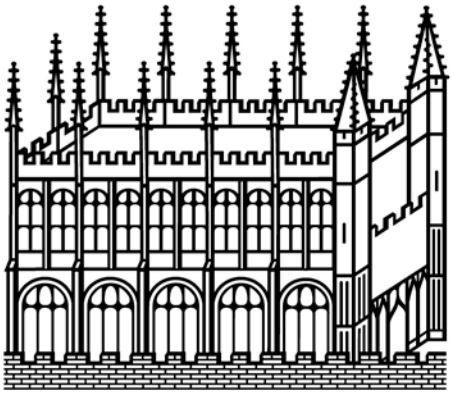

ODES SONNETS & LYRIC

JOHN KEATS

ODES SONNETS & LYRICS
OF
JOHN KEATS

JOHN KEATS

The weltering London ways where children weep
And girls whom none call maidens laugh,—strange road
Miring his outward steps, who inly trode
The bright Castalian brink and Latmos' steep:—
Even such his life's cross-paths; till deathly deep
He toiled through sands of Lethe; and long pain,
Weary with labour spurned and love found vain,
In dead Rome's sheltering shadow wrapped his sleep.

O pang-dowered Poet, whose reverberant lips
And heart-strung lyre awoke the Moon's eclipse,—
Thou whom the daisies glory in growing o'er,—
Their fragrance clings around thy name, not writ
But rumour'd in water, while the fame of it
Along Time's flood goes echoing evermore.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

ODES SONNETS & LYRICS OF JOHN KEATS

PORTLAND MAINE
THOMAS BIRD MOSHER
MDCCCCXXII

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FOREWORD

FOREWORD

THE *Daniel Press* Keats *had the advantage of being selected by Robert Bridges and has long been known to special students who were fortunate enough to possess his* Critical Essay, (*250 copies, 1895.*)[1] *It has now passed to a wider circle of admirers in England and America, though still limited to readers of the* Memorial of C. H. O. Daniel, with a Bibliography of the Press, 1840-1919. (*Oxford, 500 copies, quarto, printed for subscribers, 1921.*)

It follows that I who made three other Daniel Press books available in this country,—The Growth of Love *by Robert Bridges,* (*1894, again in 1913,*) Fancy's Following *by Mary Coleridge,* (*1900,*) *and lastly the* The Garland of Rachel, (*1902,*)—*should wish to carry on with the greatest of them all,* Odes, Sonnets and Lyrics of John Keats. *I say greatest of them all, despite the first paragraph of the* Essay *which puts a vital matter very clearly that the work of Keats is open to one final judgment,—"the best of it is of the highest excellence, but the mass of it disappointing."*

[1] *In the Muses Library, London, Lawrence & Bullen, we find this essay given as a "Critical Introduction" without any reference whatever to the first edition of 1895. See* Poems of John Keats edited by G. Thorn Drury. *2 vols., Fcap 8vo., 1896.*

FOREWORD

These selections being of the most superior importance should stand, if reissued, in rightful pre-eminence above any other, subject nevertheless to certain later critical estimates which I believe would find favour both with the late Henry Daniel and the still living poet-laureate.

The actual "leaving great verse unto a little clan" must be seen for what it is. *The lack of common fairness, common decency even, shown in the earliest criticisms need cause no great surprise:—in an age such as we know that period to have been, what else was possible?*[1]

But what do we see when the tumult and shouting has gone its way to dusty death? Even allowing for friendship's sake some well settled preferences shown by contemporaries of the poet, we are struck with the onward wave of appreciation starting with Lord Houghton, (then known as Monckton Milnes,) whose Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats *first appeared in 1848, and was completed by Sir Sidney Colvin's* John Keats, His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After-fame, *in 1917.*[2]

[1] *"There is a tradition started by Gifford that* Endymion *is unreadable." Wordsworth called it "a pretty piece of paganism."*

[2] *It has the merit of finality. My Foreword deals mainly with these selections while the six additions and a single deletion of the 'revised'* La Belle Dame *find ample justification in this authoritative work.*

FOREWORD

We know what Matthew Arnold, Rossetti and Swinburne have said in verse and prose, but few of us are familiar with Mrs. Frances M. Owen, whose John Keats: A Study, *(London, 1880,) surely deserves the honour Robert Bridges conferred upon it: "An important book in the history of the criticism of Keats' genius."*[1]

In my reprint of the Daniel Press edition I have excised La Belle Dame sans Merci *as 'revised' by Keats, which both Daniel and Bridges seem to prefer, for the reason given by Sir Sidney Colvin: "It is surely a perversion in textual criticism to perpetuate the worst version merely because it happens to be the one printed in Keats' lifetime." To this add the decisive opinion held by William Morris and quoted by Colvin from a letter of Mr. Sidney Cockerell:*

"In February 1894 the last sheets of the Kelmscott Press Keats, edited by F. S. Ellis, were being printed. A specimen of each sheet of every book was brought in to Morris as soon as it came off the press. I was with him when he happened to open the sheet on which La Belle Dame sans Merci

[1] "*The first critic, I believe, who seriously attempted to investigate Keats's mind, and the ideas that were trying to take shape in some of his poems, was F. M. Owen, whose* John Keats, a Study *(1880) never attracted in her too brief life-time the attention it deserved. Mr. Bridges's treatment of these ideas is masterly.*" *See A. C. Bradley in* Oxford Lectures on Poetry *(1909) foot-note p. 228.*

was printed. He began to read it and was suddenly aware of unfamiliar words, 'wretched wight' for 'knight at arms,' verses 4 and 5 transposed, and several changes in verse 7. Great was his indignation. He swiftly altered the words and then read the poem to me, remarking that it was the germ from which all the poetry of his group had sprung — The sheet was reprinted and the earlier and better version restored — I still have the cancelled sheet with his corrections."

This, the finest ballad-lyric written by Keats, was first printed in Leigh Hunt's Indicator *for May 20, 1820:*

"Signed, obviously in bitterness, 'Caviare' (Hamlet's 'caviare to the general'), and unluckily enfeebled by changes for which we find no warrant either in Keats's autograph or in extant copies made by his friends Woodhouse and Brown. Keats's judgment in revising his own work had evidently by this time become unsure. . . . It is to be deplored that in some recent and what should be standard editions of Keats the poem stands as thus printed in the Indicator, *instead of the original form rightly given by Lord Houghton from Brown's transcript, in which it had become a classic of the language."*

True, the Daniel Press gave the earlier version as well, but after Colvin's emphatic refusal and Morris's deliberate

rejection of the 'revised' text I feel justified in using the space saved by the insertion of three sonnets: The poetry of earth is never dead, After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains, *both the choice of Matthew Arnold, and for my own,* Standing aloof in giant ignorance, *of which Rossetti's comment on*

"There is a budding morrow in midnight,"

is not easily forgotten.

I have also given the Faery Song, Shed no tear! *as "A short and exquisite example of his melody" which Mrs. Owen quoted "as worthy of Keats," but with Bridges "we wonder how it was that there are not more better lyrics. . . . The fact remains that, with the exception of* La belle dame, *he never brought all his genius to 'spend its fury in a song.'" Finally, I think others beside myself, it may be, would miss two minor but very beautiful pieces:* Souls of Poets dead and gone *and* Bards of Passion and of Mirth.

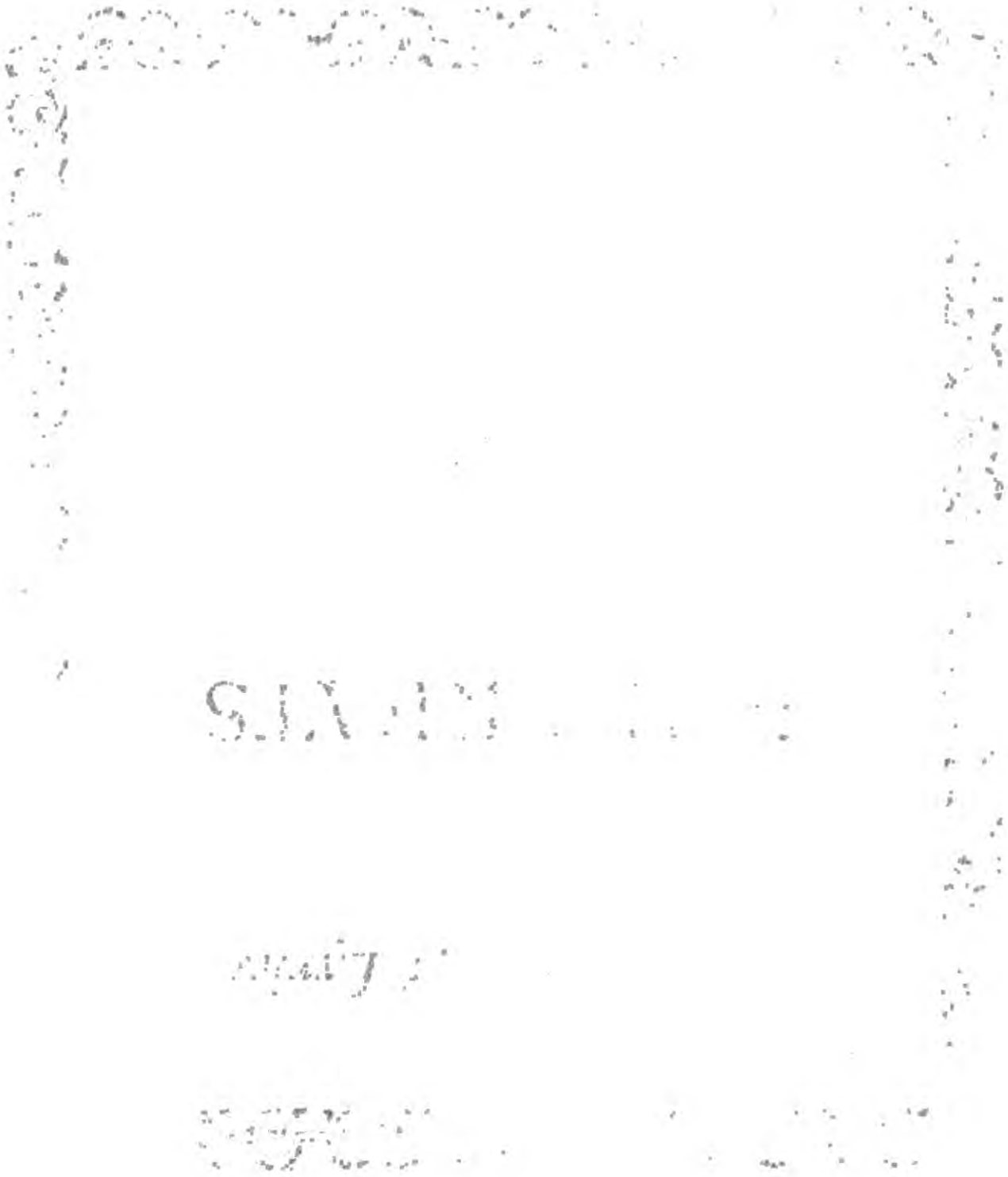
My desire to reproduce this exquisite book of selections as made by Robert Bridges and as printed by Henry Daniel in 1895, the centenary year of John Keats' birth, is now fulfilled. Some few errors have been corrected by reference to the latest Forman text, and the quotations and notes for which I am responsible only heighten the high romance, as we may

call it, of the original Oxford edition. Here, then, is the best possible from the poet based on authority of critics whose opinion as to poetic merit is the safest and sanest of our day: "No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats, his perfection of loveliness. 'I think,' he said humbly, 'I shall be among the English poets after my death.' He is; he is with Shakespeare."

THOMAS BIRD MOSHER

ODES SONNETS & LYRICS

Beauty is Truth



Odes Sonnets & Lyrics

of

JOHN KEATS

DANIEL : OXFORD

1895

THIS *selection is printed as a Memorial of the Hundredth Anniversary of the birth of* KEATS. *The object which the Printer had in view was to get together the very best of* Keats' *shorter pieces. In doing this he has been guided by Mr* Robert Bridges' '*Critical Essay*' [*Lawrence & Bullen:* 1895: *pp.* 54-61.] *The text is made by collation of the latest editions. The version of* '*La Belle Dame*' *given by Professor* Palgrave *is added for reasons set out in the Note prefixed to it.*

The Portrait of the Poet is the reproduction of a beautiful drawing formerly in the possession of Canon Dixon, *and lately given by him to Mrs* Furneaux. *It is the work of her father* Joseph Severn, *the devoted friend of* Keats. *It has never until now been copied. From the great resemblance to the Mask taken before the Poet became seriously ill it must be a trustworthy likeness. The reproduction of the Portrait is by Mr* Hollyer *of Pembroke Square.*

[*It was at one time believed to have been the work of Joseph Severn, but Mr. Arthur Severn, who is well acquainted with his father's technique, is quite certain that this could not be the case, and he believes that the portrait was drawn by his sister, Mrs. Newton, under his father's direct supervision, from notes made by him, and with the life-mask in front of her. The portrait is a beautiful piece of draughtsmanship, the modelling particularly expressive, and although it is impossible that it was drawn from life, it is yet a portrait worth recording and illustrating, because it conveys Joseph Severn's idea of the poet, and also was undoubtedly prepared in the presence of the mask, as certain details in it are identical with those on that object.* The Keats Letters, Papers and other Relics.]


SVVM
MISIT ANGELV

ODES

TO AUTUMN

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
  Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
    Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
  Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'T is not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness, —
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-ey'd despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
  To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
  As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
  Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
    Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
      In the next valley-glades:
  Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
    Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

ODE TO PSYCHE

O GODDESS! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing, on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:
The winged boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

O latest-born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
  Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
  For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
  For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
    For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
  That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
    A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
  To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
  And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
  Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
    Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
  Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
    Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
  Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
  Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
  Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
  By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
  Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
    Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
  For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
    And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
  Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
  And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
  Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
    Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
  Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
    And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty — Beauty that must die;
  And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
  Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
  Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
    Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
  Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
    And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA, WRITTEN ON MAY DAY: 1818

MOTHER of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!
May I sing to thee
As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiæ?
Or may I woo thee
In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles
Seek, as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan?
O give me their old vigour, and unheard
Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span
Of heaven and few ears.
Rounded by thee, my song should die away
Content as theirs,
Rich in the simple worship of a day.

ODE ON INDOLENCE

"THEY TOIL NOT, NEITHER DO THEY SPIN"

ONE morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced;
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again; as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return;
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:
O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
  Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
  And ach'd for wings because I knew the three;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;
  The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
    And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
  Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
    I knew to be my demon Poesy.

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:
  O folly! What is Love! and where is it?
And for that poor Ambition! it springs
  From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—
  At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
    And evenings steep'd in honied indolence;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
  That I may never know how change the moons,
    Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

And once more came they by;—alas! wherefore?
  My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
  With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:

The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
  Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
    The open casement press'd a new-leaved vine,
  Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;
O Shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!
    Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
  My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
  A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
  In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
    Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
    Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
  Into the clouds, and never more return!

ODE TO PAN

FROM "ENDYMION"

O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow!
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom

Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest-blossom'd beans and poppied corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine!

Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in halfsleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewildered shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king!

O Hearkener to the loud clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsman: Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!

Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between;
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven rending,

Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,
Upon thy Mount Lycean!

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That lingered in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.

ODE TO SORROW

FROM "ENDYMION"

O SORROW,
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes?
Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—
To give the glow-worm light?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?—
A lover would not tread
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
Nor any drooping flower
Held sacred for thy bower,
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

To Sorrow,
I bade good-morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly;
She is so constant to me, and so kind:
I would deceive her
And so leave her,
But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lilly cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
To scare thee, Melancholy!
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,
Tall chesnuts keep away the sun and moon:—
I rush'd into the folly!

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;

And little rills of crimson wine imbru'd
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite:
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate—
'We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
A conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide:—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy!'

Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?—
'For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth!—

Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy!'

Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads — with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three days' journey in a moment done:
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown!
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring!

I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce!
The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.—
Into these regions came I following him,
Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear
Alone, without a peer:
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

Young stranger!
I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime:
Alas, 'tis not for me!
Bewitch'd I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

Come then, Sorrow!
Sweetest Sorrow!
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
I thought to leave thee
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

There is not one,
No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
Thou art her mother,
And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!
Endymion could not speak, but gaz'd on her;
And listened to the wind that now did stir
About the crisped oaks full drearily,
Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
Remember'd from its velvet summer song.

LYRICS

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI[1]

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms!
So haggard, and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

[1] The following version of '*La Belle Dame sans Merci*' is the text of Professor *Palgrave* in the '*Golden Treasury*,' and is the best known, and likely to be the most admired. It is founded on the original MS. of *Keats*, which occurs in a letter to his brother dated April 28, 1819. The version in the text, page 32,[1] is the form in which the poem appeared, printed by *Leigh Hunt* in the '*Indicator*' for May 10, 1820; and the alterations are almost certainly by *Keats*. Some of these Professor *Palgrave* has refused to admit, and I have restored the original *cheek* for *cheeks* in the eleventh line. The history of *Hyperion* is perhaps sufficient justification for this deliberate rejection of the poet's own revision, and in the case of '*La Belle Dame*' the carelessness of the original transcription (which may be found in *Sidney Colvin's* Letters of *John Keats;* page 250,) forbids its exact reproduction being accepted.

[1] Omitted in this edition: see Foreword.

I met a lady in the meads,
  Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
  And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
  And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
  And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
  And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
  A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
  And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
  'I love thee true.'

She took me to her elfin grot,
  And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
  With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
  And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!

The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—*La Belle Dame sans Merci*
Hath thee in thrall!

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

SONG

I HAD a dove and the sweet dove died;
And I have thought it died of grieving:
O, what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied,
With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving;
Sweet little red feet! why should you die—
Why should you leave me, sweet bird! why?
You liv'd alone in the forest-tree,
Why, pretty thing! would you not live with me?
I kiss'd you oft and gave you white peas;
Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees?

STANZAS

IN a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writh'd not at passed joy?

To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steel it,
Was never said in rhyme.

FANCY

EVER let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: What do then?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.

Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overaw'd,
Fancy, high-commission'd:—send her!
She has vassals to attend her:
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it:—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plum'd lillies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May;

And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.
  Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Every thing is spoilt by use:
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gaz'd at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where 's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind:

Dulcet-ey'd as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.— Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash;
Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

[*Written on the blank page before Beaumont and Fletcher's Tragi-Comedy "The Fair Maid of the Inn."*]

"BARDS OF PASSION AND OF MIRTH"

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double-liv'd in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
And the parle of voices thund'rous;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth,
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumber'd, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-liv'd in regions new!

LINES ON THE MERMAID TAVERN

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new old sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

FAERY. SONG

SHED no tear—O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more—O weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
Dry your eyes—O dry your eyes,
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies—
Shed no tear.

Overhead—look overhead
'Mong the blossoms white and red—
Look up, look up—I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough—
See me—'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill—
Shed no tear—O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Adieu—Adieu—I fly, adieu,
I vanish in the heaven's blue—
Adieu, Adieu!

SONNETS

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer rul'd as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

THE HUMAN SEASONS

FOUR Seasons fill the measure of the year;
There are four seasons in the mind of man:
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span:
He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he loves
To ruminate, and by such dreaming nigh
His nearest unto heaven: quiet coves
His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
He furleth close; contented so to look
On mists in idleness—to let fair things
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.
He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER

COME hither all sweet maidens soberly,
Down-looking aye, and with a chasten'd light,
Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
As if so gentle that ye could not see,
Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,
Sinking away to his young spirit's night,—
Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea:
'Tis young Leander toiling to his death;
Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.
O horrid dream! see how his body dips
Dead-heavy; arms and shoulders gleam awhile:
He's gone; up bubbles all his amorous breath!

TO SLEEP

O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, thy willing eyes
Or wait the "Amen," ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
Save me from curious Conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.

TO FANNY

I CRY your mercy—pity—love!—aye, love!
Merciful love that tantalizes not,
One-thoughted, never-wandering, guileless love,
Unmask'd, and being seen—without a blot!
O! let me have thee whole,—all—all—be mine!
That shape, that fairness, that sweet minor zest
Of love, your kiss,—those hands, those eyes divine,
That warm, white, lucent, million-pleasured breast,—
Yourself—your soul—in pity give me all,
Withhold no atom's atom or I die,
Or living on perhaps, your wretched thrall,
Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
Life's purposes,—the palate of my mind
Losing its gust, and my ambition blind!

A DREAM AFTER READING DANTE'S EPISODE OF PAULO AND FRANCESCA

As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd and slept,
So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright
So play'd, so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft
The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes;
And, seeing it asleep, so fled away—
Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,
Nor unto Tempe where Jove griev'd a day;
But to that second circle of sad hell,
Where 'mid the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday—or holinight
Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

TO A LADY SEEN FOR A FEW MOMENTS AT VAUXHALL

TIME'S sea hath been five years at its slow ebb,
Long hours have to and fro let creep the sand,
Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,
And snared by the ungloving of thine hand.
And yet I never look on midnight sky,
But I behold thine eyes' well memory'd light;
I cannot look upon the rose's dye,
But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight.
I cannot look on any budding flower,
But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips
And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour
Its sweets in the wrong sense:—Thou dost eclipse
Every delight with sweet remembering,
And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

THE poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

AFTER dark vapours have oppress'd our plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle South, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.
The anxious month, relieved of its pains,
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May;
The eyelids with the passing coolness play
Like rose leaves with the drip of Summer rains.
The calmest thoughts come round us; as of leaves
Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—Autumn suns
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—
Sweet Sappho's cheek—a smiling infant's breath—
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs—
A woodland rivulet—a Poet's death.

TO HOMER

STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind;—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive;
Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green,
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
There is a triple sight in blindness keen;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

WRITTEN ON A BLANK PAGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS FACING 'A LOVER'S COMPLAINT'

BRIGHT star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

NOTES

So Keats stands, in his full stature, as the pure artist, with a triumphant pagan faith.

ALBERT ELMER HANCOCK

I

ON EDITIONS

NOTHING short of a complete annotated Bibliography can do justice to the fame of Keats. The nearest approach to that is a sound selection of editorial and critical work of the first quality—not likely to be surpassed for years to come. At the head of such editing stands the H. Buxton Forman editions:

1. The Poetical Works and other writings of John Keats edited with notes and appendices. In four volumes. Octavo, London, Reeves & Turner, 1889. (First issued in 1883,) Large type, Library edition.

2. The Complete Works of John Keats (including his Letters). In five volumes. Fcap 8vo. Glasgow, Gowans & Gray, 1901. This edition in "the Complete Library Series" remains "the most complete edition of Keats yet published," and was originally issued at one shilling per volume bound in dark green cloth of attractive finish, gold lettering, good paper, edges untrimmed,—a monument of inexpensive excellence.

3. The Poetical Works of John Keats, edited by William T. Arnold. Octavo. Vellum. London, 1884. The Introduction is a masterpiece of verbal criticism. Colvin says (p. 544) it was "the first which contained a scholar's investigations into the special sources of Keats's poetic style and vocabulary." Professor De Sélincourt expands this view of Arnold's, (Colvin, p. 545).

4. Poems by John Keats, Illustrations by Robert Anning Bell and Introduction by Walter Raleigh. Post 8vo. in The Endymion Series. London, George Bell & Sons, 1898. Raleigh's Introduction is the point of excellence; the illustrations are of some interest; type and paper good.

5. The Poems of John Keats. Quarto, 2 vols. London, Printed at the Chiswick Press for George Bell & Sons, 1904. The Chiswick Quartos, 350 numbered copies on hand-made paper. Edited by George Sampson. As there are no notes or any prefatory matter this must refer to the arrangement of text (excellent) and typography. — A very beautiful book.

6. The Poems of John Keats. Small Fcap 8vo. London, George Newnes, Ltd., 1902. (Also Scribners, New York.) Photogravure frontispiece and title-page. For a single volume pocket edition, $6\frac{1}{2}$ x $4\frac{1}{8}$, in limp lambskin, 469 pp., this is a wonderful book.

These are my preferences.[1] There are very many other editions, but the above are essential — nothing else can take their place. For portraits and facsimiles of letters and verse the great book to consult is *The Keats Letters, Papers and other Relics* edited by George C. Williamson. (Lane, London and New York. Folio, 320 copies printed, 1914).

[1] Nor do I forget what Francis Turner Palgrave did for Keats in the Golden Treasury Series. A lovely book in both small and large paper *format*, but unfortunately out of print in any good edition.

II

ON THE TEXT

AS the Critical Essay by Bridges is his formal exposition of the entire poems of Keats, and least likely to be known from the limited number issued, (250 copies, Fcap 8vo., London, Lawrence & Bullen, 1895,) I have drawn from it almost wholly in these notes on the Odes, Lyrics and Sonnets. That the Daniel Press does not exactly follow the same order in printing the poems can be seen: we must also see that the criticisms cover the entire range of these selections:

I. THE ODES. Had Keats left us only his Odes, his rank among the poets would not be lower than it is, for they have stood apart in literature, at least the six most famous of them; and these were all written in his best period, when he was under the Miltonic influence—that is, between the early spring of 1819, while he was still engaged on *Hyperion*, and the autumn, when he discarded it. These are the six: 1. *Psyche;* 2. *Melancholy;* 3. *Nightingale;* 4. *Greek Urn;* 5. *Indolence;* 6. *Autumn.*

To these should be added 7. the fragment of the *May Ode*, May 1st, 1818, and 8. the *Ode to Pan*, from *Endymion*, bk. i., and 9. the *Bacchic Ode to Sorrow* in *Endymion*, bk. iv. But the two hymns to *Neptune* and *Diana* in *Endymion* are only worth enumeration, and the two early odes to *Apollo* and the *Ode to a Lock of Milton's Hair*

are, as are the two later *Odes to Fanny*, chiefly or entirely of personal interest.

Of the seven odes first enumerated, the first place must be given for its perfection to that last composed — that is, the *Ode to Autumn*. This is always reckoned among the faultless masterpieces of English poetry; and unless it be objected as a slight blemish that the words "Think not of them" in the 2nd line of the 3rd stanza are somewhat awkwardly addressed to a personification of Autumn, I do not know that any sort of fault can be found in it. But though this is the best as a whole, it is yet left far behind by the splendour of the *Nightingale*, in which the mood is more intense, and the poetry vies in richness and variety with its subject.

The song of the nightingale is, to the hearer, full of assertion, promise, and cheerful expectancy, and of pleading and tender passionate overflowing in long drawn-out notes, interspersed with plenty of playfulness and conscious exhibitions of musical skill. Whatever pain or sorrow may be expressed by it, it is idealised — that is, it is not the sorrow of a sufferer, but the perfect expression of sorrow by an artist, who must have felt, but is not feeling; and the ecstasy of the nightingale is stronger than its sorrow, although different hearers may be differently affected according to their mood. Keats in a sad mood seized on the happy interpretation and promise of it, and gives it in this line —

"Singest of *summer* in full-throated ease."

But the intense feeling in his description of human sorrow (stanza 3) is weakened by the direct platitude that the bird has never known

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have half in love with easeful death.
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath
Now, more than ever seems it rich to die.
To cease upon the midnight with no pain
While thou art pouring thine thy soul abroad
In such an extasy -
Still wouldst thou sing and I have ears in vain
~~Be to my sense~~
For thy high requiem, become a sod -

Thou wast not born for death immortal Bird
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by Emperor and Clown
Perhaps the self same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.
The same that ofttimes hath.
Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam
Of ~~perilous~~ perilous seas in faery lands forlorn

it; and in the penultimate stanza the thought is fanciful or superficial,—man being as immortal as the bird in every sense but that of sameness, which is assumed and does not satisfy. The introduction, too, of the last stanza is artificial, while his choosing *elf* to rhyme to *self* turns out disastrously; and he loses hold of his main idea in the words "plaintive anthem," which, in expressing the dying away of the sound, changes its character. No praise, however, could be too high for those last six lines; and if grammar and sense are a little obscure in the first ten, I could not name any English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this ode.[1]

Next to this I should rank *Melancholy*. The perception in this ode is profound, and no doubt experienced. The paradox that melancholy is most deeply felt by the organisation most capable of

1 "I will give a most striking example of the felicitous results of Keats's tentative method. If any student of English literature were asked what are the finest three lines to be found in English poetry, he would, I think, adduce lines 8, 9, and 10 in the seventh stanza of the 'Ode to a Nightingale':

'The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.'

By the side of these miraculous lines, even the finest of Shakespeare's seem almost prosaic. But how were these lines originally written? Thanks to the publication by Sir Sidney Colvin of the facsimile in the *Monthly Review*, (March 1903, p. 140,) we first learned that they originally stood thus:

'The same that of [t] times hath
Charm'd the wide casements, opening on the foam
Of keelless seas, in fairy lands forlorn.'

Never were poetical lines so transfigured by a few touches as here." See Foreword to *Keats Relics*, by Theodore Watts-Dunton, 1914. I have reproduced in facsimile for this edition stanzas 6 and 7 taken from the above source. The Mss. is now owned by Lord Crewe.

joy is clinched at the end by the observation of the reaction which satiety provokes in such temperaments, so that it is also in the moment of extremest joy that it suddenly fades —

> "Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
> Ay, in the very temple of Delight
> Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine."

In spite of the great beauty of this ode, especially of the last stanza, it does not hit so hard as one would expect. I do not know whether this is due to a false note towards the end of the second stanza, or to a disagreement between the second and third stanzas. In the second stanza the melancholy is, as Lord Houghton said, a "luxurious tenderness," while in the third it is strong, painful, and incurable.

The line — "That fosters the droop-headed flowers all," means all the flowers only that are sacred to sorrow. See *End.* iv. 170.

Next in order might come *Psyche*, for the sake of the last section (l. 50 to end), though this is open to the objection that the imagery is worked up to outface the idea — which is characteristic of Keats' manner. Yet the extreme beauty quenches every dissatisfaction. The beginning of this ode is not so good, and the middle part is mid-way in excellence.

Next, and disputing place with the last, comes the *Grecian Urn*. The thought as enounced in the first stanza is the supremacy of ideal art over Nature, because of its unchanging expression of perfection; and this is true and beautiful; but its amplification in the poem is unprogressive, monotonous, and scattered, the attention being called

to fresh details without result (see espec. 11. 21-24, anticipated in 15, 16), which gives an effect of poverty in spite of the beauty. The last stanza enters stumbling on a pun, but its concluding lines are very fine, and make a sort of recovery with their forcible directness.

The last of the six, *Indolence*, is the objective picturing of a transient mood, and may be the description of an actual half-waking vision. If the details, such as the appearing of the figures four times, have no definite meaning, and I cannot fix any, they are too arbitrary. Parts of stanzas 2 and 3 and all the 5th are of the best work; but the whole ode scarcely earns its title; and its main interest, that is its fervour and feeling, betrays the poet into an undignified utterence in line 4 of the last verse.

The fragment of the *May Ode* is immortal on account of the famous passage of inimitable beauty descriptive of the Greek poets —

"Leaving great verse unto a little clan," &c.

With these seven the two chief odes in *Endymion* are worthy to rank. The ode to Pan in Book I. is good enough in design. Pan is first invoked as ruler in dark and moist woods; secondly, as the god to whom all natural products are sacred, with contrast of sunny places; thirdly, as king of fauns and satyrs; fourthly, for six lines as farm-god. But this last idea has been anticipated by interpolation in the previous section. Then the last part of the ode connects Pan with the secrets and power of Nature. The expression *But no more*, however interpreted, is unfortunate at the end of the ode. The diction throughout is rich and the imagery chosen well for the work that it has to do in the various aspects of the god's energy,

the different objects being seized and shown in happy phrases full of knowledge and feeling; and though it might perhaps have been better if the second section had immediately preceded the last, rather than that the mysteries should follow close on the farm, there is no great fault to find. But yet the ode does not at first reading make an impression corresponding to these merits, nor has it won, like the others, a high reputation; and this may be due partly to the vagueness of the personification, caused by the variety of attributes and objects, and partly to the versification, which, though generally easy and fluent, pauses, especially in the second division, too frequently in the mid-line, in the manner of tagging, and produces there something of the effect of a catalogue, very foreign to the repose and finish which we look for in a set ode.

Lastly, as to the *Ode to Sorrow* in the 4th book of *Endymion*, I regard this as one of the greatest of Keats' achievements, and agree with all that Mr. Sidney Colvin has said in its praise in his Life of Keats. It unfortunately halts in the opening, and the 1st and 4th stanzas especially are unequal to the rest, as is again the 3rd from the end, "Young stranger," which for its matter would with more propriety have been cast into the previous section; and these impoverish the effect, and contain expressions which might put some readers off. If they would begin at the 5th stanza and omit the 3rd from the end, they would find little that is not admirable. And, as it stands, the ode is, I think, the better for these omissions. The pictorial description of the Bacchic procession is unmatched for life, wide motion, and romantic dreamy Orientalism, while the conclud-

ing stanzas, returning to the first movement, are as lovely as any Elizabethan lyric, and in the same manner. The bold contrast and passion of the ode, in spite of its weaker opening and the few expressions which remind one that it is an early work, give it a unique place among the richest creations of the English Muse.

II. THE LYRICS. If we include among the lyrical poems those written in seven-syllable couplets, we find three popular pieces, *Souls of Poets*, *Bards of Passion*, and *Ever let the fancy roam*. In a letter to his brother, January 1819, Keats writes: "These are specimens of a sort of rondeau which I think I shall become partial to, because you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet." The theme is stated in the first four lines, and then, after an amplification without progress, these are used again in the last division to make a close by return, like a rondo in music; and the form seems good, simple, and attractive. These three poems have all of them the popular qualities of fluency and grace, and the statement of the subject is provocative of interest; yet, though the first sustains itself in a fine vein for six lines, there is little merit either of thought or diction in the first two. Mr. M. Arnold chose these and excluded the *Fancy* from his selection, but there can be no doubt that this last is by far the best of the three. It is maintained throughout at a fair level, and the simple descriptions of nature, recalling *L'Allegro*, are often very beautiful; and in the last division there is a sensuous passage done in the fine Miltonic manner, where the eight-syllable line is introduced with great effect, descriptively of Jove's languor.

Of the five other poems in this measure there is none worthy of praise as a whole.

There are left now only the lyrical poems in stanza, and easily first, holding a unique place in literature, stands *La belle dame sans merci*. This occurs in a long journalistic letter from Keats to his brother in America, and is dated "Wednesday evening," that is, April 28, 1819. It seems as if he had composed it on that day, and written it down hastily from memory, so that he had to correct several mistakes afterwards; and, from the remarks appended to it, it looks as if he was at the time unaware of its great merit. It was not inserted in the *Lamia* volume, but first appeared through Leigh Hunt in the *Indicator* for May 10, 1820, and this version differs from that in Keats' letter in one or two points; and these may be corrections by Keats, but the original first line will certainly preserve the first version, which exists in Keats' own handwriting, as the favourite and accepted one. "*Wretched wight*," the correction, is cold and poor, and fatal to the tragic motive of the poem, and out of keeping with its heroic detail, whereas the original "*knight-at-arms*" gives the keynote of romance and of aloofness from real life, and the suggestion of armour is of the greatest value to the general colouring. It would be impertinence to praise this poem, which charms alike old and young: and it stands above the reach of criticism. For other reasons it is better not to criticise, "*In a drear-nighted December*," which, after a very long interval indeed, must be placed next. This poem is a great favourite, and perhaps deservedly so, both for its beauty and originality, but the latter quality proves

expensive. And after this poem there is another gap, for if we mention the next best lyrics, we come to such poems as *Meg Merrilies*, and *Where be you going, you Devon maid?* which, as Lord Houghton printed it, omitting the second stanza, is successful; and *I had a dove*, which could only have been written by a poet; and *Walking in Scotland*, of which the obscurity and strangeness of the sentiment described make it noteworthy. Mrs. Owen quotes the Faery song *Shed no tear!* as worthy of Keats, but we wonder how it was that there are not more better lyrics. Keats, one would have thought, would have excelled in them, and we can only suppose that we have his odes instead.

Success in lyrical verse requires a delicately strict subjection of imagination to one purpose, and this was not a part of Keats' poetic instinct; and though when he came to learn it, he wrote as it would seem almost unconsciously one of the best lyrics in the world; yet it was not improbable that he would still have regarded lyrics as a tract where he might cast off restraint. The fact remains that, with the exception of *La belle dame*, he never brought all his genius to "spend its fury in a song."

III. THE SONNETS. There are nearly sixty sonnets in the latest editions of Keats' poems, but the most of them are sonnets only in external form. The metrical laws and liberties of sonnet-writing have been much inflicted on readers, and sonnets are usually classified by their differences in these minor particulars. But a more useful classification would be by their contents and form of thought. The typical sonnet is a reflective poem on love, or at least in some

mood of love or desire, or absorbing passion or emotion; and such a definition includes almost everything which cannot be readily referred to some quite different species of poetry, as a few considerations may illustrate.

The Greek epigram, for instance, was originally, as the name implies, an inscription: its business was to record some event or mark some place, and its excellence to raise an emotion in the reader's mind. Its qualities, terseness with pathos, soon established a form which poets used for other purposes, until in the hands of city wits the name wholly changed its signification, and often now the record is a piece of scandal, and the emotion such as may be expressed by a well-bred jeer; a sad fall from Simonides. The sonnet form has been as loosely and variously used as the epigram, and the many varieties of the two have more than one point of contact; but it is plain that an epigram proper cannot become a sonnet by mere expansion to fourteen lines;—this happens to exceed epigrammatic length, but is possible in dedications and temple inscriptions,—and such a hybrid may at least be separated off as an epigrammatic sonnet.

Again, Horace elaborated a form of ode which it is easier to recognise than in few words describe; and a number of Milton's sonnets may be referred to this ode form. If we compare, for example, his *Cyriack, whose grandsire*, with *Martiis cœlebs* or *Æli vetusto*, there can be no doubt that Milton was here deliberately using the sonnet form to do the work of Horace's tight stanzas; and not the whole of Shakespeare's or Petrarch's sonnets set alongside will show enough kinship with these sonnets of Milton to draw them away from their

affinity with Horace. Such sonnets, too, as his addresses to Vane, Fairfax, and Cromwell are properly odes, and should be called odes, or at least odic sonnets.

Again, there is a class of poetry called "occasional verse," and such a poem as may be written on any trivial event or fancy cannot become a sonnet because it goes begging for a dress, and, conscious not only of nakedness but of leanness, steals a well-cut garment for disguise.

These examples may suffice, if it be noted first, that nothing forbids a true sonnet from having an epigrammatic, or odic, or occasional motive—and this last is very common; and secondly, that all these forms and others are found mixed in the sonnet with its true subject-matter in all proportions.

Now not so many as half of Keats' sonnets can by any stretch of interpretation be called sonnets proper, if we consider their substance rather than their verse form. The greater number of them are occasional, reflective, or odic addresses or dedications, or poems on places and books. And these hybrids come thickest among the earlier poems, while the true sonnets predominate towards the end. Again, almost all the early sonnets are Italian in rhyme system, and all the later are Shakespearian; and if we pick out from them the twelve best poems, these will all be found to be true sonnets and eight of them on the Shakespearian model. Twelve is all that very high praise can be given to, and that number already encroaches on the second best; and if a next twelve be chosen, this would be made up almost equally of true sonnets and hybrids. From which it seems

that these hybrid poems of Keats', though most of them contain lines which make us glad to possess and preserve them, are among his immature performances; and also that as he improved in composition he relinquished his foreign subject-matter, and the Italian rhyme system, and did his best work in the English manner.

There are ten very fine sonnets; they are—

1 "Much have I travelled."
2 "When I have fears."
3 "Come hither all sweet maidens."
4 "Four seasons."
5 "Bright star."
6 "O soft embalmer."
7 "I cry your mercy."
8 "As Hermes once."
9 "The day is gone."
10 "Time's sea."

And with these some might class for its easy and pleasant mastery—

"To one who hath been long in city pent."

And the sonnet "Why did I laugh to-night"? has been selected and admired by some critics: it seems to me to be turgid and capricious, and hence unsuccessful. But all the first ten are extremely fine—the first eight being nearly faultless—and must stand among the best in the language. And if we pass from them to the next in merit, there is a great fall. Such a list would contain *Spenser a jealous honourer; Many the wonders; Nymph of the downward smile; How many bards; Shall busy flames; Keen fitful gusts; My spirit is too weak; Glory and loveliness*, and *The town the churchyard;* and there is not one of these which does not plainly fail, and that sometimes badly, in some part, though all have their points of excellence.[1]

1 Matthew Arnold selected eight sonnets; five are among the eight which I have set first: the other three are—*After dark vapours; Great spirits now; The poetry of earth.*

NOTES

Not to speak of the magnificence of the ten best sonnets (the 8th line of the first is below the mark; the final couplet of No. 2 is weak; and the 4th line of No. 9 requires much allowance,) Keats' sonnets are generally distinguished by a total absence of the self-consciousness which is the common bane of sonnets, and has got them a bad name among honest folk; so that many lovers of poetry put Keats' sonnets next to Shakespeare's. They are free from effort and puzzle-headedness and pedantry, and when they do fall, they do not fall stiffly but negligently, and most of them are pleasant poems and grateful to the reader.[1]

1 The admirable sonnet to Homer occurs in manuscript in Sir Charles Dilke's copy of "Endymion" and in Woodhouse's Common-place book; and it was included by Lord Houghton in the Literary Remains. The date given in all three places is 1818. The evidence of the manuscript on this point is of consequence as bearing on the relative positions of this sonnet and that "On First looking into Chapman's Homer" (Volume I, page 77). I understand the "giant ignorance" of line 1 to have reference to Keats' inability to enjoy Homer in the original Greek, and not to an entire ignorance of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" such as might have characterized the period before the sonnet on Chapman's version was written in 1816. Indeed the second quatrain seems to me to be too well felt for so vague an attitude as Keats' must have been towards Homer before he knew any version at all; but the late Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose intuitions in such matters were of the keenest, and entitled to the most careful consideration, held that the present sonnet must have preceded that of 1816, and received with considerable reserve the evidence as to the date which I communicated to him in the course of our correspondence. It will be of interest to many lovers both of Keats and of Rossetti to learn that the later poet considered this sonnet to contain Keats' finest single line of poetry —

There is a budding morrow in midnight,

a line which Rossetti told me he thought one of the finest "in all poetry." No one will dispute that it is an astonishing line, more particularly for a young man of Keats's years in 1818. The text given above is that of Sir Charles Dilke's manuscript, in which, however, the word "spumy" in line 7 is altered to "spermy" in what seems to me to be the handwriting of Mr. Dilke, the grandfather of the present Baronet. Woodhouse reads "So wast thou" for "So thou wast" in line 5. (*Complete Works of John Keats* by H. Buxton Forman, 1901, Vol. II, p. 205).

NOTES

There is one book by an American that has some things needing to be said and says them splendidly: *John Keats: A Literary Biography* by Albert Elmer Hancock. Octavo, Boston, 1908. The chapter XXII on the Odes may be profitably compared with Bridges, with Colvin, or even placed not far from Mackail's lecture on Keats with its beautiful termination: "Poetry is a function of life, and while life continues, poetry lives with it, creates, interprets life. So long as the sun rises, the Muse will be found as of old 'dancing before the morning gates of heaven.' Only when this planet's sphering time has closed indeed, will the roll of the poets be made up; and then at last, in the words of Keats' majestic couplet,

> No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall
> Be gods of your own rest imperial."

With these notes I have completed this re-editing of the Daniel Press *Keats*, a precious anthology of poetry, "a golden book of spirit and sense," for all time.

T. B. M.

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