# Elizabeth Tollet, â??On a Deathâ??s Headâ?•

## Description

ELIZABETH TOLLET

**â??On a Deathâ??s Headâ?•**

*Est illic Lethaeus Amor, qui pectora sanat,*
*Inque suas gelidam lampadas addit aquam.*

*Ovid.*

On this Resemblance, where we find
A Portrait drawn for all Mankind,
Fond Lover! gaze a while, to see
What Beautyâ??s Idol Charms shall be.
Where are the Balls that once couâ??d dart
Quick Lightning throâ?? the wounded Heart?
The Skin, whose Teint couâ??d once unite
The glowing Red and polishâ??d White?
The Lip in brighter Ruby drest?
The Cheek with dimpled Smiles imprest?
The rising Front, where Beauty sate
Thronâ??d in her Residence of State;
Which, half-disclosâ??d and half-concealâ??d,
The Hair in flowing Ringlets veilâ??d;
â??Tis vanishâ??d all! remains alone
This eyeless Scalp of naked Bone:
The vacant Orbits sunk within:
The Jaw that offers at a Grin.
Is this the Object then that claims
The Tribute of our youthful Flames?
Must amâ??rous Hopes and fancyâ??d Bliss,
Too dear Delusions! end in this?
How high does Melancholy swell!
Which Sighs can more than Language tell:
Till Love can only grieve or fear;
Reflect a while, then drop Tear
For all thatâ??s beautiful or dear.

**NOTES**:

**Title** *Deathâ??s Head* A picture or depiction of a human skull as a symbol of mortality (*OED).*

**Epigraph** â??Lethaean Love is there, who makes hearts whole, and pours cool water upon his torchâ?• (Ovid, *The Remedies of Love* from *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, p. 214).

**Epigraph** *Lethaean* â??Causing oblivion or forgetfulness of the past. From the river Lethe in Hades, whose water when drunk made the souls of the dead forget their life on earthâ?• (*OED).*

**7** *Teint* â??Colour; shadeâ?• (Johnson).

**11** *Front* â??The face or foreheadâ?• (Johnson).

**16** *Scalp* Originally denoting the â??skullâ?• or â??craniumâ?• (*OED*).

**18** *Orbits* â??The eyeball; the eyeâ?• (*OED*).

**20** *Flames* â??The passion of loveâ?• (Johnson).

***Source: Poems on Several Occasions. With Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII. An Epistle (London, 1755), pp. 58-59. [Google Books]***

*Edited by Carrie Siskind*