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THE SONNETS OF WILLIAM
PERCY, 1594**

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WILLIAM PERCY & ALEXANDER B. GROSART

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EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,
BY THE
REV. ALEXANDER B. GROSART, LL.D. (EDINB.), F.S.A.
ST. GEORGE'S, BLACKBURN, LANCASHIRE.

IN SIXTEEN VOLUMES.

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1877.

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OF
WILLIAM PERCY.

(1594.)

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INTRODUCTION.

WILLIAM PERCY, the "Sweet Singer" of these Sonnets, was the third, but second surviving son of Henry, Eighth Earl of Northumberland, by Catherine Neville, eldest daughter and co-heir of John, Lord Latimer. The Earl, his father, having been committed to the Tower of London, charged with plotting an invasion of England for the purpose of setting free Mary Queen of Scots, perished therein by his own hand on 21st June, 1585. His mother died 28th October, 1596, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His eldest brother was born in 1564, and a fifth brother in 1575; so that his birth may be approximately assigned to about 1570.

In the *Strafford Papers* (vol. ii, p. 168), a Mr. Garrard says in 1638 that "he lives obscurely in Oxford, and drinks nothing but ale." He lived a mal-content and retired many years and died in Penny-Farthing street,—according to Wood's *Ashmolean MSS.* He was buried in Christ Church Cathedral, 28th May, 1648, and is simply called in the register "William Percy, Esquire." Such is the meagre all of outward biographic fact that has come down concerning this so long forgotten scion of an illustrious House. It seems to be clear that the tragic end of his father cast a deep shadow over his youth, from behind which he cared not to emerge. I know not whether the Garrard-gossip be declarative of straitened means. "Nut-brown nappy ale," however, was then in favour—as long before—in the highest circles, as witness the genial bishop's pleasant song.

At the close of his Epistle "To the Reader" of these Sonnets, he announces, and indeed promises, "vnto the world another Poeme, which shall be both more fruitfull and ponderous." He did not carry out this intention. He wrote a great deal, but he modestly kept all in Manuscript. At Alnwick Castle his Grace the Duke of Northumberland