

Landon
in
The New Monthly
1838

Poems in
The New Monthly
Magazine
during the year 1838
by
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The New Monthly Magazine, Volume 52, Pages 372-373

A LONG WHILE AGO.

STILL hangeth down the old accustom'd willow,
Hiding the silver underneath each leaf,
So droops the long hair from some maiden pillow,
When midnight heareth the else silent grief;
There floats the water-lily, like a sovereign
Whose lovely empire is a fairy world,
The purple dragon-fly above it hovering,
As when its fragile ivory uncurl'd

A long while ago.

I hear the bees in sleepy music winging
From the wild thyme when they have past the noon—
There is the blackbird in the hawthorn singing,
Stirring the white spray with the same sweet tune;

SUBJECTS FOR PICTURES.—NO. IV.

I.

THE ZEGRI LADY'S VIGIL.

Ever sits the Lady weeping—
 Weeping night and day—
 One perpetual vigil keeping,
 Till life pass away,
 And she join the seven who sleep.
 Daylight enters not that building,
 Tho' so rich and fair—
 With the azure and the gilding
 That are lavish'd there—
 Round the purple curtains sweep,
 Heavily their shadows creep
 Around the Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

On the walls are many a sentence,
 In bright letters wrought—
 Touch'd not with the meek repentance
 By the Gospel brought—
 But the Koran's haughty words—
 Words that, like a trumpet calling,
 Urge the warrior on ;
 In the front of battle falling,
 Paradise is won—
 By the red and ready swords—
 Can they soothe the spirit's chords
 Of the lonely Zegri Ladye—
 Of the Ladye weeping there.

Seven tombs are in that chamber—
 Each a marble tomb :—
 Lamps that breathe of musk and amber
 Tremble in the gloom.
 Seven lamps perfume the air.

Subjects for Pictures.

On each tomb a statue lying,
 Almost seems like life ;
 And, above, the banner flying
 Seems to dare the strife—
 Which again it may not dare.
 Can the carved statues there
 Suffice the Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

While the others fled around them,
 Did the seven die.—
 In the front of war she found them
 With none others nigh :—
 Noble was the blood they shed.
 Sacred in her grief and beauty—
 Did the Ladye go ?—
 Asking life's last sacred duty
 Of the Christian foe.
 Those white feet were stain'd with red,
 When the King bestow'd her dead
 On the lovely Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

Never since the hour she brought them
 To that ancient hall :—
 Since with her sad hands she wrought them
 Their embroider'd pall,
 Hath the daylight seen her face.
 Rosy o'er the Guadalquiver
 Doth the morning gleam ;
 Pale the silver moonbeams shiver
 O'er the haunted stream.
 Nothing knows she of their grace—
 Nothing cheers the funeral place
 Of the lonely Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

Those six tombs contain a brother—
 All her house's pride :—
 Six contain her line ; one other
 Riseth at her side.
 Who is in that seventh tomb ?
 One far dearer than the others
 Shares their place of rest :
 Well she loved her noble brothers—
 But she loved him best—
 He who shared the warrior's doom
 With the favour at his plume
 Of the lovely Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

Never more when first appearing
 Will he watch her eye,
 In the mounted lists careering,
 When his steed went by
 Rapid as the lance he flung.
 Never more when night is lonely
 Will the warrior glide
 To the citron shade, where only
 He was at her side,

Subjects for Pictures.

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While the very wild wind hung
 On the music of the tongue
 Of the lovely Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

Not with daylight to discover
 How the wretched weep,
 Will the maiden wail her lover
 Or her brothers keep
 In remembrance with her tears.
 Grief hath stern and silent powers,
 And her house is proud,
 Not to-day's cold guarded hours
 Is despair allow'd ;

 But, shut out with haughty fears,
 Pride with daylight disappears,
 From the lonely Zegri Ladye—
 The Ladye weeping there.

But her slight frame has been shaken
 By the sudden blight,
 And her dark eyes are forsaken
 By their former light ;
 Heavy is their settled gloom.
 And her wan cheek beareth token
 Of young life's decline ;
 You may see the heart is broken
 By each outward sign.

 Soon the heart can life consume,
 Fast approaching is the tomb,
 Of the lonely Zegri Ladye—
 Of the Ladye weeping there.

II.

ARIADNE WATCHING THE SEA AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF THESEUS.

Lonely—lonely on the shore—
 Where the mighty waters roar,
 Would that she could pass them o'er !
 Doth the maiden stand.
 Those small ivory feet are bare,
 Rosy as the small shells are,
 They are, than the feet, less fair
 On that sea-beat strand !
 Wherefore doth the girl complain ?
 Wind and wave will hear in vain.
 Dark as is the raven's breast
 Wand'ring wild in its unrest—
 Like a human thought in quest
 Of a future hour.
 Do her raven tresses flow
 Over neck and arm below,
 White as is the silent snow,
 Or the early flower !
 Coming ere the summer sun
 Colours what it shines upon.

Subjects for Pictures.

Vainly does the west wind seek
 To recall upon her cheek
 How the red rose used to break
 In her native isle—
 Breaking with a lovely flush ;
 But her cheek has lost its blush
 And her lip its smile :
 Once how fair they used to spring
 For the young Athenian King!

Desolate—how desolate—
 Does the Cretan lady wait
 On the beach forlorn, who late
 In a palace dwelt.
 They will not—the coming waves—
 Watch her pleasure like the slaves
 Who before her knelt ;
 And the least sign was command
 From her slight but royal hand.

Lovely was the native bower
 Where she dwelt a guarded flower,
 In her other happier hour,
 Ere love grew to pain.
 Mid these grey rocks may she roam,
 For the maiden hath no home—
 None will have again.
 Never more her eyes will meet
 Welcome from her native Crete.

Little did that Princess fear,
 When a thousand swords were near,
 Where no other was her peer,
 That an hour was nigh,
 When her hands would stretch in vain
 Helpless to the un pitying main,
 To the un pitying sky—
 Earth below and heaven above
 Witness to the wrongs of Love.

On the white and sounding surge,
 In the dark horizon's verge,
 Does a vessel seem to urge
 Fast her onward way.
 And the swelling canvass spread,
 Glitters in the early red
 Of the coming day ;
 'Tis as if that vessel bore
 All the sunshine from the shore.

Hath the young King left her side—
 She but yesterday his bride—
 Who for his sake cross'd the tide,
 Gave him love and life ?
 He hath left her far behind
 To the warring wave and wind.
 But what is their strife,
 To the war within the heart,
 Which beholdeth him depart ?

Subjects for Pictures.

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She hath perill'd life and fame
 Upon an all desperate game ;
 What availeth now her claim
 On the false and fled ?
 Not him only hath she lost—
 All the spirit treasured most
 Has its lustre shed.
 Let the false one cross the main,
 If she could believe again.

After hours may yet restore
 To the cheek the rose it wore,
 And, as it has smiled before,
 So the lip will smile.
 Let them be however bright,
 Never will they wear the light
 Of their native isle.
 Trusting, happy were they then—
 Such they cannot be again.

Strange the heart's emotions are,
 How from out of its despair
 Will it summon strength to hear
 Desperate wrong and woe !
 But such strength is as the light
 Seen upon the grave by night—
 There is death below :
 And the very gleam that flashes
 Kindles from the heart's sweet ashes.

Maiden ! gazing o'er the sea,
 Wistfully, how wistfully !—
 Thine such weary doom must be—
 Thine the weary heart.
 Woe for confidence misplaced,
 For affections run to waste,
 And for hopes that part—
 Leaving us their farewell word,
 One for ever-jarring chord.

There the Cretan maiden stands,
 Wringing her despairing hands,
 Lonely on the lonely sands—
 'Tis a woman's lot :
 Only let her heart be won,
 And her summer hour is done—
 Soon she is forgot ;
 Sad she strays by life's bleak shore,
 Loving, but beloved no more !

L. E. L.



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SUBJECTS FOR PICTURES.—NO. VI.

THE TWO DEATHS.

I.—*The Death of Sigurd, the Earl of Northumberland.*

The Earl lay on his purple bed,
 Faint and heavy was his head,
 Where the snows of age were shed—
 Heavy on his pillow.
 Never more when seas are dark
 Will Earl Sigurd guide his bark
 Thro' the dashing billow.
 Never from that bed of pain
 Will the warrior rise again.
 Yes, he will arise :—e'en now
 Red he flushes to the brow ;
 Like the light before his prow
 Is the dark eye's gleaming.
 No : it never shall be said
 Sigurd died within his bed
 With its curtains streaming—
 Whose sole curtain wont to be
 Banners red with victory.
 Lift me up, the sea-king said—
 At the word his sous obey'd,
 And the old man was convey'd
 Where the sea was sounding.
 At his ancient castle gate,
 Death's dark coming to await,
 With his knights surrounding,
 Morn was reddening in the sky,
 As the Earl came forth to die.
 In a carved oaken chair,
 Carved with carving quaint and rare—
 Faces strange—and garlands fair—
 Is the chieftain seated,
 As when at some festival
 In his high ancestral hall
 Bards his deeds repeated.
 And there was no loftier song,
 Than what bore his name along.
 Round him swept his mantle red,
 Like a chief appalled,
 With his helmet on his head—
 With its white plumes flying.
 At his side the sheathed brand,
 And the spear in his right hand—
 Mid the dead and dying.
 Where the battle raged the worst,
 Ever was that right hand first.
 He—the tamer of the wild—
 Who invincible was styled,
 Now is feeble as a child
 By its mother sleeping ;

Subjects for Pictures.

But the mind is unsubdued—
 Fearless is the warrior's mood,
 While his eyes are keeping
 This last vigil strange and lone,
 That his spirit may be known.
 As a ship cuts through the froth
 Shining comes the morning forth,
 From his own ancestral north,
 While each rosy vapour
 Kindles beautiful and bright,
 With an evanescent light :
 But the human taper
 Hath an even briefer ray :
 Strange, oh life, is thy decay !
 Haughtily his castle stands
 On a rock amid the sands,
 Where the waves in gather'd bands
 Day by day are dashing.
 Never is the sounding shore
 Still with their eternal roar,
 And their strife is flashing
 To the noontide's azure light,
 And the stars that watch at night.
 Sigurd's look is on the foam
 Where his childhood wont to roam—
 For the sea has been his home
 From his earliest hours—
 Gathering the echoing shells,
 Where the future tempest dwells,
 As some gather flowers ;
 Trembling when a rosy boy
 With a fierce and eager joy.
 Many things long since forgot
 In a hard and hurried lot
 Now arise—they trouble not
 He, the stately hearted :
 But he saw a blue-eyed maid,
 Long since 'mid the long grass laid,
 And true friends departed.
 Tears that stand in that dark eye
 Only may the sea-breeze dry.
 Longer do the shadows fall
 Of his castle's armed wall,
 Yet the old man sits, while all
 Stand behind him weeping :
 But behind they stand, for he
 Would not brook man's tears to see.
 One fair child is sleeping—
 To his grandsire's feet he crept,
 Weeping silent till he slept.
 Heavily beneath his mail
 Seems Earl Sigurd's breath to fail,
 And his pale cheek is more pale,
 And his hand less steady.
 Crimson are the sky and surge,
 Stars are on th' horizon's verge,
 Night and Death are ready !
 Down in ocean goes the sun,
 And Earl Sigurd's life is done !

Subjects for Pictures.

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II.—*The Death of Camoens.*

Pale comes the moonlight thro' the lattice gleaming,
 Narrow is the lattice, scanty is the ray,
 Yet on its white wings the fragrant dews are streaming—
 Dews—oh how sweet after August's sultry day!
 Narrow is the lattice—oh let night's darkness cover
 Chamber so wretched from any careless eye—
 Over yon pallet whatever shadows hover,
 They are less dark than the shadow drawing nigh—
 Death it is thy shadow
 Let the weary one now die!

Beautiful, how beautiful!—the heavy eyes now closing
 Only with the weight of the moonlight's soothing smile—
 Or do they recall another hour's reposing,
 When the myrtle and the moonlight were comrades the while?
 Yes; for, while memory languidly is fetching
 Her treasures from the depths which they have lain among,
 A fragile hand—how thin—how weak—is sadly sketching
 Figures and fancies that cell's white walls along.
 On the lip there is a murmur—
 It is the swan's last song.

Dark order of St. Dominick! thy shelter to the weary
 Is like thy rule—cold, stern, un pitying in its aid;
 Cold is general charity, lorn the cell and dreary—
 Yet there the way-worn wretched one may rest the dying head;
 Who would remember him—ah, who does remember—
 He the ill-fated, yet the young and gifted one?
 Grief and toil have quenched life's once aspiring ember:
 High heaven may have pity—but man for man has none!
 Close thine eyes, Camoens;
 Life's task is nearly done.

Feebly his hand upon the wall is tracing
 One lovely face and one face alone,
 E'en the coming hour—other memories effacing—
 Leaves that as fresh as when it first was known;
 Faintly he traces with white and wasted fingers
 What was once so lovely—what is still so dear:
 Life's latest look—like its earliest one yet lingers
 On the large soft eyes that seem to meet him here;
 Love's ethereal vision
 Is not of Earth's dim sphere!

Large, soft, and dark, the eyes where he has blended
 So much of the soul are somewhat like his own;
 So in their youth the auburn hair descended,
 Such the sad sweet smile to either red lip known.
 Like were they in beauty, so the heart's light trembled
 On the flushing cheek and in the kindling eye;
 Yet more clearly like—the inward world resembled—
 In its sweet communion—the tender and the high;
 Our cold world is cruel
 To rend so sweet a tie.

Thro' a weary world-path known to care and sorrow,
 Still was her influence o'er his being cast;
 She was the hope that whispered of to-morrow,
 She was the memory music of the past—

She was in his numbers—when these numbers breathing
 Of his country's glory—made it glorious more—
 To its southern language long harmony bequeathing,
 Haunting every wild wave dashing on its shore.
 Ay, the poet's music
 Is lovely as of yore.

Dream not that the love which haunts the poet's spirit
 Is the common passion that sweetens daily earth :
 From a world ethereal its nature must inherit
 All the high imaginings that crowded round its birth ;
 From the pure, pale stars, amid their midnight watches,
 It asks for inspiration lofty and divine ;
 From the small wild flowers amid the woods it catches
 Charms, round the careless and the usual path to shine.
 Such is the poet's passion—
 Such, Camoens, was thine.

Flinging far below him each meaner thought that cumber
 Wishes born of wants, he lighted up life's dream
 With the kindling light that warms the poet's numbers—
 Yet are they sung by the Tajo's sunny stream.
 Still was his country the theme of his inspiring,
 How her bold vessels first swept the southern seas—
 Still was her praise the meed of his desiring,
 While telling how her heroes met the fierce and mighty breeze.
 The past and its sea triumphs—
 His dreams were fill'd with these.

How was he rewarded?—how are such rewarded ?
 Those who thus lavish their inward wealth in vain ?
 Only one doom for the poet is recorded—
 A present that must buy the future with its pain.
 Long, long away, toss'd on the Indian billow,
 Dream'd he sweet songs for his lady and his land ;
 Pale and wan he lies on his last neglected pillow—
 None are near to minister with soft and soothing hand.
 There let the poet perish—
 So hath perish'd all his band.

Heavily, heavily his large black eyes are closing
 On the twilight loveliness they are too faint to know ;
 O'er that pale high forehead a shadow is reposing—
 Peace to the weary heart that languid beats below !
 From that sweet lip its old songs are departed ;
 Take, ye wild winds, what it wont to breathe of yore—
 There he is dying deserted, broken-hearted,
 Like a broken lute which no music wanders o'er.
 Farewell to Camoens !
 The swan will sing no more.

Yet not for this in the spirit's faith I falter,
 Heavy though the doom be—yet glorious is the meed.
 Let the life be laid upon the fated altar—
 It is but the sacrifice of an eternal creed.
 Never yet was song breathed in this high believing,
 But, like a star, it hath floated down time's wave ;
 While what lofty praises and tender grieving,
 And what noble hopes, come to sanctify and save !
 Even such the glory,
 Camoens, by thy grave !

L. E. L.