

ALFRED AUSTIN.

The position of laureate is one which should command the respect due to all things ancient. It is enriched with many memories of prominent authors and many associations with the development of our literature. All who have held it have contributed something to its importance and dignity, but none have done so much to make it an office of responsibility and to endear it to the English people as he who, a few years ago, passed to the wail of his own sad music across the bar.

He is gone, but his spell still holds us. The rhythm of his grave rich verse keeps ringing in our ears, so that we listen to the humbler strains of his successor with indifference or contempt. We have fallen into the habit of identifying the laureate and the poet, and so demand of Austin the work of Tennyson. In our disappointment we exclaim against the folly of appointing such a one to the office. We forget that though we murmur against Austin, we would have felt a like discontent had the choice resulted differently. Tennyson has been succeeded, not replaced. There is no implied comparison between the two poets and no reason why those who now admire the dead laureate should not also admit the living to a place in their esteem.

Though Austin is usually thought of as a poet, he began his literary career as a prose writer, and he has returned to his earlier style of composition in "The Garden that I Love," and "In Veronica's Garden." They are descriptions of his country life, and reveal so much of the author's personality that they form an excellent introduction to the reading of his poetry. His home is in fruitful Kent. He pictures it as an old-time manor-house, large, roomy and many-gabled, with deep-set windows and wide yawning fire-places. Outside, the walls are covered to the roof with bright creepers and clinging ivy. Beside the house is an English garden, old-fashioned and undisciplined, into which nothing trim and kempt may