

and the descendant of that worthy whose hard practical ear turned the musical cadence of his horse's hoofs upon the turnpike into the refrain of 'Proputty, proputty, proputty,' to assist him in stifling the feeble promptings of a more generous spirit in his son's mind.

There is nothing akin to this in the Poet's earlier work. We should go too far if we said that Tennyson has shown a capacity for humour for the first time in these later pieces. A perusal of his works shows that an under current of genial humour has always flowed through them, not far below the surface. But that humour was always intensely clarified, and filtered as it were by its passage through the mind of a poet who is pre-eminently a gentleman. If he tells of the college pranks that hauled the 'flay flint's sow' up the corkscrew stairs to the tower leads, it is with a classical allusion to the beast as 'the Niobe of swine.' If he stoops to glorify the *Cock*, the portly head waiter becomes a modern Ganymede and his fancy makes

'The violet of a legend blow
Among the chops and steaks.'

When, with a keen observation he notices how the coarse followers of the Earl of Doorm sat silent at the board

'Feeding like horses when you hear them feed,'

we feel that the writer, in observing and recording the vulgar incident, has done so from the height of a higher station and has not in anyway lowered himself to the level of those he describes.

With greater confidence in his own powers Mr. Tennyson is now able to frankly identify himself with those he depicts, and, quitting the veil of refinement and scholarship, to allow his peasants and old women to tell their tales in their own way. The gain in vividness of conception is very great. His 'May Queen' was beautiful and tender and touching, but village girls, even when consumptive, do not have such delicately tender thoughts and modes of expression.

With how much more power does he now make *Rizpah* speak in a poem in which the fiercest tragedy and the greatest questions that perplex human minds are propounded in the most natural and forcible manner by an old woman, who is half crazed with grief and the terrible love that has driven her out

'Year after year in the mist and the wind
and the shower and the snow,'

to grovel below the gibbet on the downs for the dropped bones of her son who has been hung there in chains!

Tennyson, speaking in his own person has given form to some of the most searching doubts and cravings of the human soul in the conflict between Intellect and Faith; in this marvellous poem he simply records as a fact the discrepancy which exists in the humblest minds between formal doctrine and actual belief, a discrepancy which may be ignored but cannot be altogether hidden, which rejects the hell at heart although the lips confess it, and refuses heaven for oneself if the loved one is not to share in it,

'Do you think that I care for my soul if my
boy be gone to the fire?'

In another department of poetry we find *The Revenge*, a ballad of the Fleet, which both in subject and manner of treatment reminds us of Browning's *Herré Riel*, with which it is not unworthy of being ranked. It is a tale of Sir Richard Grenville and how, with his one little vessel he fought the whole fleet, the fifty-three 'huge sea-castles,' of Spain. Very striking is the picture of the commencement of the fight, when

'Half of their fleet to the right and half to
the left were seen.'

And the little 'Revenge' ran on thro' the
long sea-lane between till the 'mountain-
like San Philip' with her sheer bulk and
height

'Took the breath from our sails and we stay'd.'

This last line reminds us of the cadence of some of Campbell's best battle songs.

Mingled with this excellent work we have some poor and really sorry stuff. *The Sisters* is a poem in blank verse which too often degenerates into common-place colloquialisms, and the piece called *De Profundis*, and especially that part of it which bears the sub-title of *The Human Cry* is such that no lover of Tennyson will ever hear its name mentioned without a feeling of pain that such an evidence of decadence should have been allowed to appear among so much of other work that tells of continued power and unabated freshness.