

THE SOMERSBY TENNYSONS

By CHARLES TENNYSON

DR. GEORGE CLAYTON TENNYSON, rector of the remote parishes of Somersby and Bag Enderby in Lincolnshire, produced a remarkable family before he died in 1831, a worn out, disappointed, drink-shattered wreck of fifty-three years. It wasn't only the extraordinary longevity of his seven sons and four daughters — the average length of life of the whole eleven was over eighty years — nor their appearance, which was far more Spanish than English. All, with the exception of Frederick, the eldest, were tall, lean, swarthy, and aquiline, in strong contrast to the bluff, blond, English comeliness of their grandfather, George Tennyson of Bayons Manor, from whose never fully explained antipathy to their father their misfortunes and no doubt many of their peculiarities sprang.

The rector's eleven children didn't look like other people and they certainly didn't behave like other people. William Allingham, for example, observed that they all shared a manner "peculiar to the family, at once dignified, odd, very easy and natural." They all used the English language with a choice precision, very unlike the slipshod slang of ordinary conversation, yet their talk never seemed precious or affected, and most, if not all, of them retained through life a marked Lincolnshire accent. All had a passion for fine literature, reading poetry with voices of great power and with an exquisite appreciation of rhythm, melody, and dramatic values. Almost all of the eleven brothers and sisters wrote verse,

though only the three eldest, Frederick, Alfred, and Charles, ever published; all were eccentric, untidy, and absent-minded; all had a strong mystical tendency combined with a marked sense of humour and a habit of saying whatever was in their minds, with apparent indifference to its possible effects upon the hearer — “thinking outside their heads,” as a friend described it. Yet so evident was their innocence and sincerity that their candour rarely gave offence. Edward FitzGerald summed up their strange otherworldliness when he wrote “all Tennysons are dear to me — I suppose because I see so many small natures I needs must draw to the large.” There was, of course, a reverse side to the coin. All the brothers and sisters seem to have suffered to a greater or less degree from neuroses, resulting in varying degrees of hypochondria and occasional religious obsession.

Not the least singular feature of the life stories of these singular beings is that, with the exception of Alfred, who, after living from hand to mouth until he was over forty, earned a considerable fortune by his poetry, and Charles, who took orders and succeeded to a family living, none of them ever earned a penny piece or did a hand’s turn of work. Frederick had no need to earn, for he inherited a considerable property in his middle twenties, but the others succeeded somehow or other in passing through long lives with nothing to support them except the two or three thousand pounds reluctantly bequeathed to them by their grandfather.

As very little has been published about any of the family except Alfred, I have tried to piece together from my own scanty recollections and what I have been able to glean from other sources, some picture of a group of human beings whose lives and characters are, I think, of interest, both for

themselves and for the light which they throw on the temperament of the most illustrious of the brotherhood — Alfred.

Before describing the less known members of the family, I must say something about the two eldest brothers Frederick and Charles, of whom something has already been written in the various biographies of Alfred and in *Tennyson and his Friends* by Hallam, Lord Tennyson (London, 1911), *Glimpses of Tennyson* by Agnes Weld (London, 1902), *Memories of the Tennysons* by H. D. Rawnsley (Glasgow, 1900), and in the Prefaces to editions of and selections from the poems of the two brothers themselves. To Frederick there are many references in the voluminous correspondence of Edward Fitzgerald who was his lifelong friend.

Frederick differed from his brothers in temperament and in the circumstances of his life as much as he did in personal appearance. While the other boys were educated at home, except for brief intervals at the Louth Grammar School, Frederick, being destined to inherit a considerable property at Grimsby, was sent to Eton, where he became a prominent cricket and football player and “captain of the Oppidans,” with the reputation of being the best scholar the school had turned out for many years. Unfortunately he had a violent temper, and his resentment of authority often brought him into conflict with the headmaster, the redoubtable Dr. John Keate. At Cambridge he soon made his mark, winning the University prize for a Greek ode, but he entirely declined to take any interest in the normal studies, which were chiefly mathematical and linguistic. His attitude to authority may be inferred from the description of a contemporary who wrote of him as “sinister in aspect and terrific in manner, even to the discomfiture of elderly dons.” Before he had completed his second year, he was rusticated for refusing to go to chapel

or to do the impositions set him as a punishment; and he did not take his degree until 1832, when he was twenty-five years old.

Dr. Edward Maltby, afterward Bishop of Durham, a cousin of Frederick's mother, who had a long talk with him after his rustication, came to the conclusion that the trouble was largely due to the young man's manner, which seemed "always *distract* and more like an inhabitant of Laputa than one of England." He felt that, though Frederick was eccentric and wrong-headed, his moral principles were excellent and his talents so great that there was no saying to what heights he might attain if wisely and properly directed.

In Hallam Tennyson's notebook, from which I quoted at length in an article on "Tennyson's Conversation" (*The Twentieth Century*, CLXV [1959]), I find a brief record of a curious and no doubt characteristic episode in Frederick's Cambridge career. It seems that Alfred, who came up to the University two years after him, had fallen foul of the then Lord Kerry, whom he had criticised openly at a party in Frederick's rooms, at which Lord Kerry was present, though Alfred, owing to his extreme short sight, had not recognized him. Lord Kerry was furious and announced his intention of cutting both brothers in future. Next time Frederick met Kerry in the street he went up to him, publicly embraced him and was so extravagantly and bearishly affectionate that the offended peer was obliged to swallow his pride and to be at least remotely civil thereafter for fear of a repetition of the experience. Yet in spite of Frederick's violence, shyness, and eccentricity (he once described himself as a "person of gloomy insignificance and unsocial momomania"), he seems to have been a popular figure at the University. It was the same at home. So long as his unfortunate father lived, Frederick's

unbridled temper increased the tension and unhappiness of life at the Rectory. When Dr. Tennyson died and the family found themselves directly dependent on their grandfather, whose treatment of them they so bitterly resented, Frederick's interventions intensified the old man's dislike and distrust of Somersby and all its works. Even George, the eldest of the younger generation at Bayons and the most sympathetic to the Somersby family, sometimes found his sympathy sorely strained, and complained that he was tired of being "brow-beaten by a northern bear." Nevertheless, Bayons continued to feel some (perhaps reluctant) affection for cousin Frederick.

Frederick, like Alfred, eluded all efforts to make him adopt a profession after his father's death, and soon after his grandfather died (in 1835) he set off for Italy where he was to make his home for the next 23 years. At first he seems to have travelled about Europe and the Near East — "Travel," he said, in a typically resounding phrase, "makes pleasure solemn and pain sweet." Then, in 1839 he married Maria Giuliotti, daughter of the chief magistrate of Siena, and settled in Florence. His choice of Florence was determined by the great passion of his life — music; he had found no other place where music could be had so good and at so low a price. He first rented a villa — the villa Torregiani — on the Fiesole Road, just outside the city; supposedly, the house had been planned by Michelangelo. Here, though according to his own account he had at that time an income of only four hundred pounds a year from the Grimsby property, he could arrange for a complete opera orchestra to come out and play to him of an evening as he sat alone in his armchair. Later he moved to a city palazzo with a fine garden; and, as his family increased, he found it necessary to reduce expenditure,

only having a company of fourteen players to make music to him and a few chosen friends.

Sometime in the 1840's he seems to have experienced some kind of religious conversion. Hearing that his sister Mary had become a member of Swedenborg's Church of the New Jerusalem, he began to study Swedenborg's writings and became deeply impressed by them. "After this," he wrote many years later, "I never ceased to feel, yea to know, that I am ever in the presence of God" and "to realise the warning of St. Paul — Pray without ceasing." At about the same time he became a fervent British Israelite and a believer in spiritualism. However, his more youthful ways were not wholly eradicated. One day early in 1851 he went out for an evening stroll, forgot the time, and got back to find the Porta Romagna closed for the night. When the porter refused to unlock for him, pleading government orders, Frederick retaliated with a torrent of abuse, in the course of which he characterised the government as "porcelli." This was too much. The civic guard was summoned and he was marched off to prison, to be released next day at the intercession of the Irish dramatist and politician, Richard Lalor Sheil, who had just been appointed British Minister to the court of Tuscany.

Very soon after this, Frederick made the acquaintance of Robert and Elizabeth Browning. As the Brownings had lived in Florence on and off since 1846, their late meeting shows how secluded Frederick's life had been. He quickly became an immense favourite with both Robert and Elizabeth, who were deeply impressed by his earnestness, truthfulness, and simplicity. "Selfhood — the *proprium* — is not in him," wrote Elizabeth. They were impressed, too, with his many remarkable talents and acquirements, which only his extreme shyness prevented him from putting to some striking use.

Robert found his conversation very rich and suggestive, and summed him up very acutely when he said that he seemed to possess all the qualities of his brother Alfred — only in solution. “One was always expecting them to crystallize but they never did.”

Frederick did, however, “crystallize” to some extent in an unending flow of long, exquisitely written, and beautifully expressed — if prolix — letters to chosen friends. At the same time he maintained a poetic output of considerable volume, which fully bore out Browning’s acute criticism. His verse is always sincere, fluent, and melodious, with an ingenuous largeness of vision, which is at once grand and childish. “Organ tones rolling among the mountains,” Alfred called them, and the description is a just one, though expressed with a brother’s partiality. The poems roll grandly along, but they are mere *tones* — inexpressively melodious. In Robert Browning’s phrase, they seldom crystallize. In 1853, he had a bulky volume of lyrics privately printed, and in the following year, 1854, under pressure from his friends (including Edward FitzGerald), he published, through John W. Parker of West Strand, a volume containing about sixty-five lyrics of varying lengths. But though he continued to write as freely as ever, he did not publish again for thirty-six years.

All the brothers and sisters were in some degree valetudinarians in spite of their longevity. “All we Tennysons have weak health but strong constitutions,” so one of them ingeniously expressed this paradox. Frederick was no exception. He would carry chestnut twigs in his pocket as a cure for rheumatism, and by 1856 he had begun to find Florence too exciting for his nerves. He tried Pisa and Genoa, but without success. Then in 1859 he settled in Jersey where he was to make his home for the next thirty-seven years.

In Jersey his eccentricities increased. Spiritualism and Swedenborgianism became obsessions. He grew intensely interested in Freemasonry and for a time was deeply influenced by Henry Melville, a neighbour in the island, who claimed to have discovered a long forgotten science of astrology in which the true explanation of Masonic symbolism was to be found. He even travelled to London with Melville in 1874 and spent several disheartening months in an endeavour to impress the importance of the discovery on the Duke of Leinster, then Grand Master of Ireland. During this visit Edward Fitzgerald saw Frederick for the last time and described him as "quite grand and sincere" in his enthusiasm for Melville's scheme "as in all else; with the faith of a gigantic child — pathetic and yet humourous to consort with."

Frederick seems to have lived in even greater seclusion in Jersey than at Florence. Alfred and Charles visited him from time to time, and in 1886 Robert Browning called on him. Browning was delighted to find him just as of old, pleasant and genial to the last degree, but felt sadly his growing eccentricity and the seclusion in which he lived. "I groan over such a noble and accomplished man being as good as lost to us all," he wrote.

Other glimpses of Frederick's life in Jersey suggest that the old Adam kept very much alive in him. One shews him raging up and down the stairs shouting out, "where are my trousers, where are my trousers! I have forty pairs and I can only find thirty-five!" It seems that his eldest son, Julius, who was reputed the strongest man in the British Army, inherited the paternal temper and tendency to fits of violence. When the storm raged too heavily, however, Frederick would emerge from his study which he seldom left; his tall stooping figure would loom through the doorway for a moment, his

long white hair hanging almost to his shoulders — “Enough! to your room,” and Julius would quickly and silently withdraw.

Frederick retained, up to extreme old age, his mental as well as his physical vigour. Until well into the 'eighties he continued to play and improvise on the piano and a small organ, and he went on writing verse, though he did not publish again until 1890, thirty-six years after the issue of his first volume. He then brought out *The Isles of Greece*, a collection of blank verse poems based mainly on the story of the poetess Sappho. In 1891 he followed this up with a volume entitled *Daphne and Other Poems*, another collection of blank verse adaptations from Greek mythology. Four years later (in 1895) he published *Poems of the Day and Year*, a selection from his volumes of 1853 and 1854 with a few additional poems. About this time his sight began to fail and in 1896 he left Jersey to live with his son Julius in London, where he died in 1898 in his ninety-first year.

Both in character and in the circumstances of his life, Charles Tennyson, the brother next in age, presents an extraordinary contrast to Frederick. Born in 1808, Charles, like Alfred, was educated at home until he went to Cambridge, except for a few years at Louth Grammar School between the ages of eight and twelve. He was the closest in spirit of all the brothers to Alfred, and the most generally beloved for his frank and genial disposition, winning manners, and friendly sense of humour. He contributed nearly half the *Poems by Two Brothers*, published in 1827, rather more being by Alfred and only four by Frederick. He went up to Trinity at the same time as Alfred, with a Bell scholarship, published in 1830 a slim volume of sonnets which earned the commendation of Leigh Hunt and Coleridge, and took his degree in 1832. In 1834 he inherited a small estate from his great uncle,

Sam Turner of Caistor, whose surname he took and always afterwards used in substitution for that of Tennyson. He was ordained in 1835 and became in the same year vicar of the little hamlet of Grasby on the bleak north-west corner of the Lincolnshire wolds. In 1836 he married Louisa Sellwood, whose sister Emily was fourteen years later to become the wife of Alfred. One of the few points of resemblance between Charles and Frederick was in the timing of their literary output. Frederick published nothing between 1854 and 1890 (an interval of 36 years); Charles maintained a silence of thirty-four years between 1830 and 1864. Moreover, both brothers followed up their second publications with two subsequent volumes, Frederick in 1891 and 1895, Charles in 1868 and 1873. In Charles's case the primary cause of this intermission was tragic and overshadowed the whole middle period of his life. As he grew to manhood he could not escape the demon which seemed to be in wait for all the Tennyson brothers. Soon after leaving Cambridge he began to suffer from some illness which caused severe neuralgic pains. A doctor recommended laudanum. In a few months he had become an opium addict. He recovered sufficiently to marry in 1836, but soon afterwards he again succumbed to the opium habit. His wife struggled devotedly to free him. She succeeded, but at the cost of her own mental health. She had to be placed under medical care and it was not until 1849 that she and her husband could resume their life together, and settle down in his vicarage at Grasby which they never left except for short holiday visits until Charles's death in 1879.

Charles's neurosis never made him egotistical or introspective. Except for the unsettled early years of his marriage, he gave up his whole life to the care of his remote rural parish. His devotion to this work was complete. The last thing he

ever considered was his own interest. Not long after he returned to the parish in 1850, he found that he had been robbed of a large sum of money by a fraudulent agent. He was with great difficulty persuaded to take proceedings against the man. These were successful and he recovered a considerable sum of money. The whole of this he expended in rebuilding the church and the schools, and his friends noticed that he always afterwards spoke of the fraudulent agent as though *he* had been the ill-used person. Indeed Charles's charity was all embracing. He loved his parishioners, most of whom were rough and illiterate almost to brutality, and his sensibilities always remained open to the pathos and humour of their lives as was his purse to their often unprincipled importunity. He loved his garden and paddock, the woodland walk which bounded them, and the rather bleak countryside by which they were surrounded. He loved children, birds, animals, even insects. He observed ceaselessly and with acute sensibility, and he never made, like Frederick, the mistake of escaping into the clouds on the wings of a congenital fluency. In consequence, the 342 sonnets published in the collected edition issued by Kegan Paul after his death (1880), are all sincerely felt and sensitively finished; a third of them, at least, reached a high poetic standard. In fact, they convey a picture of their author more vital and more complete than any outsider's description can hope to do. (See *A Hundred Sonnets* by Charles Tennyson Turner [London, 1960].)

Of the four younger brothers, very much less is known. One, Edward, who was born in 1813, succumbed on the verge of manhood to the neurosis which haunted all the brothers in different degrees. At a comparatively early age, he began to show some poetic talent and a high degree of sensibility. This developed into a state of hypochondria so acute that it

became necessary to place him under restraint from which he could never be released. He died in an asylum in 1890.

Two sonnets by Edward which were published in my article on "J. M. Heath's 'Commonplace Book' " in *The Cornhill Magazine* (CLIII [1936], 430-432), suggest a genuine poetic gift, and this is confirmed by some lines which I have recently discovered in a manuscript book of Mary Tennyson's (now in the Tennyson Collection, at the Usher Gallery, Lincoln). These lines are fragmentary and disconnected and seem clearly to have been written in a condition of considerable mental excitement. They are not signed but they occur in the middle of a series of Edward's poems and I have no doubt that they are by him:

The Sun's rosy laugh met the faint white half
Of the young moon in the West,
And ducklings crouch on their grassy couch
Beside their mother's breast.

Alone I rove, alone I prove
All human pleasure vain,
I sigh for change, there is nothing strange
In this wide world of pain.

Forlorn I pass by the smoking mass
Of chalk and arid clay,
.
Drifts gustily over my way.

The loaded wain o'er the sandy plain
Grates harshly on the wind,
On the causeway near and the thorny [briar?]
Leaves wisps of straw behind.

There drovers urge with painful scourge
A litter of helpless swine,
The loud whip cracks on their galled backs,
Loud bellow the rushing kine.

They toss and rear through excess of fear
And lash their tails around,
The flesh flies cling with their maddening sting,
And rankle the fresh-made wound.

And still the more they plunge and roar
The flesh flies rend their prey
And . . . bees smell the tainted breeze
From . . . borne away.

In proud disdain of his griping chain
With sullen step and slow,
With heavy tread is a strong bull led
Where the valley waters flow.

His heavy tread and his bulky head,
His ample swelling chest,
His strong set neck and his fetlock thick
No trifler dare molest

The fate of Septimus was hardly less tragic than that of Edward. His youth gave promise of a brilliant future. He was tall, strong, handsome, with great personal charm, and some, I think undeniable, poetic talent. The elder brothers loved and admired him, and Arthur, his senior by a year, remembered all his life a summer morning when Frederick and Alfred, after bathing in the brook behind the old rectory at Somersby, had raced about the meadow "chairing" little Septimus between them and "admiring his fair proportions" — little thinking that the child, so beautiful and vital, would be the shortest-lived and the most unhappy of the whole brotherhood. Septimus' neurosis took the form of acute hypochondria and extreme indolence. Many stories of this, half comic, half tragic, were current in the family, and one was repeated with gusto by D. G. Rossetti, who would tell how once, when calling at the Henry Hallams' house in Wimpole Street, he was ushered into the drawing room which

he thought was empty, until a huge, untidy, shaggy figure rose from the hearth rug on which it had been lying at full length, and advanced towards him with outstretched hand, saying "I am Septimus, the most morbid of the Tennysons."

When his father died, Septimus, then sixteen years old, and apparently regarded by his father's trustees as a sharp, clever fellow, was apprenticed to a local land agent. When his grandfather died four years later he became entitled under his will to about three thousand pounds. It seems that he then gave up his apprenticeship to live with his mother. In 1843 he and Arthur went to stay with Frederick in Florence, but he only remained there for two or three years. From that time onwards inertia gained more and more hold on him. His small capital dwindled away. He ceased to write even to his mother, to whom all the family were passionately devoted, and in 1866 he died, at fifty-one, with nothing to show for the brilliant promise of his youth.

Mary Tennyson's manuscript book has a number of sonnets by Septimus. I will quote two to show the scope of his talent. The first, which is dated 13 November 1832, and was therefore written soon after his seventeenth birthday, has a genuine, if rather callow grandeur, and in the last two lines something more. The second was evidently written not long after Septimus had gone to Italy with Frederick, and reflects the intense love of home, which was shared by all the brothers and sisters and is also evident in some of the other poems by Septimus quoted in my article on "J. M. Heath's Common-place Book."

Sonnet

Thou Mighty Being! to whose works the earth
And all that it contains is as a grain
Of sand on the seashore, or drops of rain

Added unto the ocean; ample birth
Of high and holy thought have I, when e'er
I strive to see (what thou wilt not disclose)
In every glowing star that shines more fair
The mystic fountain whence his lustre flows!
What art thou? and who are we that thy Sun
Of righteousness should so distinctly shine
Upon our little world as He hath shone?
Bountiful effluence of love divine!
Perhaps even now (or have we sinn'd alone?)
In that same dewy star thy brow sharp thorns entwine.

Sonnet

I am in the land of beauty and the vine,
Olive and glowing light encircle me,
All that should glad the heart of man is mine
Yet am I not from vain repinings free;
But, longing for my native Isle, would be
Amidst its lowing vales, its bleating hills;
The cold gray slopes, the fertile vales and rills
That run rejoicing to a well-known Sea!
What aileth me? I languish: I am dull:
It vexes me that I may not employ
My pen less feebly on such forms sublime,
Vast forms and vivid colours beautiful,
That should possess my soul with song and joy —
Yet all my heart turns to that colder clime.

Arthur, who was born in 1814 and lived until 1899, narrowly escaped an equally tragic fate. He seems to have been from the first a highly imaginative and nervous boy. When quite a small child he was once discovered groping about under the dining table, and, on being questioned, explained that he was trying to find God's legs. He seems very early to have become the confidant of Alfred, his senior by four years, and, like all the brotherhood, he adored Charles.

Writing on a nostalgic visit to Somersby when he was seventy, he recalled a morning spent perhaps sixty years before with Charles (then a stout fellow "in the hay-day of existence"), leaping backwards and forwards over the brook. An "encouraging shilling" held out by the elder brother stimulated the little boy to an especially broad jump. This shilling he straightway changed into twelve coppers, and sitting on the top of the church bank above the lane opposite the rectory, "sporting and threw these about him, wondering that one little silver shilling should be the father of such a large rolling copper family." Though he never published, I believe he wrote verse intermittently and some lines discovered in Lord Ravensworth's visitors' book over what appears to be his signature, suggest that he had a real poetic talent. The lines relate to an engraving by Bewick:

A gate and a field half ploughed,
A solitary cow,
A child with a broken slate,
A titmouse on the bough.
But where, alas, is Bewick
To tell the meaning now?

He had a very genuine artistic gift also and spent some time as a boy studying under Espin, a well known Lincolnshire artist, at Louth. All the brothers were great doodlers, Alfred and Frederick, I think, specialising in romantic buildings and female heads, Arthur and Horatio in grotesque male heads. There is in the Tennyson Collection at the Usher Gallery, Lincoln, an album filled with drawings and doodles, chiefly I think by Arthur, a feature of which is the great number of comic devils, reminding one of Alfred's *Devil and the Lady*. Arthur must have been a singular boy. When he was summoned for inspection by his grandfather after his father's

death, the old man described him as "idle as a foal," with gestures and twitchings which would make him a subject of ridicule anywhere, and ignorant even of the multiplication table. If Arthur attempted to get into any profession he, like Septimus, seems to have given it up after his grandfather's death and to have gone on living with his mother, first at Somersby and then at High Beech near Epping. According to the reminiscences of the late Henry Evan Smith (1828-1908), the elder Tennyson boys had for many years a close connection with Caistor, which they would visit from time to time, taking rooms in an old house opposite the present Red Lion Hotel. Arthur appears to have gone there a good deal during the later 1830's. Evan Smith described the brothers' keeping aloof from intimate acquaintance and companionship, less from pride than shyness. It was obvious, he says, that, although delightful companions for cultured people and scholars, they were unable, through what was probably an inherited form of indolence, to put forth half their strength, physical or mental, and none of them had the nerve or resolute will required for winning distinction in any profession or competitive form of enterprise. Evan Smith was especially friendly with Arthur Tennyson, who would often have small parties in his rooms, entertaining them with extempore verses and with his skill at acrostics. No doubt the indulgence of their mother was far from beneficial to her unbalanced and erratic offspring. A friend described her sitting in her drawing room at High Beech, after the family had left Somersby, surrounded by her tall sons, all drinking pots of beer. When one of them blew the froth from his brimming pot on to the carpet, she only smiled benignly — "The exuberance of youth — the exuberance of youth."

Such indulgence was particularly bad for poor Arthur, who about this time took seriously to drink. In 1842 he agreed to go for a cure to the Crichton Institution at Dumfries, which seems to have been half lunatic asylum, half hospital for the treatment of nervous diseases. He stayed at the Crichton nearly a year; then, in September of 1843, it was arranged that Frederick, who was on a visit to England, should take him and Septimus back with him to Italy — no doubt in the hope that change of scene might steady the precarious mental balance of the two younger men. This was a generous act, but it is doubtful whether, with his violent temper and reserved habits, Frederick was well suited to so difficult a situation. The little that is known about Arthur's condition during the thirteen years of his stay with Frederick, suggests that the experiment was not altogether a happy one. Robert, afterwards first Earl of Lytton, who came to Florence in 1852 as attaché to his Uncle Henry Bulwer, the British Minister, evidently soon began to hear strange rumours about Arthur. Frederick he no doubt knew through the Brownings, but he failed for a long time to meet the younger brother. On 7 January 1854, he wrote to Mrs. Browning, who was in Rome,

I have made the acquaintance of Arthur T[ennyson] at last, he is not the genius we expected, but in all other respects has fulfilled our wildest anticipations; for he dined with me one evening, got ! and his brother has since requested that he never come up here again. I indeed have a sneaking sympathy for this reprobate, who complains that he is chilled and stunted through the whole nature of him by the frosty atmosphere and Tenarian gloom of his elder brother, whose exhortations, little conciliatory and perhaps somewhat pompous, only exasperate and bewilder, missing altogether their honest aim. (*Letters from Owen Meredith to Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning* [Waco, Texas, 1936], p. 57; also issued as vol. XXXIX of *Baylor Bulletin*.)

When Frederick left Italy, Arthur returned to England. There is some doubt as to the actual date of his return. He himself wrote thirty years later that he had lived with Frederick in Italy for eighteen years. But I am inclined to think this mistaken and to put his return not later than 1859. Whatever the actual date may have been, it seems probable that he went before long to stay with Charles at Grasby and that Charles's influence proved more beneficial than Frederick's. It seems also that soon after his return from Italy he experienced the religious conversion that came to Frederick and most of the other members of the family at some time in their lives. In June 1860, he married Harriet West, sister of the vicar of the adjacent parish of Wrawby, and it is clear that he had for some time past been working devotedly among the sick and poor of the parish.

Arthur's marriage brought him into close relations with Horatio, who had been a young man of eighteen when the family left Somersby. Horatio displayed in an extreme degree the otherworldliness of the Tennysons. When his father died in 1831 there had been a proposal to put him into the navy or merchant service, but it was found — to his mother's great relief — that he was too young. Then, when the family left Somersby in 1837, there was talk of his going with Septimus to Demarara in search of fortune, but this idea also had been given up and some time afterwards Horatio took his small capital to Tasmania. He soon found that he was not cut out for a farmer and in the middle of June 1843, he was back in England seeming, as FitzGerald observed after meeting him in London, "rather unused to the planet." "One day," writes Fitz, "he was to go to Cheltenham, another to Plymouth; then he waited for an umbrella he thought he had left somewhere. So where he is now I have no notion."

The next fourteen years Horatio appears to have spent chiefly at his mother's home at Cheltenham, with occasional visits to Alfred and Charles. During these visits he became attached to Charlotte Elwes, sister-in-law of the vicar of Bigby and Wrawby, near Grasby, and member of a family which owned a house at St. Lawrence, Isle of Wight, and were on friendly terms with Alfred and Emily Tennyson. Horatio married Charlotte Elwes at St. Lawrence in 1857, just before Arthur returned from Italy. From then onwards Arthur and Horatio were often in the Grasby district where their strange personalities became legendary. The visits grew more frequent after the death of their mother in 1865, for her house in Hampstead (now 75 Flask Walk) continued until the end of her life the chief centre and meeting place of the family.

The two brothers were alike in many ways and they had much in common with both Charles and Alfred. Like them, they both, as a friend once observed, combined an extraordinary childlikeness with an intense realization of the verities of the spiritual world and a consequent slight hold on what the majority of men think important. They had also, both of them, Alfred's keen eye for, and deep appreciation of, natural beauty. Physically their resemblance to him was remarkable: they were both dark, tall, aquiline, with a fine growth of hair and beard, Arthur having the closest resemblance in feature, but being shorter and slighter than Alfred, while Horatio was well over six feet in height. I have been lucky enough to secure from the late Mrs. Gould of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, whose father was Rector of Owmbly cum Searby in those days, and who remembered Charles, Arthur, and Horatio, some memories of them. So far as I can, I will give the description in her own words:

Tennysons are not easy to describe. There was both a natural grandeur and simplicity about them; a streak of impish mischief and a love of the gruesome. Delightfully unconventional, they were never like ordinary people; even their dress and their walk seemed "different." They might ramble, stalk, saunter or stride over the country-side and be sure of a warm welcome wherever they went, for their genuine friendliness made them universally liked.

Sometimes their remarks were not complimentary; as long as it was a Tennyson who said it, all was well, for they never intentionally hurt anyone's feelings. A Tennyson could "steal the horse."

I well remember Mr. Turner, who was often seen in his parish; often hatless, wrapped in a big cloak and enveloped too in a sort of scholarly benevolence. When talking to my mother there was often a sprinkling of laughter which was good to hear. When 3 years old I was taken to a Grasby farm. Out came a gobbling turkey and I thought it was bleeding when I saw its red feathers. I screamed with fright and dear Mr. Turner hoisted me up in his arms and hugging me tight against his *unshaved chin*, carried me all the way back to the vicarage. The great events in the summer were the Village School Treats. The one at Grasby was the most popular, because Mr. Turner always took such an active interest in all the activities of the young people.

In the winter spelling bees brought the neighbours together; but Mr. Turner was more ambitious and started poetical bees. There was a final competition, judged by Mr. Turner, and he awarded the first prize to my mother, much to our delight.

In the early days of photography my brother Charles longed to take a photograph of Charles Turner. To his surprise he readily agreed and brought a chair out into the garden, quite ready to pose. At the last, most critical, moment he made a comical and hideous grimace, and though Charles was disappointed he enjoyed the fun and thought it "so like Mr. Turner."

When the Turners went away for a change, Horatio and his family stayed in Grasby vicarage. He had been at school at Louth with my father and he used to stride over to Searby church on week days to read the lesson. I thought he was the most beautiful man I had ever seen: he must have been well over 6 feet and very distinguished looking.

Mr. Arthur Tennyson I remember very vividly. My brother and I looking out of the schoolroom window would sometimes see him floating down the garden path, his picturesque figure clothed in an ample cloak with a large collar open at the neck and a wide artistic hat over his somewhat unkempt locks. He helped himself along with a tall clothes prop, or so we thought. Once when we were racing round the house at top speed we came hurtling into the large porch, there to find Mr. Arthur quite at home placidly smoking his pipe, and not at all perturbed by our boisterous entrance. He would never knock or ring but just wander in, for he knew he was always welcome and would join us in any meal that was going. My sister Emily had golden hair and blue eyes; when he went up to her he asked her quite sternly, "Emily, what are you doing here? You ought to be in heaven."

One warm summer day, hearing that the famous strawberry bed at Bigby rectory was ripe, Mr. Arthur strode over to investigate. No one saw him come and he made straight for the strawberry bed. He was never given to exerting himself very much and he found it far too exhausting to stoop down to get a strawberry and then to straighten himself up and eat it, so he just lay full length on the strawberry bed and propelled himself along biting strawberries as he went. This was too much for young Arthur Field, the Rector's schoolboy son and Arthur's godson, who saw him from a window. He ran out and got the large strawberry net and pegged the big bird firmly down under the net.

By supper time all seemed forgiven and Arthur Field was chattering happily about his day in Brigg and how he had seen the pretty Miss Cotterell. "Is she really pretty?" Mr. Tennyson asked. "Why yes," said Arthur, "she is called the Belle of Brigg." "I would like to see for myself," he said, "and go to Brigg tomorrow." So he stayed the night at Bigby rectory and in the cool of the evening he stalked down the road to Brigg. Supper at the Cotterells in those days was by flattering candlelight. Coming down to breakfast next morning Arthur Tennyson said "Good morning" to Miss Cotterell, and after closer scrutiny, "You are not nearly so pretty as I thought you were last night."

Horatio seems, like Arthur, to have undergone some kind of religious conversion in middle life. Like Arthur, he devoted much time and emotional energy to visiting the sick

and unfortunate, often to the serious detriment of his own health, and it was characteristic that at lunch and dinner he would stow away in his pockets generous portions of any dish which he particularly fancied, for distribution in due course to his less fortunate friends. Sometimes he would forget to distribute his bounty and would go cheerfully about his business radiating a powerful odour of fish. He had what Arthur sometimes lost through the stress of his struggle with an unhappy temperament, a keen sense of humour and a happy knack of description — as, for example, when he described some children singing carols in a poor street as “gutter cherubim,” and said of the harsh voice of a preacher “that it was like a tiger licking a sore place.” The artist friend who asked his opinion of two panels which she was painting for a reredos, must have been rather disconcerted at his response. He looked at the panels silently for quite a long time and then said dreamily, “After all, angels are only a clumsy form of poultry.”

He was never happier than when writing long hieroglyphic letters to his children (in one of these I have counted over fifty tiny and very skilful drawings on three small pages of script) or making puns and riddles with Alfred’s two small boys (born in 1852 and 1854). Occasionally an outrageous example would creep into a letter, as in the following postscript to the massively built Frederick. “I gave you a dirty riddle in my last; here is another from the same manufactory — ‘why should your *podex* rank among aerial phenomena rather than mine?’ Answer: ‘Because it is a meteor’ (Sc. meatier).”

Horatio’s letters, serious and otherwise, admirably reflect his personality. They are all dashed off on the spur of the moment, without pause for choice of phrase or self con-

scious adaptation. Here is a vivid and powerful bit of description, written while he was staying with his sister Cecilia Lushington at Glasgow in December 1854:

You would have been amazed had you witnessed a quarrel here t'other day between an old scotch hag, blind with wrath and drink, a mere compound of clouts and curses, and a policeman, but the combat was very unequal and the latter utterly discomfited made a hasty retreat, thoroughly bespattered with abuse, and, to the great amusement of the bystanders, as the old beldame withdrew, she shot at him over her shoulder a gleam of murderous hate as tho' to have set her teeth in his heart and taken a long pull at his life's blood would have afforded her a keener relish than anything that could have been offered her in the whole compass of heaven and earth.

Thirty years later comes a lively description of a rough day at Tetford near Somersby where Horatio and Arthur were making a nostalgic visit:

The cottage stands on the Horncastle and Salmonby side of the little hill leading down in to Tetford, and so, being on highish ground, comes in for a full share of the equinoxes at this present flinging about the pendent tresses of a weeping ash in the corner of the damp little parallelogram called a garden in front of the house; there is also a single standard rose just opposite the window waggling its head at me with the same sort of paralytic motion as used to affect the head of Mrs. John Fytche not quite so sweet and now gathered.

Here is another vivid Somersby reminiscence — this time personal: "I am 66 next September — what a distance from the time when Mrs. ——— twitched up her lip in a tearful spasm by the old pig sty when I was some 10 or at most 12 years old, on hearing that I was likely to go to sea. 'Its a' vara sad,' as Carlyle once remarked to Alfred with face upturned to the deep starlit sky."

Now and then there is a flash of sarcasm — very seldom, however. Horatio was too kindly, except where pretentiousness and insincerity stirred his bile:

What fine fun Val's letter is. How exactly it seems to jump with what I had conceived of the man. I think I see him bending his weak profile over the paper as he writes and thinking he has done it! "from thence you must go to Venice — yes, beautiful Venice." O, Lord save us! what a trashy, thin, sky blue, butter milk style is this. "Then you come on to Rome and there I leave you." "Sir, you cannot take from me anything that I would more willingly part withal [see Hamlet in one of his interviews with Polonius]."

Usually Horatio was too much alive to his own shortcomings to be other than sympathetic to the faults of others. Now and then there is a flash of that fear of "the something after death" which bedevilled so much of nineteenth-century religious feeling:

The terror of the next world takes hold of me at times and the thought that all that seems so fair here will look so black there, and the dread possibility of deceiving ones own heart here. I cannot, as some do, look exclusively at the mercy of God: surely he is just also, or how could he be God? Surely tho' beyond his mercy, whether seen of us or not, there rises with ever more and more threatening aspect, his tremendous justice ready to fall upon such as have rejected HIS LOVE.

These fears were no doubt based on Horatio's consciousness of the weaknesses of the Tennysonian temperament, to which he felt that he himself had too often succumbed before his "conversion." This comes out clearly in the many letters which he addressed to Frederick's second son Alfred, the scape-grace of the family. Here are two examples:

Yours is a nature, as once was my own, very prone to self indulgence, and every gratification of the senses nails a man down to the earth more and more, till he lies prostrate and utterly incapable of raising himself to higher things, as complete a captive as Gulliver who fell asleep and so suffered himself to be chained down by the pygmies. Giants as we all of us are by virtue of our spiritual endowments, yet if we allow these to slumber, the small pigmy passions, the little self indulgences, will render us utterly incapable of rising to our full spiritual stature.

There are certain natures whose upward development is sadly hindered by a certain indolence, and, what so often accompanies indolence, a softness too apt to slide into sensuality. Don't take offence at the word, a man's own self love would rather have the word modified into sensuosity, a word there is no need to say I have coined for the occasion — but it is better to give things their true names.

Horatio was deeply disturbed by Frederick's attitude towards the Christian faith and in countless letters he urges the elder brother to think deeply of the real meaning of the great Christian festivals and dogmas — particularly those connected with the birth of Christ, his resurrection and atonement. Here are two examples:

The most astounding fact that history has ever recorded GOD INCARNATE, to a great percentage probably a mere myth, to many more only a pleasant song, to some a mockery, to the few a FACT, and the few are chiefly those who in the place of criticising have learnt to *do* the WILL OF GOD. For I believe it is only for such that God vouchsafes light.

Christmas is hardly a time to enter upon controversies of this kind; the atmosphere at this most sacred season should be quite clear of all discussion and the whole being should be absorbed in the stupendous FACT at this time announced by angels and believed in by the faithful; no wonder a weak runner should stagger under such a tremendous miracle of LOVE and it seems to me it is chiefly the loveless hearts that find a difficulty in believing; for faith is the legitimate child of love.

But in spite of their religious differences, Horatio had a deep affection for Frederick which comes out touchingly in a letter written to him not long after the death of his wife in 1884: "Now goodbye my dear Fred and God bless you. As the stream of time floats you away from your great loss it will open out to you more and more its actual extent, suffused however with that tender colouring which takes away all harshness of outline and lends even to keenest griefs an aspect of loveliness."

Now a last quotation from a letter, which shows that Horatio had his full share of that mystic quality with which all the brothers and sisters were endowed in different degrees:

How do you account for the following? I was travelling not long since by railway, when the rough rhythm produced by the movement of the train gradually evolved itself into the very sublimest music, I think, that ear of man had ever heard: this kept growing in volume and grandeur till at length the whole being was born upon the bosom of the mighty melody: once or twice I noticed a passage out of some of our best composers, but this, like some small effluence, was almost immediately taken up and absorbed into the main melody, which ever rising and deafening in its course bore grandly onwards, a solemn and awful chant yet jubilant and triumphant to a degree and in a combination never expressed before by any mere human composition. Surely if then and there I could have brought this inspiration (for what else was it), within the confines of bars and notes, all earthly harmony would have appeared as nothing in comparison. My spirit is yet lifted up at the mere memory of it. How and when it came or went I know not. All I do know — it was a rapture such as I never before experienced nor am likely to experience again — great wonderful and holy!!!

Horatio and Charlotte had four children, Cecilia, Maud, Violet, and Bertram. Cecilia married Mr. Pope, who became censor of the non-collegiate students at Oxford, but had no children. Maud and Violet died unmarried. Bertram, of whom a short account will be found in *Glimpses of Tennyson*, led a very unTennysonian life of adventure. After a short service in the Navy, which he did not like, he went out to Manitoba to farm. Finding this impossible, owing to lack of capital, he spent some time driving a coach, breaking horses, and pioneering in the far west. Then he studied law, was called to the Bar and became a Queen's Counsel, taking up residence in Moosomin in the North West Territories with a view to practicing there. This proved a disappointment, owing to the slow development of the township. After a short

and not wholly unsuccessful spell of gold digging in the then exciting new field at Klondike, he came back to England where he died in September 1900, in his early forties. Bertram Tennyson had a considerable literary gift. According to Agnes Weld, his love of adventure was stimulated by an early passion for Scott's novels, and wherever he went he always carried with him his Bible and the works of Shakespeare. In 1896 he published through the Spectator Printing and Publishing Company, Moosomin, N.W.T., a small paper-bound volume entitled *The Land of Naproa and other essays in prose and verse*, most of the contents of which had been published in various periodicals, e.g., *Baileys Magazine*, *The Toronto Week*, *The Quest*, and the *Moosomin Spectator*. The few poems included in this volume show I think that Bertram Tennyson had genuine poetic power and I include two here — "Cumbrian Dales and Fells" and "Plebeian and Patrician." The second is of particular interest since it contains an echo from one of Alfred's best known poems, which indeed it seems to criticize on social ethical grounds.

CUMBRIAN VALES AND FELLS

To William Watson, on reading "Lakeland Once More."

On these plains where the brooding silence
Is broken only by wail of hawk
Or sound of the wind in the secret grasses,
That tell a tale for the breeze to bear
To the aspen poplars which quake and tremble,
Astir with the secret nature holds:
Here, in this lonely land of silence,
I read your chant of the English hills
And my heart went back to the meres and mountains
I knew of old in the dear home land,
For I heard the echo from high Helvellyn
Flung back in challenge from bold Ned Scaur,

And saw through the mist the peaks sun-smitten
Rise to a height before unknown,
Where the Langdale Pikes stand up to heaven
Like giants watching the vale below,
And the insect creatures toiling slowly
With blast of powder and swing of pick,
Delving the hills that have stood for ages,
And still will stand when our race is done
And the sound of the greatest name among us
Has gone as a breath of wind goes past;
Land of valley, and pass, and mountain;
Of brook, and river, and falling spray,
Thunder of surf on your seaward bases,
Ripple of beck in your inland green.
Here it is winter, keen and starlit,
Ablaze aloft with the northern lights
That spring like spears of a charging army
Loosed from the land of the polar star,
Or spread abroad like an angel's pinions
Flung from the east to the western rim
Of the dim horizon blank and boundless,
With only the drift of the snow between.
I heard your song, and the west, in answer,
Faintly echoes a far reply:
We have not forgotten our northern country,
Force, and torrent, and mountain tarn,
The grey and purple of crag and heather,
And flying shadow on mountain side,
The Rotha sings in its rocky channel,
We hear its voice in a song that's borne
From that north land with its mountain passes,
Scree and echo, and ghyll, and scaur;
The years of exile are clean forgotten;
The sunlight glints on Solvar's How.

PLEBEIAN AND PATRICIAN

Blind fools of fate who idly happy stray,
 Life's pathway through,
Content if but the passing summer day
 Be fair and blue;
Peals there no warning from the cloud-capped peak,
Where the great goddess whom we all must seek,
 Doth still remain,
Fair Freedom? while the multitudes forlorn,
Gaze with sad eyes at summits far withdrawn
 Above their pain.

Comes there no wail from famine-haunted slum,
 And crowded court,
Half smothered by the city's busy hum,
 And noisy sport?
Hark! to that sad, exceeding bitter cry:
Help us, oh! Father, for we slowly die
 Beneath the rod
Of grinding want, and social laws which clasp
The poor forever in their ruthless grasp.
 Help us, oh! God.

What help to us that Freedom broadens down
 With steady pace,
And somewhat smooths the fierceness of that frown
 On her fair face?
Are not our children dying at our knees,
While you lie softly upon beds of ease,
 Though we have none?
Some day shall freedom smile on all around,
But we shall lie unwept beneath the ground,
 Our troubles done.

Winter is gone but in the noisome lairs —
 Where we lie pent —

We cannot know the touch of sweeter airs
That spring has lent.

Are we not freemen, can we not go too,
And walk at last beneath that arch of blue,
O'er field and fell?

Yes, we are free — you raise the canting cry —
Yes, we are free — to rot and starve and die —
You know it well.

You know it well; if once we dare to pause,
Our loved ones fade,
It is the fruit of those much vaunted laws,
The rich have made.

God! there are children in this man-made hell
Who know the sound of curses passing well,
But never yet
Have heard the skylark carol overhead,
Or plucked the wild flower from its grassy bed,
When dews were wet.

Though you dream on, the night is almost spent
And dawn is near;
The heavy cloud of misery is rent,
And hope is here;
Say — for the issue rests within your hands —
Shall that day dawning the opposing bands
In battle view?
Or shall the day-star in a sky serene
Beam from the heavens on a fairer scene?
It rests with you!

In October 1868, when Horatio's eldest child was under ten years old, his wife died. Alfred immediately had a house made ready for him on the Farringford estate, but in December 1870 he married again — Catherine West, sister of Arthur's first wife. This marriage brought the two brothers even closer together. Judging by the great number of different addresses from which Horatio wrote during the

remaining years of his life, he seems never to have had a settled home. He was often with Charles, with Alfred, and at Park House near Maidstone, the home of Cecilia and her husband Edmund Lushington. The quotations from his letters which I have given sufficiently describe his spiritual progress, marked by an enjoyment of life which never wholly failed him even in sickness and old age (he died in 1899 at the age of eighty), and an intense religious sense which never became morbid or egotistical.

Arthur's temperament was not so happy. His long struggle with the temptation to drink had weakened his spirit and driven his thoughts inward. His religious feeling was intense but egocentric. He corresponded regularly with Frederick, but nursed a subconscious resentment of what he considered Frederick's unsympathetic treatment in Italy, and he tormented himself with the feeling that Frederick's response to his advances was grudging and reluctant. Though Alfred was always ready (as was Frederick) to help him in his chronic financial difficulties, he felt that Alfred, who never answered letters if he could possibly avoid it, was becoming too grand and successful to care for him. Harriet, I believe, understood him and handled him with true affection and sympathy, but they had no children and on 17 June 1881 she died. For days he was inconsolable, walking about with one of her gloves or handkerchiefs in his hand, and with tears streaming down his face. A letter which he wrote to Frederick at the end of July shows the depths of his feeling:

We know not what health is until we miss it is an old truth, and I knew not while living with my gentle amiable darling how I loved her. You must forgive a wild letter, for while finding no voice of hers around me now, and chilled at times almost to the extreme of despair until my horrible feelings pass away and that is while finding myself

at church and welcomed there by God who never fails upon my entering there to give me one of his short but strong embraces, which shows me at once that HE has not left me; and sure am I if I am sure of anything, that to compensate for the loss of her society on earth I am now blessed with a double portion of her spirit upon me from where she is — and if I am at times strained to the utmost by unhappy feelings some sweet voice every now and then tells me that God is on my side. I saw the dear little thing die the refined and beautiful death of one who has borne so much suffering (which has all been blessed to her as she went through life) from the cough and a weak heart for years and heard the death rattle of my best of friends save God, for she was sister, brother, wife and mother to me altogether may eternal blessings light upon the heads of all those dear souls who knew her and whom God has raised up to comfort me.

His friends were fearful that the shock of his loss would drive him to drink again. If this happened they felt it must end in death or the mad house. But Horatio and his wife took him to live with them. Then on 7 December 1882 he married Emma Louisa Maynard. His Lincolnshire friends thought his new wife much too conventional and dominating. Spruce, smart, and very capable herself, she evidently tried to make him the same and they missed the untidy, shaggy, abstracted Arthur whom they had known and loved. It may well be, however, that the discipline was good for him.

On 4 February 1884 he writes to Frederick a letter which shows that the spirit of Harriet was still very near to him:

when my blessed Harriet who had lived with me in England for so many years passed away from me one awful and never to be forgotten morning now going on fast to three years since, if not entirely three, never to be spoken to by me again in this life, but betwixt that sad morning and my now writing to you — for if ever a man felt helpless and surrounded by the most dismal darkness, I was that sad man, when I became fully conscious what a loving companion had left me —

she who prayed so powerfully for me when on earth has most spiritually comforted me from where she is, and how often when I have been in keen distress has a voice soft and soothing and firm and decided spoken to me saying, "I am not the less with thee in this great suffering of thine, the greatest suffering thou hast ever known in thy life, but more than I ever was" — what intense comfort this has been to me God only knows. One morning when in a state of all but maddening distress I cried — for a plain tale is soon told and without any ornament — "O God I am going mad, save me" when the same soft kind firm voice spoke to me and said, "Be still and know that I am God," and then the high fever of anxiety and suffering fell instantly, and many other instances of the Almighty's supporting power could I give you, for I have learnt in suffering what I could never have learnt without it.

In 1883 Arthur and Emma began going to Malvern, where they soon made their home. Here, as years before at Wrawby, he devoted much time to visiting the sick and poor. His methods must have been a welcome change from the normal routine of district visitation. "Stop a bit, Betty," he would say to an old woman who always greeted him with a torrential catalogue of her ailments, "stop a bit, and let me tuck in a text." The old lady would stop, the text was "tucked in," and off she would go again as merrily as ever.

At Malvern Arthur made friends with Eliza Stephenson, wife of the Chaplain at Allahabad (afterwards vicar of Boston in Lincolnshire). Mrs. Stephenson was a novelist who used to have musical parties and "Ruskin" and poetry evenings. (See *Pastel for Eliza* by Marjorie Broughall [London, 1961].) Arthur liked to come to these parties and sometimes would read, generally from Alfred's poems; "Morte d'Arthur," "Guinevere," "The Two Voices," and "The Northern Farmer" were favourites. He read in a magnificent voice and "with all his heart." Mrs. Stephenson found something pleasant and tender and humorous about him.

He seemed a man of a fine mind which he had never been able to turn to much account — a really good man, but nervous and broken down. He suffered much from depression and liked to come and unburden himself to one of the ladies whom he found congenial. Sometimes he would wander into the garden to pick and eat the ripe fruit, saying, "God helps those who help themselves." Once at a supper party he startled the company by pointing to a dish of trifle and asking for "some more of that angel's vomit." Another evening after a late picnic he pointed to the full moon, which was just rising, with the words, "look at that great golden guinea which is going to buy us a beautiful night." He was very High Church, while his wife was evangelical. Mrs. Stephenson described her rather ominously as a bright, sensible, healthy woman, full of energy, who did all the organising, contriving, and acting while her husband just read and wandered about.

It is clear that even in Harriet's lifetime Arthur derived strength and solace from his religion, which had a markedly mystical quality. In February 1878 he wrote to Frederick:

In your letter you speak of what I may truly call the great sweet and peace giving voice which answers your prayer and similar instances of encouragement to pray for what I most stand in need of are also thank God given to me, for instance, some time before going up to the altar, the dejecting consciousness of what I am would fain do its awfully overwhelming best to keep me from going there, but as prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw, mixed with confession of what I am and how little I deserve this blessed body and blood refreshment, a happy change if I will but be patient comes at last, my gloominess falls from me and well it may for (and a plain tale is soon told) a most unmistakable and comforting voice and similar to the voice which I think speaks to you, pours into my ears these welcome sounds, Thou shalt go up, Thou shalt go up, and to make it all the more sweetly and affectingly welcome and to put it in my own rough language, that

voice seems to [be] made up of mother's and the Almighty's together. This is an innocent way of telling it, is it not? I am fully aware of it, nevertheless it is not an inch less true for that, and I become painfully aware of this, namely that if I attempt to describe my state of mind during these God-comforting occasions (while encouraged to go up to the altar) in loftier language that I get entangled in such a web of difficulties as to make me very glad when I am once fairly out of it.

He often had to fight hard against fits of depression which assailed him particularly in the early mornings. In 1884 he writes to Frederick from Malvern:

How little one knows what a moment may bring forth. In the early morning, and some hour or so before going down to breakfast, I was saying to myself, what more exaltingly, more hopefully cheering than sacred songs, while doing my best to cheer myself by singing them, for I am in the habit when waking in the early morning of doing my best to sing myself out of very dark and dismal states of mind indeed, similar to those painful thoughts upon awaking, which you at one time said belonged to you also when you awoke, but which you afterwards told me, by letter, had ceased altogether, or something like it I remember your remark well during those days when you told me that you suffered in this way, and that when they waylaid you in the early morning the anguish was intolerable.

Four years later he recurs to the subject again in a letter which begins gloomily, "At our great ages the great change may come at any moment, for are we not both of us undressing for the grave as rapidly as we can?" He asks again for Frederick's experience, having forgotten what answer he received to his earlier letter, "for my sunstroke at Malvern, coupled with so many things that have taken place betwixt then and now, quite dims my memory at times." But the old resentment against Frederick smouldered on, now and then breaking into flame. In July 1889 he writes, rebuking Frederick for never initiating correspondence. "You would be cunning, I think, to give me any exquisite reason why I should

always be the first to write . . . you grieve me I must say much that since you took me for my soul's good you have been so little anxious to know how my soul fared since we lived together in Italy."

Five years later he writes to Frederick's daughter-in-law Sophia:

Since I heard from you a remark of Frederick's to you to the effect — and I think it was this — "who says I have been unkind to my brother or brothers?" I have pondered much upon it and prayed much about it and I cannot help thinking that if my brother Frederick could realise how much suffering he had caused me during the time I was with him in Italy and could send me a message that he was grieved at having caused me such pain, he would lift a heavy load from my heart and I believe would be a happier man himself. His last few lines touched me greatly and I think by his writing them to me (as the last letter *he says* he shall ever write on earth) that there was a hidden feeling in his heart that all had not been well betwixt us when we lived together . . . I consider you my dear Sophy as a woman of good judgment and kindness and therefore I leave this letter in your hands greatly wishing that Frederick might see it, as I believe with God's blessing which I have warmly and with all my heart prayed for, that it may be the means of healing a wound in both our hearts.

But Frederick was now 87; his memory began to fail, and Sophia could only reply that he had no recollection of Arthur's ever having lived with him at all.

Arthur now began to feel Malvern too cold in winter. He began to suffer from asthma and to "find with dear old Job that it is with more or less difficulty that during the tight frosty atmospheres we draw in our breath and swallow our spittles." He, therefore, moved in 1893 to a house (then called Belle Vue) near the railway station at Freshwater and found the milder climate helpful; but it was not long before cataracts attacked his eyes and he became almost blind. Yet

he could find a charming phrase even for this affliction. "You see," he would say, "God has sent me to his night school."

His sensibilities remained as keen as ever. He loved to sit on the beach at Freshwater Bay. "There is absolution in the sea," he would say, and to a friend who met him wandering about the Freshwater lanes one May morning, and asked how he was, he replied with evident emotion, "I cannot help being troubled by the terrible excitement of the spring."

In June 1899, a month after his eighty-fifth birthday, Arthur Tennyson's troubled life came to an end. Troubled it had certainly been, but there had been consolations, and I must not paint too gloomy a picture. The Lincoln Tennyson collection possesses several of Arthur's sketch books which suggest that his art must have been a lifelong pleasure and solace to him. The books cover travels in Italy, France, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland and contain a great number of sketches in pencil, pen and ink, and wash, which shew a keen eye, a skilful hand, a fine sense of composition and a remarkable power of reducing grandiose and romantic scenes to a small scale without losing their essential character. They also contain a number of delightful caricatures of himself, his beloved Harriet, her sister Catherine, who was to become Horatio's second wife, and Horatio's first wife Charlotte (known in the family as "Charlie"). These throw a pleasing light on Arthur's capacity for simple fun and on his relations with his Harriet and other members of his intimate circle. Yet here again I must speak with reservations. On one of his caricatures I found, scrawled in his handwriting, "Oh the pleasures of the imagination, how sweet they are, but it is a dangerous sea to embark on without the pilot religion."

The Somersby sisters were just as other-worldly as their brothers, though it seems that on the whole their temperaments were happier. Physically as well as mentally they strangely resembled their brothers. Though Mary was lame from childhood, owing to some accident, she and Cecilia as young women always produced an extraordinary impression by their dark, aquiline beauty, and Emilia, (Emily as she was called in the family) though her head seemed rather large for her body, had singularly expressive eyes and a profile like that on a coin — *Testa Romana*, as an Italian friend of the family said of her.

From childhood the sisters were all omnivorous readers and three of them at least (Mary, Cecilia, and Emily) wrote verse. Sewing, knitting, and samplering they would have nothing to do with. They adored their brothers and, as far as possible, shared in their pursuits, especially story telling and play acting; according to Henry Evan Smith, "The formation of a chivalrous manliness in the boys was greatly aided by the constant companionship and influence of the girls. Each sister selected a true knight or esquire from amongst the brothers, with whom their words of encouragement and smiles of approval were always high reward." This sounds like a specimen of romantic Victorian fiction, but it probably derives from a true estimate of the relation between the brothers and sisters, who were essentially children of the Gothic Revival. As is well known, their uncle, Charles Tennyson, (afterwards, Tennyson d'Eyncourt) rebuilt the modest family mansion at Bayons as a miniature castle, embodying all the styles of English architecture from before the Conquest until the death of Richard the Second, and furnished it with heraldic carvings, wall papers copied from the Chateau de Blois, and statues and paintings of English kings and d'Eyncourt ancestors. Even

their mother's family seems to have felt the same influence in some degree, for her eldest nephew changed his name from Fytche to ffytche, no doubt to give it a flavour of antiquity, and his younger brother always pronounced his name with a long "y," presumably with the same object, while May ffytche, a member of the third generation whom I well remember, was consumed by a lifelong passion to act in Shakespeare's historical dramas.

The intense and intimate family life at Somersby inevitably exaggerated singularities of character — particularly in the two elder sisters: Mary, only one year younger than Alfred, and Emily, one year younger than Mary. When Emily became engaged to Arthur Hallam, no doubt the pressure increased. Echoes of it still sigh through the stanzas of "In Memoriam":

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn!

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon.

(Section LXXXIX)

Arthur Hallam's death just when the prospects of marriage were, after two years of parental discouragement, beginning to seem more favourable, no doubt had a serious effect on Emily's extreme and rather melancholic sensibility. Three years later Mary had a similar, though less grievous, disappointment, when John Heath, a Cambridge friend of her elder brothers, to whom she had become engaged, broke off the engagement.

The move to High Beech, Epping, in 1837 must have been a good thing for both girls, for whom Somersby now held too many disturbing memories. The whole family were intermittently together at High Beech, or at 12 Mornington Place in northwest London, where they seem to have had a sort of communal lodging. The four sisters were all living at home, and so, for the most part, were Alfred, Septimus, and Horatio. Frederick joined them when not on the continent, and it may be that Arthur was occasionally with them, though I find no note of this.

During these years Mary, Emily, and Cecilia seem to have become the centre of a small group of young blue-stockings called the "Husks" and devoted to the study of Romantic poets — Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and, of course principally, Alfred Tennyson. The Husks had their own private language; they met in the houses of the various members to "shuckle" (Husk word for a confidential high-brow chatter), to "sloth" in the garden and to read and discuss the "deadly" (thrilling) poems of their favourites.

Although there is very little detailed information about these early years, the characters of the four sisters can already be clearly differentiated. Mary we find summed up by one of her Bayons cousins about 1835, as "very handsome, very quiet, very amiable, not very gay." Alfred, however, writes of her as "a girl of great feeling, very warm in attachment to her female friends." Emily was more egocentric and more assertive, with something of the tragic queen, both in manner and temperament. However, she was capable of deep feeling and Arthur Hallam's death no doubt dealt her a blow which time could never efface. Its severity is shown by a letter which she wrote to her Uncle Charles d'Eyncourt on the death of his youngest son, Eustace, in 1842 (nine years after her own loss).

I can well understand, my dear Uncle, that your feelings of bereavement are even more distressing than they were at first. In these overwhelming griefs the effect is frequently too stunning in the first instance for the full truth to bear with all its ghastliness of power upon the mind, but when day after day passes away and nothing breaks the mysterious silence, no letter from the beloved one whose heart was full of warmest home affections, then by degrees the full weight of the direful blow is felt crushing one's very soul.

Of Matilda's early years, there is little to say. There is a tradition in the family that she had at the age of about six months been dropped on a coal scuttle which struck her on the head and caused some mental derangement in after years. All one can say of her childhood is that she had a strong sense of humour (much less marked in her two elder sisters) and a naivety which was remarkable even in the Tennyson family. There was a vein of mysticism also, perhaps even a more psychic quality, if one is to believe the story told in Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* of her strange experience at Somersby in the autumn of 1833. One evening, just before the day on which Arthur Hallam died in Vienna, she and Mary saw a tall figure, clothed in white from head to foot, pass down the lane by the rectory. They followed and saw it disappear through the hedge at a place where there was no gap. Matilda, it is told, was so awed by this experience that on reaching home she collapsed and burst into tears. It was, by a strange coincidence, she who a few days later picked up at Spilsby the letter telling of Arthur's death, and brought it home, ignorant of its contents, to Alfred.

Cecilia was an enthusiastic member of the Husks, and had a much keener sense of humour and a lighter heart than Mary or Emily, neither of whom could have written this description of a would-be suitor — a vignette which I

think would have pleased Jane Austen. It is from a letter to her cousin John Fytche, dated 24 April 1830:

Now *Mon cher cousin* for a little more of the Revd. gentleman. On the evening of the day of your departure, as I fairly saw that there was to be nothing going forward but the gravest of conversations, I moved from off my seat for my work that I might continue the Scent Bag for you. Now this same work happened to be on the piano. My movement attracted the Revd. gentleman and he said "My Cecilia are you going to give us some music?" I murmured out "if you like." Aunt Maryanne said "I'm sure she will if you would like any, Mr. Willson." The Revd. gentleman answered "I wish you would, I should be extremely happy to hear some." So I sang a song, played some Quadrilles and then the Revd. gentleman expressed a wish for a *Gallopeade* (It sounded so funny — he pronounced the last syllable in the word *Gallopeade* with A short) Having done all he wished he gravely thanked me and I began to work — The next morning before I came down to breakfast he asked Aunt Maryanne if I could make a Pudding or a Pye — I believe Aunt Maryanne said I could make both, upon which he said "It is a very good thing to know how to make them for though you may not be required to make them yet it is as well to know." Don't you think it looks suspicious? I declare I am quite in Spirits about it. When O when will the excellent and Revd. gentleman come again! I fear I shall quite pine away and get more and more Weasel-like until his return which will not be till the fruit is ripe — but that is nothing. You know by the Fruit he means me. To return his civilities I offered him my pony when he went away, to take him to Waltham Cross, but he said "Thank you no. It might perhaps be throwing me." I could not do less you know when I recollected the many civil things he had said to me, offering to go all over Lincolnshire Asylum with me, inviting me to his Lodgings and then to crown all asking me to Play. No, no I certainly could not do less.

In 1840 the family moved from High Beech to Tunbridge Wells and thence in the autumn of 1841 to Boxley near Park House, Maidstone, the home of Alfred's Cambridge friend, Edmund Lushington. (The house in which they lived

has now been demolished. It was called Boxley Lodge and was part of the property then called Park House, Boxley, belonging to the Best family. The name of the house was later changed to Park Place to avoid confusion with the Lushington property.) Early in 1842 Emily married Captain Richard Jesse, R.N., a remarkably handsome man, who showed his courage not only by taking Emily to wife, but also by the two medals, one French and one English, which he received for saving life at sea. It is perhaps not surprising to find him described at his wedding as having a pale good-humoured face, talking fast and perhaps a little flurried, while Emily, oddly dressed and with hair in long ringlets down her back, looked "singular and elf-like." A few months later Cecilia married Edmund Lushington. In 1843 the family was further reduced when Frederick, Arthur, and Septimus left England for Italy. Mrs. Tennyson, with Mary, Matilda, and Horatio, then moved to Cheltenham where Mary on 7 July 1851 married Alan Ker, a barrister, whose brother was a prominent doctor in the town.

Soon after this marriage, Alan Ker, who had not practised at the Bar since 1848 and had no settled employment, emigrated to Jamaica with Mary. In 1857 Horatio married; in 1860, Arthur. Only Matilda now remained regularly at home with her mother. In 1865, Elizabeth Tennyson died. Matilda from now onward divided her time chiefly between Alfred's and the Lushingtons, who, with Charles at Grasby, provided the focal points for the family during the next thirty years or so.

Information about the sisters during these years is unfortunately scarce. They seem all to have continued on terms of intimate affection, but Mary and Cecilia appear to have written very few letters and Matilda wrote with difficulty

and very illegibly, owing, it is said, to an attack of scarlet fever in childhood; whether this affected her sight or muscular control I do not know.

Mary led a wandering life after her marriage. Alan Ker remained for thirty years in the Judicial Service of the West Indies. In 1853 he was acting attorney general of Antigua, from 1854 to 1856 Chief Justice of Nevis; after that he was appointed Chief Justice of Dominica, and later he became a puisne judge of the Supreme Court of Jamaica. This office he continued to hold until the end of December 1884 when he retired because of ill-health. He died at Kingston on 20 March 1885, just under a year after his wife.

Alan Ker was an unusual man. His son described him as being of the utmost moral courage and of an inflexible independence of mind, so conscientious in the discharge of his office that during a colonial service of thirty-one years he allowed himself only two holidays of six months apiece with an interval of fourteen years between, and, during thirteen years of his service, saw neither his wife nor his son. He did much public work in Jamaica in addition to his judicial service, devoting several years to a consolidation of the laws of the island from the earliest times, largely at his own expense. For all this work he received no official recognition, and when, in 1882, the Chief Justiceship fell vacant he was passed over for a man young enough to be his son. The new Chief Justice admitted that, when he came to Jamaica to take over the post, he approached Ker with some trepidation, realising the strength of his claims to the office. Ker was, however, too generous to bear malice and served loyally under the newcomer during the two years of active life that remained to him.

In spite of their long separations, Mary was a devoted wife and a devoted mother to her only child, Walter, whom I remember well — a learned scholar and barrister, tall, dark, shaggy, and aquiline, and with a truly Tennysonian reserve. Like his father he never practised seriously at the Bar, but he edited law books, including the classic *Benjamin on Sales*; he translated a volume each of Cicero and Martial for the Loeb Library and wrote a considerable amount of verse with fluency and taste. Though Mary spent so much time abroad, she remained to her sisters “the spiritual sun of the family,” as Emily called her. It was she who led Frederick and Emily into the Church of the New Jerusalem. She had strange psychic dreams and was, like Frederick and Emily, deeply interested in mesmerism and spiritualism. In Jamaica she was loved by all classes of the population for her kindness and simple courtesy. Poor women would stop her in the street for the pleasure and solace of speaking to her, and when she sailed on her last voyage to England, the neighbourhood was, according to her husband, “almost in tears.” It is probable that she wrote verse as a girl and a young woman, but none of this survives, and she did not resume the practice until about her fiftieth year when her son asked her to dramatize in verse a story from *Evenings at Home*, to provide a play which he could act with the two young sons of Governor Eyre. (Incidentally, the connexion with Alan Ker may in some way account for Alfred Tennyson’s refusal to join in the agitations against Eyre over his handling of the Jamaican riots in 1884.)

Having once begun to write again, Mary seems to have continued regularly, and the manuscript book at the Usher Gallery, Lincoln, contains more than sixty of her compositions, chiefly sonnets. Her verse is fluent, correct, and deeply

felt, but, like that of Frederick, to whom the volume is dedicated, tends to be unemphatic. There are sonnets of consolation addressed to Horatio on the death of his Charlotte, and to Edmund and Cecilia Lushington on the loss of their only son at the age of thirteen, but too many of the poems deal with such refractory subjects as Swedenborgian theology. Sometimes, however, Mary writes of her long exile in the tropics, toiling through the hot days "Mid apish chatter of the black and brown" and lying awake at night while "The whizz, the whir and the metallic ring" of the mosquito, "weary the breathless hours until the morn." In these poems the bitterness of personal experience gives an edge to her words and rhythms; a sonnet to "The White Maiden of the Tropics," with its closing couplet:

Pale scion of the north, O not for thee
This land of seething sun and blinding sea

makes one feel that it is of no hypothetical white maiden that she is thinking. Most touching of all are some lines which must have been written at the time of her last parting from her husband. Not even the obvious echo of another and far greater poet can impair their poignancy.

A FAREWELL

Good and noble thou and I are parted
Ever patient of life's wear and fret,
Thou the tender, true and single hearted,
Take this tribute to my deep regret.

By no fault of mine or thine this sorrow
Like a dark November wraps me round,
Whence shall I the words of comfort borrow,
Where no comfort in myself is found?

Thrice across the broad Atlantic sailing,
Far away upon the billow borne,
I, thy lonely lot and mine bewailing,
Have the Cypress or the willow worn.

Cease my rebel heart thy sad complaining,
Tho' the way to thee be dark and dim,
It may be that thro' this rugged training
Was the way to make thee lean on Him.

That was Mary's final parting from her husband, for she died in England at the end of April 1884 while he was still in Jamaica. I will give a final summary of her character in the words which he wrote to his son a few days after her death.

Dear woman, never to see her again in this world! It is a sad, sad thought, and quite overwhelms me. She was a good, pious, amiable, and gentle woman, every way worthy to be her mother's daughter. A sweeter and more generous nature never shed a benign influence wherever she went. It was an education to know her, so free was she from everything unkindly, everything uncharitable, harsh, severe, and unforgiving. How placable she was! how ready to let bygones be bygones! Malice or ill-will my firm belief is she knew not the very meaning of That sweet, generous face and bearing of hers, never to behold them any more in this world! . . . At every turn I see something that reminds me of her, recalling her warm interest in myself, and the pleasure she took in any little success that befell me. Oh! the pity of it. She used to sit in a garden chair so meekly, so quietly out on the terrace there, and listen with such sympathy to my narration of my days' visits to town, and what had occurred to me in the course of business or duty. She will never do so again in this life of ours

Did ever woman keep her looks as she did? When I left England in 1873 she might have passed for forty. I never knew a woman with a finer physique. Did you ever observe what beautiful ears she had? A plaster cast should have been taken of them.

And so farewell to beautiful, pious, placable Mary, with her Swedenborgian sonnets about which Alfred liked to chaff

her, her sufferings, of which I am sure she never complained, and the beautiful ears which I hope she did not hide under the back-drawn Madonna waves of her fine black hair.

Emily's marriage to Richard Jesse seems to have been a happy one. They had two children, the younger of whom, Eustace, became the father of the late Fryn Tennyson Jesse, poetess, traveller, novelist, and criminologist. I gather that Emily's maternal instinct was slight and that she never took much interest in her children, but she was sincerely devoted to her husband, who, though no doubt accustomed to command at sea, seems to have been content to play second fiddle at home and to fall in with all her whims and extravagances. Reading her letters and the descriptions of her by others, one feels that he must have had a good deal to put up with. One wonders, for example, how he liked having his eldest son christened "Arthur Henry Hallam," and how he reacted to his Emily's conviction that a photograph taken of her at Clifton showed behind her the shadowy figure of a man strangely resembling Arthur. She and Richard lived mostly at Margate, though she was in Italy in 1851 and wrote Frederick some fine descriptions of her experiences: as, for example, of a torrent at Bagni di Lucca where "the waters rushing over pieces of rock in the stream fell with a noise like thunder, which was taken up and echoed among the mountains, till the whole of them, placed irregularly as they are, gave out one continual sound, surly and grand."

Twenty years later she was in Paris during the *commune*. There she banged her umbrella on the pavement and shouted, "vive la commune," in order to be on the safe side, although she was an extreme conservative who a few years later was fulminating against Mr. Gladstone: "How that man can exist is a marvel to me, with the murder of 'that

best man in all the world' [General Gordon] on his conscience — but I forgot. He cannot have one or ere this he would have died from pangs of remorse." She was no better pleased with the state of the contemporary world as a whole: "The longer I live, the less this rolling ball appears my home," she writes to Frederick in 1885. "Other people seem to be happy, they don't seem to be troubled as you Richard and myself are by the sadnesses, the evil, the tumults that are thronging everywhere . . . the world will presently be all ablaze. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom."

At about the same time she found herself "thoroughly horrified and almost palsy stricken" by the report of the Royal Commission on vivisection and immediately began a campaign to rouse to action the people of Margate, whom she found "dark as Erebus on the subject." Private misfortunes provoked an equal intensity of declamation — for example a cook "a real *demon* in human form." "I found out too late she had false keys and had robbed me of everything pretty well worth taking in the way of apparel. Her life was a lie. People told us afterwards that she was thoroughly bad — why did they not enlighten me at the time? and was a common prostitute . . . even the thought of her makes me shudder."

However, as she herself wrote in one of her later letters, "the feathered feet of time are noiseless and swift," and the years brought consolation. When Mary returned from Jamaica, Emily found in her a true affinity and through her became a convert to Swedenborg's Church of the New Jerusalem, which afforded her consolation in her later years.

Yet Emily was by no means all gloom and thunder. Her name was long remembered with affection by the villagers

at Somersby. She loved her Richard and she loved animals, travelling everywhere with a stout lap dog and a raven, always fed on raw meat which had to be cut up in her presence. She had some sense of humour too, for, when she came to Farringford or Aldworth, she loved to exchange outrageous jokes and puns with her nephews.

I will take leave of Emily Jesse by quoting a description by Blanche Warre Cornish of a meeting with her at the Alfred Tennysons in the early 1870's:

It was one Easter holidays. The Tennyson's carriage met me at the Yarmouth pier; in it I found Miss Thackeray and a lady with her dog in her lap who was staying at Farringford. As we drove off through the lanes a personal conversation, which had been interrupted by my arrival, was resumed. The elder lady had a deep, serious voice, and she attracted me at once by her fine blue expressive eyes, which still gave forth light, though set in a deep-lined face. She had a well-cut profile; dark bandeaux of hair fell with delicate curves on each side of her brown face; they were streaked with grey. She had once been Arthur Hallam's fiancée, Emily Tennyson. To everything Annie Thackeray was saying in her gentle reflective way about life and its contradictions she replied with a strong Lincolnshire accent, "I know that; I have felt that." She added in a deep melodious tone, just like Horatio Tennyson's, "I have felt everything; I know everything. I don't want any new emotion. I know what it is to feel like a stoän" (*London Mercury*, V [December, 1921]).

Very characteristic was Emily's reaction when the ever delightful Annie Thackeray left Farringford at the end of her visit. Looking slowly round the reduced party she exclaimed in her rich, deep tones, "Now we are flat as flounders."

I wish that I knew more about Cecilia. After a "husky" youth, she settled down into a quiet, affectionate, and intellectual domesticity, as the wife of Edmund Lushington, Fellow of Trinity and Professor of Latin at the University of

Glasgow. She suffered a good deal from genuinely poor health, partly brought on by the necessity of wintering in Glasgow, where she looked out every day on "black and thick fog . . . made more hellish often by a red glow through it all — proceeding from the numerous fires in this city of dirt and dumps." She loved her husband and children, the laughing references to whom in her letters are always marked by a charmingly affectionate pride: "This ugly boy of mine," or, "Thy little niece is now two months old and has already three chins." But her children were all gradually taken from her by early death, except one girl who never married.

Park House, under Cecilia's sway, always remained a haven of refuge for the rootless sisters and brothers. According to the sprightly and rather malicious Mrs. Brookheld, "The Tennyson habit of coming unbidden and staying unwashed was, is and will be, the great burden and calamity of the Lushington existence." "They actually groan," she wrote in 1847, "under Mary who they expect will stay and keep up the establishment when the original family retire to Malta" (where Harry Lushington had just received an appointment, Edmund being absent most of the year at Glasgow). "I did not venture to touch upon the delicate ground of E, but I expect they labour under the undefined but not ungrounded alarm that Mr. J. will be a permanent fixture."

Perhaps one should not take this flight of fancy too seriously, for the bond between the Lushingtons and the Tennysons was very close, and at Park House Cecilia's eccentric and endearing personality held unquestioned sway. Tall, dark, handsome, rather ungainly and totally unselfconscious, she would sing strange ballads with passion, though she always insisted on beginning her song behind the drawing room door and gradually emerging into the room. Like the rest of the

family, she read verse beautifully, in a rich deep voice, liking particularly to declaim Alfred's "Northern Farmers" from the passage outside her drawing room with the door open. Her good nature, deep voice, and talent for acting made her much sought after for charades, when, dressed in a rough jacket and flashy neckerchief and waistcoat and, well primed with the slang phrases which her sensitive soul abhorred, she would play the most unsuitable parts with gusto. She attained the great age of ninety-two, outliving her Edmund by sixteen years and dying in 1909, so that I might well have known her, but although I think I must have seen her at some time, unfortunately I have no recollection of it.

Matilda, the last of the family, I remember well as a tall, swarthy woman, with a strong, rugged, rather equine face — "A creature without gall or guile" (so one of her friends described her). To her nephew Lionel (my father) she seemed a female "my uncle Toby": "infinite pity, infinite innocence and great cleverness in hitting the nail on the head, yet seeming, to a superficial observer, almost what country people call a 'nautral.'" With her brothers she was always a prime favourite. Many were the jokes which passed between Farringford and Park House about the doings, sayings, and alleged flirtations of "The Empress Maud." If it was draughty in church she would put up her umbrella and sit under it without any embarrassment for the duration of the service. It is recorded that, once finding herself in disagreement with the salesman in a crowded London shop about the capacity of a hip-bath which he was trying to sell her, she gathered up her ample skirts, stepped into the bath and lay down in her black bonnet and veil, button boots, flowing cloak, umbrella, and jingling jet beads, to the consternation of the salesman and the delight of the other customers. Yet poor

Tillie did not entirely escape the black-bloodedness of the Tennysons. She had, like the rest of the family, a deep underlying sensibility which led at times to religious obsessions. At one period of her life, her intense love of music found issue in a passionate admiration for the great opera singer Theresa Tietjens, who died in 1877. Amongst Matilda's papers were found several scraps of wild irregular verse about Tietjens' death and a sheet of deep-edged mourning paper, enfolding a lock of hair and inscribed in Matilda's hand: "This paper holds my beloved Theresa's hair — I have kissed it many times. It is a great comfort to have it — oh, when shall I see her again? I shall never have another friend upon earth like her — I hope God will permit me to meet her again. This thought bears me up."

When she first came to live at Farringford after her mother's death, Matilda was uneasy, and distressed her sister-in-law, Emily, by complaints about the beloved house, its climate and surroundings. But Hallam and Lionel, then boys of twelve and fourteen, took her to their hearts, making her join in all their games and adventures. Gradually she became acclimatized and indeed grew so passionately devoted to Alfred that after his death in 1892, she never felt able to visit the place again, though both Emily and Hallam were deeply attached to her. Thenceforward she lived entirely at Park House with Cecilia. After Edmund Lushington's death in 1893, the two old ladies, with "Zilly," Cecilia's only surviving child, had the place to themselves. It must have been a singular household. Fate had dealt harshly with Cecilia. Of her four children, the only son, Edmund, born in 1843, had died in 1856. Emily, the eldest girl, died in 1868 at the age of nineteen, and Lucia Maria, five years later at twenty-one. Only the second daughter, Zilly (Cecilia), lived to grow up.

All the children seem to have had considerable ability and charm, and a little volume of Lucy's verse, which was privately published in 1880 by Frederick Bunyard, Maidstone, shews at least some poetic talent. Though tradition speaks of her as having been cheerful and high-spirited as a young girl, her poems suggest that the death of her sister Emily had been a severe blow from which she never wholly recovered. They shew also that she had a good ear and a highly sensitive temperament. Was there more? Had she a gift which time might have matured into solid achievement? The following fragment — not better than a fair sample of the whole — suggests this possibility:

O sweeter far the dying day
Than golden sunrise on the hills,
To watch the faint light fade away
Altho' the evening shadow chills.

O sweeter far the falling leaves
Than verdant groves in summer's prime,
Altho' the heart grows faint and grieves
To watch the fair decay of time.

O sweeter far the close of life
Than youth in all its vain unrest,
The peace of death than earthly strife;
To love and grieve and die is best.

Repeated blows seem to have broken Cecilia's bright spirit, and it is not surprising that, especially after Edmund's death, she developed a high degree of Tennysonian eccentricity.

Park House is curiously designed in depth. It stands high up on a wooded ridge looking south across the valley through which the main railway line runs from London to Maidstone. The front is narrow, containing only the large entrance hall and to east and west of this the drawing room

and dining room. Behind the entrance hall is another large hall into which a fine circular staircase descends from the first floor, with what was once Edmund's library on the east; behind this lie the spacious kitchen and offices. This long recession of room is enclosed east and west by fine Georgian facades. Each of the two old ladies occupied large rooms on the first floor with glorious views southward over the valley, Cecilia on the east side of the house above the drawing room and Matilda on the west over the dining room. Each was looked after by a personal maid and neither was ever seen out of her rooms before luncheon. To the small nephews and nieces, who visited Park House from time to time, the old ladies were rather terrifying and their respective corners of the house were strictly forbidden territory. One of them, Mr. Godfrey L. Lushington of Woodlawn Park, Loose, near Maidstone, remembers Cecilia as a very old woman always wearing a white knitted woolen cap, carrying a large black bag, and walking with a stick. She went out very little either in summer or winter, but sometimes after tea (never before) she would wander out through the hall, stopping on the way to stroke the bust of her long lost little son and talk to it affectionately for a few moments. After roaming about the lawn for twenty minutes or so, she would wander back into the drawing room, invariably saying to her daughter (if it was winter time) in a deep, complaining, rather mournful voice, "Very dark tonight, Zilly," to which Zilly would invariably reply, "Of course it is, dear. The sun has gone down." She used her stick almost like an extra limb, and if she passed one of the children she would prod him with it, not with intent to give pain, but as some creatures use their antennae. She would embarrass Zilly by pointing with her stick at any visitor whom she might find at tea or lunch, and asking in

her deep voice, "Zilly, who's that?" The black bag was an equally important adjunct. Into it she would cram a generous selection of any delicacies which might take her fancy at tea, and, if guests were expected, great care had to be used to keep tempting cakes or buns out of sight until the last minute. She had even been known to slice the whole top off a large iced cake and add it to the loot in the black bag.

By comparison, Matilda seemed during these years less eccentric and less frail than Cecilia, though she was the older by just over a year. She too kept closely to her rooms and very seldom left the house. When she expressed a wish to do so, a donkey was fetched from an adjoining paddock and harnessed to a large bath chair. In this Matilda would drive for half an hour about the garden paths, followed by an old brown and white spaniel to which she was deeply attached. Although as I have said, Cecilia lived to be ninety-two, not dying until March 1909, Matilda survived her. Zilly, to whom Park House passed on her mother's death, did not wish to live there, and she and Matilda moved first to Lexham Gardens, South Kensington, where I visited them in the summer of 1909. I have already given my impressions of Matilda, who seemed to be full of vitality and very clear in mind and speech. Zilly I remember as short and squarely built. Mr. Godfrey Lushington tells me that she always prided herself on her likeness to Queen Victoria. From Lexham Gardens the two moved to Eastbourne and there Matilda died in 1913 at the age of ninety-seven, the last of a remarkable family. Although their births had all taken place within a period of just over twelve years, their lives had spanned a hundred and six — from the middle of the Napoleonic wars to the very verge of the World War of 1914. The average length of life of the eleven brothers and sisters (including

poor Septimus, who died at fifty-one) was over eighty years. Very few families can have surpassed them in longevity; in eccentricity and the diffusion of poetic talent, perhaps none. Genius was confined to Alfred and perhaps in a minor degree to Charles, but almost all — perhaps all — of the brothers and sisters found a natural means of expression and spiritual solace in verse, and in all but one of the branches which were reproductive this phenomenon reappeared in later generations. The Somersby Tennysons knew well the fitful fever of life, but they knew also some of its sweetest consolations.

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