From a Photograph. *From a Photo. by Mayall.*

[*The following interesting letter was written by Lewis Carroll to his cousin, and is now published for the first time.*]

Ch. Ch., May 11, 1859.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—I have had it in my head for some time back to write you an account of my visit to the Isle of Wight, only I doubted if there was enough to tell to make it worth while—now, however, that you yourself ask for it, you must be thankful for what you get, interesting or not—truly "bis dat qui cito dat" (I trust there is some latent appropriateness in the quotation). W—— must have basely misrepresented me if he said that I followed the Laureate down to his retreat, as I went, not knowing that he was there, to stay with an old college friend at Freshwater. Being there, I had the inalienable right of a freeborn Briton to make a morning call, which I did, in spite of my friend Collyns having assured me that the Tennysons had not yet arrived. There was a man painting the garden railing when I walked up to the house, of whom I asked if Mr. Tennyson were at home, fully expecting the answer "No," so that it was an agreeable surprise when he said, "He's there, sir," and pointed him out, and, behold! he was not many yards off, mowing his lawn in a wideawake and spectacles. I had to introduce myself, as he is too short-sighted to recognise people, and when he had finished the bit of mowing he was at, he took me into the house to see Mrs. Tennyson, who, I was very sorry to find, had been very ill, and was then suffering from almost total sleeplessness. She was lying on the sofa, looking rather worn and haggard, so that I stayed a very few minutes. She asked me to come to dinner that evening to meet a Mr. Warburton (brother of the "Crescent and the Cross"), but her husband revoked the invitation before I left, as he said he wished her to be as little excited as possible that evening, and begged I would drop in for tea that evening, and dine with them the next day. He took me over the house to see the pictures, etc. (among which my photographs of the family were hung "on the line," framed in those enamel—what do you call them, cartons?) The view from the garret windows he considers one of the finest in the island, and showed me a picture which his friend Richard Doyle had painted of it for him; also his little smoking-room at the top of the house, where of course he offered me a pipe; also the nursery, where we found the beautiful little Hallam (his son), who remembered me more readily than his father had done.

I went in the evening, and found Mr. Warburton an agreeable man, with rather a shy, nervous manner; he is a clergyman, and inspector of schools in that neighbourhood. We got on the subject of clerical duty in the evening, and Tennyson said he thought clergymen as a body didn't do half the good they might if they were less stuck-up and showed a little more sympathy with their people. "What they want," he said, "is force and geniality—geniality without force will of course do no good, but force without geniality will do very little." All very sound theology, to my thinking. This was up in the little smoking-room, to which we had adjourned after tea, and where we had about two hours' very interesting talk. The proof-sheets of "The King's Idyls" were lying about, but he would not let me look at them. I looked with some curiosity to see what sort of books occupied the lowest of the swinging bookshelves, most handy to his writing-table; they were all, without exception, Greek or Latin—Homer, Æschylus, Horace, Lucretius, Virgil, etc. It was a fine moonlight night, and he walked through the garden with me when I left, and pointed out an effect of the moon shining through thin, white cloud, which I had

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never noticed before—a sort of golden ring, not close round its edge like a halo, but at some distance off. I believe sailors consider it a sign of bad weather. He said he had often noticed it, and had alluded to it in one of his early poems. You will find it in "Margaret."*

The next day I went to dinner, and met Sir John Simeon, who has an estate some miles off there, an old Ch. Ch. man, who has turned Roman Catholic since. He is one of the pleasantest men I ever met, and you may imagine that the evening was a delightful one: I enjoyed it thoroughly, especially the concluding two hours in the smoking-room.

I took over my books of photographs, but Mrs. Tennyson was too tired to look at them that evening, and I settled to leave them and come for them next morning, when I could see more of the children, who had only appeared for a few minutes during dinner.

Tennyson told us that often on going to bed after being engaged on composition he had dreamed long passages of poetry ("You, I suppose," turning to me, "dream photographs?") which he liked very much at the time, but forgot entirely when he woke. One was an enormously long one on fairies, where the lines from being very long at first gradually got shorter and shorter, till it ended with fifty or sixty lines of two syllables each! The only bit he ever remembered enough to write down was one he dreamed at ten years old, which you may like to possess as a genuine unpublished fragment of the Laureate, though I think you will agree with me that it gives very little indication of his future poetic powers:—

> May a cock-sparrow
> Write to a barrow?
> I hope you'll excuse
> My infantine muse.

Up in the smoking-room the conversation turned upon murders, and Tennyson told us several horrible stories from his own experience: he seems rather to revel in such descriptions—one would not guess it from his poetry. Sir John kindly offered me a lift in his carriage back to the hotel, and as we were standing at the door before getting in he said, "You don't object to a cigar in the carriage, do you?" On which Tennyson growled out, "He didn't object to *two pipes* in that little den upstairs, and *a feebliori* he's no business to object to one cigar in a carriage." And so ended one of the most delightful evenings I have spent for many a long day. I lunched with them the next day, but saw very little of Tennyson himself, and afterwards showed the photographs to Mrs. T. and the children, not omitting to get Hallam's autograph in a large, bold, text-hand, under his portrait. The children insisted on reading out the poetry opposite to the pictures, and when they came to their father's portrait (which has for a motto, "The Poet in a golden clime was born," etc.), Lionel puzzled over it for a moment, and then began, boldly, "The Pope——!" on which Mrs. Tennyson began laughing, and Tennyson growled out from the other side of the table, "Hollo! what's that about the Pope?" but no one ventured to explain the allusion.

I asked Mrs. Tennyson for an explanation of "The Lady of Shalott," which has been so variously interpreted. She said that the original legend is in Italian, and that Tennyson only gave it as he found it, so that it is hardly fair to expect him to furnish an interpretation as well.

By-the-bye, do you think that those lines in the *Times*, called "The War," and signed "T.," are Tennyson's? I have made a bet with a friend here that they are not, and am going to try and find out. Many people seem to think they are. . . .

No more at present, from

Your faithful cousin,

CHARLES L. DODGSON.

P.S.—Five minutes to 3 a.m.! This comes of beginning letter-writing at night.

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* The lines are as follows:—

> The very smile before you speak
> That dimples your transparent cheek
> Encircles all the heart, and feedeth
> The senses with a still delight
> Of dainty sorrow without sound,
> *Like the tender amber round,*
> *Which the moon about her spreadeth,*
> *Moving through a fleecy night.*

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