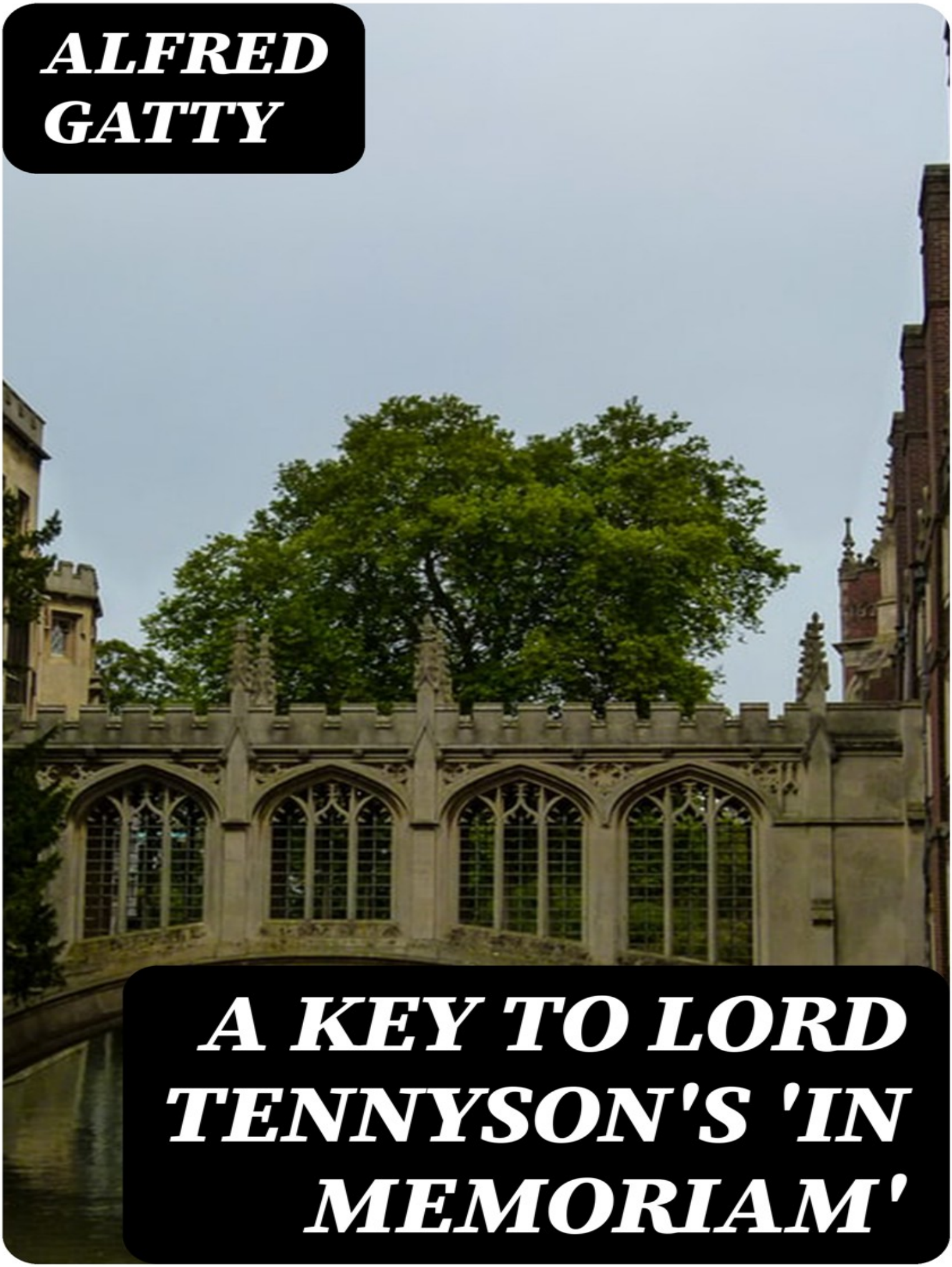
ALFRED GATTY



A KEY TO LORD TENNYSON'S 'IN MEMORIAM'

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PREFACE.

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When any one has survived the allotted age of man, there is a long past to remember, and a short future to expect; and it is the period of youth which is then found most clearly recorded on the tablets of the brain—the days, probably, of school and college, and the first establishment of a self-made home.

Middle life, with its work and anxieties, is by comparison only feebly retained; as though there had been found no room for fuller records on the preoccupied mind. But, in the indistinct interval of forty or fifty years, the loss by death of those whom we have loved cannot be forgotten; and when one dearer than any friend is also taken away, then, under such bereavement, may be found an amount of comfort and support in the Poet Laureate's *In Memoriam* which no other secular writing can supply.

To me, this Poem has been an additional buttress to the faith, which my education and sacred profession had sustained.

When a great mind, at once so speculative and so untrammelled, runs over the whole field of thought, and comes to the conviction that the hope of the Christian is the one sure prospect beyond the grave; this imparts to the mourner a consolation, to which nothing earthly can compare.

My own interest in this great Poem has been farther enhanced by the fact that I and mine, long years ago, enjoyed friendly intercourse with the Poet at Freshwater;

and this was afterwards renewed in the lives of his younger son and mine.

The incidents of the Poem have also slightly touched me, inasmuch as I was a contemporary of Arthur H. Hallam, at Eton; and I was in Chapman's house, at Charterhouse, with Edmund Law Lushington, when he was, at a very early age, captain of the school. The associates of Hallam's schooldays I well recall, for they included several who became eminent in the service of the state, and in the ranks of literature; and most of these have now passed away. *In Memoriam* has thus, in a measure, been the means of recalling my own early youth; and I have felt that the subject of the Poem befitted the study of my advanced life.

The scenery of *In Memoriam* being principally laid either at Somersby or Clevedon—the birth-place of the Poet or the burial-place of his friend—I had long been desirous of visiting these somewhat retired spots; and my wish has at length been gratified.

After sleeping at Horncastle, we drove six miles across a flat uninteresting country, where the fields betrayed signs of agricultural depression, until a short steep descent brought us into a more sheltered and wooded region, where was the sound of running water;[1] and the little old church, with its square stumpy moss-covered tower, told us that we were in the village of Somersby—

> "the well-beloved place
> Where first we gazed upon the sky."

And one could well fancy that the roomy comfortable residence, in which the Rev. Dr. Tennyson reared a large

family, was a cherished home, and is still held in fond remembrance.

This house is not the Rectory, though for a long time it was so tenanted: it is rather the Manor House of the Burton family, who for centuries[2] have owned the land and been patrons of the living. The present possessor now occupies it, and he received our visit of interested enquiry with much courtesy and kindness.

The house stands a little back from the road, with a drive to the door which may be called the front entrance; though the principal rooms are behind, and look into the garden. Here are the

> “Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
> Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;”

and the lawn may still be called *flat*, (see note, page 96), though it slopes slightly downward with the natural leaning of the ground. The four poplars have been blown down.

Beyond the lawn stretches the garden, and yet a little farther is a pond, on which, they say, the young inhabitants of the pseudo-Rectory learned to skate. The largest room in this Manor House was added by Dr. Tennyson: it is the dining-room, with an open groined roof; and the walls of it are now covered with apparently old paintings—heirlooms, one may suppose, of the Burton family.

In the centre of the hamlet, where three roads meet, with a guide-post directing the wayfarer to Louth, Horncastle, and Alford, there stands a fine witch-elm; and at Bag Enderby, also in the middle of the road, is another still larger witch-elm, with a huge arm that craves support. Both these

trees were carried and planted, about a century ago, by the grandfather of Mr. Burton, the present proprietor of the estate.

Somersby and Bag Enderby are hamlets about one quarter of a mile apart, and are held by one Rector, who now resides at the latter place. Their ancient churches are structures of more strength than beauty; and though neither of them is larger than a good sized chamber, it quite suffices for the few inhabitants. At both churches we found the key in the door, and could therefore investigate the sacred buildings at our leisure; and coming from a populous manufacturing district, with a grand mediæval parish church, we found the contrast very striking.

Somersby churchyard adjoins the road, but the ground is higher. The first object which greets you on entering through a short shaded path, is a most remarkable crucifix, which has fortunately escaped the hand of Puritan violence. On a thin stone shaft, which is at least twelve feet high, there is the carved figure of our Lord on the Cross, still plainly traceable; and behind is a full-length draped female figure. This antique gem is sheltered under a narrow-pointed roof of stone. It is a curious and rare memorial of ante-Reformation times; and within the porch there is a contemporary relic—a shallow stone basin for holy water—which still seems to invite the finger to dip, and mark the holy sign. Over the porch entrance is a plain dial with the motto, “Time passeth.”

The interior of the church has lost something of the primitive character that still reigns at Enderby: there has been a partial restoration: both nave and chancel are now

floored with coloured tiles, and the old pews have been superseded by open sittings of red pine. There is a plain solid font lined with lead; and having seen the chamber in which the great Poet was born, we could not help thinking that *here* was the birth-place of that name,[3] which not even his well-earned peerage will ever obliterate.

Over the porch door inside are the royal arms, and at the west end two bell ropes depend, which are the means of summoning the few worshippers to the Sunday service. In the *sacrarium* is a small brass, showing a kneeling figure and an armorial shield, dedicated to George Littlebury, 1612. A more modern marble monument, to one of the Burtons, is fixed on the wall near the pulpit.

The exterior of the church shows strong coarse stone masonry, which is here and there repaired and patched by local art with bricks. In the small graveyard are two altar tombs, which drew our attention. They seem to cover a vault, and are railed round; and the inscription on one records that Dr. Tennyson held the livings of Somersby, Bag Enderby, Benniworth, and Great Grimsby, and that he died on 16th March, 1831, aged 52.[4] Wild violets were in flower encircling the base of this tomb. A successor was buried near, the Rev. L. B. Burton, who had held the two adjoining benefices for more than forty years.

Immediately opposite the church, and closely adjacent to the Manor House, is a very remarkable building, of considerable architectural pretension; as will be credited when it is told that Sir J. Vanbrugh designed it! It is entirely composed of brick—sombre and solid in character—it has a flat roof and is battlemented. If differently placed, it might

have suggested Mariana's "Moated Grange." It is an edifice of more exterior grandeur than the adjoining Manor House, and the rooms are lined with oak panelling; but it is unsuited to the habits of modern life, and now stands empty.

The village of Enderby is, like its sister hamlet, absolutely rural, with an antiquated little church, much needing such material repair as times and circumstances do not seem to allow. It is dedicated to S. Margaret, and has a fine old font, octagonal in shape, and each side has rudely carved figures upon it. The flat modern ceiling cuts off the point of the chancel arch, and the same disfigurement occurs at the west end, where the two bells are rung from the floor. In neither village did we see either a nonconformist chapel or a public-house.

In giving some account of Clevedon, I would tell how my own interest in the subject of this little work has drawn forth the friendly notice of one who fully participates in all the enthusiasm and admiration that *In Memoriam* can excite.

Edward Malan, himself a fine scholar and son of a most scholarly father, has greatly assisted me, especially with classical illustrations of the text; and as he visited Clevedon before I went there, and has described Hallam's burial-place so appreciatively, I shall freely use his words when I come to that part of my subject.

How the friendship came about which has found such undying record in this Poem, is soon told. Alfred Tennyson and Arthur H. Hallam met, as undergraduates, at Trinity College, Cambridge, about the year 1828. Tennyson, born in 1809, was the older by one year and a half. Both these young men were inheritors of remarkable ability—the one

being a son of the distinguished historian, and the other a son of an accomplished divine—both, too, were themselves highly educated, and one at least was possessed of the highest genius. Their friendship was not founded on a common participation in the ordinary interests of youth, but they sympathized in poetical temperament and philosophical taste. The mental stature of Hallam, and his pure and beautiful disposition in their college life, are recalled by the Poet in many places, but especially in Poems cix. and following.

In 1829, the two friends competed for the Chancellor's gold medal for the English Prize Poem, the subject being "Timbuctoo," and Tennyson gained it. This College intimacy was continued at both their homes, and Hallam became engaged in marriage to one of Tennyson's sisters. This alliance may have deepened the attachment of the friends; but was not needed to account for the survivor writing of the departed as "more than my brothers are to me."

Arthur Hallam took his degree at Cambridge in January, 1832, and then lived with his father in London; having been entered on the boards of the Inner Temple, as a student of Law. At the beginning of August, 1833, they went a short tour into Germany, and, in returning to Vienna from Pesth, a wet day caused a slight attack of intermittent fever in Arthur, which was apparently subsiding, when a sudden rush of blood to the head put an instantaneous end to his life, on the 15th September, 1833.

A subsequent "examination showed a weakness of the cerebral vessels, and a want of sufficient energy in the heart." Mr. Hallam adds this sad tribute to his son's memory:

“Those whose eyes must long be dim with tears, and whose hopes on this side the tomb are broken down for ever, may cling, as well as they can, to the poor consolation of believing that a few more years would, in the usual chances of humanity, have severed the frail union of his graceful and manly form, with the pure spirit it enshrined. The remains of Arthur were brought to England, and interred on the 3rd January, 1834, in the *chancel*[5] of Clevedon Church, Somersetshire, belonging to his maternal grandfather, Sir Abraham Elton; a place selected not only from the connexion of kindred, but on account of its still and sequestered situation, on a lone hill that overhangs the Bristol Channel.”

My friend, Edward Malan, gives the following graphic account of his visit to Hallam’s grave—

“The chief attraction for visitors to Clevedon is the obscure and solitary parish church of St. Andrew, where the great historian and his eldest son, Arthur Hallam, are interred. You seek it by the beach and through the fields, and you find it at last, an old and lonely church beside the sea, in a hollow between two green headlands. The path up to it, bordered with ash trees and hawthorns, winds along the side of Church Hill, the first of the two headlands, which shuts it from view until, rounding a green shoulder, you come suddenly upon it, like a ghost. Even then, unless you have brought a mind in harmony, there is little to see, for the spot is so deserted and so lifeless that you seem to have stepped back through centuries, and to be moving in some old-world time. A weird sensation creeps over you, gazing on the ivy and wall-rue, and the path trodden by cottagers—

a feeling akin to awe, which reminds you somehow of the poems of Ossian. You are in the presence of these three grey sisters, grey thought, grey silence, grey repose: only clouds, like a troop of mourners, hurrying up over the waste, only a solemn dirge as the wind sweeps wailing by, only the low faint murmur of the sea. The sun's last beams are on the distant hills, and the tide is ebbing dim and shadowy to the shadowy ocean beyond.

"Inside, the church is old and dim, and filled with a faint odour of age. As the wind rises, mysterious pulses of sound awaken in the rafters overhead. The monuments of the Hallams are not in the chancel, but they are in the manor aisle affixed to the western wall. There are four of them, Arthur Hallam's being one of the two centre tombs.

"A new organ now stands on the vault. The familiar names—familiar, that is, in the classical sense—are those of the Elton family, Hallam's relations. A memorial brass near at hand bears the name of Hallam's maternal grandfather, the Rev. Sir Abraham Charles Elton, fifth baronet, together with the names of the four preceding baronets; and a marble tablet, close to the site of the old family pew, records the death by drowning of Hallam's two cousins, Abraham and Charles, in 1819, at Weston-super-Mare, when Hallam himself was eight years old. This unhappy occurrence has been commemorated by their father in an elegy entitled *The Brothers*. The moon, when high in the heavens (24 Dec. 1882), strikes through the south window of the aisle, slanting-wise on the monuments of the dead."

Mr. Malan goes on wisely to say: "No apology is necessary for calling attention to *In Memoriam*. It has