

TENNYSON.

What poet would you soonest take with you as your companion, if you were setting out on a journey? An American, I suppose, might take Longfellow; but an Englishman—well, an Englishman has such a number to choose from that perhaps he cannot easily make a choice, but I think most Englishmen would choose Tennyson, and more especially at the present time when we are all mourning the death of our beloved Laureate. Others there are of greater talent in our long list of poets but none we hold dearer.

Tennyson's place in our literature is significant as well as important. He is essentially a poet of our own times, and as such he keeps in touch with the great mass of his fellow men. The field of English literature at the time of George IV has been compared to a field from which the last harvest has been gathered and which must be broken up with plough and harrow and cleared of weeds before it will yield another crop. That renovating process was the New French Revolution of 1830 and the Revolution of 1848, together with the troublous times that intervened in England. This breaking up prepared the soil for a new and better crop of writers; and, without adopting either Carlyle's aristocratic view or the democratic view of Buckle, we can easily see how we are in a large measure indebted to this renovation for the particular attitude of the writers who come before us at that crisis. Tennyson, Gladstone,

Charles Darwin, the Brownings, Thackeray and Dickens were all of nearly the same age. Tennyson, like the others, was largely a product of the times, and yet a moulder of his times as well. He was profoundly influenced by the growing democracy of the age both in church and in state. The spirit of democracy which so influenced him he eagerly welcomed; he hailed it with joy; and in turn lent his own influence to promote the new philosophy, yet without doing damage to either church or state. His aim was to free them from error and all that was injuriously dogmatic, and to bring them nearer to the light of truth, to make everything in the constitution and the church bear fruit.

The newer and better theology had obtained a great hold on him. This is seen in "In Memoriam." "In Memoriam," one of the three living obituary poems in English, is the obituary of philosophy, and in it Tennyson appears as a contemporaneous poet, a poet of the nineteenth century. He keeps among the things of the present. "In Memoriam" "reflects the nineteenth century like a mirror." This is one reason why the poet is so popular, so near and so dear to the hearts of the people. Arthur Henry Hallam, the nominal subject of the poem, is kept in the back-ground and the poet and the nineteenth century are set in the foreground. Throughout the whole course of the poem, we hear very little of Arthur Henry Hallam, but we can