

rapid progress made in science, there began the scientific movement, followed by the revolutionary movement, the notes of which were sounded in France in 1789. In neither of these did Tennyson find a cause to champion, but on the contrary, he fought nobly and stoutly against their levelling influences. He is a sincere believer in the freedom of man, freedom which is his birthright, and cannot on any account be bartered. This freedom he does not find will be secured by revolutionary principles, but by the administration of just laws, and under the sway of order. Throughout the whole extent of his works prevails his one grand, central idea—Law—that law and order, together with activity, will ever contribute to the happiness and prosperity of a nation. In this respect Tennyson is the very opposite of Byron, who was a strong advocate of revolutionary principles. The Laureate is no transcendentalist, no mystic. He sees clearly and with an enlightened mind the hand of God in everyday actions, as well as in great historical events. By him God is considered as the supreme law-giver and ruler of the universe. The mystic to Tennyson is a repulsive being, a mere visionary, whose imagination plays riot with his other faculties.

Of all this author's works, none have been received with greater favor than "The Idylls of the King" and "In Memoriam." In the former, especially worthy of mention is "The Holy Grail," an Arthurian legend, in which the chivalrous Knights of the Round Table enter upon an undertaking that eventually results in the dissolution of the Order. "The Holy Grail" is the sacred blood, of which the knights are in quest, one alone, Sir Galahad, being successful. In this poem we are shown that an inordinate striving after the impossible or preternatural is an evil, and in this case has been disastrous to the Order. The "In Memoriam" reveals the author himself, with all his philosophical and religious principles. This poem was written on the occasion of the death of his bosom friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, an accomplished and promising young man. Of their great intimacy the author himself gives ample evidence :

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

Deeply grieved and wounded was the heart of Tennyson, but he did not despair—he finds law and order in all things, especially in human society. To him the death of his friend was an event in human affairs governed by a universal law.

Strongly optimistic is Tennyson, believing in a beneficent unfolding of life, a belief that carries him over the dejections of the world. He is especially characterized by the buoyant hopes with which he looks forward to a happy future. He speaks of a time not yet arrived, in his "In Memoriam," where he says :

"That man that with me trod  
This planet, was a noble type  
Appearing 'ere the time were ripe,  
That friend of mine who lives in God."

In the same poem we notice a disposition to favor a theory of evolution, in the course of which men will gradually shake off the lower form and assume a more noble and elevated character.

"Arise and fly  
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast :  
More upward, working out the beast  
And let the ape and tiger die."

Shelley, in his own time, believed that England had reached the lowest ebb of degradation, and she was to be elevated by revolutionary, social and political transformations. The people's progress, Tennyson seems to have studied much, but differs entirely with Shelley, believing that it is to be effected by a gradual development of law. In the "Idylls of the King," the poet has admirably symbolized his idea of progress, when he describes the great hall of Merlin :

"And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt  
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall :  
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,  
And in the second men are slaying beasts,  
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,  
And on the fourth are men with growing wings."

Tennyson sees afar off the golden age, an age of universal peace and happiness, which is to be attained by a great development of knowledge, and the presence over the whole world of political order.