

The Poetry of Keats. Vol. 1

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Auteur(s) : John Keats

Ralph Richardson

Howard O. Sackler

Type de document : disque

Collection : Literary series

Inscriptions :

- marque : Caedmon TCE130

Matériau(x) et technique(s) : vinyle

Description : Pochette en carton illustrée d'oiseaux dans leur nid, contenant un disque microsillon 45 tours protégé dans une pochette en papier. Au verso de la pochette, commentaire sur la poésie de Keats.

Mesures : diamètre : 17,5 cm

Notes : Disque contient : - Face A : 1. Ode on a Grecian Urn ; 2. To Autumn ; - Face B : Endymion (Beginning and Hymn to Pan.

Mots-clés : Anglais

Représentations : représentation animalière : animal, nid, oiseau

Autres descriptions : Langue : anglais

the Poetry of

Caedmon

KEATS



Vol. 1

*read by
Sir Ralph Richardson*



POETRY OF KEATS, Volume 1

CAEDMON LITERARY SERIES
TCE130

Ode on a Grecian Urn

To Autumn

Endymion (Beginning and Hymn to Pan)

Read by SIR RALPH RICHARDSON

Directed by Howard Sackler

"I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." Not boastfully, or with assurance even, did Keats write this to his brother. To be "among the English poets" was the prayer of his short life, for he had enshrined in his heart the image of Spenser, whose poems had inspired him to write poetry at the age of eighteen, and Chapman, whose translation of Homer had led him back to Drayton, and all of his Elizabethan cronies and peers. It was on a blank page in a volume of Shakespeare, facing "A Lover's Complaint", that Keats wrote the sonnet beginning "Bright Star, would I were steadfast as thou art. . . ." And on the fore-page of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Fair Maid of the Inn*, a tragi-comedy, he composed a poem beginning, "Bards of Passion and of Mirth,/Ye have left your souls on earth!"

In spite of that humble confidence to his brother, Keats had no means of knowing how well his poetry would be cherished after his death. Already he had written some of the purest lyrical utterances in our language. A few close friends, such as Shelley and Leigh Hunt, were encouraging, and he even found a publisher. But what greeted his first volume of verse in 1817 was not acclaim, or even the criticism easy to heap on a boy of twenty-two. It was bleak and discouraging silence. Not a word even for "On first looking into Chapman's Homer", that rare sonnet. Again he wrote, with the ardour of dedicated genius, and found another publisher for his new long poem, *Endymion*. The source of his plot came from a work by Michael Drayton. He worked on it long and weary hours, and he, far better than anyone else, knew its limitations. When he was finished, he labelled it "A Poetic Romance" and dedicated it to the memory of Thomas Chatterton, who had died in 1818. Then he attempted, in a little preface, to apologize for his "great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. . . . 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 bitternesses which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages."

It is one of the wisest observations ever made by a man of twenty-three; but it did not serve to fend off some of the most vicious attacks ever printed. The competent men from whom Keats hoped for an honest appraisal were not forthcoming. We need not sentimentalize, as Byron did in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers", to understand how, if such criticism did not kill him (tuberculosis, like reviewers, was no respecter of genius in the nineteenth century), it did undermine his spirit, to the point at which he declared, a few months before his death, that his epitaph ought to read: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water".

He died obscurely, on Italian soil, bereft of family and most friends, and disappointed in love. But soon came a realization of how well John Keats had brightened "the honour of English literature". Not Spenser, not Milton, nor Shakespeare himself, could sustain so beautifully the sensual song of life. His is a unique ravishing of the senses: beauty phrased for eternal pleasure. He is, as he had hoped, with the English poets, for all time.

