

THE  
WORKS OF TENNYSON

WITH NOTES BY THE AUTHOR

EDITED WITH MEMOIR  
BY  
HALLAM, LORD TENNYSON

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# LIFE AND WORK

OF

## ALFRED LORD TENNYSON.<sup>1</sup>

SOMERSBY.

My father was born on August 6, 1809, at the Rectory of Somersby in Lincolnshire, the fourth son of a family of eight sons and four daughters. The parish doctor said of him when a week old —

Here's a leg for a babe of a week ! and he would be bound  
There was not his like that year in twenty parishes round.

The Tennysons trace their descent through a long line of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire squires and yeomen from John Tenison of Holderness (1343), and according to Burke are the co-representatives with the Lords Scarsdale of the ancient family of d'Eyncourt. My father's grandfather and two of his uncles sat in Parliament. His father, Dr. Tennyson, Vicar of Somersby, was a distinguished-looking man, cultivated, and fond of languages and science. He was a competent scholar in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and Syriac, and something of a poet, a painter, and a musician. By the right of primogeniture he ought to have inherited a considerable fortune, but his father disinherited him in favour of his younger son Charles Tennyson, and made him take Holy Orders, for which he had no vocation, and this unfitness plunged him at times into deep fits of melancholy. He was a man of the highest truth and honour, and inspired his neighbours with a certain sense of fear, though he was a genial and brilliant conversationalist. His children were all by nature poets, and Leigh Hunt aptly described them as "a nest of nightingales." When Alfred was a boy, one of his earliest recollections was his grandmother reading to him "The Prisoner of Chillon." She used to say, "All Alfred's poetry comes from me." This brood of "nightingales" lived

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<sup>1</sup> [This preface to the poems is naturally an abridgment of my *Memoir* of my father, with here and there some few facts added, illustrating his character or the methods of his work. The commentaries and notes are for the most part those which he himself jotted down or bade me jot down for posthumous publication. — T.]

remote from towns in the lonely heart of the country. It was a time of storm and stress in Europe, but they only caught dim echoes of the great storm, and "that world-earthquake, Waterloo."

"According to the best of my recollection," writes my father, "when I was about eight years old, I covered two sides of a slate with Thomsonian blank verse in praise of flowers for my brother Charles, who was a year older than I was, Thomson then being the only poet I knew. Before I could read I was in the habit on a stormy day of spreading my arms to the wind, and crying out, 'I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind,' and the words 'far, far away' had always a strange charm for me. About ten or eleven Pope's *Homer's Iliad* became a favourite of mine, and I wrote hundreds and hundreds of lines in the regular Popeian metre, nay even could improvise them, so could my two elder brothers, for my father was a poet and could write regular metre very skilfully."

The note continues — "My father once said to me, 'Don't write so rhythmically, break your lines occasionally for the sake of variety.'

"'Artist first, then Poet,' some writer said of me. I should answer, '*Poeta nascitur non fit*'; indeed, '*Poeta nascitur et fit*.' I suppose I was nearer thirty than twenty before I was anything of an artist. At about twelve and onwards I wrote an epic of about six thousand lines à la Walter Scott, — full of battles, dealing too with sea and mountain scenery, — with Scott's regularity of octosyllables and his occasional varieties. Though the performance was very likely worth nothing, I never felt myself more truly inspired. I wrote as much as seventy lines at one time, and used to go shouting them about the fields in the dark. All these early efforts have been destroyed, only my brother-in-law, Edmund Lushington, begged for a page or two of the Scott poem. Somewhat later (at fourteen) I wrote a Drama in blank verse, which I have still, and other things. It seems to me I wrote them all in perfect metre."

These poems of uncommon promise made my grandfather say with pardonable pride, "If Alfred die one of our great poets will have gone," and at another time, "I should not wonder if Alfred were to revive the greatness of his relative, William Pitt."

When Alfred was seven he went to the grammar school at Louth, the little township on the banks of the river Ludd, but he hated the constraint. He left school in 1820 and returned to Somersby, where his father taught him and his brother Charles until they went to Cambridge. They read the great authors, — the ancient classics, and Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Bacon, Hooker, Bunyan, Addison, Burke, Goldsmith, *The Arabian Nights*, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. The earliest letter from him that has survived was addressed to his Aunt Marianne Fytche. It is an amusing piece of precocity for a boy of twelve years old.

SOMERSBY.

MY DEAR AUNT MARIANNE — When I was at Louth you used to tell me that you should be obliged to me if I would write to you and give you my remarks on works and authors. I shall now fulfil the promise which I made at that time. Going into the library this morning, I picked up "Sampson Agonistes," on which (as I think it is a play you like) I shall send you my remarks. The first scene is the lamentation of Sampson, which possesses much pathos and sublimity. This passage,

Restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,  
But rush upon me thronging, and present  
Times past, what once I was, and what am now,

puts me in mind of that in Dante, which Lord Byron has prefixed to his "Corsair," "Nessun maggior dolore, Che ricordarsi del tempo felice, Nella miseria." His complaint of his blindness is particularly beautiful,

O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
Blind among enemies! O worse than chains,  
Dungeon or beggary, or decrepit age!  
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,  
And all her various objects of delight  
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased  
Inferior to the vilest now become  
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me:  
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed  
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,

Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.  
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse  
Without all hope of day!  
O first created beam, and thou great Word,  
"Let there be light!" and light was over all. —

I think this is beautiful, particularly

O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon.

After a long lamentation of Sampson the Chorus enters, saying these words:

This, this is he. Softly awhile;  
Let us not break in upon him:  
O change beyond report, thought, or belief!  
See how he lies at random, carelessly *diffused*.

If you look into Bp. Newton's notes, you will find that he informs you that "this beautiful application of the word 'diffused' is borrowed from the Latin." It has the same meaning as *temere* in one of the Odes of Horace, Book the second,

Sic temere, et rosa  
Canos odorati capillos,

of which this is a free translation, "Why lie we not at random, under the shade of the plaitain (sub platano), having our hoary head perfumed with rose water?" To an English reader the metre of the Chorus may seem unusual, but the difficulty will vanish, when I inform him that it is taken from the Greek. In line 1333 there is this expression, "Chalybean tempered steel." The Chalybes were a nation among the ancients very famous for the making of steel, hence the expression "Chalybean," or peculiar to the Chalybes: in line 147 "the Gates of Azzur"; this probably, as Bp. Newton observes, was to avoid too great an alliteration which the "Gates of Gaza" would have caused, though (in my opinion) it would have rendered it more beautiful: and (though I do not affirm it as a fact) perhaps Milton gave it that name for the sake of novelty, as all the world knows he was a great pedant. I have not, at present, time to write any more; perhaps I may continue my remarks in another letter to you, but (as I am very volatile and fickle) you must not depend upon me, for I think you do not know any one who is so fickle as — Your affectionate nephew,  
A. TENNYSON.

Byron, who is mentioned in this letter, was worshipped by my father in his boyhood. He told me that when Byron died he felt stunned and "as if the world had been darkened" for him; and he could only rush out into the wood and carve on the sandstone rock, "Byron is dead." In his old age he used to say, "Byron is too much depreciated now, but he has such force that he will come into his own again." Through these early years my father made many friends among the Lincolnshire farmers, labourers, and fisher folk. "Like Wordsworth on the mountains," said FitzGerald, "Alfred too, when a lad abroad on the wold, sometimes of a night with the shepherd, watched not only the flock on the greensward, but also 'the fleecy star that bears Andromeda far off Atlantic seas.' Two of his earliest lines were

The rays of many a rolling central star  
Are flashing earthward, have not reached us yet."

The Lincolnshire folk were apt in the early part of the nineteenth century to be uncouth and mannerless. A type of rough independence was my grandfather's coachman, who, blamed for not keeping the harness clean, rushed into the drawing-room, flung the whole harness on the floor, and roared out "Clean it yourself, then." Again, the Somersby cook was a decided character, and "Master Awlfred" heard her in some rage against her master and her mistress exclaim: "If you raked out Hell with a small-tooth comb, you want find their likes," a phrase which long lingered in my father's memory.

In the poem of "Isabel" he more or less described his mother,<sup>1</sup> "a remarkable and saintly woman." She devoted herself entirely to her husband and children, and to the poor of the parish.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche.

Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign  
The summer calm of golden charity,

The intuitive decision of a bright  
And thorough-edged intellect to part  
Error from crime.

She earnestly looked forward to the time when Alfred would become "not only a great poet but a great and good man."

He inherited from her a spirit of reverence, humour, love of animals, and extreme sensitiveness. This sensitiveness contrasted remarkably with his great physical strength and his downright bluntness. "All the Tennysons are black-blooded," he would say, for his father's melancholy preyed upon them all more or less through life. As a child, in the middle of the black night he would rush forth, fling himself on the graves in the little churchyard — asking God to let him soon be beneath the sod. But his strongest characteristic was his love of Nature, to which he always turned for comfort. Everywhere in Nature he heard a voice — he saw everywhere above Life and Nature "the gleam."

Over the mountain,  
On human faces,  
And all around me,  
Moving to melody,  
Floated the Gleam.

The charm and beauty of the brook at Somersby haunted him. He delighted to recall the rare richness of the bowery lanes; the wooded hollow of Holy Well; the cold springs flowing from the sandstone rocks, the flowers, the mosses, and the ferns. He loved this land of quiet villages, "ridged wolds," large fields, gray hill-sides, "tufted knolls," noble ash-trees. He had a passion for the "waste enormous marsh," the "heaped hills that bound the sea," the boundless shore at Mablethorpe, and the thunderous breakers. FitzGerald writes: "I used to say Alfred never should have left old Lincolnshire, where there were not only such good seas, but also such fine hill and dale among 'the Wolds' which he was brought up in, as people in general scarce thought on." My Uncle Charles told how, on the afternoon of the publication of the *Poems by Two Brothers* in 1826, my father and he hired a carriage with some of the money earned, and driving along fourteen miles over the wolds and the marsh to Mablethorpe, "shared their triumph with the winds and waves."

The following fragment, written on revisiting Mablethorpe, is a notable sample of his descriptive style: —

## MABLETHORPE.

Here often when a child I lay reclined :  
 I took delight in this fair land and free ;  
 Here stood the infant Iliion of the mind,  
 And here the Grecian ships all seem'd to be.  
 And here again I come, and only find  
 The drain-cut level of the marshy lea,  
 Gray sand-banks, and pale sunsets, dreary wind,  
 Dim shores, dense rains, and heavy-clouded sea.

And this simile in *The Last Tournament* is also taken from what he often saw there :

as the crest of some slow-arching wave,  
 Heard in dead night along that table-shore,  
 Drops flat, and after the great waters break  
 Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,  
 Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,  
 From less and less to nothing.

## CAMBRIDGE AND ARTHUR HALLAM.

In 1827 Frederick Tennyson, the eldest brother, went to Trinity College, and was joined there in the following year by Charles and Alfred. My father felt the confinement of his life after the free country, and a want of inspiration and sympathy in the teaching provided by the college authorities. He writes :

I am sitting owl-like and solitary in my rooms (nothing between me and the stars but a stratum of tiles). The hoof of the steed, the roll of the wheel, the shouts of drunken Gown and drunken Town come up from below with a sea-like murmur. I wish to Heaven I had Prince Hussain's fairy carpet to transport me along the deeps of air to your coterie. Nay, I would even take up with his brother Aboul-something's glass for the mere pleasure of a peep. What a pity it is that the golden days of Faerie are over ! What a misery not to be able to consolidate our gossamer dreams into reality ! . . . When, my dearest Aunt, may I hope to see you again ? I know not how it is, but I feel isolated here in the midst of society. The country is so disgustingly level, the revelry of the place so monotonous, the studies of the University so uninteresting, so much matter of fact. None but dry-headed, calculating, angular little gentlemen can take much delight in A + B, etc.

I have been seeking "Falkland" here for a long time without success. Those beautiful extracts from it, which you showed me at Tealby, haunt me incessantly ; but wishes, I think, like telescopes reversed, seem to get their objects at a greater distance.

"I can tell you nothing of his college days," writes Edward Fitzgerald to a friend, "for I did not know him till they were over, though I

had seen him two or three times before: I remember him well, a sort of Hyperion.'

With his poetic nature and warmth of heart, he soon made his way. Fanny Kemble, who used to visit her brother John, said of him when at college, "Alfred Tennyson was our hero, the great hero of our day." Another friend describes him as "six feet high, broad-chested, strong-limbed, his face Shakespearian, with deep eyelids, his forehead ample, crowned with dark wavy hair, his head finely poised, his hand the admiration of sculptors, long fingers with square tips, soft as a child's but of great size and strength. What struck one most about him was the union of strength with refinement."

In later years he confessed that he owed much to Cambridge. At Somersby he had studied nature, there he was able to study his fellow-men. His friends were many, scholars and poets, Arthur Hallam, Trench, Brookfield, Milnes, Spring-Rice, Merivale, Lushington, Blakesley, Spedding, Thompson, and others. When my father first came into the dining-hall at Trinity, Thompson said at once, "That man must be a poet!" There was in all these young fellows, keen intellectual energy, imaginative generosity, and public spirit. They called aloud for liberty and toleration. The star of Byron, which had shone brightly in my father's boyhood, had set; Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth were in the ascendant. "Byron and Shelley," my father wrote, "however mistaken they were, did yet give the world another heart and new pulses" by their fiery lyrical genius. "If Keats had lived," he added, "he would have been the greatest of us." Wordsworth he looked on "as the greatest poet on the whole since Milton. Blank verse, indeed, is the finest possible vehicle for thought in Shakespeare as well as in Milton,"

Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,  
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,  
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean  
Rings to the roar of an angel onset.

A society of young Cambridge men, to which my father and most of his friends belonged, called "The Apostles," was then said to be "waxing daily in religion and radicalism." They not only debated on politics but read Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Butler, Hume, Bentham, Descartes and Kant; and discussed such questions as the Origin of Evil, the Derivation of Moral Sentiments, Prayer, and the Personality of God. Among the Cambridge papers I find a remarkable sentence on "Prayer" by Hallam:

With respect to prayer, you ask how I am to distinguish the operations of God in me from motions in my own heart? Why should you distinguish them or how do you know there is any distinction? Is God less God because He acts by general laws when He deals with the common elements of nature? . . . That fatal mistake



which has embarrassed the philosophy of mind with infinite confusion, the mistake of setting value on a thing's origin rather than on its character, of assuming that composite must be less excellent than simple, has not been slow to extend its deleterious influence over the field of practical religion.

My father — after perhaps reading Cuvier, or Humboldt — seems to have propounded in some college discussion the theory that “the development of the human body might possibly be traced from the radiated, vermicular, molluscous and vertebrate organisms.” The question of surprise put to him on this proposition was, “Do you mean that the human brain is at first like a madrepore's, then like a worm's, etc. ? but this cannot be, for they have no brain.”

At this time, with one or two of his more literary friends, he took a great interest in the work which Hallam had undertaken, a translation from the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, with notes and prefaces. For this task Hallam, who in 1827 had been in Italy with his parents, and had drunk deep of the older Italian literature, says that he was perfecting himself in German and Spanish, and was proposing to plunge into the Florentine historians and the mediæval Schoolmen. He wrote to my father: “I expect to glean a good deal of knowledge from you concerning metres which may be serviceable as well for my philosophy in the notes as for my actual handiwork in the text. I purpose to discuss considerably about poetry in general, and about the ethical character of Dante's poetry.” My father said of his friend: “Arthur Hallam could take in the most abstruse ideas with the utmost rapidity and insight, and had a marvellous power of work and thought, and a wide range of knowledge. On one occasion, I remember, he mastered a difficult book of Descartes at a single sitting.”

On June 6, 1829, the announcement was made that my father had won the Chancellor's prize medal for his poem in blank verse on “Timbuctoo.” Out of his “horror of publicity,” as he said, he gave it to his friend Merivale for declamation in the Senate House. To win the prize in anything but rhymed heroics was an innovation. My grandfather had desired him to compete, so unwillingly he patched up an old poem on “The Battle of Armageddon,” and came out prizeman over Milnes, Hallam, and others.

His friends remarked that he had from the first a deep insight into character, and would often turn upon them with a terse and sometimes grim criticism when they thought him far away in the clouds, as for instance: “There is a want of central dignity about him, he excuses himself,” or “That is the quick decision of a mind that sees half the truth.” They also pronounced him to be an unusually fine literary critic, and a man of deep thought and infinite humour. His first volume of *Poems, chiefly Lyrical* was published in 1830. Arthur Hallam criticised

it in the *Englishman's Magazine*, and his enthusiasm was worthy of his true and unselfish friendship. Hallam was, according to my father, "as near perfection as mortal man can be." "If ever man was born for great things," Kemble wrote to his sister Fanny, "he was. Never was a more powerful intellect joined to a purer and holier heart; and the whole illuminated with the richest imagination, with the most sparkling yet the kindest wit." In this connection I may quote the following note received by me (June 1913) from the present Master of Trinity:

It must have been early in 1886 that I was a guest at Trinity Lodge. After breakfast, one Sunday, Dr. Thompson and I were talking about the very distinguished group of his contemporaries, and in particular of the Arthur Hallam of "In Memoriam." I remember saying to Dr. Thompson in substance — I cannot recall my exact words — "Are you able to say, not from later evidence, but from your recollection of what you thought at the time, which of the two friends had the greater intellect, Hallam or Tennyson?" "Oh, Tennyson!" he said at once with strong emphasis, as if the matter was not open to doubt.

Arthur Hallam was often at Somersby and became engaged to my father's sister Emily. Together my father and he visited the Pyrenees, and held a secret meeting with the leaders of a conspiracy against the tyrant, King Ferdinand of Spain. It was there in the Pyrenees that my father wrote part of "Ænone."

Such descriptive lines as these are based upon the Pyrenean scenery:

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier  
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.  
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,  
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,  
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand  
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down  
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars  
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine  
In cataract after cataract to the sea.

"Before I pass on from 'Ænone,'" Arthur Sidgwick writes, "I may add a word or two on Tennyson's classical poetry generally, and his debt to the great ancient masterpieces. He was perhaps not exactly a scholar in what I may call the narrow professional sense; but in the broadest and truest sense he was a *great* scholar. In all Tennyson's classic pieces, 'Ænone,' 'Ulysses,' 'Demeter,' 'Tithonus,' the legendary subjects, and in the two historic subjects, 'Lucretius' and 'Boädicea' the classical tradition is there with full detail, but by the poet's art it is transmuted. 'Ænone' is epic in form, the rest are brief monodramas: the material is all ancient, and in many subtle ways the spirit; the handling is modern and original. In translations, too few, Tennyson can only be called consummate."

In February 1831 Dr. Tennyson fell ill and summoned my father home from Cambridge, and in March he was found leaning back in his chair, having passed away suddenly and peacefully. The Tennysons, however, did not leave Somersby Rectory until 1837. Hallam still continued to visit them and read Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch with my father and his sister Emily. My father managed all the affairs of the family. His extraordinary common-sense was notable throughout his life, and was frequently commented on by his Cambridge contemporaries. In 1832 Hallam and he went a tour up the Rhine, and my father published his second volume, *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*. Some critics saw that a new and true poet had come among them, and Emerson praised the volume in America. Of "The Lady of Shalott," which is "not far below the high-water mark of symbolic poetry,"<sup>1</sup> Hallam wrote, "The more I read it the more I like it." Of the "Lotos-Eaters" Merivale said to Thompson, "I have converted by my readings both my brother and your friend Richardson to faith in the 'Lotos-Eaters.'" "Mariana in the South," written in the South of France, especially delighted Hallam. "The Palace of Art," my father notes, "is the embodiment of my own belief that the godlike life is with man and for man, and that Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters that never can be sundered without tears."

Among the poems often quoted by Trench and his other friends at this time was "Anacaona," which, however, was not published by him in his collected works.

#### ANACAONA.

A dark Indian maiden,  
 Warbling in the bloom'd liana,  
 Stepping lightly flower-laden,  
 By the crimson-eyed anana,  
 Wantoning in orange groves  
 Naked, and dark-limb'd, and gay,  
 Bathing in the slumbrous coves,  
 In the cocoa-shadow'd coves,  
 Of sunbright Xaraguay,  
 Who was so happy as Anacaona,  
 The beauty of Espagnola,  
 The golden flower of Hayti?

In the purple island,  
 Crown'd with garlands of cinchona,  
 Lady over wood and highland,  
 The Indian queen, Anacaona,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Alfred Lyall.

Dancing on the blossomy plain  
To a woodland melody :  
Playing with the scarlet crane,  
The dragon-fly and scarlet crane,  
Beneath the papao tree !  
Happy, happy was Anacaona,  
The beauty of Espagnola,  
The golden flower of Hayti !

Naked, without fear, moving  
To her Areyto's mellow ditty,  
Waving a palm branch, wondering, loving,  
Carolling "Happy, happy Hayti !"  
She gave the white men welcome all,  
With her damsels by the bay ;  
For they were fair-faced and tall,  
They were more fair-faced and tall,  
Than the men of Xaraguay,  
And they smiled on Anacaona,  
The beauty of Espagnola,  
The golden flower of Hayti !

Following her wild carol  
She led them down the pleasant places,  
For they were kingly in apparel,  
Loftily stepping with fair faces.  
But never more upon the shore  
Dancing at the break of day,  
In the deep wood no more, —  
By the deep sea no more, —  
No more in Xaraguay  
Wander'd happy Anacaona,  
The beauty of Espagnola,  
The golden flower of Hayti !

Christopher North criticised the volume of 1832 sharply in *Blackwood*: "Alfred is the greatest owl . . ." The *Quarterly* ridiculed the poems pitilessly. My father was depressed by these unfavourable reviews. As Jowett notes: "Tennyson experienced a great deal of pain from the attacks of his enemies. I never remember his receiving the least pleasure from the commendation of his friends." Of flatterers he used to say, "Flattery makes me sick." Friendly criticism of a sane critic like Spedding or Hallam was much more to him than the praise or dispraise of the multitude. "I think it wisest," he writes to Henry van Dyke, "for a man to do his work in the world as quietly and as well as he can, without much heeding the praise or dispraise." Hallam urged him to find amusement in those "hair-splitting critics who are the bane

of good art." "To raise the many," he continued, "to his own real point of view, the artist must employ his energies and create energy in others." The general estimation in which the *Quarterly* was then held was echoed by an old Lincolnshire squire who assured my father that "the *Quarterly* was the next book to God's Bible." His friends felt that he had begun to base his poetry more on the broad and common interests of the time and of universal humanity, but their commendation did not much comfort him, and he thought of leaving England to live in Jersey, Italy, or the South of France. Hallam urged him to publish "The Lover's Tale,"<sup>1</sup> which had been written in 1828, but he thought it had too many crude thoughts and lines. Of this poem and "Timbuctoo" my father said, "Neither is imitative of any poet, and as far as I know nothing of mine after 'Timbuctoo' was imitative. As for being original, nothing can be said which has not been said before in some form or another." Then came a crushing grief, the death of Hallam at Vienna on September 15, 1833. "The Two Voices" or "Thoughts of a Suicide" was begun under the cloud of this overwhelming sorrow. But such a great friendship and such a loss helped to reveal him to himself. "Alfred," writes one of his friends, "although much broken in spirits, is yet able to divert his thoughts from gloomy brooding, and keep his hand in activity."

A still small voice spake unto me,  
 "Thou art so full of misery,  
 Were it not better not to be?"

Then to the still small voice I said,  
 "Let me not cast in endless shade  
 What is so wonderfully made."

"My poem of 'Ulysses,'" so his own words tell us, "gives my thought more simply than 'In Memoriam' of the need of going forward and braving the difficulties of life." His belief in God, his strong sense of duty, and his own power made him devote himself to work. The following is a list of the week's work which he drew up: Monday—History, German. Tuesday—Chemistry, German. Wednesday—Botany, German. Thursday—Electricity, German. Friday—Animal Physiology, German. Saturday—Mechanics. Sunday—Theology. Next week—Italian in the afternoon. Third week—Greek; and in the evenings Poetry, Racine, Molière, etc. "Perpetual idleness," he would say, "must be one of the punishments in Hell." Now and then, when he could save a little hoard, he went to London to visit his friends in their homes. One of his troubles at this time was that he was pestered by applications from the editors of magazines and annuals for poems. For example, Milnes wrote to him in 1835 asking

<sup>1</sup> This poem, founded on one of Boccaccio's tales (1827), was pirated in 1879, and so he published it with a sequel "The Golden Supper."

for a contribution to an annual edited by Lord Northampton. He sent the following answer :

December 1836.

DEAR RICHARD — As I live eight miles from my post-town and only correspond therewith about once a week, you must not wonder if this reaches you somewhat late. Your former brief I received, though some six days behind time, and stamped with the post-marks of every little market-town in the country, but I did not think it demanded an immediate answer, hence my silence.

That you had promised the Marquis I would write for him something exceeding the average length of "Annual compositions"; that you had promised him I would write at all: I took this for one of those elegant fictions with which you amuse your aunts of evenings, before you get into the small hours when dreams are true. Three summers back, provoked by the incivility of editors, I swore an oath that I would never again have to do with their vapid books, and I brake it in the sweet face of Heaven when I wrote for Lady What's-her-name Wortley. But then her sister wrote to Brookfield and said she (Lady W.) was beautiful, so I could not help it. But whether the Marquis be beautiful or not, I don't much mind; if he be, let him give God thanks and make no boast. To write for people with prefixes to their names is to milk he-goats; there is neither honour nor profit. Up to this moment I have not even seen *The Keepsake*: not that I care to see it, for the want of civility decided me not to break mine oath again for man nor woman, and how should such a modest man as I see my small name in collocation with the great ones of Southey, Wordsworth, R. M. M., etc., and not feel myself a barndoor fowl among peacocks? Good-bye. — Believe me always thine,

A. T.

Milnes was angry at the refusal, and my father answered him banteringly again :

Jan. 10, 1837.

Why what in the name of all the powers, my dear Richard, makes you run me down in this fashion? Now is my nose out of joint, now is my tail not only curled so tight as to lift me off my hind legs like Alfred Crowquill's poodle, but fairly between them. Many sticks are broken about me. I am the ass in Homer. I am blown. What has so jaundiced your good-natured eyes as to make them mistake harmless banter for *insolent irony*: harsh terms applicable only to — who, big as he is, sits to all posterity astride upon the nipple of literary dandyism, and "takes her milk for gall"? "Insolent irony" and "piscatory vanity," as if you had been writing to St. Anthony, who converted the soft souls of salmon; but may St. Anthony's fire consume all misapprehension, the spleen-born mother of fivefold more evil on our turnip-spheroid than is malice aforethought.

Had I been writing to a nervous, morbidly-irritable man, down in the world, stark-spoiled with the staggers of a mismanaged imagination and quite opprest by fortune and by the reviews, it is possible that I might have halted to find expressions more suitable to his case; but that you, who seem at least to take the world as it comes, to doff it, and let it pass, that you, a man every way prosperous and talented, should have taken pet at my unhappy badinage made me lay down my pipe and stare at the fire for ten minutes, till the stranger fluttered up the chimney! You wish that I had never written that passage. So do I, since it seems to have given

such offence. Perhaps you likewise found a stumbling-block in the expression "vapid books," as the angry inversion of four commas seems to intimate. But are not *Annals* vapid? Or could I *possibly* mean that what you or Trench or De Vere chose to write therein must be vapid? I thought you knew me better than even to insinuate these things. Had I spoken the same things to you laughingly in my chair, and with my own emphasis, you would have seen what they really meant, but coming to read them peradventure in a fit of indigestion, or with a slight matutinal headache after your Apostolic symposium, you subject them to such misinterpretation as, if I had not sworn to be true friend to you till my latest death-ruckle, would have gone far to make me indignant. But least said soonest mended; which comes with peculiar grace from me after all this verbiage. You judge me rightly in supposing that I would not be backward in doing a really charitable deed. I will either bring or send you something for your *Annual*. It is very problematical whether I shall be able to come and see you as I proposed, so do not return earlier from your tour on my account; and if I come, I should only be able to stop a few days, for, as I and all my people are going to leave this place very shortly never to return, I have much upon my hands. But whether I see you or no — Believe me always thine affectionately,

A. TENNYSON.

I have spoken with Charles. He has promised to contribute to your *Annual*.<sup>1</sup> Frederick will, I daresay, follow his example. See now whether I am not doing my best for you, and whether you had any occasion to threaten me with that black "Anacaona" and her cocoa-shod coves of niggers. I cannot have her strolling about the land in this way. It is neither good for her reputation nor mine. When is Lord Northampton's book to be published, and how long may I wait before I send anything by way of contribution?

In the end "O that 'twere possible" (on which "Maud" was afterwards founded) was sent to Lord Northampton. FitzGerald also notes that in this year Alfred wrote a poem on the Queen's accession, "the burden being 'Here's a health to the Queen of the Isles.'" One stanza I have heard my father repeat:

That the voice of a satisfied people may keep  
A sound in her ears like the sound of the deep,  
Like the sound of the deep when the winds are asleep;  
Here's a health to the Queen of the Isles.

#### LONDON AND EMILY SELLWOOD.

Some time about 1835 he had written the following, hitherto unpublished, fragment on "Semele,"<sup>2</sup> which seems to me too fine to be lost:

<sup>1</sup> *The Tribute*.

<sup>2</sup> Semele was beloved by Zeus. Hera (Juno), being jealous of her, visited her in the guise of her old nurse, and persuaded her to ask Zeus to appear to her in the same majesty as he appeared to Hera. Zeus warned Semele of the danger of her request. But she insisted on seeing him in the majesty of his godhead. He accordingly came to her as the god of thunder, and she was burnt up by his lightnings. Zeus, however,

## SEMELE.

I wish'd to see Him. Who may feel  
His light and love? He comes.  
The blast of Godhead bursts the doors,  
His mighty hands are twined  
About the triple forks, and when He speaks  
The crown of sunlight shudders round  
Ambrosial temples, and aloft,  
Fluttering thro' Elysian air,  
His green and azure mantles float in wavy  
Foldings, and melodious thunder  
Wheels in circles.  
But thou, my son, who shalt be born  
When I am ashes, to delight the world —  
Now with measured cymbal-clash  
Moving on to victory;  
Now on music-rolling orbs,  
A sliding throne, voluptuously  
Panther-drawn,  
To throbbings of the thunderous gong,  
And melody o' the merrily-blowing flute;  
Now with troops of clamorous revellers,  
Merrily, merrily,  
Rapidly, giddily,  
Rioting, triumphing  
Bacchanalians,  
Rushing in cadence,  
All in order,  
Plunging down the viney valleys —

In 1837 the Tennyson family left Somersby and established themselves at High Beech in Epping Forest. A little later a life-like portrait is drawn of my father by Carlyle, with whom he was particularly intimate, and of whom he said once to Gladstone, "Carlyle is a poet, to whom Nature has denied the faculty of verse":

Alfred is one of the few British and foreign figures (a not increasing number, I think) who are and remain beautiful to me, a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say "Brother!" However, I doubt he will not come (to see me); he often skips me, in these brief visits to town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos. . . . He had his breeding at Cambridge,

saved her child, Dionysus (Bacchus), with whom she was pregnant. After a while this son of hers took her from the lower world up to Olympus, where she became immortal, and was named Thyone.



as if for the Law or the Church; being master of a small annuity on his father's decease, he preferred clubbing with his mother and some sisters, to live unpromoted and write poems. In this way he lives still, now here, now there; the family always within reach of London, never in it; he himself making rare and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade's rooms. I think he must be under forty, not much under it. One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusky hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face — most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking, clothes cynically loose, free and easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to.

Among his friends were now numbered Rogers, Carlyle, Thackeray, Dickens, Savage Landor, Maclise, Leigh Hunt, Tom Campbell, Forster, W. E. Gladstone.

Of all London he liked Fleet Street most. He delighted in "the central roar." "This is the place where I should like to live," he would say, infinitely preferring it to the stuccoed houses of the West End. One day in 1842 FitzGerald records a visit to St. Paul's with him, when he observed: "Merely as an inclosed space in a huge city this is very fine," and when they got out under the heavens into the midst of the "central roar," "This is the Mind, that is a mood of it." While in London he often lodged in 60 Lincoln's Inn Fields, or at 2 Mitre Court in the Temple, dining out at the Cock Tavern. From High Beech the Tennysons migrated to Tunbridge Wells, thence to Boxley, Maidstone, near his favourite sister Cecilia, who married a year later the great Greek scholar, Edmund Lushington. In 1838 he took a tour to Torquay, where he wrote "Audley Court." In 1839 he visited Wales, Mablethorpe, Aberystwith, Bournemouth—in 1840 Warwick, and Coventry, where "Lady Godiva" was written. In 1840 he also went to Mablethorpe and Yorkshire. Nature in her different aspects in these and other different places gave him inspiration, as shown again and again in the poems themselves. The years spent in strenuous labour and self-cultivation, and his quasi-engagement to Emily Sellwood, daughter of Henry Sellwood of Berkshire, and niece of Sir John Franklin, had braced him for the struggle of life. He would arrange his material which he had "in profusion, and give as perfect a volume as he could to the world." "I felt certain of one point," he said; "if I meant to make any mark at all it must be by shortness, for the men before me had been so diffuse, and most of the big things except King Arthur had been done." "One night," writes Aubrey de Vere, "after he had been reading aloud several of his poems, all of them short, he passed one of them to me and said, 'What is the matter with that poem?' I read it and answered, 'I see nothing to complain of.' He laid his fingers