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In memoriam

Tennyson, Alfred

London, 1900

Prologue

The Prologue, an address to "immortal Love," resumes some of the chief points insisted on in the concluding poems, such as the necessity of faith, the freedom and spiritual nature of the will, the superiority of wisdom to knowledge; and concludes with a prayer for forgiveness.

STRONG SON of God, immortal Love,¹
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove ;²

Thine are these orbs of light and shade ;³
Thou madest Life in man and brute ;
Thou madest Death ; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :⁴
Thou madest man, he knows not why ;
He thinks he was not made to die ;
And thou hast made him : thou art just.

¹ *Immortal Love.*] See 1 John iv. 8, 9.

² See the passage in *The Ancient Sage*, beginning :

"Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son."

³ Planets which move round the sun, and so are part in light and part in shade.

⁴ This is, after the existence of God, the main article of the poet's creed.

Thou seemest human and divine,
 The highest, holiest manhood, thou :
 Our wills are ours, we know not how ;¹
 Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day ;²
 They have their day and cease to be :
 They are but broken lights of thee,
 And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith : we cannot know ;
 For knowledge is of things we see ;
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,
 A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell ;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,³

But vaster. We are fools and slight ;
 We mock thee when we do not fear :
 But help thy foolish ones to bear ;⁴
 Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin⁵ in me ;
 What seem'd my worth since I began ;
 For merit lives from man to man,
 And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

¹ See cxxx.

² Cf. *Two Voices* : "The dust of systems and of creeds."

³ *As before.*] The constant growth of knowledge will always destroy the harmony unless reverence grows along with it.

⁴ Help us, foolish as we are, to bear the light of knowledge which streams from thee, without in consequence becoming vain of our new knowledge, and losing our reverence.

⁵ *My sin.*] Explained by l. 37 and l. 41. See v. 1 ; lxxxiv. 61.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
 Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
 I trust he lives in thee, and there
 I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering¹ cries,
 Confusions of a wasted youth ;
 Forgive them where they fail in truth,
 And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849.

¹ *Wild and wandering.*] A combination of epithets found in Shakespeare, *Troilus*, I. I. 105.

IN MEMORIAM

A. H. H.

Obiit MDCCCXXXIII