

A VIEW OF TENNYSON.

MARGARET MANTON MERRILL DESCRIBES A RECENT INTERVIEW.

How the Poet Appeared at a Meeting of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in London—His Impressive Personality—A Brief Conversation.

[Special Correspondence.] New York, Oct. 18.—Alfred Lord Tennyson, who so recently laid down his busy pen and closed his eyes forever, was last seen in public at the June meeting of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in London, at which I had the honor to be a guest.



TENNYSON AND MERRILL. (From a sketch made on the spot by Margaret Manton Merrill.)

I do not think any one saw him enter and take his seat. But when it was whispered through the audience that Lord Tennyson was there he became at once the object of every one's attention.

His head was bent forward, and I had a good view of the face of the poet as he looked at eighty-three. His hair was iron gray—not white. It was brushed back from a high, slightly receding forehead, and hung in thin, wavy locks down over the collar of his coat.

They were large and full—almost like the eyes of a young man. They were dark gray in color, with heavy black lashes, and so full of expression that they seemed indeed the windows of a poetic soul.

He was dressed in a manner—not negligent—I think negligent would be a better word. It almost seemed as if there was an air of weariness even about his clothes. A dark silk scarf was loosely tied under a Byron collar.

There was a look upon the poet's face indescribable. He turned and spoke to the duke, who immediately announced, "Lord Tennyson desires me to say to you that he is pleased and touched by your courtesy, and that it would gratify him very much to rise and speak to you, but he says that it was a great effort for him to be present with us tonight, and he begs you to accept his thanks and excuse him."

The words of the poet were not received with applause. The feeling of the people seemed too deep for that. They were entirely satisfied to have seen him—to have had him sit with them.

It was my very great privilege and honor to be introduced to Lord Tennyson on this occasion and to shake hands with him. It meant a great deal to hold the hand that had penned "The Idylls of the King."

"You will pardon an old man for not rising," he said.

I had recited during the evening an original poem, which I think I would hardly have consented to do had I known that Lord Tennyson was to be present. But when I was presented to him he made very kindly mention of my work.



MARGARET MANTON MERRILL. I said, "My lord, it is a great gratification to me that you should name any effort of mine a poem."

house where he was born still stands. It is a very humble dwelling, for his father, who was the rector of the small parish at Somersby, was poor. He had a large family of children, to all of whom he contrived to give an education.

On the occasion of his attendance at the Royal Scottish Geographical Society Lord Tennyson on his way to his carriage stopped a moment in the reception room, where he was immediately surrounded by a throng of friends.

To one friend Tennyson said, "I am realizing more and more that there is a limit upon human endeavor."

To another he remarked: "I feel a continual sense of extreme weariness. I think I shall soon be 'crossing the bar.'"

The bark of the poet has put out to sea—that limitless sea on which there are no returning ships.

MARGARET MANTON MERRILL.

GEORGIE HAS THE CHOLERA.

And Bill Jonson Quarantines Him in a Mill Pond.

say gorgie, sed bil jonson 2 me laist mond, sint it turbul a bote the colery.

well, he sed, if ani i gets the colery thay turn to grene an di. over in noo york the pepel 2 a fraide they wil a git it cose a bul lot of botes down the river and a bul lot of pepel was on them wot had the colery.

then i sed, wot r we gone 3 du with r aul 3 da.

lets pla colery, bil sed.

al rite, i sed.

then bil sed, u must b a man wot has got the colery an u want 2 land out ov a bote, hay.

yes, i sed.

so we went down 2 the mill pond an we maid a raft or logs an i got on it. i had up a yellor paper on a stik a flag, that was 2 let evri 1 no thay was colery on ti raft. then i maid the raft cum in nere th the shore, an bil sed.

sail ho. whats the naim ov that craft.

this aint no craft—its a raft, i sed.

wel, whats her naim an what port do she cum from.

i sed, its the rotterdam from dontgiven dam.

al wel on bord, yell bil.

al but me, i sed, an im al alone. al the rest ride cumin over.

wats the mater, bil sed.

colery from drinkin jerssee water, i sed.

wel, u wil halv 2 put balk 2 see, sed bil. u cant land here.

so i maid the raft go out in the pond agane, an bil set down a loked acrost the pond out ov 2 old sooly watr bottuls wot he had 4 spi glasses.

i got tired or settin on the raft in a bote 2 hours, an i sed.

bil, i gess we halv plade long enoff, im cumin now an go home 2 supir.

ho, no u dont, sed bil. im the helth of seur ov this port, an u dont land here a sprede the colery among our mist.

i startid 2 cum in, an wat did bil jonson do but throw stones at me. i hit me on the leg an i commenced 2 cri.

i want 2 go home, i cried.

VALE VIVANDIERE.

THE FRENCH ARMY LOSES ITS MOST PICTURESQUE FEATURE.

The Cantiniere System to be Dispensed With—The Vivandiere Was a Peculiar Mixture of the Sister of Mercy and the Opera Bouffe Queen.

[Special Correspondence.] PARIS, Oct. 12.—One of the most picturesque features of the French army is about to disappear, for since the ambulance system has been perfected the "cantiniere" has gradually lost much of her importance, and it is reported that she is now to be dispensed with altogether.

One cannot help regretting this fact for nothing was prettier than the gay and brilliant figure of the French cantiniere as she marched past at the head of the regiment with her short skirts, long red trousers, plumed hat jauntily cocked on one side, and with the little barrel hanging from her shoulder by a tricolor scarf, and which always contained a reviving draft of brandy for her beloved "children," as she called the soldiers of France.



VIVANDIERE, 1798.

No better description has ever been given of the cantiniere than is to be found in Ouida's popular novel, "Under Two Flags." Cigarette, the heroine, is the true type, if somewhat poetized, of this vivacious, joyous, plucky, undaunted and mischievous member of the fair sex, who has for so long a period followed the French army to glory, and, alas, of late years to defeat.

Ever cheerful and bright, the cantiniere has tended on all the battlefields of Europe, fending the wounded, feeding the hungry and moistening the parched lips of the dying from her ever ready little barrel.

She was a peculiar mixture of the sister of mercy and of the opera bouffe queen—a bird with gay plumage, but possessing all the sterling qualities which uphold sinking energies, and infuse new life in those who are weary unto death—namely, resolution, courage touching to tenderness, and complete devotion to suffering humanity.

It was only when calm had been restored and when the prisoners captured in the short combat had been bound hand and foot that the captain of the detachment discovered how this regiment of chasseurs had come to his assistance at so timely a moment.

The cantiniere at the beginning of the engagement had jumped on a horse, and galloping all the way to the encampment of Medeah, situated some fifteen miles distant, had summoned help.

In so doing she may be said to have carried her life in her hand, for it was only with the greatest difficulty that she avoided the Arab outposts. She suffered frightful fatigue in this mad race across the burning sands of the desert, pursued by the awful thoughts that should she not arrive in time her beloved "comrades" would be butchered before she could rescue them, and yet it was she who led the rescuers back to the spot where a handful of brave men had been struggling for six mortal hours with an overpowering number of enraged Arabs, and it was by her energy and well nigh incredible force of endurance that many a valuable existence was saved that night.

The Duchess de la Rochefoucauld, mother-in-law to the young American duchess of the same name, nee Miss Mitchell, is also an ex-cantiniere.

Of her birth and origin it is impossible to speak extensively, inasmuch as she was a foundling, and as soon as she attained womanhood she became a vivandiere or cantiniere of the regiment in which her future husband was serving as officer.

He married her while campaigning in Algeria, and the mesalliance created an enormous sensation at the time. Indeed for a cantiniere to marry a commissioned officer was an absolutely unheard-of occurrence, for the highest rank in which women of her class had until then been accustomed to look for a husband was that of corporal.

As I said above, although in times of peace the business of these vivandieres was restricted to dispensing liquor at the canteen to the men, yet in warfare their duties became of a far more extensive nature, partaking more of those of Sisters of Mercy or ambulance nurses.

They were subjected to a very severe discipline, and being on terms of camaraderie with the men their language was apt to be picturesquely graphic and as highly colored as that of the ordinary trooper.

It may therefore be readily imagined how great was the shock when the head of the ancient and noble house of La Rochefoucauld attempted to introduce into the Faubourg St. Germain the ex-vivandiere whom he had made his duchess. I need scarcely say that her reception by the ancient aristocracy was not of an exceedingly cordial nature, and both she and her two sons have always been subjected to a sort of semiostracism on the part of the other branches of the family.

als, among which are those of the Crimea of Italy and of the Meljiddie. She is another relic of bygone days, a poor cantiniere who followed the then triumphant flag of France from west to east, but who is now forsaken and forgotten, for, cruel as it may appear, the noble women who have sacrificed their whole existence to their country are entitled to receive a pension from the government.

A most touching incident was related to me a few years ago by General Comte de Keratry, and it is so characteristic that I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing it here.

It happened during the Kabylia expeditions at the time of the Algerian insurrection. One day a detachment of zouaves and chasseurs d'Afrique was sent to reconnoiter the position of the enemy far into the desert; the soldier were accompanied by their cantiniere and by her wagon filled with provisions.

On the second night of the march the little troop was suddenly surrounded by 8,000 or 10,000 Arabs. The men took refuge behind a tangle of stunted mimosa. Soon the fray grew fast and furious. Unfortunately but little ammunition had been brought by the French detachment, and after a few hours of hard fighting the officer in command found to his horror that the position could not be held any longer, and that in spite of the almost incredible valor of his men death was staring them in the face.

Being given the force of the attacking party, it was useless to think of attempting a "retreat," and the young captain therefore gave the command to draw swords and to receive on the point of the bayonets the howling, festering crowd of white beribboned Arabs, who, noticing that the enemy's fire was slackening, were evidently making preparations to invade their thorny retreat.

At this truly terrible moment the utterly unexpected sound of French bugles reached the ears of the besieged, and a regiment of chasseurs charged and routed the followers of the prophet in less time than it takes to relate this short episode.

It was only when calm had been restored and when the prisoners captured in the short combat had been bound hand and foot that the captain of the detachment discovered how this regiment of chasseurs had come to his assistance at so timely a moment.

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