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Memories of Authors

MISS LANDON

by **Samuel Carter Hall**

MEMORIES OF AUTHORS.

A SERIES OF PORTRAITS FROM PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE.

MISS LANDON.

WITH unmingled pain I write the name of Lætitia Elizabeth Landon, — the L. E. L., whose poems were for so long a period the delight of all readers, old and young.

We were among the few friends who knew her intimately. But it was not in her nature to open her heart to any one; her large organ of "secretiveness" was her bane; she knew it and deplored it; it was the origin of that misconception which embittered her whole life, the mainspring of that calumny which made fame a mockery and glory a deceit. But I may say, that, when slander was busiest with her reputation, we had the best means to confute it, — and did. For some years there was not a single week during which, on some day or other, morning or evening, she was not a guest at our house; yet this blight in her spring-time undoubtedly led to the fatal marriage which eventuated in her mournful and mysterious death.

The calumny was of that kind which most deeply wounds a woman. How it originated, it was at the time, and is of course now, impossible to say. Probably its source was nothing more than a sneer, but it bore Dead-Sea fruit. A slander more utterly groundless never was propagated. It broke off an engagement that promised much happiness with a gentleman, then eminent, and since famous, as an author: not that *he* at any time gave credence to the foul and wicked rumor; but to *her* "inquiry" was a sufficient blight, and by *her* the contract was annulled.

The utter impossibility of its being other than false could have been proved, not only by us, but by a dozen of her intimate friends, whose evidence would have been without question and conclusive. She was living in a school for young ladies: seen daily by the ladies

who kept that school, and by the pupils. In one of her letters to Mrs. Hall, she writes, "I have lived nearly all my life, since childhood, with the same people. The Misses Lance were strict, scrupulous, and particular, — moreover, from having kept a school so long, with habits of minute observation. The affection they feel for me can hardly be undeserved. I would desire nothing more than to refer to their opinion." Dr. Thomson, her constant medical friend and adviser, testified long afterwards to her "estimable qualities, generous feelings, and exalted virtues." It would, indeed, have been easy to obtain proof abundant; but in such cases the very effort to lessen the evil augments it; there was no way of fighting with a shadow; it was found impossible to trace the rumor to any actual source. Few then, and perhaps none now, can tell how deeply the poisoned arrow entered her heart. If ever woman was, Lætitia Landon was, "done to death by slanderous tongues."

I have touched upon this theme reluctantly, — perhaps it might have been omitted altogether, — but it seems to me absolutely necessary, in order to comprehend the character of the poet towards her close of life, and the secret of her marriage, which so "unequally yoked" her to one utterly unworthy.

Here is a passage from one of her letters to Mrs. Hall, — without a date, — but it must have been written in 1837, when she was suffering terribly under the blight of evil tongues: —

"I have long since discovered that I must be prepared for enmity I have never provoked, and unkindness I have little deserved. God knows, that, if, when I do go into society, I meet with more homage and attention than most, it is dearly bought. What is my life?

One day of drudgery after another; difficulties incurred for others, which have ever pressed upon me; health, which every year, by one severe illness after another, shows is taxed beyond its strength; envy, malice, and all uncharitableness: these are the fruits of a successful literary career for a woman."

She was slow to believe that false and bitter words could harm her. At first they seemed but to inspire her with a dangerous bravery in her innocence, and to increase a practice we always deplored, of saying things for effect in which she did not believe. It was no use telling her this; she would argue that a conversation of facts would be as dull as a work on algebra, and that all she did was to put her poetry into practice. In these moods you might as well attempt to imprison a sunbeam as keep her to matter-of-fact; and the misery was, that gradually the number of detractors increased, who caught up these "effective" scraps, and set them in circulation.

She was not more than fifteen years old when the letters "L. E. L."—appended to some verses in the "Literary Gazette"—riveted public attention; and when it became known that the author was scarcely in her teens, a full gush of popularity burst upon her that might have turned older heads and steadier dispositions. She became a "lion," courted and flattered and fêted; yet never was she misled by the notion that popularity is happiness, or lip-service the true homage of the heart.

She was residing at Old Brompton, when her first poem appeared in the "Literary Gazette," which Mr. Jerdan had not long previously established. It would be difficult to conceive the enthusiasm excited by the magical three letters appended to the poems, whenever they appeared. Mr. Jerdan was a near neighbor of the Landons, and he thus refers to their residence at Old Brompton:—

"My cottage overlooked the mansion and grounds of Mr. Landon, the father of 'L. E. L.,' at Old Brompton,

a narrow lane only dividing our residences. My first recollection of the future poetess is that of a plump girl, grown enough to be almost mistaken for a woman, bowling a hoop round the walks, with a hoop-stick in one hand and a book in the other, reading as she ran, and as well as she could managing both exercise and instruction at the same time."

She was born on the 14th of August, 1802, at Hans Place, Chelsea, where her father, a junior partner in the prosperous house of Adair, army-agents, then resided. And in that locality, with few brief intervals, the whole of her life was passed.

When we first knew her, in 1825, she lived with her grandmother in Sloane Street; subsequently she was a boarder in the school-establishment of the Misses Lance, at No. 22, Hans Place, the house in which she had been a pupil when but six years old; and here she was residing up to within a few months of her marriage, when, in consequence of the retirement of the Misses Lance, she became an inmate in the family of Mrs. Sheddon.

Her grandmother's grave was, if I recollect rightly, the third that was made in the graveyard of Holy Trinity, Brompton. Her lines on this "new" churchyard will be remembered. I attended the old lady's funeral, Mrs. Hall having received from Miss Landon this letter:—

"I have had time to recover the first shock,—and it was great weakness to feel so sorry, though even now I do not like to think of her very sudden death. I am thankful for its giving her so little confinement or pain; she had never known illness, and would have borne it impatiently,—a great addition to suffering. I am so very grateful to Mr. Hall, for I really did not know what to do. Her funeral is fixed for Friday; the hour will be arranged to his and Mr. Jerdan's convenience."

Mrs. Hall supplies me with the following particulars concerning her early acquaintance and intercourse with Miss Landon.

"I forget how it came about, but my husband was introduced to a certain little Miss Spence, who, on the strength of having written something about the Highlands, was most decidedly BLUE, when blue was by no means so general a color as it is at present. She had a lodging of two rooms in Great Quebec Street, and '*patronized*' young *littérateurs*, inviting them to her 'humble abode,' where tea was made in the bedroom, and where it was whispered the butter was kept cool in the wash-hand-basin! There were 'lots' of such-like small scandals about poor Miss Spence's 'humble abode'; still people liked to go; and my husband was invited, with a sort of apology to poor me, who, never having published anything at that time, was considered ineligible; it was 'a rule,' and Miss Spence, in her 'humble abode,' lived by rule.

"Of course I had an account of the party when Mr. Hall came home. I coveted to know who was there, and what everybody wore and said. I was told that Lady Caroline Lamb was there, enveloped in the folds of an ermine cloak, which she called a 'cat-skin,' and that she talked a great deal about a periodical she wished to get up, to be called 'Tabby's Magazine'; and with her was an exceedingly haughty, brilliant, and beautiful girl, Rosina Wheeler, — since well known as Lady Bulwer Lytton, — and who sat rather impatiently at the feet of her eccentric 'Gamaliel.' Miss Emma Roberts was one of the favored ladies, and Miss Spence (who, like all 'Leo-hunters,' delighted in novelty) had just caught the author of 'The Mummy,' Jane Webb, who was as gentle and unpretending then as she was in after-years, when, laying aside romance for reality, she became a great helper of her husband, Mr. Loudon, in his laborious and valuable works. When I heard Miss Bengier was there, in her historic turban, I thought how fortunate that I had remained at home! I had always a terror of tall, commanding women, who blink down upon you, and have the unmistakable air about them of 'Be-

hold me! have I not pronounced sentence upon Queen Elizabeth, and set my mark on the Queen of Scots?' Still, I quite appreciated the delight of meeting under the same roof so many celebrities, and was cross-questioning my husband, when he said, 'But there was one lady there whom I promised you should call on to-morrow.'

"Imagine my mingled delight and dismay! — delight at the bare idea of seeing *her*, who must be wellnigh suffocated with the perfume of her own 'Golden Violet,' the idol of my imagination, — dismay! for what should I say to her? what would she say to me?

"And now I must look back, — back to the 'long ago.'

"And yet I can hardly realize the sweep of years that have gone over so many who have since become near and dear to us. At that first visit, I saw Lætitia Landon in her grandmamma's modest lodging in Sloane Street, — a bright-eyed, sparkling, restless little girl, in a pink gingham frock, — grafting clever things on commonplace nothings, frolicking from subject to subject with the playfulness of a spoiled child, — her dark hair put back from her low, but sphere-like forehead, only a little above the most beautiful eyebrows that a painter could imagine, and falling in curls around her slender throat. We were nearly of the same age, but I had been almost a year married, and if I had not supported myself on my dignity as a married woman, should have been more than nervous, on my first introduction to a 'living poet,' though the poet was so different from what I had imagined. Her movements were as rapid as those of a squirrel. I wondered how any one so quick could be so graceful. She had been making a cap for grandmamma, and would insist upon the old lady's putting it on, that I might see 'how pretty it was.' To this grandmamma (Mrs. Bishop) objected, — she 'could n't' and she 'would n't' try it on, — 'how could Lætitia be so silly?' — and then Lætitia put the great beflowered, beribboned thing on her own dainty little head, with a grave

look, like a cloud on a rose, and folding her pretty little hands over her pink frock, made what she called a 'Sir Roger de Coverley' curtsy, skipping backwards into the bedroom, and rushing in again, having deposited out of sight the cap she was so proud of constructing, took my hands in hers, and asked me 'if we should be friends.'

"Friends!" I do not think that during the long intimacy that followed that child-like meeting, extending from the year '26 to her leaving England in '38, during which time I saw her frequently every day, and certainly every week, — I do not think she ever loved me as I loved her, — how could she? — but I was proud of the confidence and regard she did accord me, and would have given half my own happiness to shelter her from the envy and evil that embittered the spring and summer-time of her blighted life. It always seemed to me impossible not to love her, not to cherish her. Perhaps the greatest magic she exercised was, that, after the first rush of remembrance of all that wonderful young woman had written had subsided, she rendered you completely oblivious of what she had done by the irresistible charm of what she was. You forgot all about her books, — you only felt the intense delight of life with her; she was penetrating and sympathetic, and entered into your feelings so entirely that you wondered how 'the little witch' could read you so readily and so rightly, — and if, now and then, you were startled, perhaps dismayed, by her wit, it was but the prick of a diamond arrow. Words and thoughts that she flung hither and thither, without design or intent beyond the amusement of the moment, come to me still with a mingled thrill of pleasure and pain that I cannot describe, and that my most friendly readers, not having known her, could not understand.

"When I knew her first, she certainly looked much younger than she was. When we talked of ages, which we did the first day, I found it difficult to believe she was more than seventeen, — she was so slight, so fragile, so girlish

in her gestures and manners. In after-days I often wondered what made her so graceful. Her neck was short, her shoulders high. You saw these defects at the first glance, just as you did that her nose was *retroussé*, and that she was underhung, which ought to have spoiled the expression of her mouth, — but it did not: you saw all this at once, but you never thought about it after the first five minutes. Her complexion was clear, her hair dark and silken, and the lashes that sheltered her gray eyes long and slightly upturned. Her voice was inexpressibly sweet and modulated, but there was a melancholy cadence in it, — a fall so full of sorrow that I often looked to see if tears were coming: no, the smile and eyes were beaming in perfect harmony, but it was next to impossible to believe in her happiness, with the memory of that cadence still in the ear.

"Like all workers I have known intimately, she had a double existence, an inner and an outer life. Many times, when I have witnessed her suffering, either from those spasmodic attacks that sapped the foundation of her life, or from the necessity for work to provide for the comforts and luxuries of those who never spared her, I have seen her enter the long, narrow room that opened on the garden at Hans Place, and flash upon a morning visitor as if she had not a pain or a care in the world, dazzling the senses and captivating the affections of some new acquaintance, as she had done mine, and sending them away in the firm belief of her individual happiness, and the conviction that the melancholy which breathes through her poems was assumed, and that her real nature was buoyant and joyous as that of a lark singing between earth and heaven! If they could but have seen how the cloud settled down on that beaming face, if they had heard the deep-drawn sigh of relief that the little play was played out, and noted the languid step with which she mounted to her attic, and gathered her young limbs on the common seat, opposite the common

table, whereon she worked, they would have arrived at a directly opposite and a too true conclusion, that the melancholy was real, the mirth assumed.

"My next visit to her was after she left her grandmamma's, and went to reside at 22, Hans Place. Miss Emma Roberts and her sister at that time boarded in Miss Lance's school, and Miss Landon found there a room at the top of the house, where she could have the quiet and seclusion her labor required, and which her kind-natured, but restless grandmother prevented. She never could understand how 'speaking one word to Letty, just one word, and not keeping her five minutes away from that desk, where she would certainly grow humped or crooked,' could interfere with her work! She was one of those stolid persons who are the bane of authors, who think nothing of the lost idea, and the unravelling of the web, when a train of thought is broken by the 'only one word,' 'only a moment,' which scatters thoughts to the wind, — thoughts that can no more be gathered home than the thistle-down that is scattered by a passing breeze.

"She continued to reside in that unostentatious home, obedient to the rules of the school as the youngest pupil, dining with the children at their early hour, and returning to her sanctuary, whence she sent forth rapidly and continuously what won for her the adoration of the young and the admiration of the old. But though she ceased to reside with her grandmother, she was most devoted in her attentions to her aged relative, and trimmed her caps and bonnets and quilled her frills as usual. I have seen the old lady's borders and ribbons mingled with pages of manuscript, and known her to put aside a poem to 'settle up' grandmamma's cap for Sunday. These were the minor duties in which she indulged; but her grandmother owed the greater part, if not the entire, of her comfort to the generous and unselfish nature of that gifted girl. Her mother I never saw: *morally* right in all her arrange-

ments, she was *mentally* wrong, — and the darling poet of the public had no loving sympathy, no tender care from her. L. E. L. had passed through the sufferings of a neglected childhood, and but for the love of her grandmother she would have known next to nothing of the love of motherhood. Thus she was left alone with her genius: for admiration, however grateful to a woman's senses, never yet filled a woman's heart.

"When I first knew her, and for some time after, she was childishly untidy and negligent in her dress: her frocks were tossed on, as if buttons and strings were unnecessary incumbrances, — one sleeve off the shoulder, the other on, — and her soft, silky hair brushed 'any how': but Miss Emma Roberts, whose dress was always in good taste, determined on her reformation, and gradually the young poet, as she expressed it, 'did not know herself.' I use the epithet 'young,' because she was wonderfully youthful in appearance, and positively as she grew older looked younger, — her delicate complexion, the transparent tenderness of her skin, and the playful expression of her child-like features adding to the deception.

"I was one day suddenly summoned to Hans Place, and drawn into a consultation on the important subject of a fancy-ball, which Miss Landon and Miss Emma Roberts had 'talked over' Miss Lance to let them give to their friends. They wished me to appear as the 'wild Irish girl,' or the genius of Erin, with an Irish harp, to which I was to sing snatches of the melodies. Miss Spence was there in consultation, as she 'knew everybody.' She congratulated me on my *début* as an authoress, (I had recently published my first book, 'Sketches of Irish Character,') and politely added, 'Now you are one of us, I shall be happy to receive you at my humble abode.'

"I begged to decline the proposal concerning the wild Irish girl and the Irish harp, but agreed to carry a basket of flowers. Certainly the *fête-givers* worked 'with a will,' turned the great house 'out of windows,' convert-

ing the two school-rooms, big and little, into a ball-room, and decorating it richly with green leaves and roses, real and artificial. I congratulated them on the prospect. 'Yes,' said Miss Landon, 'the mechanical getting-up is all very well; I wish all that is termed "dashing" did not lie in the tomb of the Duchess of Gordon. A quadrille is but still life put into motion. Our faces, like our summers, want sunshine. Old Froisart complained in his day, that the English, after their fashion, "*s'amusent moult tristement*." A ball-room is merely "Arithmetic and the use of figures taught here." A young lady in a quadrille might answer,—"I am too busy to laugh,—I am making my calculations." And yet ours is not a marrying age; the men have discovered that servants and wives are *so* expensive,—still a young lady's delight in a ball, if not *raisonnable*, has always—*quelque raison!* and I am determined, if I die in the cause, that ours shall be a success!' Her conversation was always epigrammatic.

"It seems absurd that a ball should be the first great event of my literary life. There I saw for the first time many persons who became in after-years intimate friends, and whose names are now parts of the history of the literature of their country. 'Mr.' Edward Bulwer, then on the threshold of fame, 'came out' in military uniform. L. E. L. assured me he was very clever, had written a novel, and 'piles of poetry,' and would be wonderful soon, but that he was much too handsome for an author; at which opinion, little Miss Spence, in a plum-pudding sort of turban, with a bird-of-paradise bobbing over the front, and a fan even larger than poor Lady Morgan's, agitated her sultana's dress, and assured me that 'nothing elevated the expression of beauty so much as literature,' and that 'young things, like many of the present company, would not look as well in ten years!' Mr. Bulwer was certainly pronounced by the ladies the handsomest youth in the room. The gentlemen endeavored to put him down as 'effem-

inate,' but all in vain. They called him 'a fair, delicate, very, *very* young man,'—'a boy,' in fact. I remember wondering at the searching expression of his large, wandering, bluish eyes, that seemed looking in and out at everybody and at everything. The lady of his love was there, and she ought to have been dressed as the Sultana poor Miss Spence burlesqued. Nature had bestowed on her an Oriental style of beauty, and she would have come out well in Oriental costume; but she chose the dress of a Swiss peasant, which, being more juvenile, brought her nearer to her lover's age. She certainly was radiantly beautiful. She had a mouth like 'chiselled coral,' and eyes fierce as an eagle's or tender as a dove's, as passion moved her. Her uncle, Sir John Milly Doyle, then an old man of mark in the military world, was naturally proud of his beautiful charge, and companioned her that evening.

"Miss Benger's turban was a formidable rival to that of Miss Spence. The historian was long and lanky, according to the most approved historical fashion; consequently her turban was above the crowd, while poor Miss Spence's was nearly crushed by it, and was all too frequently shoved on one side by the whirling dancers. At last, in despair, she donned a handkerchief, tying it under her chin, and wherever she went she wished the gentle-hearted Miss Webb to follow, appealing after this fashion to the merry crowd:—'Please let me pass; I am Miss Spence, and this lady is Miss Webb, author of "The Mummy,"—"The Mummy," Sir.' But Miss Webb effected her escape; and the last time I saw little Miss Spence that evening, she had scrambled up into one of those so-called 'education-chairs,' in which poor girls were compelled to sit bolt upright for several hours of the day, by way of keeping their shoulders flat and strengthening their spine.

"I remember 'Father Prout of Watergrass Hill' that evening,—then a smooth-faced, rosy-cheeked young man. Jane and Anna Maria Porter joined

the party late in the evening. They came from Esher, and, though not in direct fancy-dresses, added to the effect of the gathering. Jane was dressed in black, which was only relieved by a diamond sparkling on her throat. Her sweet, melancholy features and calm beauty contrasted well with the bright-sunshine of her sister's round, girlish face. She was dressed in white, soft blue gauze floating round her like a haze. L. E. L. (who personated a flower-girl in a white chip hat) called the sisters 'the Evening and Morning Stars.' I was so proud of a compliment Jane paid me on my new dignity of authorship, — a compliment from the author of the 'Scottish Chiefs,' — the book that in childhood I had read stealthily by moonlight, coiled up in my nursery-window, just near enough to the sea to hear its music, while the fate of Sir William Wallace made my heart pant and my tears flow!

"I saw there for the first time Julia Pardoe. She had just returned from Portugal, and was escorted by her little, round father, the Major. She was then in her dawn of life and literature, having published two volumes about Portugal, — a pretty little fairy of a girl, with a wealth of flaxen hair, a complexion made up of lilies and roses, with tiny feet in white satin *bottines* with scarlet heels, and a long, sweeping veil of blue gauze spangled with silver stars. I think she dressed as some Portuguese or Spanish character; for I remember a high comb in her hair. I can only now recall her floating about under the blue gauze veil.

"I remember one group of Quakers among the glittering throng, who looked sufficiently quaint to attract attention, while the matron of the party said clever, caustic things, differing in quality as well as quantity from the sparkling, playful jests and repartees, that, as the evening passed, were flung about by Mr. Jerdan, the popular editor of the 'Literary Gazette,' the oracle of that time, and stammered forth by Dr. Maginn. "The Doctor" and Mr. Jerdan and Theodore Hook entered together,

three men of mark, from whom much was expected — after supper.

"The Quaker matron was Mrs. Trollope, a portly lady, of any age between thirty and forty, staid and sedate, as became her character, and attentive to her 'thees' and 'thous,' which lent their cloak for plain speaking, of which she was not chary. She frequently admonished her daughters — perhaps adopted for the evening — against the vanities by which they were encompassed on every side, — satirizing and striking home, but never exhibiting ill-temper or actual bitterness. The character was well sustained throughout the evening, and occasioned quite as much fear as fun. When Theodore Hook asked her, according to the fashion of those days, to take wine with him, she answered, 'Friend, I think thou hast had enough already, and so have I.' There was nothing particularly wise or witty in the words; but their truth was so evident, and the manner in which they were spoken so clear and calm, that they were followed by a roar of laughter that for a little time upset the mighty humorist, though, in the extempore song in which he rallied, he did not forget that

'He had just received a wallop
From the would-be Quaker Trollope.'

"We enjoyed most thoroughly the intercourse commenced thus early in our married life with the spirits of our time; and I remember entering into grave debate with L. E. L. whether it would be possible for *us* to give a party that might be, as it were, the shadow of hers. A fancy-ball was out of the question. We proposed a *conversazione*, with first-rate music; but in that Miss Landon could not sympathize. "It was all very well," she said; "I had a talent for listening; she had not; and if I must have music, let there be a room where the talkers could congregate, and neither disturb others nor be themselves disturbed." The only thing she disliked in dancing was the trial of keeping time; and to do this, she was obliged to count.

"The *conversazione* was determined

on, and the invitations issued; and then my husband and I began to count the cost. Of course, if done, it must be well done. The method was not clear; it was very cloudy; and there was only one way to make it clear. We were but 'children of a larger growth,' and we had a 'money-box,' — not one of those pretty cedar inventions, with a lock and key and a slit in the cover, that we now use at bazaars, but a big, shapeless, round-about thing of earthen-ware, with a slit in the middle. We had intended its contents should gratify another fancy, but now it would be the very thing to sacrifice; so we locked ourselves into the drawing-room, placed the box on the hearth-rug, and in a moment the brown roundabout was smashed, — and there was quite a heap of silver, and a little brightening of gold! *We* had never put in any gold. We were astonished, and counted our treasure with great delight. My husband accused me of conveying the gold by some cunning art into the box; and *I* was indignant that he should have done so without my knowledge. A quarrel was imminent, when we thought perhaps it was the hand of the dear mother that had dropped in the gold. Yes, that was her *ruse*; and we would have it that the party cost us *nothing*, because the contents of the money-box never had been counted on: it was a treasure-trove, — nothing more. We were particularly anxious to be thought *prudent*; and, in our triumph, (for the party, every one said, was a brilliant success,) we communicated the fact to L. E. L. that the party had cost nothing! She laughed, and determined to set up a money-box on her own account; but, poor girl, her money was anticipated by her dependants before she received it.

"I remember once meeting her coming out of Youngman's shop, in Sloane Street, and walking home with her. 'I have been,' she said, 'to buy a pair of gloves, — the only money spent on myself out of the three hundred pounds I received for "Romance and Reality."' That same day she spoke

of having lived in Sloane Street when a child. Her mother's *ménage* must have been curiously conducted; for I remember her saying, 'On Sundays my brother and myself were often left alone in the house with one servant, who always went out, locking us in; and we two children used to sit at the open parlor-window to catch the smell of the one-o'clock dinners that went past from the bake-house, well knowing that no dinner awaited us.'"

In the zenith of her fame, and towards her terrible close of life, the personal appearance of Miss Landon was highly attractive. Though small of stature, her form was remarkably graceful; and in society she paid special attention to dress. She would have been of perfect symmetry, were it not that her shoulders were rather high.

There were few portraits of Miss Landon painted, although she was acquainted with many artists, and had intense love of Art. Her friend Maclise painted her three or four times; but I know of no other portraits of her, except that by Mr. Pickersgill, which I always thought the most to resemble her, albeit the likeness is not flattering.

She first met the Ettrick Shepherd at our house. When Hogg was presented to her, he looked earnestly *down* at her, for perhaps half a minute, and then exclaimed, in a rich, manly, Scottish voice, "Eh, I did na think ye 'd been sae bonnie. I 've said mony hard things about ye. I 'll do sae na mair. I did na think ye 'd been sae bonnie."

Mrs. Opie, who also met her at our dwelling, paid her a questionable compliment, — that she was "the prettiest butterfly she had ever seen": and I remember the staid Quaker shaking her finger at the young poetess, and remarking, "What thou art saying thou dost not mean."

Miss Jewsbury, (the elder sister of the accomplished authoress, Geraldine,) whose fate somewhat resembled her own, said of her, "She was a gay and

gifted thing"; but Miss Jewsbury knew her only "in the throng."

In short, I have rarely known a woman so entirely fascinating as Miss Landon; and this arose mainly from her large sympathy. She was playful with the young, sedate with the old, and considerate and reflective with the middle-aged. She could be tender and she could be severe, prosaic or practical, and essentially of and with whatever party she happened to be among. I remember this faculty once receiving an illustration. She was taking lessons in riding, and had so much pleased the riding-master that at parting he complimented her by saying, — "Well, Madam, we are all born with a genius for something, and yours is for horsemanship."

One of the many writers who mourned her wrote, — "Apart from her literary abilities and literary labors, she was, in every domestic relation of life, honorable, generous, dutiful, self-denying, — zealous, disinterested, and untiring in her friendship."

Her industry was wonderful. She was perpetually at work, although often — nay, generally — with little of physical strength, and sometimes utterly prostrated by illness. Yet the work *must* be done, as her poems and prose were usually for periodical publications, and a given day of the month it was impossible to postpone.

Poetry she wrote with great ease and rapidity. In one of her letters to Mrs. Hall she says, — "I write poetry with far more ease than I do prose. In prose, I often stop and hesitate for a word; in poetry, never. Poetry always carries me out of myself. I forget everything in the world but the subject that has interested my imagination. It is the most subtle and insinuating of pleasures; but, like all pleasures, it is dearly bought. It is always succeeded by extreme depression of spirits, and an overpowering sense of bodily fatigue." And in one of her letters to me, she observes, — "Writing poetry is like writing one's own native language, and writing prose is like writing

in a strange tongue." In fact, she could have improvised admirable verses without hesitation or difficulty.

She married Mr. Maclean, then Governor of the Gold Coast,* — a man who neither knew, felt, nor estimated her value. He wedded her, I am convinced, only because he was vain of her celebrity; and she married him only because he enabled her to change her name, and to remove from that society in which just then the old and infamous slander had been revived. There was in this case no love, no esteem, no respect, — and there could have been no discharge of duty that was not thankless and irksome.

They were married a fortnight, at least, before the wedding was announced, even to friends. A sad story was some time afterwards circulated, — the truth of which I have no means of knowing, — that Mr. Maclean had been engaged to a lady in Scotland, which engagement he had withdrawn, and that she was in the act of sealing a letter to him when her dress caught fire, and she was burnt to death.

The last time I saw L. E. L. was in Upper Berkeley Street, Connaught Square, on the 27th of June, 1838, soon after her marriage, when she was on the eve of her fatal voyage. A farewell party was given to some of her friends by Mrs. Sheddon, with whom she then boarded, — the Misses Lance having resigned their school. When the proper time arrived, there was a whisper round the table, and, as I was the oldest of her friends present, it fell to my lot to propose her health. I did so with the warmth I felt. The chances were that we should never meet again; and I considered myself free to speak of her in terms such as could not but have gratified any husband, — except the husband she had chosen, — and sought to convey to Maclean's mind the high *respect*, as well as affection, with which we all regarded her. The

* She was married on the 7th of June, 1838, to Mr. Maclean, at St. Mary's, Bryanston Square, — her brother, the Rev. Whittington Landon, officiating. The bride was given away by her long and attached friend, Sir Lytton Bulwer.

reader may imagine the chill that came over the party when Maclean rose to return thanks. He merely said, "If Mrs. Maclean has as many friends as Mr. Hall says she has, I only wonder they allowed her to leave them." One by one the guests rose and departed, with a brief and mournful farewell. Probably not one of them all ever saw her again.

She sailed with her husband for Africa on the 5th of July, 1838. On the 15th of August she landed, and on the 15th of October she was dead!—dying, according to a coroner's jury, "of having incautiously taken a dose of prussic acid."

The circumstances of her death will be forever a mystery; for her husband has since "died and made no sign"; but no one ever heard of her having had this horrible medicine in her possession. Dr. Thomson, who made up her medicine-chest, and who had been her attendant for many years, declared he never prescribed it for her; and it was next to impossible she could have possessed it. To the various rumors that arose out of her death I do not allude. I do not believe she committed suicide; nay, I am sure she did not, although I know she was most wretched in her mournful banishment, most miserable in her changed condition, and that, if her past years had been gloomy, her future was very dark; but I believe that poison in some shape—not from the small vial which it was *said* was found in her hand—was administered by the African woman who is known to have been her predecessor,—one of those

"Children of the South
With whom revenge is virtue."

The following letter from L. E. L. was received by Mrs. Hall on the 3d of January, 1839. It is without a date. On the 1st we had heard of her death. It was a "ship-letter," but the mark of the place at which it was posted is indistinct.

"MY DEAR MRS. HALL,—I must send you one of my earliest epistles from

the tropics; and as a ship is just sailing, I will write, though it can only be a few hurried lines. I can tell you my whole voyage in three words,—six weeks' sea-sickness; but I am now as well as possible, and have been ever since I landed. The castle is a very noble building, and all the rooms large and cool, while some would be pretty even in England. That where I am writing is painted a deep blue, with some splendid engravings; indeed, fine prints seem quite a passion with the gentlemen here. Mr. Maclean's library is filled up with bookcases of African mahogany, and portraits of distinguished authors. I, however, never approach it without due preparation and humility, so crowded is it with scientific instruments, telescopes, chronometers, barometers, gasometers, etc., none of which may be touched by hands profane. On three sides, the batteries are dashed against by the waves; on the fourth is a splendid land view. The hills are covered to the top with what we should call wood, but is here called bush. This dense mass of green is varied by some large, handsome, white houses belonging to different gentlemen, and on two of the heights are small forts built by Mr. Maclean. The cocoa-trees with their long fan-like leaves are very beautiful. The natives seem to be obliging and intelligent, and look very picturesque with their fine dark figures, with pieces of the country cloth flung round them. They seem to have an excellent ear for music: the band plays all the old popular airs, which they have caught from some chance hearing. The servants are very tolerable, but they take so many to work. The prisoners do the scouring, and fancy three or four men cleaning a room that an old woman in England would do in an hour,—besides the soldier who stands by, his bayonet drawn in his hand. All my troubles have been of a housekeeping kind, and no one could begin on a more plentiful stock of ignorance than myself. However, like Sindbad the Sailor in the cavern, I begin to see daylight. I have numbered and labelled my keys,

(their name is Legion,) and every morning I take my way to the store, give out flour, sugar, butter, etc., and am learning to scold, if I see any dust or miss the customary polish on the tables. I am actually getting the steward of the ship, who is my right hand, to teach me how to make pastry. I will report progress in the next. We live almost entirely on ducks and chickens; if a sheep be killed, it must be eaten the same day. The bread is very good, palm wine being used for yeast; and yams are an excellent substitute for potatoes. The fruit generally is too sweet for my liking; but the oranges and pine-apples are delicious. You cannot think the complete seclusion in which I live; but I have a great resource in writing, and I am very well and very happy. But I think even more than I expect-

ed, if that be possible, of my English friends.

Your truly affectionate

L. E. MACLEAN.

She had signed her name "L. E. Landon," but had erased "Landon," and written in "Maclean," adding, "How difficult it is to leave off an old custom!"

Poor girl! She thus fulfilled her own mournful prediction, though speaking of another:—

"Where my father's bones are lying,
There my bones will never lie!

Mine shall be a lonelier ending,
Mine shall be a wilder grave,
Where the shout and shriek are blending,
Where the tempest meets the wave:
Or perhaps a fate more lonely,
In some drear and distant ward,
Where my weary eyes meet only
Hired nurse and sullen guard."