



P R E F A C E .

The completion of another volume of *Old Yorkshire* again enables me to express my warmest thanks to all contributors for their invaluable help, especially as such aid has been rendered so unselfishly, and with a readiness and willingness which made it doubly valuable.

Now that *Old Yorkshire* may fairly be said to have established itself in the favour of a considerable portion of the reading public, and also, we trust, done some little service to the cause of literary and antiquarian research in Yorkshire, the Editor regrets that, owing to impaired health and pressure of business engagements, he is reluctantly compelled, for the present at least, to suspend the work. He regrets this all the more, because of the hearty sympathy he has received from numerous subscribers, as well as from literary and artistic friends who had generously promised their assistance in the future.

At the outset, the Editor felt these volumes to be needful if the valuable contributions which were appearing in the *Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement* were to be rescued from oblivion; and he has reason to know that the reproduction of these contributions, as well as the publication of others of an original character, from qualified writers, have been received by the press and the public with approval and satisfaction.

Under these circumstances, the Editor trusts that some one, more competent and with more leisure than himself, will continue the work, on the lines already laid down; but, should no one undertake the task, he hopes to be spared to resume the editorship at no distant date. He cannot close this preface without making special mention of those friends who have kindly contributed by their drawings, gifts, and loans of engravings, to make the present volume even more attractive than its predecessor. A list of such contributors will be found at the end of the volume.

Morley, near Leeds.

W. S.





INTRODUCTION.

THE words "Old Yorkshire" suggest memories of the past, which are infinite in number. In size, larger than many a continental principality; in fertility and wealth of scenery, as rich as it is large; the home of empire for many a long century under Briton and Roman and Angle; and then, when at length discrowned, the arbiter and the spring of the political power of the country; the mother of children who have loved her with a passionate regard, and who remembered her most when they were greatest themselves—these are things of which any county may be proud.

But "Old Yorkshire" may be brought more close to us than this. We need to see how people lived and worked; the homes in which they abode; the churches in which they prayed and were interred; their occupations and amusements; the language which they spoke; the dress which they wore—all this can be re-created by the student as if by a magician's wand. And more than this, we may gauge by unerring tests the intellectual capacity of past generations, and frequently, with shame be it said, to the disadvantage of the present.

The West Riding, during the last two centuries, has become the most prosperous of the three. Five centuries ago, Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax were obscure market towns, difficult of access, and of less note than Knaresborough or Richmond at the present day. Middlesbro' at the beginning of the present century had only a population of some fifty people; the over-sea merchants had their homes at Hull, Beverley, and Scarbro', whilst York had only a portion of the same trade filtered through Hull. The worsted trade was always in the West Riding, although pursued to a comparatively trifling extent;

Sheffield was always the home of cutlery. Waggons, strings of horses with pack saddles, keels and catches, conveyed from one place to another the fruit of its native industry. The villages had a larger population than at present, and people lived and died as a general rule where they were born. Occasionally younger children strayed away to the wars or became retainers in some hall or castle, but the inhabitants of the country rarely went into the towns as they do now to enter into trade, unless the requirements of a family obliged them to apprentice a younger son or two. They preferred to cling to the old homestead or parish, and you may trace them often in the parish register generation after generation, as far as it goes back. Travelling to distant places was difficult and often dangerous, and few resorted to it without some absolute necessity. More people pass through Yorkshire at the present time in a single day, than went through it in the course of the year five centuries ago. But in nothing have we a greater advantage over our ancestors than in home comforts. A thatched cottage remaining here and there in a country village shows us in what places the peasants lived; the residences of many of the country gentry were as low and comfortless as many of the kitchens of the present day. In the towns there was frequently only room for a single cart to pass between the overhanging timbered houses, in front of each of which there was room to be found for a dunghill. Such sanitary arrangements, or rather neglect of arrangements, courted the attack of epidemics of various kinds. The plague, the black death, the sweating sickness, were some of the assailants which committed frightful ravages. To meet these the medical skill of the day was altogether inadequate. Properly qualified physicians were then few and far between, and the sick had recourse to herb doctors, wise women, and charms. Many of the recipes have been preserved, and very extraordinary they are. But they are only of a piece with the intellectual deficiencies of the times. Pass back into them out of the present and seek a country town or village, and you would find no schools, no books, no news; the services in the church were in an unknown tongue. You would find, indeed, the inevitable alehouse, with its idle haunters, who rushed to the door when any wayfarer called to bait, to hear what they could of what was passing at Court or in the wars. On any Sunday in the parish church you could listen to the frailties and follies of the village, and how they were punished. The vices, alas! have outlived the punishments. Around the blacksmith's stithy, or in the carpenter's

shop, the village gossips would cluster. They had nothing to do with legislating for their country, but in their own little communities they were Lords and Commons. Here it was settled who was to ride the stang, or be ducked, or wear the brank, or be put in the stocks. They had a Lynch law of their own, more efficacious often than that which is administered by our modern justices of the peace.

In nothing was there a greater difference between the present and the past than in religion. The whole system is now changed. Of course, there was then no tolerated dissent, and in speaking of the past we have to deal solely with the Church of England. It is an undoubted fact that prior to the Reformation, with a much smaller population to deal with, there were more churches and chapels and many more clergy than at present. Wherever a new church is built now-a-days in a country district, it usually takes the place of some ancient chapel which was destroyed in the 16th century. There were, at least, three times as many clergy in a parish as there are now. This is entirely independent of the numbers who had their homes in the monasteries and were sundered more or less from the common life of the day. In the fourteenth century, the Archbishop of York would ordain, in the course of a single year, more clergy than are to be found at the present day in the whole Diocese of York. The standard of clerical capacity in such a multitude could not be high, and the smaller number, like Gideon's three hundred, may be more efficacious than the multitude; but the disparity in number is startling and suggestive. No one could traverse Yorkshire then without seeing how strongly it was dominated by the influences of religion. A multitude of chapels hung upon the parish churches, and over the latter the stately Minster of York was the recognised chief. Then every here and there you came upon a monastery, which had a religious world of its own, and often a vast influence. At least a fourth of the land in Yorkshire was in monastic hands. The monks themselves were chiefly sons of farmers and traders. They were middle-class men, and it must not be supposed that they shut themselves up altogether in the cloister. The monastic system allotted to many of them separate and distinct duties, and they often went about the country to perform them. But whether they had duties or no duties, they were very often from home. The abbots and priors were great people at christenings, or marriages, and social gatherings. They had numerous retainers, and a great array of

tenants, to whom they were more generous than they were to their land. It was their influence, and their direct connection, socially, with the middle class that saved the monasteries for a long time, and then prostrated them before the aggression of the aristocracy. But the most striking feature of middle-age religious life was the abounding wealth and beauty of its architecture and decorative skill. Then lived the men who, as has been keenly observed, built churches which we are unable to restore. No new style of architecture of any merit has been invented since the Reformation. It would seem as if every form of grace and beauty had been tried and exhausted. But what a treasure the mediæval architects have left to us in every district of Yorkshire. Putting our great men aside, these are our grandest heir-looms. And yet, very many of our great men are associated with these buildings of which we are so proud. The Yorkshire abbeys have a world-wide fame. Fountains and Rievaulx, St. Mary's Abbey, York, and Gisbro', Selby and Bolton are places of renown. Howden brings into Yorkshire the skill and the name of Durham, and in the choir of Beverley you have a master-piece of loveliness. But who can describe the beauty, prodigal even to excess, which in form and colour runs riot in York Minster, the centre and the queen of the county? All these models have guided the inventive skill that planned the village churches throughout the district, homely indeed as they are here and there; but all were fitted for the sites which they occupy, and for the people whom they sheltered. It is idle to say, as some *do* say, that the minds of those who reared such buildings were indevout or profane. The ointment was poured out centuries, perhaps, ago, but to the thoughtful mind the whole house is still filled with its odour. If we were to build such places in these days, the architect would soon endeavour to connect his name with the building. In old times it was the glory of the builder to be lost in his work. We know not who designed any part of York Minster. Go into that glorious temple, and you will never think of asking such a question as that.

It is to this "Old Yorkshire," great in its men, great in its martial and social achievements, great in its remains and evidences of artistic genius, that we look back with pride. Scarcely any American comes to England without visiting that Old York of which the name of the chief city in his own vast country is daily reminding him. The reality, he always tells us, surpasses the report. The fathers of his

own country, Brewster and Bradford, left Yorkshire to found a new Salamis across the Atlantic. It is the object of "Old Yorkshire" to gather up the fragments, letter by letter, that build up the history of that past which the American never forgets, to find out how our fathers lived. In a county with such an area, and possessing so grand a history, the task seems impossible. It can never be fulfilled to any degree unless it is begun. Our essay is only one of a hundred. It has been taken up not a day too soon.

Every day the present is swallowing up the past, I had almost said the past is gone already. We advance so rapidly, we make so many changes, that there seems to be no room for the present and the past together. "The old order changeth, yielding place to new." But there is in many such an unseemly haste to put the past aside, and so great an absence of sentiment and want of regard for those who have gone before, that every effort to conserve what remains and respect what is gone is worthy of a generous sympathy. The past is gone in some of the great Yorkshire towns. Where will you find it in Leeds, Bradford, and Sheffield, if you take away the parish churches? The old street-architecture has disappeared, and if any merit remains in the churches, it is only as if by some almost miraculous interposition. The parish churches are being restored throughout the country off the face of the earth. I once remarked to a well-known archdeacon, famous in the Convocation of Canterbury, that I did not believe that there were more than six architects in England who would not pull down York Minster, if they were asked to do so, and profess their own ability to erect another in its place, as good, if not better. The archdeacon was of the same mind with myself; and people are now beginning to find out, too late, what antiquaries have always been conscious of, and protesting against in vain, that architects have been leading the clergy to destroy that connection with the past, which was one of the greatest charms of their churches, and that archdeacons and their superiors have suffered the architects and the parochial clergy to have their way. All I can say is that if the last-mentioned authorities did not possess the knowledge requisite to distinguish between renovation and destruction, they might easily have found some who could have enlightened them. And no dread of interference, or unwillingness to acknowledge their own deficiencies by seeking advice, ought to have deterred them from doing their duty to the past, The general plea for pulling down a

church or a part of it is its decay. Twice have I known a building thus condemned prove so strong that it was actually necessary to use gunpowder to blow up the resisting walls! How often does a church go through the furnace of restoration and come out as it went in?

At the beginning of the present century, York possessed a wealth of street and church architecture such as no other city perhaps could show. Most of the old houses are gone. One of the finest mediæval hosteleries in England was removed a few years ago to give place to a great drapery establishment, with its hideous bricks and plate-glass. At the present time, a grand old city church, Sir Thomas Herbert's church, is in peril at the hands of the Corporation. The Corporation of York has so many sins of this kind to answer for that it seems, alas! to have a Pharaoh's heart. If any mischief has been done to the security of our city churches, it is mainly due to the deep draining which the Corporation has carried out. This, of course, was necessary, but they who cause the mischief ought not to find it redound to their advantage. The truest representatives of Old Yorkshire are really the monastic remains, which, in their happy solitude, laugh as it were at our fever and fret. Too unwieldy to be of use now, too shattered to be restored, all speak of them with admiration. But let them once stand in the way of a railway, or occupy a corner which a Corporation covets, and you will soon hear the old tale of cumbering the ground.

Delenda est Carthago.

I have used strong words, perhaps, but not too strong. A vast mass of treasure has gone for ever; a little heap remains, and the eagles are about it. There is no time to be lost if the remnant that survives is to be retained. I shall venture, therefore, to make some practical suggestions which may conduce to this preservation which all true Yorkshiremen must desire.

I.—To suffer no old building or church to be touched without making minute drawings and plans of the parts to be removed or altered, and depositing them in some safe place. Again, to have authentic copies of all the monumental inscriptions inside and outside a church duly recorded in the parish register. When a church is touched, the last thing thought of is the preservation of a monument. And yet that monument, in a legal aspect, may be more important than the

evidence of the parish register. If the inscriptions are recorded in that volume, the evidence which they yield is safe henceforward from careless destruction and inevitable decay.

II.—To have repositories here and there in which papers and documents can be stored under certain proper restrictions as to use. Lawyers are destroying these things every day, In these papers much of the minute history of the county can alone be found.

III.—To erect and maintain in every centre of any importance a museum in which the objects of interest discovered in the neighbourhood may be deposited and preserved. To have one great museum in London is to sacrifice to vanity for no just cause the associations and the sentiment of the country. The time will come when every town of ten thousand inhabitants will have its own library and museum. To maintain the latter there must be some self-sacrifice on the part of individual collectors. How often do we see a person possessing one or two objects of peculiar merit which he seems almost to wish to conceal. If a museum is begun, this feeling ought to be surrendered. The rebuilding of a church generally discloses some relics of interest. If these are not fastened to the walls of the church, which ought properly to be done, they will find their way in time to some neighbouring rockery. But they have occasionally a worse fate than this, There is in the York Museum a cast of a churchyard cross of peculiar merit. Where is the original? The church near which it was found (I shall not mention its name) was moderated by two sets of churchwardens—I myself am ruled by three! Well, these worthies quarrelled over the spoil, and actually settled their difference by dividing it; the cross was cut in twain, and the churchwardens were made one.

York.

J. RAINE.