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Illustrator: E. W. Haslehurst

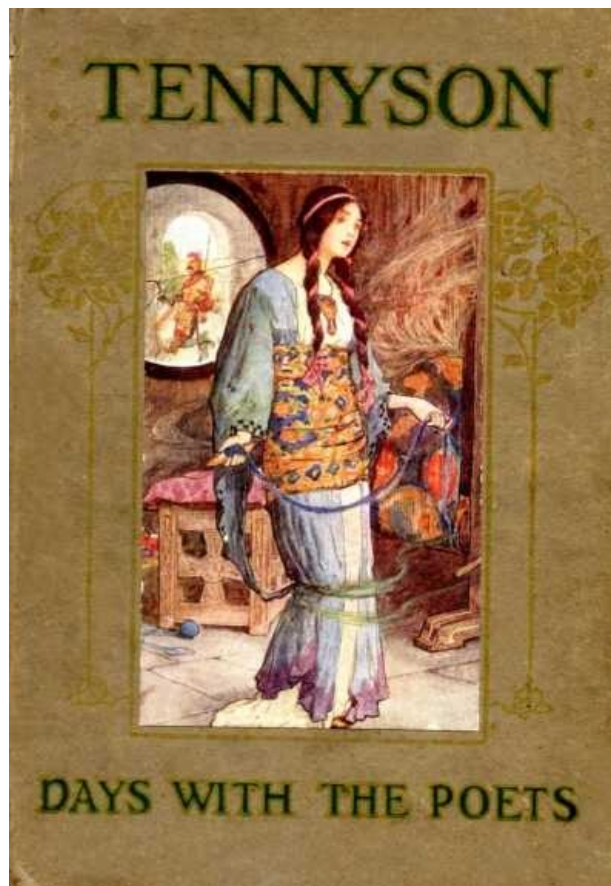
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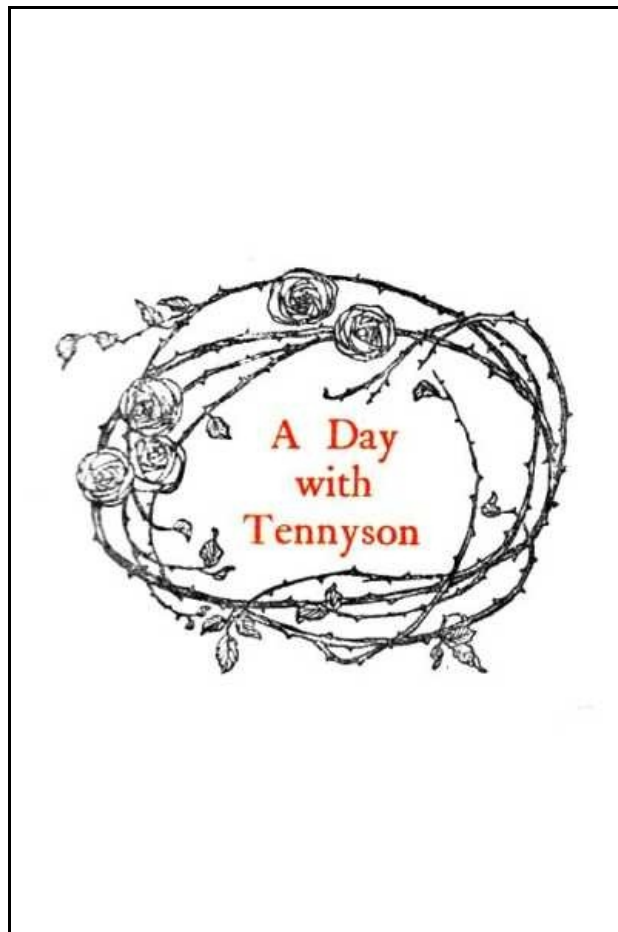
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**TENNYSON
DAYS WITH THE POETS**



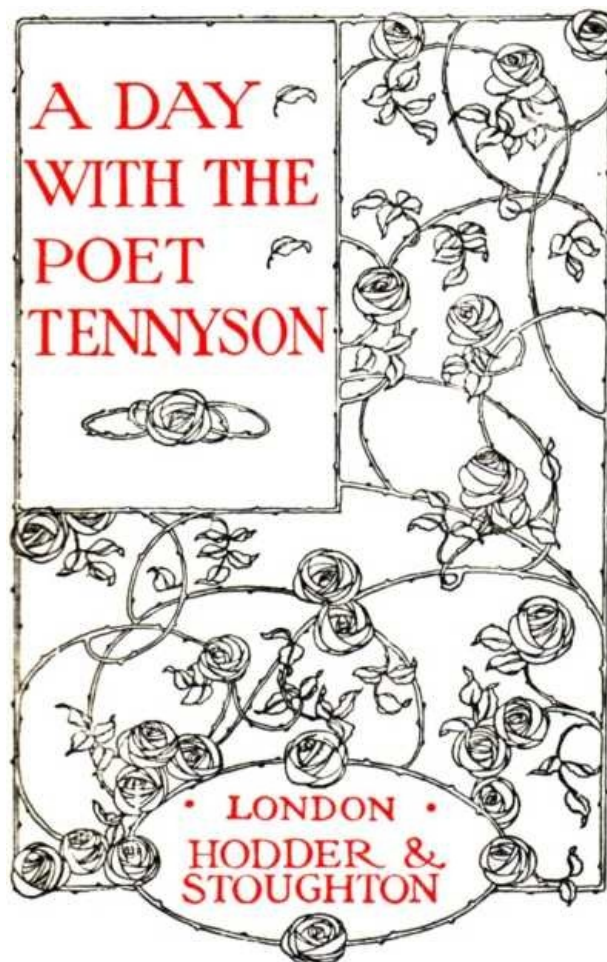
A Day with Tennyson

"I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

"And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go.
But I go on for ever."



Painting by E. W. Haslehurst. THE BROOK.



A DAY WITH THE POET TENNYSON

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A DAY WITH TENNYSON.



TENNYSON was no recluse. He shunned society in the ordinary London sense, but he welcomed kindred spirits to his beautiful home, with large-hearted cordiality. To be acquainted with Farringford was in itself a liberal education. Farringford was an ideal home for a great poet. To begin with, it was somewhat secluded and remote from the world's ways, especially in the early 'fifties, when the Isle of Wight was much more of a *terra incognita* than traffic now permits. One had to travel down some hundred miles from town, cross from the quaint little New Forest port of Lymington to the still quainter little old-world Yarmouth—"a mediæval Venice," the poet called it—and then drive some miles to Freshwater, before one attained the stately loveliness of Farringford embowered in trees.

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

* * * *

"Groves of pine on either hand,
To break the blast of winter, stand;
 And further on, the hoary Channel
Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand."

Lines to the Rev. F. D. Maurice.

The interior of the house—a very ancient one—was no less ideal than its outward aspect, "it was like a charmed palace, with green walks without and speaking walls within." And its occupants crowned all—the ethereally lovely mistress with her "tender spiritual face," and the master, tall, broad-shouldered, and massive, dark-eyed and dark-browed, his voice full of deep organ-tones and delicate inflections, his mind shaped to all fine issues. "The wisest man," said Thackeray, "that ever I knew."

Farringford was the ideal home of the great poet. "A charmed palace with green walks without,"

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



Painting by E. W. Haslehurst.
FARRINGFORD.

Subject to slight inevitable variations, a certain method and routine governed the day of Tennyson. He had definite working-times, indoors and out, and accustomed habits of family life. The morning brought him letters from all parts of England: there was hardly any great man who did not desire to exchange salutations and discuss world-subjects with a thinker so far above the rest. The poet, with the prophetic soul of genius, had always been well in advance of his times.

"For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;
Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging through the thunderstorm;
Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

* * * *

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward, let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.
Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

Locksley Hall.

The daily papers are somewhat late in reaching the Isle of Wight: but the poet could find inspiration even in a source so apparently prosaic as a *Times* column. He noted down some of those valiant and soul-stirring episodes which go unrecorded save by a passing paragraph: and the poem which, perhaps, has held the public fancy longest, the *Charge of the Light Brigade*, was written a few minutes after reading the *Times'* description of the battle containing the phrase "Someone had blundered."

"Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Someone had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

"Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there.
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd;
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not,
Not the six hundred.

"Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back thro' the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

"When can their glory fade?
O, the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!"

The Charge of the Light Brigade.

A little while after breakfast, Tennyson would retire to his "den" on the top storey, for that "sacred half-hour" devoted to poetical composition, and assisted by his beloved pipe, during which nobody dared disturb him. This den, or study, formed a setting worthy of its inmate. Every inch of wall was covered with portrait, sketches, drawings. Almost every distinguished name of the nineteenth century was in some manner represented here: the poet literally worked surrounded by his friends. And in this congenial atmosphere he devoted himself to that life-long pursuit of his, as he has imaged it in the "Gleam," which "flying onward, wed to the melody, sang through the world."

Whatever respective values a future generation may set upon Tennyson's work, there can be little doubt that he himself considered the *Idylls of the King*, with its inner spiritual meanings, as his greatest work. "There is no single fact or incident in the Idylls," he said, "which cannot be explained without any mystery or allegory whatever." Hence their appeal to the least mystical reader, through sheer beauty of language and superb pictorial effect. But at the same time he let it be known that his whole story was inherently one of pure symbolism: starting from the suggestion that Arthur represented conscience. This idea is predominant, without undue insistence upon it, in *Guinevere*.

"Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
... Let no man dream, but that I love thee still."



**Painting by W. H. Margetson.
GUINEVERE.**

"Queen Guinevere had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury,
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burned,
Blurred by the creeping mist; for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

* * * *

There rode an armed warrior to the doors,
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King.' She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet

Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang, coming, prone from off her seat she fell
And grovell'd with her face against the floor:
There with her milk-white arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King;
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's,
Denouncing judgment, but, tho' changed, the King's.

* * * *

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
... Let no man dream, but that I love thee still,
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
... But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side: see thee no more—
Farewell!'

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: 'peradventure,' so she thought,
'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light,
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore."

Idylls of the King.

In the course of the day the poet would devote considerable time and energy to his favourite exercise of garden work. To plant trees and shrubs, to roll the lawn, to dig the kitchen garden, and lovingly to tend the simple flowers which he had set, was his constant delight as long as his strength sufficed. He had a passionate love, and an extraordinary knowledge of Nature: he rejoiced in watching the birds in his great cedar, ilex and fir trees, and his mind was thoroughly attuned to the sweet influences of colour and foliage. Few else could have written that unsurpassable lyric, *Come into the Garden, Maud*.

"Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.
For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky.
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light, and to die....

"And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

"From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

"The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sighed for the dawn and thee.

"Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin, and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers and be their sun.

"There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate,
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is near;'
And the white rose weeps, 'She is late;'
The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear;'
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'"

Maud.

The same love of Nature made his eye alert for every obscurest beauty, when he put aside his gardening tools and started, as was his wont, for a stroll with some friend along the glorious cliffs of Freshwater. Those were favoured folk, who, like Mrs. Thackeray Ritchie, "walked with Tennyson along High Down, treading the turf, listening to his talk, while the gulls came sideways, flashing their white breasts against the edge of the cliff, and the Poet's cloak flapped time to the gusts of the west wind." This cloak and the Poet were practically synonymous. It figures—a first edition of it—in all the early sketches of him by Spedding, Fitzgerald, etc. (1830-40) and to the last, one can hardly imagine him apart from it.

During these quiet rambles he was wont to discuss with enthusiasm the religious and social problems of the day; they weighed heavily upon his thoughtful mind. His philosophy was a hopeful one, rooted in Christian belief, yet constantly over-shadowed by fugitive misgivings and by a sense of the impermanence of human existence. And while voicing these misgivings in lines which might give pause to weaker minds, he never lost his firm faith in right, in duty, and in ultimate rectification of all apparent wrong.

"Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin, and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers and be their sun."



Painting by W. H. Margetson.
MAUD.

"Oh, 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 shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

"Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

"So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

* * * *

"Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

"That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

In Memoriam.

But these mysteries of life and death will not bear too persistent a contemplation: and presently Tennyson, discarding them in favour of less sombre subjects, would regale his hearers with marvellous recitations. "The roll of his great voice acted sometimes almost like an incantation." The old-world classical legends had always found in him a noble exponent; and nowhere was his peculiar felicity of diction and delicate sense of sound better exemplified than in *Ænone*.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape; for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

* * * *

"Dear mother Ida, harken, ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.
'My own Ænone,
Beautiful-brow'd Ænone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n,
'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added, 'This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due:

"But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them, unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

It was the deep mid-noon: one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotus and lilies; and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

* * * *

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphroditè beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light feet
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights as she moved.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whisper'd in his ear, 'I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.'
She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone.
And I shall be alone until I die."

Enone.

The afternoon was spent, sometimes in further gardening pursuits, sometimes in a drive around the peaceful Island lanes and thatch-browed villages; frequently there were visitors to be met at Yarmouth, where the Tennysons' carriage might often be seen in the quaint cobbled streets. The soft and lovely colouring of the Solent was one to attract the poet's fancy: and it was after coming freshly one day into sight of the familiar waters of the estuary, and a tide, "that moving seems too full for sound or foam," lapping the lichened sea-walls of Yarmouth, that he composed, in his eighty-first year, the verses that he devised to be placed at the end of his whole collected poems:—"Crossing the Bar." The mystic simplicity of these lines strikes the very key-note of his character.

"Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west,
 Under the silver moon:
Sleep my little one, sleep my pretty one, sleep!"



Painting by W. H. Margetson.
SWEET AND LOW.

Tea was served in the drawing-room, "its oriel window full of green and golden lights, of the sounds of birds and of the distant sea." The air of extreme and unstudied simplicity, which dominated the whole Farringford household, was just as noticeable here. Tea was a happy gathering of the family and friends, enlivened with talk on current topics. The Laureate's sympathies were wide-reaching, and his conversation, forcible and often racy, was characterised by the strongest common-sense. He held firmly-defined views on all social subjects; and had declared himself on the question of "Woman's Rights"—then comparatively fresh—at considerable length in *The Princess*.

"The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or god-like, bond or free.
... For woman is not undevelop'd man,
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till at last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers.
... Let this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in the marriage ties
Nor equal, nor unequal; each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating with one full stroke
Life."

The Princess.

The poet's ideal of woman was set very high: he held her to be far above man, morally and

spiritually: and an ideal as perfect as may well be conceived was daily before his eyes, in the person of his beautiful wife, with her pure and saintly face: who was yet

"No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men,
Who looked all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
And girdled her with music."

The Princess.

Later on in the evening, came, perhaps, the sweetest hour of the day, when, playing and romping with his little ones, the tall and stately man became a very child for a while. A peculiar tenderness towards children was a distinctive feature of Tennyson: and whether helping his own boys build stone castles on the cliff, or frolicking with any village school children whom he might meet, he was intent upon giving that joy and laughter to the new generation which had been denied to his own childhood. "Make the lives of children as beautiful and as happy as possible," was a favourite saying with him. The "Children's Hour," which Longfellow had sung, was a radiant hour for him: and most of all he was enchanted by the sight of little drowsy heads, asleep in cot or cradle. They inspired some of his loveliest lyrics, such as:

"Sweet and low, sweet and low,
 Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
 Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
 Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps.

"Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west,
 Under the silver moon:
Sleep my little one, sleep my pretty one, sleep!"

And the loss of his first-born infant had touched him with that infinite poignancy of pathos, which breathes in other lines:

"As thro' the land at eve we went
 And pluck'd the ripened ears,
We fell out, my wife and I,
O! we fell out, I know not why,
 And kiss'd again with tears.
And blessings on the falling out
 That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
 And kiss again with tears!
For when we came where lies the child
 We lost in other years,
There above the little grave,
O there above the little grave,
 We kissed again with tears."

The dinner-table was enlivened by Tennyson's boundless store of anecdote, and keen sense of humour. It was a "feast of intellect," to quote Mrs. Cameron; hour after hour of the most brilliant conversation. The supernatural loomed largely. The poet had a *penchant* for well-authenticated ghost stories, a deep interest in psychical phenomena, and an open mind towards the unknowable. And very strange tales of dreams, clairvoyance, and occult happenings, were to be heard at Farringford. A master of the romantic pervaded by supernatural elements, he had long since drawn with deft touches the mysterious confines of "fäery-lands forlorn," steeped in the very atmosphere of dream.

"She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side,
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
 The Lady of Shalott."



Painting by W. H. Margetson.
THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

"Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the ways that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers.
And the silent isle embowers
 The Lady of Shalott....

"Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly,
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers, 'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott.'

"There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay

To look down on Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

"And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near,
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

* * * *

"A bow-shot from her bower eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

"All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet feather,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

"His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his warhorse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

"She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side,
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott."

The Lady of Shalott.

Sitting in his old oak armchair in the drawing-room after dinner, the Laureate "talked of all that was in his heart, or read some poem aloud, with the landscape lying before us like a beautiful picture framed by the dark-arched bow-window. His moods," says Mrs. Bradley, "were so variable, his conversation so earnest, his knowledge of all things so wide and minute!" Wide and minute above all, perhaps, was his acquaintance with Nature. The long quiet years in Lincolnshire had endowed him with an almost unrivalled power of detail: and, as the old Farringford shepherd said in dying, "Master was a wonderful man for nature and life." No one quotation could do justice to his powers: but the lesser music of the countryside tinkles and ripples audibly through *The Brook* and all the exquisite details of its landscape.

"I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,

To bicker down a valley.

* * * *

"I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I bubble on the pebbles.

"With many a curve my banks I fret,
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

* * * *

"I wind about, and in and out,
With many a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling.

"And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me as I travel,
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel.

* * * *

"I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

"I slide, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

"I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

"And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever."

The Brook.

In the course of the evening, the poet would retire to the "den" for a second "sacred half-hour" of unbroken silence, into which we need not follow him. Lastly, when slumber filled the house, and night hung black above the trees, he ascended to a platform on the leads of the house-top, to observe the march and majesty of the stars. Farringford, it has been said, "seemed so remote and still, and as though the jar of the outside world had never entered it." But in the throbbing starlight, the sea purring in the distance, the seer on the roof communing with the mysterious skies above him, it was more than ever a House of Dream—a house whose roof touched heaven. Here and thus were thrilling *nocturnes* imagined.

"Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:
The firefly wakens: waken thou with me.

* * * *

"Now lies the Earth all Danæe to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

"Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

"Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,

And slips into the bosom of the lake:
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me."

The Princess.

And so we leave Alfred Tennyson, at the end of his day, gazing "forward to the starry track glimmering up the height beyond," alone with the Creator.

"He lifts me to the golden doors:
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strews her lights below;"

while the discords of earth are hushed beneath the magic of the spheral harmony, and "The Gleam" hovers upward into heaven.



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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DAY WITH THE POET TENNYSON ***

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