

**JOHN KEATS: A
LITERARY
BIOGRAPHY**

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John Keats: A Literary Biography by Albert Elmer Hancock

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ALBERT ELMER HANCOCK

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John Keats

· JOHN KEATS ·

A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY BY
ALBERT ELMER HANCOCK

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PASSING OF THE CAVALIER"



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TO ONE BY MY DESK

PREFACE

A TRADITION may be established about a man of lasting genius, but the final word can never be said. Some warrant like this must be offered in excuse by the biographer who trespasses upon the field which Lord Houghton, Mr. Forman and Mr. Colvin have occupied and held with so much distinction. They have labored with the documents and collated the facts which give scholarly assurance to our estimate of Keats. Even judicial opinion must follow, more or less, the critical tradition which they have established. A later biographer therefore must acknowledge his great debt to them before he ventures to place his memorial stone upon the foundations of the builders.

It is possible for biography, sometimes, to attain the dramatic vitality of fiction. Modern scholarship demands, of course, that there shall be no transgressions against the truth. In this book I have endeavored to conceive of Keats as the protagonist of a domestic drama, coming upon a stage of shifting scenes, as in the old chronicle-

PREFACE

histories, — coming, playing his part, and passing tragically under the blight. I have tried to select the significant moments, to reproduce the authentic local color of his daily life and to make him live, in a world of good cheer and vexation, as a vivid reality. Thus we may, in imagination, see the poet at work and best discern the creative intentions of the artist. Incidentally I have discovered or co-ordinated some things which throw new light upon his character and his poetry.

Mr. William Allan Neilson of Harvard University has added a fresh seal to an old comradeship by his good offices as counselor.

A. E. H.

Haverford, Penn.
May, 1908.

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