

BALLADE OF LAWN TENNIS

[WE have long held Mr. Swinburne and Mr. W. S. Gilbert to be the greatest poets of all time. This attempt to combine their metres and styles ought consequently to produce the finest poem of all time. We affirm unhesitatingly that it has !]

In the godlike golden glory of the vast irremeable
insuperable weather

(Where those perfectly beastly bad Rembrandt
effects are, over by the sunset that looks so very
much as if to-morrow would be wet)

They have bridled the sun with a beautiful bit of
black and purple clouds, to tie the Poor up in an
intolerable tether,

(It's enough to make a 'eathen slave, 'ow much
more a gennelman as 'as allus been a gennelman
and a free-born son of Brittainia's 'earts of oak and
no negro fret.)

Notwithstanding boys beautiful with youth bounce in
the efflorescent sunlight two each sweet side of a
maiden's forelock worked into a semblance of a net.

Mr Swinburne is a person who can't say a thing
straight out, you know. What we're driving at
(a little obscurely, you'll say) but certainly
driving, driving furiously like Ahab or one of those
ridiculous characters of which we hear so much
and see so little, is to point out the analogy of
lawn-tennis and life in a light and humorous way
which even on the most blasé of Freshmen will be
unlikely to pall.

I will quote you the Walt that was Whitman, the
Wilde that was Oscar, the Vincent O'Sullivan, paean

and chant of the classical world, songs from America
due to the lyre of the Harte that was Bret.

And all these estimable personages, very useful in
their way, but to be strenuously opposed if they
should endeavor to put their oar into morals,
religion, or more important still, politics, say as
with one voice (of course we do not insinuate any
charge of plagiarism) in other words, substantially
this, that is to say of course it must be put mystic-
ally, because if a truth is important, it should be
the duty of every thinking man to conceal it from
the masses, this, I say, that the score of life (what-
ever the score at Tennis may be, that doesn't
matter) is at Love-all.

O Gilbert gyrates like a grouse in the green of the
horrible heather,

(Mr Swinburne cannot abide my straightforward
English (that's one to me) way of talking, though
his morality is imported and perfectly well known
to be as black as jet)

But, he's right in the main, though he does so lovingly
bleat and so blether,

(If I do bore him, I'm not in a disgusting music
hall set!)

Though he chatter and chortle and chuckle, at last
to the point he will get,

Which as I have previously observed is to make it
perfectly plain to the initiated, whether by force of
language or mere loudness of call,

That this truth is a type of true triumph beyond
the bad odds of a bet,

In fact I won't take your money (the first law of betting is that you mayn't bet on a certainty) so perfectly convinced by this time are all wise men that the score of life is at Love-all.

So we twain will sing together ;—

Spring regilds her coronet ;

Summer comes and don't go neither,

[This line is neither grammar nor rhyme, I'm afraid ; it's my mistake entirely, I took a perfectly absurd word to begin with, and after getting as far as this it would be a pity to turn back ; the rhymes'll get worse for certain, so don't be surprised if they do, but I haven't lost hope of sticking to grammar yet.]
It is goodly and glad to see Gilbert express his poetic regret.

I can find nothing better to add than that the son of Kish was Saul : —

Good Gilbert's forgotten agin ! The piece of advice he had in his mind was “ Trust Heaven and distrust Baphomet ! ”

And a very good piece of advice it was too (Chorus please !) The score of life is at Love-all.

ENVOI

Nothing is like leather.

The rhyme is passable—a task by no means small.

Though its connection is certainly not obvious—still our cap has lost no feather :—

Done it, by Jupiter ! We can only say farewell,

Gentle reader, impressing on you the truth (put in
Tennis language because this ballade is all about
Tennis) that the score of life is at Love-all.