

**ANALYSIS OF MR.
TENNYSON'S
"IN MEMORIAM"**

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Analysis of Mr. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" by Frederick W. Robertson

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FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON

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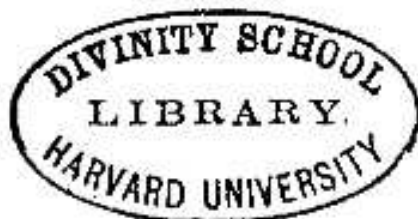
"IN MEMORIAM."

By the late

William

REV. FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON,

OF BRIGHTON.



LONDON :

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 65 CORNHILL.

1862.

BY PERMISSION, THESE NOTES ON THE

“IN MEMORIAM”

ARE DEDICATED TO

ALFRED TENNYSON, D.C.L.

POET LAUREATE,

IN TOKEN OF THEIR AUTHOR'S REVERENCE

FOR HIS WORKS.

PREFACE.

THE following Notes on "In Memoriam" were written by Mr. Robertson at the request of a friend; and now that the memory of the Writer holds in so many minds a position analogous to that described in the Poem, it has been thought that these Notes might interest the much wider public who know Mr. Robertson only through his works.

The subjoined extract from a Lecture on Poetry delivered by Mr. Robertson several years ago will serve to indicate his general estimate of this exquisite Poem:—

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“ This Lecture* will be appropriately closed by a brief notice of the last work of our chief living poet, Alfred Tennyson.

“ The poem entitled ‘ In Memoriam ’ is a monument erected by friendship to the memory of a gifted son of the historian Hallam. It is divided into a number of cabinet-like compartments, which, with fine and delicate shades of difference, exhibit the various phases through which the bereaved spirit passes from the first shock of despair, dull, hopeless misery and rebellion, up to the dawn of hope, acquiescent trust, and even calm happiness again. In the meanwhile many a question has been solved, which can only suggest itself when suffering forces the soul to front the realities of our mysterious existence; such as: Is there indeed a life

* From “ Lectures and Addresses,” by the Rev. F. W. Robertson. Pp. 124-128.

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to come? And if there is, will it be a conscious life? Shall I know that myself? Will there be mutual recognition? continuance of attachments? Shall friend meet friend, and brother brother, as friends and brothers? Or, again: How comes it that one so gifted was taken away so early, in the maturity of his powers, just at the moment when they seemed about to become available to mankind? What means all this, and is there not something wrong? Is the law of Creation Love indeed?

“By slow degrees, all these doubts, and worse, are answered; not as a philosopher would answer them, nor as a theologian, or a metaphysician, but as it is the duty of a poet to reply, by intuitive faculty, in strains in which Imagination predominates over Thought and Memory. And one of the manifold beauties of this exquisite poem, and

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which is another characteristic of true Poetry, is that, piercing through all the sophistries and over-refinements of speculation, and the lifeless scepticism of science, it falls back upon the grand, primary, simple truths of our Humanity; those first principles which underlie all creeds, which belong to our earliest childhood, and on which the wisest and best have rested through all ages: that all is right: that darkness shall be clear: that God and Time are the only interpreters: that Love is king: that the Immortal is in us: that—which is the key-note of the whole—

‘all is well, though Faith and Form
Be fundered in the night of fear.’

* * * *

“To a coarser class of minds ‘In Memoriam’ appears too melancholy: one

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long monotone of grief. It is simply one of the most victorious songs that ever poet chanted : with the mysterious undertone, no doubt, of sadness which belongs to all human joy, in front of the mysteries of death and sorrow ; but that belongs to ' Paradise Regained ' as well as to ' Paradise Lost : ' to every true note, indeed, of human triumph except a Bacchanalian drinking song. And that it should predominate in a monumental record is not particularly unnatural. But readers who never dream of mastering the plan of a work before they pretend to criticise details, can scarcely be expected to perceive that the wail passes into a hymn of solemn and peaceful beauty before it closes."