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"George Eliot" Highgate Cemetery

Edwin J. Milliken

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‘George Eliot’

(HIGHGATE CEMETERY, DECEMBER 29, 1880)

[by Edwin J. Milliken]

LARGE woman soul, sure of unfading bays,
It little boots o’er thy too early tomb
To puff our little breaths of passing praise –
Dead in the deepest of Midwinter’s gloom,
Ere thine own Autumn’s mellow fruitage failed!
We mourn a Larger Light, eclipsed too soon
By the all-darkening Shadow; we who hailed
Its rise, its rounding to the plenilune
Of finished force and chastened grace, lament
The passing of a Power. Thou perchance
Bearest it all unstained, as still unspent,
To spheres unclogged by earthy circumstance.
So be it! Not among the tricky mimes
Who glitter out a glowworm’s hour and fade,
Fame sets this large-orbed glory of our times,
Who, whilst good store of lesser lights are laid
In our King’s Sepulchre, makes royal ground
Of that green Northern Graveyard’s simplest Mound.

The poem printed above was first published in *Punch*, 8 January 1881 – seventeen days after George Eliot’s death. We are grateful to Professor Michael Slater for drawing it to our attention, and to *Punch* librarian Brigitte Istim for identifying the author for us.



George Eliot's grave, Highgate Cemetery.
(George Henry Lewes's grave is behind and below the obelisk.)