

The Handwriting of Alfred Lord Tennyson.

FROM 1827 TO 12TH MAY, 1892.

(Born 6th August, 1809; died 6th October, 1892.)

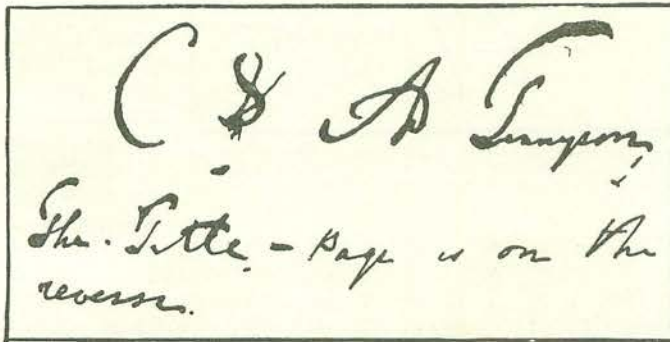
By J. HOLT SCHOOLING.



HE intense dislike felt—and justly felt—by Lord Tennyson towards the “autograph craze” went near to cause the stifling of this article at birth. Never has a famous man been more pestered by ill-considered applications for his autograph than was Alfred Tennyson—and never perhaps has a famous man more constantly avoided compliance with such requests. The poet may have been exclusive in the choice of his friends, but those friends have proved their loyalty to Alfred Tennyson. When this paper was commenced last April there seemed available scarce any of the necessary material. The catalogues of dealers

One of the earliest (known) specimens of Alfred Tennyson’s handwriting is shown in No. 1. For this, and for those shown in Nos. 2 and 3, I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. George Macmillan. All of these form part of the famous manuscript of “Poems by Two Brothers”—Charles and Alfred Tennyson—which in 1892 was sold for £480, and now rests in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, whither the two brothers went in 1828. Messrs. Jackson, booksellers and printers, of Louth, bought the copyright of these poems in 1827 for £20: in 1891 a single copy of the book sold at Sotheby’s for £17, whilst the manuscript itself was bought this year for £500 by old

members of Trinity and presented to the college. Upon inquiry I found that facsimiles from the original manuscript could not be taken until October, and, as this paper had to be finished early in September in order to be in time for the Christmas number, I was very glad to be allowed to use some admirable facsimiles of the original which are contained in the “large-paper” edition of “Poems by Two Brothers,” edited by Hallam Lord Tennyson.

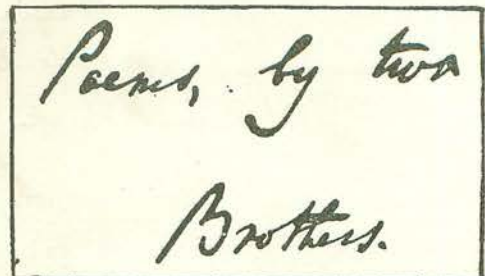


No. 1.—All written by Alfred Tennyson in 1827. Age 17-18. The end of a letter to the publisher of “Poems by Two Brothers.” (Lent by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.)

in autograph letters were remarkable for the scanty mention of Tennyson-letters; public institutions could render no aid—for lack of matter; persons who possessed letters either refused to lend them or stated that their letters had already been lent for a special purpose; inquiries in Louth, the place of Lord Tennyson’s boyhood, and elsewhere, brought no useful results: truly a pleasant state of affairs for a workman—to have no bricks with which to build his house.

This paper has been written—not to pander to any “autograph craze,” but to show (with three exceptions) an unpublished collection of extracts from Lord Tennyson’s letters, etc., in which great interest may legitimately be taken by readers of his poems; and not against the desire of those persons most solicitous to respect Lord Tennyson’s wishes, but by aid of valuable assistance received from them.

So perfect are the plates lent to me that but a slight effort of imagination is needed to believe that in possessing one of these “large-paper” copies of the Poems one also possesses a selection of leaves from the original manuscript—each page is a veritable work of art.



No. 2.—Written by Alfred Tennyson in 1827. Age 17-18. The title referred to in No. 1. (Lent by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.)

Dear Sir
 The signature of C & A. F. at the conclusion
 of my paper was not in my contract - at
 we have therefore erased it - nor do we think
 it would assist the sale of my book, since as
 you are at liberty to say who are the authors
 of C. A. F. in London will not be taken any
 more notice of than no signature at all. You
 will see by Errata on the reverse

Yours truly,
 C. & A. F.

No. 3.—Written by Alfred Tennyson in 1827. Age 17-18. A letter to the publisher of "Poems by Two Brothers." The signature, also written by Alfred Tennyson, is C. & A. F. "... & C. A. T. in London would not be taken any more notice of than no signature at all. You will see the Errata on the reverse. Yours truly." (Lent by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.)

As we have to cover a long life, the limits of space prevent the reproduction of more than the three pieces shown in Nos. 1, 2, and 3. The last is a very interesting letter: Alfred Tennyson's remark, in 1827, to his publisher about the unimportance in London of his name, must read curiously to the London of 1894.

It seems that Lord Tennyson was never a writer of many letters, and those he wrote were usually remarkable for laconic expression. Look at No. 4, whilst his letter published on the eve of the 1892 general election (June 28th)—nearly fifty years later than No. 4—contained two emphatic statements couched in ten words: "I love Mr. Gladstone, but hate his present Irish policy." As regards early letters written by Alfred Tennyson, no member of his family, except his son, possesses a single specimen: those written by him were mostly destroyed. This No. 4 is also remarkable for the condensation of much meaning into few words: I have

are many letters written by small traders, well-to-do shopkeepers, mercantile clerks, etc. Detailed examination of these letters has shown me that men of real intellect actually write a better "hand" than does the average clerk or business-man. There are exceptions, of course, but I have no hesitation in saying that the facts completely upset the fanciful idea that great men write badly. There are many men of some notoriety who pass for

My dear Sir

There is no chance of my
 staying over Monday - therefore
 instead of eating with you I will
 thank you & bid you farewell

Yours very truly
 A. Tennyson

No. 4.—Written in (about) 1843. Age 33-34.

not been able to ascertain to whom this was written, but, if the name were known, it would not be well to state who received this laconic snub polite.

Incidentally, note how pretty a little specimen is No. 4—which gives its mute evidence against the popular and mistaken notion that talented men write a bad "hand." In my collection are hundreds of specimens of all kinds of handwritings: among them

1850. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the County of Oxford

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
38	June 13	Alfred Tennyson Alfred Tennyson Emily Sarah Ellwood	full age 24	Single Spinster	Esquire —	Shiplake Shiplake	George Clayton Tennyson Henry Tennyson, Esquire	Clerk

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by me, D. Rowley

This Marriage was solemnized between us,
 Alfred Tennyson
 Emily Sarah Ellwood

in the Presence of us,
 Wm. Jackson
 Emma Ann Huntington
 Catherine Ann Rowley
 Wm. Ellwood

No. 5.—Written June 13, 1850. Age 40-41. A facsimile, in reduced size, from page 19 of the marriage register in Shiplake Church.

No. 6.—Written June 13, 1850. Age 40-41. A facsimile, in the exact size of original, of Alfred Tennyson's signature in the marriage register of Shiplake Church. (See No. 5.)

There is a gem in No. 7, although it does not look so well here as in the original, because we do not see fully displayed the exquisite sense of proportion which placed the writing in a fit and pleasing position relatively to the size of the original sheet of note-paper. It is worth while to point out that among the numerous small actions that are often overlooked as being of no importance as evidence of individuality, is the act of placing one's writing harmoniously and

talented men by dint of self-assertion and a good stock of pretension, and these persons show as much "swagger" in their written gesture as they do in their general demeanour. But an ounce of popular belief will, for a while, weigh down a ton-weight of ascertained fact. Of course, the hurried scrawl of a pressman writing against time cannot be viewed as ordinary and normal pen-gesture, although some handwritings thus produced are wonderfully good as regards the absence of confusion in the movements, even though haste make the writing somewhat illegible. The popular fallacy that doctors write badly is probably due to the fact that their prescriptions are written in abbreviated Latin, and contain technical symbols of liquid measurement not familiar to the layman.

No. 5 is a facsimile in reduced size from page 19 in the marriage register of Shiplake Church — where Alfred Tennyson was married on June 13, 1850. By a freak of what we call chance, the other entry on the page records the marriage of one Charles Pidgeon, an Oxfordshire labourer who could not write his name and so made his mark. Alfred Tennyson likewise made his mark upon the same page, and in the same year, for in 1850, after his marriage, he became Laureate and also published *In Memoriam*—thereby enrolling Arthur Hallam, as in 1851 Thomas Carlyle enrolled John Sterling, in the select list of those who have owed their fame to their friends.

In No. 6 we have an exact copy of the signature in the marriage register which has been shown in reduced size in No. 5.

tastefully in proportion to the size and the shape of the piece of paper which is used. I have found, during a good many years' study of this form of gesture, that men who possess a refined sense of proportion—of the relative fitness of things—especially a sense of the proportions of form, such as is essential to a fastidious constructor, whether he construct poems out of words (which, by the way, are for the most part waiting for us in the dictionary if we know how to combine words), pictures out of black or coloured marks deftly fashioned, or noble buildings out of non-plastic material, or, from marble, statues that look like living men, or models in plastic clay—I have found that such men do usually show in their written letters a certain pleasing grace of proportion which causes them to place their words becomingly upon the writing-paper. Post-cards readily show the absence or the presence of this quality because they are uniform in size; I have many, and some are quite little pictures in black and white if looked at in this light, whilst others are hideously out of proportion. The reason for this sense of proportion showing on a post-card, or in a letter, is sufficiently obvious when pointed out, and the fact can be tested any day by persons who themselves have this sense of fit proportion of form. But most of us can see that No. 7 is literally a very beautiful little bit of black and white construction, in which a refined and delicate sense of pro-

let not the solid ground
Fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet:
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

No. 8.—Written 1854-5. Age 44-46. Part of an early draft of *Maud*. This piece of Alfred Tennyson's handwriting is a beautiful and impressive illustration of his strength, refinement, and delicacy.

My dear Palgrave

There was a knife & fork
for you on Tuesday at Chapel
House & we waited till 4 1/2
Why didn't you come?

Ever yours
Tennyson

No. 7.—Written February 19, 1852. Age 42-43.

portion is strongly marked. Tennyson had a grand and supple hand, and always wrote with a quill pen, for he disliked the scratchiness of steel pens.

As to No. 8, no words are needed to show the beauty and the delicacy of this piece of gesture. Those who have eyes can appreciate it, and words would be thrown away upon those who have no eyes for the beauty of form. One does not intrude remarks upon such a masterpiece made by the strong hand and the delicate.

I have chosen to place No. 9 next to No. 8 because I have waited to call attention to perhaps the most prominent quality of Alfred Tennyson—his imagination.

There are some people whose handwriting never shows any "movement," and which retains day after day, and year after year, the same monotonous regularity and the same absence of any "play" in the gesture of it. I cannot deal here with the various exceptions to the general rule that such handwritings usually betray a lack of imagination and sensibility, although they may contain many excellent qualities. Look at No. 9, and then just glance at the other facsimiles on these pages: you

My dear letters

You never did send me the book —
 and the single sheet of MSS which
 you sent I should be much pleased
 to find the whereabouts —

If you want that, & if I ever
 should find it, why then you
 shall have it

Yours ever truly
 Alfred Tennyson

No. 9.—Written in December, 1860. Age 51-52. At Farringford to "My dear Latham."
 This is an excellent and interesting example of free, imaginative gesture.

will see much "movement" in the writing as a whole, and also considerable variation in it at short time intervals. But this one only (No. 9) suffices to show the imagination which lay ingrained in the nature of Alfred Tennyson, and notice also that, despite this unwonted exuberance of gesture, not one of the fifty-two words here facsimiled is confused or mixed up with another word—the movements are well differentiated although they are so freely thrown off—(the word *of* was inserted between *even* and *the*: line 3). I could show scores of specimens in which men of sensitive imagination evince the quality in a similar way, and I could also show plenty of selections from the writings of the insane where imagination is equally pronounced but not kept under control—here lies part of the difference between a genius and a madman. Speaking generally, both possess imagination: one controls it, and is perhaps a genius; the other has no control, and his disordered imagination and sensibility run away with his reason and he becomes a madman—or akin to one. [It is scarcely necessary to say that not all madmen

followed the drawing by Alfred Tennyson of a kind of pyramid in sections specifying the nature of the letters on his table: "Anonymous insolent letters": "Letters from America, Australia, from monomaniacs, etc.": "Letters asking explanation of particular passages": "Begging letters of all kinds": "Subscriptions asked for church building, schools, Baptist chapels, Wesleyans, etc.": "Newspapers gracious or malignant—magazines, etc.": "Printed circulars of poems asking for subscription": "Presentation copies of poems": "Printed proof sheets of poems": "MSS. poems": "Letters for Autographs" form the two sides of this curious and unique sketch.

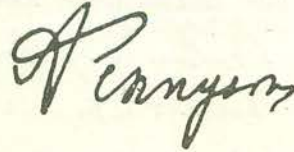
People who pester a man of letters do not think of the vast aggregate made up of many single applications of various sorts. Each post used to bring to the house fifty or sixty letters. Mrs. Tennyson and Hallam Tennyson were far too much occupied with the task of wading through these piles of unsolicited correspondence. A letter is on my desk written by Mrs. Tennyson on January 18, 1867, one sentence of which reads: "I ought to have written before, but it is difficult

possess imagination—I am merely taking a typical class of cases—for example, there is the insanity of heavy melancholia and dull apathy, in which imagination plays no part. Readers who may care to see the tell-tale antics in the writing of the insane can refer to pages 194 to 231 of *Handwriting and Expression*, Kegan Paul and Co., 1892.]

But turn to No. 10. Here is a curious freak of imagination based on fact: "Look at this pile which on my return from abroad I find heaped on my table. I ought to have thanked you before for your generous lines—but look at the pile—some three feet high—and let that apologize for my silence—and believe me, tho' penny-post-maddened, yours ever, A. Tennyson." These words fol-



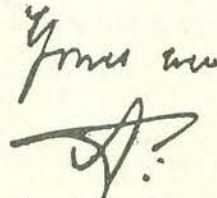
I.—Written by Mrs. Tennyson, May 12, 1868.



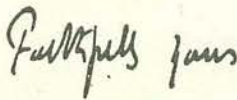
II.—Written by Alfred Tennyson, June 5, 1862.



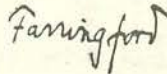
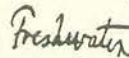
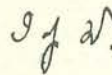
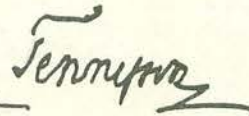
III.—Written by Alfred Tennyson, December 21, 1870.



IV.—Written by Alfred Tennyson, December 15, 1873.




V.—This signature was written by Lord Tennyson, June 2, 1886. The words, "Faithfully yours," were written by his son Hallam.



VI.—The signature and the date, May 2, 1888, were written by Lord Tennyson; the address, by his son Hallam.

No. 11.—A comparison of signatures, etc., handwritings of his wife and his son Hallam, may be seen to exist in these three handwritings, letters, genuine and otherwise, of the Poet



VII.—The signature of Hallam Lord Tennyson, written July 5, 1894.

written by Alfred Lord Tennyson, with the Despite the many points of difference which mistakes frequently occur in connection with Laureate.

fulfilment of her duties in answering these worthless letters to her husband.

In No. 11 we have perhaps what is the most interesting illustration of this paper, and one that I hope will be useful. It is a comparison of three handwritings: Alfred Tennyson's, his wife's, and that of his son Hallam. The wife and the son frequently wrote in the name of the husband or of the father, and mistakes about Lord Tennyson's letters are common even amongst those who have some knowledge of autographs. When one sees a portrait of Lord Tennyson with a signature of his son facsimiled underneath, and letters facsimiled in widely-circulated journals as being those of Lord Tennyson, but which were not written by him, it is then time to set right the mistake—not to deal with the aspect of the case which arises when

we note that a genuine signature is worth from £1 10s. to £2.

If any observant person will take the trouble to compare, for example, the "Tennyson" of I. and II. in No. 11, the signatures of VI. and VII., etc., he will see that they could not possibly have been written by the same hand. There is a certain general likeness between some of these specimens, but there remains no real likeness when we come to compare the movements which formed the letters of each of these signatures, etc.

No. 12 relates to a malignant attack upon Tennyson's reputation as a poet: "Make him out a third-rate poet," wrote the man who, in a disclosed letter, instigated the attack—a "slashing" attack was also advised by this gentleman. We see here how Alfred Tennyson quietly ignored the attack and refused the offer of his correspondent to defend him.

It is not worth your while to answer this
 no more & since it
 attack, I shaltn say but it can't possibly
 do any harm: but I am obliged to you
 for your proposed defence

Non vaginaria di lor miquardec e profa
 Yours very truly
 A Tennyson

No. 12.—Written May 18, 1869. Age 59-60. The letter from which this has been taken refers to an attack upon Alfred Tennyson, printed in *Temple Bar*, and to a defence suggested by his correspondent. (Lent by Dr. W. C. Bennett.)

Is not No. 13 pleasing with its gracious words of thanks?

The best letter of the present collection is that shown in No. 14: ". . . . I could wish that I had something of what Master Swinburne calls 'the divine arrogance of genius' that I might take it into my system and rejoice abundantly—but—as Marvell says:—

*At my best I always hear
 Time's winged chariot hurrying near;*

My dear Mr Bennett,

Thanks for your flattering poem - I can
 wish that I had something of what
 Master Swinburne calls 'the divine
 arrogance of genius' that I might
 take it into my system & rejoice
 abundantly - but - as Marvell says -
 at my best I always hear
 Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
 And yonder all before us lie
 Deserts of vast eternity -
 Where most of us will be lost & swallowed
 up - nevertheless, true thanks -
 Yours ever
 A Tennyson

No. 14.—Written November 13, 1872. Age 63-64. (Lent by Dr. W. C. Bennett.)

And yonder all before us
 lie
 Deserts of vast eternity—
 Where most of us will
 be lost and swallowed
 up. . . ."

No. 14 has been pointed out as the best letter of the present collection, but many readers may consider that No. 15 has an interest equal to that of No. 14, although of a different kind. This letter was written to

It isn't every bird who sings so
 prettily in an Author's ear

Yours very truly
 A Tennyson

No. 13.—Written December 22, 1869. Age 60-61. Thanking Dr. Bennett for ". . . the music you make in my behalf . . ." It isn't every bird who sings so prettily in an Author's ear." (Lent by Dr. W. C. Bennett.)

Mrs. Gladstone, and, coupled with the pipe shown in No. 16, it certainly has a unique interest. In the former letter Alfred Tennyson wrote as the poet—here, he wrote as the devotee of "My Lady Nicotine": "Will you manage that I may have my pipe in my own room whenever I like?"

This pipe was recently lent to me for reproduction here; and, by the way, in one of the papers recently there was a nonsensical statement that Lord Tennyson smoked only new "churchwardens," broke them after use, and threw the pieces into a basket—pure fiction, as any smoker of clays ought to know. An old clay pipe is a very pleasant pipe, but a new clay is unpleasant, even though it be soaked, as Lord Tennyson used to soak

My dear Mrs Gladstone

On Monday then - if all be well.
As you are good enough to say that
you will manage anything rather
than lose my visit - will you
manage that I may have my pipe
in my own room whenever I like?

Yours ever
A. Tennyson

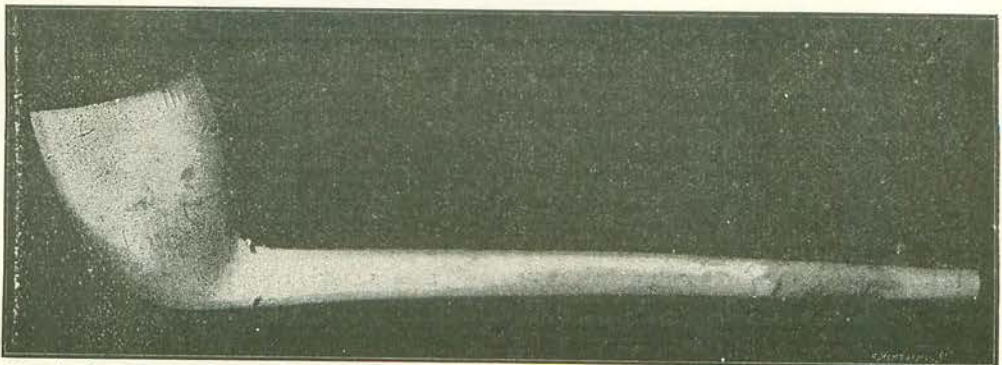
No. 15.—Written October 25, 1876. Age 67-68. The original letter, written at Aldworth to Mrs. Gladstone, is in the possession of Messrs. Noel Conway, 50B, New Street, Birmingham. One of Lord Tennyson's pipes is shown in No. 16.

his, in some liquid spirit such as sal volatile, in order to remove the hot newness of an unused clay.

There is a pleasing group of signatures, etc., in No. 17. An interval of thirty-nine years came between the writing of I. and the writing of VIII., which was dated less than five months before Lord Tennyson died.

that they are in fact only mediocrities—and poor specimens at that. But some of us whom Nature has thus classed have an unfortunate desire to pass for more than the value indelibly stamped upon us, and, in such cases, there comes up a plentiful crop of the vulgarity and pretension that spoil so many of us—we do not dare to be natural

And now let me point out that the entire simplicity, and the absence of any striving for effect, which are so evident in these two signatures, are qualities that are shown again and again in the specimens of Lord Tennyson's handwriting which have been given in facsimile upon these pages. The *raison d'être* of this trait now pointed to appears to be evident. A truly great man has no need to pose—his nerve-muscular mechanism is not called upon for affected gestures—he has but to be himself, his natural *ego*, to be great, and to be recognised as great. A large proportion of the striving after effect, which is one of the distinguishing marks of mediocrities, comes from the inward recognition by them



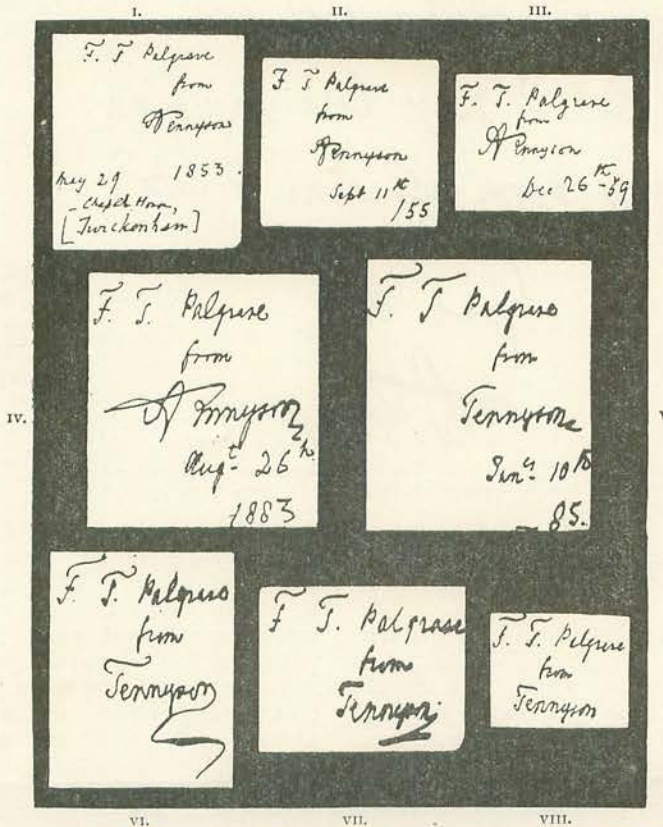
No. 16.—One of the last pipes actually smoked by Lord Tennyson. Slightly reduced size. The length of this pipe is five inches and three-quarters. This is one of the "Dublin" clay pipes which superseded the "Milos" formerly used by the Poet Laureate. Lord Tennyson would not smoke a pipe that had the usual projection underneath the bowl: he used to break off such projections, for he said they spoiled "the Grecian simplicity of the pipe." Through all his life he smoked this sort of pipe.

and simple for fear that people should under-rate us. A gross error, which accounts for an infinity of snobbishness, which produces many inflated signatures quite different from those shown in No. 17, and which lessens the value of many excellent persons who are unable to realize that Nature's coinage cannot entirely consist of noble five-pound pieces.

I have now shown a collection quite unique of the handwriting of a man whom Nature coined great. Not after the minutely

critical fashion that might properly be employed in the case of *X's* writing sent in for a private opinion, but after the fashion of a man who, exhibiting things of beauty, contents himself with stray suggestions to a sympathetic friend: "See you this excellence here—I beg you will notice that exquisite touch there."

Ill indeed, and unmannerly, would be the act which should subject to microscopic examination the sensitive and nobly-simple nature of Alfred Tennyson.



No. 17.—Here is a very interesting series of Lord Tennyson's signatures, etc. The originals were written on the title-pages of eight volumes of Lord Tennyson's works (with one exception, first editions) when he gave them to his friend, Mr. F. T. Palgrave, at dates ranging from May 29, 1853 (I.—"Poems"), to May 12, 1892 (VIII.—"The Foresters"). The six other titles are: II.—"Maud," III.—"Idylls of the King," IV.—"Ballads and other Poems," V.—"Becket," VI.—"Teiresias," signature written in 1885. VII.—"Demeter," signature written in 1889. It will be noticed that VIII. was written at age 82-83, less than five months before Lord Tennyson died. (Reduced facsimiles.)

NOTE.—I thank—for welcome aid in a difficult piece of work—Miss Georgina Hogarth, Lord Tennyson, Mr. F. T. Palgrave, Dr. W. C. Bennett, Dr. Richard Garnett, Mr. George Macmillan, Mr. Samuel Davey, of 47, Great Russell Street, W.C., Mr. J. William Wilson, of Louth, Messrs. Noel Conway, autograph dealers, of 50B, New Street, Birmingham, Mrs. Climenson, of Shiplake Vicarage, and Colonel Mansfield Turner.—J.H.S.