

paper, to do justice to my subject, although if any modern poet could divert one into a lengthened criticism, it would be Alfred Tennyson. I cannot speak of his master-pieces, "In Memoriam," "The Princess," and the "Idylls of the King," but I confine myself to his publication of two small volumes of minor poems, in 1843, in which there is so much which ministers to excitement and enjoyment, which stimulates thought and satisfies the sense of beauty, that one would like to go at large into the process by which those results are realized, and be thankful to whoever would "riddle me the *how* and the *why*" of such influences. The writings of Tennyson are peculiar in their character, as they are rich and fruitful in their results. There are in them most remarkable combinations. He scarcely touches the slightest subject without some glimpse of a profound philosophy, nor the remotest fancy without some vein of literal reality. The visible and the invisible commingle together. He is ever evincing qualities which seem contrasted, but exist in harmonious union. There are in his writings the suggestions of abstruse speculations, a homely pathos, genial humor, and the fine wit which is wisdom. He is metaphysical; full of "obstinate questionings," nice discrimination, and keen observance of character. He is most melodious: his versification distinguished sometimes by its Doric simplicity, at others by its rich variety and a thick lusciousness of melody, which almost seems to clog while it gratifies. His scenic power not merely delineates the external, but derives it from the internal, and informs any collection of external objects with the sentiment he designs to express. All have their meaning; they are so many emblems, and of this world thought is the creator, making it, like a God, in his own image, everything shadowing forth his nature and revealing his attributes. Even the compositions which he has suppressed—those which appear in his first edition, but have been omitted in the second—are so full of truth and beauty that they alone would make a reputation. They are of themselves sufficient to demonstrate the poet, and though in his fastidiousness he rejected them, the world will not willingly let them die. He can afford to throw away pearls; but they are treasures to all else. Under all variety of circumstances—in the rapidity of travel or the seclusion of solitude, when thought requires stimulus or sorrow needs consolation, when satiated with nature's loveliness or wearied with mental exertion, whether "in the populous city pent" or hearing "the roaring of the sea," I know of no time or circumstance in which the poems of Tennyson are not welcome companion.

He very clearly defined his politics, at the end of the first volume of the edition referred to, in pieces written about the period of the Reform agitation, the years 1832-33. It matters little if we are but partially in sympathy with his political principles. The particular opinions of the poet are of little consequence, because in so far as he is a *poet*, he cannot but, by the necessity of his poetical nature, be subservient to the sacred cause of human freedom.

Tennyson liked a freedom which was not in extremes, I like the extreme of freedom as contrasted with

despotism; but let him tell his own tale, and even in his picture of it, the freedom which he desiderates is a grand and superb thing.

"Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet;
Above her shook the starry lights;
She heard the torrents meet.

Within her place she did rejoice,
Self-gathered in her prophet mind;
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stopt she down through town and field,
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men revealed
The fulness of her face.

Grave mother of majestic works,
From the isle-altar gazing down,
Who, god-like, grasps the triple forks
And king like wears the crown.

Her open eyes desire the truth,
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them, May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes."

Such is freedom and her influence. Her birth-place was among the mountains, her early dwelling, "on the heights." These who have had such advantages have defied their oppressors. She comes thence through fields and towns, partially revealing the glory of her countenance, and men's throbbing hearts answer to the revelation. Disgusted by certain tendencies then manifested, he thus declares the impulse of his nature to seek even a despotism where there is a certain range of free thought and speech, with external means and appliances of good, in preference to staying in a country where independence of thought should be altogether overborne and trampled down by the intolerance of the majority.

"You ask me, why, though ill at ease,
Within this region I subsist,
Whose spirits fail within the mist,
And languish for the purple seas?
It is the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose,
The land where, girt with friends or foe,
A man may speak the thing he will;

A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down,
From precedent to precedent;

Where faction seldom gathers head,
But by degrees by fulness wrought,
The strength of some diffusive thought
Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
Opinion, and induce a time
When single thought is civil crime,
And individual freedom mute;]