

Byron  
and  
Trinity  
Memorials,  
Marbles  
and Ruins



Edited  
by  
Adrian  
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Cover photo: Statue of Lord Byron by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen.

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### 3. On the Statue of Lord Byron by Thorwaldsen<sup>1</sup> in Trinity College Library, Cambridge

*Charles Tennyson Turner (1808–1879)*

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'Tis strange that I, who haply might have met  
Thy living self—who sought to hide the flaws  
In thy great fame, and, though I ne'er had set  
Eyes on thee, heard thee singing without pause,  
And longed to see thee, should, alas! detect  
The Thyrsa-sorrow first on sculptured brows,  
And know thee best in marble! Fate allows  
But this poor intercourse; high and erect  
Thou hold'st thy head, whose forward glance beholds  
All forms that throng this learned vestibule;  
Women and men, and boys and girls from school,  
Who gaze with admiration all unchecked  
On thy proud lips, and garment's moveless folds,  
So still, so calm, so purely beautiful!

This sonnet was reprinted, along with three others, in the anthology *Trinity Poets*, ed. by Angela Leighton and Adrian Poole (Manchester: Carcanet, 2017), p. 164, with a note on the author, an abbreviated version of which here follows:

Charles Turner (formerly Tennyson), elder brother of Alfred, was admitted to Trinity in 1827. His first independent volume, *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces* (1830), was much admired by Coleridge. After graduating in 1832, he was ordained deacon, and then priest in 1833. When a

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1 Bertel Thorvaldsen or Thorwaldsen (c.1770–1844), Danish sculptor.

great-uncle died in 1835, Charles inherited much of his property, changing his name from Tennyson to Turner, though widely referred to as 'Charles Tennyson Turner'. A year later he married Louisa Sellwood, whose sister Emily would marry his brother, Alfred. The marriage between Charles and Louisa was severely tested by his opium addiction; they separated and were reunited in 1849. He seems to have overcome his addiction, and started to write poetry again. In 1864 he published *Sonnets*, followed by *Small Tableaux* (1868) and *Sonnets, Lyrics, and Translations* (1873). In 1866 ill-health forced him to retire from active ministry, and he died thirteen years later. Though his was an often unhappy life, Charles seems to have found in the small compass of the sonnet a form in which to escape the shadow of his much more famous brother.