

Poems of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
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compiled
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THE GREEK GIRL

Painted by H. W. Pickering Engraved by Charles Fox

THE GREEK GIRL.

BY L. E. L.

OH! not as I could once have sung, not as I once
could sing—
Alas! my heart has lost a pulse, my lute has lost a
string!
There was a time this pictured scroll had bodied forth
to me
A thousand fair and fairy thoughts that never more
can be.

I once had read beneath the lash of that blue down-
cast eye,
Whose depths are love's own azure world—its world
of phantasy—
A thousand dreams, the fanciful of youth's enchanted
hour,
When the heart, begirt with dreams, is like an early
rose in flower,

With its colours and its odours, the beautiful and frail,
These fading, and those borne away by every passing
gale :

How like the hopes and vanities that fill the human
heart,

Thus opening, in the sweet spring-time—but only to
depart !

I turn on life's imaginings an eye too calm and cold,
Such dreams for aye have lost on me their fascinating
hold ;

My few glad years in fairy-land are gone beyond con-
trol,

And graver thoughts, I cannot check, are rising in my
soul.

For even as the crimson tints that perish as the day
In grey and solemn colouring to midnight fades away,
E'en so the mind, as years fleet by, doth take a
deeper tone,

And, by my own sad heart, fair Greek, I learn to read
thine own.

Thou art pausing, gentle maiden, in the task which
thou hast made,

To wreath the curls of thy bright hair into a sunny
braid :

There is sadness on thy thoughtful lip, and shadow on
thy brow,
Thou "delicate Ionian," what art thou dreaming now?

Fair gifts are flung around thee—the chain, the flower,
the gem—
Dost thou think of him who gave the gifts, or only but
of them?
But no; thou hast too pale a cheek, and far too
tranquil eye
For a dream of *love* or *vanity*, to be that passing by.

Thou art thinking of thy childish days, and of thy
childish home,
When thy step was as the mountain-roe, as fleet, as
free to roam;
When the air around was musical with thine own
happy song;
When summer leaves were overhead, and summer
days were long.

Bride of a stately warrior, whose heart is as thy shrine,
Who pours the wealth of east and west to win a smile
of thine;
Bride, too, of him thou lovest!—yet tears are in thine
eyes,
For memory of thy native earth, and of thy native
skies.

Ah! guard them well, those memories!—too soon the
heart, around
The crust of luxury's selfishness, the harsh and hard
is found;
Then keep the thoughts of earlier days—the guileless
and the kind,
When the heart, with its sweet impulses, held empire
o'er the mind.

These words, I know, are fanciful; yet who would
not but trace
A history of gentle thoughts upon that lovely face!
For, if not all reality, at least, such well may seem,
And, even with our own actual life, what is it but a
dream?



VENICE. THE EMBARKATION.

Drawn by Clarkson Stanfield Engraved by E. Goodall

VENICE.

BY L. E. L.

MORN on the Adriatic, every wave
Is turned to light, and mimics the blue sky,
As if the ocean were another heaven ;
Column, and tower, and fretted pinnacle
Are white with sunshine ; and the few soft shades
Do but relieve the eye.

The Morning-time—

The Summer-time, how beautiful they are !
A buoyant spirit fills the natural world,
And sheds its influence on humanity ;
Man draws his breath more lightly, and forgets
The weight of cares that made the night seem long.
How beautiful the Summer, and the Morn,
When opening over forest and green field,
Waking the singing birds, till every leaf
Vibrates with music ; and the flowers unfold,

Heavy and fragrant with their dewy sleep.
But here they only call to life and light
The far wide waste of waters, and the walls
Of a proud city—yet how beautiful!
Not the calm beauty of a woodland world,
Fraught with sweet idleness and minstrel-dreams;
But beauty which awakes the intellect
More than the feelings; that of power and mind—
Man's power, man's mind—for never city raised
A prouder or a fairer brow than Venice,
The daughter and the mistress of the sea.
Far spread the ocean, but it spread to bear
Her galleys o'er its depths, for war or wealth.
And raised upon foundations, which have robbed
The waters of its birthright, stand her halls.
Now enter in her palaces: a world
Has paid its tribute to their luxury:
The harvest of the rose, on Syria's plains,
Is reaped for Venice; from the Indian vales
The sandal-wood is brought to burn in Venice;
The ambergris that floats on Eastern seas,
And spice, and cinnamon, and pearls that lie
Deep in the gulph of Ormus, are for Venice;
The Persian loom doth spread her silken floors;
And the clear gems from far Golconda's mines
Burn on the swanlike necks of her proud daughters—
For the fair wife of a Venetian noble
Doth often bear upon her ivory arm

The ransom of a kingdom. By the sword,
Drawn by the free and fearless ; by the sail,
Which sweeps the sea for riches—which are power—
The state of Venice is upheld : she is
A Christian Tyre, save that her sea-girt gates
Do fear no enemy, and dread no fall.

Morn on the Adriatic, bright and glad !
And yet we are not joyful—there is here
A stronger influence than sweet nature's joy ;—
The scene hath its own sorrow, and the heart
Ponders the lessons of mortality
Too gravely to be warmed by that delight
Born of the sun, and air, and morning prime.
For we forget the present as we stand
So much beneath the shadow of the past :
And here the past is mighty. Memory
Lies heavy on the atmosphere around—
There is the sea—but where now are the ships
That bore the will of Venice round the world?—
Where are the sails that brought home victory
And wealth from other nations? No glad prows
Break up the waters into sparkling foam ;
I only see some sluggish fishing-boats.
There are the palaces—their marble fronts
Are grey and worn ; and the rich furniture
Is stripped from the bare walls ; or else the moth
Feeds on the velvet hangings. There they hang—

The many pictures* of the beautiful,
The brave, the noble, who were once Venetians :
But hourly doth the damp destroy their colours,
And Titian's hues are faded as the face
From which he painted. With a downcast brow,
Drawing his dark robe round him, which no more
Hides the rich silk or gems,† walks the Venetian ;
Proud with a melancholy pride which dwells
Only upon the glories of the dead ;
And humble with a bitter consciousness
Of present degradation.

These are the things that tame the pride of man—
The spectral writings on the wall of Time—
Warnings from the Invisible to show
Man's destiny is not in his own hands.
Cities and nations, each are in their turn
The mighty sacrifice which Time demands,
And offers up at the eternal throne—
Signs of man's weakness and man's vanity.

* Lord Byron, in one of his letters, alludes to the numberless splendid pictures mouldering in the Venetian palaces, whose inhabitants refuse to sell the portraits of their ancestors, almost the sole memorials of their former splendour.

† Though the use of the same dark robe was prescribed to all Venetian noblemen, they used to outvie each other in the magnificence of the under garments which it concealed.



CORINNE

AT THE CAPE OF MISENA

Painted by Baron Gerard Engraved by J. Goodyear

CORINNE AT THE CAPE OF MISENA.

BY L. E. L.

How much of mind is in this little scroll,
Whereon the artist's skill has bodied forth
The shapes which genius dreamed!—The quiet sea
Sleeps in the distance, with that happy sleep
Which, in the human world, but childhood knows—
Childhood, whose hope is present! Pale with light,
For colour has departed with the sun,
The moon has risen in the faint grey sky,
Bearing a clear young beauty on her brow,
Which has been turned to earth too short a while
To wear its shadow. With a darker hue
Than when the sun is on their shining leaves
The myrtles spread their branches to the night,
Whose dews are falling. By the moonlight touched
With silvery softness and with gentle shade,
The fairy city seems as if repose
And sleep alone were in its quiet walls.
Silence was made for such a night, or song,

But bringing no green leaf, it seeks its ark
 With wearied wing, and plumes whose gloss is gone.
 Here, too, is traced that love which hath too much
 Of heaven in its fine nature for the earth—
 Where love pines for a home and finds a grave ;
 The eagerness which turns to lassitude ;
 The thirst of praise which ends in bitterness ;
 Those high aspirings which but rise to find
 What weight is on their wings ; and that keen sense
 Of the wide difference between ourselves
 And those who are our fellows ; and which marks
 A withered ring around all confidence :
 We cannot soothe the pain we do not know.
 The heart is sacrificed upon the shrine
 Of mental power—at least its happiness.
 A whole life's bitterness is in the song
 Whose words, too truly, are the singer's own.

Fragment of Corinne's Song at Naples.

“ Thus, shrinking from the desert spread around,
 Doth Genius wander through the world, and finds
 No likeness to himself—no echo given
 By Nature : and the common crowd but hold
 As madness that desire of the rapt soul
 Which finds not in this world enough of air,
 Of high enthusiasm, or of hope !
 For Destiny compels exalted minds ;
 The poet whose imagination draws

Its power from loving and from suffering,
 They are the banished of another sphere :
 For the Almighty goodness might not frame
 All for a few—th' elect or the proscribed.
 Why spoke the ancients with such awe of Fate ?
 What had this terrible Fate to do with them,
 The common and the quiet, who pursue
 The seasons, and do follow timidly
 The beaten track of ordinary life ?
 But she, the priestess of the oracle,
 Shook with the presence of a cruel power.
 I know not what the involuntary force
 That plunges Genius into misery.
 Genius doth catch that music of the spheres
 Which mortal ear was never meant to know ;
 Genius can penetrate the mysteries
 Of feeling all unknown to other hearts ;—
 A Power hath entered in his inmost soul,
 Whose presence he may not contain.”*

* The part marked as quotation is translated literally from Corinne's song. Its only merit is its exactness, for I have scarcely permitted myself to alter a word. This brief passage is chosen as having less reference to the story than other parts equally beautiful. There occurs, soon afterwards, one of those almost startling remarks which give such peculiarity of thoughtfulness to Madame de Stael's writings. Corinne says, "Perhaps it is what we shall do to-morrow that will decide our fate ; perhaps even yesterday have we said some word that nothing can recal." I know not what may be the effect on others, but I could never read this short, but true, remark without a feeling of terror.

Such were the words of one who felt those words
With all the truth of sorrow. In this world,
Grief and life go together ; 'neath the tent,
The palace, and the cottage, woe is heard,
Speaking with suffering's universal voice.
But of the many who at night are glad
To lay their common burden down and rest,
Surely the mind endowed with gifts from heaven
Must be most glad, for it foresees its home,
And saith, in its rejoicing orison,
Thank God, thank God, there is a grave ; and hope
That looks beyond to heaven !

MOONLIGHT.

BY L. E. L.

There are no stars : thou lovely moon,
Thou art alone amid the sky ;
Methinks thou must be sad to hold
Such solitary watch on high !
'Tis but a tale of the old time—
When all of feeling or of thought,
And all the mysteries of the heart,
Around them some fine fiction wrought—
Which said that thou didst turn to earth
Thy radiant eyes, to watch and weep
Over the rest thou could'st not break—
Endymion's passion-haunted sleep.
Beneath this moonlight fable's guise,
They pictured the immortal mind,
Which seeks upon this weary earth
The love that it may never find.
For, though upon an eagle's wing
The spirit for a while may roam,
The pinions need some gentler tie,
The heavenward wanderer asks a home ;

And deems the heart can be that home,
Deems that affection is that tie,
And gives its likeness to its hope—
The pure, the beautiful, the high.
Fair queen, this fable of thy love
Is but the doom Fate sets apart
For earth's imaginative child,
Who makes a temple of the heart!



Painted by W. Boxall

Engraved by C. Marr