

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

The New Yorker

22nd February 1839

DEATH OF MISS LANDON.

It is with feelings of sincere regret we have to announce to our readers the death of Mrs. MACLEAN, wife to the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, which most suddenly and unexpectedly occurred in that settlement on the 15th of October. The *Courier* of Tuesday says :

“The feeling with which we record this mournful intelligence at the commencement of a new year, will be respected when we state that only yesterday morning we received from Mrs. Maclean a most affecting and interesting letter, which sets forth at once with the animating assertion, ‘I am very well, and very happy.’ ‘The only regret,’ she proceeds to say, ‘the only regret (the emerald ring that I fling into the dark sea of life to propitiate Fate) is the constant sorrow I feel whenever I think of those whose kindness is so deeply treasured.’ She says that her residence at the castle of Cape Coast is ‘like living in the Arabian Nights—looking out upon palm and coco-nut trees.’ And she then enters into a light-hearted and pleasant review of her housekeeping troubles, touching yams and plantains—and not less interesting account of her literary labors and prospects; intimating that the ship which brought the letter we quote, brought also the first volume of a novel, and the manuscript of another work to be published periodically. To the last, her friendly gossip is full of life, cheerfulness and hope. The next ship that sailed—how very, very soon afterward!—brought to us the tidings of the sacrifice of that life, the memory of which should be dear to all who can appreciate poetry, and wit, and generosity, the refinements of taste and the kindly impulses of the heart, that makes human nature—and woman’s nature especially—most worthy to be regarded with admiration and affection.”

The following is copied from a periodical paper called the ‘*Watchman*,’ of Wednesday, and adds to the regrets which the loss of one so gifted, in the prime of life, must under any circumstances excite :

We have been furnished with the following extract from a letter of the Rev. Thomas Freeman, Wesleyan missionary at Cape Coast, containing the announcement of this calamitous event. The sympathies of a large portion of the public, as well as of her immediate friends, will be awakened by the circumstances of the death of this talented and estimated lady :

“CAPE COAST TOWN, Oct. 16, 1838.

* * * “Here I would gladly close my letter; but alas! alas!—I feel it my painful duty to record the awfully sudden death of poor Mrs. Maclean—not occasioned by any sickness peculiar to this climate, her general health having been very good from the day she landed until yesterday morning, when she was found dead in her room, lying close to the door, having in her hand a bottle which had contained prussic acid, a portion of which she had taken, (as was prepared by the surgeon,) the remainder being spilt on the floor. She had been seen a short time before, in apparent good health and spirits. A letter was found, which she had written to a friend in Scotland, dated the same morning, in which she expresses herself satisfied and pleased with Cape Coast and its inhabitants, and as finding every thing here much better than she had expected. (She told me the same eight or ten days ago, or thereabouts.) On the body being thus found, a jury was immediately summoned, composed of the European merchants of the town, (I was not among them,) and the nature of the evidence given was such as they considered would authorise them to give a verdict to the following effect:—‘It is thought that she was seized with spasms in the stomach, (with which she was often troubled, being subject to them,) and took an over-dose of prussic acid, as she was found dead on the floor of her bed-room, close to the door, with the small bottle in her hand. It is supposed that she took an over-dose, which killed her.’ Mr. M. had been very ill with the same complaint, (the spasms,) while she only felt them for a short time at once, not enough to make her ill. Indeed, whenever I have seen her, which was often, she always appeared in high health and spirits. We all deeply deplore the event. She was a person of an amiable disposition. To me she was very kind, especially during my late illness, in sending me any little thing (such as dried fruit, &c.) which I stood in need of. I fondly hoped she would have been spared; for though her literary pursuits would most probably have hindered her from paying much attention to our poor degraded Fantee females, yet even the presence of an European lady is of vast importance in this place. I have dwelt longer than I ought, perhaps, on this melancholy catastrophe, because I feared lest it should operate injuriously on the minds of any missionaries, or their wives, whom the Committee may intend to send to this station.”

Since writing the above, a report of the inquest held upon the body of the unfortunate lady has been received, which we subjoin, abridged from the morning papers. The suggestions, observations and inferences which appear in the report are also copied from those journals—we of ourselves knowing nothing of any circumstance connected with the melancholy catastrophe, beyond that which has been published through the same medium:

At an inquest held at Cape Coast Castle, the 15th day of October, 1838, before me, James Swazey, Esq. one of her Majesty's justices of the peace, and others, the jurors of our lady, Queen Victoria, upon view of the body of Letitia Elizabeth Maclean, Emily Baily, being duly sworn upon the Holy Evangelists, and examined, deposed and saith: That between the hours of eight and nine in the morning of the 15th inst. the deponent having received a note addressed to Mrs. Maclean, from Mr. Swazey, went to her room for the purpose of delivering the same to her, and found some difficulty in opening the door, in consequence of Mrs. Maclean having fallen against it; that deponent, on entering the room, discovered Mrs. Maclean lying on the floor with an empty bottle in her hand—(which bottle being produced, was labeled 'Acid Hydrocyanicum Delatum, Pharm. Lond. 1836; medium dose, five minims, being about one-third the strength of that in former use prepared by Scheele's proof,')—and quite senseless; that, on seeing this, deponent went for her husband to call Mr. Maclean. She believed that Mrs. Maclean must have been attempting to open the door to call for assistance, when she fell; that her mistress was subject to be attacked by spasms, and was in the habit of taking occasionally a drop or two of the medicine in the bottle in water; but had not herself seen her do so more than two or three times. She (Mrs. Maclean) had the spasms rather badly the previous evening, and wished to take a little of the medicine contained in the bottle, to give her relief; she did not complain much this morning. Deponent was not present when her mistress was taken ill, but had seen her about half an hour before, when she appeared well, and made her a present, as the deponent was about leaving the coast for England. That Mrs. Maclean then told deponent to retire, and she would send for her when she wished to dress. Deponent had not seen her writing this morning, but she was so employed the previous evening, when she delivered to deponent two letters for friends in England, and was affected at the thought of deponent leaving her. That when deponent saw her last, she was in her usual spirits. The bottle found in Mrs. Maclean's hand was uncorked, and she (deponent) afterwards corked it and put it aside. She could state nothing more which could throw any light on the subject.

The next deposition is that of George Maclean, who deposes and saith: That deponent saw *nothing particular about Mrs. Maclean this morning, except that she complained of weariness*; and after having, as usual, given him some tea and arrowroot, at six o'clock went to bed again for about one hour and a half. Deponent attributed her weariness to attendance upon himself while sick, and want of rest for three previous nights; that she was very subject to spasms and hysterical affections, and had been in the custom of using the medicine contained in the small bottle produced, as a remedy or prevention, which she had told him had been prescribed for her by her medical attendant in London, (Dr. Thomson;) that on seeing her use it, deponent had threatened to throw it away, and had at one time told her that he had actually done so, when she appeared so much alarmed, and said it was so necessary for the preservation of *her* life, that deponent was prevented from afterwards taking it away; that he had been called by Bailey that morning, when he found Mrs. Maclean on the floor near the door, quite senseless; that he immediately sent for the doctor, and assisted to carry her to bed; that the efforts of the doctor to restore life were in vain, and that deponent cannot assign any cause for *her* death. Mr. Maclean added that an unkind word had never passed between them.

At this period of the proceedings, Mr. Maclean submitted a letter, dated 15th October, written by Mrs. Maclean, and intended for immediate dispatch to a female friend in England, in which there appears no depression of spirits. The only passage which at all savors of discontent is one certainly of no great importance. The following is the letter:

“My dearest Marie:—I cannot but write you a brief account how I enact the part of a feminine Robinson Crusoe. I must say, in itself, the place is infinitely superior to all I ever dreamed of. The castle is a fine building—the rooms excellent. I do not suffer from heat; insects there are few or none; and I am in excellent health. The solitude, except an occasional dinner, is absolute; from seven in the morning till seven in the evening, when we dine, I never see Mr. Maclean, and rarely any one else. We were welcomed by a series of dinners, which I am glad are over—for it is very awkward to be the only lady; still, the great kindness with which I have been treated, and the very pleasant manners of many of the gentlemen, made me feel it as little as possible. Last week we had a visit from Capt. Castle, of the Pylades. His story is very melancholy. He married, six months before he left England, to one of the beautiful Miss Hills, Sir John Hill’s daughter, and she died just as he received orders to return home. We also had a visit from Colonel Bosch, the Dutch Governor, a most gentleman-like man. But fancy how awkward the next morning: I cannot induce Mr. Maclean to rise; and I have to make breakfast, and do the honors of adieu to him and his officers, white plumes, mustaches and all. I think I never felt more embarrassed. I have not yet felt the want of society the least. I do not wish to form new friends, and never does a day pass without thinking most affectionately of my old ones. On three sides we are surrounded by the sea. I like the perpetual dash on the rocks;

one wave comes up after another, and is for ever dashed in pieces—like human hopes, that swell to be disappointed. We advance—up springs the shining froth of love or hope, 'a moment white, and gone for ever.' The land view, with its cocoa and palm trees, is very striking; it is like a scene in the Arabian Nights. Of a night the beauty is very remarkable; the sea is of a silvery purple, and the moon deserves all that has been said in her favor. I have only once been out of the fort by daylight, and then was delighted. The salt lakes were first dyed a crimson by the setting sun; and as we returned, they seemed a faint violet in the twilight, just broken by a thousand stars; while before us was the red beacon-light. The chance of sending this letter is a very sudden one, or I should have ventured to write to General Fagan, to whom I beg the very kindest regards. Dearest, do not forget me. Pray write to me, 'Mrs. George Maclean, Cape Coast Castle, care of Messrs. Forster and Smith, 3, New City Chambers, Bishopsgate-street.' Write about yourself; nothing else half so much interests your affectionate

L. E. MACLEAN."

The verdict was "that the death of Mrs. Maclean was caused by her having taken an over-dose of prussic acid, which, from evidence, it appeared she had been in the habit of using as a remedy for spasmodic affections, to which she was subject."

By a curious coincidence, the following sweet poem from her pen was published in the 'New Monthly Magazine' on the morning of the day upon which the news of her death reached London:

THE POLAR STAR.

BY L. E. L.

This star sinks below the horizon in certain latitudes. I watched it sink lower and lower every night, till at last it disappeared.

A STAR has left the kindling sky—
A lovely northern light;
How many planets are on high!
But that has left the night.
I miss its bright familiar face;
It was a friend to me,
Associate with my native place,
And those beyond the sea.
It rose upon our English sky,
Shone o'er our English land,
And brought back many a loving eye,
And many a gentle hand.
It seemed to answer to my thought:
It called the past to mind,
And with its welcome presence brought
All I had left behind.
The voyage it lights no longer ends
Soon, on a foreign shore;
How can I but recall the friends
Whom I may see no more?
Fresh from the pain it was to part—
How could I bear the pain?
Yet strong the omen in my heart
That says—We meet again;
Meet with a deeper, dearer love;
For absence shows the worth
Of all from which we then remove—
Friends, home, and native earth.
Thou lovely polar star!—mine eyes
Still turned the first on thee,
Till I have felt a sad surprise
That none looked up with me.
But thou hast sunk beneath the wave,
Thy radiant place unknown;
I seem to stand beside a grave,
And stand by it alone.
Farewell!—Ah, would to me were given
A power upon thy light:
What words upon our English heaven
Thy loving rays should write!
Kind messages of love and hope
Upon thy rays should be;
Thy shining orbit would have scope
Scarcely enough for me.
Oh, fancy vain as it is fond,
And little needed too!—
My friends! I need not look beyond
My heart to look for you!

THE LATE MRS. MACLEAN—L. E. L.

To the Editor of the London Times:

SIR—As I find there are some painful surmises in reference to the melancholy death of Mrs. Maclean, I presume to request your insertion of the accompanying letter. It is probably one of the two she wrote the night before her decease; for, though without date, it came to me as a 'ship letter,' and not by private hand, and I did not receive it until I had read the mournful intelligence in your paper. It is unnecessary to direct attention to its cheerful and healthy tone; to me it is evidence that for the first time during a life of labor, anxiety, and pain, for such hers undoubtedly was, her hopes of ease and happiness were strong and well grounded. A mysterious dispensation of Providence has deprived literature and soci-

ety of one of its brightest ornaments. She will be lamented by millions, to whose enjoyments she so largely contributed; but to her private friends the loss is one to which language can give no adequate expression.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obliged servant,

ANNA MARIA HALL.

The Rosery, 12, Gloucester-road, Old Brompton.

“ My dearest 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 fitted 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, lavameters, gasometers, &c., 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 weed, 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 both 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 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 house-keeping kind, and no one could begin on a more plentiful stock of ignorance than myself; however, like Sinbad the sailor in the cavern, I begin to see light. 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, &c., 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 progression 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 expected, if that be possible, of my English friends. It was almost like seeing something alive when I saw ‘The Buccaneer’ and ‘The Outlaw’ side by side in Mr. Maclean’s library; I cannot tell you the pleasure it gave me. Do tell Mr. Hall that every day I find the books of gems greater treasures, I refer to them perpetually; I have been busy with what I hope you will like—essays from Sir Walter Scott’s works, to illustrate a set of Heath’s portraits; I believe they are to appear every fortnight next year. Give my kindest love to Mrs. Fielding and Mr. Hall, and believe ever,

"Your truly affectionate, "L. E. (LONDON*) MACLEAN.

"I shall not forget the shells."

[The name had been written 'L. E. Landon;' but the word 'Landon' was erased, and that of 'Maclean' substituted.]

* "You see how difficult it is to leave off an old custom."

☞ The following are the last published pieces from the pen of the lamented Mrs. Maclean: —

**The Poetry of Schloss's English Wifou Almanac,
for 1839.—BY L. E. L.**

THE DUCHESS OF KENT.

A widow with an only child,
The mother of our queen;
A stranger in a foreign land,
Thy lot has various been.
How many claims attend with thee
Upon a nations sympathy!
How many anxious watching hours
Thy Mother's heart has known,
Before the blossom was a flower—
The orphan on a throne!
Ah! may a glorious future wait
On thee—thy child—and England's fate!

LADY BLESSINGTON.

Yet on the haunted canvass dwells
The beauty of that face,
Which art's departed master held
His sweetest task to trace;
None see it but are prisoners held
In its strong toil of grace.

Nature, thy fairy godmother,
Has lavished, for thy part,
A prodigality of gifts
To make thee what thou art:
The lovely face, the gifted mind,
The kind and generous heart.

PASTA.

I see thee, with thy night-black hair
Flung wild and loose in thy despair;
Upraised are thy imploring hands
To heaven, which yet thy prayer withstands;
And in thy deep and flashing eye
Is passion's utter agony.
A Grecian statue dost thou seem,
Wrought up in some tumultuous dream;
While in the music of thy tone
Is every thrill to sorrow known.
Queen art thou—and still must be queen,
While one heart keeps thy haunting scene.

WELLINGTON.

The conqueror of a thousand fields!
Not as in olden time,
When carnage urged its crimson path,
And conquest was a crime—
But in a universal war
For every right sublime.
The laurel that he wears should have
In English hearts its birth;
His victories kept inviolate
Our island's sacred earth;
They were the glorious ransom given
For every English hearth.

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE.

Thy hand is cold!—thy colors weave
Their graceful lines no more!
Yet, painter of each lovely face
That lit our island shore,
These faces from the canvass shine,
And haunt us still with thee and thine.
Hero and beauty—all who flung
Their spell around their day—
Owe to thy pencil memories
That will not pass away;
The past—the present seems to be,
Thanks to thy art and thee!

BEETHOVEN.

A stately and a solemn song,
Such as the evening winds prolong
In some cathedral aisle,
When holy hope and lofty thought,
From the soul's deep recesses brought,
Attend the hymn the while.
There mingle with thy glorious strain
No common fancies light and vain;
Thy spirit was enshrined—
Thy chords were thoughts—thy notes were given
To all that links this earth with heaven,
Musician of the mind!

FAREWELL.

My little fairy chronicle,
The prettiest of my tasks, farewell!
Ere other eyes shall meet this line,
Far other records will be mine;
How many miles of trackless sea
Will roll between my land and me!
I said these elfin almanac
Should call all pleasant hours back;
Amid these pleasant hours, will none
Think kindly on what I have done?
Then, fairy page, I leave with thee
Some memory of my songs and me.