

ADONAIIS AND IN MEMORIAM.

Among the most beautiful and tender works in literature are the elegies. As poetry is essentially the expression of emotion it is natural that the poet's best work should be produced under the purest and highest emotion, and therefore since sorrow causes in a man the high and refining emotions, we ought to expect an elegy to express all that is best and loftiest in a poet.

In *Adonais* and *In Memoriam* we have two of the great English elegies. Shelley's *Adonais* is a lament for the poet Keats who died when only about twenty-five years old, partly, at least, on account of the harsh treatment which he received at the hands of critics. *In Memoriam* is the expression of Tennyson's sorrow at the death of Arthur Hallam, whose early death was a great shock to his friend, and cast a gloom over his life for many years.

One can hardly think of two poems of like occasion which would be more unlike in character. *Adonais* is so ethereal and fanciful that to attempt to grasp its thought and pin it down to prose is almost like an effort to grasp the rainbow or a sunbeam. The poem is pastoral, modelled upon Greek pastoral poetry; and indeed in parts, *Adonais* is almost a translation of Bion's elegy. Its spirit, too, is Greek. Nature puts on a Grecian garb, and we are transported to the days of nymphs and nature gods.

Very different is *In Memoriam*. While it by no means lacks imagination and displays now and again enchanting touches of fancy, yet throughout, reason controls it. There is no super-refinement of delicate ideas such as we see in *Adonais*. It is not Greek in thought like *Adonais*, but is essentially the creation of Tennyson who, more than any other poet, represents his age. It is an English poem of the nineteenth century. While Shelley is soaring in mid-air, seldom touching earth nor yet reaching heaven, avoiding all sternly practical subjects, Tennyson with divine touch is dealing with man in his doubts and his life struggles. *Adonais* is the prismatic colorings of the sunbeams flashing through dew-laden gossamers, *In Memoriam* the genial life-giving sunshine of the spring.

In their attitude towards nature Tennyson and Shelley are