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BY

JOHN KEATS



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INTRODUCTION.

JOHN KEATS was born on the 31st of October, 1795. He died on the 23rd of February, 1821, having lived twenty-five years and not quite four months. He was the son of a stable-man who had married his master's daughter, and succeeded to his master's livery stables on Finsbury Pavement. John Keats had a brother George, who was a year and a half younger than himself, and a brother Thomas about three years younger. His father died when he was not nine years old; his mother, about three years afterwards. Before the death of his father, John Keats had been sent to a school at Enfield kept by the father of the late Charles Cowden Clarke, and he remained at the school until two years after the death of his mother. There was a little sum of money held in trust for each of the children after the death of their parents, from whom John Keats inherited also a taint of consumption.

At school Keats showed bodily strength and no sign of the poet's temperament that his teachers or school-fellows observed. Charles Cowden Clarke said, after he had become famous, that if they had been told of Keats in his boyhood that he would make a name, and had been asked how he would make it, the last thing they were likely to think of was that he would prove to be a poet. They might have guessed him a future general, for he was often fighting.

At the age of about fourteen, in 1809, Keats was apprenticed by his guardians to a surgeon; a seven years' apprenticeship being then regarded as a chief part of the training of a youth who was to become a general practitioner in medicine.