

Alfred Tennyson (1809-92)

7 *The Lord of Burleigh*

In her ear he whispers gaily,
 'If my heart by signs can tell,
Maiden, I have watch'd thee daily,
 And I think thou lov'st me well.'
She replies, in accents fainter, 5
 'There is none I love like thee.'
He is but a landscape-painter,
 And a village maiden she.
He to lips, that fondly falter,
 Presses his without reproof: 10
Leads her to the village altar,
 And they leave her father's roof.
'I can make no marriage present:
 Little can I give my wife.
Love will make our cottage pleasant, 15
 And I love thee more than life.'
They by parks and lodges going
 See the lordly castles stand:
Summer woods, about them blowing,
 Made a murmur in the land. 20
From deep thought himself he rouses,
 Says to her that loves him well,
'Let us see these handsome houses
 Where the wealthy nobles dwell.'
So she goes by him attended, 25
 Hears him lovingly converse,
Sees whatever fair and splendid
 Lay betwixt his home and hers;
Parks with oak and chestnut shady,
 Parks and order'd gardens great, 30
Ancient homes of lord and lady,
 Built for pleasure and for state.

All he shows her makes him dearer:
Evermore she seems to gaze
On that cottage growing nearer, 35
Where they twain will spend their days.
O but she will love him truly!
He shall have a cheerful home;
She will order all things duly,
When beneath his roof they come. 40
Thus her heart rejoices greatly,
Till a gateway she discerns
With armorial bearings stately,
And beneath the gate she turns;
Sees a mansion more majestic 45
Than all those she saw before:
Many a gallant gay domestic
Bows before him at the door.
And they speak in gentle murmur,
When they answer to his call, 50
While he treads with footstep firmer,
Leading on from hall to hall.
And, while now she wonders blindly,
Nor the meaning can divine,
Proudly turns he round and kindly, 55
'All of this is mine and thine.'
Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he. 60
All at once the colour flushes
Her sweet face from brow to chin:
As it were with shame she blushes,
And her spirit changed within.
Then her countenance all over 65
Pale again as death did prove:
But he clasp'd her like a lover,
And he cheer'd her soul with love.
So she strove against her weakness,

Tho' at times her spirit sank: 70
 Shaped her heart with woman's meekness
 To all duties of her rank:
 And a gentle consort made he,
 And her gentle mind was such
 That she grew a noble lady, 75
 And the people loved her much.
 But a trouble weigh'd upon her,
 And perplex'd her, night and morn,
 With the burthen of an honour
 Unto which she was not born. 80
 Faint she grew, and ever fainter,
 And she murmur'd, 'Oh, that he
 Were once more that landscape-painter,
 Which did win my heart from me!
 So she droop'd and droop'd before him, 85
 Fading slowly from his side:
 Three fair children first she bore him,
 Then before her time she died.
 Weeping, weeping late and early,
 Walking up and pacing down, 90
 Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
 Burleigh-house by Stamford-town.
 And he came to look upon her,
 And he look'd at her and said,
 'Bring the dress and put it on her, 95
 That she wore when she was wed.'
 Then her people, softly treading,
 Bore to earth her body, drest
 In the dress that she was wed in,
 That her spirit might have rest. 100

1842

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