

of patient thought and toilsome revision in respect both of construction and verbal expression. If we could know the facts we should find that the poems which live from age to age embody results, both as to contents and expression, which are the outcome of manifold unwritten and written revisions. In proportion as we recognize this truth are we qualified to appreciate the marvels of their achievements. Genius as well as talent must put itself severely to school. This is especially true when language is the medium employed as the mould of thought, since no other is at once so mobile and fluid and so rigid and monumental.

I wish to illustrate this process of *linæ labor*—revision, polishing, perfecting—by a reference to the poems of Lord Tennyson. The Poet Laureate is an acknowledged master in the use of language, ranking next after Shakespeare and Milton. In addition to his known scrupulous care in composition before publication, we may by a studious comparison of the various editions of his poems discover abundant evidence of extraordinary patience in perfecting the products of his genius. In *Memoriam*, the greatest and most elaborately wrought of elegiac poems, was given to the world in 1850. The lyrics which now appear as xxxix,

“Old warder of these buried bones,”

and lix,

“O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me,”

were subsequently inserted in the poem. Some forty lines, in different parts of the elegy, have also undergone verbal revision. Many instances of retouching could be cited from most of his other poems, some of the changes producing lines among the most beautiful the poet has written. To give a single example. When *A Dream of Fair Women* was published in 1830, we had:

“The tall masts flicker’d as they lay afloat;
The temples, and the people, and the shore;
One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat,
Slowly—and nothing more.”

We now have:

“The high masts flicker’d as they lay afloat;
The crowds, the temples, waver’d, and the shore;
The bright death quivered at the victim’s throat;
Touched; and I knew no more.”

The most extensive revisions appear in *The Palace of Art*, and in *The Princess*; *A Medley*. I shall confine myself to illustra-