

Poems of
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)
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compiled
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Peter J. Bolton

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THE MASK

Painted by Harper Engraved by H. Cook

THE MASK.

UNVEIL'D, unmask'd ! not so, not so !
Ah ! thine are closer worn
Than those which, in light mockery,
One evening thou hast borne.
The mask and veil which thou dost wear
Are of thyself a part ;
No mask can ever hide thy face
As that conceals thy heart.
Thy smiles, they sparkle o'er thy brow,
Like sunbeams to and fro ;
But no one in their light can read
The depths that lurk below.
The tears, how beautiful they shine
Within thy large dark eyes !
But who can tell what is the cause
From which those tears arise ?
E'en as thy curls are train'd to fall
Around thy angel face,
So every look thy features wear
Is tutor'd in its grace.
No eager impulses ere fling
Their warmth upon thy cheek ;

No varying hues, from red to pale,
Thy inward feelings speak.
Thine atmosphere is festival ;
Thy hand is on the lute ;
And lightest in the midnight dance
We see thy fairy foot,
The many deem this happiness—
I see it is a task ;
Young without youth, gay without mirth,
Thine is the veil and mask.
I mark thy constant restlessness,
Thy eagerness for change ;
I know it is the wretched one
Who thus desires to range.
And thou dost flee from solitude
As if a fiend were there,
And communing with thine own thoughts
Were more than thou couldst bear.
Slight are the signs by which I put
Thy mask and veil aside,
And look upon thy wounded love,
And on thy wounded pride.
'Tis not for one, proud, fair, like thee
To perish or to pine ;
A higher lot is cast for thee—
A higher will is thine !
Oh ! misery to keep the heart
Lone, like some sacred fane,
And when it owns its deity,
Find it was own'd in vain !

Yet, far worse misery to know
Our faith no veiled thing :
Methinks that we can bear the pain,
If we can hide the sting.
But, out upon consoling friends !
The anguish one may brook ;
But not officious sympathy—
The soothing word or look.
Pity from all the common herd,
Whom most we must despise —
Perish the sigh upon the lips,
The tear within the eyes !
Alas ! what depths of wretchedness
The human soul can know !
How bitterly the waters taste,
Which seem in light to flow !
For love and hope, those leaves which give
Their sweetness to the wave,
Flung with no blessing, lose their charm,
And find the stream their grave !
Ah ! even as at coming night
The careful flowers close—
So should our heart call in its hopes,
And on itself repose.
But let it not be lull'd by dreams,
That weep whene'er they wake—
For every heart that lives by love,
A thousand beat and break !



LEONORA

Painted by T. A. Woolnoth Engraved by T. Woolnoth

LEONORA.

She was the loveliest lady of our line,
But of a cold proud beauty;
Yet gentle blushes had been on that cheek,
And tenderness within those dark blue eyes.
Sometimes, in twilight and in solitude,
There was a mournful song she used to sing —
But only then.

FAREWELL! and when the charm of change
Has faded, as all else will fade;
When Joy, a wearied bird, begins
To droop the wing, to seek the shade;—

When thine own heart at length has felt,
What thou hast made another feel—
The hope that sickens to despair,
The wound that time may sear, not heal;—

When thou shalt pine for some fond heart
To beat in answering thine again;—
Then, false one! think once more on me,
And sigh to know it is in vain.



DONNA JULIA

Painted by F. Stone Engraved by H. Robinson

THE CHOICE.

THE Spanish lady sat alone within her evening
bower,
And, sooth to say, her thoughts were such as suited
well the hour ;
For, shining on the myrtle-leaves until they shone
again,
The moonlight fell amid the boughs like light and
glittering rain.

The ground was strewn with cactus flowers, the
fragile and the fair—
Fit emblems of our early hopes—so perishing they
are ;
The jasmine made a starry roof, like some Arabian
hall ;
And sweet there floated on the air a distant foun-
tain's fall.

She leant her head upon her hand : "I know not
which to choose—
Alas ! whichever choice I make, the other I must
lose.

They say my eyes are like the stars ; and if they are
so bright,
Methinks they should be as those stars, and shed
o'er all their light.

“ Don Felix rides the boldest steed, and bears the
stoutest lance,
And gallantly above his helm his white plumes
wave and dance :
But then Don Guzman—when the night and dews
are falling round,
How sweet beneath my lattice comes his lute's soft
numbers' sound !

“ Don Felix has in triumph borne my colours round
the ring ;
Three courses, for my beauty's sake, he rode before
the King.
Don Guzman he has breathed in song a lover's
gentle care—
And many who know not my face, yet know that it
is fair.”

The inconstant moon, now bright, now veil'd, shone
o'er the changing tide ;
The wind shook down the flowers, but still new
flowers their place supplied ;
And echo'd by some far-off song, the lady's voice
was heard—
“ Alas ! I know not which to choose !” was aye her
latest word.

Yet, ere that moon was old, we saw the Donna Julia
ride
Gay on her snowy palfrey, as Don Alonzo's bride.
The bride was young and beautiful, the bridegroom
stern and old,—
But the silken rein was hung with pearls, the
housings bright with gold.



MADELINE

Painted by F. Stone Engraved by H. Cook

MADELINE.

I PRAY thee leave me not ; my heart
So passionately clings to thee ;
Oh, give me time, I'll try to part
With life—for love is life to me.
A little while—I cannot bear
The presence of my great despair ;
Though changed your voice, and cold your eye,
You would not wish to see me die.

The wretch who on the scaffold stands
Has some brief time allow'd
For parting grasp of kindly hands,
For farewell to the crowd :
And even as gradual let me learn
My thoughts and hopes from thee to turn ;
To grow accustom'd to thy brow,
Strange, chilling as it meets me now !

But, no ; I dare not, cannot look
Upon thy alter'd face :

Methinks that I could better brook
To have but memory's trace,
And I may cheat myself awhile
With many a treasured gaze and smile.
Yes, leave me—'tis less pain to brood
Over the past in solitude.

Oh, vanity of speech! no word
Can make thee mine again;
The eloquent would be unheard,
The tender would be vain.
Since gentle cares and spotless truth—
The deep devotion of my youth—
Since these are written on the air,
Wilt thou be moved by vow or prayer?

Yet how entire has been my love!
The flower that to the sun
Raises its golden eyes above,
Droops when the day is done:
But I for hours have watch'd a spot—
Although it longer held thee not;
It gave a magic to the scene
To think that there thy steps had been.

But I must now forget the past—
Say, rather, 'tis my all;
Henceforth a veil o'er life is cast—
I live but to recall.

I have no future—could I bear
To dream a dream you do not share?
It is hope makes futurity—
What, now, has hope to do with me?

Amid the ruins of my heart
I'll sit and weep alone;
Mourn for the idols that depart,
The altars overthrown,
With faded cheek and weary eyes,
Till life be thy last sacrifice.
Alas for youth, and hope, and bloom!
Alas for my forgotten tomb!



BELINDA

Painted by Miss Eliza Sharpe Engraved by H. Robinson

BELINDA ;

OR,

THE LOVE-LETTER.

ANOTHER soft and scented page,
Fill'd with more honied words !
What motives to a pilgrimage
A shrine like mine affords !
I know, before I break the seal,
The words that I shall find :—
“ The wound which you alone can heal—
So fair, yet so unkind !”

There, take your fortune on the wind !
Ah, how the breeze has borne
(As if our malice were combined)
The fragments I have torn !
So let the vows they offer pass —
Vows fugitive and vain ;
I should as soon expect the glass
My image to retain.

I care not for a heart whose youth
Is gone before its years,
Which makes a mockery of truth,
Which finds a boast in tears.
That is not love, when idleness
Would fill a listless hour —
'Tis vanity, which prizes less
The passion than the power.


I hold *that* love which can be kept
As silent as the grave,
And pure as dews by evening wept
Upon the heaving wave —
Embodying all life's poetry,
Its highest, dearest part :
And till such love my own may be,
I bear a charmed heart.



GULNARE

Painted by Miss L. Sharpe Engraved by H. T. Ryall

GULNARE.



OH, never more the flowers will stoop
Beneath her fairy feet ;
The myrtle with its bloom may droop,
But not above her seat ;
And no more will that fountain glass
The image of Gulnare —
How softly would that shadow pass
When noon was shining there !

How well the echoes used to know
The music of her lute !
The wind amid the leaves may blow,
But those sweet tones are mute.
The place is now an alter'd place,
And not what it has been ;—
It was the beauty of her face
Gave beauty to the scene.

Why did her eye in pity dwell
Upon that English knight,
The prisoner of the buried cell
Where day forgot its light?
It is a weary thing to lie
With weak and fetter'd hand,
While youth's brave time is passing by,
And rust creeps o'er the brand.

'Twas in the still night's silent hours,
The captive dreaming lay
Of his own old ancestral towers,
His mother far away.
He heard a step—a low, hush'd breath—
A sweet brow o'er him shone,
As even by the bed of death
Might shine an angel one.

She bound his wounds, she gave him food,
With odours and red wine;
And from a dreary solitude
That cell became a shrine.
She came there once—she came there twice—
The third time he was free:
She listen'd not her heart's advice,
Though weak that heart might be:

But to the lover's gentle prayer
Her pale lip still replied,
“ I may not, for a stranger's care,
Forsake my father's side.”

Her hair hung down below her knee,
 Though loop'd with orient pearl ;
He pray'd her of her courtesy
 To give him one dark curl.

“ Mid friend and foe, mid weal and wo,
 This soft braid I'll retain ;
And lady's favour, for thy sake,
 I'll never wear again.”

She would not let him see her tears—
 A time would come to weep :
Alas for young and wasted years
 That one remembrance keep !

Ah ! soon grief wears away the rose
 From any youthful cheek,
And soon the weary eyes will close
 Which hope not what they seek :
When dreams bring that loved face by night
 We never see by day,
Then the heart sickens at the light,
 And the look turns away.

There are some roses droop and die,
 While others bloom so fair—
Gone with their first and sweetest sigh :
 So was it with Gulnare.
Alas ! the Earth hides many flowers
 Within her silent breast ;
But could she not have spared us ours—
 Our dearest and our best ?

Within the City of the Dead
The maiden hath her home ;
There are the dews of evening shed,
And there the night-winds come.
Oh, Cypress ! whose dark column waves,
Nursed by the mourner's tear,
Thy shadow falls on many graves,
But not on one so dear !



MEDITATION

Painted by W. Boxall Engraved by J. Thomson

MEDITATION.

A sweet and melancholy face, that seems
Haunted with earnest thought; the dark midnight
Has given its raven softness to her hair;
And evening, starry eve, half clouds, half light,
Is in the shadowy beauty of her eyes.

How quietly has Night come down,
Quiet as the sweet sleep she yields!
A purple shadow marks yon town,
A silvery hue the moonlit fields;
And one or two white turrets rise
Glittering beneath the highest ray—
As conscious of the distant skies,
To which they teach and point the way.

The river in the lustre gleams,
Where hang the blossomed shrubs above—
The flushed and drooping rose, whose dreams
Must be of summer and of love.
The pale acacia's fragrant bough
Is heavy with its weight of dew;
And every flower and leaf have now
A sweeter sigh, a deeper hue.

There breathes no song, there stirs no wing—
Mute is the bird, and still the bee;
Only the wind is wandering—
Wild Wind, is there no rest for thee?
Oh, wanderer over many flowers,
Have none of them for thee repose?
Go sleep amid the lime-tree bowers,
Go rest by yon white gelder-rose.

What! restless still? methinks thou art
Fated for aye to bear along
The beating of the poet's heart,
The sorrow of the poet's song.
Or has thy voice before been heard,
The language of another sphere,
And every tone is but a word
Mournful, because forgotten here?

Some memory, or some sympathy,
Is surely in thy murmur brought:
Ah, all in vain the search must be,
To pierce these mysteries of thought!
They say that, hung in ancient halls,
At midnight from the silent lute
A melancholy music falls
From chords which were by daylight mute.

And so the human heart by night
Is touched by some inspired tone,
Harmonious in the deep delight,
By day it knew not was its own.

Those stars upon the clear blue heaven —
Those stars we never see by day —
Have in their hour of beauty given
A deeper influence to their sway —

Felt on the mind and on the soul—
For is it not in such an hour
The spirit spurns the clay's control,
And genius knows its glorious power? —
All that the head may e'er command,
All that the heart can ever feel,
The tuneful lip, the gifted hand,
Such hours inspire, such hours reveal.

The morrow comes with noise and toil,
The meaner cares, the hurried crowd,
The culture of the barren soil,
And gain the only wish avowed :
The loftier vision is gone by—
The hope which then in light had birth,
The flushing cheek, the kindling eye,
Are with the common things of earth.

Yet all their influence is not gone :
Perchance in that creative time
Some high attraction first was known,
Some aim and energy sublime.
In such an hour doth sculptor know
What shapes within the marble sleep ;
His Sun-god lifts the radiant bow,
His Venus rises from the deep.

And imaged on the azure air
The painter marks his shadows rise —
A face than mortal face more fair,
And colours which are of the skies.
The hero sees the field his own,
The banners sweep o'er glittering spears,
And in the purple and the throne
Forgets their cost of blood and tears.

And he who gave to Europe's sight
Her sister world, till then unseen,
How long to his inspired night
Familiar must that world have been!
All Genius ever yet combined,
In its first hour could only *seem*,
And rose embodied in the mind
From some imaginative dream.

O beauty of the midnight skies!
O mystery of each distant star!
O dreaming hours, whose magic lies
In rest and calm, with Day afar!
Thanks for the higher moods that wake
Our thoughtful and immortal part!—
Out on our life, could we not make
A spiritual temple of the heart!



GERALDINE

Painted by F. Stone Engraved by J. Thomson

GERALDINE.

LONELY and deep as the fountain when springing
From its earliest birthplace beneath the dark pines,
When first mid the wild flowers around it goes singing,
When first on its waters the red morning shines :

So lonely, so deep, is the love which is cherish'd,
Silent and sacred, Earl Surrey, for thee ;
All lighter and meaner affections have perish'd—
Life now has only but one love for me.

I share with thee every thought that delights me—
I read, it is only to tell thee again :
I have not a feeling on earth but unites me
To thee, be it intellect, pleasure, or pain.

I lean o'er the rose when the night-dews are weeping,
And deem its leaves written with sweet words of
thine ;
I see thy bold falcon through mid-heaven sweeping,
And wish it could bear thee a message of mine.

And yet I am mournful—I think of our morrow,
And my heart fills with nameless and shadowy
fears :

The heart has its omens, and mine are of sorrow—
I know that our future has anguish and tears.

I see the clouds pass o'er the stars, and my spirit
Grows dark as the terrors which round it are
thrown :

Ah, Surrey ! whatever my lot may inherit,
I care not, so suffering but reach me alone.

SONG.

OUR early years — our early years,
Recall them not again ;
The memory of former joy,
The pang of former pain.

Where is our childhood ? Where are they
The playmates of the heart,
Whose first sweet lesson was to love,
Whose second was to part ?

The Dead are with the past ; for them
How fruitless our despair !
Unkindness, anger, fondness, grief,
Alike are buried there.

Alas ! such thoughts can only weep
The heart's most bitter rain :
Our early years — our early years,
Recall them not again.



GRACE ST. AUBYN

Painted by E. T. Parris Engraved by H. T. Ryall

THE LAST OF THE ST. AUBYNS.

AND here they met:—where should Love's meeting
be —

Love passionate, and spiritual, and deep—
Where, but in such a haunted solitude —
A green and natural temple—fitting shrine
For vows the stars remember? Much the heart
Is govern'd by such outward impulses.
The love whose birth has been in lighted halls,
That lives on festival and flattery,
Like them is vain and selfish ; but the love
Whose voice has caught from twilight winds their tone,
And gazed alternately on the deep blue
Of heaven, and that in one dear maiden's eyes,
Is e'en as those divinities of old,
Whose beauty was a dream of early flowers,
Of lonely fountains, and of summer nights—
Poetry and religion blent in one.

In a fair garden did these lovers meet ;
The elm made leafy arches overhead,
And every sudden breeze that moved the boughs

Flung down a shower of gold, the alchemy
Of shining June, whose sunlight fill'd the air.
Luxuriant as a vine, the honeysuckle
Grew, till the foliage almost hid the flowers,
Whose breath betray'd them. There the sunflower
stood,

The golden cornfield of the bee, whose wings
Sounded like waters near—a lulling sound,
Soft as the nurse's chant of some old rhyme
Seems to the weary child; and by its side
The white althea grew, whose slender sprays
Are strung with seed-pearl. Up climb'd the sweet pea,
The butterfly of flowers:—I love it not,
Though every hue—and it has many tints—
Are dyed as if the sunset evening clouds
Had fallen to the earth in sudden rain,
And left their colours: purple, delicate pink,
And snowy white, are on thy wing-like leaves;
But thou art all too forward in thy bloom;
Thy blossoms are the sun's, and cling to all
That can support them into open day:
And then they die, leaving no root behind,
The hope and promise of another spring;
And no perfume, whose lingering gratitude
Remains round what upheld its summer's life.
Beautiful parasite! thou who dost win
A place with the fair flattery of thy flowers,
Whose death has nought of memory or of hope,
How many likenesses there are for thee
Mid the false loves and friendships of this world!

Beyond the wooded park spread, where the deer
Slept 'neath old trees ; and on a glittering lake—
The willows grew around it—was the home
Of stately swans. The lady of my tale
Was of an ancient ancestry, and wooed,
Half for her wealth and half for her sweet self,
By the land's chivalry ; but him she loved
Was not of her degree. Ah ! what cares Love
For all the poor distinctions wherewith pomp
Invests its nothingness ? And still he hath
Scutcheon and herald in the beating heart.

They loved—they parted ; he to win a name
Mid the red wars. Great Heaven ! what vain beliefs
Have stirred the pulse and led the hopes of man !
As if that honour could be bought by blood,
And that the fierce right hand was better worth
Than the fine mind, and high and generous heart !—
Blame not the lovers—'twas their age's fault ;
And even that I were full loath to blame.
Perchance our own, which now, quick-sighted, sees
The many faults and follies of the past,
Has a successor in the wheel of time
To which our errors will be just as clear.

'Twas pity that they parted. But one week,
And the stern father died ; none save his child—
'Twas a child's duty, and she wept for him—
Sorrowed above the harsh and cold one's grave :
A monument was all his memory.
The gentle lady was now free to choose,
And faithfully she kept to her first love.

The suitor was denied ; and festivals
Were only graced in quiet courtesy
By her sweet presence : but the peasant's hut,
Where want or suffering came, there her low voice
And fairy footstep were familiar things.
Her lute was a companion, and the wind
Caught music from her melancholy song ;
And often, in the garden where they met,
She read those old and lovelorn histories
Which, with the poet's aid, wake pleasant tears—
For unreal sorrow is the luxury
Of youth and hope. 'Twas in this happy time
The artist took his likeness of her face.
'Tis a sweet picture. Mid the parted locks
The brow is white and open—it confides
On the fair future which it dreams ; the hair
Has sunshine on it ; silken robe and gem
Are such as suit a lady in the land ;
A chain hangs from her arm, which might have paid
The ransom of an eastern emir, won
By some bold ancestor : but in her eyes,
Her deep, her blue, her melancholy eyes,
Sorrow doth dimly prophesy itself.
Nature and Fortune have no unity—
Or one so young, so good, so kind, so true,
Should have been happy. All too soon the scroll
Came o'er the sea which told her lover's fate :
He fell in battle, as so many fall,
Unknown, unnamed—his energies, his hopes,
His bold aspirings, and his proud resolves,

Alike in vain. She faded from that hour.
Quiet and voiceless in her grief, 'twas like
A bird that perishes, the cause unknown ;—
We see the plumage fade, the bright crest droop,
But reckon not of the secret wound within.
No more they saw her, at the evening hour,
Along the terrace wandering mid the flowers,
The fair exotic favourites shelter'd there ;
No more her step rejoiced the aged ear,
And made the music of the lonely hearth ;
And soon closed windows, shutting out the day,
Told there was death within that ancient house.

She died with one last wish upon her lips :
It was accomplished. Never more the vault
Where her forefathers slept received its dead ;
For she, the last of that old line, slept not
Within the sculptured chapel of her race.
They buried her beneath the glad green earth ;
The sunshine, like a blessing, falling round,
And kissing off the tears which night had wept.

Those stately walls are levelled with the ground ;
The yellow corn waves o'er them ; that fair park
Is covered now with cottages and fields.
But in a lonely nook of forest land
Her grave remains : there is a mound of grass ;
A broken cross, grey and with moss o'ergrown ;
A little open space is fill'd with flowers—
Wilding ones, growing amid furze and fern ;
A brook runs through, which, like a natural hymn,

Sings to the dead : then close the forest-trees
In many and impenetrable brakes.
Few find the path which winds around the tomb
Where sleeps the last and loveliest of her line.