

A Poem of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
in
The Literary Examiner, 1824

compiled by
Peter J. Bolton

Lines on Seeing a Portrait of Keats

This poem is recorded on spenserians.cath.vt.edu under John Keats and my text here has been transcribed from there, in the absence of access to the original, which is in *The Literary Examiner*, on 12th September, 1824, page 581.
The poem also appears on cityoflondon.gov.uk under Keats House, Remembering Keats.

LINES ON SEEING A PORTRAIT OF KEATS.

The dark curls cluster round thy graceful head,
And hang o'er thy pale forehead, where the mind
Her visible temple hath; upon thy lip
Is throned a rich and melancholy smile,
So sad, it seems prophetic of the doom
That hangs o'er thy young life, and thine eye wears
An inward look where outward things but pass
Unnoticed: thou dost hold communion with
Thoughts dark and terrible; a blight hangs o'er
The spring flowers of thy youth; the seeds of death
Are sown within thy bosom, and there is
Upon thee consciousness of fate. The light
That lingers on thy face is as a star,
The last remaining one, a shadowy beam
Of those which have been. Ardent hopes were thine,
Dreams of the laurel and of high renown,
Ere health departed; and on thy wan lip
And hope-forsaken cheek a spirit burns,
Which will not wholly pass till in the grave.
I looked upon thee, youthful minstrel! thou
Wert like the lovely presence of a dream;
Such shapes as come when, o'er the sleeper's brain,
The memory floats of some wild, saddening tale;
And he has slept, his inmost spirit filled
With sorrow's beautiful imaginings,
Or as th' Endymion of thine own sweet song.
I look'd upon thy open brow, and felt
Almost an interest like to life in thee;
Thine influence is upon the heart; thou can'st
Awaken such sweet sympathies, we think
Of youth, of genius, gathered like the rose
In the first blushing of its purple morn;
Of a bright harp, whose chords for aye are mute,
But whose rich breathings are remembered still;
Whose tone can never be forgotten.

L. E. L.