

the exhaustion of the impulse which began with Burns and Cowper. There was no longer now in England any large wave of public thought or feeling such as could awaken poetry. We have then, arising after his death, a number of pretty little poems, having no inward fire, no idea, no marked character. They might be written by any versifier at any time, and express pleasant indifferent thought in pleasant verse. Such were Mrs. Hemans's poems, and those of L. E. L., and such were Tennyson's earliest poems, in 1830. But with the Reform agitation, and the new religious agitation at Oxford, which was of the same date, a new excitement or a new form of the old, came on England, and with it a new tribe of poets arose, among whom we live. The elements of their poetry were also new, though their germs were sown in the previous poetry. It took up the theological, sceptical, social, and political questions which disturbed England. It gave itself to metaphysics and to analysis of human character. It carried the love of natural scenery into almost every county in England, and described the whole land. Some of its best writers are Robert Browning and his wife, Matthew Arnold, and A. H. Clough. One of them, ALFRED TENNYSON, has for forty years remained the first. All the great subjects of his time he has touched poetically, and enlightened. His feeling for Nature is accurate, loving, and of a wide range. His human sympathy fills as wide a field. The large interests of mankind, and of his own time, the lives of simple people, and the subtler phases of thought and feeling which arise in our overwrought society are wisely and tenderly written of in his poems. His drawing of distinct human characters is the best we have in pure poetry since Chaucer wrote. He writes true songs, and he has excelled all English writers in the pure Idyll. The Idylls of the King are a kind of epic, and he has lately tried the drama. In lyrical measures as in the