XI

Middle Years, More Sorrow

1860–1874

For Edmund and Cecilia the early-December crisis at Park House was a turbulent prelude to nine years of relative calm, 1860–68, the least unstable they had known since 1849. At the end of 1859, Edmund had taken her, with Lucy, back to Scotland but not to Glasgow—installing them instead in a rented house in Edinburgh, where he joined them on weekends. His letters thereafter to the Tennysons show Cecilia often physically ailing but usually cheerful. Surrounded by a set of Edmund’s intellectual Scottish friends, they attended frequent parties, and took their turns in giving them. Lucy studied under governesses, learned piano, lived always with her mother, whom she evidently came to understand and support emotionally. She must have been always a sober child, intuitively sympathetic, discerning beyond her years. Typically when the parents and Lucy returned to England in the spring, old tensions at Park House would soon be alleviated by Cecilia’s and Lucy’s going off to the seaside, where Edmund from time to time would come.

Late in April 1860 Edmund wrote the Tennysons that Cecilia had come to Glasgow a week before to help him pack for the move south, being “pretty well on the whole,” although she had “suffered a good deal the last 2 days, she thinks from the closeness of the town.” On the way from Scotland, they visited Charles and Louisa Turner at Grasby in the remote Lincolnshire wolds, with a side trip to see Tom’s widow, Mary, and “her little tribe” nearby. Cecilia had
sat “before by the coachman,” and afterward happily walked “thro’ all the
mud to the Vicarage at Grasby.” At a dinner party there, she had sung two
solos, including Emily Tennyson’s setting of Henry’s “The Road to the
Trenches,” which Edmund thought “people liked . . . very decidedly.”
In February 1861 Cecilia was still “on the whole going on very well, having some
times severe face ache, but in general keeping pretty strong & in good spirits.”
She “constantly” went out to dinner with him, or at least “comes in the eve­
ning. She has also sung once or twice in Edinburgh parties.”
In April they visited William Sellar and his wife at St. Andrews, where Cecilia “had a great
deal of terrible pain but was generally fresh enough in the evening to sing, &
sing very well & admiredly.”
In December, back at Edinburgh after a summer
in England, Cecilia was “very well & in good spirits,” the more so after going
to hear Dickens read from some of his books. Their house that year was
“roomy” and “comfortable . . . indeed too large; the upper story we do not
touch.” Lucy was “greatly delighted” with her little dog called Puck.
In early February 1862 Cecilia would have been “pretty well but for the damp wh is
disposed to give her a great deal of tic—it kept her in bed all last Sunday, but she
was better & took two walks with me on Monday.”
The following Christmas­time Cecilia was “very tolerably well, tho’ sometimes face and back aching, &
has been quite cheerful . . . for a long time.” She liked their house and was
looking forward to “a large party we have tomorrow.”
Again in February 1863 Cecilia had been “much freer on the whole from head & back pains, & in
general has been pretty cheerful.” They had given another “dinner & evening
party.” Next Christmastime she was suffering from a severe cold but “got up
for a dinner party we had” and enjoyed it, singing although not in good voice.
A year later, as 1865 began, Edmund was reporting “a very pleasant Xmas in
Edi, Cissy generally well & in good spirits, tho’ rather tired with a party we
gave (dinner 16, some 25 more in the evg, a very successful one all people said)
& with going out to 3 or 4 other dinner & evg parties. She sings very well &
practices by herself for it.”

Toward the end of January came the death of Mother Tennyson in her mid­
eighties. Shortly afterward Cecilia went to visit her family at Hampstead,
where Zilly, then eighteen, found her fairly well: “Mama talked a good deal,
part of the time about Grandmama, and then cheerfully about other things. She
seemed at the end especially glad to have had a sight of us.” But in early May
nearing a return to Park House, she “lapsed into abysmal gloom,” so that Ed­
mund thought “nothing can be made of her. She seems to think she wants to go
to Hampstead, then she fancies the sea might do her good, but more often she
speaks as if she was sure nothing in the world could possibly do her good.”
But by January 1866 she was again “on the whole remarkably well.” In April,
during Carlyle's visit to Edinburgh for his rectorial address at the university, Cecilia had sung "The Road to the Trenches" and another song for him, Edmund thinking "he liked her singing and talked with her very pleasantly.'

Not free of maliciousness is one impression of Cecilia during these years, published much later by William Sellar's wife, Eleanor. She found Cecilia an eccentric, "a constant source of astonishment, interest, and amusement," who had "inherited to the full the peculiarities of her family." She had something of a "morbidness, which showed itself in undue anxiety about her health—good enough, if she would only have let it alone." She was "dark, tall, and striking-looking of the Meg Merrilies type"—far from a flattering comparison. When she "stood at the open door, where she fancied she got more air, as indeed she did, and chanted to numbers of her own composing some of her brother's poems" and Henry's "Down Fell the Snow," it was "really very touching and fine, and never failed to draw tears from the eyes of her dear husband"; but it was "sometimes the cause of irreverent, if concealed, laughter to some of the audience, who could not get over the weird appearance of an ancient sybil singing in the doorway of a modern drawing room!" Yet "in spite of all her eccentricity there was something attractive in the genuineness and simplicity of her character, her sense of humour, and the originality of her expressions." When Mrs. Sellar published these recollections in 1907, seventeen years after Sellar's death, Cecilia was still living, although senile, at age ninety.

Almost ritualistically, as each spring and summer came, Venables's journals noted discords, anticipated or actualized, between the year-round Park House residents and Cecilia. One such came in September 1861, just after Charles and Louisa Turner had departed from Park House for Grasby, when "in the course of the day a great storm" occurred, leaving the household next day in "a very uncomfortable state." In May 1863, it seems, she almost forcibly evicted her brother Arthur and his wife Harriet from Park House after he had offended by smoking inside. Greatly agitated, Arthur wrote Edmund: "I never say anything to you, leaving it in general all to Harriet," for fear of doing "more harm than good though the sorrowful state of things between you & Cissy has often made me fly to pen & paper" to comfort Edmund or "to say furiously honest passionate things to Cissy on your account until checked at once by the thought of the misery such would occasion you," and also by "my own conscience which tells me how capable I am of all hideousness were I not continuously hedged in" (protected from his tendency to alcoholism). But "if Cecilia is a responsible being for her sayings and doings sooner or later may she become widely awake first to the sufferings she gives you & then to the sufferings she gave Harriet who to this moment leaps from her bed nightmared by seeing Cissy standing over her." Harriet herself wrote that she could be reconciled only "if Cecilia
FIG. VI. (Left to right) Lucy Maria, Emily, and Cecilia, daughters of Edmund and Cecilia Lushington. Date and photographer unknown. By permission of Roger G. L. Lushington.
wrote kindly to me such a kind conciliatory message [as Edmund had done] & one word to show that she felt in any way the injury she had done us not only by cruel & false accusations but in actual deed violently turning us out of her house . . . but this must be her doing.”

One source of galling discontent for Cecilia must have been how pitifully little she was seeing her two older daughters. Between the beginning of 1860 and the end of 1868, Zilly moved from thirteen to twenty-two, Emmy from ten to nineteen, separated regularly from both their parents and their sister from late October to early May. And then during stretches of the summers Cecilia and Lucy would often live at the seaside away from the Park House family. The few surviving letters from the two young Park House daughters reveal contrasting personalities—Zilly earnest, admirably thoughtful, often ill-at-ease; Emmy sparkling, eagerly responding to literature, fond of wordplay, developing early an easy writing style reminiscent of her Uncle Henry’s.

We hear Zilly’s typical voice at twenty-two when Lucy, sixteen, was confirmed: “It seems a long time since I heard from you, but do not infer from my saying that I do not think you have written well and frequently, for I am sure that you have.” At the confirmation hour she would “think of you and pray for you . . . dear child, and trust that God will confirm and strengthen you in every good thing, and that you may be 'His for ever.' ” All “the prayers in the short service of confirmation” were “very beautiful and those words ‘Let thy Fatherly hand ever be over them,’ speak of such an assurance of protection and care and Love.” She hoped that Lucy would not “mind my writing this to you, dear; it is from no wish to teach, simply my own feeling about it and you.” It sounded “strange to have Papa writing of his new house in Glasgow. They must have built the new College very quickly. . . . And what a piece of work the moving will be! Only think of all arrangements Papa’s books will require!” “Well dear child,” she ended, “I must leave off now; (I fear the word child offends you, but I cannot quite write ‘dear young woman,’ do you think I can?) . . . I shall hope to have a good account of Mama.”

Emmy was about a month past her fourteenth birthday when she described an ordinary day at Park House: “This afternoon Mr Venables, Aunt Nelly [Ellen] & I, took a riding-walk, or a walking-ride, whichever you please, that is, we took Toby with us; and Aunt Nelly and I rode him by turns.” They had gone “first to Boxley, then up the steep path to the top of the hill to the gate at the top, from which we could see the sea; and then we went down by the shorter zigzag and back again by Boxley. It was a beautiful afternoon, and being neither too hot nor too cold it was extremely pleasant walking.” The flowers had been “growing very luxuriantly all along the sides of the hill and at the top of it, and the view at the top was clearer than we had expected.”
and Aunt Nelly had "just finished Rollin's [sic] History of Alexander the Great, and yesterday we began Goldsmith's History of Rome; which I think I shall like very much indeed." In November 1864, then fifteen, she was full of exuberant puns and other verbal pleasantries concerning her father's mislaying of one of his boots. She had "supposed I should have to attempt some consolation however feeble," but was "glad to find that from your letter, consolation may be changed to congratulation on its recovery. I hope the boot will be all the more comfortable to make up for the dismay it has caused by its disappearance." Mr. Venables had suggested "that it must be the spirit of Bhotan that has brought back the wandering boot; if so I think it is a most obliging spirit, and had better be employed about other missing things, that is unless it confines itself entirely to boots." She appended a fanciful story of how "the Professor was unpacking his portmanteau when he suddenly discovered that one of his boots was missing." Thinking that "Ann" might have the boot, he began "calling out, 'Boot, Ann, Boot, Ann, Boot Ann,' " succeeding only in rousing a vision of "mighty snowcapt mountains, with terrible passes, and rushing torrents, & frightful precipices, and from the depth of the chasms came forth a husky and hollow voice," identifying itself as "the spirit of Bhotan who am come at thy call." The spirit instructed the Professor to dispatch his daughter to seek the priestess oracle, who prophesied in punning jingle: "No prophet can tell thee the fate of thy boot, / But seek thou what profit thou canst for thy foot / If thou take not my proffer woe be to thee ever, / For the boot shall come back to thee never O never." After "another awful pause," it turned out that the boot had "marched forth for the tax of York":

Tax me with no booty, but tax the great tax,
Who taxed thee with trespassing known by thy tracks,
He taxes thy boots for the sake of his pales,
And makes up for his tacks in the boot's little nails.
Puck may yet bear thy boot over hill, over dale,
To apocryphal park and to non-extant pale,
Gallic heads too have boots, from historical facts,
And you'll need them to traverse East-lantian tracts.

Of course, Emmy may have had a collaborator in Mr. Venables, a circumstance that Edmund could have readily divined. Venables had "been here all last week, and he read King Lear to us, which I admire exceedingly. I think Kent's character so great and noble, and Cordelia's still more so; only the end is very sad." Venables had taken "care to point out to us that there were a few slight defects in Edmund's character, and that he was liable to making some mistakes." That morning Venables had played billiards with her and Zilly, they "on one side,
and he on the other; of course he won, and it would not have been fair if we had won, for he gave us so many times back.” She hoped “Mama is pretty well, and that she was not much tired by the party. Dearest love to her, and yourself and Lucy.”

During most of his spring-to-fall stays in England, Edmund visited Farringford at least once, sometimes bringing Cecilia; or, less regularly, the Tennysons came to Park House. On 3 October 1860 Emily Tennyson recorded, “Edmund & A. have good walks.” Edmund’s visit in late May and early June 1861 included an excursion with Alfred in the New Forest. In late October 1862, his imminent return to Glasgow forced Edmund to cross from Farringford to the mainland during a storm that had caused two shipwrecks. In July 1863 Tennyson, suffering from a painful infection in his leg, postponed a trip to London to consult a pathologist until after Edmund arrived. Cecilia and Lucy joined Edmund there but missed Alfred, by then in London. When the pathologist ordered Alfred to bed, Emily, Cecilia, and Edmund went back to London together. In June 1864 Edmund arrived by sailing boat after the steamer that usually brought him had run aground. No visit for 1865 is recorded; during parts of August and September, the Tennysons were on the Continent. In August 1866, after “a very sad parting,” from twelve-year-old Lionel near his school at Hastings (“I watch the little face,” Emily wrote, “& then the hand & then the top of his hat. A. T. walked twice back along the road with him to comfort him at parting.”), the Tennysons consoled themselves with a week’s visit to Park House. Emily found “as ever here a loving welcome. Pleasant drives and walks.” They visited the Boxley house where Alfred had lived with his mother and sisters more than twenty years earlier. It was Emily’s first time to see Alfred’s “delightful” old room, “looking upon the bright garden with its fir trees & its crystal stream.” Alfred and Edmund had long talks about metaphysics, a subject in which Tennyson, revolted by “the materialism of the day,” had been taking new interest. During that visit, when Alfred learned of the death of his brother Septimus, Edmund “kindly” took him on short excursions. Emily wrote on departing, “How good they all have been. It is sad to leave them.”

When Edmund wrote the Tennysons, he was assiduous as ever in commenting upon Alfred’s poems, transmitting the appreciations of others, and encouraging him to compose, particularly to get on with the Idylls, with more development of Arthur. “If the last 6 books of the Iliad had been lost,” he argued in an undated fragment from a letter, “we shd not have seen Achilles in his full glory tho all that we hear of him in the other books might have told us that he was the first warrior of the past—& so I want to see an English hero in his full stature,—all himself & no excuse left for the criticism that other characters are
drawn more vividly & powerfully than his.” In 1866 he inquired about Tennyson’s forthcoming “Lucretius”: “how long is it? any chance of seeing it in MS? & are there any more in progress? any of our Arthur? that’s the true subject.” A friend of his had ranked “Guinevere” with *In Memoriam* as Tennyson’s two greatest poems, neither likely ever to be surpassed by Tennyson “or anyone else.” The “truth & loftiness & tenderness” of Alfred’s dedicatory poem to the queen after the prince consort died would “be felt,” Edmund predicted, “in a hundred years as much as now.” He had seen hardly any poem “addrest to a great person, in wh the poet was so true to himself, & so true, within truth without being niggardly of admiration, to the other party: This seems to me perfectly attained with exquisite grace.” Impatient with Alfred’s English idylls for distracting their author from classical and Arthurian poems, he needled him: was “anything either of the Muses proper or the hardhanded Muses of the farm & plough going on”? Frequently Edmund asked Tennyson for “a signature” for the autograph collections of his friends, the poet’s admirers. In 1866 he happily passed along a compliment from the eminent biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, who had “talked very pleasantly & exprest to me his unbounded admiration of Alfred’s poems. We scientific men claim him as having quite the mind of a man of Science”—not that he put this as the highest point to praise—what he had said seemed to me on the whole sincerely and understandingly spoken.” In 1863 the bookshop windows in Glasgow were “teeming with side by side photographs of Alfred & Carlyle, done by Jeffries.” In December 1861, at Carstairs, when Monteith read “Guinevere to the assembled houseparty on Sunday,” all had seemed “immensely moved except one oppressively fat honourable papist, who wonders what they saw to cry at, & avers rather triumphantly that he is not poetical.” Several people had been “quite penetrated by Guinevere who never cared for anything of Alfred’s before.” At Park House in 1864, B. L. Chapman had expressed a “most unqualified admiration of Enoch Arden, wh is not little from a man so qualified in his usual admiration. A like feeling has been exprest by several other persons I know.”

In January 1862 Edmund informed the Tennysons of “an overwhelming affliction” that had “befallen a very dear friend” of his, whom he had “known intimately for many years, & for whom” he had “the greatest regard & affection.” It was De Quincey’s youngest daughter, wife of Col. Baird Smith, “one of the best men in India,” who had recently died there. In September his wife had left her two small daughters with her sister and departed from Gravesend—Edmund had seen her off—“to sail all the way by the cape to join her husband,” knowing nothing of his broken health. Just before she arrived, he had been “ordered home as his only chance, not allowed to wait for her ship—
like poor Tom he was too much worn with labour to rally, & died before reaching Ceylon.” To “the last minute” he was vainly hoping that the ships would meet. Now she would have heard of his death “just as she was landing in the glad hope of meeting him.” Both of her sisters and Edmund were afraid that “the horror of the first shock” would “be too much for her to bear,” since she was “so delicate and had so much illness while in England.” If her “tender frame” did not “give way under it,” she would no doubt “bear it with all the heroic patience that a woman can show,” but he was “painfully anxious.” He had talked with her “about In Memoriam, wh I gave her before she went out to India; and she told me she found an inspiration in it more like the inspiration of Scripture than anything she knew.” In such a “painful world” one could “often do little enough to lighten the heaviest pain, where one wd give anything to be able to do it.”

Returning to England, Col. Baird Smith’s widow (born 1827) combined his given and family names and lived as Florence Bairdsmith until her death in 1904. Smith (born 1818), a native of the Scottish village of Lasswade, where the De Quinceys lived, had met her on his furlough from India, and she had gone out and married him in early 1856. A distinguished engineer, he had specialized in canal works, studied and described the irrigation systems in northern Italy, and applied his knowledge to improving irrigation in India. During the 1857–58 mutiny he was wounded while leading the engineers in the siege and retaking of Delhi. Afterward he was master of the mint at Calcutta, and finally broke down while surveying and coordinating relief measures for the great famine of 1861. De Quincey’s biographer, the late Horace A. Eaton, who personally knew Florence Bairdsmith’s daughters and had full access to her De Quincey family papers before they were auctioned and widely dispersed, referred to her as “obviously a brilliant and charming person,” an impression amply reinforced by her few surviving letters to Edmund. To Eaton her portrait by Richmond displayed a “cultivated and even in her old age a singularly beautiful woman.” The same Eleanor Sellar whose recollections of Cecilia were scarcely better than patronizing could hardly contain her admiration of Florence. Eleanor had first met young Florence at the home of Alan Stevenson, uncle of Robert Louis Stevenson, finding “a lovely girl,” even when “dressed in a pale-pink muslin, and ... long black velvet ribbons hanging from the back of her head. This may not sound very elegant, but it was, and so was she, and ‘the mind, the music breathing from her face,’ made her a creature that once seen could never be forgotten.” Later, in her widowhood, her letters, “written from her quiet homes first at St. Leonards and then at Bath, were among the most delightful I have ever received.” With “tender grace and humour,” she told of her children, the neighbors, the books she was reading, “while public questions
roused an almost passionate interest.” Her conversation had an “intensity and clearness of expression that made my husband—whose occasional difference of view only increased his admiration of her— liken her once to a ‘beautiful bird of prey.’”

The professor’s ornithological taxonomy seems unfortunately capricious, unless he intended more than his wife was willing to acknowledge. Freidians might clear their throats and claim that it inadvertently reveals something about Sellar himself.

When widowed, Florence was thirty-five, Edmund fifty-one. Across the next three decades, until he died at eighty-two in 1893, their friendship was deep and mutually sustaining. There seems no basis for supposing that it ever violated Platonic boundaries; but Edmund was an accomplished Platonist capable of realizing the subtle richness of a true Platonic relationship. But bluntly, it appears that from Florence he received, and learned to reciprocate, a kind of emotional and intellectual sustenance that Cecilia had not been able to bring him.

But that is not to contend that he did not retain his love for Cecilia, although it had long since been forced to undergo substantial modifications, or even that the marriage, as a marriage, was in all respects unhappy. Evidently, on one side of her nature, Cecilia could be warmly affectionate. The amount that we do not know about her, including reasons she may have had on her part to be disappointed with Edmund, greatly exceeds what, in the comparative paucity of documents, we can possibly know. But at the least, the heartbreak she and Edmund ultimately shared in the loss of three children, the poignant memories of them at their happiest best, would remain as powerful ties. And for Edmund his marriage had sealed his friendship with Tennyson, the one friend he had come to value above all others in his life.

Among Edmund’s close friends in Scotland were the Ramsays at Glasgow (the professor died in 1865): John Stuart Blackie, Greek professor at Edinburgh; the Sellars, first at St. Andrews and then at Edinburgh; another of Edmund’s former students, Lewis Campbell, professor of Greek at St. Andrews (if Campbell’s papers ever come to light, they may contain invaluable letters from Edmund); the much-beloved Dr. John Brown, the personal physician of the Lushingtons and author of Rab and His Friends and Horae Subsecivae; the respected theological writer Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen; and De Quincey until his death on 8 December 1859 (ironically, Florence, returning from India, reached England just after his death, even as on returning to India two years later she reached there immediately after her husband’s death).

Another valued Scottish friend was the metaphysician James Frederick Ferrier (1808–64), professor of moral philosophy and political economy at St. Andrews, whose memoir Edmund wrote and published in 1866. In 1852, be-
fore ever meeting Ferrier personally, Edmund had supported his unsuccessful candidacy for the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh. Presenting himself as a student of metaphysics, Edmund asserted, "There is hardly one philosophical author of the present day, whose writings so command my admiration." Another recommender of Ferrier had been De Quincey, who incidentally also endorsed Edmund’s endorsement, ranking him in the fields of "German philosophy and German literature . . . not only the most extensively, but also the most accurately informed man that I happen to know next after Sir William Hamilton." A recent literary critic, although not claiming that Ferrier had directly influenced Tennyson, who knew and admired the philosopher’s work, has emphasized that "The Ancient Sage" and parts of In Memoriam have striking affinities with Ferrier’s pronouncements concerning the unique potency of human self-consciousness. It was probably Edmund who introduced Ferrier’s thought to Tennyson. Twice in early 1855, Edmund asked the Tennysons for their reaction to Ferrier’s Institutes of Metaphysics. In her journal Emily had already recorded in December 1854 that they had been reading the book. In July 1859 the philosopher with his daughter and son-in-law Sir Alexander Grant (later principal of Edinburgh University) visited the Tennysons at Farringford. Two years later Ferrier suffered a violent attack of angina pectoris, followed by frequent recurrences that confined him largely to his home—his St. Andrews students came to him there—until his death in June 1864. Edmund had long since become his friend and learned to love him for "his tender thoughtfulness for others . . . characteristic touches of humour, frankness, beneficence, beautiful gratitude for any slight help or attention." Of his last years Edmund wrote in the memoir, "If ever a man was true to philosophy, or a man’s philosophy true to him, it was so with Ferrier during all the time when he looked death in the face and possessed his soul with patience." Edmund was articulating also a cherished ideal for himself, to possess his own soul patiently against whatever infliction of fate.

Of all the bereavements the Park House family was fated to endure, perhaps the greatest shock—certainly the one with the briefest forewarning (at least since Louy’s death)—was the death from typhoid fever of the vivacious and adored Emmy, halfway through her twentieth year, on Christmas day, 1868. She had been with Ellen at the seaside, where both had been less than well. Venables was at Park House when they returned on 1 December, apparently not really ill then or during the next week. Back in London he first heard of her illness on the tenth; by the fourteenth the account was "very bad," and Franklin and his wife were trying to get a nurse for her; on the twenty-first Edmund, without Cecilia or Lucy, arrived at London from Scotland and rushed down directly to Park House. Emmy, as Zilly recalled in a letter to him an exact year
later, "though only partly conscious gave you her loving smile and tried to stretch her hands out to you."

Something of the agonizing suspense that Cecilia and sixteen-year-old Lucy had suffered at Edinburgh was recorded, however artlessly, in a poem Lucy wrote then or soon afterward. It appears on the first page of a privately printed collection of her verses, and is the first and least successful artistically of a group of fourteen poems concerning Emmy's death (an unpretentious effort by a grieving adolescent long immersed in her uncle's *In Memoriam*):

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Death near the darling of our hearts doth hover,
His presence dread is passing at our door;
But the destroying angel may pass over,
And God bring back our gentle one once more.

They were clinging "with longing hearts and tender, / To the fond hope that life may still be thine."
They could not "sleep for thinking / That thou art lying on a bed of pain, / Beneath the heavy load of fever sinking, / And that we may not see thy face again."
In the second poem Lucy remembers how she had cried "to the Almighty to restore thee, / With agony that none but He can know."
She "would so willingly be dying for thee, / But God hath will'd that it should not be so."
A later poem in the sequence realizes the irony that "The church bells rang a joyous peal, / The morn rose dim and grey, / It was a Christmas morning when / Our darling passed away."
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The heartbroken sister cries out:

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I would that I were dying,
   Even as thou hast died;
I would that I were lying,
   My darling, at thy side.
I would that I were sleeping,
   Never to wake again
To weariness, and weeping,
   And misery, and pain.
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The three final poems in Lucy's sequence attempt, as her uncle's great model attempted, to find some elegiac consolation. The twelfth: "What means this needless misery? / I have but dreamed that she is dead, / A troubled dream, and full of gloom, / But now dispell'd, and I shall meet / Her coming from some other room, / Or at a corner of the street."
The penultimate poem lyrically celebrates the ineffable sister:

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Thy smile was like unto a star
   That shineth in the midnight gloom;
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Thy face was like the snowy flower
That through the winter days doth bloom.

Bright star, whose beams have pass'd from us;
Fair flower, too frail for this bleak shore
Dear face, whose sweetness in my soul
Remains enshrined for evermore.

In the last of the group, Lucy reclaims the material gifts she had given her sister—the brooch, the chain, the "books wherein your mark I see/At many a well-remembered line/Which you would often read with me,/And your heart found response in mine." It seemed so strange that where Emmy had gone, "No earthly gift could go with you,/No little token of our love," all being only "memories to me alone." Yet there was one exception:

One gift I gave you, O my sweet,
Love,—tender, passionate, and true;
Keep that till we again shall meet;
It pass'd thro' death's dark gates with you:
I take not back that gift again
Though all beside you leave with me,
That which was your's thro' life's long pain,
Is your's through all eternity.

In the next two years, others in the Park House family, those who had known Emmy even more intimately than Lucy had, virtually canonized her memory. On 24 July 1869 Ellen reminded Edmund of how on "the corresponding Sunday to this last year" he and she and Emmy had been together "sitting under that tree in the Buxton garden, while our dear one read to us some Wordsworth—the Ode to Immortality [sic] was one & it is seven months this day since that new life opened for her dear child. Every day at Buxton" seemed "so fresh in view, though as if separated by many years now, yet every new place & thing, or even any plant in the hedges I want to turn around & point out to her." Near the first anniversary of the death Ellen wrote again: "... If there is anything dear Edmund for which I could feel more than unspeakably thankful, it was that you were able to come in time to carry away some of our precious one's loving & tender words, and her pure faith, gathered out of those few days of darkness, & which I feel ought to be a light for all the end of my life." Zilly wrote too, characteristically comparing herself disadvantageously with the beatified sister: "I am never without thinking of her, and yet I feel unable to think of her as I would. I long to be like her by being like the Saviour whom she followed, but I feel immeasurably distant through my own nature of selfishness." She thought
Edmund could not "know the feeling I have of being lost in myself, because you have always lived so much more for others." But, wisely, Zilly admonished Edmund, "Keep this letter to yourself, please." (In short, it should not be shown to her mother.) Cecilia's own more forthright grief and depression were perhaps no more unhealthy. She too thought that Emmy, "that lovely one," was in heaven, "very very near to Christ & I believe granted to pray for us." But even that consolation was scant: "I am better than I expected . . . in this long (as it seems to me)& bitter trial. When I see the streets here & see the clogs of men & every thing moving, I feel with Lear, Why should a dog a horse a rat have life and thou no breath at all." Ellen a year later was again observing the death's anniversary: "These days are so sad & yet so full of our dear one, that I feel I cannot write of anything else."

Edmund preserved two letters of condolence from cherished friends who blended their own sorrows with unique appreciations of him. Florence Baird-smith extended "loving tender sympathy and prayers" but could "suggest no comfort in this life for such an unutterable sorrow." With a phrase from In Memoriam, she reinvoked her own bereavement: "Through seven long years I have not found the 'far off interest of tears.' How can I hope it in many more years for one whose life is in his love as I know yours is?" The octogenarian Erskine of Linlathen, two years after burying his lifelong companion sister, had "long learned to consider the love of any human being—as one of God's great gifts—being a pledge as it were of his own love—but there is a great difference in the degree of value which we must attach to these gifts." He could "truly say" that Edmund's "friendship & tender attentions" had been "most refreshing and comforting during the last few years—most dear to my heart—healthfully stimulating to my capacity of thought." A "heavy burden" was "laid upon man—& whilst he remains in this fleshly tabernacle, he seems rarely enabled to shake it off,; yet there was "surely attainable a peace of God which passeth all understanding—& which can make the most galling yoke easy, & the heaviest burden light. God grant it to you & me—& to all mourners."

Seeking change, during part of the summer of 1869, Edmund took his sister Emily and Zilly for a tour on the Continent, including a visit to his much-loved Bonn. Such journeys had their discomforts, potential or real. Cecilia wrote, "I shall be glad to hear that you get comfortable lodgings without insects like fleas & Bugs no one can gain strength while fleas & Bugs are about." Whatever the prevalence of such entomological pests, Venables learned that at least once in France the travelers were "driven by noise from lodgings to a hotel."

At summer's end a year later, Edmund, Cecilia, and Lucy (then seventeen) visited the Tennysons for two weeks in their new home at Aldworth on Blackdown, where Emily Tennyson was "thankful" they were "the better" for their visit. They had always been "most true & loving friends."
Glasgow University that year, 1870, had finally moved into an ornate build­ing at its new location on Gilmorehill. When the term opened, it was Edmund, in his sixtieth year and beginning his thirty-third in the Greek chair, who was selected to deliver the introductory address. The core of his message was the deeper values of the three divisions of study under the faculty of Arts.

The natural sciences, he reminded his hearers, needed no apologists in Glas­gow, “the city of Watt.” In the sciences one learns “that science is linked to science: in the grand concatenation disclosed by gradual discovery, sciences originally separate become one; laws at first apparently distinct reveal them­selves as but special applications of the same law. The recently completed Atlantic Cable was one “crowning manifestation of the power which, by stooping to nature’s laws, has learnt to regulate nature’s processes.”

Edmund turned next to “Mental Philosophy,” his own second love. What was “nearer to man than man? and what can he care to know, if his own nature, with all its yearnings and aspirations, is to remain for ever unknown?” That most human yearning to know ourselves has “inspired the oldest poems of our race that survive, where deep thought is strongly and confusedly entwined with the wildest imagery.” We are foolish if we “sneer at these early essays of reason seeking with two dauntless wings to scale the empyrean.” People who scoff at the Egyptian and the Greek “can but feebly apprehend the deeper truth and holiness of Christianity.” Edmund praised recent historians of pre-Socratic philosophy (these included his recently dead friend Ferrier). It was equally important that in modern times “one nation should enter into the mind of another”—Edmund would have been thinking primarily of the British study­ing the Germans—“when each has sought to approach truth from different sides.”

Almost inseparably linked to philosophy was Edmund’s own calling, the study of language, that “symbol and foremost instrument of thought, so essential­ly incorporated with it that we seek in vain to imagine how one could exist without the other.” The “more we feel that our race is one . . . a brother­hood of pilgrims whose paths, though separate, converge and point alike to the same crowning height—the more shall we prize the power which enables us to read the thoughts and acts of long-vanished generations that have helped us onward to all we now possess of worth or excellence.” Acquainting ourselves with ancient works of genius will enable us to contemplate genius if in our own time such should appear. Compare Homer and Milton. “What can, in many ways, be more unlike . . . what more perfect than either? Homer swift-flash­ing in radiance of beautiful strength; Milton stern in august majesty, clothed with thunder.” Yet any who have studied them both “will have found his admiration of either confirmed and deepened by the contrast.” So also in com­paring Aeschylus or Sophocles with Shakespeare. The “imaginative wealth of
one generation is not, indeed, reissued, but becomes fruitful, and multiplies the
wealth of another." No longer did scholars "fancy Latin derived from Greek or
Greek from Latin": now they knew that "both these noble languages belong to
a wide family of cognate tongues, whose origin is traced to the far East, and
whose domain embraces the largest portion of Europe and most of Asia." Here
was a truly exciting, relatively new, scholarly development:

It would seem as if our time were providentially summoned to explore this
region of historical science. In our day, languages whose existence had
sunk out of human remembrance have, after the dumbness of centuries,
again become vocal to the understanding. The long-buried re-orient dawn
has smitten Memnon's statue, charming it once more into speech. The
Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian records are read and interpreted; men who
breathed and thought 5000 years ago tell us on stone or paper their doings,
their household ways, their experiences of earth, their hopes for eternity.
To those who seriously reflect on these vast treasures so recently un­
earthed, it can seem scarcely an hyperbole to speak of modern research
having annihilated space and time.

Such "wonders" had been opened to view by "cautious, slowly advancing,
imaginative, critical investigation, adding one proof to many others that to
divorce the imaginative from the critical spirit is to do violence to nature."

Therefore in "all the lines of thought" much had been done, but "infinitely
more" remained. "Newton's simile" held "good for all time: the ocean of truth
spreads before us, children picking up pebbles on the shore that hint at the
vaster wonders which the boundless deep embraces." There should be no com-
placent extolling of one's own age, "as though we stood at the top of knowl-
dge." The present age should adopt "the high vocation of intellect and mental
culture," knowing it "a sacred duty—a duty to ourselves, our race, and our
Maker." Such culture was "destined to raise us higher and higher in the scale of
being, if by persevering use of our native powers we make these glorious gifts
our own, in the true sense in which what is originally not his own, but wholly
given, can be called a finite being's own." All should "strive to realise the lofty
conception expressed by the great poet of our time, growing [the lines are from
_In Memoriam_]

'Not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity.'"

In 1872 Tennyson published "Gareth and Lynette," intended at the time,
although he later changed his plan, to be the last composed of the _Idylls_. Ed-
mund’s lofty conceptions both of poetry and of womanhood were offended by Lynette’s persistently coarse mocking of her supposed kitchen-knave knight. The poem seemed “in general extremely fine,” he wrote, “hardly an expression that is not chiseled out into clearest keenness, & rich in condensed strength.” Gareth’s “modest heroism” was presented “with surpassing light & grace.” But if “the lofty lady” that Lynette styled herself “had shown her haughtiness in another way than talking such a mass of scullery slang it seems to me the poem need not have lost in effect what it wd gain in pleasantness.” Good poetry “is too good to be thrown away upon vulgar railing of ill-conditioned hussies.” One could only hope that, outside the poem, “Arthur in his justice doomed her to serve as kitchenmaid for a year under some Mrs. Kay or Lady Blanche.”

Illnesses continued with little abeyance to afflict the Lushingtons. Ellen’s health, especially, steadily deteriorated. In September 1871, Venables recorded, she had a “diagnosis of consumption,” and all feared she was dying. In May 1872 she was “looking thin and weak,” in November 1873 so weak that she was hardly able to move, and in November 1874, “quite helpless.” At that point she was only fifty-three. Some time before the autumn of 1875, she became, and remained, completely unable to walk, although she would live on, mentally alert, until 1886.

Edmund himself, before the end of the 1850s, had begun experiencing a rheumatic condition in a knee, sometimes diagnosed as gout. During midsummer 1864, although normally an enthusiastic walker, he resorted to a pony chaise for getting about his estate. Again in 1866 Venables found him “very lame,” in 1868 “painfully” so, and in 1872 hardly able to “walk at all.”

But the cruelest of blows, the one that for Edmund and Cecilia would crown all previous ones, fell in the autumn of 1874. Details are sparse, but evidently Cecilia had been anxious since at least 1869 concerning Lucy’s susceptibility to coughing. Her twenty-first birthday occurred on 20 January. She wrote her father from Edinburgh on 24 February, describing an entertainment or concert that she had enjoyed, but ended, “I do not feel any better yet for the medicine but I daresay I shall soon.” In early June, Venables noted, “Lucy apparently in danger.” With some fluctuations she progressively worsened until she died on 1 October—according to her death certificate of “tubercular disease.” During her life, since early childhood, she had lived comparatively little at Park House. Venables, with all his frequent visiting there, including summer visits, could comment upon her death, “Though I knew her little, the intolerable grief it causes is to me a great trouble.” The fairest inference from that and numerous other indications seems to be that Cecilia herself, since 1860, had spent relatively little time in her nominal home. Lucy had been the only one of Cecilia’s
four children whom she could always unambiguously consider her own. Her namesake, “Zilly,” since 1856 the heir-apparent to Park House, was by the time of Lucy’s death twenty-eight years old. Ironically, as Cecilia’s long life would spin itself ever more vaguely out, she would become in extreme old age more Zilly’s child than the reverse.

A week after Lucy died, Edmund wrote to the Tennysons. Cecilia seemed “as well as I cd have hoped—no doubt she is not well but she has often been more ill with no such compelling cause.” Her physician’s medication had helped her sleep. Zilly “in another way” was “perhaps even more shattered; it is more difficult for her to obtain sleep, but I trust the terrible strain is yielding to time & fit remedies.” Ellen’s “constant weakness” made “difference in her state less conspicuous,” but she was “manifestly” in grief. Cecilia had stayed away from the funeral, which was attended by Franklin, and by Tom’s son Godfrey, as well as Maria, Emily, Zilly, Mr. Sankey (the physician), “old Watson, and several maidservants.” Cecilia was generally “calm & can talk of other subjects; alone with me she often breaks out into passionate grief, wh perhaps is best.” She seemed “quite making up her mind to go with me to Glasgow, whither Tilly [Matilda Tennyson] will accompany us.” He hoped that plan was best, but the Tennysons should “not let anything be written about it... it might unsettle her; she partly dreads it & might take against it.” Numerous letters had comforted her by showing “how many persons prized & loved our Lucy—& I am sure she is earnestly wishing to bear God’s will aright & as far as may be do His work.”

Edmund had just seen Alfred’s new volume; he had known and loved the “exquisite” Swainston Garden lines (with their tribute to Henry, along with Hallam and Simeon). “The Voice and the Peak” was to Edmund “quite new, & it seems to me like a wild & mighty psalm, in truest harmony with all our present thoughts and feelings.” On Christmas day he wrote from Glasgow that “Cissy has been very poorly indeed, & I have been forced to call in a medical colleague to give her advice. She likes him & I hope he is doing her some good.” She had been “terribly deprest at times,” but could “sometimes be rather more cheerful—but she dislikes Glasgow as much as ever & is persuaded it always makes her ill. She has not been able to get out of doors for more than a fortnight.” Edmund himself had rheumatism in his right arm.

There would be no more winters in Glasgow for either Cecilia or Edmund. Sensibly, that next summer he would retire, at the age of sixty-four, after thirty-seven years in the chair of Greek.

Several letters among his papers thank him and Cecilia for copies of a song, both words and music, by Lucy. Through her sister, Anne Weld, Emily Tennyson, being ill, conveyed her admiration “for the words” and “their striking
fitness to what has come to pass.” Alfred wished to say “that he thinks the song very pretty no small praise for him.” Florence Bairdsmith had been “greatly struck at the wild tenderness, so like a prophetic cry for those whom she has left sorrowing.” When Edmund felt he could, would he “tell dear Mrs. Lushington of my tender and deep sympathy. I will not write to her because one fears to so highly strung a nature as hers a letter coming at a wrong time.” The song, but not the music, survives in a manuscript:

The Petition

Bury me not in the cathedral old,
The resting place of warriors bold,
Where the cold stone figures in armour lie
With their rigid faces upturned to the sky,
Nor in the cold vaults underground,
Where all is dark and still around,
But bury me where the wildflower grows,
Bury me where the violet blows.
Nought over my head but the pure blue sky,
No stone to mark the spot where I lie
Where the wild wind goes sweeping by,
And the nightingales sing a lullaby,
Lay me down quietly, & leave me to rest,
That violets and daisies may bloom on my breast.

Perhaps of greater interest in our story are certain of Lucy’s poems in her privately printed posthumous collection depicting imagined persons that seem at least partially modeled after members of the family. Seventy-two trimeter lines entitled “A Character” poignantly suggest her Aunt Emily:

Yes, I knew her story,
Understood by few:
Little of life’s glory
Had she, and she knew
Much of self-repression,
Little of delight;
Thus was her expression
Oftener calm than bright.
Others when in sorrow
Told to her their grief,
Strength from her to borrow,
And thus found relief.
She gave them comfort, but never spoke of the "want and pain" in her own life. Those who thought her "strong and brave" "passionless and cold" did not know "what had taught her/Passion to withhold." She desired "not to fail in duty," although "life's beauty/Once past closely by her." On occasions "strong feeling/Broke thro' self-control,/Some slight chance," through a "dilation" of eyes, paling of cheek, compression of lips revealing her soul. Through loving her, the narrator had learned "how to comprehend" the "character," as she patiently faded. Another poem, a sonnet describing a depressive individual, must surely contain traces of the writer's mother:

   Her eyes are dim with looking long in vain,
   Her feet are weary, climbing up the hill,
   Her heart is heavy with a weight of ill,
   A nameless burden of unspoken pain.
   She goes her way alone, nor doth complain,
   And from her daily work she doth not cease;
   She hath no wish for pleasure, only peace,
   And knows on earth that her desire is vain.
   She makes no murmur, and she doth not weep,
   Her sorrow is too great for any tears;
   But she is tired of smiling day by day,
   She fain would lose all consciousness in sleep,
   All memory of past and present fears
   In dreamless rest, which shall not pass away.

Undoubtedly for Cecilia, but perhaps also for a few cherished others, Lucy wrote the poem "Unity":

   No joy can make your spirit bright
      And not make mine the brighter too;
   And nought can give my heart delight
      But finds a sympathy in you.
   No darkness passes o'er your soul
      That doth not cast a shade on mine;
   No sorrow o'er me hath control
      But you that sorrow half divine.
   No cloud upon your brow has place
      But on mine own a sadness lies;
   No smile can ever cross my face
      But is reflected in your eyes.
Middle Years, More Sorrow

No chord within your heart is moved
But vibrates in mine own again;
So are we one, O best beloved,
In every joy, in every pain.

Probably the most moving is Lucy’s self-portrait, entitled “To—”:

When haply on this little book,
Although it is a thing of nought,
Your eyes may give a passing look,
O think of me one kindly thought.
Think, she has all the faults of youth,
Is wilful, wayward, passionate,
But those she loves she loves in truth,
And never will her love forget.

And she will strive, when far away,
In all to make a rightful choice,
To live in hope from day to day,
And in God’s goodness to rejoice;
To be, tho’ in the world, not of—
That is her aim, tho’ oft forgot—
To keep her heart a well of love,
Amid all changes changing not.

Sir Charles Tennyson, who knew Lucy’s book, viewed it judiciously. Her “poems suggest that the death of her sister Emily had been a severe blow from which she never wholly recovered. They shew also that she had a good ear and a highly sensitive temperament. Was there more? Had she a gift which time might have matured into solid achievement?” He felt, and I concur, that “a fair sample of the whole—suggests this possibility.”

“What does it mean?” Edmund at the age of four had habitually asked about “any new word or expression.” As he neared sixty-four, bereavement was no new word, yet it called anew for interpretation. A manuscript written in his hand, entitled “Dec. 31, 1874,” preserved his unpretentious attempt. Death may or may not mean passing over into celestial bliss. If for any, then surely for pure-hearted Lucy. But surely love itself is eternal. All love, if true—each child’s for parents, theirs for her or him, theirs for one another, their friends’ for them, theirs for the friends—concentrically broadens out, deepens, becomes part of cosmic love’s eternal storehouse, constantly drawn upon, never depleted:
O lost to us when claimd above
   We miss thee ever, as we must,
Whose every word was tender love,
   Whose latest thought was holy trust.
So sweet a death, so peaceful breath
   I have not witnessed ebb away;
If bliss is sure to spirits pure,
   Dear, thou art blest with God to-day.
Old year is changing into new,
   Time hastens, hurrying off so much,
Our love to all the good & true
   Time, the great spoiler, cannot touch.
Our love still deepens on & on,
   And shalt, till time himself’s no more,
Our love for all our dearest gone
   Time for Eternity doth store.

On the reverse side of the paper and in a different stanza form, Edmund wrote
six more lines:

   Dear for thy own & for thy Mother’s sake,
   Dear for thy brother & thy sister gone,
Like theirs thy light is spent wh brightly shone;
   Dear for all loving breath that with me ache,
   Thy image folds all dearness into one,
   And melts in love that points to God’s own throne.