

tion and the glad, jubilant song of the poet of a later prosperity. He, too, returns to the ancient fount of strength. In his best-known poem, the "Prophecy of Merlin," he weaves a patriotic idyll around the central figures of Arthur, Merlin and Sir Bedivere. Tennyson is his master, British Imperialism his theme, Arthurian legend the setting. One cannot fail to admire the gentle grace and steadfast love of the land of his fathers that breathes all through the poem. But the lover of Tennyson revolts from the iconoclastic spirit which could drag down from their eminence the ideal personalities of the Idylls to make them stalk through the six hundred or so lines of a poem devoted to the lauding of a nation's greatness and prophecies of its material prosperity.

Tennyson's last beautiful picture of the "Passing of Arthur," holds us as perhaps no other can. Arthur, amidst the wailing of the black-stoled queens, "passes to be King among the dead." Sir Bedivere is left with breaking heart alone amid the dead. Here Mr. Reade takes up the tale, and Bedivere is roused from a swoon to find Mage Merlin at his side. His heart still aches with the great pain of parting. He questions Merlin with eager longing and presses for prophecy. We receive the impression of intended sincerity, but we are not swept on irresistibly by the impetuous force of the man's sorrow. And why? Because there is nothing inevitable about it—the man and his language are inadequate.

It is better with Merlin. When he speaks of the prophetic gift, the hopelessness of the seer's world—sorrow is well brought out. He stands by the stream of Time; white sails float idly by; the hungry whirlpool yawns just ahead. He sees it, sees the danger, but is powerless to divert, or warn, or save.

Throughout Merlin's prophecy runs the golden thread of allegory. It is the history of England in miniature. First he predicts devastating war with the great White Dragon of the North, with the Tigers of the Sea, with other foreign foes. Then out of the union of these, the Dane, the Saxon, and the Norman, he fortells the growth of a nation.

Reade strikes his key-note—British Imperialism—when he adds :

"And Britain shall be great by land and sea,
And stretch her conquering arms around the world,
And gather treasures from all climes, and teach
Her tongue to distant nations, and her name
Shall be a word of praise to all the earth."