

Alfred Tennyson (1809 - 1892)

"O young mariner,
you from the haven
under the sea-cliff,
you that are watching
The gray magician
with eyes of wonder,
I am merlin,
And I am dying
I am merlin
who follow the gleam,
.....

a young mariner,
Down to the haven
Cap your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas
And, ere it vanished
over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the gleam."

One who reads this haunting poem of "Merlin and The Gleam" finds in it a suggestion of the spirit of the poet's whole life, - his devotion to the ideal as expressed in poetry, his early

romantic impressions, his struggles, doubts, triumphs, and his thrilling message to his race. Throughout the entire Victorian period Tennyson stood at the summit of poetry in England. Not in vain was he appointed laureate at the death of Wordsworth in 1850 for almost alone among those who have held the office, he felt the importance of his place, and fined and honoured it. For nearly half a century Tennyson was not only a man and a poet, he was a voice, the voice of a whole people, expressing in exquisite melody their doubts and their faith, their griefs and their triumphs. In the wonderful variety of his verse he suggests all the qualities of England's greatest poets. The dreaminess of Spenser, the majesty of Milton, the natural simplicity of Wordsworth, the fantasy of Blake and

Coleridge, the melody of Keats and Shelley, the narrative vigour of Scott and Byron — all these striking qualities are evident on successive pages of Tennyson's poetry. The only thing lacking is the dramatic power of the Elizabethans. In reflecting the restless spirit of this progressive age Tennyson is as remarkable as Pope was in voicing the artificiality of the early eighteenth century. As a poet, therefore, who expressed not so much a personal as a national spirit, he is probably the most representative literary man of the Victorian era.

The end.

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