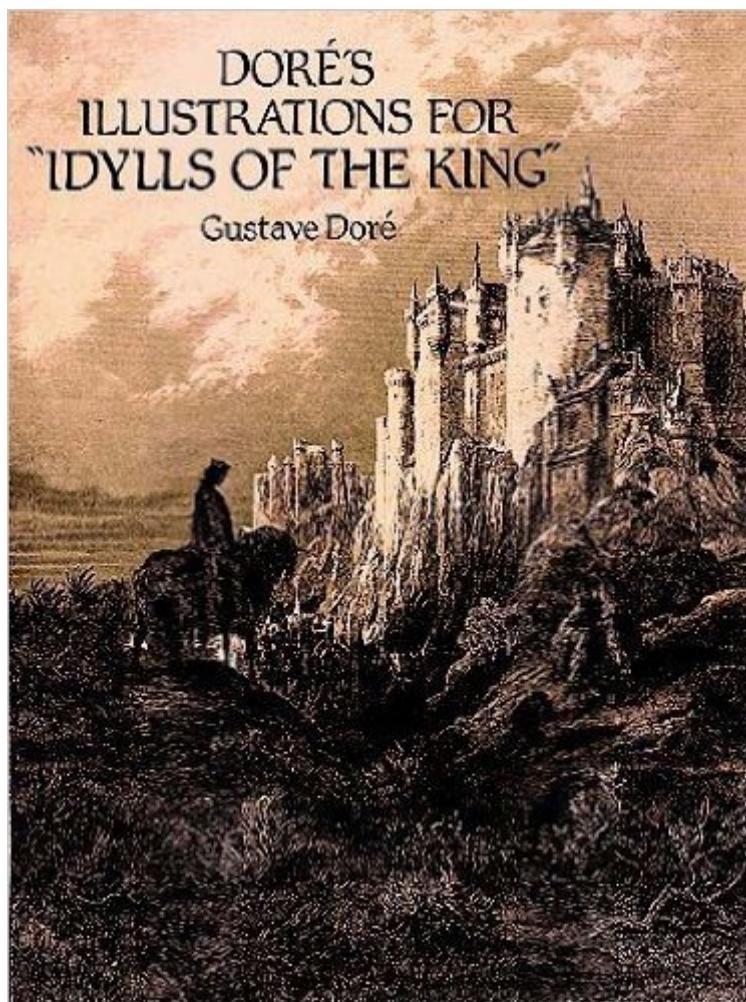


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Doré's Illustrations For "Idylls Of The King" (Dover Fine Art, History Of Art)



Synopsis

Like his contemporary, the English poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Gustave Doré (1832–83) was highly regarded for his mastery of technique. One of the most prolific and successful book illustrators of the late nineteenth century, he provided a wealth of hauntingly beautiful illustrations for the first four parts of *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson's classic poetic treatment of the Arthurian legends. This volume contains meticulous reproductions of all 36 plates from rare English editions published in 1867–69. Like many of his other works, Doré's illustrations for the *Idylls* possess great drama, detail, and power, overlaid with a melancholy, otherworldly mood. His masterly technique is abundantly evident in splendid, idealized scenes illustrating the romantic involvements of four lovely ladies: "the fair Elaine," much enamored of Lancelot; Guinevere, Arthur's perfidious queen; Enid, the wife of Geraint, one of Arthur's knights; and the "wily Vivien," a scheming beauty who attempts to seduce the wizard Merlin. Accompanied by synopses and appropriate quotations from Tennyson's poem, Doré's illustrations bring these marvelous legends to vivid life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gustave Dore first published these intricate and beautiful wood-engraved book illustrations for Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" in the 1860s. Though many, many fabulous illustrations have been created for the legends of King Arthur and his Court these still remain among the finest. This book contains 36 black and white plates, each 7 1/2" x 10" and thus nicely sized for optimal

viewing of the exquisite detail. A corresponding excerpt from "Idylls of the King" is printed on the facing page of each plate. Dore captured the grandeur and opulence of courtly life, the mystery and magic of the legendary times of Arthur and Merlin, the medieval costumes, furnishings and architecture all with a brilliance that will transport you. Highly recommended!

I have a leather bound edition of the Complete Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson published MacMillan London 1884, printed 1894 by R & R Clark. I have long admired the eight Dore prints that it contained for the Idylls. These prints measure 8.5 by 11 cm or just under 3.5 by 4 inches. The tone of the original prints is wonderfully sombre. I am disappointed by the Dover reproductions. In my view scaling the works up to 19.9 by 26 cm has completely destroyed the tonal character when compared to those in my 19th century edition. I stress, the tonal character has been altered for the worse. They now look rather washed out. I cannot understand another reviewer's viewpoint that the prints in the Dover edition look too dark. In addition, the scaling has introduced engraving detail that detracts from the images, an analogy is enlarging a digital picture until the individual pixels become apparent, it does the original conception no good at all. Presumably (I'm no printing industry expert) the prints on the 1884 edition are the originally intended size and Dore engraved with a certain level of detail in mind as they certainly work well at that scale. I am however very grateful to have the complete set. I had planned to use this edition to have them framed. Alas no, they will have to be further scanned and then reduced in size, hopefully I'll be able to recapture the original intent.

I already own a series of the Dore art books (printed by the same publishers) and love the art that accompanies the stories. This recent purchase was a gift but I was even more surprised by the level of story that came with the art. If you are a Dore fan then this will make for a great addition to your collection.

Gustave Dore illustrated early versions of four of Tennyson's Idylls (Enid, Guinevere, Elaine, and Vivien), not all of the Idylls. This inexpensive volume beautifully reproduces Dore's 36 illustrations of those four Idylls. Almost without exception, they capture the spirit of the relevant passage in the Idyll and add to its appreciation. It's a shame Dore never illustrated the remaining Idylls. Each illustration is preceded by a page of introductory text and a quotation from the Idyll so that you can understand the illustration without having the complete Idyll before you, or indeed without having read the Idyll. The text and selected quotations are so appropriate that, reading them in sequence, you get a feel for or synopsis of the entire Idyll and the story it tells, though, of course, the Idylls themselves are

more intricate and detailed.

Unless you have a couple of thousand to plunk down on the first edition of the Idylls, published by Moxon, in the 1860s, in four folio volumes, then this edition is the next best thing. The illustrations are lovely and help to uplift Tennyson's verse. In fact, Dore became so popular that this edition was often referred to at the time as "The Dore Tennyson," and rightfully so. Dore makes Tennyson's verse much better than it actually is; Tennyson, even though great, has a tendency to be somewhat maudlin and laboured in his retelling of Idylls. If you enjoy Arthurian Verse, I suggest you examine Swinburne's work in this area, or the little known Charles Williams, a contemporary of Swinburne's and in this reviewer's opinion the finest Arthurian poet of all. William Morris and Matthew Arnold have also done some interesting things.

I could gladly "idle" away the hours reading this excellent piece by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, which captures all the romance and spirit of the "dayes of olde when knights were bolde"! "Idylls Of The King", in particular with the classic Dore illustrations, hearkens us back to the grand Arthurian days, which should be mandatory reading for any student interested in the classical studies of the tales of the Middle Ages "and before"! Gustave Dore illustrates like no other, and this is a volume everyone with similar interests should read! He puts the spirit in the heart, and your heart into the time of which he illustrates!

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