

BOOKS OF REFERENCE.

The following books, among many, are recommended as being helpful to those who desire a more intimate knowledge of Tennyson and his works:—

- Poetic and Dramatic Works of Tennyson. Houghton, Mifflin & Company's Edition.
Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir, by his son.
Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Study of his Life and Works, by Arthur Waugh.
The Poetry of Tennyson, by Henry Van Dyke.
Victorian Poets, by E. C. Stedman.
Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life, by Stopford A. Brooke.
The Teaching of Tennyson, by John Oates.
Studies in the Idylls, by Henry Elsdale.
Essays on Lord Tennyson's Idylls, by Bishop Littledale.
A Study of the Works of Tennyson, by E. E. Tainsh.
The Growth of the Idylls of the King, by Richard Jones.
Illustrations of Tennyson, by J. Churton Collins.
The Arthurian Epic, by S. H. Gurteen.

INTRODUCTION.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

Birth of Tennyson.—Halfway between Horncastle and Spilsby in Lincolnshire, a land of quiet villages, large fields, and gray hillsides, on the lower slope of one of those wolds so common to that part of England, nestles the hamlet of Somersby. Here, August 6, 1809, was born, in the Somersby Rectory, Alfred Tennyson, the fourth of twelve children. His father, Dr. George Clayton Tennyson, held this living in connection with that of Great Grimsby. His mother was Elizabeth Fytche, daughter of Rev. Stephen Fytche, Vicar of Louth. The country around was not at all such as one associates with the fens. It was not flat or prosaic, with dreary waters and low-lying fens, but was diversified by hills and valleys, and full of the sights and sounds of country life, rich in flowery hollows and patches of meadow land; a fit birthplace for a great poet.

Early Life.—When seven years of age the boy was asked, "Will you go to sea or to school?" "To school," he replied. Accordingly he was sent to the Louth Grammar School, near which his maternal grandmother lived. "How I did hate that school!" said Tennyson, many years later. The terms that he spent there seem to have brought very

little with them to be remembered afterwards. He left Louth in 1820, and came home to study with his father. Of his earliest attempts at poetry he says: "According to the best of my recollection, when I was eight years old I covered two sides of a slate for my brother Charles with Thomsonian blank verse in praise of flowers, Thomson being the only poet I knew. Before I could read I was in the habit on a stormy day of spreading my arms to the winds, and crying out, 'I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind;' and the words, 'far, far away,' had always a strange charm for me. About ten or eleven, Pope's Homer's 'Iliad' became a favorite of mine, and I wrote hundreds and hundreds of lines in the Popeian meter, nay, even could improvise them. At the age of twelve I wrote an epic of six thousand lines, à la Walter Scott. Though the performance was very likely worth nothing, I never felt myself more truly inspired."

Life at Home.—After leaving Louth, Alfred, together with his brother Charles, studied under his father. Dr. Tennyson was a man of great ability, scholarly and sensible. All that the boys learned of languages, of the fine arts, of mathematics, and of natural science, until they went to Cambridge, was learned from him. Although their studies were undoubtedly somewhat desultory, Alfred received a good classical education and became an accurate scholar. The boys had the advantage of their father's excellent library. There they read Shakespeare, Milton, Burke, Goldsmith, Addison, Swift, Defoe, and Bunyan.

First Book of Poems.—Charles and Alfred were never supplied with a surplus of pocket money. Now and then

they were sorely in need of sufficient funds to make some excursion. It was to obtain money for such a purpose that in March, 1827, they made a collection of verses which they had written from time to time, and submitted it to Mr. Jackson, a bookseller of Louth, who offered them £20 for the copyright, on condition that they would take half of the amount in books. The offer was accepted, and thus Alfred Tennyson began his career as a poet.

Comment on the Poems.—As an outburst of youthful poetic enthusiasm the book is not wanting in interest, although it is full of boyish imitations of other poets. Tennyson himself could hardly tolerate it in later years. The poems had comparatively little in them to indicate future promise, and attracted slight notice. Perhaps the most successful poem of the volume is "Antony and Cleopatra." The *Literary Chronicle* of May, 1827, says of the book, "This little volume exhibits a pleasing union of kindred tastes, and contains several little pieces of considerable merit."

Cambridge Life.—In 1828 Alfred Tennyson matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He is spoken of as "six feet high, broad-chested, strong-limbed, his face Shakespearian, with deep eyelids, his forehead ample, crowned with dark, wavy hair, his head finely poised. What struck one most about him was the union of strength with refinement." Thompson said at once on seeing him, "That man must be a poet." He was of nervous temperament, and of shy and solitary habits, which gave him an appearance of affectation that soon wore off on more intimate acquaintance.

His solitude was early broken through, and he fell in with a

set of choice literary spirits, among whom were Arthur Hallam, who was to exert such an influence on Tennyson's life, James Spedding, Richard Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton), Henry Alford (afterwards Dean of Canterbury), Richard C. Trench (afterwards Archbishop of Dublin), and many others who were destined to be prominent in later life. They were all members of the same society. They were a genial, high-spirited, poetical set, full of speculation and enthusiasm for the great literature of the past, and for the modern schools of thought. It is reported that Tennyson, because of his shyness, never read a paper before the society. He is represented as having Johnsonian common sense, a rare power of expression, and as being very genial, full of enjoyment, full of sensitiveness, and sometimes feeling the melancholy of life. He passed through "moods of misery unutterable," but eventually threw them off. Despite such periods of gloom, he worked on at his poems. He read his classics, his history, and natural science. He also took a lively interest in politics.

Poetic Work at Cambridge. — In 1829 he won the Chancellor's prize at Trinity College, Cambridge, for his poem on "Timbuctoo." This was written at the instigation of his father, who wished him to compete for the prize. The poem, which was in blank verse, made considerable stir. The Athenæum declared it "would have done honor to any man who ever wrote." It was a unique poem. It was not machine-made. Tennyson threw aside conventionality. There is some forced art and labored decoration in it, but it is a well-sustained piece of work, imaginative, æsthetic, polished, and indicative of his later powers.

Meanwhile the friendship between Tennyson and Hallam was growing into greater intimacy. At one time they purposed publishing a volume of poems together, but finally gave up the project. Tennyson, however, continued to write, and to a few chosen friends in his own room he would often read his latest verses.

Publication of Poems of 1830. — In 1830 Tennyson published his volume entitled, "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," containing a carefully culled collection of his poetry up to this time. Sixty of the number are found in the present issue of his poems, among which we may note, "Claribel," "Lilian," "Isabel," "Mariana," "To Madeline," "The Merman," "The Mermaid," "The Deserted House," and "The Poet." The volume was well received. The *Westminster Review*, although it doubted the immediate appreciation of the poems, yet acknowledged that they showed the possession of poetic powers, and predicted a brilliant future for the writer. Arthur Hallam wrote an enthusiastic article on these poems, declaring that the features of original genius were clearly and strongly marked.

Departure from Cambridge. — Owing to the illness of his father, Tennyson left Cambridge in 1831, without taking a degree, and returned to Somersby. Shortly afterwards the father died, leaving the mother and a sister to the care of Alfred. He continued to live at Somersby until 1837, making occasional trips in the meantime to London and other towns. Arthur Hallam was a frequent visitor at Somersby. The acquaintance formed at Cambridge had ripened into an almost inseparable friendship between the two.

The 1832 Edition. — Meanwhile, Tennyson was busy pre-

paring a new volume of poems, which was published in 1832. Some of these poems are among his best known, as, "The Lady of Shalott," "The Miller's Daughter," "Enone," "The Palace of Art," "The May Queen," "The Lotus Eaters," and "The Dream of Fair Women." The volume in every way marked a distinct advance in his poetical ability. It is interesting to note that thus early the Arthurian legends had attracted Tennyson's attention. "The Lady of Shalott" marks the first inclination of the poet in that direction. In these poems Tennyson showed himself both as an artist and as a thinker. In them are variety of subject, of treatment, and of melody; a sense of beauty, a keen insight into nature and man. The volume, however, encountered some severe criticism which wounded the author to the quick, and he became so nervously sensitive to these adverse comments, that he withdrew from the press "The Lover's Tale," which he had composed.

A Period of Silence.—A long period of silence followed the appearance of the second volume, prompted somewhat by the hostile criticism the poet had received, but more directly owing to the great loss he sustained in the death of his intimate friend, Arthur Hallam, who died in 1833. The death of Hallam was a severe blow to Tennyson. He was too much overwhelmed to work; even poetry failed to charm him. It was not until years afterwards that his grief found voice in one of the noblest elegies in the language, "In Memoriam," a poem worthy to be classed with "Lycidas" or "Adonais."

From 1833 to 1842.—For nearly ten years no volume of Tennyson appeared from the press, though he occasion-

ally contributed a poem to some periodical. But though silent, he was not idle. He spent much of his time in London or with his mother, read Milton, Wordsworth, and Keats, and visited the Lakes. These were the years of seed-time and growth, which were to bring his poetic ability into full maturity. Piqued by criticism, he withdrew more to himself that he might carefully judge and prune his own work. It was during this time that he formed an attachment for the lady whom he afterwards married.

The 1842 Volumes.—Thus Tennyson continued for a number of years, now toiling over a manuscript, now in social concourse with his literary friends, and now running down into the country to enjoy an outing with some kindred spirit. At last, in 1842, his fears and hesitations were dispelled, and the long silence was broken. Two volumes of "Poems, by Alfred Tennyson" appeared, and a new era in the poet's reputation began. The two volumes of poems were substantially what we have to-day. Among the *new* poems were "The Gardener's Daughter," "Dora," "Locksley Hall," "Godiva," "Edward Gray," "Lady Clare," "Break, Break, Break," "St. Simeon Stylites," "The Beggar Maid," "Sir Galahad," "Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere," and the "Morte d'Arthur." Lord Hallam Tennyson, in his "Memoir," says of the poet at this time: "My father's comprehension of human life had grown, and the new poems dealt with an extraordinarily wide range of subjects,—chivalry, duty, reverence, self-control, human passion, the love of country, science, philosophy, and the many complex moods of the religious nature." The recep-

tion of these poems was immediately enthusiastic. Critics of all kinds lifted their voices in praise. Foremost among those to appreciate Tennyson was Wordsworth, the Poet Laureate, who remarked, "He [Tennyson] is decidedly the best of our living poets, and I hope will live to give the world still better things." In America the poems met with a cordial reception. Lowell declared that "it might be centuries before such a thinker and speaker as Tennyson appeared." The rise of Alfred Tennyson may be said to date from the appearance of these poems.

Personal Appearance. — Of Tennyson's appearance at this time Aubrey de Vere writes: "It was in 1841 or 1842 that I first met the poet. The large, dark eyes, generally dreamy but with an occasional gleam of imaginative alertness, the dusky, almost Spanish, complexion, the high-built head, and the massive abundance of curling hair like the finest and blackest silk, are still before me, and no less the stalwart form, strong 'with the certain step of man.'" Carlyle presents this picture of his "soul's Brother": "A great shock of rough, dusky-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, yet most majestic; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose, free, and easy. His voice is musically metallic; speech and speculation free and plenteous. I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe."

The Influence of Tennyson. — The unique position of Tennyson as an influence in drawing together the poetry of the earlier and the later years of the century is not, perhaps, sufficiently recognized. No other poet has so

singularly combined the attributes of the old and the new. Without borrowing from his predecessors, he softened and broadened their manner into a tone which prepared poetry for its later development.

1842-1847. — The beginnings of fame came to Tennyson very quietly. His poems continued to be widely read, and succeeding editions were published. All this time he was busy on "In Memoriam," now in London, now at Beachy Head, and now at Cheltenham. In 1845 a pension of £200 was bestowed on him in recognition of his poetic talents.

"**The Princess.**" — Meanwhile the poet's friends were clamoring for a complete work. They complained that his power had been displayed in fragments having no connection. In obedience to this demand, he published in 1847, "The Princess, a Medley." It has generally been considered that the germ of "The Princess" is to be found in Dr. Johnson's "Rasselas." Tennyson himself said that he believed the subject of the poem to be original, and certainly the story is full of original incident, humor, and fancy. Tennyson went over the plan of the poem with the lady who was to be his wife as early as 1839. He is reported to have said that the two great social questions of the day in England were "the housing and education of the poor man, and the higher education of woman," and he affirmed that the sooner woman found out, before the great educational movement began, that "woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse," the better it would be for the progress of the world. This is the keynote of "The Princess," the appearance of which excited considerable unfavorable com-

ment. Although admittedly brilliant, it was thought by many, even among Tennyson's friends, to be scarcely worthy of the author. The abundant grace, descriptive beauty, and human sentiment were evident, but the medley was thought to be somewhat incongruous, and the main web of the tale too weak to sustain the plot and the embroidery raised upon it.

"In Memoriam."—The year 1850 was a notable one for Tennyson. It was in this year that he gave to the world "In Memoriam," on which he had been at work for years, and in which he poured forth his very soul. "In Memoriam" is, perhaps, the richest tribute ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed. This tribute to Arthur Henry Hallam, his friend and companion of seventeen years before, was received with reverence and admiration. No poem of Tennyson is so often used for quotation, none so rich in phrases that have long since become household words. But it will probably be always read and remembered for special passages rather than for the strength of its argument. It is, in the opinion of many, the greatest work of the poet's genius. "He has done for Friendship what Petrarch did for Love." It is a permanent addition to the wealth of English literature. Everywhere is the expression of a deep religious feeling and an abiding faith.

Tennyson's Marriage.—Tennyson was married June 13, 1850, to Emily Sellwood, for whom he had formed an attachment in 1835; but whom he had been unable to marry because of his financial condition. Mrs. Tennyson is the "dear, near, and true" in the beautiful dedication

of "Enoch Arden." They were married at Shiplake Church, near Caversham, and settled at Twickenham, whence in 1853 they removed to Farringford in the Isle of Wight. Their wedded life was ever a happy one. Mrs. Tennyson, possessing rare mental qualities, became her husband's adviser in all his literary efforts, and to her he invariably referred his work for a final criticism before it was published.

The Laureateship.—It was also in 1850 that Tennyson was appointed Poet Laureate. Wordsworth was dead, and the literary world began to discuss the succession to the laureateship. There were several candidates in the field, among them Leigh Hunt and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The final choice, however, fell on Tennyson, and he retained the position until his death.

"Maud and Other Poems."—It is impossible to give even a passing notice to many of the poems that flowed from his pen after his appointment to the laureateship. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" was published in 1854. In 1855 appeared "Maud and Other Poems." Some of the most exquisite lines of "Maud" had been written long before, but when the poem appeared it was received with a general chorus of disapprobation. It was declared to be dreamy, obscure, and incoherent. Its chief fault was thought to be the war spirit that it breathed, which was not suited to Tennyson's muse. The poem was not wanting in vindicators, however, and received much praise from some of the commentators. It was a poem that Tennyson delighted to read aloud. He regarded it as one of his best works, an opinion that posterity has sustained.

"The Idylls," "Enoch Arden," etc.—In 1855, Tennyson

matured the plan of "The Idylls of the King." The first four of the Idylls appeared in 1859, and were followed at intervals by the others until 1885 (see "The Idylls of the King" in the Introduction). They may be said to represent the finest expression of Tennyson's genius. In them he reaches the height of his poetic fame. While waiting for the proper mood, as he expressed it, to complete them, he busied himself on subjects less lofty in strain,—the sea, which he always loved, and the different phases of English life, in which he took a deep interest. From the chivalric heroes of the past his mind reacted to the heroism of the present, and in 1864 he published a volume which he called at first "The Idylls of the Hearth," a title withdrawn before the publication of the work. Included in the work were "Enoch Arden," "Aylmer's Field," "The Northern Farmer," and other poems that dealt with nearly every phase of human life. "Enoch Arden" touched a chord of popular sympathy. Sixty thousand copies of the poem were sold in a very short time, and with the exception of "In Memoriam" it became the most popular of Tennyson's works.

The Dramas.—From 1864 to 1875 an occasional poem appeared from Tennyson's pen, but nothing of importance. The year 1875 marks an epoch in Tennyson's literary career. In this year he published the first of his dramas. It may seem surprising that a poet of sixty-six years should essay a new field of literature. It was a hazardous experiment, and one to which Tennyson's talents seemed hardly adapted; but he had always taken a lively interest in the stage; he believed in its future; he regarded the drama as one of the most humanizing of influences; and he was anxious to

round out his poetic career by making some permanent contributions to the literature of the Stage. He chose for his first subjects the three great periods in English history of "Harold," "Becket," and "Queen Mary," so as to complete the line of Shakespeare's English chronicle plays. He called his subjects his "historical trilogy." "Queen Mary" was published in 1875, "Harold" in 1876, and "Becket" in 1884. With respect to character-painting, Tennyson considered "Queen Mary" the most successful of his plays. It was, however, severely criticised when put upon the stage. While the workmanship was superb, it was deficient in dramatic construction; it lacked motive and progress. In "Harold," Tennyson remedied these defects in a measure, although the same general criticisms have been made on all his dramas. "Becket" is a dramatic poem rather than a stage play, a study of character rather than an effort of movement and action. It has been the most successful of any of Tennyson's dramas. Of the minor dramas, "The Falcon" and "The Cup" were published in 1884, though they had been represented on the stage in 1881; "The Promise of May" was published in 1886. The last of his dramatic works, as well as the last great literary effort of his life, was the beautiful pastoral play, "The Foresters," which was produced in 1892, only a short time previous to the poet's death.

Other Noteworthy Poems.—During the last years of his life Tennyson busied himself not alone with his dramas. With extraordinary vigor and freshness he continued to produce other work of the highest literary excellence. He wrote "The Revenge, a Ballad of the Fleet" in 1878, "The Defence of Lucknow" in 1879, two of the most spirited of

his poems, and worthy to be classed with "The Charge of the Light Brigade." In 1880 he published a book of "Ballads," containing among others the two just mentioned. This was followed by a volume of poems in 1885, dedicated to the poet Browning. Among these poems was "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade." In 1886 appeared "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," and in 1889 "Demeter and Other Poems." They were the aftermath of the poetic harvest, but they bore no evidences of mental decay.

Elevation to the Peerage.—Meanwhile Tennyson had been approached with the offer of a peerage. For some time he hesitated to accept the honor, but at last he consented, with the remark that he should regret his simple name all his life. Accordingly, in 1884, he was made Baron of Aldworth and Farringford, and took his seat in the House of Lords.

Death of Tennyson.—During the last years of his life Tennyson became wedded to country solitude. He liked to wander through the byways around Aldworth and Farringford, but seldom visited the city. In the fall of 1892 his strength failed rapidly, and he passed away October 6, at Aldworth. He died in the fulness of years and honor, with the capacity of his genius unwithered by age, rich and enchanting to the last. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the grave of Browning.

TENNYSON AND HIS POETRY: A STUDY.

Tennyson the Man.—No one can read the poetry of Tennyson without feeling that, at the basis of all his

teaching, indeed, of all his works, is Tennyson *the man*. Like Milton, he combined great poetic genius with exalted character. To the union of these two elements we may attribute the charm which he has exercised over the hearts and minds of the English-speaking people. As early as 1832 Arthur Hallam wrote of Tennyson: "His nervous temperament and habits of solitude give an appearance of affectation which is no true interpretation of the man. I think you would hardly fail to see much for love as well as for admiration." The same may be said of his later life. He was reserved even to shyness, and seldom went into society. He was highly sensitive to criticism. At times he was possessed with a spirit of melancholy, and while composing he was often abstracted for days. These conditions sometimes made him appear brusque; but this seeming discourtesy was only superficial. With his family and friends he was happy and genial. He possessed a strong sense of humor, delighted in witty stories, and told them admirably. He was a brilliant conversationalist, and one of the most entertaining of companions. He was versed in a wide range of subjects, and there was a strong vein of common sense in all his talk. He had a high regard and sympathy for his fellow-men, and a noble and splendid courtesy. He was a true English gentleman.

Higher Qualities of his Character.—No element of Tennyson's character so pervades his work as his nobility of thought. This lofty tone is present in every poem he has written. His verse is characterized by the very spirit of honor and of reverence for all that is pure and true.

His religious faith, too, was of the loftiest. He had a profound respect for sincere religion in every shape, and all Christian creeds had his sympathy. The immanence of God in man; the brotherhood of the human race; the continuance of each man's personal consciousness in the life to be; the vitality of the present; God and the spiritual, the only true and real,—these were the tenets of his faith. His conception of love was noble and reverential. Love was to him an unselfish passion; such love he ever manifested in his home and among his friends; such love he regarded as the inspiration of man's noblest deeds. He had a childlike simplicity of nature, and this characteristic marks his work. While he often adorns his lines to profuseness for the purposes of art, the emotions he appeals to are easy to understand and common to all. The principles that he upholds are those upon which society is based. He had little inclination for politics, but was deeply interested in the social questions of the day. "I believe in progress," he said, "and I would conserve the hopes of man." This is the keynote of his poetry. He was intensely patriotic, and regarded England as the greatest country on earth. The patriotic lyrics he has written stir the blood. He was for Freedom, such as had been evolved by the gradual growth of English institutions. He had small faith in outbursts of revolutionary fervor. Liberty he considered to be gained by patient years of working, and not by radical changes.

And, lastly, as characterizing the man through his works, we may note an abiding faith in Law throughout the worlds of sense and spirit, a recognition of a settled scheme of

great purposes underlying a universal order, and gradually developing to completion.

Tennyson the Poet.—In every well-developed literature we find two classes of poets, one including those who draw their material directly from Nature; the other, those who interpret Nature through Art. The former, such as Wordsworth, take their characters from real life; their incidents have their counterparts in human experience; they seldom indulge in description for the sake of description; their language, as a rule, is plain, simple, and impassioned; they do not trouble themselves with niceties of expression; they are great artists because they commune with the truth instead of working on critical principles; they are true to Art because they are true to Nature. The latter, of which Gray is an example, are essentially imitative and reflective. They are usually men possessed of great natural ability, extensive culture, refined taste, and a wide acquaintance with the literature that has preceded them. Occasionally they are endowed with great original genius. Their material is derived not so much from the world of Nature as from the world of Art. To this class we must assign Tennyson. Not, perhaps, a poet of great original genius, but of great assimilative skill, taste, and learning, he belongs to a class of poets whose work has a twofold value and interest, first, for its obvious, simple, and intrinsic beauties, which make its popular side, and, second, for its niceties of adaptation and expression, which form its intellectual side. In Tennyson we deal with an accomplished artist whose most successful works are not direct studies from simple

Nature, but studies from Nature interpreted by Art. Not the equal of Shakespeare, Milton, or Wordsworth, he is, nevertheless, a great poet. For fifty years he stood at the head of contemporary English poets, and his work is the most rounded and melodious, the most adequate expression of the poetry of Victorian England. Of broad scholarship and great intellectual ability, he absorbed the deepest and best thought of his age. Singularly alive to the spirit of his time, he has responded to its moods, and made its burning issues the very soul, the animating principle, of his work.

The Poetry of Tennyson. — Turning now to the substance of Tennyson's poems, we may note that above all they display the work of a consummate artist. As an artist in verse, Tennyson is the greatest of modern poets. Other poets may have surpassed him in special instances; but he is the one who most rarely nods, and who always finishes his verse to the extreme. "An artist should get his workmanship as good as he can, and make his work as perfect as possible," was his guiding principle. As an artist he cannot be excelled, but his art, like that of all poets who strive for artistic effect, is sometimes ornate rather than pure, and characterized by a want of simplicity. We have referred to Tennyson's simplicity of nature, to the simplicity of the emotions and feelings to which he appeals, but we cannot always point to the simplicity of his language. Directness of expression often gives way to elaborated diction. If the matter be meagre, the form is elaborate; yet there is always perfection of detail. The metre is as near perfection as any poet has ever attained.

We feel that Tennyson knows all the secrets of harmonious measures and is a master of rhythm. The melody of his diction is always charming, his epithets are always suggestive. Analogous to art, indeed, a part of it, is beauty, for art is but the love of beauty and the power of fitly expressing it. Tennyson was faithful to beauty. Power to see beauty and power to shape it were possessed by him in a remarkable degree. Of mere sound-beauty his poems are full.

Combined with his love of beauty is the love of Nature which his poems breathe. Everywhere it enters into his poetry; but to Tennyson Nature was Law, not Life. His descriptions of Nature are delightful. For minute observation and vivid painting of the details of natural scenery Tennyson is without a rival; but there is a lack of warmth, of life, in his Nature. He looks at Nature as a picture and describes it from the outside. His description excites more our intellectual than our emotional interest. His Nature is Law, not a living Being.

The last element in Tennyson's poetry which we shall note is the sympathy for his fellow-men which the poet has expressed. It embraces every class of mankind, high and low, thinker and worker. It takes upon itself the emotions, the hopes, the fears, the highest aspirations of mankind. Taken all in all, the voice of his age has found its surest utterance in the poetry of Alfred Tennyson.

HISTORY OF THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES.

Popularity of the Romances. — To the student of English literature there is no more fascinating field of research

than the cycle of romances that centre about King Arthur and his Round Table. The theme of bard, chronicler, and trouvère, these tales were the delight of court and cottage for centuries, and satisfied the intense passion of the times for narrative or romance literature. The most popular poets of every age have turned to this fountainhead of European romance to find in the body of legend here locked up a volume of ideal subjects worthy of their song. Spenser, in his "Faerie Queene," makes "Prince Arthure" his type of "magnificence" and "noble doing." Milton and Dryden thought the "Round Table" a not unworthy theme for an epic. Lapsing into obscurity during the trying times of the Reformation and the prosaic era of the Commonwealth, these tales of chivalry have been rescued at last, and the nineteenth century has witnessed a revival of national interest in them, for which we are indebted chiefly to Southey and Tennyson, the latter of whom has clothed these grand romances with all the beauty of his most polished art.

Origin of the Romances. — It is fortunate for the student that the development of the Arthurian romances can be traced with comparative ease. In recent years the subject has been investigated in all its phases by the ablest scholars and most profound critics of Europe. In its dawn the Arthurian romances carry us back into the dim twilight of British literature, when Kelt and Saxon were waging a deadly struggle for supremacy, when the heroic valor of the Kymri inspired the bards attached to this or that chieftain to sing the praises of their patron in camp and castle. Some of these songs have come down to us, and, although

they are obscured and distorted by fables, we may still glean occasional bits of genuine history. From these old Welsh songs we may conclude that Arthur was a real, historic personage, that he lived in the sixth century, and that, as chief of a petty tribe in Cornwall, he headed the tribes of western Britain against the encroaching Saxons from the east, and the Picts and Scots from the north; about him the later bards wove many strange myths and fictions. We may note here, also, that at this time many of the oppressed Kymri fled to the Continent as an asylum, and settled in Brittany, carrying with them the songs, traditions, and tales of their former home. They carried with them, too, the remembrance of their chieftains, particularly of Arthur. There they sang of his deeds, his death, and his hoped-for return. Some of these old songs are still extant, and we are not surprised to find Brittany filled with Arthurian traditions. Thus from two sources, the Kymric and the Breton, do we obtain our bardic knowledge of Arthur. In all these songs he is simply a courageous warrior, who by his heroic bravery stamped his image on the unwritten records of his country, and dying left behind him a memory dear to the national heart. How is it, then, that "the name of King Arthur came to stand for an ideal of royal wisdom, chivalric virtue, and knightly prowess, which was recognized alike in England, France, and Germany"? Let us see.

From the Sixth to the Twelfth Centuries. — From the sixth to the twelfth centuries there was a dearth of literature throughout Europe, particularly in the modern European tongues. Bards and minstrels continued to sing, to tell