

in its highest degree, blended with sublime ideas of the gods and all thing noble; the "Jerusalem Delivered" of Tasso is as replete in incident and description as those of Greece and Rome, but adds thereto the idea of the true God of the Christian; but in Milton's "Paradise Lost" and "Regained" all these individual instances seem to blend even as the perfections of every master in the *Chef-d'œuvre* of the Grecian artist. Milton brought the poetry of the age to its highest point. He shone like a glorious sun in the midst of a system of splendid planets—John Dryden, in his translations from the different languages and in his original productions helped greatly in heightening the standard of the day. And so did Samuel Butler, the first and perhaps greatest satiric poet of England. His quaint humor in "Hudibras" contrasted strangely with the sublime expressions of Milton. Lord Bristol, Richard Baxter and Joseph Addison followed in the wake of the foregoing, and Alexander Pope closed the seventeenth century as Shakspeare opened it. Like two magnificent monuments at either end of the desert of a hundred years—in the centre of which towered aloft the mightiest pyramid in the literary history of the world—JOHN MILTON.

Most naturally, since poetry got so powerful an impetus, a number of bards sprang up in the course of the 18th century. But it was only towards the last decade thereof and the dawn of the nineteenth century that the second great epoch of English poetry is to be found. During the eighteenth century, however, the muses were not at rest. Reginald Heber and Charles Lamb wrote some very exquisite poems, and poor Henry Kirk-White and that unfortunate youth, whose days were few but brilliantly sad, Thomas Chatterton, gave England some of her choicest effusions. Then Blake, and Collins—and above all William Cowper sustained the *eclat* of the age. Cowper's Task is world-renowned; and who has not read, and laughed over, and enjoyed to his heart's content the ride of *John Gilpin*? With Cowper we have Sir John Browning, John Gay, Mark Akenside and Thomas Bayley, and last but not least Thomas Gray. It has often been said that his poem, the "Elegy in a

Country Church Yard," is the most perfect poem in the language—as to idea and to execution. At all events it is one of the most beautiful and would alone be enough to immortalize its author.

With Gray ends the eighteenth century and after him, the close of the 18th and beginning of the 19th we find the second great period of the triumph of poetry in England. And it would not be unworthy of remark that it was in the days of peace that literature most flourished in the British Isles. While her armies were over-running the land and her fleet sweeping the nations off the wave her muses sought shelter in the mountains and secluded places; but when for a moment peace was restored, songs and poetry walked forth throughout the country, chanting the praises of those who won happiness to the nation, lamenting those who fell for her glory, teaching lessons of love and devotion to the people at large.

It was in such a period that Thomas Hood came forth to fling his rich humor upon the page and to blend there with his heart-touching lines—such as "The Bridge of Sighs" and "The Song of the Shirt." Leigh Hunt, Crabbe and Canning developed and enlarged upon some of the glowing thoughts of Hood and added thereto their own splendid conceptions. Robert Southey and Percy Bysshe Shelley struck each a new chord in the lyre. Shelley saw joys and sorrows; he drank deep at the fountains of human pleasure and deeper still at the spring of human sorrows. He perished at Naples, no doubt while enjoying in his poetic soul the ever famous beauties of that lovely bay. Ebenezer Elliott, though not as famous as those just mentioned, under the title of *The Corn Law Rhymers*, made himself a name in the history of the time.

But perhaps, the most famous, although the youngest and worst treated of all bards was John Keats. Unfortunate Keats; he knew not his own worth and the world knew not how awfully, how terribly cruel it was, when it cut the life-chord of that noble heart. His "Endymion" and "Hypereon" are enough to make of him the prince of imaginative poets. But his "Eve of St. Agnes" crowns all his works. In order to understand Keats, and to fathom all