

**FABRIC ROLLS AND DOCUMENTS OF
YORK MINSTER: OR, A DEFENCE OF "THE
HISTORY OF THE
METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF ST. PETER,
YORK," ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SURTESS SOCIETY**

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Fabric Rolls and Documents of York Minster: Or, A Defence of "The History of the Metropolitan Church of St. Peter, York," Addressed to the President of the Surtess Society by John Browne

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JOHN BROWNE

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YORK MINSTER :

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A DEFENCE

OF

“The History of the Metropolitan Church
of St. Peter, York,”

ADDRESSED TO THE

PRESIDENT OF THE SURTEES SOCIETY,

BY

JOHN BROWNE.

“The stability of the Surtees Society depends upon the excellency of its
Publications.”—*Vid. Report, 1859.*

YORK :

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR, AT 21, BLAKESTREET;
AND TO BE HAD OF THE BOOKSELLERS.

1862.

The present work is produced to meet the charges made in the Preface and in the Notes attached to "The Fabric Rolls of York Minster," as published by the Surtees Society, and to offer a concise History of the Edifice of the Cathedral, aided by several recently discovered facts in the structure, and by some important records.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

Dunning
Fletcher
7-15-47
59634

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TO THE
PRESIDENT OF THE SURTEES SOCIETY.

SIR,

Having been favoured in the summer of 1859, with a copy of a volume headed "The Fabric Rolls of York Minster," and written by the Secretary of your learned Society, I was naturally anxious, not only to reperuse the contents of the Rolls, but also to discover what new and valuable information had been given to the public by the acknowledged abilities of the author for historical and antiquarian lore.

I commenced the perusal of the book with the preface, and to my astonishment I found in a note, at the very outset, the assertion that I have in my "History of the Metropolitan Church of St. Peter, York," given "meagre and sometimes inaccurate extracts, from the Fabric Rolls, discarding at the same time, the language in which they are written," and that it was "for the express purpose of supplying these deficiencies that the work was published."* Having thus given the reason for his undertaking, the writer then proceeds to give a brief description of the

* Preface, pages v, vi.

different structures of York Minster, according to the ideas of Professor Willis; and in speaking of the present magnificent building, he states that we are indebted for the conception and commencement of the noble Choir to Archbishop Thoresby, who laid the foundation stone in 1361, and that the portion of the Choir which he calls the presbytery* was finished before the Archbishop's death, which took place in 1372.†

In support of these statements, he says he has entered into the question at some length in the notes to the Fabric Rolls, and he presents a wood-cut, which, in his opinion, clearly shews that the tombs which were in the pavement before the altar of the Virgin, were those of Thoresby and his predecessors; ‡ and he remarks that this once established, Mr. Browne's theories become untenable; for "no one who considers this cut, can fail to see that they (the tombs) can only be ascribed to Archbishops." §

Having thus openly found fault with my labours; having laid to my charge accusations which have no foundation in truth; having publicly challenged the accuracy of the statements made in my History; and moreover, throughout his entire production, exhibited me deliberately and prominently before the public, as a writer deserving the severest remarks, whenever he could find an opinion, date, or apparent fact given by me, which seemed to tell against his own suppositions;—I feel bound in justice to

* The term "presbytery," however erroneous, I shall use in the present instance, whenever necessity seems to require it.

† This is an inaccurate date, as the Archbishop died on the 6th of November, 1373.

‡ *Vide* pages xv, xvi of preface.

§ Page xvii of preface.

myself, to you, and to those who have kindly and liberally honoured me with their patronage, to come forward and say a few words in answer to the accusations laid to my charge, and to produce truthful materials in defence of the statements made in my History, especially those relating to the Choir of the Fabric. I trust, Mr. President, you will accept the observations I shall offer in my own vindication, especially when I assure you that I am actuated by no other motive than that of establishing the truth, and of contributing to the advancement of the Science of Ecclesiastical Architecture.

The most important point at issue between the writer and myself is, without doubt, the time occupied in completing the erection of the Choir (*i. e.* the whole Choir) of York Cathedral: but before entering upon this question, I will, following the order of the author, discuss, as briefly as possible, the subject of his charges against me.

The writer says that I have given "meagre, and sometimes inaccurate, extracts from the Fabric Rolls, discarding, at the same time, the language in which they are written."* Startled by so serious an accusation, I eagerly read and re-read his work, expecting, of course, every moment, to be overwhelmed with proofs and instances of my deficiencies and inaccuracies; never imagining that he could make such an assertion without some foundation or proof, especially as the belief in the truth of it, according to his own confession, was the cause of his undertaking the elaborate work which he has presented to the public under the title of "Fabric Rolls." But behold! what was my disappointment, when having carefully read over and examined the matter contained in his first 120 pages, and

* *Vide* note to preface, pages v, vi.