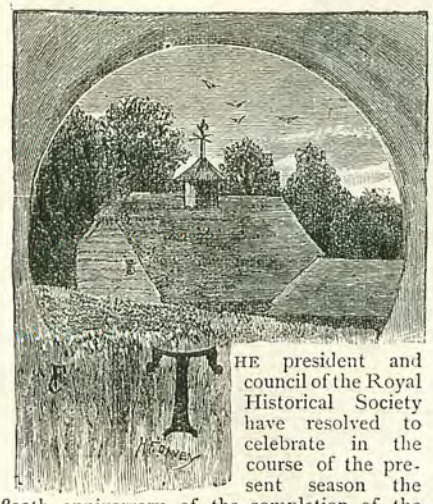
DOMESDAY BOOK.

By EMMA BREWER.



THE president and council of the Royal Historical Society have resolved to celebrate in the course of the present season the 800th anniversary of the completion of the Great Survey of England, which is known as Domesday Book, and they have sent out an invitation to most of our learned societies, archæological and architectural, to join with them in this effort to do honour to a work of such national importance. The Society of Antiquaries and the Institute of British Architects have readily responded to the invitation, and so have some of our most learned antiquaries and historians."

Such was the announcement in the *Times*, which one morning in April met the eyes of its readers and sent their thoughts back to the England of 800 years ago.

What is this Domesday Book, the anniversary of which the learned and the scientific so readily agree to celebrate?

What is this Domesday Book of which all of us have heard and only few have seen or possess any intimate knowledge concerning it?

It is the first known statistical document of Modern Europe, and was the first survey of the kind which had been made since the days of the elder Roman Empire.

It is the Great Survey of England taken 800 years ago, and is the picture of the nation as it then was.

It is our great authority for the various classes of men, from the Thegn downwards.

It gives us the map and picture of England at the exact turning-point in its history. It is among records and archives what the Kohinoor is among diamonds.

Such are the answers given by three men,* all of whom are celebrated for their knowledge of Domesday Book.

The variety of subjects upon which it gives information is marvellous. We find in it matter of great importance concerning our ancient institutions and tenures of land.

We learn from it also how, after the desolation of the Norman Conquest, many members of the great Saxon families found an asylum in the cloister, some as monks and others as rulers of the monasteries.

It points out, too, how the monasteries became the residence of men of letters as well as the sole depositories of all that could be preserved of the history of the country.

It sets before us the state and condition of England in the time of William so clearly that we can see it with our eyes, and realise it as though we were living in 1086. We see the exact amount of land, waste and water, that the kingdom contained. We know by name all the owners of estates and every tenant on them, together with the value of their income.

It goes into particulars, too, as to the occupations and trades of every individual in the kingdom, be they men or women, and the marvel of it all is that the mass of information it contains was collected and written probably within a year, if the Saxon chronicles from which we quote are correct.

"The king," say they, "held a great council to inquire into the state of the nation in the 19th year of his reign, the immediate consequence of which was the compiling of the Great Survey called Domesday Book, which was finished the next year."

To those who have seen the Domesday Book it seems the more astonishing that the work could have been done in the time, for it is written with a pen on parchment in a regular and careful manner, and takes note of the minutest detail, as the following passage, copied from the book, will show you:—"The Canons of Saint Paul's have at the Bishopsgate 10 Cottagers, with 9 acres, who pay yearly 18 shillings and 6 pence. In the time of King Edward they held it, and had the same." When William called his council together it is said that "the King had mickle thought and very deep speech with his Witan,"* and that the main subject of his mickle thought and deep speech was "about the land and how it was set and by what men."

The great work which was the result of this consultation is so rich in material for the making of history, and is so reliable in every line, that it is the envy of other countries, who have nothing to be compared with it.

It has been asserted that Domesday Book contains within it the essence of all earlier and all later English history; that it is not only our best guide to the geography of its own time, but that from it we can glean the widely different fate which befell the various districts of England in the days of the Conquest.

The survey being drawn up immediately after a great revolution, shows us clearly the exact amount of change wrought by that revolution. It shows us our England with a foreign king—an England in which all the best estates and high offices were held by foreigners.

It is easy to imagine how our forefathers, crushed and distressed as they were, would rebel against the narrow spying out of their homes and their affairs.

In some places the inquiries led to open rebellion, and not a few lives were lost.

The national chronicles place the picture before us in a very graphic manner.

"He sent over all England into ilk shire his men, and let them find out how many hundred hides were in the shire, or what the king himself had of land or cattle, or what rights he ought to have in twelve months, of the shire.

"Eke he let write how mickle of land his archbishops had, and his bishops and his abbots and his earls, and what or how mickle ilk man had that landholder was in England, and cattle, and how mickle fee it were worth.

"So very narrowly he let spear it out, that there was not a single hide, nor a yard of land, nor so much as—it is shame to tell and it thought him no shame to do—an ox nor a cow nor a swine was left that was *not set down* in his Writ."

Many have been the reasons assigned for the survey, and there is no doubt that, among others, that of ascertaining whether the Danegeld, a tax which had been laid on when Canute of Denmark was threatening invasion, was faithfully and fairly paid.

The payment or non-payment of this tax is a matter which crops up in every page of the survey, and Freeman, in his History of the Norman Conquest, seems to think that "the real and immediate cause of taking the survey was to secure its full and fair assessment."

But of course the survey had other uses and other purposes. First and foremost, William desired to know the full value of the kingdom he had fought for and won. He wanted to know its strength and its power of resistance, and he specially desired to know how he could increase his power and his income; and the plan of the survey was so beautifully thought out, that he could at a glance find answers to any questions that suggested themselves to his curious mind.

Beside all this he evidently meant it to be a register of appeal should any disputes arise concerning the titles to property, and we know that appeals to the decision of this survey did occur at a very early period.

The name by which this wonderful book is known is as curious as its contents. One or two reasons are given by ancient historians for it, all of which seem reasonable.

1. The returns or reports of the commissioners were all sent into Winchester, and were methodised in a chamber called the "Domus Dei" chamber. If these two words were spoken in Italian the pronunciation would be very like to that of Domesday, or at all events the step between the two was so small as to account for the word domesday.

2. The authority of the book has never been permitted to be called in question, and when once a doubt has been set at rest by an appeal to it, the decision is as fixed as a sentence pronounced at Domesday; there can be no appeal against it, hence it is called Domesday Book.

3. From a Saxon point of view it was the great judicial record of the age, and received therefore its name, as Dr. Cobham Brewer thinks, from Dom Bocs, which are Saxon equivalents of Judicium.

All who could, should see this grim and venerable book, which has its dwelling in a room at the Record Office, with a few companions of high worth, such as the Magna Charta. To those who desire the real knowledge hidden within its pages, there is a translation of it both in the Record Office and in the British Museum. The book is full of curious facts, interesting, not only to the learned, but to every class of people.

To those who live near New Cross would come the fact that Hatcham (spelt Hacheham) was a manor in Camberwell at the time of the Conquest. Those living in Beddington would be interested in seeing that Wallington (spelt Waleton) was, in 1085, in the Ville of Beddington. Those living in Streatham would see that Balham (spelt Belgeham) belonged to Streatham 800 years ago.

A curious fact to those living in Mitcham would be that Witford, the name of a lane between Upper and Lower Mitcham, was, in the time of the Conqueror, a hamlet of Mitcham.

Again, Haggerston (spelt Hergotestane) is mentioned in Domesday as being in the

* Ellis, Ewald, and Freeman.

* Saxon, from *witan*—to know.

parish of Shoreditch, Middlesex; and (Litestone) Lisson Green in the parish of Paddington.

It has been supposed that a person having no book whatever except that of Domesday would by study get a perfectly clear picture of the state of England and its people as they were before and after the Conquest. Under the dry legal surface there is much of pathos to be seen, and on this point I cannot do better than give you Freeman's* idea of what the Domesday Book contrives to show us about our forefathers.

"Never," he says, "was there a dry legal record so full of human interest of every kind as the great survey of England.

"Every human relation, every position of life, every circumstance which would call forth joy or sorrow, the wail of the depressed, the overbearing greed of the intruder, the domestic detail of courtship, marriage, dowry, inheritance, bequest, and burial, all are there.

"In its pages, among all the dryness of legal formulæ, we can hear the cry of the poor under the rod of a grasping neighbour or a heartless official.

"Above all, stamping his presence on every page of the survey which he ordered, we see the master of the work.

"His coming into the land is the great epoch from which the date of all that is done is reckoned."

If any are interested in this book they cannot do better than read Sir John Ellis's "Introduction to Domesday," and "Freeman's History of the Norman Conquest," both being most helpful in the understanding of this marvellous book.

* "Freeman s History of the Norman Conquest."

MY BROTHER'S FRIEND.

By EGLANTON THORNE, Author of "The Old Worcester Jug," etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WOEFUL MISTAKE.

MORE dreary and forsaken than before looked the garden to my eyes as I took my way to the gate. The brightness of the day had passed, the sun had sunk out of sight, a grey mist hid the distances; there was a chill dampness in the air. A wave of bitter feeling passed over me as, pausing at the gate, I looked back at the house. "It is all over," I said to myself. "I shall spend no more happy hours here." Then with a shiver I turned away.

I had reached the corner where the narrower road joined the main road, when I saw a number of gentlemen coming up the hill from the station. A train from London had just come in. I glanced at them carelessly, when suddenly my heart gave a wild plunge, and I felt myself trembling from head to foot, for there, on the other side, separated from me only by the breadth of the road, was Leonard Glynne. He was walking rather wearedly, it seemed to me, with his eyes bent on the ground. For a moment I actually stood still. Some spell seemed to hold me motionless with my eyes fixed on him. Then came a sudden shock of thankfulness that he had not looked up, had not seen me, and, swiftly as my feet could carry me, I hurried in the opposite direction.

I did not pause till I was a long way on the road to Beechwood. Then, as my excitement faded, I found myself tremulous, strengthless, and was fain to stand still, leaning for support against a gate. As I hurried along the image of Leonard had accompanied me. Now again his face rose before me, somewhat changed from what I remembered it. Was my fancy deceiving me, or had he indeed looked so grave and sad? Of course it was a delusion, for Sarah had said that he was very pleased at his engagement, and how could he help being joyful if he had won so fair and bright a girl? Yet it was strange how his countenance had stamped itself on my mind with a sad, downcast look, till I could almost persuade myself that he had looked just so when I saw him across the road.

Well, he was nothing to me now. I felt a sort of fierce disdain of myself for being so agitated at seeing him. He had never really cared for me. The eloquent glances, half-spoken words, tender insinuations, which still dwelt in my memory, had had no such significance as I had imagined. Doubtless they had only expressed the gallantry which young men of fashion like to display in their intercourse with ladies, and I, in my rusticity, had not known how to meet them. I would think of him no more. So I resolved, but as I continued