

**SOURCE BOOK OF
LONDON HISTORY
FROM THE
EARLIEST TIMES TO 1800**

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Source book of London history from the earliest times to 1800 by P. Meadows

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P. MEADOWS

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EARLIEST TIMES TO 1800**

A SOURCE BOOK OF LONDON HISTORY

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO 1800

EDITED BY

P. MEADOWS, M.A.



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PREFACE

IF the study of History is to be made really valuable from either the recreative or the educational point of view, it is necessary to have frequent recourse to original sources and contemporary writings; they introduce a certain quality of reality and vividness, a kind of historical atmosphere, which is most essential to a true appreciation of the subject. This fact is now generally recognised, and many collections of sources are available for the student of English History. In this volume will be found a selection of passages, generally from contemporary sources, relating to the history of London. It is quite impossible, of course, in a small book to do justice to every aspect of the subject; and it has seemed best to give special prominence to those events which concern the City as a whole, its growth, its corporate life, and its connection with national affairs.

Besides a vast mass of general contemporary literature, a large number of the most important and interesting documents dealing with London history have already been printed; but all this material is very scattered, and frequently rather inaccessible to the general reader. The Histories by Maitland and Noorthouck, published in the eighteenth century, contain translations of charters and other documents; Riley's "Memorials" is invaluable for the fourteenth century; and many useful suggestions have been derived from Besant's "Survey of London."

The spelling of the extracts has generally been modernised,

but in a few cases the original text has been exactly followed.

It is hoped that the chronological arrangement of the passages, the care which has been taken in selecting them so as to illustrate events or circumstances of definite importance in the history of the City, and the introductory remarks attached to each extract, will save this volume from being merely a collection of historical scraps, and will enable it to be of real use to all who are interested in the story of London.

P. M.

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HISTORY OF LONDON

LONDON BEFORE THE CONQUEST.

REFERENCES to London in the early chronicles are comparatively few; under Roman rule it took the place for which it was fitted by its geographical situation—a commercial port, and it flourished or decayed as trade prospered or declined. The Saxon invaders did not care for walled towns, and London was neglected; moreover, they did not care for commerce, and there was no need for a commercial centre or port. The unsettled condition of the country made it impossible for the city to prosper, and the invasions of the Danes further interfered with its growth. But in spite of all these drawbacks, London was definitely marked out from the first as the best and most convenient centre for trading and commercial activity; and Alfred fully realised the importance of the city not only for purposes of trade, but as a bulwark of national defence.

The following are the most important passages in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relating to London. Its importance as a military station appears to have been very great in the time of Cnut, to judge by the efforts he made to capture the town; and the proportion of tribute paid in 1018 seems to show that the population and wealth of the city must have been very considerable.