

ALFRED TENNYSON was born at Somersby, Lincolnshire, on August 6th, 1809. He was the fourth of twelve children, two of whom, his elder brothers Frederick and Charles (Charles Tennyson-Turner) gained some distinction in poetry. His father, the Rev. Dr. George Clayton Tennyson, was a man of high intelligence and scholarly attainments, with a character of no little strength, but prone to melancholy. In literature his tastes were conservative, and he possessed some facility in versification after the approved classical models of the eighteenth century. Owing to an unaccountable caprice of his father he had, although the eldest son, been dispossessed of the estate of Bayons Manor, which passed into the succession of his younger brother, Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt. At this time, and until his death in 1831, he was the rector of Somersby and Wood Enderby, and performed the clerical duties, somewhat perfunctorily we may assume, for the surrounding parishes. His disinheritance bred in him, or at least fostered, an incurable melancholy which in a mitigated degree became the birthright of his son. What other qualities Tennyson inherited from his father we must leave those skilled in the science of heredity to divine. It is of some importance to know that although the father's disappointed hopes and lack of sane philosophy wore his strong frame out before his time, he handed down to his descendants that best of all birthrights,—a healthy constitution. "You know we Tennysons never die," the poet would jestingly say.

Elizabeth Tennyson, the poet's mother, was the daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche, the vicar of Louth, also in the county of Lincolnshire. She is the original of the poetic portrait in "Isabel," and she