ENNYSON HAD NOT PUBLISHED any poem longer than his 462-line "The Two Voices," although since 1833 he had been accumulating the individual lyrics for his eventual masterpiece *In Memoriam*, published finally in 1850. Now, early in 1845, or slightly sooner, he began another book-length work, eventually entitled *The Princess*, apparently in the back of his mind since about 1839. Through a semi-farcical fantasy involving a female university ruled by a despastically zealous feminist princess, the poem attempts to suggest the ideally relative roles of women and men in a properly balanced society. The first edition, December 1847, was followed early in 1848 with a somewhat revised second edition dedicated to Henry. Perhaps the dedication was an afterthought, a belated, inexplicit reward for Henry's encouragement and practical assistance during Alfred's nearly three years of composition. Such an elongated experimental work would have provided numerous opportunities for practical suggestions. Throughout its composition Henry was at hand in England, seeing the poet at frequent, well-spaced intervals. It must have been mainly with this poem that he merited Tennyson's later praise for his critical acumen.

If Henry did substantially help perfect *The Princess*, when and where did Tennyson write it and when could he and Henry have seen the manuscript together? This chapter will suggest a tentative chronology.

Tennyson was staying with his mother and family in Cheltenham in January
1845 when he received the news of Dr. Matthew Allen’s death, after which he would recover £2,000 through the life insurance Edmund had kept valid for him. He departed for London to visit FitzGerald (Venables saw him there on 17 January), but returned to Cheltenham by the first week in February.

In London he and Henry were two of seven men at a dinner party given by the wealthy old poet Samuel Rogers. An eighth guest, arriving late, was Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s daughter, the Honorable Mrs. Caroline Norton, a writer and feminist with a notorious reputation since her estranged husband had accused her of immorality with Lord Melbourne. Although a court trial had vindicated her, Tennyson squeamishly shunned her at dinner, afterward compared her to a serpent, and declared he had “shuddered sitting at her side.”

John Killham’s book about *The Princess* suggests she had been in Tennyson’s thoughts back in 1839 when he was first mulling over the idea for such a poem. Killham even speculates that a known conversation with fellow Apostle John Kemble, who despised Mrs. Norton and railed against feminist innovations, including female colleges, may have partially stimulated Tennyson’s initial plans for his poem. Killham refrains from claiming that Caroline Norton was “the model for the Princess in the poem.” But if his other conjectures are correct, Tennyson’s unexpectedly encountering her six years later may have regenerated an interest in the project. In early March at Cheltenham, he would be reading to Venables from his new manuscript.

Decades afterward, in 1885, Edmund disputed an account that seemed to dissociate Park House from the fashioning of *The Princess*. Thackeray’s daughter, Anne Ritchie, had asserted in an article that the poem “was born in London.” What did “born mean?” Edmund demanded of Hallam Tennyson. If it merely denoted “published, so were all his poems; if it has any other sense, I dispute its correctness—certainly it was mainly written in his Boxley period (which extended from Autumn 1841 to 1846-47).” But Edmund’s full statement shows that the time, terminating in 1843, when the Tennyson family actually resided at Boxley, was not that of *The Princess*. Edmund recalled first seeing and hearing “the first book, beyond which not much was written at that time . . . in the summer of 1845,” when Tennyson was “staying at Eastbourne and I went down to him. But many a time after that I remember parts of it being read or talked about at Park House.” Since Edmund lived at Glasgow from October through April, those “many” times at Park House would have been limited to early fall of 1845 and the summers and falls of 1846 and 1847. Although Edmund did not place the actual composing at Park House, Lushington family tradition has it that Tennyson wrote at least some of *The Princess* in a now-demolished little garden house there. In any case, until Henry left for Malta in 1847, Tennyson visited so frequently and sometimes so extendedly that
the Lushingtons could have felt that his "Boxley period" was continuing. Edmund was ending it with Henry's departure for Malta.

Furthermore, in common justice, Edmund might have reflected, wherever some of Tennyson's scribbling might have chanced to occur, The Princess was essentially a Park House, and in no sense a London, poem. Its real world setting, in its framing situation, as opposed to its contrived fantasy, was Park House through and through, in the Prologue indisputably and hardly less so in the Epilogue—a Park House idealized there forever, high on its Kentish hill, contemplatively looking out and down upon the world below:

... we climbed
The slope ... and turning saw
The happy valleys, half in light, and half
Far-shadowing from the west, a land of peace;
Trim hamlets; here and there a rustic tower
Half-lost in belts of hop and breadths of wheat;
The shimmering glimpses of a stream; the seas,
A red sail, or a white; and far beyond,
Imagined more than seen, the skirts of France.

More puzzling is Hallam Tennyson's highly questionable assertion in the Memoir, which fortunately Edmund did not live to read, that The Princess was "mostly written in Lincoln's Inn Fields." That would have meant while stopping with James Spedding, but no other biographical sources seem to indicate that Tennyson stayed with Spedding for any substantial time during 1845 to 1847. Hallam, of course, could have queried his father where the poem was written. If so, could Tennyson have misunderstood the question, or forgotten earlier circumstances, or Hallam have wrongly remembered the answer? Or was Hallam attempting to minimize the participation of Henry Lushington? But if so, why?

Actually, it seems almost certain that considerable portions of The Princess first came to life neither at Park House nor in London, but at Mother Tennyson's house at Cheltenham. There in "a little room at the top of the house in St. James' Square," remembered by Dr. Buchanan Ker, brother of Mary Tennyson's husband, as "not kept in very orderly fashion," with books and papers "quite as much on the floor and the chairs as upon the table," Tennyson, "pipe in mouth, discoursed to his friends more unconstrainedly than anywhere else on men and things and what death means." There too, in an ideal kind of solitude, both away from and close to persons who loved him, he could perhaps unconstrainedly write. There, at least, as we shall see, he stayed during some ten weeks of 1845 between early February and mid-April, crucial weeks for the
early shaping of the poem. And he stayed there during other crucial periods in its composition.

He had returned from London to Cheltenham around the first of February. Venables, on circuit, visited him there a month later on 7 and 8 March. On the eighth, "called again on A.T. & sat with him a couple of hours. He read to me the part which he has written on the Female University—part of which I like, & the story is amusing, but I am afraid the language is often too trivial."

The previous evening's entry should interest any old-fashioned Tennysonians still speculating about Tennyson's "sources": "went up to A.T.'s room, & sat a good while, he reading out passages from [Shakespeare's] Pericles & Love's Labours Lost. He is a very fine critic." Scholars have long remarked upon situational similarities between The Princess, where young females at a college are forbidden by their royal headmistress to look upon any males, and Love's Labours Lost, where a young king and three male companions in "a little academe" futilely swear to see no females. And as Killham notes, both Pericles and The Princess present joustings for the hand of a princess. If Tennyson actually was remembering Pericles, the "mention in the Prologue of the Shakespearian precedent for a winter's tale would . . . gain rather more point." Well, whatever such genetic considerations may be worth critically, Tennyson was indeed deliberately reading both these plays—a comedy and a romance—while settling into the composition of his own comico-romantic "medley." Probably at least one motive for turning to Shakespeare was to feel the Bard's matchless blank verse—its pacing, its overtones, its exquisitely achieved adaptation to the unique spirit of particular subgenres or kinds of plot situations. His wife's journals during the 1850s show him laying aside his pen and reading aloud from Shakespeare's plays and from Milton during periods while deep in his making of various Arthurian idylls. Nonplagiaristically he was wooing the Longinian "effluences" that wait to pass from master artists to receptive successors.

By 15 April, manuscripts in hand, Tennyson was back in London, where Venables saw him at his publisher, Moxon's, house. Two days later Aubrey de Vere found him "at first much out of spirits" but he "cheered up soon," and in two sessions of reading "'crooned' out his magnificent elegies [parts of In Memoriam] until one in the morning." The next evening de Vere heard some of "the University of Women" [The Princess].

On the twentieth Tennyson went down to Park House, almost certainly (as usual) taking along his manuscript, and stayed a week. It would have been the first opportunity for him and Henry to consider the poem together. The two returned to London on the twenty-eighth. For the next week, every day and evening often until past midnight, the Mitre Court chambers were so crowded with Tennysons (Alfred and Horatio), Lushingtons (Henry and Tom), and assorted friends that Venables despaired of getting his own writing done.
Then after 4 May, Tennyson abruptly disappears for several weeks from Venables's journals, although de Vere saw him on the tenth and again heard more from *The Princess* manuscript. Soon thereafter Tennyson went to the seaside at Eastbourne to stay several weeks. One letter by FitzGerald indicates that he may have gone on or near the twelfth, although Elizabeth Barrett wrote on 22 May, "Tennyson is still here" (but he may have left without her knowing it). Certainly he was in Eastbourne during June, for Venables records his return from there on the twenty-second.

On 15 June, while Tennyson was at Eastbourne, Venables made an overnight visit to Park House, arriving by one route shortly before another party came by another: Cecilia, her mother, Franklin Lushington, and "a Miss Sellwood." Obviously the Sellwood name meant nothing to Venables; but he was meeting Emily, Tennyson's former fiancée and future wife. She and Tennyson were pledged not to meet, and did not do so until they accidentally did at Park House two years later. So closemouthed had Tennyson and the family been concerning the engagement and its termination that more than one of his close friends besides Venables had never heard of it.

More than two decades later, Emily, as Tennyson's wife, would set down for her sons some idyllic memories of Edmund and Cecilia at Park House in those early years of their marriage. Cecilia "reigned as a queen to whom all did homage. It was pretty to see that daily tribute from her husband, the nosegay so chivalrously given. Student as he has always been . . . he had never the manner of a student, but one of graceful, though shy charm." The nosegays, readily procurable from the extensive flowerbeds of Park House, would have looked pretty indeed to Emily, who in those years had given up hope of marriage. Edmund would never lose all his shy charm nor his love, or sympathy, for Cecilia. But as we shall find, and as Emily Tennyson knew well enough by the time she penned her lines, Cecilia's tenure as undisputed queen of Park House had never been very secure, and by then was long ago past.

During late June through at least the first week in August, Tennyson was back in the London area. Henry too was there for part of the time. But by mid-August (as verified by a letter posted on the twenty-third), Tennyson was sojourning again at Eastbourne. There, "during the hottest part of the summer," Edmund, as he recalled forty-eight years later, found his poet brother-in-law "lodging in one of two cottages prettily grouped together, bearing the well-deserved name of Mount Pleasant." He had "completed many of the cantos in 'In Memoriam' and was engaged on 'The Princess,' of which I heard nothing before." Edmund's ambiguous "of which" probably means *from* rather than *concerning*, for surely he would not have been unaware of a new work that Henry would certainly have heard, and told him about. *The Princess*,
Edmund recalled, had "hardly advanced" beyond the first book. Edmund was remembering accurately. Before leaving London, Tennyson had shown Fitz-Gerald "two hundred lines of a new poem in a butcher's book." Part one in its present form has 245 lines, of which about forty were added after 1847. By the time Edmund came, Tennyson may have proceeded somewhat into part two. One day Tennyson gave Edmund "a perfectly novel surprise": "I have brought in your marriage at the end of 'In Memoriam,'" showing him the stanzas of the Epilogue.

Tennyson's letters and Venables's journals continue to reveal Tennyson's movements from place to place. Lang and Shannon convincingly locate him in London until late September. On the twenty-ninth he wrote from Cheltenham to Sir Robert Peel to accept a Civil List pension of £200 awarded for literary merit. At the beginning of October, he gave Henry's London chambers as his address, but by mid-month was back in Cheltenham, apparently for the remainder of that year. He was planning to visit Henry Hallam, historian father of Arthur Henry, near Bristol at the end of the month, and declared that he would "not be in London in November." Edmund and Cecilia and little Eddy had visited the family at Cheltenham: "the little one looks like a young Jupiter with his head full of Greek: but she poor thing, was out of health and dreaded the winter in Glasgow, which does not agree with her." During that dreaded Glasgow winter, Cecilia's fourth, she would be carrying her second child. Venables was in London from November until late December, and his journal does not mention Tennyson.

On 9 January 1846 Venables dropped in at Cheltenham, having learned from Charles Tennyson Turner that Alfred was "very unwell." Apparently he had some kind of internal infection. Venables sat with Tennyson for an hour in his room. He was "tolerably cheerful," but described "his pain as very formidable." Soon afterward Venables talked of Tennyson with George G. Barrett, Elizabeth's brother and leader of Venables's circuit, who told his sister, prompting her often-quoted remark to Browning that, ill or not, Tennyson was writing a new poem. He had "finished the second book of it—and it is in blank verse and a fairy tale, and called the 'University,' the university members being all females. . . . I don't know what to think—it makes me open my eyes. Now isn't the world too old and fond of steam for blank verse poems, in ever so many books, to be written on the fairies?"

Again, as in 1845, Tennyson remained at Cheltenham through the winter until early April. Venables, instead of going on circuit, stayed in London all winter, practicing his profession before parliamentary committees—his initiation into the branch of law that eventually made him wealthy. He recorded Tennyson's arrival from Cheltenham about 9 April, no more than a week ear-
lier than the previous year. There seems no way of telling how much of *The Princess* he had written since January, but in the relative quietness of Cheltenham, the opportunity had been present. Venables saw Tennyson on the twenty-fourth and the twenty-ninth, when Henry was also in London, and several times in early May.

By 16 May, Edmund had returned from Glasgow, looking “paler and thinner.” Henry and Tennyson were not together often during that month, since Henry was working hard on a pamphlet (of which we shall hear more later). During early June, Tennyson visited friends on the Isle of Wight. On the twentieth Venables went to Park House for the weekend, finding Cecilia “very ill & languid,” but little Eddy “looking very well.” Four days later Cecilia gave birth to a daughter, who in her turn was named Cecilia but would be called by the uneuphonious nickname of Zilly, which in later life would increasingly ill-match her earnest, understated dignity. She alone of her parents’ four children would attain full adulthood, finally inheriting Edmund’s properties and dying in 1921 in her seventy-fifth year.

In the final days of June, Tennyson was back in London, where he spent four days together with Henry. Then, apparently, he went down to Park House for the better part of a month, Henry being there too, except for one period of less than a week. Edmund wrote to Frederick Tennyson on 5 August that Tennyson had stayed with them “two or three weeks.” Venables’s journal shows that Tennyson left Park House on 21 July. Henry had gone from London to Park House on 1 July, but not in company with Tennyson, who could have already arrived there or would come a day or two later. Either reckoning allows about three weeks at London and Park House during which Tennyson and Henry together could again have carefully examined *The Princess*. By then the poem had grown substantially. At Park House on 20 July, Tennyson read to Venables “the Female University, of which I heard the beginning in the spring of ’45 at Cheltenham. It improves greatly as it goes on, & I think very good, showing considerable power of construction in addition to other merits.” (One suspects the composing had proceeded at least well into book three, if not beyond. Although the second book, more than twice the length of the first, displays constructional power, the plotting decidedly picks up pace in the third.) The next day Tennyson and Venables returned together to London, where Tennyson began preparing for a journey with Moxon to Switzerland, begun on the first day of August and concluded on the last.

With Venables out of London during September and October, Tennyson’s movements are more difficult to follow. Venables saw him at Cheltenham on 20 October, and letters show him there until late in November. From about the twenty-fifth until late December, he was back in London, as also was Henry
much of the time. If any more of The Princess had been composed during the weeks at Cheltenham, Henry again could have read it with him. On 22 December, Tennyson was at Cambridge for the three-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Trinity, as were also Henry and Venables and a troop of Apostolic and other brilliant friends. The talk must have been electrically heart-warming. But by 4 January 1847, Tennyson was settled again in Cheltenham, where for the third successive winter he remained through most of March. By then The Princess was substantially finished.

Henry was now well into his thirties, ever chafing beneath a galling sense of underutilized talents. Constantly less than robust and seldom far from ill, he could scarcely anticipate even normal longevity. Although never wealthy, he was less in need of money than of self-fulfilment. Months were ticking away into years. If he died, it would be to the world, and almost to himself, as if he had not lived. Such frustration can breed desperation. If any opportunity emerged for significant service, he might imprudently risk premature death. With his sense of impending mortality, Henry, like Tennyson’s Ulysses, might decide it futile “to store and hoard” himself when he might yet do “something near the end, / Some work of noble note.” But what?

Meanwhile humbler opportunities for voluntary service might materialize now and again. One such appeared to beckon during a week in the spring of 1845. For neither the first nor the last time, the moderate Tory prime minister Sir Robert Peel had placed public interest above partisan expediency and supported a parliamentary bill widely unpopular in his own party. His proposal to increase the grant to the Maynooth Seminary in Ireland, which educated Roman Catholic priests, aimed to treat the Irish majority religion more equably, and to reduce nationalist agitation. But in England the issue united diverse anti-Catholic elements, and might then and there have overthrown Peel’s government. The bill passed, but only through heavy support from the opposition Whigs: Peel’s own party rejected it 149 to 148. Peel had forecast the result: “This Bill will pass but our party is destroyed.” Within little more than a year, but only after he had courageously acted to repeal the Corn Laws, a combination of his natural opponents, the Whigs, and his old High Tory enemies within his own party would bring him down.26

Henry, ever more liberal than Tory, approved of the Maynooth grant. But at Cambridge as well as Oxford, the measure had numerous opposers, along with nuclei of dedicated supporters. As the final vote approached, opposers in the Cambridge Senate drew up a petition urging the bill’s defeat; then its supporters at Cambridge dispatched a petition of their own. In London it was Henry who rallied a cluster of friends to compose a petition and track down favorable signatures from Cambridge men scattered around the metropolis. For eight
bustling days the work went on from the Mitre Court chambers, men going and returning with hand-delivered signatures. Finally on the afternoon of 1 June, Henry, Venables, James Spedding, and one other carried the petitions with exactly three hundred signatures to the two M.P.'s from Cambridge. One of these, Henry Goulburn, Peel's chancellor of the exchequer and closest friend, would as a foregone conclusion vote "Aye"; the other, Charles Ewan Law, the late Chief Justice Ellenborough's second son and hence a cousin of Henry's, would almost as predictably vote "Nay." The petition changed nothing; but Henry and the others had meant it primarily to endorse Peel's high-principled stand. They were less than edified when the amiable Goulburn, miscalculating that they were all zealous Peelites anxious to preserve the Ministry, gravely tried to reassure them: "You will be glad to hear, gentlemen, that our friends on the other side are not seriously hostile. They take it up only as a matter of principle." Henry, "though he fully appreciated the unconscious humour," was "disposed to grudge" the trouble he had taken.

Not so entirely altruistic, perhaps, was Henry's publishing in 1846 of two trenchant pamphlets concerning railways. The issues discussed affected all of the British public, but the chief immediate beneficiary would have been a single company, the Great Western Railway, in which, as it happened, Henry was a stockholder. In fact, he finally put out his pamphlets in collaboration with Great Western officials.

Historians of British railways call the years 1845 to 1847 "the Great Railway Mania." Schemes by the hundreds burst out for financing and establishing new railways or extending existing ones. Even after various wilder projects were eliminated, 217 railway bills came before Parliament in 1845, 435 in 1846, and 257 in 1847, until finally 330 bills had been passed authorizing capitalization in excess of 167 million pounds. The demand for legal counsel to represent both the railway promoters and their various opponents before parliamentary committees created a boom in parliamentary law practice. Venables, who in later decades would rise to the top of the parliamentary bar, received his first such case in March 1846, followed swiftly by several others, paying him generously throughout the session. Henry too, during most of that May, between his two periods of pamphlet writing, worked hard on a parliamentary case. His purse might have become fatter and his life longer if instead of pamphleteering that year he had concentrated upon solidifying a parliamentary practice. But the question is imponderable, since the extraordinary demand for parliamentary barristers seems to have leveled off abruptly soon after 1847.

Henry's pamphlets undertook to discredit the report of a three-man royal commission appointed in the summer of 1845 to settle "the Battle of the Gauges," a complex of problems and conflicting claims resulting from the un-
fortunate coexistence in one small country of two rival widths (gauges) of railway tracks. On the Great Western line from London to Bristol and on certain other lines in the south, the distance between the insides of the rails was 7 feet, a radical departure from the earlier 4 feet 8½ inches prevailing on the majority of lines. With existing locomotives the broader gauge facilitated greater speeds and more passengers; but at junctures (called "breaks") where the two gauges intersected there were various inconveniences. The commissioners conceded the superior capabilities of the broad gauge but recommended "entire uniformity" based upon the narrow. Broad gauge lines should convert to narrow; at the least, an equitable way should be found to "admit of the Narrow Gauge carriages passing, without interruption or danger, along the Broad Gauge lines."

These sensible-sounding recommendations teetered upon a foundation of refutable misstatements and illogical opinions elicited from biased witnesses who had not been cross-examined. Promptly, the Great Western published a long prosaic reply, which Henry probably found invaluable when he penned his livelier attack. But he was already becoming knowledgeable about railways, having in the previous autumn become a director of a proposed Kent Atmospheric Railway, finally not constructed, one of several short-lived projects in those years for propelling the cars through pneumatic pressure created by stationary external engines.

Aside from challenging the perspicacity of the commissioners and exposing the obvious bias of their witnesses, Henry's keenest rhetoric was leveled at two vulnerable targets: exaggerations of the evils of the break of gauges, and disingenuous testimony that the speeds then attainable on the narrow gauge were quite sufficient and, indeed, that the broad gauge speeds ought to be outlawed as excessive and unsafe.

The commissioners conjectured that a break might be deleterious to rapid transport of troops and equipment, especially when "little or no notice can be previously given." Henry feigned surprise that "our scientific Commissioners" had not heard of the telegraph: "In the course of their experiments on railways, their attention devoted to a comparison of their watches and the milestones, was never attracted by those curious wires, trained from post to post, along the lines." Transferring troops and their equipment would involve simply "walking from one side of a station to another." Offsetting such occasional disadvantage, the larger carriages and engines of the broad gauge could always, "carry something like double" the soldiers and "at least half as much weight again" as their narrow-gauge counterparts. The worst imaginable "breaks" were those already simply taken for granted: the ones between the various terminals around London. Eventually the problem might be remedied, but "in the mean-
time we bear it with as much philosophy as we can command, and do not talk of applying to Parliament for twenty millions to aid in removing it.” A set piece in the commissioners’ case was their description of a break: “The change of carriages, horse-boxes, and trucks, and the transference of luggage of an entire train of much extent must, even in the daytime, be an inconvenience of a very serious nature, but at night it would be an intolerable evil; and we think legislative interference is called for to remove or mitigate such an evil.” Henry responded:

The first sentence, massing carriages, horse-boxes, trucks, and luggage into one vast heap of confusion is indeed enough to weigh down the most elastic imagination. The Commissioners present us a lively picture of enormous mountains of portmanteaus,—every portmanteau we presume requiring a fresh reference to its owner as to its place of ultimate destination, not at once, and as a matter of course, transferred from Partition A in one train to Partition C in another; wandering passengers; distracted porters; kicking horses; all this limbo of the world in the darkness of night, and all exposed, unsheltered, in the rigours of winter; it being a thing impossible and unheard of to build an extensive station with an acre of zinc or iron roof, and to make some hundreds of gas lights supply the place of day. Surely it would be within the limits of “the mind of man” to devise “some means of approaching one horse-box to another, in such a manner that the horse may be led from the first to the second with less risk than was originally incurred by placing him into the first.” Nothing was “easier than to exaggerate a partial evil: nothing more unwise than to relinquish a great gain for a little inconvenience.”

Greater speed was a blessing, and to deny the fact, much less to insinuate that demonstrably safe speed was undesirable, was downright dishonest. “Experience” had “proved that traffic grows with the means and facilities of traffic. Mere common sense shows that it is better to choose the system which is still beyond our growth, in preference to that which is within it.” Yet three commissioners were presuming to decree for a nation that the possibilities of speed be deliberately turned backward. Surely speed was “after all . . . the advantage of railways. They have others, but all secondary and dependent on this.” Time was “equally lost, whether unnecessarily spent in moving boxes from carriage to carriage, or in sitting longer than is necessary on a train. . . . Men pay heavily for time, and time is gained by speed.” Why was “delay so destructive, when the gain of time is so unimportant? Why are ten minutes lost between Bristol and Birmingham to outweigh two hours gained between Exeter and London?” (Obviously, neither Henry nor his narrow-gauge opponents had
envisioned the greatly increased speeds potentially obtainable quite independently of gauge width, through improvements in locomotive engineering and the strengthening of tracks by methods including the conversion from iron to steel.)

Ironically, in the summer of 1846, Parliament ostensibly endorsed the commissioners' report but in effect emasculated it by allowable exceptions, so that the problem of the coexisting gauges was not finally solved until decades later, by which time Britain had more than thirty "breaks." It is doubtful that Henry's pamphlets had any effect upon Parliament's action. Not inconceivably, however, they may have called new attention to his talents and thus to some degree shaped his future.

Except for the birth of Zilly, the most memorable incident in the Park House family during 1846 was Franklin's graduation from Cambridge that spring at the top of the Classical Tripos, a repetition of Edmund's achievement fourteen years earlier. In early December, as we learn from Venables's journal, Henry had made some sort of arrangement with the Morning Herald, possibly to write regularly for it. But we hear no more about that. In his thirty-fifth year, Henry was still reaching out in apparent futility for something significant to do with his life. So ended 1846, and 1847 began.

Then suddenly on 23 January, apparently without the slightest intimation of such a possibility, Henry received a letter from Lord Grey, colonial secretary in the new Whig government of Lord John Russell, offering him the chief secretaryship of the British government on the island of Malta. I have not succeeded in finding out what persons had recommended him for the post. The position ranked second only to the governor's in the civilian administration of the island, and under Lord Grey's plans to liberalize the Maltese government, gave promise of acquiring additional importance. But for Henry, particularly, there were two obvious disadvantages. Not only would it exile a no-longer-young unmarried man from family and friends but the humid Mediterranean heat might worsen his always precarious health. (The less-obvious drawbacks—the frustrations of coping with human recalcitrance in a notoriously complicated sociological and political situation—would make their appearances later.) The problem of loneliness would be partially solved by Henry's sisters, one or two of whom would always reside at Malta with him. The climate would ever be a hazard.

Henry's decision, traceable step-by-step through Venables's journal, proved quite literally agonizing. Clearly he desired, yet deeply feared, to go. He consulted physicians, including John (later Sir John) Liddell, who had directed the hospital on Malta, and Sir James Clark, leading authority on climate and chronic diseases. Apparently neither forbade his going, and another doctor
recommended it. Other persons who knew Malta urged him to accept. But three of the ones who knew him best—Tom, Frank, and Venables—remained afraid. With him they spent the fourth day of deliberating, "rather in melancholy anxiety than in discussion," until late afternoon, when Henry wrote a refusal. Then almost immediately he became "much depressed." Venables, remorsefully convicting himself of having given biased advice, feared that Henry would "never be what he was before." Two days later, with Venables's reluctant encouragement, Henry wrote again conditionally "reopening the business," and soon afterward retracted his refusal. On 3 February, Lord Grey accepted the retraction.

But significantly, with the agreement sealed at last, Henry almost at once became again "very unwell," physically and emotionally. Venables had not anticipated "the gloomy view which he now takes of the business. It infects me." Throughout the next three weeks Henry would remain "in bad spirits," "seriously unwell," in a "very painful state of despondency." The worried family summoned Edmund, who petitioned the Glasgow faculty to be absent on "urgent business." And arrived at Park House on 24 February. Henry, after five days with Edmund, was still "certainly not looking well," but had "recovered his spirits in an extraordinary degree." The need for self-fulfillment had prevailed over the premonition of death. He would take the risk, a very real one. Malta, seven years later, would claim the life of his sister Louy and, the following year, his own.

On 11 February, during Henry's deepest despondency, Venables, invited by Frank to Park House, was annoyed to find the place at that troubled time half-filled with assorted Tennysons: "Mary Tennyson and a Miss Hamilton, a Scotch old maid ... also of course Horatio & Matilda Tennyson, which is a great nuisance." The next day Venables "found no opportunity of speaking to H, all day from the crowd in the house." Alfred, still at Cheltenham, would arrive some time before 20 March, when Venables, going down at Henry's invitation, found the poet there. That evening Henry gave Venables "an explanation" for not having written or invited him sooner. Most probably, Tennyson and Henry had been going over the newly completed *Princess*. On the twenty-ninth at London, Tennyson was ready to lend the manuscript to Venables, who on a railway journey to Hereford "read the greater part of the New University with pleasure and admiration." In court all day on the thirty-first, "without a symptom of a brief," he finished the poem, liking the end less than the rest, but pronounced it "a noble poem." Back at Park House on 4 April, before returning to the circuit, Venables left the manuscript for Tennyson, who "was expected."

By the sixteenth Tennyson had returned, intending, as he wrote to T. H.
Rawnsley, to "see the last" of his "brother-in-law's brother," who would soon be off for Malta and, "being a man of feeble stamina," was "afraid of the climate and altogether down in the mouth about it." Tennyson would "do my best to set him up, though I am very unwell myself." The Malta position would pay "(I believe) about £1500 a year." Tennyson would remain at Park House until at least 25 April. By the first week in May, he was back in London; but before the month's end, he entered a hydropathic establishment at Umberslade, near Birmingham, where he would read proofs of *The Princess* and remain a month or more. The poem would come off the presses at Christmas time.

Evidently Henry had not told Tennyson of a more immediate reason than the Maltese climate for his being "down in the mouth" just then. Early in April, as he informed Venables, the Colonial Office discovered it had carelessly overstated his authorized salary: the true amount was £1,000, not £1,500. Again he became nearly ill from worry and suspense. As he later wrote the Colonial Office, he had "had some Parliamentary practice last year and expected some more this year, from which I have of course been precluded from what has occurred." But having not accepted their appointment from pecuniary motives, he would not refuse from such. Still he would appreciate being considered for a future salary increase. But Lord Grey agreed with his undersecretary that Henry "must accept the office at the present salary & without any consideration or understanding as to the future. Any future alteration of salary must stand upon different grounds." In immediate compensation Grey granted Henry a leave, presumably on salary, by extending the sailing date until autumn.

Park House during those singularly unsettling months had perhaps seen more than its normal quota of visiting Tennysons, especially when we consider that Cecilia, the resident Tennyson, was away in Glasgow. In general, were Alfred and his siblings sometimes less welcome at Park House than they may have supposed? Plausibly so. But the only documentary evidence is a questionable paraphrase of some statements reportedly made that spring by Franklin Lushington to Arthur Henry Hallam’s surviving brother Harry. More heavily-handedly than lightheartedly, young Hallam wrote his cousin Jane Elton Brookfield that at dinner after "some guarded fencing, and preliminary beating about the bush," he had drawn from Franklin "the grand fact that the Tennyson habit of coming unwashed and staying unbidden was, is, and will be the great burthen and calamity of the Lushington existence, socially considered." The Lushingtons "actually groan under M. [Mary or Matilda?], who they expect will stay to keep up the establishment, when the original family retires to Malta." The last statement was an absurdity (more likely Harry Hallam's than Franklin's), since there never were any plans for more than two of the four
Lushington sisters to accompany Henry to Malta. Neither Hallam nor Mrs. Brookfield had forgiven Emily Tennyson, Arthur Hallam’s bereaved fiance, for being supposedly unfaithful to his memory by marrying Richard Jesse, much less for subsequently retaining an annual allowance from Arthur’s father. Harry Hallam’s real target surfaces in his next sentence: “I did not venture to touch upon the delicate ground of E., but I expect they labour under undefined but not ungrounded alarms that Mr. J. may be a permanent fixture.”42 In short, Franklin had said nothing at all about the Jesses, but it was obligatory that Harry do so to Jane. Whatever Franklin may have said, Hallam had mischievously pumped from him. Anyhow, it would be a mistake to draw long-term inferences from the uniquely unnerving situation at Park House during that one spring.

Sir Charles Tennyson informs us that “Park House, under Cecilia’s sway, always remained a haven of refuge for the rootless” Tennyson brothers and sisters.43 No doubt that is to some degree true; but we would best take it cautiously. How frequent and during how many years was “always”? Actually, year in and year out during the decades after Cecilia married Edmund, there was relatively little visiting of Park House by the Tennyson brothers and sisters, especially after Henry departed for Malta. Matilda, the Tennyson spinster, is the exception since in the latter half of her long life and Cecilia’s they were nearly inseparable companions. Most significantly, through the years, it is surprising how little total time even Cecilia herself, nominal mistress of the house, really spent there, even when not in Scotland with Edmund. These facts will emerge as our story proceeds.

Tennyson’s own most momentous visit there was probably the one when he accidentally encountered Emily Sellwood, having almost certainly not seen her during the approximately seven years since the end of their engagement. In her epitomized journal Emily recounts that believing him gone to Italy she visited Cecilia, “who was very dear to me & faithful thro’ all.” He “appeared unexpectedly before breakfast. I returned home to Hale as soon after as I could.”44 But the awkward encounter led to Tennyson’s renewing the courtship and finally in 1850 to resumed engagement and marriage.45

Sir Charles Tennyson does not attempt to date the meeting, and Martin places it only roughly as “early 1848”—impossible because in 1848 until late spring Cecilia was in Scotland. But now at last Venables’s journal provides an approximate date. Arriving at Park House from Wales on Friday, 17 September 1847, Venables found among several visitors “Miss Sellwood and A.T.” On Monday, after a mid-day dinner, Tennyson surprised Venables by departing for London. Thus it was Alfred, not Emily, who first relieved the awkwardness. She “returned home” on Saturday, the twenty-fifth; significantly, as though on signal,
on that evening "A.T. appeared, to me most unexpectedly." Venables re­

mained another week until Monday, 4 October, when he and Tennyson de­

parted together. On Sunday, the tenth, Venables returned to Park House, 

without Tennyson. Meantime, Emily Sellwood had come back; on Tuesday, 

the twelfth, Venables records that "Miss Sellwood went." Quietly, she and 

Alfred had avoided another meeting by alternating their visits.

Finally, after various delays, Henry would soon be off for Malta. While 

waiting he had been perfecting his Italian, with instruction from one Bucca­

lussi, "a good-natured little" Italian master. Italian was indispensable for suc­

cess in Malta, being the official language of the establishment. (Ironically, most 

of the common people on the three English-ruled islands spoke neither Italian 

nor English, but only their native Maltese.) On 2 October a doctor came to 

examine Henry and his sisters Emily and Louy, who would go to Malta with 

him. On the twentieth Edmund, Cecilia, and the two children said farewells 

and departed for Glasgow. On the twenty-first Henry went to London for his 

first meeting with the new governor of Malta, Richard More O’Ferrall 

(1797-1880), under whom, as it turned out, he would serve for the next four 

years. On the thirtieth he would at last be on his way.

Beyond broadest outlines, we will not be attempting to follow the details of 

Henry’s service on Malta during the final seven and one-half years of his life. 

But his and O’Ferrall’s assignment was plainly intended from the first to be no 
mere continuation of status quo rule but a consciously bold, although carefully 
controlled, innovation. As explained in Grey’s 26 November 1847 dispatch to 
O’Ferrall, two immediate innovations would facilitate “such amendments and 

improvements as time and altered circumstances may render necessary, in con­
currence with the feelings and opinions of the people for whose benefit they are 

intended.” First, responding to “a very general feeling expressed in Malta,” 
O’Ferrall would be Malta’s first “Civil Governor,” free from the military re­

sponsibilities of commanding the garrison. Second, the overwhelmingly 

Roman Catholic population would at last have a Catholic governor: “a 
practical proof that religious opinions are no disqualification from offices of 
great trust and importance under the Crown, and that loyalty to the Sovereign 
and attachment to British interests will ensure to all classes of Her Majesty’s 
subjects, in every part of Her Dominion, an equal share of consideration and 
confidence.” O’Ferrall was charged ever to “bear in mind that an additional 
responsibility attaches to the Government of an unrepresented people, and 
renders it more incumbent on those who administer their affairs, to supply so 
far as possible the advantages to be derived from direct representation by an 
attentive observation of public opinion.”47

One possibility for reform Grey and O’Ferrall were considering was the
setting up of some sort of local municipal government. They asked Henry to proceed to Malta by way of Italy (instead of the usual shorter sea route from a port in southern France), investigating as he went the differing municipal systems in the several Italian states. The more arduous, if more interesting, route would keep Henry and his sisters in transit for more than two months, from 30 October to early January.

At the Colonial Office for his meeting with O’Ferrall, Henry sat nervously “waiting in this appropriately called Waiting Room,” composing a letter to Milnes, then in Spain. More than half bantering, he recorded his worries. The papist O’Ferrall would be “my head—the head whose thoughts I am to think, especially on all points of doctrinal subtlety, and whose volition I am to execute.” Milnes might soon “hear that I am, in the strict performance of duty, officiating as chief candlebearer at St. John’s, and betraying the island into the hands of the infidel yet Papist infidel French, out of those of the equally infidel but Protestant infidel English.” What “line” would he have to take between the Romanist governor and the notoriously Protestant Anglican bishop on Malta? “Shall I mediate? or shall I be ground to pieces in their collision? the one point on which they agree being that of burning the heretical secretary?” He was “writing such stupid nonsense” partially because “rather sicker at heart than usual,” having “just seen Edmund and his set,—all of whom I do dearly love, including the most original of year-old babies [Zilly]—off for Newcastle—when & where next to meet them?—what a senseless, natural, inevitable question—put with the usual chance of answer to any really interesting question.” Here the letter broke off as Governor O’Ferrall came in. Henry finished it at Park House a week later, two days before departing. He had liked “what I have seen of the governor.” After leaving Paris he would “pick up . . . as much knowledge as I can with reference to the Italian municipal systems, & have letters to the embassies at Turin, Florence, & Naples,” but would not remain long at any one place.

It seems to have been during those final days before the departure that the longstanding friendship between Venables and Emily Lushington began to acquire a new dimension, a deepening of affection that would remain unfulfilled, bringing them, and to some extent the entire Park House family, long years of anxiety and mutual frustration. On 27 October he cryptically recorded, “Long talk with E., pleasant but not perhaps wholly so.” On the twenty-ninth, after “Emily, Ellen, and Louisa each planted a pine by the clump to the S.W. of the house, & I an oak by the reservoir,” Emily presented Venables with a rug she had “worked” for him. Next morning the party, Venables included, took to the road in the Lushington family carriage, which would convey them to Paris. Tom boarded a train, but the others “remained with the carriage—I outside
with E. all the way to Folkestone. In other company I should not much have liked it on the rail, as the wind was high and the bridges rather near one's head."

"Jesse and his wife [Emily Tennyson]" joined the party at Folkestone—in Venables's opinion "a great bore." The channel crossing to Boulogne was relatively calm. At the hotel during the evening Emily and Louy "persuaded" Venables to "come on to Paris." After the Jesses next day took the English coach for Paris, the Lushington party started "with four horses in the usual foreign fashion"—and with Venables still "on the box with E." The more than eight-hour journey through "driving showers" and generally drab landscape "was no doubt very tedious to every one else, but I enjoyed it as might have been expected." The next day was "bright and beautiful," the country more picturesque, and "the party to my infinite satisfaction arranged as yesterday." They reached Paris by evening but next morning, anticlimactically, Emily was "very unwell" and remained so, although not bedridden, for the next three days, causing a delay in the travel schedule. (Had she caught cold riding on the box through rain?) During the wait there was much walking about in Paris, and two visits to the Louvre. At last on 5 November "the parting came." "So ends," wrote Venables, "all the first part of my life—to be renewed?" Tom, "after innumerable changes of mind and grumblings," accompanied Venables by railway back to Boulogne and thence to England.

Henry and the others arrived at Malta early in January 1848. Finding no place for his sisters and himself to live within the capital city of Valletta, he rented a capacious villa at San Giuseppe, about two miles away, which he later purchased. As Venables later reported, the Governor "had, with a characteristic appetite for business, already provided abundant employment" for Henry as well as for himself. Henry "commenced his new duties with an energy" that injuriously affected his health. He had "never sufficiently acquired the power of passing lightly from one subject to another, or of dealing in a perfunctory manner with trifling affairs; and his rapidity, both of apprehension and of execution, was in some degree counteracted by an excessive solicitude for finish and accuracy." Our twentieth century would have branded him tritely as "a perfectionist."

Not the least of his tasks at first was to compose his report—more than 17,000 words—describing, contrasting, and analyzing the municipal governments he had inquired about in Piedmont, Tuscany, the Papal States, and the Continental Neapolitan dominions. His conclusion suggested that his entire project had probably been a waste of strength. It would be easy enough "to adopt the forms or names of one or the other of the Italian systems, or form a modified system based upon all, and to give plausible reasons for introducing it into Malta." But Henry doubted whether "any such system or any municipal
system at all, would work to the advantage of the people in the present state of Malta." All those Italian systems had "hitherto become a machinery for Government rather than a means of protection for popular rights." In Malta there were "so many points at which municipal and, so to speak, State purposes cross and are intermingled," that they would be difficult and disadvantageous to separate. Constructing a municipal system "would be working not with, but against, the tendencies of things; in other states, men have constructed a great many separate units into one political body; in Malta we should be breaking up a natural unity into artificial divisions."  

As we shall see, the restructuring that soon took place on Malta was by a quite different plan, although itself never very successful. In the new colonial edifice, Henry would occupy a cornerstone position.