

THE EARLY
HISTORY OF BEDALE

IN THE NORTH RIDING OF YORKSHIRE

BY

H. B. M'CALL

AUTHOR OF

"SOME OLD FAMILIES," "HISTORY OF MIDCALDER," "THE WANDESFORDES OF KIRKLINGTON," ETC.

MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE YORKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

LONDON:

ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1907

Entered at Stationers' Hall

PREFACE

I CALL this book *The Early History of Bedale* because it is chiefly concerned with events which took place before the sixteenth century. In some respects the title is a misleading one, for I have not hesitated to avail myself of everything which has come to my hand, however recent, which is picturesque of life and manners in the Bedale of the past. Yet I profess to have made no exhaustive researches into the history of the parish relating to the last two or three centuries. There is, for instance, a large mass of manuscript relating to that period in the parish chest which would doubtless repay examination, and the proceedings of the Manor Court of Bedale are also preserved since about the year 1700.

My original intention was to write an antiquarian and historical account of the Church alone; but that naturally led to a somewhat careful investigation of the history of the Manor for the several centuries during which the development of the fabric of the church took place. Neither is it altogether inappropriate that such an intention should have grown into what is practically a history of the parish; for the Church, in early times, was the centre of life in every village community. The clergy and the pulpit were the channels through which parochial life, civil as well as ecclesiastical, flowed. Even popular amusements were, to a large extent, managed by the Church. I do not forbear to quote from Abbot Gasquet's charming work on *Parish Life in Mediæval England* :—

“ In a real and true sense, which may be perhaps strange to us

....

in these later times, the parish church was their church. Their life really centred round it, and they one and all were intimately connected with its management. The building was their care and their pride; the articles of furniture and plate, the vestments and banners and hangings, all had their own well-remembered story, and were regarded, as in truth they were, as the property of every man, woman, and child of the particular village and district."

In the account of the Church, it has been my privilege to collaborate with Mr Charles Clement Hodges, architect, Hexham, whose profound knowledge has imparted great value to the technical description of the building. The historical portions of the volume, for which I am more exclusively responsible, have been for the most part compiled from original record, and authorities are quoted whenever practicable.

With the single exception of Mr Merchant's work¹—which, as he himself intimates, was hastily thrown together amidst the pressure of other duties—no attempt has ever been made to specialise upon Bedale, notwithstanding that it possesses so attractive and varied a past. The best accounts of its early history are to be found in the pages of Dugdale's *Baronage of England* and Gale's *Honour of Richmond*, upon which latter the *History of Richmondshire*, by Dr Whitaker, has been very largely founded. But these writers, laborious and painstaking though their labours were, performed their tasks under disadvantages which have to a large extent been removed since their days.

The historical records of the country were then much less accessible than they are now. It is a curious reflection that when Dugdale and Gale wrote, absolutely nothing in the way of record had been calendared or printed. They had to seek their references

¹ *A Short Account of the Parish of Bedale*, by the Rev. Charles Merchant, 1889.

and authorities with much expenditure of time and patience in the badly arranged and wholly unindexed collections of public documents. The natural consequence is that, whilst the information which these writers afford us is commendably accurate so far as it relates to their own times, yet particulars regarding the early centuries are scanty, and too frequently untrustworthy.

During the latter half of the last century, the Government has published several important series of records, such as *The Close Rolls*, *The Patent Rolls*, *The State Papers*, *The Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, etc., which alone afford a vast mine whence information may be quarried. Again, many private collections have seen the light or have been reported upon by the Historical MSS. Commissioners; whilst the work of the Surtees Society and the publications of the Yorkshire Archæological and kindred Societies have illuminated many points formerly obscure. It may be truly said that even during the past twenty years, the means of elucidating local history have been very largely augmented and extended. At the same time, I have by no means neglected reference to manuscripts, in so far as that has been within my power.

In these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that some few cherished but vague traditional beliefs should melt away in the presence of actual record. For any statements, therefore, which may run counter to what has been generally believed, I can only appeal to the authorities cited. It is surely in the last degree important that what we receive as history should be true.

To William Brown, Esq., F.S.A., I am indebted for much valuable assistance and advice from the vast stores of his historical and genealogical knowledge; to W. G. Collingwood, Esq., F.S.A., for permission to reproduce his drawings of the pre-Conquest stones at Bedale; and to the Dean and Chapter of Durham, and the

Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, for the use of their respective Libraries. The etched plate which forms the frontispiece of the volume is from a drawing especially made for the work by Harold A. Rigby, Esq., A.R.C.A. (Lond.), Master at the Municipal School of Art, West Bromwich; and the measured drawing of the aisle window was very kindly made by the Rev. J. F. Hodgson of Witton-le-Wear. The obligation of the work to C. C. Hodges, Esq., architect, has been already acknowledged.

H. B. M'C.

KIRKINGTON HALL, BEDALE,
St Mark's Day, 1907.