

**LOCAL ETYMOLOGY; OR,
NAMES OF PLACES IN THE
BRITISH ISLES, AND IN OTHER
PARTS OF THE WORLD,
EXPLAINED & ILLUSTRATED**

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Local Etymology; Or, Names of Places in the British Isles, and in Other Parts of the World,
Explained & Illustrated by W. A. Williamson

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W. A. WILLIAMSON

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WITH

NOTICES OF SUBNAMES AND OBSOLETE WORDS.



BY W. A. WILLIAMSON, M.C.P.

London :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

CARLISLE: JAMES STEEL.

1849.

P R E F A C E .

THE prevailing taste for matters of antiquity in the present day is, perhaps, the principal reason for the author's taking up this subject. The fragmental evidence of past times which the names of places afford, is the first step in the inquiry; and since, in all probability, as much is now known of the ancient languages of Europe as ever will be known, the subject can never be in a better state for investigation. But etymological speculation has ever been accounted vague and unsatisfactory, and so in some degree it is; nevertheless there are certain general principles belonging to it, which are as capable of being conducted to rational conclusions as those of any other subject. The author is, therefore, fully aware of the devious and uncertain nature of the ground he treads, and though he often takes his own road, he always first ascertains the direction in which it leads; that is, he avails himself of the best guides where necessary, and when these fail he follows analogy, which is better

than weak precedent. And further, to avoid mistake and misapprehension, no name is given in any language of which the author is not himself, in some degree, a judge. The ancient Celtic language with its dialects ; the Teutonic with its branches ; Hebrew and those languages called classical, are the ground-work of the design ; but of such outlandish names as *Andes*, metal mountains ; *Mississippi*, mother of waters ; *Hydrabad*, Hyder's town, the author knows nothing but what others say who profess to understand the tongues in which they appear.

All names are printed in the English letter, for the greater facility of pronnnciation ; and particular attention has been given to render the word so represented equivalent both in sound and sense. Such a work in literature seems plainly wanting to fill up the chasm that exists between operosc works on etymology and the wants of the common reader ; —a handy depository of those antiquated, and recondite matters which occasionally fall in every one's way in conversational intercourse. The author makes free use of all comments and glosses that come in his way, to relieve and illustrate his topics ; and that too without fearing to forego the small measure of originality that is usually awarded to works of this kind. For every one who makes a book brings something of his own to the labour of others, and having moulded the mass to the model in his own mind, he may

fairly lay claim to authorship, though it be indifferently performed.

A principal object in a work of this kind is scholastic precision, and this object has been present throughout ; yet, after all, errors and oversights may, and probably do, exist in so multitudinous a mass of verbal analysis as is here brought together ; but the author hopes that all such will be indulgently scanned in a popular exposition of an abstruse subject.

CARLISLE, June 1, 1849.

LOCAL ETYMOLOGY.

LOCAL ETYMOLOGY is speaking antiquity. For the names of places were once words of common parlance, like those now in use; but becoming obsolete, through the people using them becoming extinct, or antiquated, from the change which time brings on things in common, they have lost their place in the vocabulary of living words, and are now mere terms, found only in the names of the places which they designate. There, however, they are permanently written—legible records of other peoples, speaking other languages, and inhabiting those places before the present races; and in every part of Europe there is thus a local nomenclature, composed of the fragments of the languages of its early inhabitants. Those early inhabitants can not now easily be made out; but a consideration of the ancient names of places would lead us to the people called *Celts*, *celli*, *chillé*, *coillé*, woodmen, of whom the Irish or Celts proper, the Welsh or Cymraeg, and the Highlanders or Gael, are the descendants—and who seem to be the first of mankind that came into Europe. Of the Grecian Cadmus, we take little notice; that story has all the air of a fable, and so it reads

by interpretation. The name Cadmus is the oriental *Kadem*, the east, with a classical termination; *Holek Kadmah*, towards the east, is the expression, Genesis π , and 14; and the *Cadmonites* mentioned in chapter xv., were so called because they dwelt in the *eastern* part of the country, near mount Hermon. All the incidents of the story are fabulous. Cadmus brings an alphabet from the east, which signifies the elements of learning and civilization coming originally from that part of the world, as all mankind are now agreed, and he comes from a province of Palestine, the birth-place of the human race, and he proceeds westwards, the direction of civilization, which completes the allegory. The fable was beautifully imagined, serving the two-fold purpose of making the Greeks the inventors of letters and arts and the aborigines of their own country, a thing they were particularly emulous of, and therefore called themselves *Autochthones*, autos-chthon, children of the earth, and thence the name of their most famous state *Attica*. To make out their claim to this antiquity, they disguised in fable almost every thing they found before them of history and philosophy; many of their apologues, like that of Pandora, are mere metamorphoses of ancient records. These facts, together with those rising immediately out of our subject, show that there were people and languages in Europe before the Greeks had a literature, or even a national name. By reference to the source of all history, we find people very early stirring and moving off in colonies; the story of Cadmus refers to a circumstance of this kind, not to a person, and is therefore of general application in the history and progress of society. The people driven from Palestine, (Philistine,) by the Jews, migrated to various parts of the world, as best suited them; and a colony set-