



Low Fors, in Raydale-side.(1)

PROLOGUE.

“Hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear :
believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour,
that you may believe : censure me in your wisdom, and awake
your senses, that you may the better judge.”

JULIUS CESAR : Act iii. Sc. 2.

I KNOW it is a venerable and good usage for an author
to introduce his subject to his readers with a few prefatory
remarks, intended to excite, according to his ability, a
mutual interest—a kindred sympathy in what both are
about to explore together ; and since I acknowledge that

“Whate’er with Time hath sanction found
Is welcome, and is dear to me——”

(1) From a Painting in the collection of the Rev. G. C. Tomlinson.

I were unpardonable if I refused compliance with such a custom. And hence arises a difficulty, for if the porch be rude and humble, the majority will pass by without entering the building; if the prologue be barren, many will not trouble themselves with the theme. Yet, on the present occasion, I am led to hope my theme's own interest will redeem any precluding dulness, at least with those to whom it is more especially addressed,—THE MEN OF WENSLEYDALE.

It is natural for the human heart to associate itself, as it were, with the scenes of infancy and youth; with the abodes and sepulchres of our ancestors—the places where “they lived, and loved, and died”—and to retain fond recollections of those haunts through years of separation and wandering. This is the case with all, yes even with those whose natal homes are comparatively devoid of sylvan and picturesque beauty.

“Whether an impulse, that has birth
 Soon as the infant wakes on earth,
 One with our feelings and our powers,
 And rather part of us than ours;
 Or whether fitlier term'd the sway
 Of habit, form'd in early day?
 Howe'er derived, its force confess'd
 Rules with despotic sway the breast,
 And drags us on with viewless chain,
 While taste and reason plead in vain.
 Look east, and ask the Belgian why
 Beneath Batavia's sultry sky,
 He seeks not eager to inhale
 The freshness of the mountain gale?
 Content to rear his whiten'd wall
 Beside the dank and dull canal,
 He'll say: *from youth he lov'd to see
 The white sail gliding by the tree.*”

MARMION: Intr. to Canto III.

But the bosoms of mountaineers are still more deeply pervaded by this feeling. They cling with tenacity to the

blue hills and bright streams of their father-land, dwelling with feverish love on the legends attached to crag and fountain, when far away, bustling amid the city's Mammon-worshipping multitude or voyaging along the sunny southern seas;—through manhood, to their last gasp, the latent wish burns within them that some day they may return to their "Highland Home," and sleep amongst their fathers.

If then, as I believe, such is the case with the natives of green WENSLEYDALE, little apology is necessary for offering to their acceptance the brief view of their Vale's history which occupies these pages. Brief, it most certainly and necessarily is; imperfect, I fear it will be judged in many points; neither is it much more than a condensed compilation; but I trust I may be acquitted of vanity in saying, that it will be found more complete of its *kind* than any yet published.

Some few years ago I announced as forthcoming, "The History and Antiquities of Wensleydale." Let it be distinctly understood that *this* is a totally different publication, and of much humbler pretensions. Circumstances have hitherto prevented my completing my original design, but I have by no means abandoned it. Meanwhile, a little book was evidently required, which should furnish a concise account of all the most interesting objects, and to a certain extent, a review of former times, at a price adapted to the poor as well as to the rich man's purse; a book which might equally find its way to the esquire's drawing-room table, and to the humble bookshelf of the hardy peasant dalesman who desires to know something of his "forelders'" homes and deeds. The deficiency thus felt, I hope my THREE CHAPTERS will, to a great extent, supply.

The only account of Wensleydale, within the reach of the middle and lower classes, is contained in the notes to "Wensleydale; or, Rural Contemplations: a Poem: by T. Maude, Esq.;" the fourth and last edition of which was published in 1816; thirty-six years ago. These notes, comprising a good deal of extraneous matter, fill sixty pages; but omit a variety of highly important subjects: the volume, besides, is nearly out of print. Clarkson's "History of Richmond" is a valuable and carefully written work; by far the most accurate that has yet appeared; but this is comparatively difficult of access, and, however serviceable to enquiring students, a quarto has rather a formidable appearance to the general reader.

Pre-eminent, in size and pretensions, is "Whitaker's Richmondshire," published in folio, at £24. (1819—22); hence, quite beyond the general means. This book, though beautifully got up and embellished, is very faulty; the author, unhappily, not living to complete and revise it. It may be compared to a vast quarry of fine marble, partly worked; the blocks in which require to be hewn, and polished, and arranged. Dr. Whitaker was a learned and laborious writer, but, unfortunately, only once paid this district a visit and that a hasty one. Where his conjectures appear accurate I have followed him. The account of Wensleydale in Allen's "History of the County of York" is accurate, but of necessity, meagre. Good notices of different places may be found scattered over various publications; such as "The Gentleman's Magazine," Burke's "Historic Scenes," Athill's "Middleham," and others; but the reader must at once see that all these are of small value to the bulk of the inhabitants; not one containing a compressed and universally accessible account.

Wensleydale however does not deserve the neglect she has experienced. Hand-books, of all kinds, have been published respecting localities much less interesting, whether we regard her natural beauties—her historical associations—or the distinguished characters to whom she has given birth, or who have fixed their abode in her shades. Rich in variegated mountain scenery, we may descend from the bleak hill's crest, where, amongst the heather, only the grouse and the curlew dwell; to old woods, where the linnet and the cushat breed; and fair meadows where the butterfly sleeps upon the flower. Rich also in game and in cattle, she is still wealthier in such treasures as miners dig from swart subterranean abodes. "She has Halls, and she has Castles," inseparably united with English story,—Abbeys too, whose names, whilst our national records shall be written must for ever remain upon the scroll. Her fortresses have been the palaces and prisons of Kings; her soil has been watered with the blood of the Saints. From the hour when the Roman eagles first flew over the Isis,(1) down to the present century, her vicissitudes have been innumerable.

It is no mean boast for so secluded a valley to have produced a Queen of England, a Prince of Wales, a Cardinal Archbishop, three other Archbishops, five Bishops, three Chancellors, and two Chief Justices of England; not to mention the distinguished Abbots, Earls, Barons, and Knights, who were also natives; one of whom, John Nevile, Duke of Bedford, presents the *only* instance of an English nobleman being deprived of his rank by Act of Parliament, on account of his poverty. The list of former residents is further swelled by the reigning Earls of

(1) The Yore.

Brittany and Richmond; the Kings Edward IV., and Richard III.; Mary, Queen of Scots; Harela, Earl of Carlisle; Richard Nevile, Earl of Salisbury, and his sons the potent "King-maker" the Earl of Warwick,(1) and the Marquis of Montague, all men world-renowned in their day besides others of less note and too tedious to name. Such a district should have been worthily celebrated by minstrels, and described by topographers; nevertheless, few but native poets—humble, unnoticed writers—have given it their lays; and with the exception of the works previously named, and some valuable MSS. in public and private libraries, no history exists.

The task of the local chronicler, like that of the general one, is by no means easy: the attempt to please *all* would satisfy *none*. It may be that some who peruse this little volume will find occasion for offence; perhaps charge me with giving utterance to prejudiced feelings—with preferring the Past to the Present. But the plain duty of every man who undertakes to give an account of the Past, is to exhibit those who lived then in the colours given them by contemporaries, rather than from the suppositions and theories of modern authors. Perhaps I have not done this so effectually as might be; however, I have sought to state *facts* without unnecessary comments.

The same observation holds good with regard to public institutions and buildings. Those who are led to believe that Abbeys were the abodes of gluttony and licentiousness,

(1) "York: Call hither to the stake my two brave bears
That, with the very shaking of their chains
They may astonish these fell lurking curs;
Bid Salisbury and Warwick come to me."

Henry VI.: Pt. II, Sc. 1.

The chained bear and rugged staff was the most popular cognizance of the Neviles, lords of Middleham.

and Castles, strongholds of tyrants and thieves, will start, to find them represented otherwise. Well indeed may they, for it has long been customary to draw such false pictures, and fill up the outline with the most frightful colours. Even poets have lent their powers, and men of highest genius their eloquence and pens, to blacken past times, and decry the Ages of Faith. Glorious exceptions certainly intervene; but alas! of each and of all of these we may say,—

“ He came—and baring his heav'n-bright thought
 He earned the base world's ban,
 And having vainly lived and taught,
 Gave place to a meaner man.”

Only a little while ago, and no audience could be found for such: even at present it is limited.

Men may be met, affecting to advocate for their poor brothers and sisters, coarse bread and water-porridge in a Union House, as being preferable to good meat and ale at a Convent; forgetting, apparently, that while the maintenance of the Union, with its officials and starvation, costs themselves annually large sums, the Convent, with its monks and its charities, never extracted one penny from the pockets of their ancestors. They complain, justly enough, of oppressive rates, and cruel laws; all the while oblivious, if not totally ignorant of the frightful injustice which first caused a necessity for those rates and laws, with all the innumerable concomitant miseries hence entailed on us and our successors. They bemoan sincerely the scenes of suffering that frequently occur, never thinking that in the old day and under its rule, no gifted author could have written—

“ Back! wretched suppliant! back
 To thy cheerless, homeless dwelling!

Though the snow flake hides thy track,
 And the bitter wind is telling
 Its wintry tale of woes,
 Howling where'er it goes—

* * * * *

Hence to thy haunt of famine, grief, and gloom—
 The workhouse swarms—as yet there is ‘no room:’”

G. LINNÆUS BANKS.

—because, in the precincts of the Convent there was ever “room,” and food, and shelter, for the poor and needy. Because our Catholic forefathers knew not how to look with cold hearts and closed hands on the objects of Christian charity.

“How beautiful they stand,
 Those ancient churches of our native land!
 Amid the pasture fields and dark green woods,
 Amid the mountain clouds and solitudes;
 By rivers broad, that rush into the sea;
 By little brooks, that with a lispng sound,
 Like playful children, run by copse and lea!
 Each in its little plot of holy ground.
 How beautiful they stand,
 Those old grey churches of our native land!”

The Wensleydale churches frequently elicit the tourist's admiration. He, however, sees them greatly to disadvantage; these fine Catholic buildings having undergone numberless alterations, none of an improving character, and many of the very worst description which even a country churchwarden's proverbial ignorance could effect. This is a subject painful to dwell upon. The frightful white-wash, which has obliterated family memorials, and defaced fresco paintings and armorial shields, under the pretext of *cleanliness* or *comeliness*—the splendid oak stalls cut up, to make way for wooden *boxes* called pews—the utter disregard of architectural rules displayed both externally

and internally, by the innovators—all are truly sickening. Still, though changed to accommodate a service for which none of them, save East Witton, were intended, they contain indelible accessories of Catholic rites. The sedilia, the piscina, and the lychnoscope, remain in most; and nearly all contain traces both of the roodlofts and the chantry parcloles. Were it not for the pews, they would hold congregations at least one-third larger than now suffice to fill them.

Dr. Whitaker observes, “ancient piety was anxious to go beyond strict necessity, in the construction of churches. Their builders did not sit down, as we do, to compute the precise number of square feet which a given number of hearers will occupy, and to abolish form, proportion, and grace, if these requirements should either take up room, or cause expense.”(1)

After saying: “from the expenses of building the choir, parishes were wholly exonerated; yet, in Richmondshire, this part of the fabric, if of a different period, and in a different style from the nave, varies principally in being more magnificent;” he thus proceeds:—“To account for this, we are compelled to acknowledge the prodigious advantage arising from the celibacy of the Catholic clergy. Many of the benefices, in this district, still continue to be opulent rectories; of the rest, not many had undergone the unhappy process of an appropriation, before the present chancels were built;” but, after lauding the old Catholic rectors for, as he says, applying the “superfluity” of “their glebe and tithes” “on that portion of the church which was properly their own,” the Dr. “a Protestant, and a married clergyman,” naively “*protests*” against

(1) Whittaker's Richmondshire, vol. 1. p. 6.

celibacy, and cautions married rectors, with families, not to expend more than is necessary for repairs, *but to take care of their children!* A curious and unconscious testimony, certainly, to the vast difference between the Present and the Past. (1)

(1) "From the gospel and the epistles of St. Paul, the first christians had learnt to form an exalted notion of the merit of chastity and continency. (*Matt.* xix. 10, *1 Cor.* vii.) In all they were revered: from ecclesiasties they were expected. To the latter were supposed more particularly to belong that voluntary renunciation of sensual pleasure, and that readiness to forsake parents, wife, and children, for the love of Christ, which the saviour of mankind required in the more perfect of his disciples, (*Luke* xvi. 26.): and this idea was strengthened by the reasoning of the apostle, who had observed, that while the married man was necessarily solicitous for the concerns of this world, the unmarried was at liberty to turn his whole attention to the service of God. (*1 Cor.* vii. 32, 33.) Hence it was inferred that the embarrassments of wedlock were hostile to the profession of a clergyman. His parishioners, it was said, were his family: and to watch over their spiritual welfare, to instruct their ignorance, to console them in their afflictions, and to relieve them in their indigence, were expected to be his constant and favourite occupations. (The validity of this inference is maintained in the very act of the Protestant Parliament which licenses the marriages of the clergy. 2. Ed. vi. c. 21.) But though the first teachers of Christianity were accustomed to extol the advantages, they did not impose the obligation of clerical celibacy. Of those who had embraced the doctrine of the gospel, the majority were married previously to their conversion. Had they been excluded from the priesthood, the clergy would have lost many of their brightest ornaments; had they been compelled to separate from their wives, they might justly have accused the severity and impolicy of the measure. (*Hawarden, Church of Christ, vol. 1. p. 403.*) They were, however, taught to consider a life of continency, even in the married state, as demanded by the sacredness of their functions. (*Orig. Hom. 23, in lib. num. Euseb. Dem. evan. l. i. c. g.*); and no sooner had the succession of Christian princes secured the peace of the Church, than laws were made to enforce that discipline, which fervour had formerly introduced and upheld. (*See the Councils of Elvira, can. xxxiii; of Neocesarea, can. i; of Ancyra, can. xx; of Carthage, con. ii, can. ii; and of Toledo, con. i, can. i.*) Every monument of the first ages of the Saxon Church which has descended to us, bears the strongest testimony that the celibacy of the clergy was constantly and severely enforced. 'God's priests and deacons, and God's other servants, that should serve in God's temple, and touch the sacrament and the holy books, they shall always observe their chastity.' (*Pœnit. Eg. p. 133, iv.*) 'If priest or deacon marry, let them lose their orders.' (*Ibid. i. and p. 134, v.*) But deposition was the only punishment: the marriage was not annulled. It was only in the twelfth century that holy orders were declared to incapacitate a person for marriage. (*Pothier, traité du contrat de marr. p. 135.*) Even female relations were forbidden to dwell in the same house with a priest. (*See Pœnit. Eg. p. 134, vi.*) * "Thus writes the erudite and elaborate Dr. Lingard."

* The celebrated St. Egbert, Archbishop of York, A.D. 743, 767.

Of course, the chancel (more properly *quire*), containing the High Altar, was, in all cases, the most elaborately decorated part; but, a little careful examination, shows the *sanctuaries* of the chantries (which, in the Wensleydale churches, are usually the side aisles of the nave) to have been also richly adorned. These had separate altars, having each a priest, who said mass daily. Hence, very frequently, "the whole of the side aisles," *i. e.* chapels, "were latticed in or otherwise defined;" but, not as Dr. Whitaker infers, to define the family burial vault. In fact, a chantry was often founded by the last of an ancient line, whose fathers were buried either in the churchyard or nave of the church; and the altar was endowed by him, that the Adorable Sacrifice might be offered in perpetuity for his own soul, and the souls of his kinsfolk, and for all Christian souls.

The mistakes into which writers constantly fall, from ignorance of Catholic usages, ceremonies, and belief, are so very frequent, that I hope my remarks will neither be misconstrued nor held offensive. Enough of this for the present.

It is not my intention to enter largely into archæological details, nor to indulge historical and antiquarian surmises, likely to prove tedious to the fair readers who, I trust, will scan my pages, when I shall be very distant from the banks of the Yore. Such laboured efforts would better suit a different place. My aim, indeed, is to instruct, but also to amuse; and what can be more amusing, to one who knows and loves Wensleydale well, than to ponder over its former days and doings beside the "old Ha'ingle," when the north-east wind, howling round Penhill, drifts the snow against the panes without, but the cheerful fire

“ Long rolling years have swept those scenes away,
 And Peace is on the mountain and the fell;
 And rosy dawn, and closing twilight grey,
 But hear the distant sheepwalk’s tinkling bell.”

Other spots there are, I would have you likewise visit;
 those deep wild glens among the mountains, whose very
 rudeness renders them picturesque. Such coves as

——keep till June December’s snow;

where

“ The rainbow comes—the cloud,
 And mists that spread the flying shroud,
 And sunbeams—and the sounding blast,
 That if it could would hurry past,
 But that enormous barrier binds it fast.”

WORDSWORTH.

Such varied scenes does Wensleydale afford : but above all, omit not the mouldering walls of hallowed Jervaux ; and when you tread the aisles of its once glorious but now desecrated church, remember to WHOM the building was once dedicated ; and WHOSE DIVINE PRESENCE formerly abode there day and night. And if, unhappily, you are swayed by no higher consideration,—no purer feeling of devotion,—at least for the sake of the holy prelates, and brave nobles, and fair ladies, whose recorded and magnificent monuments have long been overthrown, but whose mortal bodies yet lie beneath your feet, awaiting the hour when together with yours they shall become immortal, let thoughts of reverential awe be cherished in your heart.

Dr. Whitaker calls the confines of the hills “ the Piedmont of Richmondshire,” an appellation not undeserved. Amongst the spots whence the finest views are obtained, I may enumerate Witton Fell, Leyburn Shawl, Scarthe Nick, Morpeth Gate, Mowbray Point, and Kids-

ton Bank Top. All disclose splendid landscapes. But it seems unjust, and is really difficult to make a selection amongst the numerous points from which an artist may choose subjects for the exercise of his pencil, or a poet for the effusions of his muse.

Tedious as a thrice told tale I fear I am now becoming ; and therefore, gentle or ungentle reader, I close this Prologue with those lines of Goldsmith, appropriately chosen by Maude as an epigraph to *his* "WENSLEYDALE."

How blest is he who crowns in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease ;
Sinks to the grave with unperceiv'd decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way.





Low Fors, in Raydale-side.(1)