

**ALGERNON CHARLES
SWINBURNE:
A STUDY**

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Algernon Charles Swinburne: A Study by Theodore Wratishaw & G. F. Monkshood

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THEODORE WRATISLAW & G. F. MONKSHOOD

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BY
THEODORE WRATISLAW
AND
G. F. MONKSHOOD

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Work

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

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SWINBURNE

PROLOGUE

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, the eldest child of Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne and Lady Henrietta Jane, daughter of the third Earl of Ashburnham, was born in London on the 5th April 1837. Admiral Swinburne, who was the second son of Sir John Edward Swinburne, Baronet, died in 1877, Lady Henrietta Jane Swinburne within the last few years.

'The very ancient family' of Swinburne, says Burke, 'derived its name from Swinburne Castle in Northumberland, which it possessed from so remote a period that (although Sir William Dugdale notes them not as such) the Swinburnes of Swinburne Castle have been esteemed feudal lords.'

Swinburne Castle, however, passed away from the family on the death of Adam de Swinburne in the time of Edward II., with-

out male issue. The present family is descended from Sir William de Swinburne, who lived in the time of Henry III. The present baronet, Sir John Swinburne, is a first cousin of the poet. The family seat is Capheaton Castle in Northumberland.

The Swinburne baronetcy dates back to 1660, the barony of Ashburnham to 1689 and the earldom to 1730. The family of Ashburnham is, according to Nisbet, 'One of the ancientest families of good account before the Conquest.'

Of the personality and life of the poet little is known, and such accounts as have seen the light have been incorrect even when they have not been false. He was educated at Eton and Balliol, but he left Oxford without taking his degree—for the extraordinary reason, I understand, that, although he knew more Greek than his examiners, and more of most subjects than his co-examinees, he was 'ploughed' in 'Scripture,' which he had not taken the trouble to 'get up.' At Oxford he made the acquaintance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti

—who was then engaged in painting frescoes on the walls of the Union—and of Burne-Jones and Morris. Shortly after leaving Oxford, when he was staying with his family in Italy, he called with a letter of introduction on Walter Savage Landor, then in his last years. The admiration of the youngest for the oldest ‘singer’ of that time found expression in the dedication to Landor of the *Atalanta*, in excellent Greek verses. To the influence of his gifted mother, who was educated in Italy and taught the poet Italian, the affection of Swinburne for that southern country is no doubt due. His admiration for Victor Hugo began very early in life, not improbably dating from the time when he received a copy of *Notre Dame de Paris* as a school prize. The first time, however, that he saw Hugo was in November 1882, on the occasion of the revival in Paris of *Le Roi S'Amuse*. His early life was divided between Capheaton Castle in Northumberland, the seat of his grandfather, and East Dene at Bonchurch in the Isle of Wight, an estate which had