

EARLIEST KNOWN PORTRAIT
OF
JOHN KEATS



WITH AUTOGRAPH SONNET
BY
LEIGH HUNT

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KNOWN
PORTRAIT
OF
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W



Miss Mary Ann Smith

To John Keats -

'Tis with you think me truly one of those
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things;
For surely as I feel the bird that sings
Behind the leaves, or the kips asking those,
Or the rich bee, rejoicing as he goes,
Or the glad issue of emerging springs,
Or, overhead, the glide of a Dove's wings,
Or trees, or turf, or midst of all, repose;
And surely as I feel things lovelier still,
The human look, and the harmonious form
Containing Women - and the smile in it,
And such a heart as Charles's, wide and warm,
As surely as all this, I see in now,
Young Keats, a flowering laurel on your brow.

Lizzy Hunt

Hampstead

Dec - 1 1816

3

Charles Stewart

60

The Earliest Known Portrait of John Keats

» 516 « [KEATS, JOHN] • A Portrait of John Keats in silhouette. Measures $3\frac{7}{8}$ by $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Placed under glass and sunk in a dark rich blue velvet mat. In a full red levant morocco case, richly gilt tooled and lettered, velvet lined. Accompanied by an Autograph Sonnet Signed "*Leigh Hunt*," entitled "*To John Keats*." Placed in the velvet pocket on inside of front cover of case.

THE EARLIEST KNOWN PORTRAIT OF JOHN KEATS. Beneath it, written in pencil, is the following: "Master John Keats, aged 15 years." "Master Keats" appears here as a demure little boy with a huge white collar and black coat, with a bow tied at his throat.

Mr. Newton, on a slip laid in, remarks: "This silhouette is the earliest known portrait of Keats. It was sold with a silver medal dated 1810 wh. was purchased by Amy Lowell and is now in the Library at Harvard. The medal was won by Keats at Dr. Clarke's Academy at Enfield. I loaned the portrait to Miss Lowell for reproduction. A. Edward Newton."

The poem to Keats was written at Hampstead and is dated "*Dec. 1, 1816*." It begins as follows:

" 'Tis well you think me truly one of those
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things;
For surely as I feel the bird that sings
Behind the leaves, or the Kiss asking rose . . . "

And the terminating couplet reads:

"As surely as all this, I see e'en now,
Young Keats, a flowering laurel on your brow."

★ "*If not for himself, Leigh Hunt will always be remembered as an intimate friend of the three poets who made the first quarter of the nineteenth century forever memorable: Byron, with whom he finally quarreled—temperamentally they had nothing in common; Shelley, whom he loved and by whose funeral pyre he watched; and Keats, whose genius he was the first to recognize. It was Hunt who, in May, 1816, in his 'Examiner,' gave Keats his first appearance in print. During that year Keats and Hunt were close companions, and at the home of the latter in Hampstead, they read and wrote much together and lived in a world of 'Imagination and Fancy.' On December 1, Hunt published in his paper Keats's now famous sonnet, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'; and on that same day Hunt addressed to Keats a sonnet in which he prophesied that he would wear the laurel. Keats kept the poem by him, and it was found by Severn among his papers after his death.*"—A. E. Newton, *A Magnificent Farce*. The poem is reproduced in the book just mentioned.

Ex Libris

A. Edward Newton

Date

Cost

Source

Remarks

This silhouette is the earliest known portrait of Keats. It was sold with a silver medal dated 1810 wh. was purchased by Army Lowell and is now in the Library at Harvard. The medal was won by Keats at Dr Clarke's Academy at Enfield. I loaned the portrait to Miss Lowell for reproduction.

A. Edward Newton

LEIGH HUNT, MS. "To John Keats," 1 December 1816.

To John Keats

T'is well you think me truly one of those
 Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things;
 For surely as I feel the bird that sings
 Behind the leaves, or the Kiss asking Rose,
 Or the rich bee, rejoicing as he goes,
 Or the glad issue of emerging springs,
 Or, overhead; the glide of a Dove's wings,
 Or trees, or turf, or midst of all repose:
 And surely as I feel things lovelier still,
 The human look,—and the harmonious form
 Containing Woman,—and the smile in ill,
 And such a heart as Charles's, wise and warm,—
 As surely as all this, I see e'en now,
 Young Keats, a flowering laurel on your brow.

Leigh Hunt

Hampstead

Dec-1-1816

AMS, 1 page. Single sheet, 21 x 15.6 cm.

Laid paper. Watermark: portion of crown visible (the rest obscured by paper deterioration).

Verso endorsement: [line] | Chas Severn | [line].

Provenance: Newton sale, 15 May 1941 (no. 516). In pocket of case with portrait of Keats at 15.

Notes: 1: On the same day Hunt published, in the *Examiner*, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

2. Keats had the present MS with him at his death, after which it was Charles Severn's. See A. Edward Newton, *A Magnificent Farce* (Boston, 1921), page 116 and facing plate.

3. The sonnet is here republished owing to significant substantive differences from the text in *Foliage*; or, *Poems Original and Translated*, 1818, and Hunt's *Poetical Works* (Oxford, 1923), page 243, the first printing after that in *Foliage*.