

**THE RUTHWELL CROSS AND
OTHER REMAINS. NEWCASTLE-
UPON-TYNE, WITH BRIEF
MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR**

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The Ruthwell Cross and Other Remains. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, with Brief Memoir of the Author by Hannah Mary Wright

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HANNAH MARY WRIGHT

**THE RUTHWELL CROSS AND
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THE RUTHWELL CROSS

AND

OTHER REMAINS

OF THE LATE

HANNAH MARY WRIGHT,

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

WITH BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

" Nevermore on hill nor dale,
Evermore within the veil ;
Nevermore by stream nor wood,
Evermore beyond the flood ;
Nevermore on old paths seen,
Evermore in pastures green."

EDINBURGH:

JAMES TAYLOR, 31 CASTLE STREET.

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NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE: W. H. FRANKLIN, AND D. H. WILSON.

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PREFACE.

THE selections from Miss Wright's MSS., given in the following pages, are issued chiefly with the view of affording to her friends some suitable memorial of one who was greatly esteemed and loved. At the same time, it is hoped that an interest attaches to the volume, which will render it acceptable to many who had not the pleasure of being personally acquainted with the amiable writer. She was too modest and unpretending to care much for mere literary distinction, but she had a strong desire to write something which might prove helpful to others; and before her death she had the satisfaction of knowing that some of her writings had been read with pleasure and profit by a large circle of friends. The papers and poems selected for publication in the present volume are, altogether apart from their literary merits, well fitted to exercise an influence for good over the mind of the reader. In the poems we have the breathings of a

devout spirit, the hopeful aspirations of a heaven-taught soul.

"The Ruthwell Cross," the first composition in the volume, was written with considerable care, and cost her much time and labour. Her attention was first directed to this ancient relic by a lecture on the subject delivered before the members of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Institution, by Mr R. W. Watson. Her interest having been fairly awakened, she commenced to study it for herself. She read almost everything that had been written regarding the stone, conversed with all who could tell her anything about it, and corresponded with some of our most learned antiquarians. In the course of her researches she visited Ruthwell Manse garden, and made a careful inspection of the stone. She also applied herself to the study of the ancient Anglo-Saxon language, and took every means of being correctly informed before finally revising the composition for publication. The translation gives us, in a popular English dress, the entire poem as found by Dr Blume in the Vercelli Library. It is scarcely necessary to add, that Miss Wright's object in translating this poem was not to exalt the material cross, or to countenance any of the errors which are found mixed up with the truth in this old Saxon lay. Her aim was

simply to give the general reader, who has no time for learned researches, an opportunity of understanding what this ancient stone, erected in the seventh century, actually spoke to our forefathers regarding the way of salvation. It certainly pointed to Christ and Him crucified as the way, and though the leaven of corruption had begun to work, and there is often a strange confounding of the material cross with Him who suffered thereon, still, Jesus Christ was proclaimed as the one Divine Saviour, and the one Mediator between God and man. In the "Dream of the Holy Rood," Mary is referred to as the "Mother of God," and they who wear the token of the Christian Cross on their breast are declared to be "safe and happy." We know that before the close of the seventh century most of the churches which had been planted in England and Scotland by the Culdees, had been induced to own the supremacy of Rome, and that, early in the following century, the struggle between the elders of Iona (who were the last to hold out) and the Bishop of Rome, ended in the former submitting to receive the Latin tonsure. And at the period when this poem is supposed to have been written, the seeds of error had been widely sown, and some of them were beginning to spring up. The natural tendency

of the human mind to look to mere forms and ceremonies for spiritual life was encouraged, and the Word of God had too often to give place to human traditions. But the dark night had not yet set in, and it is interesting to notice, that in the midst of the gathering darkness, the true light still shone, and shone with some clearness. The fundamental truths of the gospel are set forth in this old poem, and the sin-burdened soul is directed to the great sin-Bearer, "Christ, the Almighty Lord," who died for the sins of men, and who thus became the great "Healer" or physician of the soul. Not only is the death of Christ referred to and its design clearly stated, but his "triumphant" ascension is also spoken of, His second coming is proclaimed, and warning is given that there will be an awful day of righteous judgment, when each man shall "receive, for woe or weal, his meed," and when no man will find any plea to urge for himself who has despised the Cross of Christ. The poem contains some passages of great beauty, and many touching references are made in it to the death of our Lord, which may be read with profit by Christian men and women, even in these happier times of revived gospel light. The whole poem is full of interest, as shedding light on the teachings of the Church in the seventh century.

EDINBURGH, *March* 1873.

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