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Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Hallam Tennyson's biography of his father Alfred, Lord Tennyson, remains the authoritative source of information on the poet's life. Begun after his death in 1892 and published five years later, this work was produced in order to 'preclude the chance of further and unauthentic biographies', and is formed largely of a wealth of documentary evidence: the letters, journals, and personal reminiscences of the poet and those close to him. Adhering to Tennyson's wishes, on his death his son and wife destroyed over three-quarters of the 40,000 letters he left behind, but those selected and reprinted here nonetheless give a fascinating insight into the personal life of the poet; guarded and respectful in its commemorative tone, but avoiding over-zealous eulogy or critical review. Volume 1 contains letters and manuscript notes from the period up to 1864, including those relating to the life and death of Tennyson's close friend, Arthur Hallam, and his own marriage.

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Alfred Lord Tennyson

A Memoir

VOLUME 1

HALLAM TENNYSON



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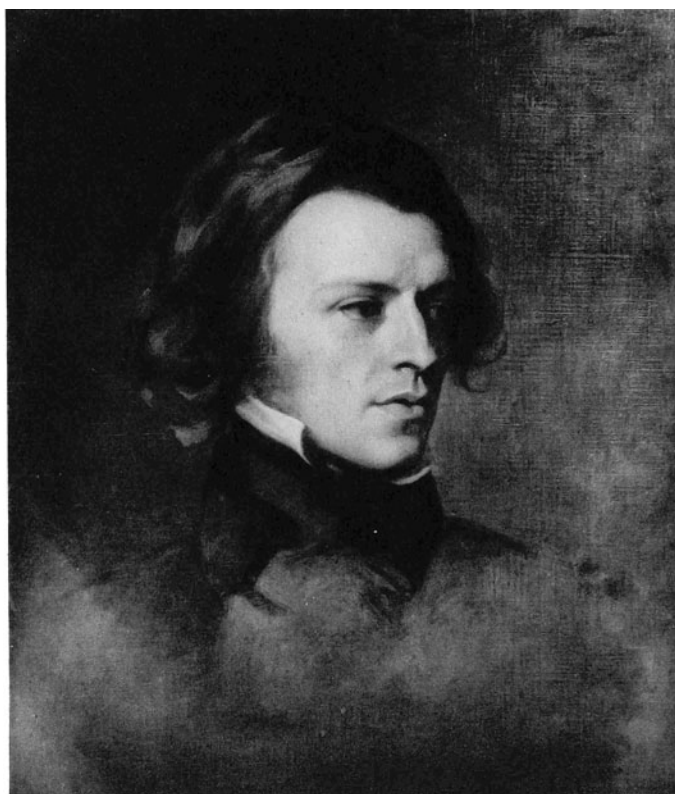
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Walker & Russell P.A.S.C.

*Alfred Tennyson.
from the portraits painted by Samuel Laurence.*

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

A MEMOIR

By HIS SON

I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure!

VOLUME I

London
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1897

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THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED
BY PERMISSION
TO THE QUEEN.

An Unpublished Version of "To the Queen," 1851.

THE NOBLEST MEN METHINKS ARE BRED
OF OURS THE SAXO-NORMAN RACE ;
AND IN THE WORLD THE NOBLEST PLACE,
MADAM, IS YOURS, OUR QUEEN AND HEAD.

YOUR NAME IS BLOWN ON EVERY WIND,
YOUR FLAG THRO' AUSTRAL ICE IS BORNE,
AND GLIMMERS TO THE NORTHERN MORN,
AND FLOATS IN EITHER GOLDEN IND.

I GIVE THIS FAULTY BOOK TO YOU,
FOR, THO' THE FAULTS BE THICK AS DUST
IN VACANT CHAMBERS, I CAN TRUST
YOUR WOMAN'S NATURE KIND AND TRUE.

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PREFACE.

Unpublished Sonnet

(*Written originally as a preface to "Becket"*).

Old ghosts whose day was done ere mine began,
If earth be seen from your conjectured heaven,
Ye know that History is half-dream—ay even
The man's life in the letters of the man.
There lies the letter, but it is not he
As he retires into himself and is:
Sender and sent-to go to make up this,
Their offspring of this union. And on me
Frown not, old ghosts, if I be one of those
Who make you utter things you did not say,
And mould you all awry and mar your worth;
For whatsoever knows us truly, knows
That none can truly write his single day,
And none can write it for him upon earth.

“History is half-dream—ay even
The man's life in the letters of the man”;

but besides the letters of my father and of his friends there are his poems, and in these we must look for the innermost sanctuary of his being. For my own part, I feel strongly that no biographer could so truly give him as he gives himself in his own works; but this may be because, having lived my life with him, I see him in every word which he has written; and it is difficult for me so

far to detach myself from the home circle as to pourtray him for others. There is also the impossibility of fathoming a great man's mind ; his deeper thoughts are hardly ever revealed. He himself disliked the notion of a long, formal biography, for

“None can truly write his single day,
 And none can write it for him upon earth.”

However he wished that, if I deemed it better, the incidents of his life should be given as shortly as might be without comment, but that my notes should be final and full enough to preclude the chance of further and unauthentic biographies.

For those who cared to know about his literary history he wrote “Merlin and the Gleam.” From his boyhood he had felt the magic of Merlin—that spirit of poetry—which bade him know his power and follow throughout his work a pure and high ideal, with a simple and single devotedness and a desire to ennoble the life of the world, and which helped him through doubts and difficulties to “endure as seeing Him who is invisible.”

Great the Master,
 And sweet the Magic,
 When over the valley,
 In early summers,
 Over the mountain,
 On human faces,
 And all around me,
 Moving to melody,
 Floated the Gleam.

In his youth he sang of the brook flowing through his upland valley, of the “ridgéd wolds” that rose above

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his home, of the mountain-glen and snowy summits of his early dreams, and of the beings, heroes and fairies, with which his imaginary world was peopled. Then was heard the "croak of the raven," the harsh voice of those who were unsympathetic—

The light retreated,
 The landskip darken'd,
 The melody deaden'd,
 The Master whisper'd
 "Follow the Gleam."

Still the inward voice told him not to be faint-hearted but to follow his ideal. And by the delight in his own romantic fancy, and by the harmonies of nature, "the warble of water," and "cataract music of falling torrents," the inspiration of the poet was renewed. His Eclogues and English Idyls followed, when he sang the songs of country life and the joys and griefs of country folk, which he knew through and through.

Innocent maidens,
 Garrulous children,
 Homestead and harvest,
 Reaper and gleaner,
 And rough-ruddy faces
 Of lowly labour.

By degrees, having learnt somewhat of the real philosophy of life and of humanity from his own experience, he rose to a melody "stronger and statelier." He celebrated the glory of "human love and of human heroism" and of human thought, and began what he had already devised, his Epic of king Arthur, "typifying above all things the life of man," wherein he had intended to represent some of the great religions of the world. He had purposed that this was to be the chief work

of his manhood. Yet the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, and the consequent darkening of the whole world for him made him almost fail in this purpose; nor any longer for a while did he rejoice in the splendour of his spiritual visions, nor in the Gleam that had “waned to a wintry glimmer.”

Clouds and darkness
 Closed upon Camelot;
 Arthur had vanish'd
 I knew not whither,
 The king who loved me,
 And cannot die.

Here my father united the two Arthurs, the Arthur of the Idylls and the Arthur “the man he held as half divine.” He himself had fought with death, and had come out victorious to find “a stronger faith his own,” and a hope for himself, for all those in sorrow and for universal humankind, that never forsook him through the future years.

And broader and brighter
 The Gleam flying onward,
 Wed to the melody,
 Sang thro' the world.
 * * * * *
 I saw, whenever
 In passing it glanced upon
 Hamlet or city,
 That under the Crosses
 The dead man's garden,
 The mortal hillock,
 Would break into blossom;
 And so to the land's
 Last limit I came.

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Up to the end he faced death with the same earnest and unflinching courage that he had always shown, but with an added sense of the awe and the mystery of the Infinite.

I can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers the Gleam.

That is the reading of the poet's riddle as he gave it to me. He thought that "Merlin and the Gleam" would probably be enough of biography for those friends who urged him to write about himself. However, this has not been their verdict, and I have tried to do what he said that I might do, and have endeavoured to give briefly something of what people naturally wish to know, something about his birth, homes, school, college, friendships, travels, and the leading events of his life, enough to present the sort of insight into his history and pursuits which one wants, if one desires to make a companion of a man. The picture of his early days has been mainly sketched from what he and my mother have told me. My difficulty in arranging the later chapters has been how to choose, and how to throw aside, from the mass of material¹. I have quoted from many manuscripts never

¹ My thanks are due to Professor Henry Sidgwick and Professor Palgrave who have helped me to make my selection from upwards of 40,000 letters.

meant for the public eye, many of which I have burnt according to his instructions. Among those that I have collected here, the most interesting to me are my father's unpublished poems, letters,—and notes on his own life and work left me for publication after his death, Arthur Hallam's letters, Edward Fitzgerald's private MS notes¹ (some of which he gave me, and some of which have been lent to me by Mr Aldis Wright), and the journal of our home life. This last is a simple record of daily something-nothings.

If there appear, in the Reminiscences kindly contributed by his different friends, to be any discrepancies, let it be remembered that the many-sided man has sympathy with many and various minds, and that the poet may be like the magnetic needle, which, though it can be moved from without, yet in itself remains true to the magnetic pole.

According to my father's wish, throughout the memoir my hand will be as seldom seen as may be, and this accounts for the occasionally fragmentary character of my work. The anecdotes and sayings here related have been mostly taken down as soon as spoken, and are hence, I trust, not marred or mended by memory, which, judging from some anecdotes of him recently published, is wont to be a register not wholly accurate. "Fingunt simul creduntque."

Such reviews as I have quoted are chiefly those which have met with my father's approbation as explanatory commentaries. For my own part, I have generally refrained from attempting to pronounce judgment either on his poems or on his personal qualities and characteristics; although more than any living man I

¹ Generally signed E. F. G. throughout this work.

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have had reason to appreciate his splendid truth and trustfulness, his varied creative imagination, and love of beauty, his rich humour, his strength of purpose, the largeness of his nature, and the wide range of his genius. If I may venture to speak of his special influence over the world, my conviction is, that its main and enduring factors are his power of expression, the perfection of his workmanship, his strong common sense, the high purport of his life and work, his humility, and his open-hearted and helpful sympathy—

“Fortezza, ed umiltade, e largo core.”

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOKS OF POEMS.

1827.—**POEMS BY TWO BROTHERS.** London: Printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, Stationers'-Hall-Court; and J. and J. Jackson. Louth: 1827. Published in two sizes.

1829.—**TIMBUCTOO.** A Poem which obtained the Chancellor's Medal at the Cambridge Commencement, 1829. By A. Tennyson, of Trinity College. 8vo.

1830.—**POEMS, CHIEFLY LYRICAL.** By Alfred Tennyson. London: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, Cornhill, 1830. 12mo.

1832.—**POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON.** London: Edward Moxon, 64 New Bond Street (dated 1833). 12mo.

1833.—**THE LOVER'S TALE,** privately printed in London.

1842.—**POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON.** London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1842. 2 vols., 12mo.

1843.—**THE SAME.** Second edition. London: 1843. 2 vols., 12mo.

1845.—**THE SAME.** Third edition. London: 1845. 2 vols., 12mo.

1846.—**THE SAME.** Fourth edition. London: 1846. 2 vols., 12mo.

1847.—**THE PRINCESS.** A Medley. By Alfred Tennyson. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1847. 12mo.

1848.—**THE SAME.** Second edition. London: 1848 (with addition of dedication to Henry Lushington).

1848.—**POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON.** Fifth edition. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1848. 12mo.

1850.—**IN MEMORIAM.** London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1850. 12mo. (Appointed Poet-laureate Nov. 19.)

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1850.—THE PRINCESS. Third edition (altered, with songs added). London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1850. 12mo.

1850.—POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON. Sixth edition. London: 1850. 12mo. (*After reading a Life and Letters* included.)

1851.—POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON. Seventh edition. London: 1851. 12mo. (*Come not when I am dead, Edwin Morris, The Eagle*, and the dedication *To the Queen* included.)

1851.—THE PRINCESS. Fourth edition. London: 1851. 12mo.
*This edition first has the passages describing the Prince's
 weird seizures.*

1851.—IN MEMORIAM. Fourth edition. London: 1851. 12mo.
(O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me? added.)

1852.—ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON. By Alfred Tennyson, Poet-laureate. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1852. 8vo.

1853.—POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON. Eighth edition. London: 1853. 12mo. (With an alteration in the *Dream of Fair Women*, and lines *To E. L.* added.)

1853.—THE PRINCESS. Fifth edition (the final text). London: 1853. 12mo.

1854.—CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, published in the *Examiner*, Dec. 9th, 1854, then printed for the soldiers before Sebastopol, August 1855.

1855.—MAUD, AND OTHER POEMS. By Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Edward Moxon, 1855. 12mo.

1857.—POEMS, BY ALFRED TENNYSON. Illustrations by D. G. Rossetti, J. E. Millais, and others. Edward Moxon. Royal 8vo.

1859.—IDYLLS OF THE KING. By Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street, 1859. 12mo.

1861.—THE SAILOR BOY. London: Emily Faithfull & Co., Victoria Press.

1862.—IDYLLS OF THE KING. A new edition. London: 1862. 12mo. (with Dedication to the Prince Consort).

1862.—ODE: MAY THE FIRST, 1862, FOR THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION. London: Edward Moxon & Co. (published also in *Fraser*, June, 1862).

1863.—WELCOME TO ALEXANDRA. 4 pages. London: Edward Moxon & Co.

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1864.—ENOCH ARDEN, ETC. By Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street, 1864. 12mo.

1865.—SELECTIONS from the works of Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street, 1865. 16mo.

This was published in Moxon's Miniature Poets, and contains six new poems, viz.: 'The Captain,' 'On a Mourner,' 'Home They Brought Him Slain with Spears,' and three 'Sonnets to a Coquette.'

1867.—THE VICTIM. } Printed by Sir Ivor Guest (Lord Wimborne),
 THE WINDOW. } set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan.

1869.—THE HOLY GRAIL, AND OTHER POEMS. By Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Strahan & Co., Publishers, 56 Ludgate Hill, 1869. 12mo.

1870.—THE WINDOW, OR THE SONG OF THE WRENS. With music by Arthur Sullivan. London: Strahan, 1871 (Dec. 1870).

1871.—MINIATURE EDITION OF COMPLETE WORKS. London: Strahan & Co.

1871.—THE LAST TOURNAMENT. *Contemporary Review*, December.

1872.—GARETH AND LYNETTE, ETC. By Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Strahan & Co., 56 Ludgate Hill, 1872. 12mo.

1872.—THE LIBRARY EDITION OF THE COMPLETE WORKS. In seven volumes. London: Strahan & Co., 1872. Large 8vo. (The Idylls of the King in sequence with Epilogue to the Queen.)

1874.—A WELCOME TO THE DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH. H. S. King & Co.

1874.—THE CABINET EDITION (H. S. King & Co.) contained: *In the Garden at Swainston, The Voice and the Peak, England and America.*

1875.—QUEEN MARY. A Drama, by Alfred Tennyson. London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875. 12mo.

1876.—QUEEN MARY, produced at the Lyceum Theatre.

1876.—HAROLD. A Drama, by Alfred Tennyson. London: Henry S. King & Co. (dated 1877). 12mo.

1879.—THE LOVER'S TALE. By Alfred Tennyson. London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1 Paternoster Square, 1879. 12mo.

1879.—THE FALCON, produced at the St James' Theatre.

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1880.—COLLECTED SONNETS. By Charles Tennyson Turner with memorial lines by Alfred Tennyson. Edited (with a short preface) by Hallam Tennyson. London: C. Kegan Paul. 12mo.

1880.—BALLADS AND OTHER POEMS. By Alfred Tennyson. London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1 Paternoster Square, 1880. 12mo.

1881.—THE CUP, produced at the Lyceum Theatre.

1882.—THE PROMISE OF MAY, produced at the Globe Theatre.

1884.—THE CUP AND THE FALCON. By Alfred Lord Tennyson, Poet-laureate. London: Macmillan & Co., 1884. 12mo.

1884.—A NEW SINGLE-VOLUME EDITION OF WORKS. Revised by the Author with corrections. Macmillan & Co.

1884.—BECKET. By Alfred Lord Tennyson, Poet-laureate. London: Macmillan & Co., 1884. Crown 8vo.

1885.—TIRESIAS, AND OTHER POEMS (including *Once more the Heavenly Power*, published in *The Youth's Companion*, Boston, U.S.A. 1884). By Alfred Lord Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London: Macmillan & Co., 1885. 12mo.

1886.—A NEW LIBRARY EDITION OF COMPLETE WORKS. In ten volumes (revised, with additions by the author). London: Macmillan & Co. (Also a new single-volume Edition, with slight alterations. Macmillan & Co.).

1886.—LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER, ETC. By Alfred Lord Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet-laureate. London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1886. 12mo.

1887.—CARMEN SAECULARE. An ode in honour of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. *Macmillan's Magazine*, April.

1889.—DEMETER AND OTHER POEMS. Macmillan & Co., London and New York. 12mo. (20,000 copies sold in first week.)

1889.—A NEW AND REVISED SINGLE-VOLUME EDITION OF WORKS (with many additions). Macmillan & Co.

1892.—THE FORESTERS, ROBIN HOOD AND MAID MARIAN. London and New York. Macmillan & Co. 12mo. Produced at Daly's Theatre in New York, March 17.

1892.—THE SILENT VOICES. Order of Service in Westminster Abbey, Oct. 12th. Printed for copyright purposes. London and New York: Macmillan & Co.

1892.—Oct. 28th. THE DEATH OF CENONE, AKBAR'S DREAM AND OTHER POEMS. London and New York. Macmillan & Co., 12mo. Also large paper Edition with five steel portraits.

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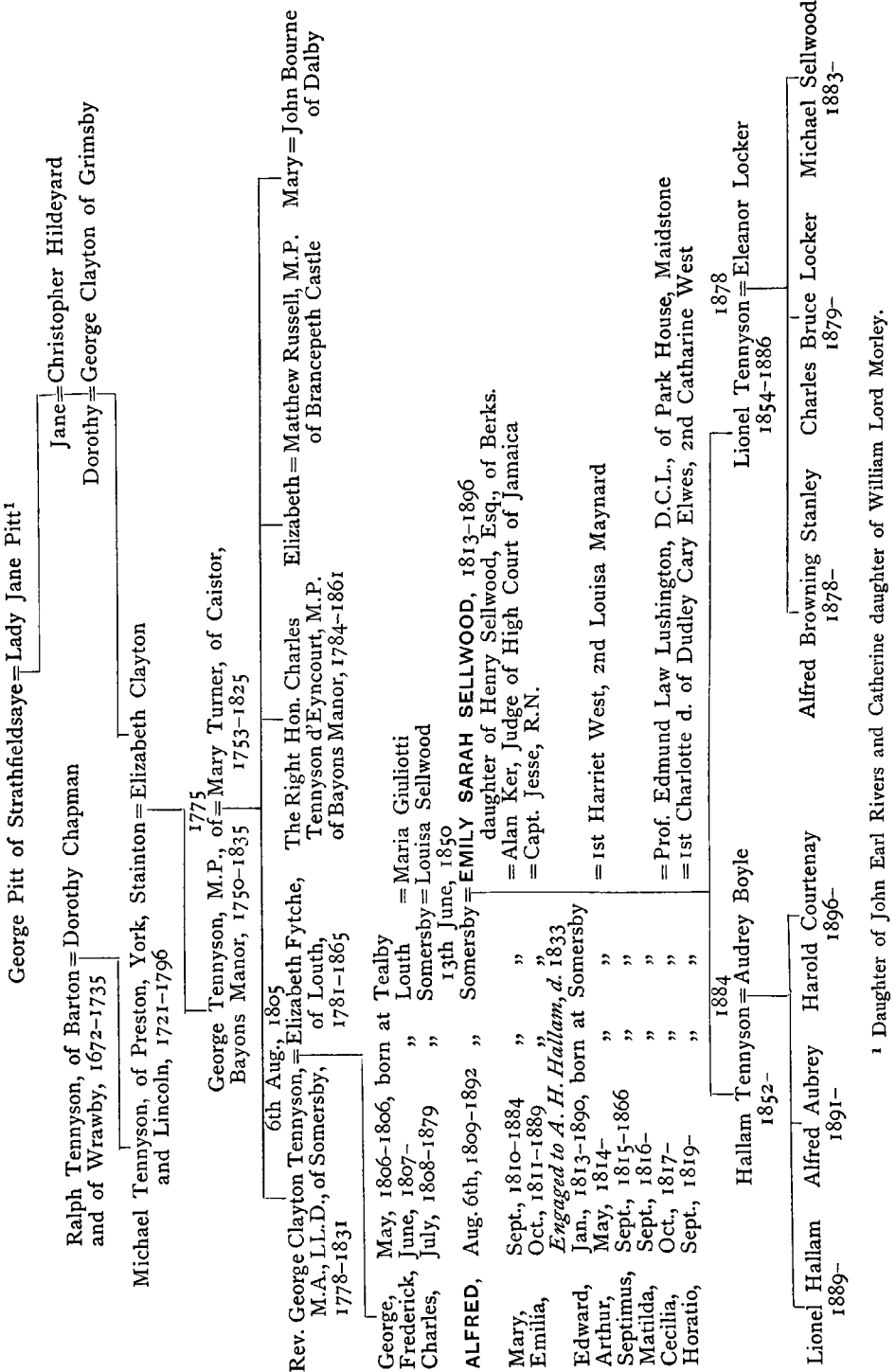
1893.—BECKET, AS ARRANGED FOR THE STAGE BY HENRY IRVING
 (revised by Alfred Lord Tennyson). Macmillan & Co.

1894.—THE COMPLETE SINGLE-VOLUME EDITION OF THE WORKS,
 with last alterations, etc. London: Macmillan & Co.

In Rowe's *Coming of Arthur*, and *Passing of Arthur*; G. C. Macaulay's *Gareth and Lynette*, and *Marriage of Geraint*, and *Geraint and Enid*; Ainger's *Tennyson for the Young*; Rowe's *Aylmer's Field*; Rowe's *Selections from Tennyson*; Palgrave's *Golden Treasury Selection of Lyrical Poems*; Dawson's *Princess*; Rolfe's *Enoch Arden*, and *Selections*, whenever there was any doubtful point in the notes, I referred it to my father: so that in the later editions of these annotated volumes the commentaries may be considered tolerably accurate.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN THE "NINETEENTH CENTURY."

My father contributed the following poems to the *Nineteenth Century*: in 1877, "Prefatory Sonnet" (March), and "Montenegro" (May), and "To Victor Hugo" (June), and "Achilles over the Trench" (August); and in March, 1878, he contributed "The Revenge"; in April, 1879, "The Defence of Lucknow, with a Dedicatory Poem to Princess Alice"; in May, 1880, "De Profundis"; in November, 1881, "Despair"; in September, 1882, "To Virgil"; in March, 1883, "Frater ave atque vale"; in February, 1892, "On the death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale."



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