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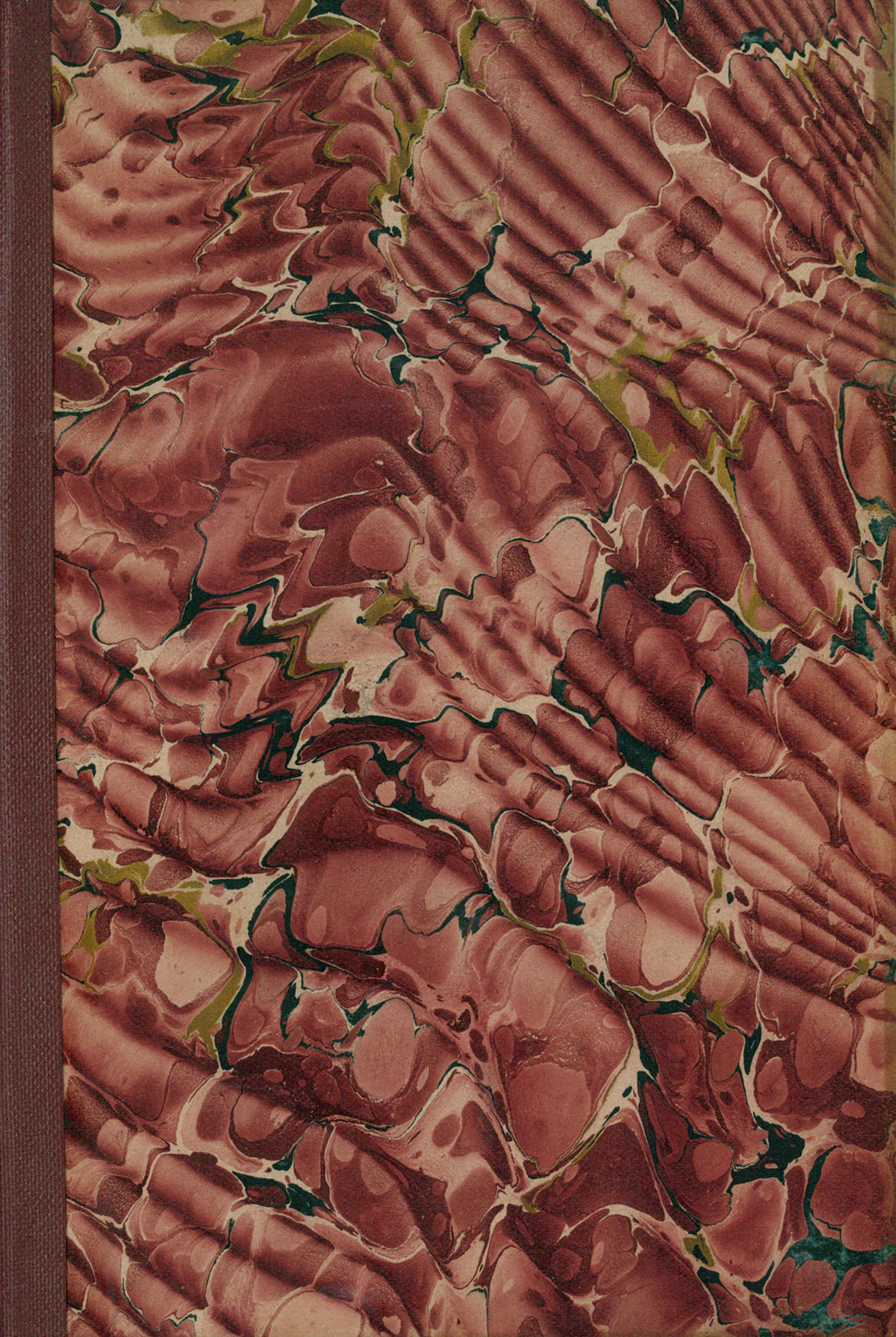
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Acting Registrar.



THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN KEATS.





John Keats.

THE LANSDOWNE POETS.

THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

JOHN KEATS.

With Memoir, Explanatory Notes, etc.



WITH PORTRAIT AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.
AND NEW YORK.

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P R E F A C E.

EVERY year, since the death of Keats, has added to the number of those who appreciate and love his poems, and every new Edition of them has been welcomed by the Public.

The present one contains all the Poems published during the young poet's life: those in the "Literary Remains," gathered together after his death by his sympathetic editor, Lord Houghton; and several taken from papers and magazines to which Keats contributed.

The collection may therefore be considered complete, as only two or three short minor poems from his letters are not included; and two short poems, thought by Lord Houghton to be of very doubtful authenticity. Mr. Forman rejects these latter entirely, and the Editor cannot believe that they were written by Keats, the rich fruit of whose genius is contained in the present volume.



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PREFATORY MEMOIR.

“WHOM the Gods love die young,” was the belief of antiquity; and such seems to have been, in truth, the case when John Keats, the gifted and beloved, passed away in the dawn of his life, after singing a few brief songs—the promise of a glorious hereafter, destined never to be fulfilled. The tenderest interest hovers over the memory of this young poet. Next to Chatterton’s his name has become a spell to move the warmest pity and sympathy in English hearts, for his short life was not a happy one, and he died without knowing that he had won the laurel of immortality.

John Keats was born October 29th, 1795. His father had married the daughter of Mr. Jennings, a large stable owner on the Pavement, Moorfields, in whose employment he had originally lived. His mother was lively and very intelligent. Her son John had a strong affection for her; and we are told in Lord Houghton’s delightful “Life and Letters of Keats,” that once when she was ill, and the doctor had ordered that she should not be disturbed, the little boy of four years old kept watch outside her bedroom door for more than three hours, armed with an old sword, which he had somewhere picked up.

While still a very little fellow he was sent to school with his brothers George and Thomas to Mr. Clarke, of Enfield, the father of the Shakspearian Charles Cowden Clarke. This school was deservedly in high repute; and here Keats displayed remarkable

ability, though not of a plodding kind ; on the contrary, he was an active, spirited little fellow, desirous of rivalling hereafter the feats of a naval relative of his, who had served with Duncan at Camperdown. He learned rapidly, but was not industrious till a desire seized him to win the first prizes of the school, when he suddenly devoted himself to study with an ardour which threatened to injure his health. If he walked it was with a book ; and play he entirely abjured. His resolute perseverance was crowned with success. He won the prizes, and probably also, at the same time, gained the love and habit of study.

During the latter part of his residence under Mr. Clarke's care he read and translated a great deal of Virgil ; but he never learned Greek, and knew Homer only in the words of Chapman. The future poet, whose lines breathed the very spirit of the old classic myths, had gained his knowledge of them from Tooke and Lemprière.

Keats lost both parents while still in his early boyhood ; thus his whole life seems to have been chequered by sorrows. His mother died of consumption when he was about fifteen, and he is said to have felt the loss deeply and bitterly. He left school soon after, and was apprenticed to a surgeon at Edmonton, a man of some eminence, named Hammond.

His father had left eight thousand pounds, to be equally divided between his four children ; the elder of whom, after they were left orphans, was taken into the office of Mr. Abbey, their guardian, a London merchant. The distance between Edmonton and Enfield permitted Keats, after he was apprenticed, to continue his intimacy with the Clarkes, in whose cultivated society his genius grew and developed. It was to them also that he was indebted for the loan of books. One day his friend Charles lent him, at his request, Spenser's "Fairy Queen ;" and that wonderful poem had on him the same effect it had produced on Cowley two

centuries before ; it awoke the dormant spirit of poetry, and his first production was an imitation of Spenser. His first published poem was, however, an "Epistle" addressed to his friend Mr. Felton Mathew, to whom he had been indebted for an introduction into some pleasant society.

At the termination of his apprenticeship he went to London, to walk the hospitals. Here he lived in the Poultry, and was introduced by Mr. Clarke to some of the literary celebrities of the day—to Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Haydon, Goodwin, and Mr. Ollier, the publisher and poet.

About this time Leigh Hunt was released from a two years' imprisonment, which he had undergone as the punishment of a libel on the Prince Regent, whom he had described in his paper, the *Examiner*, as an "Adonis of Fifty." The extreme severity with which this personality was punished roused much indignation amongst literary men. The period was one in which rival politicians used furious invective against each other ; and though Hunt cannot be acquitted of bad taste—setting loyalty entirely aside—he did but act after the ill fashion of his time. Keats was full of generous indignation on his behalf, and on his release from prison addressed to him a sonnet of eager sympathy. He also dedicated to him the first volume of his poems, which Mr. Ollier published entirely on account of the admiration he felt for them. Leigh Hunt was, in fact, the great encourager and instigator of Keats in his poetical labours ; and it is said that we owe "Endymion" and the "Revolt of Islam" to a friendly rivalry between Shelley and the young poet.

Lord Houghton relates, as an instance of the facility of Keats in composition, that "he was engaged with a lively circle of friends when the last proof-sheet" [of his Poems] "was brought in, and he was requested by the printer to send the Dedication directly, if he intended to have one. He went to a side table,

and while all around were noisily conversing, he sat down and wrote the sonnet, beginning—

“Glory and loveliness have passed away.”

This volume of poems, which appeared in 1817, fell unnoticed from the press, and Keats, ascribing his ill success to want of energy in his publisher, rather ungratefully, we think, quarrelled with Mr. Ollier.

Soon after, he sent two sonnets to the *Examiner*, on first seeing the Elgin Marbles.

Meantime he studied at least fairly well for his profession, as he passed his medical examination successfully. But when he engaged in the practice of medicine, the poet found that he could never be an efficient surgeon. He therefore conscientiously gave up his profession ; thus ruining his prospects in a worldly sense, and throwing himself into a state of poverty, and of dependence on the precarious resources of literature, which Scott so aptly described as “a good stick, but a bad crutch.”

His warm championship of Leigh Hunt procured for him, naturally, the friendship of the brothers, who were editors of the *Examiner*, in which, and in the *Indicator*, they published several of his sonnets, and the “La Belle Dame Sans Mercy.” But the intimacy, as far as his worldly interests were concerned, was not advantageous to him. The Hunts belonged to an extreme political school, which was believed to entertain revolutionary projects, and had, consequently, a very strong party opposed to them ; and party spirit, at that period, had reached a point of savagery that we can scarcely understand. Neither good taste nor charity restrained the pens of writers on either side, and it is quite possible that the cruel criticism of his great poem may have, in great measure, resulted from his intimacy with the Hunts.

Moreover the affectations and conceits of the literary coterie

or school which Hunt founded were very likely to injure, and, in fact, did in a degree injure the style of the young poet.

Amongst Keats's other literary friends were Mr. Dilke, the editor of the *Athenæum*; John Hamilton Reynolds, author of "The Garden of Florence"—a very charming poet, though little known, and brother-in-law to Hood; Godwin, the author of "Caleb Williams" and father of Shelley's second wife, Mary; Basil Montague, the *littérateur*, who was the friend and patron of Carlyle, Hazlitt, the celebrated painter, Haydon, and the artist, Severn. To the two latter Keats was greatly indebted—to the former, for suggestions, encouragement and support; to the latter, for the comfort of his last days. The publishers, Taylor and Hessey, were surely also of this list, as they were very substantial helpers in the production of "Endymion," for they advanced him a sum of money that he might continue his work free from pecuniary anxiety. And, thus aided, he began his chief poem in the beautiful Isle of Wight, where, by the advice of Haydon, he had gone to recruit his health. How he must have enjoyed the beauty of that lovely little island! And one understands at once how the line that has become proverbial—"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"—originated, and, almost necessarily, opened the "Endymion"—begun in such a scene of miniature loveliness. But he did not remain in the island; the air was too relaxing and depressed him, and he carried his work to Margate. He had, at this time, through Hamilton Reynolds, made the acquaintance of Mr. Baily, afterwards Archdeacon of Colombo—then resident at Oxford and reading for the Church. Keats returned with him to Oxford, and Mr. Baily has given the following account of the manner in which they spent their time there:—"He wrote and I read—sometimes at the same table, sometimes at separate desks—from breakfast till 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 with as much ease as he wrote his letters. Indeed, he quite acted up to the principle he lays down: that if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves of a tree, it had better not come at all. 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 or wrote letters till we went out for a walk." Mr. Baily spoke most warmly of the personal charm of Keats—of his simplicity and affectionate manner. The two friends soon after visited Stratford-on-Avon together; but in September Keats returned to Hampstead and again worked at his poem. It was finished at Burford Bridge in 1819, and placed in the publishers' hands the next spring. They were much pleased with it, and Haydon offered to supply as frontispiece a head of the poet, of which he had made a finished sketch, but it was not inserted.

Very great anxieties attended the completion of "Endymion." Keats was passionately attached to his brothers George and Tom, and Tom was then in very bad health. He, however, received much benefit by a visit to Devonshire, and George then resolved to emigrate to America, first marrying a young lady named Georgiana Wylie. Keats and his friend, Mr. Brown, accompanied the pair to Liverpool in the June of 1818, and from thence undertook a pedestrian tour to the Lakes and to the Highlands. Of this expedition he has left us some charming memorials in his sonnets and some small poems, one of which, "Old Meg," afterwards appeared in *Hood's Magazine*.

They also crossed over in the mail packet to Ireland, walked from Donaghadee to Belfast, and then crossed again to Scotland. In this last passage Ailsa Rock was constantly in their view, and Keats wrote his fine sonnet to it at Girvan.

The poet, altogether, had walked more than six hundred

miles; but, when at Inverness, he took a violent cold and ulcerated sore throat, and it became necessary that he should return home at once. Exposure to the weather and the inevitable privations of the journey had been too much for his delicate constitution. He therefore returned to England by sea. It is quite possible that his fatal illness may date from this tour of 1818. In Coleridge's "Table Talk," p. 184, we meet this remarkable account of Keats:—

"A loose, slack, not well-dressed youth met Mr. — and myself in a lane near Highgate. — knew him, and spoke. It was Keats. He was introduced to me, and stayed a minute or so. After he had left us a little way, he came back, and said, 'Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand.'

"'There is death in that hand,' I said to —, when Keats was gone. Yet this was, I believe, before the consumption showed itself distinctly."

"Endymion" was very severely reviewed by Gifford in the *Quarterly*, and there spread a rumour after the young poet's death, that the unfairness and harshness of the article had induced the illness of which Keats died. This was a delusion; but there can be no doubt that so sensitive a man must have been much hurt by it. The review in *Blackwood* was disgraceful to that magazine. He was desired in it "to go back to his gallipots!" and told that it was a wiser and better thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet! In our day, such a view of poetry and such vulgar insolence are almost incredible.

Byron and Shelley both believed in the fatal effect of the *Quarterly Review* on Keats. But Lord Houghton tells us that they were mistaken. In his full and interesting Memoir of the poet he gives us a letter of Keats, in which is this remarkable passage:—

"Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose

love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary perception and ratification of what is fine." A man who could write thus, would scarcely be killed by a review. It injured only the public, who were thus deprived of the remainder of "Hyperion." (See advertisement to first edition, p. 236 of this volume.)

In this year, Keats had the sorrow of watching by the dying bed of his brother Tom; and nearly at the same time he met the lady who was his first and last love. She was an East Indian, the cousin of some friend of his—a woman of great personal attractions and talent.

His brother George, who had married and emigrated to America, returned to England for a short visit, and received his share (near 1,000*l.*) of what poor Tom left. John, the poet, received only 200*l.* His education had been expensive, and he had made very little by his poems, consequently he could have no hope of marrying yet; and his pain and disappointment at the result of his literary efforts (however bravely he bore it) must have been great. His vain and passionate love, and the loss of his favourite brother, also preyed on his strength.

One evening, on returning to his house late outside a stage-coach, he caught a severe chill, and was persuaded to go to bed. He had hardly lain down before he coughed slightly, and said, "There is blood in my mouth; bring me the candle; let me see this blood." He gazed at it, and then said, very calmly, "I know the colour of that blood—it is arterial blood—I cannot be deceived in that colour. That drop is my death-warrant. I must die." *

* "Life and Letters of Keats," by Lord Houghton, p. 289.

From this first attack, however, he recovered, and grew comparatively well and cheerful. He then went to reside in the family of the lady he loved, and here he began seriously to think of making provision for his future life; the most feasible prospect being that of becoming surgeon on board an East Indiaman.

In 1820 appeared "Lamia," "Isabella," "Eve of St. Agnes," and other poems. It was praised, but sold slowly.

Of these poems, and of "Endymion," Lord Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review* of August, 1820, says:—

"We had never happened to see either of these volumes till very lately, and have been exceedingly struck with the genius they display and the spirit of poetry which breathes through all their extravagance. * * * * They are flushed all over with the rich lights of fancy, and are so coloured and bestrewn with the flowers of poetry, that even while perplexed and bewildered in their labyrinths, it is impossible to resist the intoxication of their sweetness or to shut our hearts to the enchantments they so lavishly present."

All readers of Keats will allow that this criticism was fair and impartial.

Change of climate was now declared to be the only chance remaining of saving the life of the gifted young poet. He had a faithful and sympathizing friend—Mr. Severn, the artist. This gentleman resolved to sacrifice his prospects at the dawn of his popularity in order to accompany and take care of the invalid.

On their arrival at Rome, after a boisterous voyage and a short stay at Naples, Dr. Clark (Sir James Clark), to whom Keats had a letter of introduction, procured him a lodging in the Piazza di Spagna, opposite his own house, and did everything that skill, ability, and generous sympathy could do to alleviate his sufferings and cheer his mind. But nothing could avail to save him. He knew he was dying, and once said, "I feel the daisies growing

over me." Just before his death he received a letter from the woman he loved, which he could not bear to read. It was placed by his desire in his coffin. He directed that the inscription on his grave should be—

"HERE LIES ONE WHOSE FAME WAS WRIT IN WATER."

A mournful line, revealing how bitterly his longing for fame had been disappointed.

Keats had a beautiful face: his eyes were large, blue, and expressive; his hair auburn.

His death, which occurred February 24th, 1821, caused much excitement in the literary world. Byron, who had at first disdained the young poet as of the "Cockney school," wrote feelingly now of him, and declared that "his fragment of 'Hyperion' seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus."

Shelley wrote in his honour his beautiful "Adonais," prefixing to it the following indignant protest against the wrongs done to his dead friend's genius:—

"John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the 27th of December, 1821,* and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome.

"The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

"The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses, was not more delicate and fragile than it was beautiful, and where canker-worms abound,

* An error of the Poet both as to age and date.

what wonder if its young flower was blighted in its bud? The savage criticism on his 'Endymion,' which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effects on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a bloodvessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

"It may be well said, that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shafts light on a heart made callous by many blows, or one like Keats', composed of more penetrable stuff.

* * * * *

"Miserable man! you one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

"The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats' life were not made known to me until the elegy was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of 'Endymion,' was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hastened from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius* than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness, by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who I have

* "We do not know," says the editor of the *Literary Chronicle*, "to whom Mr. Shelley alludes; but we believe we may say that the City of London does not boast a bookseller more honourable in his dealings, or more liberal to rising genius or indigent merit, than the publisher of Mr. Keats' poems."

been informed almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his friend. Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' His noble conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career. May the unextinguished spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against oblivion for his name !"

The poem contains the following exquisite lines, which are the best consolation for the mind pained by this sad record :—

He is made one with Nature ; there is heard
His voice in all her music—from the moan
Of thunder to the voice of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn that being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely.

* * * * *

Go thou to Rome, at once the paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness :

Pass till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where like an infant's smile over the dead,
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

It is the grave of Keats, and there a brief time afterwards rested the heart of the poet, who had wept over the sad end of this "inheritor of unfulfilled renown."

The cemetery is on a grassy slope, amid the ruins of the Honorian walls; above it is the pyramid that Petrarch believed to be the tomb of Remus, but which has since been discovered to be that of a tribune of the people named Caius Cestius. Of late years the portion of the cemetery where Keats lies has been cut off by part of the new fortifications of Rome, and high grass almost concealed the poet's grave till 1875, when Miss Frere (the daughter of Sir Bartle Frere), General Sir Vincent Eyre, the American minister, Mr. Marsh, and some other lovers of Keats's work, repaired the decaying altar tomb, and placed on the wall near it a medallion portrait of the poet, the gift and the work of Mr. Warrington Wood. A subscription was also raised to place his bust in Westminster Abbey.

George Keats survived his brother twenty years, and died in Kentucky. He was a man of great integrity and literary tastes. After his brother's death, he paid all John Keats's debts and returned the money lent to him by Mr. Brown. Keats's sister Fanny married a Spanish gentleman, Señor Lanos, the author of "Don Esteban," "Sandoval, the Freemason," etc.

The beautiful poems of "Isabella," the "Eve of St. Agnes," and "Lamia," are by many readers preferred to the "Endymion."

"Isabella" was written as one of a volume of tales from "Boccaccio," to be published by Reynolds and himself. Its touching beauty and tenderness are as wonderful as the high imaginativeness of "Endymion," for at that period when he wrote it, Keats had

not met the woman for whom his love was an absolute torture. Would he have written it, in fact, *as it is*, if he had then loved Miss Fanny Brawne? We think it might have gained in passion, but not in tenderness. The volume designed was never published, and "Isabella" was added to Keats's second volume.

The "Eve of St. Agnes" is a wonderfully graphic and melodious poem. Founded on an ancient superstition, it has a strange charm for the imagination. The description of Madeline's Chamber, stanzas 24, 25, is unequalled for beauty of description; and the feast prepared for the fasting maiden, of fruits and syrups, jellies and sweets, in golden dishes and baskets of wreathed silver, adds a strange charm to the picture.

The serpent story of "Lamia" is in another measure, and we are told that Keats studied Dryden's versification before he wrote it. The effect of that study is certainly manifest in this his last poem, which is extremely melodious and finished in style.

It was just at this time that he undertook the almost impossible task of writing a drama, in singular conjunction with Mr. Brown. He was with his friend in the Isle of Wight, afterwards at Winchester with him, when their joint task was performed. Mr. Brown was to sketch the characters and subject of each scene; the poet was to write the poetry. There is something almost comic in the picture of the two friends sitting opposite each other and discussing and arranging this tragedy of "Otho the Great." Very naturally, by the time the fourth act was finished, Keats became dissatisfied with it and insisted on writing the fifth unassisted. It is certainly the best of the drama, which, on its completion, was offered to Elliston, the theatrical manager immortalized by Lamb. He accepted it for representation, and Kean was expected to take the principal character; but the project came to nothing, and the tragedy was never produced. It is strange that Elliston ever thought of its being performed, as it

seems little suited for the theatre, though there are some beautiful lines in it, and it is interesting to the reader.

But it seems to have given Keats a fancy for dramatic work, since soon afterwards he began an historical play by himself, the period chosen being the reign of Stephen, whose chivalrous character and dauntless valour would have rendered him an ideal hero; while Maud's pride and arrogance afforded a striking contrast. But the young poet did not live to complete it—it remains only a striking fragment. He left it to complete the "Lamia"—the serpent woman appearing to have fascinated him. It was, as we have said above, his last complete work.

"Hyperion" had been finished up to its present state at the time the adverse reviews on "Endymion" appeared. It was begun after the death of his brother Tom, as Mr. Brown told Lord Houghton; but, as we have seen, he gave it up. It is quite worthy of the praise bestowed upon it by Byron and Shelley. Hunt said of it in the *Indicator*, "'The Hyperion' is a fragment—a gigantic one, like a ruin in the desert, or the bone of a mastodon. It is truly of a piece with its subject, which is the downfall of the elder gods." The reception given to "Endymion" deterred Keats from finishing it, and he would never have published the fragment of his own free will. We have to thank his clever publishers for preserving it in print, and to regret that the folly or malice of his critics prevented its completion. The description of Saturn's grief—of the "Goddess of the infant world"—of Hyperion's palace and his entrance into it, are extremely fine, and are alone sufficient to show what we have lost.

Keats had much versatility. The man who was so great a master of his own language would probably be able to attain facility in others. He had begun, as we have seen, to learn Greek, and his studies of Italian seem not only to have rendered him proficient in the language of Tasso, but also to have inspired him with

much of the peculiar humour of the Italian poets. His friend, Mr. Brown, was more than a student of Italian, for he translated admirably Boiardo's "Orlando Innamorato." It was, probably, at the instigation of this friend that Keats began "The Cap and Bells," a poem in the *ottava rima*, and in the manner of Ariosto, fanciful, humorous and satirical.

It appears from a passage in the *Indicator* of August 23rd, 1820, that Keats did not intend to publish it in his own name, but in an assumed female one; for Hunt quotes a few stanzas from it, adding that it is written "by a very good poetess of the name of Lucy V. L., who had let him see her MS." It is probable, therefore, that the young poet did not care greatly for the poem, and would not risk his growing reputation by acknowledging it, at least, at first. We confess to not caring for it ourselves; the fairy imagery is scarcely as lovely and poetical as we might have expected from Keats; and if, as is most probable, he meant to satirise George IV. and his ministers in it, the allusions have lost all interest in the present day.

The Odes "To a Nightingale" and "To a Grecian Urn" were published in a periodical, entitled, the *Annals of the Fine Arts*, and he also wrote some dramatic criticisms in the *Champion*, a weekly paper to which his friend Reynolds had introduced him. They are bright and spirited, and, taken in conjunction with his letters, prove that had he lived and practised prose, he might have become as great a prose writer as he was a poet.

In character, Keats was habitually gentle; but he was possessed of considerable spirit and courage, and his indignation was instantly roused by any base or cowardly action. It is recorded that when he was writing "Endymion," he saw a butcher beating a little boy; he instantly took the part of the feeble, and gave the fellow a severe thrashing.

We need scarcely say that he was very susceptible and impres-

sionable—his poetry manifests it ; and his affection for his brothers, and passionate love, show that he had a warm and tender heart. His friends were devoted to him, and their friendship would not have been easily won.

To the world of readers the death of Keats was a loss indeed, for himself it must have been a release from much mental and physical suffering. He was almost entirely dependent upon his friends, and his love seemed as hopeless as it was passionate, for he saw no chance of marrying Miss Brawne unless he resumed and practised a profession he disliked.

His brief, hapless life—his exquisite genius—the modesty and even the bitterness of his self-given epitaph—have greatly endeared him to his countrymen, and the one name they, perhaps, hold most dear amongst the names of their national poets is that of Keats.



THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN KEATS.

Early Poems.

DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

“What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?”
SPENSER—*Fate of the Butterfly.*

GLORY and Loveliness have passed away ;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathed incense do we see upborne
Into the east, to meet the smiling day :
No crowd of nymphs soft voiced and young, and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

POEMS.

“Places of nestling green for Poets made.”—*Story of Rimini.*

I stood tiptoe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty leaved, and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves :
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,
To peer about upon variety ;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim ;
To picture out the quaint, and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending ;
Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.
I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had played upon my heels : I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started ;
So I straightway began to pluck a posy
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them ;
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them !



I stood tiptoe upon a little hill.

And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them
Moist, cool and green ; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones ; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots :
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters,
The spreading bluebells : it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds !
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung ;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses ;
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tiptoe for a flight :
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings :
They will be found softer than ringdoves' cooings.

How silent comes the water round that bend!
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging sallows : blades of grass
Slowly across the chequered shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds ;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Tempered with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand !
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain ;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the emerald tresses ;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live ;
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches ; little space they stop ;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek ;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak :
Or perhaps, to show their black and golden wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.
Were I in such a place, I sure should pray
That nought less sweet, might call my thoughts away,
Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
Fanning away the dandelion's down ;
Than the light music of her nimble toes
Patting against the sorrel as she goes.
How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught
Playing in all her innocence of thought.

O let me lead her gently o'er the brook,
Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look ;
O let me for one moment touch her wrist ;
Let me one moment to her breathing list ;
And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburn.
What next ? A tuft of evening primroses,
O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes ;
O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,
But that 'tis ever startled by the leap
Of buds into ripe flowers ; or by the flitting
Of divers moths, that aye their rest are quitting ;
Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming into the blue with all her light.
O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
Of this fair world, and all its gentle lovers ;
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams,
Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering !
Thee must I praise above all other glories
That smile us on to tell delightful stories.
For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light ?
In the calm grandeur of a sober line,
We see the waving of the mountain pine ;
And when a tale is beautifully staid,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade :
When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings :
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases ;
O'erhead we see the jasmine and sweetbriar,
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire ;

While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
 Charms us at once away from all our troubles :
 So that we feel uplifted from the world,
 Walking upon the white clouds wreathed and curled.
 So felt he, who first told how Psyche went
 On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment ;
 What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips
 First touched ; what amorous and fondling nips
 They gave each other's cheeks ; with all their sighs,
 And how they kissed each other's tremulous eyes :
 The silver lamp—the ravishment—the wonder—
 The darkness—the loneliness—the fearful thunder ;
 Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown,
 To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.
 So did he feel, who pulled the boughs aside,
 That we might look into a forest wide,
 To catch a glimpse of Fauns, and Dryades,
 Coming with softest rustle through the trees ;
 And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet,
 Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet :
 Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled*
 Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
 Poor nymph—poor Pan—how he did weep to find
 Naught but a lovely sighing of the wind
 Along the reedy stream ! a half heard strain,
 Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.
 What first inspired a bard of old to sing
 Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring ?

* Syrinx, a river nymph, who, flying from Pan, was turned into a reed. Fletcher alludes to this nymph :—

“Pan, for her dear sake,
 Who loves the rivers' brinks, and still doth shake
 In cold remembrance of thy quick pursuit,
 Let me be made a reed, and ever mute,
 Nod to the water's fall, whilst every blast
 Sings through my slender leaves that I was chaste.”

In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round ;
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool
The blue sky, here and there serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.
And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness :
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move ;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.
So while the Poet stood in this sweet spot,
Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot ;
Nor was it long ere he had told the tale
Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew
That sweetest of all songs, that ever new,
That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness,
Coming ever to bless
The wanderer by moonlight ? to him bringing
Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing
From out the middle air, from flowery nests,
And from the pillowy silkiness that rests
Full in the speculation of the stars.
Ah ! surely he had burst our mortal bars ;
Into some wondrous region he had gone,
To search for thee, divine Endymion !*

* "Pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
She took eternal fire that never dies ;
How she conveyed him, softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppies, to the steep
Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest."—FLETCHER—*Cynthia, or the Moon.*

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,
Who stood on Latmos' top, what time there blew
Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below ;
And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow
A hymn from Dian's temple ! while upswelling,
The incense went to her own starry dwelling.
But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,
Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,
The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,
Wept that such beauty should be desolate :
So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,
And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air ; thou most lovely queen
Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen !
As thou exceedest all things in thy shine,
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.
O for three words of honey, that I might
Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night !

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels,
Phœbus awhile delayed his mighty wheels,
And turned to smile upon thy bashful eyes,
Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize.
The evening weather was so bright, and clear,
That men of health were of unusual cheer ;
Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,
Or young Apollo on the pedestal ;
And lovely women were as fair and warm,
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.
The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half closed lattices to cure
The languid sick ; it cooled their fevered sleep,
And soothed them into slumbers full and deep.
Soon they awoke clear eyed : nor burnt with thirsting,
Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting :

And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight;
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,
And on their placid foreheads part the hair.
Young men and maidens at each other gazed
With hands held back, and motionless, amazed
To see the brightness in each other's eyes;
And so they stood, filled with a sweet surprise,
Until their tongues were loosed in poesy.
Therefore no lover did of anguish die:
But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
That followed thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses:
Was there a Poet born?—but now no more—
My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.

SPECIMEN OF AN INDUCTION TO A POEM.

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye.
Not like the formal crest of latter days:
But bending in a thousand graceful ways;
So graceful, that it seems no mortal hand,
Or e'en the touch of Archimago's wand,
Could charm them into such an attitude.
We must think rather, that in playful mood,
Some mountain breeze had turned its chief delight,
To show this wonder of its gentle might.
Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
For while I muse, the lance points slantingly
Athwart the morning air: some lady sweet,
Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet,
From the worn top of some old battlement
Hails it with tears, her stout defender sent:

And from her own pure self no joy dissembling,
Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling.
Sometimes, when the good knight his rest would take,
It is reflected, clearly, in a lake,
With the young ashen boughs, 'gainst which its rests,
And th' half seen mossiness of linnets' nests.
Ah ! shall I ever tell its cruelty,
When the fire flashes from a warrior's eye,
And his tremendous hand is grasping it,
And his dark brow for very wrath is knit ?
Or when his spirit, with more calm intent,
Leaps to the honours of a tournament,
And makes the gazers round about the ring
Stare at the grandeur of the balancing ?
No, no ! this is far off :—then how shall I
Revive the dying tones of minstrelsy,
Which linger yet about lone gothic arches,
In dark green ivy, and among wild larches ?
How sing the splendour of the revelries,
When butts of wine are drank off to the lees ?
And that bright lance, against the fretted wall,
Beneath the shade of stately banneral,
Is slung with shining cuirass, sword, and shield ?
Where ye may see a spur in bloody field.
Light-footed damsels move with gentle paces
Round the wide hall, and show their happy faces ;
Or stand in courtly talk by fives and sevens :
Like those fair stars that twinkle in the heavens.
Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry :
Or wherefore comes that knight so proudly by ?
Wherefore more proudly does the gentle knight,
Rein in the swelling of his ample might ?
Spenser ! thy brows are archèd, open, kind,
And come like a clear sunrise to my mind ;
And always does my heart with pleasure dance,
When I think on thy noble countenance :

Where never yet was ought more earthly seen
Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green.
Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully
Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh
My daring steps : or if thy tender care,
Thus startled unaware,
Be jealous that the foot of other wight
Should madly follow that bright path of light
Traced by thy loved *Libertas* ; he will speak,
And tell thee that my prayer is very meek ;
That I will follow with due reverence,
And start with awe at mine own strange pretence.
Him thou wilt hear ; so I will rest in hope
To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope :
The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers ;
Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.

CALIDORE.

A FRAGMENT.

YOUNG Calidore is paddling o'er the lake ;
His healthful spirit eager and awake
To feel the beauty of a silent eve,
Which seemed full loth this happy world to leave.
The light dwelt o'er the scene so lingeringly.
He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky,
And smiles at the far clearness all around,
Until his heart is well-nigh overwound,
And turns for calmness to the pleasant green
Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean
So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
And show their blossoms trim.
Scarce can his clear and nimble eyesight follow
The freaks and dartings of the black-winged swallow.

Delighting much, to see it half at rest,
Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast
'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon,
The widening circles into nothing gone.

And now the sharp keel of his little boat
Comes up with ripple, and with easy float,
And glides into a bed of water-lilies :
Broad leaved are they and their white canopies
Are upward turned to catch the heavens' dew.
Near to a little island's point they grew ;
Whence Calidore might have the goodliest view
Of this sweet spot of earth. The bowery shore
Went off in gentle windings to the hoar
And light blue mountains : but no breathing man
With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan
Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by
Objects that looked out so invitingly
On either side. These, gentle Calidore
Greeted, as he had known them long before.

The sidelong view of swelling leafiness,
Which the glad setting sun in gold doth dress ;
Whence ever and anon the jay outsprings,
And sails upon the beauty of its wings.

The lonely turret, shattered, and outworn,
Stands venerably proud ; too proud to mourn
Its long lost grandeur : fir trees grow around,
Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.

The little chapel with the cross above
Upholding wreaths of ivy ; the white dove,
That on the windows spreads his feathers light,
And seems from purple clouds to wing its flight.
Green tufted islands casting their soft shades
Across the lake ; sequestered leafy glades,

That through the dimness of their twilight show
Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow
Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems
Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems
A little brook. The youth had long been viewing
These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing
The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught
A trumpet's silver voice. Ah ! it was fraught
With many joys for him : the warder's ken
Had found white coursers prancing in the glen :
Friends very dear to him he soon will see ;
So pushes off his boat most eagerly,
And soon upon the lake he skims along,
Deaf to the nightingale's first under-song ;
Nor minds he the white swans that dream so sweetly :
His spirit flies before him so completely.
And now he turns a jutting point of land,
Whence may be seen the castle gloomy and grand :
Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches,
Before the point of his light shallop reaches
Those marble steps that through the water dip :
Now over them he goes with hasty trip,
And scarcely stays to ope the folding doors :
Anon he leaps along the oaken floors
Of halls and corridors.

Delicious sounds ! those little bright-eyed things
That float about the air on azure wings,
Had been less heartfelt by him than the clang
Of clattering hoofs ; into the court he sprang,
Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain,
Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein ;
While from beneath the threat'ning portcullis
They brought their happy burthens. What a kiss,
What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand !
How tremblingly their delicate ankles spanned !

Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone,
While whisperings of affection
Made him delay to let their tender feet
Come to the earth ; with an incline so sweet
From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent :
And whether there were tears of languishment,
Or that the evening dew had pearled their tresses,
He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses
With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye
All the soft luxury
That nestled in his arms. A dimpled hand,
Fair as some wonder out of fairy land,
Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers
Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers :
And this he fondled with his happy cheek
As if for joy he would no further seek ;
When the kind voice of good Sir Clerimond
Came to his ear, like something from beyond
His present being : so he gently drew
His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new,
From their sweet thrall, and forward gently bending,
Thanked heaven that his joy was never ending ;
While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly pressed
A hand heaven made to succour the distressed ;
A hand that from the world's bleak promontory
Had lifted Calidore for deeds of glory.

Amid the pages, and the torches' glare,
There stood a knight, patting the flowing hair
Of his proud horse's mane : he was withal
A man of elegance, and stature tall :
So that the waving of his plumes would be
High as the berries of a wild ash tree,
Or as the wingèd cap of Mercury.
His armour was so dexterously wrought
In shape, that sure no living man had thought

It hard and heavy steel : but that indeed
 It was some glorious form, some splendid weed
 In which a spirit new come from the skies
 Might live, and show itself to human eyes.
 'Tis the far-famed, the brave Sir Gondibert,
 Said the good man to Calidore alert ;
 While the young warrior with a step of grace
 Came up—a courtly smile upon his face,
 And mailed hand held out, ready to greet
 The large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat
 Of the aspiring boy ; who as he led
 Those smiling ladies, often turned his head
 To admire the visor arched so gracefully
 Over a knightly brow ; while they went by
 The lamps that from the high-roofed hall were pendent,
 And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent. *not good.*

Soon in a pleasant chamber they are seated ;
 The sweet-lipped ladies have already greeted
 All the green leaves that round the window clamber,
 To show their purple stars, and bells of amber.
 Sir Gondibert has doffed his shining steel,
 Gladdening in the free and airy feel
 Of a light mantle ; and while Clerimond
 Is looking round about him with a fond
 And placid eye, young Calidore is burning
 To hear of knightly deeds, and gallant spurning
 Of all unworthiness ; and how the strong of arm
 Kept off dismay, and terror, and alarm
 From lovely woman : while brimful of this,
 He gave each damsel's hand so warm a kiss,
 And had such manly ardour in his eye,
 That each at other looked half staringly ;
 And then their features started into smiles
 Sweet as blue heavens o'er enchanted isles

Softly the breezes from the forest came,
 Softly they blew aside the taper's flame ;
 Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower ;
 Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower ;
 Mysterious, wild, the far-heard trumpet's tone ;
 Lovely the moon in ether, all alone :
 Sweet too the converse of these happy mortals,
 As that of busy spirits when the portals
 Are closing in the west ; or that soft humming
 We hear around when Hesperus is coming.
 Sweet be their sleep. * * * * *

TO SOME LADIES.

WHAT though while the wonders of nature exploring,
 I cannot your light, mazy footsteps attend ;
 Nor listen to accents, that almost adoring,
 Bless Cynthia's face, the enthusiast's friend :
 Yet over the steep, whence the mountain stream rushes,
 With you, kindest friends, in idea I rove ;
 Mark the clear tumbling crystal, its passionate gushes,
 Its spray that the wild flower kindly bedews.
 Why linger you so, the wild labyrinth strolling ?
 Why breathless, unable your bliss to declare ?
 Ah ! you list to the nightingale's tender condoling,
 Responsive to sylphs, in the moon beamy air.
 'Tis morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping,
 I see you are treading the verge of the sea :
 And now, ah ! I see it—you just now are stooping
 To pick up the keepsake intended for me.
 If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,
 Had brought me a gem from the fretwork of heaven ;
 And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,
 The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given ;

It had not created a warmer emotion
Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blest with from you,
Than the shell, from the bright golden sands of the ocean
Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

For, indeed, 'tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure
(And blissful is he who such happiness finds),
To possess but a span of the hour of leisure,
In elegant, pure, and aërial minds.

ON RECEIVING A CURIOUS SHELL, AND A COPY
OF VERSES, FROM THE SAME LADIES.

HAST thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem
Pure as the ice-drop that froze on the mountain?
Bright as the humming-bird's green diadem,
When it flutters in sunbeams that shine through a fountain?

Hast thou a goblet for dark sparkling wine?
That goblet right heavy, and massy, and gold?
And splendidly marked with the story divine
Of Armida the fair, and Rinaldo the bold?

Hast thou a steed with a mane richly flowing?
Hast thou a sword that thine enemy's smart is?
Hast thou a trumpet rich melodies blowing?
And wear'st thou the shield of the famed Britomartis?

What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave,
Embroidered with many a spring peering flower?
Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave?
And hastest thou now to that fair lady's bower?

Ah! courteous Sir Knight, with large joy thou art crowned;
Full many the glories that brighten thy youth!
I will tell thee my blisses, which richly abound
In magical powers to bless and to soothe,

On this scroll thou seest written in characters fair
 A sun-beamy tale of a wreath, and a chain ;
 And, warrior, it nurtures the property rare
 Of charming my mind from the trammels of pain.

This canopy mark : 'tis the work of a fay ;
 Beneath its rich shade did King Oberon languish,
 When lovely Titania was far, far away,
 And cruelly left him to sorrow and anguish.

There, oft would he bring from his soft sighing lute
 Wild strains to which, spell-bound, the nightingales listened ;
 The wondering spirits of heaven were mute,
 And tears 'mong the dewdrops of morning oft glistened.

In this little dome, all those melodies strange,
 Soft, plaintive, and melting, for ever will sigh ;
 Nor e'er will the notes from their tenderness change ;
 Nor e'er will the music of Oberon die.

So, when I am in a voluptuous vein,
 I pillow my head on the sweets of the rose,
 And list to the tale of the wreath, and the chain,
 Till its echoes depart ; then I sink to repose.

Adieu, valiant Eric ! with joy thou art crowned ;
 Full many the glories that brighten thy youth,
 I too have my blisses, which richly abound
 In magical powers to bless and to soothe.

TO * * * *.

HADST thou lived in days of old,
 O what wonders had been told
 Of thy lively countenance,
 And thy humid eyes, that dance

In the midst of their own brightness ;
In the very fane of lightness.
Over which thine eyebrows, leaning,
Picture out each lovely meaning :
In a dainty bend they lie,
Like to streaks across the sky,
Or the feathers from a crow,
Fallen on a bed of snow.
Of thy dark hair, that extends
Into many graceful bends :
As the leaves of Hellebore
Turn to whence they sprung before
And behind each ample curl
Peeps the richness of a pearl.
Downward too flows many a tress
With a glossy waviness ;
Full, and round like globes that rise
From the censer to the skies
Through sunny air. Add, too, the sweetness
Of thy honeyed voice ; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turned :
With those beauties, scarce discerned,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry.
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave ;
Like twin water-lilies, born
In the coolness of the morn.
O, if thou hadst breathed then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage higher
Than twin sister of Thalia ?
At least for ever, evermore,
Will I call the Graces four.

Hadst thou lived when chivalry
 Lifted up her lance on high,
 Tell me what thou wouldst have been ?
 Ah ! I see the silver sheen
 Of thy broidered, floating vest
 Covering half thine ivory breast ;
 Which, O heavens ! I should see
 But that cruel destiny
 Has placed a golden cuirass there ;
 Keeping secret what is fair.
 Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested
 Thy locks in knightly casque are rested :
 O'er which bend four milky plumes
 Like the gentle lily's blooms
 Springing from a costly vase.
 See with what a stately pace
 Comes thine alabaster steed ;
 Servant of heroic deed !
 O'er his loins, his trappings glow
 Like the northern lights on snow.
 Mount his back, thy sword unsheath !
 Sign of the enchanter's death ;
 Bane of every wicked spell ;
 Silencer of dragon's yell.
 Alas ! thou this wilt never do :
 Thou art an enchantress too,
 And wilt surely never spill
 Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

TO HOPE.

WHEN by my solitary hearth I sit,
 And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom ;
 When no fair dreams before my "mind's eye" flit,
 And the bare heath of life presents no bloom ;

Sweet Hope ! ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night,
Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,
Should sad Despondency my musings fright,
And frown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away,
Peep with the moonbeams through the leafy roof,
And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair,
Strive for her son to seize my careless heart ;
When, like a cloud, he sits upon the air,
Preparing on his spell-bound prey to dart :
Chase him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright,
And fright him as the morning frightens night !

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear
Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow,
O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer ;
Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow :
Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head !

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain,
From cruel parents, or relentless fair ;
O let me think it is not quite in vain
To sigh our sonnets to the midnight air !
Sweet Hope ! ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head !

In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see our country's honour fade :
O let me see our land retain her soul,
Her pride, her freedom ; and not freedom's shade.
From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed—
Beneath thy pinions canopy my head !

Let me not see the patriot's high bequest,
 Great Liberty ! how great in plain attire !
 With the base purple of a court oppressed,
 Bowing her head, and ready to expire :

But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings
 That fill the skies with silver glitterings !

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star
 Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud ;
 Brightening the half veiled face of heaven afar :
 So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud,
 Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed,
 Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head.

February, 1815.

IMITATION OF SPENSER.

* * * *

Now Morning from her orient chamber came
 And her first footsteps touched a verdant hill
 Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
 Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill ;
 Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
 And after parting beds of simple flowers,
 By many streams a little lake did fill,
 Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
 And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the kingfisher saw his plumage bright
 Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below ;
 Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light
 Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow ;
 There saw the swan his neck of arched snow,
 And oared himself along with majesty ;
 Sparkled his jetty eyes ; his feet did show
 Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
 And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle
 That in that fairest lake had placèd been,
 I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile;
 Or rob from agèd Lear his bitter teen:
 For sure so fair a place was never seen,
 Of all that ever charmed romantic eye:
 It seemed an emerald in the silver sheen
 Of the bright waters; or as when on high,
 Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the cœrulean sky

And all around it dipped luxuriously
 Sloping of verdure through the glossy tide,
 Which, as it were in gentle amity,
 Rippled delighted up the flowery side;
 As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried,
 Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem!
 Haply it was the workings of its pride,
 In strife to throw upon the shore a gem
 Outvieing all the buds in Flora's diadem.

* * * *

WOMAN! when I behold thee flippant, vain,
 Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of fancies;
 Without that modest softening that enhances
 The downcast eye, repentant of the pain
 That its mild light creates to heal again:
 E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances,
 E'en then my soul with exultation dances
 For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain:
 But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender,
 Heavens! how desperately do I adore
 Thy winning graces;—to be thy defender
 I hotly burn—to be a Calidore—
 A very Red Cross Knight—a stout Leander—
 Might I be loved by thee like these of yore!

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair ;
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast,
Are things on which the dazzled senses rest
Till the fond, fixèd eyes forget they stare.

From such fine pictures, heavens ! I cannot dare
To turn my admiration, though unpossessed
They be of what is worthy—though not drest
In lovely modesty, and virtues rare.

Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark ;

These lures I straight forget—e'en ere I dine,
Or thrice my palate moisten : but when I mark
Such charms with mild intelligences shine,
My ear is open like a greedy shark,
To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

Ah ! who can e'er forget so fair a being ?

Who can forget her half retiring sweets ?

God ! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats
For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing,
Who joys to see us with his gifts agreeing,

Will never give him pinions, who entreats
Such innocence to ruin—who vilely cheats
A dove-like bosom. In truth there is no freeing
One's thoughts from such a beauty ; when I hear

A lay that once I saw her hand awake,
Her form seems floating palpable, and near ;

Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take
A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear,
And o'er my eyes the trembling moisture shake

Epistles.

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW.

“ Among the rest a shepherd (though but young
Yet hartned to his pipe) with all the skill
His few yeeres could, began to fit his quill.”

BROWNE—*Britannia's Pastorals.*

SWEET are the pleasures that to verse belong,
And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song ;
Nor can remembrance, Mathew ! bring to view
A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
Than that in which the brother Poets joyed,
Who with combinèd powers, their wit employed
To raise a trophy to the drama's muses.
The thought of this great partnership diffuses
Over the genius loving heart, a feeling
Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

Too partial friend ! fain would I follow thee
Past each horizon of fine poesy ;
Fain would I echo back each pleasant note
As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float
'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted,
Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted :
But 'tis impossible ; far different cares
Beckon me sternly from soft “ Lydian airs,”
And hold my faculties so long in thrall,
That I am oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phoebus in the morning :
Or flushed Aurora in the roseate dawning !

Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream ;
 Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam ;
 Or again witness what with thee I've seen,
 The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,
 After a night of some quaint jubilee
 Which every elf and fay had come to see :
 When bright processions took their airy march
 Beneath the curvèd moon's triumphal arch.

But might I now each passing moment give
 To the coy muse, with me she would not live
 In this dark city, nor would condescend
 'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.
 Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,
 Ah! surely it must be whene'er I find
 Some flowery spot, sequestered, wild, romantic,
 That often must have seen a poet frantic ;
 Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing ;
 And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing ;
 Where the dark-leaved laburnum's drooping clusters
 Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres,
 And intertwined the cassia's arms unite
 With its own drooping buds, but very white.
 Where on one side are covert branches hung,
 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
 In leafy quiet : where to pry, aloof,
 Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,
 Would be to find where violet beds were nestling,
 And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling.
 There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy,
 To say "joy not too much in all that's bloomy."

Yet this is vain—O Mathew lend thy aid
 To find a place where I may greet the maid—
 Where we may soft humanity put on,
 And sit, and rhyme, and think on Chatterton ;

And that warm-hearted Shakspeare sent to meet him
Four laurelled spirits, heaven-ward to entreat him.
With reverence would we speak of all the sages
Who have left streaks of light athwart their ages :
And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness
And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness
To those who strove with the bright golden wing
Of genius, to flap away each sting
Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell
Of those who in the cause of freedom fell ;
Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell ;
Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace,
High-minded and unbending William Wallace.
While to the rugged north our musing turns
We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.

Felton ! without incitements such as these,
How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease :
For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace,
And make " a sunshine in a shady place :"
For thou wast once a flowret blooming wild,
Close to the source, bright, pure, and undefiled,
Whence gush the streams of song : in happy hour
Came chaste Diana from her shady bower,
Just as the sun was from the east uprising ;
And, as for him some gift she was devising,
Beheld thee, plucked thee, cast thee in the stream
To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam.
I marvel much that thou hast never told
How, from a flower, into a fish of gold
Apollo changed thee ; how thou next didst seem
A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream ;
And when thou first didst in that mirror trace
The placid features of a human face :
That thou hast never told thy travels strange,
And all the wonders of the mazy range

O'er pebbly crystal, and o'er golden sands ;
Kissing thy daily food from Naiad's pearly hands.

November, 1815.

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

FULL many a dreary hour have I past,
My brain bewildered, and my mind o'ercast
With heaviness ; in seasons when I've thought
No sphery strains by me could e'er be caught
From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze
On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays ;
Or, on the wavy grass outstretched supinely,
Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely :
That I should never hear Apollo's song,
Though feathery clouds were floating all along
The purple west, and, two bright streaks between,
The golden lyre itself were dimly seen :
That the still murmur of the honey bee
Would never teach a rural song to me :
That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids slanting
Would never make a lay of mine enchanting,
Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold
Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay,
Fly from all sorrowing far, far away ;
A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see
In water, earth, or air, but poesy.
It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it
(For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it),
That when a Poet is in such a trance,
In air he sees white coursers paw and prance,
Bestriden of gay knights, in gay apparel,
Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel,

And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,
Is the swift opening of their wide portal,
When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,
Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear.
When these enchanted portals open wide,
And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide,
The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls,
And view the glory of their festivals :
Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem
Fit for the silv'ring of a seraph's dream ;
Their rich brimmed goblets, that incessant run
Like the bright spots that move about the sun !
And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar
Pours with the lustre of a falling star.
Yet further off, are dimly seen their bowers,
Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers ;
And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows
'Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose.
All that's revealed from that far seat of blisses,
Is, the clear fountains' interchanging kisses,
As gracefully descending, light and thin,
Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin,
When he upswimmeth from the coral caves,
And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange he sees, and many more,
Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore.
Should he upon an evening ramble fare
With forehead to the soothing breezes bare,
Would he naught see but the dark, silent blue
With all its diamonds trembling through and through ?
Or the coy moon, when in the waviness
Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress,
And staidly paces higher up, and higher,
Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire ?