

HASLEMERE AS A LITERARY CENTRE.

BY CHARLES T. BATEMAN.



HASLEMERE possesses a history of its own. For years it ranked as a rotten borough, claiming in the eighteenth century General Oglethorpe, the friend of Johnson, as one of its members. The house where the

crest of a Surrey hill, but with its face to Sussex and the sea.

Green Sussex fading into blue
With one grey glimpse of sea.

From 1867 to the time of his death the Poet Laureate here spent a large part of every year—coming in May and leaving in

October. But for Lady Tennyson's health, his stay would have been extended. Writing to the Rev. F. D. Maurice, he pleasantly described his Isle of Wight home, "close to the ridge of a noble down." With the exception of the sea, "tumbling a breaker on chalk and sand," the natural surroundings of Aldworth far surpass those in the Island. The poet loved Aldworth, and there death met him at last in the room overlooking one of the fairest scenes in England. The house was designed by Mr. Jas. Knowles, editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, and possesses an air of dignified comfort rather than importance.



From a photo by

[H. H. H. Cameron.]

THE LATE LORD TENNYSON.

and we are distinctly poorer by their loss, but the literary and artistic colony shows no diminution in point of numbers.

As long as the English tongue holds sway, Haslemere will be a literary Mecca for pilgrims both from the old and the new countries. There, on the heights, above the sleepy old town and about three miles distant, stands Tennyson's home, nestling under the

From the public highway only the roofs and chimneys are visible. Shut in by trees, and defended by a length of private road, it admirably suited the requirements of "the splendid spirit imperiously shy." The Welsh motto, "Y Gwir yn erbyn y byd" (The truth against the world), on the tessellated pavement of the hall gives us in a sentence an estimate

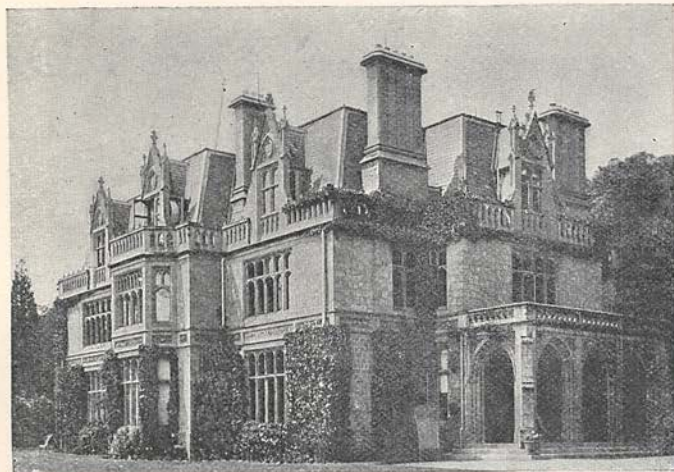
of its late owner's life and character. His favourite sanctum stood on the upper floor. Here he indulged his love of the weed. His favourite pipe was an Irish clay, and those

who formerly frequented the well-known Portsmouth Road and robbed the mail coaches.

So many stories have gained currency concerning surreptitious visits to Aldworth by strangers anxious to see Tennyson, that considerable doubt must be attached to their accuracy. The following may be vouched for on the authority of Dr. Whiting, to whom it was told with much humour by the poet himself. One Sunday Lord and Lady Tennyson were resting in the drawing-room, when they were alarmed to see a pair of legs suddenly dangling from an acacia tree on the lawn. The explanation of this unceremonious visit was, on inquiry, quickly forthcoming. The possessor of the limbs in question had climbed

up the tree to catch a sight of the poet!

Tennyson thoroughly entered into the spirit of personal incidents similar to the foregoing, and took pleasure in relating them to his friends. One concerning the Prince



From a photo by]

[Poulton, Lee.

ALDWORTH, LORD TENNYSON'S HOME AT HASLEMERE.

who have shared the pleasure of a smoke with the poet say that he generally kept a basket containing two hundred clays in the room. He smoked the tobacco in its dry state, giving as his reason that Sir Walter Raleigh always recommended its use in that condition.

A stretch of gorse and heather covers two sides of Blackdown, and across its crest and down the Haslemere Lane — locally termed Tennyson's Lane — afforded the poet his favourite ramble. In fine weather he delighted in long tramps round the neighbourhood, and even when past fourscore years walked his four miles a day. On these occasions he was accompanied by his son, the present lord, or a favourite wolf-hound given to him by a Russian noble who greatly admired his works. His local medical attendant, the late Dr. Whiting, often shared these walks. The poet shunned strangers, and whenever possible retreated into a convenient thicket if he saw them in the distance. In further evidence of this feeling it may be mentioned that he would not consent to let his eighteenth century house, at the foot of the hill on the Lurgashall side. The place is associated locally with tales of highwaymen



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

A BIT OF TENNYSON'S "CARELESS ORDERED GARDEN" AT ALDWORTH.

of Wales and the page boy much amused him. It first appeared several years ago in an evening paper, but is now retold from the version supplied by a frequent visitor to

Aldworth. With characteristic kindness the poet once engaged a lad from some charity school as page boy. One day the Prince of Wales called and this youth answered the door. "Is Mr. Tennyson in?" the Prince inquired. "S'pose he is, and s'pose he isn't?" the urchin replied. "Well, I want to know," good-humouredly replied H.R.H.; "tell him the Prince of Wales wishes to see him." The garb of an English gentleman did not accord with the youth's notions of royalty. Putting his thumb to his nose and spreading out his fingers, he said, "You don't take me for a Johnny Green, do you?" The Prince, with his usual *bon-homie*, thoroughly enjoyed the boy's blunder.

Amongst the local friends of the "great man of song" were Professor Tyndall, of whom more is said in the following pages, and the late Lord Selborne, who frequently drove to Blackdown from Wolmer. In later years several distinguished associates of former times visited him on his birthday. Amongst

these may be mentioned the late Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol, Dr. Boyd Carpenter, and Dean Bradley. On one of these natal celebrations H.R.H. the Duchess of Albany came with royal greetings. As characteristic of the man, it is interesting to note that but an hour before her arrival he was seen sitting on a wayside bank on Blackdown, attired in homely grey, neither too new nor too stylish in fit, and wearing the large black felt hat so pronounced a feature of Mrs. Cameron's pictures. To give a list of the visitors at Aldworth would practically catalogue the best known names in art, literature, the drama, or politics. General Gordon was also credited with being one of the number. Some six or seven years since, Sir Edwin Arnold related in the *Forum* the

conversation which the hero of Khartoum and the poet exchanged at their parting on Blackdown. Gordon begged Tennyson to promote the interest of his Boys' Home, exclaiming, "You in all England are the man to do it." It is a most probable story, and it seems a pity to spoil it, but, unfortunately, the incident did not occur, for Gordon was never at Aldworth.

Perhaps it is hardly surprising that Tennyson's sensitive nature shrank from the personal element so characteristic of the Press of to-day. To journalists this trait—carried, as they sometimes thought, too far—proved most embarrassing. During his illnesses at Blackdown, when the whole civilised world waited at his bedside, their difficulties

were almost inconceivable. On one of these occasions an editor of a London daily attempted to fee the butler. At the time he was ill in bed, and asked Mr. Hallam Tennyson, the present baron, to read his correspondence to him. One can imagine without description the keen delight



From a photo by

[Shawcross, Guildford.]

A CORNER OF BLACKDOWN.

of the poet's son in nipping in the bud a tempting proposal.

"Oh, that Press will get hold of me now!" Tennyson said to his son at the last. The words reveal a depth of feeling almost inexplicable; but the following incident will probably account for them. Two nights before he died, four journalists, representing the Press services and the leading London dailies, drove to Aldworth House an hour and a half after midnight, to obtain, if possible, the latest bulletin. They rang the kitchen bell, in the hope of seeing a servant, and making little or no disturbance. Though gently pulled several times, no one answered. At length they decided, after some hesitation, to ring the hall bell. With terrible distinctness it clanged through the night air, over

the gardens. In the sick room itself—nearly over the porch—the noise must have been most distressing. Someone opened a window and angrily upbraided the belated journalists standing in the rain, but, though apologies and explanations were proffered, refused them the slightest information. The next morning the entrance gate was securely roped against all callers. Most people will acquit the journalists of any intention to cause unnecessary pain, and sympathise with them in a harassing dilemma; but the circumstances of the visit were, to say the least, deplorable. Poor Tennyson! his dying words undoubtedly suggest that he was haunted by the news-gatherers.

At 1.35 a.m., on October 6th, "Lord Tennyson passed away quite peacefully." So ran the simple but pathetic message, written on a sheet of notepaper, signed by Sir Andrew Clark and Dr. Dabbs, and attached to the gate at the entrance to the grounds. At eight o'clock the "beloved physician" drove down to the post-office with a batch of telegrams to the Queen and members of the Royal Family. Near the office door he was asked how the poet died. With hardly a moment's hesitation Sir Andrew gave the following description, which, though impromptu, has certainly never been equalled:

on the bed lay the great poet, the flickering rays playing on his massive head, with its finely carved features. In contrast with the deathly pallor of his face were the wreaths of raven-black hair of which the poet was so proud. His face seemed surrounded by a halo, and reminded one of those beautiful pictures by Rembrandt, in which he has delineated the light and shade with so masterly a hand. It was a scene full of beauty, poetry, and pathos."



Photo by]

[Russell.

MR. FREDERIC HARRISON.

But half an hour's walk from Aldworth, keeping in a south-westerly direction, stands Blackdown Cottage. It is just the homely, picturesque, and unpretentious shelter for the busy literary man, who desires to possess his soul amidst the seclusion of delightful surroundings, and away from the turmoil of towns. The locomotive, bringing its shoals of visitors to spoil Haslemere and Hindhead, shrieks four miles off. Only a thin puff of smoke on a fine day marks the progress of the iron horse through Sussex. For nine summers up to 1897 Frederic Harrison stayed at the cottage.

Here he did some of



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

BLACKDOWN COTTAGE, FOR SEVERAL YEARS A SUMMER RESIDENCE OF MR. FREDERIC HARRISON.

"It was a glorious moonlit night, and the moon's beams penetrated the chamber and suffused it with a beautiful soft light. There

his best work and received his literary friends, included amongst the number being the late Lord Tennyson and Mr. John Morley.

Passing along the garden paths and the old-fashioned sun-dial, one is directed to the summer-house, built on a knoll, and yet

Frederic Harrison's house, but it has lost none of its charm since the time it enchanted George Eliot. For its size, possibly no residence has welcomed so many celebrities. Mrs. Gilchrist lived here in the early sixties, after her husband's death, and finished his "Life of Blake," which earned Carlyle's praise. Of "Brookbank" itself Mrs. Gilchrist once wrote to Mr. Wm. Rossetti, "This place is a *bonâ fide* cottage, and would stand comfortably in your drawing-room. . . . The scenery is of surpassing loveliness."

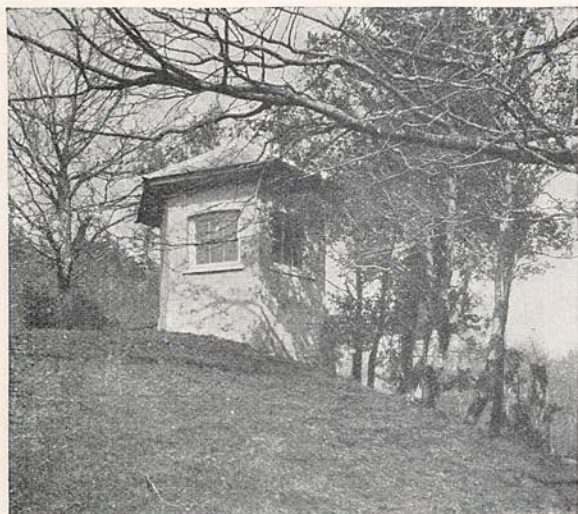
George Eliot took possession in 1871, and here wrote "Middlemarch." The wild, romantic scenery of hills and valleys, clad with gorse and heather, simply inspired her and made her love the little world around Shottersmill. Much of her writing was done in the morning, seated near the window opening on to the verandah. Sometimes, when the weather appeared particularly balmy, she ventured to write in the garden. As we know, she suffered much from the cold. One day a friend

found her in the tropical weather sitting outdoors with only a deodara to shade her head. "Oh, I like it," she said, in

partly hidden by yew, holly, and beech. This was Mr. Harrison's sanctum, and afforded him precisely the conditions he required in preparing his books. Two windows directed southwards commanded the Weald and his own homestead, lying peacefully sheltered in the hollow. To the right Blackdown rises to a considerable height, and from the summit Frederic Harrison delighted to obtain an uninterrupted view of the Downs and the sea beyond. Not a great distance from the cottage is Blackdown House, peculiarly interesting to the author who has made the life of Cromwell a study. The Protector used to visit the place, and local legend, up to a few years since, even pointed out the bedstead on which he slept.

Taking the high road to Shottersmill, let us visit "Brookbank." It is not so secluded as

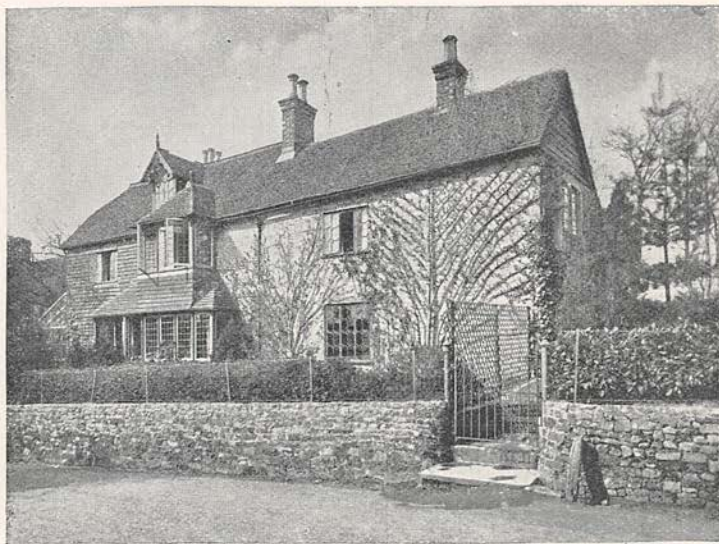
reply to the protest. "To-day is the first time I have felt warm this summer." Her nervousness when out for a drive was another



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

THE SUMMER HOUSE, WHERE MR. FREDERIC HARRISON DID HIS LITERARY WORK.



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

"BROOKBANK," WHERE GEORGE ELIOT RESIDED.

phase of her character. The story is told that her driver at Haslemere once remarked, "Withal her being such a mighty clever body,

so named by Dr. Doyle, faces almost due south; it possesses a pretty hall, built in baronial style, illuminated by a window containing the owner's arms. From this cosy corner one can look straight away through the south entrance down the valley—rich in broom—to the South Downs in the distance. The billiard-room is a pleasant apartment, opening from the hall, and here it seems quite natural to find originals of the sketches illustrating the adventures of the clever Holmes. The youthful branches of the family are here, there, and everywhere. First we see them in the hall, then with a rush they race down the valley; but for a minute we get them quiet, and here they are in our picture.



From a photo by]

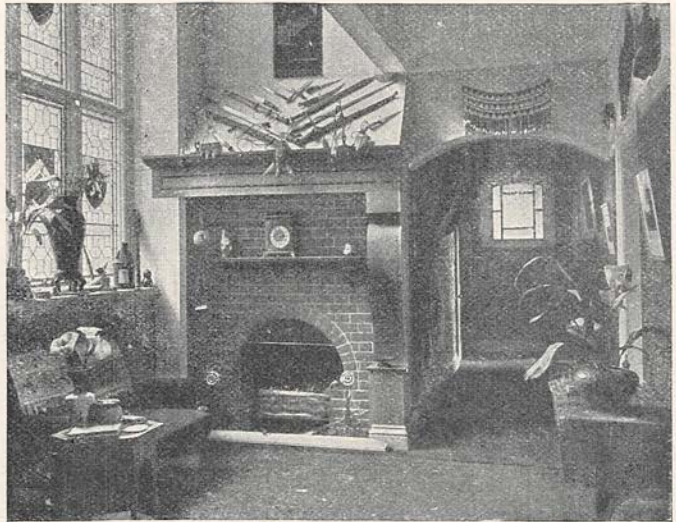
[Shawcross, Guildford.

"UNDERSHAW," THE NEW HOME OF DR. CONAN DOYLE.

she were very nervous in a carriage—allays wanted to go on a smooth road, and seemed dreadful feared of being thrown out." At the present time there are residents in the neighbourhood who still remember her peculiarities. She varied her retirement by occasionally calling upon, and receiving visits from, Tennyson, with whom she delighted to carry on weighty arguments. Coming again into Surrey in 1876, she stayed at the Heights, Witley, but a few miles distant, where "Daniel Deronda" was completed.

At the summit of Hindhead, and immediately below the Portsmouth road, one of the younger forces in literature has erected his home. A few months since Dr. Conan Doyle settled here, and already his services have been claimed by his neighbours on behalf of the literary society. With Grant Allen in the chair, the creator of "Sherlock Holmes" adopted Dickens' plan, and read selections from his own books. "Undershaw,"

Grant Allen, novelist, journalist, and literary guide-book maker, is, as everybody knows, a "hill-topper." His house, "The Croft," stands above the deep hollow nick-



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

THE ENTRANCE HALL OF "UNDERSHAW."

named "The Devil's Punchbowl," and bears as its inscription, "G & N. A. Sibi et amicis. 1893." For some years his neighbour and

friend was Mr. Biscombe Gardiner, the well-known engraver, who delights to portray the characteristics of Surrey scenery. Like



Photo by]

[Russell.

MR. GRANT ALLEN.

Dr. Conan Doyle, Grant Allen takes his share of work in the local institute; but when he accepted the presidency two or three years ago, the clerical supporters left almost *en masse*, as a protest against "The Woman Who Did." Professor Tyndall came to Hindhead in 1887. So delighted were both he and his wife with the surroundings, and so anxious to fly from the noise of the London streets, that they decided to live in a temporary iron structure on the grounds while Hindhead House was in course of erection. Without servants, and with only occasional help, Mrs. Tyndall attended to the household requirements. Yet, with only two rooms, as the professor once gleefully observed, they were never happier. In memory of those pleasant makeshift days, the shanty, now covered with ivy and creeper, still stands in the grounds.

Practically speaking, Professor Tyndall pioneered civilisation at Hindhead. At one time it possessed an unenviable notoriety for

highway and mail coach robberies. The murdered sailor's stone which "Nicholas Nickleby" turned to see reminds us that even more terrible crimes were committed in the locality. When Tyndall settled here there were but few cottages, and the glorious expanse of heather had not been disfigured by smart villas and barbed wire fences. Now the land speculator and the builder are rapidly turning a tract of wild and diversified beauty into roads dotted with huge boarding houses and laundries. In 1866 Tennyson was offered ninety acres of this land for £1,400. In reply he said, "What is the use of a number of acres if they will not grow anything?" At the present time similar property could not be exchanged for £200 an acre. To his credit be it said, Tyndall exercised much thoughtful care to prevent any "discord in the landscape" by choosing bricks and tiles for his house which rapidly toned to the natural beauty around.

The scientist settled here with the hope of completing what he termed "the work of his life." For years before his death he was engaged in collecting and assorting materials for an autobiography. Illness much delayed the task, and then, later on, death found it uncompleted. To his devoted



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

"THE CROFT," THE HOME OF MR. GRANT ALLEN.

wife falls the duty of presenting to the public her husband's busy and unselfish life. His friendship with Tennyson, Carlyle,

and other celebrities should promise a rich store of literary anecdote. For the poet he



From a photo by]

[Mora, New York.

THE LATE PROFESSOR TYNDALL.

cherished a warm regard, evidenced by the fact that he placed a window in his house to catch a glimpse of Tennyson's chimneys on the opposite hill. He delighted to recall memories of the poet reciting in full, rich voice some of his own works in the drawing-room at Freshwater.

Tyndall's relationship with the inhabitants proved of a most cordial description. If the institute wanted a lantern, he provided the money; or if lectures were required, he generously offered his services. If a dangerous bit of road required levelling, and the authorities would not move in the matter, though he never kept a carriage, his donation bulked larger than many wealthy neighbours. Not by common acceptance a rich man, he gave freely to stimulate the intellectual and social life of the district.

No photograph did Tyndall full justice. The one now reproduced, kindly lent by Mrs. Tyndall, is considered good, but even this cannot portray the flashing eyes, the leonine

proportions of the head, or the lithe activity of the Alpine climber.

Every year, with rare exceptions, Mr. and Mrs. Tyndall spent the summer at their *châlet* on the Alp Lusgen. This annual visit always proved a keen delight to Tyndall, and he sorely missed the mountains when illness kept him in England. He has himself expressed his feelings in the following lines:—

Ye splendours of the Alps! Can earth elsewhere
Bring forth a rival? Not the Indian chain,
Though shouldered higher o'er the standard sea,
Can front the eye with more majestic forms.

It was always a pleasure to him to meet any of his countrymen there, and give them the benefit of an almost unrivalled experience of mountaineering. One year he came across Archbishop Benson and his family. To both ecclesiastic and professor the holiday afforded a charming interchange of speech and kindly deeds. During a stiff climb together Tyndall was able to render a simple service to one of the archbishop's daughters, whose foot had become chafed in the ascent. On his return home he, perhaps not unnaturally, but in perfectly good taste, contrasted the situation with the strong disapproval his famous Belfast address once occasioned amongst clericals.

Like his friend Carlyle, the professor suffered much from insomnia. It is an old story how the latter assisted the "Sage of Chelsea" to deliver his famous rectorial



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

THE HUT IN WHICH PROFESSOR AND MRS. TYNDALL LIVED FOR THREE YEARS.

address at Edinburgh ; but, unfortunately, he could not cure himself, even though the air of Hindhead is undoubtedly pure and invigorating. During his latter days he had several illnesses, but invariably maintained a characteristic buoyant spirit, even though verging on seventy. This is evidenced in a letter received in 1891. The professor wrote : "The slowness of my recovery is a measure of the severity of my attack. Long

What I require now is to supplement strength of head by strength of limb."

Prior to one of these attacks the professor, with much energy, had condemned Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. In strong, picturesque language, with the fervour of the northern Irishman, he spoke and wrote against the measure and its author. Illness supervened, and the professor's condition became so critical that his friends despaired



From a photo by]

[Shawcross, Guildford.

"HINDHEAD HOUSE," THE HOME OF THE LATE PROFESSOR TYNDALL.

lying in bed has reduced my muscles to a state of atrophy, from which they are now very gradually emerging. I walk about a little with a stick, I drive out when the afternoons are fine, while during the day I try to occupy with some congenial work a brain which cannot bear inaction. Throughout my illness the brain has shown no sign of deterioration ; judged by *feeling*, it is as strong and young to-day as ever it was.

of recovery. During those anxious times Mrs. Tyndall received an exceedingly kind letter from Mr. Gladstone. Speaking of its receipt to the writer months afterwards, the professor said : "I was touched beyond measure by his kindness. He sent me a delightful letter in my illness, full of sympathy and good wishes for my recovery." Mr. Gladstone's note will appear in due course in the "Life of Tyndall."