

**A PRIMER OF
WORDSWORTH: WITH
A CRITICAL ESSAY**

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A Primer of Wordsworth: With a Critical Essay by Laurie Magnus

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LAURIE MAGNUS

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WITH
A CRITICAL ESSAY

BY
LAURIE MAGNUS, B.A. OXON.
FORMERLY DEMY OF MAGDALEN

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1897

TO MY MOTHER

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, whose life and works it is the object of this Primer to make easy of access, was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, in the month of spring which he made peculiarly his own—on April 7th, 1770. He was the second of five children, four sons and a daughter, born to John Wordsworth, of yeoman descent, law agent to Lord Lonsdale, and Anne, his wife, daughter of Christopher Cookson, of Penrith. He died in the same month, on the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth and death, on April 23rd, 1850. The eighty years covered by his life are a critical chapter in the history of the west. But of the movements which made that period remarkable, a single feature stands prominently out—the search for liberty, and its experiment in democracy. To this master-problem of his age Wordsworth's genius was given.

1850
1770
80

The record of the poet's life falls naturally into two unequal divisions, the first of personal, the second of literary interest. The first ends about 1795, in Wordsworth's twenty-sixth year, and is faithfully narrated in his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*. The second extends from that date to his death, and its interest is practically limited to the contents-tables of his works. The key to this division lies in the fact that, up to the date of departure mentioned, Wordsworth followed the letter of historical

