

Prof. Knight on Tennyson

Prof. Knight contributes to the August number of Blackwood's an article on Tennyson which contains many reminiscences and anecdotes of the poet. Here is a portrait of Tennyson as he appeared in 1890:

His aged look impressed me. There the keen eagle eye; and, although the glow of youth was gone, the strength of age was in its place. The lines of his face were like the furrows in the stem of a wrinkled oak tree; but his whole bearing disclosed a latent strength and nobility, a reserve of power, combined with a most courteous grace of manner. I was also struck by the negligence of the man, so different from that of Browning and Arnold or Lowell. He soon threw aside his picturesque cloak, and laid down his broad-brimmed hat upon the table.

At that same meeting (it was at Faringford) he had the following conversation on the art of publishing the juvenilia and suppressed work of great writers:

He spoke of the diseased craving to have all the trifles of a man of genius preserved, and of the positive crime of publishing what a poet had himself deliberately suppressed. If all the contents of a poet's waste-basket were taken out and issued as a book, the volume, one result would be that the things which he had disowned would be read by many to whom the good things he had written would be unknown. He said that he himself had suffered in that way. I told him of a poem which Wordsworth wrote when he lived at Alfoxden—an unworthy record of a revolting crime—which he had the good sense never to publish. I had seen the original, but only a copy, which I threw in the fire as soon as I read it. Tennyson was greatly pleased and said, "It was the kindest thing you could have done." He then spoke of folly of fancying that all that a poet says in his verses must have some local meaning or a person reference.

There are some curious creatures who go about fishing for the people, and searching for the places which our fancy must have given rise to our poems. They don't understand, or believe, that we have any imagination of our own, to create the people or the places. Of course, we often describe, but we generally let that be known easily enough.

Tennyson told Professor Knight some anecdotes of a visit to his Scotland: After he had left an inn in the island of Skye, the landlord was asked, "Did he know who had been staying at his house? It was the poet Tennyson." He replied, "Lor—to think of that! and sure I thought he was a shentleman!" Near Stirling the same remark was made to the keeper of the hotel where he had stayed. "Do you ken who you but he was a pleasant shentleman." "It was Tennyson the poet." An "wha may he be?" "Oh, he is a writer o' verses, sic as ye see i' the papers."

"No, to think of that! jest a pooblic writer, an' I gied him ma best bedroom." Of Mrs. Tennyson, however, the landlord remarked, "Oh! but she was an angel."

Estimating Tennyson's powers as a conversationalist, Professor Knight writes: I have said that the conversational power of Tennyson struck me quite as much as his poetry had done for forty years. To explain this, I must compare it with some of his contemporaries. It was not like the nervous flashes and flowered daisies of Carlyle's talk which sometimes dazzled as much as it instructed; and it had not that torrent rush in which Carlyle so often indulged. It was far more restrained. It had neither the continuousness nor the range of Browning's many-sided conversation; nor did it possess the charm of the ethereal visionariness of Newman's talk which lacked the fulness and the consummate sweep of Mr. Ruskin's talk; and it had neither the historic range and brilliance of Dean Stanley's nor the fascinating subtlety—that of the late F. D. Maurice. But it was clear as crystal, and calm as well as clear. It was terse and exact, precise and unassuming. Not a word was wasted, and every phrase was suggestive. Tennyson did not monopolize conversation. He wished to know what other people thought.

His appreciation of other workers belonging to his time was remarkable. Neither he nor Browning disparaged their contemporaries, as Carlyle so often did, when he spotted their weakness, and then in the next breath from first to last, Tennyson seemed to looked sympathetically on all good work, and he had a special veneration for the strong silent thinkers and workers.

Finally we give a bit of Tennyson's remarks on immortality: He then spoke of Darwin, and of the great truth in evolution, but it was only one side of a truth that had two sides. "All things are double one against another." He also spoke of Bruno, with whom he had much sympathy. From this we passed to the subject of immortality. I ventured to say that it was a more pressing problem in our time than even that of theism, and that agnosticism had undermined it in many quarters. He said it did not require argumentative proof of a future life, and referred me to "In Memoriam." He had nothing further to say; and, though his faith was not stated dogmatically in that poem, every one could see that he believed in the survival of the individual. "Annihilation was impossible, and inconceivable. We are parts of the Infinite World."

The Ideal Panacea. James L. Francis, alderman, Chicago, says: "I regard Dr. King's New Discovery as an Ideal Panacea for Coughs, Colds and Lung Complaints, having used it in my family for the last five years, to the exclusion of physician's prescriptions or other preparations."

Rev. John Burgess, Keokuk, Iowa, writes: "I have been a Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 25 years or more, and have never found anything so beneficial, or that gave me such speedy relief as Dr. King's New Discovery." Try this Ideal Cough Remedy now. Trial Bottle Free at R. R. Bellamy's Drug Store.

Arrested for Murder. Montgomery, Ala., August 24.—Two prominent young farmers of Henry county, Ala., have been arrested on the charge of being implicated in the killing of Frank Smith, colored, by white-caps a few nights ago. The coroner's verdict is kept secret and more arrests will follow.

A Suicide. Richmond, Va., August 24.—Miles D. Wilcox, a pressman employed at a local printing establishment, committed suicide here this afternoon by jumping into the river at the foot of Nineteenth street. He was 37 years of age, married, but had no children.

A Taluable Prescription. Editor Morrison of Worthington, Ind., writes: "You have a valuable prescription in Electric Bitters, and I can cheerfully recommend it for Constipation, Headache, and general ailment. It has no equal." Mrs. Annie Stehle, 2625 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, was all run down, could not eat or digest food, had a backache which never left her and felt tired and weary, but six bottles of Electric Bitters restored her health and renewed her strength. Price 50 cents and \$1.00. Get a bottle at R. R. Bellamy's Drug Store.

A Splendid Example.

(From Rev. Dr. Hawthorne's Sermon to the Veterans at Nashville.) "Veterans, in the few years that remain to us let it be our constant endeavor to emulate the virtues of these men. Let us follow them as they followed Christ, so that when life's twilight comes, we may sleep serenely, and in the morning of the resurrection awake to answer to the roll call of those who fought the good fight and were faithful unto death."

"There was nothing that did more to promote the growth of Christian feeling and rectitude in the confederate army than the spirit and bearing of its leaders. Never did an army march into battle officered by men more loyal to Christ than Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, and many of their subordinates. Who can calculate the power of Jackson's religious influence upon the men whom he led to battle? Gen. Ewell was so impressed by it that he was heard to say: 'If that be religion, I must have it.' After making a profession of faith in Christ he confessed that his rebellious heart and will had been conquered by the power of Jackson's Godly life."

"Never did the angels of God descend from their starry heights to hover over a more touching scene than Stonewall Jackson's death as it came from a human lips language more beautiful and significant than his dying words: 'Let us cross over the river and rest in the shade of the trees.'"

"Though dead he yet speaketh. The sun has gone down, but there still lingers a blaze of glory on every mountain peak, and the clouds that hover about the scene of his departure are turned to amber and gold."

"No eulogy that my poor, feeble lips could pronounce would be worthy of the exalted character and the deathless fame of Robert E. Lee. All the great virtues were harmoniously and beautifully blended in him, making an almost perfect man."

"Phidias proposed to make a statue of Alexander out of Mt. Athos, a statue holding in one hand a beautiful river embellished with villages and bridges, and in the other hand a magnificent city suspended between the grandeur of earth and the glory of heaven. The realization of that conception would have been a work of art surpassing the walls of Babylon, the pyramids of Egypt, or the colossal at Rhodes. Such was the tribute which the great sculptor believed his hero worthy to receive. A hero he was, but not the type that Christian men delight to honor. After he had climbed the dizzy heights of his ambition and looked down upon a conquered world, he turned to the midst of the shameful debauch. He mastered all things but himself."

"There is an inward rule of a man—a government of the thoughts and passions—which is an object of loftier ambition than any earthly crown or kingdom. He who rules himself and holds the castle of his inner being against the outward foe is the only real potentate. There have been such monarchs on the earth, and conspicuous among them was Robert E. Lee. Neither man nor angel ever saw him when he was not master of himself. To that high degree of moral majesty and repose he ascended, not by the power of any human philosophy, but by a living faith in the eternal Son of God."

"Fellow Christians, can we doubt that such men are immortal? The names of their traducers will be forgotten, but they shall be in everlasting remembrance."

Fellow veterans, I should be lacking in fealty to God and your most sacred interests if I did not say to you, concluding this message, that your patriotism will not save you from the consequences of sin and secure for you honor and glory in the life to come.

"Lee and Jackson were tranquil and happy in death, not because they were patriots, but because they were Christians. They are crowned and accepted in heaven, not because they were brave and noble soldiers, but because they were faithful followers of Jesus Christ."

What Mrs. Bishop Saw in China Mrs. Bishop's account of her recent journey to western China, in the Geographical Journal for July, is a remarkable testimony to the capacities, resourcefulness, and enterprise of the Chinese, and to the influence of the white civilization. They long ago grasped the idea that the prosperity of a country depends largely upon its roads, and a frequent method of displaying local patriotism is for a man to present a road to his district. Broad, flagged, shaded with superb avenues of trees, and thronged with burden-bearing coolies she found in the mountain passes, and in the rock galleries of the mountain passes, were tablets in honor of the donors. The correct principles of irrigation seem to have been known by these people, for the "boundless fertility and wealth" of the great plain of Cheng-tu and "its immunity for two thousand years from drought and floods are the monument of the engineering genius of a man who lived B. C. 206. 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