



MORLEY.

THE curiosity entertained by the lover of antiquities, of inquiring into the origin of ancient and celebrated Structures, commonly excites a regret that the accounts of them which have been left to posterity should be so meagre and insufficient. Through the apathy of our forefathers, and indifference* or ignorance of our early writers, the history of many most interesting places is now for ever buried in an impenetrable obscurity. Amongst the number of these is the ancient Church or Chapel, at Morley—a Chapel which having been in the hands of Papists, Protestants, and protestant Dissenters, and, under some form or other, a place of worship from the æra of the Saxon Heptarchy down to the present period, may well engage the notice and amuse the fancy of the learned and inquisitive, while it can scarcely fail to be esteemed by those whose ancestry have frequented it for many generations. Impressed by sentiments like these, and as one member of a family which, for two hundred years at least; has resided in the neighbourhood, I am desirous of paying to its ruins a passing tribute of respect. But I feel the stronger stimulus to do this by reason that its history stands connected with events of great general and local interest. And, therefore it is that, although labouring under disadvantages as an Antiquary, I still hope to make my book entertaining, which is, truly, the great object of my ambition.

In Domesday Book the Saxon Church at Morley is thus noticed:—

“In Moreleia habuit Dunstan VI. Car terræ ad Geld, et VI. Car possunt ibi esse qui Ilbertus habuit sed weist est. *Ibi est Ecclesia.*† Silva past. 1 leug. long et 1 late, T.R.E. Val. xl. Sol.” In Morley, Dunstan

* For illustration of this, let any one peruse the history of Leicestershire, by Burton, and other works composed by men who possessed abundant matter for the gratification of posterity, and suffered it to die with them. And then let him view the contrast in such men as Drake, the historian of York, and a few more of modern times.

† The first notice of any Village Church, after Domesday, occurs in the Saxon Chronicle, Anno 1087. They are there called “Upland” Churches. Translated *Ecclesie rurali.*

held six carrucates of land, subject to taxes; and other six carrucates may be there which Ilbert held, but it is waste. *There is a Church*—a native wood, one mile long and one broad—in the time of King Edward, valued at forty shillings.

The hide was the measure of land in Edward the Confessor’s days. The carrucate, that to which it was reduced by *the Conqueror’s* new standard, and twelve of these made one hide. A carrucate of land contained about 100 acres; eight oxgangs made a carrucate, and every oxgang contained twelve or thirteen acres, or thereabouts. Though the carrucate, however, is laid down at 100 acres, it must needs have been various according to the nature of the soil and the custom of husbandry in each country. The word comes from the Latin word *caruca*, in French, *carruè*, a plough; and signifies as much land as one team could well manage to plough in the year.

Dunstan having, therefore, at least, six hundred acres of land, in Morley, and Ilbert, about other six hundred, in waste; and there being a wood of about a mile in length and breadth, or 640 acres of forest, we are enabled to compare the present, with what was, near 800 years ago, considered the extent of the Township; and taking the above, not as admeasurement, but a very rude estimate as to wood and waste, we find it, by some means, considerably enlarged; for, we have now about 2,600 acres within the Township, including our new Inclosures and waste.

The other passage in Domesday relating to Morley, to be seen in Mr. Bawdwen’s translation under the head of “Claims of the West-Riding,” is thus rendered—

“According to the Verdict of the Men of Morelege (Morley) Wapentake, concerning the Church of St. Mary, which is in Morley Wood, the King has a Moiety of the three Festivals of St. Mary’s, which belongs to Wakefield. Ilbert and the Priests who serve the Church have all the rest.”

It may, well enough, be supposed, independently of what is here stated, that at the time of the General Survey under William "the Conqueror," this part of the country presented one general aspect of wood and waste, as did by far the greatest part of the whole Island for a century or two; after his "Usurpation;" but, fortunately, we have disclosed to us some far more important particulars, namely,—That there was, even in the reign of Edward the Confessor, *a Church here*—that it was dedicated to the Mother of Christ, and called "St. Mary's,"—that, Ilbert or Hildebert (one of the celebrated family of the De Lacies) was chief Lord over this district, under the Norman,—that the alms, oblations, or offerings belonging to this Church were considerable, and were enjoyed in moieties—one half by the King, as seized of the advowson of the Church of Wakefield; and the other moiety, by his feudal Baron and the Romish Priests who here officiated—from all which circumstances, and from the Town having given its name to the Wapentake, we may be sure, that Morley, though now a poor manufacturing village, was, in early times, a place of considerable consequence.

This inference, indeed, receives ample confirmation from what is mentioned by Dr. Whitaker, in page 5 of his *Ducatus Leodiensis*, who states, "That, in the year 1322, a large division of the Scottish army, which spread devastation and havoc wherever they came, wintered at Morley, and threw the inhabitants of Leeds into such a panic, that they buried their treasures; some of which, being the coins of that period, were found in the early part of the last century." It appears also, from the defence of Henry de Abberford, a Prior of Nostel, as will be related in a following page, that Morley had to support an army of Scots, for fifteen days, some years before the rebellion of the Duke of Lancaster, and that the Priory suffered much in its revenues, by reason of the Scots remaining for the same period, at Birstal, Rothwell, and Baumberg. And, it may be here just noted, incidentally, that from Morley being mentioned in connection with these places, the revenues of whose Churches certainly belonged to St. Oswald's, it is evident that

1 This, no doubt, gave rise to Church Spires or Steeples, the only sure guides by day, as the Lantern Towers were by night. See Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, &c. Nichols's *Leicestershire*, vol. 3, p. 144.

some profits, arising from its Chapelry, pertained to that Priory in the fourteenth century.

It would be difficult to believe that so celebrated a Church as that of St. Mary's, and one so rich in offerings, should have flourished here without an adequate number of parishioners; and, certainly, not less so, to fancy what else but its fine woods could have induced the Scots to settle at Morley, during a whole winter; for, as to its situation, it is lofty, and cold, and but about half a mile from one of the highest ridges in the county. It seems, therefore, extremely probable that, until the reign of Edward the Second, the population and opulence of this place was upon the advance; and, my conjecture is, that from the breaking up of their winter quarters by this Scottish army, when, most likely,* the Town and its Church were destroyed, we are to date the period of its decline.

I am led to this surmise by two circumstances. The first is, that upon many wall-stones hereabouts, I have discovered evident marks of fire; and, especially, on some which have probably belonged to the Church or Chapel of Edward the Second's reign. The next is, because we know that about 1318, Yorkshire, in particular, suffered from the incursions of the Scots most dreadfully; for, then it was that Skipton and Scarbro' were set on fire, and Northallerton and Borough-bridge were burnt, by those cruel Invaders. But, to return to our extracts—

Whoever is unacquainted with the character of Dunstan, and may be desirous of learning more respecting him, will be amused by perusing our best histories of the Anglo-Saxons. Suffice it here to observe that, according to the accounts, he was an Abbot of Glastonbury, and one who held the highest offices in Church and State. A Monk who, under the garb of sanctity, concealed a mind elevated by ambition and ecclesiastical pride, while he betrayed a temper insolent, violent, and ungovernable.† Living in an age of the grossest ignorance and superstition, this

* In 1322 the Scots laid waste all the Towns and Villages from Carlisle to York. Clarkson's *Richmond*, p. 34.

† One of the Monkish writers, however, gives him another character, which I transcribe at second-hand: "Erat ita Naturali præditus ingenio, ut facile quam libet rem acutissime intelligeret, firmissime retineret, et quamvis aliis artibus magnifice polleret, musicam tamen speciali quadam affectione vendicabat, sicut David Psalterium sumens, Citharam, percussus, modulans Organa, Cimbala tangens—Præterea Manu aptus ad omnia, facere potuit Picturam, litteras formare, scalpello imprimere ex auro, argento, ære et ferro."

ferocious ruffian had the luck to pass for so holy a man as to obtain the reputation of a Saint, and to be canonized, as such, after his death. Even yet, his name appears upon the British Calendar, while that of some men;† who have deserved the gratitude of their country, is held up to ignominy in that of Tyburn.

Respecting Ilbert, the first of the De Lacies noticed in our Annals, I can give the reader but little information, as very little has been recorded respecting him. He was, however, a gentleman of good family, of Norman extract, and one who came to England in the train of the Conqueror.¶ For his services he was, about the year 1072, created Lord of Pontefract and Baron of Blackburnshire, which, long after this period, was a several shire, or province, of itself. This family, by various intermarriages amongst the chief Nobility in the land, became soon of chief rank and consequence. We read of them as being the Founders of three several religious Houses at Nostel, Pontefract, and Kirkstall; as becoming Earls of Lincoln—as possessing twenty-five towns in the Wapentake of Morley, and the greater part of 150 Manors in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

My last comment upon the foregoing extracts, should now turn upon the Church of St. Mary, but it will be doing the subject more justice, to state the opinion of a very learned Author, as to its high antiquity.

“In the Manor of Wakefield with its Berewicks,” says Dr. Whitaker, “there were two Churches and three Priests. The Churches may, without the slightest hesitation, be assigned to Wakefield and Sandal; and, as we know that a Chapel, at Horbury, existed within 50 years of this time; and, as Chapels are never mentioned in Domesday, the presumption is, that the third Priest ministered at that place. I am further persuaded that though the Church, at Wakefield, was in existence in the Conqueror’s reign, it was *not* one of the original Saxon Churches, of which, in the Hundred of Morley, there were only two; namely, Morley itself the Hundred

† I allude especially to such men as Eugene Aram and Dr. Dodd; in regard to the former of whom I am supported by the Historian Smollett. From my very childhood, I have delighted in prying into the life of this wonderful Scholar, and the particulars of his case. My gleanings will be left to my family. Suffice it to observe, it is far from certain that he was so criminal as is believed.

¶ See a very scarce and curious book entitled, “The Blazon of Gentry, &c., compiled by John Fearn, gentleman, for the instruction of all Gentlemen Bearers of Armes, whom, and none other, this book concerneth, at London, printed for John VVindet, for Toby Cooke, 1586.” It professes, especially, to treat of “the Lacies Nobilitie”

Church, and Dewsbury, the known Parent of four later parishes in this hundred, besides three in Agbridge. The following quotation from Domesday will not only prove this position that, Wakefield belongs *not* to the first class of Saxon Churches; but, also, that (at whatever period) it was taken out of the original parish of Morley.”

“Sed Veredice hnum de Morelege Wap. de Ecclesia Sce Marie que e in Silva Morlege Rex hr dim elemos de iii Festis Sce Marie
 $\frac{1}{2}$ — — — — —
 q^d p^tinet ad Wachefeld Reliquum hr Ilbert & Presbi qui Eccleie inservt.”

“This curious passage,” says the Dr., “proves, that, at the separation of the Parish of Wakefield from Morley, a moiety of the oblations were separated with it. The other moiety remained to Ilbert de Lacy, the chief lord, and to the Priests who performed the duties of the Church. This division of the offerings appears to have been common in the later Saxon times, at the foundation of new parishes; and it is precisely paralleled in the first endowment of the church of Blackburn, with the fourth-part of the tithes and offerings antecedently due to the Mother Church of Whalley.”

If a Thane erected on his own bocland (*i.e.* freehold or charter-land) a Church—having a cemetery or place of burial, he was allowed to subtract one-third part of his tithes from the Mother Church, and to bestow upon them his own clerk. After this separation, therefore, of Wakefield from Morley, and, more especially, the subtraction of his tithes by that Lacy who founded and made Batley the Church of this Parish,* as hereafter will be related, it is evident the tithes, offerings, and oblations of the Mother Church, at Morley, reduced to a Chapelry, would be comparatively trifling.

It cannot well be expected that I should be able to give the reader any account of our Church in its infant state, or of the changes

* To encourage the erection of Churches, in early times, upon the Domains of the Lords of Manors, it seems they had held out to them, by way of temptation, the Commission from the Ordinary, of the right of patronage and the privilege of annexing, in perpetuity, all tithes and oblations accruing within their own demesnes, to the service of each particular Church. To these, it appears, therefore, they added a portion of land or glebe, as absolutely necessary to the accommodation of an incumbent, at a time when almost all the wants of life must have been supplied from the produce of the earth: Whitaker’s Whalley, p. 33.

which took place in its appearance, during the dark ages,† when it is considered, that in compiling the histories of our ecclesiastical structures, the most learned and indefatigable inquirers are ever bewildered in a labyrinth of doubt and uncertainty, till they arrive at that era when the light of science and literature broke in upon the world, by the invention of printing. To the man who would investigate and impart such matters as transpired, when all the nations of Europe were slumbering in superstition, the scanty detail of a poor Monk, confined to the dungeon of his cloister, and collecting his news, perchance, from the hearsay tales of pilgrims, pedlars, or palmers, is like the light of a glow-worm upon a winter's night, which serves only to make the surrounding darkness still more striking. Sad, indeed, were the ages in which our earliest chroniclers existed, and well may they account for the fabulous legends and trifling incidents which their works contain. The studies of these men—their taste—their habits—the rigid rules of the monastic orders—the turbulent state of the times—the want of posts—of traverseable roads—of police—of instruction from the press—all contributed to disqualify them for the task of authorship. Yet, who does not regret, deeply, that so many of their manuscripts should have perished, as doubtless happened on the suppression of the monasteries? For, who can tell what lights they would not have thrown upon our national history‡ and antiquities? And, amongst other curious particulars, what valuable hints they might not have supplied for a history of Morley, and of its celebrated Mother Church—"the Church of St. Mary's in the Wood?"

The absence of positive information can only, in cases like the present, be supplied by probable conjecture. To me, it seems likely that some part of the chancel, or East-end of the present fabrick, was a part of the church destroyed by conflagration, as before suggested; 1stly, because of the materials—being, in fact, mere cobble stones, which have never been coursed, or even tooled with the pick-axe.—2ndly, because of the corbels or projections of stone on which the rafter roof is placed.—3rdly, because of a projecting stone of singular form within the building—evidently a Catholic remain, and intended, as

I believe, to hold a crucifix. And, 4thly, because that very ancient silver pennies were once found in these walls—a fact often related by persons of respectability, lately deceased.

About seventy years ago, as the workmen employed by John Dawson, Esq., of Morley, were making some alterations in a seat of his, in this chancel, they discovered the flue of an old chimney in the East wall, and, on removing some stones, a few coins, said to have been of Edward the Confessor, were found. Some of these were presented to the then minister, the Rev. Thomas Morgan, by Mr. Dawson. Unfortunately, Mr. Morgan was robbed of them, much in the same way as poor Thoresby, the historian, was of his "*fine Caligula*," by a "pretended Gentleman of curiosity," who came express from Leeds to see these treasures, and made them his own, by borrowing the coins and returning, in the stead of them, a few pennies of much inferior age, value, and rarity.

Yet, although this chancel is, apparently, (*as to some part of it*) of higher antiquity than even Edward 2nd's reign, we may be quite sure that it never formed a part of the original Church of St. Mary,|| With much more probability may it be conjectured to have been part of a Church erected upon the site of that edifice, by one of the De Lacies, about the beginning of the twelfth century; and, judging of them from what our old historians relate, I should, certainly, give the honour of it to Robert, the Son of Ilbert, before-mentioned; for *he* it was who founded the Priory of St. Oswald, at Nostel; and attached to it the revenues of the former Church at Batley; and *he* it was who reduced the Church, at Morley, to a Chapelry, dependant on Batley, in the reign of Henry 1st.

The rage for building Churches, and founding and endowing Monasteries, was, indeed, peculiarly prevalent during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and few appear to have possessed the means and inclination of this Robert; who also founded the Priory of Pontefract¶—greatly contributed to its Hospital of St. Nicholas—and added much to the strength and beauty of its Castle.

|| "It appears, from Domesday Book," says Mr. Brooke, "that many of our Churches were in being, even in villages, between 1056 and 1065; and, no doubt, several of them built of stone, as Kirkdale is—for though the sacred structures of the Saxons were, in general, timber buildings, yet at this time, namely in the eleventh century, many were made of stone." *Archæol.* vol. 5. p. 193.

¶ *Stowe's Annals.* p. 166

† How little is known about our ancient Churches, the Volumes of the Gentleman's Magazine may discover.

‡ See Fuller's Church History, B. vi. p. 334; or, Nichols's Leicestershire, vol. 3, part 1, page 308, note 5.