

Loidis and Elmete;

OR,

AN ATTEMPT TO ILLUSTRATE

THE

DISTRICTS DESCRIBED IN THOSE WORDS BY BEDE;

AND SUPPOSED TO EMBRACE THE

LOWER PORTIONS OF AREDALE AND WHARFDALE,

TOGETHER WITH

THE ENTIRE VALE OF CALDER,

IN THE

COUNTY OF YORK.

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VICAR OF WHALLEY, AND RECTOR OF HEYSHAM, IN LANCASHIRE.



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MDCCCXVI.

LOIDIS AND ELMETE.



N the ensuing work I purpose to give a succinct account of the district which is supposed to be included by Bede under the names of Loidis and Elmete, as their indefinite outline coinciding at present with no district ecclesiastical or civil, frees the topographer from the embarrassment which is occasioned by the certainty and the contraction of modern limits, while it enables him occasionally to take a wider range in order to embrace an interesting object, and at the same time to neglect many claims to notice which would have been created by a rigid adherence to the plan of a parochial survey.

If the subject is not eminently fruitful in Roman antiquities, that defect is compensated by a scene of magnificent Saxon remains military and ecclesiastic, as well as by many works of art of a more private nature and recent date, which the settlement of opulent and noble families in a fertile district has gradually contributed to its ornament in a period of several centuries. This tract, though not strongly marked by nature, is far from being deficient in natural beauties. It embraces a portion (almost the lowest, and therefore at least the most fertile portion,) of three northern vallies, watered by the Calder, the Are, and the Wharf. Commencing with the junction of the two former at Castleford, it pursues the line of the first to the point at which, after a course of twenty miles, it issues from the eastern extremity of the parish of Halifax. From Castleford the Are traced upward by Leeds, the principal subject of this work, conducts us to the point at which in that valley the history of Craven terminated to the south. Stretching in the next place over the high grounds which bound the vallies of Are and Wharf, this enquiry will extend to Harwood (a scene of elegance and antiquity sufficiently important to justify a wider deviation), and ranging to the northern extremity of the parish of Otley, will terminate, for a similar reason, with the limits of Ilkley. At the extremity of the parish of Bradford it will attach upon the parish of Whalley, and therefore connect itself with another work; but the connexion would have been more complete had not the extensive and interesting parish of Halifax, unquestionably a portion of the great Saxon parish of Dewsbury, and consequently the whole vale of Calder up to its source near my own residence, been forestalled by the sluggish labours of its own antiquary*. In adopting a plan so comprehensive, I willingly submit to the necessity which it imposes of treating the several subjects less in detail than has become fashionable in works of modern

* It is more than possible that this consideration will not prevent the parish of Halifax from being comprehended in the plan.

topography. In former works I have been accused, and I plead guilty to the charge, of having given too much importance to objects comparatively trifling. This inherent sin of antiquaries, besides the great evil of producing bulky volumes on subjects scarcely interesting beyond the confines of a single parish, is attended by another transgression against the rules of good taste, namely, that of conferring almost equal importance on all subjects, so that instead of exalting the mean, which is impossible, it depresses by the stupid equality of its regards what is really great. On the other hand, it is not brevity alone, even though purchased by the rejection of trifling details, that will be able to confer interest on a topographical work. The wretched things which, if they were more brief than they are, would be nothing,—things entitling themselves Guides, Tours, Descriptions, &c. must not be permitted to boast themselves in the absence of prolixity. They are at an infinite distance beneath the dullest details of regular topography. Ignorance of the subject begetting perpetual misnomers, mistakes in chronology and in situation, together with imbecility and cloudiness of understanding, no more permit such trash to aspire to the name of topography than a verger of a cathedral is allowed to rank with antiquaries.

Sensible of these opposite defects, it has been my object, so far as I am to be considered as an original author in the following work, to study distinctness, selection, and brevity at once. I have accordingly made it my object to throw into the shade trivial and merely local objects, to exhibit with clearness of outline the general history of every parish, and to throw a strong and defining light upon subjects, which from their own intrinsic value, or the associations connected with them, may be supposed to awaken general curiosity, or to gratify a discerning taste.

Though, in compliment to the first general name which this district is known to have borne, and to the fine remains of the heptarchy which it exhibits, I have chosen to distinguish it by its Saxon denomination, it must not be supposed to be barren in antiquities of an earlier period. Three Roman stations, well known from the names which they bear in Antonine's Itinerary, Lagecium, Calcaria, and Cambodunum, together with a nameless but indubitable encampment of that people near Adel, and another equally anonymous, but equally certain, near Leeds, together with two itinera, one leading from Calcaria to Cambodunum, and another from Lagecium to Olicana, will afford matter for curious enquiry and ample information. The Saxon remains consist for the most part of magnificent earth-works, and the Roman discoveries have been disinterred from beneath the surface; but the period commencing in the century after the conquest, and continued to the present day, exhibits within the compass of this work many specimens of art in architecture and sculpture, which have either been improved as objects by partial mutilation, or exist in their original beauty and perfection. In statuary, the rude figure of the cumbent knight, after long gradations of art and taste, may be compared, as far as the pencil and graver will permit, with the exquisite works of Nollekens and Flaxman, and in architecture the strength, the symmetry, and the duration of an early Norman church, may be contrasted with the deformity, the frailty, and the tasteless expense of many modern ecclesiastical buildings, which, as they have sprung up in the present generation, will scarcely propagate the memory of its bad taste beyond the next. The subject of monastic antiquities is barren. Kirkstall, as an object of antiquarian research, is already exhausted, while the modest obscurity of three indigent nunneries, even when entire, afforded little to exhaust. The civil wars of the two Houses afford only one subject, the field of Towton and its accompaniment, the tomb of Lord Dacre.

During the civil wars of the last century but one, this district, populous as it was, and devoted for the most part to the interests of the parliament, afforded no field for any general engagement, and no bloody or long protracted siege.

In point of biography, the precincts of Leeds, while they can scarcely be said to have produced a genius in any way of the highest order, have given birth, education, or residence to many learned and excellent men of inferior rank, who were blessings to their own times, and examples to ours. Brief and simple memoirs of these, as well as narratives of some interesting transactions, which, though of no public nature, may be excused in a local work, will also be given in their proper places.

The connexion is not remote between biography and living manners; with respect to these, little change appears to have taken place in the century preceding the commencement of the present reign; but the prodigious revolution which has taken place during the last period in arts and manners, will afford scope for amusing and instructive comparisons. The mineralogy of the greater part of the district is common to all countries where argillaceous strata prevail. Little, therefore, will present itself for observation on this subject, but its share in forming the character and habits of those who occupy its surface, a curious subject, though perhaps it belongs to the province of the philosopher rather than of the antiquary. For the same reason the botany of Airedale, at least, is trite and vulgar, while that of Lower Wharfedale partakes intimately of that of Craven; but accurate investigation in the neighbourhood of Leeds is said to have added to the stock of English entomology. On this subject I shall avail myself of an obliging communication.

Thoresby, who surveyed this district with the partiality of a native and the zeal of an antiquary, has by a very ingenious comparison of facts and appearances connected it with an interesting period of Saxon history. It is my misfortune however to be very sceptical with respect to his conclusions.

At Barwick in Elmet is a very noble and extensive Saxon earthwork, worthy to be the Keningsbotl of the Northumbrian monarchs, and adjoining to it was till lately an ample and level common called Win, or Whinmore, well adapted to the encounter of two great armies; adjoining is the village of Seacroft, in the etymology of which he discovers a vestige of the slaughter committed there in the great engagement between Penda and Oswin. At Oswinorhp (not without great probability,) he traces a tradition and memorials of another residence of the Northumbrian kings. At Almonbury, another Saxon fortification, more elevated in site, but far inferior in extent to that of Barwick, Camden had long before conceived himself to have found the Cambodunum of Antoninus, which seemed to be echoed in the Campodono of Bede, and the vestiges of conflagration which are very obvious in the remains of that fortress, seemed to identify Almonbury with Campodono, and to confirm the account of Bede that it had been destroyed by fire on the return of Penda and Cadwallaun, after the fatal battle of Hethfeld. But as the great engagement between Penda and Edwin took place near the river Winwaed, in the country of Loidis, after taking for granted, as he might be permitted to do, that this was the district surrounding Leeds, our antiquary, as the next stage, inferred that the Winwaed was the modern Are, and that Winmore was the scene of that great and decisive engagement. In addition to all, some appearances of a Saxon camp much more distinct in his time, and even in the earlier days of his editor, than at present, at Gipton near Leeds, have enabled him very ingeniously to assign the previous situation of the two armies before the battle. A reasonable spirit of incredulity, which has at length found its way even into the study of antiquities, will considerably

abate the force of our author's argument. For in the first place, the word *Are* being unquestionably British, the river was in possession of that name before the Saxon *æra*, and if it had once been exchanged for *Winwaed*, what can account for the fact of the ancient appellation having been revived? In the next place the field is never denominated *Winwaed Field*, and therefore if the common had really been *Winmore*, instead of *Whinmore*, as it really was, from the *whins* or gorse which grew upon it, no inference could well be drawn from that circumstance.

But it is a fact still more unfavourable to Thoresby's argument, that the nearest part of *Whinmore* is at least five miles from the *Are*. Thirdly, a flying enemy might have been drowned in a stream so deep and sluggish as the *Are*, without its being swollen by rains, and the second syllable *waed*, seems to imply that it was ordinarily fordable, which can scarcely be said of the *Are*. At the battle of *Towton* the interposition of a rivulet trifling as *Cockbeck*, in the confusion of flight and pursuit, greatly contributed to increase the slaughter.

On the whole, I am disposed to believe that the river so fatal to the followers of *Penda* was a more inconsiderable stream, which has not wholly lost its ancient appellation.

Every antiquary versed in Saxon names of places must have observed, that in the process of being melted down into modern orthography they have undergone much contraction; whether it were that the Saxon pronunciation were really more distinct, or their spelling more remote from pronunciation. Attending to this rule we shall probably discover the *Winwaed* of *Bede*, a few miles to the southward, in the little river *Went*, which long since the conquest is known to have been spelt *Wynt*. I offer this only as a conjecture, and as it contradicts a favourite and patriotic hypothesis of our antiquary, I offer it with some regret, but it is a conjecture supported by similarity of name against one supported by none.

On the subject of Saxon antiquities at *Leeds* the scepticism of modern investigation must be permitted to extend itself a little farther.

“There hath beene a castlee at *Leedes*, as *Mr. Edward Fairfax* conjectureth. The place where itt may be thought to stand is now called the *Mill Hill*, wher by conjecture was the house of *Egfrid* and *Osfryd*, kings of *Northumberland*, who, as *Bede* sayth, lived at *Leodys**.” That there was a castle at *Leeds*, and in the situation pointed out in this extract, has been clearly proved by *Thoresby*. That *Leodys* specifically was ever the residence of any of the *Northumbrian* kings was never asserted by *Bede*, though there can be little doubt that *Osmonthorp*, *Berwick*, or *Almonbury*, perhaps all of them by turns, were honoured by the residence of their sovereign; but the silence of *Domesday* either as to such a building, or to that of *burgenses* always attached to the former, proves that no castle existed here at the period of that survey, and the well attested fact of the imprisonment of *Richard the Second* at *Leodys* castle, unquestionably the *Yorkshire*, not the *Kentish Leeds*, points at this castle as one of the dependencies of *Pontefract*, from which that unhappy monarch might be occasionally removed, and therefore in all probability a small fortification erected by the *Lacies* for the protection of this part of their domains, like *Rothwell*, and the second castle of *Almonbury*.

Whatever were its origin, or whoever its founder, the castle of *Leeds* will be proved in its proper place to have existed in the reign of *John*.

* *Dodsworth*, MSS. vol. cliv. fol. 168; and *Leland's Itin. ad Calcem*, vol. i.

Of this district the flourishing town of Leeds must be considered as the centre, and a circle drawn around it whose radius is ten miles, while it will sometimes embrace objects which I feel no inclination to admit, will shut out perhaps yet fewer near its circumference whose exclusion I should regret. When that is really the case I shall feel little scruple in overstepping the line.

After the general notice of this place by Bede (and it consists but of a single name and fact), the next intelligence concerning it is contained in that great national record of Domesday, where it is thus described :

Terra Ilberti de Laci *M.* In LEDES x Car. $\tilde{r}\tilde{e}$ 7. vi. bov. ad $\tilde{g}\tilde{l}d$ $\tilde{r}\tilde{a}$ vi. Carucæ vii. Taini tenebant TRE p̄ vii. maneriis. Ibi nō xxvii. villi 7 iii. sochī 7 iiiii. bordi henē xiiii. car. Ibi pbr 7 ecclia 7 mold. iiiii. sold 7 10 Acr p̄t̄ valuit vi. lib. m°. vii. lib.

Here we have for the first time the name of Leeds reduced from its original Saxon orthography nearly to its present form. With respect to the etymology of the word, the genius of the Saxon language compels me to reject the opinions which have hitherto been given on the subject, and to consider the word as merely the genitive case of the name born by Loidi, the first Saxon possessor of the place. This kind of ellipsis was very frequent. Thus in Craven we have Melsis, the dwelling of Melsi; and in North Lancashire, Levens (the Lefuenes of Domesday), the habitation of Leoffwine. But to return to Domesday. Under this survey are included the township of Leeds, and as they are immediately contiguous, and not elsewhere named in the survey, probably Holbeck and Woodhouse also. In the Saxon times it appears to have been held by seven thanes of the lower order immediately under the crown. It had been recently granted by the conqueror, together with much the greatest portion of the manors which will constitute the subject of this work, to Ilbert de Laci, a Norman chieftain, who was now about to consolidate them all, under his great barony of Pontefract. From this survey, the state of population, of husbandry, &c. (for Leeds was then only a farming village) may be inferred to be as follows: There were ten carucates of land, each measuring about an hundred acres, and six oxgangs, or three-fourths of a ninth carucate; all the land was reclaimed and in cultivation, for there is no mention either of *silva parca* or waste, and only ten acres of meadow, of which at that early period the proportion was very small throughout the kingdom; horses and cattle being for the most part wintered in the open air.

On the degrees of servitude, and the approaches to independence expressed by the terms Villani, Bordarii, and Sochmani, as the best legal antiquaries are far from being agreed on the subject, I shall not stay to comment. But they were all most evidently a kind of yeomen, holding by different tenures; and as there is no mention of cotarii, or cottagers, we are left in uncertainty as to the lower order of population, and the assistance the superior tenants received in their operations. It follows however that there were fourteen ploughs among twenty-seven families, and if these be multiplied by five, the result, 135 persons with their households, will be the probable amount of the land owners of Leeds and Holbeck in the reign of the Conqueror. The small number of cottagers enumerated in Domesday, where they are noticed at all, forbids us to do more than double the sum. The tenants must all have been working farmers. This statement suggests another difficulty, which is the vast redundancy of provision above that of consumption; for, supposing one third only of the land to be in tillage annually, here is the produce of 400 acres to be disposed of by 270 mouths. It will be said that vast quantities of grain must have been sold, but where

was the market? The same, or nearly the same disproportion appears from Domesday to have existed through the kingdom. The principal towns were neither many, nor more than large villages. The difficulties of conveyance for grain, which could only be carried in single sacks on horseback, prohibited commerce in that article to any considerable extent; and yet these were days in which famines were more frequent than under the present redundant population. To remove this difficulty in part, for it is still in a great degree unexplained, we are to remember, 1st, that husbandry was in the very lowest state, that the climate of this part of the country, of which so large a portion consisted of bog and forest, frequently occasioned the rotting of grain reaped or unreaped upon the ground; and lastly, what is very probable, that there were in many parts of the country a numerous and needy rabble of cottagers of whom no account was taken. But to return. A population, such as this, even allowing the last supposition, presents a curious contrast to the appearance of Leeds at present. Whatever streets do not bear the Saxon name of gate, were then, if any thing, lanes in the fields, and this rule restricts the original Leeds to Briggate, Kirkgate, and Swinegate, which last formed the original approach to the castle, which, at a somewhat later period, was erected by the Lacies. Let the reader then, who is acquainted with this busy and crowded scene as it exists at present, figure to himself two deep and dirty highways, one stretching from the bridge to the present Moothall, the other at a right angle to the parish church, with seven and twenty dwelling houses constructed of mud, wattles, and straw, the usual architecture of the Saxons; their mean barns, farm yards, &c. and here and there a wretched cabin, perhaps of still meaner structure, dispersed at intervals along these two lines. To the backs of these in every direction lay a wide extent of open fields, and with these exceptions, the streets and squares into which this great commercial town has expanded on every quarter were alternately grazed by cattle, or wrought by the plough. Amidst such a scene of poverty and wretchedness the parish church, which was destined from the beginning for the entire parish now belonging to it, must have appeared a magnificent fabric.

At no great distance would be the mansion of the presbyter, and the situation of the present tithe barn, which till lately was a very ancient structure, situated to the south, and near the middle of Kirkgate, pointed out the neighbourhood of its old principal, the parsonage, of which, after a succession of thirty-five vicars (one of the longest catalogues of incumbents in the kingdom), and after being abandoned by them during four centuries, it will scarcely be matter of surprise that no vestige remains.

It was not long, however, before this state of dependance was superseded, or rather by the bounty of the lords paramount, transferred to a nearer and humbler master, under whose immediate auspices the first germ of English liberty began to expand itself at Leeds under a charter of privileges, and in the exercise of a municipal jurisdiction.

MANOR OF LEEDS.

THE grant of the advowson of the parish church coupled with the positive evidence of the manor having been in possession of the Paganel at no distant period, renders it in the highest degree probable that the latter had been granted out by Ilbert de Lacy to Maurice Paganel almost immediately after the Domesday survey. To these mesne