

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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FROM "IN MEMORIAM."

BY ALFRED TENNYSON.

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we that have not seen thy face
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou—
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see,
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before.

But vaster—We are fools and slight;
We mock thee whom we do not fear;
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

ALFRED TENNYSON.*

QUEEN VICTORIA has conferred upon Alfred Tennyson, the most eminent of living English poets, the hereditary title of baron, and a seat in the House of Lords. But while this is nominally a distinction given by the Queen, it doubtless was really suggested by Prime Minister Gladstone.

The great statesman and the great poet are familiar friends. A few weeks ago they took a sea trip together to the Hebrides and to Denmark. Mr. Gladstone deems it fitting that this man of genius, who has so long delighted the readers of two continents, should receive a signal mark of honour at the hands of the Sovereign.

Tennyson was born in 1810, so that he is now seventy-three years old. It is a pity we cannot put back the hands on the clock of time so as to make him young again. But never mind; his works are young and always will be. He comes from Somersby, in Lincolnshire, his father was the clergyman there. You do not know Lincolnshire, probably; if you did, you would all the better understand

many of the poems of Tennyson. He speaks of the "long grey wolds" of his native county; he means flat plains of grass, divided by dykes, with here and there a row of tall, slender poplar trees, their leaves twinkling in the evening light; or a solitary willow, its boughs bent down and swaying hither and thither by the moaning wind. Read "Mariana, in the Moated Grange," if you want to know what the scenery of Lincolnshire is like. To one who has lived in the county,

But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.

Exactly so. It is the dreary, melancholy, yet soft and meditative scenery of the east of England put into a picture of perfect words.

As Tennyson grew up in such circumstances, the foundations of his poetic fancy were laid, and there is a little touch of the influence of Lincolnshire in a great deal of his writing.



ALFRED TENNYSON.

aye, and grown to like it, too, the description is like a photographic portrait:—

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The clustered marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway
All silver-green, with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding grey.

And ever when the moon was low
And the shrill winds wore up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the ghostly shadow sway.

strong dash of poetical genius, also. For more than fifty years he has devoted himself exclusively to his gentle art. As long ago as 1830, when he was twenty years of age, he published his first modest volume of poems. Twenty years after, his poem, "In Memoriam," written in memory of his dead friend Arthur Hallam, and by many of his admirers thought to be his masterpiece, was given to the public; and in 1855 appeared "Maud," and later the "Idyls of the King," which must certainly be ranked among his finest works. His poetical productions, one and all, are marked by the exceeding care and finish which should be bestowed upon true works of the literary art.

The following is the "Bugle Song," from the poem of "The Princess." As we read it we can almost see the trembling light and hear the notes of the bugle horns:—

The splendour falls on castle walls,
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory,—
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow bugle; answer echoes, dying, dying, dying.

Oh hark! Oh hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, further going,
O sweet and far, from cliff and scar,
The horns of Elf-land faintly blowing;
Blow,—let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugle; answer echoes, dying, dying, dying.

Oh love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill, and field, or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever!
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And, answer echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying!

"In Memoriam" touches all the great questions of duty and destiny. There are men now living upon whose thought it has exerted an influence more powerful than any other book, excepting only the Bible. The "Idyls of the King" also contain the fruit of long and large-minded meditation on the destiny and work of man, set to a music as perfect as the thoughts are rare. In all English literature there is no other figure like that of King Arthur, so brave and true, so greatly simple, so dignified as well as tender in its wrongs and bitter grief.

For thirty-three years Tennyson has enjoyed the distinction of being the poet-laureate of England, succeeding William Wordsworth in that ornamental office; and during that period no poet has arisen to contest his position as the foremost of British bards.

Tennyson, the author of so many strong, sweet, and beautiful verses, is indeed an interesting figure in his new character as a peer of the realm. He

* The accompanying portrait and part of this article are taken from the January number of the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*.