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## LIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS.

Ah! sea and earth.  
Ah! earth and heaven  
Ah! sky that cleavest far between,  
Ah! stars, ah! suns,  
Ye powerless ones,  
Ye cannot tell us half ye mean.

Or is it we  
That cannot hear,  
That have no eyes for thee and thine,  
That sit and long  
To learn the song;  
But never rise to things divine?

That never know  
When aid doth come,  
That never grasp the lamp and lute,  
That see no light  
Thrust through the night,  
And thus long linger blind and mute?  
—Xoutha.

## TENNYSON, THE NATURE POET.

SO intensely practical is the spirit of our own day becoming, so engrossed in material problems, that the Muse herself is becoming changed in character; is eager to solve great intellectual, social or political questions, without the adornment of her gentler graces. We do not expect in the poets of to-day special beauty of diction, delicacy, fineness of touch—rather strength, pointed phrase, even an abruptness of style. With such a tendency existing among us, it will be instructive to make a brief review of a feature of Tennyson's work, in which is revealed his charm of language, marking of rhythm, all that artistic power which did not hinder, but rather aided him in giving such a noble expression to the life of his own time. That feature of his work was his appreciative use of nature.

From Tennyson's earliest poems, "preludes of a loftier strain," his close companionship with Nature was evident; as yet, however, he was but the draughtsman and the colonist, indeed this he remained "through all his length of days," but the draughtsman and the colonist who is perhaps the greatest of English idyllic poets. His pictures are perfect, faithfully and beautifully presenting as they do the charms of the English landscape:

"And leaning there on those balusters, high  
Above the empurpled champaign drank the gale  
That, blown about the foliage underneath,  
And sated with the innumerable rose,  
Beat balm upon our eyelids."

Hallam Tennyson tells us that his father "as he exulted in the wilder aspects of Nature, so also found a joy in her orderliness, and a rest in her steadfastness,

patient progress and hopefulness." He loved nature in her peaceful moods:

"Sweet after-showers, ambrosial air,  
That rolled from the gorgeous gloom  
Of evening over brake and bloom,  
And meadow, slowly breathing bare  
The round of space."

He sought her society for her infinite love and her celestial calm. Yet he fell far short of Wordsworth—not in his portrayal of nature's beauties, but in his insight into the "life of things." Wordsworth drew from his communion with nature elevated thoughts; rose to the sublimest heights of poetry where'er have passed the great world poets.

Tennyson reached the climax of his art as the portray-er of Nature in those passages, occurring more particularly in "In Memoriam," but often too in the shorter poems, in which he has made Nature sympathize with his varying moods. Nowhere is more exquisite art shown in such a use of Nature than in "In Memoriam," Cantos XI. and XII. The poet's heart is filled with a "calm despair"—how fitting is the scene!

"Calm and still light on yon great plain  
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers  
And crowded farms and lessening towers  
To mingle with the bounding main."

This stanza reveals, too, a marked characteristic of the poet; with a few *well-chosen epithets* he reveals a landscape of immense extent; over a wide plain we look, see forests and reddening leaves, crowded farms and distant churches, until we come to the "bounding main" sinking into the southern sky. This *concentrated manner in description* was omnipresent in Tennyson; we find it in Enoch Arden:

"The blaze upon the water to the east:  
The blaze upon his island overhead;  
The blaze upon the waters to the west;  
Then the great stars that globed themselves in heaven,  
The hollow—bellowing ocean, and again  
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail."

In Canto XV. of "In Memoriam" the poet's heart is smitten with a "wild unrest," and nowhere can be found a more vivid picture of a rising storm:

"To-night the winds began to rise  
And roar from yonder dropping day,  
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,  
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,  
The cattle huddled on the lea;  
And wildly dash'd on bower and tree,  
The sunbeam strikes along the world."

The forest, the sky, the whole world is filled with the storm—the forest, waters and meadows are each struck out in one word, and, as Stopford Brooke remarks, "the wildness of the wind and the width of the landscape are