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Historic Towns

EDITED BY

EDWARD A. FREEMAN, D.C.L. & REV. WILLIAM HUNT, M.A.

YORK

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HISTORIC TOWNS.

EDITED BY

E. A. FREEMAN, D.C.L. and Rev. WILLIAM HUNT, M.A.

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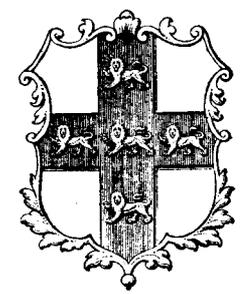
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Y O R K

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PREFACE

It will be seen from this volume that York, in all periods of its existence, has played a very important part in the history of England. In the Roman, British, and Early Anglian times it was, to all intents and purposes, the capital city. It had imperial power in its possession, but was unable to retain it. The North-Humbrian people could not keep the chief position without combination and self-reliance, and these were rendered impossible by the petty feuds and tribal jealousies which were prevalent everywhere. They did, indeed, unite to oppose the Norman invaders, and made a noble struggle for their liberties and freedom, but even that was done irregularly; they were unable to make a proper use of their successes, and so they contended in vain.

For many centuries after the Conquest York was undoubtedly the capital of the North, and was most intimately connected, as will be seen, with the fortunes of the kingdom at large. There was always among the inhabitants a kind of restless energy which induced

them to take sides, and when they made a mistake, they were always fortunate in getting out of the difficulties which it involved. It may be said with some truth that the ruling power has not left the North, but has merely been transferred from York to the great towns in Lancashire and the West Riding.

The ecclesiastical position of York has been maintained more evenly and effectively than the civil. There are few great churches in Europe that possess a history so ancient and so distinguished. Are there any that have done more for education and missionary work? The stately minster remains beautiful as ever, and still attracts the admiration and affection of the whole of the North of England. What the city of York, as a centre of local influence, has lost, the minster retains with an ever-increasing strength.

The city and church of York have had many historians and chroniclers from the very earliest times. The Roman annals have been given with full and lucid accuracy by the Rev. Charles Wellbeloved; the Anglian, Norman, and post-Norman history is to be found in the Lives of the Archbishops, the muniments of the city, and the records of the country at large. The first person to write a description of the city itself was Sir Thomas Widdrington, the recorder in the reign of Charles I., but this is still unpublished. He was followed, early in the succeeding century, by Francis Drake, whose carefully prepared and well-illustrated volume is still one

of the best works in English topography. Since his day many students have filled up deficiencies in his book, or have taken in hand other subjects connected with the annals of the city. As for the antiquities with which the soil of York abounds, they have for many years found an appropriate home in the Museum of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, in whose beautiful gardens the remains of the Roman tower and wall, St. Mary's Abbey, and St. Leonard's Hospital, are carefully protected and preserved.

The writer's chief regret, in bidding farewell to his book, is that the requirements, so far as space is concerned, of this series of histories of towns forbid anything like the treatment which such a subject as 'York' ought properly to receive. He is painfully conscious of this in every page, but especially in the Third Part—the history of the Municipality and City—which requires more space and greater elaboration than can be given.

J. RAINE.

YORK: December 1, 1892.

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