

Poems of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
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THE TOMB OF ROMEO AND JULIET.

Ay, moralize on Love, and deem
Its life but as an April gleam,—
A thing of sunshine and of showers,
Of dying leaves and falling flowers.
Who would not bear the darkest sphere
That such a rainbow comes to cheer ?
Ay, turn and wail above the tomb
Where sleep the wreck of youth and bloom ;
And deem it quite enough to say,—
Thus Beauty and thus Love decay.
But I must look upon this spot
With feelings thy cold heart has not ;
Those gentle thoughts that consecrate,
Even while they weep, the lover's fate.
I thought upon the star-lit hour,
When leant the maid 'mid leaf and flower,
And blushed and smiled the tale to hear,
Poured from her dark-eyed cavalier ;
And yet, I too must moralize,
Albeit with gentler sympathies,

THE TOMB OF ROMEO AND JULIET. 51

Of all my own fond heart can tell
Of love's despair, and love's farewell—
Its many miseries, its tears
Like lava, not like dew,—its fears,
That make hope painful,—then its trust,
So often trampled in the dust ;
Neglected, blighted, and betrayed,
A sorrow and a mockery made.
Then change and adverse fortune, all
That binds and keeps sweet Love in thrall.
Oh, surely, surely, it were best
To be just for one moment blest ;
Just gaze upon one worshipped eye,
And know yourself beloved, and die !

L. E. L.



Painted by G. S. Newton.

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THE FORSAKEN.

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THE FORSAKEN.

I dreamed a dream, that I had flung a chain
Of roses around Love,—I woke, and found
I had chained Sorrow.

L. E. L.

I HAVE caught the last wave of his snow-white plume,—
How fast to-night closes the evening gloom ;
I have heard the last sound of his horse's feet,—
Oh, wind ! once more the echoes repeat.

I should not weep thus if thou wert gone
Away to the battle as oft thou hast done ;
Or, if I wept, my tears would be
But voiceless orisons for thee.

Thou wert wont to part my scarf on thine arm,
My last kiss laid on thy lips like a charm ;
I could pray, and believe that thy maiden's prayer
Would be with thee in battle, and guard thee there.

But now thou art gone to the festival,
To the crowded city, the lighted hall,
In the courtly beauty's shining bower,
Little thou 'lt think of thine own wild flower.

Thou wilt join in the midnight saraband,
With thy graceful smile, and thy whisper bland ;
And to many another thou wilt be
All thou once wert to only me.

I might have known what would be my share—
Silent suffering, and secret care ;
I might have known my woman's part—
A faded cheek, and a rifled heart.

Often I'd read in the minstrel-tale,
How bright eyes grow dim, and red lips pale ;
Of the tears that wail the fond maiden's lot,
But I loved thee, and all but my love forgot.

And must this be, oh, heart of mine !
Why art thou not too proud to pine ?
Again I will wreath my raven hair,
With the red-rose flowers it was wont to wear ;

Again I will enter my father's hall ;
Again be the gayest and gladdest of all ;
Like the falcon that soars at her highest bound,
Though her bosom bear in it its red death-wound !

But what boots it to teach my heart a task
So vain as weeping behind a mask,
Broken, with only ruins to hide,
Little it recks of the show of pride.

Will a smile bring back to my lip its red,
Or the azure light from my blue eye fled?
Efface from the faded brow and cheek
The tale that tells my heart must break?

No! I will away to my solitude,
And hang my head in my darkened mood;
Passing away, with a silent sigh,
Unknown, unwept, and thus will I die!

Farewell, farewell! I have but one prayer—
That no thought may haunt thee of my despair;
Be my memory to thee a pleasant thing,
An odour that came and past with thy spring.

Forget me,—I would not have thee know
Of the youth and bloom thy falseness laid low;
That the green grass grows, the cypresses wave,
And the death-stone lies on thy once love's grave!

L. E. L.

L'AMORE DOMINATORE

THEY built a temple for the God,
'Twas in a myrtle grove,
Where the bee and the butterfly
Vied for each blossom's love.

The marble pillars rose like snow,
Glittering in the sunshine;
A thousand roses shed their breath,
Like incense, o'er the shrine.

And there were censers of perfume,
Vases with their sweet showers,
And wreaths of every blended hue
That lights the summer flowers.

And, like the breathing of those flowers
Made audible, a sound
Came, lulling as a waterfall,
From lutes and voices 'round.

I looked upon the altar,—there
The pictured semblance lay
Of him the temple's lord; it shone
More beautiful than day.

It was a sleeping child, as fair
As the first-born of spring;
Like Indian gold waved the bright curls
In many a sunny ring.

His cheek was flushed with its own rose,
And with the crimson shed
From the rich wings that like a cloud
Were o'er his slumbers spread.

And by him lay his feathered shafts,
His golden bow unbent;—
Methought that, even in his sleep,
His smile was on them sent.

I heard them hymn his name—his power,—
I heard them, and I smiled;
How could they say the earth was ruled
By but a sleeping child?

I went then forth into the world
To see what might be there;
And there I heard a voice of woe,
Of weeping, and despair.

I saw a youthful warrior stand
In his first light of fame,—
His native city filled the air
With her deliverer's name.

I saw him hurry from the crowd,
And fling his laurel crown,
In weariness, in hopelessness,
In utter misery, down.

And what the sorrow, then I asked,
Can thus the warrior move
To scorn his meed of victory?
They told me it was Love.

I sought the forum, there was one
With dark and haughty brow,—
His voice was as the trumpet's tone,
Mine ear rings with it now.

They quailed before his flashing eye,—
They watched his lightest word,—
When suddenly that eye was dim,
That voice no longer heard.

I looked upon his lonely hour,
The weary solitude ;
When over dark and bitter thoughts
The sick heart's left to brood,

I marked the haughty spirit's strife
To rend its bonds in vain:
Again I asked the cause of ill,
And heard Love's name again.

Yet on I went: I thought that Love
To woman's gentle heart,
Perhaps, had flung a lighter shaft,
Had given a fairer part.

I looked upon a lovely face,
Lit by a large dark eye;
But on the lash there was a tear,
And on the lip a sigh.

I asked not why that form had drooped,
Nor why that cheek was pale:
I heard the maiden's twilight song,
It told me all her tale.

I saw an urn, and round it hung
An April diadem
Of flowers, telling they mourned one
Faded and fair like them.

I turned to tales of other days,
They spoke of breath and bloom;
And proud hearts that were bowed by Love
Into an early tomb.

I heard of every suffering
That on this earth can be:
How can they call a sleeping child
A likeness, Love, of thee?

They cannot paint thee;—let them dream
A dark and nameless thing.
Why give the likeness of the dove
Where is the serpent's sting?

L. E. L.

RETIREMENT.

A PICTURE IN THE BRITISH GALLERY, BY LEAKY.

IT was a stream in Thessaly, the banks
Were solitary, for the cypress trees
Closed o'er the waters ; yet at times the wind
Threw back the branches, and then a sunbeam
Flung down a golden gift upon the wave,
And showed its treasures ; for the pebbles shone
Like pearls and purple gems, fit emblems they
For the delights that hope holds up to youth,
False in their glittering, and when they lose
The sparkle of the water and the sun,
They are found valueless. Is it not thus
With pleasures, when the freshness and the gloss
That young life threw o'er them has dried away ?

One only flower grew in that lonely place,
The lily, covered with its shadowy leaves,
Even as some Eastern beauty with her veil,

And like the favourite urns of spring ; its bells
Held odours that the zephyrs dared not steal.
And by the river was a maiden leant,
With large dark eyes, whose melancholy light
Seemed as born of deep thought which had gone through
Full many a stage of human wretchedness,—
Had known the anxious misery of love,—
The sickness of the hope which pines and dies
From many disappointments,—and the waste
Of feelings in the gay and lighted hall ;—
But more, as knowledge grew but from report
Than its own sad experience ; for she loved
The shelter of the quiet mountain valley,
The shadow of the scented myrtle grove,
And, more than all, the solitary bend,
Hidden by cypresses, of her own river.—
They called the nymph—RETIREMENT.

L. E. L.

