

**Mrs. L. E. MacLean
Obituary**

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From the Examiner.

L. E. L.

The death of Mrs. Maclean, who as Miss Landon, has associated her name and memory with the highest literature of our time, is described in all its painful and distressing details, in another part of this journal. Ordinary friends and acquaintances were reading letters from her of singular hope and cheerfulness, while others to whom she was bound by more intimate ties were grieving over letters of a very different character—when the awful news, as little expected in the one case as it was but too mournfully prepared for in the other, reached London. The same post brought intelligence of the death of her uncle, Dr. Wittington Landon.

This is not the time to enter upon any review of the literary claims or position of this accomplished and lamented woman. We may quote from one or two sources however—not ill qualified to pronounce upon such a matter—the estimation in which she was held.

The Editor of the *Courier* writes—

“The qualities which gave to ‘L. E. L.’ so proud and permanent a claim upon public admiration, were not those which constituted the chief charm of her character in the estimation of her more intimate and deeply attached friends. Brilliant as her genius was, her heart was after all the noblest and truest gift that nature in its lavishness had bestowed upon her—upon her, who paid back the debt which she owed for these glorious endowments of heart and mind, by an indefatigable exercise of her powers for the delight of the public, and by sympathies the most generous and sincere with human virtue and human suffering. More perfect kindness and exquisite susceptibility than her’s was, never supplied a graceful and fitting accompaniment to genius, or elevated the character of woman. We cannot, however, write her eulogy now—we can only lament her loss, and treasure the recollection which a long and faithful friendship renders sacred.”

The editor of the *Literary Gazette*, by whom her graceful and impassioned verses were first introduced to the world, speaks of her thus—

“ Her name will descend to the most distant times, as one of the brightest in the annals of English literature; and whether after-ages look at the glowing purity and nature of her first poems, or the more sustained thoughtfulness and vigor of her later works in prose or in verse, they will cherish her memory as that of one of the most beloved of female authors, the pride and glory of our country while she lived, and the undying delight of succeeding generations. Then, as in our day, young hearts will beat responsive to the thrilling touch of her music; her song of love will find a sacred home in many a fair and ingenuous bosom; her numbers which breathed of the finest humanities, her playfulness of spirit, and her wonderful delineations of character and society—all—all will be admired, but not lamented as now. She is gone, and, oh, what a light of mind is extinguished; what an amount of friendship and of love has gone down into her grave!”

Lastly, we borrow from the *Athenæum*, a quiet, just, and well judged notice—

“ The time for a personal notice of this lady is not yet come; it may be stated, however, that Mrs. Maclean was the daughter of an army agent, and the niece of Dr. Landon, Dean of Exeter, whose death is also announced in this week's papers; and that the early loss of her father, and the early manifestation of a talent facile as it was fanciful, brought her before the world while yet a girl, as an enthusiastic and constant literary labourer. To her honour, it must be added, that the fruits of her incessant exertion were neither selfishly hoarded nor foolishly trifled away—

but applied to the maintenance and advancement of her family. It might be partly the early consciousness of this power to befriend others, which encouraged her to such ceaseless composition as necessarily precluded the thought and cultivation essential to the production of poetry of the highest order. Hence, with all their fancy and feeling, her principal works—the *Improvisatrice*—the *Troubadour*—the *Golden Violet*—the *Golden Bracelet*—and the *Vow of the Peacock*—bear a strong family likeness to each other in their recurrence to the same sources of allusion, and the same veins of imagery,—in the conventional rather than natural colouring of their descriptions, and in the excessive, though not unmusical carelessness of their versification. It should be remarked, however, that in spite of the ceaseless strain upon her powers, and the ceaseless distractions of a London life, Miss Landon accomplished much for her own mind in the progress of its career; that she had reached a deeper earnestness of thought—had added largely to the stores of her knowledge, and done much towards the polishing and perfecting of her verse;—her latest published lyric, *The Polar Star*, written on shipboard, and which appears in the current number of the *New Monthly Magazine*, is an earnest that the scenes upon which she was entering would have opened a new life for the authoress as well as the woman. Besides her poetry, Miss Landon's three novels—*Romance and Reality*—*Francesca Carrara*—and *Ethel Churchill* remain to attest her powers as a prose writer. They are, all of them, stories of sentiment: the two latter relieved by glimpses of such gay and courtly life, as Watteau loved to paint, and Walpole and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to embalm in their correspondence. In right of this spirit they in some degree reflect the conversation of their authoress—which sparkled always brightly with quick fancy, and a *badinage* astonishing to those matter-of-fact persons who expected to find, in the manners and discourse of the poetess, traces of the weary heart, the broken lute, and the disconsolate willow tree, which were so frequently her theme of song. Another novel was in progress at the time she was snatched away with such awful suddenness—it having been her purpose to maintain her literary relations with England, and her hope to produce yet better and fresher works. Had her life been spared, this hope would, we think, have been fulfilled. As it is, the public will recollect pleasantly what she has achieved, and feel the void caused by the withdrawal of her graceful and versatile fancy. Her private friends and her literary contemporaries, too, will remember her long—as one alike kind, affectionate, and liberal.
