

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, 35
As ye trace a regal sunset
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. 45
But ah! there is woe within him
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.

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