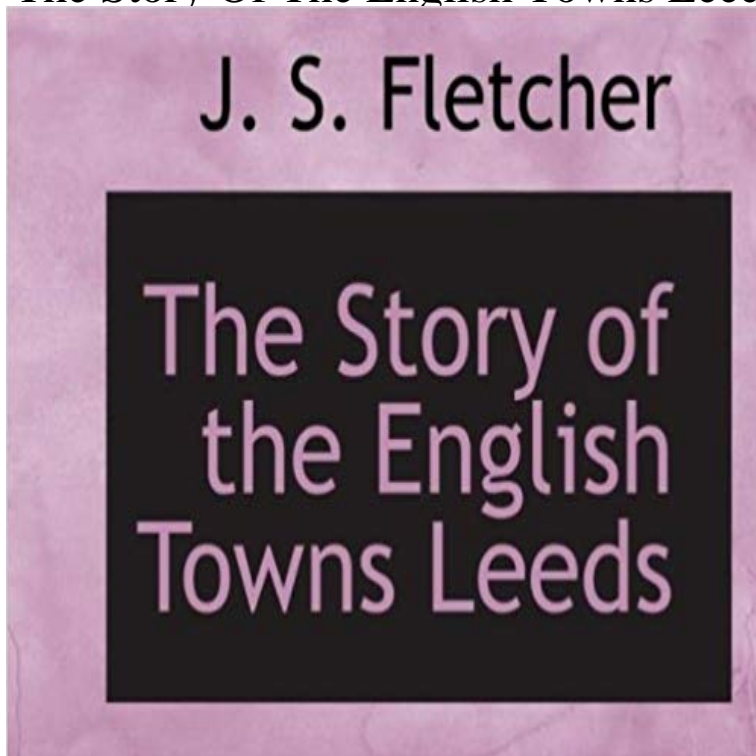


The Story Of The English Towns Leeds



THE BEGINNINGSWHEN, in the summer of the year 625, St. Paulinus brought ^Ethelburh, sister of Eadbald, King of Kent, northward to York, to be married to Eadwine, King of Northumbria, the bride must needs have been struck, if not affrighted, at the wildness of the land through which she and her guardian passed in the last stages of their journey. For they would come into what is now Yorkshire by the old Roman way which led from Doncaster to Castleford, and thence by Tadcaster to York, and they would see small evidence of human life beyond the cots of some obscure settlement, or the hovels of the swineherd and the woodmen, set deep in the forest glades. On their right would lie the marsh and waste which then spread over much of the county between the lower stretches of the Aire and the levels around York; on their left, the edges of the deep woods which covered most of the great tract of land which we now know as the West Riding. Upon the dark recesses in those woods JEthelburh doubtless looked with awe as she and St. Paulinus made their way to York : from York the King who awaited her coming looked out on them, too, but with the feelings of a conqueror. For that vast tract had until liis time been an independent kingdom, and he had recently gone out from York to subdue it, and had successful!} wrought his work, and about the time that St. Paulinus brought ^Ethelburh to him, he was able to boast that by this conquest his Northumbrian sovereignty had been extended from the eastern to the western sea. And it may have been that the great missionary, as he conducted -S/thelburh forward in the last stages of their journey, pointed to the dark woods which lay westward, and told her of the old kingdom of Elmet, of which they formed the boundary, and of its wild fastnesses and pagan folkand he may have told her also that in the midst of his newly acquired

territory Eadwine had set up a royal lodge, or fort, or camp at a place then called Loidis. In that name, evidently of Keltic origin, we have the source of the modern name Leeds. Ralph Thoresby, the topographer, perhaps the most notable of the many eminent men whom Leeds has produced, considered that his native town was one of the twenty-eight cities of ancient Britain which are specified by Nennius, the more or less fabulous chronicler, who is supposed to have been Abbot of Bangor early in the seventh century, and that its original name was Caer Loid Coit or Caer Loyd yn y Leodthe camp or fortress in the wood. But we may put that down as fanciful conjecture, unsupported by any historical evidence; we have no dependable mention of any place that we may associate with Leeds before Bede (c. 673-735) who, in the fourteenth chapter of his Ecclesiastical History/ writes that the altar of a certain church, erected under Eadwine,...

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In July 1981 it was one of the

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