

FOR THE REVIEW.]

English Literature in the Lower Grades.**TENNYSON'S MAY QUEEN.**

From very early times it was the custom in England to welcome the coming of the month of May, with its pleasant weather, its blossoms, and all its sweet sounds, sights and smells, by certain ceremonies. One old writer tells us that as soon as May came, "Every parish, town and village, assembled themselves together, both men, women and children, old and young * * * and they go, some to the woods and groves, some to the hills and mountains, some to one place, some to another, where they spend all the night in pastimes; in the morning they return bringing with them buche, boughs and branches of trees to deck their assemblies withal." Many of our older poets, Chaucer and Shakespeare and others, speak of these pretty customs, and here we have our last great poet writing about how Mayday was sometimes kept in the villages of England. A tall pole wreathed with flowers and ribbons, would be set up in an open green space, and the young people would dance and play games around it. The prettiest girl, or the most popular one, was chosen as Queen of the May and crowned with flowers.

Notice what clear pictures of the springtime come before the sick girl, and how these pictures differ from the ones that we would call up in thinking of our springs. What trees and flowers do you think of when you picture the month of May?

Explain the line, "And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave."

What birds come to us in the Spring? Can you tell where you might see them, and what sounds they will make, as the poem does about the "building rook" and the "tufted plover."

Compare the pictures of early morning and evening in verses 6 and 7.

With what words does the phrase, "beneath the waning light" go?

What does "I thought to pass away" mean? Do you remember any other expressions that are used instead of "pass away"? Explain "though my lamp was lighted late."

Can you tell why the line "Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine" seems disconnected? Where does the last line of the poem come from?

The whole of the poem, as Tennyson wrote it, is not given here: if you will read it all in a copy of his works, you will find more pictures of the country life that the poet knew and loved; the truth and beauty of his writing about trees, flowers, birds, and all the

beauty of nature, are among his chief glories as a poet.

"We're made so that we love
First, when we see them painted,
Things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times
Nor cared to see,"

and it is true also, that we may see a thing many times and not notice it, or care about it, till some poet who sees things more clearly, more rightly than other people, comes and shows us how to look at it.

In a pretty story, called "Cranford" which you must read when you are older, there is an anecdote about Tennyson that illustrates this. The young lady who is telling the story has gone out for a walk with a queer old gentleman whom she is visiting:

He walked before me with a stooping gait, his hands clasped behind him, and as some tree, or cloud, or glimpse at distant upland pastures struck him, he quoted poetry to himself; saying it out loud, in a grand sonorous voice, with just the emphasis that true feeling and appreciation give.

We came upon an old cedar tree which stood at one end of the house;

"More black than ash-buds in the front of March,
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade."

—Tennyson.

Capital term, "layers." Wonderful man!

I put in an assenting "Wonderful," though I knew nothing about it.

He turned sharp round. "Ay! you may say 'Wonderful!' Now, what color are ash-buds in March?"

Is the man going mad? thought I. "What color are they, I say," repeated he vehemently.

"I am sure I don't know, sir;" said I with the meekness of ignorance.

"I knew you didn't. No more did I, an old fool that I am, till this young man comes and tells me. Black as ash-buds in March. And I've lived all my life in the country. Black! they are jet-black, madam."

ELEANOR ROBINSON.

Children always like a teacher who knows how to make them mind. They enjoy being under discipline which is firm, just, and constant, which respects neither age, clothes, nor names, but holds the entire school under the same just and reasonable law.—*Pacific School Advocate*.

The following five questions should be frequently asked by teachers in self-examination:—

"When a child, how did I behave at school?"

"Did I then understand at once everything the teacher said?"

"Did I love all my teachers?"

"If not, why not?"

"Did any of my teachers ever make a mistake?"—*Common School Educator*.