

5. The half-truth that vice forms an essential part of human progress, that good is reached through evil, upon which Browning bases his optimism, we know to have been derived from the half-truth of Bernard de Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees." Browning tells us as much. Addressing Mandeville, he says: —

"As with body so deals law with soul
That's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
Through evil, — earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
Presumably: so far I understood
Thy teaching long ago." ¹

We cannot so easily lay finger upon the original of the optimism of Tennyson. But we can trace a close relationship between his views and the teachings of his friend Frederick Denison Maurice. Both breathing the same intellectual atmosphere and thinking in the same tone and temper, it is not surprising that there should be a kinship in their ideas. We can best illustrate this kinship by the following parallel passages. Speaking of man's inadequacy to grasp God's purposes and the insufficiency of man's theories and systems, Maurice says: "The old proclamation of a divine kingdom . . . is not in any sense whatever our scheme or theory of the Universe, *but is sent to confound, to break in pieces our theories of the Universe, to show how feeble and contemptible we and our theories are; what absolute need all creatures have of a Living God, who will reveal to us himself; what relation there is between us and Him; how He works in us*

¹ *Parleyings with Certain People* (Bernard de Mandeville).

to bring us to know his purposes, and to move in accordance with them." In another place he would have us "look out upon the world, and see a valley covered with dry bones of different systems." And farther on in the same lecture, he speaks of our obligations to infidels, "if they have been employed to convince us *that human systems must indeed perish, one and all*, that what survives must be something of a higher derivation, of a more eternal character." ¹ Two years later Tennyson crystallized the underlying idea of these extracts in lines which are now memorable: —

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they." ²

6. From the teachings of Maurice, Tennyson learned to tone down all dogma to the haziness of Universalism. Therein did he find confirmed his conviction that nothing is without a purpose, and that that purpose must needs be good. Therein did he imbibe a conception of the Incarnation, half Christian, half pantheistic. Therein he found "Christianity translated out of time into eternity," — to use an admirable phrase of Dr. Martineau; he found the kingdom of God operating in the hearts of men, leavening the human race and lead-

¹ *The Religions of the World*, lect. viii. pp. 247, 248, 257. London, 1847.

² *In Memoriam*, Prologue, 4, 5.

ing it to a higher life; he read that "all the higher human relations are but faint echoes of relations already existing in an infinitely more perfect form in the divine mind." It is a religious theory that appeals strongly to the poetic fancy. "It may seem paradoxical," says Dr. Martineau, "yet it is hardly hazardous, to say that the Maurice theology owes its power not less to its indulgence than to its correction of the pantheistic tendency of the age. It answers the demand of every ideal philosophy and every poetic soul for an indwelling Divine Presence, living and acting in all the beauty of the world and the good of human hearts."¹ Such a theology, while preserving the distinction between right and wrong and recognizing God as a Righteous Will, can still hold out the hope and lay to the human soul the flattering unction that somehow all will ultimately end in a reign of universal good. The poverty and squalor, the misery and suffering, the heart-aches and the soul-pangs that devour the large majority of humanity, are only slightly scanned in the glamour of this soothing philosophy, from the elevated plane of comfort and culture and well-being on which Frederick Maurice and his friends stand. And here is where Tennyson has taken refuge. He recoiled from the pessimism that had been broadening and deepening at the time that his mind was subject to formative influences. Therefore is he the poet of progress — in Browning's own trenchant words: —

¹ Introductory chapter to *Taylor's Religious Life of England*, p. 9.

"Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's and not the beasts'; God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be."

7. Tennyson's conception of progress is distinct from that of Browning. To Browning's mind progress is a development of every human instinct and impulse; but the characteristic of this development is that the more highly wrought instinct or impulse becomes, the less satisfaction accompanies its exercise. It is a progress of aspiration unfulfilled and of desire ungratified — a seeking after the infinite and never reaching the goal. Tennyson's idea of progress is one in which the soul advances to greater serenity and contentment in attune with the growth of the ages in knowledge and wisdom and the higher law. "His imagination," says Professor Dowden, "dwells with a broad and tranquil pleasure upon whatever is justified by the intellect and the conscience, and continuously energetic within determined bounds."¹ He holds a personal growth in each one from the purely animal, moving upward, "working out the beast," to a higher spiritual life.² He holds a growth in national well-being, not indeed with Shelley through the revolutionary spirit — "the red fool-fury of the Seine" — but as the outcome of a gradual evolution till the millennium, —

"When the war-drums throb no longer, and the battle-flags are
furled,
In the Parliament of man, the federation of the world."

He holds a universal progress of the world in science and art, and he looks forward to the time

¹ *Studies in Literature*, p. 113.

² *In Memoriam*, cxviii. 7.

when a crowning race shall reap the fruit of all we did and suffered.¹

8. This optimistic teaching of Tennyson and Browning and Maurice, with all its shades of difference, is of ancient date. We find that consciously or unconsciously — probably unconsciously — they have been transcribing a leaf out of a very old book which has exercised great influence upon thought, especially as popularized by Marsilius Ficino and Reuchlin at the Renaissance. According to that old book there is nothing absolutely bad. Nothing is accursed forever, not even the archangel of evil. A time will come when God shall restore him his angelic nature and the good name and standing which he once bore in heaven. Hell also shall disappear and shall be transformed into a place of delights; for at the end of all time there shall be neither chastisements, nor trials, nor troubles, nor guilty persons; life shall be an eternal feast, an endless Sabbath. This picture is almost a literal transcript from the teachings of the Cabala. Is it not also the doctrine of that modified Universalism which still retains the distinction between good and evil and believes in a temporary state of retribution?² From the point of view of the author we now pass to the poem itself.

¹ *Epithalamium*, 33.

² See Ad. Franck, *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, p. 803. The chief doctrines of the Cabala are to be found in the volume known as *Zohar*. This book is written in the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch. In its present shape it is a compilation of the thirteenth century; but many of its doctrines ascend to Plato (e. g. the division of the soul; cf. *Symposium*), the

IV.

1. The introductory lyric was among the last composed. It contains the argument of the whole drama. That argument is that loss may become gain when grief is cherished by love. The author begins: —

"I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

There has been much speculation as to the poet here referred to. The Rev. Alfred Gatty decides the matter in the following words: "It may be stated on the highest authority, that the special passage alluded to in the opening stanza cannot be identified, but it is Goethe's creed." And we are further told that the "dead selves" of the poet "are neither our vices nor our calamities; but, rather, our general experiences, which all perish as they happen."¹ Faust, in Goethe's great life-poem, emerges from the ruins of his dead self to a higher life and a broader assertion of selfhood. It is still the same self trampling upon the narrower and lower experiences of life. But Tennyson would not

Alexandrian School and the Jewish traditions embodied in the *Mishna*.

¹ *A Key to "In Memoriam,"* third edition, pp. 1, 2. This edition has been revised by Lord Tennyson, and whenever Mr. Gatty uses italics he is giving Tennyson's own interpretation. This gives Mr. Gatty's volume an authoritative value that cannot be attained by any other gloss, however ingenious.

forget the past; he would cherish his grief and twine it around the present and the future. He would, in spite of all obstacles, "reach a hand through time to catch the far-off interest of tears."¹ So he would have love to clasp grief — even in its excess — and carry it through the lapse of time beyond all power of being lost or forgotten. Let us trace the progress of that grief. Forthwith the poet enters upon the first stage of his sorrow, when that sorrow is so intense that it will not be comforted. He finds the emblem of his despondency in the old yew —

"And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood,
And grow incorporate into thee."²

In this mood he rails against sorrow. He will not listen to the commonplaces of consolation. The blank despair of his bereavement is reflected in the material universe: —

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands —
With all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own, —
A hollow form with empty hands."³

His grief is still in that selfish state that will not be intruded upon. The only comfort he will admit is that flowing from the exercise of his pen. Labor and time are two physicians likely to bring

¹ *In Memoriam*, i. 2; cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnet xxxii.*: —

"How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stol'n from mine eye
As interest of the dead."

² *In Memoriam*, ii. 4.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 3.

a healing balm to the soul. His grief will not, in its present acute stage, permit him to sleep, and in the gray dawn of early morning he visits the house of Hallam in Wimpole Street: —

"Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street;"¹

The house is deserted, the friend who was its light and warmth is not there, and the poet's soul feels as desolate as the scene before him, while

"ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day,"²

and he reverts to the ship that is bearing the remains of his friend from where within

"Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touched him, and he slept."³

Earth is darkened, and all things reminding him of the lost friend are a pang to his heart. However, the first paroxysm of grief becomes spent. The calm that has settled upon Nature images the apparent quiet that possesses his soul; for the quiet is only seeming, and in his heart there abides

"if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair."⁴

2. Not long after the poet describes his mood as one of "wild unrest,"⁵ and recovering himself from the first stunning shock of his grief, and reviewing its action and its effects, he wonders if it has not unbalanced his mind: —

"And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,

¹ *In Memoriam*, vii. 1.

² *Ibid.* vii. 3.

³ *Ibid.* lxxxv. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.* xi. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.* xv. 4.

And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan."¹

Indeed, so great is his grief at this period that it takes an exertion of his will-power to prevent himself from dying and following his friend.²

3. But this violent sorrow abates. The presence of the corpse in English soil brings a certain amount of comfort:—

"'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land."³

The grief-stricken friend begins to reflect upon his mood. He considers the objections raised in regard to his sorrow, and defends himself against those who would accuse him of idly nursing a barren sentiment:—

"Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing."⁴

His reverence for the dead is most Christian. It extends to the remains, "the sacred dust," of the body as well as to the soul.

4. The poet has now sufficiently recovered from the first shock to be able to look back upon the portion of his life that he had spent with his

¹ *In Memoriam*, xvi. 5.

² *Ibid.* lxxxv. 10.

³ *Ibid.* xviii. 1; cf. Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*:—

"Lay her in the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring."

⁴ *In Memoriam*, xxi. 6.

mourned friend. The "four sweet years" through which they walked together pass before him, and death is still so present to him that he cannot divest himself of the thought

"that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me."¹

"Somewhere in the waste." Such is life to him in his present mood—a waste. Even while he wanders towards where the Shadow sits, "often falling lame" in the doubts and difficulties by which he is sore beset, he will persist in contrasting the dreary path he now treads with the pleasant land through which he journeyed with his friend—

"When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech."²

He cherishes his sorrow even as he cherishes the memory of his friend. He loves the very pain that accompanies it, and triumphantly, in words that have become familiar wherever the English language is spoken, he says:—

"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."³

Sadly falls the first Christmas eve after the death of Arthur. Its rejoicings are dimmed "with an awful sense of one mute Shadow watching all." But Faith brings hope and consolation, and with

¹ *In Memoriam*, xxii. 5.

² *Ibid.* xxiii. 4.

³ *Ibid.* xxvii. 4.

the breaking of the morning the poet, full of the thought of the Infant Saviour, bursts forth in song: —

"Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born."¹

5. Here occur those two beautiful lyrics in which the poet sings the raising of Lazarus from the grave. He wonders what the risen man had to say of the life beyond the grave. Did his sister Mary question him regarding those four days that he was dead? Did he reveal to her any of the secrets of the new state in which he found himself? No answer. But great must have been the rejoicings in that little town of Bethany. And there Mary sits, —

"Her eyes are homes of silent prayer," —

feasting those eyes upon the brother who has been restored to life and to her; and with love and reverence she looks upon Him who hath worked the miracle, and who is the Resurrection and the Life, and she worships Him, and bathes his feet with costly spikenard and with tears: —

"All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete."²

Another great poet who also believes in the Divinity of Christ has made Lazarus the subject of one of his most perfect poems. Browning's mode of treating the subject has nothing in common with

¹ *In Memoriam*, xxx. 8.

² *Ibid.* xxxii. 3.

Tennyson's. Where Tennyson is calm, reflective, running his comments along an even tenor of subdued feeling, Browning is forcible and probing, seeking to grasp in detail the new life of the risen man with

"Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven."

It is a life apparently out of joint with all around. Lazarus is with his neighbors but not of them. His higher knowledge of things spiritual causes him to lose all interest in things of earth. He seems out of place. He only sees the unworldly side of things: —

"He holds on firmly to some thread of life —
(It is the life to lead perforcefully)
Which runs across some vast, distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. . . .
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will —
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is."¹

This is as an outsider would regard the spiritual aspect of the new life of Lazarus. The words are placed in the mouth of an unbeliever — an Arabian physician. Beneath the dramatic character of the poem lie some important truths. One is that it is best for man and best for the world that man knows not the whole mystery of life. Such a knowledge would destroy all the effort and all the purpose of man in the directions in which they now run

¹ *Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician.*

most forcibly. Another is that the chief thing in all living is spiritual growth and development, and that this may best be attained in "prone submission to the heavenly will." This is also the outcome of Tennyson's study of the sister of Lazarus:—

"Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?"¹

Gratifying is it to see two poets so different in tone and temper—so diametrically opposite in artistic method and execution—still on the same fundamental issue arrive at the same conclusion.

6. Returning to our analysis of the poet wrestling with his sorrow, we find that a reaction sets in; once more his grief asserts itself and overwhelms him; darkness closes around him, and with weary steps he loiters on through life. Spring-tide brings him no joy, and he only finds a doubtful gleam of solace in the very lyrics he is weaving. He again recurs to the old yew-tree in the churchyard. He finds it a fitting type of his sorrow. As the gloom of the yew is for a short season kindled at the tips, and its brighter green passes into gloom again, even so does his sorrow after the brief spell of comfort and solace that seemed to soothe his spirits return with renewed force.²

7. And now, in poem after poem, Tennyson dwells upon his separation from his friend and the vast distance between their respective states. He reasons upon the state of the happy dead; he

¹ *In Memoriam*, xxxii. 5.

² *Ibid.* xxxix.

gropes about for some clear word of hope and assurance that his soul is immortal and will recognize Arthur in the other life; still the grief remains unchanged:—

"Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
Ay me! the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears."¹

8. The poet once more rises out of the depths, and seeks solace in the thought of the nearness of his friend. He fancies Arthur's spirit free to come to him, and he begs him to be near him. He hungers for the presence of the departed soul, and strives to render himself less unworthy of the companionship. In this mood his soul opens to other influences, and he attains greater mastery over his grief.

V.

1. In the second part of "In Memoriam" the poet's sorrow takes up a more hopeful and helpful note. He who formerly found naught but desolation in the whisperings from the "lying lips" of sorrow, now woos that same sorrow to be to him a helpmeet to aid him in rising to higher things:—

"O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life."²

The grief that would not be comforted—the purely human grief—has become tempered by faith. Hitherto the poet had been wholly absorbed

¹ *In Memoriam*, xlix. 4.

² *Ibid.* lix. 1.

in his waking thoughts. But we now come across a remarkable series of lyrics in which he reveals the working of his brain when in his bed at night. The first illustrates how the poet's last thought before sleep and first thought upon waking are of his friend. He is in bed, and as the moon's rays creep through his room he thinks of the same rays passing over the tablet in the little church by the sea.

"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."¹

The moonbeams vanish, and he sleeps to awaken in the early morning and think how in the same dark church the same tablet, like a ghost, glimmers in the dawn. Time was when he could not have thus calmly transported himself in imagination to the church and read the record of his friend's death, and slept soundly afterwards.

2. In the next lyric the poet dreams of Arthur not as dead but as living:—

"When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my breath;
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead."²

He dreams of him as he looked and spoke when still in the morning of life. But Arthur's face wears an air of trouble that is new to it. By a trick of the brain, the trouble of the poet's early and uncontrolled grief is transferred to the friend he is grieving for:—

¹ *In Memoriam*, lxvii. 2.

² *Ibid.* lxviii. 1.

"It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish Sleep transfers to thee."

Professor Davidson rightly calls this "a fine piece of psychological observation."¹

3. In the third lyric the poet has a strange dream. The dream is too consistent not to be also allegorical. He dreams that Nature's reproductive power is lost; spring brings with it no revival, and the poet wanders about helpless and aimless. He enters a wood with thorny boughs and binds his brow with a crown of thorns. We are at once reminded of Dante entangled in the forest of error. Perhaps Tennyson considers the speculations and the difficulties with which he is wrestling as fruitless and barren. All thought is made sterile by the touch of skepticism. The crown of thorns may be regarded as the emblem and heritage of prophecy and martyrdom, of which the poet considers himself unworthy, and so he is scoffed at by all:—

"I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
From youth and babe and hoary hairs:
They called me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns."²

Or it may be that the wreath of poetry he was weaving out of his barren sorrow and no less barren doubt and despair was in itself harsh and thorny and but ill-suited to command respect. But a change came over the poet. He tells us:—

"I found an angel of the night;
The voice was low, the look was bright."³

¹ *Prolegomena to In Memoriam*, p. 60.

² *In Memoriam*, lxix. 3.

³ *Ibid.* lxix. 4.

This angel is belief in the saving truths of Christianity, which is never loud in its utterance, like modern creeds and modern systems of human origin. The belief is an angel, for it is heaven-born. One touch of this heaven-born faith causes the wreath to bloom. The presence of the angel dispels the darkness of night. Many doubts vanish in the presence of a heartfelt "I believe." We are further told: —

"The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand."¹

All the mysteries of our holy religion speak to us in words that are hard to understand, but we accept their saving doctrine on the authority of Divine revelation. The poem that were a barren expression of merely human grief becomes with the assistance of religion a flourishing wreath. This lyric is one of the poet's happiest inspirations.

4. Another psychological phase that the poet depicts in this series is the state between sleeping and waking, during which he strives to represent to himself the face he knows so well, and to paint its features in the gloom before him. But their outlines escape him, and in the stead nightmare and confusion usurp his fancy, till suddenly, in a passive state, the dear familiar face stands out from the darkness: —

"Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And through a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still."²

¹ *In Memoriam*, lxi. 5.

² *Ibid.* lxx. 4.

In this lyric a complex phenomenon and a difficult piece of soul-analysis are exquisitely described.

5. In the final lyric of the present series sleep at last favors the poet and forges "a night-long Present of the Past," in which with his friend he lives over again a pleasant day spent in "summer France."¹ It was in 1832 that the two friends made a tour of that country, and passed through the scenes revisited in his sleep. Tennyson has left a memento of another visit paid to one of these cherished scenes in 1864: —

"All along the valley, stream that flashest white,
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
I walked with one I loved two-and-thirty years ago."²

Here ends the series of the lyrics of sleep and dream and reverie.

VI.

1. Another group of lyrics is introduced by one commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Arthur. This leads Tennyson to think of all that his friend might have become had he lived, for he bore the marks of kinship with the great and wise. But since he did not live to achieve all that he gave promise of, and since the world heeds only things done, silence shall guard his fame here, the poet being convinced that in Arthur's new state whatever he puts hand to must win great

¹ *In Memoriam*, lxxi.

² *In the Valley of Caunterz.*

applause. Moreover, his own lay is too short lived. Though the world's poems of early days,

"the matin songs, that woke
The darkness of our planet, last" —

the poet avers that his cannot survive the life-time of an oak. Still, like Petrarca, he will sing for a higher purpose: —

"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."¹

2. With every advance we find the poet's grief abating and his sympathies broadening. There are still fluctuations. There must needs be fluctuations if the poet is to be true to nature. Were he to ignore them, were his song to be one pæan of joy after the first outburst of sorrow, his poem were not worthy of our study. No soul rises at once above the bereavement into which it is plunged by the death of one near and dear. There must needs be a struggle and a constant effort of will-power. Not the least interesting aspect of the poem consists in the record of the soul's fluctuations in grief as their proportions diminish, while the soul itself rises higher and higher into regions of faith and hope and trust in the future. Such a lapse is here recorded. While painting the beautiful domestic life that Arthur might have led had

¹ *In Memoriam*, lxxvii. 4; cf. Petrarca in *Morte di Laura*, xxv.: —

"E certo ogni mio studio in quel temp' era
Pur di sfogare il doloroso core
In qualche mode, non d' acquistar fama.
Pianger cercai non già del pianto onore."

he lived and married the woman who was engaged to him, the poet's sister Emily — this lyric in itself a charming idyll — the pang of loss seizes him, and he exclaims: —

"What reed was that on which I leant?
Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content."¹

3. In the very next lyric the poet recovers his equilibrium, and addressing E. L. Lushington, "true in word and tried in deed," the early friend who is to marry his sister Cecily, "clasping brother-hands," he explains his affliction for Arthur and Arthur's abiding influence over him for good: —

"I felt and feel, though left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine;"

"And so my passion hath not swerved
To works of weakness, but I find
An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved."²

Feeling that he is best pleasing his departed friend by holding out a brother's hand to this other friend, and letting his feelings and his sympathies flow more freely through the social body of which he is a member, he sings: —

"My pulses therefore beat again
For other friends that once I met;
Nor can it suit me to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men."

"I woo your love: I count it crime
To mourn for any overmuch;"

¹ *In Memoriam*, lxxxiv. 12.

² *Ibid.* lxxxv. 11, 13.