

Poems of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
in
Friendship's Offering, 1827
compiled
as far as possible
from contemporary sources
by
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" The Spirit and the Angel of Death. By L. E. L.

*" Spirit. I have been over the joyous earth,
When the blushing morning gave daylight birth :
The boughs and the grass were sown with pearls,
As an Eastern queen had unbound her curls,
And shower'd their treasures o'er leaf and flower :
And then I saw how the noontide hour
Kiss'd them away, as if the sun
Touch'd all with joy that it shone upon.
I saw a crimson rose, like an urn
Wherein a thousand odours burn ;
It grew in the shade, but the place was bright
With the glory and glow of its fragrant light.*

Then a young lover came beside its dwelling,
To a maiden his gentle love-tale telling;
He pluck'd a rose from out of the shade,—
'Twas not bright as the cheek on which it was laid:
The tale was told in the sunny noon,
Yet the same was heard by the rising moon.
I have been where the azure violet dwells;
I have sang the sweet peal of the lily bells;
I have past on a diamond lake,
Where white swans summer pleasure take;
I saw the sun sink down in the sea,—
Blushes and bridal seem'd there to be.
Next, over a noble city I swept,—
Calm, in the moonlight, its proud towers slept,
And its stately columns arose on the air
As cut from snow mountains—they were so fair.
Enter'd I next a stately hall;
The young and the gay were at festival:
The cheek of rose flush'd a redder dye;
Flash'd the wild light from the full dark eye;
Laugh'd the sweet lip with a sunny glance,
As the beauty went through the graceful dance.
And I saw the rich wine from the goblet spring,
Like the sudden flash of a spirit's wing.
Thence I went in the twilight dim,
I heard a convent's vesper hymn:
Beautiful were the vestal train
That dwelt at peace in their holy fane.
Paused I in air, to hear a song
Which rather might to heaven belong;
The very winds for delight were mute,—
And I know 'twas the poet's gifted lute.
Then came a sound of the trumpet afar,—
The nations were gathering together in war,
Like a cloud in the sunset; the banner was spread;
Victory had dyed it of meteor red;
Floating scarfs shew'd their broder'd fold,
White foam dash'd the bridles of gold:
Gallant it was the sight to see
Of the young and noble chivalrie.
In sooth, this earth is a lovely place;
Pass not in darkness over her face;
Yet call back thy words of doom—
They are too gay and too fair for the tomb.

Angel of Death. Thou hast seen on earth, as a
passer by,
But the outward show of mortality :
Go, let the veil from thine eyes depart ;
Search the secrets of every heart ;
Look beyond what they seem to be ;
Then come and say, are they not ripe for me.

Spirit. I have been over the green earth again ;
I have heard the voice of sorrow and pain ;
I saw a shining almond-tree fling
Its silver wreath, like a gift, to Spring :
A cold breath came from the northern air ;
The leaves were scatter'd, the boughs were bare.
I saw a ship launch'd on the sea,—
Queen of the waters she seem'd to be ;
An hundred voices benison gave,
As she cut her path through the frothing wave.
'Twas midnight—she anchor'd before a town,
Over which the sun had gone lingering down,
As loath to set over what was so fair.
Now the smiling moon rode on the air,
Over towers and turrets, sailing in light,
And gardens, that seem'd to rejoice in night ;
When the pealing thunder roll'd on the main,
And the town was awaked by the fairy rain,
And the cry of battle, for blood and flame
Follow'd wherever that war-ship came.
I heard, on the night-wind borne along,
Sweet as before, that gifted song.
But look'd I now on the minstrel's thought—
There many an inward sorrow wrought,
Work of wasting ; pining for fame,
Yet loathing the gift of an empty name ;
Hope, whose promise was little worth,
And Genius, tainted with cares of earth.
I have watch'd the young, there are thorns with their
bloom ;
The gay, but their inward heart was gloom ;
I have seen the snake steal amid flowers ;
Showers that came down on April hours ;
And have seen—alas ! 'tis but outward show—
The sunshine of yon green earth below :
Glad of rest must the wretched and way-worn be—
Angel of Death, they are ready for thee !"

Taken from The Ladies' Companion (editor Edgar Allan Poe),
August 1835, page 167

Song.

I WROTE my name upon the sand ;
I thought I wrote it on thine heart,
I had no touch of fear, that words,
Such words, so graven, could depart.

The sands, thy heart, alike have lost
The name I trusted to their care ;
And passing waves, and worldly thoughts,
Effaced what once was written there.

Woe, for the false sands! and worse woe,
That thou art falsest of the twain !
I, yet, may write upon the sands,
But never on thine heart, again.

THE LYRIST

The laurel-wreath is round thine hair,
Maid of the brow divine;
Immortal as the stars, how proud
A destiny is thine!
Thy thoughts are burning on thy cheek,
And to thine eye is given
The glory of that inward light
Which is direct from heaven.
Sweep, maiden, sweep thy glorious lyre,
And let its chords express
All that they dream,—of lofty deed,
And meekest tenderness.
'Tis noon: the Summer loveliness
Should speak unto my heart,—
The maiden bowed her laurelled head,
“In such I have no part;”
A while ago you might have said,
Joy in the sunlight hour;
As flowers, my feelings would have sprung,
Beneath such genial power.
But when those flowers have been checked,
By cold North wind and rain,
Oh, never more will they expand,
In light and bloom, again!
The poet's is a doomed lot,
And heavy to be borne;—
When one half of his fame is won,
From mockery and scorn.
If right I read the poet's mind,
'Tis delicate as wild,
Lovely, unreal, sensitive,
And simple as a child;
'Tis as a lute, which a light touch
Into sweet music wakes,
But whose fine chords are slight as fine;—
'Neath the rough hand, it breaks.
Or, if its native strength resists,
It catches the rude tone,
And, harsh and tuneless, loses all
The sweetness—once its own.
Aye, fame is glorious, while, starlike,
It shines in its far birth;
But, like that star, its glory fades,
When once it touches earth.

Oh! woe that e'er I sought to win
A poet's gifted name!
What ever had my woman's heart
To do with aught like fame?
My laurel—'tis not at my will,
Or I would fling it down,
And weep, that ever brow of mine
Had won such fatal crown!
It does not fade; 'tis but the lot
Of every birth that springs
From our sad earth, her fair, her sweet;—
These are her fleeting things.
But deadly is the laurel; hence,
Freshly, its green wreath weaves;
It is immortal, for the sake
Of poison in its leaves.
When other trees put forth their bloom,
The laurel stands alone;
Little avail the changeless leaves;
And flowers,—it has none.

The plate for this is from W. Haines as artist and J. W. Cooke as engraver. It is not currently visible on the internet. A contemporary review in *Belle Assemblée* states:

6. The *Lyrist*, engraved by J.W. Cook (sic), from a picture by W. Haines, is, on the contrary, very firm, bold and spirited, as well in the engraving as in the design: the former, however, is somewhat deficient in mellowness and tone.