

Critical Study of "In Memoriam," by John King, M. A., D. D., Principal of Manitoba College.

IN the preface to this neat volume, which all students of Tennyson will read with interest, is given the origin of the work. It is, Dr. King tells us, based upon a series of lectures delivered by himself to the ladies of his college in the far west. At the request of his friends, it is published with the purpose of helping its readers to a better appreciation and understanding of this noble poem, which has occupied the close attention of many of the most cultured minds of our day. Although the author has had recourse to other works upon the same theme, he has endeavored to exercise throughout an independent judgment and has not failed to call attention to what have appeared to be incorrect interpretations or misapprehensions.

As we might suppose, a critical work of this nature demands on the part of the writer careful study both of the poem and of the voluminous literature that has been produced by the deepest thinkers. According to the opinion of Dr. King, among the most helpful contributors to Tennysonian literature, to whom he himself is indebted for valuable suggestions, are the Rev. F. W. Robertson, whose titles to several of the cantos of the poem have been adopted, Dr. Gatty, author of "Key to In Memoriam," Mr. Thos. Davidson, who gave some attention to the philosophical and religious questions arising in the poem, and most important of all, Professor Genung and Stopford Brooke, whose works many of us have thoroughly enjoyed.

In the Introduction, of considerable ability, we are given the history of "In Memoriam." The young men, Tennyson and Hallam, who met for the first time probably in 1828, were for some years closely associated in col-

lege and university. Common ideals and common tastes laid the foundation for a friendship, which grew in closeness and tenderness until broken by the sudden death of the latter in Vienna in 1833. Consequently in 1850, Tennyson published 'In Memoriam' in honor of his beloved friend. It is a collection of short separate poems, one hundred and thirty-one in number, all full of "love and grief and aching sense of loss," yet each entirely different from those preceding, composed according as Tennyson's rich and varied imagination might suggest at the time of writing.

Beginning with the Prologue, the poem is carefully and logically analyzed, canto by canto, line by line, the difficult points being fully explained and welcome light thrown upon its many allusions. To make the meaning clearer and to stimulate the interest of the reader, the writer makes frequent use of quotation, and in special notes calls attention to marked figures of speech or particularly happy turns of expression.

"In Memoriam" naturally falls into three divisions. In the earlier poems we find sorrow and grief almost rebellious, being as yet untouched by hope, the sullen yew-tree symbolizing the hardness of the heart. In the poems forming the central portion, personal sorrow being more subdued, the poet finds himself free to discuss certain questions concerning the great Beyond, suggested by the death of the departed one. In the third division, beginning with LXXXV, grief, though not altogether absent, is more sympathetic. There is perfect resignation to the Divine Will. Triumph sounds nobly in the noble verse

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night:
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.