

# **THE LIFE OF NELSON**

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The Life of Nelson by Robert Southey

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**ROBERT SOUTHEY**

**THE LIFE  
OF NELSON**



THE  
LIFE OF NELSON.

BY  
ROBERT SOUTHEY, LL.D.

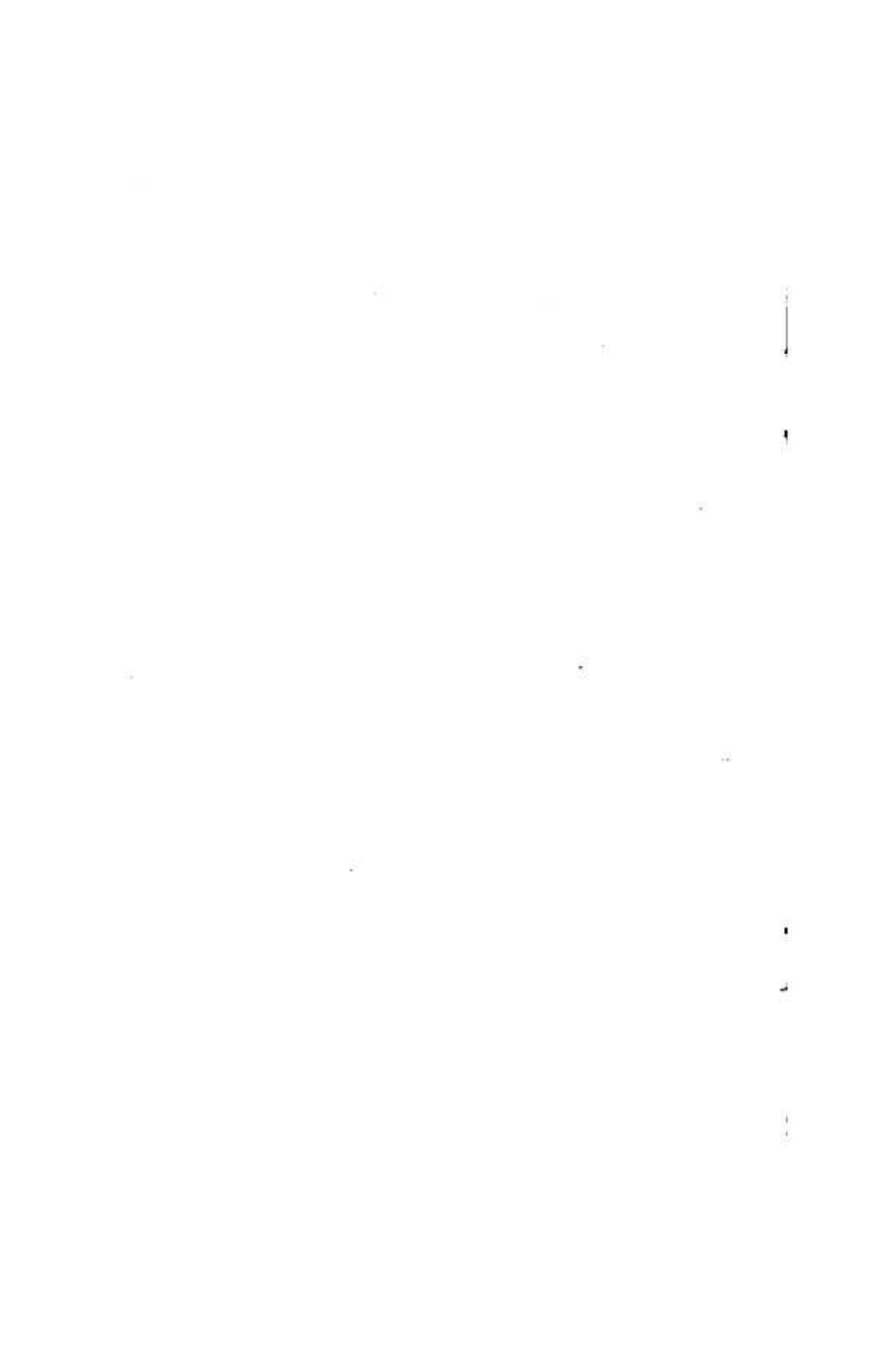
*With Biographical Notice of the Author.*

. . . ' Bursting through the gloom  
With radiant glory from thy trophied tomb,  
The sacred splendour of thy deathless name  
Shall grace and guard thy Country's martial fame:  
Far-seen shall blaze the unextinguish'd ray,  
A mighty beacon, lighting Glory's way ;  
With living lustre this proud Land adorn,  
And shine, and save, through ages yet unborn.'  
ULM AND TRAFALGAR.



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF  
ROBERT SOUTHEY.

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ROBERT SOUTHEY, the author of the present work, may be said to have spent one of the most honourable and industrious of lives devoted to literature which we have on record. With unceasing application, he was in private life sincere and generous. The only human frailty which Hazlitt could discover in him was political inconsistency and want of charity; but perhaps this judgment also argued a want of charity on the part of the critic who made it.

The eldest surviving son of a Bristol linen-draper, Southey was born in that town in August 1774. His earliest years were spent with an aunt, Miss Tyler of Bath. This lady was somewhat eccentric in her habits, and passionately fond of the theatre. After attending three schools in succession, he was sent to Westminster School, from which he was dismissed in 1792. He had been identified with a

## 8 *Biographical Notice of Robert Southey.*

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periodical called the *Flagellant*, contributing to it an article on corporal punishment, which had so incensed the head master that he was accordingly dismissed from school. His father died about this time; and his affairs being embarrassed, an uncle befriended young Southey, and he was entered as a student at Balliol College. Embracing what were called the liberal opinions abroad at the time, he went to an extreme in his expression of them. He worked hard and read a great deal while there, and wrote an enormous quantity of verse, which was torn up and burned.

Writing to Mr. C. H. Townshend in 1816, Southey reviewed his own early career as follows:—'I left Westminster in a perilous state,—a heart full of feeling and poetry, a head full of Rousseau and Werter, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon. . . . A severe system of stoical morality then came to its aid. I made Epictetus, for many months, literally my manual. The French revolution was then in its full career. I went to Oxford in January 1793, a stoic and a republican. . . . Here I became intimate with Edmund Seward, whose death was the first of those privations which have, in great measure, weaned my heart from the world. He confirmed me in all that was good. Time and reflection, the blessings and the sorrows of life, and, I hope I may add with unfeigned humility, the grace of God, have done the rest. Large draughts have been administered from both urns. No man has suffered keener sorrows, and no man has been more profusely blessed.'

His views preventing him from entering the Church, he

was ready to embrace any Utopian scheme which might offer. He and a young Quaker, Richard Lovell, and Coleridge had each been united to members of the Fricker family of Bristol; it was their intention at this time to emigrate to North America, where they would found what was called a 'Pantisocracy.' Want of funds paralyzed this scheme, and Southey for a time supported himself by lecturing on history. Cottle, the Bristol publisher, gave him fifty guineas for his poem 'Joan of Arc.' He accompanied his uncle, Mr. Hill, at this time to Portugal, which introduced him to a knowledge of the language and literature of Spain and Portugal. On his return he studied law. In 1801 he became private secretary to Mr. Corry, with a salary of £350 a year. This post he held six months. In 1803 he settled at Greta Hall, near Keswick, in Cumberland, where he pursued his industrious career of authorship for about forty years. Coleridge and his family were staying there at the time, and Wordsworth at Grasmere, about fourteen miles distant. When Coleridge left Keswick, with characteristic carelessness he left his wife and children to Southey's care and keeping. At this time Southey's political opinions underwent a change, and he became decidedly Conservative.

A sentence from one of his letters will show how unweariedly industrious he was:—'My actions are as regular as those of St. Dunstan's quarter-boys. Three pages of history' (of Portugal) 'after breakfast (equivalent to five in small quarto printing); then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies' (for