



P R E F A C E .

THE history of a particular Town, though it cannot, in the variety of the events it comprehends, or the grandeur of the subject it handles, be compared with that of a nation or empire, yet connects with it importance and utility. However uneventful it may appear, there will be found some incidents which well deserve to be recorded, and, being peculiarly interesting to natives, they furnish an appropriate introduction to the study of general history.

Such a history is united with that of the kingdom to which it belongs, and of the ages through which it has stood, and publications of this kind, founded on authentic records, and executed with accuracy and fidelity, have therefore a natural claim on the attention of the particular place or district of which they treat, and they who, by birth, residence, or any other circumstance, are connected with it, feel a peculiar concern in a review of those actions of which it has been the theatre.

For these reasons the History of Selby may claim attention. Ecclesiastically considered it has attractions of great interest, and, as the site of one of the most famous Monasteries of the North of England, founded by William the Conqueror, and of which the abbat possessed the high distinction of a Lord of Parliament, it admirably illustrates the early religious history of our country.

To the researches of intelligent antiquaries we owe the preservation of valuable and authentic documents, by which we are enabled to investigate the institutions and events of early times, and trace the manners of our ancestors. A recent instance of this is found in the light which the Master of the Rolls Commission, by the publication of extracts from the National Records, is throwing upon the monuments and fountains of our history, making them to become brighter and brighter as the years roll away. A succession of works has gradually appeared for the elucidation of our past, the very existence of which was

notices of the different Nonconformist societies than is usual in works of this description, in the hope that the memory of the self-denying labours of many inhabitants of Selby may thus be preserved, when all earthly record of them would otherwise have passed away.

A wholesome taste is growing among us for the study of biography. We are learning to feel with Milton, that a good record of a good man's history is "the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Besides the men great enough to be spoken of in separate and lengthy volumes, the history of every thriving town abounds in names well worth remembering. So in like manner it has given the writer pleasure to endeavour to preserve a record of the labours of those, who have in any respect, rendered public services to the town of Selby, and which it has been his aim to do with candour and impartiality.

The interest with which the work has been expected since its preparation was announced, and the uniform kindness with which applications for information have been responded to, has been most encouraging to the writer. The difficulties in its successful accomplishment have been neither few nor slight, and were scarcely realized at the commencement of his labours, and its publication would have been gladly deferred for some time longer, had it been possible, in order that, when accomplished, it might have been more worthy the acceptance of his readers. It is the first essay of the kind from his pen, his pretensions to the character of an antiquary are very small, and, as its preparation could only be undertaken at intervals of leisure from other duties, it has been found to be a work which required more industry in collecting, and more labour in composing, than he at first conceived would be necessary. The task has, however, always been an agreeable one, and no toil has been spared in its completion.

In the various Public Libraries many detached notices of the transactions of the abbey are to be found, but their contents afford more information upon the civil than the domestic concerns of the monastery, consisting of charters, grants, and privileges, records of great value to the original proprietors, but

presenting no view behind the monastic curtain. These, together with widely scattered notices, sifted from the numerous printed books which have been consulted, but of which the greater number are mere transcripts one from another, contain the materials from which the sketch of the monastic history has been compiled. The invaluable collections relating to the subject at the British Museum have been carefully examined, and also those at the Bodleian Library, the Record Office, and the library of the Dean and Chapter of York, as far as possible.

The Right Hon. Lord Londesborough not only did the writer the honour of accepting the dedication of the work, but most generously placed at his disposal the collection of Comptot and Fabric Rolls, and other MSS. relating to the Abbey, in his possession, which illustrate the history of the manor in more recent times.

This favour has been greatly increased in value by the generous aid given to the writer by the Rev. Canon Raine, M.A., to whom has descended not merely a name honoured in all the North of England for devotion to historical and topographical studies, but also the same talents and pursuits. What was done by the late Dr. Raine for the neighbouring county of Durham, the Rev. Canon Raine, by his invaluable works edited for the Surtees Society, (a mine of wealth for all topographical students,) and his other contributions for the history of the county, is doing for Yorkshire. Duties so arduous and important would have been a sufficient reason for declining any assistance in the preparation of these pages, and the author is therefore unable adequately to express his sense of the kindness thus bestowed on him.

The geological map of Selby has been obligingly completed by direction of Sir Roderick I. Murchison, K.C.B., the director-general of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, that of a portion of the parish only having been as yet published by the department; and the valuable remarks on the geology of Selby have been kindly communicated by Professor Phillips, D.C.L.

To the Rev. F. W. Harper, and the Rev. Henry Greeves, the writer is indebted for permission to examine the registers and other documents in their charge, and the same obligation ex-

tends to Mr. George Lowther, who, as the vestry clerk of Selby, has the custody of the parish books extending over 200 years, and who, when all others were indifferent, has ever laboured to preserve in the town the love of antiquarian and local facts, of which he has been long a most diligent collector.

To Mr William Wheater, a fellow native of Selby, and the talented author of "The History of Cawood and Sherburn"—his first, but it is to be hoped not his last, attempt to illustrate our local topography, the writer is indebted for the communication of much interesting information.

He will ever entertain a very respectful and grateful sense of the readiness with which many facts have been furnished by other gentlemen to whom the pages of the work do not give him an opportunity to refer, whilst to name them here, might have the appearance of seeking to share a responsibility that after all devolves on the writer.

In one department, that of the photographic illustrations, the writer congratulates his subscribers on the skill with which they have been executed by his friend, Mr. William Monkhouse, of York; he would also acknowledge how much the interest of the work is enhanced by the generous contributions of the Artist whose productions grace its pages; and, however unusual it may be to refer to it here, he cannot help stating how much it is owing to the liberality of the publisher, in having readily acceded to every suggestion to increase the attractions of the work, that the following pages are furnished to the subscribers at a price so nearly approaching the cost of their production; the joint aim of the author and publisher having been to foster a spirit of intelligent interest and enquiry among the inhabitants of Selby into the history of their town and neighbourhood.

In conclusion, this attempt to place on record the past history and present state of the writer's native town, is made in the hope that at some future day it may fall to another to describe the still increasing prosperity and importance of the Town of Selby.

W. W. M.

YORK, 28th Dec., 1866.