

## ALFRED TENNYSON

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, (1st Baron Tennyson) (1809–1892) was born in Lincolnshire. Though he could trace his lineage back to King Edward III, Tennyson was the son of a rector. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and published his first work of verse in 1830. His popularity continued to grow through the 1830s as he melded aspects of Romanticism with a keen interest in ancient literature and mythology (especially Greek and Celtic). Tennyson was succeeded by Wordsworth as Poet Laureate in 1850; the income allowed him to marry Emily Sellwood with whom he had two sons.

Tennyson is often caricatured as a booster of the English Colonial Empire and an intellectual lightweight compared to the Great English Romantics such as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats. However, he was a master of the poetic structure, meter, rhythm and imagery. Like Browning, he was also a master of the dramatic monologue—capable of creating keen psychological portraits of his subjects. He was also a highly effective narrator in verse—best exemplified by his *Idylls of the King* (1856-1888), his epic retelling of Arthurian legends. His elegy for his friend Arthur Hallam *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850) is considered one of the finest of the genre in English.

### THE LADY OF SHALOTT<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

On either side the river lie  
Long fields of barley and of rye,<sup>2</sup>  
That clothe the *wold* and meet the sky;  
And thro' the field the road runs by  
To many-tower'd *Camelot*;  
And up and down the people go,  
Gazing where the lilies blow  
Round an island there below,  
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,<sup>3</sup>  
Little breezes dusk and shiver  
Thro' the wave that runs for ever  
By the island in the river

- 1 According to Thomas Malory's *Morte' D'Arthur*, Elaine of Astolat falls in love with Lancelot after he defeats all of Arthur's knights in a joust at her father's Castle Astolat (Shalott). Lancelot receives a thigh wound which Elaine helps to heal at Astolat, but realizing her unrequited love for him, Lancelot leaves her. She dies of grief ten days later. According to her final wishes her body is placed in a boat and floats down the Thames River from Astolat to Camelot, Arthur's legendary castle.
- 2 Barley is a grain used for animal grain or fermented into ale; rye is a grass used for feed or fermented into whiskey.
- 3 Willow trees are associated with sorrow (particularly the "Weeping Willow"; the leaves of aspen trees quiver in the wind—evocative of the Lady's emotional state.

Flowing down to Camelot.  
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,  
Overlook a space of flowers,  
And the silent isle imbowers  
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd  
Slide the heavy *barges* trail'd  
By slow horses; and unhail'd  
The *shallop* flitteth silken-sail'd  
Skimming down to Camelot:  
But who hath seen her wave her hand?  
Or at the casement<sup>4</sup> seen her stand?  
Or is she known in all the land,  
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early  
In among the bearded barley,<sup>5</sup>  
Hear a song that echoes cheerly  
From the river winding clearly,  
Down to tower'd Camelot:  
And by the moon the reaper weary,  
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,  
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy  
Lady of Shalott".

#### PART II

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.  
She knows not what the 'curse' may be,  
And so she weaveth steadily,  
And little other care hath she,  
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear<sup>6</sup>  
That hangs before her all the year,  
Shadows of the world appear.  
There she sees the highway near  
Winding down to Camelot:  
There the river eddy whirls,  
And there the surly village-*churls*,  
And the red cloaks of market girls,  
Pass onward from Shalott.

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;

- 4 A casement is a window, often recessed, with sashes that open and shut; it is also a tunnel or opening in a military fortification.
- 5 Ready to be reaped.
- 6 A weaver would traditionally work from the rear of a fabric and use a mirror to see the pattern or design on the front .

And sometimes thro' the mirror blue  
The knights come riding two and two:  
She hath no loyal knight and true,  
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
To weave the mirror's magic sights,  
For often thro' the silent nights  
A funeral, with plumes and lights,  
And music, went to Camelot:  
Or when the moon was overhead,  
Came two young lovers lately wed;  
"I am half-sick of shadows," said  
The Lady of Shalott.

### PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
He rode between the barley *sheaves*,  
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,  
And flamed upon the brazen *greaves*  
Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
A redcross knight<sup>7</sup> for ever kneel'd  
To a lady in his shield,  
That sparkled on the yellow field,  
Beside remote Shalott.

*cone-shaped bundles*  
*shin-guard type armor*

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,  
Like to some branch of stars we see  
Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
The bridle bells rang merrily  
As he rode down to Camelot:  
And from his blazon'd baldric<sup>8</sup> slung  
A mighty silver bugle hung,  
And as he rode his armour rung,  
Beside remote Shalott.

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,  
As he rode down to Camelot.  
As often thro' the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor,<sup>9</sup> trailing light,  
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;  
On *burnish'd* hooves his war-horse trode;  
From underneath his helmet flow'd  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot.

*polished*

7 A likely reference to the Red-Cross Knight, hero of Edmund Spenser's Elizabethan epic poem *The Fairie Queen*.

8 A baldric is a belt worn partly around the waist and up over one shoulder. It is used to carry a sword, weapon, or in this case a bugle.

9 Perhaps a comet, an ominous sign.

From the bank and from the river  
He flashed into the crystal mirror,  
"Tirra lirra," by the river  
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom;  
She made three paces thro' the room,  
She saw the water-lily bloom,  
She saw the helmet and the plume,  
She look'd down to Camelot.  
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.

### PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,  
The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining,  
Heavily the low sky raining  
Over tower'd Camelot;  
Down she came and found a boat  
Beneath a willow left afloat,  
And round about the *pro*w she wrote  
'The Lady of Shalott.'  
And down the river's dim expanse--  
Like some bold seer in a trance,  
Seeing all his own mischance--  
With a *glassy* countenance  
Did she look to Camelot.  
And at the closing of the day  
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;  
The broad stream bore her far away,  
The Lady of Shalott.

*front of a boat*

*dazed?*

Lying, robed in snowy white  
That loosely flew to left and right--  
The leaves upon her falling light--  
Thro' the noises of the night  
She floated down to Camelot;  
And as the boat-head wound along  
The willowy hills and fields among,  
They heard her singing her last song,  
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,  
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
Till her blood was frozen slowly,  
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,  
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;  
For ere she reach'd upon the tide  
The first house by the water-side,  
Singing in her song she died,  
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,  
By garden-wall and gallery,

A gleaming shape she floated by,  
Dead-pale between the houses high,  
Silent into Camelot.  
Out upon the wharfs they came,  
Knight and *burgher*, lord and dame,  
And round the prow they read her name,  
'The Lady of Shalott'

*middle-class*

Who is this? and what is here?  
And in the lighted palace near  
Died the sound of royal cheer;  
And they cross'd themselves for fear,  
All the knights at Camelot:  
But Lancelot mused a little space;  
He said, "She has a lovely face;  
God in his mercy lend her grace,  
The Lady of Shalott".

"Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal"

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;  
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;  
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:  
The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.  
Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,  
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.  
Now lies the Earth all Danaë<sup>10</sup> to the stars,  
And all thy heart lies open unto me.  
Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves  
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.  
Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,  
And slips into the bosom of the lake:  
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip  
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

ULYSSES<sup>11</sup>

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.  
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink

10 According to Greek Myth, Zeus visited Danae, daughter of King Acrisius, in a beam of sunlight or shower of gold and impregnated her with the hero Perseus.

11 The speaker of this dramatic monologue is Ulysses (the Roman form of the Greek Odysseus), who has returned to his island kingdom of Ithaca after twenty years (ten during the Trojan War as recounted in the *Iliad* and ten during his trip home recounted in the *Odyssey*). The notion that Ulysses/Odysseus as the restless seeker of new experience (dissatisfied with his faithful wife Penelope) is derived from Dante's *Inferno* (Canto 27) Ulysses-Odysseus is counted among the treacherous (after all he came up with the idea of the Trojan Horse); in the *Inferno*, Ulysses recounts leaving Ithaca at the end of his life to make a final journey.

Life to the lees<sup>12</sup>: all times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades<sup>13</sup>  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;<sup>14</sup>  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust *unburnish'd*, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.<sup>15</sup>

*unpolished*

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle--  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.<sup>16</sup>  
There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:  
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,  
Souls that have toil'd and wrought, and thought<sup>17</sup> with me--  
That ever with a frolic welcome took

12 To drink to the bottom of the barrel.

13 A V-shaped cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus, perhaps used for navigation.

14 Ulysses has a bit of an ego?

15 Ulysses seeks not simply experience and knowledge, but to expand beyond what is already known and thought. In one sense, he is like the figure Faust, who would sell his soul for knowledge; in another sense, he epitomizes the toil and industry of the Victorian world where technological innovation was transforming Europe and the world.

16 Telemachus comes across as a good government "paper pusher" style reformer, unlike the mighty Ulysses, who has striven with Gods.

17 Ulysses is emblematic of the classical Greek quest for knowledge for knowledge's sake. Cf. Arnold's discussion of Hellenism.

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
 Free hearts, free foreheads--you and I are old;  
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
 Death closes all; but something ere the end,  
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.<sup>18</sup>  
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:  
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep  
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,  
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
 Of all the western stars, until I die.  
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,<sup>19</sup>  
 And see the great Achilles,<sup>20</sup> whom we knew.  
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
 We are not now that strength which in old days  
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;  
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

#### THE LOTOS-EATERS<sup>21</sup>

"Courage!" *he* said, and pointed toward the land,  
 "This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."  
 In the afternoon they came unto a land,  
 In which it seemed always afternoon.  
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,  
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.  
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;  
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream  
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

*Odysseus*

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,  
 Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
 And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,  
 Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
 From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,

18 Both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* Ulysses has had to match wits with Gods such as Neptune.

19 According to Greek mythology, the Happy Isles or Islands of the Blessed were believed to lie in the vast ocean west of the Mediterranean; here human heroes or those the god has blessed lived in heavenly joy.

20 The greatest hero of the Greek army during the Trojan War, he kills the Trojan hero Hector and the Amazon Warrior Queen Penthesilea. He was invincible except for his heel (where the troublesome Paris shot him with an arrow and killed him).

21 In Book IX of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his men take refuge with the lotus-eaters, whose plant has an opiod effect that makes them forgetful of home and their troubles. Odysseus force his men back to the ship and lashes them to their benches as they weep for lost oblivion.

Three silent *pinnacles* of aged snow, *peaks*  
 Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,  
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven *copse*. *woodland*

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown  
 In the red West: thro' mountain *clefts* the *dale* *crevices: valley*  
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale  
 And meadow, set with slender *galingale*; *flowering grass*  
 A land where all things always seem'd the same!  
 And round about the keel with faces pale,  
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.<sup>22</sup>

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
 To each, but whoso did receive of them,  
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave  
 On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,  
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;  
 And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.<sup>23</sup>

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore;  
 And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,  
 Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore  
 Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
 Then some one said, "We will return no more";  
 And all at once they sang, "Our island home  
 Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam".

#### CHORIC SONG<sup>24</sup>

1  
 There is sweet music here that softer falls  
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;  
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;  
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.  
 Here are cool mosses deep,  
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy<sup>25</sup> hangs in sleep.

2  
 Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,

22 Note the contrast between the rosy flame of the boat and the pale-faced Lotos-eaters.

23 The down-side of the Romantic search for the ecstatic moment? Cf. Keat's "unheard music."

24 Odysseus' crew form a kind of "chorus"--like that in Greek drama--hence this "song" from their communal point of view.

25 Opium is extracted from the poppy.

And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
While all things else have rest from weariness?  
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,  
We only toil, who are the first of things,<sup>26</sup>  
And make perpetual moan,  
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:  
Nor ever fold our wings,  
And cease from wanderings,  
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;  
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,  
"There is no joy but calm!"  
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

3

Lo! in the middle of the wood,  
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud  
With winds upon the branch, and there  
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,  
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon  
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow  
Falls, and floats adown the air.  
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,  
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,  
Drops in a silent autumn night.  
All its allotted length of days,  
The flower ripens in its place,  
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,  
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

4

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,  
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.  
Death is the end of life; ah, why  
Should life all labour be?  
Let us alone.  
Time driveth onward fast,  
And in a little while our lips are dumb.  
Let us alone.  
What is it that will last?  
All things are taken from us, and become  
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.  
Let us alone.  
What pleasure can we have  
To war with evil? Is there any peace  
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?  
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave<sup>27</sup>  
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:  
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,  
With half-shut eyes ever to seem  
Falling asleep in a half-dream!  
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,  
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;

<sup>26</sup> The Great Chain of Being (as well as the Theory of Evolution) deemed humankind as the most developed creature.

<sup>27</sup> An oxymoron.

To hear each other's whisper'd speech:  
Eating the Lotos day by day,  
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,  
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;  
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly  
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;  
To muse and brood and live again in memory,  
With those old faces of our infancy  
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,  
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

6

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,  
And dear the last embraces of our wives  
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change;  
For surely now our household hearths are cold:  
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:  
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.  
Or else the island princes over-bold  
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings  
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,  
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.<sup>28</sup>  
Is there confusion in the little isle?  
Let what is broken so remain.  
The Gods are hard to reconcile:  
'Tis hard to settle order once again.  
There 'is' confusion worse than death,  
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,  
Long labour unto aged breath,  
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars  
And eyes grow dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

7

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,<sup>29</sup>  
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)  
With half-dropt eyelids still,  
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,  
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly  
His waters from the purple hill--  
To hear the dewy echoes calling  
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine--  
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling  
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!  
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,  
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

8

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:  
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:  
All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone:

<sup>28</sup> Under the influence of the lotos, the Trojan warriors feel that they have been long forgotten at their island home of Ithaka, ruled by Odysseus. The Trojan War has lasted ten years.

<sup>29</sup> Amaranth is a genus of plants; in ancient Greek folklore its long-lasting flowers associated it with immortality. Moly is a mythological plant with plant stalk and white flower perhaps related to the actual plant the snowdrop: in the *Odyssey*, Hermes gives it to Odysseus to protect him from Circe's magic.

Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone  
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is  
 blown.  
 We have had enough of action, and of motion we,  
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was  
 seething free,  
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains  
 in the sea.  
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,  
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
 On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.  
 For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd  
 Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd  
 Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:  
 Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,  
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and  
 fiery sands,  
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships and  
 praying hands.  
 But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song  
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,  
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;  
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,  
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,  
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;  
 Till they perish and they suffer--some, 'tis whisper'd--down  
 in hell  
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,  
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.<sup>30</sup>  
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore  
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;  
 Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

### LOCKSLEY HALL<sup>31</sup>

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn:

- 30 Asphodelus are a genus of European perennial flowering plants (the white asphodel has a six-petaled flower). According to Greek mythology, the underworld has a limbo-like meadow of asphodels for unheroic souls unable to achieve access to the Elysian Fields, reserved for heroes and the blessed.
- 31 Locksley Hall is a fictional manor and his unnamed speaker is a soldier traveling with a group of soldiers. Tennyson took as his model the *Mu'allaqat* or *The Hanging Poems* of pre-Islamic Arabia which he read in a translation by Sir William Jones. The *Mu'allaqat* were literally "hung" on the Kaaba, a sacred shrine in pre-Islamic Mecca, Arabia (and not the most sacred shrine of Islam). Tennyson follows the poems' usual format: the speaker, traveling with a group of male friends, stops at the site of a lover's previous home (this is usually a deserted encampment for the nomadic Arabs). He pines for his lost love, often breaking down emotionally, but his poetic outpouring allows himself to stay his grief. Tennyson wrote the poem in trochaic octameter (trochee=long syllable followed by a short one—the opposite of the iamb); the final syllable of the line is dropped so the lines are sometimes call "fifteeners" (i.e., fifteen syllables per line).

Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews<sup>32</sup> call,  
 Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,  
 And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,  
 Did I look on great Orion<sup>33</sup> sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,  
 Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime  
 With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;  
 When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed:

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see;  
 Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.--

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;  
 In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;  
 In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,  
 And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,  
 Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,  
 As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd--her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs--  
 All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes--

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong";  
 Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long".

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands;  
 Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;  
 Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,  
 And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,  
 And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!  
 O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,  
 Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

32 A sea-bird, indicating fictional Locksley Hall's seaside location.

33 Orion and the Pleiades are star constellations.

Is it well to wish thee happy?--having known me--to decline  
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by day,  
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown,  
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,  
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are glazed with wine.  
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought:  
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand--  
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,  
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!  
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!  
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead of the fool!

Well--'tis well that I should bluster!--Hadst thou less unworthy proved--  
Would to God--for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?  
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should come  
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging rookery<sup>34</sup> home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?  
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did she speak and move:  
Such a one do I remember, whom to look it was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?  
No--she never loved me truly: love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is truth the poet sings,  
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,  
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,  
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,  
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whisper'd by the phantom years,  
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.  
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry,  
'Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest rival brings thee rest.  
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.  
Half is thine and half is his: it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,  
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

"They were dangerous guides the feelings--she herself was not exempt--  
Truly, she herself had suffer'd"--Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it--lower yet--be happy! wherefore should I care,  
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?  
Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets overflow.  
I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,  
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea<sup>35</sup> helps the hurt that Honour feels,  
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.  
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,  
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,  
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,  
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,  
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:  
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies<sup>36</sup> of magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew

35 British gold coin, no longer in use, equal to a pound.

36 Airships.

34 Nesting place.

From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;  
Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,  
With the standards<sup>37</sup> of the peoples plunging thro' the thunderstorm;

Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were  
furl'd  
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumph'd, ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,  
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint,  
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point to point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,  
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,  
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,  
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,  
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,  
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moulder'd string?  
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's  
pain--  
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,  
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine--<sup>38</sup>

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat  
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle<sup>39</sup> fell my father evil-starr'd;--  
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

---

37 Flags

38 Is this misogyny Tennyson's or the speaker's?

39 The Mahratta (or Maratha) Wars were fought between the British and the Hindu Maratha Confederacy. The British East India Company effectively gained control of the Indian subcontinent by 1818.

Or to burst all links of habit--there to wander far away,  
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.  
Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,  
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,  
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the  
crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree--  
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of  
mind,  
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope and breathing-  
space;

I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.<sup>40</sup>

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they shall run,  
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks.  
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books--

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are wild,  
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,  
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage--what to me were sun or clime?  
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time--

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,  
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon!<sup>41</sup>

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range.  
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day:  
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as when life begun:  
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the Sun-

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.  
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

---

40 The speaker here suggests taking as wife a "dusky woman" (i.e., non-European) in reaction to losing his cousin Amy. However, he quickly defines "civilization" in Euro-centric terms and regrets the notion, making grossly racist comments about the Non-European "squalid savage" and those with "narrow foreheads."

41 The biblical hero Joshua commands the sun to stand still during his successful battle to take the city of Ajalon. (*Joshua* 10:12).

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!  
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,  
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;  
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

#### THE EAGLE {FRAGMENT}

He clasps the crag with hooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

#### BREAK, BREAK, BREAK...

Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,  
That he shouts with his sister at play!  
O well for the sailor lad,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill;  
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy *crag*s, O Sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.

*rugged cliffs*

#### “FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL”<sup>42</sup>

Flower in the *crannied* wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies;—  
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

*creviced*

42 Zen Buddhist D.T. Suzuki compares Tennyson's poem to a haiku of Basho (“Look closely:/a nazuma flower/peeks through the hedge”). For a discussion of the essential difference in Western and Eastern thought, see D. T. Suzuki, *Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, ed. by William Barrett (London: Rider & Co., 1963), pp. 360-361.

#### CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the *bar*,        *ridge as in sandbar*  
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from out our *bourne* of Time and Place        *limit/boundary*  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.

#### From “IN MEMORIUM”

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light;  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more,  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,

Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

#### CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE<sup>43</sup>

Half a league half a league  
Half a league onward  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred:  
'Forward, the Light Brigade  
Charge for the guns' he said  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'  
Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldiers knew  
Some one had blunder'd:  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die,  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of Hell  
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turned in air,  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army while  
All the world wonder'd:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them  
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wonder'd.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred!

43 The poem commemorates military action taken by a British "light brigade" (consisting primarily of horse-cavalry) during the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War between the allied British, French and Ottoman Turkish troops against the Russians for control of the Black Sea. As a result of poor communications and imprecise orders, Lord Cardigan led approximately 660 horsemen into a narrow valley between two hills manned by Russian artillery toward a Russian redoubt or small fort at the end of the valley. Enduring heavy fire from over 5000 Russians, the Light Brigade rode three-quarters of a mile into valley and "successfully" attacked the Russian redoubt. Later a British heavy brigade (armed with artillery) and French cavalry capitalized upon the disastrous Light Brigade charge (over a third of the "600" were killed or wounded) and drove the Russians from their positions. While the charge created controversy in England as various Generals blamed each other for the disaster, many, like Tennyson viewed the event as an example of English military prowess and selfless devotion to the "Empire." The Crimean War, which ended in a negotiated settlement, was ultimately a success for the British in preventing Russia from militarizing and controlling the Black Sea, a vital area for trade between West and East.