

nals, has also contrived to impart to the whole piece that true rural and poetical air which breathes only in them and in Theocritus, which is at once homely and majestic, luxurious and rude, and sets before us the genuine sights and sounds and smells of the country with all the magic and grace of Elysium. . . . There is no work accordingly from which a malicious critic could cull more matter for ridicule or select more obscure, unnatural or absurd passages. But we do not take that to be our office, and just beg leave, on the contrary, to say that any one, who, on this account, would represent the whole poem as despicable, must either have no notion for poetry or no regard to truth. . . . We do not know any book 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 intrinsic charm."

From this time Keats steadily rose in popular favor. In 1844 Leigh Hunt again shows his fine appreciation of the rare genius of his gifted protege:

"Keats was born a poet of the most poetical kind. . . . It might be said of him that he never beheld an oak tree without seeing the Dryad. . . . In what other English poet (however superior to him in other respects) are you so *certain* of never opening a page without lighting upon the loveliest imagery and the most eloquent expressions. Name one. Compare any succession of their pages at random and see if the young poet is not sure to present his stock of beauty, crude it may be in many instances, too indiscriminate in general, never, perhaps, thoroughly perfect in cultivation, but there it is, exquisite of its kind and filling envy with despair."

Keats' biography, published four years later than the above, threw a clear light upon the simple, manly, courageous character of the poet. James Russell Lowell, with his inimitable felicity of touch, also pays tribute to him:

"The poems of Keats mark an epoch in English poetry; for, however often we may find traces of it others, in them found its strongest expression that reaction against the barrel-organ style which had been reigning by a kind of sleepy divine right for half a century. The lowest point was indicated when there was such an utter confounding of the common and the uncommon sense that Dr. Johnson wrote verse and Burke prose. The most profound gospel of criticism was that nothing was good poetry that could not be translated into good prose, as if the test of sufficient moonlight was that tallow candles could be made of it. We find Keats at first going to the other extreme and endeavoring to extract green cucumbers from the ray of tallow; but we see also incontestable proof of the greatness and purity of his poetic gift in the constant return

toward equilibrium and repose in his later poems. And it is a repose always lofty and clear-aired, like that of an eagle balanced in sunshine. In him a vigorous understanding developed itself in equal measure with the divine faculty; thought emancipated itself from expression without becoming its tyrant; and music and meaning floated together accordant as swan and shadow on the smooth element of his verse. Without losing its seriousness, his poetry refined itself and grew more inward, and the sensational was elevated into the typical by the control of that finer sense which underlies the senses and is the spirit of them."

In regard to popular criticism, Keats writes:

"I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the principle of beauty, and the memory of great men. I would be subdued before my friends and thank them for subduing me; but among multitudes of men I have no feeling of stooping; I hate the idea of humility to them. I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of thought about their opinion. . . . My glory would be to daunt and dazzle the thousand jabberers about pictures and books. . . . Just so much as I am humbled by the genius above my grasp, am I exalted, and look with contempt upon the literary world."

Matthew Arnold, whose sanity, sureness of touch, and calm impartiality constitute him a most admirable critic, after quoting Keats' words:—"If I should die I have left no immortal work behind me, nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; *but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things*, and if I had time I would have made myself remembered," says:

"He *has* made himself remembered, and remembered as no merely sensuous poet could be; and he has done it by having 'loved the principle of beauty in all things.' For to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth, and Keats knew it. 'What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth,' he says in prose; and in immortal verse he has said the same thing:—

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

"No it is not all; but it is true, deeply true, and we have deep need to know it. And with beauty goes not only truth, joy goes with her also. And this, too, Keats knew and said, as, in the famous first line of his *Endymion* it stands written, 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever.' It is no small thing to have so loved the principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with truth and of both with joy." And further on Arnold adds: "No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare,