

## AFTER READING A LIFE AND LETTERS

First printed in *The Examiner* in 1849 and afterwards published in the 6th edition of the "Poems" in 1850. The sub-title was added in 1853. It is supposed that the poem is addressed to Charles Tennyson Turner, the poet's brother, and that the volume referred to is Lord Houghton's "Life and Letters of Keats."

You might have won the Poet's name,  
 If such be worth the winning now,  
 And gain'd a laurel for your brow  
 Of sounder leaf than I can claim;

But you have made the wiser choice,  
 A life that moves to gracious ends  
 Thro' troops of unrecording friends,  
 A deedful life, a silent voice:

And you have miss'd the irreverent doom  
 Of those that wear the Poet's crown;  
 Hereafter, neither knave nor clown  
 Shall hold their orgies at your tomb.

For now the Poet cannot die,  
 Nor leave his music as of old,  
 But round him ere he scarce be cold  
 Begins the scandal and the cry:

' Proclaim the faults he would not show:  
 Break lock and seal: betray the trust:  
 Keep nothing sacred: 'tis but just  
 The many-headed beast should know.'