

Victorian Poetry (Tennyson)

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The Victorian age witnessed great achievements in all the branches of literary activities and literary thoughts. In poetry, this age achieved great distinction but these distinctions came a few years after the start of the age. This age found its best spokesman in Tennyson, who expressed in his poems the ideals and ideas of the age. He was the national poet of the 19th century of England. He was the firm believer of the values and reflected in his writing all the leading movements of the age. He never raised a question of doubt in the greatness of the queen.

The best of Tennyson appeared in 1850 • under the title 'In Memoriam'. The shortest lyrics included here were the outcome of his sorrow for Hallam. It consists of a hundred and thirty-one lyrics written between 1833 and 1850. This is the only book which will never be prized by the posterity. The elegiac note expressed herein touches all the readers and makes them feel the feelings of love, friendship and immortality of the soul. Tennyson does not follow the pattern of Bibb and Moscha while writing his elegies. He takes up the simple lyrical form and expresses his philosophy of life and death. He expresses his deep faith in God and religion in it.

Tennyson became the mouthpiece of British imperialism and expansionism in such poems like 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', 'The Revenge', 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington'. In 1853, appeared 'Maud', a lyrical melodrama of deep significance. In 1859, came the 'Idylls of the King'. The essential romantic temper of the poet is revealed here. He also gets his perfection as an artist in blank verse. In his context Tennyson is considered as supreme craftsman, perhaps second only to Keats. The poetry of Keats left a deep impression on the young mind of Tennyson. In 1818, appeared the Dramatic Romances which contained some very brilliant and popular pieces as

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How They Brought the Good News from Greece to Aix
and the Fight to the Duches. The next two works of
Browning are Christmas Eve and Easter Day (1850)
and Men and Women (1855). The first tells of the
religious views of Browning. His best poems are
his love poems. He is much interested in art for life's
sake and in love that is the main manifestation of
life. His theory of love is radiated by a robust
optimism.

Matthew Arnold is the most perfect
representative of the Victorian intellectuals
who have lost their moorings in the age because
of the impact of science and because of the
disintegrating social order. He is torn by honest
doubts created by the loss of faith in the
ethic of life. He can never accept the present
like Tennyson. He has no hope for future life.
His intellectual outlook brought Browning bare
to bare with reality and his inability to probe
into the riddles of life made him melancholy
and turned him into a fatalist. In majority
of his poems, his melancholy notes is discerned.
The poems which express the true personality
of the poet and his ideas are 'Dover Beach',
'Scholar Gypsy', 'Thyrsis', 'Schrab and Ruston',
'A Summer Night', 'The Burial Life, and to Marguerite'.
Among the above said poems, Dover Beach is
undoubtedly the best poem that achieves a rare
lyrical intensity. The two pastoral elegies - 'The
Scholar Gypsy and Thyrsis' are conceived in
classical patterns. The first is about a seventeenth
century Oxford student who left the University
and joined a band of gypsies. He was no more
to be seen by his college mates. In the second elegy,
the poet really talks about his own self and
his poetic age.