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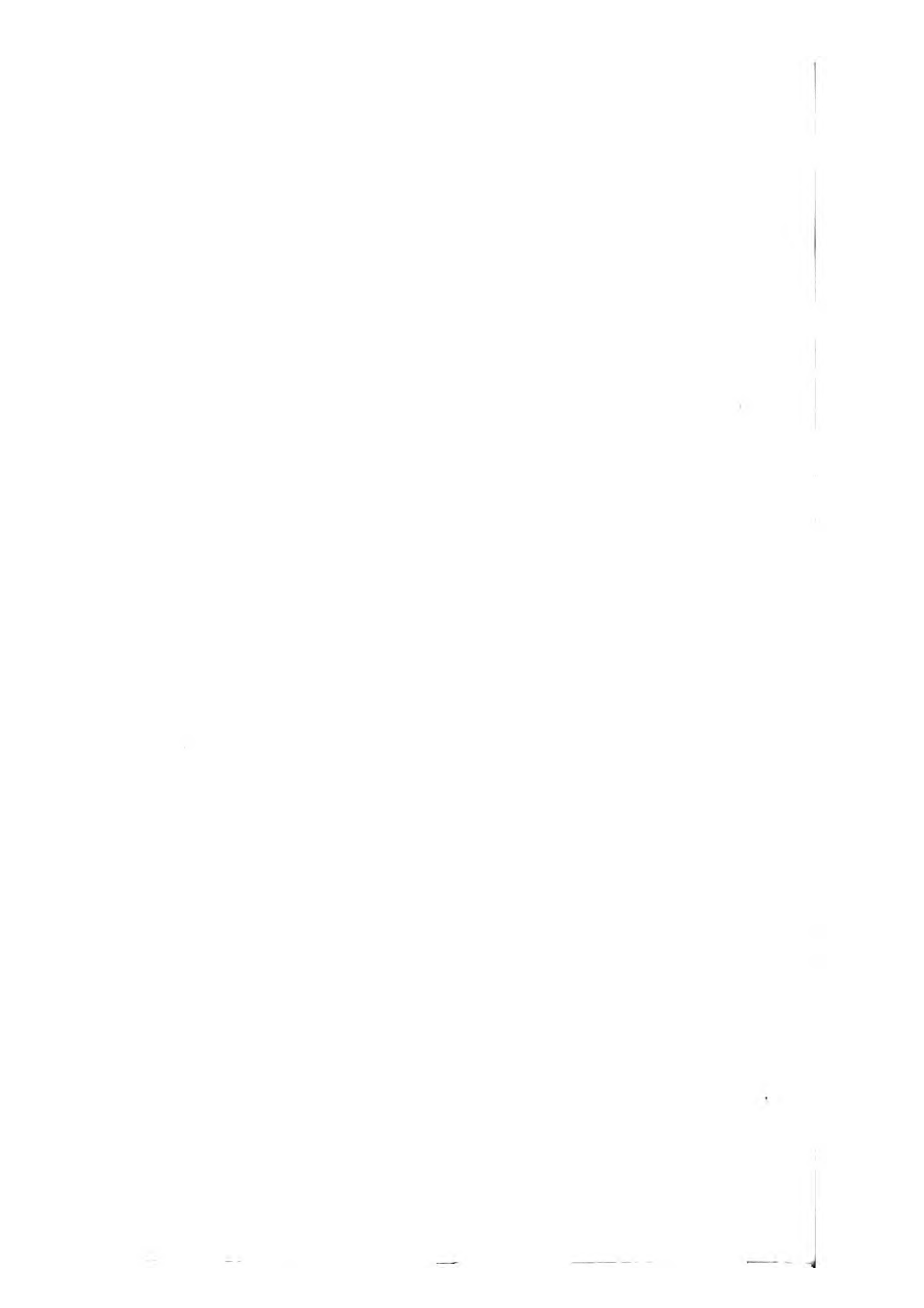
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**ENDYMION**





**E N D Y M I O N**

*A POETIC ROMANCE*

By **JOHN KEATS**

*Type-facsimile of the First Edition  
with Introduction  
and Notes*

BY

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## NOTE

**T**HE text of *Endymion* contained in this volume is a type-facsimile of the first edition, issued in 1818. The paper, the type, and the covers are a close reproduction of the original, which is now very scarce. It will be noticed that the numbering of the lines differs slightly from that of most modern editions. This is due to the fact that where a verse paragraph ends in a broken line (as at l. 710 of Book I) the part of the line that ends the paragraph, and the other part that begins the following paragraph have been counted as two lines; whereas the usual practice now is to count them as one. The difference amounts to one line in the first book, three in the second, eleven in the third, and nine in the fourth. In some copies of the original edition only one erratum is recorded—*his* for *her* in III. 71—but before the volume was issued further errors were noticed, so that in other copies five are mentioned. The present reprint follows the text of the first edition without alteration.

Keats wrote the first book of the poem on sheets of quarto foolscap paper, and afterwards revised it thoroughly before sending it to the printer. He

wrote the rest of the poem in a manuscript book, and then copied it out, making a good many alterations, on sheets of paper similar to those on which the first book had been written. The manuscript book containing the first draft of the second, third, and fourth books of the poem has not come to light, but the points in which it differed from the final manuscript were recorded by Richard Woodhouse, who was connected with the firm of Taylor & Hessey, Keats's publishers. He had an interleaved copy of the first edition in which he noted the differences between the two manuscript versions and the printed text. This copy is still in existence. The final manuscript as sent to the printers was retained by the publishers, and remained in the possession of the Taylor family until 1897, when it was sold by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson, & Hodge. It is now in the Morgan Library, New York. There are also two copies of the first edition with corrections made by Keats himself.

All this material (excepting, of course, the earlier draft of Books II, III, and IV) was thoroughly examined by Mr. H. Buxton Forman, who in more than one edition of Keats's works has recorded in full detail the points in which the successive versions differ from one another. In the notes to this edition reference has been made to a few of the more interesting of these variant readings, the information

being derived from Mr. Buxton Forman's Library Edition in four volumes. In referring to these variations of text the earlier version is spoken of as the Draft, and the revised copy which was sent to the printer as the Manuscript, as in Mr. Buxton Forman's edition.

In the Introduction to the present edition an attempt is made to elucidate the meaning of the allegory that lies beneath the surface of the poem. An earlier study with this purpose was privately printed a few years ago under the title *An Interpretation of Keats's Endymion*, and was supplemented a little later by a pamphlet on *The Story of Glaucus in Keats's Endymion*. In the present study the argument, while covering for the most part the same ground, has been almost entirely rewritten, though here and there paragraphs and sentences from the earlier statement of the case have been used again.

The whole object has been to ascertain what Keats himself meant by the poem, for this should be the beginning, and might almost be the end, of any helpful criticism. At the same time it should be borne in mind that any statement in clear-cut prose of the meaning of a poetical allegory inevitably gives it a hardness of outline which is in some way different from the intention of the author. This cannot be avoided, and indeed does no harm, for, when

once the reader has got on the track of what the writer means, the interpretation, as a separate entity, may drop out of sight. On the other hand the poem fails of its effect, and is gravely misjudged, if large sections of it are read with little or no understanding of the meaning that they were intended to convey.

By the kind permission of the Libraries Committee of the Hampstead Borough Council a brief description is given (in Appendix II) of the unique copy of the first edition of *Endymion* which is in their possession.

Special thanks are due to Mr. T. J. Wise for the loan of his exceptionally fine copy of the first edition of *Endymion*; and to Mr. W. E. Doubleday, Librarian of the Hampstead Public Library, for the unwearied courtesy with which he has facilitated the use of the invaluable collection placed under his care.

H. C. N.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. THE WRITING OF THE POEM

**I**N a few lines that stand almost at the opening of the first book of *Endymion* (ll. 34-62) Keats laid down a kind of time-table which he hoped to follow in writing his poem. He was beginning it in the spring, 'Now while the early budders are just new'; he hoped to be near the middle before the height of summer when 'the bees Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas'; and to finish while autumn was still there 'With universal tinge of sober gold'; and he kept fairly close to this plan.

The writing of the poem, the longest that he ever completed, occupied the greater part of the year 1817. He began it at Carisbrooke, in the Isle of Wight, in the latter part of April. He soon left that place for Margate; a little later he was at Canterbury; and the first book seems to have been finished about the end of May. He then spent a short time at Hastings; but early in June he joined his brothers at Well Walk, Hampstead, and there worked at the second book. The third book was written at Oxford, where he spent the month of September with his friend Benjamin Bailey, who has put on record some details of the way in which the poet worked.

'He wrote', says Bailey, 'and I read, sometimes at the same table, and sometimes at separate desks or tables, from breakfast to the time of our going out for exercise,—generally two or three o'clock. He sat down to his task,—which was about fifty lines a day—with his paper before him, and wrote with

as much regularity, and apparently as much ease, as he wrote his letters. . . . Sometimes he fell short of his allotted task, but not often : and he would make it up another day. But he never forced himself. When he had finished his writing for the day, he usually read it over to me : and he read or wrote letters until we went for a walk. This was our habit day by day. The rough manuscript was written off daily, and with few erasures.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of October Keats returned to Hampstead and worked at the fourth book. At the end of that month he completed his twenty-second year. By the last week in November he was about half-way through the fourth book. He then went down to Burford Bridge, in Surrey, and there, on the 28th of that month, the first draft of the poem was finished.

A few weeks were then given to the work of revision. In January 1818 the first book was sent to the publisher, and the rest of the poem by the middle of March. It was published in the latter part of April, almost exactly a year from the time at which he had begun to write it.

## II. THE RECEPTION OF THE POEM

The reception of the poem was disappointing. *Blackwood's Magazine*, in an article for which Lockhart was mainly if not entirely responsible, spoke of 'the calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy of *Endymion*' ; and, making a mean use of information obtained from a friend of Keats, recommended the young author to return to his practice as an apothecary, and to leave off writing poetry.

<sup>1</sup> From the Houghton MSS. Quoted in Colvin's *Life of Keats*, p. 143.

The notice in the *Quarterly Review* was written by John Wilson Croker. This, like the *Blackwood* article, was inspired by hatred of Leigh Hunt, whose name occurs six times in the course of a short account of the poem, and made no attempt to judge fairly the poetic merits of the work.

‘Reviewers’, says the writer, ‘have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author’s complaint and honestly confess that we have not read his work. Not that we have been wanting in our duty—far from it—indeed, we have made efforts almost as superhuman as the story itself appears to be, to get through it; but with the fullest stretch of our perseverance, we are forced to confess that we have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this Poetic Romance consists. We should extremely lament this want of energy, or whatsoever it may be, on our parts, were it not for one consolation—namely, that we are no better acquainted with the meaning of the book through which we have so painfully toiled, than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into.’

After quoting the words in the Preface in which Keats modestly undervalues his work, the writer cruelly adds :

‘Thus “the two first books” are even in his own judgment, unfit to appear, and “the two last” are, it seems, in the same condition—and as two and two makes four, and as that is the whole number of books, we have a clear and, we believe, a very just estimate of the entire work.’<sup>1</sup>

The *British Critic* was even more contemptuous and cruel in its handling of the poem, and though a few voices were raised in protest they scarcely succeeded in making themselves heard.

<sup>1</sup> *The Quarterly Review*, no. xxxvii, April 1818.

Two years later Francis Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote in a very different strain :

‘ There is no work from which a malicious critic could cull more matter for ridicule, or select more obscure, unnatural, or absurd passages. But we beg leave to say that any one who, on this account, would represent the whole poem as despicable, must either have no notion of poetry, or no regard to truth. It is, in truth, at least as full of genius as of absurdity. . . . We are very much inclined indeed to add, that we do not know any book which we would sooner employ as a test to ascertain whether any one had in him a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its charm.’<sup>1</sup>

But even the few who wrote in defence of the poem do not seem to have penetrated beneath the surface. Shelley after reading it wrote : ‘ It is full of the highest and finest gleams of poetry. . . . I think if he had printed about fifty pages of fragments from it, I should have been led to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, of which there is now no danger.’ It is a judgement that scarcely deserves the praise that has been bestowed upon it, for it shows his limitations rather than his insight as a critic. So far as is known it was not till 1880, when Mrs. F. M. Owen published a study of Keats, that the presence in the poem of an underlying idea was recognized. About one-third of Mrs. Owen’s volume is devoted to *Endymion*, and though she seems to have had only a very hazy idea of its meaning she did valuable service in pointing the way to a fuller understanding of it.

At the present time there is a general agreement as to the main idea with which the poem is concerned. Sir Sidney Colvin states it thus : ‘ The essence of Keats’s task is to

<sup>1</sup> *The Edinburgh Review*, no. lxxvii, August 1820.

set forth the craving of the poet for full communion with the essential spirit of Beauty in the world, and the discipline by which he is led, through the exercise of the active human sympathies and the toilsome acquisition of knowledge, to the prosperous and beatific achievement of his quest.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr. A. C. Bradley puts what is essentially the same idea in a slightly different way: 'The adventures of Endymion are also the experiences of the poetic soul in its search for union with the absolute Beauty.'<sup>2</sup>

But when one looks for more detailed guidance as to the way in which the story is used to represent the ideas that are supposed to lie beneath the surface, one meets with a note of hesitation and uncertainty. Mr. A. C. Bradley, for example, says: 'We may prefer to read *Endymion* simply as we read *Isabella*; but the question here is not of our preferences. If we examine the poem without regard to them, we shall be unable to doubt that to some extent the story symbolises or allegorises this pursuit of the principle of beauty by the poetic soul. . . . If we wish to read it as the author meant it, we must ask for the significance of the figures, events, and actions. Yet it is clear that not all of them are intended to have this further significance, and we are perplexed by the question where, and how far, we are to look for it.'<sup>3</sup> And in another place he speaks of the poem as relating 'a series of adventures to the details of which it is impossible to assign a distinct symbolic meaning, and which, taken more simply, have the incoherence of a broken dream'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Keats*, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> *Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, vol. iii, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> *Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, vol. iii, p. 100.

Similarly Sir Sidney Colvin, though stoutly asserting that 'the ideas are certainly there', says: 'The bewildering redundance and intricacy of detail in *Endymion* are obvious, the presence of an underlying strain of allegoric or symbolic meaning harder to detect. Keats's letters referring to his poem contain only the slightest and rarest hints of the presence of such ideas in it, and in the execution they are so little obtruded or even made clear that they were wholly missed by two generations of his earlier readers. It is only of late years that they have yielded themselves, and even now none too definitely, to the scrutiny of students reading and re-reading the poem by the light of incidental utterances in his earlier and later poetry and in his miscellaneous letters.'<sup>1</sup>

Statements such as these suggest that it may yet be possible to get more closely on to the track of the ideas that were in the mind of Keats when he was drawing these fantastic pictures; and a fresh examination of the poem has led to the conclusion that it has a fuller and more definite significance than has usually been supposed. In the following pages an attempt is made to show what that significance is.

### III. WHAT THE POEM MEANS

The first book of *Endymion* tells a straightforward story in so direct and simple a fashion that one is naturally inclined to accept it at its surface value, and to regard it as a mere rehandling of an old legend that had aroused the poet's interest. But as the poem proceeds the adventures through which Endymion is taken become more and more removed from ordinary human experience. He descends

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Keats*, p. 172.

into the interior of the earth, he wanders beneath the sea, and ascends on a winged steed into the regions of the air. The limits of the old legend are disregarded, and the poet draws freely upon his own invention. It is thus in the later books, rather than in the first, that the problem of the presence or absence of a coherent meaning forces itself upon our attention ; and it is here too that we may look with greater hope of success for a clue to the poet's purpose. For the more fanciful parts of the story, those in which the course of the narrative departs most widely from the sources on which it is based, or from the experiences of ordinary life, are the places in which the poet's meaning, if he had one, should stand out more distinctly.

When we come to consider the part of the story that is contained in the second and third books it will be shown that there is reason to believe that a definite and coherent meaning does underlie the strange adventures there described ; and if this is once established a strong presumption is created that some related meaning is to be found in the still more fantastic story of the fourth book, and in the more sober and intelligible narrative of the first. Moreover the meaning conveyed by the second and third books, while suitable for the middle portion of an allegory, needs both a beginning and an end in order that it may show a reasonable completeness ; and this fact strengthens the presumption already created.

In order that the following discussion of the significance of the poem may be more readily followed it may be well, before examining the story in detail, to define, in the briefest possible way, the allegorical significance of each of the four books.



In the first book the festival of Pan symbolizes the revival of interest in the beauty and the mysterious power of Nature, which had marked the opening of a new poetic era. The repeated appearances of the moon goddess to Endymion represent the awakening of the man who is destined to be a poet to the beauty of the ideal which he must strive to attain.

The second book, in the story of Endymion's journey underground, gives us a picture of the course of preparation—chiefly through the study of the great writers of earlier times—by which the young poet may fit himself for his task. It shows that even though weariness and depression may be his lot for a time, yet if he perseveres he may meet with a revelation of life and beauty which will stimulate and encourage him.

The third book contains a warning. Under the guise of the disastrous experiences of Glaucus it tells how in an earlier time English poetry had been led astray by a powerful but evil influence, of which Pope stands as the chief representative ; and how, after a long period of impotence and decrepitude, it was restored to fresh life and vigour by the redeeming power of the spirit of the new era.

The fourth book tells how the poet, still in pursuit of his ideal, is perplexed by the call of humanity in trouble, and is torn between the desire to devote himself to the service of his suffering fellow creatures and the other desire to reach the ideal after which he has so long been striving ; until at length the conflict and perplexity vanish when he sees that for him the two ideals are but one, for he can best serve his fellow men by entering fully into the poetic life.

It may further be noted that the wide range of experience through which Endymion is made to pass—on the earth

and under it, in the depths of the ocean and in the region of the air—suggests that the poet must learn to look at life in various aspects and from different points of view before he is really fitted to take up the task to which he is called.

We may now examine in more detail the way in which the allegory is carried out.

*The First Book.*

The story of the revival of the worship of Pan, the god of Nature, represents in a picturesque way the freshly awakened feeling of delight in the beauty of nature and of reverence for its mysteries which was one of the main characteristics of the new romantic movement; and this provides an effective introduction to the main subject of the poem. The suggestion probably came from two of Drayton's poems, *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moon*, with both of which Keats was evidently familiar; but the use that he makes of it is altogether his own. The linking up of the festival with the change that is coming over Endymion shows how the poet is in part the product of his age. A new spirit is moving among the people, and is welcomed by them in different ways according as they are fitted to receive it. The poet is the solitary man among a great multitude who is endowed with deeper insight than any of his fellows, and who is gifted with the power of expressing what they more or less dimly feel. Yet the call that comes to him is only an intenser and more personal repetition of the call that comes to the people at large; each responds to it according to his temperament and gifts.

Such a movement is, of course, an intellectual and spiritual one; there is no procession, no visible altar, no

sacrifice, no song of praise that we can hear ; but these are symbols expressing, in the manner of allegory, through objects and actions that can be seen and heard, the silent and intangible, but no less real, changes that come about in men's outlook and their conception of the world around them.

The fact that this was not the institution of a new festival, but the revival of one that had for some time been neglected (I. 213), is another significant point ; for the new romantic movement looked back to the earlier romantic movement, and was avowedly a renewal of an attitude of mind that, during the intervening age, had been out of fashion.

One interesting detail may be noted that helps to indicate the direction in which we should look for the meaning of the passage. In the midst of the glade in which the festival of Pan was celebrated stood a marble altar (I. 90), the visible symbol and focus of the newly awakened spirit of reverence which the people were striving to express in their worship.<sup>1</sup> It is not said that this altar had been set up for the present festival ; the suggestion is rather that it had stood there for a long time, for there were many paths (I. 79) leading to the wide lawn in which it was placed, and the people who were gathering for the festival made directly for it (I. 127). One cannot but remember that Keats had previously made use of the same image as a symbol of the delight in the beauty of nature and reverence for its mysteries that he regarded as belonging to the essential spirit of poetry.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that there is no mention of an altar in either of the poems of Drayton from which the suggestion of the festival was taken. The earlier use that Keats had made of the same image probably led to its adoption here.

Here her altar shone,  
E'en in this isle ; and who could paragon  
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise  
Of harmony ? . . .  
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd  
With honors.           (*Sleep and Poetry*, l. 171.)

This is with plain and open reference to the earlier romantic movement of Elizabethan times ; and in *Endymion* we are shown the same altar, once more, after a long period of neglect, the centre of enthusiastic worship. It seems clear that the meaning corresponds.

Endymion, the prince and leader of the people, has taken part in this festival and has shared in the general rejoicing ; but to him has come a more personal and intimate call. First in a vision of the night, and twice afterwards in a more open and unmistakable fashion he has had a glimpse of an ideal of indescribable beauty, and now he is in a state of painful perplexity, wondering whether to devote himself to the pursuit of the ideal that has been revealed to him, or to take up again his ordinary course of life.

The allegory is well conceived and is worked out with many skilful and suggestive touches. We have a picture of the poet, influenced by his environment and sharing in the enthusiasm that stirs the people around him, yet seeing more than they see, and perplexed by problems of which they are unconscious.

And the progressive character of the revelation is effectively presented. On the first occasion (I. 552) the vision of ideal beauty came to him in a dream, vivid and entrancing beyond his power to describe, 'yet it was but a dream' (I. 574). On the second he was by the margin of

a well (I. 871) when he saw reflected in the water the same face that had before appeared to him, but this time it was no dream ; he was wide awake when he saw it, and he felt that the shower of dew drops and leaves and flowers that fell upon him was evidence of the favour of his heavenly visitant. Yet a third time, when he was longing for her presence (I. 952), he came to a quiet cave, and on this occasion he heard a voice calling him by name, and there was granted to him a fuller and more intimate revelation than before.

It is a beautiful picture of an experience through which, in one way or another, every poet has to pass. There must come for each one a time when he begins to feel the call of poetry, and to realize that he has been chosen out from the ordinary run of men to devote himself to the service of a beautiful ideal. The consciousness of this may come upon him unexpectedly, and may at first be only a passing feeling ; yet it will change his outlook upon life ; and, as he allows his thoughts to dwell upon it, the ideal will grow clearer and its appeal will become stronger, until at length he comes to look upon it as a thing to be sought after more than all other aims in life.

Endymion's depression when he awoke after the vision (I. 672-710) represents the reaction that may well take place in the mind of the young aspirant when, after a vivid realization of the glory to which a true poet may attain, he comes down to earth, and finds himself confronted with the commonplace affairs of everyday life, and with the limitations of his own ability. The mood of depression will pass away when fresh hopes have been aroused, and then when these are disappointed it may return again (I. 907-18),

but after a time he will come to understand more clearly both his own powers and the ideal to which they must be devoted ; and his periods of depression will be less painful (II. 858-76).

Again, Peona's failure to enter into Endymion's experience, and her anxiety that he should fulfil the hopes that she had entertained for him (I. 711-69) represent one of the hindrances with which the young poet is likely to meet. Most ordinary people, not excepting those who are personally attached to him, will not approve of his eccentricities, and those who think most highly of his prospects will often be most disappointed at finding him unwilling to follow the regular paths to success.

But there are aspects of the story that appear to reflect more particularly the experiences through which Keats himself had passed during the period when the consciousness of his powers was growing, and the plans that had been formed for his career were being remodelled.

Endymion's earlier life had been one of healthy activity and overflowing energy ; he was one—

Who, for very sport of heart, would race  
With [his] own steed from Araby ; pluck down  
A vulture from his towery perching ; frown  
A lion into growling. (I. 533)

And Keats, according to the account of his school friends, showed a similar disposition in his early days. One of them, Mr. Edward Holmes, has left the following record :

‘ Keats was in childhood not attached to books. His *penchant* was for fighting. He would fight anyone—morning, noon and night—his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him. . . . He was not literary : his love of work and

poetry manifested itself chiefly about the year before he left school. In all active exercises he excelled.' <sup>1</sup>

And just as Endymion's earlier interests lost their attraction, and he was filled with a higher hope, a longing to attain to 'fellowship divine' (I. 779), so Keats changed his outlook and became conscious of an ideal. One of his fellow students in the medical school has described the state of his mind a year or more before he wrote *Endymion*.

'Poetry was to his mind the zenith of all his aspirations: the only thing worthy the attention of superior minds: so he thought: all other pursuits were mean and tame. He had no idea of fame or greatness but as it was connected with the pursuits of poetry or the attainment of poetical excellence.' <sup>2</sup>

Again, the unhappy restlessness of Endymion between the visitations of his goddess, the doubt as to the course that he should follow, the resolve to put all thought of her out of his mind—all these are a reflection of the difficult time through which Keats passed before he finally made up his mind to devote himself entirely to poetry. He left school and was apprenticed to Mr. Hammond about August 1811. He was even then keenly interested in literature, but it was five or six years before the decision to give up everything for poetry was finally taken.<sup>3</sup> Before he reached this stage he must have passed through many a period of doubt and uncertainty. At one time the glorious idea of becoming a great poet would dazzle his eyes; at another he would feel how absurd it was to imagine that he could ever reach up to such an ideal, and would resolve to put all thought

<sup>1</sup> Colvin, *Life of Keats*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>3</sup> Miss Amy Lowell, in her life of Keats, has shown reason for supposing that this may have been as early as July 1816.

of it out of his mind, and to take a practical, sensible view of life. Even as late as March 1819 the idea of devoting himself to medicine still occasionally presented itself. Writing in that month to his brother George he says :

‘ I have been at different times turning it in my head whether I should go to Edinburgh and study for a physician ; I am afraid I should not take kindly to it ; I am sure I could not take fees—and yet I should like to do so ; it’s not worse than writing poems, and hanging them up to be fly-blown on the Review shambles.’

But the effective decision had been reached long before this. Of the letters that he wrote during the years when the question hung in the balance barely half a dozen have survived, so far as is known, and these contain only passing reference to the question. It is fortunate, therefore, that so vivid a picture of his perplexities and struggles has been preserved for us in the pages of *Endymion*.

Another admirable bit of work is the sketch of Peona, Endymion’s sister. She is represented as being devotedly attached to her brother. She listens sympathetically to the story of his strange experiences, but fails altogether to understand why they should affect him so deeply ; and it is largely due to her influence that he makes an effort to return to his normal life of healthy activity.

Fanny Keats, John’s sister, was at this time living in the home of their guardian, Mr. Abbey, who was strongly opposed to John’s idea of abandoning medicine for poetry. The affection existing between the brother and sister was no less warm than that described in the poem, as may be seen from the really delightful letters written by John to Fanny both at this time and afterwards. It is possible that



in their talks Fanny, who was then fourteen years old, may have given expression to some of the disapproval that she would often hear voiced, and so may have started in her brother's mind the idea of this gentle and affectionate opposition. But the main suggestion of this phase of the poem is that the poet's way is a lonely one : it is futile for him to hope that others will be able to understand the ideals that are calling to him ; even those who are most ready to sympathize can but seldom enter into his feelings.

In this book then Keats has represented the way in which there spreads through a whole nation a fresh consciousness of the beauty and mystery of the world around them, and has shown how some individual in that nation, with a spirit more finely tuned, is touched more deeply than the rest, until he feels impelled to follow the ideal of which he has caught a glimpse, wherever the quest may lead him.

*The Second Book.*

After thus depicting the awakening of the soul of the poet to a consciousness of the ideal that is set before him Keats proceeds, in the second book of the poem, to represent, in a similar picturesque fashion, some part of the training that must be undergone, the process of strenuous preparation required, in order that the poet may be fitted for his high calling. In the first book the story has kept, for the most part, within the limits of human experience, but now it passes beyond them, and the reader soon finds himself faced with the question whether the poem is to be regarded as a mere fantasy, becoming more wild and impossible as it proceeds, or as a parable enshrining some aspect of truth in a strange and picturesque setting.

If we accept, provisionally, the latter view as being the more likely, we may find the main purpose of the book suggested in the opening passage, in which it is said that the stories of days long past, telling of deeds that once thrilled the world, have in the main lost their power to move us, except where they are warmed by the emotion of love. The wars of Alexander and the woes of Ulysses rouse little interest, but the stories of Juliet and Imogen and Pastorella still pulsate with life.

The book proceeds to show, under the image of an underground journey, how part of the training that a poet must undergo in order that he may be fitted for what he has to do is a prolonged and searching study of the works of the great masters of poetry in earlier ages. It is while Endymion is indulging in one of his highest flights of rapture that he is called to descend 'Into the sparry hollows of the world' (II. 205); and the suggestion is that a course of study of the classics of literature is needed as a corrective to impatient presumption on the part of the young and inexperienced poet. Keats himself had felt the need of ten years that he might overwhelm himself in poetry.<sup>1</sup>

The imagery of which Keats has made use in describing the journey is happily chosen to suggest a literature of great beauty and of enduring value, belonging to an age that has passed away. We read of veins of gold, silver grots, and sapphire columns. The way lies through winding passages and a marble gallery which forms part of a temple, where through a long pillared vista there is seen a shrine and a statue of Diana. The evidences of man's handiwork are plain on every side, but the whole place is silent and deserted;

<sup>1</sup> *Sleep and Poetry*, 1. 96.

no human life remains there. More than one reference is made to gold in the description of the journey. We are told of a vein of gold (227), a gold dome (596), and golden moss (673); and we are reminded of the famous sonnet, written less than a year earlier, in which Keats had described his own studies in literature under a similar metaphor:

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold.

It is worth noting that the octave of this sonnet is in itself a miniature allegory.

The description of the journey is managed in such a way as to suggest at many points the ideas and feelings that naturally arise out of the study of classical literature. Thus Endymion is spoken of as moving about in a region

where silence dead

Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint : (II. 268)

and this admirably suggests the way in which, as we read the pages of Herodotus or Livy, faint echoes reach us of controversies and conflicts that have long since died away into silence.

Again we are told of the interest which is to be found in the study of these writers, an interest that increases with the growth of one's power to get at their meaning:

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness ;  
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite  
To dive into the deepest. (II. 220)

At times the interest deepens into wonder (250) and awe (263) and amazement (249). The imperfect understanding of the literature of those far-off days, which is all that we can achieve however carefully we study it, is suggested in some particularly beautiful lines:

Dark, nor light,  
 The region ; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,  
 But mingled up ; a gleaming melancholy ;  
 A dusky empire and its diadems ;  
 One faint eternal eventide of gems. (II. 222)

Then again there is reference to the weariness that inevitably overtakes the student at times as he tries to find his way through this dimly lighted region (272) ; and to the feeling of despair that overwhelms him as he comes to realize the height to which he must strive to attain if his own work is to have any of the enduring quality that they have achieved. His aspirations for poetic fame appear—

A mad pursuing of the fog-born elf,  
 Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,  
 Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire. (II. 278)

At some points in the story the allegory becomes more pointed and definite. Endymion sees—

an orb'd diamond, set to fray  
 Old darkness from his throne : 'twas like the sun  
 Uprisen o'er chaos. (II. 246)

The expressions employed are not particularly suitable to a diamond, but they are a very effective description of the poems of Homer, which stand out for us with all the greater brilliance against the darkness of the previous age. And the feelings of Endymion when he saw it ('with such a stun Came the amazement') remind us of the feelings of awe and 'wild surmise' that came upon Keats himself when he first looked into Chapman's *Homer*.

It is at this point that Keats almost throws at us an explanation of what he means by the fantastic adventures through which he is conducting Endymion, for he pauses to say that these wonders are—

past the wit

Of any spirit to tell, but one of those  
 Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,  
 Will be its high remembrancers : who they ?  
 The mighty ones who have made eternal day  
 For Greece and England. (II. 250)

The temple which Endymion examined with more than ordinary care, threading the courts and passages, and crossing to and fro to make himself acquainted with all its mysteries (257-71), is probably fashioned out of the reminiscences of the long and patient study that Keats had given to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Cowden Clarke tells us that in the latter part of his time at school he voluntarily translated in writing a considerable portion of it ; and after leaving school he went on with it until he had completed a prose version of the whole poem.<sup>1</sup>

It was after this minute examination of the temple that Endymion began to feel tired of his solitary journey in these regions, and to long for the flowers, the streams, and the birds (282-333). And this may well be a reflection of the feeling that came over Keats after he had completed this self-imposed task. The thought would probably arise that he was spending too much time in this kind of study, and that he would be doing better to seek his inspiration direct from nature. It was at some such moment that there came to him a revelation of the living beauty which is to be found in this great poetry of past ages by those who seek diligently for it, though the vision of it comes at unexpected moments. It is beautifully pictured for us in the lines that tell how, when Endymion returned into the temple and

<sup>1</sup> Colvin, *Life of Keats*, pp. 14, 18.

cried to Diana for help, he saw leaves and flowers springing up through the marble pavement :

Nor in one spot alone ; the floral pride  
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew  
Before his footsteps. (II. 346)

The experience is one that is not necessarily vouchsafed to those who study the classics in order to pass an examination ; but those who read them for their own sake, as Keats had done, even though they may feel that the work is often difficult and wearisome, do at times find, breaking through the cold and polished lines, a living power and beauty which come as a revelation to them, and then they are encouraged, as Endymion was, to pursue their task.

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,  
Upon his fairy journey on he hastes. (II. 352)

As Endymion continues to explore these regions he meets with still stranger wonders. The path, bounded now by a diamond balustrade, leads him across a foaming stream, and when he touches the waters with his spear they rise in fountains (II. 607), which interlace in curious patterns, resembling now lattices covered with crystal vines, now trees moved by the wind ; then a further transformation brings the likeness of curtained canopies embroidered with peacocks and swans and other figures ; and again, gathering force, the waters begin to imitate the beams and pillars and roof of a cathedral. The whole passage would indeed be a piece of futile absurdity but for the significance which lies just beneath the surface. Two fairly plain hints of the meaning are given in the phrases ' changed magic ' (614) and ' founts Protean ' (628), and once we have caught

the tone of the lines they seem almost to shout at us the word *Metamorphoses*. It adds to the significance of the allusion when we find that in this book and the next Keats has made free use of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, drawing from various parts the stories of Venus and Adonis, of the pursuit of Arethusa by Alpheus, and of the love of Glaucus and Scylla.

The incident serves as a sign-post pointing out the meaning of the underground journey of Endymion, and showing that, taken as a whole, it is a parable of the earnest and patient study which a poet must undertake before he can fully learn his craft.

The significance of the sudden breaking of the path (653) is not quite clear, but the incidents that follow—the approach of the eagle which carries him to the jasmine bower, and the meeting there with his still unknown goddess—are evidently intended to represent the coming of some inspiration which carries the poet, when he surrenders himself wholly to its influence, into immediate contact with the essential spirit of poetry. It is a fuller and more complete revelation than has come to him before, and though it cannot endure, but must die away after a time, it brings with it a sense of encouragement, for it shows that the poet is coming nearer and nearer to the realization of the full powers, the high ideal, towards which he is striving. It is true that the climax is told in a manner not worthy of the loftiness of the experience that it is intended to represent: but if Keats fell short of complete success in attempting to accomplish an almost impossible task—the representation of an intellectual and spiritual experience in terms of earthly passion—we may at least recognize that the attempt reveals

something of the earnestness and sincerity with which he pursued his aims and ideals. The pleasure that comes from the exercise of the creative instinct is shared by many. The child who draws the picture of a cow or carves his little boat of bark knows something of it ; the man who lays out a garden or designs a house shares in it ; the writer of verse that others can only read with a smile has felt some thrill of pleasure in the making of it. But which of us can hope to enter into the joy of the poet who has produced a masterpiece able to stir thousands of hearts by its subtle magic—

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :*

or

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !*

This is the level of attainment, with the rapture that must belong to it, that Keats has attempted to depict for us in this passage.

The two sections describing in some detail the coming of Venus to awake Adonis from his sleep (388 ff.), and the pursuit of Arethusa by Alpheus (919 ff.), show how the poet, making his lonely and difficult way through the pages of the old classical writers, comes at length, to his surprise and delight, upon something that appeals to him as not only beautiful but true to life in every age.

*The Third Book.*

The opening lines of the third book are generally regarded as one of the least successful parts of the poem. They refer to the pompous vanity which is often characteristic of incompetent people when they are placed in positions of authority. We seem to catch the echoes of talk that Keats



might often have heard in Leigh Hunt's cottage. There is a political flavour about the passage which seems curiously out of place in a poem of this kind. Yet there is evidence to show that the political reference was part at least of the poet's meaning, for Woodhouse has left a note to the effect that Keats said, with much simplicity: 'It will be easily seen what I think of the present ministers, by the beginning of the third Book.' But it seems likely that a further meaning is intended by these lines, and one which has a close relation to the main purpose of the book. This purpose, as will be shown later, is to express the strong disapproval that Keats felt for the poetry of the classical school. 'He hated', says Sir Sidney Colvin, 'the whole "Augustan" and post-Augustan tribe of social and moral essayists in verse, and Pope, their illustrious master, most of all.'<sup>1</sup> And when the passage (ll. 1-22) is read again in the light of this fact it becomes evident that all the terms employed will serve to express the poetical antipathies of Keats as well as the political antipathies of Leigh Hunt. Some of them, indeed, such as 'baaing vanities', are more suited to the literary meaning. The same feeling of contemptuous dislike for the poets of this school is expressed in *Sleep and Poetry* (ll. 181-206):

With a puling infant's force  
They swayed about upon a rocking horse  
And thought it Pegasus.

The outburst is followed in each case by the reflection that there are powers at work more worthy of reverence, whose influence is uplifting. In this poem Keats contrasts the noisy self-assertion and blind conceit of the literary school

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Keats*, p. 18.

against which many of the poets of his own age were in revolt, with the gentle and silent, yet all-pervading influence of the moon, which had possessed a great fascination for him from his early days.

The transition from the stormy opening to these lines of quiet restful beauty is skilfully managed. Keats has expressed his contempt for most of the men who in those days exercised sway, whether in the field of politics or literature ; but, he goes on to say, there are powers that keep religious state in regions far above our reach, though few of them have made their influence felt in this lower world. Among these the moon, with its meek and gentle influence, is the mightiest (III. 42). Its beams, he says, shine even beneath the waves, and there bring comfort to Endymion, who has begun a new phase of his strange journey, and is now wandering in the depths of the sea. He dwells upon the delight that from the days of his childhood he has felt in the beauty of the moon, but now she has a rival in his affections.

Gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss—  
My strange love came—Felicity's abyss !  
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—  
Yet not entirely ; no, thy starry sway  
Has been an under-passion to this hour. (III. 177)

He feels perplexed at the way in which his affections are drawn in two directions, and speaks first to his goddess and then to the moon.

Dearest love, forgive  
That I can think away from thee and live !—  
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize  
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries ! (III. 185)

The reader knows, though Endymion did not as yet know, that this divided affection need not bring any distress or perplexity, for the two objects upon which it turns are in reality one and the same. But for the present it troubles Endymion.

The fact that a good deal of stress is laid upon this point, which is of very small interest so far as the story is concerned, suggests that it is meant to carry some significance beyond the mere surface meaning. But the purpose of it is not obvious. Starting, however, from the point which is generally conceded, that the experiences of Endymion are intended to represent the development of a poet in his search for ideal beauty, and that the moon goddess is the ideal, imperfectly apprehended as yet, towards which he is striving, we arrive at the idea that Endymion's instinctive love of the moon, which he has felt from boyhood, and his newly awakened passion for the goddess of his dreams, represent two phases of a poet's aspirations which may for a time appear incompatible, but are not really so. These two phases are probably the beauty of rhythm and form in poetry on the one hand, and the more intense beauty that belongs to emotion and passion on the other. Rhythm, like the moonlight, is a gentle, all-pervading influence. It is found in the growth of the flowers, in the song of the birds, in the tides of the ocean, in our breathing and sleeping, and it belongs to the very essence of poetry. The love of rhythm is an instinct that shows itself in early childhood, and it is one of the first things that we can appreciate in verse. Emotion and passion develop later, and while the poet is in the earlier stage of learning his craft he may look upon these two qualities of poetry as distinct from one another. He will learn later that they are but different aspects of

the one ideal in poetry ; that emotion must express itself through rhythm.

The fact that this point is brought up in varying form in each of the four books of the poem increases the probability that some significance was intended to belong to it. It is when Endymion has been gazing at the moon and has felt the delight of her beauty and has watched her disappear behind a cloud that he has the first vision of his goddess, but he does not realize that there is any relation between the two (I. 591 ff.). Again, before he begins his wanderings underground, the beauty of the moon fills him with delight and longing, but, so little is he conscious of her identity, that he begs her to point out his love's far dwelling (II. 179). In the fourth book the apparent rivalry still remains, but the situation has become more complex because of the appearance of the Indian maiden, and the strong attraction that Endymion feels for her. He exclaims in his unhappy perplexity, ' I have a triple soul ' (IV. 97), for the moon, and his unknown goddess, and now the Indian maiden, have all laid their fascination upon him, and he does not yet know that they are but different manifestations of the one ideal that he is striving to attain.

The greater part of the third book (from l. 189 to the end) is concerned with the story of Glaucus, the punishment that he endured at the hands of Circe, and his deliverance effected by the help of Endymion. In its main outlines the story is taken from the thirteenth and fourteenth books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but Keats has made important changes in the story, and an examination of these may help us to understand the use that he was making of the legend.

Ovid tells us that Glaucus was a fisherman, taking great

delight in the sea, and spending his life on or near it. One day, having come to a meadow which had never before been visited by man or beast, he spread out on the bank the fishes that he had caught. To his surprise he saw them, after nibbling at the grass on which they lay, move over the land and slip down again into the sea. He wondered what cause could have worked such a marvel, and himself plucked and tasted some of the grass. At once his nature was changed. He plunged into the sea, and found that he had become fit to be received into the sacred fellowship of the sea-gods. Then he met Scylla and loved her, but she fled from him, and not being able to induce her to listen to him, he appealed to Circe for help. But Circe replied by offering herself to Glaucus and suggesting that he should abandon his quest of Scylla. Glaucus emphatically refused the tempting offer and declared that nothing should induce him to forsake his love. Circe was angry, but not being able, nor indeed willing, to harm Glaucus, who was now, like herself, divine, she bent her wrath upon Scylla. She poisoned a pool of water where Scylla was wont to bathe, so that when Scylla next entered the water she was changed into a hideous monster, her waist disfigured with the heads of barking dogs. Glaucus was horrified, and Scylla, in her hatred of Circe, would have destroyed Ulysses and his companions had she not been transformed into the rock which stands there to this day.

The changes that Keats has introduced into the legend suggest that he was aiming at something more than the retelling of a picturesque and fantastic story. He has, in the first place, made no use of the incident of the fishes and the magic grass by means of which Glaucus won the freedom

of the sea. In this poem Glaucus, impelled by his desire for the sea, simply 'plung'd for life or death' (III. 382) and found to his astonishment that he could live in the denser element; and the fact that Keats has thrown aside such promising material, and has left his story, as a story, bare and uninteresting at this stage, is probably due to a disinclination on his part to admit details, however picturesque and attractive in themselves, if they had no bearing upon the idea with which he was concerned.

In Ovid's version of the story Glaucus firmly and decisively rejected the advances of Circe,<sup>1</sup> but Keats represents him as yielding to her enticements and forgetting Scylla. Then, while Ovid speaks of Circe as taking vengeance for the rejection of her advances, not upon Glaucus, but upon Scylla, Keats makes the chief punishment fall upon Glaucus. Moreover, while Ovid tells us that Scylla was changed first into a repulsive creature and then into a rock, Keats merely reduces her to ineffectiveness for a long period, but she remains 'a beauteous corse' (III. 783), while Glaucus in his version becomes

Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame. (III. 641)

Finally, while we are told by Ovid that Scylla remains a rock to this day, Keats, introducing a wealth of fantastic detail for which he found no authority in Ovid or elsewhere, represents both Glaucus and Scylla as being restored to the vigour and beauty of youth, and then being united in perfect happiness.

<sup>1</sup> Talia temptanti 'prius' inquit 'in aequore frondes'  
Glaucus 'et in summis nascentur montibus algae,  
sospite quam Scylla nostri mutantur amores.'

*Metamorphoses*, xiv. 37.

These changes constitute a very drastic rehandling of the classical legend, but it will be seen later that each one of them was needed to express some part of the meaning to which Keats has adapted the story, and that without them the Glaucus legend could have no such application.

In its earlier stages the story of Glaucus closely resembles that of Endymion. Each is devoted to a life of activity, and for each the frank and unreflecting enjoyment of this life is broken into by the recognition of a higher ideal, which soon becomes their main pursuit and appears the only thing worth striving after. It is, however, elusive, and the pursuit proves to be long and toilsome; and here the two stories begin to diverge, for while Endymion remains faithful to his ideal, and, notwithstanding occasional moods of discouragement, perseveres until at length he becomes fitted to fulfil his high calling, Glaucus, as Keats tells the story, turns aside from the course that he ought to follow, and yields to the bewitching enticements of Circe.

Now if, as we have found reason to believe, the story of Endymion is intended to represent the new movement in poetry which was in full progress in the time of Keats, the story of Glaucus would naturally represent some earlier movement in poetry (for Endymion was a youth when Glaucus was an old man), which, though at first inspired by a similar devotion to a noble ideal, had been diverted from its proper course, drained of vitality, and rendered ineffective and powerless for good. Had English poetry ever passed through an experience of this kind? It is beyond question that Keats believed that it had, and the picture that he draws (with no authority from Ovid) of Glaucus, forgetting the beautiful maiden who eluded his

pursuit, and yielding to the lower fascinations of the evil-minded enchantress, is quite an effective presentation of his view of what had happened to English poetry in the days of the pseudo-classical school. He felt that it had then forsaken the ideal after which it had been striving, and had allowed itself to fall under the allurements of a false enticement.

And the punishment that Circe inflicted upon Glaucus when he discovered her exercising her baleful charms on other victims—a punishment invented by Keats in wilful disregard of the statement of Ovid that Circe could do no such thing<sup>1</sup>—was the punishment that fell upon English poetry as the direct result of yielding to these enticements: it lost all poetic force, and fell into decrepitude. ‘They went about holding a poor decrepid standard out,’ as Keats himself has put it in another place.<sup>2</sup> Whether we accept or differ from this view of Pope and his school is of no moment: the point is that this revision of the story of Glaucus forms a very effective pictorial representation of the view that was held and proclaimed by Keats and others who were associated with him in the new poetical movement.

If we now turn back and consider the changes introduced by Keats into the original story we may be able to see that they are not mere pointless perversions of an old legend. Each one was inevitable if the story was to carry the meaning to which it was being adapted. Keats had to make Glaucus turn aside from the pursuit of Scylla and yield to Circe’s enticements in order that his action might serve to symbolize the way in which English poetry had been drawn

<sup>1</sup> *indignata dea est et laedere quatenus ipsum | non poterat (nec vellet amans), . . . Metamorphoses, xiv. 40.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sleep and Poetry, l. 203.*



away from its true ideal by the influence of Pope and his school. Glaucus had to be reduced to decrepitude in order that he might represent the state of English poetry in that age. Scylla could not be made repulsive, because, like Diana, she stands for a poetical ideal which can never be other than beautiful, though it may for a time cease to exercise any influence upon men. Finally, Glaucus and Scylla had to be restored to activity because English poetry had not remained in the 'withered, sapless, feeble' state to which it had for a time been reduced, but had, before *Endymion* was written, again become full of life and beauty and vigour.

In describing the part that Circe plays in the story Keats has used the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* as a starting-point, and has also drawn upon his reminiscences of the account of her given in the tenth book of the *Odyssey*; but here again the line that he takes soon begins to diverge from that of his predecessors. In his version of the story Glaucus waked one morning and found that Circe was not with him. He searched through the forest, and at length came upon her 'Seated upon an uptorn forest root', and surrounded by the creatures over whom she was tyrannizing. She fed them with grapes from a basket, and then, having sprinkled a branch of mistletoe with some sooty oil, she whisked it in their eyes. They shrieked and groaned with pain; their bodies began to swell, and then, carried through the air as if by a whirlwind, they vanished (III. 480-530).

It is a most fantastic story, and it seems unlikely that Keats would in wanton idleness of fancy have turned it into such a grotesque form. It is more reasonable to suppose that he had some purpose in view. Circe obviously stands for an influence of a very sinister kind, and, if the line of

interpretation already suggested is the true one, it follows that she must represent in some way the activities of the pseudo-classical school. And a detailed examination of the passage will show that it bears distinct marks of having been developed (with very little help from Ovid or Homer) so as to present a portrait—or a caricature—not so much of the classical school in general, as of its chief representative, Alexander Pope, in particular.

Reference to various details which point to this conclusion will be found in the notes,<sup>1</sup> but it may be said briefly that an examination of the passage shows that it pictures for us in vivid strokes the dominating position that Pope held among the minor poets of the day ; the mingled condescension and contempt with which he treated them ; the ridicule which he poured upon them in the pages of the *Dunciad* and elsewhere, and the consternation and clamour which followed upon the publication of these satires. Indeed, so closely does the story correspond with the details of the war between Pope and his literary enemies, that it distinguishes between an earlier attack which was less personal and bitter, yet caused no small outcry, and the later one in the *Dunciad* which was much more direct and cruel. And finally the devastating effects of this satire are shown in the lines which describe the complete disappearance of the whole crowd of poetasters before the terrible onslaught of Pope.

But the most direct evidence that Keats intended to represent Pope under the figure of Circe is to be found in one of Pope's own works, a treatise in prose entitled :

MARTINUS SCRIBLERUS ΠΕΡΙ ΒΑΘΟΥΣ : or

*Of the Art of Sinking in Poetry,*

<sup>1</sup> See notes on III. 498 ff.

which appeared in March 1727-8, in a volume of *Miscellanies* by Swift and Pope. It is a keen and amusing satire on many of the minor poets of the time, and one chapter of it in particular caused no small stir.<sup>1</sup> In it Pope declared that he was going to represent some of the writers of his time under various kinds of animals; and he accordingly proceeds to describe them as flying fishes, swallows, ostriches, parrots, porpoises, frogs, and so on. Under each kind of creature he gives a satirical description. For instance, he says of the flying fishes: 'These are writers who now and then rise upon their fins, and fly out of the profound; but their wings are soon dry, and they drop down to the bottom.' And he adds to this description the initials G. S., A. H., C. G., which were no doubt meant to stand for George Stepney, Aaron Hill, and Charles Gildon, of whom the last was handled much more severely in the *Dunciad* a few months later. And having thus transformed his victims after the manner of Circe he proceeds in the following chapter, with cynical impertinence, to charge his former friend Broome with acting the part of Circe, because of a mere phrase that he had used in his *Epistle to Fenton on his Mariamne*. 'The author's pencil,' says Pope, 'like the wand of Circe, turns all into monsters at a stroke.' Warton, in his edition of Pope, published about twenty years before *Endymion* was written, says of Chapter VI: 'This was the chapter which gave so much offence, and excited such loud clamours against our author by his introduction of these initial letters, which he in vain asserted were placed at random, and meant no particular writers; which was not believed.'

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I.

It appears then that the idea of representing Pope as Circe was not first thought of by Keats, but that Pope himself assumed the part, and Keats merely took over the identification from this chapter and used it in his poem. But it is possible, as we shall see later, that Wordsworth may have had some share in the matter.

For the sequel to the story Keats has cast loose from the classical writers upon whom he has hitherto been drawing for some of his material. The rest of the adventures of Glaucus are the product of his own imagination. As a mere story it can hardly be called convincing, and is indeed as absurd a fantasy as many other parts of the poem are until a deeper significance is recognized. But when a clue to this veiled meaning has been found the purpose of the whole passage leaps into view, and it becomes significant truth instead of pointless absurdity.

The redemption of Glaucus by the help of Endymion is an allegorical rendering of the way in which, according to the view of Keats and his fellows, English poetry had been rescued from the cramped, withered, sapless condition into which it had fallen under the baleful influence of Pope, and had been restored to a youthful freshness and vigour under the influence of what we have learned to call the new romantic movement. And it seems likely that the germ of this part of the story was found by Keats in a passage that occurs in the Essay supplementary to the Preface to the 1815 edition of Wordsworth's poems.<sup>1</sup> The third book of *Endymion* was written at Oxford in September 1817, when Keats was staying with his friend Bailey, and we know that during

<sup>1</sup> The Essay is reprinted in the *Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. ii (ed. Knight). The passage quoted is on p. 238.

that month they read Wordsworth together.<sup>1</sup> We are not told what particular parts of Wordsworth they were reading, but nothing would have been more likely to interest Keats while he was at work on a poem that deals with 'the development of the poet's soul towards a complete realisation of itself'<sup>2</sup> than the recently published volume in which Wordsworth states some of his own views on the art of poetry. In this essay, then, he would find the following passage :

'The arts by which Pope, soon afterwards, contrived to procure to himself a more general and a higher reputation than perhaps any English Poet ever attained during his lifetime, are known to the judicious. And as well known is it to them that the undue exertion of these arts is the cause why Pope has for some time held a rank in literature, from which, if he had not been seduced by an over love of immediate popularity, and had confided more in his native genius, he never could have descended. He bewitched the nation by his melody, and dazzled it by his polished style, and was himself blinded by his own success. Having wandered from humanity in his Eclogues with boyish inexperience, the praise, which these compositions obtained, tempted him into the belief that Nature was not to be trusted, at least in pastoral Poetry. To prove this by example he put his friend Gay upon writing those Eclogues which the author intended to be burlesque. The instigator of the work, and his admirers, could perceive in them nothing but what was ridiculous. Nevertheless, though these Poems contain some detestable passages, the effect, as Dr. Johnson well observes, "of reality and truth become conspicuous, even when the intention was to show them grovelling and degraded".'

The resemblances between Wordsworth's account of Pope

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Reynolds, 21 Sept. 1817. In a letter written to Bailey a little later (Nov. 1817) he again refers to Wordsworth.

<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of the poem is thus defined by Professor de Selincourt in his Introduction to the poems of Keats, p. xl.

and the description of Circe in the poem are too close, and occur in too small a space, to make it likely that they are merely accidental.<sup>1</sup> The expressions used by Wordsworth do not necessarily imply that he was thinking of Circe, but they fit remarkably well with that comparison, and it seems likely that Keats had read the passage before he wrote the lines describing how Circe treated her victims. When, then, a few pages farther on Keats found Wordsworth dwelling with enthusiasm on Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, and, after describing how it had helped to bring about a revival of poetry in Germany, using these words: *For our own country, its Poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it,*<sup>2</sup> his imagination seized upon the words, and they became the starting-point for the story of the redemption of Glaucus. The essential part of the *Reliques* was the scroll, barely saved from destruction by Percy, in which were contained those precious verses, handed on to posterity by some unknown scribe of the seventeenth century, who, even though he had survived by a little the authors of the poems that he had preserved, had sunk into a like oblivion with them.

And all this is reproduced in closest detail in the lines that tell how Glaucus found the hope of his redemption in the scroll that he barely saved from destruction, while the

<sup>1</sup> Note, for instance, 'The arts by which Pope contrived . . .'; 'the undue exertion of these arts'; 'He bewitched the nation by his melody'; and compare what is said of Gay's *Eclogues*—'The instigator of the work [Pope] . . . could perceive in them nothing but what was ridiculous', with l. 512,

Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out.

<sup>2</sup> *Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (ed. Knight), vol. ii, p. 247. The italics are ours.

man who held it out to him sank back into the waters and disappeared (III. 649 ff.).

But fantastic as is the form through which Keats has chosen to convey his ideas, his estimate of the forces that had helped to bring about the new era in poetry is more sober and more exact than that of Wordsworth. For while Wordsworth says that English poetry had been 'absolutely redeemed' by the influence of the *Reliques*, Keats makes Glaucus say that this

restoring chance came down to quell

One half of the witch in me. (III. 647)

And he goes on to show that it was only as the spirit of the new age, personified in Endymion, used these 'powerful fragments' that they could become effective for the redemption of poetry from the curse that had so long blighted it.

The rest of the book is taken up with a picture of the joy and delight that followed upon the revival of poetry. It is a fuller and more fantastic rendering of the thoughts and feelings to which Keats had already given expression in *Sleep and Poetry*:

But let me think away those times of woe :  
Now 'tis a fairer season ; ye have breathed  
Rich benedictions o'er us ; ye have wreathed  
Fresh garlands : for sweet music has been heard  
In many places. . . .

fine sounds are floating wild  
About the earth : happy are ye and glad.

. . . . .  
All hail delightful hopes !  
As she was wont, th'imagination  
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,  
And they shall be accounted poet kings  
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.  
(II. 220 ff., 264 ff.)

In this passage the reference to the revival of poetry in which Keats himself played an active part is direct and free from any veil of allegory. In *Endymion* (III. 795 ff.) the same idea is presented in a picturesque and highly imaginative form.

When once the general bearing of the passage has been recognized the striking appropriateness of many of the phrases and details of the story becomes evident. The spirit which animated the new movement in poetry is admirably suggested. The hopefulness (800), the freedom from restraint (802), the enthusiasm (810), are touched upon ; the sense of beauty (847) and wonder (849) and spaciousness (853, 872) ; the consciousness of sympathy and help coming from some source beyond and above man's own powers (900, 909) ; and through it all a joyous abandon (931-44) which was one of the moods pervading the new poetry.

The swooning of Endymion (1016) suggests how the poet may be so carried away by the fervour of his inspiration that for a time he loses touch with the realities of ordinary life ; but such moments of intense rapture, though they soon pass away, are not wasted, for the poet who has experienced them returns to earth encouraged and strengthened for the task that lies before him.

One excellent touch occurring in the message that reaches Endymion at this critical moment may help to show how little of mere random talk the poem really contains. Diana (still the unknown goddess) tells him

*Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won :* (1035)

for just as the poet cannot fulfil his mission without the help of a divine inspiration, so, on the other hand, the spirit



of poetry cannot find expression and fulfilment apart from human effort.

*The Fourth Book.*

As the story proceeds it becomes more and more remote from actual human experience, but for that very reason it is in some respects less difficult to recognize what the symbolism is intended to represent. In the fourth book it would seem that we are shown more particularly some of the experiences through which Keats himself passed in the transition from doctor to poet. But no doubt he regarded these experiences as typical of what any poet may have to go through, though the outward form of them may vary considerably.

The story turns upon the appearance of an Indian maiden who has failed to find solace in the revelry of Bacchus, and is longing for human affection. Her cry of sorrow reaches the heart of Endymion, and he is dismayed at finding himself filled with a passionate longing for this maiden, while at the same time he is as eager as ever for union with his unknown goddess.

The Indian maiden stands for sorrowing humanity. She had tried to forget her sorrows in the pursuit of pleasure, but that was a complete failure. Sick-hearted, weary (l. 271), she had abandoned this way of getting rid of her trouble. Now she is making a companion of Sorrow, and the lovely song in which she gives utterance to her feelings embodies what Keats felt to be the appeal of suffering humanity to the poet to sympathize with and find expression for its pain and grief.

Endymion's instinctive response to the cry, and the strength of the attraction that the maiden has for him

represent a feeling of which Keats had spoken elsewhere. In *Sleep and Poetry*, written about a year earlier, after telling of the way in which he would like to steep himself in the beauty of nature, he had said :

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?  
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,  
Where I may find the agonies, the strife  
Of human hearts. (ll. 122-5)

And in his letters written about this time similar ideas occur. He wrote to John Taylor, his publisher :

‘ I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good to the world.’<sup>1</sup>

In the previous January he had written to his friend Benjamin Bailey :

‘ One saying of yours I shall never forget . . . a simple thing—merely you said, “ Why should woman suffer ? ” Aye, why should she ? “ By heavens, I’d coin my very soul, and drop my Blood for Drachmas ! ” These things are, and he, who feels how incompetent the most skyey knight-errantry is to heal this bruised fairness, is like a sensitive leaf on the hot hand of thought.’<sup>2</sup>

And again a few months later, writing to the same friend to thank him for some letters that he had written in the *Oxford Herald* in praise of *Endymion*, Keats says :

‘ Were it in my choice, I would reject a Petrarchal coronation—on account of my dying day, and because women have cancers.’<sup>3</sup>

His hospital experience had shown him something of the

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 24 April 1818.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 23 January 1818.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 10 June 1818.

pain and misery that are the lot of so many people, and his sympathies were strongly moved. Just as Endymion, then, was perplexed by the apparent clash between the appeal of the Indian maiden and the claims of the goddess who had called forth his passionate devotion, so Keats appears to have wondered how he could manage to reconcile the instincts which prompted him to 'do some good to the world' with the desire to achieve distinction as a poet. Obviously the career of a doctor offered plenty of scope for doing good in a most practical manner, and we may be sure that those of his friends who wanted him to continue in that profession would not be slow to make use of this argument. On the other hand he could not lightly dismiss the hopes and aspirations towards poetry that had filled him with such enthusiasm. As we might expect, his mood varied. At one time the sufferings of his fellow men, at another the idea of becoming a poet, made the stronger appeal. This we can see from his letters, and it is vividly pictured in the fourth book of *Endymion*.

The story goes on to tell how Mercury appears and touches the turf with his wand. Two winged horses spring out of the ground, and on these Endymion and the Indian maid fly through the regions of the sky, until Endymion finds himself in the presence of his own goddess, and again the conflict of emotions troubles him. A little later the Indian maiden's steed drops down again to earth, while Endymion's carries him into the Cave of Quietude (IV. 551), where he lies unconscious of the passing of the 'pinioned multitude' on its way to celebrate the wedding feast of Diana.

The meaning of the passage is not difficult to follow. Keats had made use of a very similar, though not quite

identical image in *Sleep and Poetry*. In the earlier poem the chariot, and the steeds that with

numerous trappings quiver lightly  
Along a huge cloud's ridge,

and then wheel down through fresher skies till they reach the earth, represent the imaginative power of the poet: and the winged steeds in this poem have the same significance. The poet's sympathy with human sorrow and suffering has begun on the solid ground of actual fact, but at the touch of a divine inspiration it is carried up on the wings of imagination until it reaches the height where dwells the loftiest spirit of poetry. And then, as the youth comes once more into touch with those feelings of delight in the beauty of poetry for its own sake, the clash between the two calls again brings distress and perplexity. His passion for humanity soon drops out of sight, but he is so exhausted by the emotional conflict that he sinks into a state of peaceful apathy, and ceases for a time to feel interest in either. Indications of the poetical triumph that is soon to be his pass him by unheeded.

The next turn of Endymion's adventure brings him back to earth again, where he finds the Indian maiden, and resolves to devote himself to her, abandoning the pursuit of the goddess who seems so far beyond his reach. But to his dismay the maiden tells him that though she loves him dearly she cannot accept this devotion (l. 757), and he feels that no interest in life remains.

The meaning follows naturally upon what has gone before. The call of poetry and the call of humanity had both reached the heart of Keats, and it seemed that he would have to choose between them. He could not willingly give up either,

but as he wavered there were times when he felt that he had been too presumptuous in thinking that he could ever belong to the glorious company of the poets. So when Endymion cries

I have clung  
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen  
Or felt but a great dream ! . . .  
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent  
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,  
But starv'd and died : (IV. 640)

he is repeating what Keats had written to Leigh Hunt only a few months earlier (May, 1817) :

' I vow that I have been down in the mouth lately at this work. These last two days, however, I have felt more confident—I have asked myself so often why I should be a poet more than other men, seeing how great a thing it is—how great things are to be gained by it, what a thing to be in the mouth of fame—that at last the idea has grown so monstrously beyond my seeming power of attainment, that the other day I nearly consented with myself to drop into a Phaeton.'

Endymion therefore decides to abandon the ideal that is so far beyond his reach :

Adieu, my daintiest Dream ! although so vast  
My love is still for thee. The hour may come  
When we shall meet in pure elysium.  
On earth I may not love thee. (IV. 660)

He will devote himself to the nearer and more obvious task of helping to relieve the pains and troubles of his fellow men :

My sweetest Indian, here,  
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast  
My life from too thin breathing : gone and past  
Are cloudy phantasms. (IV. 652)

And then he finds with a sense of shock that in this decision there is no solution to the problem that has been distracting him. No rest or satisfaction is to be found in this one-sided devotion, and he falls back into a feeling of hopelessness because it seems impossible to reach any unifying purpose that may give a single clear direction for his life.

We have in this vivid picture of the mental conflict through which Endymion passed the only full account that has come down to us, perhaps the only full account ever entrusted to paper, of the anxious and perplexing time through which Keats passed during the months or years of uncertainty as to whether he should devote his life to medicine or to poetry. And when once its meaning is recognized the power and insight with which it is represented must win our admiration and sympathy. Nor is a wider application excluded, for Keats was no doubt right in assuming that he was not the only poet who had been called upon to pass through such a conflict, but that it was a choice that in one form or another confronted many, perhaps most, poets.

The attitude of Peona suggests, with a flavour of quiet humour about it, the relief with which his friends of the sensible type heard him say, in some despondent moment, that he would drop his fantastic notion of becoming a poet, and would devote himself to the practical work of a doctor's life.

The final reconciliation of the two apparently opposing calls is pictured in a scene of great beauty, when Endymion meets Peona and the Indian maid near to Diana's temple, and, looking for divine guidance in the darkness and distress of his uncertainty, sees for the first time that the Indian

maiden and the goddess of his visions are one and the same. So, at some unknown time, Keats passed from hesitation and perplexity to a clear and restful decision, when it dawned upon him that the truest service he could render to humanity was to be achieved by devoting himself wholeheartedly to poetry. We know, far better than he could ever have known, how true was the idea of the reconciling vision. For while other physicians were able to carry help and healing to the sufferers of that time, his poetry, which no one else could have written, has for the last hundred years been a source of solace and delight to a great multitude of people ; and its beauty remains for the generations to come.

#### IV. TWO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

It may help to clear the ground for a consideration of the interpretation outlined above if two supplementary questions are briefly discussed. Each is of the nature of a challenge. The first is a question that the reader may fairly ask of any one who brings forward such an explanation of the poem ; the second is a question that may fairly be asked of any one who is unwilling to accept the explanation.

##### 1. *Why did not Keats explain his meaning ?*

The first question is—If Keats really meant all that is suggested in this interpretation of the poem, why did he not give some explanation of it, at least to his friends ?

It is, of course, a question to which no one but Keats himself could give a final answer ; but it is not difficult to recognize some of the considerations that might have made him keep silent.

In the first place he probably thought that the allegory

was much more easy of discovery than it has proved to be. It is true that when once it has been pointed out the meaning seems in many places fairly obvious, but the fact that in large measure it has remained unrecognized for a century is sufficient evidence that it is unduly obscure. On the other hand, if we try to put ourselves into the position of the poet while he was working at it, we can see to some extent how he might imagine that the ideas which were never absent from his mind while he was weaving them into his fantastic imagery would appear to him much more obvious and unmistakable than they would in reality be to a reader coming freshly to the poem without even the preliminary warning that it is an allegory.

Further, we know from passages in letters that he wrote during the progress of the poem that he was disappointed with it, as the artist who tries to express his ideas in any medium is often disappointed when he contrasts the beauty of his original conception with the imperfection of the form in which he has embodied it.

'My ideas with respect to it', he wrote to Haydon, 'I assure you are very low—and I would write the subject thoroughly again—but I am tired of it and think the time would be better spent in writing a new Romance which I have in my eye for next summer.'<sup>1</sup>

And some time later to Reynolds :

'I have copied my Fourth Book, and shall write the Preface soon. I wish it was all done ; for I want to forget it, and make my mind free for something new.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 28 September 1817.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 14 March 1818 ; see also letter to John Taylor, 27 February 1818 ; and to James Hessey, 9 October 1818.



And such feelings of disappointment as are expressed in these and other letters would leave him with little inclination to enter upon an explanation of what he had been trying to say.

Then when the poem was published, and was received with indifference varied by ridicule, this mood would be emphasized rather than altered. If even the few friends who took up his defence failed to interpret it rightly, what could be expected from those who began to read it with minds prejudiced against the author? So he held his peace. He probably felt as unwilling to explain his allegory as a humorist would be to explain one of his jokes that had fallen flat, and moreover he would know that any such defence would only give occasion for fresh ridicule.

*2. What are the alternatives to this interpretation?*

The second question is—What alternatives are open to those who judge that this is not a true account of the intention of the poet?

They may say that the meaning proposed here is not that which the poem was intended to convey, but that the true explanation lies in some other direction; and they may produce evidence to support that view. But no other explanation appears to have been put forward, and so this alternative does not call for further discussion at present.

On the other hand they may say that the poem does not mean anything in particular: that Keats was just writing to amuse himself, and that it is a mistake to look for any definite thinking or purpose in these wild and sometimes beautiful fantasies. This is the attitude explicitly adopted

by some critics,<sup>1</sup> and is implicitly involved in much that has been written about the poem.

It may be noted, in the first place, that the disappointment expressed by Keats with his own poem, to which reference has just been made, is intelligible if he felt that he had not succeeded in depicting something about which he was really in earnest, but is much less easy to understand if he was content with writing the nonsense that some of his admirers seem not unwilling to ascribe to him.

But it is worth while looking at the matter more closely. It is generally accepted that the poem as a whole has a meaning and a purpose. Sir Sidney Colvin formulates it thus: 'The tale of the loves of the Greek shepherd-prince and the moon-goddess turns under his hand into a parable of the adventures of the poetic soul striving after full communion with the spirit of essential Beauty.'<sup>2</sup> Professor Oliver Elton puts it in a similar way: 'The pains and pleasures that come to the poetic soul in its search for ideal beauty are figured under Endymion's adventures; and the Moon herself is the image of such beauty.'<sup>3</sup>

But if this be accepted, the assumption that Keats meant nothing in particular by the mimic temple and the magic fountains of the second book, or the story of Glaucus and Circe, and the wreck and the rescued scroll in the third, together with many other striking incidents scattered through the various books, is as severe an indictment as any

<sup>1</sup> e. g. Middleton Murry: 'I do not believe that Keats meant anything particular by a great deal of it: ' *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 27. See also the *Modern Language Review*, October 1920, pp. 446-7 (Prof. Oliver Elton); and *The Times Literary Supplement*, 18 June 1920.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Keats*, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, vol. i, p. 238.

one could bring against the poem. For it means that while writing a poem dealing with the one subject that filled the central place in his thoughts and affections he allowed himself frequently to wander from the point for long periods at a time, and to scribble grotesque and meaningless nonsense across many of the pages. Such a view, carried to the extent to which some critics appear willing to carry it, reduces the poem to the level of

a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

It seems an improbable view, and Keats deserves better at the hands of his readers than that it should be accepted as a satisfactory estimate of *Endymion*. Keats was a thinker as well as a singer, and to suppose that he would have allowed himself to fill up a poem of this kind with mere idle dreaming, having no point or sense, seems neither fair to the poet nor critically sound.

The poem is admittedly an imperfect piece of work. There are in it many faults of expression, failures to give an adequate rendering of what appears to have been a fine conception, and some lapses into bad taste; but it seems unlikely that large sections of it are incoherent irrelevancies with little or no bearing upon the subject with which he was dealing. It is better to assume, as a working hypothesis, that these passages may have a meaning related to the main theme, a meaning obscured by the highly imaginative form in which it is embodied, but which may be discoverable by a little patient searching. Ruskin's words are worth bearing in mind: 'It is a strange habit of wise humanity to speak in enigmas only, so that the highest

truths and usefulest laws must be hunted for through whole picture-galleries of dreams, which to the vulgar seem dreams only.'

But if no other meaning is suggested, and if the idea of there being no definite meaning at all is so improbable in itself, and so dishonouring to Keats, as to be accepted only in the last resort, there remains the interpretation here proposed. It may be frankly admitted that it is a little surprising to find Keats putting such a definite and, in one place at least, satirical comment upon his art into such an obscure and fanciful shape; but the ideas that are represented are in any case those that he is known to have held, and the way in which, at point after point, the meaning fits into the story, and in the end forms a coherent view of the training and development of a poet, makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is what Keats actually intended. If one finds in one room a sheet of paper with a torn and jagged edge, and in a different room another piece of corresponding texture with a similar edge; and if when the two are put together the torn edge of the one forms the perfect complement to the torn edge of the other, fitting into it at point after point, any one may, of course, argue that it is purely a matter of chance, and that there is no real connexion between them, but it seems simpler and more rational to suppose that they really belong to one another.



2

**ENDYMION:**

**A Romance.**

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*Printed by T. Miller, Noble street, Cheapside.*

# ENDYMION:

A Poetic Romance.

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BY JOHN KEATS.

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"THE STRETCHED METRE OF AN ANTIQUE SONG."

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LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY,  
93, FLEET STREET.

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1818.





INSCRIBED  
TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
THOMAS CHATTERTON.



## PREFACE.

KNOWING within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a

year's castigation would do them any good ;—it will not : the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away : a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment : but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it : he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

*Teignmouth,*  
*April 10, 1818.*



### ERRATA.

- Page 47, line 10, for " scene " read " screen."  
60, — 12, for " head " read " bead."  
90, — 10, for " honour " read " horror."  
108, — 4, from the bottom, for " her " read " his."  
195, — 1, read " Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave."



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**ERRATUM**

**Page 106, line 4 from the bottom, for " her " read " his."**



**ENDYMION.**

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BOOK I.

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# ENDYMION.

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## BOOK I.

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever :  
Its loveliness increases ; it will never  
Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.  
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing  
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways

Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all,  
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,  
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon  
For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils  
With the green world they live in ; and clear rills  
That for themselves a cooling covert make  
'Gainst the hot season ; the mid forest brake,  
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms :  
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms 20  
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;  
All lovely tales that we have heard or read :  
An endless fountain of immortal drink,  
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences  
For one short hour ; no, even as the trees  
That whisper round a temple become soon  
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,  
The passion poesy, glories infinite,  
Haunt us till they become a cheering light 30  
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,

That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,  
They alway must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I  
Will trace the story of Endymion.

The very music of the name has gone  
Into my being, and each pleasant scene  
Is growing fresh before me as the green  
Of our own vallies : so I will begin  
Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;

40

Now while the early budders are just new,  
And run in mazes of the youngest hue  
About old forests ; while the willow trails  
Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails  
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year  
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer  
My little boat, for many quiet hours,  
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.

Many and many a verse I hope to write,  
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,

50

Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees  
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,



I must be near the middle of my story.  
 O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,  
 See it half finished : but let Autumn bold,  
 With universal tinge of sober gold,  
 Be all about me when I make an end.  
 And now at once, adventuresome, I send  
 My herald thought into a wilderness :  
 There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress       60  
 My uncertain path with green, that I may speed  
 Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread  
 A mighty forest ; for the moist earth fed  
 So plenteously all weed-hidden roots  
 Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.  
 And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,  
 Where no man went ; and if from shepherd's keep  
 A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens,  
 Never again saw he the happy pens               70  
 Whither his brethren, bleating with content,  
 Over the hills at every nightfall went.  
 Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever,

That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever  
From the white flock, but pass'd unworried  
By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,  
Until it came to some unfooted plains  
Where fed the herds of Pan : ay great his gains  
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,  
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,       80  
And ivy banks ; all leading pleasantly  
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see  
Stems thronging all around between the swell  
Of turf and slanting branches : who could tell  
The freshness of the space of heaven above,  
Edg'd round with dark tree tops ? through which a dove  
Would often beat its wings, and often too  
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness  
There stood a marble altar, with a tress       90  
Of flowers budded newly ; and the dew  
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew  
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,  
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.

For 'twas the morn : Apollo's upward fire  
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre  
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein  
A melancholy spirit well might win  
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine  
Into the winds : rain-scented eglantine 100  
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun ;  
The lark was lost in him ; cold springs had run  
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass ;  
Man's voice was on the mountains ; and the mass  
Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,  
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn  
Were busiest, into that self-same lawn  
All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped  
A troop of little children garlanded ; 110  
Who gathering round the altar, seemed to pry  
Earnestly round as wishing to espy  
Some folk of holiday : nor had they waited  
For many moments, ere their ears were sated  
With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then

Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.  
Within a little space again it gave  
Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,  
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking  
Through copse-clad vallies,—ere their death, o'ertaking  
The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea. 121

And now, as deep into the wood as we  
Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light  
Fair faces and a rush of garments white,  
Plainer and plainer shewing, till at last  
Into the widest alley they all past,  
Making directly for the woodland altar.  
O kindly muse ! let not my weak tongue falter  
In telling of this goodly company,  
Of their old piety, and of their glee : 130  
But let a portion of ethereal dew  
Fall on my head, and presently unmew  
My soul ; that I may dare, in wayfaring,  
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,

Bearing the burden of a shepherd song ;  
Each having a white wicker over brimm'd  
With April's tender younglings : next, well trimm'd,  
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks  
As may be read of in Arcadian books ; 140  
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,  
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,  
Let his divinity o'er-flowing die  
In music, through the vales of Thessaly :  
Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground,  
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound  
With ebon-tipped flutes : close after these,  
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,  
A venerable priest full soberly,  
Begirt with ministring looks : alway his eye 150  
Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept,  
And after him his sacred vestments swept.  
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,  
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light ;  
And in his left he held a basket full  
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull :  
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still

Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.  
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,  
Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth                     160  
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd  
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud  
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,  
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd  
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car,  
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar  
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown :  
Who stood therein did seem of great renown  
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,  
Shewing like Ganymede to manhood grown ;                     170  
And, for those simple times, his garments were  
A chieftain king's : beneath his breast, half bare,  
Was hung a silver bugle, and between  
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.  
A smile was on his countenance ; he seem'd,  
To common lookers on, like one who dream'd  
Of idleness in groves Elysian :  
But there were some who feelingly could scan  
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,

And see that oftentimes the reins would slip                   180  
 Through his forgotten hands : then would they sigh,  
 And think of yellow leaves, of owlets cry,  
 Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day,  
 Why should our young Endymion pine away !

    Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd,  
 Stood silent round the shrine : each look was chang'd  
 To sudden veneration : women meek  
 Beckon'd their sons to silence ; while each cheek  
 Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.  
 Endymion too, without a forest peer,                   190  
 Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,  
 Among his brothers of the mountain chase.  
 In midst of all, the venerable priest  
 Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,  
 And, after lifting up his aged hands,  
 Thus spake he : “ Men of Latmos ! shepherd bands !  
 Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks :  
 Whether descended from beneath the rocks  
 That overtop your mountains ; whether come  
 From vallies where the pipe is never dumb ;                   200

Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs  
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze  
Buds lavish gold ; or ye, whose precious charge  
Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,  
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn  
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn :  
Mothers and wives ! who day by day prepare  
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air ;  
And all ye gentle girls who foster up  
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup 210  
Will put choice honey for a favoured youth :  
Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth  
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.  
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than  
Night-swollen mushrooms ? Are not our wide plains  
Speckled with countless fleeces ? Have not rains  
Green'd over April's lap ? No howling sad  
Sickens our fearful ewes ; and we have had  
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.  
The earth is glad : the merry lark has pour'd 220  
His early song against yon breezy sky,  
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."



Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire  
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire ;  
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod  
With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god.  
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while  
Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,  
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright  
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light       230  
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang :

“ 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       240  
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      250  
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 popped 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,      260  
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,  
O forester divine !

“ Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies  
For willing service ; whether to surprise  
The squatted hare while in half sleeping 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,                   270  
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 Harkener to the loud clapping shears,  
While ever and anon to his shorn peers                   280  
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, 290  
 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 ; 300  
 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 310  
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.  
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,  
Young companies nimbly began dancing  
To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.  
Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly  
To tunes forgotten—out of memory :  
Fair creatures ! whose young childrens' children bred  
Thermopylæ its heroes—not yet dead,  
But in old marbles ever beautiful.  
High genitors, unconscious did they cull 320  
Time's sweet first-fruits—they danc'd to weariness,  
And then in quiet circles did they press  
The hillock turf, and caught the latter end  
Of some strange history, potent to send

A young mind from its bodily tenement.  
Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent  
On either side ; pitying the sad death  
Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath  
Of Zephyr slew him,—Zephyr penitent,  
Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament, 330  
Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.  
The archers too, upon a wider plain,  
Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,  
And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft  
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,  
Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope  
Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee  
And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,  
Poor, lonely Niobe ! when her lovely young  
Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue 340  
Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,  
And very, very deadliness did nip  
Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad mood  
By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd,  
Uplifting his strong bow into the air,  
Many might after brighter visions stare :

After the Argonauts, in blind amaze  
Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,  
Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,  
There shot a golden splendour far and wide,                   350  
Spangling those million poutings of the brine  
With quivering ore : 'twas even an awful shine  
From the exaltation of Apollo's bow ;  
A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.  
Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,  
Might turn their steps towards the sober ring  
Where sat Endymion and the aged priest  
'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increas'd  
The silvery setting of their mortal star.  
There they discours'd upon the fragile bar                   360  
That keeps us from our homes ethereal ;  
And what our duties there : to nightly call  
Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather ;  
To summon all the downiest clouds together  
For the sun's purple couch ; to emulate  
In ministring the potent rule of fate  
With speed of fire-tailed exhalations ;  
To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons

Sweet poesy by moonlight : besides these,  
A world of other unguess'd offices. 370  
Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,  
Into Elysium ; vieing to rehearse  
Each one his own anticipated bliss.  
One felt heart-certain that he could not miss  
His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs,  
Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows  
Her lips with music for the welcoming.  
Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring,  
To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,  
Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales : 380  
Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth wind,  
And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind ;  
And, ever after, through those regions be  
His messenger, his little Mercury.  
Some were athirst in soul to see again  
Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign  
In times long past ; to sit with them, and talk  
Of all the chances in their earthly walk ;  
Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores  
Of happiness, to when upon the moors, 390



Benighted, close they huddled from the cold,  
And shar'd their famish'd scrips. Thus all out-told  
Their fond imaginations,—saving him  
Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,  
Endymion : yet hourly had he striven  
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven  
His fainting recollections. Now indeed  
His senses had swoon'd off : he did not heed  
The sudden silence, or the whispers low,  
Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe, 400  
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,  
Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms :  
But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,  
Like one who on the earth had never stept.  
Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,  
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close ?  
Peona, his sweet sister : of all those,  
His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made,  
And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade 410  
A yielding up, a cradling on her care.

Her eloquence did breathe away the curse :  
She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse  
Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,  
Along a path between two little streams,—  
Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,  
From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow  
From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small ;  
Until they came to where these streamlets fall,  
With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush, 420  
Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush  
With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.  
A little shallop, floating there hard by,  
Pointed its beak over the fringed bank ;  
And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank,  
And dipt again, with the young couple's weight,—  
Peona guiding, through the water straight,  
Towards a bowery island opposite ;  
Which gaining presently, she steered light  
Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove, 430  
Where nested was an arbour, overwove  
By many a summer's silent fingering ;  
To whose cool bosom she was used to bring

Her playmates, with their needle broidery,  
And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid  
Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,  
On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,  
Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves  
When last the sun his autumn tresses shook, 440  
And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took.  
Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest :  
But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest  
Peona's busy hand against his lips,  
And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips  
In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps  
A patient watch over the stream that creeps  
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid  
Held her in peace : so that a whispering blade  
Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling 450  
Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling  
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep ! O comfortable bird

That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind  
Till it is hush'd and smooth ! O unconfin'd  
Restraint ! imprisoned liberty ! great key  
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,  
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,  
Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves  
And moonlight ; aye, to all the mazy world 460  
Of silvery enchantment !—who, upfurl'd  
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,  
But renovates and lives ?—Thus, in the bower,  
Endymion was calm'd to life again.  
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,  
He said : “ I feel this thine endearing love  
All through my bosom : thou art as a dove  
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings  
About me ; and the pearliest dew not brings  
Such morning incense from the fields of May, 470  
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray  
From those kind eyes,—the very home and haunt  
Of sisterly affection. Can I want  
Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears ?  
Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears

That, any longer, I will pass my days  
 Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise  
 My voice upon the mountain-heights ; once more  
 Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar :  
 Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll      480  
 Around the breathed boar : again I'll poll  
 The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow :  
 And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,  
 Again I'll linger in a sloping mead  
 To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed  
 Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet,  
 And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat  
 My soul to keep in its resolved course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,  
 Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,      490  
 And took a lute, from which there pulsing came  
 A lively prelude, fashioning the way  
 In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay  
 More subtle cadenced, more forest wild  
 Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child ;  
 And nothing since has floated in the air

So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare  
Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand ;  
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd  
The quick invisible strings, even though she saw      500  
Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw  
Before the deep intoxication.

But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon  
Her self-possession—swung the lute aside,  
And earnestly said : “ Brother, 'tis vain to hide  
That thou dost know of things mysterious,  
Immortal, starry ; such alone could thus  
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in aught  
Offensive to the heavenly powers ? Caught  
A Paphian dove upon a message sent ?      510  
Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent,  
Sacred to Dian ? Haply, thou hast seen  
Her naked limbs among the alders green ;  
And that, alas ! is death. No, I can trace  
Something more high perplexing in thy face ! ”

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand,  
And said, “ Art thou so pale, who wast so bland

And merry in our meadows ? How is this ?  
Tell me thine ailment : tell me all amiss !—  
Ah ! thou hast been unhappy at the change                    520  
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange ?  
Or more complete to overwhelm surmise ?  
Ambition is no sluggard : 'tis no prize,  
That toiling years would put within my grasp,  
That I have sigh'd for : with so deadly gasp  
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.  
So all have set my heavier grief above  
These things which happen. Rightly have they done :  
I, who still saw the horizontal sun  
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world,    530  
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd  
My spear aloft, as signal for the chace—  
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race  
With my own steed from Araby ; pluck down  
A vulture from his towery perching ; frown  
A lion into growling, loth retire—  
To lose, at once, all my toil breeding fire,  
And sink thus low ! but I will ease my breast  
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

“ This river does not see the naked sky, 540  
Till it begins to progress silverly  
Around the western border of the wood,  
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood  
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon :  
And in that nook, the very pride of June,  
Had I been used to pass my weary eyes ;  
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves  
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,  
And I could witness his most kingly hour,  
When he doth lighten up the golden reins, 550  
And paces leisurely down amber plains  
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last  
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,  
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed  
Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red :  
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well  
That but one night had wrought this flowery spell ;  
And, sitting down close by, began to muse  
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus,  
In passing here, his owlet pinions shook ; 560  
Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook



Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,  
Had dipt his rod in it : such garland wealth  
Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought,  
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.  
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole  
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul ;  
And shaping visions all about my sight  
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light ;  
The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,  
And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim :           571  
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell  
The enchantment that afterwards befel ?  
Yet it was but a dream : yet such a dream  
That never tongue, although it overteem  
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,  
Could figure out and to conception bring  
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay  
Watching the zenith, where the milky way  
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours ;           580  
And travelling my eye, until the doors  
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,  
I became loth and fearful to alight

From such high soaring by a downward glance :

So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,

Spreading imaginary pinions wide.

When, presently, the stars began to glide,

And faint away, before my eager view :

At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,

And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge ; 590

And lo ! from opening clouds, I saw emerge

The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er

A shell for Neptune's goblet : she did soar

So passionately bright, my dazzled soul

Commingling with her argent spheres did roll

Through clear and cloudy, even when she went

At last into a dark and vapoury tent—

Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train

Of planets all were in the blue again.

To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd 600

My sight right upward : but it was quite dazed

By a bright something, sailing down apace,

Making me quickly veil my eyes and face :

Again I look'd, and, O ye deities,

Who from Olympus watch our destinies !

Whence that completed form of all completeness ?  
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness ?  
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where  
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair ?  
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun ; 610  
Not—thy soft hand, fair sister ! let me shun  
Such follying before thee—yet she had,  
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad ;  
And they were simply gordian'd up and braided,  
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,  
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orb'd brow ;  
The which were blended in, I know not how,  
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,  
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,  
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings 620  
And plays about its fancy, till the stings  
Of human neighbourhood envenom all.  
Unto what awful power shall I call ?  
To what high fane ?—Ah ! see her hovering feet,  
More blue-vein'd, more soft, more whitely sweet  
Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose  
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows

Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion ;  
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million  
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed, 630  
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,  
Handfuls of daisies."—" Endymion, how strange !  
Dream within dream !"—" She took an airy range,  
And then, towards me, like a very maid,  
Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid,  
And press'd me by the hand : Ah ! 'twas too much ;  
Methought I fainted at the charmed touch,  
Yet held my recollection, even as one  
Who dives three fathoms where the waters run  
Gurgling in beds of coral : for anon, 640  
I felt upmounted in that region  
Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,  
And eagles struggle with the buffeting north  
That balances the heavy meteor-stone ;—  
Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,  
But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky.  
Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high,  
And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd ;  
Such as ay muster where grey time has scoop'd

Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side : 650  
There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd  
To faint once more by looking on my bliss—  
I was distracted ; madly did I kiss  
The wooing arms which held me, and did give  
My eyes at once to death : but 'twas to live,  
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount  
Of kind and passionate looks ; to count, and count  
The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd  
A second self, that each might be redeem'd  
And plunder'd of its load of blessedness. 660  
Ah, desperate mortal ! I ev'n dar'd to press  
Her very cheek against my crowned lip,  
And, at that moment, felt my body dip  
Into a warmer air : a moment more  
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store  
Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes  
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,  
Loiter'd around us ; then of honey cells,  
Made delicate from all white-flower bells ;  
And once, above the edges of our nest, 670  
An arch face peep'd,—an Oread as I guess'd.

“ Why did I dream that sleep o’er-power’d me  
In midst of all this heaven ? Why not see,  
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,  
And stare them from me ? But no, like a spark  
That needs must die, although its little beam  
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream  
Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.  
And so it was, until a gentle creep,  
A careful moving caught my waking ears, 680  
And up I started : Ah ! my sighs, my tears,  
My clenched hands ;—for lo ! the poppies hung  
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung  
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day  
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,  
With leaden looks : the solitary breeze  
Bluster’d, and slept, and its wild self did tease  
With wayward melancholy ; and I thought,  
Mark me, Peona ! that sometimes it brought  
Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus !— 690  
Away I wander’d—all the pleasant hues  
Of heaven and earth had faded : deepest shades  
Were deepest dungeons ; heaths and sunny glades

Were full of pestilent light ; our taintless rills  
 Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills  
 Of dying fish ; the vermeil rose had blown  
 In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown  
 Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird  
 Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd  
 In little journeys, I beheld in it 700  
 A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit  
 My soul with under darkness ; to entice  
 My stumblings down some monstrous precipice :  
 Therefore I eager followed, and did curse  
 The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,  
 Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven !  
 These things, with all their comfortings, are given  
 To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,  
 Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea  
 Of weary life." 710

Thus ended he, and both  
 Sat silent : for the maid was very loth  
 To answer ; feeling well that breathed words  
 Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords

Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps  
Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,  
And wonders ; struggles to devise some blame ;  
To put on such a look as would say, *Shame*  
*On this poor weakness !* but, for all her strife,  
She could as soon have crush'd away the life 720  
From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause,  
She said with trembling chance : “ Is this the cause ?  
This all ? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas !  
That one who through this middle earth should pass  
Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave  
His name upon the harp-string, should achieve  
No higher bard than simple maidenhood,  
Singing alone, and fearfully,—how the blood  
Left his young cheek ; and how he used to stray  
He knew not where ; and how he would say, *nay,* 730  
If any said 'twas love : and yet 'twas love ;  
What could it be but love ? How a ring-dove  
Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path ;  
And how he died : and then, that love doth scathe,  
The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses ;  
And then the ballad of his sad life closes



With sighs, and an alas !—Endymion !  
Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,—anon  
Among the winds at large—that all may hearken !  
Although, before the crystal heavens darken,                   740  
I watch and dote upon the silver lakes  
Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes  
The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands,  
Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands  
With horses prancing o'er them, palaces  
And towers of amethyst,—would I so tease  
My pleasant days, because I could not mount  
Into those regions ? The Morphean fount  
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,  
And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams                   750  
Into its airy channels with so subtle,  
So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,  
Circled a million times within the space  
Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,  
A tinting of its quality : how light  
Must dreams themselves be ; seeing they're more slight  
Than the mere nothing that engenders them !  
Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem

Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick ?  
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick 760  
For nothing but a dream ? ” Hereat the youth  
Look’d up : a conflicting of shame and ruth  
Was in his plaited brow : yet, his eyelids  
Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids  
A little breeze to creep between the fans  
Of careless butterflies : amid his pains  
He seem’d to taste a drop of manna-dew,  
Full palatable ; and a colour grew  
Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

“ Peona ! ever have I long’d to slake 770  
My thirst for the world’s praises : nothing base,  
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace  
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar’d—  
Though now ’tis tatter’d ; leaving my bark bar’d  
And sullenly drifting : yet my higher hope  
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,  
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.  
Wherein lies happiness ? In that which becks  
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,

A fellowship with essence ; till we shine, 780  
 Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold  
 The clear religion of heaven ! Fold  
 A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,  
 And soothe thy lips : hist, when the airy stress  
 Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,  
 And with a sympathetic touch unbinds  
 Eolian magic from their lucid wombs :  
 Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs ;  
 Old ditties sigh above their father's grave ;  
 Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave 790  
 Round every spot were trod Apollo's foot ;  
 Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,  
 Where long ago a giant battle was ;  
 And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass  
 In every place where infant Orpheus slept.  
 Feel we these things ?—that moment have we stept  
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state  
 Is like a floating spirit's. But there are  
 Richer entanglements, enthrallments far  
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees, 800  
 To the chief intensity : the crown of these

Is made of love and friendship, and sits high  
Upon the forehead of humanity.

All its more ponderous and bulky worth  
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth  
A steady splendour ; but at the tip-top,  
There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop  
Of light, and that is love : its influence,

Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,  
At which we start and fret ; till in the end,

810

Melting into its radiance, we blend,

Mingle, and so become a part of it,—

Nor with aught else can our souls interknit

So wingedly : when we combine therewith,

Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,

And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.

Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,

That men, who might have tower'd in the van

Of all the congregated world, to fan

And winnow from the coming step of time

820

All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime

Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,

Have been content to let occasion die,

Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.  
 And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,  
 Than speak against this ardent listlessness :  
 For I have ever thought that it might bless  
 The world with benefits unknowingly ;  
 As does the nightingale, upperched high,  
 And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves— 830  
 She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives  
 How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.  
 Just so may love, although 'tis understood  
 The mere commingling of passionate breath,  
 Produce more than our searching witnesseth :  
 What I know not : but who, of men, can tell  
 That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would  
     swell  
 To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,  
 The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,  
 The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones, 840  
 The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,  
 Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,  
 If human souls did never kiss and greet ?

“ Now, if this earthly love has power to make  
Men’s being mortal, immortal ; to shake  
Ambition from their memories, and brim  
Their measure of content ; what merest whim,  
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,  
To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim  
A love immortal, an immortal too. 850  
Look not so wilder’d ; for these things are true,  
And never can be born of atomies  
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,  
Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I’m sure,  
My restless spirit never could endure  
To brood so long upon one luxury,  
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy  
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.  
My sayings will the less obscured seem,  
When I have told thee how my waking sight 860  
Has made me scruple whether that same night  
Was pass’d in dreaming. Harken, sweet Peona !  
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,  
Which we should see but for these darkening boughs,  
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows

Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart,  
And meet so nearly, that with wings outrought,  
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide  
Past them, but he must brush on every side.  
Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,                   870  
Far as the slabbed margin of a well,  
Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye  
Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.  
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set  
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet  
Edges them round, and they have golden pits :  
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits  
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,  
When all above was faint with mid-day heat.  
And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed,                   880  
I'd bubble up the water through a reed ;  
So reaching back to boy-hood : make me ships  
Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,  
With leaves stuck in them ; and the Neptune be  
Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,  
When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,  
I sat contemplating the figures wild

Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through.  
Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew  
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver ; 890  
So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver  
The happy chance : so happy, I was fain  
To follow it upon the open plain,  
And, therefore, was just going ; when, behold !  
A wonder, fair as any I have told—  
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,  
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap  
Through the cool depth.—It moved as if to flee—  
I started up, when lo ! refreshfully,  
There came upon my face, in plenteous showers, 900  
Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,  
Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,  
Bathing my spirit in a new delight.  
Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss  
Alone preserved me from the drear abyss  
Of death, for the fair form had gone again.  
Pleasure is oft a visitant ; but pain  
Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth  
On the deer's tender haunches : late, and loth,



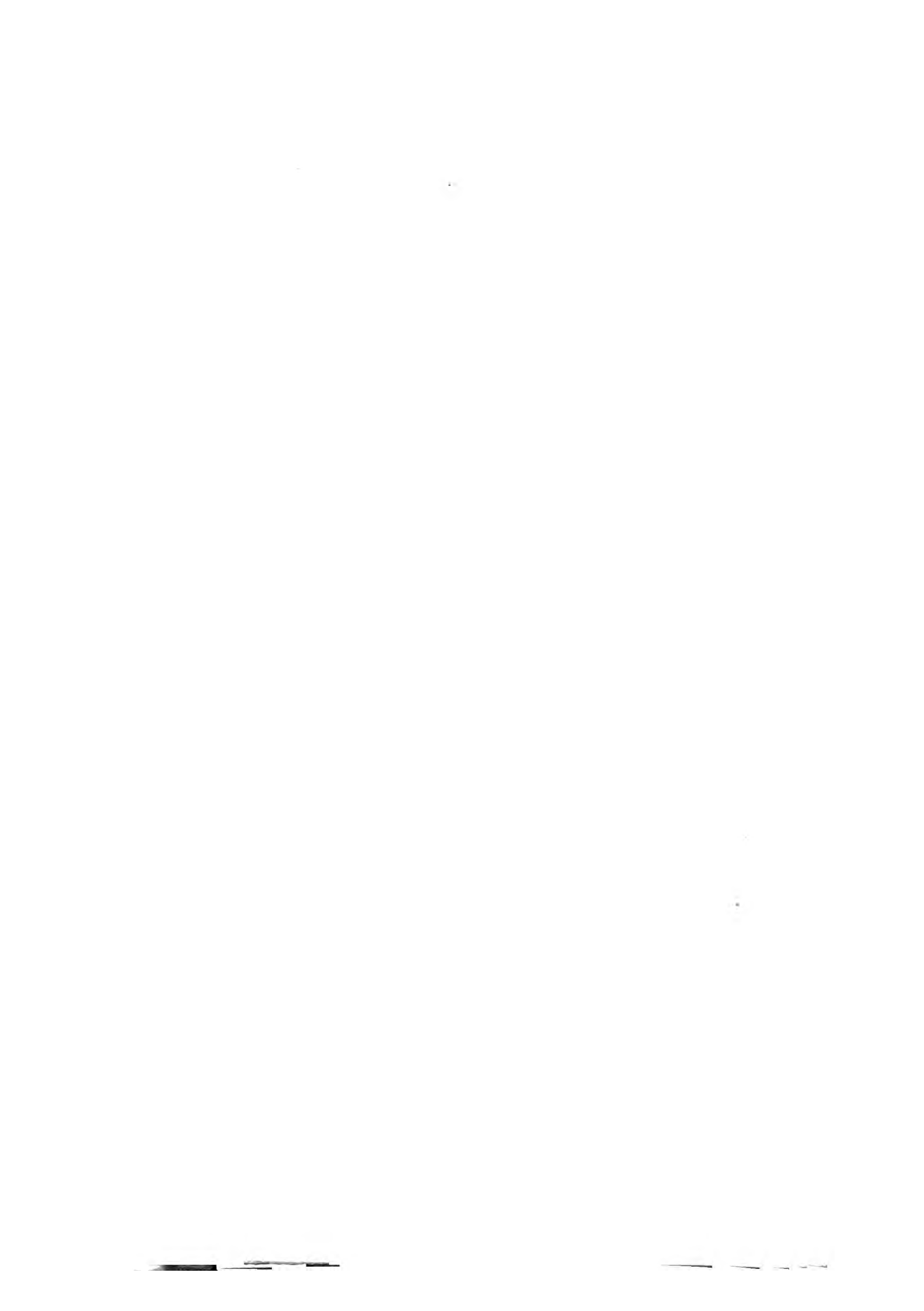
'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure. 910  
 How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure  
 Of weary days, made deeper exquisite,  
 By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night !  
 Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still,  
 Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill :  
 And a whole age of lingering moments crept  
 Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept  
 Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.  
 Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen ;  
 Once more been tortured with renewed life. 920  
 When last the wintry gusts gave over strife  
 With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies  
 Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes  
 In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,—  
 That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,  
 My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd,  
 Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd  
 All torment from my breast ;—'twas even then,  
 Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den  
 Of helpless discontent,—hurling my lance 930  
 From place to place, and following at chance,

At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck,  
And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck  
In the middle of a brook,—whose silver ramble  
Down twenty little falls, through reeds and bramble,  
Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,  
Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave  
The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,—  
'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock  
Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead, 940  
Hung a lush scene of drooping weeds, and spread  
Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home.  
“ Ah ! impious mortal, whither do I roam ? ”  
Said I, low voic'd : “ Ah, whither ! 'Tis the grot  
Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,  
Doth her resign ; and where her tender hands  
She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands :  
Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,  
And babbles thorough silence, till her wits  
Are gone in tender madness, and anon, 950  
Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone  
Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,  
And breathe them sighingly among the boughs,

To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,  
 Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,  
 And weave them dyingly—send honey-whispers  
 Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers  
 May sigh my love unto her pitying !  
 O charitable echo ! hear, and sing  
 This ditty to her !—tell her ”—so I stay’d 960  
 My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,  
 Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,  
 And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.  
 Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name  
 Most fondly lipp’d, and then these accents came :  
 “ Endymion ! the cave is secreter  
 Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir  
 No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise  
 Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloys  
 And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.” 970  
 At that oppress’d I hurried in.—Ah ! where  
 Are those swift moments ? Whither are they fled ?  
 I’ll smile no more, Peona ; nor will wed  
 Sorrow the way to death ; but patiently  
 Bear up against it : so farewell, sad sigh ;

And come instead demurest meditation,  
To occupy me wholly, and to fashion  
My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.  
No more will I count over, link by link,  
My chain of grief : no longer strive to find 980  
A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind  
Blustering about my ears : aye, thou shalt see,  
Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be ;  
What a calm round of hours shall make my days.  
There is a paly flame of hope that plays  
Where'er I look : but yet, I'll say 'tis naught—  
And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,  
Already, a more healthy countenance ?  
By this the sun is setting ; we may chance  
Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car." 990

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star  
Through autumn mists, and took Peona's hand :  
They stept into the boat, and launch'd from land.



**ENDYMION.**

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**BOOK II.**

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# ENDYMION.

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## BOOK II.

O SOVEREIGN power of love ! O grief ! O balm !  
All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm,  
And shadowy, through the mist of passed years :  
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears  
Have become indolent ; but touching thine,  
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,  
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.  
The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,  
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,  
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks—all dimly fades



Into some backward corner of the brain ;  
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain  
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.  
Hence, pageant history ! hence, gilded cheat !  
Swart planet in the universe of deeds !  
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds  
Along the pebbled shore of memory !  
Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be  
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified  
To goodly vessels ; many a sail of pride,                   20  
And golden keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry.  
But wherefore this ? What care, though owl did fly  
About the great Athenian admiral's mast ?  
What care, though striding Alexander past  
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers ?  
Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers  
The gluttoned Cyclops, what care ?—Juliet leaning  
Amid her window-flowers,—sighing,—weaning  
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,  
Doth more avail than these : the silver flow                   30  
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,  
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,

Are things to brood on with more ardency  
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully  
Must such conviction come upon his head,  
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,  
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,  
The path of love and poesy. But rest,  
In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear  
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear 40  
Love's standard on the battlements of song.  
So once more days and nights aid me along,  
Like legion'd soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd-prince,

What promise hast thou faithful guarded since  
The day of sacrifice ? Or, have new sorrows  
Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows ?  
Alas ! 'tis his old grief. For many days,  
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways :  
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks ; 50  
Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes  
Of the lone woodcutter ; and listening still,  
Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill.

Now he is sitting by a shady spring,  
 And elbow-deep with feverous fingering  
 Stems the upbursting cold : a wild rose tree  
 Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see  
 A bud which snares his fancy : lo ! but now  
 He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water : how !  
 It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight ;         60  
 And, in the middle, there is softly pight  
 A golden butterfly ; upon whose wings  
 There must be surely character'd strange things,  
 For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,  
 Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands :  
 Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands  
 His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies  
 Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.  
 It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was ;         70  
 And like a new-born spirit did he pass  
 Through the green evening quiet in the sun,  
 O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,

Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams  
The summer time away. One track unseams  
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue  
Of ocean fades upon him ; then, anew,  
He sinks adown a solitary glen,  
Where there was never sound of mortal men,  
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences 80  
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze  
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,  
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet  
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,  
Until it reached a splashing fountain's side  
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd  
Unto the temperate air : then high it soar'd,  
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,  
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip  
The crystal spout-head : so it did, with touch 90  
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch  
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.  
But, at that very touch, to disappear  
So fairy-quick, was strange ! Bewildered,  
Endymion sought around, and shook each bed

Of covert flowers in vain ; and then he flung  
Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,  
What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest ?  
It was a nymph uprisen to the breast  
In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood 100  
'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood.  
To him her dripping hand she softly kist,  
And anxiously began to plait and twist  
Her ringlets round her fingers, saying : " Youth !  
Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth,  
The bitterness of love : too long indeed,  
Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed  
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer  
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer  
To Amphitrite ; all my clear-eyed fish, 110  
Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,  
Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze ;  
Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws  
A virgin light to the deep ; my grotto-sands  
Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands  
By my diligent springs ; my level lilies, shells,  
My charming rod, my potent river spells ;

Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup  
Meander gave me,—for I bubbled up  
To fainting creatures in a desert wild. 120  
But woe is me, I am but as a child  
To gladden thee ; and all I dare to say,  
Is, that I pity thee ; that on this day  
I've been thy guide ; that thou must wander far  
In other regions, past the scanty bar  
To mortal steps, before thou cans't be ta'en  
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,  
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.  
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above :  
But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewel ! 130  
I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze,  
Who brooded o'er the water in amaze :  
The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool  
Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,  
Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,  
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill  
Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,

Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr  
Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down ; 140  
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown  
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,  
Thus breath'd he to himself : " Whoso encamps  
To take a fancied city of delight,  
O what a wretch is he ! and when 'tis his,  
After long toil and travelling, to miss  
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile :  
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil ;  
Another city doth he set about,  
Free from the smallest pebble-head of doubt 150  
That he will seize on trickling honey-combs :  
Alas, he finds them dry ; and then he foams,  
And onward to another city speeds.  
But this is human life : the war, the deeds,  
The disappointment, the anxiety,  
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,  
All human ; bearing in themselves this good,  
That they are still the air, the subtle food,  
To make us feel existence, and to shew  
How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow, 160

Whether to weeds or flowers ; but for me,  
There is no depth to strike in : I can see  
Nought earthly worth my compassing ; so stand  
Upon a misty, jutting head of land—  
Alone ? No, no ; and by the Orphean lute,  
When mad Eurydice is listening to 't ;  
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,  
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,  
But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,  
Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove       170  
Of heaven ! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair !  
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,  
Glance but one little beam of temper'd light  
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might  
And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd !  
Yet do not so, sweet queen ; one torment spar'd,  
Would give a pang to jealous misery,  
Worse than the torment's self : but rather tie  
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out  
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout       180  
Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,  
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow



Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream.  
O be propitious, nor severely deem  
My madness impious ; for, by all the stars  
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars  
That kept my spirit in are burst—that I  
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky !  
How beautiful thou art ! The world how deep !  
How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep                   190  
Around their axle ! Then these gleaming reins,  
How lithe ! When this thy chariot attains  
Its airy goal, haply some bower veils  
Those twilight eyes ? Those eyes !—my spirit fails—  
Dear goddess, help ! or the wide-gaping air  
Will gulph me—help ! ”—At this with madden'd stare,  
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood ;  
Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,  
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.  
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne                   200  
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone ;  
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan  
Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth : “ Descend,  
Young mountaineer ! descend where alleys bend

Into the sparry hollows of the world !  
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd  
As from thy threshold ; day by day hast been  
A little lower than the chilly sheen  
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms  
Into the deadening ether that still charms                   210  
Their marble being : now, as deep profound  
As those are high, descend ! He ne'er is crown'd  
With immortality, who fears to follow  
Where airy voices lead : so through the hollow,  
The silent mysteries of earth, descend ! ”

He heard but the last words, nor could contend  
One moment in reflection : for he fled  
Into the fearful deep, to hide his head  
From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness ;  
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite                   221  
To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,  
The region ; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,  
But mingled up ; a gleaming melancholy ;

A dusky empire and its diadems ;  
One faint eternal eventide of gems.  
Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,  
Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,  
With all its lines abrupt and angular :  
Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star, 230  
Through a vast antre ; then the metal woof,  
Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof  
Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss,  
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss  
Fancy into belief : anon it leads  
Through winding passages, where sameness breeds  
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change ;  
Whether to silver grots, or giant range  
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge  
Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge 240  
Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath  
Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth  
A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come  
But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb  
His bosom grew, when first he, far away,  
Descried an orb'd diamond, set to fray

Old darkness from his throne : 'twas like the sun  
Uprisen o'er chaos : and with such a stun  
Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,  
He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit 250  
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those  
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,  
Will be its high remembrancers : who they ?  
The mighty ones who have made eternal day  
For Greece and England. While astonishment  
With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went  
Into a marble gallery, passing through  
A mimic temple, so complete and true  
In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd  
To search it inwards ; whence far off appear'd, 260  
Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,  
And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,  
A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,  
The youth approach'd ; oft turning his veil'd eye  
Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.  
And when, more near against the marble cold  
He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread  
All courts and passages, where silence dead

Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint :  
 And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint       **270**  
 Himself with every mystery, and awe ;  
 Till, weary, he sat down before the maw  
 Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim  
 To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.  
 There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before,  
 And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore  
 The journey homeward to habitual self !  
 A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,  
 Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,  
 Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,       **280**  
 Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing  
 In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught  
 The goal of consciousness ? Ah, 'tis the thought,  
 The deadly feel of solitude : for lo !  
 He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow  
 Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild  
 In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,  
 The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,

Like herded elephants ; nor felt, nor prest 290  
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air ;  
But far from such companionship to wear  
An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away,  
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,  
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear ?  
“ No ! ” exclaimed he, “ why should I tarry here ? ”  
No ! loudly echoed times innumerable.  
At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell  
His paces back into the temple's chief ;  
Warming and glowing strong in the belief 300  
Of help from Dian : so that when again  
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,  
Moving more near the while. “ O Haunter chaste  
Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,  
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen  
Art thou now forested ? O woodland Queen,  
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos ?  
Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos  
Of thy departed nymphs ? Through what dark tree  
Glimmers thy crescent ? Wheresoe'er it be, 310  
'Tis in the breath of heaven : thou dost taste

Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste  
Thy loveliness in dismal elements ;  
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,  
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee  
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,  
An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name !  
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—  
O let me cool it among the zephyr-boughs !  
A homeward fever parches up my tongue— 320  
O let me slake it at the running springs !  
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—  
O let me once more hear the linnet's note !  
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float—  
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light !  
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white ?  
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice !  
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice ?  
O think how this dry palate would rejoice !  
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice, 330  
Oh think how I should love a bed of flowers !—  
Young goddess ! let me see my native bowers !  
Deliver me from this rapacious deep ! ”

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap  
His destiny, alert he stood : but when  
Obstinate silence came heavily again,  
Feeling about for its old couch of space  
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face  
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.  
But 'twas not long ; for, sweeter than the rill **340**  
To its old channel, or a swollen tide  
To margin shallows, were the leaves he spied,  
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns  
Up heaping through the slab : refreshment drowns  
Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—  
Nor in one spot alone ; the floral pride  
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew  
Before his footsteps ; as when heav'd anew  
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,  
Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar,  
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence. **351**

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,  
Upon his fairy journey on he hastes ;



So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes  
One moment with his hand among the sweets :  
Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats  
As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm  
Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm,  
This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe :  
For it came more softly than the east could blow      **360**  
Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles ;  
Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles  
Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre  
To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,  
Who lov'd—and music slew not ? 'Tis the pest  
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest ;  
That things of delicate and tenderest worth  
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,  
By one consuming flame : it doth immerse      **370**  
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.  
Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,  
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this

Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear ;  
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,  
Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,  
Had not a heavenly guide benignant led  
To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his head  
Brushing, awakened : then the sounds again 380  
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain  
Over a bower, where little space he stood ;  
For as the sunset peeps into a wood  
So saw he panting light, and towards it went  
Through winding alleys ; and lo, wonderment !  
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,  
Cupids a slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,  
At last, with sudden step, he came upon  
A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high, 390  
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,  
And more of beautiful and strange beside :  
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,

In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth  
 Of fondest beauty ; fonder, in fair sooth,  
 Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach :  
 And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,  
 Or ripe October's faded marigolds,  
 Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—  
 Not hiding up an Apollonian curve 400  
 Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve  
 Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light ;  
 But rather, giving them to the filled sight  
 Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd  
 On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd,  
 By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth  
 To slumbery pout ; just as the morning south  
 Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head,  
 Four lily stalks did their white honours wed  
 To make a coronal ; and round him grew 410  
 All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,  
 Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh :  
 The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,  
 Shading its Ethiop berries ; and woodbine,  
 Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;

Convolvulus in streaked vases flush ;  
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush ;  
And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;  
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,  
Stood serene Cupids watching silently. 420  
One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings,  
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings ;  
And, ever and anon, uprose to look  
At the youth's slumber ; while another took  
A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,  
And shook it on his hair ; another flew  
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise  
Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,  
The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er ; 430  
Until, impatient in embarrassment,  
He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went  
To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway,  
Smiling, thus whisper'd : " Though from upper day  
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here  
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer !

For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,  
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor  
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense ;  
As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence **440**  
Was I in no wise startled. So recline  
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,  
Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,  
Since Ariadne was a vintager,  
So cool a purple : taste these juicy pears,  
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears  
Were high about Pomona : here is cream,  
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam ;  
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd  
For the boy Jupiter : and here, undimm'd **450**  
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums  
Ready to melt between an infant's gums :  
And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees,  
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.  
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know  
Of all these things around us." He did so,  
Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre ;  
And thus : " I need not any hearing tire

By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd  
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind 460  
Him all in all unto her doting self.

Who would not be so prison'd ? but, fond elf,  
He was content to let her amorous plea  
Faint through his careless arms ; content to see  
An unseiz'd heaven dying at his feet ;  
Content, O fool ! to make a cold retreat,  
When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,  
Lay sorrowing ; when every tear was born  
Of diverse passion ; when her lips and eyes  
Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs 470  
Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils small.

Hush ! no exclaim—yet, justly mightst thou call  
Curses upon his head.—I was half glad,  
But my poor mistress went distract and mad,  
When the boar tusk'd him : so away she flew  
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew  
Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard ;  
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd  
Each summer time to life. Lo ! this is he,  
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy 480

Of this still region all his winter-sleep.  
Aye, sleep ; for when our love-sick queen did weep  
Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower  
Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power,  
Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness :  
The which she fills with visions, and doth dress  
In all this quiet luxury ; and hath set  
Us young immortals, without any let,  
To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh pass'd,  
Even to a moment's filling up, and fast 490  
She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through  
The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew  
Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle.  
Look ! how those winged listeners all this while  
Stand anxious : see ! behold !"—This clamant word  
Broke through the careful silence ; for they heard  
A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd  
Pigeons and doves : Adonis something mutter'd,  
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh  
Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually 500  
Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum  
Of sudden voices, echoing, " Come ! come !

Arise ! awake ! Clear summer has forth walk'd  
Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd  
Full soothingly to every nested finch :  
Rise, Cupids ! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch  
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin ! ”  
At this, from every side they hurried in,  
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,  
And doubling over head their little fists 510  
In backward yawns. But all were soon alive :  
For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive  
In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair,  
So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air  
Odorous and enlivening ; making all  
To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call  
For their sweet queen : when lo ! the wreathed green  
Disparted, and far upward could be seen  
Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,  
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,  
Spun off a drizzling dew,—which falling chill 521  
On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still  
Nestle and turn uneasily about.  
Soon were the white doves plain, with necks stretch'd out,



And silken traces lighten'd in descent ;  
And soon, returning from love's banishment,  
Queen Venus leaning downward open arm'd :  
Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd  
A tumult to his heart, and a new life  
Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife, 530  
But for her comforting ! unhappy sight,  
But meeting her blue orbs ! Who, who can write  
Of these first minutes ? The unchariest muse  
To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,  
Saving love's self, who stands superb to share  
The general gladness : awfully he stands ;  
A sovereign quell is in his waving hands ;  
No sight can bear the lightning of his bow ;  
His quiver is mysterious, none can know 540  
What themselves think of it ; from forth his eyes  
There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes :  
A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who  
Look full upon it feel anon the blue  
Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.

Endymion feels it, and no more controls  
The burning prayer within him ; so, bent low,  
He had begun a plaining of his woe.  
But Venus, bending forward, said : “ My child,  
Favour this gentle youth ; his days are wild 550  
With love—he—but alas ! too well I see  
Thou know’st the deepness of his misery.  
Ah, smile not so, my son : I tell thee true,  
That when through heavy hours I used to rue  
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon’,  
This stranger ay I pitied. For upon  
A dreary morning once I fled away  
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray  
For this my love : for vexing Mars had teaz’d  
Me even to tears : thence, when a little eas’d, 560  
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,  
I saw this youth as he despairing stood :  
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind ;  
Those same full fringed lids a constant blind  
Over his sullen eyes : I saw him throw  
Himself on wither’d leaves, even as though  
Death had come sudden ; for no jot he mov’d,

Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd  
Some fair immortal, and that his embrace  
Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace 570  
Of this in heaven : I have mark'd each cheek,  
And find it is the vainest thing to seek ;  
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.  
Endymion ! one day thou wilt be blest :  
So still obey the guiding hand that fends  
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.  
'Tis a concealment needful in extreme ;  
And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam  
Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu !  
Here must we leave thee."—At these words up flew 580  
The impatient doves, up rose the floating car,  
Up went the hum celestial. High afar  
The Latmian saw them minish into nought ;  
And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he caught  
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.  
When all was darkened, with Etnean throe  
The earth clos'd—gave a solitary moan—  
And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,  
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past, 590  
And he in loneliness : he felt assur'd  
Of happy times, when all he had endur'd  
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.  
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies  
Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,  
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor,  
Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,  
And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,  
Leading afar past wild magnificence,  
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence 600  
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er  
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,  
Streams subterranean tease their granite beds ;  
Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads  
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash  
The waters with his spear ; but at the splash,  
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose  
Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose  
His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round  
Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound, 610

The diamond path ? And does it indeed end  
Abrupt in middle air ? Yet earthward bend  
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne  
Call ardently ! He was indeed wayworn ;  
Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost ;  
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost  
Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings,       660  
Without one impious word, himself he flings,  
Committed to the darkness and the gloom :  
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,  
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell  
Through unknown things ; till exhaled asphodel,  
And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd,  
Came swelling forth where little caves were wreath'd  
So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd  
Large honey-combs of green, and freshly teem'd  
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook       670  
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown  
With golden moss. His every sense had grown

Ethereal for pleasure ; 'bove his head  
Flew a delight half-graspable ; his tread  
Was Hesperean ; to his capable ears  
Silence was music from the holy spheres ;  
A dewy luxury was in his eyes ;  
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs  
And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell 680  
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell  
Of sudden exaltation : but, " Alas !  
Said he, " will all this gush of feeling pass  
Away in solitude ? And must they wane,  
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,  
Without an echo ? Then shall I be left  
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft !  
Yet still I feel immortal ! O my love,  
My breath of life, where art thou ? High above,  
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven ? 690  
Or keeping watch among those starry seven,  
Old Atlas' children ? Art a maid of the waters,  
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters ?  
Or art, impossible ! a nymph of Dian's,  
Weaving a coronal of tender scions

For very idleness ? Where'er thou art,  
Methinks it now is at my will to start  
Into thine arms ; to scare Aurora's train,  
And snatch thee from the morning ; o'er the main  
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off                   700  
From thy sea-foamy cradle ; or to doff  
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves.  
No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives  
Its powerless self : I know this cannot be.  
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee  
To her entrancements : hither sleep awhile !  
Hither most gentle sleep ! and soothing foil  
For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued  
With power to dream deliciously ; so wound                   710  
Through a dim passage, searching till he found  
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where  
He threw himself, and just into the air  
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss !  
A naked waist : " Fair Cupid, whence is this ? "

A well-known voice sigh'd, " Sweetest, here am I ! "  
At which soft ravishment, with doating cry  
They trembled to each other.—Helicon !  
O fountain'd hill ! Old Homer's Helicon !  
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er 720  
These sorry pages ; then the verse would soar  
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark  
Over his nested young : but all is dark  
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount  
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count  
Of mighty Poets is made up ; the scroll  
Is folded by the Muses ; the bright roll  
Is in Apollo's hand : our dazed eyes  
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies :  
The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet, 730  
Although the sun of poesy is set,  
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep  
That there is no old power left to steep  
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.  
Long time in silence did their anxious fears  
Question that thus it was ; long time they lay  
Fondling and kissing every doubt away ;



Long time ere soft caressing sobs began  
To mellow into words, and then there ran  
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.      740  
“ O known Unknown ! from whom my being sips  
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not  
Be ever in these arms ? in this sweet spot  
Pillow my chin for ever ? ever press  
These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess ?  
Why not for ever and for ever feel  
That breath about my eyes ? Ah, thou wilt steal  
Away from me again, indeed, indeed—  
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed  
My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair !      750  
Is—is it to be so ? No ! Who will dare  
To pluck thee from me ? And, of thine own will,  
Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still  
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now  
How can we part ? Elysium ! who art thou ?  
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,  
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere ?  
Enchantress ! tell me by this soft embrace,  
By the most soft completion of thy face,

Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes, 760  
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—  
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,  
The passion ”———“ O lov'd Ida the divine !  
Endymion ! dearest ! Ah, unhappy me !  
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity !  
How he does love me ! His poor temples beat  
To the very tune of love—how sweet, sweet, sweet.  
Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die ;  
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by  
In tranced dulness ; speak, and let that spell 770  
Affright this lethargy ! I cannot quell  
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least  
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast  
Until we taste the life of love again.  
What ! dost thou move ? dost kiss ? O bliss ! O pain !  
I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive ;  
And so long absence from thee doth bereave  
My soul of any rest : yet must I hence :  
Yet, can I not to starry eminence  
Uplift thee ; nor for very shame can own 780  
Myself to thee. Ah, dearest, do not groan

Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,  
And I must blush in heaven. O that I  
Had done it already ; that the dreadful smiles  
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,  
Had waned from Olympus' solemn height,  
And from all serious Gods ; that our delight  
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone !  
And wherefore so ashamed ? 'Tis but to atone  
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes : 790  
Yet must I be a coward !—Honour rushes  
Too palpable before me—the sad look  
Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook  
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion  
In reverence veiled—my crystaline dominion  
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity !  
But what is this to love ? O I could fly  
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,  
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours,  
Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once 800  
That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—  
Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—  
O I do think that I have been alone

In chastity : yes, Pallas has been sighing,  
While every eve saw me my hair uptying  
With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,  
I was as vague as solitary dove,  
Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss—  
Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,  
An immortality of passion's thine : 810  
Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine  
Of heaven ambrosial ; and we will shade  
Ourselves whole summers by a river glade ;  
And I will tell thee stories of the sky,  
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.  
My happy love will overwing all bounds !  
O let me melt into thee ; let the sounds  
Of our close voices marry at their birth ;  
Let us entwine hoveringly—O dearth  
Of human words ! roughness of mortal speech ! 820  
Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach  
Thine honied tongue—lute-breathings, which I gasp  
To have thee understand, now while I clasp  
Thee thus, and weep for fondness—I am pain'd,  
Endymion : woe ! woe ! is grief contain'd

In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life ?"—  
 Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife  
 Melted into a languor. He return'd  
 Entranced vows and tears.

Ye who have yearn'd 830

With too much passion, will here stay and pity,  
 For the mere sake of truth ; as 'tis a ditty  
 Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told  
 By a cavern wind unto a forest old ;  
 And then the forest told it in a dream  
 To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam  
 A poet caught as he was journeying  
 To Phœbus' shrine ; and in it he did fling  
 His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,  
 And after, straight in that inspired place 840  
 He sang the story up into the air,  
 Giving it universal freedom. There  
 Has it been ever sounding for those ears  
 Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers  
 Yon centinel stars ; and he who listens to it  
 Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it :

For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,  
Made fiercer by a fear lest any part  
Should be engulfed in the eddy wind.  
As much as here is penn'd doth always find      840  
A resting place, thus much comes clear and plain ;  
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—  
And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound,  
That the fair visitant at last unwound  
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.—  
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.—  
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers  
Sweet paining on his ear : he sickly guess'd  
How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd      860  
His empty arms together, hung his head,  
And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed  
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known :  
Often with more than tortured lion's groan  
Moanings had burst from him ; but now that rage  
Had pass'd away : no longer did he wage

A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars.  
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars :  
The lyre of his soul Eolian tun'd  
Forgot all violence, and but commun'd 870  
With melancholy thought : O he had swoon'd  
Drunken from pleasure's nipple ; and his love  
Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to move  
From the imprinted couch, and when he did,  
'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid  
In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd  
Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd  
Alecto's serpents ; ravishments more keen  
Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean  
Over eclipsing eyes : and at the last 880  
It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,  
O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls,  
And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn curls,  
Of every shape and size, even to the bulk  
In which whales arbour close, to brood and sulk  
Against an endless storm. Moreover too,  
Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,

Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder  
Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder  
On all his life : his youth, up to the day 890  
When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,  
He stept upon his shepherd throne : the look  
Of his white palace in wild forest nook,  
And all the revels he had lorded there :  
Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair,  
With every friend and fellow-woodlander—  
Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur  
Of the old bards to mighty deeds : his plans  
To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans :  
That wondrous night : the great Pan-festival : 900  
His sister's sorrow ; and his wanderings all,  
Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd :  
Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd  
High with excessive love. " And now," thought he,  
" How long must I remain in jeopardy  
Of blank amazements that amaze no more ?  
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core  
All other depths are shallow : essences,  
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,



Meant but to fertilize my earthly root, 910  
 And make my branches lift a golden fruit  
 Into the bloom of heaven : other light,  
 Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight  
 The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,  
 Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark !  
 My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells ;  
 Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells  
 Of noises far away ?—list ! ”—Hereupon  
 He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone  
 Came louder, and behold, there as he lay, 920  
 On either side outgush'd, with misty spray,  
 A copious spring ; and both together dash'd  
 Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lash'd  
 Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,  
 Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot  
 Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise  
 As of some breathless racers whose hopes poize  
 Upon the last few steps, and with spent force  
 Along the ground they took a winding course.  
 Endymion follow'd—for it seem'd that one 930  
 Ever pursued, the other strove to shun—

Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh  
 He had left thinking of the mystery,—  
 And was now rapt in tender hoverings  
 Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah! what is it sings  
 His dream away? What melodies are these?  
 They sound as through the whispering of trees,  
 Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

“ O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear  
 Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why, 940  
 Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I  
 Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,  
 Circling about her waist, and striving how  
 To entice her to a dive! then stealing in  
 Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.  
 O that her shining hair was in the sun,  
 And I distilling from it thence to run  
 In amorous rillets down her shrinking form!  
 To linger on her lily shoulders, warm  
 Between her kissing breasts, and every charm 950  
 Touch raptur'd!—See how painfully I flow:  
 Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.

Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,  
 A happy wooer, to the flowery mead  
 Where all that beauty snar'd me."—"Cruel god,  
 Desist! or my offended mistress' nod  
 Will stagnate all thy fountains:—tease me not  
 With syren words—Ah, have I really got  
 Such power to madden thee? And is it true—  
 Away, away, or I shall dearly rue 960  
 My very thoughts: in mercy then away,  
 Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey  
 My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane."—  
 "O, Oread-Queen! would that thou hadst a pain  
 Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn  
 And be a criminal."—"Alas, I burn,  
 I shudder—gentle river, get thee hence.  
 Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense  
 Of mine was once made perfect in these woods.  
 Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods, 970  
 Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave;  
 But ever since I heedlessly did lave  
 In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow  
 Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so,

And call it love ? Alas, 'twas cruelty.  
Not once more did I close my happy eyes  
Amid the thrush's song. Away ! Avaunt !  
O 'twas a cruel thing."—" Now thou dost taunt  
So softly, Arethusa, that I think  
If thou wast playing on my shady brink, 980  
Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid !  
Stifle thine heart no more ;—nor be afraid  
Of angry powers : there are deities  
Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs  
'Tis almost death to hear : O let me pour  
A dewy balm upon them !—fear no more,  
Sweet Arethusa ! Dian's self must feel  
Sometimes these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal  
Blushing into my soul, and let us fly  
These dreary caverns for the open sky. 990  
I will delight thee all my winding course,  
From the green sea up to my hidden source  
About Arcadian forests ; and will shew  
The channels where my coolest waters flow  
Through mossy rocks ; where, 'mid exuberant green,  
I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen



**ENDYMION.**

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**BOOK III.**

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# ENDYMION.

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## BOOK III.

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-men  
With most prevailing tinsel : who unpen  
Their baaing vanities, to browse away  
The comfortable green and juicy hay  
From human pastures ; or, O torturing fact !  
Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd  
Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe  
Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge  
Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight  
Able to face an owl's, they still are dight



By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,  
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,  
Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount  
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,  
Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—  
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones  
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,  
And sudden cannon. Ah ! how all this hums,  
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—  
Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon, 20  
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—  
Are then regalities all gilded masks ?  
No, there are throned seats unscalable  
But by a patient wing, a constant spell,  
Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd,  
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,  
And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents  
To watch the abysm-birth of elements.  
Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate  
A thousand Powers keep religious state, 30  
In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne ;  
And, silent as a consecrated urn,

Hold sphery sessions for a season due.  
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few !  
Have bared their operations to this globe—  
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe  
Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence  
Shakes hand with our own Ceres ; every sense  
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,  
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud 40  
'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,  
Eterne Apollo ! that thy Sister fair  
Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.  
When thy gold breath is misting in the west,  
She unobserved steals unto her throne,  
And there she sits most meek and most alone ;  
As if she had not pomp subservient ;  
As if thine eye, high Poet ! was not bent  
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart ;  
As if the ministring stars kept not apart, 50  
Waiting for silver-footed messages.  
O Moon ! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees  
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in :  
O Moon ! old boughs lisp forth a holier din

The while they feel thine airy fellowship.  
 Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip  
 Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,  
 Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine :  
 Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,  
 Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes ;                   60  
 And yet thy benediction passeth not  
 One obscure hiding-place, one little spot  
 Where pleasure may be sent : the nested wren  
 Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,  
 And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf  
 Takes glimpses of thee ; thou art a relief  
 To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps  
 Within its pearly house.—The mighty deeps,  
 The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad sea !  
 O Moon ! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee,                   70  
 And Tellus feels her forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia ! where art thou now ? What far abode  
 Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine  
 Such utmost beauty ? Alas, thou dost pine

For one as sorrowful : thy cheek is pale  
For one whose cheek is pale : thou dost bewail  
His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh ?  
Ah ! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,  
Or what a thing is love ! 'Tis She, but lo !  
How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe ! 80  
She dies at the thinnest cloud ; her loveliness  
Is wan on Neptune's blue : yet there 's a stress  
Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,  
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please  
The curly foam with amorous influence.  
O, not so idle : for down-glancing thence  
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about  
O'erwhelming water-courses ; scaring out  
The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright'ning  
Their savage eyes with unaccustomed lightning. 90  
Where will the splendor be content to reach ?  
O love ! how potent hast thou been to teach  
Strange journeyings ! Wherever beauty dwells,  
In gulf or aerie, mountains or deep dells,  
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,  
Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.

Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath ;  
 Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death ;  
 Thou madest Pluto bear thin element ;  
 And now, O winged Chieftain ! thou hast sent 100  
 A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,  
 To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearl'd

With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,  
 Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light  
 Against his pallid face : he felt the charm  
 To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm  
 Of his heart's blood : 'twas very sweet ; he stay'd  
 His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid  
 His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds, 110  
 To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads,  
 Lashed from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.  
 And so he kept, until the rosy veils  
 Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand  
 Were lifted from the water's breast, and fann'd  
 Into sweet air ; and sober'd morning came  
 Meekly through billows :—when like taper-flame

Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,  
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare  
Along his fated way.

120

Far had he roam'd,  
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd  
Above, around, and at his feet ; save things  
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings ;  
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large  
Of gone sea-warriors ; brazen beaks and targe ;  
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost  
The sway of human hand ; gold vase emboss'd  
With long-forgotten story, and wherein  
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin  
But those of Saturn's vintage ; mouldering scrolls,  
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls  
Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures rude  
In ponderous stone, developing the mood  
Of ancient Nox ;—then skeletons of man,  
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,  
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw  
Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe

130

These secrets struck into him ; and unless  
Dian had chased away that heaviness,                   140  
He might have died : but now, with cheered feel,  
He onward kept ; wooing these thoughts to steal  
About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

“ What is there in thee, Moon ! that thou shouldst  
move

My heart so potently ? When yet a child  
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.  
Thou seem'dst my sister : hand in hand we went  
From eve to morn across the firmament.  
No apples would I gather from the tree,  
Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously :                   150  
No tumbling water ever spake romance,  
But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance :  
No woods were green enough, no bower divine,  
Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine :  
In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take,  
Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake ;  
And, in the summer tide of blossoming,  
No one but thee hath heard me blithly sing

And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.

No melody was like a passing spright 160

If it went not to solemnize thy reign.

Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain

By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end ;

And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend

With all my ardours : thou wast the deep glen ;

Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—

The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun ;

Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won ;

Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my steed—

My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed :— 170

Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon !

O what a wild and harmonized tune

My spirit struck from all the beautiful !

On some bright essence could I lean, and lull

Myself to immortality : I prest

Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.

But, gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss—

My strange love came—Felicity's abyss !

She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—

Yet not entirely ; no, thy starry sway 180



Has been an under-passion to this hour.  
 Now I begin to feel thine orby power  
 Is coming fresh upon me : O be kind,  
 Keep back thine influence, and do not blind  
 My sovereign vision.—Dearest love, forgive  
 That I can think away from thee and live !—  
 Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize  
 One thought beyond thine argent luxuries!  
 How far beyond ! ” At this a surpris’d start  
 Frosted the springing verdure of his heart ; 190  
 For as he lifted up his eyes to swear  
 How his own goddess was past all things fair,  
 He saw far in the concave green of the sea  
 An old man sitting calm and peacefully.  
 Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,  
 And his white hair was awful, and a mat  
 Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet ;  
 And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,  
 A cloak of blue wrapp’d up his aged bones,  
 O’erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans 200  
 Of ambitious magic : every ocean-form  
 Was woven in with black distinctness ; storm,

And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar  
Were emblem'd in the woof ; with every shape  
That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.  
The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell,  
Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell  
To its huge self ; and the minutest fish  
Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,  
And shew his little eye's anatomy. 210  
Then there was pictur'd the regality  
Of Neptune ; and the sea nymphs round his state.  
In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.  
Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,  
And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd  
So stedfastly, that the new denizen  
Had time to keep him in amazed ken,  
To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw  
The wilder'd stranger—seeming not to see, 220  
His features were so lifeless. Suddenly  
He woke as from a trance ; his snow-white brows  
Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs

Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,  
 Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,  
 Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.  
 Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil  
 Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,  
 Who had not from mid-life to utmost age  
 Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul,                   230  
 Even to the trees. He rose : he grasp'd his stole,  
 With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad,  
 And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd  
 Echo into oblivion, he said :—

“ Thou art the man ! Now shall I lay my head  
 In peace upon my watery pillow : now  
 Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.  
 O Jove ! I shall be young again, be young !  
 O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung  
 With new-born life ! What shall I do ? Where go,                   240  
 When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe ?—  
 I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen  
 Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten ;

Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,  
That writhes about the roots of Sicily :  
To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,  
And mount upon the snortings of a whale  
To some black cloud ; thence down I'll madly sweep  
On forked lightning, to the deepest deep,  
Where through some sucking pool I will be hurl'd      250  
With rapture to the other side of the world !  
O, I am full of gladness ! Sisters three,  
I bow full hearted to your old decree !  
Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign,  
For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.  
Thou art the man ! " Endymion started back  
Dismay'd ; and, like a wretch from whom the rack  
Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,  
Mutter'd : " What lonely death am I to die  
In this cold region ? Will he let me freeze,      260  
And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas ?  
Or will he touch me with his searing hand,  
And leave a black memorial on the sand ?  
Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw,  
And keep me as a chosen food to draw

His magian fish through hated fire and flame ?  
 O misery of hell ! resistless, tame,  
 Am I to be burnt up ? No, I will shout,  
 Until the gods through heaven's blue look out !—  
 O Tartarus ! but some few days ago 270  
 Her soft arms were entwining me, and on  
 Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves :  
 Her lips were all my own, and—ah, ripe sheaves  
 Of happiness ! ye on the stubble droop,  
 But never may be garner'd. I must stoop  
 My head, and kiss death's foot. Love ! love, farewell !  
 Is there no hope from thee ? This horrid spell  
 Would melt at thy sweet breath.—By Dian's hind  
 Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind  
 I see thy streaming hair ! and now, by Pan, 280  
 I care not for this old mysterious man ! ”

He spake, and walking to that aged form,  
 Look'd high defiance. Lo ! his heart 'gan warm  
 With pity, for the grey-hair'd creature wept.  
 Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow kept ?



Gave mighty pulses : in this tottering case  
 Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays  
 As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,  
 For thou shalt hear this secret all display'd,  
 Now as we speed towards our joyous task." 310

So saying, this young soul in age's mask  
 Went forward with the Carian side by side :  
 Resuming quickly thus ; while ocean's tide  
 Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel'd sands  
 Took silently their foot-prints.

" My soul stands

Now past the midway from mortality,  
 And so I can prepare without a sigh  
 To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.  
 I was a fisher once, upon this main, 320  
 And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay ;  
 Rough billows were my home by night and day,—  
 The sea-gulls not more constant ; for I had  
 No housing from the storm and tempests mad,

But hollow rocks,—and they were palaces  
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease :  
Long years of misery have told me so.  
Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago.  
One thousand years !—Is it then possible  
To look so plainly through them ? to dispel       330  
A thousand years with backward glance sublime ?  
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime  
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,  
And one's own image from the bottom peep ?  
Yes : now I am no longer wretched thrall,  
My long captivity and moanings all  
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,  
The which I breathe away, and thronging come  
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

“ I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures :  
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.       341  
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,  
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry  
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.



Dolphins were still my playmates ; shapes unseen  
 Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,  
 Nor be my desolation ; and, full oft,  
 When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft  
 Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe  
 To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe 350  
 My life away like a vast sponge of fate,  
 Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,  
 Has dived to its foundations, gulph'd it down,  
 And left me tossing safely. But the crown  
 Of all my life was utmost quietude :  
 More did I love to lie in cavern rude,  
 Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,  
 And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice !  
 There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer  
 My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear 360  
 The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep,  
 Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep :  
 And never was a day of summer shine,  
 But I beheld its birth upon the brine :  
 For I would watch all night to see unfold  
 Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning gold

Wide o'er the swelling streams : and constantly  
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,  
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.  
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest                   370  
With daily boon of fish most delicate :  
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate  
Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

“ Why was I not contented ? Wherefore reach  
At things which, but for thee, O Latmian !  
Had been my dreary death ? Fool ! I began  
To feel distemper'd longings : to desire  
The utmost privilege that ocean's sire  
Could grant in benediction : to be free  
Of all his kingdom. Long in misery                   380  
wasted, ere in one extremest fit  
I plung'd for life or death. To interknit  
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff  
Might seem a work of pain ; so not enough  
Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,  
And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt

Whole days and days in sheer astonishment ;  
 Forgetful utterly of self-intent ;  
 Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.  
 Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth shew      390  
 His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,  
 I tried in fear the pinions of my will.  
 'Twas freedom ! and at once I visited  
 The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.  
 No need to tell thee of them, for I see  
 That thou hast been a witness—it must be—  
 For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,  
 By the melancholy corners of that mouth.  
 So I will in my story straightway pass  
 To more immediate matter. Woe, alas !      400  
 That love should be my bane ! Ah, Scylla fair !  
 Why did poor Glaucus ever—ever dare  
 To sue thee to his heart ? Kind stranger-youth !  
 I lov'd her to the very white of truth,  
 And she would not conceive it. Timid thing !  
 She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,  
 Round every isle, and point, and promontory,  
 From where large Hercules wound up his story

Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew  
The more, the more I saw her dainty hue 410  
Gleam delicately through the azure clear :  
Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear ;  
And in that agony, across my grief  
It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief—  
Cruel enchantress ! So above the water  
I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter.  
Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon :—  
It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon  
Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

“ When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower ; 420  
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,  
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees.  
How sweet, and sweeter ! for I heard a lyre,  
And over it a sighing voice expire.  
It ceased—I caught light footsteps ; and anon  
The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon  
Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove !  
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove

A net whose thralldom was more bliss than all  
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall 430  
The dew of her rich speech : " Ah ! Art awake ?  
O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake !  
I am so oppress'd with joy ! Why, I have shed  
An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead;  
And now I find thee living, I will pour  
From these devoted eyes their silver store,  
Until exhausted of the latest drop,  
So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop  
Here, that I too may live : but if beyond  
Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond 440  
Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme ;  
If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream ;  
If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,  
Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,  
O let me pluck it for thee." Thus she link'd  
Her charming syllables, till indistinct  
Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul ;  
And then she hover'd over me, and stole  
So near, that if no nearer it had been  
This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen. 450

“ Young man of Latmos ! thus particular  
Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far  
This fierce temptation went : and thou may'st not  
Exclaim, How then, was Scylla quite forgot ?

“ Who could resist ? Who in this universe ?  
She did so breathe ambrosia ; so immerse  
My fine existence in a golden clime.  
She took me like a child of suckling time,  
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,  
The current of my former life was stemm'd, 460  
And to this arbitrary queen of sense  
I bow'd a tranced vassal : nor would thence  
Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had woo'd  
Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.  
For as Apollo each eve doth devise  
A new appareling for western skies ;  
So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour  
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.  
And I was free of haunts umbrageous ;  
Could wander in the mazy forest-house 470

Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,  
And birds from coverts innermost and drear  
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—  
To me new born delights !

“ Now let me borrow,  
For moments few, a temperament as stern  
As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn  
These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell  
How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

“ One morn she left me sleeping : half awake      480  
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake  
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts ;  
But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts  
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,  
That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er.  
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom  
Damp awe assail'd me ; for there 'gan to boom  
A sound of moan, an agony of sound,  
Sepulchral from the distance all around

Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled 490  
That fierce complain to silence : while I stumbled  
Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd.  
I came to a dark valley.—Groanings swell'd  
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,  
The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,  
That glar'd before me through a thorny brake.  
This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,  
Bewitch'd me towards ; and I soon was near  
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear :  
In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene— 500  
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,  
Seated upon an uptorn forest root ;  
And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,  
Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpentine,  
Shewing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting !  
O such deformities ! Old Charon's self,  
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,  
And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian,  
It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan,  
And tyrannizing was the lady's look, 510  
As over them a gnarled staff she shook.



Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,  
And from a basket emptied to the rout  
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick  
And roar'd for more ; with many a hungry lick  
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,  
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,  
And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial :  
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial  
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones. 520  
She lifted up the charm : appealing groans  
From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear  
In vain ; remorseless as an infant's bier  
She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil.  
Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,  
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,  
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage ;  
Until their griev'd bodies 'gan to bloat  
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat :  
Then was appalling silence : then a sight 530  
More wildering than all that hoarse affright ;  
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writen,  
Went through the dismal air like one huge Python

Antagonizing Boreas,—and so vanish'd.

Yet there was not a breath of wind : she banish'd

These phantoms with a nod. Lo ! from the dark

Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark,

With dancing and loud revelry,—and went

Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.—

Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd

540

Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud

In human accent : “ Potent goddess ! chief

Of pains resistless ! make my being brief,

Or let me from this heavy prison fly :

Or give me to the air, or let me die !

I sue not for my happy crown again ;

I sue not for my phalanx on the plain ;

I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife ;

I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,

My children fair, my lovely girls and boys !

550

I will forget them ; I will pass these joys ;

Ask nought so heavenward, so too—too high :

Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,

Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,

From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,

And merely given to the cold bleak air.  
Have mercy, Goddess ! Circe, feel my prayer ! ”

That curst magician's name fell icy numb  
Upon my wild conjecturing : truth had come  
Naked and sabre-like against my heart. 560  
I saw a fury whetting a death-dart ;  
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,  
Fainted away in that dark lair of night.  
Think, my deliverer, how desolate  
My waking must have been ! disgust, and hate,  
And terrors manifold divided me  
A spoil amongst them. I prepar'd to flee  
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood :  
I fled three days—when lo ! before me stood  
Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now, 570  
A clammy dew is beading on my brow,  
At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse.  
“ Ha ! ha ! Sir Dainty ! there must be a nurse  
Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,  
To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee : yes,  
I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch :

My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.  
So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies  
Unheard of yet ; and it shall still its cries  
Upon some breast more lily-feminine. 580  
Oh, no—it shall not pine, and pine, and pine  
More than one pretty, trifling thousand years ;  
And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears  
Cut short its immortality. Sea-firt !  
Young dove of the waters ! truly I'll not hurt  
One hair of thine : see how I weep and sigh,  
That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.  
And must we part ? Ah, yes, it must be so.  
Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,  
Let me sob over thee my last adieus, 590  
And speak a blessing : Mark me ! thou hast thews  
Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race :  
But such a love is mine, that here I chase  
Eternally away from thee all bloom  
Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.  
Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast ;  
And there, ere many days be overpast,  
Disabled age shall seize thee ; and even then

Thou shalt not go the way of aged men ;  
But live and wither, cripple and still breathe                   600  
Ten hundred years : which gone, I then bequeath  
Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.  
Adieu, sweet love, adieu ! ”—As shot stars fall,  
She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung  
And poisoned was my spirit : despair sung  
A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.  
A hand was at my shoulder to compel  
My sullen steps ; another 'fore my eyes  
Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise  
Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam                               610  
I found me ; by my fresh, my native home.  
Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,  
Came salutary as I waded in ;  
And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave  
Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave  
Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd  
Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drain'd.

“ Young lover, I must weep—such hellish spite  
With dry cheek who can tell ? While thus my might

Proving upon this element, dismay'd, 620  
Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid ;  
I look'd—'twas Scylla ! Cursed, cursed Circe !  
O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy ?  
Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,  
But thou must nip this tender innocent  
Because I lov'd her ?—Cold, O cold indeed  
Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed  
The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was  
I clung about her waist, nor ceas'd to pass  
Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine, 630  
Until there shone a fabric crystalline,  
Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.  
Headlong I darted ; at one eager swirl  
Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold !  
'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold ;  
And all around—But wherefore this to thee  
Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see ?—  
I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.  
My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread  
Met palsy half way : soon these limbs became 640  
Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

“ Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,  
 Without one hope, without one faintest trace  
 Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble  
 Of colour'd phantasy ; for I fear 'twould trouble  
 Thy brain to loss of reason : and next tell  
 How a restoring chance came down to quell  
 One half of the witch in me.

“ On a day,

Sitting upon a rock above the spray, 650  
 I saw grow up from the horizon's brink  
 A gallant vessel : soon she seem'd to sink  
 Away from me again, as though her course  
 Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force—  
 So vanish'd : and not long, before arose  
 Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.  
 Old Eolus would stifle his mad spleen,  
 But could not : therefore all the billows green  
 Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.  
 The tempest came : I saw that vessel's shrouds 660  
 In perilous bustle ; while upon the deck  
 Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck ;

The final gulping ; the poor struggling souls :  
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.  
O they had all been sav'd but crazed eld  
Annull'd my vigorous cravings : and thus quell'd  
And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian ! did I sit  
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit  
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone,  
By one and one, to pale oblivion ; 670  
And I was gazing on the surges prone,  
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,  
When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand,  
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.  
I knelt with pain—reached out my hand—had grasp'd  
These treasures—touch'd the knuckles—they unclasp'd—  
I caught a finger : but the downward weight  
O'erpowered me—it sank. Then 'gan abate  
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst  
The comfortable sun. I was athirst 680  
To search the book, and in the warming air  
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.  
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on  
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won



Into forgetfulness ; when, stupefied,  
 I read these words, and read again, and tried  
 My eyes against the heavens, and read again.  
 O what a load of misery and pain  
 Each Atlas-line bore off !—a shine of hope  
 Came gold around me, cheering me to cope 690  
 Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend !  
 For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

*“ In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,  
 Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch  
 His loath'd existence through ten centuries,  
 And then to die alone. Who can devise  
 A total opposition? No one. So  
 One million times ocean must ebb and flow,  
 And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,  
 These things accomplish'd :—If he utterly 700  
 Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds  
 The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds ;  
 If he explores all forms and substances  
 Straight homeward to their symbol-essences ;  
 He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,*

*He must pursue this task of joy and grief  
 Most piously ;—all lovers tempest-tost,  
 And in the savage overwhelming lost,  
 He shall deposit side by side, until  
 Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil :* 710  
*Which done, and all these labours ripened,  
 A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,  
 Shall stand before him ; whom he shall direct  
 How to consummate all. The youth elect  
 Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd."*—

“ Then,” cried the young Endymion, overjoy'd,  
 “ We are twin brothers in this destiny !  
 Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high  
 Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd.  
 What ! if from thee my wandering feet had swerv'd, 720  
 Had we both perish'd ? ”—“ Look ! ” the sage replied,  
 “ Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide,  
 Of divers brilliances ? 'tis the edifice  
 I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies ;  
 And where I have enshrined piously  
 All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die

Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing, on  
They went till unobscur'd the porches shone ;  
Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd straight.  
Sure never since king Neptune held his state                   730  
Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.  
Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars  
Has legion'd all his battle ; and behold  
How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold  
His even breast : see, many steeled squares,  
And rigid ranks of iron—whence who dares  
One step ? Imagine further, line by line,  
These warrior thousands on the field supine :—  
So in that crystal place, in silent rows,  
Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.—                   740  
The stranger from the mountains, breathless, trac'd  
Such thousands of shut eyes in order placed ;  
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips  
All ruddy,—for here death no blossom nips.  
He mark'd their brows and foreheads ; saw their hair  
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care ;  
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,  
Put cross-wise to its heart.

“ Let us commence,  
Whisper’d the guide, stuttering with joy, even now.” 750  
He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough,  
Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,  
Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.  
He tore it into pieces small as snow  
That drifts unfeather’d when bleak northerns blow ;  
And having done it, took his dark blue cloak  
And bound it round Endymion : then struck  
His wand against the empty air times nine.—  
“ What more there is to do, young man, is thine :  
But first a little patience ; first undo 760  
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.  
Ah, gentle ! ’tis as weak as spider’s skein ;  
And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so clean ?  
A power overshadows thee ! Oh, brave !  
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.  
Here is a shell ; ’tis pearly blank to me,  
Nor mark’d with any sign or character—  
Canst thou read aught ? O read for pity’s sake !  
Olympus ! we are safe ! Now, Carian, break  
This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal.” 770

'Twas done : and straight with sudden swell and fall  
Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd  
A lullaby to silence.—“ Youth ! now strew  
These minced leaves on me, and passing through  
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,  
And thou wilt see the issue.”—'Mid the sound  
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,  
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,  
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.  
How lightning-swift the change ! a youthful wight      780  
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,  
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,  
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,  
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force  
Press'd its cold hand, and wept—and Scylla sigh'd !  
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—  
The nymph arose : he left them to their joy,  
And onward went upon his high employ,  
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.  
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head,      790  
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.  
Death felt it to his inwards ; 'twas too much :

Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.  
The Latmian persever'd along, and thus  
All were re-animated. There arose  
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes  
Of gladness in the air—while many, who  
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,  
Sprang to each other madly ; and the rest  
Felt a high certainty of being blest. 800

They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment  
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.  
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,  
Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full showers  
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.  
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine  
Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out.  
Speechless they eyed each other, and about  
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,  
Distracted with the richest overflow 810  
Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

——“ Away ! ”

Shouted the new born god ; “ Follow, and pay

Our piety to Neptunus supreme ! ”—  
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,  
They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,  
Though portal columns of a giant size,  
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.  
Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd,  
Down marble steps ; pouring as easily 820  
As hour-glass sand—and fast, as you might see  
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,  
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,  
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,  
Just within ken, they saw descending thick  
Another multitude. Whereat more quick  
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,  
And of those numbers every eye was wet ;  
For each their old love found. A murmuring rose, 830  
Like what was never heard in all the throes  
Of wind and waters : 'tis past human wit  
To tell ; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host  
Mov'd on for many a league ; and gain'd, and lost  
Huge sea-marks ; vanward swelling in array,  
And from the rear diminishing away,—  
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried,  
“ Behold ! behold, the palace of his pride !  
God Neptune's palaces ! ” With noise increas'd, 840  
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening east.  
At every onward step proud domes arose  
In prospect,—diamond gleams, and golden glows  
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.  
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,  
Still onward ; still the splendour gradual swell'd.  
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld  
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts  
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts  
Each gazer drank ; and deeper drank more near : 850  
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere  
As marble was there lavish, to the vast  
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,  
Even for common bulk, those olden three,  
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.



As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow  
Of Iris, when unfading it doth shew  
Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch  
Through which this Paphian army took its march,  
Into the outer courts of Neptune's state : 860  
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,  
To which the leaders sped ; but not half raught  
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,  
And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes  
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.  
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze  
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,  
And then, behold ! large Neptune on his throne  
Of emerald deep : yet not exalt alone ;  
At his right hand stood winged Love, and on 870  
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast  
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,  
So wide was Neptune's hall : and as the blue  
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew

Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,  
Aw'd from the throne aloof ;—and when storm-rent  
Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air ;  
But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere,  
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering 880  
Death to a human eye : for there did spring  
From natural west, and east, and south, and north,  
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth  
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.  
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread  
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe  
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through  
The delicatest air : air verily,  
But for the portraiture of clouds and sky :  
This palace floor breath-air,—but for the amaze 890  
Of deep-seen wonders motionless,—and blaze  
Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,  
Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams

Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang ;  
The Nereids danc'd ; the Syrens faintly sang ;

And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head.  
Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed  
On all the multitude a nectarous dew.

The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew 900

Fair Scylla and her guides to conference ;  
And when they reach'd the throned eminence  
She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,—who sat her down  
A toying with the doves. Then,—“ Mighty crown  
And sceptre of this kingdom ! ” Venus said,

“ Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid :  
Behold ! ”—Two copious tear-drops instant fell  
From the God's large eyes ; he smil'd delectable,  
And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.—

“ Endymion ! Ah ! still wandering in the bands 910

Of love ? Now this is cruel. Since the hour  
I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power  
Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet  
Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net ?  
A little patience, youth ! 'twill not be long,  
Or I am skillless quite : an idle tongue,  
A humid eye, and steps luxurious,  
Where these are new and strange, are ominous.

Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,  
When others were all blind ; and were I given 920  
To utter secrets, haply I might say  
Some pleasant words :—but Love will have his day.  
So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,  
Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,  
Visit my Cytherea : thou wilt find  
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind ;  
And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done,  
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son ! ”—  
Thus the fair goddess : while Endymion  
Knelt to receive those accents halcyon. 930

Meantime a glorious revelry began  
Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran  
In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd ;  
And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd  
New growth about each shell and pendent lyre ;  
The which, in disentangling for their fire,  
Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture  
For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,

Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the throng  
Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,           940  
And garlanding grew wild ; and pleasure reign'd.  
In harmless tendrils they each other chain'd,  
And strove who should be smother'd deepest in  
Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin  
For one so weak to venture his poor verse  
In such a place as this. O do not curse,  
High Muses ! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending  
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly ;           950  
And then a hymn.

“ KING of the stormy sea !  
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor  
Of elements ! Eternally before  
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,

At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock  
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.  
All mountain-rivers lost, in the wide home  
Of thy capacious bosom ever flow.  
Thou frownest, and old Eolus thy foe 960  
Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint  
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint  
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam  
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team  
Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along  
To bring thee nearer to that golden song  
Apollo singeth, while his chariot  
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not  
For scenes like this : an empire stern hast thou ;  
And it hath furrow'd that large front : yet now, 970  
As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit  
To blend and interknit  
Subdued majesty with this glad time.  
O shell-borne King sublime !  
We lay our hearts before thee evermore—  
We sing, and we adore !

“ Breathe softly, flutes ;  
Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes ;  
Nor be the trumpet heard ! O vain, O vain ;  
Not flowers budding in an April rain, 980  
Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river’s flow,—  
No, nor the Eolian twang of Love’s own bow,  
Can mingle music fit for the soft ear  
Of goddess Cytherea !  
Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes  
On our souls’ sacrifice.

“ Bright-winged Child !  
Who has another care when thou hast smil’d ?  
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last  
All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast 990  
Our spirits, fann’d away by thy light pinions.  
O sweetest essence ! sweetest of all minions !  
God of warm pulses, and dishevell’d hair,  
And panting bosoms bare !  
Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser  
Of light in light ! delicious poisoner

Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until  
 We fill—we fill !  
 And by thy Mother's lips——”

Was heard no more 1000

For clamour, when the golden palace door  
 Opened again, and from without, in shone  
 A new magnificence. On oozy throne  
 Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,  
 To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,  
 Before he went into his quiet cave  
 To muse for ever—Then a lucid wave,  
 Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,  
 Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty  
 Of Doris, and the Egean seer, her spouse— 1010  
 Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,  
 Theban Amphion leaning on his lute :  
 His fingers went across it—All were mute  
 To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,  
 And Thetis pearly too.—



## The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion ; seeing he  
Was there far strayed from mortality.  
He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain ;  
Imagination gave a dizzier pain. 1020  
“ O I shall die ! sweet Venus, be my stay !  
Where is my lovely mistress ? Well-away !  
I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—”  
At Neptune’s feet he sank. A sudden ring  
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife  
To usher back his spirit into life :  
But still he slept. At last they interwove  
Their cradling arms, and purpos’d to convey  
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo ! while slow carried through the pitying crowd,  
To his inward senses these words spake aloud ; 1031  
Written in star-light on the dark above :  
*Dearest Endymion ! my entire love !*  
*How have I dwelt in fear of fate : ’tis done—*  
*Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.*

*Arise then ! for the hen-dove shall not hatch  
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch  
Thee into endless heaven. Awake ! awake !*

The youth at once arose : a placid lake  
Came quiet to his eyes ; and forest green,  
Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,  
Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast.  
How happy once again in grassy nest !

1040



**ENDYMION.**

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**BOOK IV.**

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# ENDYMION.

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## BOOK IV.

MUSE of my native land ! loftiest Muse !  
O first-born on the mountains ! by the hues  
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot :  
Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,  
While yet our England was a wolfish den ;  
Before our forests heard the talk of men ;  
Before the first of Druids was a child ;—  
Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild  
Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.  
There came an eastern voice of solemn mood :—

Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,  
 Apollo's garland :—yet didst thou divine  
 Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,  
 “ Come hither, Sister of the Island ! ” Plain  
 Spake fair Ausonia ; and once more she spake  
 A higher summons :—still didst thou betake  
 Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won  
 A full accomplishment ! The thing is done,  
 Which undone, these our latter days had risen  
 On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what prison  
 Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets        21  
 Our spirit's wings : despondency besets  
 Our pillows ; and the fresh to-morrow morn  
 Seems to give forth its light in very scorn  
 Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.  
 Long have I said, how happy he who shrives  
 To thee ! But then I thought on poets gone,  
 And could not pray :—nor can I now—so on  
 I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

“ Ah, woe is me ! that I should fondly part        30  
 From my dear native land ! Ah, foolish maid !

Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade  
 Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields !  
 To one so friendless the clear freshet yields  
 A bitter coolness ; the ripe grape is sour :  
 Yet I would have, great gods ! but one short hour  
 Of native air—let me but die at home.”

Endymion to heaven's airy dome  
 Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,  
 When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he bows  
 His head through thorny-green entanglement                   41  
 Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,  
 Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

“ Is no one near to help me ? No fair dawn  
 Of life from charitable voice ? No sweet saying  
 To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing ?  
 No hand to toy with mine ? No lips so sweet  
 That I may worship them ? No eyelids meet  
 To twinkle on my bosom ? No one dies  
 Before me, till from these enslaving eyes                   50  
 Redemption sparkles !—I am sad and lost.”



Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost  
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,  
Warm mountaineer ! for canst thou only bear  
A woman's sigh alone and in distress ?  
See not her charms ! Is Phœbe passionless ?  
Phœbe is fairer far—O gaze no more :—  
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,  
Behold her panting in the forest grass !  
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass  
For tenderness the arms so idly lain  
Amongst them ? Feelest not a kindred pain,  
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search  
After some warm delight, that seems to perch  
Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond  
Their upper lids ?—Hist !

60

“ O for Hermes' wand,  
To touch this flower into human shape !  
That woodland Hyacinthus could escape  
From his green prison, and here kneeling down  
Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown !  
Ah me, how I could love !—My soul doth melt

70

For the unhappy youth—Love ! I have felt  
So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender  
To what my own full thoughts had made too tender,  
That but for tears my life had fled away !—  
Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,  
And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,  
There is no lightning, no authentic dew  
But in the eye of love : there's not a sound,                   80  
Melodious howsoever, can confound  
The heavens and earth in one to such a death  
As doth the voice of love : there's not a breath  
Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,  
Till it has panted round, and stolen a share  
Of passion from the heart ! ”—

## Upon a bough

He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now  
Thirst for another love : O impious,  
That he can even dream upon it thus !—                   90  
Thought he, “ Why am I not as are the dead,  
Since to a woe like this I have been led  
Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous sea ?

Goddess ! I love thee not the less : from thee  
 By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—  
 While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—  
 I have a triple soul ! O fond pretence—  
 For both, for both my love is so immense,  
 I feel my heart is cut in twain for them.”

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain. 100  
 The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see  
 Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.  
 He sprang from his green covert : there she lay,  
 Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay ;  
 With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes  
 Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.  
 “ Fair damsel, pity me ! forgive that I  
 Thus violate thy bower's sanctity !  
 O pardon me, for I am full of grief—  
 Grief born of thee, young angel ! fairest thief ! 110  
 Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith  
 I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith  
 Thou art my executioner, and I feel  
 Loving and hatred, misery and weal,

Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,  
And all my story that much passion slew me ;  
Do smile upon the evening of my days :  
And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze,  
Be thou my nurse ; and let me understand  
How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.—

120

Dost weep for me ? Then should I be content.  
Scowl on, ye fates ! until the firmament  
Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth  
Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth  
Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst  
To meet oblivion."—As her heart would burst  
The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied :  
“ Why must such desolation betide  
As that thou speakest of ? Are not these green nooks  
Empty of all misfortune ? Do the brooks  
Utter a gorgon voice ? Does yonder thrush,  
Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush  
About the dewy forest, whisper tales ?—  
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails  
Will slime the rose to night. Though if thou wilt,  
Methinks 'twould be a guilt—a very guilt—

130

Not to companion thee, and sigh away  
 The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of day ! ”  
 “ Dear lady,” said Endymion, “ ’tis past :  
 I love thee ! and my days can never last. 140  
 That I may pass in patience still speak :  
 Let me have music dying, and I seek  
 No more delight—I bid adieu to all.  
 Didst thou not after other climates call,  
 And murmur about Indian streams ? ”—Then she,  
 Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,  
 For pity sang this roundelay—

“ O Sorrow,  
 Why dost borrow  
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips ?— 150  
 To give maiden blushes  
 To the white rose bushes ?  
 Or is it 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, 160  
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, 170  
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 :                   180  
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-lily cups with tears  
Cold as my fears.

“ Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,                   190  
I sat aweeping : 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—

200

’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 !

210

“ Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,

Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,

With sidelong laughing ;

And little rills of crimson wine imbrued

His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white





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 ! ’

240

“ 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.

250

“ Mounted on panthers’ furs and lions’ manes,  
From rear to van they scour about the plains ;



“ 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. 280

“ 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, 290  
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 gazed 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.

At last he said : “ Poor lady, how thus long

300

Have I been able to endure that voice ?  
 Fair Melody ! kind Syren ! I've no choice ;  
 I must be thy sad servant evermore :  
 I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.

Alas, I must not think—by Phœbe, no !  
 Let me not think, soft Angel ! shall it be so ?  
 Say, beautifullest, shall I never think ?

O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink  
 Of recollection ! make my watchful care  
 Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair !

310

Do gently murder half my soul, and I  
 Shall feel the other half so utterly !—  
 I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth ;  
 O let it blush so ever ! let it soothe



One moment from his home : only the sward  
He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward  
Swifter than sight was gone—even before  
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore 340  
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear  
Above the crystal circlings white and clear ;  
And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,  
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—  
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,  
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.  
The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame  
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame  
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew,  
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew 350  
Exhal'd to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,  
Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,  
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,  
The buoyant life of song can floating be  
Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.—  
Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd ?  
This is the giddy pair, and I must spread  
Wide pinions to keep here ; nor do I dread

Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance  
 Precipitous : I have beneath my glance 360  
 Those towering horses and their mournful freight.  
 Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await  
 Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid ?—  
 There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade  
 From some approaching wonder, and behold  
 Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils bold  
 Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,  
 Dying to embers from their native fire !

There curl'd a purple mist around them ; soon,  
 It seem'd as when around the pale new moon 370  
 Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow :  
 'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow.  
 For the first time, since he came nigh dead born  
 From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn  
 Had he left more forlorn ; for the first time,  
 He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—  
 Because into his depth Cimmerian  
 There came a dream, shewing how a young man,



Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin,  
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win **380**  
An immortality, and how espouse  
Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.  
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,  
That he might at the threshold one hour wait  
To hear the marriage melodies, and then  
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.  
His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,  
Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst,  
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought ;  
And scarcely for one moment could be caught **390**  
His sluggish form reposing motionless.  
Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress  
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look  
Athwart the shallows of a river nook  
To catch a glance at silver throated eels,—  
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals  
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,  
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale  
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are 400  
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop  
Their full-veined ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop ;  
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread  
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—  
And on those pinions, level in mid air,  
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.  
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle  
Upon a calm sea drifting : and meanwhile  
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold ! he walks  
On heaven's pavement ; brotherly he talks 410  
To divine powers : from his hand full fain  
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain :  
He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow,  
And asketh where the golden apples grow :  
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,  
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield  
A Jovian thunderbolt : arch Hebe brings  
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings  
And tantalizes long ; at last he drinks,  
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks, 420

Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.  
 He blows a bugle,—an ethereal band  
 Are visible above : the Seasons four,—  
 Green-kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store  
 In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,  
 Join dance with shadowy Hours ; while still the blast,  
 In swells unmitigated, still doth last  
 To sway their floating morris. “ Whose is this ?  
 Whose bugle ? ” he inquires : they smile—“ O Dis !  
 Why is this mortal here ? Dost thou not know      430  
 Its mistress' lips ? Not thou ?—'Tis Dian's : lo !  
 She rises crescented ! ” He looks, 'tis she,  
 His very goddess : good-bye earth, and sea,  
 And air, and pains, and care, and suffering ;  
 Good-bye to all but love ! Then doth he spring  
 Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'erhead,  
 Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,  
 Beheld awake his very dream : the gods  
 Stood smiling ; merry Hebe laughs and nods ;  
 And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.      440  
 O state perplexing ! On the pinion bed,

Too well awake, he feels the panting side  
Of his delicious lady. He who died  
For soaring too audacious in the sun,  
Where that same treacherous wax began to run,  
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.  
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,  
To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way—  
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day!  
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow, 450  
He could not help but kiss her : then he grew  
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save  
Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd ; and so 'gan crave  
Forgiveness : yet he turn'd once more to look  
At the sweet sleeper,—all his soul was shook,—  
She press'd his hand in slumber ; so once more  
He could not help but kiss her and adore.  
At this the shadow wept, melting away.  
The Latmian started up : “ Bright goddess, stay !  
Search my most hidden breast ! By truth's own tongue,  
I have no dædale heart : why is it wrung 461  
To desperation ? Is there nought for me,  
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery ? ”

---

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses :  
Her dawning love-look rapt Endymion blesses  
With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawned from underneath.  
“ Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe  
This murky phantasm ! thou contented seem'st  
Pillow'd in lovely idleness, nor dream'st  
What horrors may discomfort thee and me. 470  
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-treachery !—  
Yet did she merely weep—her gentle soul  
Hath no revenge in it : as it is whole  
In tenderness, would I were whole in love !  
Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,  
Even when I feel as true as innocence ?  
I do, I do.—What is this soul then ? Whence  
Came it ? It does not seem my own, and I  
Have no self-passion or identity.  
Some fearful end must be : where, where is it ? 480  
By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit  
Alone about the dark—Forgive me, sweet :  
Shall we away ? ” He rous'd the steeds : they beat  
Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,  
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow,  
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe  
In the dusk heavens silvery, when they  
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.  
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange— 490  
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,  
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof  
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,  
So witless of their doom, that verily  
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to see ;  
Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or griev'd, or toy'd—  
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy'd.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,  
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,  
No bigger than an unobserved star, 500  
Or tiny point of fairy scymetar ;  
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie  
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously  
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.  
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,  
While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd,

To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd  
This beauty in its birth—Despair ! despair !  
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare  
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her wrist ;  
It melted from his grasp : her hand he kiss'd,           511  
And, horror ! kiss'd his own—he was alone.  
Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then  
Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,

Beyond the seeming confines of the space  
Made for the soul to wander in and trace  
Its own existence, of remotest glooms.  
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs  
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce           520  
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce  
Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart :  
And in these regions many a venom'd dart  
At random flies ; they are the proper home  
Of every ill : the man is yet to come  
Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.  
But few have ever felt how calm and well

Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.  
There anguish does not sting ; nor pleasure pall :  
Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate, 530  
Yet all is still within and desolate.  
Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear  
No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier  
The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none  
Who strive therefore : on the sudden it is won.  
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,  
Then it is free to him ; and from an urn,  
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—  
Young Semele such richness never quaft  
In her maternal longing. Happy gloom ! 540  
Dark Paradise ! where pale becomes the bloom  
Of health by due ; where silence dreariest  
Is most articulate ; where hopes infest ;  
Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep  
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.  
O happy spirit-home ! O wondrous soul !  
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole  
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian !  
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,



Hast thou felt so content : a grievous feud 550  
 Hath let thee to this Cave of Quietude.  
 Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne  
 With dangerous speed : and so he did not mourn  
 Because he knew not whither he was going.  
 So happy was he, not the aerial blowing  
 Of trumpets at clear parley from the east  
 Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.  
 They stung the feather'd horse : with fierce alarm  
 He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm  
 Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd 560  
 A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,—  
 And silvery was its passing : voices sweet  
 Warbling the while as if to lull and greet  
 The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,  
 While past the vision went in bright array.

“ Who, who from Dian's feast would be away ?  
 For all the golden bowers of the day  
 Are empty left ? Who, who away would be  
 From Cynthia's wedding and festivity ?  
 Not Hesperus : lo ! upon his silver wings 570

He leans away for highest heaven and sings,  
 Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !—  
 Ah, Zephyrus ! art here, and Flora too !  
 Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,  
 Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,  
 Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill

Your baskets high

With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,  
 Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,  
 Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme ;                   580  
 Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,  
 All gather'd in the dewy morning : hie

Away ! fly, fly !—

Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,  
 Aquarius ! to whom king Jove has given  
 Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,  
 Two fan-like fountains,—thine illuminings

For Dian play :

Dissolve the frozen purity of air ;  
 Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare                   590  
 Shew cold through watery pinions ; make more bright  
 The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night :

Haste, haste away !—

Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see !  
 And of the Bear has Pollux mastery :  
 A third is in the race ! who is the third,  
 Speeding away swift as the eagle bird ?

The ramping Centaur !

The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce !  
 The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce  
 Some enemy : far forth his bow is bent  
 Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

600

Pale unrelentor,

When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.—  
 Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying  
 So timidly among the stars : come hither !  
 Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither

They all are going.

Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,  
 Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.  
 Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral :  
 Ye shall for ever live and love, for all

610

Thy tears are flowing.—

By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo !—”

More

Endymion heard not : down his steed him bore,  
Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.  
“ Alas ! ” said he, “ were I but always borne  
Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn  
A path in hell, for ever would I bless 621  
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness  
For my own sullen conquering : to him  
Who lives beyond earth’s boundary, grief is dim,  
Sorrow is but a shadow : now I see  
The grass ; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me !  
It is thy voice—divinest ! Where ?—who ? who  
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew ?  
Behold upon this happy earth we are ;  
Let us ay love each other ; let us fare 630  
On forest-fruits, and never, never go  
Among the abodes of mortals here below,  
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny !  
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,

But with thy beauty will I deaden it.  
Where didst thou melt too ? By thee will I sit  
For ever : let our fate stop here—a kid  
I on this spot will offer : Pan will bid  
Us live in peace, in love and peace among  
His forest wildernesses. I have clung 640  
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen  
Or felt but a great dream ! O I have been  
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,  
Against all elements, against the tie  
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms  
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs  
Of heroes gone ! Against his proper glory  
Has my own soul conspired : so my story  
Will I to children utter, and repent.  
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent 650  
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,  
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here,  
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast  
My life from too thin breathing : gone and past  
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell !  
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell

Of visionary seas ! No, never more  
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore  
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.  
Adieu, my daintiest Dream ! although so vast      660  
My love is still for thee. The hour may come  
When we shall meet in pure elysium.  
On earth I may not love thee ; and therefore  
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store  
All through the teeming year : so thou wilt shine  
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,  
And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss !  
My river-lily bud ! one human kiss !  
One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,  
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,      670  
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood !  
Whither didst melt ? Ah, what of that !—all good  
We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,  
Where shall our dwelling be ? Under the brow  
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun  
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none ;  
And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,  
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew ?

O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place ;  
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace                   680  
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd :  
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,  
And by another, in deep dell below,  
See, through the trees, a little river go  
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.  
Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,  
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—  
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,  
And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag :  
Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,                         690  
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,  
When it shall please thee in our quiet home  
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak ;  
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—  
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,  
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill  
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,  
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.  
Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,  
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.                   700

Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,  
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.  
I will entice this crystal rill to trace  
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.  
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire ;  
And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre ;  
To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear ;  
To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,  
That I may see thy beauty through the night ;  
To Flora, and a nightingale shall light 710  
Tame on thy finger ; to the River-gods,  
And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods  
Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.  
Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness !  
Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be  
'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee :  
Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak  
Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,  
Trembling or stedfastness to this same voice,  
And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice : 720  
And that affectionate light, those diamond things,  
Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,



Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.  
 Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure ?  
 O that I could not doubt ? ”

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear  
 His briar'd path to some tranquillity.  
 It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,  
 And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow ;      730  
 Answering thus, just as the golden morrow  
 Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east :  
 “ O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd,  
 Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away.  
 Young feather'd tyrant ! by a swift decay  
 Wilt thou devote this body to the earth :  
 And I do think that at my very birth  
 I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly ;  
 For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,  
 With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.      740  
 Art thou not cruel ? Ever have I striven  
 To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do !  
 When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew

Favour from thee, and so I gave and gave  
To the void air, bidding them find out love :  
But when I came to feel how far above  
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,  
All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,  
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—  
Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,       750  
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,  
And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers,  
Am I not cruelly wrong'd ? Believe, believe  
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave  
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,  
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife !  
I may not be thy love : I am forbidden—  
Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, chidden,  
By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.  
Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went : henceforth       760  
Ask me no more ! I may not utter it,  
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit  
Ourselves at once to vengeance ; we might die ;  
We might embrace and die : voluptuous thought !

Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught  
 In trammels of perverse deliciousness.  
 No, no, that shall not be : thee will I bless,  
 And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word return'd : both lovelorn, silent, wan,                   **770**  
 Into the vallies green together went.  
 Far wandering, they were perforce content  
 To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree ;  
 Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily  
 Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion ! unhappy ! it nigh grieves  
 Me to behold thee thus in last extreme :  
 Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem  
 Truth the best music in a first-born song.  
 Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long,                   **780**  
 And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me ?  
 Yes, moonlight Emperor ! felicity  
 Has been thy meed for many thousand years ;

Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,  
Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester ;—  
Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir

His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse  
Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls  
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays 790  
Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.  
A little onward ran the very stream  
By which he took his first soft poppy dream ;  
And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant  
A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent  
His skill in little stars. The teeming tree  
Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery,  
But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope  
Up which he had not fear'd the antelope ;  
And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade 800  
He had not with his tamed leopards play'd.  
Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,  
Fly in the air where his had never been—  
And yet he knew it not.

O treachery !

Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye  
With all his sorrowing ? He sees her not.  
But who so stares on him ? His sister sure !  
Peona of the woods !—Can she endure—  
Impossible—how dearly they embrace !  
His lady smiles ; delight is in her face ;  
It is no treachery.

810

“ Dear brother mine !

Endymion, weep not so ! Why shouldst thou pine  
When all great Latmos so exalt wilt be ?  
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly ;  
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.  
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store  
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.  
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,  
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.  
Be happy both of you ! for I will pull  
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.  
Pan’s holy priest for young Endymion calls

820

And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame,  
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame  
To see ye thus,—not very, very sad ?  
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad :  
O feel as if it were a common day ;  
Free-voic'd as one who never was away. 830

No tongue shall ask, whence come ye ? but ye shall  
Be gods of your own rest imperial.  
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry  
Into the hours that have pass'd us by,  
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.  
O Hermes ! on this very night will be  
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light ;  
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight  
Good visions in the air,—whence will befall,  
As say these sages, health perpetual 840

To shepherds and their flocks ; and furthermore,  
In Dian's face they read the gentle lore :  
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.  
Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.  
Many upon thy death have ditties made ;  
And many, even now, their foreheads shade

With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.  
New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,  
And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows.  
Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse **850**  
This wayward brother to his rightful joys !  
His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise  
His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,  
To lure—Endymion, dear brother, say  
What ails thee ? ” He could bear no more, and so  
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,  
And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said :  
“ I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid !  
My only visitor ! not ignorant though,  
That those deceptions which for pleasure go **860**  
'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be :  
But there are higher ones I may not see,  
If impiously an earthly realm I take.  
Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake  
Night after night, and day by day, until  
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.  
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me  
More happy than betides mortality.

A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,  
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave 870  
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.  
Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well ;  
For to thy tongue will I all health confide.  
And, for my sake, let this young maid abide  
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,  
Peona, mayst return to me. I own  
This may sound strangely : but when, dearest girl,  
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl  
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair !  
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share 880  
This sister's love with me ? " Like one resign'd  
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind  
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown :  
" Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,  
Of jubilee to Dian :—truth I heard !  
Well then, I see there is no little bird,  
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.  
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,  
Behold I find it ! so exalted too !  
So after my own heart ! I knew, I knew 890



There was a place untenanted in it :  
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,  
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.  
With sanest lips I vow me to the number  
Of Dian's sisterhood ; and, kind lady,  
With thy good help, this very night shall see  
My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create  
His own particular fright, so these three felt :  
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt 900  
To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine  
After a little sleep : or when in mine  
Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends  
Who know him not. Each diligently bends  
Towards common thoughts and things for very fear ;  
Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,  
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,  
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow  
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last  
Endymion said : " Are not our fates all cast ? 910

Why stand we here ? Adieu, ye tender pair !  
Adieu ! ” Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,  
Walk’d dizzily away. Pained and hot  
His eyes went after them, until they got  
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,  
In one swift moment, would what then he saw  
Engulph for ever. “ Stay ! ” he cried, “ ah, stay !  
Turn, damsels ! hist ! one word I have to say :  
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.

It is a thing I dote on : so I’d fain, 920  
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair  
Into those holy groves, that silent are  
Behind great Dian’s temple. I’ll be yon,  
At vesper’s earliest twinkle—they are gone—  
But once, once, once again—” At this he press’d  
His hands against his face, and then did rest  
His head upon a mossy hillock green,  
And so remain’d as he a corpse had been  
All the long day ; save when he scanty lifted  
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted 930  
With the slow move of time,—sluggish and weary  
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,

Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose,  
And, slowly as that very river flows,  
Walk'd towards the temple grove with this lament :  
“ Why such a golden eve ? The breeze is sent  
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall  
Before the serene father of them all  
Bows down his summer head below the west.  
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,           940  
But at the setting I must bid adieu  
To her for the last time. Night will strew  
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,  
And with them shall I die ; nor much it grieves  
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.  
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord  
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,  
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses ;  
My Kingdom's at its death, and just it is  
That I should die with it : so in all this           950  
We miscal grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,  
What is there to plain of ? By Titan's foe  
I am but rightly serv'd.” So saying, he  
Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee

Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,  
As though they jests had been : nor had he done  
His laugh at nature's holy countenance,  
Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance,  
And then his tongue with sober seemlihed  
Gave utterance as he entered : " Ha ! " I said, 960  
" King of the butterflies ; but by this gloom,  
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,  
This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,  
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,  
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head  
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed  
Myself to things of light from infancy ;  
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,  
Is sure enough to make a mortal man  
Grow impious." So he inwardly began 970  
On things for which no wording can be found ;  
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd  
Beyond the reach of music : for the choir  
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar  
Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull  
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,

Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.  
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,  
Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight  
By chilly finger'd spring. " Unhappy wight !           980  
Endymion ! " said Peona, " we are here !  
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier ? "  
Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand  
Press'd, saying : " Sister, I would have command,  
If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."  
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate  
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,  
To Endymion's amaze : " By Cupid's dove,  
And so thou shalt ! and by the lily truth  
Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth ! "           990  
And as she spake, into her face there came  
Light, as reflected from a silver flame :  
Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display  
Full golden ; in her eyes a brighter day  
Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld  
Phoebe, his passion ! joyous she upheld  
Her lucid bow, continuing thus ; " Drear, drear  
Has our delaying been ; but foolish fear

Withheld me first ; and then decrees of fate ;  
And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state      1000  
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change  
Be spiritualiz'd. Peona, we shall range  
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be  
As was thy cradle ; hither shalt thou flee  
To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright  
Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night :  
Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown  
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.  
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,  
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,      1010  
They vanish'd far away !—Peona went  
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.

THE END.



## NOTES

[Reference to other parts of the same book of the poem is made simply by the number of the lines (counted as in the first edition); to other books by the number of the book (in Roman figures) and the line (e. g. IV. 479).]

### BOOK I

1. This famous line did not reach its perfect form at one effort. Henry Stephens, who shared Keats's rooms in London for a time, has left on record that an earlier version was—

A thing of beauty is a constant joy :

When Keats read this over Stephens said : ' It has the true ring, but is wanting in some way.' A little later Keats burst out with the line as we have it, and asked what Stephens thought of it now. ' It will live for ever ' was his friend's reply. (See Colvin, *Life of Keats*, p. 176.)

63. *Latmos* : a mountain on the south-west coast of Asia Minor, not far from the island of Samos.

68 ff. In view of the unmistakable evidence of allegorical meaning soon to be met with, it is not unlikely that some significance is intended by the reference to the lost lambs. If so it is probably a parable of the fate of some of Keats's own poems. There were many lambs in the white flock of his first published volume that had been worried by the ' angry wolves ' or ' pards with prying heads ' who howled in the pages of the *Eclectic Review* and other periodicals at Leigh Hunt and all who were suspected of being his friends. But there were other poems that he did not publish, some perhaps that had not even been put into writing, and these were never (in his lifetime, at any rate) gathered into the pens that held the main flock. (Cf. the sonnet *When I have fears that I may cease to be*, written in January 1818, before *Endymion* appeared, but not published during Keats's lifetime.) Keats felt that these poems had not perished, but had joined the herds of



Pan, and that the gain to him was great, for they lived on in his mind as beautiful ideals, unmarred by foolish or unfriendly criticism. Many a poet must have had a similar feeling about his unpublished poems.

110. *A troop of little children* : it is the childlike sense of wonder and delight in the beauty of the world that helps to bring about a revival of poetic feeling such as that which was in progress when Keats was writing.

141. *Apollo*, banished for a time from Olympus, spent nine years on earth as the herdsman of Admetus. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ii. 679.

158. *Leda's love* : Jupiter in the form of a swan.

170. *Ganymede*, the cup-bearer of Jove. See Ovid, *Metam.* x. 155 sq.

192. *chase* : the MS. reads *chace*, as in l. 532.

205-6. *sounds forlorn . . . Triton's horn* : a reminiscence of Wordsworth's sonnet, *The world is too much with us*.

213. *Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan* : a clear hint of the meaning of the whole passage. The revival of interest in and reverence for nature was one of the chief elements of the new romantic movement.

232 ff. This *Hymn to Pan* is an extraordinarily beautiful piece of work for a poet not quite twenty-two years of age. Unfortunately when Keats read it to Wordsworth his only comment was—'A very pretty piece of paganism'. Wordsworth seems to have forgotten that a few years earlier he had declared that he would 'rather be a Pagan suckled in a creed outworn' if only he might have glimpses of the beauty and mystery of nature, which this Hymn celebrates.

263. *fawn* : a mistake for *faun*.

283. *hunter* : the MS., and most modern editions, read *huntsmen*.

328. When Hyacinthus was playing at quoits with Apollo, Zephyrus blew the quoit as it left the hand of Apollo so that it struck Hyacinthus, and it killed him. Apollo was grieved, and turned him into a flower. See Ovid, *Metam.* x. 182 sq.

338. *Niobe* : the story of the slaying of her children by Apollo is told in Ovid, *Metam.* vi. 146 sq.

347. *Argonauts*: a reference to Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, ii. 674 sq., where he describes the wonder of the Argonauts at the sight of Apollo rising over the sea.

406. *that old tale Arabian*: Mr. Buxton Forman suggests that the allusion is to the Eldest Lady's Story in *The Porter and the Three Ladies of Bagdad*. Keats took much interest in the *Arabian Nights*. In this story the inhabitants of a certain city have been turned into black stones for preferring fire worship to Mahommedanism.

408. *Peona*: the name may be a modification of Pæon, who is mentioned in Lemprière's *Dictionary* as one of the sons of Endymion. But another Pæon appears in Ovid, *Metam.* xv. 535; and in the *Faerie Queene*, IV. ix. 3, we meet with a Pæana.

411. The fact that there is no line to rhyme with this one is due to a somewhat drastic rewriting of the passage as it first stood in the MS. Eleven lines that originally followed l. 441 have also been sacrificed, and in several other parts of this book lines have been excised. It seems that Keats was unwilling to multiply details that had no bearing on the allegory.

475-88. This passage pictures the reaction that follows upon the excitement and enthusiasm roused by a first vision of the ideal. The vision enralls the soul for a time, but soon there comes a feeling that it is beyond our reach, and that it is futile to pursue it. The lines echo the fluctuating hopes and doubts that agitated Keats after he had begun to realize the beauty of poetry. He may even have puzzled his sister Fanny by trying to explain his ideas to her, and have been touched by her relief when he decided (for the moment) to give them up and to learn to be a doctor.

495. *Dryope* had taken her little son into a wood to gather flowers, but was changed into a lotus tree. The story is told in Ovid, *Metam.* ix. 331 sq.

512. *Haply, thou hast seen Dian*: Peona by her instinctive sympathy almost touches the actual truth. It is a long time before Endymion gets so near to it.

540 ff. The first appearance of the vision to Endymion; a picturesque rendering of the way in which Keats first became conscious that he was called to be a poet.

544. *like a crescent moon* : the poet sees his ideal reflected in many aspects of nature.

550. *lighten* : a mistake for *tighten*. Keats did not always cross his t's.

553. *the zodiac-lion* : it is the height of summer when the sun is in the constellation of Leo. The note of time may be a reminiscence of the period when this revelation first came to Keats.

555. *ditamy* : wild marjoram. The usual spelling is *dittany*.

563. *his rod* : the caduceus, the symbol and instrument of the power of Mercury (Hermes). Cf. IV. 67, 338.

586. *imaginary pinions* : the 'wings of imagination' on which he felt himself uplifted during this memorable experience. Cf. the winged steeds in IV. 345.

591. The appearance of the moon suggests that after a preliminary period of mental exaltation, during which he was disturbed and excited and somewhat confused (see ll. 565-84), he became conscious of a clearer and more definite ideal.

601. The moon disappears, and soon afterwards the goddess herself comes down. We may take this to mean that the recognition of the beauty of poetry becomes more and more definite until it makes a personal appeal which arouses an intense emotional response on the part of the poet.

758-9. *Then wherefore sully, &c.* The kind of protest that Keats would often have had to encounter from friends who wished him to live a sensible, practical life, and to put aside the dream of becoming a poet. The 'conflicting of shame and ruth' that was to be seen on Endymion's face suggests how much Keats suffered from this opposition.

770. Endymion attempts to explain the change that has come about in his outlook upon life. The passage (to l. 843) is an important one, not so far as the story is concerned, but for the understanding of what it means. The earlier lines tell of—

(a) a general desire to win fame (770-1) ;

(b) the breaking up of the plan of life by which this was to have been achieved (771-5) ;

(c) the survival of the hope in spite of the destruction of the earlier plan (775-7).

The next few lines represent the final result of several attempts

to express what Keats wanted to say. Mr. Buxton Forman tells us that in the MS. the passage originally read as follows :

Wherein lies happiness ? In that which beck  
Our ready minds to blending pleasureable :  
And that delight is the most treasureable  
That makes the richest Alchymy. Behold  
The clear Religion of Heaven ! &c.

Various changes were made in it, but it was only when the poem was passing through the press that Keats succeeded in putting it into a form that satisfied him. In the letter (dated 30th January 1818) in which he sends the lines in their final shape to John Taylor, his publisher, he says :

‘ The whole thing must, I think, have appeared to you, who are a consecutive man, as a thing almost of mere words, but I assure you that, when I wrote it, it was a regular stepping stone of the Imagination towards a truth. My having written that argument will perhaps be of the greatest service to me of anything I ever did. It set before me the gradations of happiness, even like a kind of pleasure thermometer, and is my first step towards the chief attempt in the drama.’

These words of Keats put it beyond question that the poem is a symbolical treatment of an intellectual and emotional experience. They may not carry us very far in the way of interpretation, but they give us a definite starting-point, and put out of court the idea that the poem is a mere fantasy. The degrees of the ‘ pleasure thermometer ’ of which he speaks are marked with reasonable clearness. They begin with the power to enjoy the beauty of nature (782-7) ; then pass on to responsiveness to the spirit of the romantic past (788-95), which is a critical point on the scale (796-8). Above this come the degrees (the word is used in l. 800) which lead on to complete forgetfulness of self—friendship, and, at the very top of the scale, love (789-808).

791. *were* : the MS. has *where*. The mistake was not noticed in correcting the proof.

850. The MS. reads *and* for *an*. Accepting the printed version as correct, the passage (844-50) appears to mean that if earthly love has power to lift men above ambition, any striving after fame must indeed seem trivial to Endymion, who has set before

himself the hope of winning, not only the love of his unknown goddess, but the goddess herself. Line 851 ('Look not so wilder'd') is a quaint acknowledgement that the argument is not very clearly stated. It may also be a reminiscence of the bewildered looks of some of Keats's friends, or of his young sister, as they listened to his eager attempts to expound his new enthusiasm for the poetic life.

863. *Latona* (Leto) was the mother of Apollo and Artemis (Diana). Endymion knows the place, but does not recognize its significance for him, since he does not know that the goddess of his visions is Diana herself. The idea is that a poet comes only by slow degrees to a full understanding of the ideal towards which he is striving; and that while conscious of various influences acting upon him he does not perceive their full significance. For other suggestions of the same idea see II. 301, 694; III. 144; IV. 923.

892. The readiness with which Endymion responds to the suggestions that come to him is a point that is repeatedly emphasized. He was quite ready to recognize that some divine power was manifesting itself in the magic bed of flowers (I. 554); here, he is fain to follow the Cupid; he is listening before the voice calls to him from the cave (I. 961). As the story proceeds the response is even more quick. He is eager in following the golden butterfly—'It seem'd he flew' (II. 70); when told to descend 'Into the sparry hollows of the world' he did not 'contend One moment in reflection', but 'fled Into the fearful deep' (II. 205, 216-18); when the path that he was following ended 'Abrupt in middle air' he flung himself 'Without one impious word' upon the eagle that came to carry him away (II. 655, 661). In a similar spirit he is quick to follow the directions of Glaucus (III. 759); when the winged horses spring from the ground he at once entrusts himself and his companion to their care (IV. 347); and the final consummation is reached when he explicitly declares himself ready to submit entirely to the will of heaven (IV. 984).

In all these instances Keats is showing us, by his usual method of concrete images, what he regards as the real meaning of poetic inspiration. There is the impulse or suggestion that appears to

come from some source outside of the poet himself, but, if any result is to follow, there must also be, on the part of the poet, a quickness to perceive and a readiness to respond to the promptings that come to him.

896. The second appearance of the goddess. It is clearer and more convincing than the first.

941. *scene*: the MS. has *scene* (screen), and Keats's own copy of the poem in the Hampstead Library has the correction written in the margin.

964. The third appearance of the goddess. It marks a further advance, for this time Endymion hears a voice calling him.

967. *Delos*, the island in the Aegean where Apollo and Diana were born (see l. 863).

976. An echo of Milton's *Il Penseroso*.

## BOOK II

13. *close*: Woodhouse notes, apparently on the authority of Keats himself, that the word here means 'embrace'.

31. *Hero*, in *Much Ado about Nothing*; *Imogen*, in *Cymbeline*.

32. *Pastorella*, in the *Faerie Queene*, Book VI.

39. *chaffing*: or *chafing* as we should spell it now.

54-131. It has been shown in the Introduction (pp. xxvii ff.) that the purpose of this book is to represent how a poet may prepare himself for his work by making a thorough study of the poetry of former ages. If this view be correct the story of the bud, the butterfly, and the nymph is probably a parable of the way in which Keats was led to take an interest in classical literature, and to see that a study of it would help to fit him for the work of a poet. The meaning of the parable is probably too personal for us to be able to understand it fully, but it suggests an experience somewhat on the following lines. He was in a meditative mood, turning the pages, it may be, of some book of classical stories, such as Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, which, we are told, he almost learned by heart, when he came upon some legend (the bud) which drew his interest. He concentrated his attention upon it, and found it opening out in unexpected ways, and containing elements of interest and suggestion that he had never dreamed of. As he followed it up he was led into fresh and

unfamiliar regions of study, which proved to be full of beauty, though remote from the life of to-day. (The reference to Delphi, l. 83, is another hint of the direction in which we should look for the meaning of the passage.) At length he reached a point where for a short time he was at a loss to understand the meaning and purpose of what had happened. But soon the truth came to him as if he had heard it spoken aloud. The legend dropped out of sight, but in its place arose the consciousness that before he could hope to attain to his ideal a long and arduous course of study would have to be pursued: and we know how earnestly Keats gave himself to the study of Virgil and Ovid, Shakespeare and Milton, and other great writers.

75 ff. Dr. J. W. Mackail has suggested that this passage is in part a recollection of Keats's visit to Shanklin in April 1817, about the time when he began the poem; and that Canterbury, where he stayed a little later, prompted the reference to cathedrals in l. 627.

123-4. *on this day I've been thy guide*: these words make it evident that the butterfly had been changed into the nymph—a clear hint that the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid are part of what was in the poet's mind. Cf. ll. 607-28, and note.

132-8. The world goes on its trivial way unconscious of the fact that the poet has passed through a critical experience which will influence the rest of his life.

137. *as if [nor] good nor ill*: for the omission of the negative cf. l. 222.

138-64. A vivid sketch of the disappointment that Keats had felt after failing repeatedly to express in actual poems the inspiring visions conjured up by his imagination.

144. There is no rhyme corresponding to 'delight' at the end of this line. Mr. Buxton Forman notes that in the Draft the passage originally stood:

Whoso encamps  
His soul to take a city of delight  
O what a wretch is he: 'tis in his sight . . .

Then *'tis in his sight* was struck out in favour of *and when 'tis his*; and in the final MS. the want of a rhyme was not adjusted.

But this statement suggests that there was originally no line rhyming with *miss* in l. 146.

150. *pebble-head*: the MS. reads *pebble-bead*: *head* is no doubt a misprint that escaped detection, as the correction is made in Keats's own copy. (See Appendix II.)

165 ff. Yet the ideal is the only thing worth striving after. Again there is the appeal to Cynthia, and the delight in the beauty of the moon, though Endymion fails to recognize their identity with his 'thrice-seen love' (cf. I. 863). The idea suggested is that of the imperfect understanding that the youthful poet has of the ideal towards which he is striving.

222-6. A wonderfully concentrated description of classical poetry. For the omission of the initial negative cf. l. 137.

227-44. The imagery is well chosen to suggest the kind of beauty that belongs to the literature of classical times—brilliance as of gold, silver, sapphire, highly valued and admired, fixed and finished and enduring, but with no power of growth. The suggestion of remoteness in ll. 243-4 ('whose voices come But as the murmuring surge') is an excellent touch.

283. *caught*: the MS. has *raught* (reached). Cf. I. 867: 'with wings outraught'; and III. 862: 'not half raught'.

319. It is evident that the line should read—

O let me cool 't the zephyr-boughs among!

In the Draft the word 'among' is marked for transposition to the end of the line, but this was overlooked in writing out the finished copy and in correcting the proofs.

352-76. This passage, the meaning of which is not very clearly indicated, appears to suggest that the poet, feeling encouraged to continue the quest of his ideal, catches faint echoes of beautiful rhythm, and is in danger of being so entranced by his mere delight in the music and rhythm of language as to miss the deeper essentials of poetry. He is saved from this by a vision of 'elemental passion'—the emotional element in poetry, represented by the incident of Venus and Adonis.

377. If the above explanation is on the lines of what Keats meant then the 'swart abysm' represents the destruction of the true spirit of poetry when it allows itself to be dominated by



mere beauty of language and rhythm, and to lose touch with actual life. This forms the main subject of the third book, in which Keats draws a vivid picture of the fate that had overtaken English poetry when for a time it had fallen under the spell of this influence. Line 376 ('Vanish'd in elemental passion') is an anticipation of the situation which begins only in l. 383.

401. *tenting*: his knees parted, making a tent of the cover-lids (397).

437. The reading of the Draft—'the highest reach of human honor'—seems clearer than the line as printed.

444. *Ariadne*, after being deserted by Theseus, was beloved by Bacchus. The introduction of a number of references to classical mythology is in keeping with the allegorical significance of this book.

446-7. *Vertumnus* was a deity who presided over orchards, and after some difficulty won the affection of the goddess *Pomona*. See Ovid, *Metam.* xiv. 642 sq.

449. *Amalthea*, daughter of Melissus, king of Crete, is said to have fed Jupiter with goat's milk.

454. *the three Hesperides* guarded the golden apples which Juno had given to Jupiter. The garden in which they lived is said to have been near Mount Atlas in Africa. It is curious that Amalthea's horn and the ladies of the Hesperides are mentioned together in *Paradise Regained* (II. 356-7), and that the incident in which they appear (invented by Milton) takes place in Syria; manna is also mentioned a little earlier (l. 312). Prof. de Selincourt has pointed out several reminiscences of Milton in this part of the poem. See note on l. 693.

536. *love's*: the MS. reads *Love's* (Cupid's).

538. *quell*: evidently refers to Cupid's arrows; but there does not appear to be any close parallel to this use of the word.

542. *dyes*: the MS. reads *dies*.

594. *with unusual gladness*: the difficulty of these studies and the weariness resulting from prolonged application are lost sight of now that he has found a touch of living emotion in them, and he returns to them with fresh zest.

607-28. The allegory here is unusually plain. The description of the magic changes of the water is pointless nonsense until one

recognizes that it is intended to tell us how the study of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was part of the preparation that helped to make Keats a poet. The passage then fits into the symbolism of the book as a whole.

627. *Cathedrals* : see note on l. 75.

641. *mother Cybele* : the beauty of this passage has often been noted ; its significance in the allegory is not quite clear. Perhaps Cybele, as wife of Cronos and mother of the gods, is intended to represent the fount and source of all these legends in which the poet is now beginning to perceive a deeper meaning. See also III. 1004, and note.

654 ff. The abrupt ending of the diamond path may be intended to suggest that for the moment Keats could get no more help from the study of classical literature, and felt in despair. The coming of Jove's eagle represents some unexpected inspiration to which he surrenders himself immediately, and is rewarded by a fuller and more intimate revelation of the essential spirit of poetry than he has yet been permitted to enjoy.

660. In the original draft there was no eagle. The lines read :

To cloudborne Jove he bent : and there was tost  
 Into his grasping hands a silken cord  
 At which without a single impious word  
 He swung upon it off into the gloom,  
 Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,  
 Dropt like a fathoming plummet, down he fell  
 Through unknown things. . . .

and holding on to this cord he ' swung into the greenest cell of all '.

692. *Art a maid of the waters* : Endymion's highest conjecture is far below the truth. So, it is suggested, even the poet is unable at first to form an adequate conception of the full glory of the ideal which he is striving to reach. It may be noted that in Drayton's *Endimion and Phæbe*, the goddess, when she first comes to Endymion, describes herself as a nymph ' Begot by Pan on Isis sacred flood ' . (Hebel's reprint, p. 16.)

693. *shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters* : a reminiscence of ' scaly Triton's winding shell ' in *Comus*, l. 873. It is interesting to note that in the very next line Milton speaks of ' old soothsaying Glaucus' spell '.

750. *my kindest fair* : Mr. Buxton Forman notes that in a copy corrected by Keats (not the Hampstead copy) this is altered to *delicious fair*.

763. *lov'd Ida* : in the finished manuscript Keats has written *dov'd*, and this is the reading of most modern editions.

791. *Honour* : evidently a misprint. The MS. reads *the horror*, but *the* is struck out. The longer list of errata given in some copies of the first edition makes the correction, which is also noted in the margin of Keats's own copy in the Hampstead Library.

795. *veiled* : the MS. has *vailed* (lowered).

825-6. An anticipation of the central idea of the *Ode to Melancholy*.

840 is printed for 850, and the mistake was overlooked in reading the proofs.

878. *Alecto* was one of the Furies.

879. *Hermes' pipe*, with which he lulled the hundred-eyed Argos to sleep.

885. *arbour*, perhaps a mistake for *harbour*.

907. *Now I have tasted*, &c. See the account given of Keats by Henry Stephens, who lodged with him in 1816 when they were both medical students in London (Introduction, p. xxiv).

920 ff. The story of Arethusa is told in Ovid, *Metam.* v. 577 ff.

964-6. These lines as printed are spoken by Alpheus ; but in the MS., and in a printed copy revised by Keats, the whole passage, from *Cruel god* (955) to *cruel thing* (978) is given to Arethusa.

976. *eyes* : the Draft reads *eye*.

977. *thrush's* : the MS. reads *Thrushes* without an apostrophe, and the Draft *thrushes'*.

1017. *gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage*, whom he does not yet know to be Diana herself. Cf. l. 694. The revelation comes only at the end of the poem.

1019. *lovers* has no apostrophe in the MS., nor is the speech closed with marks of quotation.

## BOOK III

6. *through an idiot blink* : may mean 'with the imperfect outlook of an idiot' : but the expression is a strange one.

7. *Fire-branded foxes* : an allusion to one of Samson's exploits : see Judges xv. 4, 5. Lines 6-8 apparently mean that the people he is denouncing look out upon life in a narrow, unintelligent way, and watch with complacency the wanton destruction of what should have been of service to mankind.

20-1. *Like thunder clouds, &c.* This reads as if some definite allusion were intended, but it has not been identified. Prof. R. W. Chambers has suggested that *Chaldeans* may be used in the sense of *astrologers*, whose 'task' it would be to interpret the meaning of the thunders. The use of the word 'spake' in reference to the thunder seems to suggest some such task of interpretation.

41. At the end of this line Keats wrote in the original draft, 'Oxford Septr. 5.'

54. *a holier din* : Wordsworth used the expression 'the fervent din' for the singing in Bolton Abbey : *White Doe of Rylstone*, l. 55.

70. *Ocean bows to thee* : cf. IV. 96 : 'While the great waters are at ebb and flow.' There is a close relation between these passages in respect of the meaning that underlies them. See note on IV. 97, and Introduction, p. xxxvi.

71. *her* : the MS. reads *his*. The correction is made as an erratum in the first edition. In some copies it is the only one.

99. *madest Pluto bear thin element* : because in some legends Cynthia (Diana) is identified with Persephone, for whom Pluto came up from Hell to the surface of the earth in Sicily.

121-38. This passage is based upon some lines in Shakespeare's *Richard the Third* (I. iv. 24), in which Clarence is giving an account of his dream.

Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks ;  
 Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon ;  
 Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,  
 Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,  
 All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea :  
 Some lay in dead men's skulls ; and, in those holes

Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,  
 As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,  
 Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,  
 And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.

Jeffrey's comment upon Keats's adaptation was—'It comes of no ignoble lineage, nor shames its high descent.' On comparing the two passages it will be seen that Keats has throughout laid stress on the antiquity of the remains which Endymion found on the sea bottom, while Shakespeare does not refer at all to this aspect of them. Thus the 'great anchors' of Clarence's dream become 'old rusted anchors'; 'wedges of gold' are transformed into 'gold vase emboss'd With long-forgotten story'; and several things not found in the earlier passage, such as the 'mouldering scrolls, Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls Who first were on the earth', are introduced, all emphasizing the same point. Endymion was depressed at the sight of these things, and might even have died but for the cheering influence of Diana. What Keats appears to be suggesting is that mere antiquarianism exercises a deadening influence upon the spirit of poetry, and may destroy it if a higher inspiration does not come to the rescue.

198-213. The description of this cloak contains reminiscences of a passage in Drayton's *Man in the Moone*.

Endimion now forsakes

All the delights that shepherds doe prefer  
 and sets his mind so generally on her  
 that all neglected to the groves and springs  
 he followe's Phœbe . . .

her mantell . . .

From her straight shoulders carelessly that fell,  
 Now here, now there, now up and down that flew  
 Of sundry colours, wherin you might view  
 A sea that somewhat straytned by the land  
 Two furious tydes raise their ambitious hand  
 One gainst the other, warring in their pride . . .

Outragious tempest shipwracks overspred  
 All the rude *Neptune* . . .  
 And oft amongst the monsters of the mayne  
 their horrid foreheades through the billows strain

Into the vast aer, driving on their breasts  
the troubled waters that so ill digests  
Their sway.

203. In the original draft this line was followed by the line—  
Quicksand, and whirlpool, and deserted shore,

It was omitted, evidently by accident, from the transcription used by the printer, and the omission was not noticed until after the publication of the poem.

244. *that giant's arm*: Keats has drawn upon Ovid, *Metam.* xiii, xiv, for the story of Glaucus and Scylla. The first line of Book XIV reads—

Iamque Giganteis iniectam faucibus Aetnen . . .

The reference is to Typhoeus (cf. *Metam.* v. 346 sq.) or Typhon, who is sometimes identified with Enceladus.

287. *human*: the MS. has *humane*, which seems to be the true reading.

312. *Carian*: Caria is the district in the south-west of Asia Minor in which Latmos stands; so that Endymion is called 'the Latmian' or 'the Carian'.

320. The story of Glaucus is adapted from Ovid, *Metam.* xiii. 904 sq.

366. *Æthon snort his morning gold*: Æthon was one of the horses of the Sun. Cf. I. 552, *His snorting four*.

408-9. *where large Hercules wound up his story, &c.* Hercules died on Mount Oeta, on the eastern side of Greece; so the statement means that Glaucus pursued Scylla round the islands and shores of the Aegean Sea and as far south as Egypt.

417. *Ææa's isle*: the home of Circe.

429-30. *A net whose thraldom was more bliss, &c.* The ready submission of English poetry to the influence of the heroic couplet.

434. *An urn of tears*: Miss Amy Lowell (*Life of Keats*, i. 402) notes that Circe talks 'in a manner almost worthy of Pope'. Probably Keats was intentionally introducing a flavour of Pope's style to fit in with the purpose of this part of the story.

448-50. *stole So near . . . hadst never seen*: it is difficult to make any sense out of these lines. Keats may have intended Glaucus to say that if Circe had continued to exercise that kind

of fascination over him he would have remained indefinitely under her influence, but more intimate knowledge of her led to disillusionment, and so to his punishment. But the words as they stand hardly convey this, or indeed any, meaning.

455. *Who could resist?* In Ovid, Glaucus does resist, and rejects Circe's advances.

460-2. A further statement of the bondage of English poetry during the pseudo-classical period.

463. *Amphion's harp*: Amphion and Zethus were sons of Antiope, Zeus being their father. Amphion by his wonderful power as a musician helped to build the walls of Thebes. See also l. 1012.

498. *Bewitch'd me*: Wordsworth said that Pope 'bewitched the nation by his melody'. See Introduction, p. xlvii.

505. *tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, &c.*, an apt description of the tone of literary and political controversy in the age of Pope.

509-10. *Fierce, wan, And tyrannizing*: Pope's attitude to the literary world of his time.

514. *raven'd quick*: referring to the large demand for Pope's writings.

516-20. *Avenging, slow, &c.* This refers to the publication of *The Bathos, or Of the Art of Sinking in Poetry*, which appeared in March 1727-8, and caused no small disturbance in the world of letters, which was increased by the fear that worse was to follow. See Introduction, p. xliii, and Appendix I.

524. *She whisk'd, &c.* This second stage of the attack, much more serious than the threat which preceded it, refers to the *Dunciad*, which was published the May following the appearance of *The Bathos*. The names of the persons attacked were still represented by initials, as in *The Bathos*, but in March 1729 an enlarged edition was brought out, in which the names were given in full. It may be noted that the word *Avenging* (516), which has little or no meaning in relation to Circe, exactly fits Pope, who excused the bitterness of his satire on the ground that he had first been attacked.

527. *Shrieks, yells, &c.* This is no exaggerated description of the outcry that arose on the publication of the *Dunciad*.

534. *and so vanish'd*. The grotesque turn here given to the

story has no authority in any of the sources upon which Keats was drawing. But as an account of the effect of Pope's satire it is the simple truth. The minor poets of the day who were so scathingly treated in the *Dunciad* have disappeared from the realms of literature. Only those who have made a special study of the period have any knowledge of them.

540-57. From the prominence given to this episode of the elephant it would appear that some definite significance belongs to it, and it seems likely that Colley Cibber is the person intended.

Cibber had for many years been a target for Pope's spiteful shafts, and in his *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian* (1740), he made a good-humoured protest against this treatment.

'When I find my Name at length, in the Satyrical Works of our most celebrated living Author, I never look upon those Lines as Malice meant to me, (for he knows I never provok'd it) but Profit to himself: One of his points must be, to have many Readers: He considers that my Face and Name are more known than those of many thousands of more consequence in the kingdom: That therefore, right or wrong, a Lick at the *Laureat* will always be a sure Bait, *ad captandum vulgus*, to catch him little Readers.' (pp. 31-2.)

This gentle remonstrance having no effect, Cibber published, in July 1742, a pamphlet entitled *A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope, inquiring into the Motives that might induce him in his Satyrical Works to be so frequently fond of Mr. Cibber's name*. In the course of this pamphlet (p. 57) Cibber complains that Pope has mangled the passage quoted above, and goes on to say:

'Could it have lessen'd the Honour of your Understanding, to have taken this quiet Resentment of your frequent ill Usage in good part? Or had it not rather been a Mark of your Justice and Generosity, not to have pursued me with fresh Instances of your Ill-will upon it?'

Pope's reply was to dethrone Theobald from the position he had hitherto filled in the *Dunciad* as King of Dullness, and to promote Cibber to the vacant throne. This drew a fresh and sharper protest from Cibber, in a second pamphlet dated 9 January 1743-4, and entitled: *Another Occasional Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope, wherein the New Hero's Preferment to his Throne, in*



*the DUNCIAD, seems not to be Accepted. And the Author of that Poem His more rightful Claim to it, is Asserted.*

It is clear then that Cibber fits the character of the protester. Indications of some contemporary jest associating him with the elephant occur in one of the Martinus Scriblerus papers, entitled *Of the Poet Laureate* [reprinted in Elwin and Courthope's edition of Pope, vol. x, pp. 445-9]. It is dated 19 November 1729, but is more likely to have been written a year later, for Laurence Eusden, who had held the office of Poet Laureate since 1718, died on 27 September 1730, and it was during the following months that the choice of a successor agitated literary circles. In a passage professing to describe the rites and ceremonies anciently used at the installation of the Laureate it is said that he was conducted in pomp to the capitol of Rome, 'mounted on an elephant'. A little later the writer goes on to say that he apprehends two difficulties :

' One, of procuring an elephant ; the other of teaching the poet to ride him : Therefore I should imagine the next animal in size or dignity would do best ; either a mule or a large ass ; particularly if that noble one could be had, whose portraiture makes so great an ornament of the *Dunciad*. . . . Unless Mr. CIBBER be the man ; who may, with great propriety and beauty, ride on a dragon.'

There is a passage in Cibber's *Apology* (p. 277) that may have some bearing on the matter. Speaking of the way in which the Patentee of Drury Lane Theatre tried to attract the crowd he says :

' But in this Notion he kept no Medium ; for in my Memory, he carry'd it so far, that he was (some few Years before this time) actually dealing for an extraordinary large Elephant, at a certain Sum, for every Day he might think fit to shew the tractable Genius of that vast quiet Creature, in any Play or Farce, in the Theatre (then standing) in *Dorset-Garden*.'

In an anonymous pamphlet entitled *The Laureat : or the Right Side of COLLEY CIBBER, Esq;* (London, 1740), there is further reference to the elephant.

' Nay, his Majesty the Patentee (he says) was entering into a Contract, to introduce an Elephant on the Stage.—What a glorious

Sight would it have been to have beheld our *Laureate* mounted on the Back or *Proboscis* of this noble Creature, and thundring out from that Rostrum, Heroic Verses, or chaunting an Ode of his own composing.' (p. 61.)

It seems probable then that it is to Cibber that Keats is alluding in this passage.

573-603. The sarcastic tone of this not very poetical passage is probably intended to suggest the bitter way in which Pope jeered at his enemies.

641. *Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame*: the epithets are well chosen to express the effect of Pope's influence upon English poetry, as Keats regarded it.

647-8. *to quell One half of the witch*: the deliverance of Glaucus from the spell laid upon him by Circe represents the redemption of English poetry from the dominating influence of the pseudo-classical school. The scroll saved from the wreck (674) is the magic influence that quelled one-half of the witch; this appears to represent the revival of interest in the ballad which centred in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The scroll is the famous manuscript which Percy discovered—a fragment barely rescued from the wreckage of a great mass of early poetry that has perished. The other half of the influence is the power exercised by Endymion, whose help is essential if the redemption is to be accomplished (see ll. 714-15, 759 ff.). Endymion stands for the spirit and power of the new poetry without which the mere recovery of some of the old ballads would have been of no avail.

665-6. *O they had all been sav'd, &c.* Keats is saying that but for the blighting influence of the classical school much more of our older popular poetry might have been saved before it was too late.

700-10. The conditions upon which the redemption of Glaucus might be hoped for appear to mean: (i) that the spirit of shallow insincerity which marked so much of the work of the classical school must be replaced by an earnest effort to penetrate the inmost secrets of nature; and (ii) that the works of the older poets which had for the time lost their influence must be reverently cared for until the new spirit of poetry should come to reawaken their power.

749-50. Some inverted commas are missing here. The MS. corresponds with the printed text.

796. *A noise of harmony* : cf. *Sleep and Poetry* (l. 173).

The fervid choir that lifted up a noise  
Of harmony . . .

referring to the revival of poetry in Elizabethan times.

817. *Though* is the reading of the MS. and of the first edition, but is evidently a mistake for *Through*.

826-7. *they saw descending thick Another multitude* : these had not been revived by the 'powerful fragments' of the scroll, but, coming from another direction, joined in the festal procession. It is probably intended to represent the romantic movement in other countries which gave fresh stimulus to the movement in England, and in turn received stimulus from it; as Keats says—'Whereat more quick Moved either host.'

906. *Nais* was the mother of Glaucus.

925. *Visit my Cytherea* : Woodhouse, apparently following the Draft, gives this couplet thus :

Visit thou my Cithera ; thou wilt find  
Cupid a treasure, my Adonis kind.

Cythera is the name of the island sacred to Venus. Cytherea is another name for Venus herself. Cf. l. 984.

936. *in disentangling for their fire* : this appears to mean that as the joyous company plucked bunches of grapes they pulled down branches of the vines.

958-9. The punctuation of the Draft, which gives commas after *rivers* and *bosom*, but not after *lost*, is better.

1004. *Oceanus the old* : cf. II. 640 ff. The idea intended is not obvious. Keats may have meant to suggest that the spirit of poetry, as it found expression in the earliest efforts of mankind, is looking with benevolent regard upon this latest manifestation, differing greatly in form and expression, yet animated by the same spirit of reverence, and fostered by the same divine protection as in former ages.

1012. *Amphion* : see l. 463, and note. It was Arion whose playing led to his rescue by the dolphins.

1016. *The palace whirls*: the swooning of Endymion is probably intended to have some significance in the allegory. The idea seems to be somewhat as follows. The spirit of the new poetry (Endymion) has reacted powerfully on the older poetry and has given it fresh force and influence. But in so doing it has for the moment weakened itself, for a concentration of interest upon the great poetry of the past may discourage young and inexperienced poets of the present day. In any case poetry cannot flourish upon inspiration drawn merely from its predecessors. It can become a living force only as it seeks contact with the actual life of men and women, and strives to enter into their joys and sorrows.

If this is the meaning it makes an excellent link with the following book, for it is there that we are shown how this sympathy with humanity is not inconsistent with devotion to a poetic ideal.

At the end of this Book Keats wrote in the Draft 'Oxf. Sept. 26'.

## BOOK IV

10. *eastern voice*: the poetry of the Bible. That this is what Keats meant is shown by the fact that the MS. has the reading (afterwards cancelled) *an hebrew voice*.

11. *the Nine*: the poetry of Greece.

15. *fair Ausonia*: Latin poetry and that of Dante.

26. *shrives*: makes his confession, opens his soul. Cf. *Isabella*, viii.

31. Sir Sidney Colvin suggests (*Life of Keats*, p. 33) that the story of the Indian maid who fascinated Alexander the Great was in the mind of Keats. It had recently been retold in verse by G. L. Way.

67. *Hermes' wand*: see note on I. 563.

69. *Hyacinthus*: see note on I. 328.

97. *a triple soul*: Endymion had previously been perplexed because it seemed that his delight in the beauty of the moon involved disloyalty to his goddess, whom he did not know to be Diana (III. 177-89). Now that he finds himself powerfully drawn to this Indian maid he is greatly troubled, and this trouble is

resolved only when he finds that the Indian maid, and his goddess and the moon spirit are all one. Keats is suggesting that a poet may feel strongly the beauty of rhythm and form in poetry ; or may take delight in it as an expression of human passion ; or may be touched with a deep sympathy for the woes of his fellow men ; but until he comes to understand that these are merely different aspects of the poet's outlook upon life he cannot begin to fulfil the task that is set before him. The reference to ' the great waters . . . at ebb and flow ' (l. 96) is probably intended to call to our minds this previous perplexity about the moon. Cf. III. 69, 70.

99. A pencil note in the MS. shows that this line should have read :

I feel my heart is cut for them in twain.

112-16. For the joining of the ideas of love and death, cf. a letter to Fanny Brawne, 25 July 1819 :

' I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute.'

128 ff. The suggestion arises in the mind of Keats that even if he does abandon the idea of devoting himself to poetry, and give himself to the service of mankind (by pursuing his medical career) he need not feel that it is an altogether unhappy choice. And for a time he makes up his mind to do this.

153. *is it* : the MS. and the copy corrected by Keats read *is't*.

159. *spry* for *spray* occurs in Sandys's Ovid, of which Keats made use.

198. '*Twas Bacchus and his crew* : Humanity (as represented in the Indian maiden's feigned story of herself) seeks relief from unhappiness in pleasure, but (271 ff.) finds no satisfaction in this way of life.

300-22. It is strange that after so beautiful a lyric, reaching nearly the high-water mark attained by Keats in that kind, there should come a speech that sinks nearly to the lowest level to be found in *Endymion*. The thankless task of pointing out in detail its faults and lapses from good taste will not be undertaken here.

323. *Woe to that Endymion!* No explanation of the purpose

of this cry is given, but it is probably intended to suggest that such an abandonment of his ideal as Endymion is contemplating (or Keats, when he thought of giving up poetry for medicine) cannot but bring unhappiness, and meets with the protest of our highest instincts.

343. *wild*: the MS. reads *wide*.

345. *two steeds*: typifying, like the car and steeds in *Sleep and Poetry* (l. 126), the power of the imagination.

364-463. The flagging of the steeds, the oncoming of sleep, the dream in which Endymion finds himself in heaven in the midst of the gods, with Diana herself, and wavering between delight at attaining his long-pursued ideal and devotion to his new-found love, are most suggestive bits of allegory. Keats is telling us how, in this period of hesitation between poetry and medicine, he found himself carried aloft by his imagination until, the energy of it being for the time exhausted, he passed on into a dream of the glory of being a real poet. He longed at one time to achieve this high ideal, and at another to be of some tangible service to his fellow men, until he became perplexed and distressed at his unstable condition of mind.

409-36. There is a poem entitled *A Draught of Sunshine* (p. 353 in de Selincourt's edition of Keats) which was sent to Reynolds by Keats in a letter of 31 January 1818, while *Endymion* was passing through the press. It is an echo and in part an explanation of these lines, and as such may claim more value than has yet been allowed to it.

445. *Where*: the MS. reads *When*.

478-9. *I Have no self-passion or identity*: cf. a passage in a letter of Keats to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818. 'A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually in for, and filling some other body.'

483-514. Endymion's rousing of the steeds, his turning to the Indian maid, the appearance of the moon, and the descent to earth of the maid, are developments of the story that follow naturally upon the incidents of ll. 364-463. Keats (relating his own experience, but assuming that other poets have passed through similar times) tells us that, after the time of perplexity previously described, he made a conscious effort to rouse his imagination,

until it brought his fancies into relation with his desire to serve humanity; that after a while the idea of the beauty of poetry again rose in his mind, and grew stronger until his humanitarian ideas dropped out of sight.

488. *silvery*: the MS. reads *silverly*.

515-65. This beautiful description of the Cave of Quietude has been felt, even by those who have missed the full meaning of the allegory, to be 'made out of the real stuff of experience'. There is little difficulty in recognizing it as representing a time when Keats was intellectually and emotionally exhausted by the perplexing conflict through which he had been passing, when for a time he ceased to trouble or even to think about it, and found a temporary peace in so doing.

542. *Of health by due*: this is the reading of the MS. The Draft reads *The rightful tinge of health*, which is clearer.

551. *let*: the MS. has *led*, which is no doubt the correct reading.

566 ff. The song in anticipation of Diana's wedding suggests that even though the poet cannot for the moment see the way that lies before him, others, less immediately concerned, are able to recognize the promise of a glorious time close at hand for poetry.

616 ff. Endymion gets his feet upon solid ground again. The meaning is that the would-be poet, taking his stand on a firm basis of common sense, decides to be practical, and to abandon the fantastic idea of giving up his life to poetry. The point is put quite plainly time after time. See, for instance, ll. 640 ff., 650-4, 657-63, 673.

636. *melt too?* This is the reading of the MS. and of the first edition; but a comparison with l. 672—*Whither didst melt?*—shows that it should be *melt to?*

689. *dew-claw'd stag*: the dew-claw consists of two rudimentary toes behind the foot of the deer.

707. *Empress Dian*: from the way in which Endymion refers to her, as one only among a number of other deities, it is plain that he has no thought of identifying her with his own goddess.

725. The MS. gives ! instead of ?

727. *strove by fancies vain and crude*: under the influence of anxious and practical friends Keats had honestly tried to persuade himself that it would be best to devote himself to medicine,

and to give up the thought of becoming a poet. He had later come to realize how 'vain and crude' were these efforts to stifle his proper genius.

744. *so I gave and gave*: the MS. reads *so I gave gave*; but a pencil note in the margin substitutes *kisses* for the first *gave*. In the Hampstead copy Keats crossed out *gave and*, and wrote *kisses* in the margin.

757. *I may not be thy love*: a higher power, speaking through the voice of humanity, forbids the sacrifice which genius attempts to make. It might lead to the spiritual death of the genius.

778-9. *I deem Truth the best music in a first-born song*: an excellent touch, which should be pondered by those who regard the poem as being made up of fantastic imagery about nothing in particular. The process of preparation and training through which Endymion has had to pass before he could reach his ideal may seem long-drawn and tedious, but to make it less so would have been to falsify the facts. His story, however picturesque the form into which it has been thrown, is a truthful representation of the experience through which Keats passed, and many, perhaps most, poets have known it too.

780. Keats was already thinking of *Hyperion*, as he hints in his preface.

787-804. Endymion is back in the place where he saw the first vision. The suggestion of the passage is that one of the best sources of inspiration for the poet is to be found in the memories of his childhood and youth.

837. *A hymning up to Cynthia*: one of many skilful touches in which it is suggested that the poet, and others who are in sympathy with him, may, in a sub-conscious fashion, approach much nearer to the truth than they are consciously aware of. Cf. I. 842 below, and I. 512 (*Peona*) and 544 (*Endymion*); II. 171, 300, 694; IV. 707, 853 (*Peona*), 923.

862-3. *higher ones*: this is very plain speaking. Keats might have used these very phrases in some of the discussions that took place about his career.

884 ff. The intentional ambiguity of this speech half reveals and half conceals the secret of the way in which Endymion will finally attain to his goal.



885. *heard!* The MS. and the corrected copy both have *heard?*

925 ff. A reminiscence of some unhappy times through which Keats had passed when it seemed to him that he would be compelled to take finally to medicine and to give up the thought of becoming a poet. From l. 946 to l. 970 the tone becomes more bitter, as Keats himself no doubt became at times.

961. The inverted commas are wrongly placed. The words *I said* are part of the speech. He is referring back to l. 946, where he had called himself 'a butterfly, a lord Of flowers', &c. The MS. and the corrected copy confirm this.

962. *Rhadamanthus*: a son of Zeus, who was made a judge of the dead in the underworld, because of his wisdom and justice.

984. It is this complete self-surrender to the will of a higher power that brings a solution of his perplexity. He is now ready for the full revelation of the destiny that awaits him.

1002. The high calling of the poet will not cut him off from the joy of human relationships and affection.

1012. *in wonderment*: the average person cannot understand or share in the rapture of the poet.

At the end of the Draft Keats wrote: 'Burford Bridge Nov. 28. 1817.—'

APPENDIX I  
MARTINUS SCRIBLERUS

*ΠΕΡΙ ΒΑΘΟΥΣ*

or, of the Art of  
SINKING IN POETRY.

[As this work is not included in most modern editions of Pope, the chapter to which reference has been made in the Introduction (p. xlv) is here reprinted. The explanation of the initials has been taken from Elwin and Courthope's edition.]

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE SEVERAL KINDS OF GENIUS'S IN THE PROFUND,  
AND THE MARKS AND CHARACTERS OF EACH.

[The first paragraph, which is not relevant, is omitted.]

AN UNIVERSAL genius rises not in an age ; but when he rises, armies rise in him ! he pours forth five or six epic poems with greater facility, than five or six pages can be produced by an elaborate and servile copier after nature or the ancients. It is affirmed by Quintilian, that the same genius which made Germanicus so great a general, would with equal application have made him an excellent heroic poet. In like manner reasoning from the affinity there appears between arts and sciences, I doubt not, but an active catcher of butterflies, a careful and fanciful pattern drawer, an industrious collector of shells, a laborious and tuneful bagpiper, or a diligent breeder of tame rabbits, might severally excel in their respective parts of the Bathos.

I shall range these confined and less copious genius's under proper classes, and (the better to give their pictures to the reader) under the names of animals of some sort or other ; whereby he will be enabled, at the first sight of such as shall daily come forth, to know to what kind to refer, and with what authors to compare them.

1. The Flying Fishes : These are writers who now and then

rise upon their fins, and fly out of the profound ; but their wings are soon dry, and they drop down to the bottom. G. S. A. H. C. G.

[i. e. George Stepney, Aaron Hill, Charles Gildon.]

2. The Swallows are authors that are eternally skimming and fluttering up and down, but all their agility is employed to catch flies. L. T. W. P. Lord H.

[Lewis Theobald, William Pulteney (?), Lord Hervey.]

3. The Ostridges are such, whose heaviness rarely permits them to raise themselves from the ground ; their wings are of no use to lift them up ; and their motion is between flying and walking ; but then they run very fast. D. F. L. E. The Hon. E. H.

[Daniel De Foe, Laurence Eusden, the Hon. Edward Howard.]

4. The Parrots are they that repeat another's words, in such a hoarse odd voice, as makes them seem their own. W. B. W. H. C. C. The Reverend D. D.

[William Broome, Colley Cibber, the Rev. Dean Daniel. The latter copied Addison's *Campaign* and Pope's *Messiah* in two pieces of verse, published in Lintot's Miscellany.]

5. The Didappers are authors that keep themselves long out of sight, under water, and come up now and then where you least expected them. L. W. G. D. Esq. The Hon. Sir W. Young.

[Leonard Welsted, George Duckett.]

6. The Porpoises are unwieldy and big ; they put all their numbers into a great turmoil and tempest, but whenever they appear in plain light (which is seldom) they are only shapeless and ugly monsters. I. D. C. G. I. O.

[John Dennis, Charles Gildon, John Oldmixon.]

7. The Frogs are such as can neither walk nor fly, but can leap and bound to admiration : They live generally in the bottom of a ditch, and make a great noise whenever they thrust their heads above water. E. W. I. M. Esq. T. D. Gent.

[Edward Ward, James Moore, Thomas Durfey.]

8. The Eels are obscure authors, that wrap themselves up in their own mud, but are mighty nimble and pert. L. W. L. T. P. M. General C.

[Leonard Welsted, Lewis Theobald, Peter Motteux, General Codrington.]

9. The Tortoises are slow and chill, and, like pastoral writers, delight much in gardens: they have for the most part a fine embroidered shell, and underneath it, a heavy lump. A. P. W. B. L. E. The Right Hon. E. of S.

[Ambrose Philips, William Broome, Laurence Eusden, the Right Hon. Earl of Selkirk.]

These are the chief characteristicks of the Bathos, and in each of these kinds we have the comfort to be blessed with sundry and manifold choice spirits in this our island.

## APPENDIX II

### THE HAMPSTEAD FIRST EDITION

A UNIQUE copy of the first edition of *Endymion* is in the Keats Collection at the Hampstead Public Library. It belonged to Keats himself, and some of the mistakes that had crept into the text are corrected in his writing. Thus on page 47 *scene* is crossed out, and *screen* written in the margin; on page 60 *head* is corrected to *bead*; and on page 90 *Honour* is changed to *Horror*. Further, opposite various passages (apparently those with which the poet at a later reading was pleased) lines, usually of this kind } have been drawn, sometimes single, sometimes double, and occasionally triple: and some passages have been underlined. Thus in Book I, lines 20, 21 have a single mark of this kind in the margin; line 530 is similarly marked, and underlined; lines 785-95 have a double mark and are also underlined; lines 827-43 have a single line, but the beautiful line 832 is triply marked and also underlined. The whole of the Hymn to Pan is marked, the first verse and parts of the fourth in a specially emphatic way. In Book II, lines 246-7, the words *set to fray Old darkness from his throne* are underlined; and lines 360-4 are triply marked in the margin as well as being underlined. In Book III the famous passage about the bottom of the sea is marked, lines 122-35 with a double marginal line, and the three following lines singly. Line 288 in the third book is underlined, but after this no more of these markings appear, though the mistake in the first line on page 195 is corrected.

Eighty blank leaves have been bound in at the end of the volume, and on these are copied, in Keats's own writing, the following poems with the dates:

Sonnet—When I have fears . . . . .	1817
„ —To Homer (Standing aloof in giant ignorance) .	1818
„ —If by dull rhymes . . . . .	1819
„ —On a Dream (As Hermes once) . . . . .	1819
„ —To Sleep (O soft embalmer) . . . . .	1819
„ —On sitting down to read King Lear once again	
	22 Jan. 1818

Sonnet—On Fame (Fame, like a wayward Girl) . . .	1819
„ —On Fame (How fever'd is the Man) . . .	1819
„ —To the Nile (Son of the old moon-mountains) . . .	1818

Two sonnets are written on each page ; seven blank pages follow, probably left for other sonnets. Then come :

Lines on seeing a lock of Milton's hair . . . . .	21 Jan <sup>y</sup> 1818
Souls of Poets dead and gone . . . . .	1818
Lines written in the Highlands after a visit to Burns's country . . . . .	1818
Ever let the fancy roam . . . . .	1818
Ode to the Nightingale . . . . .	May 1819
Ode on a Grecian Urn . . . . .	1819
To John Reynolds in answer to his Robin Hood sonnets . . .	1818

Twenty-one blank leaves follow, and then comes :

Song—Hush, hush ! tread softly ! hush, hush, my dear !

This breaks off at the word *morning's* in the sixth line of the third verse, and there is no more of Keats's writing in the book.

On the page opposite the ' Lines on seeing a lock of Milton's hair ' there is written, apparently by Sir Charles Dilke :

It should be remembered that Keats was wholly innocent of spelling.

The volume passed into the hands of Charles Wentworth Dilke (1789–1864) who was a good friend to Keats during the last five or six years of his life. On three of the blank leaves at the end of the volume Dilke has written a brief memoir of his friend. It is not dated, but it seems likely to be the earliest life of Keats that was written, and does not appear to have been printed elsewhere. It is as follows :

John Keats was born in, or in the neighbourhood of Moorfields—in 1796 or 95 and, as said, on the 29 October. His grandfather kept an Inn there and his mother married the waiter or butler, as I think Mr. C. Clarke said, by whose father the Revd. Clarke, Keats was educated at Enfield. The father was a Devonshire man.

He was apprenticed to Mr. Hammond, Surgeon, in Church St., Enfield. My wife met Miss Hammond about 18 . . . at the Revd. Hervey in Essex, where Miss Hammond was Governess.

He did not I believe serve out his term of apprenticeship—but early removed to Guy's Hospital, where he was I think, for two years a dresser, at least he paid *fees* for two years. He was I believe reasonably diligent and I have, or have seen, a small volume of notes made during his studies at the Hospital.

I think George said that one of his earliest Poems was

Now morning from her Orient chamber came

His first volume appeared in 1817

He was at this time or soon after living in Well Walk Hampstead with his Brother Thomas—George resided with Swan clerk to their guardian Mr. Abbey a tea broker and presumed to be a man of great wealth who had a country house at Walthamstow.

While *Endymion* was in progress J K visited Hastings, Oxford and I think the Isle of Wight—and subsequently visited Teignmouth, whence the Preface is dated, whither he accompanied Tom for the benefit of his health.

In 1818 George married and embarked for America. John and Brown accompanied him as far as Liverpool and then proceeded on a walking excursion through the english [*sic*] lakes and the west of Scotland. They crossed to Ireland, but only remained there a few days, and then returned to Scotland and visited the Highlands. They crossed to Mull traversed the island and visited Fingal's Cave, &c., and the Poems occasionally mark the route—'On Ailsa Rock'—'There is a charm in footing slow', &c. This last was published by Brown years after in the *New Monthly* in a paper in which if I mistake not he gave an account of this tour. Keats caught cold on this excursion and on *recollection* the first symptoms of his subsequent illness may be traced up to this cold. He took leave of Brown and returned I think by sea from Cromarty to London. Tom had by this time become decidedly worse and died soon after. He was buried in a church in Coleman St. and I attended the funeral.

John now agreed to live with Brown, paying for his board. There he became very intimate with the Brawnes who resided in the adjoining cottage, and fell in love with Fanny Brawne.

The mid summer was passed in Sussex, Hampshire and the isle of Wight—visiting for a short time my father, [and] sister,

but residing principally at Shanklin were [*sic*] the tragedy of *Otho the Great*, still in MS. and in Brown's possession (though I know that Woodhouse had a copy) was written—Brown furnishing the plot. Rice was with them at Shanklin. *Lamia* was subsequently written I believe but the progress of his poetical writings is pretty well marked by their publication.

On his return from the Isle of Wight Keats remained for some short time alone at Winchester, with which he was much pleased. Thence he wrote to Brown that he had resolved on living by the drudgery of periodical literature—to me that he would go out as Surgeon in a South Sea whaler and requesting me mean time to take lodgings for him close to my house. I then resided in Westminster and took apartments for him in College Street. His mind at this time was all in a ferment. He had resolved to break off his acquaintance with F. B. at least till he had established himself in some course of life. But it was reason against passion, and in two or three days he removed again to Brown's at Hampstead. From this period his weakness and his sufferings, mental and bodily, increased—his whole mind and heart were in a whirl of contending passions—he saw nothing calmly or dispassionately. The mid summer, or Spring rather, it was in May, Brown let his house I think and went again to Scotland and Keats removed to Kentish Town near to or at Leigh Hunts. He remained there however but a short time. The very kindness of friends was at this time felt to be oppressive to him. He was for obvious reasons dreaming of some possible means of *self dependance*, and his increasing illness seemed to make him more and more dependant on others. He was therefore disposed to separate [*sic*] from them that he might at least not *see* and *feel* it. In a letter to Brown he said 'When you hear from or see—it is probable you will hear some complaints against me. The fact is I did behave badly; but it is to be attributed to my health, spirits, and the *disadvantageous ground I stand on in society*. I would go and accomodate [*sic*] matters if I were not weary of the world. I know that they are more happy and comfortable than I am; therefore why should I trouble myself about it? . . . *Fact is I have had so many kindnesses done me by so many people, that I am chevaux-de-frised with benefits, which I must jump over or break down.*' On



leaving Kentish town he took up his abode at Mrs. Brawne's. There as might have been expected his illness increased fearfully—the constant feeding of his passion wore him out. This is his own expression. In the Autumn his medical attendants decided as a last hope, that he must winter in Italy. Mr. Severn a young artist who had gained the gold medal at the Royal Academy, which entitled him to reside for three years in Italy at the charge of the Academy, agreed to accompany him and they sailed in the *Maria Crowther* in September (1820). Keats for a long time had no hopes, and never I suspect dreamed of possible benefits from this migration. I believe he would rather have remained and died at Hampstead, with the kind friends who had now taken charge of him, and were devoted to him—to say nothing of his attachment.

[The following paragraph is written on an otherwise blank page, opposite the last page of the MS., as if it were an afterthought.]

To use his own phrases in one of his letters he was 'so low in body and mind' at this time that he was desirous of leaving England without bidding farewell to any of his friends. He however called on me at Somerset [House] in the coach the very day I think of his departure but I was unfortunately not there.

The vessel put into Portsmouth and he ran over to Bedhampton to my Sisters for a few hours. He arrived at Naples in October, but was put in quarantine, and thought that his health suffered from the foul air and stifling heat of the ship thus lying idly, more than during the whole voyage. He removed immediately to Rome, whence his last letter to Brown was written and dated 30 November. He now rapidly got worse, but lingered on till the 23rd of February 1821 when, after all his passionate struggle, he died calmly about 11 o'clock—so calmly that Severn thought he was sleeping. Severn's letters gave every particular—deeply interesting to his friends, but of no interest to the public—for the sufferings were common to humanity, and the special circumstances ought not to be referred to, as they could not but give pain.

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ENDYMION

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POETIC  
ROMANCE

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