

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1806-1861)  
[from *Poetical Works* (1897)]

FELICIA HEMANS.  
TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE POETESS.  
(1850)

I

Thou bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned Dead art bowing,  
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow throwing,  
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music wedding,  
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of their shedding!---

II

Take music from the silent Dead whose meaning is completer,  
Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such tears are meeter,  
And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou treadest,  
No flowers for her! no need of flowers, albeit "bring flowers!" thou saidest.

III

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may come to breaking,  
Or flowers, to greet the "bride"---the heart's own beating works its aching;  
Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,  
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered:

IV

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human seeming,  
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming:  
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,  
Her spherèd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more bright and holy.

## V

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning:  
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning?  
The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod, for the afflated  
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone dilated?

## VI

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her brow was wreathing,  
But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in all her breathing,  
Which drew, from rocky earth and man, abstractions high and moving,  
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

## VII

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Saviour she descrieth,  
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His bosom lieth:  
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments, flowing,  
There learneth she the sweet "new song" she will not mourn in knowing.

## VIII

Be happy, crowned and living One! and as thy dust decayeth  
May thine own England say for thee what now for Her it sayeth---  
"Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,  
The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her singing."