

William Motherwell (1797-1835)

11 *Roland and Rosabelle*

A tomb by skilful hands is raised,  
Close to a sainted shrine,  
And there is laid a stalwart Knight,  
The last of all his line.  
Beside that noble monument, 5  
A Squire doth silent stand,  
Leaning in pensive wise upon  
The cross-hilt of his brand.

Around him peals the harmony  
Of friars at even-song, 10  
He notes them not, as passing by  
The hymning brothers throng:  
And he hath watched the monument  
Three weary nights and days,  
And ever on the marble cold 15  
Is fixed his steadfast gaze.

“I pray thee, wakeful Squire, unfold” —  
Proud Rosabella said —  
“The story of the warrior bold,  
Who in this tomb is laid?” 20  
“A champion of the Cross was he” —  
The Squire made low reply —  
“And on the shore of Galilee,  
In battle did he die,

“He bound me by a solemn vow, 25  
His body to convey  
Where lived his love — there rests it now,  
Until the judgment-day:  
And by his stone of record here,  
In loyalty I stand, 30  
Until I greet his leman dear —  
The Lady of the Land!”

“Fair stranger, I would learn of thee  
 The gentle warrior’s name,  
 Who fighting fell at Galilee 35  
 And won a deathless name?”  
 The Squire hath fixed an eye of light  
 Full on the Lady tall —  
 “Men called,” he said, “that hapless Knight  
 Sir Roland of the Hall! 40

“His foot was foremost in the fray,  
 And last to leave the field —  
 A braver arm in danger’s day  
 Ne’er shivered lance on shield!”  
 “In death, what said he of his love — 45  
 Thou faithful soldier tell?”  
 “Meekly he prayed to Him above  
 For perjured Rosabelle.”

“Thy task is done — my course is run —  
 (O fast her tears did fall!) 50  
 I am indeed a perjured one —  
 Dear Roland of the Hall!”  
 Even as the marble cold and pale,  
 Waxed Rosabella’s cheek;  
 The faithful Squire resumed travail — 55  
 The Lady’s heart did break!

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