

Mortimer Collins (1827-1876)

1 *The Ballad of Eleänore*

We need hardly remind our readers of the Crosses erected by King Edward I. wherever his wife's corpse stopped on its way to interment at Westminster.

O, fairer than vermilion  
Shed upon western skies  
Was the blush of that sweet Castilian  
Girl, with the deep brown eyes,  
As her happy heart grew firmer, 5  
In the strange bright days of yore,  
When she heard young Edward murmur,  
"I love thee, Eleänore!"

Sweeter than musical cadence  
Of the wind mid cedar and lime 10  
Is love to a timorous maiden's  
Heart, in the fresh spring-time;  
Sweeter than waves that mutter  
And break on a sinuous shore,  
Are the songs her fancies utter 15  
To brown-eyed Eleänore.

They twain went forth together  
Away o'er the Midland Main,  
Through the golden summer weather  
To Syria's mystic plain. 20  
Together, toil and danger  
And the death of their loved ones bore,  
And perils from Paynim, stranger  
Than death of Eleänore.

Where Loncoln's towers of wonder 25  
Soar high o'er the vale of Trent,  
Their lives were torn asunder;  
To her home the good Queen went.  
Her corse to the tomb he carried,  
With grief at his heart's stern core; 30

And where'er at night they tarried  
Rose a cross to Eleänore.

As ye trace a meteor's onset  
By a line of silver rain,  
As ye trace a regal sunset 35  
By streaks of a saffron stain,  
So to the minster holy  
At the west of London's roar  
May ye mark how, sadly, slowly,  
Passed the corse of Eleänore. 40

Back to where lances quiver, —  
Straight back, by tower and town,  
By hill and wold and river, —  
For the love of Scotland's crown.  
But ah! there is woe within him 45  
For the face he shall see no more;  
And conquest cannot win him  
From the love of Eleänore.

Years after, sternly dying 50  
In his tent by the Solway sea,  
With the breezes of Scotland flying  
O'er the wild sands, wide and free,  
His dim thoughts sadly wander  
To the happy days of yore,  
And he sees, in the gray sky yonder, 55  
The eyes of his Eleänore.

Time must destroy those crosses  
Raised by the Poet-King;  
But as long as the blue sea tosses,  
As long as the skylarks sing, 60  
As long as London's river  
Glides stately down to the Nore,  
Men shall remember ever  
How he loved Queen Eleänore.

(From Henry W. Longfellow, ed. *Poems of Places*. Vol. 4.  
Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1876)