CHAPTER V

Romantic and Imaginative Tales
Alfred Tennyson's poems reflect the Victorian age in its totality. His Locksley Hall, The Princess, In Memoriam, Maud, Idylls of the King, Enoch Arden etc. all represent the then contemporary Victorian England in one aspect or the other. Yet this Victorian poet was Romantic in temperament, and if the "Apostles" had not persuaded him to become the spokesman of their moral and spiritual ideals, Alfred Tennyson would not have consciously forsaken the path of his predecessors.

All the great romantic poets had died by the middle of the 19th century, and the greatest of them — Coleridge, Shelley and Keats — much earlier. The rise of science and rationalism did much to cause a disintegration and decay of romantic energies, ideas and ideals. Still, writing about the middle of the century, Tennyson could not escape being influenced by the romanticism of the previous generation of poets. There is a strong romantic note in his poetry. He shared in the prolongation of romanticism.

The traditions established by the romantic poets were a love of natural scenes, a vindication of the simpler emotions in song, an interest in remote times and places, an acute sensitivity to beauty, a bent towards the wonderful

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1. Besides the 'Apostles', Carlyly's Clarion call "Close they Byron, open thy Goethe" given in Sator Resartus (1833) and his subsequent friendship with Carlyle also inspired him to don the mantle of the Victorian Bard and shed off the influence of the Romantics.
and mysterious, verging dangerously at times upon the merely surprising and eerie, an introspective lyricism tinged with an all-pervading melancholy love for common human beings and a certain formlessness in structure and expression. Though there are a number of romantic elements in Tennyson's poetry, he was not a purely romantic poet. While keeping sometimes his affinity with the romantics, he breaks away in certain other respects. He is Romantic in tone and temperament but classical in moral, form and structure of his poetry. In this connection Legouis and Cazamian have observed, "As the heir of Romantic tradition he completes and corrects it by incorporating into it the essential tenets of Classicism."

Tennyson's volumes of 1832, and 1842 contain a number of romantic and imaginative tales such as - 'The Miller's Daughter,' The Gardner's Daughter, The Lady of Shalott, 'A Dream of Fair Women', 'Dora', 'Audley Court' etc. 'These tales are clearly Romantic poems with the creation of a particular mood as one of their primary objectives, and they treat, in one way or another, the theme of withdrawal from the world. They provide some support, in fact, for the view that Tennyson at this time was a self-conscious artist who sought isolation from society through the creation of a dream world'.

beauty, off the dusty highway of human existence'. Despite Tennyson's classical sense of form and classical felicity of expression, the romantic note is much more stronger and more pronounced in these poems. There were two strains of the romantic movement: the first the more strictly 'romantic', best represented by Coleridge and Keats, with its love of picture and colour, the marvellous or mysterious, the far-away in time or place; the other, sometimes called naturalistic, of which Wordsworth, writing of the peasant around him, was the great exponent. Tennyson united these two strains more completely than any of his predecessors.

The poetry of the Romantic Revival had an influence on the poetic development of Tennyson. He owed a technical debt to the supreme skill of Coleridge as a metrist, but save in the imitative period of the early volume, Coleridge did nothing to shape Tennyson's art. Keats alone, whom the poet admired and revered above all his immediate predecessors, affected his poetic development. The sensuousness of Keats, the delicate sensitiveness to external impressions, the atmosphere of pensive beauty that hung over his scenic pictures, these matters appealed intensely to young Tennyson (Compton Rickett).

The merits of the above poems lie in their grace and
melody. The Lady of Shalott is a beautiful and lovely piece of medieval magic and haunting music. The Miller's Daughter, Dora, and The May Queen struck successfully the popular note of sentiment. A Dream of Fair Women is a wonderful poetry of imagination. These romantic tales are also known as English Idyls.

"It became one of the dominant forms of the Victorian period and that with which Tennyson's own name is particularly associated – the idyl i.e 'a little picture'. The idyls as employed by Theocritus and Virgil, frequently involves two or three shepherds who come together and speak in artless and simple language about their everyday affairs. But Tennyson's idyl was a highly sophisticated, not a simple form, and it had more to do with art than with shepherds. It was, indeed, a kind of coterie poetry, written by learned and highly cultivated men for their friends, and it was based on the premise that a delicate emotion expressed in a pure style came closer to aesthetic experience than the most magniloquent emotion hammered home. It was, in other words, a poet's poem, highly conscious of itself as art, and if the idyls of Theocritus and the bucolics of Virgil have become world famous, it is probably because quietude and charm, tenderness and pure beauty, appeal as powerfully to the great primary human affections as does heroic action. It was this form, which in Tennyson's work grew out of his use of the frame, that served as his means of responding to the
call for relevance."

In this way, in romantic and imaginative tales, Tennyson added a new genre to English poetry modelled on the pastoral poems of Theocritus. These tales are generally little pictures of contemporary English life written with a classical economy of language and making their effect by their atmosphere, vivid charm and humorous detachment.

One of the romantic and imaginative tales, is The Lady of Shalott. This poem first appeared in 1833 volume is regarded as one of Tennyson's masterpieces and, is an example of Tennyson's genius at a period when he brought the form and conception of his poetry up to a point which it never afterwards surpassed. It is a pure fantasy, entirely the result of the poet's imagination working on a legend which fascinated him at the time.

This tale was first published in 1833 volume entitled Poems Chiefly Lyrical and, again in the volume of 1842 in a much revised and, improved form. It is the first of Tennyson's poems dealing with the legend of King Arthur, as it deals with the love of the Lady of Shalott for Lancelot, one of the foremost knights of King Arthur. This poem is a prelude to work, Idylls of the King where he used this very material for another story entitled Elaine, the Lily

1. The English Idyls, from - The Poetry of Tennyson: by A Dwight Culler, page No. 113-114)
Maid of Astolat. Again an Italian romance upon the Donna di Scalotta is said to have suggested this poem.

It is charming poem of tender pathos and tragedy which recalls to our mind Tennyson's another poem Mariana. It is a tale of a lady who 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. (The Lady of Shalott image in Lawrence's earlier novels connotes merely the self-seeing, self-conscious one.) 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. Like 'The Palace of Art', the poem contains enough artistry to indicate Tennyson's urge to write poetry entirely for art's sake. The inadequacies of the 'weaving' are aesthetically presented in the correlatives of a story so imaginatively integrated that it confirms the conviction with which it was devised.

In this poem, Tennyson has captured the spirit of medieval romance and created the medieval atmosphere with light, skilful touches. The lady under the mysterious curse is like Coleridge's Christabel, or a figure in a pre-
And came I into the brown garden
Of Sir Lancelot,
A rose of gold on his heart, a
lady in his hand,
That sparkled in the pool of light,
But, from the hall she
Raphaelite picture. The language has the simplicity of medieval ballad-makers. Middle Ages were times of chivalry, knight - gallantry, woman worship, magic and witchcraft. The supernatural element in the poem, the strange curse on the Lady of Shalott, and the magic web, all pertain to the medieval period when supernatural beliefs were current:

"There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot."

Tennyson gave an interpretation of the story: "The new born love for something for someone in the world from she has been so long secluded takes her out of the region of shadows into that reality. 'She is awakened as the Princess in the Day Dream is awakened, but not to happiness; her love is hopeless and she comes out of the shadows only to die. It is love that brings the soul to life, but it may kill the body at the same time.

This poem 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 poem is a poem of many literary, artistic merits. It is a little fairy tale which can be interpreted symbolically and allegorically.
While Gerard Manley Hopkins praises the poem, as, "pure sensuous poetry", to be enjoyed for its romance, for its pictures and for its music, there are others who are not content to take it as a glittering fairy tale, and interpret it allegorically. The poem is not a modern allegory or symbolic poem but we may discover in it a hidden moral significance. Its story shows that a life of isolation, cut off from reality, is bound to result in frustration and tragedy. The day-dreams of an artist are shattered as soon as they come in contact with outside reality. As he faces the reality of life, his dreams are shattered, writes J.B. Steane in this connection, "The Lady of Shalott', then, is not an allegory, though as in Mariana, the images sometimes have the power of symbols. The mirror, for instance, suggests much beyond its role as an item in a fairy story. For as the Lady weaves, 'the mirror's magic sights', in her tapestry she is herself partly taking the role of the artist, and her existence in the island castle has something in common with the artist's apartness. Moreover, as she sees reality only through her mirror, so the artist may tend to experience vicariously, drawing his knowledge not from direct contact, but from other works of art. He has his own special nature, like the Lady: partly and affliction to him, this sense of difference, partly a blessing and possibly the very condition of his being an artist at all. For life in the ordinary day-to-day world be may be all
unfit, as was the Lady, and, for him as for her, only
disaster may follow the attempt to break bonds. This is not
the message of The Lady of Shalott, but it is, I think, a
part of the ground out of which the poem grew."

Some critics suggest an ethical interpretation of poem.
They regard it as illustrating the moral that a person who
lives in a world of dreams and fantasy finds it fatal to
come in contact with reality. A life of apartness from this
world is, therefore, to be condemned. This poem serves as a
medium, through which the poet conveys his favourite
doctrine, which is more clearly expressed in his In Memoriam-

"I hold it true, whatever befall,
I feel it, when I sorrow most,
Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all."

The human heart, though it is ever conscious of the
futility of desire and knows full well that the path of love
is beset with pains and pitfalls can never rest satisfied
with vague dreams and fanciful ideals. Man must "lose
himself in order to find himself." The Lady of Shalott,
conscious of the fact that misfortune will fall upon her if
she will move from her dreams and enchantment to the
realities of life, can not resist the call of nature and
suppress the yearnings of her heart. She feels that the
highest bliss of human life is to be attained by love and
sacrifice in the actual world of existence and not be
shutting oneself in the realm of fancy and dreams.
If an allegorical pointer is needed, the best is still that of R.H. Hutton, who said that the poem has for its real subject the emptiness of the life of fancy, however rich and brilliant, the utter satiety which compels any true imaginative nature to break through the spell which entrances it in an unreal world or visionary joys. The curse, of course, is that she shall be involved in mortal passions, and suffer the fate of mortals, if she looks away from the shadow to the reality. Nevertheless, the time comes when she braves the curse.

This poem is purely imaginative, fanciful and beautiful. Most critics regard the poem as a brilliant fancy. Stopford Brooke says, "It was never intended to have any special meaning. Tennyson was playing with his own imagination when he wrote it. The poem grew without intention like a flower which had not been on earth before. Yet out of all the fancy arose one touch of reality. What a secluded maid sees are but pictures but the hour comes when she says, 'I am half sick of shadows'. To know that the pictures of the mind are shadows is to be wild to seek reality. Then if love comes, hopeless love, all the world of phantasy breaks up, and the actual kills:

'Out flew the web and floated wide,
The mirror cracked from side to side,
The curse is come upon me, cried
The Lady of Shalott.'
If there be any meaning at all in this piece of gossamer fancy, that is it, and, like all Tennyson's meaning it is as simple as the day." It is a lyrical romance of a visionary land, and in beauty of sunlight and jewel flash is rarely surpassed. Prof. Baum regards the poem as "a merely descriptive - decorative piece."

Alfred Tennyson here anticipates Pre-Raphaelite poetry and provides a subject for the Pre-Raphaelite painter, W.Holman Hunt. This poem is an illustration of Pre-Raphaelitism in poetry. "The Pre-Raphaelites in the sister art of painting were those who attempted to convey with perfect fidelity what they saw in nature. They waged war against the conventionalities of art and their watchword was 'sincerity'. It is easy to see how an exact fidelity of nature would come to involve a wealth of detail and wealth of colour in nature - painting, and how the term might in this sense be applied to poems such as The Lady of Shalott. Its Pre-Raphaelitism consists in the extreme minuteness of its descriptions, which is anxious to omit no detail, and its gorgeous colouring."

This poem is among the most interesting narrative poems in the English Language. The story is well told with swiftness and straight forwardness. One of the Principal charms of this poem lies in its pictorial quality. It is to be enjoyed for its beautiful, vivid pictures. We are given a long succession of exquisite word-pictures. We begin with
an elaborate picture of landscape - the river, the long fields of barley and rye on both sides of it, the lilies blossoming round the island of Shalott, the whitening willows, the quivering aspens, etc. Then there are the sights seen by the Lady of Shalott in the mirror -

"Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd - lad,
Or long - hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd, Camelot."

The pictures of Lancelot convey to us the splendour and fascination of him. Exquisite and telling similes and metaphors are used to vivify the narrative and to make the readers see with their mind's eye the scene which is being described. One of the most beautiful word pictures in the poem is the one in which Sir Lancelot is likened to a meteor shooting across the sky:

"All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick jewell'd shown the saddle leather.
The helmet and the helmet - feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot,
As often thro' the purple night
Below the starry clusters bright
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moved over still Shalott."

Each picture is pre - Raphaelite painting, exquisite in detail, profuse in imagery, and glowing in colour. We see most clearly the effectiveness and abundance of Tennyson's artifice. This poem shows clearly the influence of Keats in its colour, its nature - pictures, its use of contrast and its hyphen - words. Like Keats, Tennyson had a keen
appreciation of natural beauty and he used his eyes, and the result is the unerring description which comes from a poet's command of language joined with first-hand observation. The poem is full of colours - the blue sky, the yellow barley, the grey towers. One critic calls it 'a landscape in water colours' - 'a picture shown to the music of flutes'.

In this poem Tennyson has clothed an old legend in mystery and magic. It combines two different aspects of Keats, the weird, magical suggestion of La Belle Dame Sans Merci and the definiteness and colour of a poem like The Eve of St. Agnes. The lady is a fairy lady: the land is a romantic, visionary land: the exact nature of the spell is undefined. The curse seems more to be dreaded because it is a mysterious curse which can not be met. The haunting refrain adds to the magic.

The contrast between the colour of Part III and what immediately precedes and follows: the warmth of the last stanza of Part II and the brilliant, rich colouring in Part III, and the dazzling sunlight of Part III and the heavy sky and rain of the first stanza of Part IV are striking.

There is a perfect harmony between scene and action in the poem. Tennyson has used Nature here to interpret as also to intensify human emotion. The weather harmonizes with each scene, helping to give the appropriate atmosphere (sympathetic background). Thus while in the beginning there
is peace in Nature to accord with the undisturbed state of the mind of the Lady of Shalott, the storm towards the close harmonizes with her tragic fate:

"In the stormy east-wind straining,  
The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining,  
Heavily the low sky raining."

The poem is perfect in respect of rhythm and harmony. Tennyson has used almost all his favourite devices for producing musical effects: alliteration, assonance of words etc -

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free  
Like to some branch of stars we see  
Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
The bridal bells rang merrily  
As he rode down to Camelot."

There is an artistic use of alliteration as in, "Four gray walls, and four gray towers", and in, 'only reapers, reaping early." There is also an artistic use of medial rhymes as in "Long fields of barley, and of rye, or in, "Chanted loudly, Chanted lowly." The music of this poem makes it highly lyrical. It has been called a 'musical dream'. "Nowhere did Tennyson excel the haunting music of this poem."

"The Lady of Shalott may be analyzed, like many popular ballads, as a metaphor without a tenor, as a symbol which speaks for itself. The poem tells a story: a lady grown tired of shadows leaves her tower, but on entering the world
she is destroyed. At a more abstract level, the poem is about thwarted transition, the failure to develop a merely potential existence into an actual one. It sings of the irreversible departure from the mysterious lure of beauty and shadows, and the process of becoming vulnerable and human. Each person will experience the poem at his own level of experience or at several levels. The poem is like a stone thrown into a pond, causing ever widening circles of meaning to go out from the centre.

The conclusiveness of the poem's conclusion seems predetermined. "The Lady of Shalott" is a fated and, in a sense, a suicidal poem. The self-imposed poverty of its rhyme words ('le, rye, sky, by" for example (11.1-4)), there diminution in number from four to three ('go, blow, below' [II.6-8]), to two ("Camelot", "Shalott" [ II,5,9]); the quick descent of each stanza to the stability of the refrain all these features are designed to secure the conclusiveness of the outcome. The separation of private and public worlds in the first three parts seems fated to will, in a destructive commingling of these worlds in part IV, the suicidal completion of the poem's design. All the energy of Tennyson's parable is directed towards its own termination. The Lady's cry "The curse is come upon me" (1,116) echoes the shriek of Blake's Thel. The Lady's shriek is that of 'the disappearing ghost or the uprooted mandrake,' as Northrop Frye observes of Blake's heroine; "and her tragedy
could be anything from a miscarriage to a lost vision." 1 By concealing his meaning elliptically in a narrative form, Tennyson the poet of sensation is able, not merely to describe a special fate, not merely to tell a story of unrequited love like 'Lancelot and Elaine', but to give a general representation of the process of dying into nature, of trying to acquire a stable human form. Tennyson is engaged in a lifelong search for stable identity. Renouncing the mysterious lure of a beautiful realm, a shadow world of 'negative capability', Tennyson is fully aware that a death of the imagination such as Wordsworth suffered is the price the poet may have to pay for trying, like the Lady of Shalott, to make his world human". 2

"More explicity and with a greater measure of self-identification, 'The Lady of Shalott' explores the maladjustment of the aesthetic spirit to the conditions of ordinary living. Though the lady, in this first of Tennyson's Arthurian poems, will reappear as Elaine of the Idylls of the King, she is here a grandeur and more elusive figure than the pathetic, love-smitten ingene, "the lilly maid of Astolat". She is the dedicated artist, the complement or antitype of the poet. Confined to her island and her high tower, she must perceive actuality always at

two removes at a sanctifying distance and then only in the mirror that catches the pictures framed by her narrow casement, making her disconsolate and "half sick of shadows." When the image of the bold Lancelot, who represents all the vitality she has been denied, flashes before her, she can no longer endure the burden of isolation; she turns to confront experience directly, and the magic web at once disintegrates. Released from the spell but herself destroyed, she floats, like the dying swan "chanting her death song", down by night to Camelot, where her beauty inspires awe but no real understanding:

"They crossed themselves, their stars they blest,  
Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire and guest,  
There lay a parchment on her breast,  
That puzzled more than all the rest,  
The well fed wits at Camelot.  
The web was woven curiously,  
The charm is broken utterly,  
Draw near and fear not - this is I,  
The Lady of Shalott."

"In the last stanza of the 1842 version, the fine irony of Lancelot's tribute to the lady's "lovely face" supplants the perplexity of the comfortable townsmen. Yet the mere presence in the 1832 poems of the 'well-fed wits' (who are judged by the epithet) underscores Tennyson's mistrust of the philistines and at the same time affirms his essential sympathy with the artistic temper which is both blessed and cursed by its difference." ( Jerome Hamilton Buckley) 

J.B. Steane comments, "The poem constantly moves inward to what we call the heart: through the spacious expanse of
field, road and sky, it penetrates further and further till it reaches the innermost nerve, the microscopic seat of the emotions, the centre of a power which for the individual can transform the whole exterior world. For Mariana, the beauty around her is poisoned by what is within her; for the Lady of Shalott, life is at first well enough. "She lives with little joy or fear" says the original version of the poem. So 'living and partly living', in Eliot's phrase existing in a kind of limbo, she observes the world at a second - remove and at least comes to no harm. But the reality that is borne in upon her is a recognition of her abnormality, a recognition that other people have something she has not:

'Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
I am half sick of shadows', said
The Lady of Shalott.

So again, as with Mariana, a pressure of frustration grows until it bursts as suddenly and uncontrollably as Sir Lancelot flashed into the crystal mirror."

"The Lady of Shalott is an elusive, secret spirit of nature, comparable to Arnold's Scholar-Gipsy, or Lucy Gray, or Shelley' Witch of Atlas.

Lancelot, is presented in terms of dazzling light and loud. Mythologically, he is the sun god, as the Lady is the moon goddess; he is the vita attiva, as she is the vita contemplativa; he is masculine and aggressive, reacting
boldly through the landscape, as she is feminine and recessive, enclosed within her tower”. It would seem as if he were utterly alien from her world of silence and shadow, and this is suggested formally in the poem by the fact the middle refrain - line of each stanza has hitherto been reserved for him and Camelot, as the last line is reserved for the Lady and her isle. But there is one image of powerful sexuality, an image which seems to be casually operative since it is repeated after the crisis,

"The helmet and the helmet - feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together."

which suggest that, like the human lovers, union for them is possible. And so, with Lancelot compared to a 'bearded meteor' flaming across the heavens,

"He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra Lirra', by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot."

thus intruding into her refrain as he had into her world. And in the next stanza she intrudes into his. Leaving her web and loom to look out directly upon the world, "she saw the water - lily" - image of her own recessive nature - 'bloom',

She saw the helmet and the plume,---
She look'd down to Camelot.
This brings about the catastrophe;
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The Mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

1. 'The Solitary Singer' from 'The Poetry of Tennyson' by A.Dwight Culler' Page No. -44.
The bare skeleton of this story, Tennyson derived from an Italian novella, but by adding the device of the mirror, the web, and the curse, which are Tennyson's own invention, he has made the story into a myth of the poetic imagination. The poet can not participate directly in reality but must view it through the mirror of the imagination and weave it into the tapestry of his art. The 'curse' under which he lives is simply the inescapable conditions of the poet's art. It is natural that he should fret against it at times and feel that, as in Plato's parable of the cave, he is living in a world of shadows. But unless he wishes to accept Plato's theory of art, which holds that work of art is but a copy of a copy of reality, he will not ultimately conclude that this is true. By violating the conditions of her art the Lady does not free herself from shadows but rather becomes subject to the shadow of death. Neither by turning away from her mirror and looking down at Camelot does she see reality. Rather, with an ironic introversion, she becomes

Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance -
With a glass countenance _ _ _ ."

And finally, Lancelot's response is hardly what she would have desired.

"As the Lady of Shalott floats down the river "singing her last song", she becomes a kind of dying swan, and in the first version of the poem this image was actually used. It
was a favourite with Tennyson, which he later employed of the barge carrying Arthur and the weeping queens to their home in the Great Deep and which he developed more fully in the lyric The Dying Swan. The value of this image is that it expresses, in its starkest form, the antithesis between art and life which is implicit in The Lady of Shalott. The swan sings so beautifully in death because it is pouring its whole life forces into song. Here sorrow is the very price and condition of song, or at least of this particular song. The Lady of Shalott sings two songs presenting two kinds of art. The song she sang to the reapers, is an art which is mimetic, pictorial, and very lovely. Lancelot represents the vital process. His own song "Tirra lihra," is a meaning less expression of pure vital energy. In response to that the Lady of Shalott grasps life but grasps death along with it, and her last song, a 'Carol, mournful, holy,/ chanted loudly, chanted lowly,' though lacking the bright objective pictures of her former song, does express her true tragic conditions.1

In this way this tale is "a framed work of art, the verbal equivalent of a Pre-Raphaelite painting, with its close detail, brilliant, enamelled descriptive passages, hypnotic rhythms, the element of magic or fantasy, and the strong narrative interest."

"Tennyson's bias towards classical and Arthurian subjects was strong. For this reason, and in response to the advice of friends, he made resolute efforts as he matured to direct his poetry toward his contemporary world. Having no great work in hand for long intervals, he was often contented with sketches or with poems of more patent narrative unity. The subject and design of some of the former were suggested by idylls of Theocritus, who had also presented scenes of contemporary life. The term 'idyl' here implies a short, finely wrought presentation of life, usually rural in background: it is predominantly descriptive narrative. Combining these two elements with reflection and excellence of form, *The Miller's Daughter* is a great example of the genre.

It was published in 1832 and after much revision in 1842. It was influenced by Mary Russell Mitford's *idyll*, *The Queen of the Meadow* (1827; reprinted in *Our Village*, 1828), a story which also suggested details in *The Brook*. Tennyson may have remembered Robert Bloomfield's *The Miller's Maid*, about an adopted daughter, in *Rural Tales* (1801). Tennyson says: "No particular mill, but if I thought at all of any mill it was that Trumpington, near Cambridge."

It is alive with details of an English scene. Literary

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influences have been suggested but 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. This poem focuses upon a picture, where a squire sitting over the walnuts and the wine, 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. He had no thought of Alice but, like an absent fool, 'angled in the upper pool.' All seemed to be conspiring, however to create their love. A love song he had somewhere heard beat time to nothing in its rhymes. 'Then leapt a trout.' This was the precipitating moment, the tiny action, which, like the fluttering of the film of soot in Coleridge's flue, ripples clear, there in the level food 'a vision caught my eye; / The reflex of a beauteous form' - He caught sight of a beautiful reflection like a warm, wavering sunbeam in the dark, dimpled beck. Looking up, he saw the miller's daughter leaning from the casement, and fell wholly in love with her there and then. The entire poem is, indeed, a recreation of that moment and of the mood of love which inspired, for as the poem closes, the two wander out across the wall to the old mill, where they watch the sunset "fire your narrow casement glass, / Touching the sullen below " - just as Alice had touched him long years before, just as the troubled waters, clearing to a mirror, had swept away the troubles of his youth.
And yet, this life has not been free from trouble. As the scene opens the old Miller has just died, and this event diffuses a tender sadness over the poem. They have also a child, though this event is so obscurely expressed that one is hardly aware it happened. And the circumstance which had made the youth so troubled in boyhood was the early death of his father, which made him fear that he too would die young. Life gives much, but more is taken away, opines the squire, and this truth is illustrated by the two songs inserted into the narrative, one, an imitation of Anacreon, which he made for their bridal day, and "That other song I made, / Half angered with my happy lot." The songs, so opposite in mood, re-create the pastoral structure, but this is perhaps even more effectively done by the second major picture of the poem, that of the old Miller himself. For though ostensibly irrelevant to the love that follows, it really established its mood. "I see the wealthy miller yet," begins the squire-

"In yonder chair I see him sit,
Three fingers round the old silver cup -
I see his grey eyes twinkle yet.
At his own jest - grey eyes lit up
With summer lightnings of a soul
So full of summer warmth, so glad,
So healthy, sound and clear and whole,
His memory scarce can make me sad."

The poem is a little too sentimental, and one regrets the condescension of the mother, who, in learning of her son's choice, 'wished me happy, but she thought/I might have looked a little higher.' But these are minor faults compared with the warm twilight glow that is diffused
through the picture, the golden haze through which even 1
trouble is seen by the eyes of love."

"The 1842 text contains a more convincing account of
their wooing. The first of two songs presented to Alice by
the squire's son is quite traditional but one of Tennyson's
best. Despite the lose of their child, mutual love was
strengthened. This is the first of Tennyson's English
idylls. It expresses a sensitive, manly genuineness, and it
ends, not with regrets, but with forward-looking action,
'where Past and Present, wound on one, Do make a garland for
the heart? This tail is 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'.

This tale focusing upon a feminine figure life The
Miller's Daughter was written about 1833-4 (Mem. i 103, and
Health MS) and published in 1842 among English Idyls.
Tennyson wrote it at Cambridge. The poem brings together
Tennyson's friendship for Hallam (the narrator's for
Eustace) and Hallam's love for Tennyson's sister Emily
(Eustace's for Juliet). Tennyson had thought of a series of
'Daughter' poems; cp. The Miller's Daughter (1 406) and The
Doctor's Daughter (1 307), like Tennyson's other 'English

1. The English Idyls; Book - The poetry of Tennyson by A.
Dwight Culler, page no. - 120.
2. Art and Life, Book - A Tennyson Companion, by F.B.
Pinion, page no. 87-88.
Idyls', it is indebted to Theocritus, especially the 7th Idyll. R. Pattison notes that Tennyson 'even approximates the name of one of Theocritus' characters, Eucreitus, in calling one of his own characters Eustace.' (Tennyson and Tradition, 1979, p.68)

"The Gardener's Daughter" springs from the deep affection which existed between Arthur Hallam and Emily Tennyson and the poet, its recollections are youthful, almost as tremulous with love as The Lover's Tale, and concentrated mainly on the outing of a single day. Much is imaginary, Eustace and his friend (the speaker) being painters. In 'The Ante - Chamber', which Tennyson indebted as an introduction to his dramatic monologue, the speaker invites a guest to look at Eustace's self-portrait; it is not a likeness (though some readers mistook it for Tennyson), but some lines clearly apply to Hallam, who is described as more mature and outward-looking than his painter-friend. Finally the guest is invited to another room to see another countenance. The speaker is Tennysonian; his fancy is more luxurious than Eustace's, and he had an eye for the picturesque in landscape and detail. 'The Gardener's Daughter' 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 of the poem, a picture in itself, perhaps prompted (though
THE
GARDENER'S
DAUGHTER
transferred to a humble setting) by Tennyson's temporary infatuation with Rosa Baring. Previously the pastoral view from the garden to the city had been invoked:

'A league of grass, washed by a slow broad stream,
That, stirred with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge - laden, to three arches of a bridge
Crowned with the minster - towers."

"An English Countryside and garden are seen with a painter's eye by a poet who is 'Lord of the senses five.' Love's ambience is in 'one warm gust, full-fed with perfume', as the painters enter the house. Happiness follows for both pairs of lovers, but the interim is left to the imagination, as the listener looks anticipatingly 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 final revelation is surprising, for the poem is richly suffused with youthful love and sensuousness."

It is one of Tennyson's most luxuriant poems, but when we examine the manuscripts we find, that it was one far more luxuriant, perhaps twice its present length and infinitely fuller not only of incident but also of description. Culler notes that in its longer form it was 'not an idyl but a tale, precisely in the manner of The Lover's Tale, and so provides a link between that earlier Romantic mode and the

Victorian idyl' (p.116). It shares with The Lover's Tale (1325) a romantically expansive style. Aubrey de Vere recorded of the poem (Mem. i 508-9): "The poet had corrected it as carefully as he had originally composed it in his head, where he was in the habit of keeping more than one poem at a time before he wrote down any of them." It told of the narrator's wooing of Rose, the gardener's daughter, but in the original there was much more 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. Fortunately, at a certain point Tennyson had the acumen to realize that the essence of his tale lay not in the narrative but in the picture which the narrator painted of Rose as she stood in her cottage door. And so it is on that picture that poem focuses.

The poem belongs with Rossetti's The Portrait and Browning's My Last Duchess as a member of that Victorian subgenre, the portrait by the artist of a dead girl whereas Browning is horrified at the thought of a living woman being imprisoned in a dead work of art, and Rossetti is thrilled at the idea of a form which somehow imitates the object without constituting it, Tennyson believed that the soul could be captured in the portrait painted by Love.

The subtitle of The Gardener's Daughter is The Pictures. The other picture is Eustace's portrait of his betrothed, Juliet, of which the narrator said, "(half in
earnest, half in jest,)'Tis not your work, but Love's.'
Tennyson believes that one does paint beautifully only that
which one truly loves. What does Tennyson love?

"Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love."

Though the gardener's daughter appears in a garden that
has some resemblance to the bower of the Sleeping Beauty or
of the other sequestered maidens, it is not absolutely a
hortus conclusus, cut off from the world. 'News from the
humming city comes to it/ In sound of funeral or of marriage
bells.' Neither is Rose herself a Sleeping Beauty. True,
"In that still place she, hoarded in herself,/Grew, seldom
seen." Still, her fame was widespread, and when the
narrator came to see her he found her, not warbling in her
bower, but engaged in a useful domestic work. A storm the
previous night had blown down one spray of a rose bush by
the cottage door, and she, as he entered, was reaching up to
replace it. Society ladies in those days assumed what they
called 'attitudes'. In a parlor or saloon, before a cluster
of admirers and arrayed in cashmere shawls or turbans, they
threw themselves into a series of postures. "O Attic shape,
fair attitude!" says Keats, but there is no fairer one than
that into which Tennyson froze the gardener's daughter. For
the real portrait is in words revealed by Tennyson in the
middle.
"For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught,
And blown across the walk.

A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side: the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade.

Half light, half shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man young."

"It is the centre of the poem," said Tennyson of the above passage; "it must be full & rich. The poem is so, to a fault, especially the descriptions of nature, for the lover is an artist, but, this being so, the central picture must hold its place." That is why he pruned the poem so drastically, eliminating metaphors and descriptions, placing Eustace's self-portrait in an ante-chamber, eliminating a lovely bit of autumn landscape which had been taken from Titan's "Three Ages of Man." For there are pictures within pictures in this poem. Like the Lady of the Lake and Godiva and the Sleeping Beauty, the Gardner's Daughter is framed within the narrative of her own wooing and by that successful wooing is brought out into the world. But then she is framed again by the husband's exhibiting her picture in later years and telling her story to the unnamed friend who listens.

Unlike 'The Gardener's Daughter' and 'The Miller's Daughter', this tale is less dependent on painting than

poetry and song and so is more Theocritean in structure. While The Gardener's Daughter and The Miller's Daughter focus upon a feminine figure, this poem involves a dialogue between two masculine figures. Combining dialogue with narrative description and songs, it bears a resemblance to the seventh idyll of Theocritus i.e. Thalysia (VII). But the social themes imjelled of Tennyson's poems on idyls, derive less from Theocritus than from Virgil, where the troubled political background in connection with the confiscation of estates provided an analogy to the troubles of the Reform Bill. Indeed, the significant thing about Tennyson's use of both Theocritus and Virgil is that he could use them so freely, simply reviving their forms in order to accomplish an analogous purpose in his own day.

This is part of the picnic repast enjoyed by Francis and the narrator in the orchard at Audley Court, which they have chosen in preference to the crowded town and its noisy quayside feast. They talk, argue a bit, sing a few songs, and then return through the dark to their boat.

As in the story or drama by Chekhov, the quality of the experience is everything, the sense of a mood delicately achieved. The poem begins in fustle and confusion_

"The Bull, the Fleece are cramm'd, and not a room
For love or money. Let us picnic there
At Audley Court."

1. The English Idyls : from - The Poetry of Tennyson by A Dwight Culler, page no. 121-122.
And so friends move off through the fields and, settling down upon the grass, create a kind of Victorian d'ejeuner sur l'herbe. Tennyson does not muffle the occasion but, in almost pre-Raphaelite manner, produces an intensely wrought genre painting of a Victorian picnic hamper.

Under the genial influence of the cider, they reminisce about old times, get onto the more dangerous present, argue heatedly about the cornlaws, and come together again upon the king. For these youths, though friends from of old, are diametrically opposed temperament and principles. Thus, when they sing their songs, they are of sharply contrasting temper. Francis Hale's is a cynical drinking song - "But let me live my life" - for in his view army, shop, public service, and love are equally unrewarding. It is precisely the right song to modulate from the quarrel into a happy mood again, but the narrator's is precisely right to follow it. For it is a softly lyrical nocturne, probably adapted from an Elizabethan song, of his love for Ellen Aubrey. It modulates into the conclusion. For as they go back across the fields and drop down the headland to the quay, they find the town all hushed, the bay calm.

"the harbour - buoy,
Sole star of phosphorescense in the calm,
With one green sparkle ever and anon
Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart."
"This poem", says Tennyson, "was partially suggested by Abbey Park at Torquay. Torquay was in old days the loveliest sea village in England and now is a town. In those old days I, coming down from the hill over Torquay, saw a star of phosphorescence made by the buoy appearing and disappearing in the dark sea and wrote these lines." Such serenity, however, required a discord to precede it, something to suggest the commercialism that would later sweep over the town. There was ever a third character, "John the storyteller, John/ The talker, steering downward with a thumb/ In either armhole." The heavy picnic hamper was adequate balance to the elfin phosphorescence of the sea, for these are among the antinomies that had to be reconciled in the poem. The two youths are brought together, not simply by patriotism but by youth, friendship, song, and the beauty of the evening. The scene is the perfect equivalent of the serene harvest - festival at the farm of Phrasidamus in Theocritus's seventh idyl.

"Audley court is exemplary in its apparent innocence of all tendentiousness. 'Francis' arrives by sea, the friends picnic, talk local and national politics and go home: we are not told what position each took about the Corn Laws, only that they were in despite but ended by laughing since Francis is a farmer's son, the only protagonist of the Idyls who is given a specific relation to the landscape in terms of either property or work, we can assume he was for a
policy of protection and that the speaker, a gentleman of leisure at least for the time, must have been a liberal, for free trade. The friendship mildly crosses class boundaries, akin to the cross-class marriages of the low Idyls where properted and artistic leisure wooes the working man's daughter, or artistic educated poverty is rejected by new wealth; the burden of it all is the bourgeois desire for national harmony. The two engage in a Theocriticcan singing match. Francis's song rejects the claims of love and of all public service, clerking or soldiering.

Be shot for six pence in a battle field,  
And shovelled up into some bloody trench 
Where no one knows? But let me live my life.

The speaker's song leaves all options for work aside, but though he sings of his own beloved, folded in her sister's arms, he has taken the original from a book(bought at Sir Robert's Sale). The Idyl places the need for a choice of life within a lovingly detailed English scene, from the picnic party whose contents are like fossils at intervals is the final homegoing prospect, stepping down beneath the moon.

till we reached 
The limit of the hills, and as are sank  
From rock to rock upon the glooming quay 
The town was hushed beneath us lower down 
The boy was sily calm, the harbone buoy,  
sole star of phosphorescence in the calm,  
with one green sparkle ever and anon  
Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart.
Donald Hair is surely right when he says that this suggests the spirit of *The Princess* holiday and pastime producing a mood of generous mental pleasure, in which imagination may be released, new possibilities conceived".

'Dora' is one of the 'English Idyls' written in 1835 and published in 1842 volume. To the exquisite refinement of an artificial world the stern story of 'Dora', taken from 'Dora Creswell' in 'Our Village', affords a startling contrast.

Dora is niece of the old farmer Allen. His dream is to see her married to his son William. When William stubbornly refuses to marry her, the old man in great anger asks him to leave his house within a month. William starts treating Dora harshly but the girl, out of sheer love, endures his indifference and hatred.

"The more he looked at her
The less he liked her; and his ways were harsh
But Dore bore them meekly .......

(11. 32-34)

Before the period of one month set by his father expires, William leaves the house "and half in love, half spite he wooed and wed a labourer's daughter". A son is born to him and a little after William dies in utter

1. English Idyls, Book - Alfred Tennyson, page no. 48-49.
2. Tennyson's comment on the poem was:
"'Dora' being the fate of a nobly simple country girl had to be told in the simplest possible poetical language, and therefore was one of the poems which gave most trouble." (A Memoir, p. 163)
poverty. Even during these days of his poverty, Dora keeps sending them provisions secretly. At William's death she comes to meet his wife Mary Morrison and tells her:

"I have obeyed my uncle until now
And I have sinned, for it was all through me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that is gone
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,
And for this orphan, I am come to you,
..... let me take the boy.
And I will set him in my uncle's eye
Among the wheat: than when his heart is glad
Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone."

(11. 57-62, 64-68)

Allen accepts the child but disowns Dora telling her never to see him in future. Weeping all along in the field, Dora reminds us of Keats' Ruth standing in tears amid the alien corn.

The poem ends with Allen taking all the blame to himself and accepting the two girls. Mary gets married again but it is Dora who still nurses her old love and with patience and self-effacement endures loneliness and all sufferings. She remains "unmarried till her death." No other female character in Tennyson shows such a marvellous enduring power as Dora does.

"Tennyson's intention, in this tale was to achieve the severity and simplicity of the Book of Ruth or the nobility of Wordsworth's Michael. But his harsh, bold style, in which (as in the third book of 'Paradise Lost') there is not a single metaphor or any descriptive passage, is the
counterpart not of the loving mind of Dora but of the harsh vindictiveness of the old man. Since Dora's strategy is to soften the mind of her uncle by bringing the child to him in the midst of the harvest plenty, that strategy should also be practiced on the reader".

Miss Mitford's rural scene has more life and colour, and her heroine's mission with the child when his grandfather is harvesting is successful. The happy ending in Tennyson is delayed. Dora returns to the child's mother; when they reach her uncle's home, in the hope of persuading the old man to relent, they find him fondling his grandson. No miracle is wrought by the child; it is only when he hears of his son's dying repentance that farmer Allan's guilt - ridden conscience finds relief in tears and remorse. Wordsworth flattered Tennyson when he told him that he had endeavoured all his life to write a pastoral like Dora. The poem is bare in its Biblical or Tolstoyan simplicity, but rather monotonous in movement and texture, whether the French term simplesse conveys its quality, as Matthew Arnold thought, is questionable. Dora's two visits to the harvest - field end effectively with the reiteration of 'and the reapers reaped, And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.' In conjunction with her repeated bowing in sorrow, the second the incidence of this passage (II. 99-107) suggests the influence of Wordsworth's note, and even more

of his Biblical illustrations, in defence of repetition as a device for communicating deep feelings.

"The May Queen succeeds in conveying excitement and piping notes. The tones of the New Year Sequel, with its antithetical frost and flowerlessness, are a little more subdued (not 'You must wake' and 'Effe shall go' but 'if you're waking'), though the dying girl has lost none of her decision ('You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade'). Her directing self-possession and unnatural primness are part of the emotional engineering within a situation which anticipates lying lonely in the grave when the flowers and swallows return. So pathetically appealing was the poem that Tennyson added a more Victorian conclusion for publication in 1842. The May Queen blesses the clergyman who has brought her peace, and speaks kindly of Robin, whose love she affected to despise in the days of her pride. Death is far sweeter to her than life, and she looks forward to the home of the blessed where the wicked cease from troubling; there she will be joined by her mother, her sister Effic, and by the clergyman. 'The May Queen' was, it seems, Tennyson's first effort to use poetic talent for the comfort and assurance of the public; never again did he administer so mawkishly to its sentimental piety".

This poem 'A Dream of Fair Women' was published in 1832 and later revised. It is supposed to be a dream influenced by Tennyson's reading of Chaucer's The Legend of Good Women (1384). Of the many starcrossed women a 'A Dream of Fair women', only Cleopatra is from Chaucer, but tennyson's portrait was inspired by Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra.

Great actions of the past, whatever their origin, maintain their appeal because they present life at a higher, more intense pitch than the contemporary world. So Tennyson thought, it seems, 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 incongruity of contemporaneities and his higher subject, as well as (one suspects) some problem with his imagery, made him jettison this opening. The verse, almost in the stanzaic mould of 'The Palace of Art', runs more freely, as when the subject, arising from thoughts on Chaucer's The Legend of Fair Women, is introduced: 'In every land I saw, wherever lightly illumineth, Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand The downward slope to death.' The poet hears 'sounds of insult, shame, and wrong, And trumpet blown for wars'. He starts, 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 violets recalls a period when he was innocent
A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN
and joyful. The heroines whose woe — he hears are Helen and Iphigenia, Cleopatra, Jephthah's daughter, then (very briefly) Rosamond, Queen Eleanor's victim. Before he can see others, dawn wakes him, and he observes Venus regnant in the east. His ineffectual struggle to return to his dream-world is the subject of a conclusion which is less felicitously conceived and expressed than the noble strain of 'The balmy moon of blessed Israel Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams divine' with its accompanying simile:

"As one that museth where broad sunshine leaves
The lawn by some cathedral, through the door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor
Within, and anthem sung, is charmed and tied
To where he stands, — so stood I, when that flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow."

The poem is noted for the beauty of its language and for its pictorial quality. Its diction is highly wrought and polished, and its style is elaborately brilliant. It is, like the Recollections of the Arabian Nights, remarkable for its pictorial art — its splendour of description. Tennyson's 'avoidance of the commonplace' is illustrated in this, perhaps, more than any other of his poems. Thus he writes 'argent' rather than silver', 'orbs' rather than 'eyes'(l. 158).

Cleopatra and Jephthah's daughter form the chief heroines of the Dream. The clear cut outlines of the two figures, are thrown out by the striking contrast between
them as depicted in the poem - the one, "a queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes", and the other, "a maiden pure." The portrait of Cleopatra is the most highly finished of the whole gallery.

Christopher Ricks writes, "A Dream of Fair Women" does not strikingly disintegrate, but then it never set itself much to integration. Its ostensible purpose - a vision of 'Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand/ The downward slope to death" - never becomes any kind of inquiry or once again charades. Iphigeneia, Helen, Cleopatra, Jephtha's daughter....: the line could as well have stretched out to the crack of doom. But, fragmentary and crude, there are some of the real concerns of Tennyson: the injustice to women; the sense that it would be better to have died long ago; "Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre", with consciousness buried alive; the destructiveness of a father's love; and above all, the entanglements of self-sacrifice, sacrifice, martyrdom, and suicide in the stories of Iphigeneia, Jephtha's daughter and Cleopatra. This preoccupations were to precipitate some of Tennyson's best poems; here they are too stagey and too brassy. The second stanza should alert us to an unalertness:

"Dan chaucer, the first warbler ....", wording which is fatigued in metaphorical condescension and awkward in assonance. The onomatopoeia is too easily satisfied, to battering: "And clattering flints battered with changing
Helen, who is immediate object of Oenone's hate, leads the train of fateful ladies, each of whom is a symbol of:

"Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death."

The cold bewildered victim of desire, Helen, regrets her life "where'er I came," He sight, "I brought calamity." Iphigeneia, who stands besides her, recalls the nightmare of her sacrifice, the ships and temples flickering in the intense light of Aulis and the "stern black bearded kings with wolfish eyes" immovable in their dark resolve. Cleopatra, on the other hand, cherishes defiant memories of her life in Egypt, of Antony and his passionate embraces, wit and extravagance, 'realm-draining revels, "and the final courage to die. Jephtha's daughter mingles nostalgia and exultation as she relives her eager girlhood in the gardens of Israel and it high fulfilment in submission to the divine purpose. But the fair Rosamond remembers only a sad betrayal and "the dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor." Meanwhile, the poet before whom the vision unrolls remains perplexed by the problem of evil and powerless, as a dreamer must be, to avert the defeat of gentleness, when:

"All those sharp fancies, by down lapping thought Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and did creep Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd and brought Into the gulf of sleep.

In the forest of the dead past, where he meets the lost ladies, he finds tokens of his own youth, and the smell of
violets pours back into his 'empty soul' the recollection of a time when he himself was "joyful" and "free from blame", an innocent in a world of pure sensation unclouded by moral misgiving or social demand.

The original introduction to this poem, which likened the ideal poet to a balloonist sailing above the "solid shining ground", seeing all in a broad new perspective, and waving signal flags to an earth-bound audience, was deleted from later editions thereof. But the simile, though awkwardly topical, nevertheless helps to suggest the mood of all that is best in the 1832 volume which includes this poem. The dream-vision itself has the dreamlike blend of participation and detachment that Tennyson still associated with the aesthetic act, the imaginative acceptance of diverse emotions and the careful maintenance of distance and necessary disinterest. If the poem shows a personal concern with the fate of all beauty that must die, it also reveals the power of objective portrayal, a skill at dramatising temperament through the deft use of symbolic setting. In drawing on historical or mythic past, it escapes the pressure of modern 'realism', The fair women especially Cleopatra, and her antithesis, Jephtha's daughter, transcend the accidents of a particular time, for the detail that sharpens their portraits is psychologically rather than literally accurate. Like Oenone, the Lady of Shalott and the daughters of Aesperus, they move across a literary
landscape which requires no concession to any specific local colour.

The above mentioned and analysed tales are quite romantic, imaginative and fanciful. They are clothed in such subtle graces of fancy, in such artful cadences, in such enamelled colouring, that they strike more the imagination than the heart. Romantic note in them is pure and dominant.

As we analyse these tales, we realize that Tennyson carries on the romantic tradition in his love of nature. In The Lady of Shalott, The Dream of Fair Women, The Gardener's Daughter, The Miller's Daughter etc. a romantic atmosphere of nature is present. The old halo of romance is captured there. Their setting is romantic. Tennyson's descriptions of Nature and pastorals and the beautiful landscapes that he has painted, are all full of romantic feelings. Like Keats, Tennyson sought to present the lovely spectacles of Nature surcharged with human feelings. Nature interests him as the background of human action, and he draws upon the infinites of sea and sky for similes to illustrate an action or state of mind. If the melancholy atmosphere is there, Tennyson depicts the autumn season to intensify the feelings of the character concerned and if joyful, the spring season. He could bring to perfect expression in words the observations of an eye that saw Nature as a whole, like a landscape, as well as in the minutest and the most exquisite details.
There is a scientific accuracy in his descriptions of nature. A Keats-like sensuousness and eye for colour characterise his nature-painting. This enhances the pictorial quality of his art. The sleep and quiet of his own Lincolnshire countryside broods over much of his work. It is that scene, etherealised by romance, and touched with the magic of sun and rain, which is pictured in The Lady of Shalott.

Tennyson was a great pictorial artist. He was gifted with unique powers for picturing a scene, a landscape, and a person in clear and vivid words. He could paint, as if in a flash, an accurate and precise picture in a single word or phrase. His words echo the sense and meaning. As we study his tales and verse poems, the sound and colour of them enter our soul, we think with him, we partake of his feeling, and are led to regions which he finds unable to open for us except in the suggestive way.

The Lady of Shalott is replete with fine pictures of the scenes which are reflectd in her mirror. The following stanza is a typical example of Tennyson's pictorial quality:

"All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
   And he rode down to Camelot,
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott."
We meet with his pictorial quality again in The Gardener's Daughter while he describes the garden -

"News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells;
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves you hear
The windy clanging of the minster clock;
Although between it and the garden lies
A league of grass, washed by a slow broad stream,
That, stirred with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
Crowned with the minster-towers.

The fields between
Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-uddered kine,
And all about the large lime feathers low,
The lime a summer home of murmurous wings."

In "The Miller's Daughter", he gives a wonderful description of the personality of the miller in such words that we feel as if that person is standing before our eyes:

"I see the wealthy miller yet,
His double chin, his portly size,
And who that knew him could forget
The busy wrinkles round his eyes?
The slow wise smile that, round about
His dusty forehead drily curled,
Seemed half-within and half-without,
And full of dealings with the world?

In yonder chair I see him sit,
Three fingers round the old silver cup -
I see his gray eyes twinkle yet
At his own jest - gray eyes lit up
With summer lightnings of a soul
So full of summer warmth, so glad,
So healthy, sound, and clear and whole,
His memory scarce can make me sad."

Romantic poetry is exceptionally rich in lonely, isolated, sad characters. Tennyson also gives us a rich galaxy of lonely and isolated women throughout his romantic tales specially the poems of the 1832 volumes such as - The
Lady of Shalott, Mariana in the South, Fatima, A Dream of Fair Women, Dora etc.

In the Lady of Shalott, he depicts the life of a lonely girl. She is as isolated as Mariana though not deserted like her, she is separated from the world both by water and by height. She feels sick of her loneliness:

"Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of Shadows", said
The Lady of Shalott."

In this situation of tiredness with her artificial life, she sees Sir Lancelot who represents life in the most attractive aspect. She leaves her web and her isolation to participate in life. But she dies under the effect of curse. The Lady has some similarity with Shelley's Witch of Atlas who lives alone in her solitary cave. She too grows weary of her seclusion and comes out to participate in life.

'A Dream of Fair Women' published in the 1832 volume, is full of lonely women. The poet's eyes are filled with tears when he watches:

'Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.
.....And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong
And trumpets blown for wars.
(11. 15-16, 19-20)

Iphigeneia, the daughter of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army in the Trojan war, suffers much when the Greek fleet, on its way to Troy, is detained by contrary
winds at Aulis. In order to appease the Gods, Iphigeneia is sacrificed to Artemis. She says:

"My youth ....was blasted with a curse
This woman was the cause.
(11. 103-104)

"This woman" is Helen for whom the ten years long war was fought. Iphigeneia describes her death scene:

"My father held his hand upon his face,
I, blinded with my tears,
Still strove to speak; my voice was thick
with sighs
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish eyes
Waiting to see me die
.... the bright death quivered at the victim's throat;
Touched; and I know no more."
(11. 107-112, 115-16)

All this shows that a Tennyson was at his best in the elegiac mood. Dora, The Lady of Shalott, women in A Dream of Fair Women all of them are tragic figures. Tennyson gives a pathetic description of them.

Tennyson is a great love poet, mainly a poet of conjugal love. He is a typical victorian in his treatment of love and sex relationship. "Tennyson elected to treat of love, not with Byron as an elemental force, or with Shelley and Browning as the transcendental passion, but as a domestic sentiment." says 'Compton Rickett'.

Horton in his biography of the poet points out, "It was to be not the least of his lessons to his time, that Tennyson from the first saw paradise regained not in a
monastery, but in a home.....Tennyson flung the light of romance over the familiar, and the home shone with unearthly radiance." The Miller's Daughter is a "simple story of true sweethearting and married love but raised ......into a steady and grave emotion worthy of love built to last for life betwixt a man and woman. This was the sort of love for which Tennyson cared, which was not at all in the world where Keats lived."

It is married love which Tennyson extols; he has no use for passion which is not sublimated into conjugal love. It was painful for him to contemplate even the possibility of any relation between man and woman other than the conjugal. "The Shadows of the world, the reflection of which so distressed the Lady of Shalott, included, it is true, "two young lovers" walking together in the moon-light, but we are at once reassured by the statement that these two lovers were, "lately wed."

Dora is a great example of sincere love. She nourishes a deep and passionate love for William and though William does not reciprocate her love, she continues to love him. After the death of William, she supports his family, helps in the re-settling of his wife and ultimately dies preserving love for him in her heart. She sacrifices herself for love.
However, Tennyson's idealization of domestic love does not mean that passion and the ecstasy of passion are entirely absent from his poetry. There are places in which passion leaps out with all its intensity. In the *Gardener's Daughter*, the lips of the girl are so red and warm that the sun doubles its warmth by dwelling upon them—

"But the full day dwelt on her brows,
and sunned
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man young."

Again in *The Miller's Daughter* we have a passionate and sensuous picture of the miller's daughter—

"It is the miller's daughter,
And she is grown so dear, so dear,
That I would be the jewel
That trembles in her ear:
For hind in ringlets day and right,
I'd touch her neck so warm and white.

And I would be the girdle
About her dainty dainty waist,
And her heart would beat against me,
In sorrow and in rest:
And I should know if it beat right,
I'd clasp it round so close and tight.

And I would be the necklace,
And all day long to fall and rise
Upon her balmy bosom,
With her laughter or her sighs,
And I would lie so light, so light,
I scarce should be unclasped at night."

These love idyls generally are from a male point of view. Arthur Hallam was strongly sympathetic to the value Tennyson put on love in relation to art. Tennyson said that
'The Lover's Tale' was 'very rich and full'; and that 'allowance must be made for abundance of youth... The poem is the breath of young love' (Ricks, Poems, p.300). The same sense of abundance running to excess is found in comments on The Gardener's Daughter and tacitly, in the number of lines suppressed either after first publication or from manuscripts. The lovers of The Gardener's Daughter, and other tales are all artist. These tales are concerned with aesthetic representation as much as with men's love of women.

The Miller's Daughter celebrates courtship and marriage sanctioned by parental consent. Tennyson wanted to write about love as a force that fuses persons and the world, the self and the other-than-self that defines it, involving art, nature and time. In his 1831 review, Hallam expressed a hope that Tennyson's poetry would bring 'our over-civilized condition of thought into union with the fresh productive spirit that brightened the morning of our literature' - with that curious reversal by which dead precursors were seen as youthfully vigorous, and modern artist prematurely aged. Love mainly presides over these tales. These landscape poems engage desire and disturbance, incorporating primitive feeling in sophisticated art.

The Venetian colourist Titian was favourite of Tennyson, and Hallam thought their imagination and style alien. Tennyson himself acknowledges that the autumn scenes
of 'The Gardner's Daughter' were taken from the background of a Titian. Tennyson's love poems, thus, should be read in the light of Titian's glowing colour and female forms, the landscapes of Claude and Turner, and the image of Narcissus. His own studies of solitary women like Mariana, The Lady of Shalott are also recalled, with images of enclosed places like islands in water, or of reflections in mirrors or on water. In the Idyls these are framed by some account of male friendship and retrospect - the days described are unfolded in the orbit of memory. This sense of benign maternal enclosure is intensified by memories of the woodland refuges of landscape painting, as some lines rejected from The Gardner's Daughter' make clear:

'On either side the figure where one caught
A glimpse of landscape crisp with shining woods
And summer bolts.....

(Ricks, Poems, p.510)

The scenes, charged with emotion, are also given definition by the idea of the city:

"Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love....
(The Gardner's Daughter, 33-4)

The woman's soul is also a metaphor for the lover's own feelings: in the manuscript lines it is his own image he worships in her eyes - until, shockingly, he sees the image of another man there, "There in my realm and even on my throne"(582). In the manuscript of The Miller's Daughter the lover wishes to be her mirror, but also to be the song
she sings and the book she reads, so in the manuscript of The Gardener's Daughter she 'reads' her lover's glances. Marriage sexual maturity and fulfilment are at once imagined as leading on to death: not a death of attrition into skeletal bones but one of composting, becoming rich food for further fruition. Even in The Miller's Daughter where the married lovers survive to re-encounter, from his perspective, the scenes of first love, the meeting of eyes is not entirely direct and unequivocal. It is prefigured by his sighting of the girl's image reflected in water and wavering (76-8). The closing image is of a sunset reflected on to a window and from there on to water, touching the sullen pool below into illusory fire (235-46).

In the Gardener's Daughter the speaker's friend has painted the beloved:

those eyes
Darker than darkest pausing, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of March.
(26-8)

in so far as these love poems are about love for specific women, our account should be framed by Dora and by Locksley Hall (1842). Dora like The Miller's Daughter is taken from a story by Mary Russel Mitford, and attempts Wordsworth's simplicity in praising the devoted love of women - for a man, for each other, for a child - that heals the division of masculine harshness. Locksley Hall in contrast damns the girl who has submitted to marriage for money and fantasizes
escape to exotic Edens - a colonialist fantasy that haunted Tennyson's writing from time to time. Neither the sentiment of Dora nor the invective of Locksley Hall is in tune with the feeling of the characteristic English Idyl, whose fusion of classical form and modern landscape provides the perfect medium for Tennyson's writing of love and love of writing.

Tennyson was a great metrical artist as he used great variety of metres and treated all of them with a remarkable freedom. His 1832 volume in which most of the romantic and imaginative tales are there, was extraordinarily precocious technically and showed that he had already fully mastered the principles of English prosody and realized to a surprising degree the possibilities of their application. There are several important poems which, though not all of them had yet reached the perfection to which subsequent revision brought them, showed that his grasp of structure and rhythm was marvellous.

The Lady of Shalott is the triumph of metrical art. It is metrical tour de force, written in a stanza of seven lines, the first four all with the same rhyme ending and the last three also with one, though a different, rhyme ending, and a refrain after the third and the fourth lines. This difficult metre, which is handled with great lightness and freedom, gives the poem an extraordinary speed and 'punch'.

The Dream of Fair Women presents a series of pictures
and is quite dramatic. It is composed in slightly differentour-line stanzas, the slow, rich movement of which gives
the effect of tapestry.

The Miller's Daughter and 'The May Queen' are the
earliest examples of Tennyson's popular ballads. The May
Queen freshowed the technique which was to apply to all
the popular ballads of his later life—'The First Quarrel',
'Rizpah'. 'Despair' and so on. It is written in a rising
rhythm of seven iambics, irregularly varied by anapaests,
by the inversion of a foot (particularly at the beginning of
the line,) by the use of a single suspended syllable in the
middle of the line, and by the variation of the caesura or
natural sense—break in the line.

The variation of caesura is very frequent:
"He thought I was a ghost, mother,/for I was all in white,
And I ran by him without speaking/ like a flash of light."

In the second line the caesura comes one syllable later
than in the first. It is all because of the flexibility of
Tennyson's verse and his control of rhythm that he was able
to use the metre for different purposes i.e.—for the
nostalgic richness of 'The Gardener's Daughter', for the
austere and restrained emotion of Dora and others.

In these poems, sound and rhythm are intimately and
deliberately expressive. These poems, for this reason, are
intensely felt and are melodious. Whether narrative, lyric
or elegiac, he often used his control of sound and rhythm
for more definite ends than the production of melody. For example, the third of these lines from *The Gardener's Daughter* describing the long-drawn onset of night:

"....'or as once we met
Unheedful, tho' beneath a whispering rain
Night sli'd down one long stream of sighing wind
And on her bosom bore the baby sleep."

Thus Tennyson by the above tales added to English poetry a body of work that deserves to be ranked with the best of all other poets, except Shakespeare only, in virtue of its astonishing desplay of poetic art.

To conclude, I have to say that these imaginary and romantic tales are works of a subtle and delicate art. They are among the finest of Tennyson's poems, certainly, the most neglected in proportion to their merit of all of Tennyson's works. Some have an abiding charm; several present living pictures of rural England. Social criticism runs deeply in 'Dora' which illustrate the baneful effect of parentally arranged marriages. They are true to character, and almost inevitably present partial truths. John Sterling found the 'most valuable part of Mr. Tennyson's writings' in the like poems, which he thought 'a real addition to our literature'. 'The heartfelt tenderness, the glow, the gracefulness, the strong sense, the lively painting in many of these compositions set them far above the glittering marvels and musical phantasms of Mr. Tennyson's mythological romances, at first sight the most striking portion of his
works." These poems have the universality of interest and appeal. Their value lies simply in the beauty and charm with which they invest their subject. There is a kind of golden haze, a lucent atmosphere, in which everything is enveloped. They are the happiest of Tennyson's poems. They are poems of youth, of the heyday of one's existence, when love and art, nature and society are all clothed in a freshness which they will later lose. And yet they are not poems of escape. They are the poems of the middle range of life and of the middle class. They have the cloying sweetness and classicality at the same time that is not achieved by any other Tennyson's poems.