

POEMS
Attributed to
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
From
The Keepsake, 1838

compiled
by
Peter J. Bolton

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Notice

All contributions to *The Keepsake*, 1838 were kept anonymous. However, Sypher believes these two poems are by Landon and includes them in the closing notes to his *Poems from the Annuals*. They follow on from the opening story “The Royal Marriage”, which is known to be by Landon from a surviving manuscript.

The reviewer in *Fraser’s Magazine* at the time clearly agrees because he wrote:—

A pretty lady, of course, by Chalon, for a frontispiece: next comes an engraving, called, touchingly, “The First.” This represents a Greek kissing a Turkish lady; and following it, is a third plate, with heart-breaking pathos entitled “*The Last*.” It is our old friend Conrad, with Medora dead in her bed; but there are some other words tricked up to this old tune: “What, is the *ladye* sleeping?” &c. We think we can recognise, in spite of the incog., the fair writer who calls Conrad’s mistress a *ladye*.

The metamorphosis of the dead into sculpture is a theme that is typical of Landon.



THE FIRST

Painted by F. P. Stothard Engraved by H. Robinson

THE FIRST.

A LOVELY and a languid hour,
Long is the shadow on the flower,
And twilight with her first soft tears
Amid the cypress grove appears.

Listening for one beloved foot,
Sweeter to her than song or lute,
The ladye leans above the chords,
Deep in those thoughts that ask not words.

A little while hath she been bride
To him who lingers at her side,
As life had nothing left to show
More than that fairy form below.

Could those too happy moments stay
When Love is in his early day,
Life were a poet's fancy, made
For dreaming in the green wood shade.

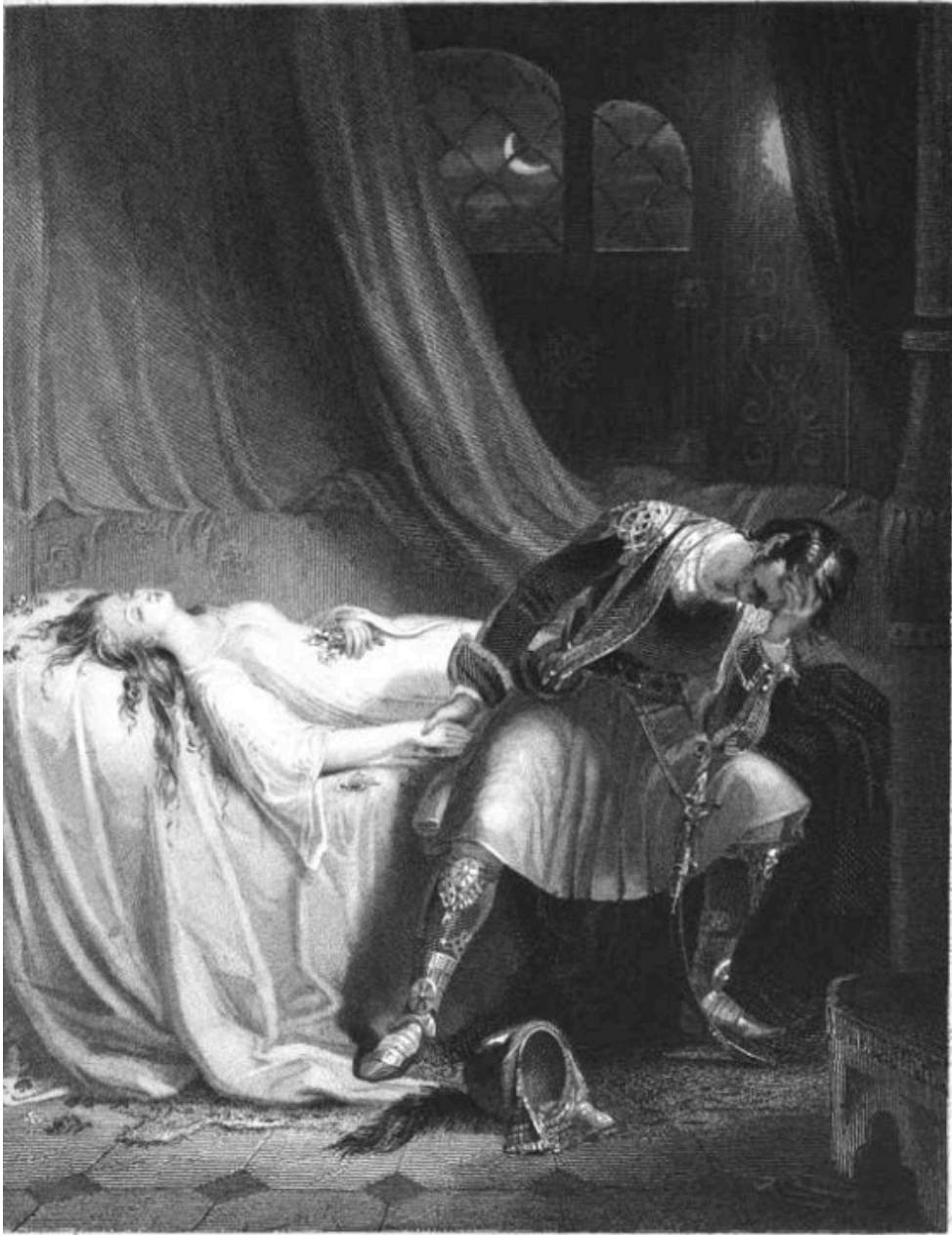
Then common things are covered o'er
With beauty never known before ;
A little leaf, a flower will wear
A charm that only Love flings there.

As yonder rising star hath given
Its own pure loveliness to heaven,
So Love can to the human heart
Its own enchanted light impart.

'Tis but a dream—a morning dream,
Yet flinging down on life's dark stream
A shadow fairer than the rose
To warm the current to its close.

Henceforth the spirit has one spot
Where other griefs and cares come not—
One thought that is from heaven, and flings
The lustre of an angel's wings.

Ah ! linger, ye beloved hours,
Linger on life's enchanted flowers,
They are so lovely—linger on—
What will they do when ye are gone ?



THE LAST

Painted by Edward Corbould Engraved by H. Cook

THE LAST.

WHAT! is the ladye sleeping?—no, too pale
 Is that white slumber for the dreaming hours;
 Too curious are the foldings of that veil,
 And too unmoved that wreath of fragrant flowers.

She lieth like a statue, white and cold,
 Like the soft marble of some sculptured column;
 The long bright hair sweeps down in many a fold
 O'er the high brow—wan with death's hues, and solemn.

This is not sleep—for sleep retains the life
 That gives the image to the troubled dreaming,
 With all day's feverish cares and fancies rife,
 Around the flushed and unquiet pillow seeming.

But these are over here—the cold clear cheek
 Has neither tears nor blushes to discover;
 Fear hath no more to shun, nor hope to seek,
 The sorrows and the joys of earth are over.

A little while, and e'en these sad remains
 May stay with those who cherish them no longer;
 Vainly the weeper what he loves retains—
 He may not—love is strong—but death is stronger.

Scatter the violets o'er that wan brow,
And raise that cold form from its last life pillow;
Bear it to where those azure violets grow,
Then leave it to its rest beneath the willow.

And is this all?—Ah! no—the loved, the dead,
Have yet another tomb, the heart's enshrining;
There are the inward tears perpetual shed,
Grief with all other memories entwining.

Weep for the mourner—not for her who knows
Life's latest—aye, and also sweetest slumber;
Peace is around it—only weep for those
Whom mortal cares and mortal anguish cumber.

It is a desperate grief—an utter gloom—
To which all after life brings no removing,
To know that deep within the unpitying tomb
Lies all the heart had in this world for loving.