

Poems of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
in
The Amulet, 1833

compiled
by
Peter J. Bolton

Contents

The Youthful Mariners
Agatha
Lines on the Bust of a Lady
The Evening Star
The Gentle Student
The Lute



THE YOUNG NAVIGATORS

Painted by W. Mulready Engraved by Charles Fox

THE YOUTHFUL MARINERS

BY L. E. L.

How now, my youthful mariners !
Where will ye sail to-day ?
Seek ye the southern latitudes,
And Spice Isles far away ?

Manilla and the Philippines,
To have your canvass fanned
By a thousand fragrant odours
Before you see the land ?

With Sindbad for your guide-book,
Will ye go sailing on,
To gather cinnamon, and pearls,
And nutmegs in Ceylon ?

Or are ye for a bolder quest,
Upon the Northern Seas ;
And, on your passage to the pole,
See even ocean freeze ?

And watch the restless waters
Turned into solid stone,
Like granite, and like porphyry,
In wild confusion thrown ?

Or do ye bear a battle-flag,
And thunder at your side,
So that the foreign foe may quail,
Where'er your navies ride ?

I cannot tell what enterprise
Might haunt that childish crew—
What, with their little fairy ships,
It was their dream to do :

But be what will the enterprise,
That carries men afar,
Through danger, death, through calm and storm,
For commerce, science, war ;

They could not go more heart in hand,
Their purpose to fulfil,
Than launched those boyish mariners
Their fleet upon the rill.

The sunbeam glittered on the waves,
And danced within their eyes :
Whose bark shall reach yon willow first,
His is the victor's prize.

And each one lends his voice and breath,
To urge the tiny sail ;
No sailor in a calm e'er watched
More anxious for a gale.

And though they are but paper boats,
Launched on a village brook ;
How earnest is each beating heart !
How eager is each look !

Oh, happy age ! that thus can find,
In trifles and in toys,
The pleasure of a new delight—
The freshness that enjoys !

Oh ! why should life bring weariness,
And languor, and disdain ?
Ah ! would to God that I could be
An eager child again !

AGATHA.

BY L. E. L.

A tale of patient sorrow, and of faith,
Which taught that patience.

AN ancient chamber in a castle old :
The oaken wainscoting is black with age ;
The tapestry, worked with Scripture histories,
Has lost its colours ; and the books that fill
Those carved arches, show both care and time.
And yet the room is cheerful—for the sun
Looks through the casements, where bright flowers
are placed
In graceful order ; and the cultured plant
Bears ever witness to a calm delight
Shed o'er the hours of such as nurse its bloom.
Two lean beside the window : one whose brow
Bears evidence of many a chastened grief,
For it is sad but calm—her cheek is pale,
And touching in its beauty—'tis so meek,
So kind, with light that suits an angel's face
Who dreams of heaven. By her side is one

Younger, and exquisitely beautiful,
With large blue eyes, the darker for their tears ;
And with the red rose reign upon her face,
Paramount as in youth.

Agatha Loquitur.

Nay, Bertha, turn from gazing on the road
Which winds amid the lime-trees—'tis in vain ;
The last hoof-tramp has perished on the wind
Two hours ago. Now dry thy tears, dear child ;
I would not check the natural tenderness,
The grief, the young and loved at parting feel ;
But I must blame this utter yielding woe,
Which feeds upon indulgence, and forgets
Womanly fortitude and gentleness,
Making the strength it finds in patient hope.
But then the dangers of the red campaign—
The weary march—the night-watch when the snow
Drives on a northern wind !—My Bertha, yes,
All these, and more, are in thy Ernest's lot ;
Yet not the less his life is in God's hand,
As much as when he wandered through our vales
With thy sweet eyes upon him : trust in heaven—
Prayer and submission bring their blessing down.
Dear child ! I know your sorrow, though my heart
Now only beats unto a measured time ;
Yet once its pulse was agony ; I wept
Tears passionate and vain. Oft have you asked

My early history ; I'll tell it now,
That it may bring its lessons—faith and hope ;
Show how the heart is schooled by suffering,
And how earth's sorrow may be guide to heaven !
You know that I am not a native here ;
These quiet valleys, where security
Seems like a birthright, and the circling year
Is marked but by the seasons and their change—
The green ear ripening into yellow wheat,
The opening blossoms and the falling leaves—
These are our chronicles of passing time !
This was my mother's soil—this Saxon land :
She was the very being such a home
Would form to gentle beauty—calm and meek,
Yet steadfast ; filled with all harmonious thoughts,
Her nature and religion were content—
Content which learnt submission from its hope—
Hope, high and holy hope, beyond the grave !
But I was born beside the winding Rhone,
And lived from infancy 'mid glittering scenes
Of falsehoods, follies, and appearances.
No kindly influences from solitude,
No communings with nature filled the heart
With thought, and mystery, and memories,
Which childhood doth unconsciously imbibe,
Till the mind, strengthened by such intercourse,
Finds its own power, and doth rejoice to find.
For never was it meant that we should be

Formed only by the artificial world.
We grow there selfish and indifferent ;
We take up cunning for defence, and deem—
How foolishly!—'tis wisdom : vanity,
Too strongly nourished and too early taught,
Makes every object, like a mirror, yield
Some likeness of ourselves ; and we but see
Our own small interests, and our weak desires,
In all around ; and we exaggerate
Our merits and our claims ; unsatisfied,
As the false estimate must ever be,
It ends in disappointment ; and then comes
Envy and hate, anger and bitterness ;
While life, a constant fever, has no joy
In nature, or in meditation lone.
Such was my youth : I lived but for myself ;
My gentle mother only asked to see
A smile upon the face she loved so well ;
And my proud father, in his bold career
Of war and council, had but time to think
Indulgence was affection. Yet not glad,
Albeit so glittering, was my hour of youth ;
It had its vain desires, hopes mortified,
Its envyings and repinings. I was young,
And rich, and (I may say so now) was beautiful ;
But so were many ; and to vanity
The triumph which it shares is incomplete.
Before a year of festival had passed,

There came a stranger to our halls ; he bore
High rank and honour in the emperor's court,
From whom he brought a greeting to our king.
It doth not need to paint his lofty step,
His falcon eye ; he won him many hearts ;
Such triumphs then were surest road to mine.
I loved Count Herman—passionately loved ;
And I, methinks, grew better for that love ;
For early love brings with it gentleness,
And self-distrust, and timid cares ; love feels
Its own unworthiness, and I felt mine—
Conscious of faults I never dreamed before.
Had my affection been less rashly placed
It had been better for my happiness ;
But Herman loved in that frivolity
Which most destroys our nature's higher part.
He woke in me no great and noble thoughts,
No generous imaginings ; the mind,
Stirred by the feelings to its inward depths,
Was a mysterious sea he sounded not ;
His choice was but a worldly preference,
And mutable like other worldly things ;
It had no soul, and thence no certainty :
For constancy is but love's spiritual part.
Count Herman left our court with many vows ;
How he fulfilled them one short summer taught,
Which saw him wedded in his native land.
Not 'mid the quiet influences around—

The solemn light of evening on the hills,
So tranquil in their beauty—can I paint
My fierce despair, or my impetuous grief;
Vexed pride and anger, grief and lingering love,
Mingled together in wild sobs and words;—
Thank God I have forgotten them! Again
My evil nature had the mastery;
I thought but of myself; and, worst of all,
There rose before me that deep burning shame
Which I must meet: I could have borne the loss
Of my false lover's faith, but could not bear
'To think that others knew his falsehood too.
I shrank abashed, and shunned all social life:
I thought not of my mother's lonely hours;
Remembered not a home made desolate
By the lost presence of a darling child;
But, reckless in my grief as in my love,
Entered the convent of the Carmelites;
I vowed a heart to God that was not God's;
And, as the veil the novice wears doth hide
Her face from every eye, so did the veil
Of proud resentment hide me from myself.
How eagerly I entered my new state!
How strict was I in its observances!—
Night brought its vigil, and day brought its fast—
Till (so the human heart deceives itself).
I deemed myself half martyr and half saint,
Rejoicing in my early holiness.

Alas ! the novelty wore off : I grew,
First languid, and then weary, and then turned
Repining to the world I had resigned.
Yet good for me the listless solitude
Of my low cell : lonely are serious thoughts,
And such mine were. I thought on wasted hours,
And wasted gifts, with penitential fear.
Day filled with its unsatisfying round
Of forms and words, how precious grew the night !
Then, leaning from my lattice, I could watch
The pale stars growing bright in the dim air ;
Spoke not their mystery to my inmost soul ?
Found they not language in my own deep thoughts ?
Then was I humble in my nothingness—
An atom in the path of many worlds.
Then was I hopeful in the scented weed
That, clustering at my casement, filled the cell
With its sweet breathings. I could see a Power
As watchful of the little as the great :
The fragile flower was cared for as the star.
Yet I had moments of despondency—
Many and bitter ; and remorse awoke
As from a dream. At last a summons came—
'Twas from my dying father ; and I went
(My year's novitiate was not past) and knelt,
For the first time, beside the bed of death.
How my heart smote me when I saw the cheek
Of my pale mother ! I, her wilful child,

How much I might have soothed her, had I shared
Her patient vigils ! Many a weary night
Had she bent lonely o'er my father's couch,
And now it was too late for me to aid.
I wept in agony ; I called the saints
To witness to the depth of my despair ;
I vowed wild penances ; my grief,
Still selfish, half forgot my mother's woe.
Yet now not all in vain for me her meek
And beautiful example ; I was touched
By the calm sweetness of humility,
Though sorrowing, resigned : yet in my heart
There was a struggle ; pride forbade to change,
And bade me straight resume the veil and vow ;
But still, the image of my mother, left
To solitude and solitary tears,
Softened me with reproachful tenderness ;
I longed to throw me at her feet, and say,
Mother, dear mother, take your child again !
One evening—'twas the first we bent our way
To that ancestral chapel where the dead
Of all our race reposed,—how many tears
Had fallen upon those cold and quiet stones !
The tablets to the memories of the tomb
Were mostly worn with time ; but one was there
Fresh—'twas the bitter work of yesterday !
There knelt my mother, but in prayer, not tears ;
And pale, as with some sad yet solemn thought,

At length she rose ; and, taking tenderly
My hand in hers, said, “ Shall we part, my child ?”
My tears were readier than my words ; we sat
Together in the dim and holy eve,
And then my mother told me that her heart
Had long been opened to the truths divine
The German Luther taught ; and by that faith
Had my departed father died in hope.
The tie was broken now that bound to France,
And she desired to see her native land,
Own the true creed, and die. “ My Agatha,”
She said, in her own sweet peculiar tone,
“ Read you the pages which I offer now,
And then decide.” I kissed the silver clasp
Of the small Bible :—Bertha, from that hour
It has to me been as a bosom friend !
We sought this castle ; and our pilgrimage
Brought its own blessing. Years have passed away
In our most dear home circle ; and we trace,
Each day succeeding, an accustomed round
Of duties, pleasures, charities, and cares,
Which make their own delight. My mother's age,
How beautiful it is !—such deep repose !—
Solemn as if the shadow of the grave
Were resting on it ; yet rejoiced to stay,
For my sake and for yours—her orphan charge !
Though faint the pilgrim, yet the heart is strong.
Bertha, my soul, the contrite and subdued,

Is stirred with thankfulness and love to God :
E'en as the vale reflects the sunshine bright
With golden light—and as the lake gives back
The bright blue sky unbroken by a cloud—
As outward earth mirrors the outward heaven—
So doth the soul return the spiritual light,
Even from the shadow of the inward world.
Many things trouble, many things destroy,
The image God has stamped on every mind ;
Sorrows, and strife, and passions, o'er it pass,
In feverish, yet dark obscurity.
And then we struggle vainly, unless faith,
With tears and prayers, creates a holy calm—
And only in such mood may we hope peace.
But, Bertha, see the light leaves of the lime
Are trembling, heavy with the darkness flung
By twilight ; 'tis the hour my mother loves
To pace the terrace ; she will need the aid
Of your young arm—I would not trust such charge
To any but our Bertha !

LINES ON THE BUST OF A LADY.

BY L. E. L.

[The Sculptor, H. B. Burlowe.]

A FACE of perfect beauty, such as haunts
The poet's dream, what time the shadowy limes
Have their light leaves stirred by some gentle wind ;
And their soft bloom, their small, pale yellow flowers,
Grow golden in the sunshine of the noon.
Then shapes are fitting round, which only wear
The likeness of our earth, but scarce its look ;
So spiritual the light which gives a soul
To each fair face, and to each starry eye.
This face is such a one : the open brow
(The parted hair obscures it not) is proud,
As if unconscious of life's meaner things ;
And on the lip is scorn—but generous scorn—
Which blends with sweetness ; and the loveliest smile,
So soft, so gracious, and so feminine,
Is on the dimpled cheek. Methinks the sculptor's skill
Has caught, most happily, the fine ideal
Both of the heart and mind.



THE EVENING STAR

Painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence P.R.A. Engraved by J. C. Edwards

THE EVENING STAR.

BY L. E. L.

How beautiful the twilight sky,
Whose starry worlds now spread,
Amid the purple depths of eve,
Their glory o'er my head !

And there is one—a radiant one—
Amid the rest shines he,
As if just risen from his sleep,
Within the mighty sea.

The clouds fall off in glittering flakes
Before his shining brow ;
So moves a ship that flings the waves
In bright foam from its prow.

I marvel not in former days,
Ere purer light was given,
That men fell down and worshipped thee,
A spirit-king in heaven.

But now that knowledge great and high
Is kindled in man's soul,
We know thee but the glorious part
Of a more glorious whole.

Oh, mysteries of night ! that fill
The mind with awe and love !
How visibly the power of God
Is manifest above !

Oh ! might and majesty that reign
Upon the midnight sky !—
Creed of my hope ! I feel thy truth
Whene'er I gaze on high.



THE GENTLE STUDENT

Painted by G. S. Newton Engraved by Charles Rolls

THE GENTLE STUDENT.*

BEND, gentle student, o'er the page,
Although thine be a joyous age—
An age, when hope lifts up its eyes,
And sees but summer in the skies ;
And youth leads on its sunny hours,
Like painted ones, whose links are flowers.
Yet bend thy sweet and earnest look
Above that old and holy book.

For there will come another time,
When hope will need a faith sublime,
To lead it on the thorny path
That weary mortal ever hath.
When vain delights have left behind
A fevered and exhausted mind,
And life, with few and wasted years,
Treads mournfully its vale of tears.

* Vide the Frontispiece.

Bend o'er the leaf thy graceful brow,
For every word thou readest now
Will sink within thine inmost heart,
Like good seed, never to depart :
A glorious and a great reward,
A sacred and eternal guard,
A sun amid our earthly gloom,
That sets to rise beyond the tomb !

L. E. L.

THE LUTE.

BY L. E. L.

OH! sing again that mournful song,
That song of other times!
The music bears my soul along,
To other, dearer climes.

I love its low and broken tone;
The music seems to me
Like the wild wind when singing lone
Over a twilight sea.

It may not sound so sweet to you,
To you it cannot bring
The valleys where your childhood grew,
The memories of your spring.

My father's house, my infancy,
Rise present to my mind,
As if I had not crossed the sea,
Or left my youth behind.

I heard it, at the evening's close,
Upon my native shore ;
It was a favourite song with those
Whom I shall see no more.

How many worldly thoughts and cares
Have melted at the strain !
'Tis fraught with early hopes and prayers—
Oh, sing that song again !



Drawn by H. Lavers

Engraved by G. Sangster