

Hunt eventually induced him to retire definitely from the profession.

It is impossible to mention all the poems of this period and to rehearse the tale of his new acquaintances. By far his most important acquisition in friendship was Leigh Hunt, whom he met, according to the opinion of Herr Hoops, not earlier than September or October, 1816, despite the generally accepted prior date.

An examination of portions of his earlier work will make plain Keats' aims and achievements at this period of his growth.

In the first place nothing is easier than to detect here and there glaring faults of taste such as set the venomous old critics by the ears. It is easy enough to point out, here and there, the extravagances in diction, the puerilities of thought, and the innovations in prosody which seemed to give some colour to the vehement strictures that were passed upon him. But surely some of those quiet luxurious beauties should have moved a satyr to tears, and softened the stony rigour of a critic's heart.

Objectionable, we may concede, are such lines as these :

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.

Or puerile Moorish-Byronic imitations like the following ("To Some Ladies") :

Why linger you to 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-beaming air.

Verses as weak as that are not uncommon, nor such coined colloquialisms as "bloomy" and many more Cockneyisms and trivial expressions which betray the harmful influence of Hunt upon the choice of a vocabulary at least. Expressions such as, "the quaint mossiness of aged roots," "the pillowy silkiness of stars" are perhaps the outgrowth of Chapman, yet they, too, bear Hunt's seal of approval. Especially in the wrenching of one part of speech into another Keats can shelter himself behind such mighty fellow-sinners as Milton and Shakespeare, and a picturesque word such as "mossiness," in the line above quoted, is even an acquisition to our poetical vocabulary. What shall I say of the beauties of this first slender volume of 1817? At a later time Keats writing to Shelley gave a fragment of pregnant advice: "Load every rift of your subject with ore." The rank growths of a fertile youth forbade this to Keats before the masterpieces of his later years. Yet what earnest do we not obtain of the greatness to be? what ravishing insight into the gradual sphering of his genius to the perfect orb? He has said, in another place, that poetry should "surprise by a fine excess." If we come to the early poems, bearing that thought in mind, we may see that there is such a thing as an error of fine excess, but will inevitably conclude that only in such an error is there hope for the budding poet. Had Keats, in early youth, been a conscious master within the narrow bounds of a confined horizon, the Keats of maturer years, the Keats whom we know and cherish, would never have touched those mightier harmonies of his later verse.

A study of the development of Keats will ever be one of the most fascinating and fruitful tasks for the student of poetry. Few men have cherished such ideals of art, and few, indeed, have consecrated themselves so purely to the service of beauty. He was more than the prophet or high priest of Beauty; he was her very voice.

His delightful letters reveal to us his keen sense of his high vocation, and, therefore, are well nigh indispensable to a thorough appreciation of his poetry.

"I find I cannot exist without poetry—without eternal Poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it—I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan." Again: "I went to the Isle of Wight, thought so much about poetry, so long together, that I could not get to sleep at night."

"I vow that I have been down in the mouth lately at this work (Endymion). 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 great 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. Yet 'tis a disgrace to fail, even in a huge attempt; and at this moment I drive the thought from me."

We perceive in this characteristic passage one of those forced attempts at humour which gave such umbrage to Keats' last critic, Andrew Lang. Yet, here, as in many finer portions of his familiar letters, we have assurance of his exalted opinion of the worth of poetry, a growing sense of its inherent sacredness. Indeed the spirit of poetry, even when manifested in a somewhat mawkish sentiment of love, received from Keats all the worship of which his nature was capable.

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A Hundred Years!

(1796-1896.)

INSCRIBED TO THE IMMORTAL MEMORY AND EVER PRESENT SHADE OF
BURNS.

Shortly before the Poet's death (21st July, 1796), Mrs. Burns said to him, in a regretful voice, "Whaur are a' oor gran' frien's noo, Robert?" "Oh! never mind, Jean," replied the dying Bard, "the world will ken me better a hunner years hence." On that lowly bed, set in under the wall: pallid, livid, unshaven; worn almost to a skeleton; with masses of coal-black hair—prematurely tinged with grey—falling over his temples, the inspired Prophet of Freedom, and of Honest Independence, suddenly threw up his arms, and leaped, upward and forward, into those of Death.

A HUNDRED YEARS! yet the glorious throne
Of Scottish Song is still thine own—
A type of the Centuries waiting thee,
Who sang the Charter of the Free!

Hustling the living and trampling the dead,
The years rush on with resistless tread—
Crowns and Kingdoms may disappear,
But Time ever yieldeth another year.

Humble the bed that gave thee birth;
Lowly as that from which—from Earth—
Thy spirit leaped, strong in its faith,
And sought the friendly arms of Death.

Strong in its faith! faith in a World,
Repentant, that so long had hurled
Its dire damnation on the head
Soon number'd with the mighty Dead

Then, like a dazzling Splendour came
That Worship of thy name and fame—
To scorch Detraction's lying tongue,
As forth Truth's golden joy-bells rung!

A Hundred Years! how swift their flight!—
From darkness to unclouded light—
To where thy Fame's perennial Sun
Its endless course hath but begun!

With silence, then, shall the toast be met
Of "The Bard" whose sun shall never set—
Flashing its glory from shore to shore,
A joy of the world forevermore—?

With silence!—no! or said or sung,
Thy name shall be on ev'ry tongue,
And in the hearts of all mankind
The deathless fame of BURNS enshrined!

COLIN RAE BROWN.

The Burns Club, London, England, 1896.

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The Expository Times (January) begins with Notes on Professor Sayce's Archaeological Commentary on Genesis—a work which has already led, and which will hereafter lead, to much controversy, but which must be reckoned with. Professor Mahaffy on the Sermon on the Mount comes next, and the notes on this are distinctly valuable. Among the various contributions to this publication, we would specially note the "Requests and Replies." The requests are quite worth making and printing, and the replies are by men of the greatest distinction. The reviews are carefully done and without prejudice. The other features remain as before.