Chapter II

The Major themes of His Verse-Tales
Tennyson, belonging to a family of scholarly tastes and literary accomplishments, was fortified by classical training, and well supplied with models. He was a versatile story-teller. His wide-mindedness enabled him to deal competently and even triumphantly with the demands for poems on royal births, marriages and deaths, on battles, exhibitions and jubilees and others. As we examine his verse tales there are mirrored the different aspects of Tennyson as Tennyson - a typical victorian, Tennyson - a great patriot, Tennyson - a social reformer, Tennyson - a romantic and imaginative poet, Tennyson - a lover of past, Tennyson - a sentimental and elegiac poet. This is due to the different or vary nature of the themes of his verse tales. As Tennyson was very much aware of contemporary issues, tendencies, intellectual currents, and social evils, he wrote realistic, social and political tales reflecting the Victorian age in its totality. As he was not satisfied with the present, he took shelter in the glorious past and wrote legendary and medieval tales. As he was an upholder of ideal manhood he wrote Arthurian legend and taught the lesson of spiritual values. As he was romantic in temperament and spend his early life in the post romantic period, he wrote romantic and fanciful tales taking us in the world of imagination, beauty, and enchantment. As his family background aroused in him melancholy flavour, and adverse criticism of his poems made him morbid, he wrote
sentimental poems full of sentiments, intense feelings and emotions. In this way, the various themes or subject matters of his verse tales suits the various tastes of the reading public and, thus belong in the enduring heritage of English poetry.

The themes of some of his major verse tales were inspired by the contemporary Victorian social, political and religious conditions which made him The Poet Laureate in 1850, an award as officializing his identification with the spirit of the age and considering him the literary representative of Victorianism. Tennyson, the Great voice of Victorian England, was very much affected by the current issues of his age. Few poets have entered so fully into its moods, or have to such a degree moulded and then satisfied the tastes of their contemporaries as Alfred Tennyson.

The Victorian age was an age of material affluence, political awakening, democratic forms, industrial and mechanical advancement, social upheaval, educational expansion, imperialism and empire — building, humanitarianism, idealism and zeal for life. While it evoked feelings of warm appreciation and commendation in the hearts of many of its admirers, it equally roused the feelings of resentment and condemnation in others. "Both in life and art" says 'H.I.'A. Faussel', "the age accumulated a great material empire; its primary impulse was acquisitive. It possessed itself alike of trade and knowledge and provinces
with almost mechanical greed. And without questioning the essential value of these things, it named the tenure of them 'progress'----- But beneath the Veneer of middle-class cultivation, the smoke-veiled world of industry spread further and further its tentacles over the green land, nourishing as never before the germs of those two fatal diseases of modern civilization, 'Industrialism and Militarism'. Both these scourges represent surrenders to that licentious nature to which in his private morals and culture gracious Victorian professed to be so superior."

Tennyson tried to understand fully and sympathise with the movements and agitations of his time and expressed in his poetry what he felt about them. His verse-tales became an expression of his approval of what was noble and disapproval of what was unhealthy and corrupt in the thought of the Age. On the role of art, on women's emancipation and the factors that promote civilized progress, on science and its relatedness to religion, and on practical and philosophical religion, and on practical and philosophical religion he wrote much in his verse tales that is relevant to modern times. The variety and vividness of his presentations have an evalasting appeal.

"Human corruptibility might gradually be reduced, but he had no doubt, as he tells us in In Memoriam, that 'vast eddies' would continue in 'the flood of onward time' when, in 'Ring out, wild bells', he prayed for an end to 'the feud
of rich and poor', 'the want, the care, the sin, The faithless coldness of the times', 'foul disease', and 'the narrowing lust of gold', he had in mind the appalling socio-economic conditions of a class-ridden, wealth-producing England which by and large was guilty of laissez-faire and mammonish exploitation, and which was quite content to leave altruistic enterprise and education to churches and other voluntary organizations. He knew Carlyle by 1839, and must have become familiar with his Past and Present indictment of man's oppression by 'his Mock-Superiors', and of 'plethoric plenty' in which 'the people perish'; from Charles Kingsley and others he learnt about abject poverty and working-class conditions.

Such wrongs stirred Tennyson so deeply at times that he was compelled to vent them in verse. His artistic problem was to publicize them without incurring ostracism; he resolved it by recourse to the mask of verse fiction, first in 'Locksley Hall', written as early as 1837-38, then in Princess, Maud, The Vision of Sin and others. No poet except him, spoke out more vehemently against the injustices and horrors of an age that created 'two nations', with little done to bridge the gap between heartless mammonism and the degradation of the poor.

Locksley Hall is the first of Tennyson's poems of

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1- The 'Locksley Hall' poems and Maud' - from A Tennyson Companion, page-141, by "F.B. Pinion."
social protest and very moving to those of his contemporaries who were active in reform. Locksley is the name of Robin Hood, a militant champion of the poor against wealthy oppressors in Scott's 'Ivanhoe'; Tennyson's hero curses 'social wants', 'social lies', and 'gold that gilds the straitened forehead of the fool.' He is Tennyson's mouthpiece, and the fictional-background is contemporary. He and his heiress cousin Amy had been in love but, in obedience to her acquisitive parents, she had married someone no better, in his estimation, than a clown, who, when his passion fades, will consider her 'Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.'

The hero of this monologue is a prey to strong feeling. What can he do when 'Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys'? Like Dante, he believes that 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things', but it pleases him to recall the 'wild pulsation' of his youth when he 'dipt into the future' and saw 'all the wonder that would be'. His vision of airborne commerce spelling prosperity is crossed by the thought of aerial war until the battle-flags are furled "In the parliament of man, the federation of the world". Now every thing is out of joint; he knows that the menace of 'a hungry people' exists. 'Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers', he repeats with Tennysonian irony, for the next inveighs against the weakness that springs from woman's inferiority to man, and take
comfort in a dream of marriage with some savage woman in one of the tropical isles of eden. Admitting that once again he is the fool of fancy, he recovers his sense of racial superiority and his belief in progress: "Forward, forward let us range, let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change". The social criticism is as noticeable as the optimism, it reflects a somewhat unbalanced mind. This tale ends with a characteristic outburst: as the youthful hero indulges self-congratulatory thoughts on his "founts of inspiration", he sees a blackening storm-cloud, and trusts it contains a thunder-bolt that will Wreck Locksley Hall. In this way, it also expresses the young hopes and aspiration of the early victorian era.

Tennyson had an alert and well-informed mind, receptive to contemporary ideas and attitudes. The confused and ambiguous final effect of the poem has a special interest for the modern reader as its constant ambiguity and self-contradiction serve to direct our attention to the deep divisions and instabilities within the whole victorian edifice.

This tale refers to the fear of the growth of material knowledge without a proportionate increase in the moral sense, and the danger of the standardization of human personality through an egalitarian policy. The same remorse was expressed by Wordsworth in this poem, "The World is too
much with us" in which he condemned the material pursuits of the people.

The period of Crimean War forms the background of Maud (1855), another social verse tale, when commercial prosperity of England was at its height and 'Mammon' was the God of English people.

In the summer of 1855, when the unfortunate Crimean War was in full swing, he staggered the literary and political world by the publication of Maud, in which he challenged the liberals with a savage attack on the commercial system and with what appeared to be a eulogy of war. Maud is the tragedy of a morbid boy who has committed suicide after having been ruined by the fraud of a wealthy neighbour. He lives on in the old family home brooding on his own misery and his father's wrongs, with which the social iniquities of contemporary Britain become linked in his mind. His father's betrayer comes back to live in the neighbourhood with his daughter, Maud. He falls in love with her, the brother opposes the match, a duel results in which the brother is killed. Maud's lover flies from the country; she dies and he loses his reason, and when at last he emerges from madness finds reintegration of spirit by volunteering for the war. After his recovery he sees a heavenly vision in which Maud appears and tells him that he will find rest for his soul in the coming war, suggests how his mind works. It lightens his despair to think that England can rise above
mammonism against tyranny, that its men need not be an unkind, divided 'little breed', but can unite for a noble cause. He is no longer the man who wished to bury himself in self, or retire in philosophic seclusion; at last he can be one with his kind. The passionate ballad sung by Maud inspires him, his rose has become "The Blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire".

Through the mouth of hero, Tennyson voices powerful protests against social injustice and inequality:

"Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?
Was not one of the two at her side
This new-made lord, whose splendour plucks
The slavish hat from the villager's head?
Whose old grand father has lately died,
Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom
Wrought, till he crept from a glutted mine
Master of half a servile shire,
And left his coal all turn'd into gold
To a grandson, first of his noble line,
Rich in the grace all women desire,
Strong in the power that all men adore,
And simper and set their voices lower,
And soften as if to a girl, and hold
Awe stricken breaths at a work divine,
Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,
New as his title, built last year,
There amid perky larches and pine,
And over the sullen - purple moor,
(Look at it) pricking a cockney ear."

when the hero, a hypersensitive youth living in morbid solitude, speaks of the Peace of the 1850s as being viler than any war,

"Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
when the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine,
when only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie,
Peace in her vineyard – yes! – but a company forges the wine."

his views – although they represent Tennyson's sympathies – are not Tennyson's views as he himself would have expressed them in cold blood.

Is Tennyson approving the Crimean war or advocating was as a good thing in itself? Tennyson's real view about war is expressed subtlety in Section X of Maud:

"This huckster put down war! Can he tell
a whether war be a cause or a consequence?
Put down the passions that make earth Hell!
Down with ambition, avarice, pride,
Jealousy, down! cut off from the mind
The bitter springs of anger and fear
for each is at war with mankind."

In the more extreme parts of the poem he was speaking in character and expressing the malaise of a generation. He hoped by the violence of his statements to shock the reader into a realization of the social horrors of the time. War is no panacea in the poem; it is the lesser of two evils; the new heroic spirit has reduced England's lust for gold only 'for a little'. Tennyson has thus, used the psychotic mask of his story to stress the ills of a country that is radically unchanged.

The Flight, published in 1885, written fifty years earlier presents a situation similar to those in 'Locksley Hall' and 'Maud'. A motherless girl is betrothed for her
father's advantage to one she scorns. She feels sacrificed like Jephthah's daughter; if she is mad, she is like Scott's Lucy of Lammer moor, the 'mad bride who stabbed her bridegroom on her bridal night.' As she wakes early on her bridal day, she expresses her feelings to her sister in the moaning of the sea that sounds as if it would burst the shore. With thoughts of her lover Edwin at sea, among the islands of the Blest, and of the happy singing of the birds that love their mates, the poem does not escape the sentimental. It ends with the two sisters preparing for flight; the world cannot be as harsh as the speaker's fate if she remains, for 'every heart that loves with truth is equal to endure'. This poem is totally inspired by the mammon worship and materialism of that age.

Another contemporary verse tale Princess deals with a burning issue of Victorian England i.e. Female Education - a question of major interest to the Victorian society - the proper place of women. "It is a vivid reflection of an age—, a glimpse of the aspirations of the age in the colours in which they presented themselves to a truly poetic imagination."

The age in which Tennyson lived saw the all round progress. Education was wide spread. Science presided over religion. At that time a reformation in female education
was felt. W.J. Fox wrote in *The Burial of Love* - "Open what love is, depends what woman is, and upon what woman is, depends what the world is----." Impelled by this statement, Tennyson gave ear to the question of women's rights in marriage and society, one of the deeper pulsations of the world. Uptil now woman was subservient to man. The situation of women was very much like that of slaves and of the working class. The provision for the higher education of women was negligible. The possibility of giving them the Parliamentary franchise had scarcely ever been considered, and practically all professions were closed to them. The equality of men and women was still a principle recognised more in theory than in practice even at the highest levels. Tennyson felt that education is only a means to that end. Tennyson had long been keenly interested in the subject when at home as he found a little scope for his highly gifted sisters, and his interest had no doubt been stimulated by his friendship with P.D. Maurice, who was to found Queen's College for Girls in 1848. The whole question of women's status was under discussion, even though legal reform was very slow; struggles about property and divorce prepared the way for the suffrage campaign. The 1857 Divorce Act was the first recognition by Parliament that in certain cases married women should have control over their property. Caroline Norton, when tortured by her husband, was the moving spirit behind the Bill i.e. Custody of Infants Act, which offered separated or divorced women limited rights of
access to their children. Besides all these things it was felt woman should be educated because of her influence on her husband and children. In 1835 Oberlin Collegiate Institute, in Ophio, became the First institution of higher learning for women and blacks both. In England the accession of queen Victoria to the throne in 1837 did much to favour the feminist cause. These circumstances fired the thinking capacity of Tennyson and he expressed his views on this issue through this verse tale-Princess.

Princess Ida repudiates a contract of marriage with a Prince to whom she has been betrothed in childhood, proposing to devote herself to the higher education of her own sex, in order that they may be mentally prepared to insist upon liberty and equality, and so found a University for women. But the Prince, with two comrades, puts on women's clothing, and they enter themselves as students in the college that admits women only within its bounds; they are speedily detected as was obviously inevitable; and they are scornfully expelled. The Prince's father declares war upon the father of the Princess to enforce the marriage contract; but it is agreed to settle the quarrel by a combat of fifty packed warriors on either. When the Prince is wounded, the college is turned into a hospital for the wounded men, and the girls into nurses. The Princess remains to nurse the defeated Prince and to read poetry by his bed side, with the natural consequence that is tending
him she is drawn to love him. She abandons her University and marries her betrothed. The story is medieval but it is set in modern times. This tale suited the general taste because of its mild liberalism and 'gentlemanly' support of the cause of female education.

Tennyson has given no direct expression of his own opinion but through the acts and words of the characters in the story he has allowed the various points of view to find utterance. This statement of the Prince's father shows the typical Victorian attitude—

"Man for the field and woman for the hearth,
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey:
All else confusion."

Tennyson's views can be known through the mouth of Princess and Lady Psyche and the Prince. Princess claim in Canto IV that women should be—

"Not vassals to be beat, nor pretty babes
To be dandled, no, but living wills, and spheresed
Whole in ourselves and owed to none."

Tennyson's voice is clear in these lines by Lady Psyche in Canto II:

"----everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
Of science, and the secrets of the mind:
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more."
Prince's speeches clearly express Tennyson's own view about the marriage in Canto VII —

"either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal; nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each life."

Again —

" The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free. —

Tennyson believed woman's capacities to be fully equal, though not entirely similar, to man's and that he approved of their being given the fullest development and expression, so long as woman's prime function, as wife, mother and High Priestess of Domestic culture is not impaired.

In this tale by showing Prince moving towards Ida after putting off a certain effeminacy and Princess towards the Prince by putting off a certain mannishness, Tennyson wants to show that we should further Nature's plan. He thought that his friend Hallam had achieved "manhood fused with female grace" and that Christ was the perfect type of humanity in that he represented 'the union of tenderness and strength" — 'what he called 'the man-woman." Thus to imitate Christ is to further Nature's plan. Indeed, by typing Christ in their own lives the Prince and Ida will bring back the "statelier Eden" in which reign "the world's great bridals, chaste and calm", and from these will spring "the crowning race of humankind." The end of this tale shows the sure triumph of the natural affections over any feminine attempt to ignore them. Tennyson believed that
women should be given full opportunities for all round development but the means as adopted by Ida for the attainment of this end e.g. the defiance of the fundamental human instincts, the cultivation of the intellect alone should be neglected. There should be no attempt to crush out human impulses and affections. True wisdom consists in the organisation of our lives – physical, mental, moral, social, political – in conformity with Nature's eternal laws. Tennyson understood excellently well the calibre of the English spirit, and the methods especially suited to our insular genius. Orderly development was dear to him; and the notion of "a land of settled government" and of "freedom slowly broadening down" was conceived in the true Benthamite spirit. Tennyson was a great patriot. He wrote a number of national and patriotic verse tales which placed him among the most distinguished of our poets. After reading "Ode On the Death of Duke Wellington, The Revenge, The Defence of Lucknow" and others, we get the impression that the Victorian age was an age of intense patriotism. The Victorians were proud of their Queen, they were proud of their country, and of their empire. This narrow nationalism of the Victorian age is reflected fully in the above mentioned verse tales. The sense of national pride and glory is well sounded. Tennyson once wrote –

It is the land that free men till
That sober-suited freedom chose,
The land where girl with friends and foes,
A man may speak the thing he will,
A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown.

When in September 14th, 1852, the aged Duke of Wellington died whom Tennyson had reverenced all his life as the saviour of Europe from the tyranny of Napoleon, he (Tennyson) composed the famous memorial verse tale i.e. 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.' In this poem Tennyson glorifies this Victorian hero who only three months before his death had been fighting to secure the enactment of the Militia Bill. Tennyson saw in Wellington an impersonation of all that he had admired in England. The picture he draws of the Duke is identical in its great features with that he had painted of the nation. On the way of the Duke's funeral, the public read it in a pamphlet of sixteen pages. The patriotic spirit of Tennyson as well as his appreciation of Duke is reflected in these lines from this ode -

"O Statesman, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom sown
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings;
For saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be save and crowns be just.
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts;
He bade you guard the sacred coasts;
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall!
His voice is silent in your council hall
For ever; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent; even if they broke
In thunder silent; yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke;"
In the last few lines he once more warned the nation of the dangers of unpreparedness.

The sentiment of patriotism flourishes best in minds charged with historical associations, and imbued strongly with the continuity of the present with the past. *The Charge of the Light Brigade, The Defence of Lucknow, The Revenge* etc., all these War poems exhibit a genuine love of the bull-dog qualities of our race.

*The Revenge* shows Tennyson's deep and sincere love of his country. The heroic exploits, the very spirit of the Elizabethans is infused into this poem. In this patriotic poem, Tennyson has presented a realistic picture of Englishmen's stoic courage against adverse circumstances, their love of adventure and their hatred of Spain. It is story of how Sir Richard Grenville, one of the most bold and adventurous spirits of Elizabethan age, with his single ship, 'The Revenge', fought against Spanish ships—till the last breadth of his life. He sacrifices his life and faces death fearlessly and gladly so that the world may look upon his nation with admiration. This tale is famous for its patriotic flavour. Another tale 'The Defence of Lucknow' was influenced by Indian Mutiny.

The *Vision of Sin* a religious and philosophical poem, shows the doubt and conflict between the need to believe and the difficulty of believing in God which existed in the mind
of Victorians with the advance of Science. Tennyson shows that God had to exist because without him nothing made sense. In The Two Voices, this conflict is explicitly dramatized. In the end of the poem a new voice speaks encouragingly of 'A hidden hope' generating the feeling

'every cloud, that spreads above  
And veileth love, itself is love.'

At the end of 'The Vision of Sin' we are told that 'God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.' As in 'The Passing of Arthur', The 'Two voices', 'Locksley Hall', the voice of doubt and hesitation about the next world is heard in this poem in the form of a narrator's dream of a young and old poet in which young man abandons himself to voluptuousness and then being old sings a song of the vanity of human wishes and human ideals:

"Death is king, and Vivat Rex!  
Tread a measure on the stones,  
Madam - if I know you sex,  
From the fashion of your bones."

In such poems, Tennyson shows his belief that our life on earth is meaningless without the hope of immortality. It gave some relief to the victorions who were suffering from spiritual agony at that time.
Despite being classical in the sense of form and felicity of expression, Tennyson was quite romantic and imaginative. Though he was a contemporary Victorian poet dealing with contemporary problems and issues, he wrote some verse tales in which romantic note is more strong and more pronounced. When Tennyson started writing, the era of romantic revival had already finished, and the age of science and rationalism had taken its place. But Tennyson could not avoid being influenced by the romanticism of the previous generation of poets.

"Alfred Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809, a few weeks before the fourteenth birthday of John Keats. Had Tennyson died young we would now think of him as one of the minor Romantics".

Tennyson when in Cambridge was totally a romantic by temperament before joining 'Apostles'. He enjoyed a number of traditions established by the romantic poets such as – love of natural scenes, love of picture and colour, the marvellous and mysterious, note of melancholy, interest in remote time and places, love for common human being, music, melody and fine phrases and above all the imaginative fervour. The themes of some of his verse tales were inspired by above mentioned romantic qualities of Tennyson e.g. The Lady of Shalott, A Dream of fair Women, The

Gardener's Daughter, The Miller's Daughter, Mariana, Tithonus, Dora and others. The theme of the Lady of Shalott shows his love for magic, superstition, Knight's gallantry, remote place, imagination and metrical skill.

The Gardener's Daughter and Miller's Daughter exhibit his conception of true love, love of picture and natural scenes, pure passions, past memories and humanity. Dora presents love for pastoral, and an atmosphere of romance tinged with melancholy which is the result of the morbid nature of Tennyson. All these verse tales or idyls are dominated by the feminine image of Tennyson. He remained, however, in the 'Keatsian Chamber of Maiden thought intoxicated with its light and atmosphere. These imaginative tales reflect, to some extent, the artistic ideals of Keats and lead the reader into an enchanted land of beauty. They are clearly romantic poems as they treat in one way or the other, the theme of withdrawal from the world. Through them Tennyson sought isolation from society by creating in them a dream-world.

The Lady of Shalott, a lovely piece of medieval magic, is a pure fantasy, a pure sensuous poetry, full of romance, pictures and music. It testifies Tennyson's interest in the old medieval cycle. Though the idea of this tale came to Tennyson after reading Sir Thomas Malory's Morte D'Arthur probably or an Italian romance upon the Donna di Scalotta, he had thrown over it the colour of his imagination and made
it quite original.

Like other feminine images, e.g. Mariana, Claribel and Oenone, Tennyson has endowed the Lady of Shalott with the soul of lovely places, with the sobbing quality which he found in nature, and placed her in the garden of the mind and thus transformed her from an art object into a symbol of the artist, so important a symbol for later Pre-Raphaelite and aesthetic writers. The Lady of Shalott lives apart, ensiled and embowered, weaving by night and day a magic web with the colours suggested by the outside world which she sees in a mirror. Though 'half sick of shadows' when she sees a reflection of two young lovers, she is afraid of a curse if she looks at the outer reality. The flashing appearance of Sir Lancelot in the mirror has such vitalizing effect that she springs to the window, and sees his burning helmet and plume as he rides down to Camelot. The web flies out and floats away, the mirror is cracked from side to side, and she feels the curse of death upon her. She ultimately dies. This shows Tennyson's urge to write poetry entirely for art's sake. This poem in this way deals with the unfortunate and unspoken love of the Lady of Shalott for the brave and handsome Sir Lancelot, the most illustrious of King Arthur's Knights; it was a love that was doomed to end in death.

This tale is full of vivid pictures and colours - a landscape in water colours, - a picture shown to the music
of flutes. Each word-picture that passes before our eyes in quick succession is exquisite in detail, profuse in imagery, and glowing in colour, and enjoyed for its delicate music and melody. "In this tale, it is as though Keats' sensuous richness and acute verbal sensitivity have coalesced with the haunting, incantatory magic of Coleridge; and the symbolic overtones add a mysterious dimension with a deeply felt personal implication---We recognize the underlying dilemma of the poet before the competing claims of art and the living world." Though a purely romantic and imaginative poem, it has a deeper meaning also. It explores the maladjustment of the aesthetic spirit to the conditions of ordinary living. According to Hallam Tennyson, an element of symbolism is to be found in these lines, "I am half sick of shadows' said/The Lady of Shalott." To which Tennyson is supposed to have added, "The new born love for something, for someone in the wide world from which she has been so long secluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities." Thus Lancelot and Camelot are to be equated with reality, the isle and castle of Shalott with some ivory - tower existence, the Lady with the retired artist or poet, her web with the work of art on which he works, and the curse, the contact with harsh reality. The poem also shows the doctrine of Tennyson -

"Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all."
Thus, the romantic atmosphere and the presence of supernatural elements, the colourful pictures, note of melancholy, nature painting, the flight of imagination and fancy, all make this tale highly romantic.

Tennyson's other verse tales like The *Gardener's Daughter* and The *Miller's Daughter* are quite imaginative, and narrative based on the theme of domestic love. They are also known as *English Idylls*. An *Idyl* is a short, finely wrought presentation of life, usually rural in background; it is quite descriptive and narrative. Tennyson had used this genre with reflection and excellence of form. They are also called pictures or sketches which Tennyson versified with ready and sometimes not over-subtle art; which became far more popular than his published plays or *Idylls of the King*. He, while adopting this verse form, was partly influenced by Theoritus & Virgil, but he made it a highly sophisticated form, not a simple form. It was based on the premise that a delicate emotion expressed in a pure style came closer to the aesthetic experience.

These idyls show the impression of the light of Titan's glowing colour and female forms, the landscapes of Claude and Turner, and the image of Narcissus. They are framed by some account of male friendship, and by retrospect - the days described are infolded in the orbit of memory. They are concerned with aesthetic representation as well as with men's love of women. They are all from a male point of
view. These idyls are very interesting and moving because of their idealism and the sober decency of their sentiments which presents Tennyson as a poet of domestic sentiment. He extols in these tales the passions sublimated into conjugal love. He glorifies domestic love and casts over it the glow of romance.

The Gardener's Daughter is one of Tennyson's most luxuriant and imaginative tale which also has the touch of personal lyric, as perhaps prompted by his temporary infatuation with Rosa Baring. Springing from the deep affection which existed between Arthur Hallam and Emily Tennyson (Eustace and Juliet) and the poet, its recollections are youthful, almost as tremulous with love as The Lover's Tale, and thus provides a link between that earlier Romantic mode and the Victorian idyl. It tells about the narrator's wooing of Rose, the gardener's daughter, about the paintings of Eustace, the narrator's friend, about the long-drawn-out difficulties of the courtship, and about the death of a younger brother. The essence of this tale lays in the picture which the narrator painted of Rose as she stood in her cottage door, and so the subtitle of this tale is "The Pictures; as Eustace and his friend(speaker) are painters. It is a retrospect prompted by the anniversary of the morning when the two painters left their cathedral city, and the speaker saw his 'Rose in roses', and discovered his love was not in vain. The scene
he recalls is the focal point in view, a picture in itself, which shows the sensuousness of Tennyson, an impact of Keats. After receiving rose from his loved one, the speaker could not sleep for joy. Happiness follows for both pairs of lovers, but the interim is left to the imagination, as the listener looks anticipantly towards the picture, the unveiling of which discloses the painter's 'first, last love', the idol of his youth the darling of his manhood, and now 'the most blessed memory' of age. The Gardener's Daughter, Rosa, is framed by the husband's exhibiting her picture in later years and telling her story to the unnamed friend who listens. The tale is rich with youthful love and sensuousness.

"The Miller's Daughter", A. Brooke says, "is a simple story of true sweet hearting and married love built to last for life betwixt a man and woman. This was the sort of love for which Tennyson cared,"

The Miller's Daughter, like The Gardener's Daughter, is the tale concerned with past memories. It also focuses upon a picture, for as the squire reminisces with his wife about their wooing, he recalls how, a listless and unhappy boy, he had thrown himself down one April morn by the mill pond ("If I thought at all of any mill it was that of Trumpington near Cambridge", Tennyson wrote). This tale is alive with details of that scene. Though this tale was influenced by Mary Mitford's "The Queen of the Meadow", the subject is
largely imaginary, and the setting is subsidiary to the thoughts, recollections, and character of one who in serene age has few regrets about his past. The poem reaches its central point of recall when the narrator describes how he, the squire's orphan, once angled in the higher pool by the mill-house, caught sight of a beautiful reflection of the miller's daughter, Alice, who was leaning from the casement, and fell wholly in love with her there and then as all seemed to be conspiring to create their love. This tale is a re-creation of that moment and of the mood of love which it inspired. Old Miller has just died. They have also lost a child and this has strengthened their mutual love. Life gives much, but more is taken away, opines the squire, and this truth is illustrated by the two songs inserted into the narrative which re-create the pastoral structure. This tale expresses a sensitive, manly genuiness and, ends with forward looking action "Where Past and Present, wound in one, Do make a garland for the heart."

It is a remarkable accomplishment, for its author felt less imaginatively at home in contemporary life than in the classical world, the historic past, and the glories of art and literature. It is noted for its pictorial quality, humanitarian note, and romantic pictures.

'A Dream of fair Women', published in 1832, is supposed to be influenced by Tennyson's reading of Chaucer's The Legend of Good Women' and his portrait of Cleopatra by
Shakespeare's *Antony* and *Cleopatra*. This tale is highly imaginative and fanciful. It is noted for its pictorial art, its splendour of description, and avoidance of the commonplace which characterize an excellent romantic poem. The imagery and accessories of it show the affinity to Keats.

Great actions of the past, whatever may be their origin, maintain their appeal because they present life at a higher, more intense pitch than the contemporary world. So Tennyson thought when he began 'A Dream of Fair Women'. He imagined himself a balloonist lifted high above the world of the present; detached, but seeing the whole in true perspective. The subject is introduced in these lines - "In every land I saw, wherever light illumineth, Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand The downward slope to death." The poet hears 'sounds of insult, shame, and wrong, And trumpets blown for wars'. He resolved to do noble things; but sleep bears him down, and he dreams he has wandered far into an old still wood (the world of ancient time), where the fragrance of violet recalls a period when he was innocent and joyful. The heroines whose woe and misery he sees are Helen and Iphigenia, Cleopatra, Jephthah's daughter, then Rosamond, Queen Eleanor's Victim. Before he can see others, dawn wakes him, and he observes Venus regnant in the east. The train of fateful ladies casts over this tale a curtain of melancholic atmosphere. Like in *The*
Lady of Shalott, a romantic atmosphere of Nature is present. Tennyson's descriptions of Nature and pastorals and the beautiful landscapes that he has painted show his partial attraction towards romantic tradition.

Dora, written in 1835 and published in 1842, is a very exquisite and popular pastoral which has been highly appreciated by all especially by Wordsworth. Tennyson's love of the spectacles of Nature surcharged with human feelings is to be found over here. In Dora, like the Lady of Shalott, Ruth, Mariana, and others, the theme of lonely, isolated and unhappy characters is present. Dora is the niece of the old farmer Allen, who wanted to see her as his daughter-in-law. But William (Allen's Son) refuses to marry. Dora continues to love him. He marries with a labourer's daughter and dies after getting a son. She supports the family of William and persuades Allen to accept his grandson. She endures loneliness and sufferings and remains "unmarried till her death."

This tale is highly sentimental and pathetic. It is based in its Biblical or Tolstoyan simplicity; the rural scene here has a life and colour appealing to all.

'Enoch Arden', a very popular verse-tale of Victorian era, made Tennyson known as 'The Poet of the People'. 'The Fisherman's Story' as it was first called, is a single, three part tale (basically a common one) of a
sailor who, after ship wreck, survived about ten years on a tropical island before being able to return home, where he found his wife married to his friend. This is the result of the poet's imagination, activated by memories of sea-fishing he had witnessed and of scenes in travel books. Enoch Arden has three chronological phases, the second including two accounts, of Enoch's wife Annie and of himself during their long separation. The first phase leads from childhood to marriage, with Philip's disappointment at losing Annie. The second, beginning with Enoch's misfortune and his departure as boatswain on a China-bound merchant-ship, in the hope of returning rich enough to give his children a good education, is briefly recapitulated to stress all that is significant to him when he hears so much about local history. Lane, the publican widow with whom he stays on his return:

'His baby's death, her growing poverty,
How Philip put her little ones to school,
And kept them in it, his long wooing her,
Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth
Of Philip's child.

The account of Enoch's misfortunes away from home during this long interim period is notable for the brilliant evocations of the tropical island he is fated to endure. Finally, when he discovers Annie's married happiness, he sacrifices himself rather than destroy it; when sickness comes he looks forward to death, revealing his secret just before the end, but making Mariana swear not to divulge it
to Annie and Philip until he is dead. He draws comfort from the thought of joining his youngest child in heaven.

This is very sentimental, and imaginative verse-tale. Enoch Arden challenges the novel by its appeal as a story of marriage and its deviation. It was Tennyson's great financial success and among the most popular poems of the period. It shares with contemporary narrative painting and drama the aim of pictorial 'realization': to produce both strong emotion and a sense of actuality in effects of 'situations' which would influence moral and social consciousness. In drawing attention to the working class as a subject for art and demanding respect as well as sympathy for them, Tennyson's poems stands in a long humane tradition.

The Day Dream, is a fanciful versetale. Lady Flore's dreamy eyes remind her lover of the sleeping beauty, and he narrates the legend hopefully while she continues her embroidery. The story moves inward from the present to the past until the sleeping beauty is awakened by the Prince's kiss, and from this, outward with their departure to the conclusion, in which the lover asks his unresponsive lady whether it would be pleasant to sleep a hundred years through war and scientific achievements. He wishes he could waken her with a kiss, 'The prelude to some brighter world'. The poem grew from 'The Sleeping Beauty' (published in 1930), and is most effective in circumstances external to
the story when the long-pent stream of life and activity in the palace is suddenly released. Love brings life 'A perfect form in perfect rest', and the princess follows the prince 'Through all the world. The lady of the cordulary remains unmoved, and her lover courteously tells her that, such is her beauty, he could not but tell her the tale in earnest and in sport.

'The Brook' is a well known imaginary lyric, mainly a poem of recollection, it evokes life in an English rural scene. It is the brook which starts Lawrence Aulmer's reminiscences, it seems to prattle the 'primrose pancies' of his young brother. They had parted, Lawrence for the East, and Edmund - too late - to Italy, where he died. Middle-aged now and bald, Lawrence quotes his brother's lyric at internals. The sight of the farm at the junction of brook and river recalls how he walked miles with farmer Philip, listening to his interminable - self congratualtory talk,. in order to give his daughter Katie Willows time for reconciliation with the cousin to whom she was betrothed. He had succeeded, but, like Edmund, Philip had died, and sweet Katie was in Australia 'For men may come and men may go, But I go on for ever,' the lyric ends. The theme of the poem may derive from Wordsworth's The river Duddon: 'Still glides the stream. Tennyson's happy ending suggests the countinuity of life, for suddenly, as Aylmer sits nursing, a girl appears, her eyes 'a bashful azure', her
hair 'In gloss and hue the chestnut,' exactly like Katie Willows'. She is her daughter, her family have returned and bought the farm, she is sure her mother will welcome Lawrence. The mastery of this tale is concealed in conversational ease and unpretentiousness, the conciseness of which gives innumerable immediate effects of scene and character, from which emerge the humour and pathos of life.

Among the most outstanding of the poems published in 1830 is 'Recollection of the Arabian Nights'. It carries the reader stage by stage through varying scenes of enchantment. This poem is distinctly seen as a highly artistic evocation of one of the romantic worlds of Tennyson's boyhood.

Like the Lady of Shallot, Mariana is also a story of a lovelorn maiden who lives in a moated grange, complaining about her lover's absence wishing for her death. It is a romantic and imaginative poem which shows the influence of Keats, and anticipates the magical power of Walter De La Mare, and the waste lands of T.S. Eliot.

"With Mariana, Tennyson turns particularly to the immured maiden - the maiden who finds herself in the 'closed situation' of the moated grange, the isle and castle of shalott, the vale of Ida, or the Palace of Art. In every case, however, there is an opening or aperture through which she may look out upon the world-the window in the moated
grange, the magic mirror of the Lady of Shalott, the gallery of the Palace of Art, and the "gorges, opening wide apart," which 'reveal/Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel." Into this distant city so revealed, Troy or Camelot, the lady's lover has disappeared, and as her thought follows him across the glooming flats, or down the river, or through the gorge, she makes her moan, and her song, "overflowing the vale profound" is ultimately carried to the city, where its reception, though varied, is far less sympathetic than that of W.W.'s Solitary Reaper. Tennyson... in this the situation of the abandoned maiden who is waiting for death or dying and who, from her isolated situation, pours forth a lament which sweeps over the world and is rebuffed by the world, he obviously found a symbol for one part of his imaginative experience...

Tennyson, a great story-teller, had a peculiar gift for narration. In his childhood, he used to fascinate others with his stories. When grownup, he drew material for his verse-stories from different sources. As Tennyson had a great passion for the past, he looked back at old legend which offered him a rich treasury of subjects for his poems. His grandson writes:

"Far, faraway had, from his earliest memory, a strange charm for him, a charm which before long began to illumine the distant in time...., breeding in him that 'Passion of

the past' which was to be one of the main springs of his early poetry."

He wrote a number of poems on the mythological themes and old English legends. One of the reason for his love for the past was his 'personal dislike of the present', an integral aspects of Tennyson's attraction to the past.

"To me", Tennyson once wrote to Emily Sellwood, "the far off world seems nearer than the present, for in the present is always something unreal and indistinct, but the other seems a good solid planet, rolling round its green hills and paradises to the harmony of more steadfast laws".

It was the realm of myths and legends that came closest to constituting an idealized past that could solace Tennyson's imagination as a kind of eternal presence. Through these legends Tennyson found an objective basis for personal expression. He told his son: "It is no use giving a mere rechauffe of old legends".

Consequently, it became his customary technique to cast the legendary material in what he considered a modern 'frame'. The resulting marriage of ancient matter with modern meaning is seen especially in Idylls of the King, which is the story of Arthur, of his noble design of the

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3. Memoir, I, 171-172
4. Memoir, II, 364
Round Table, and of its failure under the ever widening influence of evil. It is based on the legend of Arthur who was a war leader in Britain, in sixth century who after the departure of the Roman, headed the tribes of cumbria, and by his valour and martial skill drove away the encroaching saxons from the east and the pict and scots from the north, and that five or six centuries later, "the name of King Arther had come to stand for an ideal of royal wisdom, chivalric virtue, and knightly prowess which was recognised alike in England, France and Germany.

The passion for Arthurian legend goes back to that moment in Tennyson's early youth when he first read Malory and 'the vision of Arthur as I have drawn him ...had come upon me.'

Besides this in 1833, the coincidence of a personal catastrophe i.e. the sudden death of Arthur Hallam, led Tennyson to begin his two 'Arthur' poems, the "Morte d' Arthur" the germ of whole poem which was drafted in 1833, and In Memoriam. The Morte d' Arthur was a reaction to the actual Arthur's death and his profoundly personal quest for reunion with Hallam becomes in the Idylls a profoundly impersonal despair for the passing not only of a hero but of civilization.

Tennyson considered the Arthurian legend the 'greatest
of all poetical subjects: 'Arthur was to be his Agamemnon, the 'great and complete man'.

Tennyson's most ambitious work i.e. the Idylls of the King came out piece by piece between 1859 and 1885. The long pondered scheme to present the story of Arthur and the knigths of the Round Table in poetry squares with the kind of ambition that possessed Milton and Wordsworth to fashion a work of epic proportion and significance. Tennyson delivered himself of his magnum opus tale by tale, and not in the order which was eventually theirs. Between 'The coming of Arthur' and 'The passing of Arthur' are sandwchitched the ten tales, beginning with the story of 'Gareth and Lynette', working through the saddening rhythm of demoralization and collapsing hopes to the events of 'The Last Tournament' and 'Guinevere'. The first issue of Idylls of king, comprising only four Idylls - Enid, Vivien, Elaine, and Guinevere - appeared in 1859 which studies in 'The True and the False' and represent 'woman's influence' on 'the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin'. The remaining Idylls were published at intervals between 1869 and 1872, with the exception of Balin and Balan, 'an introduction to Merlin and Vivien', contained with other poems in a volume given to the world in 1885. The original fragment, Morte'd Arthur, now forms part of the last Idyll, The passing of Arthur. The following list shows the dates of publication and final place in the series of
the various Idylls.

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Tennyson had, ever since his early childhood, wished to take up the Arthurian legend but he never liked to handle an old legend unless if he could in some way give it a relevance to contemporary life and problems.

"I tried in my Idylls to teach men the need of the ideal", he said thirty years later, Tennyson much disliked being too strictly pinned down in the interpretation of his poems. But we can say that Arthur, in Tennyson's scheme, represents the ideal or spiritual principle trying to realize itself in the world of sense (through marriage with Guinevere), Lancelot the embodiment of the rationalistic and scientific intellect. When the poetic spirit is overcome by the sensual and science succumbs to the lure of materialism, fatal blows are struck at the Quest for the Ideal, the inevitable failure and undying persistence of which are symbolized by the defeat of Arthur and his promised return from Avalon, while the relativity of even
the noblest human embodiments of the ideal is implied in the famous lines of 'Morte d' Arthur'.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The whole poem is charged with christian feeling and symbolism. The Grail obviously represents the extreme mystical approach to religion. He made the Quest of the Grail one of the principle causes of the collapse of Arthur's scheme. He showed that the highest life is with man and for man, and saw that for the ordinary mind to turn away from the ordinary duties of human society in order deliberately to seek mystical experience, or deliberately cultivate religious exaltation, is dangerous and almost certain to be injurious.

Arthur is 'Ideal manhood closed in real man', the Round Table, representing the 'passions and capacities of a man', succeeds for a time in keeping its vows to 'follow the christ, the king'. It is 'the table land of life, and its struggles and performances' between the two mysteries of birth and death. At the end Arthur laments that the house which vowed loyalty to him has been his doom. Lancelot fails Arthur because concupiscence prevails over principle. The struggle which the Idylls presents in varying facets is 'not the history of one man or of one generation but of a whole cycle of generation; it is unending and 'world wide',

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the world-wide war of sense and soul, typified in individuals, with the subtle interaction of character upon character, the central dominant figure being the pure, generous, tender, brave, human-hearted Arthur'. The struggle is within. 'The king who fights his people fights himself'. F.E.L. Priestley praised Idylls as 'one of Tennyson's most earnest and important effects to deal with major problems of his time'. He concludes:

"He wants to make the reader understand how these principles (Christian) become neglected, and what must happen to individuals and societies who neglect them. He is voicing a warning to his own age and nation, and to all ages and nations'.

His main object was to emphasize the vital importance for men and nations of maintaining a spiritual ideal, and the danger of this succumbing to the combined forces of sensuality and materialism, as Arthur's ideal polity, did, in the 'last weird battle of the West'.

Apart from its moral and religious significance, it can be studied as a complete work of art, causing much of the contemporary popularity of Tennyson. The Idylls are rich pictorial fancies taken out of a great magazine of romantic poetry and can be read with delight for their 'exquisite

1 - Ibid', ii.130
3 - Ibid, pp.254-5.
magnificence of style' as Swinburne calls it, the elaborate melody of rhythm, the richness and truth of illustration, and the grandeur of tone that marked them. The lover of poetry and romance will always feel the intrinsic charm both in the form and in the substance of these tales of 'wonder and woe, of amorous devotion and fierce conflict and celestial vision'.

Tennyson's narrative power can be seen in this epical poem where he shows himself capable of rapid as well as slow narrative, which gave ample scope to his unrivalled power of creating background and atmosphere as well as time to apply his dramatic talent.

Tennyson had a great fascination for the Pre-Raphaelite ideal as is seen in his love for precise detail and minute observation. In fact, the touch of the writer, the artist, and the musician in language, has never been more exquisite as here. In this way, he gave a new life and vigour to the old legend of Arthur with the touch of his literary and artistic genius.

In the 19th century there was a revival of the hellenic spirit and almost all the romantic poets were influenced by it. William Wordsworth was the first to revive hellenism, quite dead in the Augustan age. He was close to the Greeks in his belief that nature was alive, animated by individual spirits and had its own independent
existence. "The world is too much with us", 'Prometheus Unbound', 'The Hymn of Apollo', 'The Hymn of Pan', 'The witch of Atlas', are all written on classical (Greek) themes. Keats also used Greek mythology to express the beauties of nature. 'Endymion', 'Lamia' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Psyche' are all based on Greek mythology. All these romantic poets used classical antiquity to express them personal ideas.

Like the romantic poets, Tennyson too could not avoid being influenced and fascinated by classical world of myths. Greece and Rome with their rich literature and art provided him with themes for his verse tales and poems. The Poet's father, Dr. Tennyson, a great Hebrew, Syriac and Greek scholar took great pains to teach his children, specially Charles and Alfred and was responsible for originating in him a love for the past, for the classical literature.

'Hesperides' (1820), 'Oenone', 'Lotos Eaters', 'Ulysses', 'Tithonus', 'Tiresias', are some of the poems which are based on classical themes. In them the concrete and sculptured figures of the antique fable are emblazoned with warmth and fresh colour by becoming the impersonations of the impulses and affections of modern life - love unrequited, lassitude restless, the roaming spirit, the ennui of old age, philosophic ardour or serenity.

Many ancient writers had written about Oenone and the main theme of the judgment of Paris. The classical authority for the story of Oenone and Paris is the Athenian Apollodorus (2nd Century B.C.) who wrote a chronicle of events beginning with the fall of Troy. Tennyson makes of the story an allegory of the choice of ideals in life which every man, at some time, has to make.

Oenone was a nymph of Mount Ida. She was loved by Paris, a son of Priam, King of Troy. Because his mother had dreamed that Paris would be the ruin of Troy, he was exposed at birth on the slopes of Mount Ida to get perished, but some shepherds found him and brought him up as one of themselves. Here later, as a shepherded, he met and fell in love with Oenone. The poem gives the story of the famous judgement and of the subsequent desertion of Oenone. Oenon's sorrow rises to the level of Greek tragedy by its cause and by its results. It is caused by a quarrel in Olympus. Oenone tells how she had been bereft of Paris when he had been called upon to award the golden apple to the most beautiful of the these goddesses who contested the prize. Hera, the Queen of Heaven offered him power; cold, observant, and angry Pallas declared that self reverence, self knowledge, and self control alone lead life to 'sovereign power', and that her wisdom would help him through shocks, dangers, strengthening endurance with action, and making his will in all experience accord with
the pure law' which brings 'perfect freedom'; last of the three Venus whispered her beguiling promise i.e. she will give him the most beautiful and loving wife in Greece. Oenone's fate turns on Paris' choice of Aphrodite as the fairest of the three goddesses; in token there he presents her the apple of discord. Left disconsolate after her direction by Paris, the mountain nymph is filled with fiery thoughts, which are as yet hardly defined. She will discuss them with the wild Cassandra, who is haunted by a fiery vision and the sound of armed man (Cassandra is warned of Troy's destruction) Oenone dimly foresees her own self-immolation on the funeral pyre of Paris, as in the Greek tradition which is the subject of Tennyson's late poem 'The Death of Oenone'). Her sorrow is lifted into dignity by the vast results which flowed from its cause. Behind it were the tragedy of Troy, the ten year's battle, the wanderings of Ulysses and the tragedy of Agamemnon.

Though the theme of this verse tale is borrowed from the classics, Tennyson has made it quite relevant to the needs of modern times by infusing into this old myth a moral purpose. Through the mouth of Pallas, Tennyson points out that the foundation of character, of life, of government, of true power, of the glory and strength of country lies in 'self reverence, self knowledge, self control', (1.142) and speaks of the need of living by law and of acting the law we live by without fear. Like in the Idylls of the king, he
shows in Oenone that one of the reasons of almost all tragedies is the momentary victory of sensuality over soul.

In this way, the ancient theme is modernised; the Greek soul of the story' smothered by romanticism and didacticism, is reborn with a new light and appeal.

'Tithonus' written in 1833 and published in 1864 is based on the classical myth of the love of Goddess Aurora for Tithonus. Its story is told in the Homer's Hymn to Aphrodiyte. It is the most touching and most beautiful of his poems based on Greek mythology.

Tithonus, a human being, was loved by Aurora, the goddess of the dawn. At his request she gave him the gift of immortality. But he had forgotten to ask for everlasting youth. As he grew older and older, he found his immortality a torture because immortal life without immortal youth would be a veritable curse. Life became unbearable, and Tithonus longed for death. The poem is built up on a contrast of youth and age, love and death. The pathetic situation is

1. Tithonus, conversely, yearning for escape from a cruel immutality, represents the despair of continuing an existence now void of purpose. In spirit he is the antithesis of Ulysses, whereas the latter responds to the gleam of the untravelled world and challenge of the western star, Tithonus finds frustration in 'the gleaming halls of morn'.. Ulysses believes it 'dull to pause', Tithonus feels it tragic that any man should desire to pass beyond the goal of ordinance/where all should pause, as is the most meet for all, verbally, the one answers the other, together they are the two voices of a divided sensibility." Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of A Poet, op. cit, p.62.
expressed with beauty, pity and tenderness. Tithonus is bound to Eos whose beauty is renewed each morning but the tragedy of the situation is that he can not reciprocate her passion with the same intensity.

The poem is one of concentrated pathos. The elegiac note of the poem is unmistakable. Again, though the poem deals with a ancient myth, it has been endowed with modern significance. The desire for immortality, which most of us desire on occasions, is foolish. Death is the proper end of life.

"Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all."

The fact that death is the natural end of all things is admirably stated -

"The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
the vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan."

A survey of all these classical verse tales shows that Tennyson borrowed from classical antiquity and middle ages only the skeleton for the themes of his verse tales. He put on them the flesh of his morals and imagination and show the modern relevance of these old forgotten myths. The main motive behind these myths is the poet's disgust and horror at the contemporary Victorian society's agnosticism,
individulism and permissiveness. He was attracted towards these sotries for the sake of their ethical power and afterwards increased the significance of the classical poems. His verse tales based on classical subjects are usually correlative of significance for all time, and most of them raised questions of live concern for his own age.

The themes of some Tennyson's vers-tales were inspired by his religious instinct and sermon. They are 'Sea Dreams', 'Aylmer's Field' and others.

'Sea Dreams' which was written in 1857 and published in 1860 is based on a dream of Tennyson (according to the testimony of his grandson Charles) and two of the poet's recollections: his anxieties when the proceeds of his inheritance were in jeopardy, after being invested in Dr. Allen's speculative enterprise, and his mother's belief (at Cheltenham) in the doctrines of Dr. Cummings who was a popular preacher of the Scottish national Church whose Apocalyptic zeal made him antagonistic towards every form of heterodoxy including the scientific, and especially virulent in his denunciation of Roman Catholicism. Like the twenty first idyll of Theocritus, it embodies a seaside discussion of poetry and dreams.

The poem has larger, Carlylean themes; one, expressed by the clerk's dream, is on 'honest work' and the false lure of gold' the other relates to the central inspiration
of Idylls of King. There are great dawns of spiritual truth in the course of time but, in less enlightened periods, sectarian differences lead to violent disputes until disputants and their outworn needs have persuaded. Speaking through narrative imagery, Tennyson conveys the thought expressed in the prologue of *In Memoriam*: "Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be. They are but broken lights of thee, And thou, O Lord, art more than they'. He does more, especially in the contention of 'dark' clusters of man on whether or not the dead forms of religion are to be restored; in sweeping them and the forms out to sea to the waste deeps, Tennyson shows kinship with Carlyle.

Another verse tale of this category is *Aylmer's Field* which was originally, titled *The Sermon*. Mrs. Tennyson found the story of it 'very grand and very finely told'. It contains powerful and moving passages, and bears witness throughout to careful thought and execution. The vanity of pride in lineage and wealth with which the poem opens and concludes was a form of selfishness against which the poet felt 'a prophet's righteous wrath', when it trampled on 'holy human love', as in *Maud* (here, between Edith Aylmer and Leolin Averill), his indignation was the greater. He elaborated the basic narrative material provided by woolner, prepared most of the sermon, and created the ending to which it is the key. The influence of Crabbe is felt in the
satire and some the narrative presentation.

The satire against Sire Aylmer, who is the 'County God', and his lady, 'a faded beauty of the Baths, is trenchant, he loves his only child Elizabeth 'As heiress and no heir regretfully'. When her love is banned, they try unsuccessfully to 'Sell her.... for her good,' hoping to catch by 'the faith of gold and Beauty' any 'eldest-born of rank or wealth' within their compass.

The ending has the force of Greek tragedy, and its significance is enlarged by a natural or scientific vision which places man, and his earthly grandeur, in the true perspective of time.

The last view of Edith is memorable. After the thunders of the house have fallen on her, she is 'Pale' as the Jephtha's daughter, a rough piece of early rigid colour (prophetic of death) over the door by which she withdraws, as she casts a piteous look on Leolin who enters on the opposite side of the room. He is confronted by 'the powers of the House'. The climax is unexpected, it comes during the service Leolin's brother Averill is invited to give in honour of Edith. After seeing the body of Leolin in London, he is emotionally impelled to preach on the worship of the false God found in gold and stately homes contrasting him with the Lord of love who stilled the Galilean waves, and in whose steps Edith had walked. His denunciation of those who
stone to death is directed against Aylmer's until the lady falls shrieking and is carried out. (Luke xiii.345). The conclusion follows from it: the mother soon dies, and sir Aylmer becomes imbecile; his one word is 'desolate'. The Aylmer family perishes; the Hall is demolished, and the vast estate divided up;

"And where the two contrived their dauther's Good,
Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made his run,
The hedgehog underneath the plantain bores,
The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow - warm creeps, and the thin weasel there follows the mouse, and all is open field".

In this way, we find that the range of the themes of Tennyson's verse tales is very wide and encompassing.