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ENGLISH THESIS

VICTORIAN POETS

M. A. & D. of D., June, 1921

WILLIAM M. UNGER, B.A. L.P.H.

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ENGLISH POETRY DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA.

A glance at the literature and particularly at the poetry of the generation in which we live should hold for us great interest and enthusiasm. The period which I am to endeavour to discuss and criticise comprises what is known as the Victorian Era. I shall not confine myself to any particular year of this Period but shall discuss the Poetry and Poets of the Nineteenth Century drawing a comparison between the Poetry of the Victorian Age and that of the earlier centuries. Of the individual Poets I shall have something to say but I shall be guarded by the words of Pope:

"'Tis hard to say if greater want of skill,
appear in writing or in judging ill".

But the glance which I am going to take into the Poetry of this period is of necessity to be hasty and the opinions founded on it will be cautious and briefly expressed. The only names which will find a place in this treatise will be those of literary persons who have acquired extensive fame or whose efforts have already achieved results from which permanent effects cannot but follow. My estimate of the intellectual character of the time ought to be formed, and shall be formed, with the hesitation becoming those who just because they are imbued with its spirit are not impartial judges of the value or the ultimate tendency of its exertions.

The want of originality with which we the sons of the age, are almost unanimous in taxing it, must be admitted to be very obvious in the Poetry of this age. The huge wave which earlier in the century, threw on shore so many treasures has long since ebbed and there is little for us to gather but the shells left by the ripple of an ordinary tide. Poems were never produced by so large a number of writers as within the past sixty years; and never were so many pieces written that show felicitous moments both in matter and in language. But seldom also have so few poems appeared which rise sufficiently above mediocrity to have a chance of survivance. There are poets and poets and while there were many during the age about which I am writing whose works were laudable and will live still there were ~~xxx~~ many whose fate with posterity is still doubtful. I would be guilty of an injustice by omission should I select poets who are worthy of remembrance for my choice might not have the universal approval of those who are more learned and more judicious in choosing from the many those who are destined to live in the hearts of the people. Before dealing at length with the respective poets of this Victorian Period I shall mention briefly their names and characteristics of their works.

Henry Taylor deserves notice for the fine meditateness and well-balanced judgment shown in his poems as well as in his dramas. Browning I have chosen for the strength of thought which struggles through the obscurity of all his poems and Mrs. Browning for similar merits accompanied with greater force of imagination. Sir Edward Bulwer (Lytton) was doubtless infected by the inclination to mysticism or to a kind of semi-philosophy (not Scholastic) in verse which seems to be prevalent among worshippers of the muse and his metrical compositions have an artificial stateliness indicating that he is more at his ease in prose. But he deserves honorable mention for the high sense he everywhere shows of the functions of poetic art for the skill with which his Dramas are constructed and for the over-flowing picturesqueness which fills his "King Arthur". Commendation must also be given to Elliott, the "Corn Law Rhymer" for his vigorous conception while Thomas Hood lives on account of the remarkable union of grotesque humor with depth of serious feeling

In the course of my treatise I shall delay on Landor, Matthew Arnold, Byron, Walter Procter, Rossetti, Swinburne, William Morris and pass casually over the minor poets. But to Alfred Tennyson I shall give special attention. He is one of the very few poets of our generation who is entitled to be compared with the poets of the past. His works constitute a new link in that series of poetical changes which had its first step in Wordsworth and its second in Shelly. Theoretically considered the movement may be said to consist in an increasing predominance of the lyrical and didactic elements of poetry over the epic and dramatic. The narration of events and the portraiture of character and action have become more and more subordinate to the representation to the poet's moods of feeling or to the imaginative embodiment of reflective thought. Progress like this is not in a direction promising to lead to poetic greatness. Nor is there reason for believing that even Tennyson's poems, by far the most powerful of those in which tendencies of the sort have lately been manifested have really exerted a wide or commanding influence. But in their kind they are very beautiful. Tennyson's mind was exquisitely poetical; his diction is often felicitous in the extreme; his susceptibility of those refined emotions which his favourite objects of contemplation are calculated to excite is alike delicate and profound; and much of his imagery is not only fascinating for its natural and suggestive aptness but marked by a very strong originality. It is not wonderful, either that he should have captivated so many minds alive to fine influences or that his turn both of thought and style should have found so many imitators. His very faults though they may offend exact judgment or cool, ardent sympathies never involve coarseness either of taste or feeling. He is without doubt the outstanding figure in Poetry of the Victorian and I shall deal more fully with him and with his works later on in my work.

In the Nineteenth Century science, freedom of thought, refinement and material progress moved along together. The modern student often has been so narrowed by his investigations as to be more unjust to the poet than the latter was of old to the philosopher. Art has seemed mere pastime and amusement, as once it seemed the devil's frippery and seduction to the ascetic soul of the Puritan aglow with the gloomy or rapturous mysteries of his theology. Also by the multitude whom the practical results of science at last have thoroughly won over and who are now impelled by more than Roman ambition to girdle the earth with engineering and conquer the elements themselves neither the songsters nor the metaphysicians but the physical investigators are held to be the world's greatest men. The De Lesseps, Fields, Barings, Vanderbilts, no less than Lyell, Darwin and Agassiz wear the bay-leaves of to-day as they did fifty years ago and the Victorian poets had to struggle on in oblivion, comparatively speaking until the world was ready to take them up as serious. Religion and Theology were then as now, except in the Catholic Church, subjected to analysis and the universal tests and the divine and the poet, traditionally at loggerheads had a common bond of suffering, a union of toleration or half-disguised contempt. The poet's hold upon the youthful mind then and now, and sentimental popular emotion has also immeasurably relaxed. The gratifications of the aesthetic perceptions were considered of little worth. This the Victorian poets had to contend with. The truth was and is that our girls and youths wandered down the lanes with Darwin, Huxley and Spencer under their arms, (had they Zigliari or Lorti they would have had sound principles of philosophy if not poetry) or if they carried Tennyson, Browning and Rossetti they read them in the

light of spectrum analysis or tested them by the economics of Mills and Bain. The very tendency of modern poetry to wreak its thoughts upon expression, of which our shallow friend Huxley complains, naturally follows the iconoclastic overthrow of its cherished ideals, confining it to skilful utilization of the laws of form and melody. Even the poets, with their intensely sympathetic natures had caught the spirit of the age, the Victorian Age, and pronounced the verdict against themselves. The poets had practically to surrender. The more intellectual will confess that they weary less of a new essay by Proctor or Tyndall than of the latest admirable poem; that overpowered in the brilliant presence of scientific discovery their own conceptions seem less dazzling. A thirst for more facts grew upon the people as it still grows on them now in this twentieth century; they throw aside their lyres and renew the fascinating study forgetful that the inspiration of Plato, Shakespeare and other poets of old, often foreshadowed the glory of these revelations and neglected to chant in turn the transcendent possibilities of eras yet to come. Science the modern Circe beguiled them from their voyage to the Hesperides and transformed them into her voiceless devotees.

Every period, however original and creative has a transitional aspect in its relation to the years before and after. In scientific iconoclasm, then, we have the most important of the symptoms which mark the recent era as a transition period and presently shall observe features in the structure and composition of its poetry which justify it in thus ranking it. This will be seen when I deal with the poets and their characteristics. The Victorian Poets have flourished in an equatorial region of common sense and demonstrable knowledge. Thought has outlived its childhood yet has not reached a growth from which experience and reason lead to visions more radiant than the early intuitions. The zone of youthful fancy, excited by unquestioning acceptance of outward phenomena is now well passed. But the zone of cultured imagination is still beyond us. In the Victorian as at present, scepticism scientific conquest, realism, scornful unrest are to the front. Apollo has left the Heavens. The modern child knows more than the sage of antiquity. But the change to the scientific was none the less severe regardless of the fact that Wordsworth had depicted an era when the poet and the man of science should find their missions harmonious and united. The votaries of poetry during the Victorian Age had a trying time. The poets had to contend with the fact that while men are instructed out of the early phenomenal faith their recognition of poetry has nor had not become a second nature.

The characteristics of the middle portion of the nineteenth century, have been so perplexing that it is but natural the elder generation among us should exclaim, "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" While other arts must change and change, the pure office of poetry is ever to idealize and prophesy of the unknown; and its lovers forgetting that nature is limitless in her works and transitions mourn that-so much having been discovered, robbed of its glamour and reduced to prosaic fact-the poet's ancient office is at last put by. But nature's book of secrecy is infinite. The Victorian Poets found as the poets of our day will find that the spiritual and material spheres are yet untrod. When we examine the disenchanting process which has made the Victorian times a turbulent, unrestful interval of transition from that which was to that which shall be then we begin to understand the muse of that period. The Poets of the age to which I refer looked before and after and pined for what was not".

While in one sense the recent era and with more point than usual, may be called a transition period, it is found to possess in no less degree than eras that have witnessed smaller changes, a character and history of its own. Such a period may be negative or composite in the value of its art productions. The dreary interval between the times of Milton and Cowper was of the former non-creative type. An eclipse of imagination prevailed and seemed to chill and benumb the poets. They tried to plod along in the well-worn paths but like men with bandaged eyes went astray without perceiving it. Substituting pedantry for emotion and still harping on the old myths, they reduced them to vapid, artificial unreality not having the faculty of reviving their beauty by new forms of expression. Of the art to conceal art none save a few like Collins and Goldsmith had the slightest instinct or control. As for passion that was completely extinct. At last the soul of a later generation demanded the return to natural beauty and the heart of the times clamored for pulsation and utterance. Cowper, Burns, Wordsworth, Byron and their great contemporaries arose and with them a general creative literature of which the poetry strove to express the spirit of nature and the emotions of the heart-subtile, essential elements, in which no amount of scientific environment could limit the poet's restless explorations. Our recent transition period, The Victorian, ensued but in its composite aspect how different to that to which I have referred above! The change which had been going on during this later time pertained to imaginative thought and feeling; the specific excellence which characterizes its poetry is that of form and structure. In technical finish and variety the period was well advanced and instructively interesting. The poets of the Victorian Age were well endowed at birth and we cannot say that they have not fulfilled ~~their~~ their mission to the attainable extent. When not creative their genius has been eclectic and refining. Doubtless the time has displayed the invariable characteristics of such periods. In fact there were never more outlets to the imagination serving to distract public attention from the efforts of the poets than were afforded in the Victorian Age and still more to-day by prose-romance and journalism. But the Victorian period was a learned and scholarly period; writers busied themselves with enjoying and annotating the great works of the past; criticism predominated, exact and catholic. How searching were the tests by which tradition and authority were tried; how high the standard of excellence in art; how intolerant the healthy spirit of the Victorian years toward cant and melodramatic affectation; how vigorous the crusade against sham. In all this we discern the remaining features which, though less radical, in their importance than the scientific revolution, have marked the Victorian period as one of transition and as composite in the thought and structure of its poetic art.

Besides the restrictions to which the Victorian poets were subjected by the triumphs of the journalists and novel writers, their enthusiasm also was checked by the modern dislike of emotional outgivings and display. This aversion naturally resulted from the peace, security and ultra-comfortableness of the English people. It was a time of repose and luxury, a felicitous Saturnian era when all rare things that poets dreamed of were close at hand. Fulfillment had stilled the voice of prophecy. The people saw disease averted, life prolonged, the masses clothed and housed, vice punished, virtue rewarded, and the landscape beautiful with the handiwork of culture and thrift.

But in most countries advanced to the front of modern refinement the dominant spirit has been antagonistic to the production of great and lasting poetry. For it is the passion of song that makes it lofty and enduring and the snows of Hecla have overlaid human passion in English common life during most of the Victorian Age. I do not deplore nor blame the materialism of our century except the materialism which forgets God, for this departure from the love of poetry may be excused on the ground that scientific discovery has supplanted poetry. This may be more heroic and beneficial to mankind than the idealism of the past. Nevertheless and without magnifying the poet's office it is fair to assume that although a poetical era may not be best for the contemporary world it is well for a poet to be born in such an era and not ill for poetry and literature that he was born.

Having thus gone beyond the zone of idealism in the Victorian Age and left to oblivious depths the halo of impulsive deed and speech we reached the noon-day of common sense. Poets did not mouth in the grand manner for the world would have no patience to hear them and would deem them stagey or affected. Human emotions were the same in the Victorian times but modern training had toned the people down to that impassibility wherein the thoroughbred Christian woman was said to rival the Indian Squaw; madmen were not as of old thought to be inspired; eccentricity bored. Men's hearts beat on forever but Thackeray's Englishmen were ashamed to acknowledge it at their meetings and partings. The Platonists taught that the body should be despised; the people quietly ignored the heart and the soul. The time was off-hand, chaffy and had to be taken in its mood. The point was fairly well made by "Shakespeare's Scholar" in his essay on "The play of the Period" that the latter days were unfavorable to strong dramatic verse, the highest form of poetry, and the surest mark of a true poetical era. The modern English have not been devoted to intense heroic feeling whether above or below it, who shall say?—but certainly not within it. The novel was and is their drama; true, but chiefly the photographic novel of the conventional life; others, including the poets have obtained a hearing slowly, by accident or by sheer force of genius. The people of the Victorian age subjected their tears to analysis but did not care for tragic rage; they avoided high excitements; they distributed their emotions in a hundred petty ways and rather than be exalted are content with the usufruct of the five external wits. Domestic peace and comfort resulted in the absence of enthusiasm and the rise and prolongation of an idyllic school in art. Adventure always was the English amusement, not a mode of action but the converse of this was true in the days of Raleigh, Drake, Sydney and Richard Grenville. Not that England is wholly utilitarian, "domestic, student, sensualist" as has been charged but she has well defined and studied the science of society. All this the Victorian poets have had to contend with as Poets or adapt themselves to, as clever artists, and above all, as men of their time. Lastly however, we find that the structural, artistic phases of modern English poetry, in scorn of the stilted conventionalism of the eighteenth century have been of the most composite range, variety and perfection. Of course the natural forms were long since discovered but lyrist's have learned that combinations are endless, so that new styles, if not new orders, are constantly brought out. In the ultra-critical spirit of the time, they enhanced and still enhance the strength and beauty of

of their measures by every feasible process and the careful adaptation of form to theme. This is an excellence not to be underestimated for if "expression is not valuable for its own sake" it is at least the wedded body of inspiration, employing the poet's keenest sensibilities and lending such value to thought as the cutting of a diamond adds to the rugged stone. Never was the technique of poetry so well understood as since the time of Keats and the rise of Tennyson and his school. The best models during the Victorian Era were selected by the song-writers, the tale-tellers and the preachers in verse and a neophyte of the Victorian days and still more of to-day would disdain the triteness and crudeness of the master workmen of sixty years ago. The greater number of Victorian poets instead of restricting themselves to a specialty ranged over and included all departments of their art and were lyricists, balladists and idyllists by turn, achieving excellence in every direction except the dramatic which indeed few ventured upon. Modern poetry was as composite as modern architecture and if, as in the case of the latter grotesque and tawdry combinations abounded there also were many strong and graceful structures which excelled those of former periods in richness and harmony of adornment. The rhythm of every dainty lyrical inspiration which the morning of English poetry was caught and adapted by the song writers all of whom from Hood to Kingsley had new arrangements and effects of their own. The extreme of word-music and word painting was attained together with a peculiar condensation in imagery and thought so that the poets of the last era occupied whole passages with a single image. If "the light that gilds" our recent English poetry be "the light of sunset" it is indeed beautiful with all prismatic hues and its lustres are often as attractive in themselves as for the truth and beauty which they serve to illumine.

So far as progress is a change from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous we may hold that an advance was made in English art and poetry during the Victorian Era. But the Victorian Period was as I have shown a period of transition and a period of transition is also one of doubt and turbulence; one whose requisites and characteristics it is essential to bear in mind in order to ~~xxxx~~ obtain a true appreciation of the leading poets who represent it. For we must consider an artist's good or ill fortune, his struggles and temptations, his aids and encouragements, remembering that the most important art of any period is that which most nearly illustrates its manners, thoughts, and emotions in imaginative form and language. Through his sensitive organization the poet is exquisitely affected by the spirit of his time and to render his work of future moment, seeks to reflect that spirit or confines himself to expression of the spiritual experiences common to all ages and all mankind. The works of Homer and Milton were clogged with restrictions of time, personages and places. Yet these are the world's greatest names; it has no greater. The potent allegory of their poems comes nearer to us than the abstract Shastras. Their personages and places are but the media through ~~the~~ which the Protean forms of nature are set forth. The statement of unmixed thought and beauty has not been the splendor of the masters. And while it is true that nature and history are the poet's workshop and all material his property the studies and reproductions of foreign or antique models, except as practice work, are of less

value than what he can show or say of his own time. Hence it is of the highest importance to the poet that he should live in a sympathetic or co-operative if not heroic period. In studying the minor poets we see with special clearness the adverse influences of a transition era composite though it be. A likeness of language and manner is common to the Elizabethan writers various as were their themes and natural gifts. The same is apparent in the Cromwellian period with regard to Marvell, Shirley and their contemporaries. But now as if in despair of finding new themes to suit their respective talents, yet driven on to expression we find the Victorian poets-one copying the refrains and legendary feeling of illuminated missals and black letter lays; another recasting the most enchanting and famous romances of Christendom in delicious language and measures caught from Chaucer himself; others adopting the quaint religious manner of Herbert and Vaughan; a host of others essaying new and conscientious presentations of the undying beauty of Greek mythologic love. We see them dallying with sweet sense and sound until our taste for melody and color is more than surfeited. The language which Henry Taylor applied to the poets of a former generation seems even more appropriate with respect to the Victorian artists. They too are characterized by "a profusion of imagery, by force and beauty of language and by a versification peculiarly easy and adroit... But from this undoubted indulgence in the mere luxuries of poetry has there not ensued a want of adequate appreciation for its intellectual and immortal part?... They wanted, in the first place, subject matter. A feeling came more easily to them than a reflection and an image was always at hand when a thought was not forthcoming". It is but just to say that the Victorian poets are not so wanting in reflection as in themes and essential purpose. These defects many have striven to hide by excessive finish and ornamentation. Conscious of this a few with spasmodic effort to be original, broke away in disdain of all art, palming off "a saucy roughness" for strength and coarseness for vigor. And even this return to chaos wins the favor of many who from very sickness of over-refinement, pass to the other extreme and welcome the meaner work for a time because it is a change. The effect of novelty gives every fashion a temporary hold but the calmer vision looks above and along the succession of modes and seeks what is in itself ennobling and every disguise of dilettanteism, aristocratic or democratic whether it struts in the rags of Autolycus or steals the robe of Prospero and apes his majestic mien must ultimately fall away. In the search for a worthy theme more than one of the poets to whom I have referred has by a "tour de force" allied himself to some heroic mission of the day. On the other hand, honest agitators have been moved by passionate zeal for their several causes to outbursts of rhythmical expression. In most cases the lyrics of either class have been rhetorical and eloquent rather than truly poetical. Finally in the wide diffusion of a partial culture, the Victorian period has been noteworthy for the multitude of its tolerable poets. It has been a time of English minnesingers, hosts of them chanting "the old eternal song". But the poets of such a period are like a collection of trout in water that has become stagnant or turbid. The graceful smaller fry, unconscious that the real difficulty is in the atmosphere about them one after the other yield to it and lose their color, flavor and elastic life. But the few noble masters of the pool adapt themselves to the new condition or resist it altogether and abide till the disorders of the waters is assuaged. Reviewing the poetic genius of the Victorian era we find one strong spirit maintaining an independent vigor and

beauty through successive generations composing the rarest poetry with slight regard to temporal mode or hearing-a man neither of nor for an age-who has but lately passed away. Another Victorian Poet of a different cast, the acknowledged master of the composite school has relected his own period by adapting his poems to its landscape, manners and speculation with such union of strength and varied elegance as English literature has seldom displayed. Then there is a woman, of whom I shall speak more fully later, an inspired singer, if ever there was one-all fire and air, her song and soul alike devoted to liberty, aspiration and ethereal love. The spot in her character is regrettable. But I shall glide over that sighing that it would have been consoling had she observed the conventionalities of life. Another poet, her masculine complement, whose name is rich with the added glory of her renown, represents the antiquity of his race by study of mediaeval times and themes and exhibits to the modern lover, statesman, thinker and Noble, their prototypes in ages long gone by; he constantly exalts passion above reason while reasoning himself, withal, in the too serious fashion of the present day; he is the exponent of what dramatic spirit is still left in England-that of psychological analysis which turns the human heart inside out, judging it not from outward action in the manner of the early poets. The we find the youngest and latest, a phenomenal genius, the extreme product of the time, carrying its artistic and spiritual features to that excess which foretokens exhaustion. Possessed of unprecedented control over the rhythm and assonance of English poetry; in the purpose and structure of his early verse to be studied as a force of expression carried to its furthest limits but in his true, poetic and dramatic work exhibiting signs of a reaction or transformation which surely is now at hand. I refer to Swinburne. The others to whom I have referred in the above lines and to whom I shall direct special attention later on are Landor, Tennyson, Mrs. Browning and Browning himself.

And so the Victorian Era may properly be called the Transition Period. Towards its close there arose the creative poetic literature adapted to the new order of thought and the new aspirations of humanity. This will grow without a doubt. The idyllic philosophy in which Wordsworth took refuge from the cant and melodrama of his predecessors has fulfilled its immediate mission. The art which was born with Keats found its perfect work in Tennyson. But a craving for more ~~far~~ dramatic spontaneous utterance is prevalent with the new generation. There is an instinct that to interpret the hearts and souls of men is the poet's highest function; a disposition to throw aside precedents-to study life, dialect and feeling as our painters study landscape, out of doors and at first hand. The Victorian Poets began this new viewpoint. Considered as the floating land-drift of a new possession even careless and faulty work after this method is eagerly received; although in England, so surfeited of the past and filled with vague desire, the faculty to discriminate between the richer and the poorer fabric seems blunted and sensational. Experimental novelties are set above the most admirable compositions in a manner which is discouraging and which discouraged and cast a gloom over many of the Victorian poets; just as the uncouth carving or piece of foreign lacquer-work is more prized than an exquisite specimen of domestic art because it is strange and breathes some unknown, spicy fragrance of a new-found clime, so the novelties are prized to the contempt of the poetical jewels. The Victorian Transition Era doubtless will be

prolonged by the ceaseless progress of scientific revolution occupying men's imaginations and constantly readjusting the basis of language and illustration. Ere long some new Lucretius may come to reinterpret the nature of things, confirming many of the ancient prophecies and substituting for the wonder of the remainder the still more wondrous testimony of the lens, the laboratory and the millennial rooks. The Victorian Era has nothing to be ashamed of in the calibre of its poets; the spirit of the times militated against their greater success but comparatively speaking the Victorian days brought forth gems in poetic art which will live on until Michael The Arch-Angel sounds his trumpet.

And now if you will bear with me for a few moments I will introduce to you a few of the poets who have made an indeleble impression in the hall-ways of fame during the era to which I have directed my remarks in this Thesis. Listening to the concert of modern song, a critical ear detects the notes of one voice which possesses a distinct quality and is always at its owner's command. I refer to Landor. Landor was never mastered by his period, though still in harmony with it; in short he was not a discordant but an independent singer. He was the pioneer of the late English school and among recent poets, though far from being the greatest in achievement was the most self-reliant, the most versatile and one of the most imaginative. In his various works we are chiefly impressed by their constant exhibition of mental prowess and everywhere confronted with an eager and incomparable intellect. Landor was a poet for poets, of clear vision and assured utterance throughout the Victorian Years. His station resembles that of a bulkhead defending the sea-wall of some lasting structure—a mole or pier built out from tuneful, grove-shaded Arcadian shores. He stretches far into the channel along which the tides of literary fashion have ebbed and flowed. Other poets, leading or following the changeful current often appear to leave him behind; but often find themselves again where he looms, unchanged and dauntless wearing a lighted beacon at his head. Why, among Victorian poets should I first mention Landor, who was born under George III, who bandied epithets with Byron, was the life-long friend of Southey—the contemporary, likewise, in their prime of Wordsworth, Scott and Coleridge; in whose maturity occurred the swift and shining transits of Keats and Shelley, like the flights of shooting stars; whose most imposing poem was given to the world at a date earlier than the first consulate of Napoleon; who lived from the times of Warton and Pye to see three successive laureates renew the freshness of England's faded coronal, while he sang aloof and took no care? Because more truly than another declared of himself, he stood among these but not of them; greater or less but different and with the difference of a time then yet to follow. His style, thought and versatility were Victorian rather than Georgian. They are now seen to belong to that school of which Tennyson is by eminence the representative. His manner was that of recent years. He not only lived into the Victorian Era where he saw the reflection and naturalism of Wordsworth produce fatigue but he lived to the borders of a reaction from that finesse and technical perfection which succeeded. His influence yet has scarcely grown to reputation by communication from the select few to the receptive many though he has always stood unwittingly, at the head of a normal school teaching the teachers. Despite his appreciation

of the antique his genius found daily excitants in new discovery, action and thought; he never reached that senility to which earlier modes and generations seem the better but was first to welcome progress and was thoroughly up with the times. The larger portion of his work saw print long after Tennyson began to compose and his epic, tragedies and miscellaneous poems were not brought together until 1840. Hence while it is hard to confine him to a single period, he is a tall and reverend landmark of the period under review, and the day has come for measuring him as a Victorian Poet whatever he may have been in any other. Nor is he to be observed as an eccentric and curious spectacle but as a distinguished figure among the best. As an artist, he was like a maple, swift of development, but strong to hold it as an elm or oak; while many poets have done their best work under thirty and ten years after have been old or dead, the very noontide of Landor's faculties was later than his fiftieth year. We could not regard him as a tyro, had he died like Keats, at twenty-five nor as a jaded old man dying as he did at ninety. For he was as conservative in youth as he ever grew to be and as fiery and forward-looking in age as in youth. He attained the summit early and moved along an elevated plateau forbearing as he grew older to descend the further side, and at death flung off somewhere into the ether, still facing the daybreak and worshipped by many rising stars. He was born by Shakespeare's stream and verily inhaled something of the master's spirit at his birth. Once in the flush of conscious power he sang of himself:

"I drank of Avon too, a dangerous draught,
That roused within the feverish thirst of song".

Lowell has said of him that "excepting Shakespeare, no other writer has furnished so many delicate aphorisms of human nature". In literature his range is unequalled by that of Coleridge who was so opulent and suggestive; in philosophy, history and poetic art, Goethe is not wiser or more imaginative though often more calm and great. I place Landor amongst the foremost poets because it was the poet within the man that made him great; his poetry belongs to a high order of that art. Radically a poet, he ranks among the best poets of his time and with Milton, Coleridge and Emerson he shares the honor of being an intellectual student and thinker. His works are deficient in that broad human sympathy through which Shakespeare has found his way to the highest and lowest understandings—just as the cloud seems to one a temple, to another a continent, to the child a fairy-palace but is dazzling and glorious to all. Landor belonged to the Parnassian aristocracy; he was a poet for poets and one who personally impressed the finest organizations. Consider the names of those who having met him perceived in him something great and worshipful. His nearest friends and admirers were Southey, Wordsworth, Hunt, Milnes, Brown, Emerson, Carlyle, Browning, Swinburne and a host of others.

His early verses like those of Shelly and Brown have a stilted academic flavor and though witty enough were instigated by youthful conceit and abhorrence of conventional authority. They were followed by red-hot political satire in the diction and metre of Pope.

-II-

In mentioning a few of Landor's gems I shall not go back very far nor shall I delay on his great work "Gebir" because that was written in 1798. Suffice it is to say that art, treatment and imagination were well brought out; there his language, imagery and versification were extraordinary. I shall pass over "The Phocaeans" an unfinished epic; likewise the "Charitable Dowager" and his various Icelandic poems. Then a great many poems often put forth in pamphlet form making little mark at the time but all idiosyncratic, Landorian though closer scrutiny of them need not detain us here. His literary life was like the firmament whose darkest openings are interspersed with scattered stars but only the luminous, superior constellations herewith invite our regard. Landor as I have said was noticeable among recent poets as an artist and the earliest to revive the partially forgotten elegance of English verse. Whoever considers the metrical product of our era must constantly bear in mind the stress laid upon the technics of the poet's calling. No shiftlessness has been tolerated and Landor was the first to honor his work with all the finish that a delicate ear and faultless touch could bestow upon it. Look at his "Hellenics". You discern at a glance that it is only what is natural to him and reached by the first intention; that he falsified the distich with reference to easy writing and hard reading and composed admirably at first draught. By way of contrast one sees that much of the famous poetry of the day has been carved with pains "laborious, orient ivory, sphere in sphere". A poor workman blames his tools but Landor was so truly an artist that he took the nearest instrument which suggested itself and wrought out his conceptions to his own satisfaction whether others relished them or not. His thoughts often ran as freely in Latin numbers as in English. For criticism Landor had a determined bent which displays itself in his poems and essays. The critical and creative natures are rarely united in one person. But Landor lived in a critical age and so acute was his sense of fitness of things that it compelled him to estimate and comment upon every literary production that came under his observation. While the literary consciousness and thoroughly genuine art of Landor's poetry are recognized by all of his own profession, much of it like certain still-life painting is chiefly valuable for technical beauty and admired by the poet rather than by the popular critic. The touch of the master, the quality of the poet is dominant over all. His voice was sweet and he could not speak unmusically. His daintiest trifles show this. They are found at random like precious stones sometimes broken and incomplete but every one pure in color and absolutely without flaw. With regard to the fame of Landor it may be said that while he has not reached a rank which emboldens any publisher to issue a complete edition of his varied and extensive writings and even his poems alone are not brought together and sold with Byron, Longfellow, Tennyson and other public favourites, it is certain however that he has emerged from that condition in which DeQuincey designated him as a man of great genius who might lay claim to a reputation on the basis of NOT BEING READ. He has gained a hearing from a fit audience though few which will have its successors through many generations. His fame is more secure possibly than that of some of his popular contemporaries. Peruse for a moment "Cupid and Pan" "Dryope" and "The Last Fruit off an Old Tree" Who but Landor could have written the faultless and pathetic

quatrain?

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art,
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It, sinks and I am ready to depart".

Deaf, lame and blind as Landor was—"qualis artifex perit". The poems and criticisms of his last three years of life are full of thought and excellence. The love of song stayed by him and like all true poets young in feeling to the last. The foibles of his latter days some say obscured his genius. To us at this distance they seem only the tremors of the dying lion. When at the age of eighty-nine years he breathed his last at Florence it was indeed like the death of some monarch of the forest, most untamed when powerless, away from the region which gave him birth and the air which fostered his scornful yet heroic spirit.

Once more I crave your indulgence while I couple the names of three more Victorian poets whose works very clearly reflect certain phases of English life and Literature. It would be difficult to select three more unlike one another in genius, motive and the results of their devotion to art or any three whose relation to their period can be defined so justly by a process of contrast and comparison. Here are the poet of sympathy, the poet of cultured intellect and the born vocalist of lyric song. The first is thoroughly democratic in his expression of the mirth and tragedy of common life. The second equally represents his era with its excess of culture, subtle intellectuality, poverty of theme, reliance upon the beauty and wisdom of the past. His sympathies may be no less acute but the popular instinct has deemed them loyal to his own class; his humanity takes little note of individuals but regards social and psychological problems in the abstract; as for his genius it is critical rather than creative. The last of this trinity is delightful for the troubadour quality of his minstrelsy; a poet and song-writer loving poetry for itself possessing what the musician would call a genuine "voice" and giving blithe, unstudied utterance to his tuneful impulses. Hood is the poet of the crowd; Arnold of the closet; Procter of the open air, all are purely English and belong to the England of the Victorian Times. I shall not delay long on these poets for I must hurry on to others acclaimed with greater eclat by the people. A few words relative to each will have to suffice. Hood has a portion of almost every gift belonging to a poet. His sympathetic instinct was especially tender and alert; he was the poet of the heart and sound at heart himself; the poet of humane sentiment, clarified by a living spring of humor which kept it from any taint of sentimentalism. To read his poetry is to laugh and weep by turns; to take on human charity; to regard the earth mournfully yet be thankful as he was for what sunshine falls upon it and to accept manfully as he did, each one's condition, however toilsome and suffering, under the changeless law that impels and governs all. Even his artistic weaknesses were frolicsome and endearing. Much of his verse was the poetry of the beautiful in a direction opposite to that of the metaphysical kind. Of his works I might mention "Hero and Leander"; "Venus and Adonis" "The Two Swans"; "The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies 2" and a number

of fine sonnets among which is "Fair Ines" certainly without a peer. Much of his verse exhibits a persistent defect which was due to his nervous imagination, that of overloading a poem with as much verbal and scenic detail as the theme and structure could be made to bear.

From the grave of Hood we pass to Matthew Arnold in some respects the antipode of Hood, who deals with precisely those elements of modern life which the former had least at heart. Arnold, through culture and good fortune achieved greater poetical success than one should expect from his native gifts. His verse often was the result not of "first intention" but of determination and judgment. Yet his taste is so cultivated and his mind so clear that between the two he has overleapt the bounds of nature and almost falsified the adage that a poet is born, not made. He is an illustrious example of the power of training and the human will. Lacking the ease of the lyricist, the boon of a melodious voice, he has by a tour de force, composed poems which show little deficiency of either gift; has won reputation and has impressed himself upon his age as the apostle of culture and classical restraint. There is a passion of the heart and a passion of the brain. If Arnold as a poet, lacks spontaneity, his intellectual processes on the contrary are spontaneous and sometimes rise to a loftiness which no mere lyricist without unusual mental faculty can ever attain. His head not only predominates but exalts his somewhat languid heart. A poet once sang of a woman:

"Affections are as thoughts to her".

but thought with Arnold was as poetical as affection and in a measure supplies its place. He had an intellectual love for the good, beautiful or true but impart to us a vague impression that he cares less for man in the concrete than for man in the abstract—a not unusual phenomenon among aesthetic reformers. We fail to find in Arnold's poems that blithe, gay off-hand poem. Yet he can be very nobly lyrical in certain uneven measures depending upon tone and which like "Philomela" express an ecstatic sensibility.

In other poems which reveal his saddest and profoundest intellectual moods he is subjective and refutes his own theory, that of epic or classical objectivity well and characteristically set forth in "Soharb and Rustum". But an objective method is well suited to a man of large or subtle intellect and educated tastes who is deficient in the minor sympathies. Through it he can allow his imagination full play and give a pleasure to readers without affecting that feminine instinct which really is not a constituent of his poetic mold. Arnold had little quality or lightness of touch. His hand was rough, his voice rough by nature yet both are refined by practice and thorough study of the best models. His shorter metres used as the framework of poems and lyrics were rarely successful. But through familiarity with the Greek choruses he caught something of their irregular beauty. "The Stayed Reveller" has much of this unfettered charm. Arnold was restricted in the range of his affections but that he was one who could love very loyally the few with whom he did enter into sympathy through consonance of traits or experience is shown in his emotional poems entitled "Faded Leaves" and "Indifference" and in later pieces which display more lyrical fluency "Calais Sands" and "Dover Beach". A prosaic manner injures many of his lyrics, at least he did not seem to distinguish clearly between the functions of poetry and of prose. He is more

at ease in long stately and swelling measures whose graver movement accords with a serious and elevated purpose. Judged as works of art "Soharb Rustum" and "Balder Dead" really are majestic poems. Their blank verse like that of the "Morte d'Arthur" is the result of the author's Homeric studies. Arnold explains his own position quite well in the following words "In the sincere endeavor to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to guide myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They at any rate knew what they wanted in art and we do not. It is this uncertainty which is disheartening and not hostile criticism". He surely summed up the situation cleverly when he said:

"Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harassed to attain,
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide,
And luminous view to gain".

Arnold as it were, falters upon the march, conscious of a mission too weighty for him to bear—that of spiritualizing what he deems an era of unparalleled materialism. The Victorian Age was materialistic. He found the age dull and mean and with Hamlet he cried:

"The time is out of joint, O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right".

And as Hamlet, in action, was inferior to lesser personages around him, he thus yields to introspection while protesting against it. He thus falls behind the bard of a fresher inspiration or more propitious time. In all this we discern the burden of a thoughtful man who in vain, longs to create some masterpieces in art and whose yearning and self-esteem make him loath to acknowledge his limitations even to himself. But the bent of Arnold's faculty lies in the direction rather of criticism and argument than of imaginative literature. This is evident from the increase of his prose work over that of his poetic endeavors. His essays are illuminated by his poetic imagination and he thus became a better prose writer than a mere didactician ever could be. In short we may regard Arnold's poetry as an instance of what elevated verse, in the Victorian Period could be written, with comparative little spontaneity by a man whose vigorous intellect was etherealized by culture and deliberately created for itself an atmosphere of "Sweetness and light".

It is indeed a wide leap Arnold to "Barry Cornwall" under which familiar and musical lyricism, Waller Procter has had more singers of his songs than students of his graver pages. No lack of spontaneity here. Freedom is the life and soul of his delicious melodies composed during thralldom to the most prosaic work yet tuneful as the carols of a lark upon the wing. It is hard to think of Procter as a lawyer who used to chant to himself on a London omnibus on his daily journeys to and from the city. I did not know lawyers were poetically inclined. The special quality of his poems is that however carelessly fashioned it is alive with the energy of music; the voice of the stanzas have a constant tendency to break into music. The spirit of melody is predominant. To freedom and melody he adds more refinement than any songwriter of the Victorian Era and has a double right to his station

in the group under review. His stanzaic poems have in fact the rare merit of uniting the grace and imagery of the lyric to the music and fashion of song. His songs have an excellence of "mode" which renders them akin to the melodies of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, Heywood and Fletcher. More than other poets Procter tempts a reader to linger on the path of criticism and make selection of the jewels scattered here and there. Like the man in the enchanted cavern one cannot refrain from picking up a ruby or an emerald though forbidden by the compact ~~xxxxx~~ made. The later chips from Procter's poetic and dramatic workshop are superior to his earlier blank-verse in wisdom, strength and beauty. He lingered to an extreme old age, a white-haired, silent minstrel into whose secluded mind, the reproach would have fallen unheeded the reproach of the world which wanted more of his poems, and who pleaded with him thus "Thou indolent, grey-headed old man sing us again songs of the dreams of thy youth". Among his most beautiful works were "A Petition to time"; "Life"; "Peace". What can tears Avail". Time will not permit me to indulge in a criticism of the latter works for I must advance to the poets of greater magnitude and popularity, at least greater in the opinion of the poetical world. Whether that contention can be upheld or whether the applause of the great populace which inhabits the world, is a safe criterion to judge by, I shall not attempt to say. But I shall leave the so-called minor poets and live for a few moments with the greater luminaries.

There are some poets whom we picture to ourselves as surrounded with aureolas; who are clothed in so pure an atmosphere that when we speak of them our language must express that tender fealty which sanctity and exaltation compel from all mankind. We are not sure of our judgment; ordinary tests fail us. The pearl is a pearl though discolored; fire is fire though shrouded in vapor or tinged with murky hues. We do not see clearly for often our eyes are blinded with tears; we love, we cherish, we revere. The memory and career of Elizabeth Barrett Browning appear to us like some beautiful ideal. Nothing is earthly though all is human; a spirit is passing before our eyes yet of like passions with ourselves and encased in a frame so delicate that every fibre is alive with feeling and tremulous with radiant thought. Her genius may certainly be compared to those sensitive palpitating flames which harmonically rise and fall in response to every sound vibration near them. Her whole being was rhythmic and in a time when art is largely for itself alone her utterances were the expression of her inmost soul. I have said that while the composite period has exhibited many phases of poetic art it is not difficult with respect to each of them taken singly to find some former epoch more distinguished. The Elizabethan Age surpassed the age of which I write in dramatic creation and in those madrigals and canzonets which to transpose Mendelssohn's fancy are music without harping; the Protectorate developed more epic grandeur; the Georgian Era more romantic sentiment and strength of wing. The Victorian Era, with its wider range of possibilities for women has been illumined by the career of the greatest female poet that England has ever produced at any time; more than this the most inspired woman (not of course with virtue for which we are all sorry) of all who have composed in ancient or modern tongues or flourished in any land

or time. What have we of Sappho beyond a few exquisite fragments a disputed story, the broken strings of a remote and traditional island lyre? Yet from Sappho down including the poetry of Southern and Northern Europe and the whole melodious greensward of English song, the remains of what woman are left to us which in quantity and inspiration compete with those of Elizabeth Browning? What poet of her own sex except Sappho did she herself find worthy a place among the forty immortals grouped in the hemicycle of her own "Vision of Poets"? Her style from the beginning was strikingly original, uneven to an extreme degree equally remarkable for defects and beauties of which the former gradually lessened and the latter grew more admirable as she advanced in years and experience. The effect of Mrs. Browning's secluded life was visible in her diction which was acquired from books rather than by intercourse with the living world and from books of all periods so that she seemed unconscious that certain words were obsolete or, repellent even to cultured and tasteful people. Reviewers who accused her of affectation were partly correct yet many uncouth phrases and forgotten words seemed to her no less available than common forms obtained from the same source. Her taste never seemed quite developed but through life subordinate to her excess of feeling. For a time she showed a lack of the true artist's reverence and not without egotism followed her wilful way. The difficulty with her obsolete words was that they were introduced unnaturally and produced a grotesque effect instead of an attractive quaintness. Moreover her slovenly elisions, indiscriminate mixture of old and new verbal inflections, eccentric rhymes, forced accents, wearisome repetition of favored words to a degree that almost displayed and implied poverty of thought—such matters were justly held to be an outrage upon the beauty and dignity of metrical art. An occasional discord has its use and charm but harshness in her verse was the rule rather than the exception. When she had a felicitous refrain she frequently would mar the effect and give a shock to her readers by the introduction of some whimsical or repulsive image. Her passion was spasmodic; her sensuousness lacked substance; as for simplicity, it was at one time questionable whether she was not to be classed among those who, with a turbulent desire for utterance really have nothing definite to say. Her sonnet on "The Soul's Expression" showed that the only thing clear to her ~~xxx~~ mind was that she could state nothing clearly:

"With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right,
That music of my nature day and night,
With dream and thought and feeling interwound".

I cannot delay as long as I would on Mrs. Browning. Three more poets are still to be considered and to them I must of necessity give the greater portion of my efforts. Mrs. Browning is to be regarded as the representative of her sex in the Victorian Era. She is a luminous example of the fact that "woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse". She is also the passion-flower of the century: the conscious medium of some power beyond the veil. For if she was wanting in reverence for the form and body of the poet's art, she more than all her tuneful brethren revered the poet's inspiration. To her poets were:

"The only truth tellers now left to God,
The only speakers of essential truth,
opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths, the only holders by
His sun-skirts".

She surrendered herself to the play of her imagination as if some angelic voice were speaking through her. With equal powers of expression such a faith exalts the bard to an apocalyptic prophet. It seemed to those around her as if she died beholding

"in jasper-stone as clear as glass,
The first foundations of that new, near Day,
Which should be builded out of Heaven to God".

I am going to give but a casual and cursory glance at Robert Browning and his works not that he does not deserve especial mention and consideration but simply because the outstanding figure of the Victorian Era has yet to claim my attention.

In a study of Browning, the most original and unequal of poets, three features obviously present themselves. His poetic and dramatic gift so rare in the materialistic Victorian times; his method-the eccentric quality of his expression-constantly intrudes upon the reader; lastly the moral of his verse warrants a closer examination than we give to the sentiments of a more conventional poet.

It is customary to call Browning a Dramatist and without doubt he represents the dramatic element of the recent English school. Although Browning's earlier poems were in the form of plays and have a dramatic purpose still they are in spirit and method, poetic. They have the sacred rage and fire and the flame of the poet. I shall not speak of his dramatic efforts but confine myself to a few remarks relative to his poetry.

Browning's manner is so eccentric as to challenge attention and greatly affect our estimate of him as a Poet. Eccentricity is not a proof of genius and even an artist should remember that originality consists not only in doing things differently but also in doing them better. The genius of Shakespeare and Moliere enlarged and beautified their style; it did not distort it. The lines

"O many are the poets that are sown,
By Nature, men endowed with highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine,
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse".

imply that the recognized poet is one who gives voice in expressive language to the common thought and feeling which lie deeper than ordinary speech. He is the interpreter; moreover he is the maker, an artist of the beautiful, the inventor of harmonious numbers which shall be a lure and a repose. Browning has the qualities. Did he make the best of them? There is a conflict of opinion on this point which I shall not try to unravel. He is said to have succeeded "by a series of failures" as far as notoriety means success and despite the perpetuation of his faults. A very learned scholar and poet was asked, "How does Browning's work impress you?" His reply was: "Now that I try to formulate the sensation which it has always given me, his work seems that of a grand intellect painfully striving for adequate use and expression and never quite attaining either". This is my own feeling. The question arises, What was at fault? Browning's genius, his chosen mode of expression, his period, or one and all of these? After the flush of youth is over, a poet must have

wise method if he would move ahead. There is something amiss in one who has to grope for his theme and cannot adjust himself to his period. Especially in one who cannot agreeably handle such themes as he arrives at them. More than this however, is the difficulty in Browning's case. Expression is the flower of thought; a fine imagination is wont to be rhythmical and creative and many passages scattered throughout the works of Browning show that this is no exception. It is a certain caprice or perverseness of method that, by long practice has injured his gift of expression; while an abnormal power of ratiocination and a prosaic regard for details have handicapped him from the beginning. Besides intellectual arrogance and scorn of authority he has insulted Beauty herself, and furnished too much excuse for small offenders. What may be condoned in one of his breed is intolerable when mimicked by every jackanapes and self-appointed reformer. A group of evils then, has interfered with the greatness of his poetry. His style is that of a man caught in a brass of ideas through which he has to travel, wearily floundering, gasping here and there and often sinking deeper while there seems no prospect of getting through. His latest works were more involved and course, less beautiful and elevating than most of those which preceded them. His theory apparently must have been that poetry is valuable only for the statement which it makes and must always be subordinate thereto.

Browning's early lyrics and occasional passages of more recent date show that he has melodious intervals and could be very artistic with a loss of original power. Often the ring of his verse is sonorous and overcomes the jagged consonantal diction with stirring lyrical effect. The Cavalier Tunes" are examples. Such choruses as;

"Marching along, fifty-score strong,

Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song".

These with, "Boot, saddle, to horse and away" show that Browning can put a verse the spirit of a historic period and had in him the making of a lyric poet.

From among his lighter pieces I will select for present mention, two very unlike each other; one as delightful a child's poem as ever was written, in fancy and airy extravagance and having a wildness and pathos all its own - the daintiest bit of folklore in English verse - refer to that poem which we have all studied as children, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin". The other,

"Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead,

Sit and watch by her side an hour".

appeals like Wordsworth's "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" and Keats's "Rose Aylmer" to the hearts of learned and unlettered, one and all.

Browning's style is the more aggressive because in compelling Beauty itself to suffer a change and conform to all exigencies it presents such a contrast to the refined art of our day. I have shown that much of this is due to natural awkwardness, but that Browning was able on fortunate occasions to better his work is equally true. More often he has either let his verse have its way or has shaped a theory of art by his own restrictions and with that contempt for the structure of his song which Plato and St. Paul entertained for their fleshly bodies. If his mischief had ceased here, it would not have been so bad. But his genius has won pupils who copy his vices without his strength. For so much of Browning's crudeness as comes from inability to express himself or to find a proper theme he may readily be forgiven; but whatever is due to real or assumed irreverence for the divine art, among whose

potaries he stands enrolled, is a grievous wrong unworthy of the humble and delightful spirit of the true craftsman. He forgot that art is the bride of the imagination from whose embraces true creative work must spring. Concerning realism, it is not well that repulsive or petty facts should always be recorded. Only the high, essential truths demand a poet's illumination. The obscurity wherein Browning disguises his realism is but the semblance of imagination—a mist through which rugged details jut out, while the central truth is feebly to be seen.

Passing over his dramas and many of his poems we come to a class of poems which I might call "emotional poems". Their moral appears to be that of the apothegm that "Attractions are proportional to destinies"; poems of rationalistic freedom as opposed to Calvinism; of a belief that the greatest sin does not consist in giving rein to our desires but in stinting or too prudently repressing them. Life must have its full and free development. And as love is the master passion, he is most earnest in illustrating this belief from its good or evil progress and to this end he has composed his most impressive verse. Of course no Catholic could agree with these statements and no student of Scholastic Philosophy. But that is not the point. I am not arguing. I am simply stating facts, false as they are. And a fact such as stated above can be false even though it may appear a bit paradoxical that a fact could be false. The main moral of Browning's emotional poetry seems to be that the unpardonable sin is "to dare something against nature". To set bounds to love is to commit that sin. But he is at any rate an artist and it is not my province to discuss the ethics of this matter but simply to speak of it as a fact.

"IN a Balcony" is the longest and finest of his emotional poems. The story is clearly wrought; his language is exquisite. The lonely queen in the poem, barter power and pride for love, clutching at this one thing as at Heaven and feels,

"How soon a smile of God can change the world".

Then upon discovery of a cruel deceit her vengeance and despair is well brought out:

"IN her first passion woman loves her lover,
In all the others, all she loves is love".

"A Light Woman" is a poem which turns upon the right of every soul however despicable, to its own happiness and to freedom from the meddling of others. The words attest the boundless liberty and sovereignty of love. His longest poem is "The Ring and the Book". The special quality is affluence; limitless wealth of language and illustration. The poems included under the above caption abound in the material of poetry. This latter work is the extreme of realistic art and considered to be Browning's greatest work. To review it would require many pages. As the product of sheer intellect this surpasses all his poems.

A fair estimate of Browning may I think be obtained from what I have already said. It is hard to speak of one whose verse is a metrical paradox. I have called him the most unequal and the most original of poets. He continually descended to a prosaic level but at times was elevated to the Laureate's highest flights. Without realizing the proper functions of art, he nevertheless sympathized with the joyous liberty of its devotees. His life may be conventional but he

never forgot the Latin Quarter and often celebrated that freedom in love and song which is the soul of Beranger's

"Dans un grenier qu'on est bien a vingt ans".

He was an eclectic and would not be restricted in his themes. On the other hand he gives us too gross a mixture of poetry, fact and metaphysics, appearing to have no sense of composite harmony but revels in arabesque strangeness and confusion. He has a barbaric sense of color and lack of form. Striving against the trammels of verse, he really is far less a master of expression than others who make less resistance. Much of his poetry is either very great or very poor. It has been compared to Wagner's music and entitled "the poetry of the future". But if this be just then we must revise our conception of what poetry really is. His greatness lies in his originality; his error, arising from perverseness or congenital defect, is the violation of natural and beautiful laws. This renders his longer poems of less worth than his lyrical studies, while, through avoidance of it, productions, differing as widely as "The Eve of St. Agnes" and "In Memoriam" will outlive "The Ring and The Book". Commentators in writing of Arnold cite the quotation of Goethe's distinction between the dilettanti who affect genius and despise art and those who respect their calling though not gifted with high creative power. Browning escapes the limitations of the latter class but incurs the reproach visited upon the former and by his contempt of beauty or inability to surely express it, fails of that union of art and spiritual power which always characterizes a poet "entirely great".

As I have already said, all periods are transitional yet it may be said that the calling of the English poets during the Victorian Era was a struggle, not so much for recognition as for the vital influence which constitutes a genuine existence. The latter day singers, who bear a special relation to the immediate future are like those Priests of the Sun who, on hills over-looking the temple of strange gods and above the tumult of a hostile Nation tend the sacred fire in the presence of their band of devotees and wait for the coming of a fairer day. Not that the blood of Englishmen at that time was more frigid and their wants more sordid than the blood and wants of the English of old. The time was I think, sufficiently imaginative. Love of excitement, the most persistent of human motives was strong as ever. But the sources then and now are various which supply to the imagination that stimulus for which the new generation otherwise might resort to poetry. The Victorian Era, as I have said, was an age of journalism just as to-day is the age of journalists. All the acts of the world are narrated by the daily press. It was a time of criticism and scholarship similar to the Alexandrian Period of Greek thought. It was the noon-tide of imaginative work in prose and so largely did great novelists supplant the poets in general regard that annalists designate the Victorian period as "the age of Prose Romance". Then again readers during the period under review were confronted with those wonders of science which have a double effect-destroying the old poetic diction and imagery and elevating the soul with beauty and sublimity beyond anything proffered by verse of the idyllic kind. The poets tried to meet the exigency but their efforts were timid and hardly successful. Their art though noble and refined, rarely swayed the multitude or even

and the literary progress of the time-that which verse was wont to do in the great poetic epochs. Year by year these adverse conditions have been more severely felt. To-day I venture to say poets would get but scant consideration with the movies and the wild desire for excitement to contend against. To the later poets of the Victorian Era the conditions were most oppressive. Those poets who braved the times were called minor poets to whom I have referred in the earlier part of my thesis. We could not possibly give much attention to those minor poets; not that they might not warrant our attention and expenditure of time; but for reasons which I have already stated, namely lack of acclaim by the populace. We seek for those who are distinguished not only by power and individuality but by the importance of their accomplished work. Thus three or four of these so-called minor satellites require specific attention. Of the four whose names most readily occur to the mind-Buchanan, Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne-the first holds an isolated position; the remaining three though their gifts are entirely distinctive, have an appearance of association through sympathy in taste or studies-so that while to classify them as a school might be unphilosophical, to think of one is to recall the others. Such a group is not without precedent. It is not for this cause that I include the three under one review; if it were so Buchanan from his antagonistic position well might be placed elsewhere. The fact is that all are latter-day poets and need not object to meet in the house of a friend on the footing of guests. With the exception of Rossetti these later poets are like in at least one respect. They are distinguished from the Farringford School by a less condensed, more affluent order of work; are prodigal of their verse ~~pouring~~ pouring it out in youth and flooding the ear with rhythm. There is no nursing of couplets and so fruitful a yield may be taken as the evidence of a rich and fertile soil.

A few words about each of the above mentioned quartette. Judged either by his verse or his critical writings Robert Buchanan seems to have a highly developed poetic temperament, with great earnestness, strength of conviction and sensitiveness to points of right and wrong. Upon the whole, he represents, possibly more than any other man of that era, the Scottish element in literature-an element that stubbornly retains its characteristics just as Scotch blood manages to hold its own through many changes of emigration, intermarriage or long descent. The most prosaic Scotsman has something of the imagination and warmth of feeling that belongs to a poet. He wears his heart upon his sleeve; his naivete and self-consciousness subject him to charges of egotism; he has strong friends but makes as many enemies by tilting against other people's convictions and by zealous advocacy of his own. It is difficult for such a man to confine himself to pure art and Buchanan is no exception to the rule. He is essentially a Scotsman not only in push and aggressiveness but in versatility, in general love and knowledge of nature and in his religious aspiration. The latter does not manifest itself through allegiance to any belief but through a spirit of individual inquiry resulting in speculations which he advances with all the fervor and I might say, mistaken zeal, of Knox or Chalmers and thus furnishes another illustration that every Scot has a creed of his. England can afford to tolerate the metaphysics of Scotland for the sake of her poetry. Buchanan was a transcendentalist and he made his verse the exponent of transcendentalism and thus in his chosen quest after the knowledge of good and evil has placed himself apart from the other poets of his time.

Rossetti is one of those men whose significant position is not so much due to the amount of work which they produce as to its quality and to the principles it has suggested. Such leaders often are found and influence contemporary thought by the personal magnetism that attracts young and eager spirits to gather around them. Sometimes a man of this kind in respect to creative labor is greater than his productions. But if Rossetti's special attitude has been of more account than his poetry it is not because he lacks the power to equalize the two. He has chosen to give his energies to a kindred art of expression for which his genius is no less decided. Yet his influence as a poet, judging from his writings and from a meagre knowledge of his life and associates seems to be radical and more or less enduring.

A stream broadens as it flows. In the careers of Morris and Swinburne we see the forms of extension through the indestructibility of nature is secured for a specific mode of art. The instinct is not far wrong which connects these poets with Rossetti and calls the circle by his name. Three men could not be more independent of one another in their essential gifts; yet there is some common chain between them to which the clew most likely was obtained first by Rossetti. But the element which Rossetti's verse and bearing have brought into English poetry holds to that art, the relation of Pre-Raphaelite painting and decoration of the academic kind. The term realism constantly is used to cloak the mediocrity of artists whose designs are stiff, barren and grotesque. They deal with the minor facts of art unable to compass the major; their labor is scarcely useful as a stepping-stone to higher things; if it were not so unimaginative it would have more value as a protest against conventionalism and a guide to something new. But Rossetti, a man of genius, has lighted his canvas and his pages with a quality that is more ennobling. He has discerned the spirit of beauty, wandering within the confines of a region whose landscape is visible, not to groundlings, but to the poet's finer sight. His verse odd and weird as it may appear at first sight is full of exaltation and lyrical power. In measuring his career as a poet we perceive that he has moved in a somewhat narrow range with respect to both the thought and the method of his compositions but that he approaches Tennyson in simplicity, purity and richness of tone. His verse is compact of tenderness, emotional ecstasy and poetic fire.

William Morris may be described, to use the phrase of Hawthorne as an artist of the Beautiful. He delights in the manifestation of objective beauty. Morris was absorbed in the loveliness of his romantic work and as an artist seems to find enchantment and content. He sings of himself thus and proves what I have been trying to show, namely that the Victorian poets were born out of their time:

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,

Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

As for his poetry it is of a sort which must have been delightful to construct; wholly removed from self, breeding neither anguish nor disquiet but full of soft music and a familiar olden charm. So easeful to read it could not have been unrestful to compose and to the maker was its own reward. He always keeps within ~~xxx~~ his self-allotted region. He was a wise, sweet and very fortunate bard.

A correlative moral runs through all his poetry; one which, it must be owned, savors of pagan fatalism. The thought conveyed is that nothing should concern men but to enjoy what hollow goods the gods award us. This tinge of fatalism has a saddening effect on his verse and thus far

essens its charms. One of his critics has well said: "A poet, in this age of the world, who would be immortal must write as if he himself believed in immortality". We have seen that the poetry of Morris is thoroughly sweet and wholesome, fair with the beauty of green fields and summer skies and pervaded by a restful charm. Yet it is but the choicest fashion of romantic narrative-verse. His imagination was clear but never lofty. He never raised the soul to elevated thoughts and deeds. Readers who look for passion, faith and high imaginings will find his measures empty in the end.

Algernon Charles Swinburne next to Tennyson, is possibly the greatest, at least the most read of the Victorian poets. Swinburne had a faculty of expression so brilliant as to obscure the other elements which are to be found in his verse and constantly led him beyond the wisdom of art. But I wish to speak mainly and at some length upon the one faculty in which Swinburne excels any other living or departed English poet; in which I doubt, if his equal has existed among recent poets of any tongue unless Shelley be excepted or possibly some mystic of the modern French School. This is his miraculous gift of rhythm, his command over the unsuspected resources of a language. Shelley had a like power as shown in "Prometheus Unbound". Before the advent of Swinburne we did not realize the full scope of English verse. In his hands it is like a violin in the hands of Paganini. The range of his fantasias, roulades, arias, new effects of measure and sound is incomparable with anything hitherto known. The first emotion of one who studies even his immature work is that of wonder at the freedom and richness of his diction, the susurrus of his rhythm, his unconscious alliterations, the endless change of his syllabic harmonies resulting in the alternate softness and strength, height and fall, riotous or chastened music, of his affluent verse. He was a born tamer of words, a subduer of this most stubborn yet most copious of the literary tongues. In his poetry we discover qualities we did not know were in the language—a softness that seemed Italian, a rugged strength we thought was German, a blithe and debonnaire lightness we despaired of capturing from the French. He has added a score of new stops and pedals to the instrument. He has introduced partly from other tongues, stanzaic forms, measures and effects untried before and has brought out the swiftness and force of metres like the anapestic, carrying each to perfection at a single trial. Words in his hands were like the ivory balls of the juggler and all words seemed to be in his hands. Speaking only of his command over language and metre I have a right to reaffirm and to show by illustrations that he is the most sovereign of rhythmists. He compels the inflexible elements to his use. Chaucer is more limpid, Shakespeare more kingly, Milton loftier at times, Byron has an unaffected power, but neither Shelley nor the greatest of his predecessors is so rhythmic and no one has been in all moods so absolute an author of verse. He was a master of expression. Did he carry expression to a fatiguing excess? He may have gone too far at times. The fruit may be and possibly here is, too luscious; the flower is often of an odor too intoxicating to endure. Yet what execution he had! The voice may not have been equal to the grandest music nor trained and restrained as it should be. But the voice is there and its possessor had the finest natural organ to which this or the last generation have listened.

Much criticism has been directed at Swinburne for "His Poems and Ballads". Here he described a series of wild Gothic verses which were full of sensuous and turbid passion. This was a grave mistake and the

author admitted his error. These poems were an offence against good taste and discretion. Still we must forgive Swinburne's youthful antics on account of his subsequent good works. In some of Swinburne's pieces we discover the influence which French art and literature has exerted upon the author. His acquaintance with the round of French minstrelsy made it natural for him to produce a kind of work that first would not be relished by the British taste and ear. The richness of these beautiful French qualities brought into the English verse by Swinburne has made amends for his Gallic sensualism. Two pieces against which special objection has been made, "Anactoria" and "Dolores" exhibit great beauty of treatment and a mystical though abnormal feeling. The author held them to be dramatic studies written for men and not for babes and connects them with "The Garden of Prosperine" and "Hesperia" in order to illustrate the transition from passion to satiety and thence to wisdom and repose.

In Swinburne's poems we do not perceive the love of nature which was so passionate an element in the works of Shelley. Yet he was a poet of renown. His earlier poems were undoubtedly tinged with immorality. It was a great mistake but he recovered. If rank unwholesome flowers spring from too rich a soil, in the end a single fruitful blossoming will compensate us for the sterile fleurs du mal of youth. This happened in Swinburne's case. Swinburne was accused also of lack of application. But works like his are not produced without energy and long industrious hours. If done at a heat, the slow hidden fire has never ceased its burning. After passion-reflection, taste, repose; and such have been the qualities displayed by the Victorian Poets in the contemplation of beauty and knowledge and in the production of their composite verse. Swinburne beyond the rest, having carried expression to its farthest extreme, obeys a healthful impulse began another cycle of creative song. Wisdom, beauty and passion, a blended trinity, constitute the poetic strength of every immortal poet. Possessing these attributes, Swinburne will live on. So long as the true critic's faith, hope and charity ~~and~~ (the greatest of these is charity) abide, Swinburne will retain his laurels as the greatest exponent of the triune spirit of Britain's noblest and most enduring song.

That a new king should arise "over Egypt which knew not Joseph" was but the natural order of events. The wonder is that nothing less than the death of one Pharaoh and the succession of another could oust a favourite from his position. But it is a common fact that as admired poets advance in years, the people and the critics begin to mistrust the quality of their genius and are disposed to revise the laudatory judgments formerly pronounced upon them and finally to claim that they have been overrated and are not so wonderful. Such was the case of Tennyson. The people allowed the other poets to sink into oblivion. Tennyson was the hero. The influence of Tennyson was fascinating and extended but in later years vexed the public mind. But it seems to me that the only just estimate of Tennyson's position is that which declares him to be by eminence the representative poet of the Victorian Era. Not like one or another of his compeers, representative of the melody, wisdom, passion or other partial phase of the era but of the time itself with its diverse elements, in harmonious conjunction. In his verse he is as truly "the glass of fashion and the mould of form", of the Victorian generation as Spenser was of the Elizabethan Court, Milton of the Protectorate and Pope of the reign of Queen Anne. His poetry has gathered all the elements which find vital expression in the complex modern art

Tennyson began as a metrical artist, pure and simple and with a feeling perfectly unique—at a long remove, even from that of so absolute an artist as was John Keats. He had very little notion beyond the production of rhythm, melody, color and other poetic effects. Instinct led him to construct his machinery before essaying to build. Many have discerned in his youthful pieces the influence of Wordsworth and Keats, but no less that of the Italian poets and of the early English Balladists. Meaningless as are the opening melodies of his collected verse they seemed so delicious in contrast with even the greatest productions which then held the public ear. Here was something of a new kind. The charm was legitimate. Tennyson proved his kindred genius by his instinctive study of details in his verse. He seemed to perceive from the outset that poetry is an art and chief of the fine arts; the easiest to dabble in; the hardest in which to reach true excellence; that it has its technical secrets; its mysterious lowly paths that reach to aerial outlooks. He devoted himself with the eager spirit of youth to mastering this exquisite art and wreaked his thoughts upon expression for the expression's sake. He had dreams rather than thoughts but was at the most sensitive period of his life with regard to rhythm, color and form.

It is difficult to realize how chaotic was the notion of art among English verse makers at the beginning of Tennyson's career. Not even the example of Keats had taught the needful lesson and the efforts of his successors were of small importance. These were dreamy experiments in metre and word-painting. Readers sought not to analyze their meaning and grace. The significance of art has since become so well understood and such results have been attained that "Claribel", "Lilian", "The Merman", "The Dying Swan", "The Owl", Etc. seem slight enough to us now; and even then, the affectation pervading them, which was merely the error of a poetic soul groping for its true form of expression, repelled men of severe and established tastes. But to the neophyte they had the charm of sighing winds and babbling waters, a wonder of luxury and weirdness, inexpressible, not to be effaced. To this day what lyrics better hold their own than "Mariana" and "The Recollections of the Arabian Nights". The poet exhibited distinctness of theme and motive and in a word seemed to feel that he had something to express if it were but the arabesque shadows of his fancy laden dreams. Even "The Hero and Leander" is too good to be discarded.

The volume of 1832 which began with "The Lady of Shalott" and contained "Eleanore", "Margaret", "The Miller's Daughter", "The Palace of Art", "The Lotos Eaters" was published in his twenty-second year. All in all a more beautiful and original volume of minor poetry was never added to our literature. The Tennysonian manner here was clearly developed, largely pruned of mannerisms. The command of delicious metres; the rhythmic susurrus of stanzas whose every word is as needful and studied as the flower or scroll of ornamental architecture—yet so much an interlaced portion of the whole, that the special device is forgotten in the general excellence; the effect of color, of that music which is a passion in itself, of the scenic pictures which are the counterparts of changeful emotions, all are here and the poet's work is the epitome of every mode in art. Even if these lyrics and idyls had expressed nothing they were of priceless value as guides to the renaissance of beauty. Thenceforward slovenly work was impossible, subject to instant rebuke by contrast. The force of metrical elegance made its way and carried everything before it. From this day Tennyson

confessedly took his place at the head of what some attempt to classify as the art-school, that is of poets who largely produce their effect by harmonizing scenery and detail with the emotions or impassioned action of their verse.

There comes a time in the life of an artist, when if he be a painter he tires of painting cabinet pictures; if a poet he says to himself, "Enough of lyrics and idyls; let me essay a masterpiece; a sustained production that shall bear to my former work the relation which an opera or oratorio bears to a composer's sonatas and canzonets". It may be that some feeling of this kind impelled Tennyson to write the "Princess" the theme and story of which are both his own invention. The poem is constructed of ancient and modern materials—a show of mediaeval pomp and movement, observed through an atmosphere of latter-day thought and emotion; so varying withal, in the scenes and language of its successive parts that one may well conceive it to be told by the group of thoroughbred men and maidens who, one after another, rehearse its cantos to beguile a festive summer's day.

At the age of forty a man blessed with a sound mind in a sound body should reach the maturity of his intellectual power. At such a period Tennyson produced "In Memoriam"; his most characteristic and significant work not so ambitious as his epic of King Arthur but more distinctively a poem of this century and displaying the author's genius in a subjective form. In it are contrasted and concentrated his wisest reflections upon life, death and immortality, the worlds within and without, while the whole song is so largely uttered and so pervaded with the singer's manner that any isolated line is recognized at once. This work stands by itself; none can essay another upon its model, without yielding every claim to personality and at the risk of an inferiority that would be appalling. The strength of Tennyson's intellect has full sweep in this elegiac poem—the greatest threnody of our language by virtue of unique conception and power. "Lycidas" with its primrose beauty and varied lofty heights and flights is but the extension of a theme set by Moschus and Bion. Shelley in "Adonais" despite his spiritual ecstasy and splendor of lament followed the same masters and took his landscape and imagery from distant climes. Swinburne's dirge for Baudelaire is a wonder of melody; nor do we forget the "Thyrsis" of Arnold and other modern ventures in a direction where the sweet and absolute solemnity of the Saxon tongue is most apparent. Still as an original and intellectual production "In Memoriam" is beyond them all, and a more important though possibly no more enduring, creation of rhythmic art.

The metrical form of this work deserves attention. The author's choice of the transposed quatrain verse was a piece of favorable good fortune. Its hymnal quality, finely exemplified in the opening prayer is always impressive and, although a monotone, no more monotonous than the sounds of nature—the murmur of ocean the sighing of the mountain pines. The work as a whole is built up of successive lyrics each expressing a single phase of the poet's sorrow brooding thought and here again is followed the method of nature which evolves cell after cell and joining each to each constructs the sentient organization. Tennyson's art instincts are always perfect; he does the fitting thing and rarely seeks through eccentric and curious movements to attract popular regard.

As to scenery, imagery and general treatment, "In Memoriam" is eminently a British poem. The grave, majestic, hymnal measure swells like the peal of an organ yet acts as a brake on undue spasmodic outbursts of discordant grief. A steady yet varying *marche funebre*; a sense of passion held in check, of reserved elegiac power. For the strain is everywhere calm, even in rehearsing a by-gone violence of emotion along its passage from woe to desolation and anon, by tranquil passages to reverence, thought, aspiration, endurance, hope. On sea and shore the elements are calm even the wild winds and snows of winter are brought in hand and made subservient, as the bells ring out the dying year, to the new birth of nature and the sure purpose of Eternal God.

Critical objections are urged against "In Memoriam" because it is said to present a confusion of religion and scepticism, an attempt to reconcile faith and knowledge, to blend the feeling of Dante with that of Lucretius. If this be so the author only followed the example of his generation and faithfully gave voice to its spiritual questionings. He is accused of "idealizing the thoughts of his contemporaries" to which I would answer in the words of a well-known writer, "great writers do not anticipate the thought of their age; they but anticipate its expression". Failing as others have failed to reconcile poetry and metaphysics, he succeeds better in speculations inspired by the revelations of lens and laboratory. But a charge requiring more serious consideration is that the sorrow of "In Memoriam" is but food for thought, a passion of the head, not of the heart. Tennyson however had reached the philosophical zenith of his life, far above ignoble weakness and performed the office which an enfranchised spirit might well require of him; building a mausoleum of immortal verse, conceiving his friend as no longer dead but as having solved the mysteries they had so often discussed together. If there is didacticism in the poem, it is teaching which leads *ad astra* by a path strictly within the province of an elegiac minstrel's song. For the rest, "In Memoriam" is a serene and truthful panorama of refined experiences, filled with pictures of gentle, scholastic life and of English scenery through all the changes of a rolling year; expressing moreover, the thoughts engendered by these changes. When too sombre, it is lightened by sweet reminiscences; when too light, recalled to grief by stanzas that have the deep solemnity of a passing bell. It is not a work to read at a sitting, nor to take up in every mood but one in which we are sure to find something of worth in every stanza. It contains more notable sayings than any other of Tennyson's poems. The wisdom, yearnings, and aspirations of a noble mind are there. The poet's imagination, shut in upon itself, strives to irradiate with inward light, the mystic problems of life. At the close, Nature's eternal miracle is made symbolic of the soul's palingenesis and the tender and beautiful marriage lay tranquillizes the reader with the thought of the dear common joys which are the heritage of every living kind. We now come to a great master-piece "Idyls of the King". Here we have a series of idyls-like the tapestry work illustrations of a romance, scene after scene, with much change of actors and emotions yet all leading to one solemn and tragic close. It is the epic of chivalry; our conception of what knighthood should be; but so skilfully wrought of high imaginings, fairy spells, fantastic legends and mediaeval splendors that the whole work, suffused with the Tennysonian glamour of golden mist seems like a chronicle illuminated by saintly hands and often blazes with light like that which flashed from the holy wizard's book when the covers were unclasped. In the poet is great for nothing else in this poem and in "In Memoriam" he deserves credit for greatness in this that he restored precious Saxon words too long forgotten but which are not with us to stay.

is the purifier of our tongue; a resistant to the novelties of slang and affectation intruded upon our literature by the mixture of races the extension of English-speaking colonies to every clime and continent in the world.

There is one other poem which I would mention and that is "In Memoriam A. H. Hall". Coming within the average range of emotions it has been widely read. This poem is in Tennyson's purest idyllic style; noticeable for its evenness of tone, clearness of diction, successful description of land and ocean and finally for the loveliness and fidelity of its genre. A far different creation is "Lucretius" a brooding character in which Tennyson is quite in sympathy. He has invested it with a certain stately grandeur. He found its limits and contented himself with portraying a gloomy, isolated figure as strongly and subtly as Browning could have drawn it and with a terseness beyond the latter's art.

In whatever light we examine the great characteristics of Tennyson's genius, the complete and even balance of his poetry is from first to last conspicuous. It exhibits that just combination of lyrical elements which makes a symphony, wherein it is difficult to say what quality predominates. Reviewing minor poets we think this one attractive for the wild flavor of his unstudied verse; another for the gush and music of his songs; a third for idyllic sweetness or tragic power but in Tennyson we have the strong repose of Art whereof the world is slow to take. The fulness of Tennyson's art evades the charm of spontaneity. His poem is sweet, assured, strong. He has enthusiasms but they are held in check. He is well-broken as we say of a thoroughbred - proud and true and though he makes a few bursts of speed keeps easily forward and is sure to stand first at the stand. And now I come back to the avowal that in technical excellence, as an artist in verse, Alfred Tennyson is the greatest of modern poets. Other masters, old and new have surpassed him in special instances, but he is the one who rarely nods and who always finishes his career to the extreme. Not that he is free from weaknesses; when pushed for inspiration he often resorted to inventions as disagreeable as the affectation which repelled many healthful minds from his youthful lyrics. Faults of this sort in "Maud" and later poems have prejudiced another class of readers, people who still pay homage to the genius of Pope for faults which Tennyson has in even greater excess.

Tennyson's original and fastidious art is of itself a theme for an essay. But I cannot delay much longer on this great poet. The poet who tries it may well despair; he can never excel it and is tempted to a hasty and careless trust to make his individuality felt thereby. Its strength is that of perfection; its weakness, the over-perfection which makes a still-life painter. Here is the absolute sway of metre, compelling every rhyme and measure needful to the thought; here are sinuous alliterations, unique and varying breaks and pauses, winged flights and falls, a glory of sound and color, everywhere present, or if missing, absent of the poet's free will. Art so complex was not possible until centuries of literature had passed and an artist could overlook the field, essay each style and evolve a metrical result which should be that of earlier periods at the music of Meyerbeer and Rossini is to the narrower range of operatic music of Scarlatti or Gluck. In Tennyson's artistic conscientiousness he is the opposite of that compeer who approaches him mostly nearly in strength of intellect, Robert Browning. His gift of language may not be so copious as Milton's yet through its use a higher excellence is attained.

The limitations of Tennyson are nearly as copious as his abundant gifts. They are indicated first by a style pronounced to the degree of mannerism and secondly by failure to produce dramatic work of the genuine kind. With respect to his style, it may be said that Tennyson-while objective in the majority of his themes-is the most subjective of poets in the distinguishable flavor of his language and rhythm. It is impossible to observe a single line or an entire specimen of Tennyson's poems without feeling that they are the handwriting of the same master or of some disciple who has caught his fascinating and contagious style. His second limitation hardly interests us as we are not concerned in the drama in this thesis.

Reviewing, shortly, our analysis of Tennyson's genius and the more important of his works, we find in him, the true poetic irritability, a sensitivity increased by his secluded life and displayed from time to time in "the least little touch of the spleen". We perceive him to be the most faultless of modern poets in technical execution but one whose verse is more remarkable for artistic perfection than for dramatic action and inspired fervor. His adroitness surpasses his invention. When given a theme no other poet could handle it so exquisitely. We find him objective in the spirit of his verse but subjective in the decided manner of his style; possessing a sense of proportion based upon the highest analytic and synthetic powers-a faculty that can harmonize the incongruous thoughts and general details of a composite period; in thought resembling Wordsworth, in art instructed by Keats but rejecting the passion of Byron and having nothing in his nature that aspired to it. Finally, an artist perfect in a widely extended range that nothing of his can be spared in this respect approaching Horace and outlying Pope; not one of the great wits nearly allied to madness yet possibly to be accepted as a wiser, more serene above the frenzy of the storm; certainly to be regarded in time to come as, all in all, as Hamlet would say, the fullest representative of the refined, speculative, complex Victorian Age.

With Tennyson I will draw this lengthy Thesis to a close. The poetry of many other poets of more or less worth might be considered but I feel that I have considered the most important luminaries. The Victorian Era has nothing to be ashamed of; it had a fair portion of illustrious poets and the usual plethora of mediocrities. The different forms of poetry, the elegiac, the idyllic, lyric and dramatic were treated by master minds. The era was indeed composite and refined. If not so vigorous, poetically speaking, as the impetuous Georgian revival which preceded it, nor characterized by dramatic greatness like that of the early and renowned Elizabethan, it was in its own way as remarkable as either of those historic eras and on the score of technical and complex achievement, full of real significance to the lyric artist and the poetic connoisseur. In pursuing the general subject of Victorian Poetry by an examination of the foremost poets, I have tried to convey a just idea of the career and genius of each. If my criticism seems too technical, it is due to the fact that the technical refinement of the period under review has been so marked as to demand full recognition and analysis. After all a critic speaks only for himself and his opinion must be taken for what it is worth-as being always open to the broader and more learned criticism of those to whom it is submitted.

The qualities of The Victorian Poets which I have stressed are simplicity and freshness. They are the basis of persistent growth and of greatness in a masterpiece; simplicity and spontaneity, refined by art, enlivened by imagination and sustained by intellectual power. The Victorian Age lacked none of these qualities. Simplicity does not imply poverty of

right-there is a strong simplicity belonging to an intellectual age. A harness of thought and diction natural to true poets, whose genius is to be in direct ratio with their possession of this faculty, and inversely as their tendency to cloudiness, confusion of imagery, obscurity, hardness of style. It may be said that everything really great is marked by simplicity. The poet's office is to reveal plainly the most intricate phases of wisdom, passion and beauty. In the world of ideal we must have clear imagination and language; the more life-like the dream, the longer will it be remembered. Victorian Poets would not have to shine by reflected glory in this regard. The success of the Poets of the Era Queen Victoria was due not so much to the style chosen as to the fact that having found a style which suited them, the English followed it steadily and persistently. Here seemed to be a national movement, strong and promising to endure. Then suddenly at the signal of two or three restless and clever men whose eyes had caught something else, the English architects threw the whole thing away, as a boy after working the morning lough at some plaything, with a sudden weariness drops his unfinished work to run after the first butterfly. They seem to show us that their progress was at the impulse of whim rather than conviction, ruled rather by fashion than by tradition. It was the mobile Frenchman who in the latter century set us an example of steadiness. If his work, like all the best in the Victorian Day lacks some of the higher qualities of older and greater styles, it has more than any other modern work, the coherency and firmness that are at the bottom of all style. There was, I will admit, a lack of recognizable and pervasive style in the English poetry of this age. Breadth, passion and imagination seem to be the elements least conspicuous in much of the recent poetry. Most of the poets withdrew themselves from the movement of their time and country, forgetting it all in a dream, and in no man's land. Victorian Poetry as I have said compared unfavorably with the poetry of earlier times and in comparison with the effle and nonsense that is belched forth to-day it is most beautiful and inspiring. It must be remembered that the poets failed to fight for recognition and attention which the novelists had stolen from them which was a tacit acknowledgement that poetry could not maintain its former pre-eminence in the world of letters. But while they did not exhibit the confident, full-throated confidence that begets leadership, still they were not put to shame. They sang in spite of discouragements and their songs will live when the sin, immorality and filth of the modern novel will be relegated to the oblivious depths of Erebus.

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