

Tennyson as an exponent of 19th Century
Literature.

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Class of '97.

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- "History of 19th Cent. Literature."
- "Stedman's Victorian Poets."
- "Ward's British Poets."

In writing an introduction to a subject of this nature, it seems necessary that one give a brief history of the literature of the nineteenth Century.

The closing years of the eighteenth (18th.) Century not only took from the world's store of writers, but it also added to its list. The literature of those days was very different from anything which came before or anything that followed. A great change was noted in the ninth decade of the 18th Century, and the writers who so beautifully added to the world's store of knowledge, in the opening years of the present Century, were not what the world regarded them in after years.

In this century a new form of Poetry was given us and many of our loved poets belong to this age and time. Although it was not a poetical period yet it seems that poetry always took precedence

of all other forms of Literature. The following are some of the men who produced some of this new poetry. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Goethe, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rogers, Campbell, Landor, and the following minor poets who were born before Tennyson, Beddoes, Sir Henry Taylor, Mrs Hemans, and L. E. L. Hood, and Raed. This new poetry which sprang up in the nineteenth Century had its foundation in the closing years of the Eighteenth Century. The three greatest poets of the time were Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron. W^m Wordsworth was born in Cockermonth, England, the 7th of April, 1770. He was well educated at the Hawkshead Grammar School and St John's College, Cambridge, and took his degree (B. A.) from this latter place in 1791. A few years later it seems that he and the wonderful Coleridge, as he was called began to combine their powers and gave to the world in 1795 the "Lyrical Ballads."

The next mentioned is Sir Walter

Scott. Scott was born in Edinburgh on the 15th of August 1771. The influence of Scott is said to have been delayed for various reasons, but this to some extent is accounted for in the statement: "Critics naturally come after creators." The home life, unlike many of our other poets is said to have been quite a happy one.

Lord Byron was born in London, Jan. 22nd, 1788. In some respects, Lord Byron is said to have been the most truly representative poet of this time.

It was in the early years of the century that we first accounts given of a new fiction and it was Miss Burney who made her success in this style of writing with "Evelina", afterwards wrote "Cecilia" which was also regarded fine by good critics, but it seems her fame was not a lasting one, for in 1796 she wrote "Camilla" and this was considered almost a failure, still later in 1814 came the "Wanderer" which was decided a complete failure, and it is said that after this she

never attempted the style again.

Not only did new forms of poetry and fiction spring up in these opening years, but there was also seen the development of Periodicals and, too, we find the Historians of the century represented by Hallam, Roscoe, Mitford, Calgrave, Arnold, M^{rs} Carlyle, Carlyle, and others. After this followed a second poetical period of which the well known Tennyson, Mrs Browning, and Matthew Arnold, the world's well known critic are representatives. This was followed by the novel since 1850. Literature gives account of a group of novelists coming into praise about the year 1850. These were said to possess greater talent and originality than those who had preceded. Among the novelists of this time were Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Miss Brontë, Charles Kingsley and others.

Philosophy and Theology followed the novel and among the writers on philosophical subjects may be seen the name of John Stewart Mill who is

better known to many of us as a great economic writer. Later Journalism and Criticism in art and Letters followed Philosophy and Theology and here is added the name of the great ethic writer, John Ruskin. After this came Scholarship and Science, this is represented with Darwin, Huxley, and a number of others whose names are less familiar.

Now it is that we are confronted with the Drama. The English Drama of the nineteenth Century is said to have displayed one curious and disastrous characteristic, for the plays as a rule, that have been good literature have never been acted while we find those which have been successfully acted have seldom been good literature.

After reviewing the divisions of 19th Century Literature and noting the ones who so successfully represented their time in their line of writing we are able to take up the life of Alfred Tennyson and see along what lines he has worked and

what he has added to Literature.

Lord Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate, was born at Somersby, Lincolnshire, Aug. 5th 1809. The influence of Tennyson has spread far and it has been of the highest type. "Even fascinating and extended as his poetry was, it is said to have somewhat vexed the public mind in these later years. "And with all its serene beauty there are those who have grown tired and Tennyson reaches the point of criticism, and such seemed to darken his path for a time". He wrote a little poem called "The Flower", in which are expressions of his grief. He likens this little flower to his life, he starts with the flower nothing but a common ordinary one but in time it grew into a very beautiful flower but its beauty and worth at last faded for says he - "The seed is common and men weary of a beauty too familiar". And above all comes the world at large as a lasting critic to Tennyson. For he not only thinks of the present

days but looks beyond and thinks of the future generations how they can criticize and compare his work with contemporaries.

Tennyson, by eminence has been regarded as the representative poet of the recent era, and too, it is said of him that he not only represented his age in one particular phase but the time itself in its various relations.

Tennyson received his later education at Trinity college, Cambridge, and it was during his years at Cambridge that he met his most devoted friend, Arthur Henry Hallam. The death of this sincere friend caused one of the greatest griefs of Tennyson's life.

Mr Waugh states that Literary success always requires two elements for its composition:- There must be genius in the author, and there must be opportunity, and there can be no doubt but Tennyson was a man of great genius, but it was not till the year 1842 that he became famous and many of the poems

which he had written in the ten years which preceded and had been ridiculed, were in 1842 repeated by nearly every tongue, and so we would say these ten years bought to Tennyson his opportunity.

The world acknowledges and will continue to acknowledge that Tennyson had added much to the world's store of writings. In a volume on Lord Alfred Tennyson, Mr Waugh states; "The unique position of Tennyson, as an influence drawing together the poetry of the earlier and the later years of the century, is not perhaps sufficiently recognized. No poet has so singularly combined the attributes of the old and the new. With out in any case borrowing from his predecessors, he softened and broadened their manner into a tone which prepared poetry for its later development, a development to which he continually gave the first, half latent impulse." As we see Tennyson has been our great light in bringing together

the old and the new in the very best form.

Doubtless Tennyson's, "In Memoriam" has brought him greater fame than any other poem he produced. It is said by many to be the finest elegy in the Language.

It is said that Tennyson was a great unchallenged master, productive through all his years, held the critics and the public with an eye that time does not fatigue or dim.

The poems "Rossetti" and "Mr Wm. Morris" show his rich sense of colour and delicate delineations and too in his works are found a great variety of metre.

It is stated by Mr Waugh that Tennyson in a closer and more intimate relation to inanimate nature than did any of his predecessors. In many of the poems of Tennyson is found a sympathetic nature.

We find the task of Tennyson to have been the sifting and combining the lesser voices of antago-

man, to separate the tithe of truth from a mass of falsehood, and to fuse the many elements into one complete whole," and when this combination was effected the true spirit of the age was discovered, and to Tennyson we give the glory of discovery.

In writing of Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett, said, "If any thing should happen Tennyson the world would go into mourning." It was at the advanced age of 83 yrs. when the last sickness of his life came upon him and after lingering for several days, he passed quietly away on the 6th of Oct. 1892. and as Mr Waugh says "The world felt they had lost one of the greatest poets England had produced in the present Century".

He little thought of his little poem "Crossing the Bar" being used as his epitaph. He was buried in Westminster and his tomb bears this inscription -

"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark.

Tor this from out our town of Time ^{and} Place,
The Flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my pilot face to face,
When I have crossed the bar."