

## *Locksley Hall - Sixty Years After*

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Late, my grandson! half the morning have I paced these sandy tracts,  
Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard the curlews call,  
I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless, the divine;  
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish past;  
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last.

'Curse him!' curse your fellow-victim? call him dotard in your rage?  
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she was not wise;  
I remember how you kiss'd the miniature with those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—  
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp'd my neck had flown;  
I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken for her sake?  
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier, earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid child;  
But your Judith—but your worldling—she had never driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the golden ring,  
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease of life,  
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father, mother—be content,  
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is something in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the ground,  
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon the hound.

Cross'd! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the Moslem in his pride;  
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle have stood,  
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we knelt in prayer,  
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she smiled,  
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged husband now,  
I this old white-headed dreamer stooped and kiss'd her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,  
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fall'n away.  
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the chancel stones,  
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight against the foe,  
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden sequence ran,  
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, loyal, lowly, sweet,  
Feminine to her inmost heart, and feminine to her tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body and mind,  
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd down the coast,  
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost at sea;  
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art left to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be left alone,  
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat beside her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true as he was brave;  
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as lord of all,  
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the pall!

Beautiful was death in him who saw the death but kept the deck,  
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the sinking wreck,

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race began,  
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and slew the wife,  
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds beyond the night;  
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just;  
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a growing gloom;  
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,  
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.  
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings would flay  
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild Moguls,  
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest English names,  
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest of the great;  
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd himself a curse:  
Rome of Caesar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller? which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a Gospel, all men's good;  
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the day begun  
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from the still unrisen sun.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the primal clan?  
'Kill your enemy, for you hate him,' still, 'your enemy' was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the helpless horse, and drive  
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at midnight, found at morn,  
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring, born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent Mother! Are we devils? are we men?  
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers  
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how all will end!  
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of the Past,  
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise:  
When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober fact to scorn,  
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, 'Ye are equals, equal-born.'

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.  
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than the Cat.

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated language loom  
Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her? shall we yield?  
Pause, before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial sceptre now,  
Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the suffrage of the plow?

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only you and you,  
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than once, and still could find,  
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised hustings-liar;  
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by right divine;  
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the sickening game;  
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known to all;  
Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them 'old experience is a fool,'  
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek ones in their place;  
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the yelling street,  
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, without the hope,  
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll their ruins down the slope.

Authors—atheist, essayist, novelist, realist, rhyme-ster, play your part,  
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul passions bare;  
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage of your sewer;  
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism,—  
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising race of men;  
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the beast again?

Only 'dust to dust' for me that sicken at your lawless din,  
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce becomes mine age—  
Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall asleep?  
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a deep?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts, for I am gray:  
After all the stormy changes shall we find a changeless May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and Jacquerie,  
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I shall not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,  
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and Truth;  
All the millions one at length, with all the visions of my youth?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt, or deaf or blind;  
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue,  
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,  
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,  
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thousands millions, then—  
All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late or soon?  
Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this day and at this hour,  
In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years ago—  
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you see her now—  
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the seeming-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the dune, the grass!  
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun himself will pass.

Venus near her ! smiling downward at this earthlier earth of ours,  
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of all good things.  
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peoples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour or in Mars,  
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and madness, lust and spite,  
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so silver-fair,  
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, 'Would to God that we were there'?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the immeasurable sea,  
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,  
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?  
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword, 'Evolution' here.

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,  
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;  
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,  
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,  
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—

Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier by and by,  
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the human soul;  
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in the Whole.

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Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-guarded gate.  
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you, you come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shatter'd wheel? a vicious boy!  
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,  
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,  
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,  
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,  
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your 'forward,' yours are hope and youth, but I—  
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now into the night;  
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer of the dawn?  
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be  
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain her earthly-best,  
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course of Time will swerve,  
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson! Death and Silence hold their own.  
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest, rustic Squire,  
Kindly landlord, boon companion — youthful jealousy is a liar,

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the madness from your brain.  
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have not lived in vain.

Youthful! youth and age are scholars yet but in the lower school,  
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are less and less:  
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideousness!

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing the Locksley shield,  
Till the peasant cow shall butt the 'Lion passant' from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old Poetry, passing hence,  
In the common deluge drowning old political common-sense!

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have fled!  
All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on the dead.



All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom disappears,  
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of eighty years.

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In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his grave—  
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all the mouldering bricks—  
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of driving showers—  
Peep the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Here to-night! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll the Chapel bell!  
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, 'I have loved thee well.'

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come to claim his bride,  
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd, and started from my side—

Silent echoes! you, my Leonard, use and not abuse your day,  
Move among your people, know them, follow him who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier brother men,  
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him? who shall swear it cannot be?  
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle with the game:  
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the Powers of Ill,  
Strewing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine.  
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—  
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the Past.  
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will bear the pall;  
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of Locksley Hall.