

PATRIOTISM AND LOVE IN THE WRITING OF ALFRED TENNYSON

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ABSTRACT

In the Victorian period, Alfred Lord Tennyson was a renowned poet. For him, criticism wasn't an issue since he wasn't weak or wayward. When everything was said and done, he didn't come up short, and in fact, he's just getting better. His art would not be swayed by criticism, but he would rectify and improve it. There are two worlds or rather two voices in his poetry that are conflicting, comparing, and dilemmatizing and he strove to achieve a decent balance between them throughout the course of his career. To put it another way, Tennyson was not only an individual who wanted to express himself via poetry, but he also aspired to be a voice for all people and exhibit many modern-day literary qualities. An effort is made in this article to exhibit and describe Alfred's manner of life and the works he wrote. Tennyson's handling of and attitude to nature may be noticed in his poems, as well. Poems by Tennyson are the most accurate depictions of Victorian society's way of life, views, and beliefs.

Keywords: Victorian, Criticism, Poems, Conflicting

INTRODUCTION

He was born on August 6, 1809, in Somersby, Lincolnshire; his father was the rector of the church there. He was the twelfth kid in a family of twelve. His beautiful body and masculine good looks as an adult were evident even at a young age in Alfred, a clever and smart child.

Tennyson attended a grammar school in Louth, a neighbouring town, until he was eleven, where he had unpleasant recollections. In the years that followed, he stayed at home, where he studied under the watchful eye of his famous father. Tennyson showed his creative prowess at a young age, penning a blank verse play and a 6,000-line epic poem by the time he was fourteen. Astronomy and geology were two of his favourite topics to study in the classroom as well as in his own time. He served as Queen Victoria's Poet Laureate for a significant portion of her reign.

Alfred and Charles Tennyson's poems, as well as a few brief contributions from Frederick Tennyson, were collected in *Poems by Two Brothers*, published in Louth in 1827.

At Trinity College in Cambridge, Tennyson began his studies in 1828. Although he was bright and handsome and well-spoken, he was also painfully bashful and miserable. The Apostle, an informal group that included some of the university's most promising young men, became a new home for him after a time. While there, his poetry was recognised and acclaimed, and he met a bright young man named Arthur Henry Hallam, who

would go on to become one of his closest and greatest friends. Tennyson was awarded the Newdigate Prize for poetry in 1829.

Tennyson's collection *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was published in 1830 when he was still a student, but it failed to make a lasting effect on readers. When he and Hallam travelled to Spain that summer, they had a fanciful concept of starting a rebellion in the Pyrenean mountains. As a result, the rebels received a considerable quantity of money, but there is no record of their participating in any military action at all. Tennyson was obliged to quit university in 1831 following his father's death because he was unable to complete his studies.

After that, Tennyson and his family returned to Somersby, where they lived in peace. He used his free time to write poetry and participate in a variety of outdoor hobbies. One of Tennyson's sisters had engaged Hallam to one of her brothers, so the two young men were able to spend a lot of time together.

Poems by Alfred Tennyson was released in 1832, and it included early versions of several of Tennyson's most famous works, including "The Lady of Shalott," "The Palace of Art," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Oenone," and "A Dream of Fair Women." Poetry in this collection was of varying quality; some poems were too romantic, while others lacked polish. The book was panned by critics despite the excellent lyrics noted before. When Tennyson received criticism for the first time, he was devastated. He didn't write for a long time, but he ultimately made the decision to focus on honing his lyrical abilities.

When Hallam died in Vienna in 1833, it was a sudden death. Tennyson was devastated by the death of a loved one. After the death of his wife, he took a total break from all of his customary pursuits. Hallam's death left him contemplating the nature of God and the immortality of the soul a lot throughout his sorrow. Tennyson penned a number of heartfelt elegies and poetry throughout this lengthy time of loss and agony. Finally compiled and published in 1850, this is widely regarded as one of English literature's finest elegiac masterpieces. *In Loving Memory of A.H.H.*

When Tennyson's family relocated to London, he remained to live with them and devote himself to his studies and writing. Due to financial constraints, he got engaged to Emily Sellwood against the objections of her parents, but felt that they couldn't be married. Many of his older poems were revised for publication in a two-volume collection in 1842, including "Morted' Arthur," "Ulysses," and "Locksley Hall," as well as a number of outstanding new ones. Tennyson was finally regarded as one of the most important literary personalities of the century and much praised in England.

Tennyson experienced a major psychological breakdown as a consequence of losing his tiny fortune via a careless investment during this period. After he recovered, the British government gave him an annual pension. Tennyson and Emily were married in June 1850, after a 13-year engagement. Tennyson was named poet laureate later that year, following Wordsworth. *Odes to Wellington's death (1852)* and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" are two significant poems he penned while serving in that position (1854).

Although he was well-known, Tennyson remained reticent and relocated to a more remote part of the city. During this time, he continued to work on his Arthurian poetry, the first of which came in an 1832 collection,

and the first four idylls appeared in an 1859 collection. After a short period of time, they were his most popular compositions, and he kept working on them until they were finally completed in 1885, when they were published as *The Idylls of the King*.

Tennyson's latter years were unremarkable. Their son, whom they called Hallam, was born to him and Emily. An honorary doctorate from Oxford University in 1885, as well as an invitation to serve as the rector of Glasgow University, went to Tennyson, who was widely regarded as the greatest of English poets. In 1883, Queen Victoria elevated him to the peerage, renaming him Baron Tennyson of Aldworth. As a result of his literary accomplishments, he was the first Englishman to get such an honorary degree. Many notable persons called Tennyson their friend, including: the Prince Consort Albert; Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone; Historian Thomas Carlyle; Poet Edward FitzGerald.

Tennyson wrote poetry for the rest of his life. In addition to *Maude*, *A Monodrama* (1853), *Enoch Arden* (1864), *Ballads and Poems* (1880), *Tiresias and More Ballads* (1885), *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1886), *Demeter and Other Poems* (1889), and *The Death of Oenone* (1890), he released several other works in his latter years as well (published posthumously in 1892). Aside from poetry, he also composed a number of historical plays in poetic form, including *Queen Mary* (1875), *Harold* (1877), *Beckett* (1884), and *The Foresters* (1886). (1892).

As the most admired and widely read English poet of his day, Alfred, Lord Tennyson rose to prominence in his own lifetime. Because he featured topics and issues that were of particular interest exclusively to Victorians, the quality of his writing was inconsistent and unintelligible today. Although Tennyson's ideas were frequently flimsy and only of momentary import, his technical prowess and prosody were unmatched. Tennyson's own assessment of his work to Carlyle is perhaps the most insightful:

Since Shakespeare, I don't believe anybody has been as proficient in the English language as I am—to be clear, I have nothing to add.

On October 6, 1892, Tennyson died at Aldworth House, his Surrey residence, at the age of 83. Shakespeare's copy of *Cymbeline*, which he had been reading the night before he died, was put in his coffin in Westminster Abbey.

PATRIOTISM AND NARROW NATIONALISM

Throughout Tennyson's work, the patriotic ardour and affection for the nation of the Victorians are evident. In practically all of his texts, he expresses the patriotic pride of the Victorians. Like the 'Ode to the Duke of Wellington', *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *The Defense of Lucknow*, he wrote these poems because he was proud of the English country and race. "The nation where free men cultivate," "a steady government," and "a land of just and fair fame," he considers England to be.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS LOVE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

In his poems, Tennyson conveys the typical conceptions of love, sex, and marriage of his day. He valued characteristics associated with the Victorian era, such as propriety, thrift, and dignity. He did so in accordance with the Victorian notion of gender segregation in the workplace. It's like when he states:

Man, to command and woman to obey.”

Tennyson, like his day, did not believe in sex without marriage; nor could he imagine a sexual connection outside of it. He preferred household love over romantic love between men and women, which he disdained. In his poem "The Miller's Daughter," he presents the ideal of marital love. The destruction brought on by illegal love affairs, such as the one between Lancelot and Guinevere, is a common theme in *Idylls of the King*. There was no room for leniency in sexual morality in Victorian society, and this attitude typifies that.

Tennyson is trying to find a middle ground between the Victorians' preference for complete sexual restraint and the older eras' preference for licentiousness by permitting love and sex inside the confines of married life. Tennyson emphasised spiritual love above physical love in issues of love, and love between a husband and wife over illegal sexual enjoyment by unmarried couples was more important to him than physical love. In the following words from *In Memoriam*, he expresses the conventional Victorian view of sexual morality by condemning sexuality and advocating the control of animal instincts:

“Arise and fly

The feeling Faun, the sensual feast;

Move upward, working out the beast,

And let the ape and tiger die”.

Sensual love may be destructive to society, according to Tennyson in his novel *Idylls of King*. As a result of Lancelot and Guinevere's unlawful and passionate love affair, the Round-Table falls apart, which is a metaphor for the collapse of society as a whole.

RELIGION AND SCEPTICISM (FAITH AND DOUBT)

For example, Tennyson has expressed a wide range of opinions in his poems about Victorian society and the world at large.

In the following words from *In Memoriam*, we see the tension between faith and doubt that plagued Victorians' minds:

Are God and Nature then at strife,

That Nature lends such evil dreams?

So careful of the type she seems,

So careless of the single life”.

Tennyson came to think that 'somehow good will be the eventual objective of evil' in an attempt to reconcile religious faith with scientific scepticism. According to him, in *In Memoriam*, even if he was sceptical or had "honest doubts," there was a bigger hope inside him:

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,

And gather dust and chaff, and call

To what I feel is the Lord of all,

And faintly trust the larger hope”.

Literature by Tennyson has an element of pessimism and despair about human existence and the plight of man on this world, which was prevalent in Victorian society with the rise of Darwinism and other scientific and evolutionary ideas. However, like in *In Memoriam*, it ends on a hopeful note.

POET LAUREATE

The office of Poet Laureate was created in 1850 after William Wordsworth's death and Samuel Rogers' rejection; Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Leigh Hunt had also been considered. He was the longest-serving laureate of all time, serving until his own death in 1892. When Princess Alexandra of Denmark came in Britain to marry the future King Edward VII, Tennyson wrote a poem welcoming her to the country. As a homage to the British cavalymen who participated in an unwise charge on October 25, 1854, during the Crimean War, Tennyson wrote "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in 1855. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* and *Ode Sung at the Opening of the International Exhibition* are two more notable compositions penned while serving as Poet Laureate.

In 1865 and 1868, Disraeli offered Tennyson a baronetcy, but he turned it down both times. Finally, Gladstone persuaded Tennyson to accept a peerage in 1883. He became Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater on the Isle of Wight in 1884, thanks to Queen Victoria. In 1884, he was elected to the House of Lords and assumed his seat on that day. Additionally, he penned a significant amount of non-official political lyric, ranging from the bellicose "Form, Riflemen, Form" about the French crisis of 1859 to "Steersman, be not hasty in thy act/of steering," which bemoaned Gladstone's Home Rule Bill.

Tennyson's pals Julia Margaret Cameron and G.F.Watts were the subject of Virginia Woolf's play "Freshwater."

Tennyson was the first British author to be elevated to the peerage. As a passionate man with certain quirks, he never felt at ease in his peerage. It is often believed that he accepted the peerage in order to provide a better life for his son Hallam.

At the end of his life, Thomas Edison recorded Alfred Lord Tennyson reciting his own poems. Among the recordings are "The splendour falls" (from "The Princess"), "Come into the garden," "Ask me no more," "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," and "Lancelot and Elaine." Unfortunately, the sound quality is as bad as you'd expect from wax cylinder recordings.

Tennyson's "religious convictions also broke convention, tending towards agnosticism and pandeism" were disclosed towards the conclusion of his life: To quote from *In Memoriam*: "There lives more faith in honest uncertainty than half the creeds," he wrote famously. The context of this remark strongly contradicts its apparent meaning.] "The churches have slain their Christ" he wrote in *Maud*, 1855. Tennyson described Christian love in the churches as "the twin of heathen hatred" in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." "We are self-uncertain beings, and we may, Yea, even when we know not, blend our spites and secret hatred with our defence of Heaven," he wrote in his drama "Becet" (Becket). "I believe in Pantheism of a kind," Tennyson wrote in his *Diary* (p. 127) When he was dying, Tennyson admired Giordano Bruno and Spinoza, stating of Bruno, "His idea of God is in some ways mine," according to his son's autobiography, confirming that he was not an orthodox Christian.

Tennyson kept writing until he was 90 years old. On October 6, 1892, at the age of 83, he passed away in Aldworth. At Westminster Abbey, he was laid to rest. Freshwater's All Saints' Church dedicated a monument in his honour. "Oh, that press will have me now!" were his last words. Hallam Tennyson succeeded his father as 2nd Baron Tennyson in 1897, and subsequently served as the second Governor-General of Australia.

TENNYSON AND THE QUEEN

Despite the fact that Tennyson's nomination as Laureate was primarily the result of Prince Albert's efforts, Queen Victoria grew to appreciate Tennyson's work after Albert's death, noting in her journal that she was "much calmed & happy" after reading *In Memoriam A.H.H.* When they first met in April 1862, Victoria described him as "quite unusual looking," tall and dark, with a fine head and long black flowing hair and a beard; "oddly clothed, yet there is no affectation about him." A few years later, Tennyson encountered the Queen again, and she revealed to him how much of a comfort *In Memoriam A.H.H.* had been to her.

THE ART OF TENNYSON'S POETRY

From mediaeval stories to classical mythology to everyday life, Tennyson employed a broad variety of sources for his poems. Because of the depth of his imagery and descriptive writing, it's easy to see how John Keats and other Romantic poets influenced him when he was growing up. It's also worth noting that he was an expert at rhythm. Relentless grief is emphasised by the persistent rhythm of *Break, Break, Break*. To emphasise his rhythms and ideas, Tennyson cleverly uses words' musical properties. The language of "I come from haunts of coot and hern" swirls and lilts like the stream in the poem and the last two lines "Come down O maid from yonder mountain height" exemplify his clever use of onomatopoeia, alliteration, and assonance in the following passage:

The moan of doves in immemorial elms

And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Tennyson was a master craftsman who meticulously edited and reworked his works. Few Victorian writers tried with translating the quantitative metres of Greek and Latin poetry to English in such a wide range of styles and with such precision of metre. He has a strong sense of order and a propensity for moralizing that are

reminiscent of the Victorian era. In addition, he expresses a frequent issue among Victorian writers: the tension between religious belief and the rapid advancement of scientific knowledge. Poems by him, like those by many authors who churn out numerous works over time, are often lacking in inspiration, yet his personality shines through all of them. Among Tennyson's numerous works, the most well-known are *Maud* and *Idylls of the King*, the latter of which is widely regarded as the most influential Victorian rendition of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Several of Tennyson's poems (e.g., *Mariana*, *The Lotos Eaters*, *Tears*, *Idle Tears*, *In Memoriam*) have a similar thread of sadness, melancholy, and loss, perhaps reflecting his own lifelong battle with crippling depression. "The saddest of all English poets," according to T. S. Eliot, was Tennyson, whose poetic "depths, to the abyss of grief," were masked by technical mastery of rhyme and language.

CONCLUSION

Tennyson is a real representation of his time, expressing the varied thoughts, ideas, trends, and social and moral concerns of the day. While he admires the ideas of his day, he also speaks out against those of them that he believes are harmful to people's well-being. Poems by Tennyson are the most accurate depictions of Victorian society's way of life, views, and beliefs. To summarize, we might say that his dualistic desire to get engaged in both activity and people is only a way of escape rather than a commitment founded of profound conviction. However, it is Tennyson's conflict between doubt and faith, denial and consent, that takes the centre stage in these poems, not the declaration of victory.

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