

the world, so behindhand in its echoes (which must have come there softened through all manner of green and tranquil things, and as it were hushed into pastoral silence), that though the early part of the century was stirring with the clang of legions, few of its rumours seem to have reached the children. They never heard at the time of the battle of Waterloo. They grew up together playing their own games, living their own life; and where is such life to be found as that of a happy, eager family of boys and girls before Doubt, the steps of Time, the shocks of Chance, the blows of Death, have come to shake their creed?

Alfred's first verses, so I once heard him say, were written upon a slate which his brother Charles put into his hand one Sunday at Louth, when all the elders of the party were going into church, and the child was left alone. Charles gave him a subject—the flowers in the garden—and when he came back from church little Alfred brought the slate to his brother all covered with written lines of blank verse. They were made on the models of Thomson's "Seasons," the only poetry he had ever read. One can picture it all to one's self, the flowers in the garden, the verses, the little poet with waiting eyes, and the young brother scanning the lines. "Yes, you can write," said Charles, and he gave Alfred back the slate.

I have also heard another story of his grandfather, later on, asking him to write an elegy on his grandmother, who had recently died, and when it was written, putting ten shillings into his hands and saying, "There, that is the first money you have ever earned by your poetry, and, take my word for it, it will be the last."

Alfred Tennyson, as he grew up toward manhood, found other and stronger inspirations than Thomson's gentle "Seasons." Byron's spell had fallen on his generation, and for a boy of genius it must have been absolute and overmastering. Tennyson was soon to find his own voice, but meanwhile he began to write like Byron. He produced poems and verses in profusion and endless abundance: trying his wings, as people say, before starting on his own strong flight. One day the news came to the village—the dire news which spread across the land, filling men's hearts with consternation—that Byron was dead. Alfred was then a boy about fifteen.

"Byron was dead! I thought the whole world was at an end," he once said, speaking of these by-gone days. "I thought everything was over and finished for every one—that nothing else mattered. I remember I walked out alone, and carved 'Byron is dead' into the sand-stone."

One thing which cannot fail to strike us when we are looking over the records of these earlier days is the remarkable influence which Alfred Tennyson seems to have had from the very first upon his contemporaries, even before his genius had been recognized by the rest of the world. Not only those of his own generation, but his elders and masters seem to have felt something of this. I remember long ago hearing one of Tennyson's oldest friends, who has the best right of any to recall the fact, say that "Whewell, who was a man himself, and who knew a man when he saw him," used to pass over in Alfred Tennyson certain informalities and forgetfulness of combinations as to gowns, and places, and times, which in another he would never have overlooked.

Once in their early youth we hear of the two friends, Tennyson and Hallam, travelling in the Pyrenees. This was at the time of the war of early Spanish independence, when many generous young men went over with funds and good energies to help the cause of liberty. These two were taking money, and letters written in invisible ink, to certain conspirators who were then revolting against the intolerable tyranny of Ferdinand, and who were chiefly hiding in the Pyrenees. The young men met, among others, a Senor Ojeda, who confided to Alfred his intentions, which were to *couper la gorge à tous les curés*. Senor Ojeda could not talk English or fully explain all his aspirations. "Mais vous connaissez mon cœur," said he, effusively; and a pretty black one it is, thought the poet. I have heard Alfred described in those days as "straight and with a broad breast," and when he had crossed over from the Continent and was coming back, walking through Wales, he went one day into a little way-side inn, where an old man sat by the fire, who looked up, and asked many questions. "Are you from the army? Not from the army? Then where do you come from?" said the old man. "I am just come from the Pyrenees," said Alfred. "Ah, I knew there was a something," said the wise old man.

John Kemble was among those who had gone over to Spain, and one day a rumour came to distant Somersby that he was to be tried for his life by the Spanish authorities. No one else knew much about him except Alfred Tennyson, who started before dawn to drive across the country in search of some person of authority who knew the consul at Cadiz, and who could send letters of protection to the poor prisoner.

It was a false alarm. John Kemble came home to make a name for himself in other fields. Meanwhile Alfred Tennyson's own reputation was growing, and when the first two volumes of his collected poems were published in 1842, followed by "The Princess" in 1847, his fame spread throughout the land.

Some of the reviews were violent and antagonistic at first. One in particular had tasted blood, and the "Hang, draw, and Quarterly," as it has been called, of those days, having lately cut up "Endymion," now proceeded to demolish Tennyson.

But this was a passing phase. It is curious to note the sudden change in the tone of the criticisms—the absolute surrender of these knights of the pen to the irresistible and brilliant advance of the unknown and visored warrior. The visor is raised now, the face is familiar to us all, but the arms, though tested in a hundred fights, are shining and unconquered still.

The house at Farringford itself seemed like a charmed palace, with green walls without, and speaking walls within. There hung Dante with his solemn nose and wreath; Italy gleamed over the doorways; friends' faces lined the way; books filled the shelves, and a glow of crimson was everywhere; the great oriel drawing-room window was full of green and golden leaves, of the sound of birds and of the distant sea.

The very names of the people who have stood upon the lawn at Farringford would be an interesting study for some future biographer: Longfellow, Maurice, Kingsley, the Duke of Argyll, Locker, Dean Stanley, the Prince Consort. Good Garibaldi once planted a tree there, off which some too ardent republican broke a branch before twenty-four hours had passed. Here came Clough in the last year of his life. Here Mrs. Cameron fixed her lens, marking the well-known faces as they passed: Darwin and Henry Taylor, Watts and Aubrey de Vere, Lecky and Jowett, and a score of others.

I have heard of Mr. Tennyson wandering for days together in the glades round about Lyndhurst. Some people once told me of meeting a mysterious figure in a cloak coming out of a deep glade, passing straight on, looking neither to the right nor the left. "It was either a ghost or it was Mr. Tennyson," said they.

In Sir John Simeon's lifetime there was a constant intercourse between Farringford and Swainston. Sir John was one of Tennyson's most constant companions—a knight of courtesy he calls him in the sad lines written in the garden at Swainston.

"Maud" grew out of a remark of Sir John Simeon's, to whom Mr. Tennyson had read the lines,

"O that 'twere possible  
After long grief and pain,"

which lines were, so to speak, the heart of "Maud." Sir John said that it seemed to him as if something were wanting to explain the story of this poem, and so by degrees it all grew. One little story was told me on the authority of Mr. Henry Sidgwick, who was perhaps present on that occasion. Mr. Tennyson was reading the poem to a silent company assembled in the twilight, and when he got to the birds in the high hall garden calling Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud, he stopped short, and asked an authoress who happened to be present what birds these were. The authoress, much alarmed, and feeling that she must speak, and that the eyes of the whole company were upon her, faltered out, "Nightingales, sir." "Pooh," said Tennyson, "what a cockney you are! Nightingales don't say Maud. Rooks do, or something like it. Caw, caw, caw, caw, caw." Then he went on reading.

Reading, is it? One can hardly describe it. It is a sort of mystical incantation, a chant in which every note rises and falls and reverberates again. As we sit around the twilight room at Farringford, with its great oriel-window looking to the garden, across fields of hyacinth and self-sowed daffodils toward the sea, where the waves wash

against the rock, we seem carried by a tide not unlike the ocean's sound; it fills the room, it ebbs and flows away; and when we leave, it is with a strange music in our ears, feeling that we have for the first time, perhaps, heard what we may have read a hundred times before.

Mr. Tennyson works alone in the early hours of the morning, and comes down long after his own frugal meal is over to find his guests assembling round the social breakfast table. He generally goes out for a walk before luncheon, with a son and a friend, perhaps, and followed by a couple of dogs. All Londoners know the look of the stalwart figure and the fine face and broad-brimmed felt hat as he advances.

There is one little ceremony peculiar to the Tennyson family, and reminding one of some college custom, which is, that when dinner is over the guests are brought away into a second room, where stands a white table, upon which fruit and wine are set, and a fire burns bright, and a pleasant hour passes, while the master of the house sits in his carved chair and discourses upon any topic suggested by his guests, or brings forth reminiscences of early Lincolnshire days, or from the facts he remembers out of the lives of past men who have been his friends. There was Rogers, among the rest, for whom he had a great affection, with whom he constantly lived during that lonely time in London. "I have dined alone with him," I heard Mr. Tennyson say, "and we have talked about death till the tears rolled down his face."

Tennyson met Tom Moore at Rogers's, and there, too, he first met Mr. Gladstone. John Forster, Leigh Hunt, and Landor were also friends of that time. One of Tennyson's often companions in those days was Mr. Hallam, whose opinion he once asked of Carlyle's "French Revolution." Mr. Hallam replied, in his quick, rapid way, "Upon my word, I once opened the book, and read four or five pages. The style is so abominable I could not get on with it." Whereas Carlyle's own criticism upon the "History of the Middle Ages" was, "Eh! the poor miserable skeleton of a book!"

It is a gain to the world when people are content to be themselves, not chipped to the smooth pattern of the times, but simple, original, and unaffected in ways and words. Here is a poet leading a poet's life; where he goes there goes the spirit of his home, whether in London among the crowds, or at Aldworth on the lonely height, or at Farringford in that beautiful bay. The last time I went to see him he was smoking in a top room in Eaton Square. It may interest an American public to be told that it was Durham tobacco from North Carolina, which Mr. Lowell had given him. I could not but feel how little even circumstance itself can contribute to that mysterious essence of individuality which we all recognize and love. In this commonplace London room, with all the stucco of Belgravia round about, I found the old dream realized, the old charm of youthful impression. There sat my friend as I had first seen him years ago among the clouds.

FROM December's *St. Nicholas* we quote portions of Mr. Frank R. Stockton's racy story: "Prince Hassak's March."

In the spring of a certain year, long since passed away, Prince Hassak, of Itoby, determined to visit his uncle, the King of Yan.

"Whenever my uncle visited us," said the Prince, "or when my late father went to see him, the journey was always made by sea; and, in order to do this, it was necessary to go in a very roundabout way between Itoby and Yan. Now, I shall do nothing of this kind. It is beneath the dignity of a prince to go out of his way on account of capes, peninsulas, and promontories. I shall march from my palace to that of my uncle in a straight line. I shall go across the country, and no obstacle shall cause me to deviate from my course. Mountains and hills shall be tunneled, rivers shall be bridged, houses shall be levelled; a road shall be cut through forests; and, when I have finished my march, the course over which I have passed shall be a mathematically straight line. Thus will I show to the world that, when a prince desires to travel, it is not necessary for him to go out of his way on account of obstacles."

Prince Hassak selected from the schools of his city five boys and five girls, and took them with him. He wished to show them how, when a thing was to be done, the best way was to go straight ahead and do it, turning aside for nothing.

"When they grow up they will teach these things to their children," said he; "and thus I will instil good principles unto my people."

The first day Prince Hassak marched over a level country, with no further trouble than that occasioned by the tearing down of fences and walls, and the destruction of a few cottages and barns. After encamping for the night, they set out the next morning, but had not marched many miles before they came to a rocky hill, on the top of which was a handsome house, inhabited by a Jolly-cum-pop.

"Your Highness," said the course-marker, "in order to go in a direct line we must make a tunnel through this hill, immediately under the house. This may cause the building to fall in, but the rubbish can be easily removed."

"Let the men go to work," said the Prince. "I will dismount from my horse, and watch the proceedings."

When the Jolly-cum-pop saw the party halt before his house, he hurried out to pay his respects to the Prince. When he was informed of what was to be done, the Jolly-cum-pop could not refrain from laughing aloud.

"I never heard," he said, "of such a capital idea. It is so odd and original. It will be very funny, I am sure, to see a tunnel cut right under my house."

The miners and rock-splitters now began to work at the base of the hill, and then the Jolly-cum-pop made a proposition to the Prince.

"It will take your men some time," he said, "to cut this tunnel, and it is a pity your Highness should not be amused in the meantime. It is a fine day: suppose we go into the forest and hunt."

This suited the Prince very well, for he did not care about sitting under a tree and watching his workmen, and the Jolly-cum-pop having sent for his horse and some bows and arrows, the whole party with the exception of the labourers, rode toward the forest, a short distance away.

"What shall we find to hunt?" asked the Prince of the Jolly-cum-pop.

"I really do not know," exclaimed the latter, "but we'll hunt whatever we happen to see—deer, small birds, rabbits, griffins, rhinoceroses, anything that comes along. I feel as gay as a skipping grasshopper. My spirits rise like a soaring bird. What a joyful thing it is to have such a splendid hunt on such a glorious day!"

The gay and happy spirits of the Jolly-cum-pop affected the whole party, and they rode merrily through the forest; but they found no game; and, after an hour or two, they emerged into the open country again. At a distance, on a slight elevation, stood a large and massive building.

"I am hungry and thirsty," said the Prince, "and perhaps we can get some refreshments at yonder house. So far, this has not been a very fine hunt."

"No," cried the Jolly-cum-pop, "not yet. But what a joyful thing to see a hospitable mansion just at the moment when we begin to feel a little tired and hungry!"

The building they were approaching belonged to a Potentate, who lived at a great distance. In some of his travels he had seen this massive house, and thought it would make a good prison. He accordingly bought it, fitted it up as a gaol, and appointed a jailer and three myrmidons to take charge of it. This had occurred years before, but no prisoners had ever been sent to this gaol. A few days preceding the Jolly-cum-pop's hunt, the Potentate had journeyed this way, and had stopped at his gaol. After enquiring into its condition, he had said to the jailer:

"It is now fourteen years since I appointed you to this place, and in all that time there have been no prisoners, and you and your men have been drawing your wages without doing anything. I shall return this way in a few days, and if I still find you idle I shall discharge you all and close the gaol."

This filled the jailer with great dismay, for he did not wish to lose his good situation. When he saw the Prince and his party approaching, the thought struck him that perhaps he might make prisoners of them, and so not be found idle when the Potentate returned. He came out to meet the hunters, and when they asked if they could here find refreshments, he gave them a most cordial welcome. His men took their horses,