

SOUTHEY

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Southey by Edward Dowden

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EDWARD DOWDEN

SOUTHEY



ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

SOUTHEY

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN

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NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWO

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NOTE.

I AM indebted throughout to *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, edited by the Rev. C. C. Southey, six volumes, 1850, and to *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, edited by J. W. Warter, B.D., four volumes, 1856. Many other sources have been consulted. I thank Mr. W. J. Craig for help given in examining Southey manuscripts, and Mr. T. W. Lyster for many valuable suggestions.

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SOUTHEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

No one of his generation lived so completely in and for literature as did Southey. "He is," said Byron, "the only existing entire man of letters." With him literature served the needs both of the material life and of the life of the intellect and imagination; it was his means of earning daily bread, and also the means of satisfying his highest ambitions and desires. This which was true of Southey at five-and-twenty years of age was equally true at forty, fifty, sixty. During all that time he was actively at work accumulating, arranging, and distributing knowledge; no one among his contemporaries gathered so large a store from the records of the past; no one toiled with such steadfast devotion to enrich his age; no one occupied so honourable a place in so many provinces of literature. There is not perhaps any single work of Southey's the loss of which would be felt by us as a capital misfortune. But the more we consider his total work, its mass, its variety, its high excellence, the more we come to regard it as a memorable, an extraordinary achievement.