Excerpts from Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott” (1833 Version)

Part the First.

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 manytowered Camelot.
The yellowliv’d waterlily,
The greensheath’d daffodilly,
Tremble in the water chillly,
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 cheerily,
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 inrailed
With a rose-fence, and overtrailed
With roses; by the marge unhailed
The shallop flitteth silkensailed,
Skimming down to Camelot.
A pearlgarland winds her head:
She leaneith on a velvet bed,
Fully royally apparell’d,
The Lady of Shalott.

Part the Fourth

In the stormy eastwind straining
The pale-yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered 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,
Clasped with one blinding diamond bright,)
Her wide eyes fixed on Camelot,
Though the squally eastwind 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 looked down to Camelot.
It was the closing of the day,
She loosed 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 darkened wholly,
And her smooth face sharpened slowly
   Turned to towered Camelot:
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the waterside,
Singing in her song she died,
     The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By gardenwall and gallery,
A pale, pale corpse she floated by,
Deadcold, between the houses high,
     Dead into towered Camelot.

Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
To the plank’d wharfage came:
Below the stern they read her name,
     “The Lady of Shalott.”

     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 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.”