



Keats's misdated letters

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Keats's Misdated Letters

IN the 'Fourth Edition with Revisions and [Non-Keatsian] Additional Letters' of *The Letters of John Keats* (Oxford, 1952) the editor, Mr Maurice Buxton Forman, remarks that in 1950 the Harvard Keats Collection owned 81 of the letters which he had included in his 1947 edition, equivalent to 264 of his 529 pages. The total is slightly higher today. Such a "world record" to which the British Museum takes second place,' as Mr Forman calls it, was made possible only by gifts from two generous collectors, Mr Arthur A. Houghton, Jr, and the late Miss Amy Lowell.

Of Keats's merits as a letter-writer there can be no doubt. Mr T. S. Eliot merely expressed the common opinion of readers and critics today in his 'descant' (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, London, 1933) 'upon the general brilliance and profundity of the observations scattered through Keats's letters.' He calls them 'models of correspondence,' a 'revelation of a charming personality,' 'certainly the most notable and the most important ever written by any English poet.' It is, then, unfortunate that no wholly satisfactory edition of the letters has yet been made. None *can* be made until all the letters are properly dated and arranged in exact chronological order.

The first effort of an editor should be to assign letters their proper dates. To do so for Keats is, in a way, to solve an intricate jig-saw puzzle. Frequently he deals with the same incident or subject in two or three widely separated letters, and his self-admitted carelessness about dating necessitates the most painstaking and detailed investigation of nearly every letter. Hardly a one, indeed, can be studied by itself, for it is remarkable how the letters hang together. To investigate dates is, one may admit, a pedestrian task. None the less, until it is carefully done, many details in biographies of Keats, and even many critical ideas about his poems, are bound to be incorrect. The 1952 edition contains 244 letters by Keats (three — Nos. 70a, 96a, 138a — are not given sequential numbers, and No. 238 was not written by him) and 36 letters by other writers. Of these over 45 are misdated and wrongly arranged. I briefly set down the evidence for this statement below.¹ Numbers followed by an asterisk (as No. 64*) refer to

¹ A few of these details are briefly summarized in my review of Mr Forman's book in the *Keats-Shelley Journal*, II (1953), 19-34.

letters by Haydon and others that the editor has interpolated among those of Keats.

No. 4

Nos. 3 and 4 are addressed to Charles Cowden Clarke. In the former, undated but postmarked October 31, 1816, Keats expresses delight at the prospect 'of seeing so soon' with Clarke the painter Haydon and his studio. In No. 4, undated and unpostmarked, he informs Clarke that he has received a note in which Haydon has called off their visit 'on this days Evening for that he hath an order for the Orchestra to see *Timon y^e Misanthropas.*' Miss Lowell, who first published No. 4 (*John Keats*, Boston, 1925, I, 202), rightly thought that it referred to 'the visit already planned on October thirty-first' since 'Timon of Athens was on at Drury Lane for the ten days beginning on Monday, October twenty-eighth, and ending with the performance of Wednesday, November sixth,' and Mr Forman, citing her words with approval, dates No. 4 merely 'Nov. 1816.' Miss Lowell's account of *Timon* is, however, incorrect. The play was first presented on October 28 and then on October 30, November 1, 4, 8, 11, 18 — seven performances in all. I imagine that the visit planned in No. 3 was for November 1, and that Keats dispatched No. 4 by messenger to Clarke, who on the same day ('All hallowmas' day': see No. 7) promised to spend the evening of December 17 with him. Perhaps November 4, 8, or 11 are equally plausible, but November 18 seems out of the question since, as No. 5 shows, Keats visited Haydon on November 19.

No. 11

In No. 11, an undated letter, Keats thanks Taylor and Hessey for their 'kindness,' and says, 'I will steal out of town in a day or two.' The letter is probably about their formal decision to publish Keats's future work — a decision concerning which Taylor wrote to his father on April 15, 1817 (see Olive Taylor, *London Mercury*, XII, 1925, 258). Keats left London on April 14, and arrived at Southampton the next morning (No. 12). His 'in a day or two' points to April 12 or 13 as the date of No. 11.

No. 15*

No. 15* by Haydon is printed with the date '11 May 1817' at its head. The date actually comes at the end of the letter, and cannot be read with absolute certainty. It is 'May' followed by what looks like an inverted capital *U* and by some word that appears to begin with a *T*, the remainder being torn off. In many other instances, particularly in his Journal (of which I have seen some photostats), Haydon makes an 8 that resembles inverted *U*. Thursday, May 8, is at least a much better guess for No. 15* than Sunday, May 11. Mr Forman, it will be observed, in his headnote

changes the date of No. 15* from what he misreads as '11 May 1817' to Saturday, May 10. In No. 15*, addressed to Margate, Haydon writes 'at breakfast,' and warns Keats, 'Do not give way to any forebodings. . . .'
It seems altogether unlikely that a Saturday morning London letter (No. 15*) would have reached Margate, 71 miles distant, in time to be answered (No. 15) Saturday night. (An 1823-24 directory says of the Margate Post Office, 'Mail to London and Canterbury, at half-past six in the evening, and returns at seven in the morning.') No. 15, completed at Margate on Sunday afternoon, May 11, was postmarked at London on May 13. If No. 15* was written on Thursday, May 8 (it certainly was not written on May 10 or 11), then all difficulties about No. 15 vanish, though it is a bit odd that in No. 15* Haydon says that he has been 'swearing to write you every hour this week,' and that on the same day (no doubt after receiving a note from Keats) he also dashed off No. 64* (see below).

No. 23

No. 23 is not in Woodhouse's book of transcripts of letters, but in one of his volumes of poems, and only the poem and its introductory sentence are copied. It would be interesting to know the evidence for the date September, 1817. 'Oxford,' of course, suggests some such date as September 3-October 4.

No. 26

In No. 25, dated Wednesday, October 8, 1817, Keats writes as if he had returned from Oxford on October 5. At any rate, he saw Brown and Reynolds on October 7. In No. 26, also to Bailey and dated by Mr Norman merely 'October 1817,' he says, 'For this fortnight I have been confined at Hampstead — Saturday evening was my first day in town,' by which he seems to mean Saturday, October 25. He tells of having invited Haydon 'a Fortnight' in advance, on 'Sunday before last,' to dine. The invitation must have been sent on October 12. It was accepted, but on or shortly before October 26 Haydon 'sent illness as an excuse.' Keats further says that 'yesterday' he called at the Reynolds home, and mentions only Jane Reynolds. In No. 27, postmarked October 31, he informs Jane Reynolds of finding a letter from Bailey 'when I got home the other night' and of finishing 'my Letter to him immediately.' No. 26, then, was written sometime between October 26 and October 30. Since its postmark (not 'illegible' but very dim), no doubt stamped at Oxford, appears to be

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or November 1, 1817, I imagine that Keats wrote the body of No. 26, ending 'your affectionate friend./John Keats,' on October 29 and added the long postscript the next day.

No. 32

Mr Forman dates No. 32 Sunday, December 21, 1817, his source being a very puzzling transcript made in July, 1845, by John Jeffrey, of Louisville, Kentucky, and now, like all the other Jeffrey transcripts, at Harvard. In the third sentence Keats refers to a dramatic criticism of his published 'in to-day's Champion,' that is, the issue of December 21. Because of Jeffrey's omissions or miscopying, various other dates are vague. Keats spent two evenings, 'yesterday and to-day,' December 20 and 21, with Dilke, and began 'to go on with' No. 32 as soon as he returned home from the second visit. He 'spent Friday evening with Wells,' which means December 19. Christmas Eve he planned to spend with Reynolds. Jeffrey has evidently messed up a sort of journal letter, for in the sentence following 'I am going to Reynolds, on Wednesday' (December 24) Keats remarks, 'Brown and Dilke walked with me and back from the Christmas pantomime.' Pantomimes were always first presented at the two patent theaters on Boxing Day, December 26. Hence Brown, Dilke, and Keats must have seen either the first or the second (Saturday, December 27) performance at Drury Lane of *Harlequin's Vision* (of which he published a review), and No. 32 was presumably finished about Sunday, December 28.

No. 36*

No. 36* from Haydon, assigned to 'Jan. 1818,' should be precisely dated January 11 or 12. It is a reply to Keats's No. 36 of Saturday, January 10. As No. 37 (January 13) proves, Keats was in town on January 11 and 12, and when he returned to Hampstead he found Haydon's No. 36* lying 'on the table.'

No. 37

No. 37 in its heading is dated merely 'Tuesday (13 Jan. 1818)' — Jeffrey has characteristically supplied the incorrect date 'Tuesday Hampstead 1818/ April 21' — but should also include the date of its second part, Monday, January 19. That January 19 is the exact date is suggested by the references to 'nearly a week ago' and to dining with Haydon on Sunday and taking Haslam with him. That dinner on January 18 is vouched for by statements in No. 41, p. 87.²

² Of No. 43, the date of which is said by Professor H. W. Garrod in his 1939 edition of Keats's poems (pp. 462, 480 f.) to be 'perhaps 7 Feb. 1818,' it may confidently be said that January 31, 1818, is correct. The letter has no postmark (it is a copy by Woodhouse), but Woodhouse supplied the January 31 date in his customary red ink. Furthermore, in his manuscript collection of Keats's poems (what Mr Garrod calls *W*²) he corrected his first date of February, 1818, for 'When I have fears' to January 31, 1818; and he similarly dates the other poems he copied from No. 43.

No. 45

No. 45 at first glance does seem in its references to Reynolds' illness and to Keats's having 'finished' Book II of *Endymion* to justify the date of February 5, 1818, given it by Mr Forman. But appearances are deceptive. Professor Willard B. Pope, who has seen Haydon's journal, tells me that, instead of being in Devonshire (where Haydon had been, and where he was returning 'to day'), on February 5 Haydon was busily working in his London studio on the head of Christ in 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.' The journal, he observes, is incomplete for 1818, but no entries about Haydon's leaving London occur until August 31, when he went to Salthill and Bridgewater, though there are entries suggesting a trip to Devon in June, 1817. Keats's reference to finishing his second book, then, concerns the actual composition, not the making of a fair copy for Taylor and Hessey, and No. 45 belongs probably to the end of August, 1817, when he wrote Book II before going to visit Bailey at Oxford. Haydon's letter of September 17 (No. 24*), with its remark, 'I am delighted to hear you (are) getting on with your Poem,' is thus seen to be an answer to No. 45.

Nos. 52, 70, 212

No. 52 is undated, but the editor assigns it to February or March, 1818. In very brief sentences Keats tells Taylor and Hessey that he is trying to make 'a general clearance of all lent Books,' that 'here are the remainder' he has borrowed from them, though fashions may have perhaps changed so that they may be 'not worth so much now as they were six months ago.' In No. 70, June 21, 1818, Keats told Taylor, 'I can scarcely ask the loan of Books for him [Tom] — since I still keep those you lent me a year ago,' a remark indicating that No. 52 was written after No. 70. In No. 212, dated by Mr Forman May, 1820, but really, I think (see below), written late in May or early in June, 1819, Keats informs Dilke, 'I have at last made up my mind to send home all lent Books.' Obviously No. 52 and No. 212 were written about the same time.

No. 55

No. 55, postmarked March 23, 1818, and dated by Keats 'Teignmouth Saturd. Morn,' is assigned in the editor's headnote to Saturday, March 14. The real date is more likely to have been March 21, although one should note that Haydon's No. 55*, dated March 25, was postmarked on April 2. In the first place Keats cannot have arrived at Teignmouth, as Mr Forman says (p. 115 n.), on March 4. Instead, according to Hessey, he left London 'on the night of the Storm on the *outside* of the Coach' (Rollins, *The Keats Circle*, I, 12); that is, on March 4, probably around 6 P.M. If he reached Exeter, 173 miles distant, and then Teignmouth on the night of March 5 (normally the coaches arrived around 7 or 8 P.M.), especially in such bad

weather (see No. 54), he was lucky indeed. More probably, he arrived on March 6. In the second place, he says, 'the 6 first days I was here it did nothing but rain and at that time having to write to a friend I gave Devonshire a good blowing up.' The friend was Reynolds, the blowing up came in No. 54, which was written on Saturday, March 14. No. 54 lambastes Devonshire for six consecutive days of rain, No. 55 enumerates these six and 'about three days' of good weather, and 'to day it rains again.' The language of No. 55 clearly proves it to have been written several days after No. 54, and 'Saturday' must be March 21.

No. 64*

No. 64* is printed with the date '8th of May 1818' at its head, but actually Haydon dated it at the end 'May 8. 1817.' It is a hasty note apparently written on the same day as Haydon's No. 15.* It is possible that 'your delicious Poem' of No. 64* was an extract from the first book of *Endymion*, which on April 18 Keats had notified Reynolds 'I shall forthwith begin,' and which, according to Keats's letter of May 10 to Hunt, 'I began . . . about a Fortnight since and have done some every day except travelling ones.' But very likely it was the sonnet 'On the Sea.'

No. 73

No. 73, dated in the headnote June 29, 1818, was instead written on June 29 and July 1, 2. Keats himself gives the date July 1 on p. 161. He was then in Carlisle. That afternoon he and Brown rode the 38 miles to Dumfries, where after dinner he completed the letter, putting in a sonnet 'On visiting the Tomb of Burns.' 'You will see by this sonnet,' he says (p. 163), 'that I am at Dumfries, we have dined.' 'Yesterday' (p. 163), as Jeffrey's date indicates, was July 1.

No. 74

No. 74, dated by Mr Forman July 2-July 4, 1818, was written on July 2-5. These dates are easy enough to work out. The largest part of the letter was completed by July 4. Then Keats remarks (p. 169), 'Since I began this we have walked sixty miles to newton stewart at which place I put in this Letter — to night we sleep at Glenluce — tomorrow at Portpatrick.' He and Brown walked from Newton Stewart, where No. 74 was postmarked, to Glenluce on July 5, and on to Portpatrick on July 6, as is proved by comments on pp. 169 f.

Nos. 76 and 77

No. 76, correctly dated by Mr Forman July 11-13, 1818, was begun at Maybole, July 11, and one wonders why it precedes No. 77 of July 10-14.

Keats begins No. 76 by telling Reynolds of his visit to Burns's tomb (July 1) and of how he is near Burns's cottage at Ayr. 'I shall fill this sheet for you,' he says, 'in the Bardie's Country, going no further than this till I get into the Town of Ayr which will be a 9 miles' walk to Tea.' They reached Ayr that afternoon (July 11), spent the night there, walked to some unspecified place on July 12, started out again on July 13 but were stopped by rain 'at the end of a dozen Miles,' at Kingswells, where Keats completed No. 76 and added a section to No. 77 (pp. 182 f.). Evidently the rain soon ended, and the travelers then walked into Glasgow ('last Evening,' July 13; see p. 183), where they spent the night. The dates of all the events of Keats's and Brown's walking tour have been carefully worked out by Professor Nelson S. Bushnell, *A Walk after John Keats* (New York, 1936), who (pp. 286 f.) plausibly suggests that on July 12 Keats and Brown walked only 12 miles, along the coast to Monkton, then inland to Kilmarnock.

No. 81

Mr Forman dates No. 81 August 3, 1818, failing to observe that the letter is in two parts, the second part of which, beginning 'Over leaf you will find a Sonnet I wrote on the top of Ben Nevis. We have just entered Inverness' (pp. 206 f.), was written on August 6. Mr Bushnell (p. 302) places the travelers in Letterfinlay on August 3, Fort Augustus on August 4, Foyers on August 5, and Inverness on August 6 and 7 (see Nos. 82 and 82*).

No. 83

No. 83 is dated August 18, 1818, by Keats, and is postmarked August 19. Keats tells his sister that he reached Inverness on August 8 (a typical misdating for August 6), that he boarded 'the Smack from Cromarty,' had 'a nine days passage,' and 'landed at London Bridge yesterday.' Mr Bushnell (pp. 297-300) quotes the *Inverness Courier and General Advertiser*, which lists the smack *George* as having 'cleared out' for London on August 8, 'the only ship,' he says, 'clearing for London from any of the Inverness district ports during the entire week,' August 1-8. 'Nine days' would mean August 17 or 18. Mrs C. W. Dilke is certainly a more reliable witness about dates than Keats. She wrote (see p. 211 n.) on August 19, 'John Keats arrived here last night. . . . Keats is unlikely to have reached Wentworth Place on the night of August 18 'as brown and as shabby as you can imagine; scarcely any shoes left, his jacket all torn at the back,' and then to have written to Fanny Keats at once. His 'yesterday' (August 18) indicates that he wrote No. 83 on August 19.

No. 86

No. 86, to Dilke, is postmarked September 21, 1818, and hence dated by the editor September 21. It was, instead, evidently written on two days,

September 20 and 21. On page 215 Keats says that 'Reynolds by what I hear is almost over happy,' and that he had intended to go to town with Mrs. Dilke 'tomorrow' (September 21) but 'this morning' (September 20) he has asked her to excuse him. That the last paragraph of the letter was written on the 21st is clear from the statements that Mrs. Dilke did go to town 'This morning,' that Keats 'yesterday' had sent her 'an unscal'd note of sham abuse,' and that he has 'just had a Letter from Reynolds — he is going on gloriously.' Until the letter came Keats had not heard directly from Reynolds for some time (see p. 216).

Nos. 102 and 106

No. 106 is assigned to the date Saturday, January 2, 1819, on the theory that it is an answer to Haydon's No. 105*, conjecturally dated January 1. All the Haydon-Keats letters were long since removed from Haydon's Journal (thirty-five of them are now at Harvard), but Mr Forman says that once No. 106 and No. 105* were fastened in the neighborhood of entries for December 31, 1818. Certainly No. 106 is not a reply to No. 105*. In the latter Haydon specifically invites Keats to call tomorrow 'between ten and eleven' A.M. and threatens a call of his own today 'before three' P.M. But in the former Keats expresses regret at 'not being able to dine with you to day.' He politely says, 'I had an engagement to day — and it is so fine a morning that I cannot put it off.' If the meteorological table in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (LXXXIX, i, 94) may be trusted, January 1 was fair, but January 2 was foggy with temperatures of 32–39°.

The dating of Nos. 102 and 106 depends largely on the various dates on which No. 98 was written. To George and Georgiana Keats he wrote on December 18, 1818 (No. 98, p. 252), 'I shall dine with Haydon on Sunday [December 20] and go over to Walthamstow [to see Fanny Keats] on Monday if the frost hold.' In No. 99 to Fanny, December 18, he made the same promise: 'If on Monday the frost continue I will endeavour to be up early and cut across the fields [to see you].' I think that No. 106 was an eleventh-hour postponement, written on December 20 and sent by hand, of the scheduled dinner with Haydon, the reason being that Keats could not 'disappoint one who has been my true friend,' that is, Haslam, who had meanwhile invited him. Continuing No. 98 on December 22 (pp. 254 f.), Keats wrote, 'It is some days since I wrote the last page. . . . I dined at Haslam's on Sunday [the 20th] — with Haydon yesterday and saw Fanny in the morning.' In No. 106, to be sure, he had promised Haydon, 'I will be with you tomorrow morning and stop all day.' But 'morning' was an elastic word in 1818, meaning usually any time before dinner. Keats could have been 'up early' enough to make, and obviously he did make, the fifteen-mile trip to Walthamstow and back in plenty of time to be at Haydon's before dinner. At that dinner on December 21 Haydon did something odd or discourteous, for which the

next morning he sent an apology by his servant Salmon. After Mr Lewis had called on him that morning (p. 255), Keats left the house — was out 'when Salmon called' (p. 271). When he returned he wrote No. 102 (which was postmarked at 12 o'clock noon on the 23rd), in it assuring Haydon, 'I never felt your going out of the room [on December 21] at all.' No. 106, then, of December 20, should precede No. 102, of December 22.

It is worth noting that in his reply to No. 102 Haydon invited Keats to dinner on the following Sunday, December 27. The invitation was evidently accepted, and at that time Haydon showed Keats the letter (mentioned in No. 98, p. 256) from Joseph Ritchie that is postmarked (as its present owner, Mr Pope, tells me) not December 22, as Mr Forman (p. 256 n.) has it, but '7 o'clock 26. DE 1818 N.T.'

No. 109

No. 107 is plausibly assigned by the editor to Monday, January 11, 1819, and there is every reason to think that No. 108 has the same date. In both Keats speaks of his intention to go to town 'tomorrow,' and in No. 108 he informs his sister that he is 'going into Hampshire for a few days.' No. 109, then, dated by Mr Forman merely as January, was in all likelihood written on the night of January 12 after Keats had failed to get money for a loan to Haydon. In No. 109 he again mentions his intention of visiting Hampshire ('I have been delaying it longer than I intended'). Probably he left London on the 13th or 14th before getting Haydon's letter (No. 109*) of the latter date, for he says that he was in Bedhampton and Chichester for about two weeks (pp. 282, 295), and he returned to London on or just after Tuesday, January 26 (p. 279).

Nos. 110 and 110*

No. 110 is assigned to January, 1819, on the basis of the letter from Haydon that follows (No. 110*) with the date 'Saturday 21st 1819.' As Mr Forman points out, the only Saturday falling on the 21st in 1819 came in August, and hence he assumes that Haydon's letter was really written on Saturday, January 23. But Haydon and Keats were notoriously careless about dating, and a simpler explanation is that Haydon's date is an error for Saturday, February 20. On February 14, Keats told George and Georgiana Keats, 'Yesterday I went to town for the first time for these three weeks' (p. 296), or literally since around January 24. In No. 110 he tells Haydon, 'I have been to town in the day time' (he was there on February 17: see pp. 300, 302), and he promises, 'I shall see you soon.' No. 112, February 4, assures William Mayor, 'In about a fortnight I will see you either in Town or at Islington.' All these details suggest that Keats wrote No. 110 on Thursday, February 18, and that Haydon penned his reply, No. 110*, on Saturday, February 20. Furthermore, in No. 110* Haydon says, 'I will be with you on Monday by 12,' which means, in Mr Forman's dating, January

25; but on Sunday, January 24, Keats (and Brown) wrote No. 111 from Bedhampton. He did not return to London (see above) before Tuesday, January 26.

No. 113

No. 113, 'Feb^y. Thursday,' Mr Forman dates February 4 or 11, 1819. In the course of it Keats tells his sister that since his return from Bedhampton (about January 26) 'I have been taking care of myself,' but 'I shall be in town tomorrow.' He can hardly have written thus on February 4, the very day when he wrote No. 112 to William Mayor, saying that he could not venture out of his house for 'about a fortnight.' In the part of No. 123 written on February 14 he remarks, 'Yesterday I went to town for the first time for three weeks' (p. 296). It seems certain that No. 113 dates from February 11 when Keats was planning for the 12th a trip that he actually made a day later. As he tells Fanny Keats in No. 114, he intended to 'write you . . . once a fortnight,' and No. 114 was written on February 27, just sixteen days after No. 113.

No. 122

The date of April 17, 1819, assigned to No. 122 by Mr Forman, is probably incorrect. The dated postmark is illegible, but the Saturday on which No. 122 was written seems to have been April 24. Keats tells his sister, 'I cannot go out on Sunday — but if on Monday it should promise as fair as to day I will . . . me rendre chez vous.' Apparently the reason why he could not 'go out' was that on Sunday the 25th the Wylie brothers dined with him, as they had dined with him and Mrs Brawne on April 4 (pp. 291, 318, 327). He did 'go out' on Sunday the 11th, having a memorable walk with Coleridge (p. 323), and again on Sunday the 18th, when he dined with Taylor and Woodhouse in Fleet Street (p. 328). Twice in No. 122 he promises to visit his sister on Monday. But on Monday the 19th (see my notes on No. 123) he went to town in the morning and then entertained Reynolds and others at Wentworth Place all night (p. 327). April 24 with rain was at least a fairer promise for weather than April 17, which was 'stormy.'

No. 123

No. 123, a journal letter, is correctly dated up to p. 309. There a break in the original manuscript has had to be filled in from 'some sort of transcript' made by Jeffrey. Mr Forman throws no light on the date which the Jeffrey portion represents. It begins (p. 309), 'On Sunday we had to dinner Severn and Cawthorn,' a sentence which Mr Forman silently corrects to 'On Monday. . . .' The earliest recognizable date before this passage is 'to have dined with him to morrow,' or March 14 (p. 306). But on the

Monday of p. 309, after dinner Severn went home to paint, while Keats, Brown, and Cawthorn went to Drury Lane to see R. L. Sheil's new tragedy *Evadne* and an excellent pantomime of which Keats wrote, 'I had seen it before and enjoyed it again.' *Evadne* was followed by a pantomime, *Harlequin Munchausen, Or The Fountain of Love*, only on Monday, February 15 (40th performance), and Monday, March 1 (42nd performance).

Much of the confusion in No. 123 is caused by the fact that Keats omitted one sheet. Many weeks later he came across the omitted sheet, which with a note of apology he included in No. 156 of September 17-27, 1819, but the sheet and the note survive only in a copy made by Jeffrey (see pp. 309, 312). Jeffrey began the note, which Mr Forman prints on p. 312, with the preposterous date '18th September 1820,' and, preposterous though it is, Mr Forman prints it as '18th September (1820),' his '(1820)' being an editorial insertion! But the dying Keats had boarded the *Maria Crowther* for Italy on September 17, 1820. He had not written to his American relatives in months, nor was he ever to write to them again. Jeffrey's guess and Mr Forman's emendation '1820' are exactly a year too late. Keats's September 18 (1819) note should be printed on p. 304 before 'March 12.'

As for other dates in this long letter, it appears that 'Wednesday Evening' (April 21) given on p. 328 indicates the date of April 20 on which Keats began the passage, 'Yesterday I could not write a line' on p. 327. He went with Rice and others to Covent Garden on Saturday, April 17; had dinner with Taylor and Woodhouse on Sunday, April 18; went to town on Monday morning, April 19, and returned to Hampstead to play cards all night with Reynolds and others; was too washed out to write a line on Tuesday, April 20; but on Wednesday the 21st resumed the composition of his journal letter, wherein he composed impromptu the review of *Peter Bell* that Reynolds had asked for on the 19th and that was printed, with trifling changes, in the *Examiner* on Sunday, April 25, the day on which he had invited the Wylie brothers to dinner. 'Yesterday' on p. 336 may or may not be April 20.

No. 152

No. 152 should be dated in the heading, not simply September 21, 1819, but September 21 and 22. The first four pages of No. 152, which is postmarked September 22, were written late in the night of Tuesday, September 21. On the same night Keats had written No. 151 to Reynolds and had then taken a walk to mail it in time for it to be postmarked September 21. 'I must take a walk,' he told Reynolds (p. 385), for he had been writing a long letter (that is, pp. 420-425 of No. 156) to George Keats 'all the morning.' Returning from the walk, Keats began to write No. 152 to Woodhouse, and in his first sentence he refers to No. 151. Late at night, he broke off: 'I shall proceed tomorrow' (p. 390). The third sentence which he wrote 'tomorrow,' or 'Wednesday,' September 22, tells, 'I have written him [Brown] a long one this morning,' that is, No. 154, discussed below.

No. 154

No. 154, reproduced from Charles Brown's *The Life of John Keats*, has the date '23 September 1819.' Keats was, as everybody knows, notorious for getting dates wrong. That No. 154 was actually written a day earlier, September 22, is certain. Before Keats completed No. 152 (see above) to Woodhouse in the morning of September 22 he noted, 'I have written him [Brown] a long one this morning.' Again, writing No. 153 on the same day to Dilke, he says, 'I have written to Brown on the subject.' The subject — Keats's determination to make a living by writing for periodicals — of Nos. 153 and 154 is identical. In No. 155, September 23, Keats tells Brown, 'I ought to have waited for your answer to my last [No. 154, September 22] before I wrote this. I felt, however, compelled to make a rejoinder to your's. I had written to xxxx [Dilke, No. 153, September 22] on the subject of my last.' In the *Life* Brown says, 'On the same day [September 23] he wrote another letter, having received one from me between the writing of his two,' that is, No. 155. Brown accepted Keats's dates without any question, and failed, like all students of Keats, to suspect that Nos. 154 and 155 were written on consecutive days.

No. 156

One may wonder why No. 156, beginning on September 17, 1819, is placed *after* No. 151 (September 21), Nos. 152-154 (September 21, 22), and No. 155 (September 23). The various dates in the long letter No. 156 can be worked out with fair ease.

Nos. 159-162

Letters 159-162 are not wholly clear, and actual events, as well as dating, furnish a problem. According to Nos. 159 and 160, written to Fanny Brawne and postmarked October 11 and October 13, 1819, Keats was living at 25 College Street on October 10-13 or perhaps October 10-12. In No. 161, written from Wentworth Place and postmarked October 16, Keats tells his sister that he returned from Winchester 'this fortnight,' or literally on October 2. On October 1 he had informed Dilke (No. 157) that he would be in London on October 8, and he certainly was there by October 10 (No. 159). But why in No. 161 should he have told Fanny Keats on October 16 that he was living again in his old room at Wentworth Place, and that his lodgings 'for two or three days' previous had been at 25 College Street? And why, writing from the Dilkes's Great Smith Street house, in a letter postmarked October 19 (No. 162) should he have said to Fanny Brawne, 'M^{rs} Dilke I should think will tell you [not before 'tomorrow morning,' October 20] that I purpose living at Hampstead?' Surely Fanny Brawne, who lived in half of Wentworth Place, would have

known of Keats's presence in the other half on October 16 — if the postmark of No. 161 is correct. [Later: My friend Dr William H. Bond tells me that the British Museum cataloguer dates No. 161 '16 October 1819?' but that the blurred day of the month 'is probably either "26" or "30," more likely the latter.' Either of these dates would remove all difficulties, since Keats says, 'I have been returned from Winchester this fortnight.']

Nos. 163, 167, 168

Mr Forman dates No. 163 as Wednesday, October(?), 1819. In it Keats tells Severn that he is so objectless as even to grudge indulging himself 'by going to Hazlitt's Lecture.' He adds, 'If you should be at the Lecture tomorrow evening I shall see you.' Now Hazlitt's lectures on the dramatic literature of the age of Elizabeth were delivered on eight Fridays, November 5, 12, 19, 26, December 3, 10, 17, 24. No. 163, then, if Keats's 'Wednesday' is correct, was written on November 3, in which case instead of 'tomorrow evening' (Thursday) he should have written 'day after tomorrow evening' (Friday). Of course his 'Wednesday' may be an error for 'Thursday.' But in No. 167, written on 'Friday Evening,' and misdated by Mr Forman November 19, 1819, he says, 'Hazlitt has begun another course of Lectures. . . . I hear he quoted me in his last Lecture,' a statement that means Hazlitt's *first* lecture of November 5, wherein a line from 'Sleep and Poetry' is misquoted. Hence it is obvious that Keats also missed the second, November 12, lecture by staying at home to write No. 167. In No. 163 Keats asks Severn to let him know when 'The Cave of Despair' 'is up and in a good light' so that he can meet Severn at the Royal Academy to see it. All pictures entered for the prize had to be at the Academy by November 1 (p. 443 n.). Severn's reply to No. 163 (November 3 or 4) reached Keats while he was in the middle of writing No. 167 (November 12). Obviously Severn asked Keats to meet him at the Academy on Tuesday, November 16; but the latter in No. 168, misdated by Mr Forman as Monday, December 6(?), 1819, tells of 'an appointment in the City of an undesirable nature' for the 16th. Hence No. 168 was written on Monday, November 15. Another reason for dating No. 167 on November 12 is Keats's remark (p. 441), 'I have not been to see Fanny [Keats] since my return from Winchester.' In No. 165 (November 17) he had promised his sister a visit on 'Thursday [November 18] without fail.' In No. 170 (December 20) he refers to a visit he has made to Fanny. If by any chance he had failed to call on November 18, he would have written an apology like No. 171, for he was extremely punctilious where Fanny was concerned. The letters should be rearranged in the order Nos. 163, 167, 168, 165, 166.

No. 178

No. 178 Mr Forman dates Friday, February 11, 1820, following the postmark. In No. 175 (February 8) Keats had promised his sister to write

'again the day after to-morrow' (February 10), and there is every reason to believe that he did so. No. 175 is postmarked a day later than the date on which the letter was written, and in all likelihood No. 178, too, was composed a day before it was postmarked. Later, sickness made it impossible for Keats to meet exactly the schedule for letters to Fanny as promised in No. 178 and No. 184.

No. 190*

No. 190*, by B. W. Procter, is misdated by Mr Forman as February 25, 1820, and several times thereafter wrongly cited. As Professor G. H. Ford (*Modern Language Notes*, LXVI, 1951, 532-536) proves, Procter wrote very likely on Friday, June 30 (Ford says June 29), and added the postscript early in July. The letter should be omitted from future editions of Keats's letters, on which it has no bearing.

Nos. 190-194

The odd arrangement by which Nos. 192-194, all of 'Feb. 1820?', are placed after Nos. 190 and 191, both assigned to February 28, 1820, can at least be plausibly altered. No. 190 very likely was written on February 27, the day before it was postmarked. Then (without any pretense of certainty) No. 191 might be assigned to February 27; No. 192 to February 28; No. 193 to February 29; No. 194 to March 1.

No. 195

No. 195 Mr Forman dates Friday, March 1820(?). If one could be sure that the postmark is '. . . 4 1820' — in other words, if 4 were the day of the month — then the date would be February 4, or August 4, the only months in 1820 when Friday came on the fourth. The postmarks are impossible to read. They seem to be 'HAMPSTEAD [N]O' and '12 o'Clock [] 4 1820 ND,' but just what letter or figure comes before the 4 I cannot determine. (The letter is endorsed by an unknown hand 'Mr John Keats / 1820.') February 4 seems too early, as August 4 is too late, for the subject matter of No. 195, and perhaps March is as good a guess at the date as can be made. It must be noted, however, that the conclusion 'Your affectionate friend / John Keats —' and '[Remember] me to Charles' do not belong to No. 195. These phrases are on a separate slip, cut from some other letter and pasted on No. 195. That explains the oddness of Keats's appearing to have written to Mrs Wylie just as her son Charles called and then of sending remembrances to him.

No. 212

No. 212 is misdated 'May 1820,' a whole year too late. As I have shown above, Keats's references to his determination 'to send home all lent Books' and to become a surgeon on an Indiaman prove that he wrote Nos. 52, 128,

129, and 212 about the same time, and that No. 212 certainly dates shortly before June 9, 1819, by which time, as he wrote to his sister (No. 129), he had 'given up the Idea of the Indiaman.' The 'pencilled memorandum' that Mr Forman refers to (p. 487 n.) may be disregarded.

No. 213

No. 213 to Fanny Brawne, dated by Mr Forman May, 1820, says that 'Hunt amuses me very kindly' (compare a similar remark about Hunt in No. 222, July 22, p. 500), and accordingly was written after June 23, when Keats moved into Hunt's house in Mortimer Terrace, and before August 12, when he went to the Brawnes'.

Nos. 216, 220, 223

Nos. 216, 220, and 223 are dated by Mr Forman May, July 5 (?), and July 1820. Professor J. R. MacGillivray (*Keats*, Toronto, 1949, p. xxxv and n. 24), however, asserts that both 216 and 220 were written at 'the end of May or early in June,' that 'they were plainly sent together, probably the headings "Tuesday Morn—" and "Wednesday Morn—" were added as an afterthought, and put on the wrong letters,' and that No. 223 belongs with 216 and 220, having been written before Keats's hemorrhage of June 22. I think that he is right.

No. 217

One would like to have the reasons that led the editor to assign this undated, unpostmarked letter specifically to June 11, 1820. H. W. Garrod (*The Poetical Works of John Keats*, Oxford, 1939, p. xxxi) dates it June 6.

No. 226

No. 226 is postmarked, and hence dated by the editor, August 14, 1820 (Monday). In it Keats tells his sister, 'Yesterday I received an invitation from Mr Shelley.' That 'invitation,' addressed in care of Leigh Hunt at the *Examiner* (No. 226*), was postmarked at the London Foreign Post Office on Thursday, August 10. It probably reached Keats on Saturday, August 12, before he left Hunt's Mortimer Terrace house. No. 226 was very likely written on the 13th, and should precede No. 225.

No. 227

No. 227 was written on August 16, 1820. Only an inexplicable editorial aberration can account for its retention as No. 227 when Nos. 226, 228, 229, 231, 233, are all given the date of August 14. It should come after No. 233.

Nos. 221*, 221**, 229

No. 229 to Haydon, conjecturally misdated August 14, 1820, is preceded in earlier editions by two letters from Haydon dated July and July 14. In the 1952 edition these two are transposed, though their dates are unchanged, so as to come between No. 221 (July 5) and No. 222 (July 22). Haydon's first letter was written *before* June 23, the day on which Keats moved into Hunt's house; for Haydon mentions Keats's landlady and says, 'I have been sitting for some little time in your Lodgings which are clean, airy, & quiet' — that is, in the Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town, lodgings (see p. 495 n.) Haydon's second letter, though dated July 14, is addressed to Keats at Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town. Haydon begins it by saying, 'When I called the other morning,' that is, before June 23, so that as late as July 14 he knew nothing of Keats's having moved. The 'bearer' who delivered Haydon's note of July 14, asking for the return of Chapman's Homer, first to Wesleyan Place and then to Mortimer Terrace, evidently waited for Keats's reply, No. 229, which Mr Forman dates exactly a month too late, and which is 'the note' Keats himself mentions in No. 225. No. 231, of August 14, tells Taylor, 'This morning Haydon has sent another messenger.' Keats asks Taylor to buy a copy of the Homer from Longman's and send it to Haydon. Evidently Taylor or Hessey did so, and Haydon acknowledged its receipt in a lost note to which Keats formally replied in No. 232.

No. 234

No. 234 is dated merely 'August 1820,' but in his *Life of John Keats* Brown says that No. 234 was written 'a few days after' No. 233 (August 14), so that its date must be around August 18.

No. 238

No. 238 ('September 1820') was written, not by Keats, but by Severn to Haslam on or shortly after September 18 (see Mabel A. E. Steele, *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, VI, 1952, 121-125), and should, accordingly, be omitted from future editions of the letters.

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