

# A Study of Alfred Tennyson and His Verse-Tales

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**Abstract – The term 'tale in verse' strictly taken includes the entire field of English poetry narrative or epic in kind. The tale in its present form is 'told', but the telling is after the same fashion as the talk of Shakespeare's men and women. A satirical tale like Absalom and Achitophel, or a burlesque like the Rape of the Lock, or an allegory like the Faery Queen are less pure forms of the tale than simple narratives. The aim of the verse tales is not to teach a moral through satire or burlesque but to entertain us with a narrative where the events and individuals, whether ordinary or extra-ordinary are yet in the scale of common life. In order to understand the nature of a verse-tale, we describe here the essentials of it. It stirs the imagination of the readers and appeases their love of beauty, romance, adventure, chivalry and heroism. A pure verse tale is clear, straight forward and smooth in flow.**

**It has clear comprehension of events. It mostly narrates a brave and noble deed. "The story is the most important factor, and the story should be clear. The ideal poem----is that which tells a fine story finely, sets forth a brave tale in stirring words".**

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Generally the poets express themselves through lyric and drama, and so therefore we have only few perfect narrative pieces in spite of being the poetical museum so full of narrative pieces in spite of being the poetical museum so full of narrative poems. In lyric and drama the impulse of expression is inherent rather than acquired. While a story teller should have a special creative attitude. Like a poet or a dramatist, a story teller cannot sing his life of cares or express his feelings and experiences through characters and events respectively. He has to stay impersonal like reporter and present himself with the audience.

It is quite difficult to find in a writer both the imaginative and impersonal attitude or in a poet both the inherent and acquired impulse of expression and that's why "to tell the story of a whole people, and transpose it from the human to the heroic scale, is a task for a giant, and not all poets are giants".

The verse-tales found its full and perfect play in the hands of Lord Tennyson, the most representative poet of the Victorian Age. Though Tennyson dealt with almost all literary forms like Ode, Elegy, Sonnet, Ballad, Dramatic Monologue, verse drama etc. But it was with that particular genre i.e. verse tale that he was at home partly because it provided him with ample scope for the expression of his thought and emotional content as well as his literary and artistic excellence, and partly because the vogue of fiction in that age convinced him that verse-narrative would be popular. He had woven excellently the tapestry of verse-tale with the threads of his poetic genius. He had expressed in his verse stories his philosophy, his social and political views, his feminism and his

disapproval of many things in the Victorian age. At the same time he enriched this form with the glamour and golden colors of his fancy and imagination, romantic zeal and emotional exuberance, Lately, in this literary form he was able to display and exhibit his perfect art and technique, cadence and rhythm, workmanship and versification. In this way he gave this form a new color and look.

Tennyson has written his verse-tales on different themes with great originality. Some of his verse-tales belong to the classical age and legendary history with a great moral purpose infused in them such as *Idylls of the King*, *Tithonus*, *Oenone* and others which show Tennyson's knowledge and love of old classics and old legends. Having a conscious and well-informed mind. Tennyson wrote also on realistic themes giving a glimpse of the contemporary 19th century. Such tales are "The Princess, Locksley Hall, The Vision of Sin, The Revenge, Ode to Wellington in which Tennyson comes out before us as a thinker, philosopher and social reformer, unholding and disapproving certain values prevalent in that age. Besides this, his romantic impulse imagination, fancy and emotional instinct compelled him to write some imaginative and romantic verse-tales the result of which are these poems-The Miller's Daughter, The Gardener's Daughter, *The Lady of Shalott*, *Dora*, *Audley Court* etc; full of emotions and passions, and colored in an atmosphere of true love. But the true and real genius of Tennyson is seen in enlivening these verse-stories with the touch of his excellent narrative power, pictorial imagination, colorful images, wonderful music and melody, epigrammatic

terseness, and the application of suitable words and metres suiting to different themes.

Tennyson enhanced the beauty of verse-tales under his patronage. In order to study more in details about it, we will have to go deep into the above mentioned verse tales. That's why in my this doctoral thesis. I have made some tentative efforts to discover the hidden beauties of his verse-tales and to bring them into lime-light in the coming chapters.

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