

## Some Sonnets by John Keats

### “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer”

Much have I travell’d in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow’d Homer ruled as his demesne;  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star’d at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look’d at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

(*Examiner*, 1 Dec. 1816.)

### “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles”

My spirit is too weak—mortality  
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,  
And each imagined pinnacle and steep  
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die  
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.  
Yet ’tis a gentle luxury to weep  
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep  
Fresh for the opening of the morning’s eye.  
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain  
Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;  
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,  
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude  
Wasting of old time—with a billowy main—  
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

(Written 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1817.)

### “Bright Star”

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night  
And 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,  
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,  
Pillow’d upon my fair love’s ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

(Written in ?October 1819.)

### “On Sitting Down to read *King Lear* ..”

O golden-tongued Romance with serene lute!  
Fair plumed Syren! Queen of far away!  
Leave melodizing on this wintry day,  
Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:  
Adieu! for once again the fierce dispute,  
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay  
Must I burn through; once more humbly assay  
The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit.  
Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,  
Begetters of our deep eternal theme,  
When through the old oak forest I am gone,  
Let me not wander in a barren dream,  
But when I am consumed in the fire,  
Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

(Written Jan. 1818.)

### “When I have Fears ...”

When I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,  
Before high-pilèd books, in charactery,  
Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain;  
When I behold, upon the night’s starred face,  
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
And think that I may never live to trace  
Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;  
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,  
That I shall never look upon thee more,  
Never have relish in the faery power  
Of unreflecting love—then on the shore  
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

(Written late Jan. 1818.)

### “Happy is England”

Happy is England! I could be content  
To see no other verdure than its own;  
To feel no other breezes than are blown  
Through its tall woods with high romances blent:  
Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment  
For skies Italian, and an inward groan  
To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,  
And half forget what world or worldling meant.  
Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters;  
Enough their simple loveliness for me,  
Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging:  
Yet do I often warmly burn to see  
Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing,  
And float with them about the summer waters.

(Written and published 1817.)