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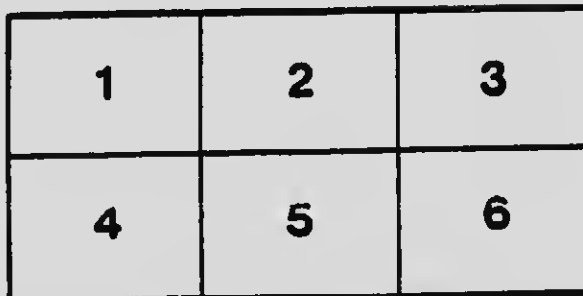
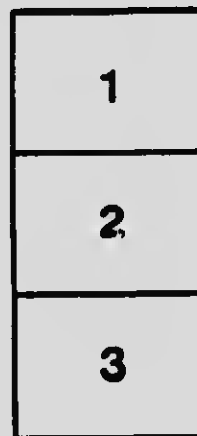
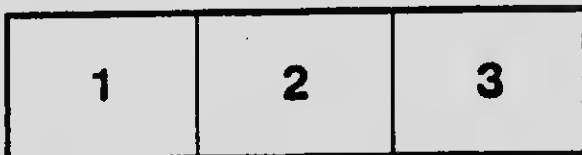
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TENNYSON









ALFRED TENNYSON

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# TENNYSON

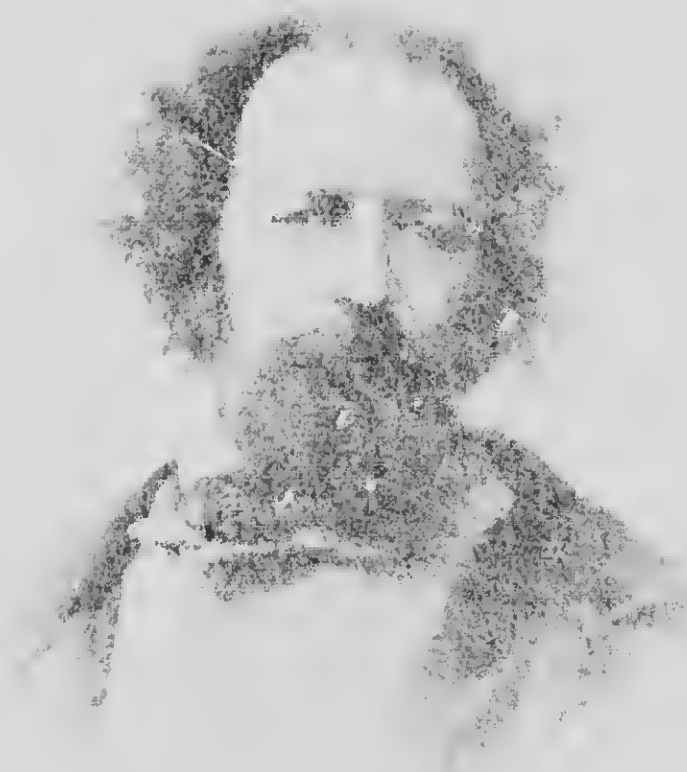
THE LIFE OF

ALFRED TENNYSON

BY

ALFRED TENNYSON

H. K. TENNYSON



A. PREL

# TENNYSON

BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

AND

DR. RICHARD GARNETT, C.B.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

TORONTO

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## TENNYSON

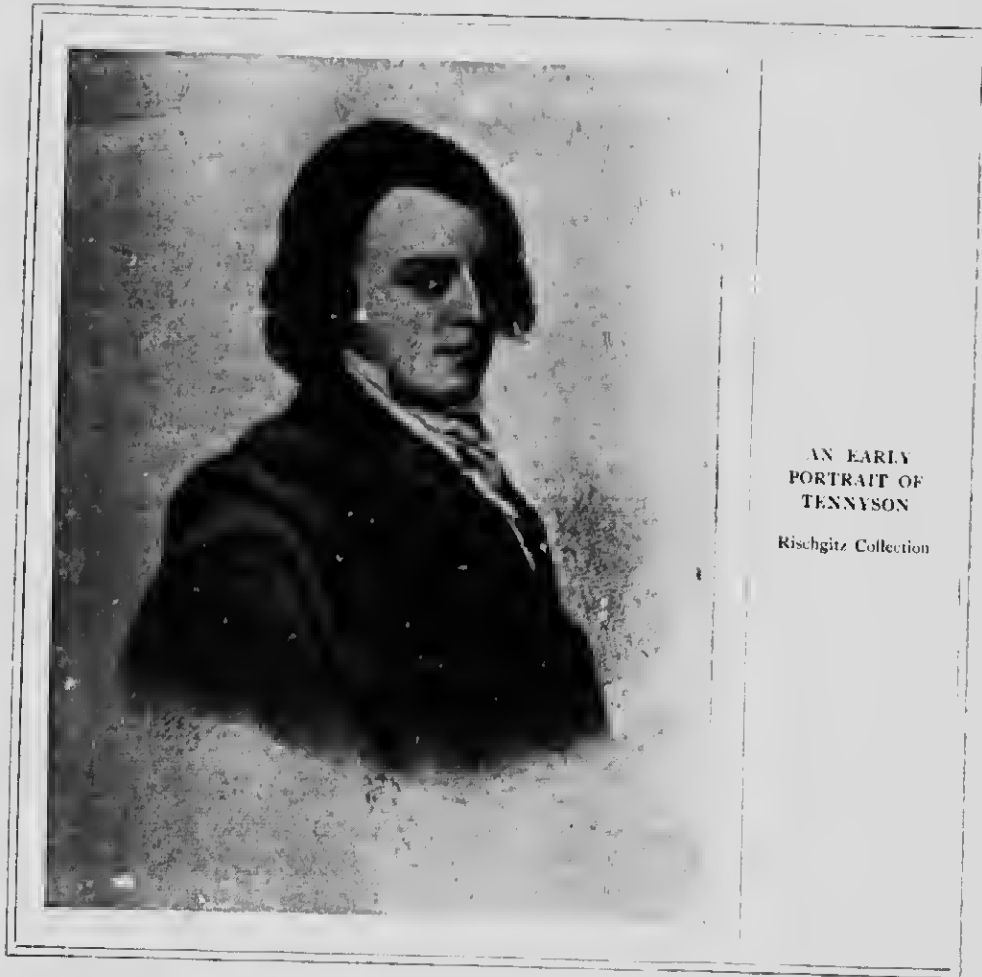


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THE BROOK AT SOMERSBY

IT was merely the accident of his hour, the call of his age, which made Tennyson a philosophic poet. He was naturally not only a pure lover of beauty, but a pure lover of beauty in a much more peculiar and distinguished sense even than a man like Keats, or a man like Robert Bridges. He gave us scenes of Nature that cannot easily be surpassed, but he chose them like a landscape painter rather than like a religious poet. Above all,

he exhibited his abstract love of the beautiful in one most personal and characteristic fact. He was never so successful or so triumphant as when he was describing not Nature, but art. He could describe a statue as Shelley could describe a cloud. He was at his very best in describing buildings, in their blending of aspiration and exactitude. He found to perfection the harmony between the rhythmic recurrences of poetry and the rhythmic recurrences of architecture. His description, for example, of the Palace of Art is a thing entirely victorious and unique. The whole edifice, as



AN EARLY  
PORTRAIT OF  
TENNYSON

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described, rises as lightly as a lyric, it is full of the surge of the hunger for beauty; and yet a man might almost build upon the description as upon the plans of an architect or the instructions of a speculative builder. Such a lover of beauty was Tennyson, a lover of beauty most especially where it is most to be found, in the works of man. He loved beauty in its completeness, as we find it in art, not in its more glorious incompleteness as we



find it in Nature. There is, perhaps, more loveliness in Nature than in art, but there are not so many lovely things. The loveliness is broken to pieces and scattered: the almond tree in blossom will have a mob of nameless insects at its root, and the most perfect cell in the great forest-house is likely enough to smell like a sewer. Tennyson loved beauty more in its collected form in art, poetry, and sculpture: like his own "Lady of Shalott," it was his office to look rather at the mirror than at the object. He was an artist, as it were, at two removes: he was a splendid imitator of the splendid imitations. It is true that his natural history was exquisitely exact, but natural history and natural



*From a photo by Messrs. Curton & Sons, Hereford*

SOMERSBY RECTORY, LINCOLNSHIRE

Where Alfred Tennyson was born, on Sunday, August 6th, 1809



LOUTH

(Reproduced from "The Laureate's Country," by kind permission of Messrs. Seeley & Co., Ltd.)

whole scene accurately, but we see it through glass. In Tennyson's works we see Nature indeed, and hear Nature, but we do not smell it.

But this poet of beauty and a certain magnificent idleness lived at a time when all men had to wrestle and decide. It is not easy for any person who lives in our time, when the dust has settled



From a photo by Messrs. Carlton & Sons, Horncastle

SOMERSBY CHURCH

religion are things that can be, under certain circumstances, more unnatural than anything in the world. In reading Tennyson's natural descriptions we never seem to be in physical contact with the earth. We learn nothing of the course good - temper and rank energy of life. We see the and the spiritual perspective has been restored, to realise what the entrance of the idea of evolution meant for the men of those days. To us it is a discovery of another link in a chain which, however far we follow it, still stretches back into a divine mystery. To

ALFRED  
TENNYSON

*From the painting by  
Samuel Laurence*

Rischgitz Collection



many of the men of that time it would appear from their writings that it was the heart-breaking and desolating discovery of the end and origin of the chain. To them had happened the most black and hopeless catastrophe conceivable to human nature; they had found a logical explanation of all things. To them it seemed that an Ape had suddenly risen to gigantic stature and destroyed the seven heavens. It is difficult, no doubt, for us

## TENNYSON



TENNYSON'S MOTHER



*From a photo by Messrs. Carlton & Sons, Horncastle*  
BAG ENDERBY CHURCH

in somewhat subtler days to understand how anybody could suppose that the origin of species had anything to do with the origin of being. To us it appears that to tell a man who asks who made his mind that evolution made it, is like telling a man who asks who rolled a cab-wheel over his leg that revolution rolled it. To state the process is scarcely to state the agent. But the position of those who regarded the opening of the "Descent of Man" as the opening of one of the seals of the last days, is a great deal sounder than people have generally allowed. It has been constantly supposed that they were angry with Darwinism because it appeared to do something or other to the Book of Genesis; but this was a pretext or a fancy. They fundamentally rebelled against Darwinism, not because they had a fear that it would affect Scripture, but because they had a fear, not altogether unreasonable or ill-founded, that it would affect morality. Man had been engaged, through innumerable ages, in a struggle with sin. The evil within him was as strong as he could cope

## TENNYSON

7

with—it was as powerful as a cannonade and as enchanting as a song. But in this struggle he had always had Nature on his side. He might be polluted and agonised, but the flowers were innocent and the hills were strong. All the armoury of life, the spears of the pinewood and the batteries of the lightning, went into battle beside him. Tennyson lived in the hour when, to all mortal appearance, the whole of the physical world deserted to the devil. The universe, governed by violence and death, left man to fight alone, with a handful of myths and memories. Men had now to wander in polluted fields and lift up their eyes to abominable hills. They had to arm themselves against the cruelty of flowers and the crimes of the grass. The first honour, surely, is to those who did not faint in the face of that confounding



ALFRED  
TENNYSON,  
1838

From an early  
Daguerreotype

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Engraved by G. J. Stodart



OLD GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL, LOUTH

The original building,  
now no longer in  
existence, where  
Tennyson was sent  
to school at the  
age of seven

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From a drawing by E. Hull



*From the bust by Chantrey*

ARTHUR H. HALLAM

(Reproduced from Hallam's "Remains," by kind permission of Mr. John Murray)

cosmic betrayal; to those who sought and found a new vantage-ground for the army of Virtue. Of these was Tennyson, and it is surely the more to his honour, since he was the idle lover of beauty of whom we have spoken. He felt that the time called him to be an interpreter. Perhaps he might even have been something more of a poet if he had not sought to be something more than a poet. He might have written a more perfect Arthurian epic if his heart had been as much buried in prehistoric sepulchres as the heart of Mr. W. B. Yeats. He might have made more of such poems as "The Golden Year" if his mind had been as clean of metaphysics and as full of a poetic rusticity as the mind of William Morris. He might have been a greater poet if he had been

less a man of his dubious and rambling age. But there are some things that are greater than greatness; there are some things that no man with blood in his body would sell for the throne of Dante, and one of them is to fire the feeblest shot in a war that really awaits decision, or carry the meanest musket in an army that is really marching by. Tennyson may even have forfeited immortality; but he and the men of his age were more than immortal; they were alive.

Tennyson had not a special talent for being a philosophic poet, but he had a special vocation for being a philosophic poet. This may seem a contradiction, but it is only because all the Latin or Greek words we use tend endlessly to lose their meaning. A vocation is supposed to mean merely a taste or faculty, just as economy is held to mean merely the act of saving. Economy means the management of a house or community. If a man starves his best horse, or causes his best workman to strike for more pay, he is not merely unwise, he is uneconomical. So it is with a vocation. If this country were suddenly invaded by some huge alien and conquering population, we should all be called to become soldiers. We should not think in that time that we were sacrificing our unfinished work on Cattle-Feeding or our hobby of fretwork, our brilliant career at the Bar or our taste for painting in water - colours. We should all have a call to arms. We should, however, by no means agree that we



*From the medallion by Thomas Woolner, R.A.*

ALFRED TENNYSON

(Reproduced from "Tennyson's Poems," by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.)



THE LADY OF  
SHALOTT

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all had a vocation for arms. Yet a vocation is only the Latin for a call.

In a celebrated passage in "Maud," Tennyson praised the moral effects of war, and declared that some great conflict might call out the greatness even of the pacific swindlers and sweaters whom he saw around him in the Commercial age. He dreamed, he said, that if—

. . . The battle-bolt sang from the three-decker out on the foam,  
Many a smooth-faced, snub-nosed rogue would leap from his counter  
or till,  
And strike, were it but with his cheating yard-wand, home.

Tennyson lived in the time of a conflict more crucial and frightful



THE PALACE OF  
ART

*From a drawing by  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti*

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than any European struggle, the conflict between the apparent artificiality of morals and the apparent immorality of science. A ship more symbolic and menacing than any foreign three-decker hove in sight in that time—the great, gory pirate-ship of Nature, challenging all the civilisations of the world. And his supreme honour is this, that he behaved like his own imaginary snub-nosed rogue. His honour is that in that hour he despised the flowers and embroideries of Keats as the counter-jumper might despise his tapes and cottons. He was by nature a hedonistic and pastoral poet, but he leapt from his poetic counter and till and struck, were it but with his gimerack mandolin, home.



ALFRED TENNYSON

A marble bust, copied by Miss Grant from the original, sculptured from life in 1857 by Thomas Woolner, R.A.

Rischgitz Collection

which Tennyson uttered has been adopted by every one. This will make against his fame. For a man may vanish as Chaos vanished in the face of creation, or he may vanish as God vanished in filling all things with that created life.

Tennyson's influence on poetry may, for a time, be modified. This is the fate of every man who throws himself into his own age, catches the echo of its temporary phrases, is kept busy in battling with its temporary delusions. There are many men whom history has for a time forgotten to whom it owes more than it could count. But if Tennyson is extinguished it will be with the most glorious extinction. There are two ways in which a man may vanish — through being thoroughly conquered or through being thoroughly the Conqueror. In the main the great Broad Church philosophy

G. K. CHESTERTON.

## TENNYSON AS AN INTELLECTUAL FORCE

IT is easy to exaggerate, and equally easy to underrate, the influence of Tennyson on his age as an intellectual force. It will be exaggerated if we regard him as a great original mind, a proclaimer or revealer of novel truth. It will be underrated if we overlook the great part reserved for him who reveals, not new truth to the age, but the age to itself, by presenting it with a

### MARIANA IN THE SOUTH

*From a drawing by  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti*

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STOCKWORTH MILL.

(Reproduced from "The Homes and Haunts of Alfred, Lord Tennyson," by kind permission of Mr. George G. Napier and Messrs. James Macchlose & Sons.)

cannot, indeed, be so dominant as theirs. The Victorian era was far more affluent in literary genius than the periods of Dryden and Pope; and Tennyson appears as but one of a splendid group, some of whom surpass him in native force of mind and intellectual endowment. But when we measure these illustrious men with the

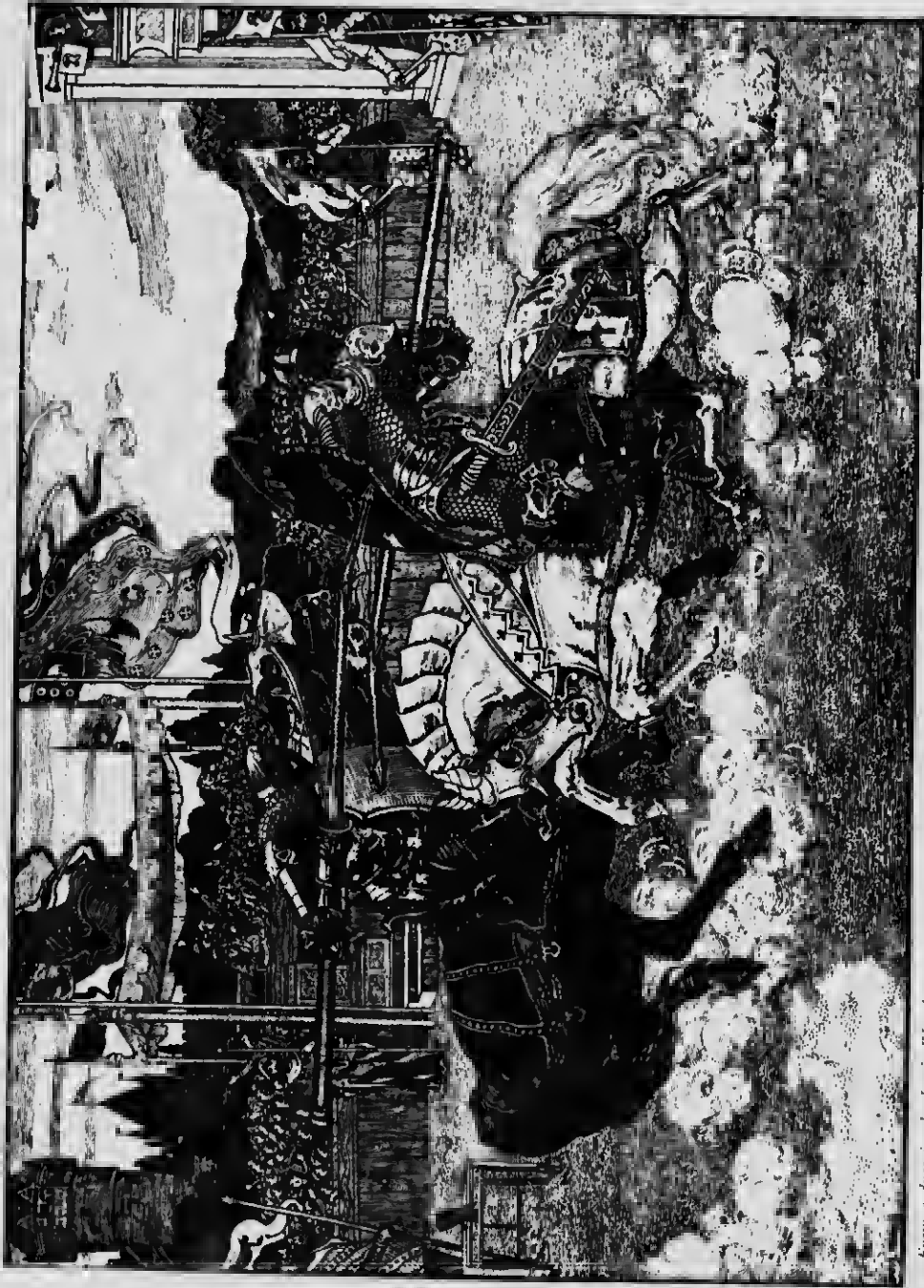


CLEVEON CHURCH

Where the remains of Arthur Hallam were finally laid to rest on January 30, 1834.

(Reproduced from "The Homes and Haunts of Alfred, Lord Tennyson," by kind permission of Mr. George G. Napier and Messrs. James Macchlose & Sons.)

miniature of its own highest, and frequently unconscious, tendencies and aspirations. Not Dryden or Pope were more intimately associated with their respective ages than Tennyson with that brilliant period to which we now look back as the age of Victoria. His figure  
The Victorian era was far more affluent in literary genius than the periods of Dryden and Pope; and Tennyson appears as but one of a splendid group, some of whom surpass him in native force of mind and intellectual endowment. But when we measure these illustrious men with the spirit of their age, we perceive that — with the exception of Dickens, who paints the manners rather than the mind of the time, and Macaulay, who reproduces its average but not its higher mood — there is something as it were sectarian in them which prevents their being accepted



*From a drawing by Louis Klicod*  
**GERAINT AND EDYEN**  
(Reproduced from the Illustrated Edition of "Ilyds of the King," by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.)



*From a drawing by A. Garth Jones*

IN MEMORIAM

"Man dies; nor is there hope in dust"

(Reproduced from the Caxton Series Edition of Tennyson's "In Memoriam,"  
by kind permission of Messrs. George Newnes, Ltd.)

which of all contemporary compositions bears the Victorian stamp most unmistakably, which tells us most respecting the age's thoughts

as representatives of their epoch in the fullest sense. In some instances, such as Carlyle and Browning and Thackeray, the cause may be an exceptional originality verging upon eccentricity; in others, like George Eliot, it may be allegiance to some particular scheme of thought; in others, like Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, exclusive devotion to some particular mission. In Tennyson, and in him alone, we find the man who cannot be identified with any one of the many tendencies of the age, but has affinities with all. Ask for the composition

respecting itself, and there will be little hesitation in naming "Locksley Hall."

Tennyson returns to his times what he has received from them, but in an exquisitely embellished and purified condition; he is the mirror in which the age contemplates all that is best in itself. Matthew Arnold would perhaps not have been wrong in declining to recognise Tennyson as "a great and powerful spirit" if "power" had been the indispensable condition of "greatness"; but he forgot that the receptive poet may be as potent as the creative. His cavil might with equal propriety have been aimed at Virgil. In truth, Tennyson's fame rests upon a securer basis than that of some greater poets, for



*From a drawing by A. Garth Jones*

IN MEMORIAM

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky"

(Reproduced from the Caxton Series Edition of Tennyson's "In Memoriam,"  
by kind permission of Messrs. George Newnes, Ltd.)



*From the portrait at Aldworth by G. F. Watts, R.A.*

LADY TENNYSON

acquaintance with him will always be indispensable to the history of thought and culture in England. What George Eliot and Anthony Trollope are for the manners of the period, he is for its mind: all the ideas which in his day chiefly moved the elect spirits of English society are to be found in him, clothed

in the most exquisite language, and embodied in the most consummate form. That they did not originate with him is of no consequence whatever. We cannot consider him, regarded merely as a poet, as quite upon the level of his great immediate predecessors; but the total disappearance of any of these, except Wordsworth, would leave a less painful blank in our intellectual history than the disappearance of Tennyson.





*From a drawing by E. Hull*

HORNCASTLE

The home of Emily Sellwood, afterwards Lady Tennyson

(Reproduced from "The Laureate's Country," by kind permission of Messrs. Seckley & Co., Ltd.)

Beginning, even in his crudest attempts, with a manner distinctly his own, he attained a style which could be mistaken for that of no predecessor (though most earnestly anticipated by a few blank-verse lines of William Blake), and which no imitator has been able to rival. What is most truly remarkable is that while much of his poetry is perhaps the most artificial in construction of any in our language, and much again wears the aspect of bird-like spontaneity, these contrasted numbers evidently proceed from the same writer, and no one would think of ascribing them to different hands. As a master of blank verse Tennyson, though perhaps not fully attaining the sweetness of Coleridge or the occasional grandeur of Wordsworth and Shelley, is upon the whole the third in our language after Shakespeare and Milton, and, unlike Shakespeare and Milton, he has made it difficult for his successors to write blank verse after him



*From a photo in the possession of the Rev. A. H. Wickham, Vicar of Graysby*  
GRASBY CHURCH

phenomenon at the close of a great epoch; it is almost peculiar to Tennyson's age that it should then have heralded the appearance of a new era; and that, simultaneously with the inheritor of the past, perhaps the most original and self-sufficing of all poets should have appeared in the person of Robert Browning. A comparison between these illustrious writers would lead us too far; we have

Tennyson is essentially a composite poet. Dryden's famous verses, grand in expression, but questionable in their application to Milton, are perfectly applicable to him; save that, in making him, Nature did not combine two poets, but many. This is a common

already implied that Tennyson occupies the more conspicuous place in literary history on account of his representative character.

The first important recognition of Tennyson's genius came from Stuart Mill, who, partly perhaps under the guidance of Mrs. Taylor, evinced



CHAPEL HOUSE, TWICKENHAM  
Tennyson's first settled home after his marriage  
Rischgitz Collection



*From a drawing by Gustave Doré*

ELAINÉ

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ALFRED TENNYSON

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about 1835 a remarkable insight into Shelley and Browning as well as Tennyson. In the course of his observations he declared that all that Tennyson needed to be a great poet was a system of philosophy, to which Time would certainly conduct him. If he only meant that Tennyson needed "the years that bring the philosophic mind," the observation was entirely just; if he expected the poet either to evolve a system of philosophy for himself or to fall under the sway of some great thinker, he was mistaken. Had Tennyson done either he might have been a very great and very inter-

esting poet; but he could not have been the poet of his age: for the temper of the time, when it was not violently partisan, was liberally eclectic. There was no one great leading idea, such as that of evolution in the last quarter of last century, so ample and so characteristic of the age that a poet might become its disciple without yielding to party what was meant for mankind. Two chief currents of thought there were; but they were antagonistic, even though Mr. Gladstone has proved that a very

exceptional mind might find room for both. Nothing was more characteristic of the age than the reaction towards mediæval ideas, headed by Newman, except the rival and seemingly incompatible gospel of "the railway and the steamship" and all their corollaries. It cannot be said that Tennyson, like Gladstone, found equal room for both ideals in his mind, for until old age had made him mistrustful and querulous he was essentially a man of progress. But his choice of the Arthurian legend for what he intended to be his chief work, and the sentiment of many of his



*From the portrait in the possession of Lady Henry Somerset, painted by G. F. Watts, R.A., in 1859*

ALFRED TENNYSON

most beautiful minor poems, show what attraction the mediæval spirit also possessed for him; nor, if he was to be in truth the poetical representative of his period, could it have been otherwise. He is not, however, like Gladstone, alternately a mediæval and a modern man; but he uses mediæval sentiment with exquisite judgment to mellow what may appear harsh or crude in the new ideas of political reform, diffusion of education, mechanical invention, free trade, and colonial expansion. The Victorian, in fact,



*From the chalk drawing by M. Arnault in the National Portrait Gallery*

ALFRED TENNYSON  
Rischgitz Collection



*From a photo by Messrs. F. Frith & Co., Reigate*

FARRINGFORD

Tennyson's residence at Freshwater

finds himself nearly in the position of the Elizabethan, who also had a future and a past: and, except in his own, there is no age in which Tennyson would have felt himself more at home than in the age of Elizabeth. He does, indeed, in "Maud" react very vigorously against certain tendencies of the age which he disliked: but this is not in the interest of the mediæval or any other order of ideas incompatible with the fullest development of the nineteenth century. If the utterance here appears passionate, it must be remembered that the poet writes as a combatant. When he constructs, there is nothing more characteristic of him than his sanity. The views on female education propounded in "The Princess" are so sound that good sense has supplied the place of the spirit of prophecy, which did not tabernacle with Tennyson. "In Memoriam" is a most perfect expression of the average theological temper of England in the nineteenth century. As in composition, so in spirit, Tennyson's writings have all the



From a photo by Mrs. Julia Margaret Cameron

TENNYSON (About 1871)

(Reproduced by permission of Mr. J. Caswall Smith)

advantages and all the disadvantages of the golden mean.

By virtue of this golden mean Tennyson remained at an equal distance from revolution and reaction in his ideas, and equally remote from extravagance and insipidity in his work. He is essentially a man of the new time; he begins his career steeped in the influence of Shelley and Keats, without whom he would never have attained the height he did a height neverthe-

less, in our opinion, appreciably below theirs, if he is regarded simply as a poet. But he is a poet and much else; he is the interpreter of the Victorian era firstly to itself, secondly to the ages to come. Had even any poet of greater genius than himself arisen in his own day, which did not happen, he would still have remained the national poet of the time in virtue of his universality. Some personal friends *splendide mendaces* have hailed him as our greatest poet since Shakespeare. This is absurd; but it is true that no other poet since Shakespeare has produced a body of





From a drawing by George H. Rhead  
MERLIN AND VIVIAN  
(Reproduced from the Illustrated Edition of "Idylls of the King," by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.)

*Crossing the Bar*

Sunset & evening stars,  
 And one clear call for me.  
 And may there be no mourning of the bar,  
 When I put out to sea,  
 But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
 To fall for ebb and flow,  
 When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
 Turns again home.  
 Twilight & evening bell,  
 And after that the dark.  
 And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
 When I embark!  
 For tho' from out our bourne of Time & Place  
 The flood may bear me far,  
 I hope to see my Pilot face to face,  
 When I have cross'd the bar.

A FACSIMILE OF TENNYSON'S MANUSCRIPT, "CROSSING THE BAR"  
 (Reproduced from "Tennyson: A Memoir," by kind permission of  
 Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.)

poetry which comes so near to satisfying all tastes, reconciling all tendencies, and registering every movement of the intellectual life of the period. Had his mental balance been less accurately poised, he might have been the laureate of a party, but he could not have been the laureate of the nation. As an intellectual force he is, we think, des-

tined to be powerful and durable, because the charm of his poetry will always keep his ideas before the popular mind; and these

ideas will always be congenial to the solid, practical, robust, and yet tender and emotional mind of England. They may be briefly defined as the recognition of the association of continuity with mutability in human institutions: the utmost reverence for the past combined with the full and not regretful admission that—

The old order changes,  
giving place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself  
in many ways:

the conception of Freedom as something that "broadens down, from precedent to precedent"; veneration for "the Throne unshaken still," so long as it continues "broad-based upon the People's will," which will always be the case so long as

Statesmen at the Council meet  
Who know the seasons.

Philosophically and theologically, Tennyson is even more conspicuously the representative of the average English mind of his



*From a water-colour drawing by Mrs. Allingham*

THE GLADE AT FARRINGFORD

(Reproduced by kind permission of the Artist)



From a photo by Messrs. F. Frith & Co., Reigate  
FRESHWATER

*media*: not, as in former days, between Protestantism and Romanism, but between orthodoxy and free thought. Tennyson cannot, indeed, be termed Coleridge's intellectual heir. As a thinker he is far below his predecessor, and almost devoid of originality; but as a poet he fills up the measure of what was lacking in Coleridge, whose season of speculation hardly arrived until the

day. Not that he is a fusion of conflicting tendencies, but that he occupies a central position, equally remote from the excesses of scepticism and the excesses of devotion. This position he is able to fill from his relation to Coleridge, the great exponent of the *via*

season of poetry was past. Tennyson was but one of a band of auditors it might be too much to call them disciples of the sage who, curiously enough, had himself been a Cambridge man, and who, short and unsatisfactory as had been his residence at that seat of learning,



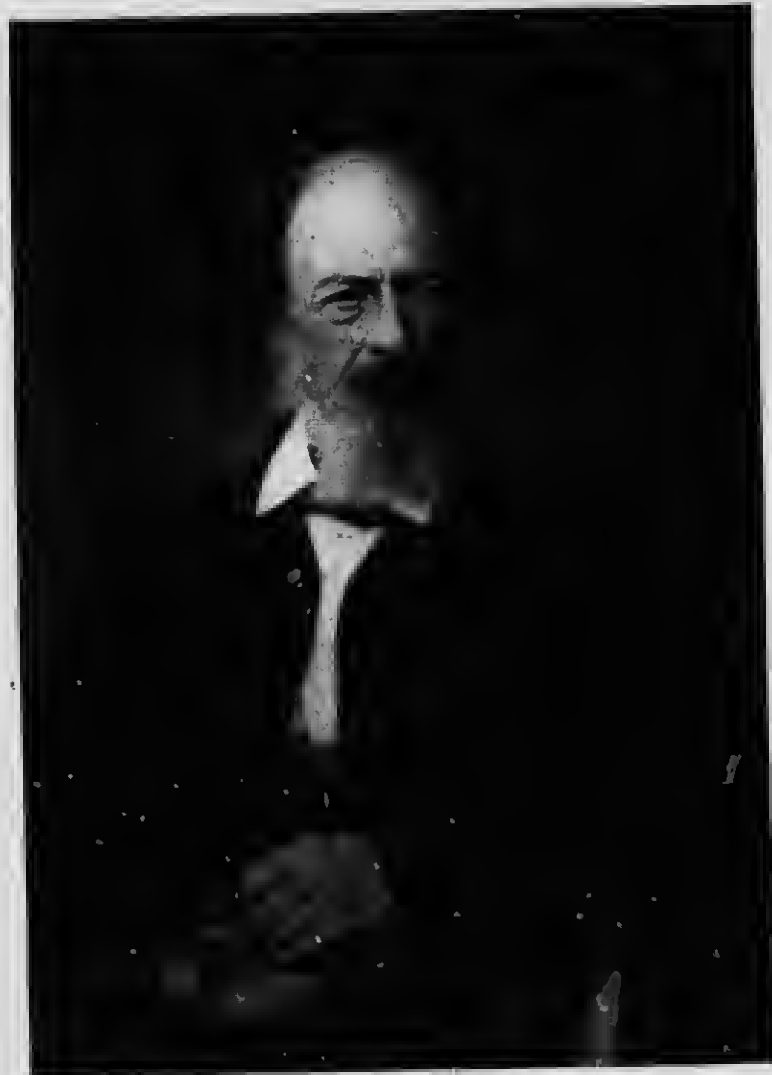
From a photo by Messrs. F. Frith & Co. Reigate  
FRESHWATER BAY



*From a drawing by Gustave Doré*

**GUINEVERE**

(Reproduced from the "Illustrations to Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King,'" by kind permission of Messrs. Ward, Lock & Co.)



*From a photo by Barraud*

ALFRED TENNYSON

seemed to have left behind him some invisible influence destined to germinate in due time, for all his most distinguished followers were Cantabs. Such another school, only lacking a poet, had flourished at Cambridge in the seventeenth century, and now came up

again like long-buried seeds in a newly disturbed soil. The precise value of their ideas may always be matter for discussion; but they exerted without doubt a happy influence by

Turning to scorn with lips divine  
The falsehood of extremes.

providing religious minds reverent of the past with an alternative to mere mediævalism, and gently curbing Science in the character she sometimes assumes of "a wild Pallas of the brain." When the natural moodiness of Tennyson's temperament is considered, the



*From a photo by the Graphotone Co.*

TENNYSON'S LANE, HASLEMERE



*From a photo by the Graphotone Co.*

ALDWORTH

Tennyson's home near Haslemere



*From a photo by Messrs. T. Frith & Co.,  
Belgate*

TENNYSON'S MEMORIAL, BEACON  
HILL, FRESHWATER

prevalent optimism of his ideas, both as regards the individual and the State, appears infinitely creditable to him. These are ideas natural to sane and reflecting Englishmen, unchallenged in quiet times, but which may be obscured or overwhelmed in seasons of great popular excitement. The intellectual force of Tennyson is perhaps chiefly shown in the art and attractiveness with which they are set forth: even much that might have appeared tame or prosaic is invested with all the charms of imagination, and commends itself to the poet equally with the statesman. Tennyson is not the greatest of poets, but appreciation of his poems is one of the surest criteria of poetical taste: he is not one of the greatest of thinkers, but agreement with his general cast of thought is an excellent proof of sanity: many singers have been more Delphic in their

inspiration, but few, by maxims of temperate wisdom, have provided their native land with such a Palladium.

RICHARD GARNETT.

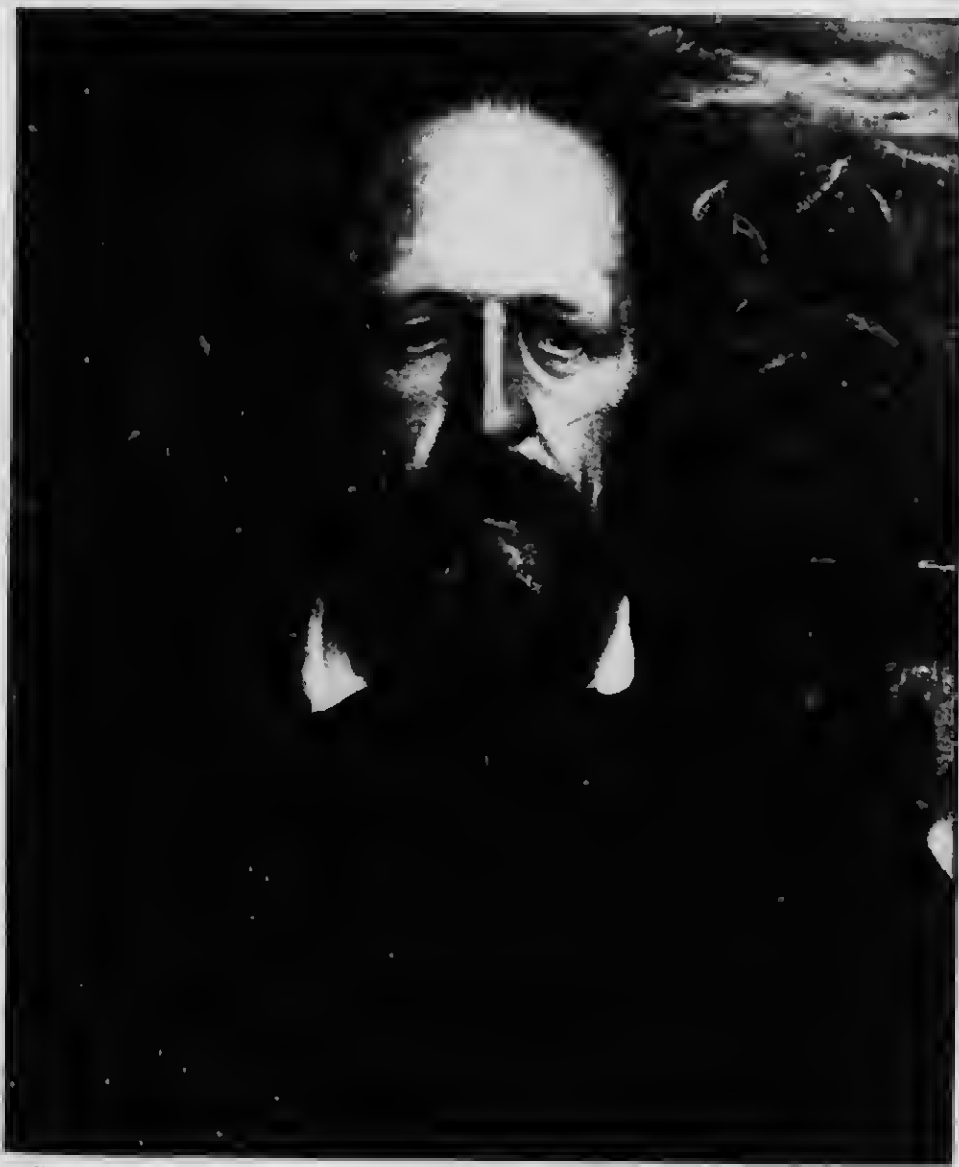
### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

**Somersby  
Rectory, the  
birthplace of  
Alfred Tennyson**

*see page 3*

Alfred Tennyson was born on Sunday, August 6th, 1809, at Somersby, a village in North Lincolnshire between Horncastle and Spilshy. His father, the Rev. Dr. George Clayton Tennyson, Rector of Somersby, married in 1805 Elizabeth Fytche, daughter of the Vicar of Louth, in the same county; and, of their twelve children, Alfred was the fourth.





*From a portrait by G. F. Watts, R.A.*

ALFRED TENNYSON  
Rischitz Collection

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

He always spoke with affectionate remembrance of his early home : of the woodland trained round his nursery window ; of the medieval-looking dining-hall, with its pointed stained-glass casements ; of the pleasant drawing-room, lined with bookshelves and furnished with yellow upholstery. The lawn in front of the house, where he composed his early poem, "A Spirit Haunts the Year's Last Hours," was overshadowed on one side by wych-elms, on the other by larch and sycamore trees. On the south was a path bounded by a flower-border, and beyond "a garden bower'd close" sloping gradually to the field at the bottom of which ran the Somersby Brook.

**Somersby Brook***see page 4*

That flows  
To purr o'er matted grass and ribbed sand,  
Or droop in the dark of rushy coves,  
Drawing into his narrow pathlet run  
In every hollow and turn,  
The filtered tribute of the rough woodland,

The charm and beauty of this brook haunted the poet throughout his life, and to it he especially dedicated, "Flow down, rudd rivulet, to the sea." Tennyson did not, however, attribute his famous poem, "The Brook," to the same source of inspiration, declaring it was not addressed to any stream in particular.

**Tennyson's  
Mother***see page 5*

Tennyson was exceedingly fortunate in the environment of his childhood and the early influence exercised by his parents. His mother was of a sweet and gentle disposition, and devoted herself entirely to the welfare of her husband and her children. Her son is said to have taken her as a model in "The Princess"; and he certainly gave a more or less truthful description of this "remarkable and saintly woman" in his poem "Isabel":—

Locks not wide-dispers'd,  
Madonna-wise on either side her head;  
Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign  
The summer calm of golden charity.

**Somersby  
Church***see page 4*

Tennyson's father was a man of marked physical strength and stature, called by his parishioners "The stern Doctor." In 1807 he was appointed to the living of Somersby, and that of the adjoining village of Bag Enderby, and this position he held until his death, on March 16th, 1831, at the age of fifty-two. He was buried in the old country churchyard, where "absolute stillness reigns," beneath the shade of the rugged little tower. In his time the roof of the church was covered with thatch, as were also those of the cottages in its immediate vicinity.

**Bag Enderby  
Church***see page 4*

The livings of Somersby and Bag Enderby were held conjointly, service being conducted at one church in the morning and at the other in the afternoon. Dr. Tennyson read his sermons at Bag Enderby from the quaint high-built pulpit, Alfred listening to them from the squire's roomy pew.

**Louth***see page 4*

At the age of seven Tennyson was sent to school at Louth, a market-town which may fairly lay claim to having been a factor of some importance in his early life. His maternal grandmother lived in Westgate Place, her house being a second home to the young Tennysons. The old Grammar School where Alfred received the early portion of his education is now no longer in existence. Tennyson's recollections of it and of the Rev. J. Waite, at that time the head-master, were not pleasant. "How I did hate that school!

**The Grammar  
School, Louth***see page 7*

he wrote later. "The only good I got from it was the memory of the words *Sonus desiliens in aqua*, and of an odd wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows."

Tennyson's first connected poems were composed at Louth, and in this town also his first published work saw the light, appearing in a volume entitled "Poems by Two Brothers," issued in 1827 by Mr. J. Jackson, a bookseller. The two brothers were Charles and Alfred Tennyson.

After a school career which lasted four years, Alfred returned to Somersley to continue his studies under his father's tuition. This course of instruction was supplemented by classics at the hands of a Roman Catholic priest, and music-lessons given him by a teacher at Horneastle.

In 1828 Charles and Alfred Tennyson followed their elder brother Frederick to Trinity College, Cambridge. They began their university life in lodgings at No. 12, Rose Crescent, moving later to Trumpington Street, No. 57, Corpus Buildings. Of his early experiences of life at Cambridge, Alfred wrote to his aunt: "I am sitting owl-like and solitary in my rooms (nothing between me and the stars but a stratum of tiles). The hoof of the steed, the roll of the wheel, the shouts of drunken Gown and drunken Trow come up from below with a sea-like murmur. . . . The country is so disgustingly level, the revelry of the place so monotonous, the studies of the University so uninteresting, so much matter of fact. None but dry-headed, calculating, angular little gentlemen can take much delight in them."

It was at Trinity College that Tennyson first made the acquaintance of Arthur Hallam, youngest son of the historian, whose friendship so profoundly influenced the poet's character and genius. "He would have been known if he had lived," wrote Tennyson, "as a great man, but not as a great poet; he was as near perfection as mortal man could be."

In February 1831 Tennyson left Cambridge without taking a degree, and returned to Somersley, his father dying within a month of his arrival. From this time onward Hallam became an intimate visitor at the Rectory, and formed an attachment for his friend's sister Emily. In July 1832 Tennyson and Hallam went touring on the Rhine, and at the close of the year appeared the volume of "Poems by Alfred Tennyson," which contained,

"The Lady of Shalott," "The Miller's Daughter," "The Palace of Art," "The Lotus Eaters," and "A Dream of Fair Women."

"Well I remember this poem," wrote Fitzgerald, with reference to "The Lady of Shalott," "real to me, before I knew the author, at Cambridge one night in 1832 or 3, and its images passing across my head, as across the magic mirror, while half-asleep on the mail-coach to London 'in the creeping dawn' that followed."

There she weaves by night and day  
A magic web with colours gay.  
She has heard a whisper say,  
A curse is on her if she stay  
To look down to Camelot.  
She knows not what the curse may be,  
And so she weaveth steadily,  
And little other care hath she,  
The Lady of Shalott.

The idea of "Mariana in the South" came to Tennyson as he was

Arthur Hallam  
(from the bust by  
Chantrey)

see page 8

The La.  
Shalott

35

**"Mariana in the South"***see page 13*

travelling between Narbonne and Perpignan. Hallam interpreted it to be the "expression of desolate loneliness."

Till all the crimson changed, and past  
 Into deep orange o'er the sea,  
 Low on her knees herself she cast,  
 Before Our Lady marm'd she;  
 Complaining, "Mother, give me grace  
 To help me of my weary land,"  
 And on the lipid mirror glow'd  
 The clear perfection of her face.

**Stockworth Mill***see page 14*

Of these earlier poems none added more to Tennyson's growing reputation than "The Miller's Daughter." It was probably written at Cambridge, and the poet declared that the mill was no particular mill, or if he had thought of any mill it was that of Trumpington, near Cambridge. But various touches in the poem seem to indicate that the haunts of his boyhood were present in his mind.

Stockworth Mill was situated about two miles along the banks of the Somersby Brook, the poet's favourite walk, and might very well have inspired the setting of these beautiful verses.

I loved the brimming wave that swam  
 Thro' quiet meadows round the mill,  
 The sleepy pool above the dam,  
 The pool beneath it never still,  
 The meal-sacks on the whiten'd floor,  
 The dark round of the dripping wheel,  
 The very air about the floor  
 Made misty with the floating meal.

**The Palace of Art***see page 11*

In the volume of 1832, several stanzas of "The Palace of Art" were omitted, because Tennyson thought the poem was too full. "'The Palace of Art,'" he wrote in 1890, "is the embodiment of my own belief that the Godlike life is with man and for man."

Amongst the "marvellously compressed word pictures" of this poem is the beautiful one of our illustration on page 11.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,  
 Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
 Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
 An angel look'd at her.

**Clevedon Church***see page 14*

On the 15th of September, 1833, Arthur Hallam died suddenly at Vienna. His remains were brought to England, and laid finally to rest in the old and lonely church beside the sea at Clevedon, on January 3rd, 1834.

When on my bed the moonlight falls,  
 I know that in thy place of rest  
 By that broad water of the west  
 There comes a glory on the walls.

**"In Memoriam"***see pages 16, 17*

Tennyson's whole thoughts were absorbed in memories of his friend, and he continually wrote fragmentary verses on the one theme which filled his heart, many of them to be embodied seventeen years later in the completed "In Memoriam."

**The home of Emily Sellwood, at Horncastle***see page 19*

In 1830 Tennyson first met Emily Sellwood, who twenty years later became his wife. Horncastle was the nearest town to Somersby, and in the picturesque old market-square stood the red-brick residence of Mr. Henry Sellwood, a solicitor. The young Sellwoods being much of the same age as the Tennysons, a friendship sprang up between the two families, which in later

**Grasby Church**  
*see page 20*

years ripened into a double matrimonial relationship. In 1836, Charles Tennyson, the poet's elder brother, married Louisa, the youngest daughter of Henry Sellwood. In the previous year he had succeeded to the estate and living of Grasby, taking the surname of Turner under his great-nephew's will. At his own expense he built the vicarage, the church and the schools; and on his death, in 1879, Grasby descended to the Poet Laureate. It was at his brother's wedding that the bride's sister, Emily, was taken into church by Alfred Tennyson, but no engagement was recognised between them until four or five years later, and their marriage did not take place until 1850. It was solemnised at Shiplake Church on June 13th, the clergyman who officiated being the poet's intimate friend, the Rev. Robert Rawnsley.

**Lady Tennyson**  
*see page 18*

In the April of the same year, on the death of Wordsworth, Tennyson had been offered the post-laureateship, to which post he was appointed on November 19th, owing chiefly to Prince Albert's admiration for "In Memoriam."

Lady Tennyson became the poet's adviser in literary matters. "I am proud of her intellect," he wrote. She, with her "tender, spiritual nature," was always by his side, cheerful, courageous, and a sympathetic counsellor. She shielded his sensitive spirit from the annoyances and trials of life and "her faith as clear as the lights of the June-blue heaven" helped him in hours of depression and sorrow.

**Chapel House,  
Twickenham**  
*see page 20*

Chapel House, Twickenham, was the poet's first settled home after his marriage, and he resided in it for three years. It was here his "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" was written, and the birth of his son Hallam took place in this house on August 11th, 1832.

**Farringford,  
Tennyson's  
residence at  
Freshwater**  
*see page 25*

In 1833, whilst staying in the Isle of Wight, Tennyson heard that the residence called Farringford was to let at Freshwater. He decided to take the place on lease, but two years later purchased it out of the proceeds resulting from "Maud," which was published in 1855, and Farringford remained his home during the greater part of each year for forty years, and here he wrote some of his best-known works.

"The house at Farringford," says Mrs. Richmond Ritchie in her *Reviews*, "seemed like a charmed palace, with green walls without, and speaking walls within. There hung Dante with his solemn nose and wreath; Italy gleamed over the doorways; friends' faces lined the passages, books filled the shelves, and a glow of crimson was everywhere; the oriel drawing-room window was full of green and golden leaves, of the sound of birds and of the distant sea."

**The Glade at  
Farringford**  
*see page 29*

The grounds of Farringford are exceedingly beautiful and picturesque. On the south side of the house is the glade, and close by

The waving pine which here  
The warrior of Capraea set.

Referring to Farringford in his invitation to Maurice, Tennyson wrote—

Where far from noise and smoke of town  
I watch the twilight falling brown  
All round a careless order'd garden,  
Close to the ridge of a noble down.

The ridge of the down in question constituted the poet's favourite walk, and

**Freshwater Bay**  
*see page 30*

the scenery which he encountered round Freshwater Bay might well have been represented in the opening verse of "Enoch Arden"—

Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;  
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands.

**Freshwater Village**  
*see page 30*

Inland the road leads to the little village of Freshwater, in which the erection of a number of new houses evoked from the poet the lines—

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are less and less;  
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideousness!

**Alfred Tennyson**  
*see pages 22 and 26*

Opposite these villas stands an ivy-clad house at that time occupied by Mrs. Julia Cameron, the celebrated lady art-photographer, two of whose effective portraits of Tennyson appear on pages 22 and 26.

**"The Idylls of the King"**  
*see pages 15, 21, 27, 31*

In the autumn of 1859, "The Idylls of the King" were first issued in their original form, being four in number: Enid, Vivien, Elaine, and Guinevere, and from their publication until the end of Tennyson's life his fame and popularity continued without a check. During the next few years the poet spent much time in travelling, but in 1868 he laid the foundation-stone of a new residence, named Aldworth, about two miles from Haslemere, which became his second home—

You came, and look'd and loved the view  
Long-known and loved by me,  
Green Sussex fading into blue,  
With one grey glimpse of sea.

**Aldworth**  
*see page 33*

On the way from Haslemere to Aldworth, it is necessary to cross a rough common covered with whin bushes to reach the long winding lane which was named Tennyson's Lane. This was the poet's favourite walk when living in the neighbourhood.

**Tennyson's Lane**  
*see page 33*

**Tennyson's Memorial, Beacon Hill, Freshwater**  
*see page 34*

Tennyson died on Thursday, October 6th, 1892, and was buried in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, next to Robert Browning, and near the Chamber monument. Against the pillar close by the grave has been placed Woolner's well-known bust. The monument erected to the memory of the poet on Beacon Hill, near Freshwater, was unveiled by the Dean of Westminster on August 6th, 1897.

**Alfred Tennyson (from the painting by Samuel Laurence)**  
*see page 5*

With regard to the portraits of Tennyson reproduced in these pages, perhaps those of chief interest in addition to the Cameron photographs already referred to are the paintings by Samuel Laurence, executed about 1838, and the three-quarter length by G. F. Watts, now in the possession of Lady Henry Somerset. Of the former Fitzgerald wrote:

"Very imperfect as Laurence's portrait is, it is nevertheless the *best* painted portrait I have seen; and certainly the *only* one of old days. 'Blubber-lipt' I remember once Alfred called it; so it is; but still the only one of old days, and still the best of all, to my thinking."

**Alfred Tennyson (from the painting by G. F. Watts in 1869)**  
*see page 23*

The Watts portrait, according to Mr. Watts-Dunton, possesses "a certain dreaminess which suggests the poetic glamour of moonlight." The same writer asserts that "while most faces gain by the artistic halo which a painter of genius always sheds over his work, there are some few, some very few faces that do not, and of these Lord Tennyson's is the most notable that I have ever seen among men of great renown."

