age; and indeed my defense would have hurt his cause far more than it would have helped. . . . A few years more, after I am gone, people all over England will be speaking of Keats, and doing homage to his rare intellectual qualities. They will acknowledge that I was right in my prophecy, published some time ago, that he was as true a man of genius as these latter times have seen, one of those who are too genuine and original to be properly appreciated at first, but whose time for applause will infallibly arrive with the many." And then Hunt would relapse into silence, his eyes gazing into the distance, as though he saw unutterable visions.

Kenyon West.

THE INFLUENCE OF KEATS.

ONE of the things that surprised and bewildered dear old Colonel Newcome when he gathered his boy's friends around the mahogany tree in the dull, respectable dining-room at 12 Fitzroy Square, was to hear George Warrington deliver, between huge puffs of tobacco smoke, the opinion "that young Keats was a genius to be estimated in future days with young Raphael." At this Charles Honeyman would sagely nod his ambrosial head, while Clive Newcome assented with sparkling eyes. But to the Colonel, sitting kindly grave and silent at the head of the table, and recalling (somewhat dimly) the wigged and powdered poetry of the age of Queen Anne, such a critical sentiment seemed radical and revolutionary, almost ungentlemanly.

But how astonished he would have been sixty years later if he had taken up Mr. Sidney Colvin's "Life of Keats," and read in the concluding chapter of that vivacious work the deliberate and remarkable judgment that "by power, as well as by temperament and aim, he was the most Shaksperian spirit that has lived since Shakspere"!

In truth, from the beginning the poetry of Keats has been visited too much by thunderstorms of praise. It was the indiscriminate enthusiasm of his friends that drew out the equally indiscriminate ridicule of his enemies. It was the premature salutation offered to him as a supreme master of the most difficult of all arts that gave point and sting to the criticism of evident defects in his work. "The Examiner" hailed him, before his first volume had been printed, as one who was destined to revive the early vigor of English poetry. "Blackwood's Magazine" retorted by quoting his feeblest lines and calling him "Johnny Keats." The suspicion of log-rolling led to its usual result in a volley of stone-throwing.

Happily, the fame and influence of a true poet are not determined by the partizan conflicts which are waged about his name. He may suffer some personal loss by having to breathe, at times, a perturbed atmosphere of mingled flattery and abuse instead of the still air of delightful studies. He may be robbed of some days of a life already far too short, by the pestilent noise and confusion arising from that scramble for notoriety which is often unduly honored with the name of "literary activity." And there are some men whose days of real inspiration are so few, and whose poetic gift is so slender, that this loss proves fatal to them. They are completely carried away and absorbed by the speculations and strifes of the market-place. They spend their time in the intrigues of rival poetic enterprises, and learn to regard current quotations in the trade journals as the only standard of value. Minor poets at the outset, they are tempted to risk their little all on the stock exchange of literature, and, losing their last title to the noun, retire to bankruptcy on the adjective.

But Keats did not belong to this frail and foolish race. His lot was cast in a world of petty conflict and ungenerous rivalry, but he was not of that world. It hurt him a little, but it did not ruin him. His spiritual capital was too large, and he regarded it as too sacred to be imperiled by vain speculations. He had in Chaucer and Spenser, Shakspere and Chapman, Milton and Petrarch, older and wiser friends than Leigh Hunt. For him

> The blue
> Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
> Of summer nights collected still to make
> The morning precious: beauty was awake!

He perceived, by that light which comes only to high-souled and noble-hearted poets,

> The great end
> Of poesy, that it should be a friend
> To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man.

He gave to that end the best that he had to give, freely, generously, joyously pouring himself into the ministry of his art. He did not dream for a moment that the gift was perfect. Flattery could not blind him to the limitations and defects of his early work. He was his own best and clearest critic. But he knew that so far as it went his poetic inspiration was true. He had faithfully followed the light of a pure and elevating joy in the opulent, manifold beauty of nature, and in the eloquent significance of old-world legends, and he believed that it had already led him to a place among the poets whose verse would bring delight, in far-off years, to the sons and daughters of mankind. He believed also that if he kept alive his faith in the truth of beauty and the beauty of truth it would lead him on yet further, into a nobler life and closer to those immortal bards whose

> Souls still speak
> To mortals of their little week;
> Of their sorrows and delights;
> Of their passions and their spites;
> Of their glory and their shame;
> What doth strengthen and what maim.

He expressed this faith very clearly in the early and unequal poem called "Sleep and Poetry," in a passage which begins

> Oh, for ten years, that I may overwhelm
> Myself in poesy! so I may do the deed
> That my own soul has to itself decreed.

And then, before four years had followed that brave wish, his voice fell silent under a wasting agony of pain and love, and the daisies were growing upon his Roman grave.

The pathos of his frustrated hope, his early death, has sometimes blinded men a little, it seems to me, to the real character of his work and the true quality of his influence in poetry. He has been lamented in the golden verse of Shelley's "Adonaïs," and in the prose of a hundred writers who have shared Shelley's errors without partaking of his genius, as the loveliest innocent ever martyred by the cruelty of hostile critics. But, in fact, the vituperations of Gifford and his crew were no more responsible for the death of Keats than the stings of insects for the death of a man who has perished of fever on the coast of Africa. They added to his sufferings, no doubt, but they did not take away his life. Keats had far too much virtue in the old Roman sense — far too much courage, to be killed by a criticism. He died of consumption, as he clearly and sadly knew that he was fated to do when he first saw the drop of arterial blood upon his pillow. Nor is it just, although it may seem generous, to estimate his fame chiefly by the anticipation of what he might have accomplished if he had lived longer; to praise him for his promise at the expense of his performance; and to rest his claim to a place among the English poets upon an uncertain prophecy of rivalry with Shakspere. I hear a far sounder note in Lowell's manly essay, when he says: "No doubt there is something tropical and of strange overgrowth in his sudden maturity, but it *was* maturity nevertheless." I hear the accent of a wiser and saner criticism in the sonnet of one of our living American poets:

> Touch not with dark regret his perfect fame,
> Sighing, "Had he but lived he had done so";
> Or, "Were his heart not eaten out with woe
> John Keats had won a prouder, mightier name!"
> Take him for what he was and did — nor blame
> Blind fate for all he suffered. Thou shouldst know
> Souls such as his escape no mortal blow —
> No agony of joy, or sorrow, or shame.
>
> . . . .

"Take him for what he was and did" — that should be the key-note of our thought of Keats as a poet. The exquisite harmony of his actual work with his actual character; the truth of what he wrote to what his young heart saw and felt and enjoyed; the simplicity of his very exuberance of ornament, and the naturalness of his artifice; the sincerity of his love of beauty and the beauty of his sincerity — these are the qualities which give an individual and lasting charm to his poetry, and make his gift to the world complete in itself and very precious, although — or perhaps we should even say because — it was imperfect and unfinished.

Youth itself is imperfect: it is impulsive, visionary, and unrestrained; full of tremulous delight in its sensations, but not yet thoroughly awake to the deeper meanings of the world; avid of novelty and mystery, but not yet fully capable of hearing or interpreting the still, small voice of divine significance which breathes from the simple and familiar elements of life. And yet youth has its own completeness as a season of man's existence. It is justified and indispensable. Alfred de Musset's

> We old men of yesterday

are simply monstrous. And the poetry which expresses and represents youth, the poetry of sensation and sentiment, has its own place in the literature of the world. This is the order to which the poetry of Keats belongs.

He is not a feminine poet, as Mr. Coventry Patmore calls him, any more than Theocritus or Tennyson is feminine; for the quality of extreme sensitiveness to outward beauty is not an exclusive mark of femininity: it is found in men

as often as in women, but it is always most keen and joyous and overmastering in the morning of the soul. Keats is not a virile poet, like Dante or Shakspere or Milton; and that he would have become one if he had lived is only a happy and loving guess. He is certainly not a member of the senile school of poetry, which celebrates the impotent and morbid passions of decay, with a *café chantant* for its temple, and the smoke of cigarettes for incense, and cups of wormwood for its libations, and for its goddess not the immortal Venus rising from the sea, but the weary, painted, and decrepit Venus sinking into the gutter.

He is in the highest and best sense of the word a juvenile poet—"mature," as Lowell says, but mature, as genius always is, within the boundaries and in the spirit of his own season of life. The very sadness of his lovely odes, "To a Nightingale," "On a Grecian Urn," "To Autumn," "To Psyche," is the pleasant melancholy of the springtime of the heart. "The Eve of St. Agnes," pure and passionate, surprising by its fine excess of color and melody, sensuous in every line, yet free from the slightest taint of sensuality, is unforgettable and unsurpassable as the dream of first love. The poetry of Keats, small in bulk and slight in body as it seems at first sight to be, endures, and will endure, in English literature, because it is the embodiment of the spirit of immortal youth.

Here, I think, we touch its secret as an influence upon other poets. For that it has been an influence — in the older sense of the word, which carries with it a reference to the guiding and controlling force supposed to flow from the stars to the earth — is beyond all doubt. The "History of English Literature," with which Taine amused us some twenty-five years ago, nowhere displays its narrowness of vision more egregiously than in its failure to take account of Gray, Collins, and Keats as fashioners of English poetry. Our American critic, Mr. Stedman, shows a far broader and more intelligent understanding of the subject when he says that "Wordsworth begot the mind, and Keats the body, of the idyllic Victorian School." We can trace the influence of Keats not merely in the conscious or unconscious imitations of his manner, like those which are so evident in the early poems of Tennyson and Procter, in Hood's "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" and "Lycus the Centaur," in Rossetti's "Ballads and Sonnets," and William Morris's "Earthly Paradise," but also in the youthful spirit of delight in the retelling of old tales of mythology and chivalry; in the quickened sense of pleasure in the luxuriance and abundance of natural beauty; in the freedom of overflowing cadences transmitting ancient forms of verse into new and flexible measures; in the large liberty of imaginative diction, making all nature sympathize with the joy and sorrow of man,—in brief, in many of the finest marks of a renascence, a renewed youth, which characterize the poetry of the Victorian era. I do not mean to say that Keats alone, or chiefly, was responsible for this renascence. He never set up to lead a movement or to found a school. His genius is not to be compared with that of a commanding artist like Giotto or Leonardo or Michelangelo, but rather with that of a painter like Botticelli, whose personal and expressive charm makes itself felt in the work of many painters who learned secrets of grace and beauty from him, though they were not his professed disciples or followers.

Take for example Matthew Arnold. He called himself, and no doubt rightly, a Wordsworthian. But it was not from Wordsworth that he caught the strange and searching melody of "The Forsaken Merman," or learned to embroider the laments for "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar-Gypsy" with opulence of such varied bloom as makes death itself seem lovely. It was from John Keats. Or read the description of the tapestry on the castle walls in "Tristram and Iseult." How perfectly that repeats the spirit of Keats's descriptions in "The Eve of St. Agnes"! It is picturesque poetry.

Indeed, we shall fail to do justice to the influence of Keats unless we recognize also that it has produced direct and distinct effects in the art of painting. The English Preraphaelites owed much to his inspiration. Holman Hunt found two of his earliest subjects for pictures in "The Eve of St. Agnes" and "The Pot of Basil." Millais painted "Lorenzo and Isabella," and Rossetti "La Belle Dame sans Merci." There is an evident sympathy between their art, which insisted that every detail in a picture is precious, and should be painted with truthful care for its beauty, and the poetry of Keats, which is filled, and even overfilled, with minute and loving touches of exquisite elaboration.

But it must be remembered that in poetry, as well as in painting, the spirit of picturesqueness has its dangers. The details may be multiplied until the original design is lost. The harmony and lucidity of a poem may be destroyed by innumerable digressions and descriptions. In some of his poems — in "Endymion" and in "Lamia"— Keats fell very deep into this fault, and no one knew it better than himself. But when he was at his best he had the power of blending a hundred delicate details with his central vision, and making every touch heighten and enhance the general effect. How wonderful in its unity is the "Ode on a

Grecian Urn"! How complete and magical the opening lines of "Hyperion":

> Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
> Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
> Far from the fiery Noon, and eve's one star,
> Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
> Still as the silence round about his lair;
> Forest on forest hung about his head
> Like cloud on cloud.

How large and splendid is the imagery of the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"! And who that has any sense of poetry does not recognize the voice of a master in the two superb lines of the last poem that Keats wrote? — the sonnet in which he speaks of the bright star

> watching, with eternal lids apart,
> Like Nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
> The moving waters at their priestlike task
> Of pure ablution round earth's human shores.

The poets of America have not been slow to recognize the charm and power of Keats. Holmes and Longfellow and Lowell paid homage to him in their verse. Lanier inscribed to his memory a poem called "Clover." Mr. R. W. Gilder has two sonnets which celebrate his "perfect fame." And there are many of our younger poets who would join with Mr. Frank Dempster Sherman in twining a garland for Keats among

> The poets nine
> Whose verse
> I love best to rehearse.

But I seem to find an even deeper and larger tribute to his influence in the features of resemblance to his manner and spirit which flash out here and there, unexpectedly and unconsciously, in the poetry of our New World. Emerson was so unlike Keats in his intellectual constitution as to make all contact between them appear improbable, if not impossible. And yet no one can read Emerson's "May-Day," and Keats's exquisitely truthful and imaginative lines on "Fancy," one after the other, without feeling that the two poems are very near of kin. Lowell's "Legend of Brittany" has caught, not only the measure, but also the tone and the diction of "Isabella"; the famous introduction to "The Vision of Sir Launfal," with its often quoted line,

> What is so rare as a day in June?

finds a parallel in the opening verses of "Sleep and Poetry"—

> What is more gentle than a wind in summer?

and Lowell's "Endymion," which he calls "a mystical comment on Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love,'" is full of echoes from Keats, like this:

> My day began not till the twilight fell
> And lo! in ether from heaven's sweetest well
> The new moon swam, divinely isolate
> In maiden silence, she that makes my fate
> Haply not knowing it, or only so
> As I the secrets of my sheep may know.

In Sidney Lanier's luxuriant and melodious "Hymns of the Marshes" there are innumerable touches in the style of Keats; for example, his apostrophe to the

> Reverend marsh, low-couched along the sea,
> Old chemist, wrapped in alchemy,
> Distilling silence,—

or his praise of the

> Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the noon-day fire,
> Wildwood privacies, closets of lone desire,
> Chamber from chamber parted with wavering arras of leaves.

One of the richest and most sustained pieces of elegiac verse that have yet been produced in America, Mr. George E. Woodberry's noble poem called "The North Shore Watch," has many passages that recall the young poet who wrote

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

Indeed, we hear the very spirit of Endymion speaking in Mr. Woodberry's lines:

> Beauty abides, nor suffers mortal change,
> Eternal refuge of the orphaned mind.

And now one more poet—and I think a true one—comes to add his name to those who have seen the bright star of immortal youth in the poetry of Keats. Father Tabb, in one of his delicately finished little poems, imagines Sappho, amid the Olympian throng, listening to the "Ode to a Nightingale," and hearing in it

> The pantings of her heart.

Yes; the memory and influence of Keats endure, and will endure, because his poetry expresses something in the heart that will not die so long as there are young men and maidens to see and feel the beauty of the world and the thrill of love. It is complete, it is true, it is justified, because it is the fitting utterance of one of those periods of mental life which Keats himself has called "the human seasons."

But its completeness and its truth depend

upon its relation, in itself and in the poet's mind, to the larger world of poetry, the fuller life, the rounded year of man. After all, we find it impossible truly to understand the performance of Keats without considering his promise; we cannot appreciate what he did without remembering that it was only part of what he hoped to do. He was not one of those who believe that the ultimate aim of poetry is loveliness, and that there is no higher law above the law of "art for art's sake." The poets of arrested development, the artificers of mere melody and form, who say that art must always play and never teach, the musicians who are content to remain forever

> The idle singers of an empty day,

are not his true followers. He held that "beauty is truth," but he held also another article that has been too often left out in the repetition of his poetic creed: he held "truth beauty," and he hoped one day to give a clear, full utterance to that higher, holier vision. Perhaps he has, but not to mortal ears.

Henry van Dyke.

HAROLD.

UP from the trodden sand lift his red plume;
  Shoot his maimed stallion, and sheathe his red sword:
Bury him there where the cliffs make a gloom
  And the cedars hang desolate over the ford.

Helmet and cuirass and scabbard of steel,
  Gauntlets and top-boots and clatter of spur,—
Dumb now the clashing from thigh-bone to heel,
  And harmless as dragon-fly mocking them there.

Such a great fight there will never be more:
  Harold alone there, with pistols and sword,
Shooting them down when they rode to the shore,
  Cutting them down when they rode from the ford;

Twenty long minutes he held it, and then
  Shouting came down from the pass overhead;
He turned in his saddle to cheer on his men,
  And the gray rocks that saw it were splattered with red.

Bury him there where the waters swing by,
  And the gloom of the mountain hangs over the ford;
With his feet to the rock and his face to the sky,
  And the grip of his hand on the hilt of his sword.

Bury him there where the winds in the pass
  Will cry him the dirges the sere cedars know.
No tear will awake him of comrade or lass,
  Where we leave him to dream in the grass and the snow.

Only the flare of his surging red plume
  Like the flag of a hero will challenge the ford,
Till the last great "To horse!" will blare over his tomb,
  And he 'll lead us again with his hand on his sword.

G. E. Theodore Roberts.