

**ANDREW LANG**



**ALFRED  
TENNYSON**

**EXTENDED EDITION**

**Alfred Tennyson**

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## **ANDREW LANG (1844-1912)**

Biographical Sketch from "Portraits And Sketches" by  
Edmund Gosse

INVITED to note down some of my recollections of Andrew Lang, I find myself suspended between the sudden blow of his death and the slow development of memory, now extending in unbroken friendship over thirty-five years. The magnitude and multitude of Lang's performances, public and private, during that considerable length of time almost paralyse expression; it is difficult to know where to begin or where to stop. Just as his written works are so extremely numerous as to make a pathway through them a formidable task in bibliography, no one book standing out predominant, so his character, intellectual and moral, was full -of so many apparent inconsistencies, so many pitfalls for rash assertion, so many queer caprices of impulse, that in a whole volume of analysis, which would be tedious, one could scarcely do justice to them all. I will venture to put down, almost at haphazard, what I remember that seems to me to have been overlooked, or inexactly stated, by those who wrote, often very sympathetically, at the moment of his death, always premising that I speak rather of a Lang of from 1877 to 1890, when I saw him very frequently, than of a Lang whom younger people met chiefly in Scotland.

When he died, all the newspapers were loud in proclaiming his "versatility." But I am not sure that he was not the very opposite of versatile. I take "versatile" to mean changeable, fickle, constantly ready to alter direction with the weather-cock. The great instance of versatility in literature is Ruskin, who adopted diametrically different views of the same subject at different times of his life, and defended them with equal ardour. To be versatile seems to be unsteady, variable. But Lang was through his long career singularly unaltered; he never changed his point of view; what he liked and admired as a youth he liked and admired as an elderly man. It is true that his interests and knowledge were vividly drawn along a surprisingly large number of channels, but while there was abundance there does not seem to me to have been versatility. If a huge body of water boils up from a crater, it may pour down a dozen paths, but these will always be the same; unless there is an earthquake, new cascades will not form nor old rivulets run dry. In some authors earthquakes do take place as in Tolstoy, for instance, and in S. T. Coleridge but nothing of this kind was ever manifest in Lang, who was extraordinarily multiform, yet in his varieties strictly consistent from Oxford to the grave. As this is not generally perceived, I will take the liberty of expanding my view of his intellectual development.

To a superficial observer in late life the genius of Andrew Lang had the characteristics which we are in the habit of identifying with precocity. Yet he had not been, as a writer, precocious in his youth. One slender volume of verses represents all that he published in book-form before his thirty-fifth year. No doubt we shall learn in good time what he was doing before he flashed upon the world of journalism in all his panoply of graces, in 1876, at the close of his Merton fellowship. He was then, at all events, the

finest finished product of his age, with the bright armour of Oxford burnished on his body to such a brilliance that humdrum eyes could hardly bear the radiance of it. Of the terms behind, of the fifteen years then dividing him from St. Andrews, we know as yet but little; they were years of insatiable acquirement, incessant reading, and talking, and observing gay preparation for a life to be devoted, as no other life in our time has been, to the stimulation of other people's observation and talk and reading. There was no cloistered virtue about the bright and petulant Merton don. He was already flouting and jesting, laughing with Ariosto in the sunshine, performing with a snap of his fingers tasks which might break the back of a pedant, and concealing under an affectation of carelessness a literary ambition which knew no definite bounds.

In those days, and when he appeared for the first time in London, the poet was paramount in him. Jowett is said to have predicted that he would be greatly famous in this line, but I know not what evidence Jowett had before him. Unless I am much mistaken, it was not until Lang left Balliol that his peculiar bent became obvious. Up to that time he had been a promiscuous browser upon books, much occupied, moreover, in the struggle with ancient Greek, and immersed in Aristotle and Homer. But in the early days of his settlement at Merton he began to concentrate his powers, and I think there were certain influences which were instant and far-reaching. Among them one was pre-eminent. When Andrew Lang came up from St. Andrews he had found Matthew Arnold occupying the ancient chair of poetry at Oxford. He was a listener at some at least of the famous lectures which, in 1865, were collected as "Essays in Criticism"; while one of his latest experiences as a Balliol undergraduate was hearing Matthew Arnold lecture on the study of Celtic literature. His conscience was profoundly stirred by "Culture and Anarchy" (1869); his sense of prose-

form largely determined by "Friendship's Garland" (1871). I have no hesitation in saying that the teaching and example of Matthew Arnold prevailed over all other Oxford influences upon the intellectual nature of Lang, while, although I think that his personal acquaintance with Arnold was very slight, yet in his social manner there was, in early days, not a little imitation of Arnold's aloofness and superfine delicacy of address. It was unconscious, of course, and nothing would have enraged Lang more than to have been accused of "imitating Uncle Matt."

The structure which his own individuality now began to build on the basis supplied by the learning of Oxford, and in particular by the study of the Greeks, and "dressed" by courses of Matthew Arnold, was from the first eclectic. Lang eschewed as completely what was not sympathetic to him as he assimilated what was attractive to him. Those who speak of his "versatility" should recollect what large tracts of the literature of the world, and even of England, existed outside the dimmest apprehension of Andrew Lang. It is, however, more useful to consider what he did apprehend; and there were two English books, published in his Oxford days, which permanently impressed him: one of these was "The Earthly Paradise," the other D. G. Rossetti's "Poems." In after years he tried to divest himself of the traces of these volumes, but he had fed upon their honey-dew and it had permeated his veins.

Not less important an element in the garnishing of a mind already prepared for it by academic and aesthetic studies was the absorption of the romantic part of French literature. Andrew Lang in this, as in everything else, was selective. He dipped into the wonderful lucky-bag of France wherever he saw the glitter of romance. Hence his approach, in the early seventies, was threefold: towards the mediaeval *lais* and *chansons*, towards the sixteenth-century

Pleiade, and towards the school of which Victor Hugo was the leader in the nineteenth century. For a long time Ronsard was Lang's poet of intensest predilection; and I think that his definite ambition was to be the Ronsard of modern England, introducing a new poetical dexterity founded on a revival of pure humanism. He had in those days what he lost, or at least dispersed, in the weariness and growing melancholia of later years a splendid belief in poetry as a part of the renown of England, as a heritage to be received in reverence from our fathers, and to be passed on, if possible, in a brighter flame. This honest and beautiful ambition to shine as one of the permanent benefactors to national verse, in the attitude so nobly sustained four hundred years ago by Du Bellay and Ronsard, was unquestionably felt by Andrew Lang through his bright intellectual April, and supported him from Oxford times until 1882, when he published "Helen of Troy." The cool reception of that epic by the principal judges of poetry caused him acute disappointment, and from that time forth he became less eager and less serious as a poet, more and more petulantly expending his wonderful technical gift on fugitive subjects. And here again, when one comes to think of it, the whole history repeated itself, since in "Helen of Troy" Lang simply suffered as Ronsard had done in the "Franciade." But the fact that 1882 was his year of crisis, and the tomb of his brightest ambition, must be recognised by every one who closely followed his fortunes at that time. Lang's habit of picking out of literature and of life the plums of romance, and these alone, comes to be, to the dazzled observer of his extraordinarily vivid intellectual career, the principal guiding line. This determination to dwell, to the exclusion of all other sides of any question, on its romantic side is alone enough to rebut the charge of versatility. Lang was in a sense encyclopaedic; but the vast dictionary of his knowledge had blank pages, or pages pasted down, on which he would not, or could not, read

what experience had printed. Absurd as it sounds, there was always something maidenly about his mind, and he glossed over ugly matters, sordid and dull conditions, so that they made no impression whatever upon him. He had a trick, which often exasperated his acquaintances, of declaring that he had " never heard " of things that everybody else was very well aware of. He had " never heard the name " of people he disliked, of books that he thought tiresome, of events that bored him; but, more than this, he used the formula for things and persons whom he did not wish to discuss. I remember meeting in the street a famous professor, who advanced with uplifted hands, and greeted me with " What do you think Lang says now? That he has never heard of Pascal! " This merely signified that Lang, not interested (at all events for the moment) in Pascal nor in the professor, thus closed at once all possibility of discussion.

It must not be forgotten that we have lived to see him, always wonderful indeed, and always passionately devoted to perfection and purity, but worn, tired, harassed by the unceasing struggle, the lifelong slinging of sentences from that inexhaustible ink-pot. In one of the most perfect of his poems, " Natural Theology," Lang speaks of Cagn, the great hunter, who once was kind and good, but who was spoiled by fighting many things. Lang was never " spoiled," but he was injured; the surface of the radiant coin was rubbed by the vast and interminable handling of journalism. He was jaded by the toil of writing many things. Hence it is not possible but that those who knew him intimately in his later youth and early middle-age should prefer to look back at those years when he was the freshest, the most exhilarating figure in living literature, when a star seemed to dance upon the crest of his already silvering hair. Baudelaire exclaimed of Theophile Gautier: " Homme heureux! homme digne d'envie! il n'a jamais aimé que le



Beau!" and of Andrew Lang in those brilliant days the same might have been said. As long as he had confidence in beauty he was safe and strong; and much that, with all affection and all respect, we must admit was rasping and disappointing in his attitude to literature in his later years, seems to have been due to a decreasing sense of confidence in the intellectual sources of beauty. It is dangerous, in the end it must be fatal, to sustain the entire structure of life and thought on the illusions of romance. But that was what Lang did he built his house upon the rainbow.

The charm of Andrew Lang's person and company was founded upon a certain lightness, an essential gentleness and elegance which were relieved by a sharp touch; just as a very dainty fruit may be preserved from mawkishness by something delicately acid in the rind of it. His nature was slightly inhuman; it was unwise to count upon its sympathy beyond a point which was very easily reached in social intercourse. If any simple soul showed an inclination, in eighteenth-century phrase, to "repose on the bosom" of Lang, that support was immediately withdrawn, and the confiding one fell among thorns. Lang was like an Angora cat, whose gentleness and soft fur, and general aspect of pure amenity, invite to caresses, which are suddenly met by the outspread paw with claws awake. This uncertain and freakish humour was the embarrassment of his friends, who, however, were preserved from despair by the fact that no malice was meant, and that the weapons were instantly sheathed again in velvet. Only, the instinct to give a sudden slap, half in play, half in fretful caprice, was incorrigible. No one among Lang's intimate friends but had suffered from this feline impulse, which did not spare even the serenity of Robert Louis Stevenson. But, tiresome as it sometimes was, this irritable humour seldom cost Lang a

friend who was worth preserving. Those who really knew him recognised that he was always shy and usually tired.

His own swift spirit never brooded upon an offence, and could not conceive that any one else should mind what he himself minded so little and forgot so soon. Impressions swept over him very rapidly, and injuries passed completely out of his memory. Indeed, all his emotions were too fleeting, and in this there was something fairy-like; quick and keen and blithe as he was, he did not seem altogether like an ordinary mortal, nor could the appeal to gross human experience be made to him with much chance of success. This, doubtless, is why almost all imaginative literature which is founded upon the darker parts of life, all squalid and painful tragedy, all stories that " don't end well" all religious experiences, all that is not superficial and romantic, was irksome to him. He tried sometimes to reconcile his mind to the consideration of real life; he concentrated his matchless powers on it; but he always disliked it. He could persuade himself to be partly just to Ibsen or Hardy or Dostoieffsky, but what he really enjoyed was Dumas père, because that fertile romance-writer rose serene above the phenomena of actual human experience. We have seen more of this type in English literature than the Continental nations have in theirs, but even we have seen no instance of its strength and weakness so eminent as Andrew Lang. He was the fairy in our midst, the wonder-working, incorporeal, and tricky fay of letters, who paid for all his wonderful gifts and charms by being not quite a man of like passions with the rest of us. In some verses which he scribbled to R.L.S. and threw away, twenty years ago, he acknowledged this unearthly character, and, speaking of the depredations of his kin, he said:

Faith, they might steal me, w? ma will,  
And, ken'd I ony fairy hill

I'd lay me down there, snod and still,  
Their land to win;  
For, man, I maistly had my fill  
O' this world's din

His wit had something disconcerting in its impishness. Its rapidity and sparkle were dazzling, but it was not quite human; that is to say, it conceded too little to the exigencies of flesh and blood. If we can conceive a seraph being fanny, it would be in the manner of Andrew Lang. Moreover, his wit usually danced over the surface of things, and rarely penetrated them. In verbal parry, in ironic misunderstanding, in breathless agility of topsy-turvy movement, Lang was like one of Milton's "yellow-skirted fays," sporting with the helpless, moon-bewildered traveller. His wit often had a depressing, a humiliating effect, against which one's mind presently revolted. I recollect an instance which may be thought to be apposite: I was passing through a phase of enthusiasm for Emerson, whom Lang very characteristically detested, and I was so ill-advised as to show him the famous epigram called "Brahma." Lang read it with a snort of derision (it appeared to be new to him), and immediately he improvised this parody:

If the wild bowler thinks he bowls,  
Or if the batsman thinks he's bowled,  
They know not, poor misguided souls,  
They, too, shall perish unconsolated.  
I am the batsman and the bat,  
I am the bowler and the ball,  
The umpire, the pavilion cat,  
The roller, pitch and stumps, and all

This would make a pavilion cat laugh, and I felt that Emerson was done for. But when Lang had left me, and I

was once more master of my mind, I reflected that the parody was but a parody, wonderful for its neatness and quickness, and for its seizure of what was awkward in the roll of Emerson's diction, but essentially superficial. However, what would wit be if it were profound? I must leave it there, feeling that I have not explained why Lang's extraordinary drollery in conversation so often left on the memory a certain sensation of distress.

But this was not the characteristic of his humour at its best, as it was displayed throughout the happiest period of his work. If, as seems possible, it is as an essayist that he will ultimately take his place in English literature, this element will continue to delight fresh generations of enchanted readers. I cannot imagine that the preface to his translation of "Theocritus," "Letters to Dead Authors," "In the Wrong Paradise," "Old Friends," and "Essays in Little" will ever lose their charm; but future admirers will have to pick their way to them through a tangle of history and anthropology and mythology, where there may be left no perfume and no sweetness. I am impatient to see this vast mass of writing reduced to the limits of its author's delicate, true, but somewhat evasive and ephemeral genius. However, as far as the circumstances of his temperament permitted, Andrew Lang has left with us the memory of one of our most surprising contemporaries, a man of letters who laboured without cessation from boyhood to the grave, who pursued his ideal with indomitable activity and perseverance, and who was never betrayed except by the loftiness of his own endeavour. Lang's only misfortune was not to be completely in contact with life, and his work will survive exactly where he was most faithful to his innermost illusions.

# ALFRED TENNYSON

## INTRODUCTION

In writing this brief sketch of the Life of Tennyson, and this attempt to appreciate his work, I have rested almost entirely on the Biography by Lord Tennyson (with his kind permission) and on the text of the Poems. As to the Life, doubtless current anecdotes, not given in the Biography, are known to me, and to most people. But as they must also be familiar to the author of the Biography, I have not thought it desirable to include what he rejected. The works of the "localisers" I have not read: Tennyson disliked these researches, as a rule, and they appear to be unessential, and often hazardous. The professed commentators I have not consulted. It appeared better to give one's own impressions of the Poems, unaffected by the impressions of others, except in one or two cases where matters of fact rather than of taste seemed to be in question. Thus on two or three points I have ventured to differ from a distinguished living critic, and have given the reasons for my dissent. Professor Bradley's Commentary on *In Memoriam* came out after this sketch was in print. Many of the comments cited by Mr Bradley from his predecessors appear to justify my neglect of these curious inquirers. The "difficulties" which they raise are not likely, as a rule, to present themselves to persons who read poetry "for human pleasure."

I have not often dwelt on parallels to be found in the works of earlier poets. In many cases Tennyson deliberately reproduced passages from Greek, Latin, and old Italian writers, just as Virgil did in the case of Homer, Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, and others. There are, doubtless,

instances in which a phrase is unconsciously reproduced by automatic memory, from an English poet. But I am less inclined than Mr Bradley to think that unconscious reminiscence is more common in Tennyson than in the poets generally. I have not closely examined Keats and Shelley, for example, to see how far they were influenced by unconscious memory. But Scott, confessedly, was apt to reproduce the phrases of others, and once unwittingly borrowed from a poem by the valet of one of his friends! I believe that many of the alleged borrowings in Tennyson are either no true parallels at all or are the unavoidable coincidences of expression which must inevitably occur. The poet himself stated, in a lively phrase, his opinion of the hunters after parallels, and I confess that I am much of his mind. They often remind me of Mr Punch's parody on an unfriendly review of Alexander Smith -

"Most WOMEN have NO CHARACTER at all." —POPE.

"No CHARACTER that servant WOMAN asked." —SMITH.

I have to thank Mr Edmund Gosse and Mr Vernon Rendall for their kindness in reading my proof-sheets. They have saved me from some errors, but I may have occasionally retained matter which, for one reason or another, did not recommend itself to them. In no case are they responsible for the opinions expressed, or for the critical estimates. They are those of a Tennysonian, and, no doubt, would be other than they are if the writer were younger than he is. It does not follow that they would necessarily be more correct, though probably they would be more in vogue. The point of view must shift with each generation of readers, as ideas or beliefs go in or out of fashion, are accepted, rejected, or rehabilitated. To one age Tennyson may seem weakly superstitious; to another needlessly sceptical. After all, what he must live by is, not his opinions, but his poetry.

The poetry of Milton survives his ideas; whatever may be the fate of the ideas of Tennyson his poetry must endure.

## **CHAPTER I—BOYHOOD—CAMBRIDGE—EARLY POEMS.**

The life and work of Tennyson present something like the normal type of what, in circumstances as fortunate as mortals may expect, the life and work of a modern poet ought to be. A modern poet, one says, because even poetry is now affected by the division of labour. We do not look to the poet for a large share in the practical activities of existence: we do not expect him, like AEschylus and Sophocles, Theognis and Alcaeus, to take a conspicuous part in politics and war; or even, as in the Age of Anne, to shine among wits and in society. Life has become, perhaps, too specialised for such multifarious activities. Indeed, even in ancient days, as a Celtic proverb and as the picture of life in the Homeric epics prove, the poet was already a man apart—not foremost among statesmen and rather backward among warriors. If we agree with a not unpopular opinion, the poet ought to be a kind of "Titanic" force, wrecking himself on his own passions and on the nature of things, as did Byron, Burns, Marlowe, and Musset. But Tennyson's career followed lines really more normal, the lines of the life of Wordsworth, wisdom and self-control directing the course of a long, sane, sound, and fortunate existence. The great physical strength which is commonly the basis of great mental vigour was not ruined in Tennyson by poverty and passion, as in the case of Burns, nor in forced literary labour, as in those of Scott and Dickens. For long he was poor, like Wordsworth and Southey, but never destitute. He made his early effort: he had his time of great sorrow, and trial, and apparent failure. With practical wisdom he conquered circumstances; he became eminent; he outlived

reaction against his genius; he died in the fulness of a happy age and of renown. This full-orbed life, with not a few years of sorrow and stress, is what Nature seems to intend for the career of a divine minstrel. If Tennyson missed the "one crowded hour of glorious life," he had not to be content in "an age without a name."

It was not Tennyson's lot to illustrate any modern theory of the origin of genius. Born in 1809 of a Lincolnshire family, long connected with the soil but inconspicuous in history, Tennyson had nothing Celtic in his blood, as far as pedigrees prove. This is unfortunate for one school of theorists. His mother (genius is presumed to be derived from mothers) had a genius merely for moral excellence and for religion. She is described in the poem of Isabel, and was "a remarkable and saintly woman." In the male line, the family was not (as the families of genius ought to be) brief of life and unhealthy. "The Tennysons never die," said the sister who was betrothed to Arthur Hallam. The father, a clergyman, was, says his grandson, "a man of great ability," and his "excellent library" was an element in the education of his family. "My father was a poet," Tennyson said, "and could write regular verse very skilfully." In physical type the sons were tall, strong, and unusually dark: Tennyson, when abroad, was not taken for an Englishman; at home, strangers thought him "foreign." Most of the children had the temperament, and several of the sons had some of the accomplishments, of genius: whence derived by way of heredity is a question beyond conjecture, for the father's accomplishment was not unusual. As Walton says of the poet and the angler, they "were born to be so": we know no more.

The region in which the paternal hamlet of Somersby lies, "a land of quiet villages, large fields, grey hillsides, and noble tall-towered churches, on the lower slope of a



Lincolnshire wold," does not appear to have been rich in romantic legend and tradition. The folk-lore of Lincolnshire, of which examples have been published, does seem to have a peculiar poetry of its own, but it was rather the humorous than the poetical aspect of the country-people that Tennyson appears to have known. In brief, we have nothing to inform us as to how genius came into that generation of Tennysons which was born between 1807 and 1819. A source and a cause there must have been, but these things are hidden, except from popular science.

Precocity is not a sign of genius, but genius is perhaps always accompanied by precocity. This is especially notable in the cases of painting, music, and mathematics; but in the matter of literature genius may chiefly show itself in acquisition, as in Sir Walter Scott, who when a boy knew much, but did little that would attract notice. As a child and a boy young Tennyson was remarked both for acquisition and performance. His own reminiscences of his childhood varied somewhat in detail. In one place we learn that at the age of eight he covered a slate with blank verse in the manner of Jamie Thomson, the only poet with whom he was then acquainted. In another passage he says, "The first poetry that moved me was my own at five years old. When I was eight I remember making a line I thought grander than Campbell, or Byron, or Scott. I rolled it out, it was this -

'With slaughterous sons of thunder rolled the flood' -

great nonsense, of course, but I thought it fine!"

It WAS fine, and was thoroughly Tennysonian. Scott, Campbell, and Byron probably never produced a line with the qualities of this nonsense verse. "Before I could read I was in the habit on a stormy day of spreading my arms to the wind and crying out, 'I hear a voice that's speaking in

the wind,' and the words 'far, far away' had always a strange charm for me." A late lyric has this overword, FAR, FAR AWAY!

A boy of eight who knew the contemporary poets was more or less precocious. Tennyson also knew Pope, and wrote hundreds of lines in Pope's measure. At twelve the boy produced an epic, in Scott's manner, of some six thousand lines. He "never felt himself more truly inspired," for the sense of "inspiration" (as the late Mr Myers has argued in an essay on the "Mechanism of Genius") has little to do with the actual value of the product. At fourteen Tennyson wrote a drama in blank verse. A chorus from this play (as one guesses), a piece from "an unpublished drama written very early," is published in the volume of 1830:-

"The varied earth, the moving heaven,  
The rapid waste of roving sea,  
The fountain-pregnant mountains riven  
To shapes of wildest anarchy,  
By secret fire and midnight storms  
That wander round their windy cones."

These lines are already Tennysonian. There is the classical transcript, "the varied earth," *daedala tellus*. There is the geological interest in the forces that shape the hills. There is the use of the favourite word "windy," and later in the piece -

"The troublous autumn's SALLOW gloom."

The young poet from boyhood was original in his manner.

Byron made him blase at fourteen. Then Byron died, and Tennyson scratched on a rock "Byron is dead," on "a day when the whole world seemed darkened for me." Later he

considered Byron's poetry "too much akin to rhetoric."  
"Byron is not an artist or a thinker, or a creator in the higher sense, but a strong personality; he is endlessly clever, and is now unduly depreciated." He "did give the world another heart and new pulses, and so we are kept going." But "he was dominated by Byron till he was seventeen, when he put him away altogether."

In his boyhood, despite the sufferings which he endured for a while at school at Louth; despite bullying from big boys and masters, Tennyson would "shout his verses to the skies." "Well, Arthur, I mean to be famous," he used to say to one of his brothers. He observed nature very closely by the brook and the thundering sea-shores: he was never a sportsman, and his angling was in the manner of the lover of *The Miller's Daughter*. He was seventeen (1826) when *Poems by Two Brothers* (himself and his brother Frederick) was published with the date 1827. These poems contain, as far as I have been able to discover, nothing really Tennysonian. What he had done in his own manner was omitted, "being thought too much out of the common for the public taste." The young poet had already saving common-sense, and understood the public. Fragments of the true gold are found in the volume of 1830, others are preserved in the *Biography*. The ballad suggested by *The Bride of Lammermoor* was not unworthy of Beddoes, and that novel, one cannot but think, suggested the opening situation in *Maud*, where the hero is a modern Master of Ravenswood in his relation to the rich interloping family and the beautiful daughter. To this point we shall return. It does not appear that Tennyson was conscious in *Maud* of the suggestion from Scott, and the coincidence may be merely accidental.

*The Lover's Tale*, published in 1879, was mainly a work of the poet's nineteenth year. A few copies had been printed

for friends. One of these, with errors of the press, and without the intended alterations, was pirated by an unhappy man in 1875. In old age Tennyson brought out the work of his boyhood. "It was written before I had ever seen Shelley, though it is called Shelleyan," he said; and indeed he believed that his work had never been imitative, after his earliest efforts in the manner of Thomson and of Scott. The only things in *The Lover's Tale* which would suggest that the poet here followed Shelley are the Italian scene of the story, the character of the versification, and the extraordinary luxuriance and exuberance of the imagery. As early as 1868 Tennyson heard that written copies of *The Lover's Tale* were in circulation. He then remarked, as to the exuberance of the piece: "Allowance must be made for abundance of youth. It is rich and full, but there are mistakes in it. . . . The poem is the breath of young love."

How truly Tennysonian the manner is may be understood even from the opening lines, full of the original cadences which were to become so familiar:-

"Here far away, seen from the topmost cliff,  
Filling with purple gloom the vacancies  
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas  
Hung in mid-heaven, and half way down rare sails,  
White as white clouds, floated from sky to sky."

The narrative in parts one and two (which alone were written in youth) is so choked with images and descriptions as to be almost obscure. It is the story, practically, of a love like that of Paul and Virginia, but the love is not returned by the girl, who prefers the friend of the narrator. Like the hero of *Maud*, the speaker has a period of madness and illusion; while the third part, "*The Golden Supper*"— suggested by a story of Boccaccio, and written in maturity — is put in the mouth of another narrator, and is in a