

**MEMORIALS OF OLD BIRMINGHAM: MEN AND
NAMES, FOUNDERS, FREEHOLDERS, AND
INDWELLERS, FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY. WITH PARTICULARS AS
TO THE EARLIEST
CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION BUILT AND
ENDOWED IN ENGLAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649748501

Memorials of Old Birmingham: Men and Names, Founders, Freeholders, and Indwellers, from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Century. With Particulars as to the Earliest Church of the Reformation Built and Endowed in England by Toulmin Smith

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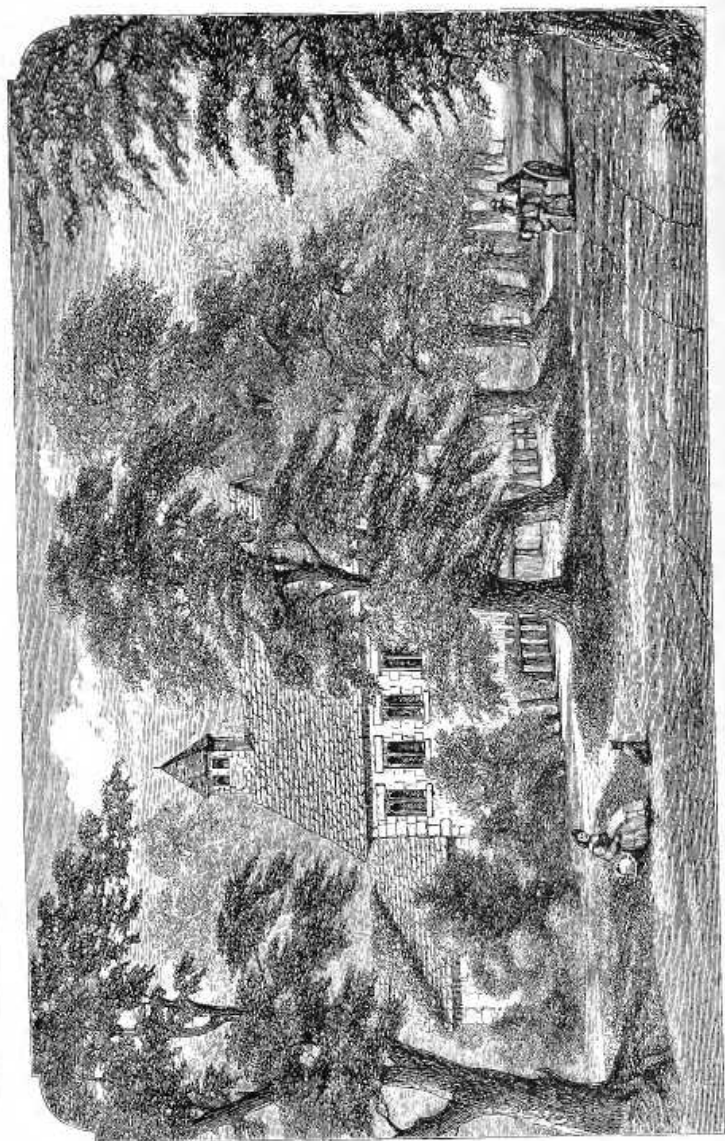
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TOULMIN SMITH

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THE "PROPPER CHAPPELL" OF DERTEND, BUILT IN 1375.

P R E F A C E.

Two of the best books in the English language, on subjects of general interest, grew up out of notes upon obscure villages. SELBORNE, whence arose WHITE's charming "*Natural History of Selborne*," lies in a corner of Hampshire: AMBROSDEN, whence arose KENNETT's learned "*Parochial Antiquities*," lies in Oxfordshire. The reason why these are good books, is plain. Each of the authors, instead of dealing in speculative generalities, took note of what was before him, and followed up his observations on these actual things of real life as far as he was able. There is a vagueness about the consideration of general principles: but when general principles are found applied to instances in life and action, they remain no longer vague: they become understood, as an actual part of the world's living existence, or of a nation's growth, strength, and well-being.

It is from this point of view that the following pages have been written. Birmingham is not a little village, but a large town. It has grown to be a large town during the course of many centuries, and through the influence of that tone of mind which springs from the character of old English Institutions. What is here put together, arising out of what has been done in Birmingham, illustrates equally the action of

old English Institutions throughout all England. Though its immediate subject is local, therefore, its interest and application are general. The facts here collected touching transactions in Wyclif's time, add to the general interest of the subject.

The same is true of the illustrations given of the growth of English Surnames. Real men and women are here grouped, instead of speculative theories on the origin of names.

Let it not be supposed that this work pretends to be a History of Birmingham, even for the times it touches on. In "Traditions of The Old Crown House" and in this work, I have illustrated some important events in the early history of the Town, not before examined. But a "History of Birmingham" remains to be written. I have been requested to undertake that task; and, if Health and Time permit, I shall, in all likelihood, essay it. Renewing now my acknowledgments for the assistance cordially given me by all (save one) with whom I have had occasion to communicate while preparing this work, I hope that, should I proceed with the "History of Birmingham," I may invoke the help, for that work, which so many representatives of old families in the town are able to give.

The Facsimiles at the end of this work are done in *photolithography*, and have been executed by Messrs. Day and Son.

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MEN AND NAMES
OF
OLD BIRMINGHAM.

THE ancestry of a PLACE is a very different thing from the ancestry of a PERSON. To parade the latter before the world in long pedigrees and particulars, is but vanity: to unravel the former, or make it better understood, is a work of general usefulness. The number of truly great men that have lived in the world, is not very large; but the growth and greatness of nations are marked in, and become best understood by tracing, the growth of the separate groups of men who have lived and flourished there from time to time.

The quaintly-gabled houses and narrow streets that cluster round the Cathedral of an old but now unenterprising City, have a story of their own to tell; and the rambling rows of dwellings that, near the crumbling walls of what was once a Strong-hold, formed, not long ago, the "burgage tenures" of a decaying Borough, have also their own story to tell. Each story will be interesting and instructive, though the one will be very different from the other. But there are towns that have neither Cathedral nor Strong-hold, and have never had

either of these, but which yet have a story to tell that is not less interesting and not less instructive than either of the others. There are towns whose beginnings are hoary with age; which have not been lifted, by factitious accident, into a sudden greatness that has remained stationary, or has decayed away; but which have gone on, from solid beginnings, steadily growing and prospering, and are now among the best-known centres of intelligence, industry, and independence, in the country; and therefore are the best safeguards to the State.

Such a town is Birmingham. The history of its great antiquity, and of the people who founded it, is told in its very name.* It may not have sent forth any man of such individual greatness that his name dazzles the inquirer, and is

* "Hám' is the most sacred, the most intimately felt, of all the words by which the dwellings of men are distinguished. It is of such antiquity as to have become anomalous in some of its grammatical relations; and it is the word peculiarly devoted in the heathen mythology of the North to denote the earth inhabited by men." (*Codex diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*, tom. iii., Preface, p. xxviii.) "This word [hám], as well as the feeling of which it is the symbol, was brought across the ocean by the [North] Teutonic colonists, and it is the most precious of all the gifts for which we thank them." (Taylor's 'Words and Places,' p. 131.) "The people who believe in Heroes, originally gods and always god-born, preserve a remembrance of their ancient deities in the gentile names by which themselves are distinguished, long after the rites they once paid to their divinities have fallen into disuse; and it is this record of beings once hallowed, and a cult once offered, which they have bequeathed to us in many of the now unintelligible names of the MARKS:—" great family unions, comprising households of various degrees of wealth, rank, and authority: some, in direct descent from the common ancestors, or from the hero of the particular tribe; others, more distantly connected, through the natural result of increasing population, which multiplies indeed the members of the family, but removes them at every step further from the original stock; some, admitted into communion by marriage, others by adoption, others even by emancipation: but all recognizing a brotherhood, a kinsmanship or *sibscaft*; all standing together as one unit in respect of other similar communities; all governed by the same judges, and led by the same captains; all sharing in the same religious rites; and all known to themselves and to their neighbours by one general name." "The following patronymical names I believe to be those of ancient Marks, . . . [among others] Beornings— Birmingham, *Warc.*" (Kemble's 'Saxons in England,' Vol. I. pp. 56, 61, 449, 457.)