

mocking of Lynette. The crowning glory of his ambition is to be counted a knight of Arthur,

“Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
Else, wherefore born?”

Lynette is the first of the types of womanhood to be drawn by Tennyson in the *Idylls*. She is a fresh and frank young woman, thoughtless, quick-tongued, and rude, — but pure and honorable. She is of the petulant, impatient type. Her sauciness lacks charm, because there is too much masculine roughness about it. Her character is not consistent. At one time she is saucy, rude, and lacking in earnestness; at another, refined and full of sentiment, singing charming songs which seem out of keeping with her previous nature. She seems to be two women in one; yet, in spite of the inconsistencies, there is a freshness and vivacity about the young woman that attracts and pleases us.

The story of the *Idyll* as far as line 430 is probably Tennyson's own invention, but from this point he follows Malory's account in the seventh book of “*Morte Darthur*.” The poem is replete with allegory; not only does it, as a whole, represent the first stage of the main theme, the springtime of life, and the strength and hope of youth, but it contains within itself many independent allegories. Arthur's city and its gates are allegorical. The utterances of Merlin are riddling presentments of the allegory. Gareth's successive combats with the knights at the ford of the river symbolize the war of time against the soul of man, shadowing forth the whole struggle involved in the course of human life.

INTRODUCTION TO “GARETH AND LYNETTE”

“Gareth and Lynette” represents the golden age of Arthur's reign, when the Round Table seemed indeed a model for the world, and Arthur himself the representative of Christ upon earth. No taint of sin has yet crept into the Order, and the name of Guinevere is not mentioned in the poem. The warriors are loyal to their vows and to their King. It is a period

“When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.”

In this picture Arthur sits on his judgment seat and delivers justice. Wrongs are sure of redress, and valiant knights go forth each day to deliver the weak from the oppressor. Young men of noble birth, whom Arthur's character has inspired to noble deeds, come to his court seeking knighthood and high adventure. Gareth himself is a type of this youthful chivalry in perfection. He is the image of his time, representing the youthful craving for honor, spoiled by no meaner motive than ambition. He is the embodiment of the Arthurian kingdom in its youthful energy and purity. Full of courage, and the unquenchable faith of youth, borne along on the first wave of enthusiasm, he does not mind the drudgery of the kitchen, the taunts of Sir Kay, or the

In this Idyll the author does not appear at his best; although there is much to commend, the poem falls below the high standard set by the poet in preceding idylls. It is fresh and animated in tone, and harmonizes well with its general position and design. It contains many fine descriptions, which are admirable specimens of scene painting. The descriptions of Arthur's city and the mystic gate, the meeting with Merlin, the warriors who guard the river, and finally the encounter with Death are excellent. We are indebted to Tennyson also for his happy use of fine old English words and expressions. The scenes between Gareth and his mother, however, are much too long and tedious. We cannot reconcile our æsthetic sense to the incredible kitchen part of the story. The coarse taunts of Lynette are hardly in keeping with the delicate songs she sings, and the refinement and sentiment she displays at times. The verse often seems cramped for want of necessary conjunctions, while here and there are interspersed lines of a redundant nature. The frequent alliteration and play upon words palls on the ear, and at times the poet indulges in excessive reiteration. On the whole, however, the fine inventions, the vivid pictures, and the richness of expression throw a magical glamour over the poem, which raises it at once above the commonplace.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.



THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
 And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
 Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted pine
 Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
 "How he went down," said Gareth, "as a false knight 5
 Or evil king before my lance, if lance
 Were mine to use — O senseless cataract,
 Bearing all down in thy precipitancy —
 And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
 And mine is living blood: thou dost His will, 10
 The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
 Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
 Linger with vacillating obedience,
 Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to —
 Since the good mother holds me still a child! 15
 Good mother is bad mother unto me!
 A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
 Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
 To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
 Until she let me fly discaged to sweep 20
 In ever-highering eagle-circles up
 To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
 Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
 A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
 To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came 25