

A FIRST EDITION OF *ENDYMION*

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THE Library has acquired a fine copy, the gift of Daniel Maggin, of the first edition of Keats's *Endymion*. This modest octavo volume, which was offered so humbly by its author and which troubled the critical waters of his own day and caused startling repercussions in literary history, was published in a small edition (no one seems to know just how many copies were printed) at the end of April, 1818, by Taylor and Hessey, patrons and publishers of poets.

The Rutgers copy, in the original tan boards with the original small spine label reading: "Endymion: A Poetic Romance—Price 9s.," is what bibliographers would designate a second issue of the first edition because of some small changes made after the first binding. In a letter to Taylor, written April 24, but postmarked April 27, Keats called attention to additional *errata*, and in the first printing a slip was attached to page [xi] noting five errors to be corrected (one of which had already been printed on that page). This is the state of the first issue in the Morgan Library.

At some stage in the printing and binding shortly after, the outer double-leaf of the first gathering (pp. [i], [ii], [xi], and [xii]) was cancelled and on page [ii] instead of "Printed by T. Miller, Noble Street, Cheapside," there appears: "T. Miller, Printer, Noble Street, Cheapside"; and the five *errata* are printed on page [xi]. This then is the change that distinguishes the second issue, except that in the Rutgers copy the original *erratum* leaf was left when the volume was bound and it follows the printed *errata* leaf listing five errors.

Four unnumbered pages at the end in both the Morgan and the Rutgers copies list under date of "May, 1818" ("May 1, 1818" in the Rutgers copy): "Books just published by Taylor and Hessey." These lists include a curious assortment of known and unknown books and authors contemporary with Keats. The lists are identical except for a slight change in order and the omission of one item in

the second issue. Taylor and Hessey had just published Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, *The Vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise*, of Dante Alighieri, translated by H. F. Cary, *The Conflagration of Moscow*, *A Poem and Hypocrisy. A Satirical Poem*, by the Rev. C. Colton, various moral tracts by Mrs. Taylor, of Ongar, *A Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters . . .* by Lady Pennington, and *A Course of Practical Sermons*, "expressly adapted to be read in families," by the Rev. Harvey Marriott.

In this miscellaneous company Keats's fateful poem first saw the light. The author himself never considered it more than experimental, and was half sick of it before it was finished. He later told Shelley that when he wrote it his "mind was like a pack of scattered cards." And in the deprecating preface he said: "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." And when John Wilson Croker held him up to ridicule in the *Quarterly Review*, that infamous literary attack which Shelley thought was the cause of Keats's death, the young author himself was less dismayed than his friends. He wrote: "In *Endymion*, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice.—I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest." Keats already had a premonition that he might "cease to be/ Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain." He had dedicated *Endymion* "To the Memory of Thomas Chatterton."