two teachings of the poem. These together keep the love of man and woman in its right place, from which it is always being removed, to baseness by the base, to usurpation by the spiritually lawless. That the love of man and woman, "when they love their best and truest," is the noblest of natural things, but that the noblest must be in subjection to Divine law, these two, fully believed, would remake the world.

Whether "behold thy bride" is literal does not appear. One asks, because it seems difficult to imagine a duty which should part these two, and yet allow the scene opening

"The slow sweet hours that bring us all things good."

And this scene having taken place, the exhortation beginning—

"Live happy ; tend thy flowers"

seems a very sanguine one.

CHAPTER VIII

POLITICAL POEMS

THERE is no sturdier aspect of Tennyson's mind and teaching than the political and social aspect. Reverence, willingness to a lofty calling, love of country, courage, freedom, loyalty, obedience—these make his prescription for national and social well-being. Freedom, not that obedience may be escaped from, but that it may be more worthily fulfilled; loyalty, not as an abject submission on the part of those below, but as a hearty and joyful devotion on the part of each, whether above or below, to the others, and of all to the whole. Not, he holds, by the old machinery, as such, nor by new machinery, as such; not by the retention of power in the hands of one set of persons, nor by its transference to the hands of another set, but by the presence in the nation of these ancient all-time virtues will it be well with a land. This puts the poet outside and above all party clamour, and exhibits politics not as war or as a low art, but as one aspect of noble living. This is true poet's teaching.

With the foolish notion that those who have no power to do a thing have some inherent right to mis-do it, Tennyson, it need hardly be said, has no sympathy.

“Russia bursts our Indian barrier! Shall we fight her? Shall we yield?

Pause, before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices from the field.

“Those three hundred millions, under one imperial sceptre now,

Shall we hold them? Shall we loose them? Take the suffrage of the plough.”

But this might be mere scorn. In Tennyson it is not—

“Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth, if only you and you,

Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

“Ploughmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than once, and still could find,

Sons of God, and kings of men, in utter nobleness of mind.

“Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised hustings-liar;

So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is the Higher.”

Keen to the true relation of man and woman, our poet is equally keen to the true relation of rich and poor, reverencing both, but not shutting his eyes to the difference between them.

Akin to this is his strong love of country. His sympathies are large and go out to all men. But a nation is a fact, a great human fact, a divine-human fact. Love of it, like family love, does not fight against the larger love. And whether in smaller minds it does or does not fail to help the larger love, the thing itself is nature, and he is poorer who is

without it. And so the full patriotic flush of our poet's writings is a refreshment and a tonic.

And last, I may remark upon his deep conviction that the true progress of freedom is an organic growth, not a revolution.

Glances towards these political topics occur in many places, but the poems that are largely or wholly political are the following. I extract some leading thought from each—

"You ask me, why, though ill at ease."

"Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent."

"Of old sat Freedom on the heights."

"Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them."

"Love thou thy land."

"Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for day,
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.

"Make knowledge circle with the winds;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds."

This last is a dominant thought with Tennyson: I have dwelt upon it in another chapter.

England and America in 1782.

“Strong mother of a Lion-line,
 Be proud of those strong sons of thine
 Who wrenched their rights from thee !”

though, perhaps, some American biographies of actors in that transaction cast a less than heroic hue over the story.

Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.

“We are a people yet.
 Though all men else their nobler dreams forget
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers ;
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
 Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
 And save the one true seed of freedom sown
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
 That sober freedom out of which there springs
 Our loyal passion for our temperate kings ;
 And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
 Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.”

To the Queen, 1851.

“And statesmen at her council met
 Who knew the seasons when to take
 Occasion by the hand, and make
 The bounds of freedom wider yet
 “By shaping some august decree,
 Which kept her throne unshaken still,
 Broad-based upon her people’s will,
 And compassed by the inviolate sea.”

“Broad-based upon,” not in the sense “derived from,” but in the sense “supported by.” I think that

in the other sense the poet's conviction was that a great historic institution is "broad-based" upon the past, and the providence of God therein, the present being a step in continuation of the past, and that the future has a right to inherit our past, modified, but only modified by the present. I think, too, that in later years he believed that the "occasion" had not been waited for, in connection with recent changes. Hence the quotation, the first in this chapter.

Maud.

"Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold.
Though many a light shall darken, and many shall weep,
. . . many a darkness into the light shall leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one desire."

The Charge of the Light Brigade.

"Forward, the Light Brigade !'
Was there a man dismayed ?
Not though the soldier knew
Some one had blundered :
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die."

The Charge of the Heavy Brigade. Epilogue.

"Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
My friends and brother-souls,
With all the peoples great and small
That wheel between the poles."

But if, and as, war is and must be---

“Nay—though the realm were in the wrong,
For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
The warrior’s noble deed.”

To the Duke of Argyll.

“O Patriot Statesman, be thou wise to know
The limits of resistance, and the bounds
Determining concession.

. . . be thy heart a fortress to maintain
The day against the moment, and the year
Against the day ; thy voice, a music heard
Through all the yells and counter-yells of feud
And faction.”

Hands all Round.

“That man’s the best Cosmopolite
Who loves his native country best.

Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro’ craven fears of being great.”

To the Queen (with Idylls of the King).

“One isle, one isle,
That knows not her own greatness : if she knows
And dreads it, we are fall’n.”

The Flect.

“Which Nelson left so great.
His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,
Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—
Her ancient fame of Free—
Were she . . . a fallen state ?”

Opening of Indian and Colonial Exhibition.

“ May we find, as ages run,
 The mother featured in the son ;
 And may yours for ever be
 That old strength and constancy
 Which has made your fathers great
 In our ancient island State.”

Freedom.

“ Howe'er blind force and brainless will
 May jar thy golden dream.

“ Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
 Of civic Hate no more to be,
 Of Love to leaven all the mass,
 Till every Soul be free.

“ Tho' some of late would raise a wind
 To sing thee to thy grave,

“ Men loud against all forms of power—
 Unfurnished brows, tempestuous tongues—
 Expecting all things in an hour—
 Brass mouths and iron lungs !”

Ode sung at the Opening of the International Exhibition.

“ Till each man find his own in all men's good,
 And all men work in noble brotherhood.”

Politics,
Beautiful City,
Riflemen Form,

which complete the list, offer nothing to add.

Locksley Hall Sixty Years after supplied the first quotation of the chapter.

I may refer to one other poem. On 2nd December

1851, Louis Napoleon perpetrated the *coup d'état*. The English press spoke its mind upon it; and in the House of Lords was expressed the opinion that that mind had been spoken too plainly, or too roughly perhaps. Out of this came the poem *The Third of February, 1852*. Assuming its justice, it is a fine strong utterance, revealing the *Englishman* who wrote it.

“ We dare not ev'n by silence sanction lies.
It might be safe our censures to withdraw ;
And yet, my Lords, not well : there is a higher law.

“ As long as we remain, we must speak free,
Tho' all the storm of Europe on us break ;
No little German state are we,
But the one voice in Europe : we *must* speak ;
That if to-night our greatness were struck dead,
There might be left some record of the things we said.’

CHAPTER IX

EARLIER PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS

AMONG philosophical poems I might note first *The Poet*, *The Poet's Mind*, and *The Poet's Song*; but these have been already considered in Chap. II. Akin to them, from one point of view, are *The Golden Year* and *Locksley Hall*, both poems of hope, of expected progress, like also in mood to the happier among the political poems which we have just been considering. In *The Golden Year* we have—

“When wealth no more shall rest in mounded heaps,
But smit with freer light shall slowly melt
In many streams to fatten lower lands,
And light shall spread, and man be liker man
Thro' all the season of the golden year,”

and

“Ah! when shall all men's good
Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
Through all the circle of the golden year?”

A poet's dream; a politician's aim; a Christian's hope; a philosophy of life.

In *Locksley Hall*, apart from or intermingling with

the personal sorrow and anger, and the protest, of which we have already spoken, we have the hope of the imagination more than of the heart, the anticipation of

“All the *wonders* that would be.”

But the chief of these early philosophic poems are such as may be called analytic ethical. To these we address ourselves.

The Two Voices is a philosophical poem of the strictest kind. It is one sustained argument, or a series of arguments upon the same subject, from the beginning to almost the close. Yet, as I have before remarked, it is full of glowing poetry. It would be difficult to find another poem in which a conception so purely intellectual is clothed with such richness of imagination and imagery. The argument is concerning suicide. To feel the full force of it, it is necessary to separate oneself, for the time, from all that Christianity has taught us concerning the duty of patient endurance, and the absolute surrender of the human will to the Divine, and concerning the “soul of good in things evil,” and to take up the position of, say, a high-souled Greek whose life was full enough of sadness and suffering to have become a burden to him. From such a situation the argument starts. The sinfulness of suicide is out of the question—the thing is not discussed as a matter of conscience. The question of the poem is whether on grounds of rational self-regard suicide could be defended, or must be condemned. I venture to give the steps of the argument:—

Voice. You are so miserable, why not die?

Man. This being of mine is too wonderful to be wantonly destroyed.

Voice. A dragon-fly is more wonderful than you.

I have found that this step of the argument is commonly misunderstood. The Voice is thought to urge the hope of a resurrection. That this is not the meaning is evident from the next answer of the man, which would, then, have no pertinence whatever, and also from the fact that, farther on in the poem, the Voice scoffs at the notion of a future life at all. The argument really stands thus :—

Voice. A dragon-fly is more wonderful than you.

Man. Not so. The pre-eminence of man lies in his intellectual and moral nature.

Voice. You are proud. Let me grant that you are higher than the fly and some other beings. Think you there are not many other beings in the universe higher than you.

Voice, resumes. Moreover you are but one of many. There would be plenty of men like you left.

Man. No two beings are altogether alike.

Voice. Even so, among millions of shades of difference, will your particular shade be missed ?

Man. You cannot know.

This is the end of the first argument. It might seem weak on the side of the man ; but it is not so. The strength of the temptation depends upon the truth of those things insinuated by the Voice. The proof of the truth is challenged and is not produced. It is enough. Even a doubt upon this point would forbid suicide to a noble mind. A new argument commences :—

Voice. You are so miserable and so impotent, 'twere better to die.

Man. Matters may mend. If I die, I lose that chance.

Voice. What are the means of cure ?

Man (not answering directly). If I should die, I should leave beautiful nature, and the knowledge of human progress. These would continue, while I was absent and ignorant.

Voice. But this must happen some day, in any case.

Man. Human progress is unceasing. If I bide my time, I see some of it.

Voice. The progress of man is so slow, so slight, compared with the infinite distance of the goal, that thousands of years would not suffice to show you any appreciable advance. How much less will some thirty years avail? Moreover, *you* cannot watch and see even this fancied progress for want of health of body and calm of mind.

Man (again changing the argument). Men will call me a coward if I die rather than wait and suffer.

Voice. Much more a coward are you, then, to live; for, so, you are twice a coward; you fear the pain of life, yet dare not escape, because you fear the scorn of men. Moreover, does love so bind you to men, that you need care for their scorn? Will it disturb your rest? In truth, they will not scorn you; they will forget you.

Man. That men will forget me, is small inducement to put myself out of their sight. Rather it provokes me to live, and recall the hope I once had of compelling them to remember me by useful and noble deeds done on their behalf.

Voice. Such dreams are common to youth. They pass as age advances. They are not worth preserving. Man cannot really do anything worth doing, or know anything worth knowing. The end of life is disappointment. Death is the remedy.

Man. That men *can* do and know is certain; for men have done and known.

Voice. Perhaps. Or they thought so. Some men have happy temperaments. From such come happy phantasies.

Man (changing the argument once more). This life is bad. Should I seek death as I am, the next, so entered, may be worse—its suffering deeper and more fixed.

Voice. Ponder the dead man, and tell me do you find evidence of any new life to fear?

Man. You cannot prove the dead are dead. It is true that the outward signs imply it. Why then do we not hold those signs conclusive? The fact that thus, against all outer reasons, we doubt, is evidence for the new life. The heart of man forebodes a mystery. He has conceived an Eternity. He conceives too, the ideal, which here he nowhere finds. He sees dimly a Divine Father and a Purpose working through the universe.

He feels in himself a higher nature struggling with his lower being. These doubts and questionings must have answers somewhere. You cannot answer them. Counter doubts will not do it, for the first doubts would still remain. Thus by doubts you have assailed me, and by doubts you are foiled.

Voice (after a pause in the argument). You had a beginning; you sprung from nothing. Why should you not have an end, and pass to nothing?

Man. You do not show that to begin necessarily implies to end. But suppose I grant it, I do not know that at birth I began to be. Each being may have many phases of life. I do not remember my last stage of being—the change of state may involve forgetfulness. Moreover—

“As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens, then
Until they fall in trance again;”

so should my next stage of being be like the last, I may then remember that last, though forgetting it in this. Or I may have fallen from a higher state of being, and the yearnings after the noble and the beautiful which flit through my mind may be traces of that higher life. Or I may have risen through and from lower forms, and then I might well have forgotten, for even here we forget the days of early immaturity. Or I may have existed as an unbodied essence, and then I must needs be incapable of memory—

“For memory, dealing but with time,
And he with matter, should she climb
Beyond her own material prime?”

Moreover, there do haunt me what seem like reminiscences of a past life, as if what now seems new were not really new, but had been seen or done before.

Voice. “The still voice laughed. ‘I talk,’ said he,
‘Not with thy dreams! Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality.’”

Man. Yes, but you have missed your mark, and have not tricked me into death by one-sided falsehoods. Whatever in our darker moods we may feel, no living being ever truly longed for death. It is fuller life, not death, that we want.

The battle is over, and the man has won the victory upon the ground chosen by the tempting Voice. By the pleas common to all worthy humanity, suicide is irrational, weak, contemptible. The man is victorious, but not the less is he desolate—

“I ceased and sat as one forlorn.”

But then comes the second Voice whispering Christian hopes; and the sight of human love and worship, and the happy glory of nature bring light and comfort to the desolate heart that, without light and comfort, had battled for the right.

There is one instance of suicide in Ancient History that upon non-Christian grounds could scarcely, if at all, be held blameworthy. This is the instance of Hannibal's death. A modern, to commit suicide, must either, for the time being, have ceased to be sane, or must have abjured Christianity. Amongst ancients, Nero, Hasdrubal, the brother of Hannibal, and Hannibal himself will serve as typical instances. The first destroyed himself because he was afraid to face the pain in store for him—this man is of the lowest type. Hasdrubal ended his life in passionate disappointment at his defeat and the failure of his expedition, shrinking from the shame, and, perhaps, also, from the sight of the troubles of his country, and the pain of his brother at the overthrow of his cherished hopes. This was weakness, but not altogether unworthy weakness; rather the weakness of a noble nature. Hannibal had devoted his life with unexampled fidelity of consecration to the deliverance of his country from the yoke of Rome; he had struggled for victory, he had bowed honestly before defeat, he had undertaken the pettiest

services, and had exposed his great head to contumely from meanest men; and, now, having exhausted the world in his search for the means of some new effort, he felt that his work was done. But the malignant hate of the Romans would not let him rest; his work was over, and safety and peace there was none for him in the world. So he retired from the world. If ever suicide could fit the character of a great man, this is the instance. I do not think that on any but Christian grounds this death could be held unworthy of even the supreme name of Hannibal.

The Palace of Art is another ethical philosophical poem; but whereas *The Two Voices* is sustained argument from beginning to end, in this there is no touch of argument; there the truth is exhibited logically, here pictorially, as I may say.

There is a man prosperous, and of high intellectual and imaginative powers. He sets before him one object—to be happy. To this end he chooses “a huge crag platform” isolated from the abodes of men, and having no means of communication therewith; and here he erects his “Palace of Art.” He resolves to live alone and calm, unmoved by the interests or the sorrows of the race of men.

His palace is an epitome of all forms of beauty and art. From a golden gallery round the roof a mighty range of land is seen, while the cloisters around the four courts of the palace are rich with the murmurous music of waters, and fragrance of incense and light that enters through windows of “slow-flaming, crimson fire.”

The palace is full of corridors that lead from room to room, and in the rooms are hung numberless

pictures, whose subjects are culled from the choicest beauties of nature and poesy. Thus—

“One seemed all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.”

Or from among the art subjects—

“Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily ;
An angel looked at her.”

There are towers to the palace, and in these are placed great bells that swing of themselves, producing silver music, and paintings of strong men in thought and poetry, and many other emblems, suggestive of power and supremacy, separation and completeness. In these towers he delights to sit, and contemplate the common world below, saying—

“‘All these are mine,
And let the world have peace or wars,
’Tis one to me.’”

At last the climax of his self-assertion is reached, and he says—

“‘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.’”

This mere sketch gives no idea of the pictorial richness of the poem, which is indeed marvellous. But what is the moral significance of the picture? Some men choose to be happy by indulging their lower appetites and tastes. This man is not one of these. In him is

the highest refinement. It is in beauty that he seeks his happiness, and that beauty is of no low order, but the beauty of high art and noble thought. With the giants of mankind he seeks to dwell; for the race of men he feels only scorn. Of living men he loves none, pities none. In him are embodied the highest refinement of thought and imagination, and absolute selfishness. Is he noble or contemptible? He would scorn to the dust a being in whom coarseness and selfishness were embodied, holding himself the antipodes of such an one. Is he so, or is he kin to him? Beauty is his god, refinement his highest virtue. Of humility and self-denial, of sympathy and pity he knows nothing. Is he noble or contemptible? Intellectually he is the antipodes of the selfish boor, morally is he not akin to him?

It will not be denied that one tendency of civilisation is to produce such characters as this which is here idealised. The worship of refinement grows upon us. Is it true worship, or idolatry? Of refinement, as such, no word but good. But I think that refined selfishness is a civilised devil. Every age has its devil-worship; this is one phase of the devil-worship of our age, and perhaps of all highly-civilised ages.

This selfishness grows out of want of sympathy—such an one would not be selfish towards his intellectual equals, perhaps—and the want of sympathy, deepening, oftentimes, into contempt and scorn, grows in some sort out of high culture. Not only the pleasures of men, but their sorrows, not only their sorrows, but their hopes and their creeds, are apt to be looked upon by the highly-cultivated man as

phenomena of a lower order of being, and thus he comes to think of himself as a sort of god. So also thought Lucifer, and in truth these two are kin. It is a point to be insisted upon, because it is a danger common to all those who are striving after that cultivation of their powers which is one of the highest happinesses of life. Of course this Lucifer spirit is not the inevitable companion of high culture. In some, the growth of every power of the soul seems but to intensify their sympathy with their fellow-men, not awakening in them scorn, nor even pity that shines down as from a higher level of being, but drawing them into such closer brotherhood of love as can override all distinctions, whether of the outer or the inner life. Where this is the effect of culture, there culture is doing its true work upon the moral as well as upon the intellectual nature; where this result is not produced, there the moral nature is stunted in proportion as the intellectual nature advances. It is Lucifer gods that look down in scorn, or, in softer moments, in scornful pity; the love of the great God is so near to brotherhood, that the Incarnation must needs be accomplished to testify to the fact.

The sequel of the poem shows the Nemesis and the cure. After three years of prosperity the very isolation and self-centredness which he had made his glory becomes his punishment—

“Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her” (his soul)—

at which he scorns himself and then laughs at his self-scorn. Weird, haunting fears turn the palace into a ghastly tomb.

“ Back on herself her serpent pride had curled.
 ‘ No voice,’ she shrieked in that lone hall ;
 ‘ No voice breaks through the stillness of this world :
 One deep, deep silence all ! ’ ”

The thought of time and of eternity grows dreadful to him ; loveless, comfortless, he who seated himself above sympathy, perishes for want of sympathy. The universe is a great tomb to him, which he alone inhabits. Then comes repentance.

“ ‘ Make me a cottage in the vale
 Where I may mourn and pray.’ ”

And then comes the brighter hope beyond.

“ ‘ Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
 So lightly, beautifully built :
 Perchance I may return with others there,
 When I have purged my guilt.’ ”

Not in the love of beauty lay the evil. Keen sensibility and high culture are not sin. Refinement and love make the true man, and a “ Palace of Art ” built for himself and men his brothers should be a noble monument to the greatness of a man.

This poem has a prologue, in which the character to be set forth in the poem is described as—

“ A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
 That did love Beauty only (Beauty seen
 In all varieties of mould and mind)
 And Knowledge for its beauty ; or if Good,
 Good only for its beauty.”

Now this I do not understand. “ Large in heart ” is exactly what I should say the man is not. The poet himself says, two or three lines on, “ He that shuts Love

out," meaning that the man had done that. Further, I do not understand—

"Or if Good,
Good only for its beauty."

"Good" surely is the name for that, thought of as beauty, which thought of as duty, we call Right. Good is the name for moral beauty. This man could not have loved Good, for the highest good is Love, which he had shut out.

The Vision of Sin is a poem the interpretation of which it is not easy to read. It opens with a glowing picture of sensuous beauty and enjoyment. But the sensuousness is low—ministering rather to the excitement of passion than to the satisfaction of the sense of beauty. In the midst of this picture are many human figures, but chiefly one—a new-comer—a youth, and—

"He rode a horse with wings, that would have flown,
But that his heavy rider kept him down."

This image is doubtless borrowed from the "Phædrus" of Plato—and understanding it so, we learn that the young man was one of high capacities, but of low aims—fitted for a spiritual life, but deliberately choosing the sensual. The solemn beauty of God, and the slow-coming but inevitable Nemesis descending from the heavens, alike fail to raise him or to warn him.

"I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
Unheeded : and detaching, fold by fold,

From those still heights, and, slowly drawing near,
 A vapour, heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
 Came floating on for many a month and year,
 Unheeded."

The vision changes; the young man has grown old; the vengeance has partly fallen. All the sensuous, beautiful surroundings have vanished; low and coarse companions and circumstances have taken their place. There is a horse still, but one altogether wingless. All that power of voluptuous enjoyment is gone; the old man asks for wine, but it is wine, simply; a stimulant, no more. He says—

"I remember, when I think,
 That my youth was half divine."

For to the palled appetite of the sensualist, the keener sensibilities of youth, tinged as they always are with some idealising touch, even though sensual, too, may well seem as "half divine." To the sensualist grown old, there is left but coarse appetite, at most; oftentimes not even that. From this old man, self-respect has fled, and belief in all the higher qualities and the higher aims of men.

"Drink to lofty hopes that cool—
 Visions of a perfect state:
 Drink we last, the public fool,
 Frantic love and frantic hate.

"Virtue!—to be good and just—
 Every heart, when sifted well,
 Is a clot of warmer dust,
 Mixed with cunning sparks of hell."

The meaning of thus much of the poem is clear. A life of sensuous, or sensual, pleasure, in youth, is

avenged by the loss of even that and the incapacity for anything higher as age comes on. But towards the end of the monologue of the old man a touch of something else shows itself. He grows bitter, and scornful of himself as well as others, and even despair seems to glimmer out from his talk. And then he ceases, and the vision changes again. The end has come, death and decay spreads over all, and the solemn silent beauty of God alone remains. Then two voices are heard; one pleads for the old man that his sins were those of sense, and that sense has avenged the sin. He did not indulge malignant passions, did not use his higher nature to pervert it, but neglected it only, and lived for the lower nature. The higher nature remains, though all unused and undeveloped, yet not slain by crimes of malice. Thus seems to plead the first voice. But the second voice answers—

“ ‘The crime of sense became
The crime of malice, and is equal blame.’ ”

He who will live for his lower nature alone must needs be guilty of sins against the higher nature; it is not permitted to him simply to ignore it. Crimes of sense must lead to crimes of malice, through the channel of selfishness, and these, then, are not less blameworthy that they so arose. The pleading voice urges again—

“ ‘He had not wholly quenched his power;’ ”

there was still left in him the perception of, and the capacity for, higher things: had it not been so, he would have been content in his lowness; but he was bitter and scornful of himself, and by this it was manifest that conscience was not wholly dead in him.

“At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, ‘Is there any hope?’”

And in that question is expressed the limit of human knowledge, and the suspense of human anxiety. Concerning millions of wasted lives that lie decaying in the hollow, nobler men who are half-way up the slope cry to the summit, “Is there any hope?”

“To which an answer pealed from that high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand ;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.”

The answer comes, but it is unintelligible—a sealed answer to human wisdom. But as it peals the dawn of God rises in the far distance, and the light thereof may seem to mingle with the eager question of man, as the last word lingers upon his tongue, and the light and the hope commingling may, perchance, bridge the way to a joyful interpretation of the mystic answer that pealed from the heights of God.

It is manifest that these two poems—*The Palace of Art* and *The Vision of Sin*—are companion poems; they portray the antipodes of selfish pleasure-seeking. In both, the pleasure sought is sensuous; but in the first the sensuousness is allied to elevated thought and high imagination; in the second it is closely allied to sensuality, and rapidly merges entirely into it. In both, the end is sorrow, self-scorn, and despair—these so much keener in the first than in the second, because the nature sinned against was higher to begin with, and the very sin has tended to keep alive the sensibilities of that nature. They are both of them poems conveying lessons which, though not novel, are yet of the deepest

importance, and under such forms as give them a penetrating power which under ordinary forms they would altogether fail to have.

The short poem *Will* needs no comment; I name it, however, because I shall have occasion to refer to it in a subsequent chapter; with it, I may group *Early Sonnets*, 3.

CHAPTER X

“ IN MEMORIAM ”

(*In the following commentary the cantos are numbered in accordance with the later editions of the poem. In most editions since 1870 a new canto (No. XXXIX.) is found, making the total number of cantos CXXXI. In earlier editions the total is CXXX. For these earlier editions the numbering of this commentary will be right up to canto XXXVIII. For cantos beyond that, the number must be diminished by 1.*)

WE now address ourselves to the study of the greatest of Tennyson's Philosophical Poems, and to one of the two greatest of his works in general.

As most of my readers will quite well know, this poem was written in memory of Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian Henry Hallam, and chief friend of the poet, who also was his chief friend. The friendship seems to have been an equal one, which so many friendships are not. Arthur Hallam was born in Bedford Place, London, on the 1st of February 1811. The words of *In Memoriam*—

“ Dark house, by which once more I stand,
Here in the long unlovely street ;
Doors, where my heart was wont to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,”

probably refer to that house. His education was of a very irregular, though, as it seems, of a very excellent sort; as a consequence, his culture and scholarship were high and extensive, but lay, for the most part, somewhat out of the beaten track. His powers and his character need not to be spoken of, since *In Memoriam* is written. In October 1828 (having been previously entered on the boards of Trinity College), he went down to reside at Cambridge. The friendship between him and Tennyson must have been formed almost immediately, for in 1830 they were very intimate, and proposed to jointly publish a volume of poems. At the wish of Henry Hallam, the father of Arthur, this plan was given up. Tennyson's poems were published alone that same year, and Arthur Hallam's are to be found in the "Remains" published by his father after his death. That the friendship must have commenced as immediately as we think is shown also in *In Memoriam*, canto XXII., for Arthur died on the 15th of September 1833, less than five years from the time of his going up to Cambridge. He took his degree, and left Cambridge in January 1832, and, forthwith, commenced the study of law in London, having been entered on the boards of the Inner Temple. During all his life, his health was delicate and fluctuating, and a uniform seriousness and frequent melancholy characterised his mind. This was due, not less to the weakness of his body, than to the earnestness of his character. He was especially subject to all such ailments as are incident to imperfect circulation. In the beginning of August he accompanied his father to Germany. On the 15th of September he was at Vienna, and there "a

sudden rush of blood to the head put an instantaneous end to his life."

"God's finger touched him, and he slept."

"The mysteriousness of such a dreadful termination to a disorder generally of so little importance, and in this instance of the slightest kind, has been diminished by an examination, which showed a weakness of the cerebral vessels, and a want of sufficient energy in the heart. Those whose eyes must long be dim with tears, and whose hopes on this side the tomb are broken down for ever, may cling, as well as they can, to the poor consolation of believing that a few more years would, in the usual chances of humanity, have severed the frail union of his graceful and manly form with the pure spirit that it enshrined."

The body was brought home from Vienna, and buried on the 3rd of January 1834 in the chancel of Clevedon Church in Somersetshire.

I believe there exists no record of the life of Arthur Hallam save this brief memoir prefixed by his father to the "Remains" that he published; I believe there exists no record of the friendship and intercourse between Arthur Hallam and Alfred Tennyson save *In Memoriam*. It is enough.

That the friendship was, as I said, an equal one, is at least partly shown by the review of his friend's poems published in 1830, written by Arthur Hallam for the "Englishman's Magazine." A portion of this review is included among the "Remains."

In the section closing this chapter I shall touch upon certain references to places which the poem contains. The

following table points out certain chronological markings, expressing, not the times when the various parts of the poem were written, but the periods in the history of his sorrow upon which the poet's mind dwelt in writing them. The writing of the poem was a slow and gradual work, the progress being not from beginning to end, but probably by the filling in of a first draft.

Cantos I. to XXI.	.	From Death to Burial.
„ XXVIII. to XXX.	.	Christmas Eve, No. 1.
„ LXXII.	.	Anniversary of Death, No. 1.
„ LXXVIII.	.	Christmas Eve, No. 2.
„ XCIX.	.	Anniversary of Death, No. 2.
„ CIV., CV.	.	Christmas Eve, No. 3.
„ CVI.	.	New Year.
„ CVII.	.	His Birthday.

But the great interest of the study of *In Memoriam* lies in the effort to trace the mental and spiritual history set forth in the poem. To this task we address ourselves.

The beautiful dedicatory poem seems to be a confession of faith, more deep than manifold. The sovereignty of God; the hope of immortality arising out of the character of God; the mystic meeting of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ; the incomprehensible freedom of the human will, and the highest use of that freedom—a voluntary surrender to the will of God; the littleness and evanescence of human systems of thought and truth; the limits of knowledge, its divine origin nevertheless, but the need of reverence to complete with it the harmony of spiritual music; the futility of the thought of merit towards God; the state of the blessed dead; the hope of divine pardon and teaching—these are its high

themes. By this inscription on the threshold, he who essays to enter may learn that, not less to Religion than to Art and to Human Love, is this Temple dedicated.

It must, however, be acknowledged that in the region of the latter rather than of the former is the poem greatest—or better, that it is more excellent as a religious poem than as a poem about religion. This is indeed confessed by the poem itself (canto XXXVII.), and we may say that the religious speculations contained in it do not go very far. It does vivify elementary religious apprehensions, and that is perhaps all that art can do, or properly attempt, in this region.

On the art side, there is little to be said but praise. On the human love side, the poem has often (though oftener not) been called morbid. Perhaps the charge is largely answered by repeating that it is art. It is written out of the imagination, not out of present full emotion, or the memory of past emotion, however past and remembered emotion may be the basis of the present imaginings—to doubt which would be an entire dishallucination. If I called the poem morbid at all, it would be on account of certain unhealthy mental operations portrayed in it, and unhealthy speculations pursued in it. But of these, what there is of them, more will be said in the proper place.

Canto I. (which seems to have been written later than those that follow it) strikes the keynote of the poem—the holiness of the grief which grows out of love; its power to elevate the nature of the mourner, and the danger of killing love and the possibility of nobleness in the effort to escape from grief.

“Let Love clasp Grief, lest both be drowned ;
Let darkness keep her raven gloss :

Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
 To dance with death, to beat the ground,
 "Than that the victor Hours should scorn
 The long result of love, and boast,
 'Behold the man that loved and lost,
 But all he was is overworn.'"

Men prate of the duty of resignation, and the sinfulness of unmeasured sorrow; alas! it rather seems that resignation, in this matter, is to most men a duty all too easy, and sorrow is apt to be kept within strictest measure. A heart-whole love, that death turns into a lifelong grief, is a sight to reverence rather than rebuke.

Yet perhaps there is a truer note than

"Let Love clasp Grief."

I think the note is "Let conscience clasp love," refusing to profane it in the endeavour to escape from grief. Let conscience clasp love, making it the basis and motive of nobler living. Thus on the "stepping stone" of love will the man, accepting grief, but avoiding morbidity, "rise to higher things."

Cantos II. to VIII. seem to express that confusion of heart and mind which characterises the first hours of a great sorrow. The blow stuns first, the pain comes later. You shall know tender-hearted people who seem to themselves to have suddenly lost all power of feeling, when some great grief has fallen upon them. Cold, weary indifference seems to be their sole feeling. But then, presently, as memory awakens, the pain throbs in upon them, till the whole heart becomes flooded with woe. So it runs through these seven poems. As in *Maud* the shell holds the attention of

the lover, so here in II. the yew-tree plays the same part. Then comes the gradual awakening to self-consciousness in III. and IV., and the sad look-out on the universal pain in VI., and, at last, the coming right home to a sense of personal loss in VII. In VIII. is given the mournful justification of *In Memoriam*—

“So seems it in my deep regret,
O my forsaken heart, with thee,
And this poor flower of poesy,
Which, little cared for, fades not yet.

“But since it pleased a vanished eye,
I go to plant it on his tomb,
That if it can, it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.”

From IX. to XVII., through a series of exquisite delineations, the poem follows the ship that is bringing home “lost Arthur’s loved remains.” They are all too vivid and too transparent to need any comment. Every one who has lost a friend who had also been a companion must feel the wonderful truthfulness of XIV.

Though it is out of place to do so here, I cannot help remarking upon the richness of the symbolism in the two lines—

“Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God ;” (x.)

and how they bring before the mind, not merely the chancel of a church, but all its holiest associations, and so its most inviting fitness as a resting-place for the dead.

In XVIII. the body is brought home; in XIX. it is buried by the side of the Severn, in the chancel of Clevedon Church. There sitting, as it were, by the grave, his sorrow flooding and receding from his heart

with the ebbing and the flowing tide, he utters his grief at the times of ebb. And when some rebuke him, he justifies his sorrow and the expression of it by the character of him who is gone, and the impossibility of silence (XXI.) All utterance of emotion that is genuine is spontaneous; the moment it becomes deliberate it gains a touch of insincerity.

In VII. and VIII. the mourner glances back at the past and the associations that cling round the memory of his friend. From XXII. to XXVII. he again returns to the past, counting, as it were, his lost treasures, and marking where the thread of joy was broken off. But, as he dwells upon the past, he perceives that its chief good was not the happiness, great though that was, that it brought him, but the nobility. And now that he is left alone, it will not suffice that his love should remain, there must also remain its ennobling power, otherwise life had better cease for him.

“And if that eye which watches guilt
 And goodness, and hath power to see
 Within the green the mouldered tree,
 And towers fallen as soon as built—

“Oh, if indeed that eye foresee,
 Or see (in Him is no before),
 In more of life true life no more,
 And Love the indifference to be ;

“Then might I find, ere yet the morn
 Breaks hither over Indian seas,
 That Shadow waiting with the keys,
 To shroud me from my proper scorn.” (XXVI.)

And though, in the past, love brought him joy as well as nobility, yet the love is still a good, though the joy is gone, for its ennobling power remains ;

"'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all." (XXVII.)

So grief steadies herself, and faith recovers her hold when she perceives that the uses of love are not lost when the object of love is taken away. At the first she had grown dumb, and the voice of sorrow only was heard—

"'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run ;
A web is woven across the sky ;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun.'" (III.)

But when she discovers that only joy is dead, and not love, nor its fruit of nobility, faith revives, and the seeds of a new and holier joy are sown.

"I hold it true, whate'er befall ;
I feel it when I sorrow most ;
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all." (XXVII.)

This seems to me the first great halting-place in the poem. The mourner's nature has righted itself, and while, as in a fickle nature it would do, love has not faded into forgetfulness, yet neither has it hardened into unfaithful bitterness, nor degenerated into weak and selfish sorrowing. "The far-off interest of tears" is already in some measure grasped. He who, though he has lost, continues still to love ; he in whom faith survives, though the poison-breath of deadly grief has fallen upon her ; he who has learned to comprehend that love itself is worthless except it bear its proper fruits of nobleness ; he already is one of those who

"rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things." (1.)

He truly has risen out of self altogether, and is on that level from which he may spring into the higher regions of universal love and spiritual truth.

Into this region of spiritual inquiry and truth the poem henceforth mounts. It ascends from the personal to the universal—not leaving the personal, and so becoming merely abstract, but expanding the personal into the universal. But all the time the personal lies at the heart of the universal, and again and again the universal is condensed down into the personal, and a living love and the yearning of an individual heart are seen to be the centre from which those movements after the infinite and the eternal start.

But first come the three poems of Christmas-tide (XXVIII., XXIX., XXX.) It is striking how an intense love regards times and seasons, more especially if death has set its consecration upon them. The observance of days may become a meaningless form, but only when the love that gave rise to the observance has vanished, or has faded into coldness. In the early Church, the necessity for Sabbath laws was swept clean away by the felt holiness of the Lord's day; but in these latter days, because our love has grown cold, men live again by law rather than by love, and so Sabbatarian discussions without number arise. And if other great Church days have grown meaningless, it is because love for a personal Master has crystallised into adherence to a creed, an organisation, or, at best, a law. When the personal Christ comes again into the hearts of men, His days will be holy days and will need no prescription.

And to that love which we cherish for our dear dead ones, times and seasons are very precious. Marked

by love, they are sacred halting-places in the journey of life, whereat we spread out our holiest memories, and call into full realisation the forms that on common days are dim to our inner sight, and our souls are bathed in the light of their beatified love, and we sorrow before them over our unworthiness, and wonder that they could ever have loved us, yet doubt not that they love us still, and we ourselves love them more tenderly and deeply than even when they lived by our sides. And all meanness and sin appears baser to us as our hearts grow tender in their presence; and it seems to us but one resolve when we promise to be ever faithful to their dear memories, and to strive to attune our lives to the holiness of their present being. It is on such days as these that we learn how near akin are the deepest sorrow and the deepest joy, and how near to them both is holiness.

In xxxi. starts the new range of thought. Until now memory has brought the dead friend back into his old place, or sorrow has contemplated his place empty of him. Now faith follows him into his new being, and the contemplation of the unseen life begins. It is a beautiful thought to take Lazarus as a bridge, so to say, from the known to the unknown. He has been in that world, and is now again in this, and so the two are brought nearer together in him. But his lips are sealed. He has brought the unknown nearer, but he has not made it known. As before, faith only can penetrate it.

xxxii. follows exquisitely upon xxxi., presenting a picture in which faith and sight were one. But upon this picture xxxiii. jars painfully. The canto has been a much-quoted one, and it has doubtless had

an aspect of usefulness for the purpose for which it was designed. But, on the other hand, it seems to allow an attitude of patronising superiority, on the part of those who have not a definite belief, towards those who have. Nor is it harmonious within itself. "Form" must mean *definite belief*; it cannot mean *forms*. What then does "*cares to fix itself to form*" mean? You do or you do not think the definite belief true: that settles your action: there is no question of *caring to fix*. The only question is one of fact. If your sister or you can *know* the other to be wrong, then the one who knows must be gentle and patient: it may be she or it may be you. And as for "whose faith has centre everywhere," suppose it turn out to be that your faith has centre *nowhere*, as may well happen, if the definite belief is true and you are rejecting it. The last verse of the canto comes very near to recognising this alternative. I should say the moral of the whole is, let him who does not believe assume no pedestal in the presence of her whose "hands are quicker unto good," but humbly, like other honest men, seek to know the truth, whatever it may be, that he may obey it.

In xxxiv. commences a great series of questionings about the future life. Some of these questionings may seem artificial and far-fetched to one to whom the future life is but a general fact; but they will seem in no way artificial or far-fetched to him to whom that life has been made an intense and personal reality by the passing into it of one who had been the partner of his thoughts and his hopes, and whose death blanched all his own interest in the present. To such an one, all the questions of this

part of the poem arise one after another, presenting themselves to him not at all as general problems concerning the nature of the future life, but rather as agonising doubts which must be answered before he can adjust his thoughts and hopes to the new and mysterious relations that have sprung up between him and his friend.

And, first of all, comes the question, Is there any future life at all? When the heart is cold and calm, this question is hardly realised, and a logical "yes" or "no" or "perhaps" can be heard, as if something far other than the key to the whole riddle and holiness and pathos of human life were under discussion. But let death step in and remove your best-beloved from your side, then "Is there any future life?" means to you "Is there any longer a love that gave your life all its highest joy and worth? is there any more one in love for whom you found your best help in the struggle after goodness? is there any more a hope that can keep the tears you are now shedding from withering and hardening your heart for ever?" This, and not the general question of the destiny of the human race, not even the question of your own personal destiny, is the intensest form of the problem of the future life.

The poet says that the mystery and darkness of the present necessitates a belief in the future. The world is an insoluble riddle without the key of Immortality. Religion has no meaning, patience and virtue are not at all worth while, and suicide is the only wisdom.

"'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,

To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease." (xxxiv.)

But at least love might live? Not so. The nobility of love depends upon its belief in its own immortality. To think it may die, is at once to die. And

"If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut." (xxxv.)

And so as Immortality is the only possible basis for noble love, love in its turn becomes a proof of Immortality.

I cannot refrain from introducing here an argument for immortality (one of the most beautiful I have seen, and akin to, though differing from the argument of the poem), taken from one who mixes darkness and clear light in his writings. He says, "Thus, if the celestial hope be a delusion, we plainly see *who* are the mistaken. Not the mean and grovelling souls, who never reached to so great a thought; not the drowsy and easy natures who are content with the sleep of sense through life, and the sleep of darkness ever after; not the selfish and pinched of conscience, of small thought and smaller love;—no, these, in such case, are right, and the universe *is* on their miserable scale. The deceived are the great and holy, whom all men, ay, these very insignificants themselves, revere; the men who have lived for something better than their happiness, and spent themselves in the race, or fallen at the altar of human good. . . . Whom are we to revere, and what can we believe, if the inspirations of the highest of created natures are but cunningly devised fables?"

To return to *In Memoriam*. From XXXVI. to XL. the direct continuity of the thought about Immortality is broken. XXXVI. is very noble, and XL. very tender, but we must not linger about them. The last line of XL.—

“And thine in undiscovered lands,”

takes up the subject again. But there is a previous line—

“My paths are in the fields I know.”

Immortality is a fact; but the friends are parted. The fifth verse of XLI. strikes the note of the first great terror of bereavement, where the lost one has been the mate of heart and mind—

“Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor,
An inner trouble I behold,
A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
That I shall be thy mate no more.”

This raises the question whether the hope of renewed matehood is a sound one. The next verse raises a second question, namely—What will be the character of that renewed matehood?—

“Though following with an upward mind
The wonders that have come to thee,
Thro' all the secular to-be,
But evermore a life behind.”

And in the two questions a third is involved, namely—What are the conditions of the new life by which this hope and the special form of it will be realised? Concerning the second question we may well believe that we know nothing, because we know nothing of the form of the new life. Most of our earth ties in their form are temporary; and as for precedence, the

first shall be last and the last first. The teacher may sit at the feet of the taught, when the temporal has given place to the eternal—the child may be wiser than the patriarch in things spiritual.

But the question, Shall the matehood be renewed at all? is different. It would seem that as character argues immortality, so love—I mean, true love; love of the spirit—argues not only immortality, but its own immortality. It would even seem as if all true spiritual contact must have eternal results—results not simply upon the person affected, but upon the relation between him and the one by whom he was so affected. And let the spiritual contact be constant, and of will and of love, it would seem as if the souls could not but be knit in an eternal bond. One would think that the passing spiritual touch must establish an eternal acquaintanceship, so to say. And if so, then, certainly the friendship lived to-day, in God, shall not cease. But it is clear that the eternal bond must have been earned, wrought. Such friendships do not grow without toil and prayer and descending grace.

But next the question comes—What are the conditions of the new life by which this hope will be realised?

In XLVII. the poet rejects a spurious immortality taught by many philosophic sects, and, also, often found more or less explicitly in conjunction with forms of Christian mysticism. The doctrine says that human souls are but fragments struck off from the universal soul, depending for their separateness and sense of individuality upon temporary and probably physical conditions. These conditions being

cancelled, the individuality ceases, and the fragmentary human soul is absorbed into the universal soul, human consciousness being swallowed up in the divine. Thus the man is not annihilated, but becomes immortal by the surrender of his personality. The poet thinks this a "faith as vague as all unsweet." In truth, for in all personal purposes it differs only from the doctrine of extinction at death in that it is more flattering to the sense of dignity. And as for matehood, that of course is put out of the question. But no ;

"Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside ;
And I shall know him when we meet."

Connected with this is XLV. A future life must mean a future consciousness and a personal self-consciousness : that of course. But will the consciousness of that life be continuous with the consciousness of this ? Will memory join this to that, and fuse them into one whole ? With this question canto XLV. deals. I apprehend that it must mean more than it strictly says. It can scarcely be intended to claim for this life so small a result as the awakening of self-consciousness — the discovery by the soul of its own separate being. Rather it must mean that the soul shall gather up and carry with it all its experience in the present, all its knowledge of its own properties and powers, and its relations to the universe around it. This gives the present life its full meaning ; less than this would leave the purpose of life unexplained.

The work of XLV. being accomplished, XLVI. can be realised. From the vantage ground of the new life "the eternal landscape of the past" can be surveyed,

and, in the case of the poet, the five rich years of his friendship with his living friend.

But the fear of XLI. was not quite that of the loss of all communion whatsoever, but that of the loss of an *equal* matehood. This involves the conception of the spirit's life as an active and progressive one from the moment of death, and XLII., upon consideration accepting such a conception, sees a beautiful relation to be possible out of it—a relation, too (so the poem affirms), not different from that which had always in measure been between the friends. But XLIII. raises another picture, involving the recognition of the difference between what is called the intermediate state and the state after the Resurrection. This picture, throughout the whole remainder of *In Memoriam*, is never returned to; but always the immediate entrance upon an active and progressive state is assumed. The fact on its positive side is one of considerable gravity; for not only does it give an, at least, doubtful bias to a good deal of the poem, but it prepares the way for a tendency not unmanifested in the poem itself, and very explicitly manifested in poems dealt with in the chapter on *The Preternatural in Tennyson*. Nor, on the other side, was the poet shut up to the picture of XLIII. as an alternative. Offering the comfort that XLIII. might offer, in that it too seems to preclude the danger that the dead should grow away from the living who love them, yet giving to the dead themselves a condition of positive blessedness, is the Christian doctrine of Paradise. The Christian Faith concerning the blessed dead is that neither are they fully awake, nor do they wholly sleep. "I sleep, but my heart waketh," might one of

them say. They sleep to rest; they wake to love and long. And this their state precisely answers to our own with regard to them, if we be loyal. We sleep to them—that is, we have lost present knowledge of them; but we wake to them in love and longing. “With regard to them,” of course I say. Otherwise our state and theirs are not alike. For they, unlike us, are withdrawn from action. This is the meaning of their longing. They wait for reunion, as we wait. They look for a life of action—of fuller and loftier action than they or we have yet known. This is the significance of the doctrine of the Resurrection. As long as the spirit is thought of as able to live the full life of man by itself—the body being a mere, not to say a troublesome, adjunct to the spirit—so long the Resurrection will appear a mystery, not only as to its mode, but as to its motive; a fact to be accepted because it is impossible to accept Christianity and reject it, but a fact in no way commending itself to the judgment as specially significant and good. But as soon as it is recognised that man is not a spirit with the accident of a body attached, but a compound being, of body, soul, and spirit, upon the union of which full life depends, then the doctrine of the Resurrection comes to be only another name for full immortality. Thus, that which is perpetually represented as a burden for faith to carry, turns out to be the expression of a triumphant accord between the doctrine of faith and the highest scientific necessity. The “resurrection of the body” means, then, the resurrection of the dead. The full life of man intermits at death. With the renewed body the full life of man is resumed; the dead are raised.

In XLVIII. and XLIX. another break of continuity occurs. This also, like the last, is apologetic and explanatory. The subjects are deep and solemn, but blame not the muse for her temerity in touching them. She ventures but at the impulse of love, and questions rather than answers, seeks to learn more than to teach. Canto XXXVII. in the former break, more perfectly than XLVIII. in this, expresses the poet's proper range in relation to religion.

Canto L. takes a new departure, by an address to the dead, asking for his present nearness in all the trying moments of life and in the last moment of death. The appeal is, however, not literally meant; it is but fanciful, to raise the question, How should we feel if he were near, considering what we are?

“Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?” (LI.)

The answer given is that the dead would judge mercifully—

“Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.”

This gives the key to the succeeding poems, which urge hope notwithstanding the presence of imperfection, of sin.

“So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dashed with flecks of sin.
Abide: thy wealth is gathered in
When Time hath sundered shell from pearl.” (LII.)

and

“And dare we to this fancy give,
 That had the wild oat not been sown,
 The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
 The grain by which a man may live?” (LIII.)

But now the poet faces the peril of the doctrine he is preaching. Perhaps we may think that he is rather slow in doing so; that he might have thought that the eyes of the dead, if they are like God's, are as a flame of fire as well as eyes of charity; eyes of judgment as well as of mercy, warning as well as encouraging, rebuking as well as excusing.

“There must be wisdom with great Death,” he said; but wisdom's standard is an awful one. At all events, the poet faces round now. Referring to the doctrine of the last extract, he says—

“Oh, if we held the doctrine sound
 For life outliving heats of youth,
 Yet who would preach it as a truth
 To those that eddy round and round?”

“Hold thou the good: define it well:
 For fear divine Philosophy
 Should push beyond her mark, and be
 Procress to the Lords of Hell.”

And who does not eddy, or is not in danger of eddying, round and round? Who dares to take such a philosophy into his *practical* thoughts, in whatever time of life he may be? For young or for old, there should be but one governing thought in life, that evil is evil, and must be hated, and shunned at all costs.

The line of thought in LII. and LIII. which we have just been considering, leads on to the deeply impressive canto LIV., commencing—

" Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood,"

and ending—

" So runs my dream : but what am I ?
 An infant crying in the night :
 An infant crying for the light :
 And with no language but a cry."

Concerning this hope, the poet asks, or at first seems to ask—

" The wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul ?" (LV.)

But it is to be observed that this question does not cover the same ground as the preceding hope. *That* says, " We trust that good will be the goal of ill ;" *this* speaks of continued life beyond the grave. Now though the goal of good without continued life is not possible, continued life is possible without the goal of good. Through cantos LV. and LVI. it is the question of the continued life that is pursued. In other words, the moral and its fruits are dropped out of thought. It is a pity ; for it is the two questions in combination that make the vital problem for us. " Shall we live on," we ask, " and will it be well with us ?" The question is twofold, and the answer may be twofold, resting on twofold conditions. If the answer were " Live on ? No," that would end the matter. If the answer be " Live on ? Yes : that is involved in your constitution—is part of the order of God," the question still remains, " And shall it be well with us ?" and

the answer to that brings back the moral: "That depends on you: that is, the purpose of God in you being taken for granted, it depends on you to allow or to hinder this good purpose in you." I grant that the poet might, completing the possible puttings, answer, as some do, "The two questions are one; if we live on, it shall be well; if it is not well, we shall not live on." But the matter is not so put (the poet understood the solemnity of human conduct too well for that), and the question dealt with in these cantos (LV. and LVI.) is that of continued existence beyond the grave, and the evidence of nature, simply, upon the matter. We will follow the poet's line, remarking only in parting that the two questions are the life-blood each of the other. Of virtue—

"Would she have strength to endure for the life of the fly or
the worm?"

And the question of the future life becomes a mere speculation, were it not that for virtue we plead—

"Give her the glory of going on, and still to be."

The future life; that, like the present life, is of God's making. But the "final goal"; that is of God's good purpose and of man's choice. The two together determine it.

Well, then, keeping to the poem; the hope of the future life for man—

"Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?"

"Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life."

Considering this, and the meaning that might seem to lie under it,

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope." (LV.)

"Careful of the type" is Nature? Not even so!

"She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.'" (LVI.)

And so rises the agony of the doubt. Is man, too, one of the types that shall go? If this were so, then is he the harshest note in all the cruel discord of Nature.

"O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil." (LVI.)

It is obvious that the poem itself contains the reason why the logic of Nature should not be applied to man.

"Such splendid purpose in his eyes ;"
"Who rolled the psalm to skies," only "wintry"
if his hope were vain :
"Who built him fanes of prayer," only "fruitless"
if his faith were false ;
"Who trusted God was love indeed ;"
"Who loved, who suffered countless ills ;
Who battled for the True, the Just."

These differentiate him. From mere Nature to him, no argument can be carried over. Conscience, will, and faith make a being destined to continue.

But now a new question is incidentally raised—that of the love of God as manifested in Nature. In canto LVI. we have the verse—

“Who trusted God was love indeed,
And love Creation's final law—
Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed.”

Nature is supposed to cast a doubt upon this first of truths. How does the matter stand?

To begin with, “shriek” is metaphor; Nature does not shriek. Next “ravine,” rapine, that is, imports a fictitious element. The word has a moral quality—implies sin. The poet has answered himself here (canto XXVII.)—

“I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfettered by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes.”

The moral element then is absent, as we shall see: there remains but that animals kill each other, or are killed by the elements, with what of pain there may be. Livingstone's account of his feelings when he was in the grip of a lion brings even this pain into doubt. Allow it, however, and the case stands thus: I. A very large proportion of the animal world has but a low nervous organisation, and, therefore, but small susceptibility to pain. Vast numbers of the lowest—as the *Articulata* and *Radiata*—probably feel no pain at all. We must not go into the proof of this here; but a knowledge of the physiology of the nervous system will leave little

doubt of its truth upon the mind. II. Animals suffer little from disease; their diseases are few and simple, and if serious, quickly fatal. Their chief pain is the short, sharp agony of death. But by this death the pains of old age are forestalled, and life is brought to an end when only its best part has been passed through. An animal dying in the prime of life has had a short life altogether good; an animal living till the decay of old age is completed, has had a longer life blurred by a considerable proportion of discomfort and pain. III. A large part of the weight of even physical suffering in man lies in the thought of its continuance or the dread of its approach. We may think that in animals these mental aggravations of physical pain are reduced to their minimum. To them, probably, the present pain stands by itself, unintensified by the past or the future. IV. (and this is very important). Our horror and misgiving at the sight of all Nature one vast battlefield, wherein each tribe is at war with each other, and all seek all as their victims and their prey, arises from our associating this picture with the evil passions which would be required to call out similar acts from men. If a man kills a man, we think of hate or basest selfishness as the motive of the deed, and so the deed fills us with horror or loathing, and we can picture nothing but unlove as present in the mind of any who might be concerned in prompting or countenancing the deed. But, eliminate the passions altogether, and let the deed be accidental, and our loathing ceases, and we feel but pity for the victim of the accident. Let it further be shown that the victim is the gainer by the act, and all feeling in the matter ceases. We erroneously and

half-unconsciously interpret the physical phenomena of Nature by a moral key, and so draw out from them fears and misgivings that they are in no way calculated to suggest. The mystery of pain even in the physical universe is not wholly soluble; but, given the necessity of susceptibility to pain as the condition of an organisation capable of enjoying pleasure, and needing to be warned off from those accidents that might endanger its perfectness or its very existence, and there remains not much in the contemplation of physical nature to disturb the heart. This necessity of pain is not manifestly certain, but it seems highly probable; and this probability co-acting with the other mitigating considerations, before set forth, may serve to keep the mind in suspension until peradventure answers of fuller hopefulness may be heard.

The saddest thought in connection with the sufferings of animals is this, that, as soon as they come into contact with man, pain, unnatural and useless to themselves, falls upon them. I do not mean the pain of kindly discipline to work—this may have its compensations, and, at all events, soon comes to be easily and cheerfully borne; but I mean the pain that arises out of the coarseness and selfishness and cruelty of men. The horse of a brutal man is, if we will think of it, an object of sorrowful and perplexing contemplation. But here we are out of the sphere of nature; and the sorrow and perplexity form but part of that great mystery according to which all beings known to us are liable to suffering (and more than suffering) from the unworthiness of others. The man who sins not only sows the seeds of pain and degradation for himself in the future, but he scatters possible pain and degra-

dation among all those who in the remotest degree or the most indirect manner come within his influence. Standing upon the borders of the circle of humanity are the animals whom man has domesticated to his use; they in measure catch his power, share his pleasures, sympathise with his aims, and, alas! receive also the bitter fruit of his sins. The wild horse struck down and devoured by the beast of prey presents a startling picture, from which nearly all the horror vanishes as we contemplate it; the horse ill fed and tortured by a brutal man presents a picture whose sadness and mysteriousness deepen the more as we dwell upon it the more. But even here we must not exaggerate. The animal's *quality* of suffering is, as we have seen, not profound; and the time is short. The man forms the saddest picture, after all.

To resume. In LVI. the thought of *In Memoriam* reaches its climax. Starting from the personal grief, it has soared right away into the questions affecting universal humanity, but, finding no answer, can but rest upon

"Behind the veil, behind the veil." (LVI.)

Then in LVII. it is as if the heart had grown weary with the strain, and fell back like a tired bird into the nest of its personal sorrow. There even comes a revulsion of feeling, as if the questionings had been altogether useless or out of place.

"Peace; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go." (LVII.)

For three cantos (LVII., LVIII., and LIX.) there is

a suspension of all thought, and just a simple dwelling upon feeling. Henceforth, until a new flight into happier and more hopeful thought takes place, the poem keeps very near to the personal, and only

“Loosens from the lip
Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears and skim away.”

From LX. to LXV. is another group, clustering around the question of how the departed spirit regards its old life and associations. The contrast of the old with the new is figured by a village maid whose heart is set upon one born above her. Her own surroundings look poor to her, yet she cannot picture his ways or his whereabouts, neither does she think that he can love her. So the mourner to his friend who has moved into a sphere above him. “To thee also, O spirit, these surroundings of mine, and myself also, must look low and poor. Yet will not love knit us, for not Shakespeare can love thee more? But if to remember me and my love

“‘Could make thee somewhat blench or fail,
Then be my love an idle tale,
And fading legend of the past.’ (LXII.)

Yet for me to love my hound

“‘Can hang no weight upon my heart,
In its assumptions up to heaven ;’ (LXIII.)

so seeing I am, perchance, as much more than he as thou art than I, to love me still may be no clog upon thy upward progress.” So runs the plea ; dwelling ever upon the value of love, and how it may not be wasted nor its ties broken, and settling at last upon the brighter thought—

"Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me ;
A part of mine may live in thee,
And move thee on to noble ends." (LXV.)

LXIV. is gracefully tender, and seems as worthy to be true for one who has risen to heaven as for him who has risen to the high places of the earth. Concerning the assumption in these cantos that the *present* condition of the departed is one of activity and progress we will speak further hereafter. Note now, again, the change of picture from XLIII.

LXVI. sets forth a truth that is not often recognised or precisely understood. A great grief acts upon different natures in very different manners. Some it renders bitter, but then I think there must be more than grief at work—there must be unworthiness also, either in the sufferer, or in some who have had to do with bringing his grief upon him. A sorrow, pure and simple, does not, I think, make a worthy nature bitter. Some, grief altogether subdues ; their whole nature is saddened, every thought and feeling, every utterance and manner, is attuned to the dominant sorrow. These may be true and worthy men and women, but I think they are generally weak, unless indeed the grief be such as not only to wring the heart, but to overturn the balance of the mind. Then although they may have been originally strong, sorrow has brought them to weakness. Some there are whom grief altogether embitters or subdues, who yet show a smiling face, wearing a mask to conceal the furrows of pain. This type is very commonly recognised, and is even supposed to be more widely spread than it actually is. Where it exists, the smile is the result of insincerity

which seeks a disguise, or of pride which shrinks from the imagined humiliation of pity, or of sensitiveness which fears the pain that unchastened hands may give in touching the never-healing wounds. But there are some (and of these the poem speaks) into the depths of whose hearts a great grief sinks, lying there cold and still like the waters of the ice-stream in the bed of the Mexican Gulf while the waters warm with the rays of a tropical sun float and move above. In these natures the grief never changes, is never forgotten. Through all variations of surface thought and feeling, it lies there cold and still, felt for ever. Yet the warmth at the surface is genuine, not feigned. The laugh is the laugh of genuine merriment, the smile expresses genuine kindness and active sympathy. The apparent interest in matters of thought is real interest. No mask is worn. The surface of the mind seems what it is. None the less, the depths of the mind are what they are; for there are two layers of thought and feeling. The one changes with and adapts itself to the perpetually varying circumstances and characters of the outer life, the other changes not at all. This is a kind of nature not often understood. To most men it seems that a laugh either must be hollow, or must express the absence of pain. But, in truth, the outer eyes may be looking upon the play of children, and the outer ears listening to their laughter, while the outer heart, so to say, responds to their beauty and their joy; yet none the less the inner heart shall be thrilling to the tones of a dear voice that lingers on the ear for ever, while to lie down and sleep, as the lost beloved is sleeping, would seem the sweetest thing on earth. A sad heart behind a

gay smile, this is common enough, and commonly enough understood; a sad heart behind a gay heart, this is more rare, and still more rarely understood.

The cantos from LXVII. to LXXI. hover about the land of sleep and dreams. In LXVII., across the bridge of moonbeams, so to say, the waking thoughts travel to the resting-place of the dead friend.

"And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn."

In LXVIII. sleep has come and dreams mingle past happiness with present sorrow. In LXIX. sleep shapes a symbolical dream, in which the dreamer wanders in perpetual winter crowned with the thorns of his loss, and the people mock him. But the face of the dead breaks in—

"They called me fool, they called me child:
I found an angel of the night;
The voice was low, the look was bright;
He looked upon my crown and smiled:

"He reached the glory of a hand,
That seemed to touch it into leaf:
The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand."

The poet is said to have given another meaning to this canto. But read as I have read it, it makes a group of kindred poems with the preceding and succeeding ones. Read thus, the dead friend breaks into each dream.

I do not understand what "beyond the will" means in the last verse of LXX., nor what is the value of the jarring word "wizard." If the two are meant to express that the experience was beyond the region of the normal, then they fit into the first verse of the next

canto (LXXI.), drawing that into the abnormal, as the verse itself half suggests.

“Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
And madness, thou hast forged at last
A night-long Present of the Past,
In which we went through summer France.”

It seems a pity that the dream series should end in this fashion. I shall, however, pursue this subject in the chapter on *The Supernatural or Preternatural in Tennyson*. For the present we will think of dreams as, as I trust they are, healthy products of life and the mind, and then I would remark that it is not without significance that these dream-poems are placed thus late in the history of the poet's sorrow. The experience of different minds varies in this matter; but I think that it will, for the most part, be found that it is the things that touch the surface of the mind that are reproduced in dreams; the great facts and emotions of life do not so reappear, and a deep and sad emotion that possesses every fibre of the soul during the hours of waking will be altogether ignored in the life of dreams. Only later, when the mind has become familiar with its sorrow, when the grief has come to mingle with, rather than overmaster, every other thought, when it has become a member of the household, so to say, rather than a strange and awe-inspiring visitor, then, like other things of the usual life, it may visit the world of dreams. It mingles with the surface of the mind as well as lies deep down at the bottom, and by this right it joins that medley of superficialities which forms our common dreams. But even so it will every now and then separate itself and assert its distinctness and superiority, and so there come those tenderer or

nobler reminiscences that are among the chief joys of the heart-wearied mourner. But not to all true mourners do these dreams ever come.

It may be noticed that this ebb-time of emotion, in which dreams come, is also the time in which, in the poet's mind, grief is apt to blossom into poetry. But of this I have spoken more at length elsewhere.

LXXII. marks the second anniversary of death.

From LXXIII. to LXXVII. deal with fame—first, the dead friend's, and then fame in general, or the poet's. The dead man never lived to achieve fame, though the make of greatness was in him—

“So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
I see thee what thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old.” (LXXIV.)

The poet consoles himself—

“So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be,
How know I what had need of thee,
For thou wert strong as thou wert true?” (LXXIII.)

and

“So here shall silence guard thy fame ;
But somewhere, out of human view,
Whate'er thy hands are set to do
Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.” (LXXV.)

This is below our poet's mark. Fame missed here : compensation, more fame, there. This is below the *Wages* level—

“Nay but she thought not of glory ; no lover of glory she ;
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.”

And it has the defect of the theory already referred to, that the dead enter at once upon a life of action

and progress, instead of the paradise life. Verses 3 and 4 of LXXIII. are better, but they also are below the mark. True life is lived altogether above the thought of human estimate; true deeds are done and true words spoken simply on their merits. And the more we value our dear ones on their merits alone, the deeper is our regard. However, the close is healthier, though still somewhat valetudinarian—

“But what of that? My darkened ways
 Shall ring with music all the same;
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,
 To utter love more sweet than praise.” (LXXVII.)

We now come to another great halting-place in the poem. I said that canto XXVII. seems to me the first important halting-place—the point at which the mourner rises out of the exclusive contemplation of his personal grief into the consideration of those great problems that concern the whole race rather than the individual. I further showed that in LV. these questionings reach their climax, and that from that point the poem keeps constantly near to the mourner's personal sorrow and the memory of the dead. The thoughts rise into the universal still, but only in the shortest flights, a fresh departure from memory being taken in nearly every canto. Thus we have at present three divisions to the poem; first, from I. to XXVII., second, from XXVII. to LVI., third, from LVI. to LXXVII., the point we have reached. Through all these, however, whatever their differences, grief is the dominant note. By this common character they become one.

At LXXVIII. a change commences. XXVIII., from which the first change starts, is a Christmas poem; so also is this. The change is towards recovery. Through

the undertone of grief there begins to flash up, now and then, the note of hope, and gradually the hope grows stronger and more permanent, till at last the poem ends in hope so intense as to be almost joy. The grief was love under another form; no less the hope is love. The recovery consists in the passing of grief into hope, not in the passing of love into forgetfulness. Love looking back upon loss must be grief; love looking forward to fruition must be hope. There is no loss of love, but rather its conversion into a higher form.

By this change the mourner's feelings towards the present are also changed. While love looks back in tears, the present seems but as a blighted tree, from which the fruit has fallen, withered; when love looks forward in hope, the present becomes to its eyes the seed of nobler fruit in the future, and by this change of regard for the present the recovery of health is made manifest.

As far as we have gone, *In Memoriam* is best studied by following the poems in the order in which they stand; the connection of thought and the connection of place manifestly coincide. But from this point it seems to be otherwise. Henceforth the main drift of the poem is to set forth the progress of recovery; but woven into this main drift are lines of thought which are not dealt with and put away at once as in the first part of the poem, but which rise to the surface again and again in an intricate and apparently irregular manner. The classification of this remaining portion becomes therefore somewhat difficult. I think it will best be accomplished by pursuing one after another the incidental lines of thought

until these are exhausted, and the residuum will then be the direct exhibition of the progress of recovery. To trace first, then, the incidental lines of thought:—

The Christmas poem LXXVIII. by its close is linked to XC. and CXXIII. In the truest-hearted, the sense of loss never dies, the place of the lost is never filled. If to any it seem otherwise—

“ He tasted love with half his mind,
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
Where nighest heaven.” (xc.)

It is not quite true what another poet has said, that

“ The saddest grave that ever tears kept green
Sinks to the common level of the field ;
Then o'er it runs a road.”

Now and then, to the last, some mourner can say—

“ Ah dear, but come thou back to me :
Whatever change the years have wrought,
I find not yet one lonely thought
That cries against my wish for thee.” (xc.)

I think it would be the confession of the essential pooriness of our race if it had to be owned that such fidelity as this is never found.

By a natural transition we pass to XCVII. The mourner on earth is faithful, and he clings to the belief that the spirit in paradise is not less faithful, though his state is so raised, and his sphere of thought and interest so much greater and nobler. He is occupied, not estranged ; it was his heart, not his mind, that was pledged. The form of the poem is beautiful, and recalls at a higher level the thought of LX.

By another easy transition we pass to a group consisting of LXXXII., XCI., XCII., XCIII., XCIV., XCV., and

CXXII. In all these it is assumed, as it is in LXXIII. and LXXV., and in those from LX. to LXV., and in XL., XLI., and XLII., that the dead are in full active wakefulness. There is no longer the XLIII. picture—that of sleep, absolute, till the Resurrection; nor is there the picture of the Christian doctrine of Paradise. Well, then, upon the assumption of the active wakefulness of the departed, the question is raised, "Can they return and commune with and manifest themselves to us?" The question is raised, and almost, or quite, the answer is assumed that they can, till the poet grows frightened, his conscience troubled at the position in which he finds himself. So, indeed, it is said that he said of himself, and that this accounts for the following change:—

In canto XCV., in the old editions, we had—

"So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touched me from the past,
 And all at once it seemed at last
 His living soul was flashed on mine,
 "And mine in his was wound," etc.

But in later editions we have

"The living soul was flashed on mine,
 "And mine in *this* was wound."

Now, however inconsequential the new form is (and one must confess that it is utterly so in relation to the context), one may be very glad of the change. That because he was reading

"The noble letters of the dead,"

the *Universal* soul should touch and commingle with, and transport into mystic raptures and revelations the

soul of the reader of the letters, is incredible. But that the poet should repent of asserting that his reading of the letters brought the soul of his *friend* into that relation with him is, we may think, a very good thing indeed. For one must believe that this sort of speculation or fancy would be unhealthy, belonging to a state of mind not sufficiently in love with fact, or one open to delusion. But of this matter also we shall speak in the chapter on the Supernatural.

The fact that the alteration had to be and could be made, throws a doubt upon the historical character of the whole canto, like the doubt as to whether CIII. is allegorical or a genuine dream. In XCV. there can be no question of allegory, of course.

There is a passage in LXXXV. that must detain us for a moment. In supposed communion with the dead, the poet asks—

“ ‘Can clouds of nature stain
The starry clearness of the free?
How is it? Canst thou feel for me
Some painless sympathy with pain?’

“ And lightly does the whisper fall;
‘Tis hard for thee to fathom this;
I triumph in conclusive bliss,
And that serene result of all.’ ”

The question is as old as loss and grief, and is even wider than the poet puts it, and may rise higher. Of God, also, as of the dead, we ask, how does He regard our pain? His answer may be supposed to be the same as theirs—

“ I triumph in conclusive bliss,
And that serene result of all.”

Herein lies one of the most blessed hopes of our race.

That He who is the God of Love is also the God of Happiness; that the God over all is Blessed for Ever, has in it a hope deeper and stronger than all the fears that infest our lives. A less loving than He must fail of happiness, without the knowledge that, at bottom, all is well. If we may so use human forms of speech, the Love of God assures us of His good heart toward us; the Happiness of God is the proof that all His purposes of Love are in the way of complete fulfilment.

God is happy, and so all is well. But yet, for the present, we suffer, and the question returns—

" 'Canst thou feel for me
Some painless sympathy with pain?'"

The answer to this is hidden yet revealed in the story of the Man of Sorrows, who is the express image of the Father's Person. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

"And my heart grew more despairing, and my soul was dark
and dreary,
Till I saw the Godhead bending, faint and meek and very
weary ;
Not in blessedness supernal, sitting easy on a throne,
Dealing sorrow unto others, with no sorrow of His own."

In the Divine sorrow is found the consolation under present pain; in the Divine happiness the great guarantee of hope for the future.

LXXX., LXXXI., LXXXIV., and CXIII. are four pictures of what might have been had the dead man lived. The first supposes the friend who now lives to have been the one to die; the second pictures what their love might have grown to had both lived; the third is a sweet life-picture of domestic joy ending in a fairer

death;¹ while the fourth paints a career of public service and honour in a time of civil strife. There is a completeness about this group that can scarcely be accidental.

The last verse of LXXXI. calls for some special comment. Death broke a short friendship, and though the love of the friends was great, yet

“ This haunting whisper makes me faint,
‘ More years had made me love thee more.’

“ But Death returns an answer sweet :
‘ My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain,
It might have drawn from after-heat.’ ” (LXXXI.)

There is a profound truth in Death's answer, though there are conditions to the truth. The immature grain, frost would kill ; but the grain mature though not ripe will be ripened by its action. So a friendship that was but just formed, wherein the friends, though they had been drawn together, had not had time to arrive at a knowledge of each other's characters, this friendship, broken by death, though it would leave a tender memory behind it, could not well be ripened by the sudden frost. But when love has come to be firmly based upon character, then death can do at once all that time could ever have accomplished. If you have lost one whom you had learned to know well and who was dear to you, be sure that your present love is the measure of your highest capacity of love for that lost one. And indeed more than this is true ; for death beatifies the lost one, by leaving upon your memory

¹ Most readers of *In Memoriam* will know that Arthur Hallam was engaged to one of Tennyson's sisters.

the ideal image of your friend, freed from the petty blurs that soil all human characters; and death beatifies your love, by raising it above all the smallnesses of selfishness and varying moods, and enshrining it for ever amongst your holiest emotions. An idealised friend, and an idealised love—these are the blessings that Death brings to the true heart, in payment for the joy that he takes away, and in compensation for the pain that he lays upon the heart. I think that to him who is content to live wholly for the higher and the hereafter, it may not seem amiss, when the first pain has throbbled itself to calm, to kneel down, though still with streaming eyes, and thank God that his loved one and his love have risen to the bosom of the Unblemished and the Changeless.

I do not presume to speak of the mystery of the death of the Holy One; but looking at it from this point of view alone, I conceive that had it been written of Him—

“And, lo! a shape with pallid smile divine,
Wandered in Palestine;
And Adam’s might was stately in His eyes,
And Eve’s wan sweetness glimmered on His cheek,
And when He opened heavenly lips to speak,
I heard, disturbing Pilate into sighs,
The rustle of those leaves in Paradise.”

Had thus much and no more been the story of His human life, then the power of that life to move and to win the hearts of men would have been immeasurably less. Not that there was wanting any sweetness or completeness in the life itself; but, uncrowned by death, it would have lacked that regal sway over the hearts of men which He wields as King of Sorrow no

less than as Lord of Love. Death alone immortalises. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." In the victory of the Cross is emblazoned the Omnipotence of Love and Death.

To return. The last poem of the group with which we have just been dealing seems to me to belong also to another group, consisting of a number of part-portraits of the dead man. These are xcvi., cix., cx., cxl., cxii., and cxiii. The first of these takes up a point dropped in the previous poem, where, in the letters read at night—

"Strangely spoke
The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen through wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell." (xcv.)

Then xcvi. describes how the dead friend dealt with doubt, and the result upon his character. Men, for the most part, either beat off doubts or entertain them. Not many have, on the one hand, the courage, and, on the other hand, the loyalty to truth, to really grapple with them, and see what of force they contain. He who holds on to a faith by dint of shutting his ears to all that can be said against it, does not take very high ground; but he who lets go a faith by simply *opening* his ears to all that can be said against it, does not, of a certainty, take higher ground. The first manner is of the nature of superstition; the second is of the very spirit of irreverence and disloyalty, which are irreligion.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds." (xcvi.)

That is deeply true; but for the doubt to be honest, it must be true of the doubter that

"He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
 He would not make his judgment blind,
 He faced the spectres of the mind
 And laid them." (xcvi.)

And then the reward will come—

"Thus he came at length
 To find a stronger faith his own ;
 And Power was with him in the night,
 Which makes the darkness and the light,
 And dwells not in the light alone." (xcvi.)

Doubt is so much the fashion, and, in truth, so much the necessity of our time, that there is danger that it come to be looked upon as in itself a good. It is good to doubt the false, if the doubt be pursued to the overthrow of the false ; it is good to doubt the true that has come to us by tradition or education alone, if the doubt be pursued to the establishment of the true ; otherwise there is no good in doubt at all. That feeble life that truth, traditionally held, can give to the nature is better than the bloodlessness of mere doubt. Strong minds doubt, but doubt is no proof of strength ; noble minds doubt—in these days, all the noblest must pass through doubt—but doubt is no proof of nobility. The strength and the nobility are shown when the doubts are grappled with till they yield up some hidden treasure of truth. Then the truth is but the second and crowning reward ; the first reward began when the struggle began, being found in the growth of that intellectual and moral strength which was at once the parent and the offspring of the contest.

We may pass lightly over the other poems of this group. CIX. pictures nobly a noble man ; CX. describes his influence upon others ; CXI. portrays the outward

graces of the man—the gentleman in contrast with the “churl in spirit”; CXII. returns to the quality of his mind, to excuse his friend that he measures living men by so high a standard; while CXIII. shows the fruit that his character would have borne in public life. The last part of CXIII. recalls the poem “*Love thou thy land*,” and it joins with the whole of this group (except XCVI.) in leading up to the thought of CXIV.

This poem is the fullest expression of the thought that so often recurs throughout the writings of our poet. In “*Love thou thy land*” we have—

“ Make Knowledge circle with the winds ;
 But let her herald, Reverence, fly
 Before her to whatever sky
 Bear seed of men and growth of minds.”

In the dedication to *In Memoriam* we have—

“ Let Knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of Reverence in us dwell ;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,
 But vaster.”

And now we come to the poem immediately before us.

If these three be carefully studied, it will be perceived that they contemplate knowledge under two different aspects—one as a means by which man apprehends the universe around him; the other as an instrument for accomplishing those practical results which he desires to bring about. Under one aspect, knowledge would be praised as tending to the elevation of the nature; under the other as being a form of power. In the one case it is thought to subserve *being*, in the other, *doing*.

Is knowledge elevating? Yes, if it be harmonised by reverence, not otherwise. So says the poet.

"Let her know her place;
She is the second, not the first." (CXIV.)

"Knowledge puffeth up," is an ancient saying of authority. To all minds the unknown is touched with awe. Awe enlightened by knowledge approaches reverence; there is wanting but love to complete it. If the splendours and wonders of the universe do not penetrate to the heart as well as the head, then not only no reverence is awakened, but awe is dispelled. That which by fuller knowledge should have come to seem more holy, because more radiant with the presence of God, comes to lose all semblance of holiness, love being wanting, because God is not perceived by the head, but felt only by the heart. Though the head should in some sort reach Him, it would be but as a First Cause, and this apprehension of Him is not reverence, nor akin to it. If it should seem that by growth in knowledge, even though reverence is not attained, still little is actually lost, and the gain is positive, and so knowledge must anyhow be good; the answer is twofold. First, if that which should have brought reverence as its result has come to pass, and reverence has not resulted, the nature is thereby hardened, and rendered more essentially irreverent. This principle is receiving perpetual illustration in the moral history of men. Every time a virtue is missed, through the non-appropriation of the offered means to that virtue, the corresponding defect in the character is strengthened. He who suffers sorrow or joy, the stirrings of a great example, or the pain of

sudden shame to pass over his soul without leaving some result of moral elevation behind it, more than misses a possible growth in grace. The child corrected and unamended is hardened by the correction. He who eats and drinks the outward elements of a sacrament, receiving with them no inward and spiritual grace, eats and drinks condemnation to himself. And so a man who grows into a fuller knowledge of the outward and visible signs of God, without getting nearer, by the grace of reverence, to the Indwelling Spirit, has set the seal upon the irreverence of his soul.

Second (and this though akin to the first is distinct from it), by gaining knowledge, and no reverence with it, a man has used up a portion of the reserve of means to reverence which was before available for his service. Of the ignorant man who is irreverent, it may always be hoped that did he but know more he would revere more. If he has come to know more, and still does not revere, this hope, because this means, is gone.

It need scarcely be said that all this assumes the fundamental nature of reverence in relation to elevation of character. The only hope that the lower can grow higher is found in the fact that the lower can revere the higher. The power of reverence is the measure of the life of the soul. That which is beyond my apprehension is beyond my aspiration, and that which excites in me no thrill of admiration has no counterpart in my character. So that reverence *is* fundamental to goodness, and whatever quenches the growth of that puts an end to the possibility of this.

Thus much for the one aspect of knowledge. On

the other hand, Is knowledge power? Yes; but the power may be beneficent or malignant. So says the poet—

“What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain
Of demons ?

“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.” (CXIV.)

I apprehend that there is no truth of deeper importance, at the present moment, to our country than this. In past ages of our history, the great masses of the people, occupied in incessant and unintellectual toil, their minds inactive, and their passions kept in check by a traditional respect for superiors, and an unquestioning if unreflecting and low-toned religiousness, formed, for practical purposes, an unimportant element in the nation. Even the great popular movements of the past were, after all, the work of the minority. Now all this is changed, or is rapidly changing. The traditional respect for superiors is virtually dead; the working-classes are everywhere seeking and gaining knowledge, and thought, of some

sort or other, is active amongst them. At the same time, the Church has almost entirely lost its hold upon these men. Here, then, the condition of things is changed to its very foundations. What is to come of the change? The passions will assert themselves, as a matter of course. The passions always *do* assert themselves in all men. Self-interest, impatience of opposition, love of power, are universal instincts. How are these passions to be governed in this new nation rising up amongst us? By the intellect, do we hope? The intellect is very often the servant of the passions; it is very rarely their ruler. No man is just or tolerant or generous by the persuasion of the intellect, though often enough the intellect points a surer road and supplies more efficient instruments for the ends of injustice, intolerance, and selfishness. The intellect makes no election of good or evil; it is the servant to whomsoever is master in the nature, be that master good or bad. And yet we go on talking of education as the panacea for all the ills of the nation, and the great lever which is to raise the people, and by it, for the most part, mean no more than a certain amount of knowledge-giving, or a little more sharpening of the intellectual faculties. Every school-inspector, every middle-class examiner, lays his rule and measure to this. Every gentleman of leisure who feels that he has a mission to improve the minds of the working-classes, thinks he has done well when he has supplied to them another fact or two, or fed them with another meal of logic finely minced for weak digestions. I think we have had enough and more than enough of this, if nothing else than this is to be done.

"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." (CXIV.)

But "she is the second, not the first." The head is the propelling but not the guiding part of the nature. He who multiplies engine-power, and heaps on fuel without limit, taking no care of his steerage, is not a wise ship-master. The present age, rich in the elements of power, is thereby rich in the elements of a possible overwhelming catastrophe. The great need of our age is steerage-power. The traditional respect for superiors was in large measure a superstition; it is right that it should have passed away. But in its place we must have a true respect for real superiors, or the nation must come to shipwreck. The fading faith in religion was, in large measure, a superstitious belief in a corrupt Christianity; it is right that it should have passed away. But in its place we must have a real belief in a pure Christianity, or every man of the nation must come to shipwreck. Faith in men, love to men, respect for men; faith in God, love to God, reverence for God—who will supply these to the world? Let these abound, and then

"Make Knowledge circle with the winds."

But let these be wanting, then I have no faith in the power of knowledge to raise the world, but rather fear her as "some wild Pallas from the brain of demons." Better head and heart both sleep for ever, than that the head should awaken, while the heart still sleeps, or but awakes to give entrance to a devil.

Having thus examined some of the incidental

lines of thought that arise out of the record of the progress of the mourner's recovery, we now briefly address ourselves to the observation of the main current of the change.

The Christmas games in LXXVIII. are touched and half saddened by "the quiet sense of something lost," but they are not hollow mockeries of mirth as they were in XXX. Then sorrow quenched mirth, now it lives side by side with it. The sadness of the past and the household smiles of the present no longer seem discordant. So also canto LXXIX. takes up the last line of IX., and seeks to heal the wound that it may have given. Grief for the lost often seems half cruel to the living. They and their love seem for the time forgotten in the sorrow for the love that is gone. But by and by the lost love and the living love can live side by side in the heart, as sorrow and mirth can do. The past and the present are harmonised. This is the beginning of health. The restoring power of the thought of LXXX. must needs be very great, as also must the steadying power of the thought of LXXXI. LXXXII. is almost, and LXXXIV. is quite a relapse; but between them in LXXXIII. is the deliberate longing for the currents of life to return into living channels. LXXXIV. yearns again towards the might-have-been, and that is the old disease; but LXXXV. and LXXXVI., with also CVIII., picture the still-may-be, and this is health. But all through this texture of the present and the future is woven the golden thread of the past and its memories, shining out through those portraits of the dead man which we have studied, and through those beautiful snatches of reminiscence in LXXXVII., LXXXIX., C., CI., CII., and XCV.

The permanence, and yet, as soon as time had been given to the nature to recover itself, the healthiness of this love and grief are to a great extent explained in the fourteenth verse of LXXXV.—

“Likewise the imaginative woe,
That loved to handle spiritual strife,
Diffused the shock through all my life,
But in the present broke the blow.”

Sometimes a grief of this kind falls only upon the emotions, and then, according to the character of the person, it is evanescent or becomes morbid. But if it is taken up by the whole nature—intellect, imagination, conscience as well as emotions—then, growing among all the fibres of the soul, it becomes a permanent part of the mental organisation, and an element in all the processes of the intellect, the pictures of the imagination, and the purposes and motives of the moral nature. But while thus making for itself an abiding-place in the mind and heart, it excites so many activities, in every part of the nature, that its immediate force is broken by their counteraction. It becomes a permanent *influence* instead of a temporary but overwhelming *force*.

In xcv. I think the *poetry* of *In Memoriam* rises to its climax. I say the poetry, for it is that that I mean. Other parts excel it in elevation of thought, but none in intensity of poetic beauty. The picture of daybreak which closes it is unsurpassable. I should have said, it is quite unmatched, but that I remember the *Essay Without End* that appeared in one of the earliest numbers of the “Cornhill Magazine,” and which is said to have been from the pen of Thackeray. In that, too, day-dawn is marvellously

pictured, and these two form an exquisite and perfect pair.

But xcv. is specially important for another reason. In it we have reached, for the first time, a footing of firm health of mind. The mourner is in real and full communion with his living friends, yet is so far from having forgotten the dead friend that then, above all other times—

A hunger seized my heart ; I read
 Of that glad year which once had been,
 In those fall'n leaves which kept their green,
 The noble letters of the dead.

“So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touched me from the past.” (xcv.)

That is, touched me *by* the letters, and *through* memory, as we now may, and always should, read the passage. It is when love has outlived the *disease* of grief, when health has returned, and yet love lasts “pure and whole,” that the full happiness of the memory of the dead is known. Health, we say. Perhaps we should more carefully say, health as towards his loss and grief. Whether that state of mind described by “his living soul was flashed on mine,” afterwards changed to “*the* living soul,” was altogether healthy, will be considered in the chapter on the Supernatural.

In contrast with the rapture, the genuine rapture, and the perhaps morbid element of xcv., xcvii. feels very strange, though taken by itself it is a beautiful simile, beautifully set forth—a simile strange to have been thought of, yet fitting strangely well.

xcviii. is natural, and the exact opposite would have been no less natural. Almost capriciously the heart fixes upon some places that are linked to the memory of the dead, and covers them with "a treble darkness," while over others a holy light broods for ever.

From xcix. to cvii. form a group dealing with time and circumstances, bringing together another anniversary of the death-day of the departed (xcix.), a change of home (c.-ciii.), a Christmas (civ.-cv.), a New Year (cvi.), and a birthday of the dead man; the whole group suggesting the commencement of a new chapter of life, and leading up to the resolve of cviii. cvi. rings the dawn of the new day in noble tones. cii. is an exquisite picture of the rivalry of two regrets, and the dream of ciii. is very beautiful. I do not think that this latter is meant to be significant in all its details. If it were a real dream it is unlikely that it would be so, and if but an art dream, I think it would be bad art, because antagonistic to verisimilitude, to construct it significant throughout. Its leading thought is what entitles it to a place in the poem. Whether it be real or not, the poet is called to meet his friend in the other world. Of details, in the letter, at all events:—the "hall" probably represents the Lincolnshire parsonage that the mourner was just leaving; the "river" is the stream to which he wrote "A farewell"; the maidens are probably his sisters, to whom in the confusion common to dreams he ascribes his own poems upon his dead friend; or it may be they are his own thoughts and associations with his friend. The poet is said, later, to have given "hopes and powers": as the meaning of these.

(Compare v. 4 and 5 of *Epithalamion*.) The journey is suggested by his approaching start upon the wild ocean of life. The fact that upon going out to sea he found, in his dream, his living friend instead of only the "veiled statue," the glorified memory, of him, would naturally leave his "after-morn content."

Passing over the portraiture that we have already dwelt upon, and the poem of Knowledge and Reverence, we come to cxv. This is a Spring poem, and strikes the keynote of the remainder of this spiritual history. The summer of former happiness is over and gone; the winter of sadness and mourning is past; life reawakens in the world, and the glorious summer once more lies before. During the winter the heart dwelt regretfully upon the Summer that was gone; in the Spring the Summer to come fills the heart. Regret is dead, or has changed to hope. The joys of the new Summer are akin to those of the old, and indeed the glories of the new are the fruit of the seed of the old. Because the bloom of the past died down to seed, therefore the bloom of the future is possible. The past life in passing left behind it the seed of the life that is to be lived. And the regret for the past is the same as the hope for the future, for they are both forms of love. Regret is dead, and hope is born; but the love which is both is unchanged. Indeed the regret does not die; it only changes.

"And in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest." (cxv.)

And so a grief can bloom, and the fruit that follows is the noblest that life can bear.

Love is the whole burden of *In Memoriam*: in the first part love as grief and regret; in this last part, love as hope and joy. The dead who set in the west has risen again in the east, and so love faces about and looks forward instead of backward, and the road that leads to reunion lies under the sunshine of day and through the loves and smiles of living men.

"Yet less of sorrow lives in me,
 For days of happy commune dead;
 Less yearning for the friendship fled,
 Than some strong bond which is to be." (CXVI.)

The dead friend set as the evening star, and love darkened into grief; he rises as the morning star, and love brightens into hope. The star is the same; the love is the same.

"Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
 For what is one, the first, the last,
 Thou, like my present and my past,
 Thy place is changed; thou art the same." (CXXI.)

With the new birth of hope, faith revives. The first impulse of grief had been to say, "The stars run blindly—a web is wov'n across the sky," and though she had battled with the fear, yet the shadow of doubt hung heavy upon her; but the tone of reviving hope is altogether different; she says—

"The songs, the stirring air,
 The life re-orient out of dust,
 Cry through the sense to hearten trust
 In that which made the world so fair." (CXVI.)

With hope and faith come the thoughts of preparation and progress—

“ Oh days and hours, your work is this,
 To hold me from my proper place,
 A little while from his embrace,
 For fuller gain of after bliss.” (CXVII.)

Grief is always self-centred, and more or less apt to be narrow and selfish; noble and happy love is expansive and embraces the whole world in its arms. So this thought of preparation and progress, this hope of a great and blessed future spreads over all things. During the sad parts of the poem, the mourner's own sorrow was the centre of all his questionings about the world; but now the dead friend's glory is the key to the universal hope. CXVIII., CXX., CXXVII., and CXXVIII. are full of this great expectation.

For the centre of the poet's personal hope, his friend might in some sort suffice; but at the heart of the universal hope there must be a universal friend, whom we call God. Strike out the dead friend from being, and for the living friend, hope is gone; strike out God from being, and for the world, hope is gone. But that the dead friend still lives, love gives the assurance. So love, of which are born hope and faith, can alone give assurance of the life of the Universal Friend.

“ I found Him not in world or sun,
 Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
 Nor through the questions men may try,
 The petty cobwebs we have spun:

“ If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
 I heard a voice 'believe no more,'
 And heard an ever-breaking shore,
 That tumbled in the Godless deep;

“ A warmth within the breast would melt
 The freezing reason's colder part,
 And like a man in wrath, the heart
 Stood up and answered 'I have felt.'” (CXXIV.)

Gradually, as faith and love find out and rest upon God, and as hope widens from the individual to the universal, the dead friend also seems to blend with both.

"Strange friend, past, present, and to be ;
Loved deeper, darklier understood ;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee." (CXXIX.)

And again—

"Thy voice is on the rolling air ;
I hear thee where the waters run ;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair." (CXXX.)

But yet the love in nowise loses its reality and its personality—

"What art thou then ? I cannot guess ;
But though I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less :

"My love involves the love before ;
My love is vaster passion now ;
Though mixed with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more." (CXXX.)

The dear dead friend has become, to the imagination of him who on earth loves him, one with Nature and with God, humanising them, yet not losing his own personality, but in that personality tender and near as ever, rising to the divine and pervading the universal. Seen in all things, felt at all moments, he makes all things and all moments dear and holy by his presence.

I think that if any one were to read CXXIX. and CXXX. for the first time, out of connection with the

rest of *In Memoriam*, it is very probable that he would suppose them to be addressed to Christ. I think, too, that every one will feel that, with a few unimportant alterations, they would make beautiful hymns to God. Yet I think that few will deny their exquisite appropriateness in their present place and for their present use. How is this? How can the same words be rightly addressed to the dead friend, to Christ, and to God? The reason is found in that truth of which the Incarnation is the expression. Christ is Ideal Man and the express image of the Father's Person. He is the one Christ, and in so being is, at the same time, Ideal Man and the express image of God. Therefore whatever feelings are appropriate towards God are appropriate towards Him; whatever regard is due to ideal humanity is due to Him. Indeed the highest moral conception of which we are capable is the conception of Ideal Man; and therefore when God desires us to apprehend Him to the limit of our powers, He takes flesh and dwells amongst us. All unworthy conceptions of God are such as picture Him in some respects lower than perfect man. Our highest possible conception of Him is realised in the person of Christ, who is Ideal Man.

But now it is easy to see how these same hymns can be addressed to God and to Christ, which in moments of rapture might be addressed to the dead friend. The dead friend has become idealised and spiritualised. Unseen, like God; all-pervading, like God; shorn of imperfection and weakness, of ignorance and changeableness; the goal and the model of all high aspiration; known in character, but unknown

in mode of being, he has come to seem divine and mixed with God. The human nature has entered upon what seem to us divine-like conditions of being, and the spirit of the living man goes out to the spirit of his dead friend as to God.

This is necessarily the end of the poem. That spiritual history which began in loss and grief and doubt, has reached its consummation in hope and joy and the beatific vision. A fragrance of intense spiritual happiness, that is the highest development of love for the dead, haunts the end of the poem. This happiness can come for moments even while grief is at the full, so that the heart breaks and exults at the same instant. When the joy has become perennial the history is completed.

The village of Clevedon lies on the banks of the Severn, nearly opposite the beautiful Wye. It nestles in a hollow on the top of a hill, near to heaven, well into the bosom of the earth. The new village has grown quite away from the old (of which little but the graveyard remains), and can be completely seen at a glance from the hill on which the old village stands. From the vivid newness of the new, the old village, with its church, looks peaceful and inviting.

The tablets of the Hallam family are in one arm of the transept of the church. In 1833 died Arthur; in 1837 Eleanor, his sister; in 1840 died his mother; in 1850 died Henry Fitzmaurice, his brother; and last of all himself, the only son of his father, Henry Hallam, our great and good historian. "Here with his wife and children rests Henry Hallam the historian." This is the sad summing up on the

last tablet. In the centre of the cluster stands the stone to the memory of Arthur Hallam. His short life and his noble character are sketched in a few words on the tablet, then the farewell—

“Vale dulcissime
Vale dilectissime desideratissime
Requiescas in pace
Pater ac mater hic posthac requiescamus tecum
Usque ad tubam.”

This is the memorial of a life to which has been erected that noble monument of human love, our poet's *In Memoriam*—

“When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west,
There comes a glory on the walls :

“Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

“The mystic glory swims away ;
From off my bed the moonlight dies ;
And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipped in gray :

“And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.”

Leaving the church and looking toward the sea the whole scene from Clevedon Hill seems to have been in the poet's mind when he wrote—

"Sweeter seems
 To rest beneath the clover sod,
 That takes the sunshine and the rains,
 Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
 The chalice of the grapes of God ;

"Than if with thee the roaring wells
 Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine,
 And hands so often clasped in mine,
 Should toss with tangle and with shells."

And looking over the Channel as the tide came up against the cliffs he may have conceived that sad, beautiful little poem that might almost be a part of *In Memoriam*—

"Break, break, break,
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !
 And I would that my tongue could utter
 The thoughts that arise in me.

"O well for the fisherman's boy,
 That he shouts with his sister at play !
 O well for the sailor lad,
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

"And the stately ships go on
 To their haven under the hill ;
 But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
 And the sound of a voice that is still !

"Break, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead
 Will never come back to me."

In the whole of *In Memoriam* there is but one reference to the Wye ; yet a student of that poem can hardly help feeling that the Wye is to him emphatically Tennyson's river. And what a river it is. Now

a brimming navigable stream, now with scarcely water enough to cover its bed; here transparent as crystal, there opaque and secret; here calm and very smooth, there impetuous and noisy; winding in and out, and backwards and forwards—at one or two points almost meeting itself again, yet never quite forgetting that its destiny is to reach the sea. And then such banks, such a valley of unbroken beauty stretching almost from its source to its mouth! Hill upon hill, one exquisite curve growing out of another and melting again into a third; bold cliffs precipitous and naked, slopes gentle and verdant or covered with the richest foliage; bays of mimic grandeur and tiny tributaries without number, picturesque villages and venerable ruins,—beauties numberless and of endless variety, a river to “make glad the heart of man” and to be “a joy for ever.” But now it is touching to see in what mood the poet comes to this happy stream—

“The Danube to the Severn gave
The darkened heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.”

His friend has died suddenly in Vienna, and his body is being brought across the sea to be buried in the quiet church of Clevedon on the banks of the Severn.

Through the earlier poems of *In Memoriam* we find him impatiently expecting the vessel that carries “lost Arthur’s loved remains.”

The ship has arrived, and the sorrowing friend sings—

“’Tis well; ’tis something; we may stand,
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violets of his native land.”

He stays but a short time at Clevedon, the place is too painful as yet; but not to be too far away he crosses to the opposite shore—

“There twice a day the Severn fills ;
 The salt sea-water passes by,
 And hushes half the babbling Wye,
 And makes a silence in the hills.”

The river is full of little rapids, down which the water falls with a “sweet inland murmur.” It is one of the great charms of the river. As the tide comes up, the water deepens, and “half the babbling Wye” flows back and grows silent. The effect is very beautiful. The murmur is exquisite; the silence is tender.

But the poet’s thought is born of his grief—

“The Wye is hushed nor moved along,
 And hushed my deepest grief of all,
 When filled with tears that cannot fall,
 I brim with sorrow drowning song.”

The flow of the tide does not last long near the rapids. In about an hour comes the ebb, and the river again murmurs its sad, soothing, prayerful song—

“The tide flows down, the wave again
 Is vocal in its wooded walls ;
 My deeper anguish also falls,
 And I can speak a little then.”

From the summit of the Windcliff the wonderful panorama lies outspread before the eye. In the distance stretches the Severn, and into it, its windings of incomparable beauty being finished, runs the silver Wye; and these two rivers seem like symbols of the poet and his friend.

Through a great channel the Severn pours its water into the sea; so is the poet many-voiced, speaking with a large utterance to all the world. The waters of the Severn flow down, in part, from the proper source of the river, but the full body of the stream is swollen by contributions from many another river, yet it is all called the Severn. So the true poet combines with the outflow of his own heart and mind the thoughts of many another mind which have flowed into and become incorporated with his; and united and assimilated in him, find their way to the ocean of human thought through his mouth. And as all the streams that combine to form the Severn have their common origin in the rains of heaven, so all the true inspirations of the poet must be heaven-fetched, and he is a devil's prophet whose inspirations come from any other source.

And the Wye stands for Arthur Hallam. Many streams pour water into the Severn, but none so much as this one; many influences have gone to perfect the heart and mind of our poet, but none so potent as this one.

“Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me.

“But he was rich where I was poor,
And he supplied my want the more
As his unlikeness fitted mine.

“Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine.”

The Wye has of itself no opening into the sea; it

flows into the Severn and becomes nameless. Yet it is not lost. Arthur Hallam found no utterance before the sea of men; he died and became nameless before he reached the ocean; no stream of thought is called by his name. Yet was he not lost. The Severn without the Wye were other and less; Tennyson without the influence of his friend were other and perhaps less. And herein our dead poet was as happy as the Wye; for an utterance has been given to him through the mouth of another. Before the eyes of the silent Intelligences he lives as no dumb poet; for utterance is not in words, and he whose spirit has gone abroad into the hearts of men is not dumb. The waters of the Wye commingle everywhere with the ocean—the spirit of Arthur Hallam shall commingle everywhere with the thoughts of men.

CHAPTER XI

“IN MEMORIAM”—VERBAL COMMENTARY

DISTINCT from the difficulty of fully grasping the great thoughts of the author—a difficulty common to the study of *In Memoriam* and every other work of power—there are felt to be some peculiar difficulties about the study of this poem, arising from the obscure or highly symbolical character of much of its language. I suppose the difficulty is somewhat real. Some of the language *is* obscure; much of the language *is* highly symbolical. The following chapter is an attempt to clear some of the obscurity, to interpret some of the symbolism.

I must ask the patience of each of my readers in case I should, in some or in many instances, have stopped to explain what is perfectly clear to him. While endeavouring to touch upon all passages that might be called obscure, I have tried to avoid such explanations as no thoughtful person would find needful. *In Memoriam* is not the book for unreflecting readers at all. But minds differ. What is perfectly clear to one may fail to strike another; and the obscurities, real or supposed, of the poem have driven off many readers, and are the subject of complaint

from many others. So I have felt it right to make this verbal commentary somewhat full.]

In determining what passages needed comment, I have called in the help of several intelligent friends. The agreements and the dissonances of their lists of passages were very instructive. I venture to hope that, by the collation of these lists and my own best care, I have attained to something like an exhaustive exhibition of the verbal obscurities of the poem. Whether I have done much towards the elucidation of these obscurities is another matter. But here also I hope. There still remain one or two cases in which I have marked the obscurity without supplying the explanation. The reason for this is the one that will first come into the reader's mind. I hope that by thus publishing my needs I may create a chance of getting them supplied.

For the sake of brevity, I have thrown this chapter into the form of notes.

Dedication.

- Verse 1, line 1. Probably Christ. But there are passages below that look more like an address to the personified love of God. It is not at all unlikely that both references were in the mind of the poet.
- „ 2 „ 4. The resurrection of Christ, perhaps. But perhaps rather that Divine Love will conquer death also. The "skull" is the symbol of death.
- „ 5 „ 1. "Systems" of doctrine and belief.
- „ 7 „ 4. "As before." "In the infancy of mankind," when "mind" and "soul," though each small, were, according to the implication of the poem, in balance and harmony.

Canto. Verse. Line.

This is the most obvious interpretation. I doubt if it be the poet's meaning. It assumes more than he is wont to assume. A correspondent suggests: "That the soul which reverences, and the mind which knows, may keep in tune, as they were before the *individual* grew in knowledge—that the one may not outstrip the other."

- I. 1 1. "Him." Longfellow has this thought in his "Ladder of St. Augustine." But I think that poem was published after *In Memoriam*.

In the *Illustrated London News* of Nov. 8, 1856, p. 484, occurs the following note:—
"In Memoriam. As to the poem referred to by Tennyson at the opening of *In Memoriam*, when Petrarch says—

" 'Da volar sopra 'l ciel gli avea dat 'ali
Per le cose mortali
Che son scala al Fatton, chi ben le stima ;
Che mirando ei ben fiso quante e quali
Eran virtuti ir quella sua speranza
Potra levarsi all' alta cagion prima.'
(Canzone 7.)

and Milton (to whom Petrarch's works were probably familiar) in *Paradise Lost*, Book V.

" 'Well hast thou taught the way that might
direct
Our knowledge, and the scale of nature set
From centre to circumference, whereon,
In contemplation of created things,
By steps we may ascend to God.'

is it likely that the Laureate should have referred to a contemporary harp, far less renowned?
A. T. B."

A correspondent writes: "The poet himself has said he meant Goethe."

Canto. Verse. Line.

- I. 2 4. "Interest." *Result, fruit.*
- 3 4. The two clauses of the line are probably equivalent. Allusion to ancient funeral ceremonies.
- II. 4 3, 4. "Seem to lose my own personality and become part of thee." (See also Chap. XVII.)
- III. 1 } "Vaults of death" = a temple of a false religion.
 2 }
 3 } "Priestess," of an oracle; lying: *mistaken* has been suggested, as seeing things through the distorting mist of unshed tears.
 "Blindly" = without guidance or goal.
 A "web" across the sky, darkening it.
 A "cry" of universal desolation.
 Death, in the sun, and so everywhere.
 These (v. 3) are sorrow's false inferences from the personal confusion, darkness desolation, and consternation at death.
- IV. 3 3, 4. Water may be reduced to a temperature considerably below freezing-point, without its turning to ice, if it be kept quite still. The least motion will cause it to instantly freeze. In the act of freezing water expands, and the containing vessel will, so, oftentimes be broken. The breaking is often ascribed to the thaw; it is really the work of the frost; the thaw only makes it manifest. The use of the image in the poem is clear.
- 4 2. "Below" = in the brain, beneath the sleeping eyes.
- V. 3 1. "Weeds" = mourning garments.
- VIII. 5 3. "The general gift of poetry," not this particular poem, of course.
- IX. 4 1. A command to night to bring out all her stars to light the ship.

- Canto. Verse. Line.
- IX. 4 2. "Let no wind come from before the ship's course," as this would hinder its progress.
- X. 4 3, 4. The chancel of a church. Villagers. Sacrament cup, and sacramental wine.
- 5 1. "With thee." The ship. As it would be if the ship were wrecked.
- XI. 2 1. The hill on which the old church of Clevedon stands. (See also last section of preceding chapter.)
- 3 1. The plain of South Wales, across the Severn.
- XII. 1 3. "Knit below." The carrier-pigeon has its message fastened (knit) beneath its wings. But lines 1 and 2 scarcely seem to suggest a *carrier-pigeon*.
4. "Wild" = rapid.
- 3 4. The "marge" of what? I do not see. Perhaps, on the verge of the sail or vessel. In this case "linger" must be read as "settle."
- XV. 1 2. A gale from the west.
3. Close of autumn.
- 2 3. "Wildly dashed" is bold.
- 3 2. "Thy." The ship, as in XIV.
- 4 2. "It is not so." That the previous picture of quiet is not true. The remainder of the canto wants carefully realising, it is easy then.
- XVII. 2 2. When out on the ocean you seem to be in a circular space bounded on all sides by the sky. Hence, in a voyage, a ship seems to pass through many such "circles of the bounding sky."
- 4 3, 4. This is vague. Perhaps, soft rays of light from the stars, the milky-way, or soft night showers.

Canto. Verse. Line.

- XVIII. 3 1. "Pure hands." This seems to imply something special about the funeral. I do not know who were the pall-bearers. Or it may simply mean that none but the pure and good should have to do with his body.
- XIX. 1 Arthur Hallam died at Vienna, and was brought by sea to Clevedon on the banks of the Severn. This I have told more fully elsewhere. For the rest of the canto, see last section of preceding chapter.
- XXI. 1 Not literal. Arthur Hallam is buried in the vault of the church, not in the graveyard.
- XXII. See opening of *In Memoriam* Chapter.
- XXIII. 2 1. This line has been much discussed. The complaints made against it are that it is not pertinent to the main thought of the canto, and that the notion of a shadow keeping keys is a very halting metaphor. I am afraid I have not any defence to offer upon these points; nevertheless, I like the line.
A correspondent writes: "Is not a 'shadow cloaked' a good representation of the obscurity and mystery of Death? The Poet had been previously speaking of their companionship (of thought and talk). Now his friend was gone, admitted by death to the place where all secrets, and where the truth of all creeds is revealed. Is this at all strained?"
This is interesting; but I think that such metaphors as a cloaked shadow, and a shadow carrying keys, are scarcely justified by it.
- XXIV. 1 3, 4. The spots on the sun.
3 1, 2. The allusion is, of course, to a well-known optical effect of mist.

- Canto. Verse. Line.
- XXVI. 3 4. I offer to the reader two paraphrases of this line :—
 (1) "And that love only produces indifference to life."
 (2) "If He see in present love, future indifference." I think the second is the more probable meaning. The doubt turns upon the force of "to be."
- XXVII. 3 4. This is rather obscure, whether want means *careo* or *desidero*.
- XXXIII. 3 3, 4. The general, not the special, sacramental thought.
- XXXIV. 2 1. It is thought that the Earth, viewed from without, would reflect a green colour. Or the reference may be simply to the vegetation which covers the Earth.
- XXXV. 2 4. } Nature changes ; dies. Why should love
 3 } not be temporary too ? This is the reasoning.
- XXXVI. 1 1, 2. Truths intuitive, or, at least, capable of being arrived at by the powers inherent in man.
 4 3, 4. Pacific Islanders ; "wild" having the sense of barbarian.
- XXXVII. 1 1. } *Urania*, muse of Astronomy, has so a
 3 1. } heavenly character, and may be represented as dealing with spiritual matters. *Melpomene*, the tragic muse, inspires this poem.
 6 2. "Clasped." Contained.
- XXXIX. A new canto added.
- XLI. 2 2. "Bound." Connected.
 4 4. "The terrors of the land of death." A friend suggests that "forgotten fields" is the same thought as "forgetful shore." It is possible, but then I do not see the force of "forgotten." We may forget *in* death, but we do not forget death now.

Canto. Verse. Line.

- XLI. 6 3. "Secular to be." The ages that are to come.
- XLIII. 1 2. "Bloom" = blossom. The image is the folding of the leaves in a flower at night.
- XLIII. The application of the image is this. The night-sleep of the flower = the unconscious state, between death and the resurrection, of the soul. As the colour of the flower, the result of its life in the light, is hidden in its folded state, so the traces, the impressions, left upon the soul by the past, are "silent," unmanifested during the sleep of unconsciousness. But as the colour of the flower is (potentially, at least) still present during its folded state, so upon all the souls of the silent garden of the universal dead the results of the past still remain enstamped, and these (and amongst them, love) will remanifest themselves when the soul awakens to the renewal of its conscious being, as the colour reappears when the flower reopens. "Figured" suggests the veins of the leaf. But that meaning does not harmonise with the rest of the image.
- XLIV. 1 3, 4. It seems doubtful whether this refers to a supposed previous state of being which now we forget, or nearly forget, or simply to the earlier periods of life which we forget in the later. Verse 2 rather favours the first notion, which is a very common one with the poets (though Christian poets should know better), and is touched upon in *The Two Voices*. If the second is the meaning, then, "shut the doorways of the head" probably means the closing up of the bones of the skull after infancy.

- | | Canto. | Verse. | Line. | |
|--------|--------|--------|-------|--|
| XLVI. | 3 | 4. | | The five years of their friendship. |
| | | 4 | | The five years was a short period for his friend's love to look back upon. He desires the retrospect to be over his whole life. |
| XLVII. | 4 | | | If it could be that the "faith as vague as all unsweet" were true, the spirit would at least desire to know the moment of "remerging in the general soul," and so to bid farewell to those it had loved as a "separate whole." |
| L. | 2 | 3, 4. | | "And Time seems but a Maniac scattering purposelessly the moments of man's existence (the sands of the hour-glass); and Life but a Fury slinging (as symbolised by the flame of the ancient Furies) destruction and pain." I think this is the force of the images. |
| LII. | 3 | | | This seems a weak verse, as far as expression is concerned. The force of "record" is <i>example</i> , only as the Great Example of men is not living before them, there is but the record of His example. So the thought is, What keeps a spirit true to its ideal? What example can do it? What recorded example? Not even the record of the sinless years that breathed beneath the Syrian blue. |
| LVI. | 3 | 3, 4. | | "Wintry" and "fruitless," if it were true that man too passed away—or |
| | | | | "Who rolled the psalm to the skies, though they seemed never so wintry; who built him fanes of prayer, though the prayer seemed never so fruitless." |

The form of thought by this second reading would be identical with that of the next verse.

- | | Canto. | Verse. | Line. | |
|--|----------|--------|-------|---|
| | LVII. | 2 | 1. | "Your." Probably his sister. |
| | LXVII. | | | See last section of preceding chapter. |
| | LXVIII. | 4 | 3. | "Of my youth." A friend suggests that a long interval elapses between LVI. and LVII., so that LVII. and the succeeding cantos were written a good many years after the death of Arthur Hallam. <i>In Memoriam</i> was not published until sixteen or seventeen years after the death. |
| | LXXI. | 2 | 1. | "Credit" = power. |
| | | | 3. | "Blindfold" = vague, unrealised. |
| | LXXII. | 3 | | The effect of rain upon the rose and the daisy, I suppose. |
| | | 4 | 1, 2. | "The sun might have risen all ablaze in a windless sky, etc., and it would have been all the same to me." It will help the realisation of the whole canto to remember that Arthur Hallam died in the autumn, September 15. |
| | LXXIV. | 3 | 3, 4. | "The land of death, which is dark to us, must be beautiful if only from containing him." |
| | LXXVI. | 1 | 4. | Have become so distant that they seem but of the size of a needle-point. |
| | | 3 | 1, 2. | Compare Job xxxviii. 4-7 with Genesis i. 1-3. |
| | | 4 | 4. | "Hollow trunks." |
| | LXXX. | 4 | 1. | His credited example—the example which he certainly would have set—shall thus liberate me from my present weakness and faultiness. |
| | LXXXIII. | 1 | 1. | The line is rendered clearer if "upon" be made "towards." |
| | | | 2. | "New Year" = spring. |
| | LXXXV. | | | Addressed to some friend who had also been a friend of Arthur Hallam. |
| | | 27 | 1. | "Hold apart" = alone hold. |

- | | Canto. | Verse. | Line. | |
|-----------|--------|--------|-------|--|
| LXXXVI. | | | | Remarkable as being one sustained sentence. |
| | | 1 | 4. | } "Slowly breathing bare the round of space" = "Clearing the whole sky-dome from clouds." |
| | | 2 | 1. | |
| LXXXVII. | 10 | | 4. | The broad bar of frontal bone for which Michael Angelo was so remarkable. |
| LXXXVIII. | 1 | | 3, 4. | The reference is to the mixture of joy and grief thought to be noticeable in the song of the nightingale. |
| LXXXIX. | 12 | | 3, 4. | "Crimson-circled star" = evening star setting in the crimson sunset. "Father" = sun. |
| | | 13 | 4. | "Honeyed hours" = bees, I suppose. |
| XCI. | 1 | | 4. | A friend says that the <i>blue-bird</i> alone answers to the description, but that it is peculiar to North America. |
| XCVIII. | 2 | | 3, 4. | Will-o'-the-wisp. |
| | | 6 | 1. | "Mother town" = capital = <i>metropolis</i> . |
| CIII. | | | | See previous chapter. |
| CVII. | | | | Arthur Hallam was born February 1. |
| | | 3 | 4. | "Iron horns." The appearance of smaller branches in a hard moonlight night. |
| CVIII. | | | | This canto may be paraphrased thus: "I will not shun intercourse with men, lest I lose the power of sympathy. Faith that is barren is useless. No less so is vacant yearning, however mighty it may be. For though it should reach to the heavens, it can find but an image of myself, though engaged in the avocations of heaven. Human conception, however far-reaching, can grasp nothing higher than man. So though my yearning reach down to death, it can find only the image of man. Therefore the true fruit of faith and yearning is action. Herein lies true wisdom which is the fruit of sorrow." |

	Canto.	Verse.	Line.	
	CXV.	1	2.	"Burgeons" = bursts forth into life. "Quick" = quickset.
	CXVII.	3	1.	Hour-glass.
			2.	Sundial.
			3.	Clock.
			4.	Apparent daily path of the sun.
	CXXI.			The identity of the evening and the morning star.
	CXXII.	1	4.	} Compare III., verse 2, for contrast.
		2		
		4	3.	Compare LXXXVIII., verse 3.
	CXXIV.	1	2.	"Our ghastliest doubt." Doubts about whom would be our ghastliest doubts.
		3	3, 4.	The allusion is to the wearing away of continents, as told of in the geologic record.
	CXXVI.	1	4.	"Couriers" = thoughts.
		3	1.	"Sentinel" = faith.

Epithalamion.

On the marriage of the poet's sister. Probably not the one who was formerly betrothed to Arthur Hallam.

13	2.	On the dead buried beneath the chancel floor.
20	2.	"Whiter" = more favourable.
32 3, 4.	}	A recurring thought of our poet's. See <i>Maud</i> —
33		

"So many a million of ages have gone to the making of man :
He now is first, but is he the last ? is he not too base ?"

And also *In Memoriam*, CIII.—

"And one would chant the history
Of that great race, which is to be."

And again, CXVIII.—

“The herald of a higher race.”

The idea seems to lie vaguely between the Christian hope of the restoration and perfecting of man, and some evolution conception of the arising of a new and higher being to supersede him. But see Chap. XVI.

CHAPTER XII

“ IDYLLS OF THE KING ”

THE *Idylls of the King* are twelve in number, but they form one work. They do not indeed form a continuous narrative; they are scenes: but they are scenes so selected and arranged that they give the result of a consecutive and developed story.

The story, as every one knows, is that of, or out of, the Arthurian Romance. But whereas the Arthurian Romance was, or had become, a sort of wilderness forest jungle, with tracts beautiful and tracts repulsive, tracts salubrious and tracts malarious, this is an ordered plantation, bright or solemn, exhilarating or terrible, but everywhere (quite everywhere, I trust) wholesome. It is, from the literary point of view, a restoration, not an original invention; but it is in a deeper sense a restoration. The old Romance was in its genesis idealistic. Arthur and Chivalry were its roots—its inspiring themes. But it had forgotten itself and its own meaning, and the ideal story had become corrupted by trivial and impure accretions. In this sense the *Idylls* are a restoration, and indeed more than a restoration. In them the Arthurian Romance is brought back and carried farther into the ideal, and the

scenes and workings of terrible evil which it includes do not mar the ideal, but stand out in their native blackness in the light of that ideal.

The reader is of course always to remember that he is reading a story which, however it may have been believed by those who first framed it, *he* does not pretend to believe in his understanding; not, that is to say, as he might a novel, for instance, of which he feels that the elements are credible though the story is fictitious. In this romance the elements, many of them, are of course not credible. The appeal, in such, is to his imagination, that through its stimulation the impression of the ideal elements of the story upon his spiritual perception may be intensified. For the appeal is to the spiritual. (The Idylls are a vision of kingship, of chivalry, of loyalty, of womanhood, and of the passion of purity; this, and a wail at the desecration of these and the fruits of that desecration.)

In what has just been said it is assumed that the presence of the fictitious supernatural in the Idylls is justifiable. Of this, however, I am not sure. (The poet himself seems to be a little apologetic in the matter, for more than once he makes a quoted narrator responsible for the wonder tale.) I myself remember feeling, when *The Holy Grail* was published, as if in the midst of its splendour, there was a sense of glamour about it. I should think that Tennyson would have been competent to make a very visional romance out of the elements of possible reality in the Arthurian story.

In connection with this matter, one could wish that the poet had changed at least the *name* of Merlin's endowments. Magic, whether thought of as a reality

or a delusion, is spiritually unclean, and it is, moreover, discordant with most of the supposed supernatural through these legends, which is Christian in its kinship.) (Even where the wonders are less than Christian, they are higher, more spiritual, than "magic" suggests. The three queens, for example, belong to a sort of heavenly fairyland and not to the region of magic, as, at all events, European ears understand the term. The conscience of one's imagination would have been more at peace had the term been absent.

The poems are called *Idylls of the King*. They might have been called *Idealised Scenes from the Arthurian Romance*, or *The Tragedy of Queen Guinevere*; or *The Treason of the loyal Lancelot, and what came of it*; or *The Flesh and the Spirit*, as some one has half suggested; or *The Conscience and the Senses*, as Tennyson himself has half suggested. In any case it is a story of conflict between good and evil, of tragedy and failure. But by it the pure are purified, the holy are made to hunger and thirst after righteousness. The last two of the above titles might suggest that the *Idylls* have to be studied as an allegory! This I do not mean to imply; I do not think that they should be so regarded. The Arthurian story is a legend, growing doubtless out of history! That its development was influenced by the sense of likeness, of type, by the allegorising tendency, is more than likely, and that Tennyson in the selection and manipulation of his materials was similarly affected is probable. But this is the extent of the matter, I think. To be sure, in his dedicatory poem to the Queen, he says—

“Accept this old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul
Rather than that gray king.”

But by this I understand him to mean that he was writing not about a mere king and his knights, but about a king who was to his knights

“As is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses,”

and that while his subject was legendary, his interest in it was on account of the moral significance contained in or able to be infused into it. I think that those who speak of the Idylls as *an* allegory, would find themselves hard pressed if they were called upon to assign the significance of the particular characters and incidents contained and recorded in the poems.

The first idyll, *The Coming of Arthur*, sets before us an old order broken up and passing away. The Roman power had collapsed; many a petty king had seized upon the fragments of their dominion, and

“Ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land.”

To these were added the heathen hosts who “swarmed overseas” and “harried” what was left. In vain Aurelius and Uther fought and died. Chaos was too strong for them—

“And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less.”

Upon this ruin of a departed order enters Arthur, of mysterious origin, brought by Merlin, the minister of

the supernatural, and approven king by miracle. | Beside him stand Merlin, his knights, and Lancelot, sworn friend and chief of knights. The binding of his knights to him was with all solemnity—

/ / "Then the king in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light." //

The binding of Lancelot to him was with all solemnity and tenderness—

" 'Thou dost not doubt me king,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day.'
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my king!' Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'"

Then comes Guinevere as queen, bound also with solemnity.

" And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine.
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!'
To whom the queen replied with drooping eyes,
'King and my lord, I love thee to the death!'"

So the new order was established—

" And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and through that strength the king
Drew in the petty principedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reigned.'

But even in this first idyll two notes of the tragedy are sounded, though it needed the future to interpret them. The one is—

“But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or marked not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.”

The other is—

“And Lancelot passed away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and returned
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.”

The new order is set up; *Gareth and Lynette* exhibits it in its first bloom, without a shadow! The king dispensing justice is the centre of it, but leading up to the centre and down from it is the story of Gareth in his tender, high-hearted youth, while through the pictures glisten justice and loyalty, knighthood and mother's love, dainty womanhood, gentle humour, and nature-pictures, forming a paradise that makes the heart gay—gay save for the memory that paradise was lost. Lancelot is here without a soil.

In *The Marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid* (which were formerly one poem—one of the four first-published idylls) the tones deepen—deepen to the rapture of moral loveliness, touched, alas! with sorrow and the shadow of sin. It is a large-canvased picture, though in its main incident it is an episode. There are Arthur, and the queen in her graciousness, and the dear old parents of Enid, and the fine Geraint—fine, save for his one great stupidity—and many more, and abundance of adventure, and the first alarm

note of the Guinevere tragedy; but the poem is the poem of Enid — of Enid, perfect type of womanhood. Her voice and song, first heard, made Geraint say—

“Here, by God’s grace, is the one voice for me”;

and herself, first seen, made him say—

“Here by God’s rood is the one maid for me.”

Daughter of the fallen house, she waits on the guest—

“And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crossed the trencher as she laid it down.”

Geraint must fight and humble the sparrow-hawk, but he can do it only in the name of his lady-love there present. And such you have not, says Earl Yniol.

“To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, ‘Thy leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho’ having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnished as before; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,
As I will make her truly my true wife.’”

Her mother, who has to tell her and prove her heart, finds—

“Half disarrayed as to her rest, the girl;
Whom first she kissed on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart: but never light and shade

Coursed one another more on open ground
 Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
 Across the face of Enid hearing her ;
 While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
 When weight is added only grain by grain,
 Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast ;
 Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
 Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it ;
 So moving without answer to her rest,
 She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
 The quiet night into her blood, but lay
 Contemplating her own unworthiness."

His noble deeds had been Geraint's forerunners, and had done his wooing before he came. Enid women are easily won *so*.

Then follows to quote half the poem, if that might be, for not only is Enid the queen of womanhood, but this is in many respects the crown of the Idylls. But the poem needs no comment; it shines by its own light, and its wise words are dear to those who love the good. For Enid, knew we no more than we have seen, we know her already, because a maiden's spirit under the solemnity of love is the revelation of her whole womanhood. But all through the story her tender, meek obedience and her sweet dogged courage make such sunshine and shower that the heart of the reader melts between smiles and tears. And when, towards the end, the Earl Doorm seems to have her in his power, neither the obedience nor the courage falters.

"But Enid answered, harder to be moved
 Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
 With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
 And now their hour has come; and Enid said :

'In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
 And loved me serving in my father's hall :

In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
 And there the Queen array'd me like the sun :
 In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
 When now we rode upon this fatal quest
 Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd :
 And this poor gown I will not cast aside
 Until himself arise a living man,
 And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough :
 Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be :
 I never loved, can never love but him :
 Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
 He being as he is, to let me be.'"

And when, at last, the bitter trouble is over, and she is mounted on the horse with her husband, her arms about him: then—

"And never yet, since high in Paradise
 O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
 Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
 Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour
 Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
 And felt him hers again : she did not weep,
 But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
 Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
 Before the useful trouble of the rain."

It has been said by readers that Enid was poor-spirited. In a sense, yes ; but in that sense "blessed are the poor in spirit." It has been said by readers that Geraint was unworthily suspicious, arbitrary, unjust—ruthless, perhaps. To which the answer is, "That needs no saying!" Of course Geraint was all these ; else the poem would not have been written. *Because* Geraint was suspicious, arbitrary, unjust, ruthless, therefore the full exhibition of Enid's spiritual loveliness became possible. That is one of the uses of Geraints, that they show forth Enids. It has been said by readers that Geraint's conduct being of the

quality of which it was, Enid ought not to have submitted, but ought to have withstood his ruthlessness. To which the answer is, "Had Enid done so, Geraint would certainly have had no right to complain;" but for us, we may be thankful that there are Enids as she stood, as I trust there are, or that, at least, a poet dreamed one.

So we leave the pearl of the ring of the Round Table—a pearl that had been cast into gloom by the shadow of a coming cloud, by which cloud, indeed, the idyll is linked to the main story. In *Balin and Balan* and *Merlin and Vivien* the cloud gathers, the shadow deepens. It is the twofold cloud formed by the sin of Guinevere, the hideous personality of Vivien. We pass from woman to woman, but what a change. Of Guinevere more hereafter, but of Vivien, this (however true or false the *first* line may be)—

"For men at most differ as heaven and earth,
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell."

The Arthurian order looks still full and green, but a worm is at the root. By the false love between the queen and Arthur's otherwise true friend and chief of knights, the house is divided against itself, and Lancelot, against the desires of his better self, becomes prince of the flesh, against which Arthur has set himself to war. By the evil repute of this false love, and the queen's high treason, the vows of the knights sit loose upon them; through its corrupting influence an atmosphere is prepared which makes the presence of Vivien to become possible in the court; through it Arthur is paralysed in half his sphere, and the new order is a commingled labyrinth of false and true, the evil and the good.

When the first four Idylls were published, I, for one, in faith accepted the portraiture of Vivien as necessary to the aim—some just aim—of the poet; in faith, and partly in judgment, for I thought that the poet's intention, over and above that of reproducing some portions of the Arthurian Romance, was to set forth four kinds of woman. Later, I had misgivings whether the infliction of so repulsive a picture were not wanton, and therefore immodest. But as the series of Idylls now stands, exhibiting the moral movement running through it, I am reconciled again to the main intention at least, whether to all the details I cannot, after so many pros and cons, judge.

One's general feeling towards Vivien is as towards a fiend. There is one touch, however, which, if it is to be accepted as true, brings her back into the range of pity as for a human sinner. It is where she speaks to the brutal Mark of her birth—

“My father died in battle against the king,
My mother on his corpse in open field;
She bore me there, for born from death was I
Among the dead and sown upon the wind—
And then on thee!”

The notion that the old Romance was, or that these Idylls are, a formal allegory I have never regarded. The symbolism present is, I think, of the imagination and not of the intellect. But in the case of Merlin and his fate, allegory would be a comfort as compared with the bare-faced magic that leaves a corporeal man shut up, at the will of a woman, as dead in the hollow oak.

Of the men Balin and Balan we will speak later. At present we pass to *Lancelot and Elaine*.

Another woman, and another sweet woman. Not Enid, nor like her, nor equal to her; but such as she is, a dream too. Enid has in her that undertone of manhood which, dominated by womanhood, completes the perfect woman, even as the perfect manhood includes the undertone of womanhood. But Elaine is the quintessence of simple, or even abstract, womanhood—emotion and impulse absolute. There are indeed one or two touches in the portraiture that jar (*me*, at all events). But even apart from these, the character itself is perhaps a little abnormal. Such absolute subjection to emotion, however ethereal, spiritual, is perhaps not full human, of any type. The character it most resembles, as far as I know, is that of *Zerah* in Mrs. Browning's *Scraphim*. But then *Zerah* is an angel—a woman angel, if that might be—while Elaine is a woman. At least Elaine wanted Paradise for her surroundings. So much the worse for her, poor child. But for us, spite of the touch of defect, or perhaps by reason of it, she brings one more air of Eden through a scene about to fall into pandemonium.

And indeed, over and above her special circumstances, while the womanhood of Enid moves one with a large and rejoicing love, Elaine awes one—an awe full of love indeed; but awe, not joy; an awe made up of the sense of mystery and the sense of peril. I do not mean any external, vulgar peril, but the peril of unspeakable pain and loneliness. Such awe is, it may be, oftener due than we dream: to feel it about human emotion, and woman's emotion, purifies.

The most startling outcome of Elaine's character is her explicitness. She talks like a child—a child with a woman's heart. Even to Gawain, whose wooing she

resented, she makes known her feeling for Lancelot. Her brothers, she said—

“‘Talked,
Meseemed, of what they knew not ; so myself—
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
I know there is none other I can love.’”

Like this had been her childlike boldness when, as Lancelot was preparing to start for the tourney, she drew near and asked and pleaded that he should wear her favour in the lists. Like it, too, when, Lancelot being wounded, she goes to carry him the diamond and to nurse him, she answers, he having said that she needed rest—

“No rest for me ;
Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.”

Like it when, he being about to depart, she breaks out—

“‘I love you : let me die.’

.
And innocently extending her white arms,
‘Your love,’ she said, ‘your love—to be your wife.’”

And like it, last of all, when he having left her “taking no farewell” she has herself, dead, carried down the river in the barge, to make up the omission.

It is a picture full of tears ; a picture to make one wish that the woman had never grown up from infancy, or that she had married her guardian angel—to make one mourn that the world had no place for her, or to rejoice that the peace and safety of death had embraced her.

But this is as much the idyll of Lancelot as of Elaine. And sad as is the picture of Elaine, the picture of Lancelot is infinitely sadder. Sad, I do

not mean, with the sadness which we feel or should feel at all sin; but sad with sadness at the sight of a noble nature trailed in the mire of evil, and of the sorrow which that nature suffered. For Lancelot is not as Guinevere. Her sin, gloss it how you will, is all self—to others, treason or ruin only. In his sin, wooed and entangled as he was, one must think, there was an element of chivalry—or rather, I mean, being entangled, chivalry helped to keep the chains about him. I beg the reader to believe that I am not apologising for Lancelot. In such times as these, when sex loyalty, not only in act, but in theory, is almost the one thing needful, God forbid that I should do so. I am but differencing. One might distinguish them, perhaps, as a man disloyal, and a disloyal woman. In Guinevere, thus far, I find no touch of repentance, of remorse. Rather she justifies her lowness—

“‘To me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
For who loves me must have a touch of earth ;
The low sun makes the colour.’”

And of her husband, standing simple and trustful in the background of the idyll, and of his aims, she is scornful—

“‘Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself.’”

This, barring her queenliness, which is easy to a queen, is Guinevere.

Guinevere thus far in our story has brought the great, though passing, cloud between Enid and Geraint; she has driven Balin and Balan to their deaths; she

has made a court in which Vivien was possible; she has brought Elaine to her death and Lancelot nearly to his; and now by her jealous passion she makes Lancelot muse to himself, as the barge passes out of sight—or may we go back and quote first Arthur's words to him?—

“Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
 Most joy and most affianced, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,
 And many a time have watched thee at the tilt
 Strike down the lusty and long practised knight,
 And let the younger and unskilled go by
 To win his honour and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
 Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
 Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man,
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.”

And then Lancelot to himself—

“Ah simple heart and sweet,
 Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
 Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
 Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last—
 Farewell, fair lily.

Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
 Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,

For what am I? what profits me my name
 Of greatest knight? . . .

What use in it?

To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight!"

and the rest as we have quoted it, ending with

"So groaned Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man."

To realise Lancelot, one must think of him as he would have been without that great blot in his life, which also he partly remains in spite of it. Not Arthur himself is more chivalrous, generous, knightly. To Elaine he is all tenderness, as far as his honour may suffer him to be so, and almost sternly true, spite of his tenderness. She, with the clear sight and yet the blindness of perfect love, sees the man as he ought to have been, and worships him accordingly.

"Marred as he was, he seemed the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marred, of more than twice her years,
Seamed with an ancient sword-cut on the cheek,
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her doom."

Again—

"When the living smile
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There broke a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature."

And again—

"And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely through all hindrance finds the man
Behind it and so paints him that his face,

The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest ; so the face before her lived."

And once more—

"But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain : so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest."

And even his great sin cannot mar him wholly, nor
drag down all his life and character to its level. Away
from that, he is still a true knight, and even over that
his nobility glimmers to his greater pain.

"His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true."

And—

"Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it : but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul."

And then that test of all true knighthood, and of all
true manhood, the reverence for womanhood, and awe
at woman's love—this is found in him.

"He looked, and more amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dreamed she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, though he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a god's."

And so, being still high enough to understand the

noble, though low enough to have fallen from it, there grows up in him an almost despairing humility, that is not self-contempt, only because he is yet too high to have surrendered all hope of the possible.

“ ‘ In me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great :
There is the man.’ ”

It would seem as if the saddest thing in all Lancelot's life must have been his feeling towards Arthur. Had he been wholly a traitor at heart, he would have despised him, or hated him, or both. But he still reveres him, and still loves him. I think it is not easy to conceive a greater punishment for Lancelot, with the power of suffering yet keen in him, and the sensibility to the worthy and the base keenly alive, also, to have to bear, than the living, day after day, with Arthur, loving him, seeing perpetually in him fresh grounds for reverence, and receiving from him constant proof of affection, and care, and trust. For he was Arthur's chiefest friend—

“ ‘ In whom I have
Most joy and most affiance,’ ”

said Arthur of him.

“ ‘ Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart ! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me : not without
She wills it : would I, if she willed it ? Nay,
Who knows ? But if I would not, then may God,
I pray Him, send a sudden angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.’ ”

We come now to *The Holy Grail*, a poem full of splendours of the imagination, full of deep spiritual touches, but very hard to read in detail, hard even in its general intention. For whereas in most other parts of the Romance the supernatural is incidental, and may be ignored in the understanding, here it is in the main current and forms the nucleus and course of the movement recorded. Yet itself is not credible. It is not natural, of course; and it is not of the like of the Christian *supernatural*. It is impossible for us to believe that, not visionally, but with the recorded attendant phenomena, the Holy Grail appeared.

How then shall we regard the story? One is tempted to look round for an allegorical meaning. But an allegory, jointed in as part of a narrative which is not throughout allegorical, would make sad confusion. I think that as regards the main movement in the story, we must read the matter thus. Ignoring the particular legend of the Holy Grail, we must suppose, as represented by it, some spiritual test and challenge—such, for mere example, as the preaching of Savonarola might have been—struck into such a condition of things; a test and challenge not merely strong enough to awaken faith in the pure-hearted, but vivid enough to stir enthusiasm in souls that would prove to be but stony ground—or perhaps, I should add to the hypothesis, having truth in it, but having also fantasy. Now such a test and challenge would *sort* men, and would, I suppose, tend to break up a morally decaying order. Arthur is represented as expecting such a result from the event, when he heard how his knights, pell-mell, had vowed themselves to the quest—

“ Ah, Galahad, Galahad, ’ said the king, ‘ for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—

A sign to maim this Order which I made.’ ”

But to the other knights—

“ What are ye ? Galahads ?—no, nor Percivales ;
but men
With strength and will to right the wronged, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat.’ ”

Now, however, such chances will pass unused.

“ While ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire ! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more.’ ”

And so it proved. What happened to Galahad and the rest does not belong to the main movement, and it could not be translated into prose—it is part of that which is not to be believed in the understanding. | But the order of the Round Table was virtually broken up. |

There is a passage in the early part of this idyll that used to take my fancy, but that now, in the light of things that are, makes me shiver.

The nun, Percivale’s sister, has seen the Holy Grail. To her is brought Galahad, the knight in white armour, to whom Arthur had said, upon knight-ing him—

“ God make thee good as thou art beautiful.’ ”

Upon him the maiden lays her charge that he, as her spiritual knight, shall go forth in quest of the Grail. Already things are doubtful. Such commissions do not properly derive so. Kings, not maidens, made knights, even in the natural sphere. Much more,

spiritual commissions do not so derive. But now the passage ends—

"And as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief."

This is almost the language of Mesmerism, of mesmeric, of hypnotic, suggestion, whatever these grave-sounding words may mean. If the poet had intended us to think that the whole thing was spiritually unclean, the language would be intelligible. But as no such intention appears in the poem, the words are distressing.

But over and above the thinning of the ranks of the Round Table, the most important aspect of this idyll is that which it has towards Lancelot. That Galahad should pass into the spiritual city by following the Grail, that the meek Sir Percivale and the honest-hearted Sir Bors should see the Holy Grail, is in accordance with the obvious characters of the men. But Lancelot is said to have seen it, though veiled; or at least he reported himself to have seen it, though Percivale thought he spied

"A dying fire of madness in his eyes."

His report of himself, however, in response to the King's—

"Thou, too, my Lancelot, my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this quest availed for thee?"

was—

"Our mightiest!" answered Lancelot, with a groan;
'O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin

So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
 Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as each,
 Not to be plucked asunder."

In the hope that the sight of the Holy Grail might pluck them asunder, he goes on to say, he swore with the other knights; but a saint, who wept with him, told him that unless they could first be plucked asunder, his quest was vain. And at the saint's bidding he pressed on in his endeavour to part them, but his madness came upon him and drove him through perils and shames and wonders; till in the end—

"O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
 All palled in crimson samite, and around,
 Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
 And but for all my madness and my sin,
 And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
 That which I saw; but what I saw was veiled
 And covered; and this quest was not for me."

Now I take it that the poem bids us to believe, or at least to strongly incline to believe, that Lancelot's doubts were invalid, and that he did see the Holy Grail. Arthur is made to count him with Bors and Percivale as having, "if indeed there came a sign from heaven," "seen according to their sight." Or in general terms we are to include, or to strongly incline to include, Lancelot among those who stood the spiritual test and answered to the challenge. But Galahad and Percivale and Bors so responded because they were "pure" and "meek" and "loyal." By what qualification did Lancelot respond? What does his inclusion mean?

I felt it was necessary that this question should be asked. Towards the answer, I have but two suggestions to offer.

First, we have had in the present and the preceding idylls pictures of such contrition of heart and longing for deliverance as might not be inconsistent with the beatific vision.

But, secondly, these ought to have led to breaking with the sin, which they did not. What then are we to think? Is this something towards an answer—that the whole initiative in the evil relation lay with the queen, that, in the spirit of chivalry, Lancelot had a sort of conscience towards her (a false one of course) warring with his conscience towards God, and that so the wrong in one conscience seemed to him a sort of right in the other. That, in other words—

"His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true,"

in a deeper sense than that in which one at first reads these words. Unless this partly justifies the thing challenged, I have nothing to offer.

Pelleas and Ettarre. King Arthur made new knights to fill the gaps left by the quest of the Holy Grail. Among these is Pelleas.

The idyll is a very, a sadly simple one, too painful to enlarge upon. The new knight is a man after Arthur's own heart—a virgin spirit. Knighthood for himself; womanhood for the object of his worship: these make the man. But knighthood in Arthur's court is all but dead, and womanhood has reached to the depth of Ettarre. The discovery of these facts, the latter fact especially, drives the young knight

mad. The picture of the idyll is one of appalling corruption; the picture of the young knight's passion of disappointment, of indignation, of outraged purity of spirit, is one of the holiest that can be conceived. It is an angel's touch making manifest the darkness of hell.

There is one glorious counter-flash. Pushed to consternation by step after step in the terrible discovery, Pelleas asks of Percivale, "Is the king true?"

"'The king!' said Percivale.

'Why then let men couple at once with wolves.

What! art thou mad?'"

Pelleas carries his passion of indignation into the presence of the queen, having just before flashed furiously in word and blow against Lancelot, who returned to the queen's presence when *he* did. As he left, flaming, though without intelligible words, against her—

"The queen

Looked hard upon her lover, he on her;

And each foresaw the dolorous day to be:

And all talk died, as in a grove all song

Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey;

Then a long silence came upon the hall,

And Modred thought, 'The time is hard at hand.'"

He is, indeed, as we have just seen, soon pulled down into seriousness by his contact with Pelleas, but the first presentment of Lancelot in this idyll is, by contrast with the remorseful Lancelot of the two previous idylls, and the gloom-shadowed Lancelot of *The Last Tournament* which follows, startling and even shocking. The picture is—

" Not long thereafter from the city gates
 Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
 Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
 Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star,
 And marvelling what it was."

Is this possible human history—this and the context together? Is this the man who even ever so dimly saw the Holy Grail—this the man whose state of heart made it seem not impossible that he should so see it?

My impression is that the poet's thought must have lapsed—that, either, intent upon making the contrast between the state of mind of Lancelot and that of Pelleas vivid, or transcribing from his original sources in the Romance, he has forgotten for the moment the moral history that he was depicting, and so has created an impossible situation.

In *The Last Tournament*, to which we shall come immediately, we get back into sequence. The gloom there depicted is what—at best, what—would naturally follow remorse that had not become practical repentance. The return is a relief to one's sense of reality, confused by the other state of things, and helps to confirm the impression that the other picture was—a rather serious one, but—a slip.

I would, before passing on, remark, *apropos* of Pelleas, upon the series of child-hearted men which the idylls present. Arthur is childlike in his simplicity and trustfulness—the queen scornfully calls him

" A moral child without the craft to rule ; "

Lancelot, apart from his sin, is simple ; Geraint is a grand sort of boy ; Galahad is a " child " that enters

the kingdom of heaven. All these, however, are on a large scale, and their childlikeness is an undertone. But Pelleas, and earlier in the story, Gareth, and then Balin and Balan, amuse and comfort one just by their utter simplicity and directness, and child-hearted sweetness. Let us notice a touch or two from each.

Gareth wants to be made knight. Arthur says—

“ My knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.”

Gareth thinks he can promise ; concluding with—

“ And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing.”

His pleadings with his mother before this are full of the longings of a man's heart for man's work, but are as full of obedience as an infant's.

Among the kitchen folk, if they told stories of Arthur's doings, “ Gareth was glad ” ; but if their talk was low—

“ Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud,
That first they mocked, but, after, revered him.”

For Balin and Balan, nothing can be more touching, more babes-in-the-wood-like, than their death scene. By misadventure each has mortally wounded the other, and they have both swooned, unknowing.

“ O brother,' answer'd Balin, ' woe is me !
My madness all thy life has been thy doom,
Thy curse, and darken'd all thy day ; and now
The night has come. I scarce can see thee now.
Goodnight ! for we shall never bid again

Goodmorrow—Dark my doom was here, and dark
It will be there. I see thee now no more.
I would not mine again should darken thine,
Goodnight, true brother.'

" Balan answer'd low,
' Goodnight, true brother here ! goodmorrow there !
We two were born together, and we die
Together by one doom : ' and while he spoke
Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept the sleep
With Balin, either lock'd in either's arm."

And now a touch or two of Pelleas—

" And when she spake to him,
Stammered, and could not make her a reply.
For out of the waste islands had he come,
Where saving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives."

" And while they rode, the meaning in his eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her."

He believed the woman's word that she would love
him—

" O happy world,' thought Pelleas, ' all, meseems,
Are happy ; I the happiest of them all.'
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his blood,
Then being on the morrow knighted, sware
To love one only. And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their heels
And wondered after him, because his face
Shone . . . so glad was he."

Meet preparation this for the passion of pain we
have just witnessed.

The Last Tournament is full of premonitions that,

as Modred had said, the end was hard at hand—of premonitions and most pathetic touches.

There is the fool, with the worship of Arthur in his now purified heart, and his discernment of the state of things around him.

There is the child which Lancelot found in the eagle's nest, which Arthur gave to Guinevere, which she received coldly at first, but afterwards learned to love till it died, and which makes one ask how things would have gone with the queen had she had a child of her own, as one before has asked how it would have gone with her had Arthur, and not Lancelot, fetched her from her father's home.

There is the tournament for the child's necklace (giving occasion to the queen's lie about the former diamond prize), which some in mockery, some in earnest, called—

“The Tournament of the Dead Innocence.”

There is the rising up of the apostate knight—the Red Knight—and Arthur's expedition to subdue him (while Lancelot is left to preside at the Tournament), and the unchastened fury of Arthur's followers in the performance of their work.

There is Arthur's half reproach, half lament, to Lancelot at the signs of decay in manliness and loyalty among his knights—a reproach and lament caused by Lancelot's own divided response, and awakening in him such feelings that

“Round his sick head all night, like birds of prey,
The words of Arthur shrieked.”

There is the first manifested touch of remorse in the queen towards her husband when she—

"In her high bower,
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
Watched her lord pass, and knew not that she sighed.
Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme
Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'"

There is the melancholy tournament, with laws broken, courtesy dead, women scornful or indignant, Lancelot rapt in his own sad musings, and Tristram, his skull not quite yet cloven by Mark for his treason, victor in the tournament. The tournament, we say, was called that of the Dead Innocence.

And then, after Lancelot had said to him—

" 'Hast thou won?
Art thou the purest, brother?'"

and he had answered—

" 'Great brother, thou nor I have made the world;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine,'"

Tristram carries his prize to Isolt, Mark's wife, his own wife Isolt being away in Brittany, her home, and after discourse between them, showing that while they did evil they perfectly understood the good, Mark clove Tristram's brain, as before indicated.

"That night came Arthur home, and while he climbed,
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,
The stairway to the hall, and look'd and saw
The great Queen's bower was dark,—about his feet
A voice clung sobbing till he questioned it,
'What art thou?' and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.'"

! The bitterness of the whole idyll is that all the

wickedness and baseness of heart is in full moral daylight.†

Guinevere follows next. It suffers, with regard to its junction with the other idylls, from having been written a long time before those immediately preceding it—thirteen years before *The Last Tournament*, ten years before *Pelleas and Ettarre* and *The Holy Grail*. Now in a course of years the lines of a general plan, if it has already been formed, get modified, however unconsciously to the framer of the plan, and the portions executed first, if they be later portions, come to need re-editing. *Guinevere*, however, has not, as far as I have noticed, been touched since it was first published, and so the junction with the idylls preceding it is imperfect.

In the first place, the introductory narrative about Modred goes back to the Enid and Vivien times, though the interval has been occupied by other idylls, in which neither Enid nor Vivien is mentioned, Vivien having indeed disappeared at the end of her idyll.

On the other hand, there is the sense of a considerable space between *The Last Tournament* and *Guinevere*, produced by Arthur's words, when referring to Guinevere's sin, followed by that of Tristram and Isolt, he adds—

“Then others, following these my mightiest knights ;”

and so a picture of dark sequence, occupying time.

This last, too, while the fool's words ending *The Last Tournament* had sounded like a doom note preparing us for an immediate catastrophe.

But, deeper, the Lancelot of this idyll is not the Lancelot we have lately known (except indeed in that

discordant passage in *Pelleas and Ettarre* to which we have already given attention). It would seem as if the poet's conception of Lancelot deepened after he wrote *Guinevere*, and so when we reach this idyll, later placed but earlier written, we come to a lower, more worldly Lancelot,

"Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,"

to be sure, but with no manifested agony of spirit as towards God, and concerning his sin. In accordance with this is the representation that, though the king *could* say—

"And he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight,"

he yet made war upon the king—resisted the king's forces by force of arms. We cannot think that the Lancelot we have more recently known would have done this.

Further, we are introduced here to misgivings and fears in the queen's mind of which the other idylls give no hint. Modred's watch upon her alarmed her and created all sorts of waking and sleeping terrors in her mind, and the poem adds—

"Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her,"

so that at the last she said, and said again and again—

"O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,"

and

"O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence."

Out of this it comes to pass that whereas the queen's repentance seemed in sequence with the remorse, and still earlier, the mere shame, preceding it, when the idyll *Guinevere* stood comparatively alone, it now, the more recently written idylls being present, seems too sudden to be true to nature. } For the Guinevere of those recent idylls is a hard, defiant woman, consciously and deliberately standing to a sinful course. } I think that as the poet's conception of Lancelot deepened for good during the years of which I have spoken, the queen of his imagination developed in the opposite direction, so that one has come to feel that Lancelot fell from a noble standing through her. But now coming back to this idyll, the balance of judgment changes again, as more heavy upon Lancelot, less heavy upon the queen. I have just pointed out how Lancelot's behaviour to the king surprises one; and now I say that in order to understand the queen of this idyll, one must forget, in part, the impression made by the immediately preceding idylls, and take the woman as she stands in this idyll—that is, as we conceived her when *Guinevere*, one of the original *Idylls of the King*, first appeared.

Arthur's speech is, of course, entirely in the ideal of the relation of husband and wife. A garden of God had been given him to dress and to keep, and the fulfilment of that duty he held to be the first business of his life. He loved Guinevere with a full, deep, conjugal love, but he expected her to be his helpmeet in his divinely appointed work. } It did not occur to him that to be a devoted husband was the *first* business of his life. } Geraint had tried the experiment of that doctrine, and his most sweetly adequate wife had found

it a very distressing one. Arthur did not try it; his conception of wifehood was nobler.

"For saving I be joined
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world.

But were I joined with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything,
Have power on this dark world to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live."

And see what came of it. Mere devoted husbands fly into Geraint tantrums when the suspicion of anything wrong arises, but Arthur could say—

"Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,"

and when the terrible wrong had become a demonstrated fact, he proved that his marriage words—

"Behold thy doom is mine;
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death,"

were less than the truth. He held her indeed cut off from his home as a duty to others; he held her cut off from himself for all the uses of this present life, for

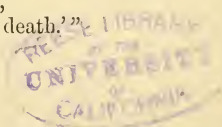
"Mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
"I loathe thee.""

So

"Hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—
Farewell."

He had even in his first indignation at the shameful sin thought of

"That fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death."



But now he says—

“‘Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives.’”

And he charges himself with the care of her as long as his life shall last, and the nuns with the care of her as long as her life lasts. And then, stretching away beyond the death that bounded his marriage promise, and holding himself true to his “let chance what will,” he says—

“‘Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter, in that world where all are pure,
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope.’”

One of the saddest things to be seen in our own day is the act of a husband who does not profess to have renounced the authority of the words, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it,” who yet cuts himself adrift from all care, spiritual and otherwise, of a wife who has sinned.

Her many memories, the days of bitter meditation since she left her home, and now her husband's presence and words, accomplish, the poem bids us realise, the salvation of Guinevere, God working. Once before, we remember, she did not see his face, though it was bare, because she was blind. Now her eyes are open, but his face was covered.

“So she did not see his face,
Which then was as an angel's.”

But she understood him.

“ ‘ His mercy choked me.’ ”

She understood his judgment of her sin. .

“ ‘ Shall I kill myself ? ’ ”

She laid hold of his hope—

“ ‘ His hope he called it.’ ”

“ ‘ Left me hope

That in mine own heart I can live down sin,
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God.’ ”

She echoed his words—

“ ‘ Let no one dream but that he loves me still.’ ”

She understood him, we say,

“ ‘ Now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too.’ ”

And she understands the work she has failed to do—
the work she has marred.

“ ‘ Ah, my God,

What might I not have made of Thy fair world,
Had I but loved Thy highest creature here ?
It was my duty to have loved the highest :
It surely was my profit had I known :
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.’ ”

The Passing of Arthur consists largely of legendary supernatural, or, as some would say, of allegorical matter. I, not quite deliberately, but as the event proves, have concerned myself mainly with the moral development of the story. I may therefore count that

our study of it is ended. I part with it in the abiding sense that these idylls make up a poem which, traversing so largely regions of darkness and sin, is a holy poem, awakening the spirit to a higher vision of good, and approving him who chose and transfigured the tale as the poet of the ideal of womanhood and of the passion of purity.

CHAPTER XIII

GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE LATER POEMS

MAUD, published in 1855, may be considered to complete the series of Earlier Poems. In 1859 the *Idylls of the King* began, and they were not completed till 1885. But five years after the *Idylls* were commenced the *Enoch Arden* volume was published, and with it commences the series of what I would distinguish as the Later Poems. None of the *Idylls of the King* are to be included with these, nor, for the most part, are the plays. The distinction is not merely one of date, nor did I desire to make it. The character of the matter of the poems compelled it.

One of the first things that strikes one about these later poems is their prevailing sadness.

Akin to this is the lack of comfort and harmony in many of the subjects. I do not mean in the poetry: the art power remains. But the selective standard seems altered. Through sadness in some, and discord in others, the poems, many of them, are not in the blue. Faith and the joy of the imagination are wanting: low-hanging clouds darken the horizon, and the feet weary in the mire. In them the poet wails, not sings.

Yet singing is his business. God and hope are his *raison d'être*.

Moreover, the topics are largely changed. In his earlier writings the poet is predominantly an artist-moralist: his theme is (implicitly, I mean, not explicitly) the beauty of God and the good. In the later poems he often becomes a speculative thinker. He is entangled in the travail of the age. An earnest man can hardly help being so. But the poet, as such, should live above it, or should make the eternal verities by which men live sound through the din. The din is too much present in the later poems, I think. One man's contribution to this, even if he is right, is of small value; but the still small voice of the poet who dwells in the ether, and sings of the truths that never change, is a music that glides through the coarser undulations of the earth sounds, reaching and strengthening and comforting spirits bruised with the clash of mere mental conflict raging around them. So I think our poet wasted his force by entering into the arena which was not his sphere.

It is in the later idylls that the sadness of which I have spoken will chiefly be found. This, naturally; and equally naturally the philosophical poems contain the speculative matter. Of this latter, evolution is the dominant note.

One other novelty, or almost novelty, the later poems contain, and that is the element of which I shall treat in the chapter entitled *The Supernatural or Preternatural in Tennyson*.

Of the plays, which are also a novelty of the latter days, I shall speak briefly before closing.

Apart from what I venture to consider mistakes in

subject-matter, and, thinking of the plays, to some extent in choice of form, there seems no reason to draw much distinction in quality between the work of the prime and that of the later years of our poet. Than *Rizpah*, for instance, I think he has written nothing finer.

I should remind the reader that a considerable number of the later published poems, which have nothing of this new character about them, have been already dealt with. These, very varied in their subjects, do, in fact, with seven of the *Idylls of the King* and all the plays, form a large proportion of the work of the poet's later years. It remains true, however, that the poems spoken of above constitute a dominant feature of that work.

CHAPTER XIV

LATER IDYLLS

THE later idylls are uniformly sad. There is not one happy one. I place them in two groups: the first group I name

Idylls of Sorrow.

These are—

Enoch Arden.
In the Children's Hospital.
Forlorn.
Happy.
Tomorrow.
Romney's Remorse.
Charity.

These are sad enough. But in each there is some manifest fruit of spiritual gain. Of the next group even this cannot be said. I name it

Idylls of Lamentation.

Aylmer's Field.
The First Quarrel.
Rizpah.
The Sisters.
The Flight.
The Wreck.
The Ring.
The Bandit's Death.

We begin with the *Idylls of Sorrow*, and first comes *Enoch Arden*. The publication of this poem, or rather of the volume containing it, made a landmark in the history of opinion concerning Tennyson's poetry. To those who had watched his never faltering power up to the climax of the first set of the *Idylls of the King* there seemed little reason for anxiety concerning his new gift, when *Enoch Arden* was announced. When the book, and specially the poem *Enoch Arden*, came to be read, there appeared the curious phenomenon of those who loved him best feeling disappointed at his latest gift; while those who heretofore had loved him least, and had professed to understand him least, thought this his best poem. Who were right was the question, and is. Or, the question of rightness apart, how may the fact be accounted for?

To this latter question the answer, I think, is easy. *Enoch Arden* was so far the least Tennysonian of Tennyson's poems, both in manner and in structure. The story is full of coincidences of a supernatural sort which his stories heretofore had never been.¹

This element of quasi-supernaturalism tends to give to the thoughtful student the impression of unreality, and therefore of weakness, in the structure of the story, while, on the other hand, it pleases those whose standards of judgment have been formed by lower masters. Hence the anomalous antagonism of opinion out of comment upon which grew the foregoing remarks.

The other respect in which *Enoch Arden* seemed un-Tennysonian is its manner. Not only does the movement of the verse miss that wonderful swell and music which characterises nearly all the poet's blank

¹ This subject is pursued in Chap. XVII. of the present volume.

verse; not only is the expression simple almost to severity; there is also an absence of his own peculiar turns of thought and modes of expression. Of such passages as those in which the uninitiated profess to find no meaning, but which often afford to his disciples the fullest revelation of the master's mind, there are none. This change was called a falling off; it was praised as an advance. It is safest simply to call it a change. That the cause of the change lay in no falling off of power, the volume afforded ample proof. Even *Enoch Arden* itself contains passages of unexcelled gorgeousness or intensity. That passage commencing—

“The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns,”
and ending—

“The scarlet shafts of sunrise, but no sail,”
cannot be overmatched, nor is there anything of more intense pathos than the passage beginning—

“Now when the dead man come to life beheld.”

And if any disciple of the Laureate missed something of the old pleasure under these new conditions, he might be reconciled to the fact by the consideration that the new form had won for his master many new lovers who heretofore had failed to lay hold upon even the edge of his garment.

And, all supposed drawbacks notwithstanding, *Enoch Arden* is a noble poem by that highest test of a poem, the worthy presentment of ideal character. Robbed of all heroic accidents, the man Enoch Arden is a true hero, after the highest conception of a hero. A man of unconquerable *will*, by the might of love and faith and duty—this is the highest hero, and this is

Enoch Arden. Through all his simple, homely life, the quality of the man is to be seen, but he is proclaimed full hero only when the great ordeal has come. He is as great as King Arthur, none the less that, in his supreme hour, his task is to bear and abstain rather than to do. He is great by his unconquerable will, yet his strength is not the strength of dogged resistance, but a conscious and deliberate bowing before love and duty, by the underlying might of faith.

“He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul.”

It was much debated whether it was true art, first, not to let Enoch speak to his wife and children before he died, and, second, to make him, dying without seeing them, let them know that he had returned at all. To determine these points, it must be considered that the conception of Enoch is that of a man altogether noble. Any emotional satisfaction gained at the cost of making him less noble would have been false art, therefore. Now his appearance in the new family circle, whatever doubtful pleasure it might have afforded to him, would have caused utter consternation and pain to all others concerned. To Philip it would have meant a ruined life; while Annie would have found herself severed from both ties at once, and shocked beyond recovery by the discovery of her false position. A low-toned or morbid artist would have made them meet—the situation has been produced more than once in recent novels to the entire offence of all readers of refinement

and sensibility. The most that could be permitted to Enoch, consistent with his nobility and with true art-feeling, was that terrible satisfaction he obtained when

“The dead man come to life beheld
His wife his wife no more, and saw the babe
Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
And all the warmth, the peace, the happiness,
And his own children tall and beautiful,
And him, that other, reigning in his place,
Lord of his rights and of his children's love.”

Concerning the other point, it was some time before I could arrive at a conclusion to my own satisfaction, if even I have yet done so. The affirmative answer, if that be the right one, comes out of the consideration that the conception of Annie is in no way that of an ideal character. She is a faithful, loving woman, as ordinary men and women go, but she is of the common, not of the highest type. This is seen all through the poem. Her long hesitation about marrying Philip is as much fear as fidelity. It was through her suggestion, half or wholly unconscious, it may be, that he first spoke of it to her.

“I thought not of it: but—I know not why—
Their voices make me feel so solitary,”

is the language, not of the desolation of faithful love, but of the longing for some present interest and sympathy. After she is married, an almost fear of Enoch's return seems to haunt her.

“A footstep seemed to fall beside her path,
She knew not whence; a whisper on her ear,
She knew not what; nor loved she to be left
Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
What ailed her then, that ere she entered, often
Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,
Fearing to enter.”

In this state of mind the certainty of Enoch's death would be a comfort to her, perhaps even though accompanied by the pain and shame of knowing that he had been alive, when, before, she thought him dead. Therefore, that Enoch should leave word for her to be told may be true art, upon the conception of the ideal type of Enoch's character, and the common type of the character of Annie.

In accordance with this is the passage—

“ ‘This miller's wife,’
He said to Miriam, ‘that you spoke about,
Has she no fear that her first husband lives?’
‘Ay, ay, poor soul,’ said Miriam, ‘fear enow!
If you could tell her you had seen him dead,
Why, that would be her comfort.’ ”

The weakest portion of *Enoch Arden* is, I think, the three last lines. After the completeness of the ending in the words—

“ There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms abroad
Crying with a loud voice, ‘A sail! a sail!
I am saved;’ and so fell back and spoke no more,”

those three extra lines chill one. To name him “strong heroic soul” seems so entirely unnecessary, after the living presentment of his strength and heroism; and though the kind of funeral his friends and his town gave him was important for their own sakes, the record of it here has yet to my mind the effect of an anti-climax.

In the Children's Hospital is a sweet little story, if it is strictly historic. Even if it is, one would not, of course, assume that what happened was more than a

gracious coincidence, though certainly one would not assume that it was *not* more than a gracious coincidence. But if it is fiction one would resent it. For the visitations of Divine help which it suggests so answer to the greatness of our need, and would be so infinitely comforting and reassuring to our spirits, that we feel mocked by pretence stories in such a region. I think, however, it reads as if it were historic. The last line but one of verse VII. included, I wonder? But of that and the like of it more hereafter. In the ending of *Forlorn* there is a fine reticence. One would naturally desire to know what came of the agonising act. But the result is not to the point. Such desperate obedience to conscience is rendered, when at last it is attained to, in the "scorn of consequence," or rather, for such comfort must lie at the bottom of the heart, in the faith that the far-off result of right can only be good.

In *Tomorrow* the ending is everything, and a very fine ending it is. Is it a mistake to think that *Happy* could have spared the foreign element of the Count and his doings? or was the wife's remorse for her jealous folly necessary to the depth of the self-devotion? The line—

"This poor rib-grated dungeon of the holy human ghost," as describing not the proper relation, but the present behaviour, of the body to the soul, is a striking one. *Romney's Remorse* is very touching, and the passage which follows brings out its moral with deep intensity—

"Ay, but when the shout
Of His descending peals from Heaven, and throbs
Through earth, and all her graves, if *He* should ask
'Why left you wife and children? for my sake,

According to my word ?' and I replied,
 'Nay, Lord, for *Art*,' why, that would sound so mean
 That all the dead, who wait the doom of Hell

Would turn, and glare at me, and point and jeer,
 And gibber at the worm, who, living, made
 The wife of wives a widow-bride, and lost
 Salvation for a sketch."

But softer follows—

"O yes, I hope, or fancy that, perhaps,
 Human forgiveness touches heaven, and thence—
 For you forgive me, you are sure of that—
 Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven."

Charity seems strained and painful in its form, and the one woman appears to forget that she has her wrong to repent as well as her wrongs to lament; but the noble act of the other woman was worth recording, perhaps even worth imagining, if the story is but fiction.

We come now to the *Idylls of Lamentation*. Until *Aylmer's Field* was published in 1864, the poet being then in the fifty-fifth year of his age, and in the thirty-fourth of his fully launched poetic career, there was, I believe, no considerable example among Tennyson's writings of a sad story without moral gain to some one. What I called the *Emotion Pictures* were such, but they were not "considerable," and so did not beat in upon the heart. In other words, these Lamentations practically belong to the latter part of Tennyson's life and writings. The change to dominant sadness began, as we have said, with the *Aylmer's Field*, that is the *Enoch Arden* volume. The present point, however, is not the sad-

ness but the unredeemed sadness of the poems in question.

In *Aylmer's Field*, with which we begin, there are two families—a county magnate, his wife and daughter, and a country rector and his brother. Both families are old, and the Hall and the Rectory have been on familiar footing from immemorial time. The magnate, Sir Aylmer Aylmer, and his wife are proud—coarsely proud and vulgar, notwithstanding their ancient name. Their daughter Edith embodies the graces which they lack—for she is tender and loving, forgetful of self—

“Queenly responsive when the loyal hand
Rose from the clay it worked in as she passed.

.
A voice
Of comfort and an open hand of help,
A splendid presence flattering the poor roofs
Revered as theirs, but kindlier than themselves.”

She and the boy Leolin Averill, the brother of the Rector, almost grow up together. Will they love ?

“How should Love,
Whom the cross-lightnings of four chance-met eyes
Flash into fiery life from nothing, follow
Such dear familiarities of dawn ?
Seldom, but when he does, Master of all.”

Sir Aylmer had no fear ; he

“Would care no more for Leolin's walking with her,
Than for his old Newfoundland's.

.
To dream
That Love could bind them closer well had made
The hoar hair of the Baronet bristle up
With horror, worse than had he heard his priest
Preach an inverted scripture, sons of men
Daughters of God.”

But the love came, nevertheless, in brother and sister guise, at first—

“But where a passion yet unborn, perhaps
Lay hidden as the music of the moon
Sleeps in the plain eggs of the nightingale.”

At last it comes to be known—to themselves, and then to Sir Aylmer. He, with the coarseness proper to him, demands of Leolin—

“‘And you shall say that having spoken with me,
And after looked into yourself, you find
That you meant nothing.’”

To which Leolin replies—

“‘I
So foul a traitor to myself and her,
Never, oh, never.’”

So they are parted, but true in heart for ever. For a time letters help them, but these are discovered by treachery, and stopped, she not understanding how.

“So that the gentle creature, shut from all
Her charitable use, and face to face
With twenty months of silence, slowly lost,
Nor greatly cared to lose, her hold on life.
Last, some low fever, ranging round to spy
The weakness of a people or a house,
Like flies that haunt a wound, or deer, or men,
Or almost all that is, hurting the hurt—
Save Christ as we believe him—found the girl,
And flung her down upon a couch of fire,
Where, careless of the household faces near,
And crying upon the name of Leolin,
She, and with her the race of Aylmer, passed.”

That moment she names his name in dying, Leolin hears her call him, in his sleep, as the poem puts it, and answers her trembling and panting. (Of this more

hereafter.) The next day Leolin knows the dreadful news, and that day he dies by his own hand.

The parents ask the brother of Leolin to preach a funeral sermon for Edith. Then comes that terrible sermon upon the text, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." I think it is one of the most daring situations in all literature. From the parish pulpit, before the parish congregation, the rector of the parish, the brother of the dead man, grown aged with horror and grief in a handful of days, pours down upon the heads of the parents of the woman, dead, too, whom his brother had loved, that terrible blast of reproach for those two deaths which they had caused. And that blast strikes them dead, too; for in a month the mother dies, and the father becomes imbecile, and never leaves the house again until he leaves it to be buried. I say it is very daring. Only a prophet's commission could have justified the sermon.

Aylmer's Field is a protest against the tyranny of the pride of birth and wealth over love. We may be sure that it is this by the explicit intention of the poet. Such a man as Tennyson does not tell such a story for nothing, or for the morbid pleasure of telling a painful story. It is true that the wickedness against which he protests is old enough, and that the protest has been times enough repeated. But so long as the sin holds, the protest must be uttered, even though the form of utterance should remain unvaried. Here it is not unvaried, of a certainty.

But underlying the protest against the tyranny of the pride of birth over love, is a protest against the pride of birth itself, or at least against the commoner and baser form of this pride. Leolin's words—

“ Fall back upon a name ! rest, rot in that !
 Not *keep* it noble, make it nobler ? fools,
 With such a vantage-ground for nobleness ! ”

might be set as the text of a sermon often preached by our Laureate.

There are two kinds of pride of ancestry. The one is a poor mean thing, resting in the past, and content with the shadow of another man's greatness ; the other is a living, stimulating power, inciting the man himself, by the contemplation of idealised forms of worth and duty, to present worthy effort. The one is a worm at the root, the grave, of personal character ; the other is the soil from which its roots draw constant nourishment. The one is a narrow torpid thing, nursing egotism and scorn of others ; the other is the parent of that wider sense of brotherhood, which is the offspring of all true enthusiasm. The one demands honour from others, because some one else has been so great ; the other finds in the greatness of that some one else a reason for self-honour and the loyalty to duty which is the fruit of self-honour. The one, with all its grand airs, is close akin to toadyism and snobbishness ; the other is a fertile parent of self-respect, and allied to a noble humility.

These two that affect an outside kinship, are in fact antipodal in their character, and inhabit antipodal characters. Against the mean counterfeit, *Aylmer's Field* is a protest, and a protest driven home by a startling and bitter example—

“ But there—out yonder—earth
 Lightens from her own central Hell—O there
 The red fruit of an old idolatry—
 The heads of chiefs and princes fall so fast,

They cling together in the ghastly sack—
 The land all shambles—naked marriages
 Flash from the bridge, and ever-murdered France,
 By shores that darken with the gathering wolf,
 Runs in a river of blood to the sick sea.”

About the next two Lamentations, *The First Quarrel* and *Rizpah*, I had hesitation as to whether they should not stand in the depths, so to say, of the Idylls of Sorrow. For though there is no light in them upon the husband in the one, and the son in the other—that is to say, no light out of the sad crisis—yet the meek forgiving sweetness of the wife and the passion of instinctive love in the mother, do somehow make the heart of the reader glow. *Rizpah*, especially, is wonderful—

IX

“ And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last good-
 bye ;
 They had fasten'd the door of his cell. ‘O mother!’ I
 heard him cry.
 I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had something further to
 say,
 And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me away.

X

“ Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was
 dead,
 They seized me and shut me up : they fasten'd me down on
 my bed.
 ‘Mother, O mother!’—he call'd in the dark to me year after
 year—
 They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I
 couldn't but hear ;
 And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid and
 still
 They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked
 their will.

XI

“Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
 I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it
 a theft?—
 My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that had
 laughed and had cried—
 Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved
 in my side.

XII

“Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd 'em, I
 buried 'em all—
 I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard
 wall.
 My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment
 'ill sound,
 But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.”

The Sisters is a heart-breaking poem. (It is the second of the name, by the way; the other also a bitter tragedy.) Why write such poems? one asks. They are like pagan tragedies—stories of fate and doom. But such things happen, it may be said. Perhaps: does that justify the artist, as it might the historian? Is *he* not the minister of faith? Or has he also to teach the terrors of the Universe, and so to solemnise men, compelling their faith to take deeper root. And probably in all such tragedies there is human fault, the significance of which men should learn. For the victims, the end is not yet. One must hope that the poet, if he be right-hearted, knows whether he should write such poems.

The Flight is in the same region as *Lady Clara* and *Aylmer's Field*, only here the father proposes to outrage an existing love in order to sell his daughter

for money to pay his debts and save his lands. One verse of the poem puts into good plain English the significance of marriage vows, and is worthy the attention of others than those who are sold by their fathers—

“ Shall I take *him* ? I kneel with *him* ? I swear and swear
forsworn

To love him most, whom most I loathe, to honour whom I
scorn ?

The Fiend would yell, the grave would yawn, my mother's
ghost would rise—

To lie, to lie—in God's own house—the blackest of all lies ! ”

This brings us to a story in which marriage vows are broken. *The Wreck* is a very perplexing poem indeed. A hard, cold husband ; an emotional, spoiled, weak-willed woman ; a man fascinating by bodily or mental attractions and free of the burden of conscience—these would make the elements of plain, vulgar sin. But when the woman describes herself as such that she doted on the poets—

“ The word of the Poet, by whom the deeps of the world are
stirred,”

(is it significant that Shelley is singled out for naming ?) ;
when this woman has a child—

“ The child that I felt I could die for,”

which, however, she afterwards deserts—deserted one morning “ when the small sweet face was flushed ”—it died ten days afterwards ; when the lover, all but a dwarf and a hunchback by the way, is described by her as having a

“ Voice as mellow and deep
As a psalm by a mighty master, and pealed from an organ.

For, Mother, the voice was the voice of the soul.”

("Mother" means the Roman Church); when this "first and greatest of men," who is so impressive when he "flames at a public wrong," tells the woman who has just, I will not mention broken her marriage vows, but deserted her infant child, that there was "never the heart among women more tender and true," and exhorts her, her conscience having begun to awaken about her child, "Comfort yourself; the man will take care of his own;" when, her lover being dead, she has written home to the nurse to inquire after the child, this woman finds the culmination of her husband's brutality in the fact that he sends her the information she seeks in a newspaper-cutting from among the deaths, and addresses her by her maiden name;—when all this is told by the woman herself with an air of heroic penitence, as if, though of course she was very much to be blamed, she was very much to be pitied too—for there is plenty of incidental agony—we feel that either the poet is playing some trick upon us, or that this is bewilderment absolute. What does it all mean? Of course if some one else had told the story we should sigh over one more variety of human sin, remembering and sorrowing for our own contribution to the sad assortment, and should doubtless find plenty of occasion for pity. It is the attitude and rant of the woman that outrages compassion. This is the final scene as regards the lover—

" 'O Stephen, I love you, I love you, and yet'—

As I leaned away from his arms—'would God we had never met!'

And he spoke not—only the storm; till after a little I yearned

For his voice again, and he call'd to me 'Kiss me!' and there—as I turned—

'The heart, the heart!' I kissed him, I clung to the sinking form,
And the storm went roaring above us, and he—was out of the
storm."

This with broken marriage vows and a deserted infant in the background. Henceforth her thoughts are divided between the dead lover and (as she hoped, though falsely) the living child; the husband did not count, nor the broken vows. What does it all mean? If the poet means to show us what a fool *he* may become who sets about to deceive himself, good; but he gives us no hint that he is outside the whole thing. Yet that Tennyson could mean to give any countenance to that infidelity which holds marriage vows to be binding only as long as they are agreeable—that is, not binding at all—is impossible. None could believe more firmly than he that "for better or worse" is the divine keystone of that arch of the family upon which the nobility of human character and society rests. I wondered was the poem aimed at the Roman Church and the enervating influence (real or supposed) of the Confessional. But that it could hardly be. There is a nemesis—a semi-preternatural nemesis, of which more hereafter—in the story. But that, if it were the motive, could have been put into a healthily balanced narrative. The poem remains a perplexity to me, jarring upon the truth, which the poet himself has taught us, that men and women must "live by law," whatever, in the way of pain, comes of it. This woman, because her husband had no heart to be wounded, finds herself acquitted as towards him, unmindful that she has broken law in him. And I cannot discern the attuning note struck in the poem. I trust that the vital importance of the

matter will excuse me for having dwelt so long upon it. The woman finds palliation in the fact that it was her lover's *mind* that attracted her. This is in the modern key that is so full of the portent of chaos. The fact really deepens the quality of the offence, for it makes it more spiritual—a more deliberate violation of “live by law”—the act of a person who could better know what she was doing.

The Ring opens with a dainty lyric, and has a pretty, though slight, idyllic framework. But the form is dramatic and the main matter is preternatural. For these reasons we shall consider it not now, but hereafter. We will only notice that the combination of the preternatural with the malignant persistence of Muriel gives a result in the highest degree painful.

We come last in this group to *The Bandit's Death*. In a prefatory note to it Tennyson says, “I have adopted Sir Walter Scott's version of the following story as given in his last journal (Death of Il Bizarro), but I have taken the liberty of making some slight alterations.” Now I must say that against this I plead with all my heart. Either the dreadful and abnormal story is true or it is not. If it is, it may be good to tell it; but then let us have the story, and not some artistic variation upon it. If it is not, for pity's sake, why should any one invent such horrors. The only redeeming touch in the story—and that rather shames than comforts us—is—

“He was loved at least by his dog: it was chained, but its
horrible yell

‘She has killed him, has killed him, has killed him!’ rang
out all down through the dell.”

But perhaps this never happened.

So in horror end the Idylls of Lamentation. This last is in the last volume, *The Death of Ænone*.

What, once more, is the meaning of this deep sadness and painfulness in so many of the later poems? I have no answer to offer beyond what I have suggested in the *General Remarks on the Later Poems* and in the comment on *The Sisters*.

It may help to make clear my standard of judgment in this matter if I say that I think Shakespeare deserved—what, in a case of another sort the Athenians inflicted—a fine, for writing *Othello*.

CHAPTER XV

POEMS OUT OF TUNE

EDWIN MORRIS, *Locksley Hall*, and *The Letters* might also have been grouped under this title. But these are earlier poems, and have found their place accordingly. There stand here therefore only four:—

Sea Dreams.
The Lover's Tale.
Lucretius.
Despair.

Sea Dreams is out of tune through the business arrangements that produce the situation, and the folly that believed in and so trusted such a man as the hypocrite. (Of *him*, and the satire upon him, I have spoken elsewhere.) But the poem seems almost to have been made to create a place for the dreams. (The title confesses as much.) Is this quite fair? Dreams from life, not life for dreams, one would say. The result is that, though containing a great deal of finished poetry, the piece, as a work of art, seems to lack a reason for existing. And it ends out of tune, spite of the word "forgive." The sweet note in it is the woman, and she and her sayings are *very* sweet.

justification. *Lucretius* is a pathological study, and seems to me more fit for an essay in the *Lancet* than for a poem. A *psychological* study, in the hands of such a writer as Tennyson, might make a fine poem; and even morbid psychology would not lie beyond the range of possible successful treatment. But the study of the action of a brain poison upon body and mind is pure pathology, and pathology is outside the region of poetry. When, in *Maud*, the lover goes mad, it is within the province of the poem to depict his madness, because the madness is the direct fruit of the mental and moral experiences dealt with in the poem, and these experiences give its whole cast to the madness itself; the madman is Maud's lover still. But when to *Lucretius* is given a dose of poison which subverts his whole nature, and gives to that which was weakest in him—not *him* at all, in fact—a factitious and temporary power, so that thoughts and images foreign to his whole life take possession of his mind, and, howsoever mingled with broken glances of his own proper thoughts and dominant tendencies, invert and falsify the whole putting of his nature—this is a case for the doctor, not the poet. If he who had *lived* *Lucretius*, through the ignorant impatience or selfishness of a woman, taking form in a poison-cup, died *so*, let us, if necessary, record the fact, but let us not make a poem of it. So, at least, the matter presents itself to my mind; and so it is that, finding much fine poetry in *Lucretius*, I do not like the poem.

Despair is, if I may coin the word, a spirituo-pathologic study. *Lucretius* groaned under the effects of a brain poison; this poor man under the effects of

a spirit poison. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—that was the health he had lost, and the poisons that worked in him were, first, Calvinism, and then, to which the other helped to drive him, Atheism. For the poor man had a human heart, and his faithful love for a faithful wife, and hers for him, made Calvinism and Atheism not theories, but living terrors. Terrors, not fears merely; but terrors creating the vision of a universe without justice, without love. The infused lies made his disease. In other words, the poor man's trouble was not legitimate.

It is not like the sorrow of the widow in *Rizpah*. Than it nothing could be bitterer; but there was reason for it, in fact. For this poor man's sorrow there was cause, but no reason. It was a disease. The healing of it would have made a lovely art subject; the analysis of it, no—as I think. The part of the poem that justifies itself as art is the touch of health still left—the touch of tender human love and trust.

"And she laid her hand in my own—she was always loyal and sweet—

Till the points of the foam in the dusk came playing about our feet.

.

"We turned to each other, we kissed, we embraced, she and I.

.

" 'Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever and ever farewell,'
Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began,
Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the coming of man!"

I think that Tennyson in some of these later poems

speaks, and suffers his characters to speak, in a very superficial way about the doctrine of future punishment. To print "hell" with a capital H, as in this poem, involves a sort of special pleading. If, which I do not think, a satisfactory discussion of the subject were possible, it would have to rest not only upon thoughts of the heart of God, but also upon conceptions of the nature of character and of the human soul. I, who write, suffered enough in my early years from the horrors of Calvinistic teaching. But to talk with inevitable ignorance and rashness on the other side will not help matters. The words of the New Testament, if we refer to them, are at once solemn and vague. Our wisdom is, perhaps, to take the solemnity to heart, and to rest content with the vagueness. It may well be that with our present powers of understanding and realising, greater seeming precision would be simply misleading.

Our poet, who loved men, desired that they should believe in the infinite love of the Infinite and Incomprehensible God. To this end, I doubt not, he wrote *Despair*, and such passages as I have just referred to. But a more excellent way was open to him, even the way of the devout and holiness-loving artist which he was. In the other way, not even a theologian can do much. But he who has seen the beauty of God must needs believe in His love. Divine beauty in all its grades is the great sphere of the poet's teaching, and in this sphere our poet could better have sought the end at which he aimed.

By a natural transition we pass to the consideration of the Later Philosophical Poems.

CHAPTER XVI

LATER PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS

THE series of Later Philosophical Poems opens well with the brave little poem *Wages*, teaching that virtue is the basis of the hope of immortality, that the hope of immortality is the life-blood of virtue, and that the immortality which virtue desires is not an immortality of reward as distinct from virtue, but an immortality of virtue.

The Voice and the Peak finds in man a peak higher, a voice deeper, and a being other than belongs to external nature.

So far we have familiar truths; the putting makes the poem in each.

The next are more speculative, concerning themselves with the relation of the seen to the unseen in the universe at large.

"*Flower in the crannied wall*," in asserting that to understand through and through any part of nature would involve the understanding of all nature, and of Him who is nature's source and life, implies the organic unity of the universe and its vital relation to God.

The Higher Pantheism goes further, and asserts

that in some mystic manner God and the universe are one, as body and soul are one man, essential reality and vital manifestation. But the pantheism, if pantheism it be, is a higher pantheism, for there is no obscuring of the two fundamentals of religion, the Divine Personality, and the seeming paradox therewith, the true personality of man.

The Ancient Sage combines the attitudes of the two former groups. It bears a considerable resemblance to *The Two Voices*. Like it, it consists of counter-puttings; and like it, it takes its stand outside, that is, in thought prior to (in this case in time prior to) the Christian revelation. The counter-puttings are between two who plead, the one for the seen alone, and the other for the unseen, the one for sense, and the other for faith, the one for the outer world, and the other for the inner consciousness. One of the speakers is a young man, a kind of saddened Alcibiades, whose words are in the discordant keys of sorrow and voluptuousness. He urges, "The visible is all that we know, there is nothing, or nothing that reveals itself, behind, and in man himself age and death unmake what life and youth have made. So the present, though it is contemptible, is all that we have, and should be sadly and scornfully lived for.

" ' Yet wine and laughter friends ! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall. ' "

To him the Sage answers that the Nameless is revealed within; that in his own being man learns the unseen, and that in obedience to the inner voice is the path of wisdom.

“ If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
 Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
 There, brooding by the central altar, thou
 May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
 By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
 As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know.”

What “ canst not know ” means appears later—

“ Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
 Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
 Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one :
 Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
 Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my son,
 Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
 Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
 For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
 Nor yet disproven : wherefore thou be wise,
 Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
 And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith ! ”

The inner being, the inward voice, faith, the
 obedience of faith—by these the Nameless is known.

“ And since

The key to that weird casket, which for thee
 But holds a skull, is neither thine nor mine,
 But in the hand of what is more than man,
 Or in man's hand when man is more than man,
 Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
 And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
 And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
 And send the day into the darken'd heart ;
 Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
 A dying echo from a falling wall ;
 Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
 To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
 Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous looms ;
 Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,

Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine ;
 Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
 And lose thy life by usage of thy sting ;
 Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
 Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness."

To the Christian the Nameless is not nameless, and He is revealed otherwise than within. But unless He is found within, and in obedience to the voice within, He will not be truly found at all.

There is in this poem an argument for the reality of the Unseen drawn from the experience (or the supposed experience) of a mystic—

"The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
 And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud
 Melts into Heaven. I touched my limbs, the limbs
 Were strange, not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
 But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self,
 The gain of such large life, as, matched with ours,
 Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
 Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world."

Upon the value of such an argument I do not presume to offer any pronounced opinion. There are some to whom such evidence is full of fascination, while others (of whom I have come to be one) trust more the experience of a man in the complete integrity of his being, where the functions of body and mind as well as of spirit are in full exercise. For the moment you approach this seeming exaltation of condition, the question arises as to whether it is not the morbid with which you are dealing. I again say that I offer no pronounced opinion. I do but say that to keep distinct the abnormal and the super-

natural must needs be a thing of the utmost importance.

There is in this poem a vivid picture of the destructive action of old age upon the human faculties, and in *The Two Voices* an equally vivid picture of the apparent finality, utterness, of death. In neither of them is there given that answer to the implied argument contained in the fact that oftentimes while the bodily and mental powers are decaying, the spirit, the character, in its fundamentals of penitence and veracity, is seen to be advancing. He in whom this takes place has the blessedness of being a supreme evidence of immortality.

I may add here a quotation from a beautiful article in the *Anti-Jacobin* of 18th April 1891, which is in mood with the foregoing remark. The writer has been speaking of the simplicity of childhood, and of genius, and he concludes:—

“There is another kind of simplicity, which is endowed, like the others, with the synthetic eye, and which is the only kind that is of much abiding value to its possessor; namely, the simplicity of wisdom. This is rarely found except in persons of advanced years. The simplicity of age is the blossom of which that of childhood is the bud and almost always failing promise. Its great condition is innocence which has been retained through or recovered during the struggles and temptations of manhood; and, as the innocence of knowledge is far nobler than that of infantine ignorance, so its reward, the unitive vision, has an immeasurably wider field. Such men at seventy see again the daisy as they saw it when they were seven; but a universe of realities, unknown in childhood, is dis-

cerned by them as a single flower, of which each particular reality is a petal; and the life-long unconscious analysis, which has been to other men corruption, has only provided them with a vaster prospect of the elemental integrity, and an inexhaustible source of joy, which, like that of the 'young-eyed cherubim,' is too grave for smiles."

Before passing on I would remark upon the depth of spiritual suggestion contained in the poem *Far—far—Away*, which at first sight looks only like a musical trifle.

Thus far, though under the poet's particular forms, the teachings presented to us are for the most part familiar, and stamped with the assent of general conviction.

But now in *De Profundis*, in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years after*, and especially in the *Demeter* and *Death of Enone* volumes (most aggressively in *The Dawn*, *The Making of Man*, and *The Dreamer*), we come to a note that is new, hurting the heart, and making discord with the old notes, which, however, are still present. The difference can best be set forth as follows:—

The ideas that have hitherto governed the thinkings of men in Christendom concerning the universe and themselves are such as these: God; Creation; the Divine Immanence; Providence; the Purpose of God; Man; the Human Will; Right; Responsibility; Immortality; and, regarding the present imperfect marred condition of man, Effort; Progress; Repentance; Divine Pardon and Grace.

But now, ignoring and confusing these ancient

ideas, rather than definitely opposing them, a new formula has arisen, and men are taught to account for things as they are, and to expect things as they will be, by and through what is called *evolution*.

Our poet has adopted the word and the idea; they rather haunt his later writings. I am sorry, and for the following reasons:—

I believe that the word has no fixed and definite meaning, and that the idea vaguely expressed by it is delusive.

I believe that evolution in the strict sense of the term, whether applied to a single object or to the universe in general, is unthinkable. Certainly I will say that there is no instance of evolution, even in the sphere of the merely physical, known to man, or imaginable by him—no instance, or possibility of a thing becoming other than it was out of its own inherent resources. A thing may be reshaped by an agent other than itself; or, acted upon by external forces and assimilating foreign matter, it may grow. But shut a thing up to itself and its own resources, it will remain stationary. If some one should say by “evolution” I mean growth—cosmic growth as you describe it—I answer then you had better say growth, for that term recognises the foreign elements as factors in the new product. If some one should say, in speaking of “evolution,” I never intended to exclude the idea of the operation of God, I answer then you had better be careful how you use the term, for some in using it *do* mean to exclude that idea, and to assert that the universe advances out of its own resources. And, indeed, postulate the operation of God, and you have surrendered evolution. If it be answered that the term is not meant to go as

deep as this question, yea or nay, but simply to assert that the history of the universe, could it be written, would be the record of the continuous arising of new phases out of former ones by insensible degrees of change, as do arise the various stages in the life of an individual organic being from embryo to maturity—I say, for this, evolution is a misnomer, unless the universe is supposed to be shut up to its own resources. I say also that this is, as every one who knows would confess, an hypothesis: it is *demonstrable* at no one point along the whole line of organic gradation, not to emphasise the two supreme points where life begins and where man enters. And, finally, I return upon the line of thought, and say that could this be established as the history of the seeming of the universe, evolution in the proper sense of the word would no more be proven than it would be in the case of a piece of sculpture coming gradually into form before the eyes of one who was unable to see the sculptor and his tools. Given God, then the supposed continuous history, could it be established, becomes the record of Divine operation in the substance of the universe. Refuse to grant God, and assume the universe shut up to its own resources, then that any advance should take place becomes unthinkable.

So much (if I be not presumptuous) for the irrationality of the word “evolution” when it is strictly used, and for its ambiguity when it is not strictly used. The whole subject is in the crucible of scientific, philosophic, and theologic thought. It is not a word and an idea for a poet to build upon. His work is to vivify immutable truth and beauty, not to popularise crude speculations.

But, as I have implied, the matter is still graver. How man came into being is a sufficiently important question; how men, in being, are to become what they ought to be, is to them still more important. The old answer has been that over and above that creative operation of God by which He brings into being the things that He wills to exist and advances them along the line of progress which is also according to His wisdom and will, there flows from Him towards those beings capable of character—beings whom we describe as spiritual—an operation answering to their higher nature, or the higher nature in them, and which we call *grace*. Further, we have understood that in such spiritual beings capable of character, and indeed as an essential attribute of their spiritual being, the power of will exists, by which they are able in measure to determine their own characters. In other words, we have looked upon Nature (meaning by that the operation of God in creation and providence), Grace, and Will as the sources of human character. Out of the sense of this higher contact of God with us, and the sense of responsibility involved in the power of will, we have felt ourselves to be heirs of a future life. Upon these conceptions we have been builded, and have built ourselves, and we feel that the moral being in us is compact with them. But now in the place of them the Juggernaut term “moral evolution” comes rolling over us, threatening to crush the life out of the old beliefs and out of us together. If some one says that by the term “moral evolution” it is only meant to express an advancing purpose, a progress of God, in the shaping of human character, we answer that by affinity with other uses of “evolution” it stands for

more than this, and that if it did not, we should have no need of it, for that we held that belief already and had been able to express it. There can be no doubt that, as a matter of fact, the idea and the term tend to fight against those ancient and fundamental convictions that, potentially, make us men. To what tragic uses the new doctrine can be put Tennyson was himself conscious, when, in *The Promise of May*, he made it the working theory of a villain. Certainly it is not a theory to be put incidentally or as if it were an axiom of thought, and, I think, our poet's wisdom faltered when he let his work as an artist-moralist be confused by the intrusion of this speculation. Of course progress, the purpose of God, on the one hand, and the order of nature and the fruits of growth on the other, are proper subjects for the poet's handling. Even these great topics, however, endorsed by the judgment of mankind, must be dealt with in the light of the mystery and solemnity of the human will. But if, in the place of all these, the poet clothes himself in the language of evolution, then, to most readers at least, and perhaps to all, his tones are changed from those of high prompting and subtlest inspiration into the fate-note of cosmic mechanism. When that has happened, the poet's work is a thing of the past. What inspiration is there, for instance, in—

“Is it shame that so few should have climbed from the dens in
the level below,
Men with a heart and a soul, no slaves of a four-footed will?
But if twenty million of summers are stored in the sunlight
still,
We are far from the noon of man, there is time for the race
to grow.”

Compare with this—

“He was not all unhappy. His resolve
 Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
 Prayer from a living source within the will
 Kept him a living soul,”

and

“Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
 And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
 Hereafter in that world where all are pure,
 We too may meet before high God,”

and judge if our poet did not wander into infertile paths.

“Is it shame that so few have climbed?” the poet asks. The faith and conscience of Christendom answer that it *is* shame that so many or all have *fallen*. We believe that man *was* made—that “The Making of Man” does not remain to be done. We believe that he was made, not into a civilised being, to be sure, but with such spiritual possibilities that to be “in the dens” is to have fallen—is sin somewhere. We hold that the recognition of this fact, and sorrow and shame at it—repentance, in other words—is the beginning of worth in man as he now is. This is the Christian faith, and though the defence of it is full of technical difficulties, we hold that it touches bottom, and is the beginning of the remaking of man. Now men who discuss morals upon the basis of physical science will talk according to the basis from which they start. But that a *poet* should for a moment seem to give the go-by to a philosophy in whose soil are the roots of human character and set up in its place a doctrine of evolution-fate is to be deeply deplored—is a loss to all, and a peril to those who do not detect and reject the confusion.

The poet offers himself a consolation—

“But if twenty million of summers are stored in the sunlight still,
We are far from the noon of man, there is time for the race to grow.”

Say there is time for a race of mollusks to grow and we are not disturbed. To be sure the mollusks now living are what they are, and their descendants between now and the twenty million years hence will be only proximately satisfactory. Still we are not disturbed. Individual mollusks do not greatly interest us: the species it is that we regard. But apply the same language to man, and our attitude changes.

“Ah, what will *our* children be,
The men of a hundred thousand, a million summers away?”

the poem asks. I answer, “Oh yes; but there’s *me*. I do not think I was made to be merely a passing step to the coming man. I was made to be myself, and to endure. I need to be fulfilled in myself. Evolution consolation does not meet my case.” Unsatisfactory indeed it sounds compared with the Christian teaching which bases the hope of the race upon the salvation—the repentance, the renewal—of the individuals of the race; that addresses itself to man by addressing itself to the consciences of individual men.

The radical vice of current evolution talk is that it distresses or destroys the sense of that double truth, faith in which is religion and virtue—the truth, that is, of God and man, of the sovereign will and the will of the creature, and by consequence the sense of immortality. That in the midst of the turmoil larger views of

the order of nature and deeper views of the operation of God in nature are being arrived at, far be it from me to deny. But the truth that most concerns man is that of the relation of God to man and of man to God. This must be made our sheet-anchor; the response of conscience to God our deepest oracle. All else must wait on this. To minister to this is the poet's chief work. Silence this and the poet's work is over. Let poet and man be faithful to this, and all other thinkings will bide their time and lead sooner or later to truth.

But let us thankfully acknowledge that though the new tones confused they did not silence the old ones.

In *De Profundis*, addressed in idea to his new-born child, there shines—

“Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
 Out of His whole World-self and all in all—
 Live thou! and of the grain and husk, the grape
 And ivyberry choose; and still depart
 From death to death through life and life, and find
 Nearer and ever nearer Him, who wrought
 Not Matter nor the finite-infinite,
 But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
 With power on thine own act and on the world.”

In *Locksley Hall Sixty Years after*, amidst many heart-tossings at the recoil of evil upon us, we have—

“Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race began,
 Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.”

And again—

“Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the
 Pure, the Just—
 Take the charm ‘For ever’ from them, and they crumble into
 dust.”

And again—

“Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his
doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.”

And once more—

“Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle with
the game :
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither see nor
name,
Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the Powers
of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the
Will.”

In *Vastness* (*Demeter* volume), which is a sort of
catalogue of chaos, we break at last into—

“What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-
coffins at last,
Swallowed in Vastness, lost in Silence, drowned in the deeps
of a meaningless Past ?
What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's
anger of bees in their hive ?—
Peace, let it be ! for I loved him, and love him for ever : the
dead are not dead but alive.”

In *Parnassus*, stunted by the “terrible muses” of
astronomy and geology, we have—

“If the lips were touched with fire from off a pure Pierian
altar,
Though their music here be mortal need the singer greatly
care ?
Other songs for other worlds ! the fire within him would not
falter ;
Let the golden Iliad vanish, Homer here is Homer there.”

The first verse of *By an Evolutionist*, though Christianly it is not quite right, has a fine ring about it—

“The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said, ‘Am I your debtor?’
And the Lord—‘Not yet: but make it as clean as you
can,
And then I will let you a better.’”

Then comes *The Play*—

“Act first, this Earth, a stage so gloomed with woe
You all but sicken at the shifting scenes.
And yet be patient. Our Playwright may show
In some fifth Act what this wild Drama means.”

And then, closing the *Demeter* volume, *Crossing the Bar*, which ends—

“For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.”

Passing the special three on the other side that I have instanced, there remain the later poems of the *Death of Ænone* volume. Upon God and immortality their tones are sweet and clear, and upon the general human attitude one is almost all that could be desired:—

Faith.

“Doubt no longer that the Highest is the wisest and the best ;
Let not all that saddens Nature blight thy hope or break thy
rest.”

The Silent Voices.

“Call me rather, silent voices,
Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights beyond me
On, and always on !”

God and the Universe.

“‘Spirit nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great,
Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the Gate.’”

These are sweet, but they are axioms of religion—the last not quite clean of the other theory, in the expressions “*limit of thy human state*” and “Opener of the Gate,” which, we trust, is the name for resurrection rather than death. The next, however, is fuller—

Doubt and Prayer.

“Though Sin too oft, when smitten by Thy rod,
Rail at ‘Blind Fate’ with many a vain ‘Alas!’
From sin through sorrow into Thee we pass
By that same path our true forefathers trod ;
And let not Reason fail me, nor the sod
Draw from my death Thy living flower and grass
Before I learn that Love, which is, and was
My Father, and my Brother, and my God !
Steel me with patience ! soften me with grief !
Let blow the trumpet strongly while I pray,
Till this embattled wall of unbelief
My prison, not my fortress, fall away !
Then, if Thou willest, let my day be brief,
So Thou wilt strike Thy glory through the day.”

This is fuller. Perhaps it is full. But I, for one, should have liked an utterance, or a more explicit utterance, of the name of Christ. For though one might be thankful to have *Theism* strongly asserted, in these days, it seems to have come to this, that Theism has no staying power, in our part of the world at all

events, except as linked to, or embodied in, faith in Christ. The personal God, the supernatural in man, the solution of the world's agony, these are effectively witnessed to in Christ only, as it seems by the drift of belief when it parts company with Him. In other words, it seems to be more and more becoming true in Christendom that you cannot have Theism except as you have Christianity

So much, then, for the philosophical poems that have the troubling new note in them, and for these others, or these portions of the same, that comfortingly preserve the old note.

There remain two or three poems in a different region, to which we now proceed to give a brief attention.

I doubted whether to discuss the *Dream of Akbar* as an historical picture or as a philosophic poem. Thought of as the latter, it involves the notion of an eclectic religion administered by a self-appointed pope "which is impossible." Eclectic religions can at most be but private property, and popes, to gain obedience, must at least *claim* divine authority. As for toleration, that is not the lesson we specially need at the present moment, but rather the complement of toleration, namely, a tenacious adherence to what we have believed to be true until conviction wrenches it from our hands, and a persistent fulfilment of the duties involved in the old belief until conscience demands the cancelling of its claims. *Akbar's Dream* is not quite in this healthy atmosphere, but rather lends itself to that Palace-of-art spirit which says—

“I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all,”

and which so escapes from the practical obligations of any.

There is, however, one beautiful passage that would be tonic enough if taken to heart—

“To pray, to do—
To pray, to do according to the prayer,
Are, both, to worship Alla, but the prayers,
That have no successor in deed, are faint
And pale in Alla’s eyes, fair mothers they
Dying in childbirth of dead sons.”

If, now, the poem be considered as an historical picture, the question arises, “Is it true?” Was Akbar, circumstanced as he was, such a man as the poem pictures? If “yes,” the fact is not merely a fact, but a joy-inspiring truth and a fear-inspiring rebuke. Joy-inspiring in that, under such circumstances, God could so prevail in man; and a rebuke in that Christians could be such as to so little commend their faith to him that he should still need to be eclectic. But if the picture is not true, then a false argument is implied—the argument, I mean, involved in the assertion that in such circumstances such characters can arise, not to say result. The same demur is called up by Lessing’s beautiful (if true) *Nathan the Wise*, and by some humbler modern books in which an agnostic hero, the sum of all the virtues, is surrounded by moral reptiles calling themselves Christians. The very least that one has a right to demand in such a case is that the portrait be guaranteed as from the life. The very least, but by no means the most. For, first of all, the guarantee is impossible; no person

is competent to portray another in the fundamental manner necessary for this purpose. And were the thing possible, the speculative belief and the character in any individual person may have no vital connection—they may grow from quite different roots. Yet a large proportion of readers in these days, seeing a noble-minded agnostic or eclectic or what not, are disposed to credit the belief with the generation of the character, and of course to argue so far in favour of the belief. Therefore an artist is bound to select his subjects in view of the inferences that may be drawn from them—that is, he is bound not only to make his portraits true to the particular, but to choose such subjects as shall teach what is true fundamentally and in the general. The historian of course is not so bound, though he, in proportion to his greatness, desires to exhibit not merely fact but nature. But in the case of the artist, the poet, this desire is his *raison d'être*.

Kapiolani implies the doctrine that the overthrow of superstition is the preparation for the entrance of true religion. Perhaps; but I should think the converse to be more deeply true.

St. Telemachus is, I must confess, an historical picture; but as its region is that of spiritual working, I place it here. No one who believes in the direct relations between God and the human soul could feel it to be incredible that the saint was inspired to such an act. The picture of the physical mechanism by which the inspiration is supposed to have been accompanied and introduced is more dubious. (I assume that it is not part even of the legend; the poet's reference to Theodoret does not imply that it is.)

In such matters there ought to be no conscious fiction. Once give way to this, and you may say anything. Matthew Arnold in his *Sohrab and Rustam* made a background of elemental wonders for the fight between father and son, when he himself had, I suppose one may safely assert, no belief in the actuality of anything of the kind. Fiction in science no one would justify: why, then, fiction in religion, where truth matters most of all?

CHAPTER XVII

THE SUPERNATURAL OR PRETERNATURAL IN TENNYSON

I DO not attempt to define the terms supernatural and preternatural, nor to distinguish precisely between them. The reader will see that, for the purposes of this chapter, I do not need to do so.

The supernatural in literature may be visional—such as it is in Mrs. Browning's *Drama of Exile*—of which no one supposes that it is to be taken literally.

Or it may be legendary—believed by the makers of the legend to be real, but not so believed in by the reproducers of the legend.

Or it may be *actualistic*, if I may use such a word—*realistic* is appropriated to a technical use—a part of a narrative otherwise posing as representing things as they are.

Now the supernatural so used is bound by the obligations resting upon the containing narrative. It must be true to fact—concretely historical—or true to nature, the *like* of that which is historical. Or, as no narrator is infallible, it must be believed by him to be according to fact or to nature—that is, to the actual order of things. If, however, he believes things to be

true which are not true, though *he* is justified by his belief, his work is condemned by his error.

I am aware that in saying that the supernatural must be true to nature, I am using an apparent contradiction in terms. But we have two meanings to the term nature: (*a*) the total order of things; (*b*) a part of the total order of things which we distinguish from another part called the supernatural. What is demanded above, then, is that if a writer depicts the supernatural, what he sets down shall be believed by him to be either a record of historical fact, or fiction the *like* of that which historically happens, and which is, so, true to nature, in the wider sense of the term.

Now Tennyson was a religious poet. As such he believed that there is a supernatural in man, and that man has supernatural as well as natural relations with the Divine. So, explicitly or implicitly, his poetry must necessarily be pervaded by the supernatural. When, for instance, in *Enoch Arden* he says—

“Had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being everywhere
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude,”

he is putting into his picture an element of the supernatural.

But now in this same poem we have introduced supposed examples of super- or preternaturalism of quite another order. On Annie's marriage-day with Philip it is said of Enoch that—

“Though faintly, merrily, far and far away
He heard the pealing of his parish bells.”

And before that, when Annie, seeking for a sign con-

cerning Enoch, opened her Bible to find one, it is said that she suddenly put her finger on the text, "Under a palm-tree," and that though she thought the words had no meaning to her, she dreamed when she slept that she saw (though she misinterpreted the dream)

" Her Enoch sitting on a height,
Under a palm-tree, over him the sun."

And in the same volume, in the poem *Aylmer's Field*, the poet, as from his own mouth, says—

" Star to star vibrates light : may soul to soul
Strike thro' a finer element of her own ?
So,—from afar,—touch as at once ? or why
That night, that moment, when she named his name,
Did the keen shriek, ' Yes, love, yes, Edith, yes,'
Shrill, till the comrade of his chambers woke,
And came upon him half-arisen from sleep,
With a weird bright eye, sweating and trembling,
His hair as it were crackling into flames,
His body half flung forward in pursuit,
And his long arms stretched as to grasp a flyer."

Now this kind of thing scarcely appears in our poet in any work earlier than the volume from which these quotations are taken.

To be sure, there is No. 1 of *Early Sonnets* with its supposed touches of reminiscence ; there are the presentiments in *Maud*, and the vivid dream towards the end of the poem ; there is the angel-music that the May Queen believes herself to have heard : but these scarcely, if at all, go beyond the region of poetic fancy.

And, graver, there are those elements of *In Memoriam* to which reference has already been made in the course of the study of the poem, and which imply

that the soul immediately at death enters upon an active and progressive state, and suggest the possibility, as in XCIII. and CXXII., of its return to communion with the living. But in the only instance in which the poet went so far as to assert the return, he afterwards recanted, changing a word for the purpose, so that now, as I have already pointed out, no such assertion exists. (xcv. 9, 3. See Chap. X. page 159 of this volume.)

Substantially then we may say that, however *In Memoriam* has tendencies along the line of danger, this preternatural element is not seriously present in the earlier poems.

In and after the *Enoch Arden* volume, however, there are a good many pronounced examples of the introduction of preternaturalism. Before considering these it will be well to set before ourselves the facts that give to them their gravity.

Wooring the attention of the existing generation there are a large number of alleged phenomena that constitute what are known as spiritualism, clairvoyance, and so on.

Connected with these alleged phenomena there are theories of the relation of the soul to the body, and the powers of the disembodied spirit in relation to matter and persons still in the body.

There is a practice or alleged power known as mesmerism or hypnotism by which, it is asserted, the still embodied human soul is brought into new relations with things, other living persons, and the spirits of the dead.

There are persons thought to be specially open to the mesmeric influence, and specially apt to take on

the new relations. These persons are known as *mediums*.

Now all this, true or false, is very grave indeed, having the solemnity of both religion and scientific inquiry about it. Unless it were established as indubitable truth, it is utterly unfit for the purposes of art, which must, I would almost say, above all things, be true, and certainly *must be wholesome*.

Now whatever imperfection there may at present be in the answer to the question, "Are these things true?" there is, I think, little doubt about the answer to the question, "Is occupation with them wholesome." For thus:—

There are unhappy persons in the world who in their bodily condition are known as hysterical, in their mental condition have a touch of imperfect sanity, in their spiritual condition are utterly untruthful, and untruthful in such a manner that their untruthfulness working into their semi-madness and their hysteria produces a combination of the subtlest deceptiveness. (I speak after the manner of men: the Divine diagnosis of such poor sharers of our common burden may be a very different one.)

Now such persons as these are the plastic subjects of mesmerism—are ready *mediums*, so-called. This fact—and I believe I speak as knowing—may serve as a danger-signal to warn all wise-hearted persons, in their lives, and all conscientious artists, in their writings, off this field.

I have a profound sense of the evil of hypnotism, mediumship, spiritualism. I do not concern myself with the question whether their alleged phenomena are real or not. I think the things themselves to be

spiritually unclean, morally corrupt. He who touches them is in danger of being involved in an entanglement from which he will escape, if he escapes, only, God helping him, by the rising up of those powers and demands—will, reverence, and insistent demand for veracity—which should in the first instance have preserved him from the entanglement. For there seems to be a spiritual subtlety about the whole thing, be the alleged phenomena what they may, which the spirit of man, God helped, alone can resist. The intellect is checkmated as soon as a man has made himself a party, active or passive, to the proceedings upon which it rests.

But now some one may answer, "Be it as you say about hypnotism, mediumship, and spiritualism. Are there not phenomena of clairvoyance and spirit visitation and such things, which spontaneously arise, unsought by any, towards which no man has contributed by any illicit seeking?" I reply, "I do not know, and I do not concern myself to inquire. If such things happen, they happen. But I have learned better than to set myself to the quest of them. If they happen, they belong to the exceptional, perhaps to the abnormal. If they are actual and are not abnormal, still they are the concern, so to say, of the other side. They do not come into the range of our responsibility. And if they are abnormal, the quest of them may be expected to lead to such a loss of health in the nerves, the imagination, and the judgment, as a wise man would be very sorry to experience. I should say the attitude of the Psychical Research Society is the one *not* to assume in relation to such matters. Large, well-balanced religious persons, and large, well-balanced scientific persons leave them alone."

There is one further reason for the alert avoidance of the things of which I have been speaking, and that is that they have already largely corrupted current thought and the lower walks of artistic literature. I have been lately going through *In Memoriam* again for the purposes of this volume, and in doing so I was stopped by a half-shudder at two innocent-looking verses—verses quite innocent to me last time I studied the poem, and quite innocent in their own intention. The first is XII. 5. It is said by spiritualists that such things happen, and one person told me, in the days when I was bitterly learning the wisdom which now I offer to the reader, that her guardian angel had got into her body while she was away, lest some bad spirit should take possession of it. Consider the mad vision of life raised by such a statement. The other verse was XVIII. 4. I read once in a respectable magazine a story, by indeed a popular writer of the sort, though I am thankful to say I have read nothing else from his pen—a story in which this is represented as having really happened under circumstances that made it the taking not the giving of life. Is it not well that true literature should keep clear of the suspicion of such abominations? We turn now to the passages of the Later Poems that provoked these meditations. Those from *Enoch Arden* and *Aylmer's Field* have been already given.

In *The Lover's Tale*, the first part of which (though in how near a form to its present one I do not know) was an early poem, we have (parts II. and III.) dreams of forecast.

I promised to say why one is suspicious of an expression in *The Garden at Swainston*. The reader now knows.

The accumulation of events in the catastrophe of *The First Quarrel*, and the last verse of *Rizpah* gives one pause.

The passage beginning (in *The Sisters*)—

“Thro’ dreams by night and trances of the day,”

no one would think of as more than a fancy of the imagination were suspicion not in the air.

The line—

“Then in the gray of the morning it seemed she stood by me
and smiled,”

in *In the Children’s Hospital*, followed by—

“He had brought his ghastly tools: we believed her asleep
again—

Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on the counterpane;
Say that His day is done! Ah why should we care what they
say?

The Lord of the children had heard her, and Emmie had past
away,”

it is not suspicious to challenge. To challenge the first line quoted and its sequel, I mean. The rest of the last verse raises another question which I have already discussed.

Like the foregoing is VII. 3 of *The Wreck*—

“When her orphan wail came borne in the shriek of a growing
wind,”

followed by the last line of XII.—

“And gone—that day of the storm—O Mother, she came to me
there.”

In *The Cup* we have the dying woman Gamma supposed to see and to be met by her husband, previously dead. Of *Harold* and *Boadicea*, later.

In the *Death of Ænone*, Paris being already dead, it is said—

“Then her head sank, she slept, and through her dream
A ghostly murmur floated, ‘Come to me,
Ænone! I can wrong thee now no more,
Ænone, my Ænone,’”

but this might be only dream, and moreover we are in the region of legend here.

In *Demeter*, however, outside the legend a doctrine is proposed—

“Last as the likeness of a dying man,
Without his knowledge, from him flits to warn
A far-off friendship that he comes no more.”

Thus far we are among the commonplaces of this region of notions. But in the *Poem to the Princess Alice* another note is struck—

“If what we call
The spirit flash not all at once from out
This shadow into substance.”

And this leads us on to the most serious example of the thing of which we are speaking. The example in question is *The Ring*.

This poem is a slight dramatic idyll, having about its framework all the manner of an incident of modern life. The supernatural or preternatural in it cannot be thought of as either visional or legendary. It is on the footing of what I have called the *actualistic*. It has to be true to fact or nature, or it is false; and art may not be false, especially in such a region.

A father and daughter are conversing—

Father. Why, you shiver though the wind is west
With all the warmth of summer.

Daughter. Well, I felt
On a sudden I know not what, a breath that passed
With all the cold of winter.

The Father soliloquises. Even so.
The Ghost in Man, the Ghost that once was Man,
But cannot wholly free itself from Man,
Are calling to each other through a dawn
Stranger than earth has ever seen ; the veil
Is rending, and the Voices of the day
Are heard across the Voices of the dark.

and she perhaps,

My Miriam, breaks her latest earthly link
With me to-day."

Miriam was his dead wife. His daughter, too, is a Miriam. The daughter is to be married. Her father gives her a ring, engraved "*Io t'amo.*" On receiving it she sees a strange brilliancy in a tower concerning which her nurse told her a story of her infancy, involving the ring and the seeming appearance to the child of her dead mother. All this precludes the story which then her father told her.

There were two cousins, Miriam and Muriel. The father liked both, but doubted which he loved. Going abroad, however, he, in absence, learned, and at Venice he bought a ring for Miriam. "The ring is weird," the man who sold it said, and told a story about it. "The Ghost lovers guard it," he said, "and to steal it were death or madness to the thief." The ring is sent to Miriam. Through error or fraud, Muriel appro-

priates it. On the return of the giver, however, she has to resign it to Miriam. Miriam is married: Muriel steals the ring, but again has to resign it. Miriam lives a year, but dies at the birth of her child, taking a promise that *she*, not Muriel, shall have the ring. Well, by feigned love to the child, Muriel set herself to win the bereaved husband, and at last she succeeded—

“ ‘I take thee, Muriel, for my wedded wife’—
I had forgotten it was your birthday, child—
When all at once with some electric thrill
A cold air passed between us, and the hands
Fell from each other, and were joined again.”

There followed a miserable married life, with the refrain, “Give me the ring.”

“ ‘That weak and watery nature love you? No!
“*Io t'amo, Io t'amo!*”’ flung herself
Against my heart, but often while her lips
Were warm upon my cheek, an icy breath,
As from the grating of a sepulchre,
Passed over both.”

Ghost sounds also were heard, and movements took place—

“And one betwixt the dark and light had seen
Her, bending by the cradle of her babe.”

At this Miriam (the daughter) chimes in, saying that once at night, when noises disturbed her, she cried for her nurse, and a soft hand fell on her forehead—

“And a sudden face
Looked in upon me like a gleam and passed.”

At last Muriel's chance came, and she stole the key that kept safe the ring—stole it by means of a

hypocritical embrace. The husband from whom she had stolen it, discovering the loss, hurried home and up to the tower where the ring was kept.

“An icy air fled by me.”

The chest was open. Muriel lay stark dead, the ring beside her. A red mark ran all round one finger.

“Those two Ghost lovers,”

suggests Miriam.

“Gone too far up,” her father answers.

“Then a dearer ghost——”

“wrenched it away,”

completes the father: or, says Miriam——

“Had floated in with sad reproachful eyes,
Till from her own hand she had torn the ring
In fright, and fallen dead. And I myself
Am half afraid to wear it.”

Her father assures her——

“You have the ring she guarded; that poor link
With earth is broken, and has left her free.”

Now all this is in the atmosphere of quasi-spiritualism, or of the so-called *Psychical Research* activities, against which I protest that they are false in fact, or spiritually unclean in their origin, or spiritually unwholesome in their tendencies. One or two of the instances I have brought together (those from *Enoch Arden*) belong to the *Clairvoyance* region; most of them are examples of supposed spirit visitation. The *Princess Alice* quotation and *The Ring* set forth a doctrine of the spirit's *gradual*

emancipation, or separation, from earth ties. But *The Ring* also descends lower, and connects a whole series of solemn spiritualistic phenomena with a circlet of metal. (I have myself known a ring to be made the lying basis of an elaborate spiritualistic deception.) This—I mean the poet's ring and its asserted powers—brings us down to the depths of pagan fetishism, to which, indeed, spiritualism itself tends.

How our poet arrived in this region, or what connection this phase of his writings has with his personal opinions, I do not know (except a little by hearsay, and that is not worthy to be called knowing), nor is it my business to inquire. I deal with the writings. But in these is to be found what may be the root of this fruit. Like every spiritual-minded man, Tennyson has always been deeply interested in the question of the condition of the dead, and the event which gave birth to *In Memoriam* of course deepened the interest. Now, as I have pointed out in the commentary upon the poem, an alternative presented itself to the mind of the poet. Either, said he, they sleep absolutely till the Resurrection (*In Memoriam*, XLIII.), or they enter at once upon an active and progressive state. To the former view he did not adhere; nor did he even entertain the view of the Christian doctrine of Paradise. He committed himself to the view of an immediate entrance upon a full and active consciousness. This involved the fear of an ever-increasing separation, and might have provoked longings for, and suggested the possibility of, spirit visitations. Whether it did, I, of course, do not know. I only say that the passing by of the eminently sane doctrine of Paradise, and the adoption of

this other view instead, suggests a possible root for what has followed.

The glory of Tennyson's writings is that they are, almost without a fleck, morally clean,— clean in tone and intention, dealing holily with characters and actions, whether the characters and actions themselves are holy or unholy. One longs to feel that the *spiritual* cleanness is equally perfect. And the great pain, over and above their danger, connected with the elements of which I have been speaking is that they mar the sense of complete spiritual wholesomeness which otherwise the poems might have left upon the mind.

I promised to comment upon the state of extasy described in *In Memoriam*, xcv., read as it now stands since the change of "his" to "the."

With this I would link II. 4—

"And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee."

With this also I would connect the supposed condition of rapture (already discussed) of *The Ancient Sage*.

And, finally, I would quote (at second hand) a description of his own feelings given by Wordsworth. "I was often unable," he says, "to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times, while going to school, have I grasped at a wall or a

tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality."

What shall we say to such experiences? Are they aspects of superior faculty? Or are they touches of that madness to which genius is said to lie so near? Are they, or any of them, triumphs of the supernatural in man? Or are they bits of passing morbidity? If the reader is more prepared than I am to give a positive answer to this question, it may be because he is wiser, or because he is more rash.

However, I incline to value most the full integrity of body, soul, and spirit, the full balance of all the faculties, the full activity of all the perceptions, genius in the harness of a sound, sane mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PLAYS

WE glance briefly at the plays. With the question whether any of them are plays proper, or whether they are all dramatic poems, I shall not much concern myself. From the stage point of view the question is a very important one; from the point of view of literature it is less important. Until 1875 there was no play to discuss. Before that, when the only poem of Tennyson's in the dramatic form was the trifle *Walking to the Mail*, I expressed the opinion that though the poet's writings were full of dramatic faculty, he himself was not a dramatist. "Tennyson," I said, "has a strong dramatic tendency, but he has no tendency to write plays. This is because of his also strong lyric tendency. He loves to project himself into other and very different characters; but then he loves to sing through them, or at least to make them sing. He consents to become objective, that his characters may become subjective. But this is not the pure dramatic spirit. In the perfect play, not only the poet lives in his characters, but they live in each other. If the poet forgets his characters, and begins to utter himself, or if the characters forget each other,

and begin simply to utter themselves, the drama is at an end. Tennyson does not usually do the former, but his characters are very apt to do the latter, or rather would do the latter were he not wise enough to place them in what I may call lyrical situations."

Except that the poet did afterwards take to writing plays, and, incidentally, that, as I have elsewhere said, I have more fully realised his idyll-making power, there is nothing much to alter in the above.

The "strong dramatic tendency" has continued to manifest itself in the poems generally, apart from the plays. Most of the later characters (portraits) utter *themselves*, and many of the later idylls are put into the mouths of persons of the story. The poem which, without being a drama, is the most dramatic is *Maud*; in later editions it is, as I have already pointed out, called a *Monodrama*.

Until 1875 (the poet being then sixty-six years of age) the only poem in the dramatic form was, we say, the trifle *Walking to the Mail*. The plays now form between a third and a fourth of the total of the writings of their author. That is a very curious phenomenon.

The Ring, as regards form, is on about the same level as *Walking to the Mail*, except that there is a great deal more characterisation of the persons of the dialogue.

The plays, in the order of their publication, are—

- Queen Mary.
- Harold.
- The Falcon.
- The Cup.
- The Promise of May.
- Becket.
- The Foresters.

Three of these—

The Falcon,
The Cup,
The Promise of May,

are tragedies in little.

Three—

Queen Mary,
Harold,
Becket,

are tragedies in large.

One—*The Foresters*—is a dainty pastoral, dramatic idyll; an artistic comedy, with plenty of sentiment and poetry to make it art. I venture to think that most of the seven are successful in proportion as they are idyllic.

The Falcon is a very pretty playlet with a very painful main incident. The assassination of the bird, loved and loving, to pleasure or honour the dearest woman under heaven seems to me profane. I am no animal worshipper. Dogs' hospitals and all such, the condition of humanity being what it is, I resent. Between man and the animals there is no common measure. But a pet animal—an animal turned into a friend—is on another footing. Of course one could not kill a human being at one's own will: but to take the life of an animal friend seems, in a way, more ruthless than to take a human life. The man could consent, and could afterwards say, "I died for a cause." The animal has no after-glow, and could give no consent. In killing it you have *extinguished* love for your own ends, and simply because you had the power. I think the Count was a traitor.

The Cup would have been altogether better as an idyll. There is but one person in it, and but one incident, with its counter. Told as Tennyson could have told it, it would have made a fine story, and all the feebler and more unpleasant accessories could have been pushed into the background. As it is, it rather jars than moves: it might have been placed among the *Poems out of Tune*.

The story of *The Promise of May* is, of course, shocking, nor does the putting mitigate the pain. The dramatic form, the prose parts, the rusticity, all literalise the dreadful tale. If such a story had to be told, the idyll was again the form. Tennyson could have melted the heart into compassionate and indignant sorrow by such an idyll. The beauties that there are in the poem as it stands (and there are beautiful parts) are of the idyll quality.

With the main censure, however, that, as I understand, fell upon this play, I do not go. Of course, if any one said that all holders of the evolution theory must be such as Philip Edgar, that would be absurd. But to represent that evolutionism can be easily turned into, as I have already expressed it, the working theory of a villain is, I hold, not absurd at all, but manifestly true, and useful to be set forth. And wherein the creature was not a *deliberate* villain, he suffered himself to *drift* into villainy, and to such drifting evolution notions would help to encourage all those who do not *love* the right.

The "tragedies in large" must of course, in great measure, be judged from the historic point of view. That would be a considerable study, which I do not touch.

As art, I call *Queen Mary* a tragedy in the same sense as that in which Browning calls the degradation of a human character *A Soul's Tragedy*. The abjectness of Mary towards Philip is pitifully tragic. But it is revolting, and so, for interest, the play lacks a centre, though it is full of instruction. It is like, for instance, the period in European history between the death of Philip and the commencement of the Thirty Years' War, in which much is ending and much is beginning, though nothing great is happening. The interest of the play is in secondary characters, and in this region there are very fine parts. Among the principals one cannot console oneself even by Cranmer, for his courage does not come to the full until there seems nothing left to risk. The death scene, however, is fine, and the conversation about it, between Howard, Paget, and Peters, is very fine. Howard is altogether a refreshing character, and his question—

“Peters, you know me Catholic, but English.
Did he die bravely? Tell me that, or leave
All else untold,”

is the glow-point in the play.

Harold is, on the human and natural side, my favourite among the plays. Two fine characters fill the centre of the canvas, and the heart is satisfied. But all the sons of Godwin are interesting: all, except the passionate Tostig and the weak Leofwin, are noble. Harold and Edith are *touchingly* interesting. William is vividly pictured; Malet and Stigand are refreshing specimens of loyal-hearted men, whatever one may think of the quality of Malet's advice. The fifth Act of the play is very moving indeed.

Two questions and two sorrows haunt the poem. The questions are: First, Is it intended that one should think of the catastrophe of the story as the Nemesis of the false oath of a truth-loving man? (The oath is so made to pervade both the natural and the supernatural elements of the play, that the question cannot but arise.) And if there is a Nemesis, are we intended to think of it as working by natural or by supernatural means?—by the undermining of the force of Harold and others through a troubled conscience, or by Divine working outside of him and them? Involved in this is, of course, the question of the moral quality of the false oath, under the circumstances of the case. "Better die than lie" was Harold's watchword. He both lied and died. Is the play designed to imply a doctrine of this whole matter?

The other question, which, indeed, mingles with the first, is concerning the preternatural elements present in the play. To every adequate tragedy, ancient or modern, the supernatural is essential. Omit this and you have comedy. But in the Christian tragedy, the supernatural is God, as we understand Him, working in and through the events of human life. In *Harold*, however, part of the supernatural is more akin to the supernatural of the pagan tragedy—portents, dreams, visions, apparitions. "Naturally so," it may be answered; "because the play is cast in times when Christendom was full of this idea of the supernatural." Yes; but the play does not pose as a restoration: it poses as an original picture of the persons and events set forth. That it should exhibit the persons as having their minds full of pagan preternatural notions would be historic; but when

Edward's visions, and Edith's and Harold's dreams are made to be minutely prophetic, the poet becomes responsible, and we have to ask, Did he believe them to be historic, true to fact, that is? Did he believe them to be true to nature, as we have defined "true to nature" in the previous chapter? The same sort of question arises with regard to *Boadicea*. How did the poet imagine that the Druidesses obtained the power to forecast the future of Britain? Incidentally, I would ask, what does the poet mean by associating the visional prophetic power with the own-soul-saving-selfishness of Edward? I am not concerned to press these questions here: I do but raise them. We cannot, however, be content with even the Shakespeare standard in such matters. Shakespeare lived on the edge of the times when such things were taken for granted. Moreover, he himself was rather a man of the world artist than a prophet artist: accuracy of observation and insight, rather than the spiritual obligation of veracity, made him true. And when the mood took him, he would, as in *The Tempest* and *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, dramatise anything. Our standard is another: we live now. Perhaps it is science that has taught us that in matters of the imagination, as in matters of faith, we must be content with nothing but the *truth*.

The two sorrows of which I spoke are: first, That at the overthrow of the better man and the better cause; and second, That growing out of the picture of Edith beating the heavens with her prayers, and beating, as it seems, in vain. To the first sorrow the introductory sonnet beautifully answers—

"A garden here—May breath and bloom of spring—
 The cuckoo yonder from an English elm
 Crying 'with my false egg I overwhelm
 The native nest:' and fancy hears the ring
 Of harness, and that deathful arrow sing,
 And Saxon battleaxe clang on Norman helm.
 Here rose the dragon-banner of our realm :
 Here fought, here fell, our Norman-slander'd king.
 O Garden blossoming out of English blood !
 O strange hate-healer Time ! We stroll and stare
 Where might made right eight hundred years ago ;
 Might, right ? ay good, so all things make for good—
 But he and he, if soul be soul, are where
 Each stands full face with all he did below."

To the second sorrow there is no answer but in the depths of faith. Perhaps the next day in Paradise Edith knew that her prayers had borne abundant fruit—

"And hears at times a sentinel,
 Who moves about from place to place,
 And whispers to the worlds of space
 In the deep night, that all is well."

As an historical play, *Becket* is, I suppose by far, the most considerable effort. Concerning it, I will but ask (1), Is the Becket of the catastrophe accounted for in the earlier part of the play ? And (2), Are we to conceive of him as believing himself to be fighting for God and truth, or as having no higher thoughts than the maintenance of the power of the hierarchy to which he belonged ? The question is pertinent to many others beside him. But these two questions are, I suppose, the central ones in the study of this play.

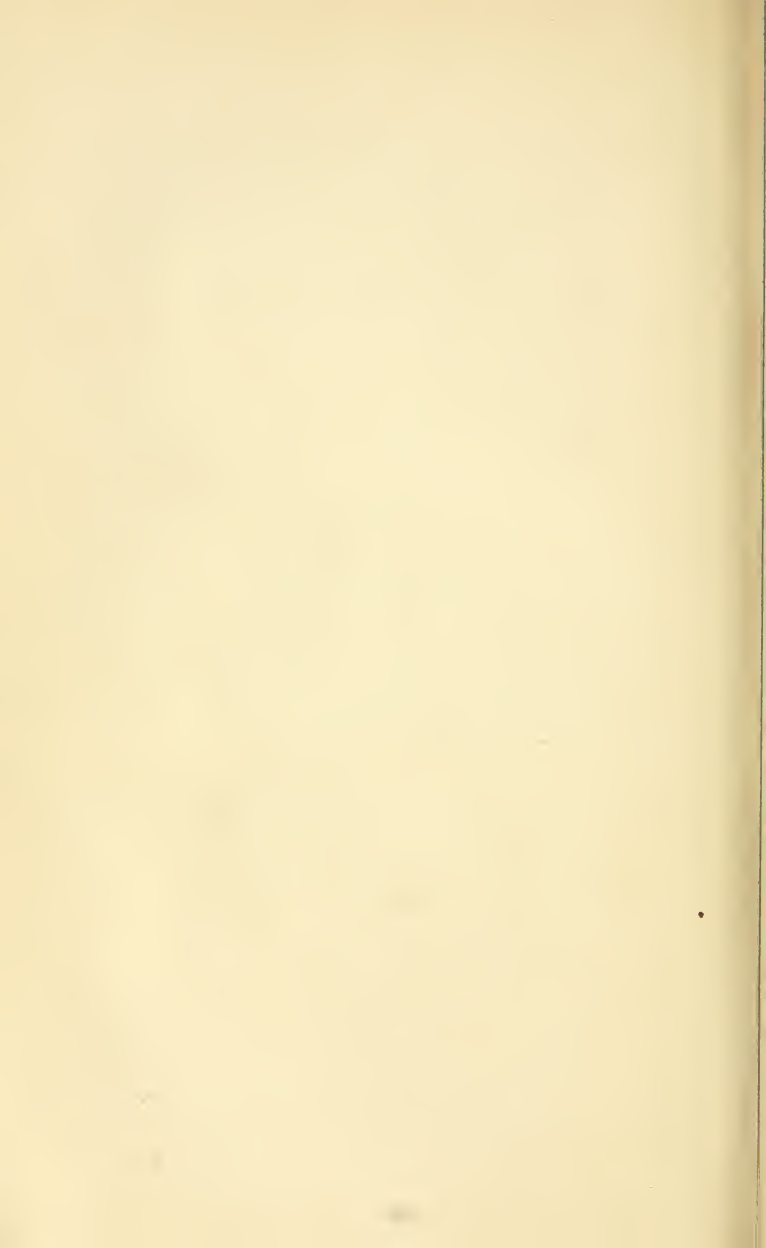
The Foresters brings us to the surprising close of a surprising episode. A series of plays commenced at

the age of sixty-six, ends with a light and half-playful pastoral drama written at an age beyond eighty. The poem is the most playful thing, except *The Princess*, that its author has ever written, while the greater part of his work for the last quarter of a century has been full of sadness. So diverse are the moods that may coexist in the heart and mind of man.

The play is too simple to need a word of comment ; but I remark with joy, that as in the solemn *Idylls of the King*, so here, in one of the lightest products of his pen, he who wrote it approves himself as the poet of the ideal of womanhood and of the passion of purity.

This poem was one of the last things read by her whose name stands at the head of this volume, and her feeling about it answered to what I have expressed. The passage which she specially singled out for admiration was that reply of Marian which leaves one in doubt whether to love most, in the imagination, her who gave it, or him to whom it could deservedly be addressed—

“ Robin, I will not kiss thee,
For that belongs to marriage ; but I hold thee
The husband of my heart, the noblest light
That ever flashed across my life, and I
Embrace thee with the kisses of the soul.”



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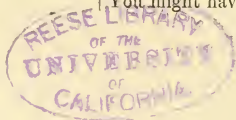
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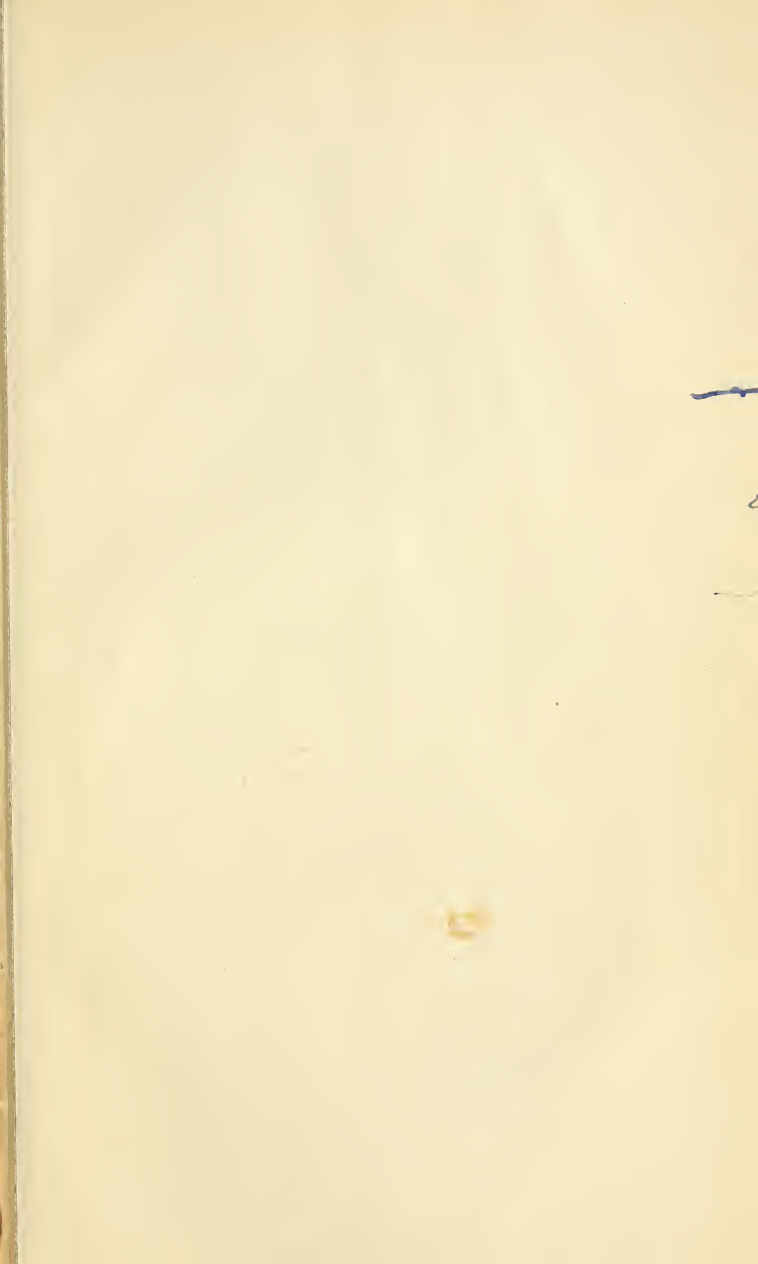
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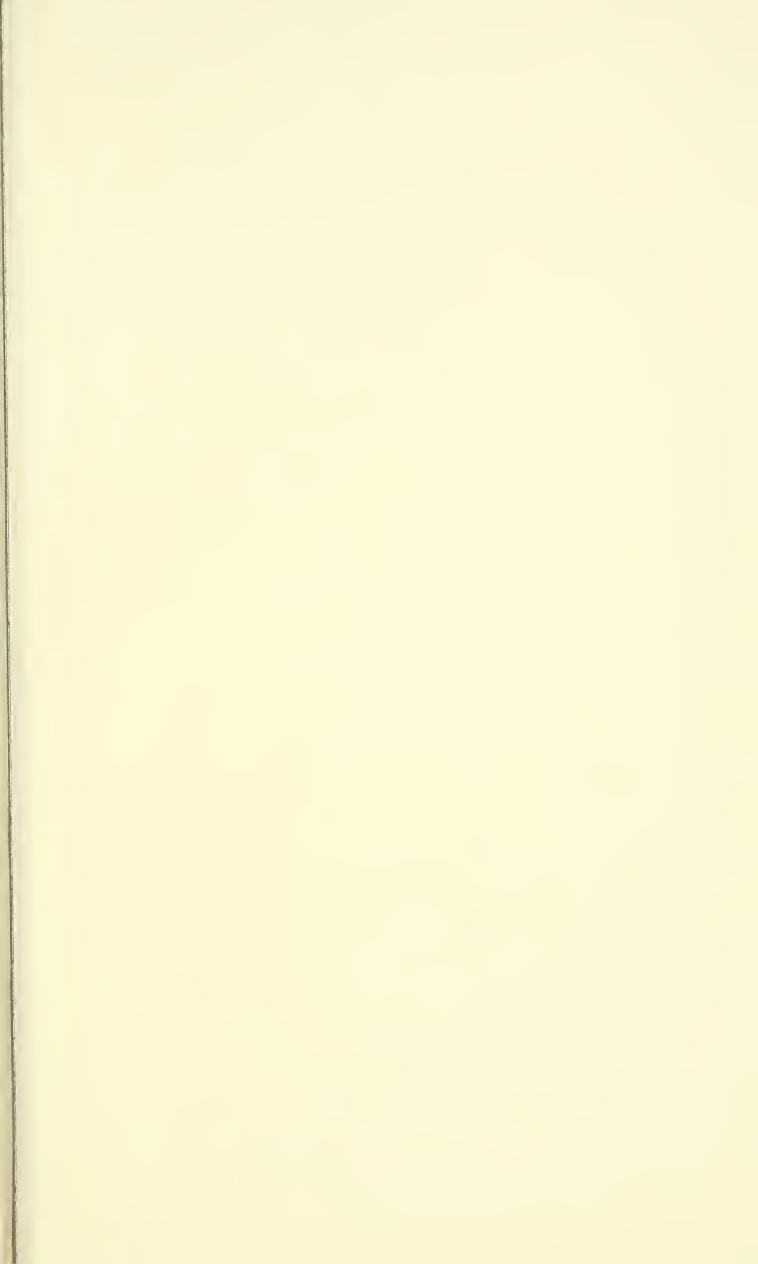
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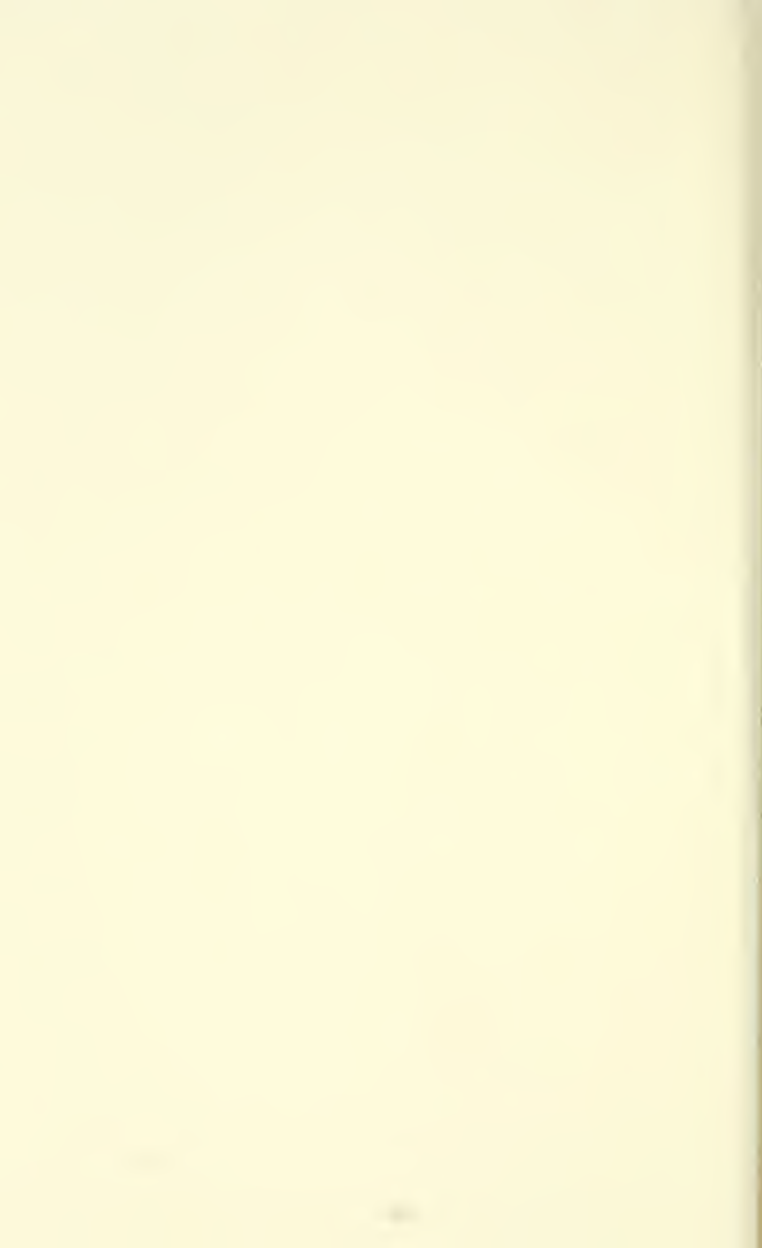
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