
"IDYLLS OF THE KING."

There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower;
So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl."

Compare these passages, and say whether one is not justified in declaring that Tennyson's similes, whether short or long, simple or elaborate, are alike perfect. That last, by the way, is a thorough-going Homeric, that is to say, epic, simile, in the sense that one becomes quite engrossed in the treatment of the associated object.

I have a notion that such perfection is not to be accounted for by any rule of thumb. No hand-book on Poetics can reveal this secret. For the achievement of such beauties three things, at any rate, are essential: the literary faculty, a wholesome life, an all but perfect environment. I believe that a man like Ruskin carries style in prose, that a man like Tennyson carries style in verse, to a point where mere mechanical explanations are at once inadequate and out of place.