IX

A Precarious Stability

1848–1853

The new year, 1848, found only two Lushingtons, Maria and Ellen, residing at Park House. Tom frequently dropped down from his London rooms, but would return in November to India. Edmund and Cecilia with their two children had routinely begun their sixth dreary winter in his faculty house at Glasgow College. For him its notorious location, however much it offended the nostrils, had the advantage of proximity to his classroom. For her the place was an ordeal unmitigated, conducing to despair.

At last, in mid-January, he obtained a house in a better neighborhood; but Venables, visiting in the following November, found the “new house ... small & uncomfortable,” and the “whole impression of Glasgow depressing.” When he walked with Edmund still farther “outside the smoke,” the “day was very fine & the sunset beautiful.” Edmund was “very well,” Cecilia “looking ill,” and both “hospitable as usual.” Eddy by then was almost six, Zilly between two and three. A cramped house would amplify their childish noisiness. Their father every morning would start out, often through cold fog, in semi-darkness toward an underheated roomful of sleepy, mostly ill-prepared Greek students. He soon wrote Tom that the “children’s row distracts every corner of one’s brain.” He was sleeping again “in college, & shall probably for 10 weeks except on holidays.” This nightly separation from his family foreshadowed separations more radical during his remaining twenty-six years at Glasgow. In
October 1849, after subjecting her children to the perils of a cholera epidemic during the previous winter at Glasgow, and giving birth that summer to a third child (Emily, later called Emmy), Cecilia did not go north with Edmund. Nine years would pass before they again wintered together in Scotland; and even after that, she usually lived in Edinburgh, seeing Edmund only on weekends.

When Henry reached Malta in early January 1848, he was travel-weary, ill—by his own accounting “very nearly dead.” Then, as he informed Milnes some ten days later, he had imprudently “plunged into work at once,” risking “very serious illness.” Although “not good for much yet, hardly round the corner,” he felt hopeful concerning his work. His “Papist employer,” Governor O’Ferrall, seemed “a good & kind man. I hope we shall agree very well. I would write more; but my head will hardly let me bend over to paper for five minutes together.”

Unfortunately, Henry and his earnest Irish Catholic governor would not long enjoy uninterrupted tranquility. Both were men of good will, each idealistic according to his values. But the revolutionary years of 1848 and 1849, with their violent upheavals in nearby Italy, were not auspicious for harmony between men of such divergent convictions. Henry eagerly sympathized with the Italian nationalist movement that broke out in Piedmont and soon affected most of Italy. Before the end of November, the well-intentioned but muddled Pope Pius IX, overwhelmed by developments in that revolution he had once seemed to be encouraging, had fled in disguise from the Vatican to the Kingdom of Naples. O’Ferrall, never disloyal to Britain but a dedicated Roman Catholic, felt mostly antipathy for Henry’s admired Italian liberals, especially disliking their schismatic harrowing of the pontiff. After French troops dispatched from Paris, more or less at the pope’s invitation, occupied Rome in July of 1849 and overthrew the new republican government, numerous refugees fled from inevitable prosecution carrying questionable passports issued by the British consul, reportedly with the tacit consent of the French. O’Ferrall’s reluctance to admit the fugitives offended the humanitarian sensibilities of Henry, who saw no need to require a passport. Although the two men managed to carry on despite disharmonies, Henry would feel relief when O’Ferrall resigned in 1851. Venables would later claim that O’Ferrall was “the only person with whom, during his whole stay in Malta, or, I might say, in the whole course of his life, [Henry] had any unpleasant relations.”

Henry, then, in 1848 was beginning a career—the final seven and one-half years of his life—that would be sufficiently free of boredom but frequently replete with tensions. The last three and one-half years, under a new governor, would be less unpleasant: but by then Henry’s health, precarious from the outset, would be further deteriorating. “On the whole,” Venables wrote, “his
strength diminished slowly from year to year." Perhaps physical inactivity, "his languid habits in the intervals of occupation and of social excitement ... increased the debility which they indicated." It was "difficult to ascertain the effect" of the Maltese climate on Henry's "constitution, although he always himself considered it pernicious." He would sum up his feelings about the place: "We are tolerably well—barring that in Malta, to get up from your chair is, summer and winter alike, as great an effort of will as to walk a quarter of a mile in England: that nothing ever tastes like anything; that one does not sleep, and is sometime bothered; barring these and similar trifles, I am myself very well off at present."

During January 1848 Venables was preparing for the private printing of four lengthy poems (including a dedicatory one) that he and Henry had made together over a span of several years. The single-paragraph introduction to the 90-page book, Joint Compositions, printed anonymously in early March, explained that the poems had been "produced in conversation; a line suggested by one of the writers in his turn was often completed by the other; and there is scarcely a passage ... which either could recognise as his own." The dedictees, indicated only by four spaced asterisks above the thirty-quatrains "Dedication," were the four Lushington sisters, who had been constantly ready "To catch our meaning at a word, / And, best of all, to listen." The three other poems were reflections upon persons or incidents in the contemporary pursuit of justice. If their high-intentioned verses failed, the authors would not be the first who "at morn have schemed / What noon dissolves in vapour: / Tis not so easy as it seemed / To put the world on paper."

The earliest of the poems, "Swing, at Cambridge," was written some time between December 1830, when its described events occurred, and January 1839, when Venables's journals begin. (The journals record the composing of the other poems, but not of this.) Peter Allen's The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years (1978) reproduces nearly half of it. Its forty-four lively six-line stanzas recreate the response of Cambridge students, including, as we know, Tennyson and some other Apostles, to a nearby rick-burning during the agricultural workers' agitation. Students rushed out, joined bucket lines, and afterward talked themselves into readiness to defend the university from a rumored, but never materializing, attack. When their oracular "poet wise" (Tennyson) was mock-gravely consulted whether "'any law of battle' " would be broken by "'pouring from afar / Water or oil, or melted lead?' / The poet raised his massive head— / 'Confound the laws of war.' " A final section, omitted by Allen, condemns the subsequent hanging of one of the rick-burners: "A sight of bitter woe and shame, / A sight that brought man's wisdom blame, / A mournful tragedy." Following a perfunctory trial, the jury foreman pronounced "'Guilty,'
in easy tone. A market-day crowd jostled about the gallows. Surely that era of railroad building, an “age of boasted power, / Of conquered land and sea,” might be expected to find a “worthier remedy” for crime. By a “gentler kindlier spell, / Must greater works be done”:

When rich and poor in mutual trust
Shall know each other and be just,
Not bound by laws severe:
And a true mother commonwealth
Lead back sick children into health
With love and gentle fear.

The most ambitious and least poetically successful of the compositions was “The Coronation,” finished in April 1840. Its 513 lines in various meters and rhyming patterns describe London on Victoria’s coronation day and evaluate the constitutional monarchy from several viewpoints: two Americans, a rabid and a more moderate British radical, a philosophical and a more conventionally patriotic conservative, a pragmatical Whig, a German metaphysician, an Anglican clergyman, and the mediating Spectator, who speaks for the two authors—the cautious, pessimistic Venables moderating Henry’s quick indignation. All the varying positions had pieces of the truth: “Turning to each a different side, / The changeless truth is multiplied.” Yet all positions were not equally true. History was displaying a pattern. In the previous century the men of the Enlightenment, growing “tired of home and ancient ways,” the close walls and low roofs, had impetuously broken out, pursuing a “phantom hope.” Tiring now of wandering, “some would fain / Rest in their old content again.” Such reversion was impossible: “Our course lies onward, change and strife / Are better than self-blinded life. The “conscious march” must proceed to new conquest, not boastfully, ever mindful of the ancient virtues of Loyalty, Faith, and Love.

Less than a week after completing “The Coronation,” the two friends began their best poem, “A Rural Ride,” a 425-line tribute to the radical journalist William Cobbett. Alone the sturdy Cobbett departed from London one early summer morning:

A labourer’s son, ’mid squires and lords
Strong on his own stout legs he stood;
Well-armed in bold and trenchant wit;
And well they learned that tempted it,
That his was English blood.

Through pleasant farming country Cobbett would ride his horse southward toward “the prettiest town I know,” which Venables’s journal identifies as
Maidstone, and minutes earlier would pass a place we learn was Park House. As he rode along, he would see much to approve, and other things to disapprove. A mower was sweeping from right to left, his "thin sharp blade" cutting "cleanly through":

With understanding critic eye,  
The rider watched each motion lithe;  
The length of stroke: the steady swing;  
And stopped to hear the whet-stone ring  
Against the upright scythe.

But if he saw them droop and flag,  
He said: "They want their fathers' beer;  
"And much I dread, that tea and slops,  
"Supplanting honest malt and hops,  
"Have done the mischief here—"

The hostess of a small roadside inn "poured forth the troubles of her mind," how the agent "raised the rent, / And took the tithes in kind," and their horses were commandeered for highway work when most needed to stack hay, and the poor themselves were taxed poorer by the "poor rates." But when she piously consoled herself that life was short and heaven would be sweet, Cobbett would have none of that kind of passive millennial dreaming. The "lazy Methodists" were much at fault for the decline of rural England: "'That barn with stucco plastered o'er, / 'And Ebenezer on the door— / 'I knew it boded harm.'"

With loving descriptions of the English landscape, the duo-poets escorted the old radical along his way: "thick planted trees and hedges rank," an old church tower "framed in deepest blue."

Trembling with heat, the crystal air  
Quivered and glistened, as it were  
A silver woven veil.

The light oats trembled on the slope,  
The rich wheat clothed the loamy plain—  
Red poppies blushed, and charlock bright  
With sunny steaks of yellow light  
Gleamed through the taller grain.

And then Park House, the best contemporary description we have of it:

Before him rose the well-known mark;  
Where from the fir-toll in the park  
The walls of elm ran down,
Relieving with their depth of shade
The light grey walls of tinted stone—
Gay creepers decked with lavish growth
The goodly front that toward the South
Bowed out to catch the sun.

Dim openings in the laurel screen
Winding through light acacia bowers
Led to the pleasant walks behind;
To smooth plots safe from every wind,
And rich with tended flowers.

When a small child of a laborer, "big with his errands from the farm," became frightened by some cows and the dogs herding them, one of the daughters of the house tenderly came to his rescue. Cobbett "raised his hat and bowed his praise,
/ There was no man who all his days / Had honoured woman more.
"

Down the hill at the Kent County Hall, a milling crowd of working people waited to greet their champion. A scornful baronet uttered a "gentlemanly sneer": "See whom the thinking people's choice / Delights to honour with its voice— / They love a charlatan." But another gentleman, more astute, de­murred: he cared little for "clamourings of the crowd" who judged men and laws "off-hand," but he wished "that their quick applause / Were never worse bestowed." In Cobbett the people saw a British strength like their own, mixing evil with good but making "our sullen island blood / Lead on the march of Time."

"I know him well—on every side,
"Walled round with wilful prejudice:
"A self-taught peasant, rough of speech,
"Self-taught, and confident to teach,
"In blame not over-nice.

"What matter, if an honest thought
"Sometimes a homely phrase require?
"Let those who fear the bracing air
"Look for a milder sky elsewhere:
"Or stay beside the fire.

"There are worse things in this bad world
"Than bitter jests and bearing free—
"I hail thee, genuine English born—
"Not yet the lineage is outworn
"That owns a man like thee."
Cobbett's apologist was modeled from Henry's late father and Venables's friend, Squire Edmund Henry Lushington, known through his latter years at Maidstone as a liberal friend of the poor, one who in his capacity of magistrate was not above putting off dinner with his family to go down to the gaol and sign a release order for a prisoner, since "... if I wait till later in the day, the poor fellow might not have time to reach his home and friends tonight."

The book was printed solely "for the amusement of some of those who may be acquainted with either or both of the writers." Venables sent off copies to various family members and friends, including Emily Sellwood, whom he had twice met at Park House. The British Library copy, used in this study, was that of B. L. Chapman, in 1848 an intimate friend of both the authors.

The summer and fall of 1848 brought the zenith of the uneasy attraction between the then thirty-eight-year-old Venables and the thirty-one-year-old Emily Lushington. She had returned in poor health from Malta, Maria having gone out to join Henry and Louy. Venables from the first was both eager and dreading to see her, fearful of the outcome of a more intensified friendship. For whatever reasons, never spelled out to himself (and gratuitous conjectures are no adequate substitute for fact), he obviously considered it untenable to consider marriage. If she should so come to love him as to wish for marriage the situation would become distressing for them both. And an estrangement from her family, one that he cherished as if his own, would have constituted emotional death for him and sorrow for them all.

On 1 September, lonely in London and frustrated at the collapse of half-formed plans to visit Henry and his sisters at Malta and Naples, Venables went down to visit the Lushingtons at the seaside at Eastbourne. Met by Edmund, and finding a room at a nearby inn, he began three weeks of near-idyllic enjoyment not to be equaled again in his life. His most satisfying times with Emily thereafter would seem "not as in 1848." Edmund and Cecilia and the children, as well as Tom, Emily, and Ellen, were there. Daily routines included walks and talks with all, bathing in the ocean with Edmund, rides by horse, excursions by boat and once "in a carriage to Pevensey, fine old ruins, such as one has often seen, though not in such company. Returning we walked over a desert of shingle to the sea, & by the fort home. Another day snatched from the burning." On 6 September: "I never was happier for the moment, but afterwards there come grave regrets." On the tenth: "In the middle of the day heavy rain came on with a gale. At night the sea was very grand. Out at it with E. & got wet." On the thirteenth, after a walk with Emily & Tom: "Ed. & E. E. [Ellen Eliza] met us. More personal talk than usual or formerly." On the sixteenth, after a rough boat ride with Emily, Ellen, and two others: "I read out some of Plato's Banquet, & a good many passages from Shakespeare—to my own pleasure &
theirs'; then "At night a most communicative talk, & I begin almost to think that the result is come that I have so long hoped & feared." On the seventeenth: "After dinner read Comus & Paradise Regained to E. & E. E. on the beach, & walked with them to Holywell, where we climbed down a steep path in the cliff. Back in fine starlight. One thought incessantly occupying me in many forms." On the eighteenth: "Read part of Hamlet & of Julius Caesar to Emily & Ellen under the cliff. They appeared to like it. . . . More talk of the same kind, but with a screw loose, as if I had been mistaken, which ought to content me & does not. I wish it was over." On the nineteenth (the day of his departure): " . . . out with E. & E. E., who were finishing pictures for me. . . . I am quite surprised at their kindness, which relieves my complicated regrets." Persons of strictest integrity, neither would deviate from Victorian propriety; but they would continue to be drawn to one another, and both suffer. The story is not irrelevant to a biographical study of Henry. We will later encounter the persuasive probability that Henry on his deathbed in 1855 intimated, at the least, to both Emily and Venables his wish that they would marry.

In late November, when Tom left at last for India after an extended furlough of more than four years, Venables accompanied him to Southampton. Afterward Venables took advantage of the occasion to write "for the first time a note to E.L." (He had first met her twenty years earlier.) Three days later came "a kind friendly note from E.L. with nothing particular in it but valuable as the only one I ever received." During the nearly forty remaining years of his life, and of their friendship, he would record the receipt of numerous others, but only a very few survive.

Henry's responsibilities on Malta acquired a new dimension after 11 May 1849, when letters patent from the queen's government reconstituted the Maltese Council of Government. Previously it had included no elected members; now it would have eight elected by popular vote, to serve together with ten official members, half of whom were Maltese. The new arrangement was a compromise between the desire of the Maltese spokesmen for a fully elected legislature and the opposition of Lord Grey and O'Ferrall to going that far. The governor would be president of the council with veto power. When it was in session, Henry as chief secretary would be heavily involved with its day-by-day operations, and would deliver frequent speeches defending the government's position on various proposals. From the first he was skeptical concerning the council, and wanted to believe that the Maltese themselves were indifferent to the reform, since "a constitution is neither a church procession, nor bellringing, nor fireworks, and these are the real excitements of the Maltesian mind." Evidently he was partially mistaken: of the 3,767 men qualified by education and property to vote, more than eighty-eight percent turned out for the first
election on 16 August. Significantly for future controversies, no Liberal Maltese were elected, and three of the eight new members were Roman Catholic priests (one of them a titular bishop); eventually the priestly membership would reach five (sixty-two percent of the elected contingent). The most heated debates, those in which Henry as a fervent believer in complete religious equality would become most deeply involved, would be occasioned by Catholic attempts to legislate preferential treatment for their religion.

In mid-August 1849 Venables left for Malta to visit Henry and the sisters. Before he departed, Cecilia kindly presented him with "a pretty ring with the children's hair." Southward from Paris the weather was already "becoming greatly hotter" and would be worse at Malta. Henry's villa there had large "lofty rooms & a garden full of flowers." But Henry himself, looking "thin, pale, & ill," although "rather the better for extravagantly long hair and whiskers," soon fell severely ill, in pain every night for more than a week. Later Henry, on an extended holiday with his sisters and Venables in Italy, wrote that Venables "joined me . . . at Malta; became acquainted with the meaning of the term caloric, & the influence exerted by that mysterious force in cosmological arrangements; nursed me through an illness, and otherwise enjoyed himself; & finally left Malta in company with us on Oct. 2." The beauty of Italy was "really excessive," but as for Malta, "people all whose small wits have been gradually evaporated from them in that wretched little oven, do not recover them by a few weeks freedom."

The Italian sojourn provided its politically instructive ironies. A fellow passenger on the flea-infested ship from Malta was the aging Neapolitan patriot General Gulielmo Pepe (1783-1855), who had unsuccessfully led troops against the Austrians as early as 1821; became for two decades a refugee; returned to Naples in 1848 to oppose the Austrians again, only to have his king call off the campaign; then led two thousand volunteers to Venetia, where he became the commanding general, and was again overcome by Austrians; escaped to Malta and was now bound for Genoa. While the ship was anchored for several hours in the Bay of Naples, "within sight," as Venables wrote, "of the dungeons in which the old soldier would have perished if he had stirred three yards from the ship," his "humbler and plainer spoken comrades" shouted "an edifying volley of abuse" at the Neapolitan "policemen and quarantine officers who lay alongside in their boat." Henry's party too, although ultimately bound for Naples, was unable to put ashore there, since the kingdom of Naples was refusing to admit visitors from France, or from Malta, which was in "free communication with France." Persons from Malta had first to spend two weeks in the Roman States; but, of course, as Henry pointed out, the Roman States, then actually being occupied by French troops, were "in the freest & most constantly possible
The fortnight of sightseeing in Rome, including inspection of damage from the recent summer's resistance to the French, passed rapidly. The travelers were off by carriage to the Neapolitan frontier and thence by train to Sorrento. They found Naples "full of anecdotes of royal ferocity," and although Englishmen were safe enough, all were pained by so much evidence of "the destruction of Italian liberty." General Pepe had estimated no fewer than forty thousand political prisoners in Naples and Sicily. Henry had begun writing a spirited historical summary of the last two years' Italian wars; more than a year later the *Edinburgh Review* would publish it in two installments. During most of November, Henry kept comparatively well; but Louy was alarmingly ill with a fever, visited by physicians daily or oftener. In early December they all returned to Malta, where Venables remained until mid-January.

Soon would begin the first session of the new Council of Government. Venables judged from a letter that Henry was "interested and pleased with his council work." On 4 April, came "some Malta papers with an admirable speech of HL's" about the Roman Catholic "question." The twenty-second brought another Malta paper, with a "long & able article" by Henry about Piedmont, which Venables inserted in the *Daily News*. "His energies," Venables felt, "are remarkable."

In the life story of Alfred Tennyson, the year 1850 is proverbially his "*annus mirabilis,*" when he published *In Memoriam,* finally married Emily Sellwood, and became poet laureate. The Park House circle, as we shall see, was actively involved in all three of those events.

Between 5 and 13 March at London, the proof sheets for *In Memoriam* had, as a friendly service for Tennyson, been read and corrected by Venables. The book appeared in late May. The two lengthiest sections of the elegy—85 and the epithalamic Epilogue—seem addressed directly to Edmund. The Epilogue indisputably is; and the similar phrasing in the two salutations—"O true in word and tried in deed" (85) and "O true and tried, so well and long" (Epilogue)—would hardly have been a mere coincidence. True, parts of 85 predate Tennyson's friendship with Edmund; nothing survives in documents to link Edmund to that poem; and Hallam Tennyson in 1913 dropped an earlier note that had identified Edmund as the poem's addressee. Yet within the poem the addressee, a tactful friend, earnestly but gracefully concerned with Tennyson's welfare, resembles the Edmund Lushington of numerous later letters to the poet. He questions Tennyson, "to bring relief / To this which is our common grief, / What kind of life is that I lead." Was Tennyson's "trust in things above / . . . dimmed of sorrow, or sustained"? Had his love for Hallam "drained" his "capabilities of love"? The interrogator's words, lightly reproachful, "half
exprest,” had “virtue such as draws / A faithful answer from the breast.” Reassuringly, Tennyson replies that his “pulses . . . beat again” for “other friends” and for the “mighty hopes that make us men.” The “widowed” heart “may not rest / Quite in the love of what is gone, / But seeks to beat in time with one / That warms another living breast.” That other heartbeat could have belonged to any or all of several intimate friends, not necessarily as Hallam Tennyson claimed, to Emily Sellwood, Tennyson’s fiancée, nor just to the interrogator. Tennyson’s closest friendship with Edmund postdated the broken engagement with Emily, but before the poem was finally published, the engagement had been resumed. At best, such biographical speculations have only limited value. Aesthetically considered, 85 as finally patched together is one of the least satisfactory sections, barely achieving coherence; but in the total argument of *In Memoriam*, it marks an important turning from despair toward regeneration. If Edmund, as still seems probable, is addressed in 85, Tennyson was deliberately associating him with the hope of a happier life, as he certainly does in the Epilogue.

In the resumption of Alfred’s and Emily’s engagement, Edmund and Cecilia had been centrally involved. As Emily would tell her sons, she and Alfred had met at Park House at least once after that unintentional first reunion there. Edmund “with loving generosity” offered to sell his carriage horses for money to help them marry, but they did not allow it. At the quiet wedding on 13 June at Shiplake-on-Thames, Edmund and Cecilia were among only seven adults present, not including even Tennyson’s mother. Martin says it was Edmund who “produced the ring, which he had rightly guessed Tennyson would forget.” Edmund later quipped to John Forster that the secretive Alfred would “gladly give 7/6 . . . to every penny-a-liner” who would keep the wedding story “out of the papers.” Even so close a friend of Tennyson’s as Venables, upon hearing about the wedding, could only pronounce it “a strange piece of news,” having been unaware that the newlyweds had ever been more than casual friends.

It was perhaps the wedding, culminating a courtship begun in the Lincolnshire wolds some twenty years before, that inspired Cecilia to return there that summer to her own childhood haunts. For her, as with any of her sisters or brothers, the memories must have been mixed with sadness. Edmund, on his first visit, was unabashedly entranced. They went first to Mablethorpe, of old the favorite seaside resort of Cecilia’s family. Edmund, as he wrote to Tennyson, so loved the place—so “grand and vast”—that he could “hardly bear to leave it.” In mid-July they had “winter fires every day, great comfort in the hospitable inn—generally fair weather with keen west wind.” Cecilia had taken “her 3 walks every day with great spirit, today for the first time one was
helped by a donkey.” They “wandered at low water ever farther seaward” while a mirage played “wild work with airy banks & sham waves.” Then they proceeded inland for a twenty-four-hour stay at Cecilia’s native Somersby. The Burtons at the old parsonage could not spare a bed in the house but provided a room “sedulously polished” in a house nearby. Cecilia and Edmund could walk about “with as much privacy” as they wished, reviving memories with Dr. Tennyson’s old parishioners. Edmund found it “very touching to see their fondness for Miss Cecilia & delight at seeing her.” “Even apart from all its interest,” he found Somersby “beautiful thorough English laneland, with rare richness of trees all along.”

But, as with so much—one feels tempted to say “virtually everything”—in Cecilia’s life, even this glad nostalgic holiday led ironically to sorrow. The “week’s excitement & exertion . . . brought on a very early miscarriage.” Although “a good deal distrest,” she was remaining cheerful “when not oppressed by faintness.”

No doubt so, at the time. But what of the years that lay ahead, when in 1856 and 1868 and 1874 three of her four beloved children died? Did she bitterly reflect in her times of dark depression that the child perhaps unnecessarily lost at Somersby (was the place accursed for Tennysons?) might have been one who would have survived to comfort her, perhaps a manchild to outlive his ill-starred brother and carry on his parents’ line?

For the Park House family, it was a summer of varied coming and going, including the customary sojourn by the seaside at Eastbourne. Toward the end of July, Henry and his sisters Maria and Louy returned for a visit from Malta, the first homecoming for all three, although Maria’s absence had been shorter, only since the summer of 1848. While the Alfred Tennysons were honeymooning at Tent Lodge, on Coniston Water in the Lake District, Franklin and Ellen and, at another time, Edmund went up to visit them. Emily Tennyson recalled that during Edmund’s stay a stormy wind one night broke a window, driving her and Alfred into another room.

On 23 October the Tennyson newlyweds arrived at Park House for a stay of almost three months, while Alfred searched for a house to lease. Between househunting trips, he and Henry could again be together, the last times that they would ever see much of each other.

On the twenty-fourth, Venables came down and, except for two or three very short returns to London, remained continuously until early January—one of the lengthiest views we have of Park House life. A typical day was uneventful yet varied—an almost ritualistic round of companionable walks in frequently changing groupings around the park and into the countryside surrounding, of boat rides on the river, rides on horses, and of evening conversation circles. On Sunday the twenty-seventh, Edmund departed in the afternoon for
Glasgow. But that morning Venables "walked a short distance" with Maria and Louy, walked in the afternoon with Maria, Louy, and Henry, then met Emily and another guest "coming from church." That evening "after talking upstairs with A.T., we came down & had a long pleasant talk with Mrs. Lushington," Maria, Ellen, Frank, and Henry. "Ghoststories & others." The next day, "walked a short distance" with Emily and Ellen, and later "Rode Oddo with" Henry and Frank "by Maidstone, Barming, & Aylesford." And so the record had typically gone through the ten earlier years of Venables's recorded visits, and would continue, with inevitable changes of person and circumstances, for three decades more. Tennyson that autumn of 1850, besides househunting, was busily "correcting his three books," as his wife wrote a friend on 26 December, "for new editions." Tennyson could, if he wished, again seek Henry's advice concerning specific alterations.

On 9 November a letter came from Windsor Castle offering Tennyson the poet laureateship. His son long afterward wrote, "He took the whole day to consider and at the last wrote two letters, one accepting, one refusing, and determined to make up his mind after a consultation with his friends at dinner." Afterward he "would joke and say, 'In the end I accepted the honour, because during dinner Venables told me, that, if I became Poet Laureate, I should always when I dined be offered the liver-wing of a fowl.' " Actually, we find from the journals of both his wife and Venables, he hesitated not one day but four, accepting on the thirteenth.

The wide approval of *In Memoriam*, mourning Arthur Henry Hallam, had helped bring the appointment after the eighty-seven-year-old Samuel Rogers had declined it because of advanced age. Ironically, Park House had just learned of the death at Siena on 25 October of Hallam's younger brother Harry, a close friend of Frank's. By a grim coincidence, Harry like his brother seventeen years before, had died during a Continental journey with their historian father.

As fall turned to early winter, Tennyson was still periodically going out and returning from househunting. Henry, often less than well, was preoccupied with problems concerning Malta. Cecilia's health, never good, remained variable, doubtless not bettered by separation from Edmund nor by the additional activity at home. Shortly before the holiday season, she was driven to bed, Louy wrote to Edmund, by "a bad rheumatic headache," yet brightening somewhat when little Emmy was brought in to see her. Cecilia "talked, & baby examined with intense interest a medicine bottle."

By the twenty-third Cecilia was able to come downstairs for pleasant talk with Venables and Emily Tennyson. Christmas Eve brought "some indifferent fireworks," and after dinner "a magic lantern" which Venables thought "rather tiresome." Edmund did not arrive from Glasgow until late afternoon.
on Christmas day. After "a large Christmas dinner" came more magic lantern in the bow room. Henry next morning was "out of spirits, talking about Malta." Edmund remained to celebrate Eddy's seventh birthday, the thirty-first, with "a children's tea," then hurried off for Glasgow on New Year's morning, after being at home less than a week. Frank had decided to accompany Henry and the sisters Maria and Louy to Malta on the third. As the time neared, Henry was "in tolerable spirits, but languid." Cecilia was "much depressed." Henry sent his pony "to the dock," bound for Malta too. On the morning of departure, Frank's cheerful presence kept Henry "in comparatively good spirits"; but all the others—those going and those staying—were "very deeply depressed."

On 20 January the Tennysons left Park House for a picturesque old place Alfred had too impulsively leased at a gratifyingly rural location called War ninglid, near Horsham in Sussex. The house, as Emily described it, "had a lovely Copley Fielding view of the South Downs," and the birdsong outside enchanted Alfred with memories of Somersby. But a storm soon blew them "out of the diningroom & he was smoked out of his room & the rain went more than halfway thro' our bedroom and the storm was so loud we could not sleep so he got up and read some of the books we had unpacked the evening before." Furthermore, they soon "discovered that there was no post for the house, not even a carrier, and that we were five miles from a doctor." And Emily was expecting a child in April. On 2 February they abandoned the place, Alfred "with his accustomed tenderness" drawing Emily "in a garden chair some two miles over the rough road" to an inn, "guarding" her from "every jolt." They stopped several days with the Rawnsleys at Shiplake while Tennyson futilely searched for another house. On the twentieth, a month to the day after leaving Park House, they were back again staying with Cecilia. At a hotel on the way, Emily had stumbled against a step and fallen, spraining her foot and possibly injuring her unborn child, a boy, who two months later was born dead. By 11 March the Tennysons were at last settled in a secure house at Twickenham, having been assisted all the way by the Park House coachman. Alfred was soon taking his "walks before breakfast; short walks, not like the long Warninglid walks. Duty walks and alas! without pleasure."30

In July, Edmund and Cecilia joined Alfred and Emily for a few days together at Paris, before the Tennysons went on to Italy. Afterward, when Venables saw them at Park House, Edmund was "full of" his journey, "but she was much tired."

Tennyson had reached almost the exact midpoint of his life. Never again would he be homeless, a wanderer, or a recurrent visitor at Park House. He and his Emily would ever remain lovingly close to Edmund and Cecilia, but hence-
forth most of the visiting between their houses would be done by the Lushingtons, frequently by Edmund alone.

In January and March 1851 appeared Henry’s two-part *Edinburgh Review* article, approximately thirty thousand words, summarizing, describing, and evaluating “a series of events” in Italy during 1848 and 1849, “for magnitude, and strangeness, and rapidity perfectly unparalleled.” A powerful sympathy with the Italian cause, an indignation and scorn against perverse authority and fumbling official ineptitude, permeate his pages. The prose is uneven, overelaborated in places. At his best Henry was, as always, a maker of phrases illuminating in their terseness, a cogent underliner of ironies. Concerning the Austrian position in Italian affairs: “The Austrian government [in Lombard], truly called by Mazzini, in 1845, the best in Italy, formed not the less the strength of the very worst. . . . the great insurance office for the otherwise dangerous speculations of tyranny.” Of Pius IX: “. . . He will live in history as one more painful specimen of that commonest form of the irony of destiny,—the common-place blown into factitious greatness, at length brought face to face with great events, and ignominiously collapsing.” Again: “He had come, so he flattered himself, to send peace on earth—he found that he had sent a sword. That is, he found the world was much more in earnest than he was or wished others to be.”

One finds memorable character sketches of the principal actors in the drama. In the earlier battles the octogenarian General Radetsky, although the enemy, was “the one hero to admire. . . . doing his duty, whoever else might fail in theirs, shaken as little by sedition in Vienna as by revolt at Milan, master of the ground he stood on, and resolved to hold that at least.” But Henry’s greatest fascination, combined with half-compassionate contempt, was for the vacillating Pius IX. His original liberal-seeming views “were probably as sincere as they were narrow.” He knew that his temporal government of the Papal States was hated; “as a priest attached to his church, and a man not devoid of benevolence, he wished to abate this scandal,” to attach his people “to his person.” He had meant to work reforms, remove abuses, see that the “wolves should worry” his flock no longer. Lacking the wits to understand the near impossibility of what he was ostensibly attempting, he disregarded prudent advice to “declare at once what he would do, to do it, and to go no further.” Too soon “an inclined plane of indefinite hopes and slack performances conducted” him with “almost unexampled rapidity to the point to which all such careers tend—the point where the roads split.” Events pursued events, engulfing the hapless Pontiff, until he felt forced to declare against the Italian cause. The tragic farce had played itself out to a temporary apparent ending. As Mazzini wrote, Austria was again “the blade of the sword of which the Pope is the cross, and this
sword hangs over all Italy. "The "sole difference," Henry reflected, was "that
the cross" of temporal sovereignty had "lost such sanctity as it once possessed,
and the sword is sharper than ever."

The most eloquent set piece is Henry's description of Garibaldi's now famous
retreat from Rome to Venice:

If Song lives still in the Sabine mountains, many a future lay ought to tell
how the outlaw of Italian liberty left the conquered city, foiled his French
pursuers and gained the mountains;—how, threading the Apennines from
Tivoli to Terni—from Terni to Arezzo . . . heard of here and there,
repeatedly struck at by the Austrian pursuing columns, damaged but not
crushed, evading through their lines when on the point of closing on him,
he reached at last the Adriatic;—how, creeping along the shore with the
relic of his band, his scanty flotilla was beset and scattered by the fire of an
Austrian fort and gunboats,—how some were sunk, some taken; [his wife
dying along the way]; and how at last, he reached Venice—worn out with
toil, and almost alone—in time to accept a command in the last strong­
hold, and to see the last shot fired in the struggle which he had done and
suffered so much to maintain. His story is a romance ready made.

Fortunately, the wars, although lost, had "tended to show the Italians what
they are, and what their interests are." They were even less reconciled than
before "to those great evils which some would persuade them to consider as
blessings: bad government—priestly government—despotic government—
foreign government." More solidly than before, they had "the idea of national­
ity in a bodily form," and with "many painful, but some proud recollections."
The "idea of union" would remain more than "a dream. It is a spirit not yet
laid; it walks in and out of Italy in many a thoughtful head and burning heart."
Sooner or later it would once more find "an armed body to inhabit."

In the fall of 1851, Venables again joined Henry and his sisters for two weeks
at Sorrento before returning with them to Malta. The island had a new gover­
nor and Henry a new employer, the Scottish soldier and meteorologist Colonel
(later Major General) Sir William Reid, former governor of Bermuda and later
of Barbados, who on Malta would be both governor and commander-in-chief.
Henry arrived "unwell & depressed, but after seeing Sir W. Reid, with whom
he eventually dined, he was a good deal better." There was the usual small
colonial round of visits, balls, and other social events. On 18 December the new
session of the council opened, "in the tapestry room, a long table with nine
sitting on each side of the room." Governor Reid "read rather a stiff address. H.
made two statements very clearly & pleasantly." On the twenty-seventh the
Malta Mail" published a compliment to H. in the Report of the Malta Chamber
of Commerce." On the year's last day, Henry and Venables walked on "the
cavalier [fortification], where we saw the coast of Sicily plainly, & the white cone of Etna not so distinctly. The evening brought another ball: "a good house, & apparently a good ball. We were not back until 2.30. At midnight there was a country dance." Venables "asked Maria to join it, but she declined, so we sat together & talked the year out." He sailed for England near the end of January.

At Sorrento, Venables had found Henry hard at work on a new pamphlet, "as engrossing to him as usual." William Ewart Gladstone, after spending the winter of 1850–51 at Naples, had published a furious attack upon the Neapolitan government for throwing thousands of its political opposition into prisons and cruelly mistreating them there. The Neapolitans had issued a flimsy pamphlet to refute Gladstone's charges, which had become an international sensation. The British embassy had influenced Henry to answer the defense. Documents he obtained included shorthand reports of disgraceful court proceedings convicting several prisoners, among them Carlo Poerio, recent minister of education and more recently leader of the opposition in the since-dissolved parliament, who had been sentenced to nineteen years in irons. (Gladstone had prominently discussed Poerio, whom he himself had seen in the dungeon chained to a murderer.)

Henry's pamphlet appeared in February 1852, anonymously—possibly because of his official position at Malta. Combining factual refutations with scornful dismissal of illogical arguments, it assailed, one by one, the Neapolitan contentions. They had inanely blamed Gladstone for not coming to them for official information, rather than taking the word of convicts in prison and other traitorous informers. But, of course, Gladstone had "wished to see with the eyes which he might have had easily and pleasantly bandaged, even, if he had so desired it, by a sceptre-holding hand." The apologists had filled pages to prove that their laws protecting accused persons were just, none of which Gladstone had denied; his pamphlet had merely documented that they had shamelessly violated those laws. To the Government plea that priests, including the archbishop of Naples, had visited the prisoners, Henry replied: "Such is the honesty, such the logic, of this defense. Because the benevolent archbishop deigned to visit these wretched places, the descriptions of their miseries are false." Just as logically, "the presence of Howard in the horrible dungeons which he reformed, proved that they stood in no need of reform." Even if true, the Neapolitan denial of having tortured certain prisoners was no justification: "Savages kill an enemy with tortures; the slow death of years may suffice a Christian and civilized government." The Neapolitans would have been wiser to remain "absolutely silent," rather than revealing that they possessed no kind of rational defense.

At Park House young Eddy, in his ninth year, was getting on well with his
Latin, “very accurately” construing Ovid for Venables. Emily during March fell alarmingly ill, seeming for a day or two near death. Maria hurried home from Malta, happily finding Emily convalescent. On 13 July, Henry and Louy arrived on holiday from Malta. On 19 August, a week and a day after Hallam Tennyson’s birth, Tennyson and Henry met for a brief visit in London; whether they met again that year is uncertain. Edmund, but not Henry, was present at Twickenham on 5 October, along with Arthur Hallam’s father, Frederick D. Maurice, Browning, Thackeray, Venables, Jane Carlyle, and others, for little Hallam’s christening.

Almost undoubtedly, Henry had mentioned to Tennyson the possibility that he might not be returning to Malta. It is clear enough that he and the family had been considering some alternative plan—as a rash conjecture, I think it may have been a marriage with some woman having money, but I have no idea whom. Whatever it was, Venables called it “a very uncomfortable plan in agitation.” Even by 20 September the matter remained unsettled: Edmund wrote Tennyson, “Plans with regard to Malta are still uncertain but I think Malta seems most likely.”

Malta won. On 28 October, Henry departed, accompanied as always by Louy, but this time, untypically, also by Emily, and by Franklin and young Eddy. Within four years three of the group—Louy, Henry himself, and Eddy—would be dead. Also on the twenty-eighth, Edmund was off again alone for Glasgow, seeming to Venables “more out of spirits than I have ever seen him.” Henry was still much depressed when he wrote Milnes from Folkestone before crossing the channel. Their mutual Apostolic friend Saville Morton, journalist, painter, and inveterate womanizer, had been stabbed to death at Paris by a jealous husband. Although “a sudden death has its recommendations,” Henry reflected, “one cannot but transfer something of one’s own horror” to the victim. No doubt it seemed all the sadder, not “because I find life as life more pleasant” than Milnes did, but “rather because I find it so much less pleasant, as indeed it is to me, I think.” Consequently he “perpetually” felt that life “owes to me, and all other unlucky people, so much—which debt is repudiated by death.” Persons who “have passed a life of happiness are much the readiest to die—putting aside, or supposing equal, all other considerations.” In his party was “Edmund’s little boy. Do you recollect him? A fellow with splendid long curls, he commences his travels thus early—let us hope he takes to foreign parts more kindly than I do. O for an honourable dismissal from Malta or an honourable tidewinter’s place in England.” Yet, if the winter in Malta should do “the good I hope, it will be a compensation for much, and I shall not regret having held the office for this year.”

Edmund too had ample basis for feeling out of spirits: he was facing another
half-year of loneliness. His son might benefit educationally from travel and from tutoring by his accomplished uncles, but perhaps at indeterminate risk to his health. The possibility of delivering Henry from more of Malta had been abandoned or postponed. Emily was retreating not only from the harsh English winter, but also from her enervating emotional entanglement with Venables, an increasing preoccupation of the entire family.

Finally, Cecilia, seven months pregnant, had been progressively failing in health, emotionally as well as physically. Scattered statements regarding her health are brief, often allusive rather than explicit; but in aggregate they permit a tentative reconstruction. She was, and would be for long years to come, frequently more or less disablingly depressed; when agitated, she would occasionally become fractious, and to some degree hysterical. As early as February 1850, her first winter apart from Edmund, the Park House nurse had given Venables "a very unpleasant account." On 3 June 1852, he noted, "Mrs. L. with reasons for not going to Malvern," the location of Dr. James Manby Gully's hydropathic establishment, a refuge for the nervously afflicted, where Tennyson had stayed at the end of 1847. In early July at Eastbourne, Venables found her "looking very ill." There again on 16 August, writing Emily Tennyson, he hoped the seaside had "done good as to its immediate object, & in general health she seems to be better; but how far the specific evil is touched I do not know." On the same day Edmund wrote Alfred, inquiring about Isle of Wight hotels: he and Cecilia were planning "a small trip," its duration depending partially upon "how far Cissy is able to enjoy it; she looks to it hopefully, & it is the kind of thing to do her more good than most others." On 7 November, ten days after Edmund left for Glasgow, Venables found that "Mrs. L. has been nervously ill." Two weeks later she was not much recovered and kept to her room except for a few minutes daily. Edmund came at Christmas time, and drew her about in a chair. He came again briefly after she gave birth to a daughter, Lucy Maria, on 20 January. (Lucy would become her mother's inseparable companion, perhaps the one person in her life who most intuitively understood her, but would die at twenty-one of tuberculosis.) By February, Cecilia was looking "very well" again, but at the end of the month was suffering from severe facial pain. And so the record would continue until further illness in late summer led at last to an extended course of hydropathic treatment, but with doubtful results.

Living at Malta and several times sojourning in Italy, Henry, ever a quick learner, had become something of a master of the Italian language. Now in an article published in February 1853 in the nonconformist British Quarterly Review, he emerged as a confident translator of verse from idiomatic Italian into stanzas of idiomatic English. The poetic voice of the Italian movement, the
satirist Guiseppe Giusti, a Tuscan born near Florence, most of whose bitterly
subversive poems had at first circulated in manuscript underground, had died in
March 1850, two months short of forty-years-old. Henry had been fascinated
by Guisti’s poetry since at least the fall of 1847, when he and Venables had
jointly translated some of it for a review by Venables. Henry’s 1853 article
reviewed Giusti’s life and works, discriminatingly characterized his genius, and
provided more than four hundred freely translated lines in various metres and
stanza forms excerpted from about a dozen poems. To capsulize the peculiar
flavor of Giusti’s verses, their depth of feeling, passion, ironic force, and
beauty, Henry suggested the term “lyrical satires.” Giusti’s “real master,”
Dante, had taught him the value of “the short description, which . . . em­
phatically outlives the object, the single line which brands, the single indelible
epithet which recalls, and seems to comprise the character.” In a verse “simple
and even severe,” Giusti used “the plainest and most popular expressions of the
Tuscan dialect, condensed, vivid, familiar . . . in the strongest sense of the
word, original,” to tell “his countrymen how base, how hateful, was much of
the life around them.” In Coleridgean terms, Henry stressed that, as in “all
poetry worth the name,” nothing in Giusti is “ever put in for mere ornament;
the exact words are used for the exact thought; thought and language are not
separable; they are interfused and one.”

“All earnest irony,” Henry contended—and could do so from self-
knowledge, being himself an earnest ironist, however minor—“is born of
. . . conflict of deep feelings; the smile may in part express contempt perhaps,
or a sense of the vanity of things, but the root of it is sadness and indignation
which can find no adequate direct expression.” Giusti, in “his own beautiful
words,” had sighed, “Ah me! the war of moods, the depth of sadness, / A soul in
tears, a seeming smile of gladness.” That “depth of feeling” had “at once sharp­
ened the edge of that trenchant ridicule, and raised the poet into the element of
true lyric passion.”

In Giusti’s most popular piece, “The Boot,” poor boot-shaped Italy “relates
how it has passed from leg to leg, through a series of larcenous wearers; how
much misuse, patching, unprofitable wear and tear it has undergone in the
service of these unrighteous owners.” Priests, especially, had worn it, “spite­
fully and without discretion,” and blockheaded poets had praised them for
doing so. The boot needed “some fitting leg to wear me”: “No German’s leg or
Frenchman’s—understand— / I would be worn by one of my own land.” Bon­
aparte might have been the proper wearer, but was bent on “rambling too
far . . . until”: “Alas! that snow-storm caught him far astray, / And froze his
limbs, and stopped his walk midway.” The poor boot—fragmented Italy—
bemoans: “I’m a mere Harlequin’of shreds and patches: / If you would really
put me in repair, / Make me, with loving zeal and sense to aid, / All of one piece and one prevailing shade," then, perhaps, "the kick of the boot will be a serious matter to any insolent provoker." Another poem "of grave and sometimes grim humour, relieved with touches of melancholy beauty" was "La Terra Dei Morti" ("The Dead Man's Land"), where Italians, as Henry explains, lament that their "life, or rather this our present pseudo-life, is a mere intrusion among the living . . . yet from some things, one would almost think we were still living; who knows; perhaps it will turn out so":

To us poor ghosts of Italy,
Us, mummies from the womb,
Our nurse is sexton, and our birth
But opens up the tomb.
On us the curates waste in vain
The holy font's expenses,
And charge our burial fees again
On purely false pretences.
Made up like Adam's sons
In human likeness fair,
True flesh you'd think us, yet we are
Mere ribs and long shin bones,
What do you here, poor souls misled,
Strayed from your place of slumber?
Oh, be resigned, go join the dead,
The nation without number.

For a departed nation
There is no place in story,
What is Liberty or Glory
To this corpse generation?
Garlands on graves? What good to them?
They're just as well without it.
Let's mumble off their requiem,
And make less talk about it.

Henry translated nine more stanzas, still but a portion of the whole.

But Giusti's greatest work was his "Gingillino" (1844), a long poem offering instructions for the perfect education of a political scoundrel: "A satire more fiercely definite, alive in object and execution, was never penned." The making of the future arch-scoundrel would begin at infancy:
Hush, baby, don't cry,
You were naked when born;
Would you learn how to die
Not so bare and forlorn?

Come list to our maxims,
Which ever hold good,
And will float you like cork
To the top of the flood.

With a back early bent,
And a pliable marrow,
Cringe, crush yourself under
The pedagogue's harrow.

The candidate for scoundrelhood must forswear "the brilliant, the daring," keep head and heart undisturbed by heroic stories and "Weak dreams of honour, / Dim spectres of glory," reading only "What will keep you in earning."

He must never weakly give way to conscience: "On the dirtiest fingers / Clean gloves can be worn; / Do this—or die naked / As when you were born." He must carry away from his university studies only that knowledge which will advance his sordid career:

What is left from all you've read,
Crudest studies, bump'd and hurried
In that nutshell of a head,
Ur'n in which the mind is buried?
Scantiest lore is yet enough
For that soul of coarsest stuff:
Yea, the slightest tincture of it
Will fit you for touching profit.

Don the gown of learned brother
Or attorney, which you will:
One name fits you like another
While it pays your baker's bill:
Born a hound and hireling wary,
Born Cossack or Janissary,
With bow'd neck and crooked shrinking
Making up for want of thinking.

Already adept in "the great art of omission," the apprentice scoundrel must also learn all the base things that must be positively done: "how to choose a
patron; how to treat him when chosen; what services to render obtrusively, what inobtrusively; in short, the whole duty of a crawler, set forth with a calm and scientific accuracy, an absence of exaggeration, or obvious irony, in itself most ironical.”

Taking Giusti’s ideas and materials, Henry’s thrilled ear and responsive mind had fashioned new poems in the quite different genius of his own native tongue. So it must be with any worthy verse translation of any poem that is really a poem. If Henry’s own muse ever gave him a poem as good, it has not survived.

For Alfred and Emily Tennyson, the time was long overdue to escape from semi-urban Twickenham, too accessible to London, to a greater rural solitude more conducive to composing poetry. Except for two versions of his “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,” Tennyson had written almost nothing in nearly three years. “Have you devised any means,” Edmund inquired on 31 March 1853, “of getting away from that abominable Twickenham? I am very anxious to hear that you have, the sooner the better. While you are there, I am almost afraid to ask have you been doing any work for the future? but it is sad to think how the summers are slipping on.” The manner was typical of Edmund’s letters to Alfred: understated praise, quiet brotherly concern, occasionally cautious reservations concerning a poetic project, frequent gentle encouragement to write for sake of the world and his own reputation. “One begins at last,” Edmund wistfully wrote, “to believe the day for setting off for home will sometime arrive.”

At Park House, Franklin had returned from Malta in early January. Early in June he and Venables, along with Edmund, who had come from Park House, met the ship bringing Emily and Eddy from Malta. Emily “looked ill & weatherbeaten after a bad voyage,” Eddy “much improved in looks & very good company.” At Park House “the meeting took place: such as I never saw, & in itself pure enjoyment.” Between Emily and her nephew those seven months of almost constant companionship had sealed a bond for the remaining three and a half years of his life. At the lingering end it would be his Aunt Emily who tirelessly nursed him like a mother while his own mother, it seems, was incapacitated with illness and grief. On 20 August, Henry and Louy arrived from Malta, so that again for a few weeks all the family except Tom was together.

Earlier that August, William H. Allen and Company published a ninety-seven-page pamphlet by Henry, eloquently and cleverly done, The Double Government, the Civil Service, and the India Reform Agitation, defending against recent detractors the existing structure under which India was jointly governed by the crown and the directors of the East India Company. Venables considered this book Henry’s best piece of writing, which rhetorically it well may be, although more than a century later the central issues it discussed have died. But Henry
himself lives audibly enough in many of its incidental touches. Through "a proper combination," he tells us, "of ignorance as to facts, recklessness as to assertions, and thoughtlessness as to consequences," the reformers had attempted to "stimulate the British community into one of those periodical states of high moral excitement" in which "something memorably disastrous and unwise is triumphantly attained." We share his scorn for specious, question-begging arguments. "Declamation is easy for those who have learned nothing of the India of to-day, and forgotten nothing of the India of Burke"; thus, "passages descriptive of the blunders of a young judicial civilian in 1853 are read side by side with passages descriptive of the crimes of perhaps his grandfather in 1763." Or the reformers irresponsibly generalize "in their single and sweeping dicta upon that congeries of not more than forty nations and languages which they are pleased to unify as the people of India."

Henry packages his insights in strikingly dramatic sentences. Having two governing boards obliged to exchange communications had distinct advantages: "You may, in a way more or less civil, pooh-pooh a gentleman across the table, or be conveniently deaf; but you must, unfortunately, attend to him if he writes you a letter which you are bound to answer." Again, "We use many words without even doubting that we understand them; and that we all and always understand them alike," until something "puts our phraseology to the test," and we "find that we are every day using the same word in twenty different senses as speakers, and . . . never understand it twice alike as hearers." For years the English had "been deaf as well as dumb on the subject of India," but now "we have got rid of one of the qualities. We have received the gift of speech, unhappily not as yet sufficiently accompanied by the counter-gift of hearing." He scores some good-natured points at the expense of his eminent kinsman, the Earl of Ellenborough, an accomplished Cambridge scholar who had contended that lack of literary education might be advantageous to a colonial administrator. "Like other men, Lord Ellenborough pines for the quality which he has not—deficiency in book-learning, freedom from the niceties of a cultivated intellect." Despite his learning, Ellenborough as governor-general of India was "undoubtedly an able administrator; and though he occasionally committed an escapade, which duller people would have avoided, yet there can be no greater error than to suppose that dulness is safe. Much duller men" than Ellenborough "have made much greater blunders." Surely the "blockheads have a fair inheritance already; the world, in how many senses, is practically theirs, and constructed for their benefit. Let not their indefeasible right to sit in its highest chairs of rule be theoretically conceded."

Decidedly more dated now is Henry's near-mystical belief in the supposed divine election of the British for morally educating the Indians: "Such a gift,
and with it such a duty—responsibilities so great, possibilities of good to ourselves and others so unlimited—the most wonderful, and what might be the noblest page in the world’s history, committed to us to make or mar.” He skirts perilously close to shrillness in disputing the contention of certain Indian agitators that Indians in general were equal in ability and morality with Europeans: “If there is one lie more fatal to the hopes of India, and more monstrous in itself, than those of their own religions, it surely is comprised in this,—‘We are as good as the English.’” Yet he readily concedes that in numerous points of local administration the natives’ “knowledge is more direct and greater than ours . . . and their sagacity in devising appropriate and possible remedies is probably not less.” He heartily advocates competitive examinations to qualify Indians for civil service positions formerly reserved for Britons. He despises the resolute indifference that kept the English smugly ignorant of India’s basic needs. Actually it was “a poor country—poor essentially in itself and not merely by former plundering . . . a community, of which perhaps four-fifths, some say nine-tenths, have been from time immemorial occupied in producing from the earth little beyond a sufficiency of food for themselves and for the remaining fifth.” India needed railroads, and irrigation—and money. Available money had been squandered “by war after war”: in recent years most glaringly by the infamous “Affghan burglary,” “the reason, more or less, of every other war that has since tended to deprive India of irrigation and railroads.” Only when the English knew India well would they care about India greatly.

The most memorable passage is Henry’s tribute, modeled from his brother Tom, to scores of able young English civilians then serving in India—“English boys of eighteen expanded into experienced Indians of thirty-two or thirty-three.” They displayed “that unmistakable mark . . . of the man who has dealt with and ruled other men, blended with a kind of shy simplicity and anxious correctness of manner,” as they returned to English society. They were “full of sense and confident knowledge on their own subjects; by no means ashamed of them, but keeping them a little in the background.” Men they were, “wise as serpents, harmless as doves—men, with the mysteries of the finances of half a dozen provinces, or the ravelled skeins of the intrigues of half a dozen native Courts, clear and producible at a moment’s notice, in their heads.” Their sympathy with the Indian people was real, as shown in “the tone in which they speak of the natives . . . as a class; a genuine, not a canting tone: not complimentary, often decidedly the reverse; but never sneering or contemptuous: sympathetic, without sentimental falsehood; never other than calm, practical, appreciating.” These were “the rulers, in the main, of India[.] Eight hundred men, most of them such as these.”
At Park House the autumn brought new displacements. On 1 September, "a painful occasion for all," nine-year-old Eddy, accompanied by his father and Aunt Emily, went off to school at Shirley, near Southampton, for his first entire separation from his family, "unhappy," Venables wrote, "for the first time in his life." Characteristically, Venables worried about Emily's unhappiness at parting from the boy, but wrote nothing about possible effects upon his mother. She had been "ill in bed" on 27 August, but well enough to ride a pony to Boxley on the thirty-first. After that he mentions her not at all until 14 September, when she went away with Edmund to Ben Rhydding in Yorkshire to enter the hydropathic establishment of a Dr. MacLeod to begin the water cure. Just what kind of illness, other than her longstanding headaches, sent her away just then seems impossible to ascertain. Her infant, Lucy, left behind at Park House, was not quite eight months old. Edmund stayed with Cecilia about a month, returning to Park House before going to Glasgow on 25 October. She had visits from Louy and from Chapman, and still another from Edmund, who came down from Glasgow.

Edmund kept three of her letters, from early November, all chatty and cheerful: "I had a hilly walk today going with Louy up to the top of the garden past the bridge & up into that hilly field thou wast so fond of & going on to a cottage which thou mayst remember." She relays news from Park House about the children. The "Doctors here" were "going on very well & on the whole I am much stronger with much less headache." She was delighted at the "wonderful reason of the waiter this morning for bringing breakfast half an hour late—'The fact is mam that we have a gentleman staying in this house not quite in right mind.' " She tells Edmund, "I miss . . . thee much but still I feel comfort in the idea that I am getting real good here. I had a vapour this morning at half past eleven & a shallow after it which I liked." She worries over the expensiveness of the place: "Thou dost not say how many students thou hast this half year I hope it is good considering what I cost thee." When shortly afterward Edmund visited from Glasgow she was having "a good deal of headache again," but he wished to believe that she had been "getting a real good" that would "stay by her if she will only go on at home with trust & good habits."42 (What good habits? Or bad ones? Dependence upon sedatives? Alcohol? Perhaps nothing more than neglect of physical exercise. We shall probably never know.) On 2 December, Franklin went to Ben Rhydding and brought her home. Three days later Eddy arrived, "very fat," Venables wrote, and "chattered away naturally about school." Edmund himself had been ill at Glasgow earlier in the month, and arrived for the holidays still looking unwell.

That year at Glasgow the Liberal student faction had rashly determined to violate a longstanding tradition and oppose the automatic second-year reelec-
tion of a lord rector. Against the Conservative incumbent, Lord Eglinton, whom they disdained as a sporting, rather than an academic, person, the Liberals entered the name of the new poet laureate. Tennyson, with Edmund sharing his feeling, demurred but did not flatly refuse to be supported. Tradition prevailed and Eglinton was reelected. Afterward, Tennyson wrote to thank the Liberals for their support, then tactfully requested that they not sponsor him again:

... I cannot but confess that I felt a kind of relief in learning that the College had adhered to its custom of re-electing the Rector of the former year; and though it may seem still stranger, I would fain request you (if I could hope that my wish as to this matter might have any weight among you) not to re-propose me next year, but to pass by one who is so essentially not a public man in character, whatever he may chance to be in name. ... 44

Twenty-seven years later, in 1880, there would be another semi-ambiguous effort—that time by the Conservatives—to make Tennyson the lord rector. Then, as we shall see, after first consenting he would finally firmly withdraw, much to Edmund’s dissatisfaction.

Tennyson and Henry met briefly at Park House for a few hours on 10 November, when Tennyson came down with his brother Frederick. The two old friends had not quarreled, but with Alfred married and Henry preoccupied at Malta, the years of their closeness had passed.

International stresses along the Black Sea would lead before the end of March 1854 to the declaration by France and England of war against Russia. As early as October 1853, more than a month before the Russians sank the Turkish fleet at Sinope, Henry had announced to Milnes that he was, and intended to be, “thoroughly anti-Russia”: “Having over you the advantage of untravelled ignorance, I have a strong and unshaken prejudice in favour of the side which is manifestly in the right, and against the side which is glaringly in the wrong.” 45 The Crimean War in all its aspects would become for poor Henry his last all-encompassing preoccupation.