

We purpose—unless negated by the editor—to give readers of THE ILLUSTRATED some rhymed sketches of rural character, such as we have seen, and the local poets have hit off cleverly. As the first of these, we give a rough-drawn sketch of one who, for aught we know, may have been an emigre from Canadian soil. It was written by David Barker, whose verses hit off to the life the manners of the country folk in Maine:

TOM PLUMADORE.

What, never saw Tom Plumadore—
Him of the Frenchman nation
Who runs the tank at Clinton Gore,
At the old Burnham Station?

You know Judge Rice, who sleeps on down—
Our learned legal brother?
Him of the highest type of man;
Tom Plumadore—the other.

Rice is the famed Maine Central boss—
Runs that machine of "hisen";
Tom runs the tank—a kind of cross
Twixt hell and Libby Prison.

For years within that tank, 'tis said,
That Bull-Run-scarred old fellow,
Has slept with pea-straw for his bed
And beech-log for his pillow.

I tried Tom's bed, and thought, perhaps
My poor scarred Bull Run brother,
May find some sweeter pea-straw naps
Than down may yield the other.

Now the leaf
Incessant rustles from the mournful grove.
—Thomson.

The flame of the forest burns low; a few embers, and all the rest—ashes. The "carmine glare" and golden haze that seemed neighbours to the sunset, linger no longer. Little birds in their green tents sing no more to us now; they have said to one another, "Let us go," and the poet is alone with his singing. Our regret is audible in his verse:

"In the southward sky the late swallows fly;
The low, red willows in the river quiver;
From the beeches high russet leaves sail by;
The tawny billows in the chill wind shiver;
The beech-burs burst and the nuts down-patter;
The red squirrels chatter o'er the wealth disperst.

"In the keen late air is an impulse rare,
A thing like fire, a desire past naming;
But the crisp mists rise, and my heart falls a-sighing,
Sighing, sighing that the sweet time dies!"

Sweet, though sad, to the soul of the singer were those calm days, "ere the last red leaf was whirled away by the bitter blasts of November." Lowell loved them for the sake of those "visionary tints the year puts on," painting "the swamp-oak with his royal purple," and "the chestnuts lavish of their long-hid gold"; and showing how

"The tangled blackberry, crossed and recrossed, weaves
A prickly network of ensanguined leaves."

Longfellow loved them, for then he saw the prodigality of the golden harvest, "the 'revelations of light,' when 'the leaves fall, russet-golden and blood-red'; hearing 'from far-off farms the sound of flails, beating the triumphal march of Ceres through the land.'" So Thomas Buchanan Read loved them, as we feel when we read his "Closing Scene"; so loved them the numerous choir of loving musical ones, whose sweet strains are slipping into memory.

*Charles G. D. Roberts.

PASTOR FELIX.

Sunday Observance in England.

It may be pointed out that at the present day there is no need for any movement on the part of the Church towards the relaxation of our observance of the day; for the fashionable world, at least, is already going downhill fast enough, and the scenes in the London parks, the opening of private picture galleries to ticket-holders who certainly are not solely drawn from the working classes, and the growing habit of giving Sunday evening dinner parties, at homes, and concerts—all show that "society," so called, needs no stimulus to induce it to follow our versatile neighbours across the Channel. The best course for Churchmen to adopt is to act upon the advice of "Wykehamist," who has been writing in the *Times* in favour of the separation of the Sunday morning services, and to supplement them by introducing bright musical services in the afternoons.—*Banner*.

ENGLAND'S GRAND OLD POET.



F many Englishmen and others throughout the civilized world refer with pride and affection to Gladstone as "England's Grand Old Man," may we not with at least equal truth speak of Tennyson as "England's Grand Old Poet." Gladstone, with his acknowledged ability, with his splendid oratorical powers, with his great heart going out towards suffering humanity wherever found, is still but the exponent of a party, while Tennyson speaks for, and sings of all England. He is essentially an English poet; his loveliest gems are descriptive of English scenery, amid which his long life has been peacefully spent, and of England's greatness, towards which he has contributed so materially.

For more than half a century he has sung "to one clear harp in divers tones" without scarcely a discord or jarring note. Is it not comforting in these degenerate times, in these days of spurious realism, Zolaism and Tolstoism, to be able to reflect that Tennyson, the greatest living poet, has never penned one immoral allusion, one suggestive line or one erotic stanza? When the time comes for him to lay down his laurel wreath—and may that time be long delayed—when the rider on the pale horse selects him as his illustrious victim, the Laureateship may be transferred to his successor with the lines Tennyson magnanimously used in accepting it:

"This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that uttered nothing base."

His life has been singularly pure and unsullied, happy in his domestic relations, surrounded by loving friends and relatives; his patriarchal figure and long, flowing locks are well known to the tenantry and neighbours, by whom he is universally revered as one of nature's noblemen.

His poetic offerings to Royalty are often misrepresented, and misrepresented by cheap penny-a-liners and literary hacks, on account of his official position, but an impartial critic could discover no trace of servility or sycophancy in them. Take the following lines from the dedication already alluded to—the reference, of course, being to our noble Sovereign:

Her court was pure; her life serene;
God gave her peace; her land reposed,
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife and Queen;

And statesmen at her council met
Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet,

By shaping some august decree
Which kept her throne unshaken still
Broad-based upon her people's will
And compassed by the inviolate sea.

Many warm admirers of Tennyson were saddened, not to say disappointed, when his sequel to "Locksley Hall" appeared some five or six years ago. The original "Locksley Hall" drew such a brilliant, roseate Golden Age, about to dawn, when the poet with prophetic eye

"Dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Till the war-drums throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

The most sanguine optimist and admirer could not fail to be tinged with sadness when the poet, half a century after, reviews in his sequel to "Locksley Hall" those bright "castles in Spain" his youthful imagination had constructed, and discovers none of them were real. Tennyson regretfully shows in this poem that bitter experience and advancing age have dispelled those youthful visions, and on every side are indications that the world is getting worse instead of better. The publication of this pessimistic view led to a rather spirited discussion throughout America and Europe, whilst Canada contributed her quota in the shape of a review poem entitled, if I remember correctly, "Then and Now," by Rev. E. E. Dewart, of Toronto, himself no mean poet. A lofty tone of hopefulness pervaded this review, and Tennyson's attention was drawn to the fact that as we recede from past events their grossness is often glossed over in our

imagination, and the present and future look correspondingly dismal. Dewart indignantly asked:

"Is it right because past evils do not thwart our present aims,
To make light of them, and cover cruel wrongs with pleasant names?"

As befitting a Christian minister, he put his faith in God ultimately bringing good out of the social, national and world-wide evils which loomed so darkly before the Poet-Laureate's vision, and he pinned his faith in this declaration: "Truth and Righteousness unconquered in this conflict shall prevail

This the God of Truth has promised, and His Word can never fail."

Dewart's criticism of Tennyson's poem led to another Canadian minister, Rev. W. F. Clarke, then stationed at St. Thomas, Ont., taking up his literary cudgels and slashing both Tennyson and Dewart. This gentleman, long known as a versatile writer in other departments, had never been suspected of possessing a poetic vein, but it must be confessed he put his own views in vigorous verse. I long since lost my copy of it—cut out of a newspaper at the time—but the opening stanzas always clung to me since:

"Poet-peer and poet-preacher, both are right and both are wrong;

Each has truth and fact embodied in the texture of his song;
One has wailed a minor cadence with a pathos all his own,
Whilst the other peals an anthem in a lofty major tone.

'Tis the old chameleon fable verified in stately verse,
In some things the world is better, whilst in others it is worse.

All depends on how you view it; in the sunshine or the shade,
When the flowers are blooming brightly or the brilliant colours fade."

The discussion ended here; but as contributions to a literary topic by Canadian authors, they certainly deserved permanent preservation.

It was Tennyson's misfortune, like many other eminent men, to pass his earlier years in comparative literary obscurity,—the world slowly and grudgingly admitted his genius. Taine says: "When Tennyson published his first poems, the critics found fault with them. He held his peace; for ten years no one saw his name in a review—not even in a publisher's catalogue. But when he appeared again before the public, his books had made their way alone and under the surface, and he passed at once for the greatest poet of his country and his time."

This is one of the Poet Laureate's striking characteristics, that he scarcely ever deigns a reply to adverse critics, and in this respect he is a very apostle of silence. A story is current in London literary circles which, if authentic, shows that were the poet minded so he could equal Byron in bitter personalities. It is related that shortly after the poem "Maud" appeared, a London critic, distinguished more for his faultless attire and dandy airs than for brain power, wrote a cutting review of "Maud," which he styled "a sorry exhibition of mawkish sentimentality." Tennyson, it is said, thereupon published these lines:

"What profit now to unders'and
The merits of a spotless shirt,
A dapper boot, a little hand,
If half the little soul be dirt."

This instance, if true, is the only time that the poet broke his uniform reserve towards unfriendly criticism, of which he has had a generous share.

It is now almost universally admitted that "In Memoriam" is Tennyson's greatest work, and it is no disparagement to other authors to say that never before was such a tender tribute of love laid on the grave of a departed friend—never before was such a glorious funeral eulogy pronounced—never organ however grand, or played upon by master however renowned, peeled forth so mournful a chant as Tennyson over his friend Arthur Hallam, in "In Memoriam." The opening stanzas indicate a lofty theme set to noble music.

"I held it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping stones,
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years,
And find in loss a gain to match,
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears."