

says, "An eye that had an inward look perfectly divine, like a Delphian priestess who saw visions."

The poems comprising his first volume, published in 1817, were all written before the poet was twenty. This volume contained the "Ode to Sleep" and several shorter poems and sonnets. They are considered somewhat stiff and unnatural, yet contain many beautiful passages. In examining them we find that their style has been affected by the poet's study of Spenser and Milton.

In 1817, Keats conceived the idea of "Endymion," a long poem relating the adventures of the shepherd prince, Endymion, while in pursuit of the moon-goddess, Selene, who had charmed him in a vision. He wanders many days, being encouraged on his way by Venus and other deities, until he at last finds his goddess in the guise of an Indian maiden, in distress, whom he tries to aid. The poem is founded on a Greek mythological tale and the goddess is supposed to be a personification of beauty, or the ideal which one is not justified in pursuing, unless, at the same time, he aims to do good to humanity. The finest parts of the poem are the "Hymn to Pan," the songs of the Indian maid, and the vivid descriptions of nature, as—

"Rain-scented eglantine

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."

"Endymion" was severely and unjustly criticised by men who knew nothing of the soul of poetry, but who were enemies of Leigh Hunt, and therefore prejudiced against Keats. That the poet was aware of the imperfections of this early attempt, caused by the immaturity of his youthful mind, is evident from the preface, therefore it was cowardly in the critics to censure him for these acknowledged faults. Many declare that these severe criticisms had no effect on Keats' health and spirits; but although he said, "Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on a man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works," yet we cannot believe that his sensitive nature could escape uninjured from the unwarranted persecution of those cruel pens. Certainly, soon after this time, were developed the germs of that dread disease, consumption; but other misfortunes may have combined to cause his illness, among them the death of his younger brother, Tom, to whom he was greatly attached; and his passionate,

jealous love for a young lady, Fanny Brawn, with whom marriage seemed impossible for many reasons.

During the twenty months following his brother's death, Keats' genius reached its greatest height. At this time, he wrote the "Eve of St. Agnes," "Isabella," "Lamia," "Ode to the Nightingale," "Hyperion," and many sonnets, some of which are considered among the most beautiful in the language.

His epic, "Hyperion" has been compared to "Paradise Lost" in point of majesty and grandeur, though where Milton shows the advantage of years and scholarship, Keats evinces a keener insight into the mysteries of nature. This poem is a description of a war between the Titans and the Olympic gods, when Saturn is dethroned from his place in the heavens, and Hyperion crowned in his stead.

In 1818, Keats' friend, Reynolds, proposed that they should each write a poem on tales from Boccaccio, and publish them in one volume. Keats wrote "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil." In excusing his work, he calls it "An echo of thee (Boccaccio) in the North-wind sung." Some of the scenes are very vividly pictured, particularly those of action and intense grief.

Of all his shorter poems, the one that charms us most is the "Eve of St. Agnes," a love tale of a youth and maiden whose families were enemies. This tale is made the theme of a poem, which is full of brilliant coloring and clearly painted pictures. Who can not feel the icy coldness of the night and the gloomy silence of the church? Or again what can be more beautiful than the picture of Madeline as she knelt in prayer before the latticed window—

"Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes
As are the tiger moth's deep-damasked wings,
Where 'Rose bloom fell on her hands together prest,
And on her silver cross, soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory like a saint'?"

His last works are chiefly fine sonnets and odes, the "Ode to Autumn" being one of the most beautiful, in which Autumn, the "bosom friend" of the Sun, "conspires" with him

"To bend with apples the mossed cottage tree,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more
And still more, later flowers for the bees."

At the age of twenty-four, when the frail body could no longer withstand the burning of genius, passion, and disease, Keats' health completely failed; and after a year of great suffering, he was