

(Written for The Home Journal.)

TENNYSON AND HIS WRITINGS.

A CRITIQUE, BY SAMUEL MOORE, B. A.

FOR the last three-quarters of a year the literary critics and scholars of the civilized world have been sounding words of praise in their papers and magazines on the worth of the poet laureate, Lord Tennyson, and from their panegyrics we judge that the writers obey in spirit and letter the ethical precept of the Latin author, viz., *Nil de mortuis, nisi bonum*, (or say nothing concerning the dead except what is good.) In this respect their eulogies form a contrast to the opposite adage of Mark Antony on the death of Cæsar: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

Alfred Tennyson was born in 1809, A. D., in the parish of Somerby, Lincolnshire, England, of which town the poet's father Rev. Dr. Tennyson, was the parson.

The rector was a man of wide scholarly attainments, and Mrs. Tennyson a kind and imaginative woman, so that the young poet had the advantage of the best social environments in the home life. Alfred, after receiving a grammar school education, was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, to pursue the studies of the university and, while an undergraduate, he won the chancellor's gold medal for a poem. It was during his days as a student in Cambridge that he formed an ardent friendship with Henry Hallam, a fellow undergraduate student of the university, and this friendship has been immortalized by his never-dying elegiac poem "In Memoriam."

In 1850, on the death of Wordsworth, Tennyson was appointed poet laureate, and, in the same year he married Miss Emily Sellwood, a lady of high renown. She is the "dear, near and true" of the dedication of Enoch Arden.

Tennyson's home life was specially happy, and the many virtues of his "better half" allured him to higher aspirations and grander ideals in life. Two sons were born to Tennyson, Hallam and Lionel. Tennyson, during his laureateship,

enjoyed the respect and esteem of the best citizens of England, and he honored the peerage by accepting the highest title in the realm.

Alfred Tennyson was a man of wide educational attainments, viz., literary, scientific and philosophic. He always kept in touch with the times, the social progress in thought of the last half century being reflected in his writings, *vide* "In Memoriam," which is typically a nineteenth century production in literature.

His sympathies for the people of England found expression in every political, religious and social movement of his age, as shown in "Love Thy Land," "You Ask Me Why," "Of old sat Freedom," "Locksley Hall," all of which contain many sublime lessons in ethics and politics.

The people of England, during the last half century, felt the influence of several movements in economics, science plus the burning questions in sociology and religion, and the educational advances in experiment and discovery. All these subjects supplied food for thought and serious reflection, and his writings show Tennyson in the Victorian age what Spencer, "the poet's poet," was in the Elizabethan.

Tennyson seemed to have realized the adage of John Bright, viz.: "That it was by agitation that the public mind was crystalized."

The writings of Tennyson will be studied by the students of literature for many generations, for his poems possess spirit and power, and thus fulfil Thomas de Quincey's requisite of good literature.

Tennyson is rich in figurative language, simile, metaphor, etc. He has pressed into his literary service the various elements of nature. But few writers possessed such creative powers of mind and strength of imagination, such as we have exemplified in the legend of "King Arthur and the Round Tables," and also in the Idylls of the King; *vide* Enid, which is typically a love poem. Enid is pictured before us as the Miss Nightingale of her period.

That the writings of Tennyson have had a good influence on the social life, and also the English literature of his age, we have good reason to believe, some of his poems, like the village parson, "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way."

The Poet Laureate has wedded

the beautiful in thought to the beautiful in sound, and thus in theme and mode of expression, he reaches the perfection of an ideal poet, as understood by Ruskin. Tennyson was an artist of the highest order in poetry, a moralist whose teachings were ethically pure, and a religious teacher who was honest in the sacred cause.

The poetic literature of Tennyson cultivates not only the æsthetic faculty of the reader, but contains many lessons in Christian ethics, suited to persuade men to live the higher life.

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

The actors and actresses of France are becoming very great devotees of the bicycle and recently a race was run in that country in which none but professionals were admitted. Alfred Delille and Emile Delcort have composed a three act farce in honor of the event, naming it *La Bicyclette*.

Mark Murphy in O'Dowd's Neighbors filled The Victoria Wednesday evening. The comedy portion of the entertainment was of the type of the latter day farce, but many of the vocal selections were really artistic gems.

Cyril Tyler, the American boy soprano, has made his debut in London under the management of Col. Mapleson, and the critics compare his method and manner to that of a prima donna.

At The Victoria, Monday and Tuesday evenings next, Smallwell & Giovanni's Trained Animal Show will be seen. The show is said to be very entertaining and worthy of patronage.

Felix Morris will adopt the plan during his starring tour of presenting at each performance a one-act play, like "The Old Musician," and following it with a two or three act comedy.

Miss Margaret Marshall, the clever character woman of French's stock company, is in the city.

Martha Wren (Mrs. James Collins) has secured a divorce from her husband.

Darrell Vinton and Miss Ida Burrows are to be married shortly.