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I.

MILTON AND TENNYSON.

“Blessings be with them and immortal praise,
Who gave us noble lives and nobler cares,
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays.”—WORDSWORTH.

TWO rivers, rising in the same lofty region and fed by kindred springs, are guided by the mountain-slopes of their environment into channels which, though not far apart, are widely different. The one, deeper and stronger from its birth, after a swift and lovely course through fair uplands of peace, is shattered suddenly by the turmoil of a fierce conflict, lifting but one foam-crested wave of warning, is plunged into the secret and tumultuous warfare of a deep cañon, emerging at length with wondrously augmented current, to flow majestically through a land of awful, thunder-riven cliffs, towering peaks, vast forests, and immeasurable plains,—a mighty land, a mighty stream. The other river, from a source less deep, but no less pure and clear, passing with the same gentle current through the same region of sweet seclusion, meets with no mighty obstacle, is torn by no wild cataract in its descent, but with ever-growing force and deepening, widening stream sweeps through a land less majestic, but more beautiful, not void of grandeur, but free from horror,—a land of shadowy vales and gardens; mysterious cities hung in air, and hills crowned with ruined castles,—a stream brimming and bright and large, whose smooth, strong flow often conceals its unsounded depth, and mirrors, not only the fleeting shores, but also the eternal stars, in its bosom.

Such is the figure in which I see the poetry of Milton and of Tennyson flowing through the literature and life of our English race.

They are, without doubt, the two great religious poets of England. I do not mean by this to say that they are equal or alike in their greatness. Milton is assuredly a poet of the first order. The world has but three, or at most five, names worthy to stand beside his. For Tennyson, his most ardent admirer will hardly dare to claim more than the highest rank in the second order. But there is a deep community of temperament and of moral purpose, a striking coincidence of tastes and methods, a series of resemblances and analogies between the two poets, which have never yet been carefully observed, and which will justify me in the study of their works side by side, by way of comparison and contrast.

There are two direct references to Milton in the works of Tennyson; and these we must examine first of all, in order that we may read in them, if possible, the attitude of his mind toward the greater master.

In the Palace of Art, the royal daïs on which the soul is to hold her intellectual throne is hung round with choice paintings of wise men.

"For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him, Shakespeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled;

"And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,
From cheek and throat, and chin."

This tells us the rank which Tennyson, in his twenty-third year, assigned to Milton; and it tells us, too, how clear and true was the picture which he had formed of Milton's genius. His sign is strength, but strength seraphic; not the rude force of the Titan, but a power serene, harmonious, beautiful; a power of sustained flight, of far-reaching vision, of lofty utterance such as belongs to the seraphim alone. For the angels are lower beings, some weak, some strong, followers in the heavenly host; the cherubim are silent and mysterious creatures, not shaped like men, voiceless and inaccessible; but the seraphim hover on mighty wings above the throne of Jehovah, chanting his praise one to another, and bearing his messages from heaven to earth. This, then, is the word which Tennyson chooses, and chooses with the divine instinct of a great poet, to summon the spirit of Milton before us,—*a seraph strong*. That phrase is worth more than all of Johnson's blundering criticisms.

The second reference to Milton in the works of Tennyson is found among the Experiments in Quantity, which he published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, in 1863, and which now appear at the close of

the second volume of his collected works. We have here the expression of his mature opinion carefully considered and uttered with the strength of a generous and clear conviction; an utterance well worth weighing, not only for the perfection of its form, but also for the richness of its contents and the revelation which it makes of the poet's own nature. Hear with what power and stateliness it begins, rising at once to the height of the noble theme :

“O, mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O, skilled to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages ;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset,—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.”

Thus the brief ode finds its perfect close, the rich, full tones dying away in the prolonged period, as the strains of some great music are lost in the harmonious hush of twilight. But one other hand could have swept these grand chords and evoked these tones of majestic sweetness,—the hand of Milton himself.

It was De Quincey, that most nearly inspired, but most nearly insane of critics, who first spoke of the Miltonic movement as having the qualities of an organ voluntary. But the comparison which with him was little more than a fortunate and striking simile, is transformed by the poet into a perfect metaphor,

“A jewel, five words long
That on the stretched fore-finger of all Time
Sparkles forever.”

The great organ, pouring forth its melodious thunders, becomes a living thing, divinely dowered and divinely filled with music;—an instrument no longer, but a *voice*, majestic, potent, thrilling the heart,—the voice of England pealing in the ears of all the world and all time. Swept on the flood of those great harmonies, the mighty hosts of angels clash together in heaven-shaking conflict. But it is the same full tide of music which flows down in sweetest, lingering cadence to wander through the cool groves and fragrant valleys of Paradise. Here the younger poet will more gladly dwell,

finding a deeper delight in these solemn and tranquil melodies than in the roar and clang of battles, even though angelic.

Is it not true? True, not only that the organ voice has the two-fold gift of beauty and grandeur; true, not only that Tennyson has more sympathy with the loveliness of Eden than with the mingled splendors and horrors of the celestial battle-fields; but true, also, that there is a more potent and lasting charm in Milton's description of the beautiful than in his description of the sublime. I do not think that *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Comus* have any lower place in the world, or any less enduring life, than *Paradise Lost*. And even in that great epic there are no passages more worthy to be remembered, more fruitful of pure feelings and lofty thoughts, than those like the Hymn of Adam, or the description of the first evening in Eden, which show us the fairness and delightfulness of God's world. We have forgotten this; we have thought so much of Milton's strength and sublimity that we have ceased to recognize what is also true, that he, of all English poets, is by nature the supreme lover of beauty.

I.

This, then, is the first point of vital sympathy between Tennyson and Milton; their common love of the beautiful, not only in nature, but also in art. And this we see most clearly in the youth and in the youthful writings of the two poets.

There is a strange resemblance in their early circumstances and tastes. Both were born and reared in homes of modest comfort and refined leisure, under the blended influences of culture and religion. Milton's father was a scrivener, or copying lawyer: deprived of his possessions because he obeyed his conscience to become a Protestant, but amassing a competence by his professional labor, he ordered his house well, softening and beautifying the earnest sobriety of Puritan ways with the pursuit of music and literature. Tennyson was born in a country rectory, one of those fair homes of peace and settled order which are the pride and strength of England,—homes where "plain living and high thinking" produce the noblest types of manhood. His father also, like Milton's, was a musician, and surrounded his seven sons with influences which gave them poetic tastes and impulses.

Cambridge was the university to which Tennyson was sent, and this had been the student-home of Milton. There is much that is alike in the college life of the two poets. A certain loftiness of spirit,

an habitual abstraction of thought, separated them from the mass of their fellow-students. They were absorbed in communion with the great minds of Greece and Rome. They drank deep at the springs of ancient poesy. Not alone the form, but the spirit of the classics became familiar to them. They were enamored of the beauty of the old world's legends, the bright mythologies of Hellas, and Latium's wondrous histories of gods and men. For neither of them was this study and love of the ancient poets a transient delight, a passing mood. It took strong hold upon them; it became a moulding power in their life and work. We can trace it in all their writings. Allusions, themes, illustrations, similes, forms of verse, echoes of thought, conscious or unconscious imitations,—a thousand tokens remind us that we are still beneath the influence of the old masters of a vanished world,—

“The dead, but sceptered sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.”

And here, again, we see a deep bond of sympathy between Tennyson and Milton: they are certainly the most learned, the most classical of England's poets.

Following their lives beyond the university, we find that both of them came out into a period of study, of seclusion, of leisure, of poetical productiveness. Milton retired to his father's house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where he lived for five years. Tennyson's home was at Somerby, in Lincolnshire, until his father's death in 1831, and after that, we may conjecture, with his mother at Hampstead, near London. The position and circumstances of the two young poets were wonderfully alike. Both were withdrawn from the whirl and conflict of active life into a world of lovely forms, sweet sounds, and enchanting dreams; both fed their minds with the beauty of nature and of ancient story, charmed by the music of divine philosophy, and by songs of birds filling the sweet English air at dawn or twilight; both loved to roam at will over hill and dale and by the wandering streams; to watch the bee, with honeyed thigh, singing from flower to flower, and catch the scent of violets hidden in the green; to hear the sound of far-off bells swinging over the wide-watered shore, and listen to the sighing of the wind among the trees, or the murmur of the waves on the river-bank; to pore and dream through the long night-watches over the legends of the past, holding converse with all forms of the many-sided mind, until the cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn, and the lark's song startled the dull night

from her watch-tower in the skies ; they dwelt as idlers in the land, but it was a glorious and fruitful idleness, for they were reaping

“ The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.”

How wonderful, how precious are the results of these peaceful years. *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, *Lycidas* ; *Isabel*, *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, *Ode to Memory*, *The Dying Swan*, *The Palace of Art*, *A Dream of Fair Woman*, *Mariana*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Ænone*,—these are poems to be remembered, read and re-read with ever fresh delight, the most perfect things of their kind in all literature. Grandeur poems, more passionate, more powerful, are many ; but there are none in which the pure and supreme love of beauty, Greek in its healthful symmetry, Christian in its reverent earnestness, joined to a marvellous artistic sensibility and delicate power of expression, has produced work so complete and exquisite as the early poems of Milton and Tennyson.

Their best qualities are the same. I am more impressed with this the more I read them. They are marked by the same clear-eyed observation of nature, the same sensitive perception of her beauty, the same charm of rich and musical description. Read the *Ode to Memory*,—for instance, the description of the poet's home :

“ Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door ;
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
In every elbow and turn,
The filtered tribute of the rough woodland
O ! hither lead my feet !
Pour round my ears the live-long bleat
Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds
Upon the ridged wolds,
When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud
Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
What time the amber morn
Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.”

Compare with this some lines from *L'Allegro* :

“ To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise !
Some time walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state,

Rob'd in flames and amber light,
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;
 While the ploughman, near at hand,
 Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
 And the mower whets his scythe,
 And every shepherd tells his tale
 Under the hawthorn in the dale.
 Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
 While the landscape round it measures ;
 Russet lawns and fallows gray,
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
 Mountains on whose barren breast
 The labouring clouds do often rest ;
 Meadows trim with daisies pied,
 Shallow brooks and rivers wide."

Here is the same breadth of vision, delicacy of touch, atmospheric effect, the same sensitiveness to the simplest variations of light and sound, the same power to shed over the quiet scenery of the English country the light of an ideal beauty. It is an art far beyond that of the landscape painter, and all the more exquisite because so well concealed.

Another example will show us the similarity of the two poets in their more purely imaginative work, the description of that which they have seen only with the dreaming eyes of fancy. Take the closing song, or epilogue of the *Attendant Spirit in Comus* :

"To the ocean now I fly
 And those happy climes that lie
 Up in the broad fields of the sky.
 There I suck the liquid air,
 All amidst the gardens fair
 Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,
 That sing about the golden tree :
 Along the crisped shades and bowers
 Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ;
 The graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
 Thither all their bounties bring ;
 There eternal summer dwells,
 And west-winds, with musky wing,
 About the cedarn alleys fling
 Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
 Iris there with humid bow
 Waters the odorous banks, that blow
 Flowers of more mingled hue
 Than her purpled scarf can shew,
 And drenches with Elysian dew
 Beds of hyacinths and roses."

Compare with this Tennyson's *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, with its dream of dusky gardens filled with secret music, slow-moving waters, long alleys breathing fragrance, and slopes of

sward inlaid with braided blooms. Here is more than a mere resemblance of words and themes, more than an admiring imitation or echoing of phrases ; here is an identity of taste, spirit, temperament. But the resemblance of forms is also here. We can trace it even in such a minor trait as the skilful construction and use of double-words. This has often been remarked as characteristic of Tennyson, singled out as a distinguishing feature of his poetry. But Milton uses them almost as freely and quite as magically. In *Comus*, which has a little more than a thousand lines, there are fifty-four double-epithets ; in *L'Allegro* there are sixteen to a hundred and fifty lines ; in *Il Penseroso* there are eleven to one hundred and seventy lines. Tennyson's *Ode to Memory*, with a hundred and twenty lines, has fifteen double-words ; *Mariana*, with eighty lines, has nine ; the *Lotos-Eaters*, with two hundred lines, has thirty-two. And if I should choose at random fifty such words from the early poems, I do not think that any one, not knowing them by heart, could tell at first glance which were Milton's and which Tennyson's. Let me try the experiment with the following list :

Low-thoughted, empty-vaulted, rosy-white, rosy-bosomed, violet-embroidered, dew-impearled, over-exquisite, long-levelled, mild-eyed, white-handed, white-breasted, pure-eyed, sin-worn, self-consumed, self-profit, close-curtained, low-browed, ivy-crowned, grey-eyed, sea-nymphs, far-beaming, pale-eyed, down-steering, flower-in-woven, dewy-dark, moon-loved, smooth-swarded, quick-falling, slow-dropping, coral-paven, lily-cradled, amber-dropping, thrice-great, dewy-feathered, purple-spiked, live-long, foam-fountains, sand-built, night-steeds, full-flowing, sable-stoled, sun-steeped, star-led, pilot-stars, full-juiced, dew-fed, brazen-headed, even-song, wisdom-bred.

It will puzzle the reader to distinguish with any degree of certainty the authorship of these words. And this seems the more remarkable when we remember that there are two centuries of linguistic development and changing fashions of poetic speech between *Comus* and *Ænone*.

Not less remarkable is the identity of spirit in Tennyson and Milton in their delicate yet healthful sympathy with Nature, their perception of the relation of her moods and aspects to the human heart. This, in fact, is the key-note of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The same world, seen under different lights and filled with different sounds, responds as deeply to the joyous, as to the melancholy, spirit. There is a profound meaning, a potent influence in the outward shows of sky and earth. While the *Lady of Shalott* dwells in her pure seclusion, the sun shines, the lily blossoms on the river's breast, and the blue sky is unclouded ; but when she passes the fatal line, and the curse has fallen on her, then

"In the stormy east-wind straining,
 The pale yellow woods are waning,
 The broad stream in his banks complaining,
 Heavily the low skies raining,
 Over towered Camelot."

Thus, also, when the guilty pair in Eden had transgressed that sole command on which their happiness depended,

"Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
 Wept at completing of the mortal sin."

Here is no "pathetic fallacy." Ruskin may say what he will. There is nothing false in this, but rather the clear perception and embodiment of a great truth which every man who has communed with Nature has felt, though he could not prove or express it,—the truth that the world without answers to the world within, and by the things which are seen, things invisible and eternal are shadowed forth and known.

It follows, of necessity, that he who looks thus on Nature will be sincere and reverent. The vision of beauty will breed high thoughts and pure desires in him. He will be free alike from the morbid fury of sickly passions overwrought, and the hollow artificiality of cold indifference. He will look on the world with a calm, large, devout regard, as Adam saw for the first time the wonders and delights of Paradise. And this is true both of Milton and of Tennyson. They are equally removed from the feigned, conventional adoration of Pope, who erected his temple of Nature in a stuccoed grotto at Twickenham, and the moody, melodramatic nature-passion of Byron, which was, in truth, but the painted background to his hatred and disgust for humanity. They are as far above the melodious, incoherent, Bacchantic chantings of Swinburne, as above the feebly-rapturous inanities of the Della Cruscan school. What Arthur Hallam said of Tennyson's early poems, applies with equal truth to Milton: "There is a strange earnestness in his worship of beauty," and, I may add, a perfect moral sanity and wondrous elevation of thought.

Look at the Lady in Comus. She is the sweet embodiment of Milton's youthful ideal of virtue, clothed with the gracious fairness of opening womanhood, armed with the sun-clad power of chastity. Darkness and danger cannot

"Stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts."

Evil things have no power upon her, but shrink abashed from her presence.

"So dear to heaven is saintly chastity
 That when a soul is found sincerely so,
 A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;

And in clear dream and solemn vision,
 Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
 Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
 Till all be made immortal."

And now, beside this loveliest Lady, bring Isabel, with those

"Eyes not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed
 With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
 Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
 Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane
 Of her still spirit."

Bring also her who, for her people's good, passed naked on her palfrey through the city streets,—Godiva, who

"Rode forth, clothed on with chastity ;
 The deep air listened round her as she rode,
 And all the low wind hardly breathed for fear."

These are sisters, perfect in purity as in beauty, and worthy to be enshrined forever in the love of youth. They are ideals which draw the heart, not downward, but upward by the power of "*das ewig Weibliche*."

There are many other points of resemblance between the early poems of Milton and Tennyson on which we might dwell with pleasure ; echoes of thought like that sonnet, beginning

"Check every outflash, every ruder sally
 Of thought and speech : speak low, and give up wholly
 Thy spirit to mild-minded melancholy,"—

which seems almost as if it might have been written by Il Penseroso : coincidences of taste and reading such as the fondness for

"Him that left half told
 The story of Cambuscan bold,
 Of Camball and of Algarsife
 And who had Canace to wife,"—

"Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
 Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth
 With sounds that echo still":

likenesses of manner such as the imitation of the smooth elegiac poets in Lycidas and Ænone. But the limits of this essay forbid more illustrations. I can only sum up my study of these early poems in the words with which Arthur Hallam described Tennyson's second volume of poems. He says that they are marked by five distinctive qualities. First, his luxuriance of imagination and his control over it ; second, his power of embodying himself in ideal characters ;

third, his vivid picturesque delineation of objects and peculiarity with which he holds all of them fixed in a medium of strong emotion ; fourth, the variety of his lyrical measures and exquisite modulation of words and cadences ; and fifth, his elevated habits of thought. Strike out, perhaps, the second of these, and add the quality of absolute moral purity and seriousness, and the description will apply just as closely to the early poems of Milton.

II.

There are two causes which have power to change the natural and premeditated course of a man's life,—the shock of a great outward catastrophe, and the shock of a profound inward grief. When the former comes to a man, it shatters all his cherished plans, renders the execution of his favorite projects impossible, directs the current of his energy into new channels, plunges him into conflict with circumstances, turns his strength against corporeal and incorporeal foes, and produces a change of manner, speech, life, which is at once evident and tangible. With the latter, it is different. The inward shock brings with it no alteration of the actual environment, leaves the man where he stood before, to the outward eye unchanged, free to tread the same paths and pursue the same designs ; and yet, in truth, not free, most deeply, though most subtly, changed ; for the soul, being once shaken from her serene repose, and losing the self-confidence of youth, either rises into a higher life or sinks into a lower ; meeting the tremendous questions which haunt the darkness of a supreme personal bereavement, she finds an answer either in the eternal Yes or in the eternal No ; and though form and accent and mode of speech remain the same, the thoughts and intents of the heart are altered forever.

To Milton came the outward conflict ; to Tennyson, the inward grief. And as we follow them beyond the charmed circle of their early years, so strangely one in outline and atmosphere, we must trace the parallel between them, if indeed we can find it at all, far below the surface ; although even yet we shall see some external resemblances amid many and strong contrasts.

Premonitions of this outward change and divergence may be easily discerned in the youthful writings of both poets. The melodious lament of Milton's muse for Lycidas is broken by the stern, deep note of anger against the false shepherds, the enemies of religious liberty, and we hear the pre-murmur of imminent strife in the warning,—

“ But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.”

The splendor of the Palace of Art, that most exquisite and lofty dream of selfish, supersensual pleasure, is shattered by the entrance of a great moral question, and the proud, self-centered soul, torn by the throes of spiritual conflict, is brought down to labor with and for humanity. I think we feel that neither of the men who wrote these two poems will shrink or fly from the life-struggles, so different and yet so similar, which lie before them.

Milton's catastrophe was the civil war, sweeping over England like a flood. But the fate which involved him was none other than his own conscience. This it was that drew him, by compulsion more strong than sweet, from the florid literary hospitality of Italian mutual laudation societies into the vortex of tumultuous London, made him “lay aside his singing robes” for the heavy armor of the controversialist, and leave his “calm and pleasant solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark on a troubled sea of noises and harsh disputes.” His conscience, I say, not his tastes: all these led him the other way. But an irresistible sense of duty caught him, and dragged him, as it were, by the neck to the verge of the precipice, and flung him down into the thick of the hottest conflict that England has ever seen.

Once there, he does not retreat. He quits himself like a man. He is not a Puritan. He loves many things that the mad Puritans hate,—art, music, fine literature, nature, beauty. But one thing he loves more than all,—liberty! For that he will fight,—fight with the Puritans, fight against anybody, desperately, pertinaciously, with grand unconsciousness of possible defeat. He catches the lust of combat, drinks delight of pen-battle. The serene poet is transformed into a thundering pamphleteer. He launches deadly bolts against tyranny in Church, in State, in society. He strikes at the corrupt clergy, at the false, cruel king, at the self-seeking bigots disguised as friends of freedom. He is absorbed in strife. Verse is forgotten. But one brief strain of true poetry bursts from him at the touch of personal grief. The rest is all buried, choked down, concealed. The full stream of his energy, unstinted, undivided, flows into the struggle for liberty and truth; and even when the war is ended, the good cause betrayed by secret enemies and foolish friends, the freedom of England sold back into the hands of the treacherous Stuarts, Milton fights on, like some guerilla captain in a far mountain region, who has not heard, or will not believe, the news of surrender.

The blow which fell on Tennyson was secret. The death of

Arthur Henry Hallam, in 1833, caused no great convulsion in English politics, brought no visible disaster to Church or university, sent only the lightest and most transient ripple of sorrow across the surface of society; but to the heart of one man it was the shock of an inward earthquake, upheaving the foundations of life and making the very arch of heaven tremble and crack. Bound to Hallam by one of those rare friendships which surpass the strength of passion, Tennyson felt his loss in the inmost fibres of his being. The world was changed, darkened, filled with secret conflicts. The importunate questions of human life and destiny thronged upon his soul. The ideal peace, the sweet, art-satisfied seclusion, the dreams of undisturbed repose, became impossible for him. He must fight, not for a party cause, but for spiritual freedom and immortal hopes, not against corporate and embattled enemies, but against unseen foes, thrones, principalities, and powers of darkness.

I think we have some record of this strife in poems like *Two Voices* and *The Vision of Sin*. The themes here treated are the deepest and most awful that can engage the mind. The worth of life, the significance of suffering, the reality of virtue, the existence of truth, the origin and end of evil, human responsibility, Divine goodness, mysteries of the now and the hereafter,—these are the problems with which the poet is forced to deal, and he dares to deal with them face to face. I will not say that he finds, as yet, the true solution; there is a more profound and successful treatment of the same problems to follow in *In Memoriam*. But I say that, so far as they go, these poems are right and true; and in them, enlightened by grief, strengthened by inward combat, the poet has struck a loftier note than can be heard in the beautiful poems of his youth.

For this, mark you, is clear. The poet has now become a man. The discipline of sorrow has availed. Life is real and earnest to him. He grapples with the everlasting facts of humanity. Men and women are closer to him. He can write poems like *Dora*, *Ulysses*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, as wonderful for their difference in tone and subject as for their common virility and absolute truth to nature. He has learned to feel a warm sympathy with

“Men, my brothers, men, the workers”;

to care for all that touches their welfare; to rejoice in the triumphs of true liberty; to thunder in scorn and wrath against the social tyrannies that crush the souls of men; and

“The social lies that warp us from the living truth.”

It is true that there is no actual and visible conflict, no civil war raging to engulf him. He is not called upon to choose between his love of poetry and his love of country, nor to lay aside his singing-robes even for a time. It is his fortune, or misfortune, to have fallen upon an age of peace and prosperity and settled government. But in that great unseen warfare which is ever waging between truth and error, right and wrong, freedom and oppression, light and darkness, he bears his part and bears it well, by writing such poems as *Locksley Hall*, *Maud*, *The Princess*, *Aylmer's Field*; and these entitle him to high rank as a poet of humanity.

Are they then so far apart, Milton and Tennyson, the Latin Secretary of Cromwell and the Poet Laureate of Queen Victoria, the straitened tenant of a hired house in London and the fortunate possessor of Farringford,—are they so far apart as their circumstances would seem to place them? I think not. I think that even now, in this most divergent middle period, we may trace some deep resemblances, under apparent contradictions.

It is a noteworthy fact that a most important place in the thought and writing of both these men has been occupied by the subject of woman and marriage. How many of Tennyson's poems are devoted to this theme! *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lord of Burleigh*, *Lady Clare*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Princess*, *Maud*, *Enoch Arden*, *Aylmer's Field*, and the great Arthurian Epic, all have the thought of union between man and woman, and the questions which arise in connection with it, at their root. And in *The Coming of Arthur*, Tennyson makes his chosen hero rest all his power upon a happy and true marriage:

"What happiness to reign a lonely king
Vext with waste dreams? For saving I be joined
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I joined with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything,
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live."

Compare with this Adam's complaint:

"In solitude
What happiness? Who can enjoy alone?
Or all enjoying what contentment find?"

his demand for a companion equal with himself, "fit to participate all rational delight"; and his description of his first sight of Eve:

"She disappeared and left me dark. I wak'd
To find her, or forever to deplore
Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure."

Mark the fact that those four tremendous pamphlets on Divorce with which Milton horrified his enemies and shocked his friends have underlying all their errors and extravagances the great doctrine that a genuine marriage must be a true companionship, and union of souls—a doctrine equally opposed to the licentious, and to the conventional, view of wedlock. He would have joined with Tennyson in his bitter invectives against marriages of convenience and avarice. He would have joined also in praise of what Bayne well describes as "that true marriage, that healthful and holy family life, which has its roots in mutual affection, in mutual fitness, and which is guarded by a constancy as strong as heaven's blue arch and yet as spontaneous as the heart-beats of a happy child." But in praising this, Milton could have spoken only of what he had desired and missed; Tennyson speaks of what he has possessed and known. A world-wide difference, more than enough to account for anything of incompleteness or harshness in Milton's view of woman.

What gross injustice the world has done him on this point! Married at an age when a man who has preserved the lofty ideals and personal purity of youth is peculiarly liable to deception, to a woman far below him in character and intellect, a pretty fool utterly unfitted to take a sincere and earnest view of life, deserted by her a few weeks after the wedding-day, met by stubborn refusal and unjust reproaches in every attempt to reclaim and reconcile her, accused by her family of disloyalty in politics, and treated as if he were unworthy of honorable consideration, what wonder that his heart experienced a great revulsion, that he began to doubt the reality of such womanhood as he had described and immortalized in *Comus*, that he sought relief in elaborating a doctrine of divorce which should free him from the unworthy and irksome tie of a marriage which was in truth but an empty mockery? That divorce doctrine which he propounded in the heat of personal indignation, disguised beneath the calm exterior of the professed philosopher, was surely false, and we cannot but condemn it. But can we condemn his actual conduct, so nobly inconsistent with his own theory? Can we condemn the man, as we see him forgiving and welcoming his treacherous wife driven by stress of poverty and danger to return to the home which she had frivolously forsaken; welcoming also, and to the best of his ability sheltering, her whole family, who were glad enough, for all their royalist pride, to find a refuge from the perils of civil war in the house of the de-

spised schoolmaster and Commonwealth-man ; bearing patiently, for his wife's sake, with their burdensome presence in his straitened dwelling-place, until the death of the father-in-law, whose sense of honor was never strong enough to make him pay one penny of his daughter's promised marriage-portion,—can we condemn Milton as we see him acting thus ? And as we see him, after a few months of happy union with a second wife, again left a widower with three daughters, two of whom, at least, never learned to love him ; blind, poor, almost friendless ; disliked and robbed by his undutiful children, who did not scruple to cheat him in the marketings, sell his books to the rag-pickers, and tell the servants that the best news they could hear would be the news of their father's death ; forced at length in very instinct of self-protection to take as his third wife a plain, honest woman who would be faithful and kind in her care of him and his house ; can we wonder if, after this experience of life, he thought somewhat doubtfully of women ?

But of woman, woman as God made her and meant her to be, woman as she is in the true purity and unspoiled beauty of her nature, he never thought otherwise than nobly and reverently. Read his sonnet to his second wife, in whom for one fleeting year his heart tasted the best of earthly joys, the joy of a perfect companionship, but who was lost to him in the birth of her first child :

“ Methought I saw my late espoused saint
 Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
 Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
 Rescued from death by force though pale and faint.
 Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint
 Purification in the old Law did save,
 And such as yet once more I trust to have
 Full sight of her in Heaven, without restraint,
 Came vested all in white, pure as her mind ;
 Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight
 Love, sweetness, goodness in her person shined
 So clear as in no face with more delight.
 But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
 I waked, she fled, and day brought back my sight.”

Surely there is no more beautiful and heartfelt praise of perfect womanhood in all literature than this ; and Tennyson has never written with more unfeigned worship of wedded love.

It is true, indeed, that Milton declares that woman is inferior to man “ in the mind and inward faculties,” but he follows this declaration with the most exquisite description of her peculiar excellences :

“ When I approach
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
 And in herself complete, so well to know

Her own, that what she wills to do or say
 Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best :
 Authority and reason on her wait
 As one intended first, not after made
 Occasionally ; and to consummate all
 Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat
 Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
 About her as a guard angelic placed."

It is true that he teaches, in accordance with the explicit doctrine of the Bible, that it is the wife's duty to obey her husband, to lean upon, and follow, his larger strength when it is exercised in wisdom. But he never places the woman below the man, always at his side ; the divinely-dowered consort and counterpart, not the same, but equal, supplying his deficiencies and solacing his defects,

"His likeness, his fit help, his other self,"

with whom he may enjoy

"Union of mind or in us both one soul."

And such love as this

"Leads up to heaven ; is both the way and guide."

Compare these teachings with those of Tennyson in *The Princess*, where under a veil of irony jest mixed with earnest, he shows—the pernicious folly of the modern attempt to change woman into a man in petticoats, exhibits the female lecturer and the sweet girl graduates in their most delightfully absurd aspect, overthrows the visionary towers of the Female College with a baby's touch, and closes the sweetest of all satires with a picture of the true relationship of man and woman, which may stand forever as the final word of Christian philosophy on this theme.

"For woman is not undeveloped man,
 But diverse : could we make her as the man,
 Sweet love were slain ; his dearest bond is this—
 Not like to like, but like in difference.
 Yet in the long years liker they must grow ;
 The man be more of woman, she of man ;
 He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
 Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world ;
 She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
 Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind :
 Till at the last she set herself to man
 Like perfect music unto noble words.
 Then comes the statelier Eden back to men :
 Then reign the world's great bridals chaste and calm :
 Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
 May these things be !"

Another point in which we may trace a deep resemblance between

Milton and Tennyson, is their intense love of country. This is not always a prominent characteristic of great poets. Indeed, we may question whether there is not something in the poetic temperament which unfits a man for actual patriotism, makes him an inhabitant of an ideal realm rather than a citizen of a particular country; inclines him to be governed by disgusts more than he is inspired by enthusiasms, and to withdraw himself from a practical interest in the national welfare into the vague dreams of Utopian perfection. In Goethe we see the cold indifference of the self-centered artistic mind, careless of his country's degradation and enslavement, provided only the all-conquering Napoleon will leave him his poetic leisure and freedom. In Byron we see the wild rebelliousness of the poet of passion, deserting, disowning, and reviling his native land in the sullen fury of personal anger. But Milton and Tennyson are true patriots—Englishmen to the heart's core. They do not say, "My country right or wrong!" They protest in noble scorn against all kinds of tyrannies and hypocrisies. They are not bound in conscienceless servility to the tail of any mere political party. They are the partisans of England, and England to them means freedom, justice, righteousness, Christianity. Milton sees her "rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks"; or "as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and scaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms." Tennyson sings her praise as

"The land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose,
The land where girt with friends or foes,
A man may speak the thing he will."

He honors and reveres the Queen, but it is because her power is the foundation and defence of liberty; because of her it may be said that

"Statesmen at her council met
Who knew the season when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet,
"By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon the people's will,
And compassed by the inviolate sea."

Think you he would have written thus if Charles Stuart, bribe-taker, extortioner, tyrant, dignified and impotent hypocrite, had been his

sovereign? His own words tell us on which side he would have stood in that great revolt. In the verses written on The Third of February, 1852, he reproaches the Parliament for their seeming purpose to truckle to Napoleon, after the *coup d'état*, and cries:

“ Shall we fear *him*? Our own we never feared.
 From our first Charles by force we wrung our claims.
 Pricked by the Papal spur, we reared,
 We flung the burthen of the second James.”

And again, in the poem entitled England and America in 1782, he justifies the American Revolution as a lesson taught by England herself, and summons her to exult in the freedom of her children.

“ But thou, rejoice with liberal joy!
 Lift up thy rocky face,
 And shatter, when the storms are black,
 In many a streaming torrent back,
 The seas that shock thy base.

“ Whatever harmonies of law
 The growing world assume,
 Thy work is thine,—the single note
 From the deep chord that Hampden smote
 Will vibrate to the doom.”

Here is the grand Miltonic ring, not now disturbed and roughened by the harshness of opposition, the bitterness of disappointment, the sadness of despair, but rounded in the calm fulness of triumph. “The whirligig of Time brings in his revenges.” The bars of oppression are powerless to stay the tide of progress.

“ The old order changeth, giving place to new,
 And God fulfils himself in many ways.”

If Milton were alive to-day he would find his ideals largely realized; freedom of worship, freedom of the press, freedom of education, no longer things to be fought for, but things to be enjoyed; the principle of popular representation firmly ingrained in the constitution of the British monarchy, (which Tennyson calls “a crowned Republic,”) and the spirit of “the good old cause,” which seemed lost when the second Charles came back, now victorious in English Liberalism, and peacefully guiding the destinies of the nation into a yet wider and more glorious liberty.

But what would be the effect of such an environment upon such a character as his? What would Milton have been in this nineteenth century? If we can trust the prophecies of his early years; if we can regard the hints of his own preferences and plans, from whose fruition a stern sense of duty, like a fiery-sworded angel, barred him out, we must imagine the course of his life, the development of his genius,

as something very different from what they actually were. An age of peace and prosperity, the comfort and quietude of a well-ordered home, freedom to pursue his studious researches and cultivate his artistic tastes to the full, an atmosphere of liberal approbation and encouragement,—circumstances such as these would have guided his life and work into a much closer parallel with Tennyson, and yet they never could have made him other than himself. For his was a seraphic spirit, strong, indomitable, unalterable; and even the most subtle influence of surroundings could never have destroyed or changed him fundamentally. So it was true, as Macaulay has said, that “from the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral rites of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which these finer elements were defiled.” And yet the very process of rejection had its effect upon him. The fierce conflicts of theology and politics in which for twenty years he was absorbed, left their marks upon him for good and for evil. They tried him as by fire. They brought out all his strength of action and endurance. They made his will like steel. They gave him the God-like power of one who has suffered to the uttermost. But they also disturbed, at least for a time, the serenity of his mental processes. They made the flow of his thought turbulent and uneven. They narrowed, at the same time that they intensified, his emotions. They made him an inveterate controversialist, whose God must syllogize and whose angels were debaters. They crushed his humor and his tenderness. Himself, however, the living poet, the supreme imagination, the seraphic utterance, they did not crush, but rather strengthened. And so it came to pass that in him we have the miracle of literature,—the lost river of poetry springing suddenly, as at divine command, from the bosom of the rock, no trickling and diminished rill, but a sweeping flood, laden with richest argosies of thought.

III.

How to speak of *Paradise Lost*, I know not. To call it a masterpiece is superfluous. To say that it stands absolutely alone and supreme is both true and false. Parts of it are like other poems, and yet there is no poem in the world like it. The theme is old; had been treated by the author of *Genesis* in brief, by Du Bartas and other rhymers at length. The manner is old, inherited from Homer,

Dante, Virgil. And yet, beyond all question, *Paradise Lost* is one of the most unique, individual, unmistakable poems in the world's literature. Imitations of it have been attempted by Montgomery, Pollok, Bickersteth, and other pious versifiers, but they are no more like the original than St. Peter's in Montreal is like St. Peter's in Rome, or than the pile of dingy limestone on New York's Fifth Avenue is like the Cathedral of Milan, with its

"Chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazoned fires,
The height, the space, the gloom, the glory,
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!"

Imitation may be the sincerest flattery, but imitation never produces the deepest resemblance: for the man who imitates is concerned with that which is outward; but kinship of spirit lies below the surface. He who is nearest of kin to a master-mind will himself be too great for the work of a copyist; he will be influenced, if at all, unconsciously; and though the intellectual relationship may be expressed also in some external traits of speech and manner, the true likeness will be in the temper of the soul and the sameness of the moral purpose. Such likeness, I think, we can discern between *Paradise Lost* and Tennyson's greatest works, *The Idylls of the King*, and *In Memoriam*.

It is a striking and significant fact that Milton, when he first conceived the purpose of writing a great English poem, was, for a long time, most strongly attracted by the Arthurian legend. It was his cherished design to do for the literature of England that which Tasso and Ariosto had done for that of Italy, "that which the greatest and choicest wits of Athens and Rome, and those Hebrews of old did for *their* country." And for this end he could find, at first, no better plan than to

"Revoke into song the kings of our island,
Arthur yet from his underground hiding stirring to warfare,
Or to tell of those that sat round him as Knights of his Table;
Great-souled heroes unmatched, and (O might the spirit but aid me),
Shiver the Saxon phalanxes under the shock of the Britons."

What led him to abandon this subject is not difficult to conjecture. What he would have made of it had he attempted it, we can less easily imagine. It must have been a grand and sonorous epic, filled with majestic descriptions of battle, after the Homeric manner, and closely knit into a continuous unity by the central figure of Arthur as the ideal champion of Christianity against Heathenism.

Very different is the manner in which Tennyson has approached this theme. Drawn to it at first by a more fortuitous and æsthetic

interest (as we may infer from the fragmentary character of the *Lady of Shalott* and *Morte d'Arthur*), fascinated anew from time to time by the mysterious beauty of the complex mythos, he has wandered at will through the shadowy labyrinth of legends which gather about the name of Arthur, choosing such portions as pleased him for description, and building at last a poem which is more like a Gothic cathedral than a Grecian temple. The unity is subjective rather than objective. The ground plan is there,—the great cross of human will and divine purpose,—but it is concealed and confused by a wilderness of clustering columns and branching chapels. Arch and capital are covered with miracles of carving. We are lost in admiration of the delicate details. The great design seems doubtful and obscure.

With *Paradise Lost* this is never the case. It is one throughout. The central thought is always manifest and supreme. Its method is classical, historical, synthetic. The *Idylls of the King* are romantic, pictorial, analytic. Each method has its own advantages. But while the latter is more in harmony with the modern spirit, and was doubtless chosen by Tennyson for this reason, the former is the method of the loftiest minds which work not for an age, but for all time. To attempt it, means for any save the most potent and strenuous spirit, an ignominious failure.

Bearing in mind this great difference, we can trace the intimate resemblances between the two poems. First, in manner and style there is a close relationship. Both Milton and Tennyson have been led by their study of the classic poets to understand that rhyme is the least important element of good verse, the best music is made by the concord rather than by the unison of sounds, and the coincidence of final consonants is but a slight matter compared with the cadence of syllables and the accented harmony of long vowels. Indeed it may be questioned whether the inevitable recurrence of the echo of rhyme does not disturb and break the music more than it enhances it. Certainly Milton thought so, and he took great credit to himself for setting the example, "the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming."

There were many to follow him in this path, but for the most part with ignominious and lamentable failure. They fell into the mistake of thinking that because unrhymed verse was more free it was less difficult, and making their liberty a cloak of (poetic) license, they poured forth floods of accurately-measured prose under the delusion that they were writing blank-verse. The fact is that this is the one form of verse which requires the most delicate sensitiveness of ear,

the most careful elaboration, and the long and patient training of a life "wedded to music." In Cowper, Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Browning, these preconditions are wanting. And with the possible exception of Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum," the first English blank-verse worthy to compare with that of *Paradise Lost* is found in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. There is nothing else in the language so grandly and purely musical.

There is a shade of contrast in the movement of the two poems. Each has its own distinctive quality. In Milton we observe a more stately and majestic march, more of rhythm; in Tennyson, a sweeter and more perfect tone, more of melody. These qualities correspond in verse, to form and color in painting. We might say that Milton is the greater draughtsman, as Michael Angelo; Tennyson the better colorist, as Raphael. But the difference between the two painters is always greater than that between the poets. For the methods by which they produce their effects are substantially the same; and their results differ chiefly as the work of a strong, but sometimes heavy hand differs from that of a hand less powerful, but better disciplined.

De Quincey has said, somewhere or other, that finding fault with Milton's versification is a dangerous pastime. The lines which you select for criticism have a way of justifying themselves at your expense. That which you have condemned as a palpable blunder, an unpardonable discord, is manifested in the mouth of a better reader as majestically right and harmonious. And so when you attempt to take liberties with any passage of his you are apt to feel as when coming upon what appears to be a dead lion in a forest. You have an uncomfortable suspicion that he may not be dead, but only sleeping; or perhaps not even sleeping, but only shamming. Many an unwary critic has been thus unpleasantly surprised. Notably Drs. Johnson and Bentley, and in a small way Walter Savage Landor, roaring over Milton's mistakes, have proved themselves distinctly asinine.

But for all that, there *are* mistakes in *Paradise Lost*. I say it with due fear, and not without a feeling of gratitude that the purpose of this essay does not require me to specify them. But a sense of literary candor forces me to confess the opinion that the great epic contains passages in which the heaviness of the thought has infected the verse, passages which can be read only with tiresome effort, lines in which the organ-player's foot seems to have slipped upon the pedals and made a ponderous discord. This cannot be said of the *Idylls*. Their music is not broken or jangled. It may never rise to the lofti-

est heights, but it never falls to the lowest depths. Tennyson has written nothing so strong as the flight of Satan through Chaos, nothing so sublime as the invocation to Light, nothing so rich as the first description of Eden, but taking the blank-verse of the *Idylls* through and through, as a work of art it is more finished, more expressive, more perfectly musical than that of *Paradise Lost*.

The true relationship of these poems lies, as I have said, beneath the surface. It consists in their ideal unity of theme and lesson. For what is it in fact with which Milton and Tennyson concern themselves? Not the mere story of Adam and Eve's transgression; not the legendary wars of Arthur and his knights; but the everlasting conflict of the human soul with the adversary, the struggle against sin, the power of the slightest taint of evil to infect, pollute, destroy all that is fairest and best. Both poets tell the story of a *Paradise Lost*, and lost through sin; first, the happy garden designed by God to be the home of stainless innocence and bliss, whose gates are closed forever against the guilty race; and then, the glorious realm of peace and love and law which the strong and noble king would make and defend amid the world's warfares, but which is secretly corrupted, undermined, destroyed at last in ruin and in blackening gloom.

It is the great catastrophe of human failure, foreshadowed first in Eden, repeated in a thousand trials, on a thousand moral battle-fields, in every man's experience, the same strife

"Of Sense at war with Soul,"

the same bitter ending of defeat and fall.

To Arthur, as to Adam, destruction comes through that which seems, and indeed is, the loveliest and the dearest. The beauteous mother of mankind, fairer than all her daughters since, drawn by her own highest desire of knowledge into disobedience, yields the first entrance to the fatal sin; and Guinevere, the imperial-moulded queen, radiant with purity and grace, led by degrees from a true friendship into a false love for Lancelot, infects the court and the whole realm with death. Vain are all safeguards and defences; vain all high resolves and noble purposes; vain the instructions of the archangel charging the possessors of Eden to

"Be strong, live happy, and love! but first of all
Him whom to love is to obey!"

vain, the strait vows and solemn oaths by which the founder of the Round Table bound his knights

"To reverence the King as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds."

All in vain! for sin comes creeping in; and sin, the slightest, the most seeming-venial, the most beautiful, is the seed of shame and death. This is the profound truth to which the *Idylls of the King* and *Paradise Lost* alike bear witness. And to teach this, to teach it in forms of highest art which should live forever in the imagination of the race, was the moral purpose of Milton and Tennyson.

But there is another aspect of this theme which is hardly touched in the *Idylls*. Sin has a relation to God as well as to man, since it exists in His universe. Is it stronger than the Almighty? Is His will wrath? Is His purpose destruction? Is darkness the goal of all things, and is there no other significance in death; no deliverance from its gloomy power? In *Paradise Lost*, Milton has dealt with this problem also. Side by side with the record "of man's first disobedience," he has constructed the great argument whereby he would

"Assert eternal Providence
 And justify the ways of God to men."

The poem has, therefore, parallel with its human side, a divine or philosophic side, for which we shall look in vain among the *Idylls of the King*. In them Tennyson does not attempt to pierce the black cloud, to illuminate the future, to assert the divine wisdom and love in spite of earth's sorrow and darkness. He has approached this problem from another stand-point in a different manner. And if we wish to know his solution of it, his answer to the mystery of death, we must look for it in *In Memoriam*.

This poem is an elegy for Arthur Hallam, finished throughout its seven hundred and twenty-four stanzas with all that delicate care which the elegiac form requires, and permeated with the tone of personal grief; not passionate, but profound and pure. But it is such an elegy as the world has never seen before, and never will see again. For not only is it the work of long and patient years, elaborated with such skill and adorned with such richness of poetic imagery as other men have thought too great to bestow upon an epic; not only is it the most exquisite and perfect work of mortuary art, worthy, in this regard, to be compared with that world-famous tomb which widowed Artemisia built for the Carian Mausolus; but it is something infinitely grander and better. Beyond the narrow range of personal loss and loneliness, it sweeps into the presence of the eternal realities, faces the great questions of our

mysterious existence, and reaches out to lay hold of that hope which is unseen but abiding, whereby alone we are saved. It is

The record of a faith sublime,
And truth through clouds at last discerned,
The incense of a love that burned
Through pain and doubt defying Time ;

The story of a heart at strife
That learned, at last, to kiss the rod,
And passed through sorrow up to God,
From living to a higher life.

Naturally we expect to find a vast difference between this poem and *Paradise Lost*. The plan demands it. The contrast between the elegiac and the epic forms has never been more strongly marked than here. And it may seem almost absurd to seek, and impossible to discover, any resemblance between these long-rolling, thunderous periods of blank-verse and those short swallow-flights of song which "dip their wings in tears and skim away." The comparison of *In Memoriam* with *Lycidas* would certainly appear more easy and obvious; so obvious, indeed, that it has been made a thousand times, and is fluently repeated by every critic who has had occasion to speak of English elegies.

But this is just one of those cases in which an external similarity conceals a fundamental unlikeness. It is like the resemblance which has been traced between one of the portraits of Milton and William Wordsworth, on the surface only. For, in the first place, Edward King, to whose memory *Lycidas* was dedicated, was far from being an intimate friend of Milton, and his lament has no touch of the deep heart-sorrow which throbs in *In Memoriam*. And, in the second place, *Lycidas* is in no sense a metaphysical poem; does not descend into the depths or attempt to answer the vexed questions, while *In Memoriam* is, in its very essence, profoundly and thoroughly metaphysical; more so, perhaps, than any other great poem except *Paradise Lost*.

There is a point, however, in which we must acknowledge an essential and absolute difference between the great epic and the great elegy, something deeper and more vital than any contrast of form and metre. *Paradise Lost* is a theological poem. *In Memoriam* is a religious poem. The distinction is narrow, but deep. Milton approaches the problem of human life and death from the side of reason, resting, it is true, upon a supernatural revelation, but careful to reduce all its contents to a logical form, demanding a clearly-formulated and closely-linked explanation of all things, and seeking to establish his system of truth upon the basis of sound argument. His

method is purely rational. Tennyson's is emotional. He has no linked chain of deductive reasoning; no sharp-cut definition of objective truths. His faith is subjective, intuitive. Where proof fails him, he will still believe. When the processes of reason are shaken, disturbed, frustrated; when absolute demonstration appears impossible, and doubt claims a gloomy empire in the mind, then the deathless fire that God has kindled in the breast burns toward that heaven which is its source and home, and the swift answer of immortal love leaps out to solve the mystery of the grave. Thus Tennyson *feels* after God, and leads us by the paths of faith and emotion to the same goal which Milton reaches by the road of reason and logic.

Each of these methods is characteristic not only of the poet who uses it, but also of the times in which it is employed. *Paradise Lost* does not echo more distinctly the age of the Westminster divines than *In Memoriam* represents the age of Maurice and Robertson. It is a mistake to think that the tendency of our present theology is toward rationalism. That was the drift of Milton's time. Our modern movement is toward emotionalism, a religion of feeling, a subjective system in which the sentiments and affections shall be acknowledged as lawful determinants of truth. And this tendency has its right as well as its wrong, its golden mean as well as its false extreme. Whether it has ever led Tennyson too far; whether it has ever swept him beyond the truth, it does not now become me to discuss. But this much is clear: it has never carried him away from the sure anchorage of Christian faith, nor is there any substantial difference between the final teachings of *In Memoriam* and of *Paradise Lost*. Is Tennyson a Pantheist because he speaks of

"One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves"?

Then so is Paul a Pantheist when he tells us that in God "we live and move and have our being"; so is Milton a Pantheist when he makes the Son say to the Father:

"Thou shalt be all in all, and I in thee
Forever, and in me all whom thou lovest."

Is Tennyson an Agnostic because he speaks of the "truths that never can be proved," and finds a final answer to the mysteries of life only in a hope which is hidden "behind the veil"? Then so is Paul an Agnostic, because he sees but through a glass darkly; so is Milton an Agnostic, because he declares

"Heaven is for thee too high
 To know what passes there. Be lowly wise ;
 Think only what concerns thee and thy being.
 Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid ;
 Leave them to God above."

Is Tennyson a Universalist because he says :

"Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood" ?

Then so is Milton a Universalist when he exclaims :

"O, goodness infinite, goodness immense,
 That all this good of evil shall produce,
 And evil turn to good !"

The faith of the two poets is one ; the great lesson of *In Memoriam* and *Paradise Lost* is the same. The hope of the universe is in him whom Milton and Tennyson both call "immortal Love." To Him through mists and shadows we must look up,

"Gladly behold, though but his utmost skirts
 Of glory, and far-off his steps adore."

Thus our cry out of the darkness for the light shall be answered. Knowledge shall grow from more to more.

"Light after light well-used we shall attain,
 And to the end persisting safe arrive."

But this can come only through self-surrender and obedience, only through the consecration of the free-will to God who gave it ; and the highest prayer of the light-seeking, upward-striving human soul is this.

"O, living will that shalt endure,
 When all that seems shall suffer shock,
 Rise in the spiritual Rock,
 Flow through our deeds and make them pure,

"That we may lift from out the dust
 A voice as unto him that hears,
 A cry above the conquered years,
 To one that with us works and trust,

"With faith that comes of self-control,
 The truths that never can be proved
 Until we close with all we love,
 And all we flow from, soul in soul."

I must bring this essay to an end before it is, in any sense, complete. Many points of resemblance in vocabularies, in metrical devices, in the use of scientific and literary material, have been passed over for want of space. But I think enough has been said to prove

a real intellectual and moral kinship between Milton and Tennyson, and to exhibit a profound analogy in their works, which has hitherto escaped the notice of the critics. And if this piece of vacation work, hasty and incomplete, should have no other result, it has, at least, deepened and quickened my sense of reverent gratitude to these two masters of English verse.

That rugged old rhymers, Ebenezer Elliott, once said of some one's essays, "they contain rural pictures which, before God, I believe have lengthened my days on earth." I might not venture to say that, for the length of my days is to me unknown; but I know that be they few or many, they are infinitely better and sweeter, more filled with divine light and life by reason of the influences which have flowed into them from the poetry of Milton and Tennyson.

HENRY J. VAN DYKE, JR.