

and smiles when I acknowledged that I had never heard of the famous Horncastle horse fair, the largest in Lincolnshire, and at one time the largest in Britain. I soon found, to my cost, that the fair had drawn many dealers from long distances, for the accommodation of every hotel in the town was taxed to the utmost limit, and I was obliged to ask the genial proprietor of "The Bull" to secure me lodgings in a private house. Horncastle is only two leagues distant from Tennyson's early home, and it was the market-town to which some members of the Tennyson family frequently came to replenish the domestic larder. Many a time, in the early years of the century, did young Tennyson walk from his home to Horncastle, and it would be impossible even for himself to tell how largely these walks, solitary or not, have affected the thought and tinged the complexion of his poetic descriptions of natural scenery.

In another very real way Horncastle has touched the life of Tennyson. After he had become the most noted poet in Britain,—in the very year, in fact, in which he was appointed as Poet Laureate—at the age of forty-one, he married Emily Sellwood, the daughter of a Horncastle lawyer, and the niece of Sir John Franklin (born at the neighboring village of Spilsby). Emily Sellwood, now Lady Tennyson, has had her memory embalmed in more than one of her husband's poems. She is the "Edith" of "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." To her he wrote from Edinburgh the poem, "The Daisy," beginning

"O Love, what hours were thine and mine,
In laads of palm and southern pine."

She is also honored in that sweet dedication:

"Dear, near, and true,—no truer Time him-
self
Can prove you, tho' he make you evermore
Dearer and nearer."

SOMERSBY.

Tuesday, August 12th, was to me a day of exquisite enjoyment. I set out

alone in the morning from Horncastle to make my way on foot to Somersby, Tennyson's birthplace, six miles north-east. In the early part of my walk I met many farmers bringing in their fine looking horses to be sold to foreign buyers and carried to all parts of England and the continent. I caught many a phrase from the passers-by that reminded me of the quaint dialect of "The Northern Farmer." These farmers were all, I take it, animated by the spirit of the farmer of the poem:

"Doesn't thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they
canters awaay?"

Proputtly, proputtly, proputtly—that's what
I 'ears 'em saay."

Of all the passengers on the Horncastle road that day I alone was intent, not on the value of horses, but on the charms of poetry and of poetic associations.

The road to Somersby is extremely rural;—rural in a thoroughly English sense. It winds and turns and twists between the bordering hawthorn hedges—some trim and neat, some wild and shaggy. At every bend of the road the landscape varies. Here a cosy cottage; there a picturesque windmill: here a wide stretch of pasture covered with thick fleeced sheep; there a distant hill wrapt in blue-grey mist: here a group of laborers cutting the ripe corn; there a quiet woodland slope where grow the poet's trees in rich variety, the ash, the elm, the lime, the oak.

What a silent land I found as I approached the end of my journey! In the last three miles I saw only two persons. The only creatures in sight were hundreds on hundreds of sheep and cattle.

Now Somersby is near at hand. The road turns down a steep incline and passes through a shady arbor. The branches of the trees that skirt the narrow way meet overhead and cast their tremulous shadows at your feet. All is quiet but the faint rustling of the leaves, or the distant clamor of the daws and rooks. You feel that you have reached an actual lotus-land,—