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Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)

compiled by
Peter J. Bolton

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STANZAS ON THE NEW YEAR.

I stood between the meeting Years,
 The coming and the past,
 And I ask'd of the future one,
 Wilt thou be like the last ?
 The same in many a sleepless night,
 In many an anxious day ?
 Thank Heaven ! I have no prophet's eye
 To look upon thy way !
 For Sorrow like a phantom sits
 Upon the last Year's close.
 How much of grief, how much of ill,
 In its dark breast repose !
 Shadows of faded Hopes flit by,
 And ghosts of Pleasures fled :
 How have they chang'd from what they were !
 Cold, colourless, and dead.
 I think on many a wasted hour,
 And sicken o'er the void ;
 And many darker are behind,
 On worse than nought employ'd.
 Oh Vanity ! alas, my heart !
 How widely hast thou stray'd,
 And misused every golden gift
 For better purpose made !
 I think on many a once-loved friend
 As nothing to me now ;
 And what can mark the lapse of time
 As does an alter'd brow ?
 Perhaps 'twas but a careless word
 That sever'd Friendship's chain ;
 And angry Pride stands by each gap,
 Lest they unite again.
 Less sad, albeit more terrible,
 To think upon the dead,
 Who quiet in the lonely grave
 Lay down their weary head.
 For faith, and hope, and peace, and trust,
 Are with their happier lot :
 Though broken is their bond of love,
 At least *we* broke it not.—
 Thus thinking of the meeting years,
 The coming and the past,
 I needs must ask the future one :
 Wilt thou be like the last ?
 There came a sound, but not of speech,
 That to my thought replied,
 " Misery is the marriage-gift
 That waits a mortal bride :
 But lift thine hopes from this base earth,
 This waste of worldly care,
 And wed thy faith to yon bright sky,
 For Happiness dwells there ! "

L. E. L.

EGERIA'S GROTTA.

A SILVER Fountain with a changeful shade
 Of interwoven leaves and blossoms made;
 The leaves that turn'd the light to emerald green,
 While colour'd buds like rainbows shone between:
 And on the southern bank, as if beset
 With ocean pearls, grew the white violet;
 Above there stood a graceful orange-tree,
 Where Spring and Summer dwelt in amity,
 And shared the boughs between them,—one with flowers
 Its silver offering to the sunshine hours;
 The other with its fruit, like Indian gold,
 Or those bright apples the last lover roll'd
 In Atalanta's path and won the day—
 Alas! how often gold has led astray!
 The shadow of old chestnut trees was round—
 They were the guardians of the hallow'd ground;
 The hunter in his chase had past it by,
 So closely was it screen'd from curious eye.

On the bank opposite to that, where strew'd
 Sigh'd the pale violets' sweet multitude,
 There was a little Grotto, and like stars
 The roof was set with crystal and with spars
 Trembling in light;—it needed much their aid,
 For at the entrance the dark branches play'd
 Of a lone cypress, and the summer-day
 Was changed to twilight as it made its way.
 It is Egeria's Grotto. Her bright hair
 Has left its odour on the fragrant air;
 The echo of her step is lingering still
 In the low music of the lute-toned rill;
 And here the flowers are beautiful and young
 As when beneath her ivory feet they sprung.

Ay, this made Love delicious as a dream,
 Save that it was too constant but to seem—
 No time to tire, gone almost soon as seen;
 Known but by happiness, that it had been—
 A shade, but such a shade as rainbows cast
 Upon the clouds, in its first beauty past—
 A mystery, such mystery as the breath
 Lurking in summer sweetness on a wreath,
 Which we would but enjoy, but not explore,
 Too blest in the pleased sense to desire more.
 And thus if Love would last, thus must it be—
 A wish, a vision, and a fantasie.

L. E. L.

THE FUNERAL BRIDE.

An Italian Legend.

It is but daybreak—yet Count Leon's halls
 Are crowded with the young, the fair, the gay;
 And there is music, and all sign of mirth—
 The board that shines with silver, and with wine
 Sparkling like liquid ruby in bright cups;
 Flowers are strewn over the white marble floor;
 And every beauty wears a snowy robe,
 Blushing most consciously at the soft words
 That dark-eyed cavaliers are whispering.
 It is a bridal—but where is the bride?
 Enter yon lofty room—the bride is there.

Jewels are by her that a king might give,
 His favourite daughter's dower; and her bright hair
 Has pearls that Cleopatra might have worn,
 Pure as just from the ocean treasure-cave;—
 They are the lover's gifts, and he is one
 Of Genoa's richest nobles; and the bride,
 Genoa has no loveliness like hers.
 The orange buds were placed upon her breast,
 Yet Isabel moved not: paused she to take
 One last look on the sweet face in her mirror—
 To watch the rainbow-light her coronet
 Threw o'er her forehead from its many gems?
 Oh, no! where is the conscious smile, the flush,
 That should light lady's cheek at such a time?

Her mother saw—albeit she would not seem
 To mark the absence of the maiden's mind,
 But led her forth where friends and kinsmen stay'd
 Her entrance in the gay and gorgeous hall:
 Pity was mix'd with wonder as she came—
 Wonder at her exceeding loveliness—
 And pity—there were many knew her heart
 And hand went not together. There she stood,
 Like the sweet rising of the summer moon,—
 Beautiful, but so very, very wan,
 The crimson even from her lip was gone.

An Italian Legend.

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She stood—a statue which has every charm
Of woman's perfect beauty—but her blush.
The silver veil that o'er her forehead hung
Half hid its paleness, and the downcast eye
That droop'd with tears, seem'd only modest fear.

On they went to the temple, and they paused
Before the altar, where for the first time
The bridegroom leant close beside Isabel,—
And the next moment she lay on the steps,
White as the marble which her cold cheek press'd.
—The feast was turn'd to mourning, and the flowers,
The bridal flowers, bestrew'd her winding-sheet :
The instruments broke off in a dead pause,
And the rich festive board was spread in vain.— —

Next night, by torchlight, did they bear the bride
Into the vault where slept her ancestors.
Wail'd the wild dirge, and waved the sable plume,
Spread the dark pall—and childless they went home.

But there was one whose misery was madness—
One to whom Isabel had been the hope
Which had made life endurable, who lived
For her, and in her—who, in childhood's days,
Had been the comrade of her summer walk.
They had grown up together, and had loved,
Uncheck'd, until Cesario's father died,
And the proud fortunes of his ancient house
Seem'd falling, and the orphan youth had left
But little, save his honourable name.
Then came the greeting cold, the careless look,
All that adversity must ever know ;—
They parted, he and Isabel ; but still
There is a hope in love, unquenchable,—
A flame, to which all things are oil, while safe
In the affection which it knows return'd.
And the young lover had some gallant dreams
Of wooing fame and fortune with his sword,
And by these winning his own Isabel.

At that time Genoa battled with the Turk,
And all her young nobility went forth
To earn their country and themselves renown :
Then home they came again, and with them brought
Tidings of victory o'er the infidel.
Cesario was the first that sprung to land,
While his name rose in triumph from the crowd,
For his fame was before him ; yet he made
No pause to listen, though his breast beat high
With honourable joy ; but praise was not
Worth love to the young hero, and he sought
Tidings, sweet tidings of his Isabel.

He drew his cloak around his martial garb,
Look'd on the evening sky, which was to him
Like morning to the traveller, and found
The garden nook, where one small hidden bower
Was the green altar Memory raised to Love.
How much the heart, in its young hours of passion,
Delights to link itself with lovely things,
With moonlight, stars, and songs, fountains and flowers ;
As if foreboding made its sympathy,—

The Funeral Bride.

Alike so very fair, so very frail !
 It was within this bower they went to meet ;
 And one amid their many parting vows
 Was, that the twilight should be consecrate
 Still to each other ; and, though far away,
 Their thoughts, at least, should blend. And Isabel
 Vow'd to the pale Madonna that one hour ;
 And said that every setting sun should hear
 Her orisons, within that lonely bower,
 Rise for Cesario. It was twilight now,
 And the young warrior deem'd that he should meet
 In her green temple his beloved one.
 'Twas a sweet solitude, and mingled well
 Present and past together ; myrtle stems
 Shook silver flowers from their blossom'd boughs,
 And in the shelter of a cypress tree
 Stood the Madonna's image, the white arms
 Cross'd in the deep humility of love.
 Heavenward the sweet and solemn brow was raised,
 And lips, whose earthly loveliness yet seem'd
 To feel for earthly misery, had prayers
 Upon their parted beauty ; and around
 Roses swung perfume from their purple urns.
 He waited there until the laurel leaves,
 With silver touched, grew mirrors for the moon ;
 But yet she came not near—at length he saw
 Her lute flung careless on the ground, with rust
 Upon its silver strings, and by its side
 A wreath of wither'd flowers. He gazed no more—
 His heart was as if frozen—it had sunk
 At once from its high pitch of happiness.—

He sought her father's palace, for his fear
 Was more than he could suffer :—there he learnt
 His own, his beautiful, was in the grave ;
 And, it was told, laid there by love of him.
 He stay'd no question, but rush'd to the church,
 Where gold soon won his entrance to her tomb.
 Scarce the lamp show'd the dim vault where he stood
 Before the visible presence of the dead.
 And down the warrior bow'd his face, and wept
 For very agony, or ere he nerved
 His eye to gaze on that once worshipp'd brow.
 At last he look'd—'twas beautiful as life,—
 The blue vein lighted up the drooping lid,—
 The hair like sunshine lay upon the cheek,
 Whose rose was yet like summer,—and the lip,
 He could not choose but kiss it, 'twas so red :—
 He started from its touch, for it was warm,
 And there was breath upon it,—and the heart,
 As if it only lived to beat for him,
 Now answer'd to his own. No more, no more !—
 Why lengthen out the tale ?—words were not made
 For happiness so much as sorrowing.
 The legend of the Buried Bride is yet
 A household history in Genoa,
 Told by young lovers, in their day of hope,
 Encouraging themselves : such is the fate
 That waits fidelity.

L. E. L.

SIR GUILBERT.*

WHY is thy bark upon the sea—
Thy sail spread for the wind?
That vessel may go on her way,
But thou must stay behind.
I've seen thee stand knee-deep in blood,
In battle by my side;
And both thy faith and loyalty
Are like thy good sword tried.

* Founded on the answer given by a Norman knight to William the Conqueror
—Thierry's History of the Conquest, vol. i. p. 322.

Look round ! is not this a fair land ?
 Are not its daughters fair ?
 Are not its castles stately ones ?
 Choose thou and have thy share.—
 “ No ! Conqueror, no ! ” Sir Guilbert said,
 “ My portion is not here ;
 The air bears on 't the widow's curse,
 The ground the orphan's tear.
 I join'd thy banner as a knight,
 And not as a brigand :
 My soldier's duty done, I will
 Away to mine own land.
 I will not have your English ground,
 Nor yet your English dame ;
 I came with but my sword and steed,
 I will go as I came.
 A little tower in Normandie
 Was where I had my birth ;
 I will return to it,—no blood
 Cries from my father's hearth.
 Sir King, thou art as brave a knight
 As e'er stemm'd battle wave ;
 But thy heart's temper'd as thy braud,
 Thou art as stern as brave.
 For me, I am of softer mould,
 I cannot bear the moan
 That haunts me here ;—whate'er my house,
 At least it is mine own.
 The breeze is rising on the sea,
 I see the white sails swell ;
 My bark is waiting but for me,—
 Sir King, farewell ! farewell ! ”

L. E. L.

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CI-DEVANT !

I cannot, if I would, call back again
 The early feelings of my love for thee :
 I love thee ever, but it is in vain
 To dream Love can be what it was to me.
 Some of its flowers have fallen from the chain,
 And showed that iron under them could be—
 And it has entered in my soul : no more
 Can that soul revel in its dreams of yore.

O no, my heart can never be
 Again in lighted hope the same—
 The love that lingers there for thee
 Has more of ashes than of flame.

Still deem not but that I am yet
 As much as ever all thine own ;
 Though now the seal of Love be set
 On a heart chilled almost to stone.

And can you marvel? only look
 On all that heart has had to bear—
 On all that it has yet to brook,
 And wonder then at its despair.

Oh, Love is destiny, and mine
 Has long been struggled with in vain—
 Victim or votary, at thy shrine
 There I am vow'd—there must remain.

My first—my last—my only love,
 O blame me not for that I dwell
 On all that I have had to prove
 Of Love's despair, of Hope's farewell.

I think upon mine early dreams,
 When Youth, Hope, Joy together sprung ;
 The gushing forth of mountain-streams,
 On which no shadow had been flung.

When Love seemed only meant to make
 A sunshine on life's silver seas—
 Alas, that we should ever wake,
 And wake to weep o'er dreams like these !

I loved, and Love was like to me
 The spirit of a faery tale,
 When we have but to wish, and be
 Whatever wild wish may prevail.

I deemed that Love had power to part
 The chains and blossoms of life's thrall,
 Make an Elysium of the heart,
 And shed its influence o'er all.

I linked it with all lovely things,
 Beautiful pictures, tones of song,
 All those pure, high imaginings
 That but in thought to earth belong.

And all that was unreal became
 Reality when blent with thee—
 It was but colouring that flame,
 More than a lava flood to me.

I was not happy—Love forbade
 Peace by its feverish restlessness ;
 But this was sweet, and then I had
 Hope which relies on happiness.
 I need not say how, one by one,
 Love's flowers have dropp'd from off Love's chain ;
 Enough to say that they are gone,
 And that they cannot bloom again.
 I know not what the pangs may be
 That hearts betray'd or slighted prove—
 I speak but of the misery
 That waits on fond and mutual love.
 The torture of an absent hour,
 When doubts mock Reason's faint control :—
 'Tis fearful thinking of the power
 Another holds upon our soul !
 To think another has in thrall
 All of life's best and dearest part—
 Our hopes, affections, trusted all
 To that frail bark—the human heart.
 To yield thus to another's reign ;—
 To live but in another's breath—
 To double all life's powers of pain—
 To die twice in another's death.
 While these things present to me seem,
 And what can now the past restore,
 Love as I may, yet I can dream
 Of happiness in Love no more.

L. E. L.

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THE WISH.

Oh, it is not on lip or brow
 On which you may read change ;
 But it is in the heart below
 That much of new and strange
 Lies hidden. Woe the hour betide
 That ever they had aught to hide !
 My step is in the lighted hall,
 Roses are round my hair,
 And my laugh rings as if of all
 I were the gayest there ;
 And tell me, if 'mid these around,
 Lighter word or smile be found.
 But come not on my solitude,
 Mine after-hour of gloom,
 When silent lip and sullen brow
 Contrast the light and bloom,
 Which seem'd a short while past to be
 As if they were a part of me.
 As the red wreaths that bind my hair
 Are artificial flowers,
 Made for, and only meant to wear
 When amid festal hours :
 Just so the smiles that round me play
 Are false, and flung aside, as they.
 And when the reckless crowd among
 I speak of one sweet art,
 How lightly can I name the song,
 Which yet has wrung my heart !
 That lute and heart alike have chords
 Not to be spoken of in words—
 Or spoken but when the dew goes
 On its sweet pilgrimage,
 Or when its ray the moonbeam throws
 Upon the lighted page,
 On which the burning heart has pour'd
 The treasures of its secret hoard.
 These are the poet's hours ! oh ! these,—
 Secret, and still, and deep—
 The hot noon lull'd by singing bees
 Or the blue midnight's sleep.
 When odour, wind, and star, and flower
 Are ruling, is the poet's hour.
 But ill betide the time when he
 Shall wish to hear his song
 Borne from its own sweet secrecy
 On words of praise along :
 Alas for fame ! 'tis as the sun
 That withers what it shines upon.
 My lute is but a humble lute,
 Yet o'er it have been thrown
 Those laurel leaves, that well might suit
 With one of loftier tone.
 And yet is there one chord appears
 Unwet with sad and secret tears ?

Are there not in yon midnight sky
 Planets, whose ruling sway
 From our birth shape our destiny;—
 Some that with darkling ray
 In one fix'd mournful aspect shine?
 Such natal star I feel is mine.

And once my horoscope was read,—
 They said that I should have
 A brightness o'er my pathway shed,
 And then an early grave;
 Feelings worn with a sense their own,
 As chords burst by their own sweet tone.

I have one wish, 'tis wild and vain,
 Yet still that wish will be,
 That I might rest in yon wide main,
 My tomb the mighty sea;
 As if at once my spirit went
 To blend with the vast element.

One day I saw a grave just made,
 How drear, how dark, how cold:
 There when the coffin had been laid,
 They trampled down the mould:
 A week more 'twas a step and seat
 For heartless rest, and careless feet.

Be my death-pillow, where the rock
 Admits no mortal tread—
 No carved epitaph to mock
 The now unconscious dead;
 Or be my grave the billows deep,
 Where the sun shines and the winds sweep.

L. E. L.
