

Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802-38)

1 *The Troubadour*

He raised the golden cup from the board;
It sparkled with purple wealth;
He kissed the brim her lip had prest,
And drank to his ladye's health.

"Ladye, to-night I pledge thy name, 5
To-morrow thou shalt pledge mine;
Ever the smile of beauty should light
The victor's blood-red wine.

"There are some flowers of brightest bloom 10
Amid thy beautiful hair;
Give me those roses, they shall be
The favour I will wear.

"For ere their colour is wholly gone,
Or the breath of their sweetness fled, 15
They shall be placed in thy curls again,
But dyed of a deeper red."

The warrior rode forth in the morning light,
And beside his snow-white plume
Were the roses, wet with the sparkling dew,
Like pearls on their crimson bloom. 20

The maiden stood on her highest tower,
And watched her knight depart;
She dashed her tear aside, but her hand
Might not still her beating heart.

All day she watched the distant clouds 25
Float on the distant air;
A crucifix upon her neck,
And on her lips a prayer.

The sun went down, and twilight came,
 With her banner of pearly grey; 30
And then afar she saw a band
 Wind down the vale their way.

They came like victors, for high o'er their ranks
 Were their crimson colours borne,
And a stranger pennon droop'd beneath, 35
 But that was bowed and torn.

But she saw no white steed first in the ranks,
 No rider that spurred before;
But the evening shadows were closing fast,
 And she could see no more. 40

She turned from her watch on the lonely tower
 In haste to reach the hall;
And as she sprang down the winding stair,
 She heard the drawbridge fall.

A hundred harps their welcome rung, 45
 They paused as if in fear;
The ladye entered the hall, and saw
 Her true knight stretched on his bier.

(From George Barnett Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 2. London, 1881)