Lady of Shalott by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Part I

On either side the river lie

Long fields of barley and of rye,

That clothe the wold and meet the sky;

And thro' the field the road runs by

       To many-tower'd Camelot;

The yellow-leaved waterlily

The green-sheathed daffodilly

Tremble in the water chilly

       Round about Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens shiver.

The sunbeam showers break and quiver

In the stream that runneth ever

By the island in the river

       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.

Underneath the bearded barley,

The reaper, reaping late and early,

Hears her ever chanting cheerly,

Like an angel, singing clearly,

       O'er the stream of Camelot.

Piling the sheaves in furrows airy,

Beneath the moon, the reaper weary

Listening whispers, ' 'Tis the fairy,

       Lady of Shalott.'

The little isle is all inrail'd

With a rose-fence, and overtrail'd

With roses: by the marge unhail'd

The shallop flitteth silken sail'd,

       Skimming down to Camelot.

A pearl garland winds her head:

She leaneth on a velvet bed,

Full royally apparelled,

       The Lady of Shalott.

Part II

No time hath she to sport and play:

A charmed web she weaves alway.

A curse is on her, if she stay

Her weaving, either night or day,

       To look down to Camelot.

She knows not what the curse may be;

Therefore she weaveth steadily,

Therefore no other care hath she,

       The Lady of Shalott.

She lives with little joy or fear.

Over the water, running near,

The sheepbell tinkles in her ear.

Before her hangs a mirror clear,

       Reflecting tower'd Camelot.

And as the mazy web she whirls,

She sees 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:

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, came from 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 flam'd upon the brazen greaves

       Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd

To a lady in his shield,

That sparkled on the yellow field,

       Beside remote Shalott.

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 from Camelot:

And from his blazon'd baldric slung

A mighty silver bugle hung,

And as he rode his arm our 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 from Camelot.

As often thro' the purple night,

Below the starry clusters bright,

Some bearded meteor, trailing light,

       Moves over green 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 from Camelot.

From the bank and from the river

He flash'd into the crystal mirror,

'Tirra lirra, tirra lirra:'

       Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom

She made three paces thro' the room

She saw the water-flower 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;

Outside the isle a shallow boat

Beneath a willow lay afloat,

Below the carven stern she wrote,

       The Lady of Shalott.

A cloudwhite crown of pearl she dight,

All raimented in snowy white

That loosely flew (her zone in sight

Clasp'd with one blinding diamond bright)

       Her wide eyes fix'd on Camelot,

Though the squally east-wind keenly

Blew, with folded arms serenely

By the water stood the queenly

       Lady of Shalott.

With a steady stony glance—

Like some bold seer in a trance,

Beholding all his own mischance,

Mute, with a glassy countenance—

       She look'd down to Camelot.

It was the closing of the day:

She loos'd the chain, and down she lay;

The broad stream bore her far away,

       The Lady of Shalott.

As when to sailors while they roam,

By creeks and outfalls far from home,

Rising and dropping with the foam,

From dying swans wild warblings come,

       Blown shoreward; so to Camelot

Still as the boathead wound along

The willowy hills and fields among,

They heard her chanting her deathsong,

       The Lady of Shalott.

A longdrawn carol, mournful, holy,

She chanted loudly, chanted lowly,

Till her eyes were darken'd wholly,

And her smooth face sharpen'd slowly,

       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 pale, pale corpse she floated by,

Deadcold, between the houses high,

       Dead into tower'd Camelot.

Knight and burgher, lord and dame,

To the planked wharfage came:

Below the stern they read her name,

       The Lady of Shalott.

They cross'd 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 wellfed 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.'

My Last Duchess by Robert Browning

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Fr Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
``Fr Pandolf'' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Fr Pandolf chanced to say ``Her mantle laps  
``Over my lady's wrist too much,'' or ``Paint  
``Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
``Half-flush that dies along her throat:'' such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart---how shall I say?---too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.   
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace---all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,---good! but thanked  
Somehow---I know not how---as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech---(which I have not)---to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, ``Just this  
``Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
``Or there exceed the mark''---and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
---E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Sonnet 43 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold

The sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits;--on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.  
  
Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.  
  
The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.  
  
Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

To An Athlete Dying Young by A.E. Housman

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;   
Man and boy stood cheering by,   
And home we brought you shoulder-high.   
  
To-day, the road all runners come,   
Shoulder-high we bring you home,   
And set you at your threshold down,   
Townsman of a stiller town.   
  
Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.   
  
Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,   
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears:   
  
Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honors out,   
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.   
  
So set, before its echoes fade,   
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,   
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.   
  
And round that early-laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,   
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

“In Memoriam A. H. H.” [ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/alfred-tennyson)

Love is and was my Lord and King,

         And in his presence I attend

         To hear the tidings of my friend,

Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,

         And will be, tho' as yet I keep

         Within his court on earth, and sleep

Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel

         Who moves about from place to place,

         And whispers to the worlds of space,

In the deep night, that all is well.