

THE POETICAL WORKS

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The poetical works by John Keats

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JOHN KEATS

**THE POETICAL
WORKS**

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN KEATS.

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ENDYMION:

A

POETIC ROMANCE.

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATFIELD.

The stretched metre of an antique song.

B

PREFACE.

Knowing within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they, if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

THOMSON,
April 10, 1818.

BOOK I.

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever :
Its loveliness increases ; it will never
Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darken'd ways
Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in ; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season ; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms :
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read :
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour ; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'er-cast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
 Will trace the story of Endymion.
 The very music of the name has gone
 Into my being, and each pleasant scene
 Is growing fresh before me as the green
 Of our own valleys : so I will begin
 Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;
 Now while the early budders are just new,
 And run in mazes of the youngest hue
 About old forests ; while the willow trails
 Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails
 Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
 Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
 My little boat, for many quiet hours,
 With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
 Many and many a verse I hope to write,
 Before the daisies, vermeil rinn'd and white,
 Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees
 Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
 I must be near the middle of my story.
 O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
 See it half-finish'd : but let Autumn bold,
 With universal tinge of sober gold,
 Be all about me when I make an end,
 And now at once, adventuresome, I send
 My herald thought into a wilderness :
 There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
 My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
 Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
 A mighty forest ; for the moist earth fed
 So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
 Into o'erhanging boughs, and precious fruits.
 And it had gloomy shades, sequester'd deep,
 Where no man went ; and if from shepherd's keep
 A lamb stray'd far a-down those inmost glens,
 Never again saw he the happy pens
 Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
 Over the hills at every night-fall went.
 Among the shepherds 't was believed ever,
 That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
 From the white flock, but pass'd unworried
 By any wolf, or pard with prying head,