

by evolution (evolution again) have lost or abandoned the use of speech and have become a dumb race of mind-readers. A ship-wrecked voyager is cast away among them. With commendable foresight they have preserved a dynasty of interpreters—after a sort—who have retained a rudimentary power of expressing themselves in crippled words. Through the existing official the castaway learns all about them. He is hospitably received and kindly treated. They all read him off at sight and take to him. He says: "In their perfect frankness the adorable women told me that what I felt was only friendship, which was a very good thing but wholly different from love, as I should well know if I were beloved. When I found that I was affected in the same way by every gracious woman I met I had to make up my mind to adapt myself to a world in which friendship being a passion, love must needs be nothing less than a rapture." In due course the rapture comes. "With people who become acquainted at a glance and old friends in an hour, wooing is naturally not a long process. Indeed, between lovers there is no wooing but merely recognition. The day after we met she became mine." "A genial temperament, a wide-grasping, god-like intellect, a poet-soul are incomparably more fascinating to them than the most dazzling combination conceivable of mere bodily graces."

Having brought our enamoured couple to a bliss far surpassing any enjoyed by mere speakers of words, we may pick up a few dropped threads in the traits of character of this most interesting people. The speech of those who talk is in their ears "a gibberish like the growling of animals." Politeness can never take the form of insincerity "as among talking nations," for the "real and inmost thoughts are read." "No one need fear being misjudged. Justice is a necessary consequence of mind-reading." "Mind-reading so heightens sympathy that the lowest order of friendship becomes a mutual delight such as only rare friends enjoy among other races." "An invincible distaste is induced for the laborious impotence of language." "Think no longer that the sense of a gulf fixed between soul and soul, which mocks love, is any necessity of human nature; for our fellowmen whom I describe it has no existence."

"The lying-hid within the soul of a contained chamber where we may go to grovel out of sight of our fellows, a secure refuge of lies, has always been the despair of the saint and the exultation of the knave. It is the foul cellar which taints the whole house above. Imagine the delightful exhilaration of moral health and cleanness, the breezy oxygenated mental condition from the consciousness of absolutely nothing concealed."

"It may be supposed that for all men there are certain women expressly suited by mental and moral as by physical constitution. But how painful the thought that they may not recognize each other even if they meet, seeing that speech is so inadequate and so misleading a medium of self-revelation! No such fear for mind-readers." (Apology is made for inevitable condensation by stress of limited space here, with trust, however, that, though the letter is less, none of the exquisite spirit has evaporated.) To proceed, then, "I discovered that my love had no idea of the colour of my eyes or hair or complexion. Of course, as soon as I asked her the question, she read the answer in my mind. On the other hand, if in the blackest midnight I should come to her, she would not need to ask who the comer was. It is by the mind, not the eye, that these people know one another. It is really only in their relation to soulless and inanimate things that they need eyes at all." "Art is with them confined to the inanimate, the human form having for the reason mentioned, ceased to inspire the artist." "A woman of mind and heart has no more need of beauty to win love, than a beauty elsewhere of mind or heart. Still, they are a singularly handsome race, from the absolute compatibility of temperaments in all the marriages, and also from the state of ideal, mental and moral health and placidity." "Of course my love knew that her rare beauty had no little part in attracting my devotion, but, reading my limitations, she tolerated and forgave the element of sensuousness in my passion." "As I considered what mutual love must be where both parties are mind-readers, I realized the high communion which my sweet companion had sacrificed for me. It was because I might not hope to attain this enfranchisement from the false ego of the apparent self, without which life seemed to her race scarcely worth living, that my love was moved to depths of pity for me." "Among a people, who are compelled by the very constitution of their minds to put themselves in the places of others, the sympathy, which is the inevitable consequence of perfect comprehension, renders envy, hatred, and uncharitableness impossible." Alas! for our inferior selves, we cannot choose but feel envy of so admirable a people.

Ah! lamentable catastrophe which cut short this banquet of felicity and virtue beyond all ordinary human power of taste. The poor, ill-starred fellow had scarcely passed the threshold of an undreamed-of happiness when he was carried out to sea in an open boat, and for five days drove before the storm. His one companion—not his love—perished under the strain. "He died very quietly—indeed with great appearance of relief. The life of the mind-readers, while yet they are in the body, is so largely spiritual that the idea of an existence wholly so, which seems vague and chill to us, suggests to them a state only slightly more refined than they already know on earth." The luckless fellow was picked up in an unconscious state by an American ship, homeward bound, where, when he came to his senses, he found himself "surrounded by a people whose only means of communication is to keep up a constant clatter of hissing, guttural, ex-

plosive noises, eked out by all manner of facial contortion and bodily gestures."

"I often find myself staring open-mouthed at those who address me, too much struck by their grotesque appearance to bethink myself of replying." "I find that I shall not live out the voyage, and I do not care to. I can judge how I should fare amid the stunning Babel of a nation of talkers. What satisfaction or consolation, what but bitter mockery could I ever more find in such human sympathy and companionship as suffice others and once sufficed me—I who have seen and known what I have seen and known! Ah, yes, doubtless it is far better I should die."

And, in effect, the poor unfortunate only survived long enough to commit his unparalleled narrative to the care of the captain. That whole narrative, from which we could only afford all-insufficient extracts, we most cordially commend to all readers. It contains no mention of it, but it may well be that his mind had become unhinged from the contemplation of such disastrous matrimonial unions as are pictured in the earlier portion of our article, and the shock was greater than he had strength left to bear. *Requiescat in pace.*

D. FOWLER.

MY BABY SLEEPS.

The wind is loud in the west to-night,
But Baby sleeps;
The wind is blowing with all its might,
But Baby sleeps.
My Baby sleeps, and he does not hear.
The noise of the storm in the pine trees near.

The snow is drifting high to-night,
But Baby sleeps;
The bitter world is cold and white,
But Baby sleeps.
My Baby sleeps, so fast, so fast,
That he does not heed the wintry blast.

The cold snows drift, and the wild winds rave,
But Baby sleeps;
And a white cross stands by his little grave,
While Baby sleeps;
And the storm is loud in the rocking pine,
But its moan is not so deep as mine.

M.

TENNYSON'S UNDERTONES.

UNDER the title, "Is Tennyson a Spiritualist?" there appeared recently in the *Pall Mall Gazette* an account of a letter which has been published in Chicago. The original—in the Laureate's own handwriting—is said to be dated from Farringford, May 7th, 1874, and contains this extraordinary account of his experiences:—

"A kind of waking trance (this for lack of a better name) I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently till all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life. . . . I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words?"

It has been pointed out by Professor Thomas Davidson, who had seen the letter, that the same conviction is described in "In Memoriam" (xcv). Students of Tennyson, however, will recall many other passages which are, as it were, explicit vouchers for the authenticity of this letter. The subject is one of large interest, and the writer of these lines is not aware that it has before been followed up at any length. It may be set down clearly at once that Tennyson is no spiritualist in the ordinarily accepted sense of that term. At the same time, the sense of an underlying life, so to speak, is strong in him; and he shares with others that attentiveness to its sounds and movements which makes it more or less a reality to him. There is no denying the fact—if personal testimony is of any value at all as proof—that the profoundest issues have come to some men out of what, to the large majority of their fellows, can only appear as the voids of being. While it is no doubt true that very few indeed would be disposed to assert with Thoreau that "the most glorious fact of our experience is not anything we have done, or may hope to do, but a transient thought, or vision, or dream that we have had," most men who have, not acquired, but found themselves in possession of, a certain nimbleness of spirit and open outlook, would not care to deny the revivifying power that dwells in those brilliant visitants which outline themselves for a moment on the background of our every-day life, and—are gone! Remembering, however, that an illustration is often a final court of appeal, crystal in its authoritative import, when explanation merely seems to throw a giant shadow in which the subject of search is enveloped and lost, as much as may be the poet should be allowed to speak for himself.

An exact parallel passage to that which appears in the letter referred to may be found in an early poem of Lord Tennyson's:—

On me when boy there came what then I called,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy phrase, "The Passion of the Past."

The first grey streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower,
Had murmurs, "Lost and gone, and lost and gone!"
A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost the boy?
I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more . . . for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the self was loosed
And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into heaven. I touched my limbs, the limbs
Were strange, not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and through loss of self,
The gain of such large life as matched with ours
Were sun to spark—unshadowable in words
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

A portion of these lines vividly recalls one of the songs in "The Princess," and the latter part, bringing to mind a passage in Lord Beaconsfield's *Contarini Fleming* is at the same time akin to those "weird seizures" to which it will be remembered, the Prince in "The Princess" was subject:—

While I listened came
On a sudden the weird seizure and the doubt:
I seemed to move among a world of ghosts;
The Princess with her monstrous woman-guard,
The jest and earnest working side by side,
The cataract and tumult and the kings
Were shadows; and the long fantastic night
With all its doings had and had not been.

The fascination of such subjects for the Laureate's mind reveals itself again in "The Golden Supper." Sometimes there is a vagueness of feeling which—unpronounced though it be—instantly discredits the things that are, as though with a gentle uplifting of the finger. Again there are hauntings of the memory of an earlier life, with which many, before and after the "Phædo" made its appearance, have been tolerably familiar. These hauntings are seldom definite in any sense whatever. They seem to come from quarters far withdrawn, like those of "the happy dead" described in "In Memoriam":—

The days have vanished, tone and tint,
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
Gives out at times (he knows not whence)
A little flash, a mystic hint.

In an early sonnet, we have a more or less common, yet curious, impression referred to:—

As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood,
And ebb into a former life, or seem
To lapse far back into some confused dream
To states of mystical similitude;
If one but speaks or hints or stirs his chair,
Even the wonder waxeth more and more,
So that we say, "All this hath been before,
All this hath been, I know not when or where."

Coleridge also, it may be mentioned, has thought his feeling worth recording in sonnet form. Here are some very delicately touched lines from "The Two Voices":—

Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.

Beside these instances may be placed that transcendently beautiful passage in "The Holy Grail," in which the King admits no right to see "visions," or submit to "seizures," in the face of duty undone. Surely it would be impossible to find a lovelier conditioning of the higher experience than we have here—the gates of the Unseen, as it were, turning only on the hinges of absolute performance which takes place under the common sunlight of our working day. The King says that Duty—a home-abiding worker for the most part—

being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come as they will; and many a time they come
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air,
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision of himself.
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again.

Very rich in suggestiveness—if feeble in outline—are the couple of lines found in "In Memoriam":—

The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the cords and go.

What Edgar Allan Poe called the Great Secret exercises peculiar mastery over the poet. The subject is introduced in "The Day-Dream":—

For all his life the charm did talk
About his path, and hover near
With words of promise in his walk,
And whispered voices at his ear.

And again, in "The Lover's Tale":—

When first we came from out the pines at noon,
With hands for eaves, uplooking and almost
Waiting to see some blessed shape in heaven.

Sometimes trifles overturn great things, coming as they do charged with strange import, which demands, and never fails, in certain mental conditions, to receive instant recognition. In times of grave moment, even the intensest of our lives, the imprint left upon the mind is frequently not the thrilling event itself, which has gathered the interest of our life together, but some trifle in remote relation to the whole affair. In "Maud," for instance, we have:—

Strange that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye,—
That it should, by being so overwrought
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense,
For a still, or a flower, little things
Which else would have been passed by!