THE POETICAL WORKS OF TENNYSON

SELECTED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION
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INTRODUCTION

I

ONE HUNDRED years ago, on November 7th, 1850, Mr. Alfred Tennyson, aged forty-one, after a day's deliberation, the drafting of an acceptance and a refusal, and a three-course discussion with his dinner-guests, decided to undertake the duties of a Poet-Laureate offered him by his Queen, an acquiescence which sealed him as the future National Poet of Victorian England, the poet who, in Sir Herbert Grierson's words, 'enjoyed a larger measure of popularity than has fallen to the lot of any English poet since the death of Scott'.

How had this come about? It appeared that Albert the Good had approved Alfred the Graceful. Tennyson's son, Hallam, described this golden moment thus: 'Five months after his marriage my father was offered the poet-laureateship by the Queen, for the Prince Consort had read *In Memoriam* and delighted in it. Curiously enough the night before the offer came he dreamt that the Prince had kissed him on the cheek, and that he had remarked: "Very kind, but very German".'

Today, who would object to this seemingly accidental selection when considering that after Samuel Rogers aged eighty-seven had refused the appointment on the score of age when proffered it by Prince Albert, the other candidates put forward to succeed Wordsworth were Leigh Hunt, Henry Taylor, 'Barry Cornwall', Charles Mackay, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and (as Sir Charles Tennyson records): 'with less confidence, her husband, Robert', even if more Browningite than Tennysonian? For Tennyson, if he had never expected the honour, had by that time fully deserved it. *Poems* 1830, 1833, and 1842, *The Princess*, 1847, and the anonymous *In Memoriam* of 1850 had contained his freshest and most unlaboured verse, the poems of his which, in the main, still give us the deepest delight. There were fine things to come, but even the finest of them, including the incomparable

handful produced in his final period, generally lacked the spontaneity of the 'first, fine, careless rapture'. The cultivated craftsmanship ever grew more careful, the sentiments more sonorously noble, the emotion less deep, the beauty more contrived. And now, offering as my last criticism—that he wrote too much, a fault certainly not confined to him alone in his century, I have written the worst I have to write of Tennyson.

Tennyson selected is indeed Tennyson resurrected.

Recently, four living poets have honestly attempted his re-valuation, revelation and redemption. I refer to Mr. F. L. Lucas, Sir John Squire, Mr. W. H. Auden and Mr. John Heath-Stubbs. Their selections, which I reserved to read after completing this present one, were far more restricted in length than is happily the case with this volume. Mr. Lucas' Anthology occupies some two hundred pages, Mr. Auden's about two hundred and fifty, Sir John Squire's around two hundred and eighty; while Mr. Heath-Stubbs was permitted a mere fifty. Nevertheless, within their respective spaces, it is extraordinary to note how well they agree—although from extremely differing and independent viewpoints—which verse of Tennyson is great Tennyson and worthy of our study and appreciation today; and, I will admit, I was relieved to find how largely my own selections equated with theirs.

To select Tennyson for contemporary reading, while it is a privilege is, none the less, a problem. Forty years ago the late Sir Herbert Warren noted in the Introduction to his Oxford University Press edition of the *Poems* (up to 1868): 'Tennyson's poems begin today to "lie", as, in his own beautiful metaphor, he said they would,

Foreshortened in the tract of time.

'We are not directly conscious of their date, except that they belong generally to the Victorian era, or of their relative distance from each other and from ourselves. This is the fate of all true poetry as it ceases to be the poetry of an age and comes to be poetry for all time. If poems cannot survive this change by their innate vitality, nothing will really give them new life. If they do not first arrest and interest us by their own self-

contained potency, no note, or comment, or Introduction will render them genuinely interesting.'

Warren was writing four years before World War One, and it is clear that, even then, he scented the decline in his idol's popularity which was to ensue during the next thirty years. Unhappily, he did not live to learn that during World War Two the reaction occurred and that Tennyson's works, with their frequent messages of spiritual consolation, were then the most highly in demand after Shakespeare's.

The difficult teething years of our now middle-aged 'Modernists' in verse and criticism, that unhappy vintade between 1917 and 1937, witnessed the feared Tennyson eclipse, so that Mr. Lucas, writing in 1931, ruefully had to admit: 'Taken as a whole Tennyson exasperates the present generation so badly that they have not patience to find out what is best in him, or to value it when they find it, embedded as it is in so much that they hate or ridicule. . . . But the old Magician has not lost his magic for all that.'

Indeed, he has not. Once we recognize that Tennyson has been paying the price of the priggishness of his Age, greatly suffering derision for sins that were by no means his alone, and accept his instinctive efforts as a cultured Lucretian to compromise between his intuitive faith and his urge towards the new theories of science that were being put forward in his day, we can begin to understand the real and honourable writing-man beneath the wide-awake hat, beard, and cloak. In every-day life, his gruff growl was obviously, and often, a shield cast before his hyper-sensitivity. For Tennyson was, in all probability, the most 'nervy' poet of stature England has ever produced. Never could he face hostile criticism from whatever quarter it might come; so that throughout the greater part of his career—one of sixty-five years—his devoted wife had to hide from him every adverse article that she came upon. Indeed, Lockhart's savage review of *Poems*, 1833, and Christopher North's boisterous fun at its expense silenced the poet for ten years so scalded did he feel.

But Tennyson, I repeat, has been blamed unduly. A point has been made that having succeeded to a series of Romantic

rebels, he betrayed them, throwing in his hand, eschewing his early voluptuous melancholy to hymn 'solid Victorian England' and become official singer of its belief in steady human progress, in the domestic virtues. Such a criticism has undeniably more than a grain of truth; but it is meanly made. There is no admission in it of the largess Tennyson had already cast to his countrymen before his attitude changed. His was no sudden *volte-face*; it was a gradual change, and if it has been unfortunate for his reputation in certain localities, almost parochial in their size, and dimmed his lustre for a decade or two, it has in no way dowsed the flame of his fame. Tennyson, anyone save a fool can see, or a knave will deny, is an indestructible Lord of the High Language. His mistake, if a mistake it were, was to attempt to be a philosophic poet and embody in his verse the leading ideas of his Age; for, whenever he did so, although he unfailingly exhibited the high level of his craftsmanship, his ineffable art, the result though a *tour-de-force* of talent, fell short of the purest expression of his natural genius. The same may be said of most of his poems produced for public occasions.[1]

And yet here in my comments I must hesitate, because, beneath all Tennyson's work any writer essaying criticism must be almost guiltily aware of the primitive intuition of the true poetic imagination. It remains there always, a submerged, sub-aqueous quality that 'knows', the Tennyson beneath Tennyson as it were, lurking bright-eyed, waiting to speed to the surface and, indelibly for eternity, make reply to some voiced complexity concerning the Mystery of Man:

From the great deep to the great deep he goes.

I am the fifth contemporary poet to tilt in the recent tourney for Tennyson, and here, with this volume, save or splinter my lance as a Selector. But my faith 'is as the faith of ten' in Tennyson's inevitable revival and re-habilitation.

[1] The great *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, however, might be considered an exception. Warren heard from Tennyson's lips that it was 'in no sense what it is so often called, a laureate piece. It was written out of spontaneous feeling toward the man whom I had admired for some forty years'.

His merits have lain un-examined overlong of late (*pace* Sir Lucas, Sir Squire, Sir Auden, Sir Heath-Stubbs: I warmly salute your recognition of his resilience and richness but I am here granted a larger destrier which can show wider paces), just as his excesses have been magnified recently by envious derisory nonentities.

Such ' critics ' are not important.

II

The whitewash at last has been removed. The colours on the walls are clear and rich once more. The human figures in Tennyson's frescoes expand their breasts in the light, inhale clean air again, and the several tints of flesh, jerkin and stomacher glow. What he designed is restored: such was my impression when some months before I undertook this selection, I read an advance American edition of *Alfred Tennyson* by Sir Charles Tennyson, for, with this scholarly study, for the first time—and I mean no disrespect to the Hon. Harold Nicolson's excellent pioneering monograph—the world has Tennyson untrammelled, a breathing being possessed (let us thank the Almighty!) of some human frailties—port, shag, and a love for simple company—sins not at all pernicious, but common to many excellent gregarious persons in all grades of society, who are often the more lovable for their ownership.

The plaster of the Tennyson whited sepulchre is now cracked, and, I presume, finally sharded. Sir Charles has murdered a myth and freed a man. He is surely the most admirable of grandsons.

Alfred Tennyson is, I do not hesitate to believe, a great biography, and it is the pleasurable duty of all students of the poet to read it. Its packed pages collect diverse contemporary portraits of Tennyson in telling sequence. I venture to borrow a few.

1839: Jane Welsh Carlyle:

> Alfred is dreadfully embarrassed with women alone—for he entertains at one and the same moment a feeling of almost adoration for them and an ineffable

contempt! Adoration I suppose for what they might be—contempt for what they are!

1840: Thomas Carlyle:

A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free and easy; who swims outwardly and inwardly, with great composure in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco smoke: great now and then when he does emerge: a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man.

1845: William Wordsworth:

He is certainly the first of our living poets and will, I hope, live to give the world still better things.

1846: Robert Browning:

A long hazy kind of man, at least just after dinner—yet there is something naïve about him—the genius you see too.

1848: Aubrey de Vere:

He has indeed a most noble countenance, so full of power, passion and intellect—so strong, dark and impressive. He is as simple as a child and not less interesting for his infirmities. He is all in favour of marriage and indeed will not be right till he has someone to love him exclusively.

1850: Coventry Patmore:

In Tennyson I perceive a nature higher and wider than my own and at the foot of which I sit happily and with love.

1855: Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

If I had heart to spare, certainly he would have won mine. He is captivating with his frankness, confidingness and unexampled *naïveté*.

1871: (Sir) Edmund Gosse:

If I live to be a hundred years, I shall still hear his rich tones as [gazing at the famous black bust of Antinous in the long First Sculpture Gallery at the British Museum] he said without emphasis, without affectation, as though he were speaking to himself,

'Ah—this is the inscrutable Bithynian. If we knew what he knew, we should understand the ancient world.'

1875: Raymond Blathwayt:

Alfred Tennyson [is] incomparably one of the stateliest, most romantic and most interesting figures in the whole world—not in England only, not only in literary or social circles, but absolutely the most interesting, the most famous, the most sought after figure in the whole world. He [is] a classic figure, as though he [has] stepped out of *Homer* or *The Aeneid* or the pages of *The Bible*.

1878: (Sir) Frederick Wedmore:

I never felt more crushed by the mere presence of any human creature than I did at first in his company . . . [Tennyson] protested his constitutional indolence 'and besides, what am I going to get to drink?' On being promised a bottle of port, he finally consented. The bottle was duly produced and proved not a drop too much for him, for he became more and more mellow under its influence.

1880: Lord Acton:

Even I was tamed at last. There was a shell to crack, but I got at the kernel, chiefly at night, when everyone was in bed. His want of reality, his habit of walking in the clouds, the airiness of his metaphysics, the indefiniteness of his knowledge, his neglect of transitions, the looseness of his political reasoning, all this made up an alarming *cheval de frise*. But there was a gladness, not quickness, in taking a joke or story, a comic impatience of the external criticism of Taine and others, coupled with a simple dignity when reading impatient attacks, a grave groping for religious certainty and a generosity in the treatment of rivals—of Browning and Swinburne, not of Taylor—that helped me through.

1892: Benjamin Jowett:

His poetry has an element of philosophy more to

be considered than any regular philosophy in England.

These dozen most varied opinions, it can be seen, cover more than half a century; and each, I think, illumes, often sparklingly, a facet of Tennyson the Man with a beam of personal light. Mrs. Carlyle sees beyond his manners, while Carlyle pierces far beyond his tobacco smoke. Wordsworth expresses high confidence—even before *In Memoriam*. Browning and Patmore are selflessly unjealous and de Vere knowledgeably, intimately loyal. Mrs. Browning perhaps is the warmest in ardour (what a speculation to imagine her Lady Tennyson and Alfred walking Flush and not Don the setter, Lufra the deer-hound or Karenina the wolfhound!), and Lord Acton the most icy. Yet even he, against his own logic, admits to recantation. Tennyson, it is obvious, eventually won all hearts.

There are an hundred incidents in his life that appeal, and a thousand recorded remarks each and every one of which humanise the lay figure too long presented as a lay preacher.

Anyone will accept as Tennysonian: 'England is the greatest nation in the world'—yet the statement closes with 'and the most vulgar'. The French, he could never abide, though in the last year of his life he omitted 'a shocking chorus against them' from a delightful song in *The Foresters*; and he thoroughly approved of Governor Eyre's conduct in suppressing a rebellion in Jamaica, stating, as he tossed off glasses of port, 'We are too tender to our savages—we are more tender to blacks than to ourselves. . . . Niggers are tigers, niggers are tigers.'

Flattery he claimed to hate; saying in front of Jowett: 'No flatterer is a friend of mine.' The Master of Balliol was pleasantly sceptical: 'Well, Tennyson, while you have been talking, I have been reflecting that in this house, and in this room, I have heard a good deal of incense offered *and it was not unacceptable.*'

The ballet he found degrading in its scantiness of coryphée clothing and one night rushed from his box and could

not be prevailed upon to return. Yet he prided himself as a dancer and, at seventy, declared zestfully that he could waltz. 'I hope I shall never see you', replied his *confidante*, Fanny Kemble.

On another occasion the point went to him. Cruising in the *Pembroke Castle* with Laura Tennant and Herbert Gladstone, he heard her address her companion on sighting Scafell with the words 'Isn't it lovely?' 'Yes, and cold like some women I know' came Tennyson's gruff voice from behind them.

'Simplicity' and '*naïveté*' and 'nobility' are the three words found most frequently in contemporary records of encounters. Mrs. Browning recalls an incident suggesting the first two words: 'Think of his stopping in *Maud* every now and then: "There's a wonderful touch! That's very tender! How beautiful that is!" Yes, it was wonderful, tender and beautiful, and he read exquisitely in a voice like an organ, rather music than speech.'

And he was always forthright. Having complained to his Queen one day at Osborne that his privacy at Farringford was frequently being invaded and learned of her: 'We are not much troubled here,' he replied somewhat grimly: 'Perhaps I shouldn't be either, Your Majesty, if I could stick a sentry at my gates.'

Again; although he had declared, 'I love Mr. Gladstone but I hate his policy', he kept to his room when the Prime Minister came intent on his company at dinner; eventually after dessert being persuaded to appear and be friendly. A truly Tennysonian apology was then made as he took his candle to turn up to bed: 'I'm sorry I said all those hard things about that old man'—but it was wholly spoiled next morning by an addition at breakfast: 'I never said anything bad enough about that old rascal.'

This is the new, enchanting and exciting Tennyson that his grandson's book presents. The Tennyson I for one have always been waiting to meet, the Tennyson who set out to aid a Spanish insurrection; who could easily refer to 'the foolish facility of Tennysonian verse'; who ever and anon yearned to

live under Italian skies; who short-sightedly patted the Czarina on the shoulder; who informed the Rev. R. S. Hawker his 'chief reliances for bodily force was on wine'; the Tennyson, who, according to the Rev. W. H. Brookfield, found fashionable house-parties irksome, 'craving for stronger port and coarser flavours.'

In truth, half-past two in the morning was his reasonable hour to end an evening of reading poetry and drinking brandy-and-water in such company as that of Dante Gabriel and William Rossetti, George Grove and Arthur Sullivan, or the thawing Lord Acton. And often bizarre were the guests of Tennyson the gregariously inclined in his years of greatness.

Garibaldi arrived and planted a Wellingtonia. Ellen Terry prepared the poet's clay-pipe, dipping the mouthpiece in *sal volatile* lest it should tear his lips. Queen Emma of the Sandwich Isles, freed a moment from ceremony, raced delightedly in his company on a nearby down crest. Young Prince Alamayu of Abyssinia forlornly wandered the garden paths. Turgenev spun stories vivaciously. Joachim played and was read to. Hubert von Herkomer, Helen Allingham and G. F. Watts penetrated the barrage of growls until they obtained sittings. Youthful Hubert Parry was annihilated at luncheon for saying 'awfully good' when his host preferred 'bloody'. To the last, Tennyson was a Lion who could roar, even if a lamb-like quality of sympathy lay beneath, in Carlyle's words, the 'bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed' leonine exterior.

This sympathy was particularly evidenced in his treatment of children and admirers, for he was frequently most patient when importuned; though when travelling, as William Allingham testifies, he revelled 'in his anonymosity'.

Unutterably tender, for instance, are some of the vignettes Sir Charles Tennyson paints of his grandfather as parent. Among others, we have sketches of him standing on Yarmouth pier and with his field glasses sweeping the decks of an incoming steamer for an early sight of his sons returning the first time from boarding-school; of his reconstructing the battle of Waterloo for them on its very field; of his snow-ploughing to

Hallam's bedside at Marlborough when his son, with congestion of the lungs, was almost given up for dead; of his conducting Lionel to the Zoo and to the Spectacle of the Chinese Giant; and of his refusing a visit to Ceylon, despite the life-long lure of the Tropics, lest he missed 'Hallam's holidays'.

A particularly favoured child-friend was little Elspeth Thompson, (later the wife of the author of *The Wind in the Willows*), his companion on many a London walk. In cloak and sombrero, striding briskly, Tennyson on such occasions could not fail to be remarked. He noticed the interest of the public, but missed the point of it: 'Child, your mother should dress you less conspicuously, people are staring at us.'

One day he took her to India House. In the garden below Charles Lamb's window, he plucked a leafy twig and gave it to his small friend with the words: 'Yes, you are a little girl now, but some day you'll turn into a being known as a young lady and then you'll put that bit of greenery into an album and tell people that it was given you by Alfred Tennyson.'

Elspeth promptly threw her present down, pouted, stamped her foot, said she possessed no album and that, even if she had one, she did not want the silly leaf. Astounded and nonplussed, Tennyson begged her to pick it up, only to be told he must pick it up himself if he wanted her to keep it. Further magnificent efforts on his part to enforce majestic masculine authority were equally vain. Vanquished, he recovered his gift and presented it once more. This time, more or less graciously, it was accepted.

Other stories of Tennyson's good-nature and kindness are legion, but two are outstanding.

The first concerns the volcanic Mrs. Julia Margaret Cameron, an old friend of the family, who had long been an Isle of Wight neighbour. One of the pioneers in the art of portrait-photography, she was for ever 'posing' and 'clicking' Tennyson and his equally unwilling, if less eminent, friends, frequently dressing them up to fit subjects of mythology or history, and harassing them for manuscripts and autographs. Chief of his plagues, Tennyson, the amiable and affectionate,

always endured her demands with forbearance. Typical of this endurance is an incident of which Sir Charles gives a remarkably restrained description:

> 'Once during this spring of 1873 she took it into her head that the great Doge of Freshwater ought, like the Doge of Venice, to wed the sea, whose many moods he had so wonderfully celebrated in verse. She had a wreath made of red and white may to act as a ring, and followed by a solemn procession of friends, proceeded with this to Farringford, to bring Alfred down to the bay, where he was to throw the wreath into the water, uttering meanwhile some words worthy of the occasion. The struggle was a tough one, but in the end she was successful and the ceremony took place with a dignity which perhaps no one but Alfred could have succeeded in maintaining.'

The second incident illustrating Tennyson's unusual kindness occurred in the year before the poet's death.

Unannounced, an American artisan called one day at Aldworth. 'He had worked his way over to England in a cattle ship in order to recite *Maud* to its author. Though he suffered acutely from the recitation, Tennyson sat through it and paid his admirer's fare back to the United States.'

Sublime stoicism indeed!

III

'Simplicity' and 'naïveté' and 'nobility' are the three words found most frequently in contemporary records of encounters . . .

Now that, today, we meet the true Tennyson, we must surely continue to use these particular words when considering him, since documents ever demonstrate his self-effaciveness, an unselfish personal negation which must be unique among poets. I refer here, and particularly, to his Civil List Pension, his Laureateship, his offers of a baronetcy and the circumstances culminating in his final acceptance of a barony. The facts regarding each are creditable to all, but pre-eminently creditable to the poet's high conception of honour.

First the question of a pension arose. In 1844, Carlyle

mooted the proposal to Edward Fitzgerald, and then to the poetic Monckton Milnes, newly-elected a Member of Parliament.

Milnes, hesitating, lost (and so 'damned'), disappointed. 'Richard Milnes,' splendidly exploded Carlyle, 'on the Day of Judgment when the Lord asks you why you didn't get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents. It is you who will be damned.'

Henry Hallam, abetted by Gladstone, next took a hand and in February 1845 wrote to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. The result was an offer of £200 a year for the poet. Tennyson took a few days to consider this suggestion, writing to his friend Drummond Rawnsley that there was something in the word 'pension' which stuck in his gizzard. But his conscience was clear; he had not 'lobbied'. He gave in and wrote Peel: 'I accept your offer.' He was 'deeply sensible' of the Prime Minister's 'kindness'.

In 1850, as I have already recalled, Tennyson again hesitated, this time about the Laureateship, and wrote a refusal as well as an acceptance before his friends, at dinner, persuaded him to bend his knee.

Twenty-three years later, in the New Year of 1865, a further honour was suggested; Frederick Locker sounding him on the acceptance of a baronetcy. Emily Tennyson did not like the idea. Tennyson, who at first, humanly, was not 'entirely averse', soon indicated 'he would not feel able to accept'; just as, when the offer was repeated again in the Spring of 1873, after requesting leave to re-consider the proposal for a day or two, he finally announced that he and his wife would prefer to remain plain Mr. and Mrs., adding, as a suggestion, that 'if possible the title should be assumed by [their eldest son] Hallam at any age it might be thought right to fix upon'.

The friendly Gladstone, due to fall from power one year later, replied that to give Hallam a baronetcy during his father's lifetime was an innovation, though it might be attempted. The matter, therefore, quite reasonably rested.

At the end of 1874, Disraeli, taking the Tennyson papers

of his predecessor from their pigeon-hole, probed the baronetcy query again. Indomitably, the poet answered that he still respectfully declined the honour for himself—but might it not possibly, *after his death*, be conferred upon Hallam? Such a reservation of a baronetcy would be contrary to all precedent, Disraeli punctiliously echoed. Tennyson then declared that he never desired anything contrary to precedent. And there the matter rested again.

The wheel of government turned. With Gladstone back in office, the occasion of a cruise together in the *Pembroke Castle* in the autumn of 1883 was used to sound the poet again concerning his ennoblement. A barony was offered. With the *finesse* of a fencer and the *politesse* of a prince, Tennyson for twenty years had parried his Queen's Prime Ministers, had exhibited both the geniality and gentleness of genius, had made excuses, had made counter-suggestions; but the pressure now was all-powerful. A peerage was no ideal of the poet of port who had wished always he were just a poet at Portofino. Still, he would again accept an honour. He was great enough to submit. He had reached seventy-five; and, no doubt, if he could have selected his fellow peers they would have been his staunch old friends and mentors, Homer, Catullus, Virgil and Horace, Dan Chaucer, Shakespeare, Gray and Burns. But that could not be; and he was assured England needed a better poet than Houghton in the House of Lords, one more worthy to succeed incomparable Byron! So the decision of acceptance was made, if only to secure Hallam's succession. But the buzz of applause in Tennyson's ears can have been only as the buzz of blow-flies.

At Somersby rectory in his youth, with the great calf quartos in his father's study, with virgin sheets intended for sermons used—almost profanely?—to copy fair *The Devil and the Lady*, and the stars glinting in from above the Lincolnshire wolds, there had been reality. Just as, in his early manhood, all days with Arthur Hallam had been, and still were in memory, a reality. Now all was unreality. The weight of his coronet alone proved it real. The reward for his life's labour

had lain with God and the 'foolish facility of Tennysonian verse', the work he had been permitted to produce, a poem like *Maud* for instance, with those parts he still found 'wonderful', 'tender', 'beautiful', that poem which that Francophil Swinburne declared was 'the poem of the deepest charm and fullest delight, pathos and melody ever written—even by Tennyson'. This expression of the Queen's amiability, though kindly meant, was only an *embarras de richesse*, an embarrassment for his old age.

One does not need to be a psychologist to read the honesty in every line of the verse and lineament of Alfred Tennyson. It is as patent as it is pure.

IV

In the last hundred years a literature has appeared concerning Tennyson: biographies, memories, bibliographies, concordances, studies, essays, critiques: I have scanned a deal of this and won practically nothing, except fatigue, from it.

It may be taken as intentional, therefore, and not accidental, that I have mentioned only the Hon. Harold Nicolson's valuable study and referred particularly to Sir Charles Tennyson's supreme biography, a 'Tennyson Companion' that can never fail to cast helpful sidelights on the great text it is designed to complement.

The selection that follows is part of that great text of poetry, a lengthy part chosen to suit the fair-minded reader of our time. If I might care to delude myself that I have netted *all* the beauties of Tennyson, I must hastily recall, I know, that there are still many holes in my net. And yet I take great comfort in the generosity of the haul I am privileged to land.

Tennyson had two important philosophical statements to make about the background to his verse and life:

> 'There are moments when this flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the spiritual the only real and true—depend upon it, the spiritual is real, it belongs to one more than the hand and