

Poems of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
in
Forget Me Not, 1825
compiled
as far as possible
from contemporary sources
by
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Ronald.—Not love thee! By that cheek
 Now beautiful with blushes—by those eyes,
 Like a blue harebell, when a sunshine plays
 Upon its dewy leaves—by that white brow
 Crown'd with gold curls, and by that eloquent smile—
 I love thee tenderly as exiles love
 Remembrance of their own country; dear
 As home, as infancy, as happiness;
 Precious as hope.

Ellen.—Ah, these are honeyed words, but . . . I believe them.

Ronald.—Alas! my trusting love, I've other words—
 Dark, fearful words—for thee. We must forget
 That we have ever loved; our vows must be
 Shadows long past.

Ellen.—Oh Ronald, cruel, cruel—
 Love may not learn forgetfulness. I can
 Be silent as the grave; can school my tears
 To fall in secret; let my cheek grow pale;
 And my heart waste away in solitude;—
 But I cannot forget thee.

Ronald.—Time has been
 When pardon to the mourner were less sweet
 Than are those words to me; but now thy love
 To me is as despair: I'll tell thee all,
 All my dark auguries. E'en from a child
 There was a strange power on me; I have sought
 The mountain brow, when veiled in thunder clouds;
 I roamed the forest when night wrapped me round,
 The meteor flames my guide; I lay beside
 The foaming waterfall, and I have held
 Unblest communion with the dead, and seen
 And talked with spirits, and have looked on sights
 Which sent the frozen life-blood from my cheek!
 I did not seek companionship with man;
 I lived in a proud solitude; but you
 Softened my gloomy mood, and then my pride
 Bowed to a woman's power: life was no more
 A stern and gloomy pathway: but it grew
 A paradise of hope, and I forgot
 My dreary visions.

Ellen.— Oh forget them still!
My heart beats quick with fear—What is that sound?
How sad, how wildly, has the night-wind swept
Over my harp!

Ronald.—Ah, those prophetic notes!
Death is upon their tones; 'tis the same dirge
That rang last night within my ear:—I stood
Beneath an oak whose blasted stem was rent
By the fierce lightning; it yet smoked; the fire
Was red upon it, while the falling rain
Hissed on the scorched leaves. I heard the voice
Of spirits on the wind, and saw strange forms:
The clouds were black as death; my only light
Was the pale herald of the thunder-peal!
Then rose the vision on my soul: first came
Those melancholy sounds; then I beheld
Myself and thee—I saw the dagger gleam
Red in my hand—'twas dripping with thy gore—
I saw thy death-wound, saw thee cold and pale
And knew myself thy murderer!

Ellen.— Oh, Ronald, leave
This most unholy interchange with things
Forbidden and concealed. Ask thine own heart;
It will proclaim their falsehood. Ask that heart
Which I most truly do believe is mine,
If it could injure me.

Ronald.— Dear Ellen, no;
It cannot be that I who love thee, thus
Could harm thee, love: the turf, on which thy step
Has left its fairy trace, is unto me
A sainted spot; the very air thou breathest
Is precious; more I prize the slightest leaf
Wreath'd with thy sunny hair, than the rich gems
That burn in Indian mines. It cannot be
That I could harm thee!

Ellen.— Oh, I do not fear.
Come, pray thee, smile at thine own prophecy.

Ronald.—For once, Ellen,
I'll bid thee not believe me!

* * * * *

It is a lovely shade, but shun the place—
Mark what a red taint is upon the heath!
The very harebells have caught that one hue:
Look how they gleam beneath the pale moonlight!
Oh, blood is on their bloom—a crimson dye—
Which has been and which will be there for years.
Those larches, with their graceful sweep, once made
A gentle maiden's bower, and 'tis her blood
That gives the flowers their unnatural stain.
'Tis a sad history:—The maid was slain
By one who was her lover; for his heart
Was dark with jealousy: and then he fled
To the fierce battle, as if outward strife
Could kill the strife within; yet home he came
At last—death spares the wretched—then he heard
How innocent, how true, his Ellen was.
He sought the spot where she was murdered, made
Atonement with his blood; and it is told,
When the moon lights the midnight, comes a sound
Of melancholy music, and a shape
Like that poor maiden, with the golden hair
Stain'd from the bosom's wound; and by its side,
Another phantom of a dark-brow'd chief,
Who seems, with bended head and outstretch'd arms,
To ask forgiveness; these flit o'er the turf,
And make the place so fearful.

From the review in *The Literary Gazette*, 9th October 1824, page 641

REVIEW OF NEW BOOKS.

Forget me Not; A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1825. London, R. Ackermann.

The Parting Charge.

I see the white sails of thy ship,
 The blue depths of the sea;
 I hear the wind sweep o'er the wave
 That bears thee, love, from me.
 Thy flag shines in the crimson sun,
 Now setting in the brine:
 That sun will set to-morrow there,
 But light no sail of thine!
 Yet, with to-morrow's evening star,
 Again I'll seek this spot;
 'Twas here I gave my parting charge,
 My last—"FORGET ME NOT!"
 Around my neck there is a band,
 'Tis made of thy dark hair;
 Its links guard my heart's dearest prize,
 A broken ring they bear.
 A like pledge hangs upon thy breast,
 The last sweet gift love gave,
 We broke that ring, we twined that hair
 Upon a maiden's grave,
 A girl who died of broken vows—
 (How can love be forgot?)
 A fitting shrine for faithful hearts
 To sigh—"FORGET ME NOT!"
 How can I bear to think on all
 The dangers thou must brave?
 My fears will deem each gale a storm,
 While thou art on the wave.
 How my young heart will cling to all
 That breathes of thine or thee!
 How I will plant thy favourite flowers,
 And nurse thy favourite tree!
 And thou! oh thou! be shade or shine,
 Or storm or calm thy lot,
 Bear on thy heart our parting words—
 Our fond "FORGET ME NOT!"
 Nay, pray thee, Mother, let me gaze
 Upon that distant sail;
 What matters that my eye is dim,
 Or that my cheek is pale!
 And tell me not 'tis vain to weep,
 For him who is away;
 That sighs nor tears will speed the flight
 Of but a single day:
 It is not that I hope to bring
 My Sailor to our cot,
 But who can say and yet not weep—
 Farewell!—"FORGET ME NOT!"

Contextual image of the plate in the Forget Me Not, page 55



THE LUTE.

WAKE not again, thou sweet-voiced lute !
Better for me that thy chords were mute,
Than thus to recall thoughts long since fled,
And bring to my mem'ry the false and the dead.
They remind me of one who shared with me
The short-lived sunlight of infancy ;
For when the young rose of her cheek grew pale,
And health was departed, she loved thy wail ;
And I have heard thy murmurs sweep
O'er the flowers that smile round her last cold
sleep.

And thou recallest a dark-eyed maid,
With forehead of snow and raven braid,
The light of my love-dream,—one who oft
Would answer in song to thy breathing soft ;
One who could love, and her love forget—
O waken not, lute, that wild regret !
Better thou ever shouldst silent be,
Than renew such memories of sadness to me.

From The Gospel Advocate and Impartial Investigator, 28th October 1828, Page 352, Auburn, New York: Editor - L.S. Everett, Publisher - U.F. Doubleday.

Poetic Department.

From "A New-year's Gift."

THE RUINED COTTAGE.

Oh there is
A deep, sweet feeling in the human heart,
Which makes life beautiful amidst its thorns !

None will dwell in that cottage, for they say
Oppression rest it from the honest man,
And a curse clings to it : hence the vine
Trails its green weight of leaves upon the ground ;
Hence weeds are in that garden : hence the hedge,
Once sweet with honeysuckle, is half dead :
And hence the grey moss on the apple tree.

One once dwelt there, who had been in his youth
A soldier ; and when many years had past,
He sought his native village, and sat down
To end his days in peace. He had one child—
A little laughing thing, whose large dark eyes,
He said, were like the mother's she had left
Buried in stranger lands ; and time went on
In comfort and content—and that fair girl
Had grown far taller than the red rose tree
Her father planted her first English birth day.
And he had trained it up against an ash
Till it became his pride ;—it was so rich
In blossom and in beauty, it was called
The tree of Isabel. 'Twas an appeal
To all the better feelings of the heart,
To mark their quiet happiness, their home—
Their garden filled with fruits, and herbs, and flowers.

And in the winter there was no fireside
 So cheerful as their own. But other days
 And other fortunes came—an evil power.
 They bore against it cheerfully, and hoped
 For better times, but ruin came at last :
 And the soldier left his own dear home,
 And left it for a prison ; 'twas in June,
 One of June's brightest days—the bee, the bird,
 The butterfly, were on their lightest wings ;
 The fruits had their first tinge of summer light ;
 The sunny sky, the very leaves seemed glad,
 And the old man looked back upon his cottage
 And wept aloud :—they hurried him away,
 And the dear child that would not leave his side.
 They led him from the sight of the blue heaven
 And the green trees, into a low, dark cell,
 The windows shutting out the blessed sun
 With iron grating ; and for the first time
 He threw him on his bed, and could not hear
 His Isabel's good night. But the next morn'
 She was the earliest at the prison gate,
 The last on which it closed, and her sweet voice
 And sweeter smile made him forget to pine.
 She brought him every morning fresh wild flowers,
 But every morning could he see her cheek
 Grow paler and more pale, and her low tones
 Get fainter and more faint, and a cold dew
 Was on the hand he held. One day he saw
 The sunshine through the grating of his cell,
 Yet Isabel came not : at every sound
 His heart-beat took away his breath, yet still
 She came not near him. For but one sad day
 He marked the dull street through the iron bars
 That shut him from the world ; at length he saw
 A coffin carried carelessly along,
 And he was desperate—he forced the bars ;
 And he stood in the street free and alone.
 He had no aim, no wish for liberty—
 He only felt one want, to see the corpse
 That had no mourners ; when they set it down,
 Or ere 'twas lowered into the new dug grave,
 A rush of passion came upon his soul,

And he tore off the lid, and saw the face
Of Isabel, and knew he had no child!

He lay down by the coffin quietly—
His heart was broken!

I. E. L.

