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#4 in our series by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

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Title: Lady Clare

Author: Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Release Date: July, 2004 [EBook #6074]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on November 3, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LADY CLARE ***

Produced by David Starner

Lady Clare

by Alfred Tennyson

22 illustrations by Alfred Fredericks,
Granville Perkins,
Frederic B. Schell,
Edmund H. Garrett,
F. S. Church
and Harry Fenn

[Transcriber’s Note: these illustrations are available in the
HTML format of this file, ldycl10h.zip]

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Lady Clare

It was the time when lilies blow,
And clouds are highest up in air.
Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe
To give his cousin, Lady Clare.

I trow they did not part in scorn:
Lovers long betrothed were they;
They two will wed the morrow morn;
God’s blessing on the day!

"He does not love me for my birth
Nor for my lands so broad and fair;
He loves me for my own true worth,
And that is well," said Lady Clare.

In there came old Alice the nurse,
Said, "Who was this that went from thee?"
"It was my cousin," said Lady Clare;
"To-morrow he weds with me."

"Oh, God be thanked!" said Alice the nurse,
"That all comes round so just and fair:
Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,
And you are not the Lady Clare."

"Are ye out of your mind, my nurse, my nurse,"
Said Lady Clare, "that ye speak so wild?"
"As God’s above," said Alice the nurse,
"I speak the truth: you are my child.

The old earl’s daughter died at my breast;
I speak the truth, as I live by bread!
I buried her like my own sweet child,
And put my child in her stead."

"Falsely, falsely have ye done,
O mother," she said, "if this be true,
To keep the best man under the sun
So many years from his due."

"Nay now, my child," said Alice the nurse,
"But keep the secret for your life,

And all you have will be Lord Ronald’s,
When you are man and wife."

"If I’m a beggar born," she said
"I will speak out, for I dare not lie,
Pull off, pull off the brooch of gold,
And fling the diamond necklace by."

"Nay now, my child," said Alice the nurse,
"But keep the secret all you can."
She said, "Not so; but I will know
If there be any faith in man."

"Nay now, what faith?" said Alice the nurse,
"The man will cleave unto his right."
"And he shall have it," the lady replied,
"Though I should die to-night."

"Yet give one kiss to your mother, dear!
Alas, my child! I sinned for thee."
"O mother, mother, mother," she said,
"So strange it seems to me!

"Yet here’s a kiss for my mother dear,
My mother dear, if this be so,
And lay your hand upon my head,
And bless me, mother, ere I go."

She clad herself in a russen gown,
She was no longer Lady Clare:
She went by dale, and she went by down,
With a single rose in her hair.

The lily-white doe Lord Ronald had brought
Leapt up from where she lay.
Dropped her head in the maiden’s hand.
And followed her all the way.

Down stepped Lord Ronald from his tower:
"O Lady Clare, you shame your worth!
Why come you dressed like a village maid,
That are the flower of the earth?"

"If I come dressed like a village maid,
I am but as my fortunes are:
I am a begger born," she said,
"And not the Lady Clare."

"Play me no tricks," said Lord Ronald,
"For I am yours in word and in deed;
Play me no tricks," said Lord Ronald,
"Your riddle is hard to read."

Oh, and proudly stood she up!
Her heart within her did not fail:
She looked into Lord Ronald’s eyes,
And told him all her nurse’s tale.

He laughed a laugh of merry scorn:
He turned and kissed her where she stood;
"If you are not the heiress born,
And I," said he, "the next in blood--

"If you are not the heiress born,
And I," said he, "the lawful heir,
We two will wed to-morrow morn,
And you shall still be Lady Clare."

Finis

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