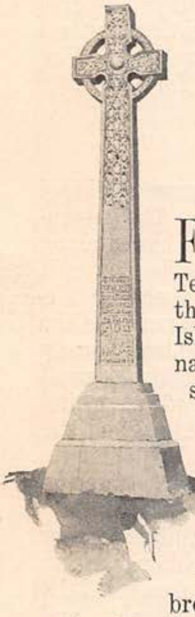
TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS AT FRESHWATER.

BY V. C. SCOTT O'CONNOR.



> Ye King holds Frescewatre in demesne.
> DOMESDAY BOOK.

> Where, far from noise and smoke of town,
> I watch the twilight falling brown
> All round a careless-ordered garden
> Close to the ridge of a noble down.

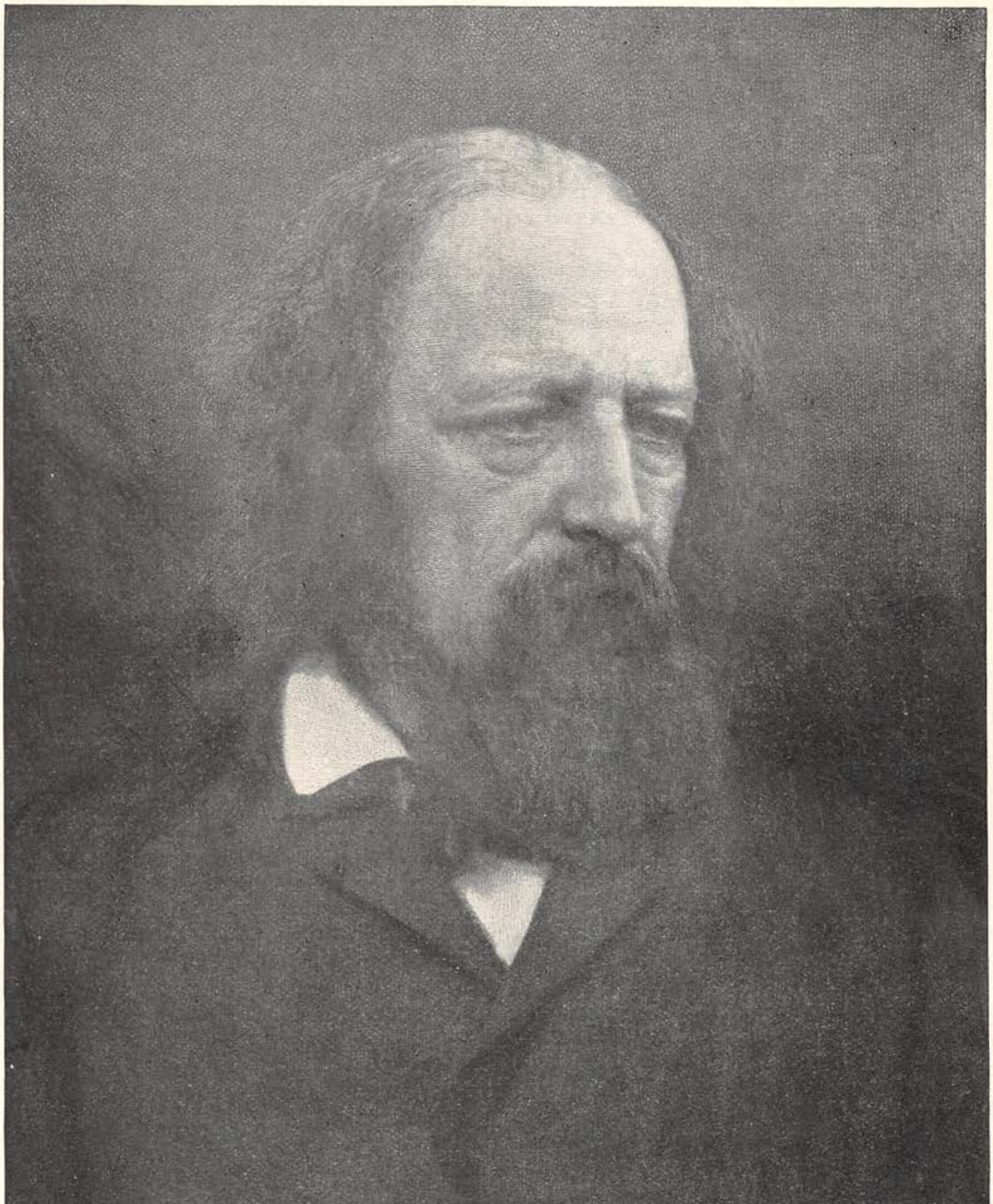
FRESHWATER, so intimately associated with the life of Tennyson, is a little village in the extreme western end of the Isle of Wight. The island here narrows down into a small peninsula, and from every point of vantage in its neighborhood there is a far-reaching view of the sea. It derives its name from the spring of fresh water, within a few yards of the beach at Freshwater Gate, which, broadening as it crosses the island, enters the Solent near Yarmouth, and is known through its course as the River Yar. The little peninsula would speedily become an island if there were no breakwater at Freshwater Gate, or Freshwater Bay, as it is more commonly called, to stay the power of the sea. The Channel has been encroaching on it for ages, battering away into the cliffs; and the aspect of Freshwater Bay has altered considerably even during the past hundred years. The smugglers' caves; the fine natural Arched Rock, which stands out in lonely beauty amid the foam and surge of the Channel; the Stag Rock, once known as the Stack—all these will disappear in time, perhaps in another generation.

The traveler approaches Freshwater either by the miniature Isle of Wight railway, through Cowes and Newport; by coach from Ventnor; or more commonly from Lymington, on the mainland opposite, by the daily steamer which plies across the Solent to the old-fashioned little town of Yarmouth. This was the route favored by the poet in his journeys to and from his Freshwater home. It was during one of these little voyages across the Solent that he composed his poem «Crossing the Bar,» now published as the last poem in the collected edition of his works, though written some years before his death. It was his custom latterly to travel in a special steamer when making the annual move to and from Farringford, partly on account of Lady Tennyson's delicate health.

Between Southampton and Lymington a change of trains becomes necessary at Brockenhurst, where, in the little waiting-room, hangs a collection of Mrs. Cameron's famous portraits, placed there by her, in days gone by, when she was Tennyson's near neighbor and friend at Farringford, in memory of her meeting there a son returned from Ceylon after an absence of many years. Brockenhurst thus affords the traveler a first glimpse into the social life of Freshwater in those earlier days, the memory of which it is the purpose of this article in some measure to revive.

Some years ago I had but recently returned from a brief sojourn in Italy, and my heart was full of the glory and beauty of its great cities and its incomparable climate. Something of this I expressed in conversation with my friend Mr. Arthur Tennyson, a brother of the laureate, to whom Italy is an open book into which he, like his brother Frederick Tennyson, has read many years of a long life. «Yes,» he replied; «it is a very beautiful country, and very pleasant to sojourn in; but for an old man—for me—there is nothing in it like this»; and as he spoke he turned to the quiet landscape which spread beyond us—soft, undulating downs whereon the sheep were grazing; open fields bordered by deep, trim hedges; little stone cottages half hidden under climbing ivy; and everywhere a sense of ordered comfort and rest.

Tennyson undoubtedly chose Freshwater as a home for these qualities of remoteness from «the madding crowd,» and the tranquillity that slumbers in its mild southern air. When he came to settle here in the early fifties, with the laurel chaplet fresh on his brow,



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MRS. CAMERON.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON.

the little village was infinitely more secluded than it is now. Its rural stillness had not yet been invaded by the shriek of the steam-engine, and the «elegant seaside villa,» which is now one of its most dubious adornments, had not yet emerged into the capitalist horizon. An occasional steamer served as the only means of communication between this, the western end of the island, and the adjoining mainland, and the manor-houses of the local gentry, with farms and cottages, made up all there was of Freshwater.

From the rural village of forty years ago, secluded from the great world beyond, it is passing into a cheap watering-place; and the rows of new buildings which boast pretentious names along the main road to Freshwater Gate are a testimony to its growth.

Yonder lies our young sea village—Art and Grace
are less and less:
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of
slated hideousness.

But if Freshwater has suffered somewhat since Tennyson went to live there, it is infinitely richer for the legacy he has left it. His memory exalts all that is permanent of its old beauty. The village has altered, but the beautiful swelling downs remain; the little sedge-embroidered Yar still makes seaward from Freshwater Gate, where the Channel spray mingles with its infant waters, to Yarmouth by the Solent, as it did half a century of summers ago; and at Farringford, the poet's home, all remains as he left it. The personal memories which still linger in the neighborhood must die out one by one as the people of his time pass away; but meanwhile his portrait hangs in most of the old cottages, the village folk still have quaint personal recollections of the great man who moved among them wrapped in a sort of mystery, and a few of those who were privileged to be his intimate friends still reside in the neighborhood.

The admiration of his rustic neighbors was, it must be confessed, somewhat confused and vague, especially before he became a tangible, understandable lord.

One day, when Tennyson was having his new study built, he overheard an amusing conversation between two of the workmen.

«Have you seen him?» said one.

«Yes,» replied the other.

«What sort of a chap is he?»

«Oh, well enough for an ‹overner,›» growled the other in reply.

The story is a characteristic one of the old days when the Wight islander was profoundly exclusive, and believed that stout, honest fellows like himself grew only in the Isle of Wight; for no good, in his estimation, could be expected from «over» the sea.

The shepherd at Farringford was a well-known figure in the old days. When he grew old and past work, he was given a pension by Lord Tennyson, and he retired to a little cottage on the estate. One day a niece of the poet's went to sit by him, and she read to him from a volume of Tennyson's poetry. When she had finished reading, he said: «Well, miss, but that was fine. What a head-piece he must have on him, to be sure! You 'd never think it, now, to look at him.»

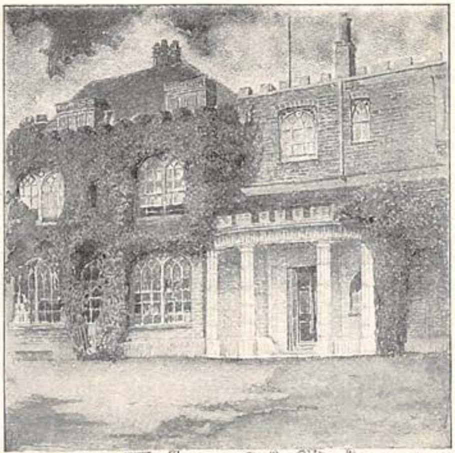
«Oh, yes, shepherd,» exclaimed the young lady. «Why, I think he has a beautiful, noble face.»

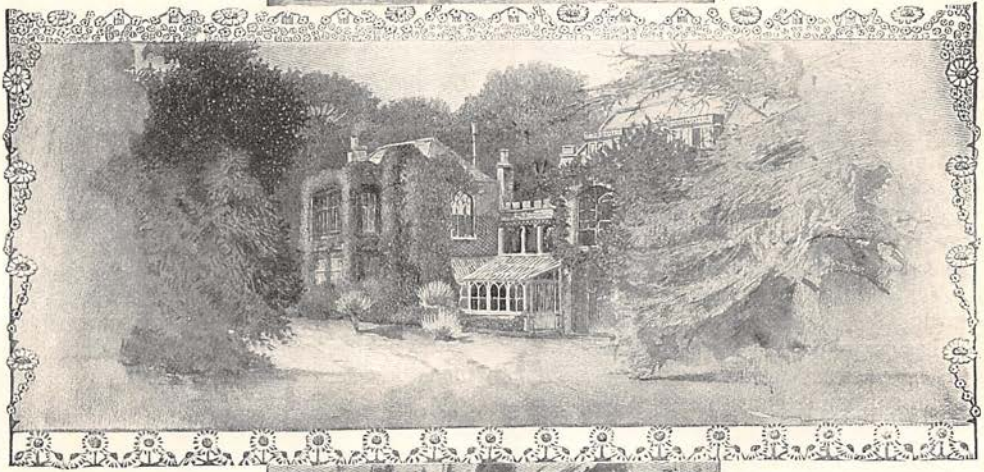
«Well, well, miss,» retorted the old man, «that may be, but you 'd never think it, anyway, to hear him talk!»

«When I came to Freshwater,» Tennyson said somewhat sorrowfully to a friend, «it was a labyrinth of lanes.» Many of these have disappeared or been shorn of their main attraction, but many still remain; and the Freshwater lanes, hidden under arching elms and bordered with hedges of thorn and blackberry, are a principal element in its beauty to-day. The most famous of these is Farringford lane, barred from the roadway by a little black-hued wicket, the latch of which yields with ready hospitality to the visitor. He may pass up it, though it is a private way, under the shadow of gnarled elms, and making the gentle ascent up a foot-path checkered with light and gloom, he will presently come to where «Tennyson's Bridge» spans the road. On either hand stretch the broad Farringford demesnes—the house and park on the right, and open fields, distinguished by clumps of weather-beaten pines sheering away from long habit from the blast, on the left. The bridge is a slight rustic structure serving to unite two sections of the estate. Across it the poet, seeking a sequestered way to the boisterous open down-land beyond, found his readiest passage. From here, framed by the overhanging trees, he could look out on the vast slope and shoulder of distant Afton, and, nearer, on to his own Down, patterned in heather and ragged gorse,—a thing of flame-clad beauty in its season,—and white chalk chasms with precipitous sides. Here, in the silent moonlight, under the shadow of his own dark pines, he often stood and listened to the voice of the sea.

«Tennyson's Down,» which towers up here

so mightily, a great bulwark between the ocean and the poet's home, continues, under changing names, till it culminates, at a height of nearly four hundred and fifty feet, in the «Beacon.» Thence it declines toward the sea, its last outpost being the storm-shattered rocks on which the Needles lighthouse is built.

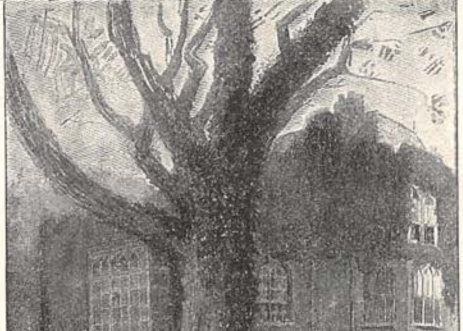




The downs and tender-tinted cliffs are lost,
And nothing but the guardian fire remains—
That crimson-headed tower on the rough coast
Whose steady lustre ceases not nor wanes.

The days of the Beacon are numbered; and when the Tennyson monument takes its place, the old wooden Beacon will be taken down and carried away. Yet it is a historic relic in which many take an interest. Tennyson himself regarded it in this light, and, when walking with a companion over «the broad backs of the bushless downs,» would sometimes stop and draw attention to it, pointing out impressively that on this same spot he believed there had been lighted one of those beacons which flashed the news to a waiting people of the approach of the Spanish Armada. It is more than possible that this was the case; and there is no doubt whatever that in later days, when the country was once more face to face with a grave crisis in its history, the beacon then on this spot was destined to play a similar part.

The following narrative is of interest in this connection, and I am indebted to Miss Oldershaw of Freshwater for its use. The narrator, long since deceased, was living near Freshwater at the time. She says: «When all the inhabitants of the south coast of England were living in daily fear of a French invasion un-



DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

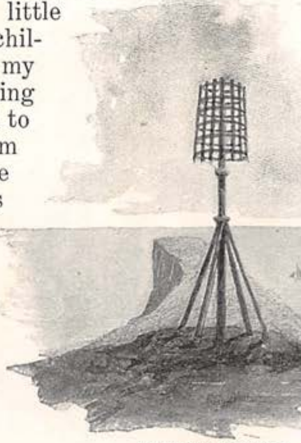
FARRINGFORD: THE PORCH.—TENNYSON'S STUDY WINDOWS (SECOND FLOOR ON THE LEFT).—THE DRAWING-ROOM WINDOW AND PART OF THE GREAT CEDAR.

der Bonaparte, beacons were erected on all the high downs of the Isle of Wight, and signalmen were appointed to keep watch day and night for French vessels approaching the coast. They were to be lighted to give warning to the inhabitants of the island that the enemy was at hand. One evening the signalman at St. Catherine's, having imbibed too much of the spirits then smuggled into Niton, saw a fleet of fishing-boats entering Chale Bay, and magnified them into war-ships. He accordingly lighted his beacon. By order of the governor of the island, all the women and children were to be sent into Newport, as the center of the island. In Freshwater they were collected,—not a difficult task when the population was so small,—and sent off, packed in wagons, to Newport. When about four miles on the road they were met by a messenger from Chale, and told that it was a false alarm. In the meantime my uncle and aunt had packed their silver and other valuables in strong boxes, ready to be lowered into a deep well in the garden. The beacon at Freshwater was not lighted, because the signalman declared from the beginning of the scare that it was an impossibility for the French to land at Chale while the wind was blowing from the quarter it was in.»

The downs on which the Beacon still stands[1] for the moment were Tennyson's great refreshment, and many accounts have been left by his friends of those famous walks along their wind-swept ridges in which he opened his heart and mind to them.

«I have known him,» writes Sir John Simeon's daughter, in an unpublished and singularly beautiful little memoir written for her children, from which it is my greatest privilege, in writing this paper, to be allowed to quote—«I have known him to stop short in a sentence to listen to a blackbird's song, to watch the sunlight glint on a butterfly's wing, or to examine a field flower at his feet. The lines ‹Flower in the crannied wall› were the result of an investigation of the ‹love-in-idleness› growing on a wall in Farringford garden. He made them nearly on the spot, and said them to me next day.»

But the same voice that was stilled in homage to a blackbird's song rose and fell through those long walks over the downs in a grand melody of its own—a melody of high thoughts wedded to stately words. «I used to go for walks,» continues Miss Simeon (afterward Mrs. Ward), «sometimes alone with him, sometimes in the company of other guests, of whom Mr. Jowett was one of the most frequent. Forgetful of the youth and ignorance of his companion, he would rise to the highest themes, thread his way through the deepest speculations, till I caught the infection of his mind, and the questions of matter and spirit, of space and the infinite, of time and of eternity, and such kindred subjects, became to me the burning questions, the supreme interests, of life. But, however absorbed he might be in earnest talk, his eye and ear were always alive to the natural objects around him.»



THE OLD BEACON.

The downs, then, are more connected with Tennyson's personality than almost any other locality in Freshwater; for, outside of his own grounds, they were his favorite haunt. Steep of ascent, their long, undulating summits, like great land-waves, are soft, and spring underfoot. The sea-winds blow free and untrammeled across them, if vehement in their moods; and the tall, cloaked man, walking there with chosen friends, or alone with his own thoughts, felt himself, in the midst of their majestic privacy, happily remote from conventional exercises, and the world that came prying about his doors. On these glorious expanses the babble and hum of the commonplace are superseded by great symphonies of nature—the boom of the restless sea and the song of the hastening wind, in diapason of varied emotion. Nor are humbler melodies lacking—the tinkle of sheep-bells, the joyous yelp of the shepherd's dog, and furtive rustlings of a little free-lance, owning no man's dominion, from the tattered gorse. There are views, too,

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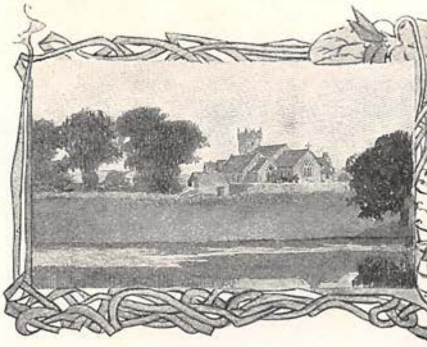
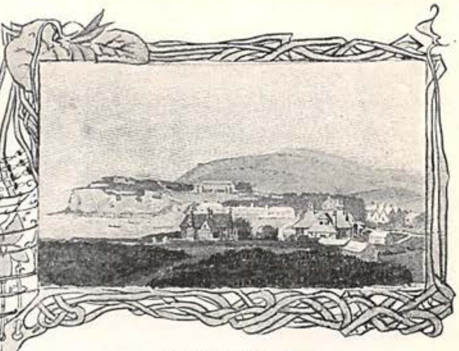
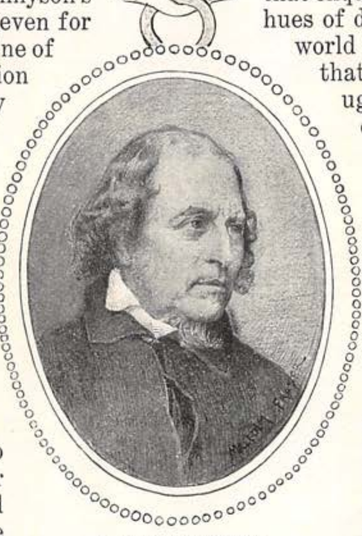
[1] Since these words were written the old wooden Beacon has gone down, and the monument erected to Tennyson's memory has taken its place. It is a very graceful and beautiful Iona cross of white Cornish granite, visible from afar. It has been carved after a design by Mr. Pearson, R. A., and is adorned with a runic tracery and the words, «In memory of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, this cross is raised by the people of Freshwater and other friends in England and America.» It stands on one of the finest sites in all England.



FRESHWATER CHURCH.



FRESHWATER BAY.



DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

CHARLES TENNYSON-TURNER.
(AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY MAYALL.)

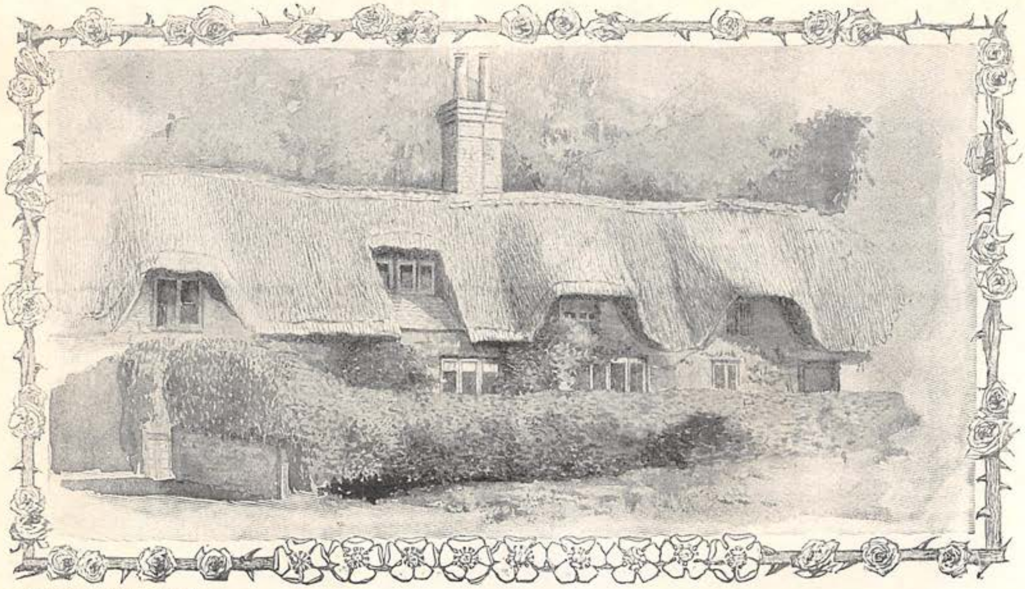
from this walking-place of Tennyson's which made it no mean one, even for him; and many and many a line of his poetry found its inspiration here. From here one may still observe

> Below the milky steep
> Some ship of battle slowly creep,
> And on thro' zones of light and shadow
> Glimmer away to the lonely deep;

or one may look down to the little village, seeming «how quiet and small,» and yet not free from its «gossip and scandal and spite.» Far out to the horizon, flecked here and there by a sail, one may see shimmering in the sunlight the English Channel, and away northward that beautiful coast outline, in a long perspective of changing color, which he thought as fine in its summer glory, when the sea gleams like a blue girdle about the cliffs, as the scenery about Sorrento. There are days, too, of rare and delicate beauty, which come in interludes between rain, when tints of the softest play on the down slopes as the shadows lengthen—tints of gray-green iridescence like the colors on the throat of a wood-pigeon. One circumstance I may mention here which associates Tennyson's memory more nearly with this locality than any other I know of. Save that it reveals the great tenderness and sensitiveness of his character, it were almost too intimate for repetition. It was Tennyson's custom to rise early, when his household had scarcely begun to stir, and walk alone in the freshness of the morning. So it happened, one day, as he climbed the down slopes at that exquisite hour when the changing hues of dawn play like music over a world awakening to renewed life, that his steps were stayed by an ugly spectacle. Some person during the previous night had set the gorse and heather alight, and in the smoke and rush of sudden flame several of its little inhabitants had been stifled and burned. In the place of what was fair and sheltering the day before there was now a burnt wilderness, rendered pitiful by the presence of a few helpless victims, little birds and charred rabbits. Turning back from this scene of cruelty, the tender-hearted poet walked sadly home as the day was breaking in splendor, and climbing up to his room, burst into tears.

Willingly, he took no part in the destruction of life. «His sympathy with nature led him to mourn over the cutting down of trees, as if they were, like the grove in Dante's ‹Inferno,› the abode of his personal friends,» and he never would consent to his flowers at Farringford being plucked. «I can very well remember the look on his face,» Miss Weld, his niece, tells me, «when he met me, one day, returning from his meadows with a wheelbarrow full of fading daffodils, plucked by me with the lavish hand of a child. He gazed at them very sorrowfully, and in gentle words expressed his regret that so much beautiful life had been needlessly sacrificed.»

From Freshwater Gate to the Needles the white cliffs which pillar the downs are sheer and abrupt. During the summer he made occasional boating excursions, skirting them in the little voyage round the Needles to Alum

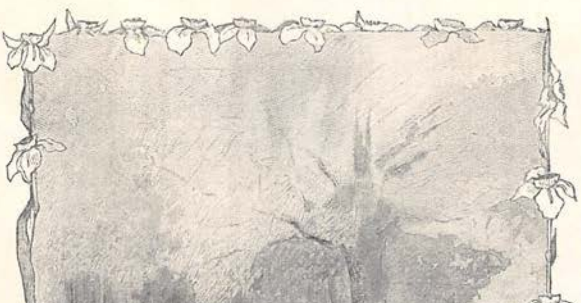


DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

THE HOME FARM.

Bay. A close observer of the habits of animals, he used to be deeply fascinated by the wheeling flight of the sea-birds about their homes on the tall cliff ledges. He was himself a climber of considerable nerve, and in spite of his short sight was familiar with many of the steepest cliffs. Of Watcombe Bay he was especially fond, calling it his own bay, since it appertained to the down which was his by ancient prescription as lord of the manor.

Continuing under Tennyson's Bridge, the lane we left some time ago for the open downs passes under the shadow of the poet's trees till, skirting the Home Farm, it turns sharply to the right, and passing near it, bisects the Farringford demesne. On one side of the lane the thatched farm-house sleeps in rustic beauty under heavy-lidded eaves. From its chimneys the blue smoke quietly ascends against a dense background of lofty trees, and in the yard fowls and chickens and ducks forage with sounds of contentment for food, or bask in the warm sunlight. On the farther side a fine reach of park-land stretches away from a group of yellow hayricks glistening under the great elms, and under the leafy shelter of its avenues the Tennyson herds wander in peace. I am told that in former days the main drive up to Farringford lay through this portion of the estate. A massive yellow farm-wagon with the legend,



HOME FARM LANE.

THE RT. HONBLE. LORD TENNYSON,
Farringford,

writ across it in black letters, finds shelter, when not in use, under the pent-roof of an adjoining stable. It is the definite touch which tells the visitor that Farringford, so deeply associated in the hearts of those who speak the English tongue all over the world with the life of a great poet, is also the private estate of an English gentleman. The poet loved his herds, and was a good farmer. «We are very proud of our mutton,» his son said to me, the other day, as we stopped to look at his flocks of sheep grazing under the trees about Farringford.

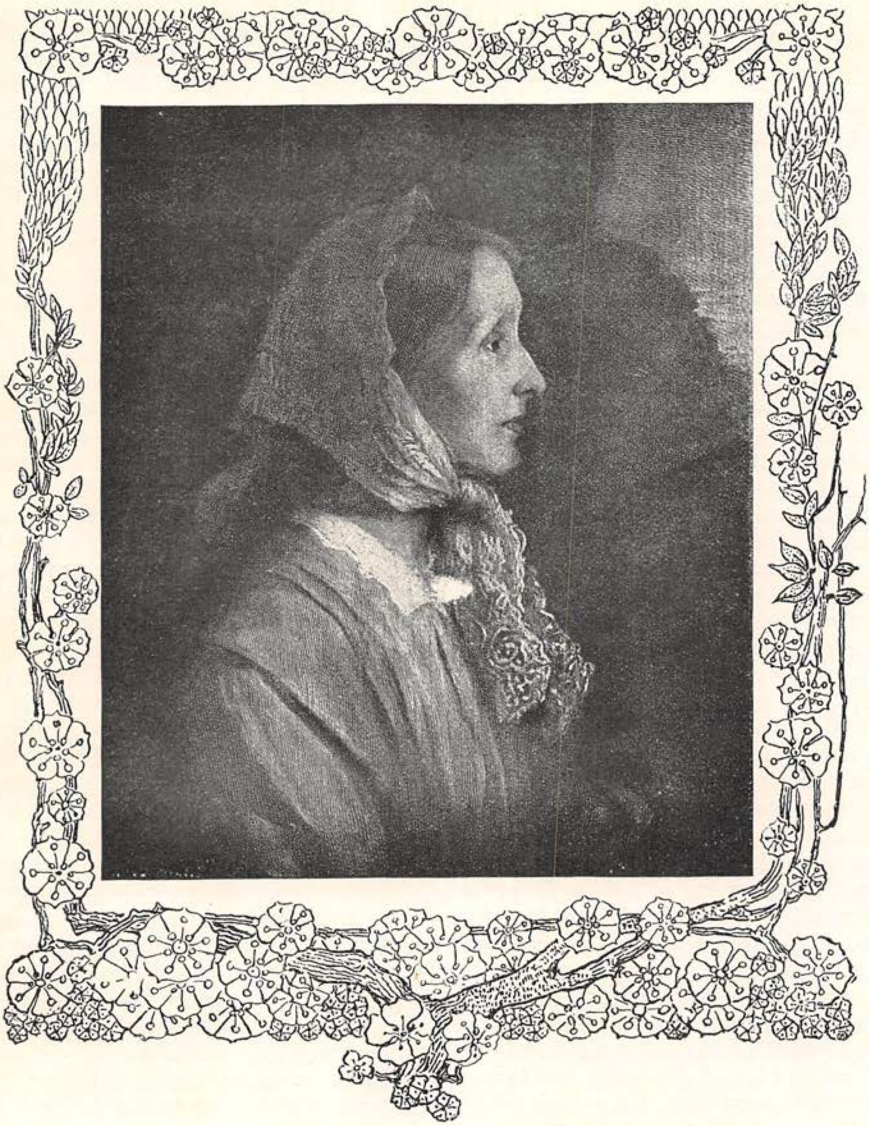
Leaving the Home Farm, one may pass on through lanes happy with the laughter of children returning from school to laborers' cottages, hidden under ivy and climbing roses, and bearing the initials «A. E. T.» in monogram. The letters stand for Alfred and Emily Tennyson—a symbol of perfect unity of heart and a gentle care for the comfort and happiness of poorer neighbors.

In spite of the limitations imposed by delicate health, Lady Tennyson took no small share in the pleasant duties connected with her position as mistress of Farringford. Many of the improvements carried on since they came to live here were made at her suggestion or under her supervision; and whether it were the laying out of a little flower-bed, or the constant task of shielding him from the wearing interruptions of the commonplace, she was ever the «dear, near, and true» companion and partner of the poet's life. «To her,» wrote Mr. Palgrave, «he has never looked in vain for aid and comfort, the wife whose perfect love has blessed him through these many years with large and faithful sympathy.»

She was fruitful in good works, and did all with that inimitable grace and charm which spring only from the heart. Her memory is green in many of the little cottages in Freshwater. An old man in Freshwater once said to me, speaking of her with the tears almost in his eyes: «She was the kindest, most beautiful-speaking woman I have ever met, sir. God bless her!»

Turning back down the highway, a lane beautiful in midsummer, one comes in a few minutes to the gateway of Farringford, quiet and unpretentious, like everything else about it. Though the house is not far off, it is not visible from here; there is only a glimpse under the horse-chestnuts of the graveled drive. Facing the gate, across the road is the pretty little cottage in which the old gardener lives, and near it is an apple-orchard—the two, in their homely, unconventional beauty, a not inappropriate entrance to a poet's home. A friend of his staying at Farringford witnessed a scene here which is characteristic of the mingled reverence and rudeness of those admirers of the laureate to whom it was due that he fled from Freshwater here. A tourist, finding himself opposite the gateway, seized the opportunity it offered of carrying away a memento of his visit. Pulling out of his pocket a large penknife, he proceeded with some labor to cut out of the gate wall a fragment of stone. This vandalism accomplished, Tennyson's dishonest admirer hesitated for a moment; then, lifting the latch, he passed in through the gate a short way up the graveled drive till he came within sight of the house. Here he stopped, and gazing earnestly about him as though he would have every momentous detail firmly impressed on his memory, he stood bareheaded for some moments. Then he turned, and came solemnly and reverently away. «The man did not, of course, know,» says my informant, «that I was a witness to what he was doing. I was naturally very curious to see what he was about, and watched him from the lane outside. I related the circumstance to Lord Tennyson the same afternoon at lunch, proceeding slowly with my narrative in the order in which the events had occurred. His indignation was great while I was telling him of his admirer's destructiveness, but I could see he was mollified toward the close. ‹H'm!› he growled, ‹the fellow had some grace left in him.›»

There were no limits, however, to the rudeness and ill-bred curiosity of the thronging tourists to Freshwater in those years, between 1853 and 1867, during which it was still his summer home. Mr. Fytche, a cousin of the poet, now living at «The Terrace,» Freshwater, tells the following story of a party which arrived at Mr. Lambert's hotel, one summer, filled with the determination to exploit Farringford and its venerable master. Calling up the landlord, they told him they counted on him to aid them in effecting their purpose; but he flatly refused, saying it was as much as his tenure was worth for him to encourage them in breaking in on the Laureate's privacy. He continued resolute in his refusal, and the spirits of the party sank before the obstacles he pictured for them. One burly fellow, however, bolder than the rest, went off by himself; and after a somewhat



FROM A PAINTING AT ALDWORTH BY G. F. WATTS. AFTER A PHOTOGRAVURE FROM "ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON," A MEMOIR, BY HIS SON. LONDON, MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.; NEW YORK, THE MACMILLAN CO.

LADY TENNYSON.

thorny passage through the thick-set hedge and barbed wire designed to keep such intruders out of Farringford, succeeded in finding his way in and climbing up one of the big trees overlooking the lawn. Here, in one of the branches, he sat patiently till the laureate came out with some young ladies staying in the house.

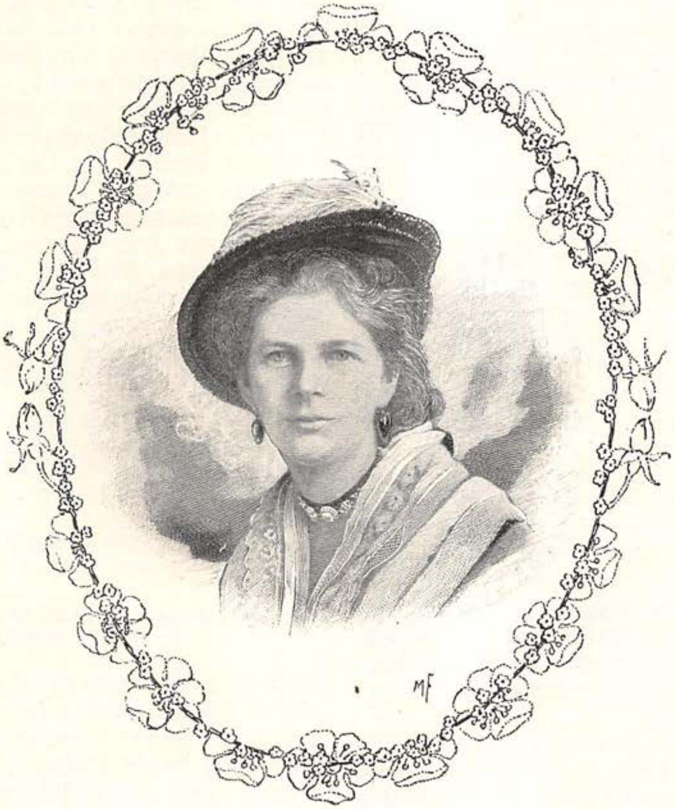
«Alfred,» says Mr. Fytche, «was tossing about the tennis-balls—he did n't actually play the game—when a noise in the trees above them attracted attention.

«‹It is a carrion crow,› said Tennyson, who always spoke of the rooks as crows; and they went on. But the prying Tom perched up in the branches was finding his refuge drafty and uncomfortable; and further rustlings, still attributed by Tennyson to a crow, culminated in a violent fit of sneezing about which there could be no mistake. Tennyson was greatly angered, and called out to him, ‹Come down, you villain!›—the gardener, with his gun, at the same time being sent for. The ‹villain› came down ignominiously enough, all his valor and determination gone, and begged to be forgiven. ‹I will forgive you,› said Tennyson, ‹on one condition. Promise that you will go away at once, and *never* come back to this island.› The man promised, and took himself off.»

A little below Farringford gate is the shop of Mr. Rogers, the Freshwater naturalist, whose windowful of stuffed specimens—monkeys, armadillos, toucans, and other creatures, some of them collected in faraway Brazil and Central America—is in curious contrast with his quiet rural English surroundings. Mr. Rogers came to live here more than half a century ago, and is one of those who remember Tennyson's coming to Freshwater.

Tennyson, passing down this lane on his way to the village, often stopped to look at the stuffed creatures in the window, or to make to the old naturalist, some remark straight to the purpose and pregnant with close and accurate observation. «Almost the first time I ever walked out with him,» said a privileged friend, «he told me to look and tell him if the field-lark did not come down sideways upon its wing.»

It is time, however, to walk up and look at Farringford itself; and I cannot do better than begin by telling in Miss Simeon's (Mrs. Ward's) words how and when it came to be chosen as a home by Tennyson and his wife. «It was in the autumn of 1852,» she writes, «that Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson first came to Farringford. They had been looking for a house, and they found themselves, one summer evening, on the terrace walk, with the rosy sunset lighting up the long line of coast to St. Catherine's Point, and the gold-blue sea with its faint surf mingling with the rosiness; and they said, ‹We will go no further; this must be our home.›»



MISS WELD.

Tennyson was then forty-three years old, and his son Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson, to whose courtesy it is due that this article has been written, was an infant a few months old. At Farringford, two years later, Lionel was born; and here were written «Maud,» full of local allusions; most of the «Idylls of the King»; and «Enoch Arden,» in the opening words of which—

Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands—

one recognizes a likeness to Freshwater Bay. For forty years Tennyson spent a large part of his life here. Aldworth was purchased in 1867, and thereafter there was a migration from Farringford each summer to the stately house built for him by Mr. Knowles. When Tennyson came to live at Freshwater he was a poor man. Fame, indeed, had already found him out; but much of his best work was still to come, and the world was waiting for it. When he went to Aldworth he went a rich man, at the pinnacle of his fame; and Aldworth is therefore a finer, a statelier, and a costlier residence than Farringford. But it is of Farringford that he has written in his poems; and it was at Farringford that life and happiness opened out before him after long years of waiting endeavor. Every home and haunt of his must forever be interesting to such as revere his memory and read his words; but there are two which stand first: Somersby, where in those dim, far-away days he played as a lad when Waterloo was yet unfought, where grief and pain first came to him, leaving the world in legacy what to many is the most precious of all his poems; and Farringford, where happiness and love were found again. For «it was an ideal home—ideal in its loveliness, its repose, in its wild but beautiful gardens, and more than all ideal in its calm serenity. The hospitable simplicity, the high thought and utter nobleness of aim and life, which that pair brought with them, and which through the long years of change, of sickness, and of sorrow, of which every home must be the scene, made the atmosphere of Farringford impossible to be forgotten by those who had the happiness of breathing it.» The words are Miss Simeon's (Mrs. Ward's).

We may enter it, all untenanted as it is by them, for a moment. The gravel drive offers no glimpse of the house till, sweeping round a clump of sheltering trees, it confronts one somewhat unexpectedly with the little Gothic-looking porch through which the hall door opens. Here, the most prominent among them, is the

Giant ilex keeping leaf
When frost is keen and days are brief—

a mass of somber green amid the winter skeletons about it. It is a fine old tree, and one of the biggest of its race in England.[1] Several great branches, each a trunk in its proportions, spring from the base, and they are now chained to each other to stay the splitting asunder which is hastening its dissolution. Lashed round with these black chains and iron bands, dimly visible through its gloom, it is like some rugged old giant keeping death savagely at bay. In striking contrast to it, across the trim gravel shoots up, in all the pride of its youthful beauty,

The waving pine which here
The warrior of Caprera set.

Two and thirty years ago a rifle-bullet brought its parent cone to earth in the woods of California. The little plant which sprang from it was given by the Duchess of Sutherland to Tennyson; and here, at the threshold of Farringford, Garibaldi, to whom the great heart of the English people had just gone out in a tumult of sympathy, planted it on a memorable day in 1864, when he came over from Lymington on a visit to the laureate. Sir Henry Taylor, who was present on this interesting occasion, has left us a pleasant memory of it, in spite of the counter-attractions of a beautiful young lady, to which he admits he fell a victim:

And there was he, that gentle hero, who,
By virtue and strength of his right arm,
Dethroned an unjust king, and then withdrew
To tend his farm.

To whom came forth a mighty man of song,
Whose deep-mouth'd music rolls thro' all the land,
Voices of many rivers, rich or strong
Or sweet or grand.

The tree, a *Wellingtonea gigantea*, has, in spite of the too ardent admirer who before twenty-four hours were over had with rude and vandal hands broken off one of the branches, grown to stateliness and beauty. It is a graceful creature, apart from the historic interest which attaches to it; and it keeps its youth and freshness amid

The branching grace
Of leafless elm, or naked lime,

which encompass it about in winter.

Under the porch there are some fossil remains of a huge lizard, dug up in Freshwater Bay and brought here in Tennyson's lifetime. «My father was deeply interested in geology,» was Lord Tennyson's comment when he drew my attention to them. Through the tiny hall a door opens into a large anteroom with fine windows overlooking the ilex copse, and farther beyond there is a long, narrow hall, from which a staircase ascends to the upper stories. A striking object on a low

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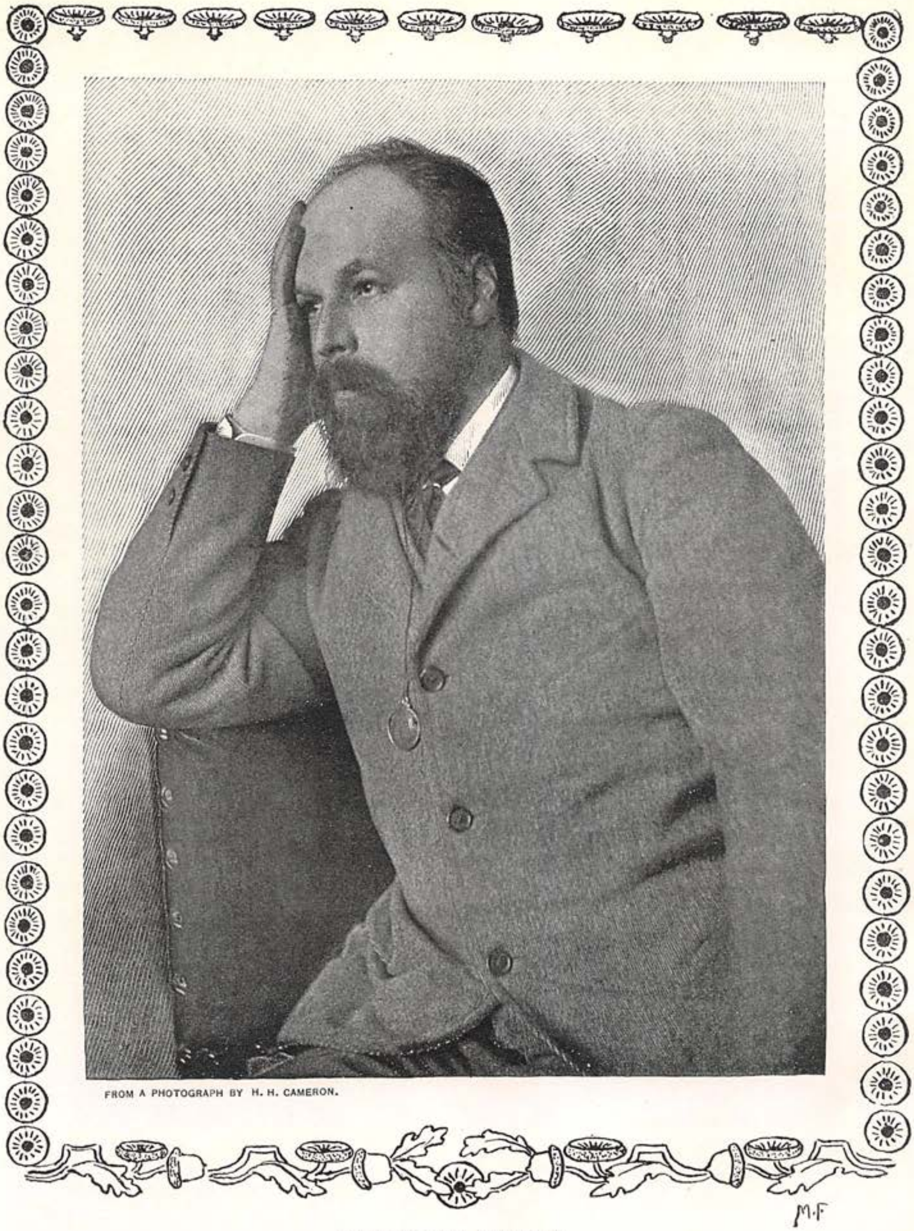
[1] It was planted in the Waterloo year, when the Seymours lived at Farringford. Mr. Seymour was a clergyman, and a daughter of his married the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge.

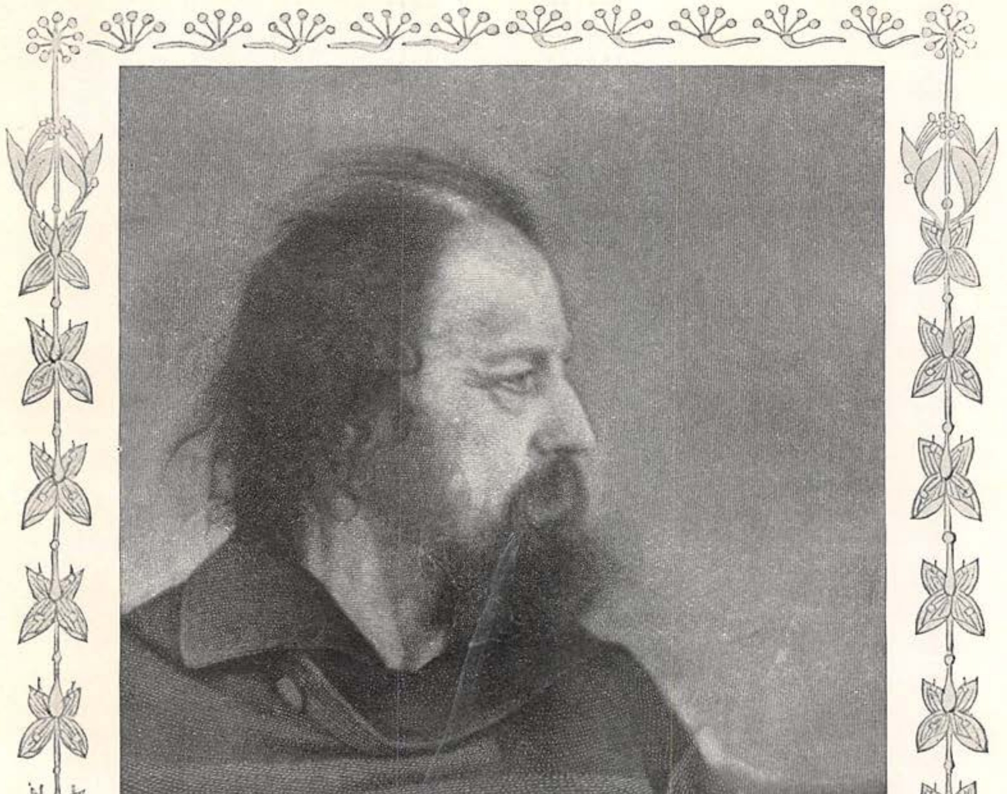


FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY H. H. CAMERON.

HALLAM, LORD TENNYSON.

table in it is a white bust of Dante, whose poetry Tennyson was fond of reading in its native melody. Photographs and pictures are upon the walls, each with some separate interest attaching to it—among them portraits of Tom Hughes and of Frederick Denison Maurice, whose religious views find voice in the fifty-fourth canto of «In Memoriam»:

> O yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill.
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
>
> That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroy'd,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete;
>
> That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MRS. CAMERON.

THE «MONK» PICTURE OF TENNYSON.

Some account of this picture is given on page 7 of THE CENTURY for November, in the article on Mrs. Cameron.

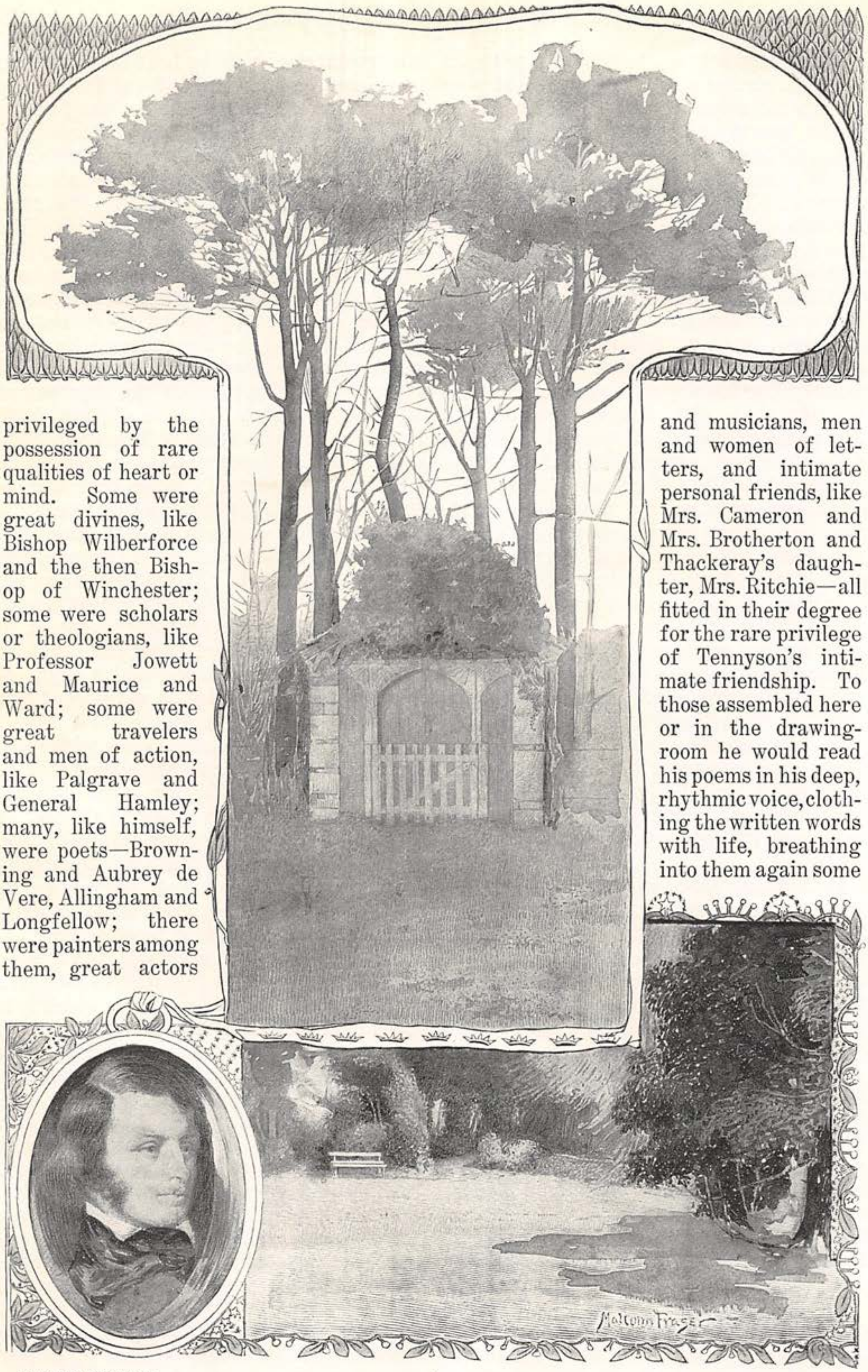
A little way beyond, to the left, with its beautiful window looking out upon the sloping lawn, is the noble drawing-room, associated, in the hearts and memories of those who were privileged to know her, with the person of the gentle lady who shared the joys and sorrows of Tennyson's life. From here, on her sofa, she had glimpses of the beautiful view without, reaching through parks and meadows to the sea, with a faint glimpse of St. Catherine's Point beyond. In one of the rooms there hangs a water-color sketch of this view, done by Richard Doyle when a guest at Farringford. Here Lady Tennyson received her friends and exercised her gentle influence. «My afternoon walks with Tennyson,» writes Miss Simeon (Mrs. Ward), «were followed by long talks in the firelight by the side of Mrs. Tennyson's sofa: talks less eager, less thrilling, than those I have recalled, but so helpful, so tender, full of the wisdom of one who had learnt to look upon life, and all it embraces, from one standpoint only, and that the very highest.»

Lady Tennyson's influence, like that of many another gentle and much-loving woman in households less serene and peaceful, was wise and far-reaching. «To his wife's perpetual and brooding love and care for him,» wrote Mr. Knowles shortly after Tennyson's death, «and afterward to his son's equal and measureless devotion, the world owes, under Providence, many years of Tennyson's prolonged life, and many of his immortal poems.»

In the breakfast-room, through which Tennyson would pass on his way to his study, there hangs over the mantel-shelf a fine colored print of the great arctic monument discovered by Kane, on which he bestowed the poet's name; and in another room there is a water-color sketch of Tennyson Lake in New Zealand—each a testimony to the exalted place Tennyson fills in the thoughts and lives of men in the uttermost parts of the earth. On the wall facing the Kane picture is Mayall's famous portrait which prefaces the collected edition of his works. It is the one his family like best. On either side of it are two remarkable portraits of Francis Bacon in his boyhood, and on a screen there is Mr. H. Hay Cameron's portrait of Sir Henry Irving as *Becket*—a striking picture.

The breakfast-room opens into the little conservatory, at all times a thing of gracious light and color. Beyond it, and immediately under the study, is a large room used for dances and Christmas trees, sometimes called the music-room. Its main interest centers in a large canvas begun by Lear in illustration of «Enoch Arden.» Though unfinished, it is beautiful in conception, and realizes forcibly the loneliness of the castaway sailor amid a world of splendor—mountains and cliffs and deep purple valleys sloping to the sea; and everywhere, in fantastic form, the rich, exuberant vegetation of the tropics. The scenery, I believe, is that of Ceylon. Between this room and the gay little conservatory there is the narrow spiral staircase, leading to his study, up which on one occasion Tennyson, hastily followed by three great bishops, guests at Farringford, fled from the drawing-room on the approach of unexpected callers. It is a difficult little stairway, and one feels, with a smile, that some of its difficulty was not unintentional. «He has built himself,» wrote Lord Houghton concerning Aldworth, «a very handsome and commodious home in a most inaccessible site, with every comfort he can require, and every discomfort to all who approach him. What can be more poetical?» Something of a similar impression haunts the ascent to Tennyson's Farringford Parnassus. But on its threshold, now especially that it is tenantless, all other thoughts become merged in a nameless sense of reverence.

It is a large and beautiful room, with views from its stately window of meadow and lawn and spreading ilex, and again, in the distance, that island picture which stayed the feet of a couple in their search for an ideal home. There is a painting in this room from Mayall's portrait, and another of Tennyson by the same photographer—a great cloaked figure standing at the columned porch of Farringford. But fine as the picture is, it is lacking in that elusive quality, that flash of the soul's light through shrouding matter, which it is given to great artists at their best to picture, and which here and there at intervals it is the triumph of photography to be able to record. On the sofa near the poet's writing-table there lies a Spanish hidalgo's cloak of black cloth lined with green and scarlet velvet, which Lionel Tennyson brought home from Spain. It was worn by Beerbohm Tree in one of his plays. On the walls are pictures and portraits, each of which has some separate interest attaching to it over and above that which vests everything in this room, since all that is in it was found worthy of it by its illustrious tenant. To his study Tennyson was wont to retire with his pipe after dinner; to this room his chosen friends were admitted, and the talk went round to some purpose, for none went there save those privileged by the possession of rare qualities of heart or mind. Some were great divines, like Bishop Wilberforce and the then Bishop of Winchester; some were scholars or theologians, like Professor Jowett and Maurice and Ward; some were great travelers and men of action, like Palgrave and General Hamley; many, like himself, were poets—Browning and Aubrey de Vere, Allingham and Longfellow; there were painters among them, great actors and musicians, men and women of letters, and intimate personal friends, like Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Brotherton and Thackeray's daughter, Mrs. Ritchie—all fitted in their degree for the rare privilege of Tennyson's intimate friendship. To those assembled here or in the drawing-room he would read his poems in his deep, rhythmic voice, clothing the written words with life, breathing into them again some



DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

THE SUMMER-HOUSE IN MAIDEN'S CROFT.—ALFRED TENNYSON, FROM A MINIATURE IN POSSESSION OF MRS. FYTCHE.—«THE SUMMER PARLOUR OF THE KING.»

of the inspiration which is lost in the effort to restrain within the narrow realm of words the limitless, ethereal music of a poet's soul. Humorous poems like the «Northern Farmer» gained, too, and not a little, from «his giving the words their proper accent, and by the enormous sense of humor thrown into them by his voice and manner in reading them.» No one loved a good story better than Tennyson, and his friends, to amuse him, often treasured up such good things as came their way till an opportunity served of relating them to him. Such stories were in the main of a humorous nature; but there were others, of a more somber or pathetic cast, which in one or two cases were subsequently embodied by him in a poem. «Rizpah,» perhaps the finest of his ballads, was thus inspired by a true story of the Brighton downs communicated to him by his friend and neighbor Mrs. Brotherton.

When a story interested him in this way he would ask for it again and again; and he had a somewhat disconcerting way of pouncing down on any, even the slightest, variation in the telling of it, insisting in this, as in all the other relations of his life, upon absolute accuracy.

In the study there is a portrait of Arthur Hallam which takes one back to those early and happy days of which there is so sad and sorrowful a reflection in «In Memoriam»—those «few sweet years» of an immortal friendship. It is a copy of a drawing from life, done over sixty years ago by Miss Sellwood, whose sisters married Charles and Alfred Tennyson, and who as Mrs. Weld endeared herself to the hearts of many still living in Freshwater and Oxford. The original drawing, in which the sympathetic beauty and high intellect of the man are happily portrayed, is in the possession of her daughter, Miss Weld.

Not far from it, near a bust of Wordsworth, are framed some words written by Garibaldi on the day he came to Farringford as one of its most illustrious visitors. There are portraits here of Lionel Tennyson, and there is a copy of the one of Lady Tennyson painted by Mr. Watts. There is a sketch done by Thackeray, illustrating some lines from the «Lord of Burleigh,» the ink of which has turned to yellow; and there is much else that would be of interest, if one's thoughts could readily turn to little things in this room, where one treads softly in reverent homage rather than in a mood of small curiosity.

Sunning itself outside is a little lawn beneath the windows. A fine magnolia trained against the wall of the drawing-room—«crucified» in Tennyson's expressive phrase—covers it in perpetual green. It blossoms luxuriantly, yielding as many as two hundred of its mammoth flowers in one season. It climbs to the attic above, where Tennyson worked in the early days before the new study was built. In a sheltered corner near the magnolia a miniature clump of bamboo makes good shift in spite of winter trials; and a little beyond, its swaying branches reflected in the drawing-room panes, spreads the great cedar. As it sighs and sways in the breeze, one is reminded of the words of him who has made it immortal:

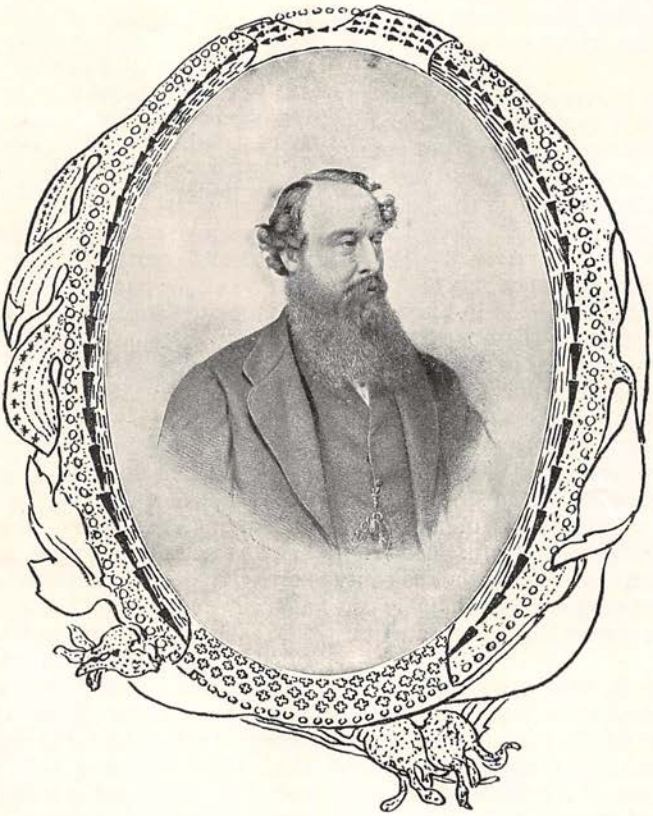
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious
East,
Sighing for Lebanon,
Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,
Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed
With honey'd rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame.

A narrow path covered with green-gold moss leads from the house, with the sunlit turf on either hand, through a leafy avenue into Farringford lawn,—in winter

Hoar with rime, or spongy wet;
But when the wreath of March has blossom'd,
Crocus, anemone, violet.

It is a fine oval lawn, encompassed about with pines and elms and ilexes, and laurel-hedged walks which lead away from it to other parts of Farringford. «Mrs. Brotherton, as you know,» said Lord Tennyson to me as we walked across it recently, «has written a pretty poem about it,» calling it «The Summer Parlour of the King.» Its lower end is outlined by a ruined bit of wall, picturesque in its mantle of ferns and ivy; and from its northern end a little lane, which echoes to the dry-tongued laurel's «pattering talk,» leads through the thick shrubbery and woodland which surround it to the rustic bridge of which mention has already been made. It leads to the summer-house in a meadow where Tennyson wrote a good deal; and many a Freshwater tourist has had his only glimpse of him as he slowly crossed the little bridge to the wood beyond. It is a wild and negligée bit of woodland, through which the fretted sunlight plays on the warm red trunks of its tall pines. Here Mr. Watts painted his picture of Sir Galahad, and here a thousand daffodils blossom in the spring. The path which leads through it is bordered by ferns and lilies, all planted there by the poet himself.

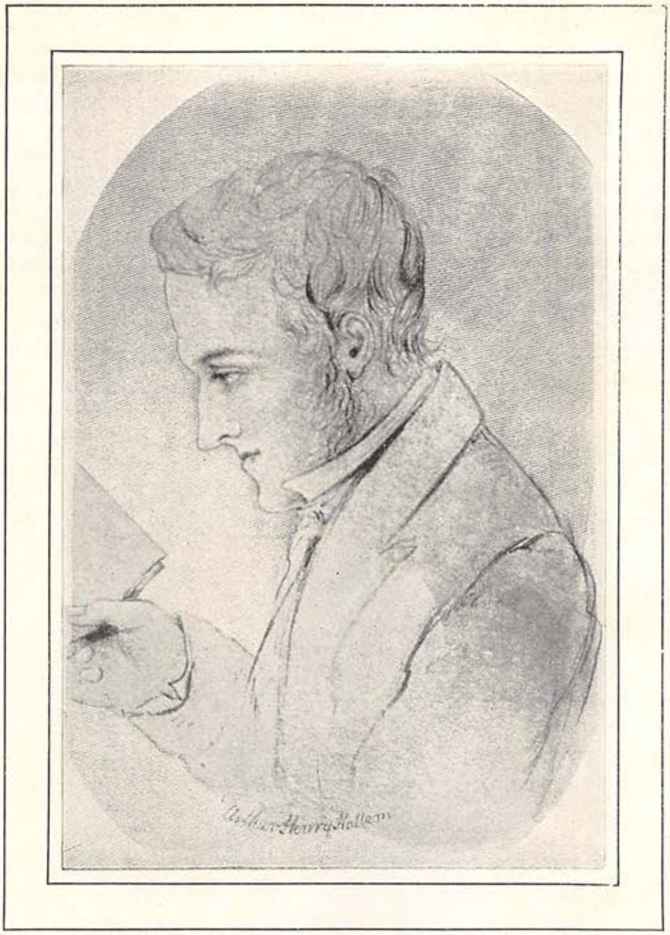
Leaving the wood, the little path runs on, yielding glimpses of white cliffs and blue Solent, somewhat restricted now from the growth of trees in the hollow beyond. «We were obliged,» Lord Tennyson tells me, «to allow them to grow up as a shelter for our cottages.» A small iron gate opens from the wood into the field known as «Maiden's Croft,» over which the air blows pure and fresh. The downs rise up majestically beyond, and in the hollow between the penned sheep cluster together against the cold. Maiden's Croft once formed part of the lands of a Cistercian priory, and there is a wonderful legend attaching to it of an ever-vigilant dragon who guards the mouth of a subterranean way to France hidden somewhere beneath its smiling surface. There is a deeper interest in the little summer-house which faces the southern sunlight under the shelter of tall pines, where «Enoch Arden» and many another poem were bodied forth, and whence the poet, sheltered from all but balmy breezes, and remote from alien sounds, could look out on the beautiful world. Like everything else about Farringford, it is plain and simple, without ostentation, yet wisely fitted to serve its end.



FROM A LITHOGRAPH, BY PERMISSION OF R. MANSFIELD & CO.

SIR JOHN SIMEON.

Turning back from here, one goes on past the house to the beautiful old walled garden which suns itself on a slope behind Farringford. On the way there are the kennels inhabited by an Afghan sheep-dog and the beautiful Siberian wolf-hound, «Karénina,» a granddaughter of one which belonged to the late Czar of Russia. She is a beautiful, picturesque creature, and was the constant companion of her master in his last walks over the Freshwater downs. Near by is a cluster of rose-bushes which awaken memories of «Maud»; and a little beyond there is the green wicket through which lies a way into the garden girt about with walls. From its position on the sloping hillside it is far fairer and more cheerful than the famous walled gardens of France; for one can see over its walls out into the meadows and park-lands beyond. In the spring and sum-



AFTER A DRAWING FROM LIFE BY MRS. WELD.

ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM.

mer, when its lilies and roses awake to life, it is a little paradise of beauty and color, though desolate just now in its season of winter sleep. There is a small sheltered arbor in it where Tennyson often sat; and a little farther on there is another, into which the thick ivy roots have grown, which he himself fashioned for his wife when they first came to live in Freshwater. The air is ever mild and gentle in this sheltered spot; and here, where the aged poet once walked in days when driving east winds were abroad, to-day the littlest of all the Tennysons is being wheeled along in his cradle asleep. A green postern at the far end opens into the Home Farm, through which, as one turns to reënter, there is framed a pleasant vista of the old garden under the ivy-covered lintel.

«That is the terrace from which my father used to look at the stars,» remarked Lord Tennyson, as we emerged from the garden gate, pointing to the flat roof of one of the back rooms of Farringford.

As we went on, two little boys came racing along the gravel with their hoops: the elder fair-haired and blue-eyed, a Saxon lad; the younger with dark, serious brown eyes and an earnest face in which there broods something of his grandfather's personality.

During the forty years of his life at Freshwater, Tennyson made many memorable friendships. The first, and that of which least has been written, was his friendship with Sir John Simeon, whose seat of Swainston is an hour's drive from Farringford. Sir John Simeon had entertained the greatest admiration for Tennyson's poetry since the day when he was an undergraduate at Christ Church, and a fuller acquaintance had already sprung up between them from an introduction brought about at Lady Ashburton's house in London. It was on that occasion that Carlyle, referring in characteristic phrase to Tennyson's classical inspirations, said to Sir John, as they walked home together, «There he sits upon a dung-heap, surrounded by innumerable dead dogs.» «Eh,» said Carlyle afterward humorously to Tennyson, «but that was n't a very luminous description of you.»

The near neighborhood of a man like Sir John Simeon, in whom intellectual gifts were merged in an exquisite courtesy, was no small gratification to the poet. «During the early years at Farringford,» says his daughter, «it was one of my father's great and frequent pleasures to ride or drive over in the summer afternoons. The Tennysons sometimes came over to Swainston for a few days, and I remember his being there on the wonderful July night in 1858 when the tail of the great comet passed over Arcturus. His admiration and excitement knew no bounds; he could not sit at the dinner-table, but rushed out perpetually to look at the glorious sight, repeating, ‹It is a besom of destruction sweeping the sky!›

«Little Lionel,» she adds, «was that same night taken from his bed to the window by his mother; and opening his sleepy eyes on the unaccustomed splendor, he said, ‹Mamma, am I in heaven?›»

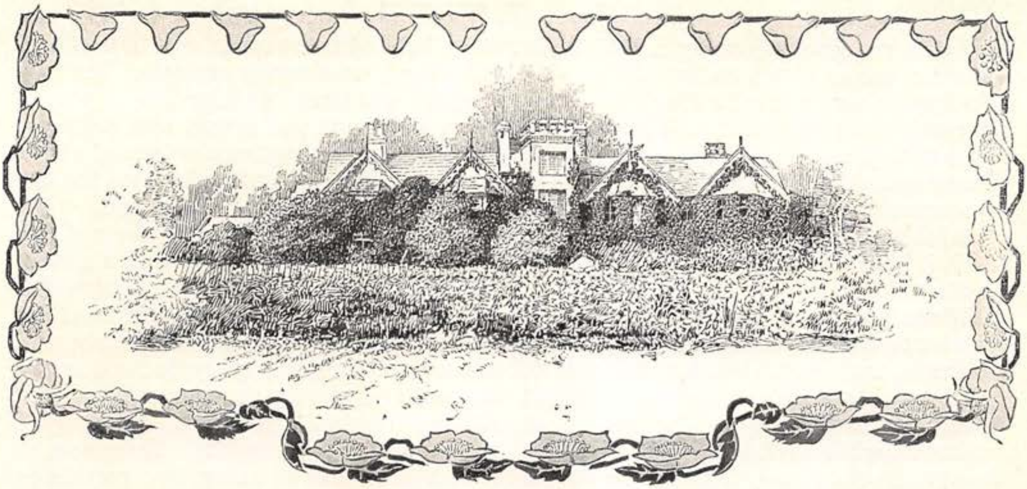
Tennyson's presence so near them was a source of the greatest pleasure to Sir John and his family.

«Mr. Tennyson's visits were eagerly looked forward to by us children. He would talk to us a good deal, and was fond of puzzling and mystifying us in a way that was very fascinating. He would take the younger ones on his knee and give them sips of his liqueur after dinner.» Meeting a little maiden of five in the road one day, Tennyson, to her great entertainment, stopped her, and said: «Madam, you 've a damask rose on either cheek, and another on your forehead, rosy lips, golden hair, and a straw bonnet.»

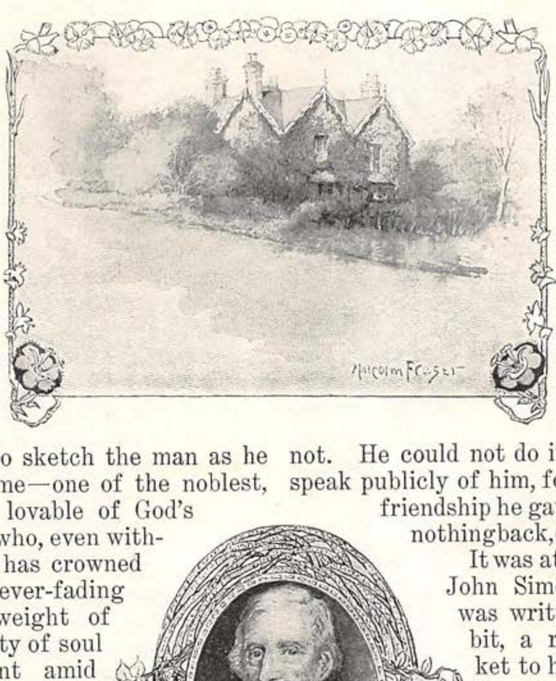
In another place Sir John's daughter continues: «From the misty dawn of early childhood rises the first image of one who was to fill so large a place in my life and that of those dear to me. As I, not yet four years old, lay in my father's arms, and he said to me the ‹Morte d'Arthur,› there blended with the picture of the wild winter mere, and the mighty king carried dying to its shore, a vision of the man who my father told me lived somewhere among us, and who could

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY NORMAN MAY & CO. BORDER BY MALCOLM FRASER.

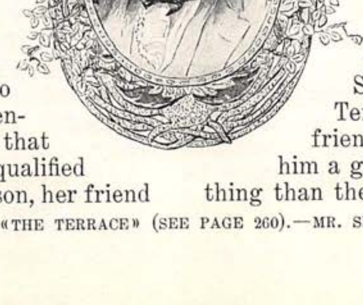
HORATIO TENNYSON.



write words which seemed to me more beautiful than anything I had ever heard.» Such were the impressions of the child, and one may read in them something of the feeling which animated that household at Swainston when Tennyson was the friend of its master. The sentiments of the child grew with womanhood into a full and deep perception of the beauty of Tennyson's character. «I want nothing,» she writes in another place, «but to sketch the man as he always seemed to me—one of the noblest, truest, and most lovable of God's creatures, and one who, even without the genius that has crowned his brow with never-fading laurel, must by weight of character and beauty of soul alone stand a giant amid his fellow-men.»



«I went,» said one, «dreading to meet the man, for I loved his poetry; but I have come back loving the man even more.» Another, who still lives amid associations endeared to her by memories that cannot die, and is better qualified than most to speak of Tennyson, her friend in intellectual sympathy of thirty years, answered my direct question with a certainty in which there was no shadow: «To know Tennyson was to risk nothing of one's feeling for his poetry; his personality far from reduced the effect of his poems. For he was a very great man, yet simple as a child; open-hearted and absolutely truthful, like all the Tennysons. It was impossible to him to say the thing that was not. He could not do it. It is not easy to speak publicly of him, for when he gave his friendship he gave it wholly, keeping nothing back, concealing nothing.»



It was at a suggestion of Sir John Simeon's that «Maud» was written, built up bit by bit, a richly wrought casket to hold a precious gem. The story is too well known to need repetition here. Many fine lines of «Maud» were written under the shelter of the great trees in Swainston Park; and one day Tennyson, in tribute to his friendship with Sir John, gave him a gift of rare value—no less a thing than the manuscript of «In Memo-

DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER. DIMBOLA.—«THE TERRACE» (SEE PAGE 260).—MR. SELLWOOD.

riam.» It was given on a day in 1855, while Tennyson was on a visit to Swainston. «He asked my father,» writes Sir John's daughter, «to reach him a particular book from a shelf in the library, and as he did so down fell the manuscript, which Mr. Tennyson had put there as a surprise. I have always,» she adds, «felt grateful to him for the continual pleasure which it gave my father during the whole of his life.»

Fifteen years more were to pass in high-souled intercourse between Farringford and Swainston, until, on the last day of May, 1870, «Sir John's best friend, come to see him laid to rest,» walked sadly in the garden at Swainston, while in the house, in his coffin, the «prince of courtesy lay.» As he walked there, and his thoughts turned on the vanished years, his heart spoke out in sorrowful tribute to his dead friend:

Two dead men have I known
  In courtesy like to thee:
Two dead men have I loved
  With a love that ever will be:
Three dead men have I loved, and thou
    art the last of the three.

In a hurrying age of self-seeking, jostling egoism, Tennyson's capacity for pure and lasting friendship stands out as not the least element of greatness in his character.

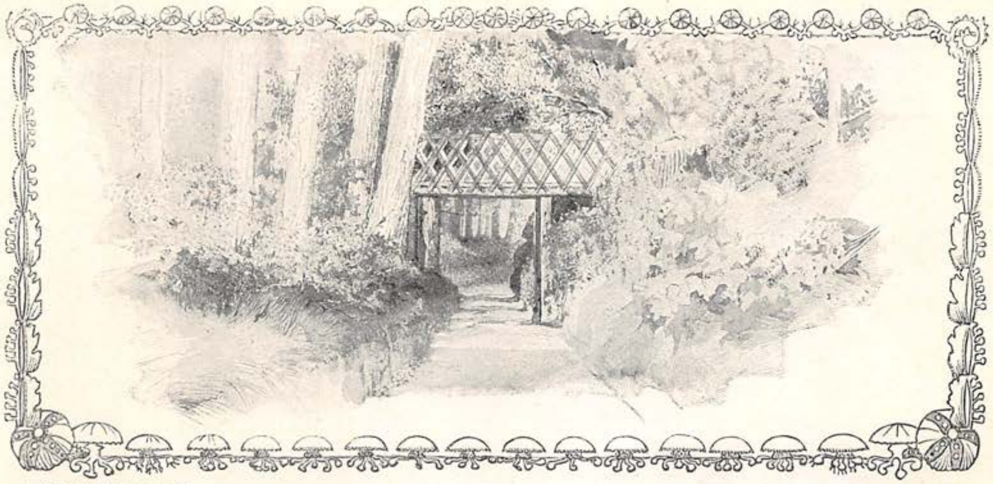
That Tennyson, like all men of rare and high-strung sensitiveness, was subject to moods of deep gloom is well known, nor is it in any sense remarkable. The soul which vibrates to the beauty of the world vibrates also to its gloom and pain. But his heart was open to let the sunshine in; the friends who knew him could always win him back to laughter from his grayest moods with an amusing story or a humorous repartee.

«I shall never be happy again,» he said one day to Mrs. Brotherton; «nothing will ever make me smile any more.» «Well, then,» she said, «have one of these buns,» handing him one from a basketful she was carrying, and thereupon incontinently he laughed. «What he often said to me was,» adds Mrs. Brotherton, in telling me this little anecdote, «that he had never been happy since he was twenty, and sometimes that he wished he had never written a line; but he owned that his dejection (only temporary, after all) was entirely due to the Tennyson temperament, and was incurable by any amount of the materials of earthly happiness, which he quite acknowledged he had had his full share of.»

Tennyson not only loved to hear a good story, but had many of his own to tell. The following is an amusing example. The Farringford gardener, walking one day in a lonely spot near the downs, saw suddenly, to his great consternation, the form of a huge bear emerging against the sky-line. He was about to take to his heels in a panic when the bear, perceiving him, dropped something it was carrying, and cried out, with a gasp of relief, «Oh, dear! Mr. Smith, you did frighten me so!» Mr. Smith, recovering at this from his fright, recognized in the bear an acquaintance turned amateur smuggler, and in the moment of discovery unaware of his terror-striking disguise. The object he had dropped was a cask of illicit spirits. There was, in fact, a good deal of smuggling carried on at that time, to which the so-called «Smugglers' Caves» in the cliffs near Freshwater Gate bear testimony to this day.

A few doors beyond Dimbola, nearest the downs, is «The Terrace,» a little property bought, with the adjoining fields, by Lord Tennyson chiefly to prevent his beautiful view from Farringford being obstructed by other buildings. It has been tenanted for years by the poet's cousin, Mr. Fytche, once a great landowner in Lincolnshire; but in the old days between 1868 and 1875, when Mrs. Cameron lived near by, it was occupied by Mr. Horatio Tennyson, seventh brother of the poet. Mr. Tennyson spent his time chiefly in visiting the poor, and especially the sick, by whom he was greatly beloved; and his gentle, kindly personality is perhaps better known in Freshwater village than that of his great brother. He was Mrs. Cameron's principal ally in establishing a reading- and recreation-room for the parish, which, like much else of her day, has disappeared. The photographs she presented to it alone remain, and the visitor to Freshwater may see them on the walls of the village school, where they were hung by a former schoolmaster, who purchased them when the contents of the reading-room were sold at auction. Refined and gentle, with many of a poet's qualities, Horatio Tennyson is remembered in Freshwater, not for great achievements or great powers, but for the simple sincerity and the unselfishness which characterized his life there. Tall and exceedingly handsome, he possessed in the same remarkable degree the full, rich voice of Tennyson and his brother Arthur.

To Freshwater also came as visitors the poet's sisters, Emily, once the betrothed of Arthur Hallam, and Cecilia, with her husband, Professor Lushington, whose bridal is



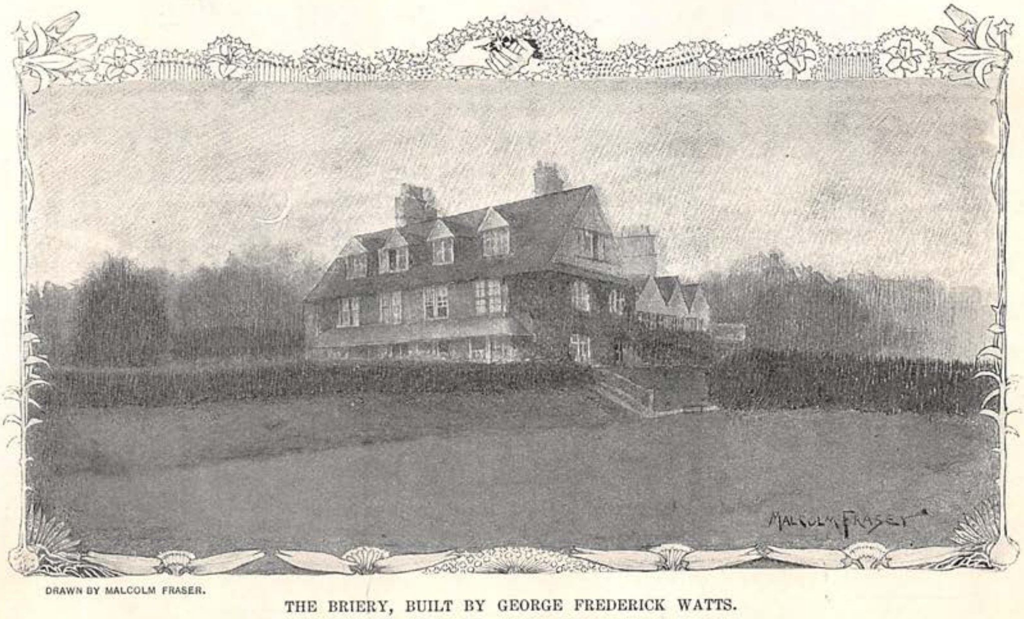
DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

so beautifully commemorated in the epithalamium at the close of «In Memoriam.» A third sister, whom all her friends still know as Aunt Tilly, long made her home at Farringford. To Farringford, too, came Charles Tennyson-Turner, the brother «one in kind,» who married a sister of Lady Tennyson, and shared his brother's early poetic life. He has left a record of his visits to Freshwater in his sonnet, «A Farewell to the Isle of Wight,» in which the very heart of the man speaks out.

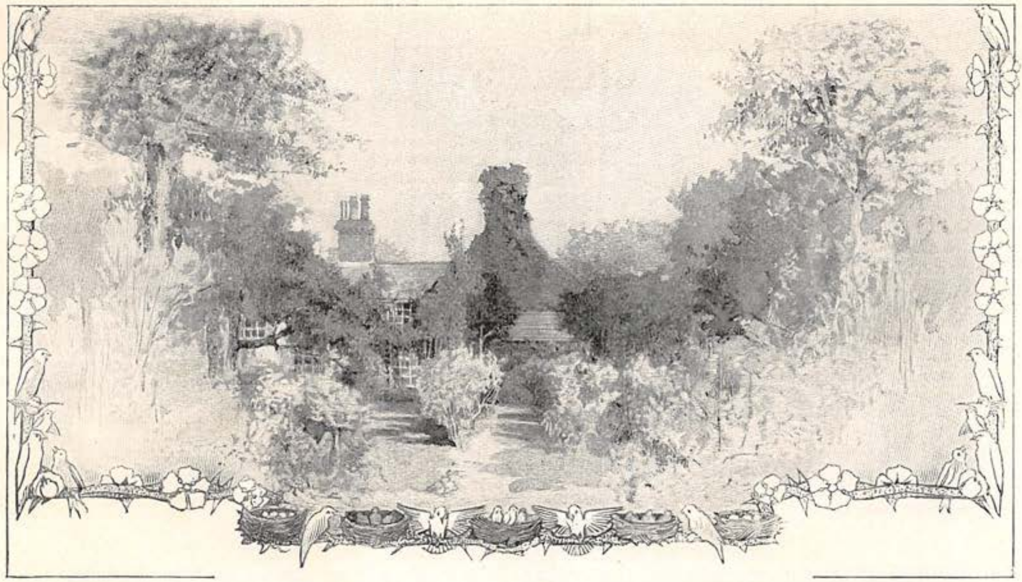
> Silent I gazed upon our foaming wake,
> And silent on the island hills I gazed,
> As up the ebbing stream we bore, to make
> Our harbour, while the west athwart us blazed.
> Keen were my thoughts: my memory wandered back
> To those fair shores, the Needles and the Downs—
> The happy woodlands and the little towns—
> For every day a new and pleasant track;
> How grieved was I those social walks to lose,
> Those friendly hands! The shadow of our mast
> And sail ran sadly o'er the fruitless ooze
> At sunset as between the banks we passed
> Of that tide-fallen river, speeding fast
> To land, and further from those fond adieus.

His first volume of sonnets was a collection of great beauty and high merit, and there were

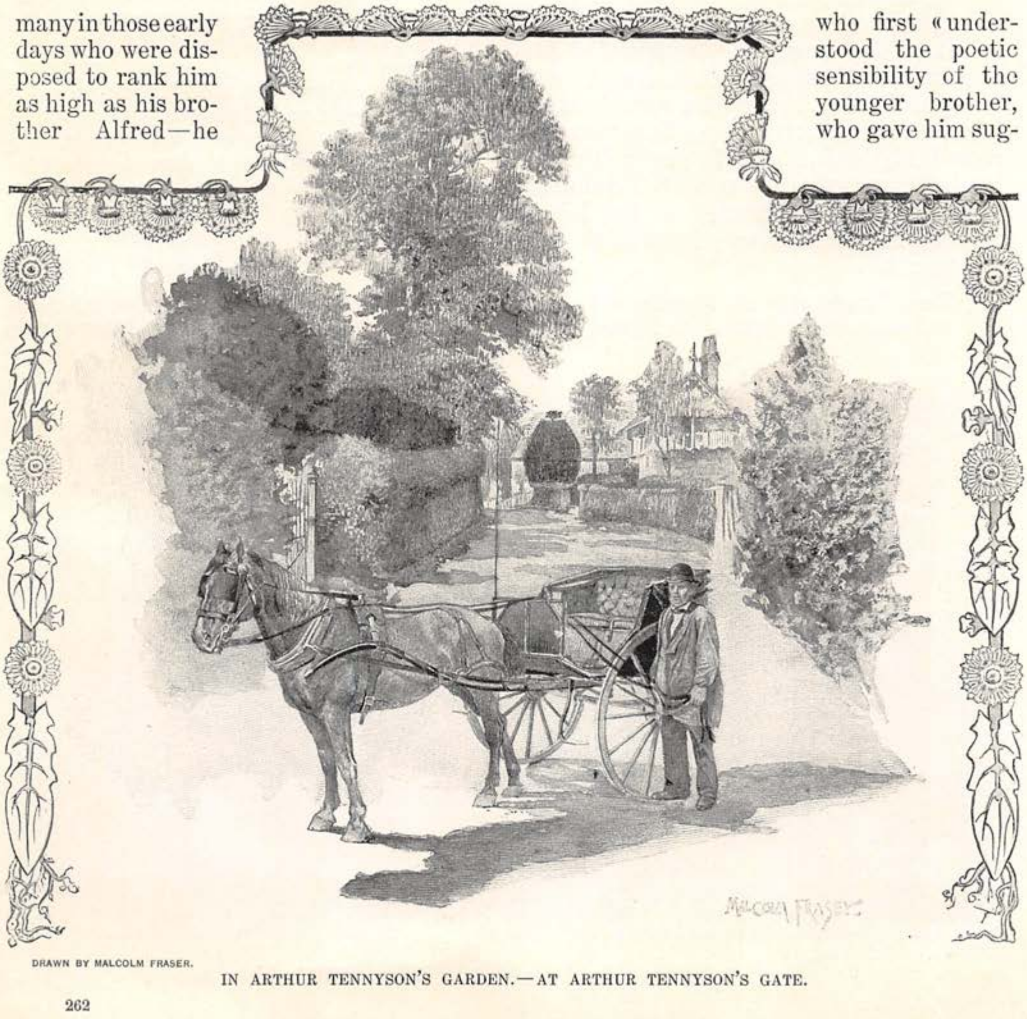


DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

THE BRIERY, BUILT BY GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS.



many in those early days who were disposed to rank him as high as his brother Alfred—he who first «understood the poetic sensibility of the younger brother, who gave him sug-



DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

IN ARTHUR TENNYSON'S GARDEN.—AT ARTHUR TENNYSON'S GATE.

gestions, and who saw his first lines written on a slate while the rest of the family were at church,» in the days when Charles and Alfred Tennyson were lads in Lincolnshire. But for many years after the publication of these first sonnets he was silent. With whole-hearted devotion he and his accomplished wife gave themselves up to ministering to the necessities of an obscure Lincolnshire parish, happy in the thought that they were doing their duty. The villagers well-nigh adored them for the beauty and devotion of their lives, and there are many still living who can tell of Charles Turner and his wife sallying forth, lantern in hand, in the dead of a midwinter night, to watch by the bedside of a parishioner dying of confluent smallpox so malignant that all his own relatives had fled from him in terror. «None who knew Charles Turner,» Miss Weld tells me, «can forget his quaint humor, tempered by a vein of sadness wrought in him by pondering much on the problems of life. As keen an observer of bird and beast and flower as his brother, he found in the fair harmony of nature the key to many of these problems; for while mastering all the latest discoveries of science, he ever loved to trace in the marvels they enfolded the guiding hand of God.»

The life of Charles Turner was the life of a saint, wrought out in «loveliness of perfect deeds.» Self-seeking, untruth, and the unbeautiful cravings of the world were as remote from it as sunlight is from darkness. An unkind word or thought was to him almost inconceivable. His humility was as touching as it was utterly genuine. To those who appreciated or liked his poems he felt almost personally grateful, wondering that merit should be found in so slight a thing. He wrote thus once to a friend who had given him high praise:

My low deserts consist not with applause
  So kindly—when I deem it so
My sad heart, musing on its proper flaws,
  Thy gentle commendation must forego.

«When I first met Charles Tennyson-Turner, I told him,» Mrs. Brotherton writes to me, «that when a very young girl an old college friend of his gave me that first thin book of his early sonnets, and I took it to my heart so fully that I never could bear to leave it at home, but carried it with me if I went on ever so short a visit. His wife told me he spoke of this with the deepest pleasure as ‹one of the sweetest things ever said to him.›»

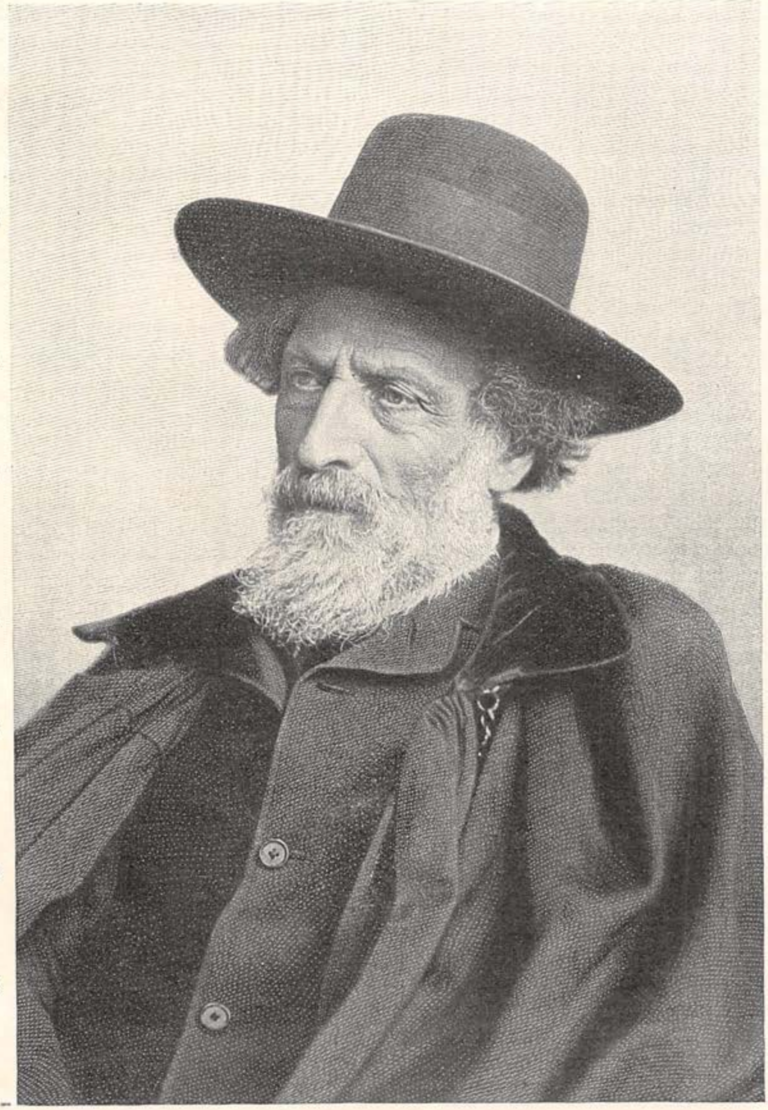
When, in later years, after a long interval of silence he sang again, his voice reflects the preoccupations of his life; but though those subsequent sonnets contain much that is of rare excellence, they undoubtedly fall below the standard of his earlier achievement. That Tennyson thought highly of his brother's poetry is well known. In his lines prefatory to his brother's sonnets, to some of which he applied the term «exquisite,» he has told the world of his love and reverence for him:

True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

True poet, surely to be found
When truth is found again.

I have talked with many who knew Charles Turner, and I have never heard anything but good of one of whom no one can recollect anything in detraction, anything evil or unpleasant.

Another of the laureate's brothers, Mr. Arthur Tennyson, still resides at Freshwater, to which he was an occasional visitor in his brother's lifetime. A year or two ago his tall cloaked figure and striking face, which bear a strong family resemblance to those of his brother, were a familiar sight in the Freshwater lanes. But time makes sad progress with those whose footsteps are passing into life's twilight. In the summer of 1896 we sat in his beautiful old garden, under the lee of his favorite elder, and talked of his great brother, and the far-away time when they were lads together at Somersby. The checkered sunlight lay on the grass about us, the great elms whispered overhead, and the murmur of his bees was wafted to us with the scent of summer flowers from the gay little garden beyond the lawn. His feeble eyes still caught glimpses of the world about him—a world with which his heart beat in responsive sympathy. True poet in soul, he sat in close touch with the personality of nature. Little changes in the breeze, the passage of summer clouds, shadows lengthening on the grass,—all those delicate, elusive hints of another life about him which are lost in the hurrying egotism of worldly affairs,—played on his sensitive being like the wind on Æolian chords. I felt that in all these things he shared his brother's heritage. Once or twice he quoted lines of his own, but in the main he rolled out in his grand, organ-like voice numbers of others—now a splendid line from Byron, the hero of their youth, now the stately, pathetic beauty of «In Memoriam,» now a sonnet of his brother Charles.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BENNETT & SONS.

ARTHUR TENNYSON.

Everything he touched in this way he touched with perfect understanding, skill, and sympathy; and in the roll of his splendid voice one understood what it meant to a few chosen friends to listen to a poem of Alfred Tennyson's read by himself in those bygone days at Farringford. He asked me to read him his favorite poems, but especially to read from «In Memoriam,» and each line more beautiful than usual he himself would repeat with enjoyment of its music. He asked me to read because his sight was already nearly gone. He drove with us, the day we left, to Yarmouth Pier, and for some time after the little steamboat had left her moorings he stood there, wrapped about like another Alfred Tennyson, a tall, strange figure, with the far-away look in his eyes of one who would see into the great infinite, beyond the near vision of sense. Just before we left, I was telling him of a former crossing here one night, and the striking spectacle presented by a great African liner, with all her ports aflame, racing through the darkness out to sea. «Ah,» he said, with a break in his voice and a pathetic look in his dim eyes, yet realizing it all instantly as though the thing were before him, «how beautiful! how beautiful it must have been!» When I saw him again winter had come, cold and gray.

Concerning his brother's sonnet «On seeing a child blush at his first sight of a corpse» he told the following story:

«When we were lads at Somersby we used to visit Louth, where my grandmother lived —a dear lady who gave us bonbons and other comfortable things. One day when we went to see her—my brother Charles, my cousin Albert Fytche, and I—we were met at the door by a servant, who said to my brother: ‹Your grandmother is dead, sir. Will you come up and look at her?› So we climbed up-stairs, and instead of meeting the dear, stately old lady we were accustomed to seeing, we were confronted with a corpse. Albert, who was the youngest of our party, blushed on seeing it, instead of turning pale, as might have been expected. My brother Charles Turner was deeply impressed by the circumstance, and almost immediately went into an adjoining room, where he wrote that beautiful sonnet of his, ‹On seeing a child blush.› I consider it a wonderful achievement for a lad of fifteen.»

And thereupon Mr. Tennyson, in his deep, sonorous voice, and with uplifted hand,—a hand wonderfully strong and shapely for his age,—recited the sonnet in its original and earliest form—like many of Charles Turner's, not improved by subsequent revision.

After the lapse of three quarters of a century the old words still linger in the memory of him who, an eye-witness at the scene of their composition, is now a blind and aged man, past the reading of printed books. «It is profoundly true,» he concluded, «*poeta nascitur, non fit*. I am an old man now—eighty-three years old; yet I have never been able to write anything to compare with those lines of my brother's, written at the age of fifteen, though I could have wished it, and have some of the Tennyson spark.»

From serious themes he presently passed to lighter ones, repeating, among other things, some nonsense rhymes from a book which had beguiled many an hour of his childhood. «It would be very pleasant to me,» he said, «if I could get that book again now in my old age. But, like many other things, it has gone. My father died when we were boys, and many of our old possessions were sold or scattered after his death.» Passing to later times, he continued: «When I was in Florence, Lytton,[1] then an attaché, was lodging with us. I recollect his coming in, one day, and repeating some lines of mad poetry composed by Nat Lee in a lucid moment [*sic*], under the eye of his keepers. One was:

«O that my mouth could bleat like buttered peas.

What a juicy line! Another was a daring simile:

«Like a damned potato riding on the blast.

I do not think,» he added, laughing, «that anything better of its kind has been written.»

His humor, strongly akin to his brother's, is not the only marked characteristic he shares of the Tennyson idiosyncrasy. «The things which struck us most in Mr. Tennyson,» an old friend of his writes to me, «were his absolute simplicity,—I know no word for it but childlikeness,—and his intense realization of the verities of the spiritual world, and consequently slight hold upon much which more common men think important, his keen eye for and deep appreciation of all beauty, his tender-heartedness, and his humor. He had a most happy knack of hitting off expressive descriptions. Some small children singing Christmas carols he called ‹gutter cherubim,› and of the extremely harsh voice of a preacher he said,

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[1] The Earl of Lytton, afterward Viceroy of India and her Majesty's ambassador in Paris.

‹It 's like a tiger licking a sore place.›» Referring to his likeness to his brother, my correspondent continues: «While staying with us at Cliveden he was often mistaken for the laureate, and asked by admirers to shake hands or patronize some concert or sale of work;» for though in the case of those who knew Tennyson well there could be no confusion of this kind, to the world at large he represented its conception of the Tennyson personality. «He had a magnificent voice, whether in singing or reading or in his daily speech. He sometimes read us his brother's poems, which was a great treat.»

Like his brother, Arthur Tennyson loves to give each word he uses its due. His conversation is as remote as possible from what Coleridge called «the villainous slang fineries of the day,» which pass for English in so many quarters otherwise respectable. Tennyson often regretted that many words strong and beautiful in themselves had been vulgarized into incorrect or petty use. «They have stolen some of my best words from me,» he used to say. There is an amusing story of a grim rebuke he administered to a young lady who walked with him on the downs, for using the phrase «awfully jolly» as an expression of her sentiments concerning the walk.

One of the most interesting, as it is one of the most attractive, houses in Freshwater is the Briery. Many years ago, when old Little Holland House, where a great artist had worked and won fame, became no longer tenable, its occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Thoby Prinsep, and their illustrious guest, George Frederick Watts, R. A., came away to live at Freshwater. On a field here, of which Mr. Prinsep was the owner, Mr. Watts built the Briery, and the furniture from Little Holland House came to make its interior as much like the old house as possible. The Briery was for many years the Prinseps' home, and Mr. Watts during this time spent at least a portion of each year here.[1] In the meantime old Little Holland House, decorated with beautiful frescos by Mr. Watts, was pulled down, and Little Holland House as it exists to-day rose in its place. Mrs. Prinsep was a sister of Mrs. Cameron, one of those three Miss Pattles who were known as «Wit, Grace, and Beauty» in India. Tennyson was a frequent visitor at the Briery, which is but a short walk from Farringford. «He took delight,» says Miss Weld, «in reading aloud to old Mr. Prinsep the interesting letters which every mail brought him from his artist son, Mr. Val Prinsep, whilst the latter was engaged on his large painting of the ‹Proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India,› which letters were subsequently published under the title of ‹Imperial India›; and between Tennyson and the aged but accomplished gentleman and scholar who gave sixty years of his life to the service of India there was much and varied sympathy.»

There was no less a communion of heart and thought between these two men of genius who found themselves such near neighbors in Freshwater—between Tennyson the singer and Watts the painter of the ideal and the beautiful. Of Mr. Watts's connection with Freshwater the most permanent record will be found in his pictures. Those familiar with its scenery will recognize it in many of them, and those who seek to know something of his friendships there will find it in his portraits of Mrs. Cameron and Sir Henry Taylor, of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, his wife and sons, of the Prinsep family, and of many of those great men who were alike the friends of the painter and the poet. Many of them are a principal attraction in the National Portrait Gallery in London, to which they have been presented by the most generous and munificent of great painters.

Before leaving, the Tennyson lover will perhaps like to stay a moment at the Briery porch, where a rosemary is growing with unusual luxuriance. It has grown up to its present proportions from a little sprig that was broken, many years ago, from its parent in the old garden at Farringford, by Tennyson himself. He had just made an appointment with a young lady who was then governess at the Briery to take her and the children for a drive to a neighboring farm.

«You won't forget?» she said at parting. «Forget?» he replied, breaking a little sprig from the rosemary. «See, here is some rosemary for remembrance.» Then, seeing from her face that she did not understand the allusion, he smiled in his grim, gentle way, and said: «Oh, you ignoramus! you don't know what I mean! Go home immediately, and read your ‹Hamlet› the moment you get in.»

She read her «Hamlet,» but first of all planted the little sprig of rosemary; and under her solicitous care, and in spite of some who laughed at her, saying it would never grow, it took root and flourished. The old plant at Farringford which gave it life is long since dead, but another, cut from the rosemary at the Briery porch, has lately taken its place.

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[1] Among the other occupants of the Briery in those days were two little girls, the granddaughters of Mrs. Prinsep, one of whom is now the Countess of Dudley, and the other Lady Trowbridge.

The Briery in later days was let to Lord and Lady Kenmare, who came to live here for a time from their beautiful home in Killarney, one of the most beautiful estates in the world. Tennyson continued to be a constant visitor at the Briery during their tenure, and his regard for at least one member of that household has been embodied in his poem to Mary Boyle, whose niece married his son Hallam, now Lord Tennyson.

A narrow lane, which rural fancy has named «Love Lane,» into which the sun peeps furtively, passes up to the right of the Briery, and its quiet seclusion is typical of those old Freshwater lanes the gradual disappearance of which Tennyson spoke of with regret. It opens out at the far end into the broad fields of Weston Manor, where lived Mr. W. G. Ward, the author of «The Ideal of the Christian Church,» and once famous as a leader in the Oxford movement. Readers of Tennyson's poetry will recall his lines written in memory of their friendship:

Farewell, whose living like I shall not find,
  Whose Faith and Work were bells of full accord,
My friend, the most unworldly of mankind,
  Most generous of all Ultramontanes, Ward,
How subtle at tierce and quart of mind with mind,
  How loyal in the following of thy Lord!

On a little knoll near it, in a situation of commanding beauty, is the cottage of Father Haythornthwaite, the Roman Catholic priest at Freshwater, in whose cheery, congenial society Tennyson was often seen during the later years of his life.

A short way beyond, on a neighboring crest, is Hawkhurst, the home in the old Freshwater days of two who enjoyed no small share of Tennyson's regard and affection—Mrs. and Miss Weld. Mrs. Weld, who died in 1894, was a sister of Lady Tennyson.

The Welds at one time owned Aubrey House, at Keyhaven in Hampshire, which commanded an extensive view of the Isle of Wight; and signals used sometimes to be exchanged from its flat roof with Farringford, only a few miles distant, in answer to which the poet and his sons would go across by boat. Tennyson found pleasure in the society of his brother-in-law, who had traveled considerably and was a writer of some repute. He had a great love and admiration, too, for Mr. Sellwood, his wife's father, whose manners had all the charm of the high, old-world courtesy. Mr. Sellwood was often an honored guest at Farringford in those days when he lived with his other daughter in Aubrey House. After Mr. Weld's death in 1869, the Tennysons persuaded his widow and only child, to whom the laureate was guardian, to take up their abode at Freshwater. A day seldom passed without a meeting of the two families either at Hawkhurst or Farringford; for though Mrs. Weld's insistence on always being kept in the background has hitherto caused the omission of any mention of her in notices of Lord Tennyson's friends, she was, from the days when they were neighbors in Lincolnshire, one of the nearest of those for whom he had a regard. He appreciated the attraction of her rare nature, and fully agreed with his wife in saying of her that «there never was a better sister, nor one who was more a sister to all she could help.» In later years she went to live at Oxford, where her house became the rendezvous of much of the best society it had to offer. The learned men whom she gathered round her found refreshment in talking with a woman whose charm of personality and fresh, bright, marvelous flow of happiness were among the least elements in her refined and beautiful character. She attracted to her side many to whom «society» in its ordinary forms was irksome, and she had the rare gift of bringing out in each mind with which she came into contact the very best and the particular best it had to offer. «To know her,» said one who spoke from the fullness of knowledge—«to know her was to love her, for hers was a rare nature. She was full of intuitions, of beautiful thoughts, of graceful kindnesses, and of tender ways.» «She was indeed,» writes another, «one of those people to whom it was simply a pure personal gratification to be kind and helpful to all. Her strong, clear sense of duty and sincerity created the same virtues in others, and her charitable feeling was ever shown toward those who needed it. She was ready to make any self-sacrifice in order to benefit others; her whole life, indeed, was full of thought for others; and she was admired not only for her talents, but still more for her goodness; for she was one of the most perfectly generous and unselfish women that ever lived.»

«We remember her,» writes an old Freshwater friend, «as the kind friend and neighbor whose place has never been filled since she left.»

On some rising ground which overlooks

the peaceful little Yar where it broadens from a reed-bound streamlet into a tidal estuary is the parish church of Freshwater. Here, beneath its ivy-covered walls, under the shadow of whispering elms, or where the field flowers blow in the wind-ruffled grass, sleep the Freshwater dead of a thousand years. Over the altar, a little to the right of its stained-glass window, is a graceful figure of St. John, carved in white stone by Miss Mary Grant, and placed there by the aged poet in sorrowful memory of his son Lionel. One may read below it the words:

In Memoriam,
Lionel Tennyson,
Second Son of
Alfred and Emily, Lord and Lady Tennyson.
Obiit April, 1886.

In another place, on a white marble slab, there is a further inscription.

Lionel Tennyson died on the voyage home from India, and was buried by the desolate shore of Perim, one of the most desolate of all in the whole world. He died from the effects of a fever caught while shooting in the jungles of Assam. He had gone out only a short time before, at the invitation of the Marquis of Dufferin, then Viceroy of India, in the hope of learning something of the great dependency with which his life had been connected for several years previously. He had already filled with distinction an appointment at the India Office, and had shown much real sympathy with and interest in the needs of the Indian people. But death overtook him in the flush of his career.

A little below the monument to Lionel Tennyson is one erected somewhat later by Hallam, Lord Tennyson. The words come as a fitting tribute from a poet's son.

Outside, under the open heavens, the graves lie thick and close—stately marble, weather-softened stone, and nameless turf. The humble village folk sleep here, and by their side lie great admirals and soldiers and administrators, builders of the fabric of a great empire.

Last of all, to Freshwater churchyard have been borne the mortal remains of Lady Tennyson, the faithful companion of the man whose spirit broods in gentle benediction over the little village, hallowing it for all time to the generations of English speakers to come. Men who think of him will think of her as a woman who typed those two sublime manifestations of human love which daily give men hope for the human future and heart of grace to meet the present of their lives.[1]

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[1] Lord Tennyson's friendship with his neighbors the Camerons is spoken of in the article on «Mrs. Cameron, Her Friends, and Her Photographs,» in this magazine for November.—The Editor.

A NEW YORK NOCTURNE.

(NIGHT ON A DOWN-TOWN STREET.)

BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

NOT in the eyed, expectant gloom
Where soaring peaks repose,
And incommunicable space
Companions with the snows;

Not in the glimmering dusk that crawls
Upon the clouded sea,
Where bourneless wave on bourneless wave
Complains continually;

Not in the palpable dark of woods,
Where groping hands clutch fear,
Does Night her deeps of solitude
Reveal unveiled, as here!

The street, a hollow cañon carved
In the eternal stone,
Remembers not the rushing stream
It anciently has known.

The emptying tide of life has drained
The iron channel dry.
Strange winds from the forgotten day
Draw down, and dream, and sigh.

The narrow heaven, the desolate moon,
Made wan with endless years,
Seem less immeasurably remote
Than laughter, love, or tears.