

**THE ENGLISH LAKE  
DISTRICT AS  
INTERPRETED IN THE  
POEMS OF WORDSWORTH**

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The English Lake District as Interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth by William Wordsworth  
& William Knight

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**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH & WILLIAM KNIGHT**

**THE ENGLISH LAKE  
DISTRICT AS  
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POEMS OF WORDSWORTH**



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THE  
ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT

AS INTERPRETED IN THE  
POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

BY  
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## PREFACE.

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THIS little book is not a new attempt at criticism, an endeavour to estimate the genius, or to weigh the merits, of the poetry of Wordsworth.<sup>1</sup> Its aim is much humbler : viz., to interpret the poems, by bringing out the singularly close connection between them, and the district of the English Lakes, and by explaining Wordsworth's numerous allusions to the locality. As such, it is only one small stone added to the cairn, that is being raised to his memory, by the devotion of successive generations.

It aims at being a guide to the Poems, more than to the District ; and to the District, only in so far as it is reflected in, and interpreted by, the Poems. It necessarily takes for granted a certain knowledge of both. The latter, however, are no longer 'caviare to the multitude.' The number of those who can trace to their influence much of what is highest and

<sup>1</sup> To a certain extent this is done in the Lecture printed as an Appendix.

best within them is multiplying with the spread of culture, and almost in proportion to the complexity of our civilisation; while the peculiar charm of the former is increasingly felt by Englishmen.

Many of Wordsworth's allusions to Place are obscure; and the exact localities, as well as individual objects, are difficult to identify. It is doubtful if he cared whether they could be afterwards traced out or not; and in reference to one (see p. 53), when asked by a friend to indicate the particular spot, he refused to localise it, saying, "Oh yes; that, or any other that will suit." Besides, in some of his most realistic passages, he avowedly weaves together a description of places remote from each other. Numerous instances of this will occur as we proceed.

It is true that 'poems of places' are not meant to be photographs; and were they simply to reproduce the features of a particular district, and be an exact transcript of reality, they would be literary photographs and not poems. Poetry cannot, in the nature of things, be a mere register of phenomena appealing to the eye or the ear. No imaginative writer, however, within the range of English literature, is so peculiarly identified with locality as Wordsworth is; and there is not one on the roll of poets, the appreciation of whose writings is more aided by an intimate knowledge of the district in which he lived.

Homer can be understood without a visit to the Troad, or the *Ægean*; but the *power* of Wordsworth cannot be fully known by one who is a stranger to Westmoreland. The wish to be able definitely to associate his poems with the places which suggested them, and which they interpret, is natural to every one who has ever felt the spell of his genius. It is indispensable to all who would know the peculiar charm of a Region which he characterised as 'a national property,' and of which he, beyond all other men, may be said to have effected the literary 'conveyance' to posterity.

These poems are the best, and, in one sense, the only needed, 'guide' to the whole of that classic ground. It is ground which they have *made* classic. They have done more for the north of England than the novels and metrical romances of Sir Walter Scott have done for Scotland: and Scott's are the only works which, in this connection, can be even remotely compared with Wordsworth's. There is, however, another and a most interesting scientific work, in reference to Scotland, with which the poetic interpretation of the English Lakes may be contrasted. It is Professor Geikie's book on *The Scenery and Geology of Scotland*, in which he endeavours to interpret the present physical character of the country, by explaining the forces that have been moulding it for cen-