

Foreword

By ROWLAND L. COLLINS

STUDENTS OF Alfred Tennyson's poetry often become seriously interested in the details of his life, because so many of his poems are clearly products of specific biographical situations. It is well known that the poet's childhood and youth were spent in a remote Lincolnshire hamlet, under the influence of a neurotic, well-educated father, a deeply pious mother, and a tyrannous grandfather. In these years Alfred developed his knowledge of the phenomena of nature, his appreciation for the varying moods of landscape, his sophistication and excitement about reading and writing, and his delight in meditation. He shared this growth with six brothers and four sisters. Sir Charles Tennyson, the poet's grandson, has here for the first time brought together the important details of the lives of each of Tennyson's brothers and sisters.

In a curious way, because these ten Tennysons all share with their more famous brother not only physical characteristics, but psychological quirks, religious convictions, and philosophical obsessions, their lives tell us a good deal about his. For instance, the brooding and speculative turn of mind, which is shown so frequently in Tennyson's poetry, appears not as a unique characteristic, but almost as a shared experience. Most of Tennyson's brothers and sisters show, at least to some extent, a delight in the by-ways of spiritual and mystical experience and a tendency to morbid preoccupations. The whole family reveals childhood roots in the Gothic Revival. But in their shared eccentricities, Alfred's moods,

convictions, and writings appear the more clearly touched with genius.

The information which Sir Charles presents is drawn from three main sources. Several of the anecdotes have already been published, but in widely divergent places. Family traditions and records are the second primary source. The third is the large group of Tennyson family letters now preserved in The Lilly Library at Indiana University. These papers, described more fully in the appended catalog, contain letters from almost all of Tennyson's brothers and sisters. In one sense, therefore, the description of the Lilly collections is an elaborate footnote to Sir Charles's essay.

The following list of names and dates should be helpful in clarifying the intricacies of Sir Charles's narrative.

THE SOMERSBY TENNYSONS

Children of George Clayton Tennyson (1778-1831) and Elizabeth Fytche (1781-1865), who were married 6 August 1805

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>Death</i>
Frederick	5 June 1807	1839 Maria Giuliotti (d. 22 January 1884)	26 February 1898
Charles	4 July 1808	24 May 1836 Louisa Sellwood (d. 20 May 1879)	25 April 1879
Alfred	6 August 1809	13 June 1850 Emily Sellwood (d. 10 August 1896)	6 October 1892
Mary	11 September 1810	7 July 1851 Alan Ker (d. 20 March 1885)	4 April 1884
Emilia	25 October 1811	24 January 1842 Captain Richard Jesse, R.N.	24 January 1887
Edward	January 1813		1890
Arthur	12 May 1814	22 May 1860 Harriet West (d. 17 June 1881) 7 December 1882 Emma Louisa Maynard (d. 31 August 1919)	27 June 1899

Septimus	10 September 1815	8 September 1866
Matilda	13 September 1816	1913
Cecilia	10 October 1817	14 October 1842 18 March 1909 Edmund Law Lushington, D.C.L. (d. 13 July 1893)
Horatio	25 September 1819	16 April 1857 2 October 1899 Charlotte Maria Elwes (d. 31 October 1868) 8 December 1870 Catherine West