

INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF TENNYSON

ALFRED TENNYSON was born at Somersby, a small hamlet among the Lincolnshire wolds, on August 6, 1809. His father, the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, vicar of Somersby, was a man of large and cultivated intellect, interested in poetry, mathematics, painting, music, and architecture, but somewhat harsh and austere in manner, and subject to fits of gloomy depression, during which his presence was avoided by his family. The father, however, was sincerely devoted to his children, and himself supervised their education. His mother, Elizabeth Fytche, the daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche of Louth, was a kind-hearted, gentle, refined woman, beloved by her family and friends. Her influence over her sons and daughters was unbounded, and over none more so than Alfred, who in after life recognized to the full the debt he owed to his mother.

The family was large, consisting of twelve sons and daughters, of whom the eldest died in infancy. Alfred was the fourth child, his brothers Frederick and Charles being older than he. The home life was a very happy one. The boys and girls were all fond of books, and their games partook of the nature of those they had been reading. They were also given to writing, and in this they were encouraged by their father, who proved himself a wise and discriminating critic. Alfred early showed signs of his poetic bent; at the age of twelve he had written an epic of four thousand lines, and even before