

## *The City of York in the Sixteenth Century*

THE municipal history of York during the sixteenth century lies embedded in twenty volumes of corporation minutes, somewhat jealously guarded by the city's council. These differ considerably in size, in interest, and in legibility. The writers lay no claim to style; still there is a certain quaint simplicity in the terse entries, which is attractive. Kings seem to have vied with each other in loading the northern capital with favours. The earliest charter is one of Henry II, without date. It grants to the citizens of York all their liberties, laws, and customs, their gild merchant and houses in England and Normandy as the same were held in the time of Henry I. It is possible that the presence in York of a colony of Jews may have had something to do with the readiness with which the charters were granted, for the Jews were the only money-lenders of the period, and liberties were very often costly luxuries. A charter of Richard I granted to the people of York exemption from all kinds of toll, lastage, wreck, pontage, passage, and from all customs in England and Normandy and parts beyond the sea.<sup>1</sup> John confirmed these two charters, and in return for a fee-farm rent of 160*l.* granted the city of York, with its liberties, to the citizens.<sup>2</sup> Edward II authorised the mayor to hold a court of pleas, a privilege which Henry III was the first to grant,<sup>3</sup> and placed under the control of the citizens the assize of bread and beer, the keeping and assaying of weights and measures, and the various duties performed by the market keeper, together with the power of summarily punishing offenders.<sup>4</sup>

Richard II gave to the mayor and twelve aldermen the powers of justices of the peace, free from all interference of the justices of the peace for the ridings of the county.<sup>5</sup> Later he constituted

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Select Charters*, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> 36, 40, and 46 Hen. III.

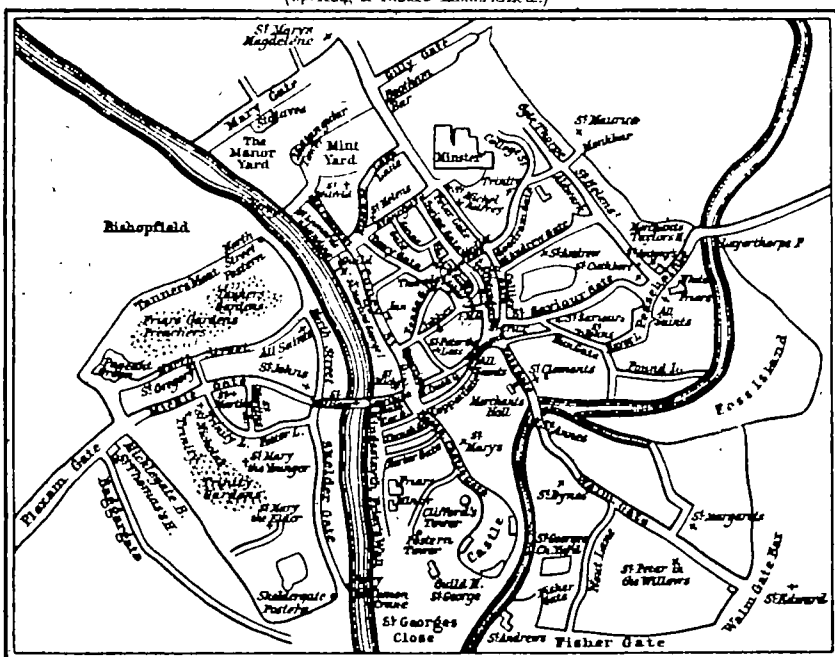
<sup>3</sup> 16 Rich. II.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> 5 and 10 Edw. II.

York a county by itself, and directed that the city and commonalty should choose two sheriffs to hold courts from month to month instead of the shire bailiffs, who were royal nominees.<sup>6</sup> Henry IV<sup>7</sup> and Henry VI<sup>8</sup> also granted important privileges to the favoured city. But it was Edward IV, the citizen king who placed the municipal government on a distinctly democratic basis. He ordered that the craftsmen of the trades of York should name two aldermen, from whom the council should elect the mayor;<sup>9</sup> and later he directed that all the citizens were to assemble and choose a mayor from among the aldermen.<sup>10</sup> The direct participa-

YORK IN THE XVI<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.  
(Spelling of Names modernized.)



tion of the people in the elections was not a success when the Tudors came to the throne; turbulence and lawlessness reigned in York, where Richard III had always been popular. An insurrection early in the reign of Henry VII was suppressed with difficulty. In 1504, at the election of the lord mayor for the ensuing year, the people rushed *en masse* to the gildhall with a bill of a series of articles which they declared stood within the common law. They refused to proceed to the election until 'the maier & presens graunted them all theyr askyngs and desyres and also of theyr

<sup>6</sup> 19 Rich. II.

<sup>7</sup> 27 Hen. VI.

<sup>8</sup> Royal Patent, 13 Edward IV.

<sup>9</sup> 1, 7, and 9 Hen. IV.

<sup>10</sup> Royal Patent, 4 Edw. IV.

Cl. Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 185, folio edition.

further mynde caused theym to put the seale of office of marialtie unto the said pauper bill.' Although they were not quite satisfied that the mayor and his brethren intended to carry out the articles, they consented to disperse, but night seems to have brought counsel, for when, on the following day, the feast of St. Blaise, the mayor, Sir Thomas Jameson, proceeded to take his oath of office,

right fewe of theym held up theyr hands . . . and when he and the aldermen would have departed forth of the Comon hall unto theyr dyner diverse riotouse persons went into the Comon hall dore and shute it and kept it stoken unto ye tyme ye maier of nowe sworne had sette his signett unto theyr pauper bill of diverse articles presented on Saynt Mary day last.<sup>11</sup>

But the insurgents' triumph was short-lived; a later entry shows that the king's help was invoked: a messenger was despatched with letters of privy seal, containing the names of sixteen of the insurgents, who were to be sent at once to London to be tried before the archbishop and chancellor. In an abject letter, written shortly after their arrival in London, the prisoners strongly urged 'their marsters and sersors of all ye craftts' among whom the disturbance had originated 'to be of good demenor anenst the maier,' and a letter from Henry VII shows that submission was their best policy. 'We have in suche wise provided for ye condigne punition of ye residue of ye prisonners which have appeared before us as may bee to ye fearfull example of all other sembleby toffende hereafter.'<sup>12</sup> By April the town seems to have settled down to its ordinary state of quietude, for the archbishop, writing from Cawood, says—

Consideryng yt all ye complaynts comynnalties be subdued to your obediaunce I wold advyse you some deall rather to be moved to pitie than to any waies of rigor wherefore ye shall doo well to put at liberte uppon suffycent suretie for keypyng the peace and for ye apperaunce such persons as be in prison serssors and all others persons yat ye thynketh deserve and by recognisaunce shall bynd every of theym in x li: and 11 suerties.

Still the sympathies of the archbishop were not entirely on the side of the stronger party, as appears clearly from a later paragraph in the letter:—

. . . and yeruppon to call afore you and yo<sup>r</sup> brethern all ye sersors comandyng them for so myche as ye intende due justice and indeferency to be mynstred unto theym and to every of theym and bycause of ye haynouse complaints maid afore my lorde chancelor me & other lords of ye Counsaill to assemble ye companeys of their crafttes severally by theym-selves and to examyne every of thayr compayne who hath cause to complane and woll putt up any billes and whenne they have so doone then

<sup>11</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 19 Hen. VII, ix. f. 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* 19 Hen. VII, ix. f. 14.

the said sersors to put in writtyng the names of the complaynments and present the same unto you, whar uppon my advyse of yo<sup>r</sup> brethern thenne shall do weall to assigne theym a day to bring in ye billes of complainte and at suche season ye see all thayr billes be brought affore you and no more to be brought in after them ye may devise an ordor yt ye parties compleynned upon may have copy of the billes object ageinste them to thintent they may mak answer, accordyngly shewyng that for a moor dewe order to be had ye woll desyre me and my lord of Duresme to be present whenne ye shall determyne in thayr causes specally that we bothe beinge of ye Kyngs counceills may be privey to suche indifferency as shalbe mynstered to the said complaynants at the day that shalbe appointed soo that we may make reporte to ye Kings grace of yo<sup>r</sup> demeano<sup>r</sup> in that behalfe.

Cawood the xiii day of Aprill

Yours  
J. EBOR.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas Savage.

The commons seem to have had a salutary lesson, for, in spite of episcopal sympathy, for the next twelve years the records give no account of similar risings. But in 1517 a dispute arose with regard to the election of aldermen, on the death of John Shaw. 'Great variaunce controv'sie trowble & debate' arose as to his successor. The quarrel waxed so hot that riots ensued, and several of the aldermen, citizens, and commonalty were indicted in the court of chancery; one, William Neleson, possibly the ringleader, was committed to the Fleet. In the meantime the death of another alderman forced Henry VIII to appoint a commission to look into the matter. The abbot of St. Mary's and Lord Latymer were at the head of the commission. They ordered that the two aldermen chosen, John Norman and William Cure, should be set on one side, and 'two other substantiall and discretous sones put in theyr romes.' The people, regardless of the order, chose the same two again, and brought matters to a climax by electing William Neleson, the prisoner in the Fleet, to be their mayor. In an extremely characteristic letter Henry expresses his anger at their action, 'which is to us gret mervaylle & dyspleasor that ye wold thus do, and moche the more bycause ye knowe that the said Will<sup>m</sup> beyng prisoner is no conveyent person to be putt in that rome.' He ordered John Doghson to be elected mayor at once, 'as ye wold abyde our grete dyspleasor and answer therefore unto us at your uttermost peryll,' and threatened, unless immediate attention were paid to his orders, for their 'mysdemeanors and abusyng of the franchises to send justices in eyre to execute the lawes in the said citie.'<sup>14</sup> Wolsey, too, wrote a letter of remonstrance. The people of York gave way, and expressed their sorrow thus:

<sup>13</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 19 Hen. VII, ix. f. 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 8 Hen. VIII, ix. f. 89.

We be ryght sorry inwardly in our hearts and utterly determined in our myndes yat from hensforth not to do yat thyng that shalbe dyspleasor to his highenes ne yor grace besechyng yor grace in the moste humble manner to be merci [?] unto his highenes to pardon us.<sup>15</sup>

These constant disturbances led to the charter of Henry VIII, by which the government of the city was intrusted to the mayor, sheriffs, aldermen, and a common council. This last-named body consisted of two members chosen from each of the thirteen principal crafts, and one from each of the fifteen inferior crafts. These men, together with the oldest searchers from each craft, were to form a nominating council, who annually chose three aldermen, from whom the mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen elected a mayor for the ensuing year.<sup>16</sup> The plan worked well so long as the crafts did not fluctuate much in prosperity, but the seeds of discord were there, and in the early years of Elizabeth's reign York was again in a great ferment about the question of elections. A petition was presented to the lord mayor.

Whereas the xiv crafts and xv crafts named in the charter hath voyces for the elecution of the Mayor & Sheryffes and certayne of the said occupation be decayed so that there is none of theym to have voyces our desyre is that for such occupatons as is decayed that so many other at the renewyng of the charter may be putte in the charter to have voyces.

Several other articles were presented at the same time, none of which seems unreasonable.

We the said comon council and other comonars of our humble seute desyre your lord and worshypfulle brethren with other your lordshippes counsell to have nowe reformation had for 40 li: that Girdlyngton did gyve to the comons and freemen of this citie and for that cause that if any freeman will desyre to borowe of the same money upon they ar pledged not to be denyed so that all the same money may be used always according to the Girdlyngton will.

Also we desyre that from hensforth nothyng to be lette that belongeth to the comons but that all the comons before maye have knowledge of it, that it may be lette for the moste wallowe for the profit of the cittie of that thing that the comons may forbear and nothing to be allowed that belongeth to the comons but that that is sealed with the comon seale and for this we desire youe of your goodnes nowe that this may be enacted.

Also we desyre that our mylners shall not take no mowter at all but one penny for a bushell of hard corne and for malt 11<sup>d</sup> a Quarter & not above as was used when the corne was better cheape and soo the same we desyre reformaton.

Miles Cook, in the name of the rest of the common council, required them to be at once ratified; but the lord mayor answered, with what must have seemed to the eager democratic reformer

<sup>15</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 8 Hen. VIII, f. 9.

<sup>16</sup> 9 Hen. VIII; cf. Gross, *Gild Merchant*, i. 111; Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 184.

criminal nonchalance, that 'he and his brothern at tyme conveyent would peruse the said articles and would establish the same as much as reason were.' Miles Cook, however, refused to proceed to the election unless the said articles were first enacted,

whereupon in avoydyng further clamor of the reste of the Comons they gave them faire wordes wellyng the common clerke to make asssemblant to enter them as confirmed and stablISHED and that done proceeded all in peaceable manner to the electon of the mayor as is abovesaid.

When they learned how they had been tricked, they sent two of their number to demand that their articles should be confirmed and enacted. The mayor temporised and said

he and his bretheren would deliberate and examyne their sayd requests and as they saw cause would agree the stablishment of the same, and that they of the common counsel should not appoynt them theyr tyme, when nor in what wise they should order such matters.

The common council were forced to content themselves with this evasive answer, but later 'beyng put in remembrance of their dewtie and obedyens they in ryght humble wyse beseched my seyde l. mayor at his pleasor to appoynt a day when he would have his assemblic.'<sup>17</sup> He consented, and passed all their requests. The rearrangement of the representative trades after this revolt gives us a clue to their number and relative prosperity.

The fourteen crafts which sent two representatives each to the common council were the merchants, mercers, drapers, grocermen, goldsmythes, dyers, skynners, barbers, fysshmongers, taillers, vyntners, joynars, glasiars. The fifteen less important crafts were, hosiers, inholders, vestment makers wax chandlers, howers, wevers, walkers, ironmongers, sadlers, masons, bakers, bochers, glovers, pewtherers, armorers. These underwriten have no voyces at the electon of the mayor, aldermen and sheriffs, tapilars, tannars, cordwers, potters, sheremen, cappers, cowpers, gyrdlers, pynners, maryners, spoeryers, fyshers, cooks, mylners, fletchers, tylers, paynters, bookbynders, parchmentmakers, cardmakers, mynstrelles, cortwrights, salmakers, turners, ropers, pattanmakers, fownderers, tyle-makers, cureyers, haters, plomers, bottlmakers, horners, fedder beddmakers, cobblers, stringers, laborers.<sup>18</sup>

Another turbulent council meeting led to the reform of the manner of voting. In 1564 the archbishop, Thomas Young, demanded the lease of a piece of land. The matter was discussed somewhat hotly, and when the mayor referred the affair to the common council they

so differently answered the part crying all, all, and the others holding theyr peace that it was not well known whether the more part assented yereto or desclymeth and yefore it was devysed by the said lord mayor, M<sup>r</sup> recorder and worshippful presens that the said Comons in quyet

<sup>17</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 5 Eliz. xviii. f. 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 5 Eliz. xxiii. f. 79.

wyse should sytt orderly or stand in the said common hall and soo the said recorder with four or five of the said aldermen in peaceful wyse, in secret maner to know of every of theym by hymselfe whether they wold agree to the lease to be made in forme aforesaid, whiche thyng soo gone through by the said recorder & aldermen with the comon clerk it was evident that 88 of the sayd comons did consent and 22 residue of all the sayd comons there assembled wold not assent soo that by this wayes the most part did fully agree.<sup>19</sup>

The York officials make a formidable show.<sup>20</sup> At their head was the mayor, whose office then, as now, was no sinecure. He was the ultimate referee in all disputes; within the city his authority was supreme; Richard II had granted that he should have their sword carried before him with the point upward. This right was guarded most jealously. When Margaret of Scotland visited York, in 1504, a violent altercation arose between the sheriff of the county and the mayor about this matter; it resulted in the triumph of the mayor

and in thayr rydyng forth with the said Quenes grace without bowthome barre Sir William Conyers then beyng Shireff of Yorkshire anenst Saynt Marigate end began to bere up his rodde to fore the Quene and the mayor said unto hym Master Shyrff ye ought to bere no rodde here as yit and the said Sir William answered and said it was within his office & he wold bere it, & then the maier answered and said it was within the liberties of this cite and he dyd wrong to bere any there.

The lord treasurer, the queen's attendant, interfered, and said—

Sir Sheriffe put down your rodde you do wrong to bere any within the libertie of this cite and then the said Sir William held down his rodde on lowe endlong by his horssyde unto he come beyonde Mawdeleye Chapell withowte the liberties of this cite and then & ther he toke over his rodde sayng nowe shyrffe hold down yor rodde for it is within myn office and they said they wold and bade God spede him.<sup>21</sup>

The institution of the court of the north led to some complications between the mayor and the president, who took up his residence in the old manor house at York. In the instruction given to the burgesses in the first year of Edward VI's reign this jealousy comes out very strongly.

*[Instruction to the Burgesses concernyng the mayntenance of the ancient liberties of the said city for the common weal of the same.]*

To labour that the mayor & Shyrffes of the said cite may be suffered to have cognysaunce of all actons of trespas doen within the said cite & suburbs of the same accordyng to the tenor of the Kings

<sup>19</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 7 Eliz. xxiii. f. 159.

<sup>20</sup> G. L. Gomme, *Index of Municipal Offices*, pp. 37-77.

<sup>21</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 18 Henry VIII, ix. f. 5.

Majestie Chartres as also to put mr Stanhope in remembraunce that from nowe furth the lorde president in the north parties may dyrecte the Kings grace in commysion onelie to the said maier and his brethren in all concernyng the Kings affayres within the countie of the cite as was ever accustomed before the establisshment of the courte of requests in the north parties.

In a letter to the recorder the mayor complains

that the said lord presedent do take such part his servaunts ageynst the mayer and comaltie of the said cite that they are not able for to enjoy and meyntene the ancenynt right of the said cite onlesse a reformaton therein be shortly hadde.<sup>22</sup>

Another entry in the reign of Elizabeth shows that the difficulty arose again.

For as much as William Allayn being a free man of this cite hath comensed sewt against Thomas Mason joyner another fre citizen of this cite before the vicepresident and counsell in these north parts and the said william allayn beyng now called before these presents and chardged with the same fact and the said william allayn being now required by the lord maier if he would submit hymself to abyde the order of the lord maier and his brethern touchyng this his said offence, the said william utterly and disobediently refused so to do saieng further that Mr Deane and the Church of Yorke would heare him forth therein if it coste one hundred pounds.<sup>23</sup>

The matter was adjourned until Mr. Recorder could be consulted, and there is no further referencē to it.

The mayor was always provided with resplendent robes, and had several attendants, as mace-bearers, sword-bearers, and for state occasions minstrels. The amount of money expended on these civic trappings must have been considerable, if we judge from the cost of a mace and a 'hat of maintenance.'

	£	s.	d.
86 oz & a half of silver for the makyng of the great mace and gyldyng of the same . . . . .	24	3	
For a bolt of yron for the sayd mace to the smythe . . . . .		4	
For garnysshing the two swords and for silver and gilting the same Hat . . . . .		24	
one felt hat . . . . .		3	
one gould edge . . . . .		3	4
one gould tassel . . . . .		5	0
lynynge in the head . . . . .			18
a cover of buckram . . . . .		2	0
one goulde bande . . . . .		22	8
makyng same hat . . . . .		2	6 <sup>24</sup>

But all this pomp failed to inspire reverence; for George Horseley, a contumacious character, declared that my lord mayor, his brethren

<sup>22</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 1 Edw. VI, xviii. f. 180.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 24 Eliz. xxviii. f. 59.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 22 Eliz. xxvii. f. 289.



and sheriffs 'were more mete to drive pigges to the feylde than to be justices of the peace.'

The office of sword-bearer seems to have been quite an honourable post, for on 8 Jan. 1518 a grant of the office was made to Robert Fournes, Wolsey's servant. This was done by the cardinal's special request. As the post was generally given to a York man, Fournes was regarded as an interloper, and on St. Blaise's Day, when he was officiating at the election of the lord mayor, one of the crowd cried out—

Master Fournes what do ye here there is not oon in this hall that hereafter will company with you or any thing will doo for ye, there is not oon in this citie that luffeth my lord cardinall or you or any other that longeth to my lord Cardinall.<sup>25</sup>

This general dislike seems to have driven Fournes from the city, for in 1522 Henry Fawkes was appointed sword-bearer.<sup>25</sup> The sword-bearer still attends the lord mayor and corporation on all state occasions, and affixes the seal of the corporation, and is present at all meetings for the admission of freemen. In 1518, when 'the Chamber was in grete dette & also the land yereof sosore decayed,' the municipal authorities decided 'that from henceforth there shalbe but iiii servants at the mace to the said Maier and his Successors to suche tyme as the said Citie be in better habielyte.'

The aldermen too were required to live up to their position. Minute regulations are laid down with regard to their dress and style of living; they were not to go out unless preceded by a servant, or if that were impossible a child.

That no alderman of this Citie from hensforth shall goo owte of his parissh unlessse that he have a valvet typpet abowte his nek a man or a chylde for to attend of him in syne & tokyn yat he is one alderman for the worship of this Citie accordyng to the ancyeat ordynence and what alderman of this city sheryffe or any of the xxiv yat shall ryde withoute a man honestly appoynted for to attend hym shall pay yefore vi<sup>s</sup>.<sup>26</sup>

They were forced to wear their scarlet 'gownes' frequently. If they went to a council meeting without their tippets they were fined. They had to wear 'gownes' faced with 'foynes' from Michaelmas to Pentecost, and 'gownes' faced with 'budge, black furre or silke' from Pentecost to Michaelmas, officials who were 'widdowers' being allowed to wear black 'for one whole year and no more.' Their manners do not always seem to have been in keeping with their splendid robes, for a special regulation was brought in

that none of the said presens nor their successors at any time hereafter

<sup>25</sup> Robert Davies, *History of the Fawkes in York*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 85 Hen. VIII, xvii. f. 35.

shall call anie of his brethren, aldermen, sherriffes, or any of the xxiv Knaves or false Knaves nor none other opprobrious or scandlous names.<sup>27</sup>

The relations between mayor and alderman do not always seem to have been quite cordial, for a measure had to be passed that none aldermen from hensforth speyk for no person franchest or unfranchest in the presens of the partyes complaynant or defendant nor gif no wordes of comfort to any person so long as the person ys obstynate agenist the maior of this citie.<sup>28</sup>

As collector of the city tax the sheriff too held an important post, and any man who refused to occupy the office was fined 5*l.*; the fine could, however, be diminished at the discretion of the mayor, as in the case of John Rogers, fishmonger,

who considering he was of small person and not of suffycent stature to occupie the said office shall content & pay to the well of the said citie xx li to be payde and accompted in the mayr's tyme now beyng and for the same to have suffycent discharge in wrytyng under the common seale for the tyme of his lyff of which xx li it was agreed that at his payment he should have x li. gyven agayn because he had great chardge of children.<sup>29</sup>

John Smith was elected five years one after the other; but he refused to stand and withdrew himself to Skipton in Craven. Still at his death his executors were sued for the amount of the city tax.<sup>30</sup> The recorder is another prominent city official. He was the general referee on any peculiar local custom which might be called in question by the higher court. Pasture masters are peculiar to York and Beverley. They are the guardians of the pastures over which the burgesses have a right of common.<sup>31</sup> The gild of minstrels and waits had a semi-official position, for no one else could play before the mayor on state occasions. Their instruments too belonged to the corporation. Nicholas Wright, one of the waits, shall have of the chamber eleven shillings paid willingly for a base shalme and the same to remayne from hensforth to the cities use and good surety to be taken from tyme to tyme of suche the said waytes as shall have custody and use thereof to be all tymes forth comyng when my lorde mayor for the tyme being shall commande.

The civic authorities seem to have exercised a general supervision over the morals of the minstrels, for an order was issued that a certain Thomas, evidently some unsatisfactory character, should have 'respite to learne and applie himself in the instruments and songs belonging the sayd wayts and to leave his unthrifty gamyng uppon payne to be putte forth of that office.'<sup>32</sup> The rules of the gild, as drawn up in 1579, show that great jealousy of foreign musicians existed.

<sup>27</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 85 Hen. VIII, xvii. f. 86.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 20 Hen. VIII, xi. f. 66.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 1 Hen. VIII, ix. f. 49.

<sup>30</sup> Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 186.

<sup>31</sup> Gomme, *Index of Municipal Offices*, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 8 Eliz. xxii. f. 87

*Gild of Musyoycons. xxi Elizabeth.*

That no manner of forryner of what condition hee be occupie anie minstrelle singing or plainge upon annie instrument within annie parishe within this citie or franchises thereof upon annie church holi dies or dedication daies holowed or kept within the same parishe or annie freemans dinner or dynnars mad or kepte within the same citie or franchise thereof upon payne that everie such forayne minstrell restore money to him gyven by the maister or serchers to pay everie such tyme that he shalbe found doinge contrary to this act iii<sup>a</sup> iiiii<sup>d</sup> the one halfe thereof to remaine to the use of the comon chamber of this cittie and thother half to the comon box of the said arte.<sup>33</sup>

The gild had been in existence for some time ; unfortunately its record book is lost, but in the third year of Elizabeth a minute is entered in the city's annals that

at the humble sewte and prayer of the friens of mynstrelles of this citie certayne ordynances were devysed enacted & stablissed hereafter to be firmly observed and fulfilled of the said mynstrells in maner and forme and in every poynt accordyng as they be inrolled in the old register of parchment with the bosses. And that the sayd craft of mynstrells shall of ther chardges yerely bryng forth the pageant of herod inquiring of the iii Kyngs for the child Jesu some tyme broughte forth by the late masons of the said citie.<sup>34</sup>

Several new officers sprang into existence in York in the sixteenth century—ale-tasters, water bailiffs, tipstaves, and especially a new class of officers who took over the duties formerly performed by the head beggars. York literally swarmed with beggars. Fuller says : ' We may observe that generally such places wherein the great abbeyes were seated swarm most with poor folk at this day, as if beggary were entailed on them ; ' <sup>35</sup> and this was certainly true of York. After the dissolution of the monasteries the municipal authorities made every effort to carry out the tentative poor relief legislation, which fills so many pages of the sixteenth-century statute book. But the laws themselves were illogical and ineffectual. While the priest preached almsgiving as necessary for eternal salvation the legislator ordered the recipient of alms to be whipped, mutilated, or hanged. York made strenuous efforts to prevent the beggars entering the town. Wardens were stationed at Micklegate Bar, the gate leading to the south, to prevent their entrance ; but they made their way by a lane bearing the name, until within a few years since, of Beggars' Lane to a postern which was not so closely watched near Fishergate ; so the efforts of the city council were unavailing. A few months later they drew up a series of

<sup>33</sup> A collection of gild regulations in the gildhall at York, f. 143. 'Forayner' may possibly only mean 'stranger,' though the context points to its meaning 'alien.'

<sup>34</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 3 Eliz. f. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Fuller, *Church History*, ed. 1658, p. 298.

enactments, with the view of mitigating the begging nuisance, which had become intolerable.

It is agreed by the said presens that all the constables of this citie and suburbs of the same shall certifie the said wardens by wrytyng at the next ward mote of all common beggars that is come within the same parishes and wardes within the space of three yeares last past. All powre fowkes that are lymmyted to begge and hath bagges shall from now furth begge within the wardes which they inhabit and dwelle within the same citie & in none other warde uppon payne to be avoyded the citie if any do the contrary.

None of the said powre fowiks from hensfurth shall tak nor receyve any strange chyldren into theyr howses to the intent that any of them shall go about within the city to begge. Any constable within this citie from now furth shall take all strange beggers vagabonds that at anytime hereafter shall resorte & come with their constabulary to begg or that use or comytt any misdemeanor and to putte them in the stokkes & to gyve them none other dyat but onely brede & water.<sup>36</sup>

As was natural, the difficulty of collecting the gifts for the poor increased; at last the council agreed 'that a warde mote courte' should be instituted, into which the money should be paid. From the accounts of this wardmote we get some idea of the relative wealth of the various parishes.

*Guthrum ward*

St Michel le belfry evy wek . . . . .	x <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	10/-
St Elene in Stayngate evy wek . . . . .	iii <sup>s</sup>	iiii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . . 8/4
St Martyn in Constrete evy wek . . . . .	v <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	5/-
St Olaves . . . . .	xx <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/8

*Monk ward to pay evy wek*

St Sampsons . . . . .	iii <sup>s</sup>	iiii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . . 3/4
St Crux . . . . .	v <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	5/-
St John le Pyk . . . . .	iiii <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	4/-
St Margaret . . . . .	xii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/-
St [?] <sup>37</sup> in Peseholme . . . . .	iiii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	4 <sup>d</sup>
St Cuthbert . . . . .	xii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	12 <sup>d</sup>
St Elene ad muros . . . . .	xii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	12 <sup>d</sup>

*Mikellythward*

St Johns ad finem pontis . . . . .	ii <sup>s</sup>	vi <sup>d</sup>	. . . . . 2/6
St Martyns in Myk . . . . .	xx <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/8
St Niche voc. Trinitie . . . . .	xx <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/8
„ „ in North Strete . . . . .	11 <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	11 <sup>d</sup>
St Marie Vet . . . . .	xx <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/8
St Marie de novo . . . . .	xii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/-

<sup>36</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 37 Hen. VIII, xviii. f. 88.

<sup>37</sup> Word illegible.

*Walmgate ward.*

St Michil ad finem pontis . . . . .	vi <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	6/-
St Marie . . . . .	xvi <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/4
Crux . . . . .	v <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	5/-
St. Denis . . . . .	iv <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	4/-
St M'garet . . . . .	ii <sup>s</sup>	. . . . .	2/-
St Lawrence . . . . .	xii <sup>d</sup>	. . . . .	1/- <sup>38</sup>
total			£8 8 6 per week.

The suppression of gilds and of all the religious houses which had escaped the dissolution of 1539 placed in the hands of the municipal authorities a certain amount of property and money.<sup>39</sup> Three of the hospitals in the city—St. Thomas's, near Micklegate Bar; St. Antony's, in Peseholme Green; Trinity Hospital, in Fossgate—were set aside as places 'where the poor could be set on worke,' and their income 'ymployed to the mayntenaunce of the powre.' This was done before the statute 18 Eliz. c. 3 made such institution compulsory. The accounts of the hospital of St. Thomas have been preserved for the year 1574-5, and certainly read as if the physical welfare of the boys was attended to.

Raiment for the poor boys in St Thomas's Hospital . . . . .	s.	d.
Money to be pute in their purses . . . . .	8	4
6000 turves for the three hospitals at 2/4 a thousand . . . . .	14	0
Labourers for carriage thereof . . . . .	2	6
Six horse loads of coals to St Thomas's hospital at 6 <sup>d</sup> the load . . . . .	3	0
Paid to Johnstone's wife in Skeldergate for healing of two boys heads at St Thomas's house which were scalled and stuff for them . . . . .	4	6
Paid to Robert Blake for curing a younge Spanyghte & for stuff that went to it . . . . .	8	0

As well as compulsory payments benevolences were often given by the holders of official positions. During six months of 1574-5

	£	s.	d.
The Lord President of the North gave . . . . .	9	0	0
The Lord Archbishop . . . . .	10	0	0
The Deane . . . . .	6	0	0
M <sup>rs</sup> Yonge (wife of the late Archbishop) . . . . .	4	0	
Mr Slingsby <sup>40</sup> . . . . .	2	0	

A few years later the lord archbishop, the lord president, and the dean of York were rated for the relief of the poor at 20*l.*, 13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, and 8*l.* yearly respectively.<sup>41</sup> The law of 1576 that stores of wool should be provided for the people who wished to work, and houses

<sup>38</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 4 Edw. VI, xx. f. 9.

<sup>39</sup> *Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi*, Surtees Soc., vol. 57, preface, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Davies, *Walks through York*, p. 110.

<sup>41</sup> York Corp. Min.' 19 Eliz. xxvii. f. 61.

of correction erected for the refractory who refused to work, was not put into immediate execution in York, but two years after it was passed a large sum of money was put on one side by the mayor for carrying out the first part of the enactment. 'A stock of wool for setting the poor of this citie on worke cccc£ 200 of the citie 200 of Sir Wm Bowes money'<sup>42</sup>—but it was not until eight years later that very active measures were taken to realise the good hope expressed in the preamble to the statute of 1562 'that idleness would be banished.' The order was issued that 'a wall shalbe made up at St Antonys and a hows to be made there for the correction of rooges & three chaynes and a clogge to be made for the punnyshment of such rooges as will not worke.'<sup>43</sup> From one of the entries in the records Walmgate, then as now, seems to have been the favourite haunt of beggars.

All badges made for the poor of this citie admytted to begge with difference for every warde being their severall lymyttes to begge in were nowe declared to evy the said poore one badge that is to saye to thande of M<sup>r</sup> Beane warden of Mykellgate xxii Bootham ward xii Monkward xxii Walmgate ward xxviii.<sup>44</sup>

This is easily explained by the fact that the unwatched Fishergate postern led directly into Walmgate.

The poor were generally remembered in the wills of the rich merchants; the Bowes family, one of whom was jeweller to Queen Elizabeth, were especially munificent to this city.<sup>45</sup> Among other bequests Sir Thomas Bowes left money so that 'every Sondag throughout the year' five penny loaves of bread should be distributed 'in honour of the five wounds of our Lord Jesus Christe.' The difficulty of obtaining capital with which to begin any new enterprise was a serious hindrance to a poor trader; but money was often left on the lines of the Girlyngton bequest, and easily obtainable, without paying interest, by any honest man. Sir Thomas White, merchant tailor of London, left

the some of an hundred and foure poundes of lawfull money of England upon condition and for thintent the said mayor & Comaltie of the said citie of York or their assignes shall next after the receipt thereof disburse and pay or cause to be delivered and payde unto foure yonge men of the said city of York and fremen of the same being of honeste name and fame occupyers and inhabitants within the same citie of York (clothiers always to be preferred above all others) to be named and appoynted by the mayor and aldermen the some of one hundred poundes that is to saye to every of them xxv poundes to have & occupie the same for the space of ten yeares to there moste commoditie and advantage without paying anything for the loan of the same.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 21 Eliz. xxvii. f. 28.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 11 Eliz. xxiv. f. 144.

<sup>44</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 19 Eliz. xxvii. f. 45.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 28 Eliz. xxix. f. 107.

<sup>46</sup> Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 874.

Thomas Brafferton too left money to be employed as a fund to supply the unemployed with work, but he guarded against the introduction of 'a charity rate' of wages. The will directs that the money was to be spent

in wooll flax or hempe & to be delivered within the parishe of Thornabie to be by them wrought & made into cloth and the poore people for the working thereof to be paid after such rate as nowe or hereafter shallbe used for such lyke work within the said parishe.<sup>47</sup>

That indifference to the suffering of the poor which many historians give as the keynote to the social life of the sixteenth century does not seem to have prevailed at York.

Envy waxeth wondrous strong,  
The rich doth the poor wrong,  
God of his mercy suffereth long  
The devil his works to work<sup>48</sup>

is distinctly untrue of York. Every effort was made to cope with poverty; regulations were constantly made to keep down the price of food, so that the poor should not suffer in time of scarcity.

Two of the eldest aldermen shall to-morrow attend on the market to see the poor are served & soo other two the next market day and so everie markt two and they to take order that no badgers buye annie corne either to be conveyed by water or land, but by reasonable quantities and that quantite and the day & price to be written on his lycense and they to see the poore served before any citizen & then the citizen & then straingers.<sup>49</sup>

The streets were seldom effectually lighted. Davies, whose accuracy is generally unimpeachable, says that until 1673 the citizens were left to grope their way through the dark streets and alleys as best they could,<sup>50</sup> but early in the sixteenth century it was ordered that

all aldermen & of the xxiiii of this citie shall have a lanterne with a light yerein burnyng on every dore every nyght from v of the cloke of the nyght unto ix of the cloke uppon payne to have to pay xii<sup>d</sup>.<sup>51</sup>

In 1569 the order was reissued, and not confined to officials.

The wardens to cause lanterns and lights to be sett forth at every suche inhabitants hows as they shall thynk requyste on every strete and lane of thys citie so there may be sufficient light throughowte the nyght from v unto day light in the morning beginning this nyght forth to contynue and the constables every within their chardge nyghtly at six to gyve warnyng

<sup>47</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 29 Eliz. xxix. f. 154.

<sup>48</sup> 'Now-a-day,' in *Ballads from the MS.*, ed. Furnivall.

<sup>49</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 29 Eliz. xxix. f. 174.

<sup>50</sup> Davies, *Walks through York*, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 19 Hen. VIII, xi. f. 25.

to every the said inhabitants to put forth the sayd lights accordingly & also ones every nyght about mydnight two of the watchmen of the warde to walk the sayd stretes & lanes and if any want be the said watchmen to call upon them to set forth a new light or else to present the said defaulter.<sup>52</sup>

In 1537 the disturbed state of the north made Henry anxious to visit York. The citizens despatched a letter declaring their joy at the prospect. 'It shalbe to all us his powre subjects & mooste bownden dalie beydmen the mooste high comfuth in the world next to o<sup>r</sup> lord god.'<sup>53</sup> Although Henry did not go to York until some years later, a quantity of information was collected at the time which throws some light on the size and state of the city.

Hereafter apperyth howe many beddes ar within the said citie and suburbs of the same w<sup>thin</sup> the wakentake of Aynstie for straungers and also stablyng for ther horses over & besydes the close of Yorke Saynt Mary Abbey Saynt Leonerds Saynt Andrews & the iiii placeys of Freres of the said citie, over & besydes the aldermen & other honest merchauntmen of this citie which kepes logyng for ther frends.

*Myklythward*

Item primis within that ward . . . . . cclx bedds [260]  
 Stablyng for . . . . . <sup>xx</sup> ccccxxvi horses [516]

*Walmgate Ward*

Item w<sup>thin</sup> that ward . . . . . ccc bedds [300]  
 Stablyng for . . . . . <sup>o</sup> v xvi horses [516]

*Monkward*

Item w<sup>thin</sup> that ward . . . . . <sup>xx</sup> ccciiii bedds [185]  
 Stablyng for . . . . . cccxxviii horses [218]

*Bowthomwarde*

Item w<sup>thin</sup> that ward . . . . . <sup>xx</sup> ccciiii bedds [280]  
 Stablyng for . . . . . <sup>xx</sup> v horses [100]

Stabling for 1,350 horses and a provision of 1,025 beds give some idea of the number of travellers York expected to pass through the city; during the sixteenth century it was the chief stopping place between London and Scotland. The account is very circumstantial, for it goes on to distinguish between 'fедderbeddes & materseys.'<sup>54</sup>

The civic authorities took great precautions when the news arrived of an outbreak of plague in the country. Wardens were set at the gates to prevent the entrance of any wares from an

<sup>52</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 11 Eliz. xxiv. f. 167.    <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 29 Hen. VIII, xiii. f. 97

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 29 Hen. VIII, xiii. f. 96.



infected district, the inn-holders were forbidden to lodge any Londoners 'fleeing or coming thence for fear of the plague,' and the hospitals were forbidden to take in any strange vagabonds or beggars. The citizens seem to have resented these precautionary measures; for when some drapers and goldsmiths 'newly come from Stirbridge Fayre' were ordered to 'shutte up theyr shoppe wynddars & to keep themselves from accompanying with neighbours,'<sup>56</sup> they refused, and remained obstinate even when committed to prison. When once the plague had gained ground in the city, active measures were taken to prevent it spreading. The inhabitants of a certain district without Layerthorp postern were provided with houses in the city, and their houses given up to the sick people; the postern gate was closed, the houses had 'a bede cross sett upon the dowers,' and when convalescent they were ordered to carry 'a whyte wande in theyr hand to the intent that they may be known.'<sup>56</sup> The modern idea of keeping people from thinking of the disease by providing amusement was not entertained. In order to avoid the danger consequent upon people crowding together the city's amusements were curtailed. Lord Robert's players were given a 'royall' and told 'quyetly to departe withowte any further playing at that tyme.' But the officials did not stay to see their wise measures carried out, and the horror of the time was increased by the lawlessness and general disorder which reigned. 'The aldermen & sheriffs of this city that hath withdrawn themselves furth of the city wherethrough ther lakketh good order in the same citie,' are ordered 'to resorte home again & ther to remayne to helpe & assist my lord mayor in his offyce of the maryltie upone payne of 20<sup>s</sup>;' but they were allowed 'to leve their wives and children & servants as they think best.'<sup>57</sup> With a view to increasing the food supply, butchers from other towns were invited to the city:

All forren butchers shall resorte to this citie with flesh to selle in thursday marktett trinite churchyard in miklygate and at the fisse shambles at fossebrig end freely without any payng of pagaunt money or other imposition considering that it is for the refuge & helpe of this citie during the time that this citie is infected with the plage.

The mayor and his brethren were proud of the architecture of their city, and on more than one occasion took measures for preserving some of its characteristic features. Ouse Bridge having been damaged by the tide, a letter was at once sent to Sir Martyn Bowes, alderman of London, to ask his assistance in finding a skilled workman to repair the damage. In his reply Sir Martyn gives the workman a high character.

<sup>56</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 5 Ellis. xxiii. f. 17.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 28 Hen. VIII, xiii. f. 156.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 4 Edw. VI, xx. f. 5.

I have been an earnest sewtar to my l. mayour and his brethren here to send downe to you for the amendment of your bridge the most expert workman that aperteyneth to London bridge & as we think within the realme for suche bridge work . . . for his wages ye shall give him none for he is the city's freeman which name is Thomas Harper his chardges to & fro ye must beare and his chardge for bed & board whilst he remayne with you.

This letter was dated 7 July. On 5 Aug. Harper had repaired the bridge and was returning to London, having had given to him 5*l.*, and 10*s.* for his return journey; so evidently his work had given satisfaction.<sup>88</sup> Towards the end of the sixteenth century Clifford's Tower, one of the most venerable of York's many architectural beauties, was in imminent risk of demolition. The civic authorities besought the lord treasurer and the chancellor of the exchequer to interfere. The correspondence on the subject is very voluminous,<sup>89</sup> but they succeeded in inducing Burghley to prohibit the destroyer from carrying out his design. Burghley's letter to the archbishop contains a valuable suggestion as to the use to which the tower might be put.

There is a playne round towre of frestone of an ancyeut building near the castle called Clifforde towre the which at the present serveth no use. Redhead gaoler of the castle hath begonne to pulle downe some parte therof alreddy & burneth it for lyme to his owne use & so entendeth to do the reste yereof for that it seemeth it may be turned to some good use for the beautyfyng of the citie & profite & benefice of the inhabitants by makyng it a place for the keping of the records of the citie. I therefore praye your grace to cause it to be vewed and to certifie unto me to what good use it may be best employed & so continued whereupon directon may be given accordingle and in the meantyme I pray you let Redhead be chardged to proceed no further in pullyng downe more of it being rather to accompte that which he hath done as done withoute warrant and so I byd yor grace very heartily farewell from my hous at Weston.

BURGHLEY.

xix June 1506.<sup>90</sup>

On the occasion of any great festival, as the Corpus Christi procession or the visit of any royal personage, the streets were swept, the pigs and beggars 'avyoyded, the offal & filth' carried off, and sometimes the houses decorated with flags, or if flags could not be obtained the hangings of the beds were hung from the windows, and flowers strewn before the doors. Unfortunately we have no means of settling the population of York during the period, definite information on the subject being very scanty. In 1827 there were 880 taxed inhabitants, in 1740 1,800. Its population relatively to the other large towns is given by Thorold Rogers.

<sup>88</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 11 Eliz. xxiv. f. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Davies, *Walks through York*, p. 82.

<sup>90</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 38 Eliz. xxx. f. 289.

	1841	1483	1603	1841
(1)	London	London	London	London
(2)	Newcastle	York	Bristol	Norwich
(3)	Bristol	Norwich	York	York
(4)	York	Bristol	Lincoln	Gloucester

Inside the walls the principal streets follow the same lines and in most cases retain the same names as they had in the sixteenth century. Micklegate prolonged by Ousegate and the Pavement is still the principal thoroughfare, and is cut by Coney Street and Castlegate at right angles and parallel to the river Ouse. The flat, monotonous brick houses had not then monopolised the ground; the streets were formed of an irregular jumble of picturesque timber dwellings, a good idea of the style of which can still be gained from the houses in Stonegate. Drake says 'there were no brick buildings in England in the reign of Henry VIII, except chimneys. It was long after this before any such thing appeared at York;' <sup>61</sup> but early in the reign of James I Thomas Waller is described in a contemporary document as dwelling in 'le read brik hous ac uno orto super le backsyde ejusdem,' and in 1592 the brickmakers had become of so much importance that they wished to be separated from the tile-makers, with whom they were associated. <sup>62</sup> The proportion of shops to houses was much less in the sixteenth century than at present, for business was chiefly carried on in the markets. Workers in the same trade were accustomed to congregate in the same place; and many streets still retain the name thus gained, as Girdlergate, Spurriergate, Fetter Lane, and Tanner Row. At the opening of the century there was hardly a street which had not either a church, a gild house, or a monastic building. Monasteries covered an enormous space; there were the Dominicans in Toft Green, the Augustines in Coney Street, the Franciscans on the King's Staith, the Carmelites on Peaseholme Green, the hospital of St. Leonard on the banks of the river, and the priory of Holy Trinity in Micklegate. The gild of St. Christopher and St. George had their meeting-place in the gildhall, in Coney Street, the merchant adventurers in Fossigate, the merchant tailors in Aldwark.

The relations between the civic authorities and their representatives in parliament were generally cordial. The correspondence between the burgesses and mayor of York does not bear out the theory that the direct interference of the represented with the representatives is a nineteenth-century development. The mayor, having heard that the two members were not good friends, wrote an indignant remonstrance, pointing out that the weal of the city would never be compassed if it were entrusted to men who would not subordinate their private feelings to the cause of the city.

<sup>61</sup> *Eboracum*, p. 79.

<sup>62</sup> Davies, *Walks through York*, p. 188.

The two offenders returned to York soon after the receipt of the letter, but failed to pay their respects to the mayor at once. At the next council meeting it was agreed

that for soo muche as M<sup>r</sup> Walson & Mr. Hall citizens of this last parliament at their home return to this citie did not immediately come to my lord mayor according to civilitie and ancient custome shall pay therfur 5<sup>l</sup> apeece.<sup>63</sup>

The fine was afterwards remitted and cordial relations seem to have been restored, for at a meeting in the common chamber the same year the mayor proposed that 'considering the derth of all things necessary,' the burgesses of the city should have '6/8 a peece the day for the accustomed diett of theymselves they men and horses.' Miles Cook, who more than once had figured as the upholder of economy and liberty, and who was head of the common council, refused to consent, urging that 'in avoyding of a president hereafter it would be better if at their return it be thought reasonable to have the rest paid in the name of a rewarde.' The mayor refusing to yield, Miles, having told him that 'he was not worthy to sytt on the bench if he be ageynst the comon wele,' was committed to ward, and the burgesses got their increased pay.<sup>64</sup>

The part played by women in the records is not attractive. They generally appear as suppliants for charity, as criminals to be driven from the city for evil conduct, or as defendants in libel cases. Drake gives various customs peculiar to York.

There is a custome in the citie that the husband may give his lands which are of his own purchase to his wife, there is also a custom that if the wife do not claim her rights within a year and a day after the death of her husband she shall be barred. The custome of the city of York is likewise in the city that after debts and funeral expenses paid the wife shall have the third part of the husband's goods.<sup>65</sup>

The lady mayoress, as the first lady in the city, played an important part in dispensing civic hospitality. In January 1556

after the accounts of the late lord mayor had been examined, he was disallowed £12 .. 10. for the amount of a quarter's salary for two reasons, first, for that on his first entry he did not keep house as he ought to have done, and secondly for that the lady his wife did not wear a French bonnet for the worship of the city.<sup>66</sup>

One entry in the records shows that in some things the sixteenth-century woman was not far behind her of the nineteenth.

And for so much as it apereth that isabel Warwicke hathe skylle in the scyence of surgery and hath done good therein it is therefore agreed by thes presens that she uppou her good behaviour shall use the same

<sup>63</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 5 Eliz. xxiii. f. 45.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 4 Eliz. xxiii. f. 33.

<sup>65</sup> Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 216.

<sup>66</sup> Davies, *Walks through York*, p. 188.

scyence within the cite without let of annie of the surgeons of the same.<sup>67</sup>

When the authorities were making strenuous efforts to induce the people to attend the parish church, they found the women more difficult to deal with than the men, for of fifty-nine cases brought before the mayor forty-three were women.<sup>68</sup> Even in the sixteenth century a certain amount of jealousy of women's labour seems to have existed, for the weavers' gild enacted 'that there shall no man of the said craft lerne his wif his doughter or any woman to weve in theyr sayd craft under payne of xx'.<sup>69</sup>

The inhabitants of York were always a pleasure-loving, hospitable people, and made the visit of any royal or illustrious person the excuse for general feasting and rejoicing. Early in the century the Lady Margaret, the eldest daughter of Henry VII and wife of the ill-fated James IV of Scotland, visited the city, accompanied by 500 persons, 'right noblely and richly appareled.' She was met by the sheriff of the city

in cremnsyn with an hundred persons on horseback in one clothyng honestly arraed and by Sir John Gilliot Knight of the Bath then beyng maior of the worshypfull cite in fyne cremynsen saton engraved havng a colar of gold of the Kings livery about his nek on horsbak his saddyl of velvet & his hors trapps of the same with gylt bullion, his fotemen in grene saton with the armes of the cite and his owne armes, the recorder and aldermen in skarlet on horsbak theyr sadylls covered with fyne cloth & bordered with black velvet. Theyr trapps of the same with gylt bolyn the xxiv. in cremnsyn on fote & the crafts & comons honestly in theyr clothyng on fote to mete her grace at Mykelgate.

A handsome present 'of a standyng sylver pece with the armes of the cite, which pece was valowed to the somme of £12.. 16.. and an hundred angells of gold amounting to £33.. 6.. 8' were given to her. The lady was delighted with the reception and present. She thanked the mayor 'with a cheerful & goodly countenance,' and said—

My lord mayor and yo<sup>r</sup> brethren and all the hole cite of York I thank you hertely of yo<sup>r</sup> grete kyndnesse & yo<sup>r</sup> grete p'sent which godes grace I shall ever endevo<sup>r</sup>e to luffe you and this city the dayes of my liff and I shall showe to the Kings grace my father the grete kyndnesse that you have done to me.<sup>70</sup>

Queen Margaret visited York again some years later, and was then presented with several articles less valuable but more characteristic of the city—40 pennyworth of 'maynebrede in skilops, white wyne & rede, white claret, malmsey ypcras,' 'of evy of them a galon,'

<sup>67</sup> 'York. Corp. Min.' 14 Eliz. xxv. f. 15.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 18 Eliz. xxvi. f. 68.

<sup>69</sup> A collection of gild regulations in the gildhall, f. 127.

<sup>70</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 19 Hen. VII, ix. f. 6.

and 'six gret pykes laide affore her grace upon a shet qwyke lepyng affore her which she thankfully received sayng yt was a goodly presaunt, & she praysed the Mayne brede.'<sup>71</sup> The following day the queen went by water to the Pyke Garth and Sir John Carre 'maid to hir grace and his company a gret Banket, both of flesshe and fysshe.'<sup>72</sup> A fish dinner seems to have been a favourite way of showing hospitality, for in 1522 the corporation invited Lord Roos, warden of the east marches, to dine with them at the Pyke Garths, a private fish garth belonging to the city. Davies quotes the bill of fare, with the price of each article affixed, from the 'chamberlayne's' accounts.

	£	s.	d.
Six pikes . . . . .	1	11	
2 Trenches . . . . .		8	4
2 Turbot . . . . .		1	10
Congereels . . . . .		1	6
1 Bret <sup>73</sup> . . . . .			10
2 Keelyngs . . . . .		1	4
5 Lings . . . . .			8
Eels . . . . .		1	10
Salteels . . . . .		8	0
Salmon . . . . .		4	0
3 lbs of Almonds } . . . . .		1	2
2 lbs of Rice } . . . . .			
Spices . . . . .		3	6
Bread . . . . .		4	8
Cooks services . . . . .			8
Servants for fetohing and carrying . . . . .	5	4	7 <sup>4</sup>

The great poverty and decay into which the city had fallen made the commonalty regard this lavish hospitality with discontent. Unable to see that the decay was the result of a great many far-reaching causes, which were at work over the whole of England, they attributed it to some fault of those in whose hands the city's welfare was placed. For some time their anger at the deeds of the civic authorities had been smouldering, but in 1593 it burst into flames. They declared to the mayor and his brethren that they were determined to have redress. The struggle between their sense of injustice and their sense of duty to the city's governors is apparent in each line of their remonstrance.

My lord it is not unknowne that dyverse tymes we have putte up unto you dyverse bylles concernyng the comon wele of this city and so small respect hath beyn gyven unto theym that wee see no reformation to so mych that for lakke of good order among you and yor brethren the citie is so far in decaie and in so grete dette as wee thinke yere is noon of the

<sup>71</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 7 Hen. VIII, x. f. 84.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 7 Hen. VIII, x. f. 84.

<sup>73</sup> Breat, a kind of turbot: Halliwell.

<sup>74</sup> Davies, *Walks through York*, appendix.

comoners of this citie able to bere the chardge wherefor of necessity we be compelled to bespeak yor lordship and all yor brethren to look upon thes artycles followyng and if they seem to you good & laudable for the comon profet then we desyre you that they may incontintently be putte in executon and if they or any of them be thought that they be not for the comon wele we desyre you to holpe to reforme them, when thus my lord & masters we perceive that in times past this citie was in grete prosperitie and the rent of this citie did amount to a great somme with many other profetts theyn the commons of this citie for so much as they desyred that the mayre of this citie shuld kepe a goodly howse and meyke goode chere to suche strangers as come to the citie they of good lovyng mynd did gyve to the mayre of this citie towardes his chardge sum moore some less lykewyse as they thought he had deserved in keypyng of his hows and in other good doying for the comon wele unto so myche that nowe of layt and of long tyme of contynnance the mayor had had every yere of the chambre 4<sup>li</sup> onlesse annie defaute hath been founde in his hows-keepyng for that he hais yefore dyverse tymes beyn syrved to such sum as for that defawte by his brethren was thought conveyent—which 4<sup>li</sup> and other vain expensis hais beyn oon of the causes of the great decaille of this citie whereupon it was agreed 'by a full counsail in the hole voyce of the sayd comalte' that the mayor should have 'no more fee of the comon chambre but onely 20 pounds unto suche tyme that the comon chambre be brought forth of dette,' and the maier was no longer 'to maik annie sumptuous and costly feaste to his brethren in lent season nor to the Kyng Justice of assize nor annie other wyse but at his owne pleasor as shall seeme hym beste,' and the Comon Chambre shall beere no coste of the Mayor and his brethren of Corpus Christi day.<sup>75</sup>

The remonstrance does not seem to have been very effectual, for the presents and the feastings still continued. The institution of the council of the north in 1586 introduced a new element into the social life of the city. The lord president constantly received costly gifts, and civic banquets were held in his honour. At first the hospitality seems to have been all on one side, but the earl of Huntingdon, who was lord president in 1561, entertained the mayor and corporation more than once. The city records bear witness to his generosaity.

My l. president hath bestowed on my l. mayor and aldermen of the cytie at York to bucks to maik merie withal that the same bucks shall be eaten on Tewesdie next at the howse of Frances Hynche by my L. mayor aldermen Sherrffs xxiiii and chamberlaynes and all their ladies and wiffs.<sup>76</sup>

Venison feasts were a common festivity at this time. The earl of Cumberland, the captain of the city's militia, annually sent two bucks for the use of the mayor and his brethren; from his letter the custom seems to have been of long duration.

<sup>75</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 24 Hen. VIII, xi. f. 140.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 24 Eliz. xxvii

And where you have heretofore demanded of my lorde and grand-father and my lord father to have two tymes in the year venyson of them as of a custume and that nowe evenn at thys tyme I am entered into my lands I have sent you venyson not as dewtie but for that I wold you wyll as much as in me is not have the conducting of yo<sup>r</sup> bodies but yo<sup>r</sup> hertie luffe & favo<sup>r</sup>.<sup>77</sup>

Even in the midst of the Scotch war,<sup>78</sup> when the people of York were expecting the Scotch at their very gates, they found time to send the earl of Hertford, general of the army, a present.

	s.	d.
Mayne brede maid in skallops to the some of . . .	6	8
Thre great pyks in ypcras thre gallons		
Thre gals red & whyte claryt		
In sugar two loyves		
iiii lbs bysketts iii lbs caraways		
iiii lbs comfetts <sup>79</sup>		

Mayne bread is seldom absent from the gifts to distinguished strangers during the sixteenth century. Davies says it was 'a delicate sort of bread or cake made for persons of superior rank.'<sup>80</sup> He continues that in 1595 such a formidable rival had appeared in the form 'of spiced' cakes

that the corporation interfered, and ordered the mayne bread bakers to bake every Friday morning ten shillings' worth of mayne bread, and if it were not sold by five o'clock in the afternoon the lord mayor, sheriffs, aldermen, and twenty-four were to buy and pay for it.<sup>81</sup>

But long before this an order had been issued that 'no maner of person of this citie shall by any spiced cakes in Saynt Marie gate or else where on payne of forfeiting xx<sup>d</sup> as often as they do so.'

The fish dinners and venison feasts were chiefly patronised by the mayor and his brethren; but York was far from allowing the civic authorities to monopolise the pleasures. In 1570 the gentlemen of York put in a petition

to have a cokkepytt mayd in this citie that they myght resorte thereunto for their pastime and to spend their money.

The council considering that it would be

a comoditie to this citie and cause much money to be spent bothe amonge vytellers and other craftsmen

consented.<sup>82</sup> Throughout the whole century the records are full of regulations against those who use unlawful games. In 1531 a very harsh measure was passed against the pleasure-seeking labourer.

<sup>77</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 84 Hen. VIII, xvi. f. 19.

<sup>78</sup> Proude, *History of England*, iv. 109.

<sup>79</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 86 Hen. VIII, xvii. f. 107.

<sup>80</sup> Davies, *Walks through York*, appendix.

<sup>81</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 10 Elis. xxiv.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*



... the unthrifty rewle & dameano<sup>r</sup> that is nightly used by powre labrers of this cite to ye evyll example the whyche usyd ayle howses and their playd at dyes cards and other unlawfull games against the forme of dyverse statuts in yt behalff provyded by the said presens yt from now furth all ye sayd laborers both fre and foreign shalbe within thayre owne hows by eight of the clok on work dayes at nyght and so to continue and of holy dayes at nyght by nyne of the clok & so to continue & whiche of the said laborers as presummyth to do the contrary shalbe punnysshed by imprisonment of theyr bodies.<sup>63</sup>

But towards the end of the century the joyous spirit of the early Elizabethan era had passed and the country was settling down to the sternness of puritanism. Nowhere did the spirit die harder than in York. The last ten years of the sixteenth century were marked by a struggle between the people, bent on retaining the pageants, processions, and interludes, and the civic authorities, bent on suppressing them and on substituting for the city players a city preacher. A prime mover in this effort for the suppression of pleasure was Archbishop Grindal. His interference with the gild displays caused much popular indignation, and he induced the mayor to put down a peculiar local custom dating, it is said, from the Conquest. His letter to the lord mayor contains an emphatic condemnation of the custom.

Whereas there hath beyn heretofore a very rude and barbarous custom mayntayned in this cite and in no other cite or towne of this realme to our knowledge that yerely uppon St Thomas day before Christmas two disguised persons called Yule & Yules wif shuld ryde through the cite very undecently & uncomely drawyng grete concurses of people after them to gaise after comyttyng other enormyties for somuch as the said disguised rydyng and concourse besydes other inconvenynces tendeth also to the prophaning of that day appoynted to holy uses also with drawyng of gret multitudes of people from devyne service and sermons we have thought good by thes presents to will and requyre you and nevertheless in the quenes Ma<sup>ties</sup> name by vertue of her highnesses comyssion for causes directed straitly to us and others within the provynce of York that ye take order that no such rydyng of Yule and Yules wif be from hansfurth.<sup>64</sup>

EDM. EBOR.

This was agreed to by the council, who further showed their zeal for the moral improvement of the citizens by passing an act to restrain the freedom of wedding festivities.

And it was also agreed by thes presens that none of the Aldermen Sheriffes or xxiv shall come at annie weddyng of any person or persons where annie bryde bedde shalbe maid uppon payne evyone offenyng in the same to forfeit for every offens fortie shylyngs. and that none of the cooks of this cite shall dresse any wilde fowle at annie such weddyng

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 22 Hen. VIII, xi. f. 101.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* xxiv., quoted in Davies, *Municipal Records, Fifteenth Century*, appendix.

upon payne to forfait for evy such offens XL<sup>s</sup>. to the comon chambre of this citie.<sup>85</sup>

The time was indeed past when

More, Sandys, and Denny passed the joke,  
And bluff King Hal the curtain drew,  
And Katharine's hand the stocking threw.

From the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century the streets of York were constantly filled with an eager crowd, watching the processions or listening to the familiar words of the mystery or paternoster or crede play. The most celebrated plays were those performed by the craft gilds on Corpus Christi Day. The town council have in their possession a book called the 'Liber diversorum Memorandorum Civitatem Ebor tangentium,' in which, under the date 1415, a list of fifty-seven plays, with the different crafts which undertook to bring them out, is given. The plays themselves have been rescued from oblivion by Miss L. Toulmin Smith. They are of slight literary value, though they are not disfigured by ribaldry or irreverence, and to a sixteenth-century audience some of the situations would appeal strongly; for the religious frenzy of the Reformation had left some slight warmth behind it, and 'the world to come' was a reality to them. They probably keenly enjoyed the groans and howls of Lucifer *diabolus in inferno*—

Owte, owte, harrowe!  
Helples, slyke hote at es here!  
Whare es my kynde become so cumly & clere—

and the sight of Lucifer thrust violently down from the higher to the lower stage would afford them intense amusement.

The wails of 'the synfull kaytiffs,' who at the judgment day could do nothing but wring their hands and weep, afforded scope for the actors to display their tragic powers. Each craft brought out its own play. Though the municipal authorities exercised a general supervision, there was a more or less fanciful resemblance between the craft and the play. Thus the 'shipwrightes' play was 'Deus premuniens Noe facere archam de lignis leuigatis;' the 'orfeuers, goldbeters & monemakers,' 'Tres Reges venientes ab oriente.' The plays differ considerably in length, the longest, the 'Dream of Pilate's Wife,' played by the 'tapiters and couchers,' having 546 lines, while the innholders' play, 'The Coronacon of owre Ladie,' has only 45 lines. Still, although the plays began at five in the morning and lasted until nine, the whole 51 plays could have been performed on; probably some of them were not spoken, only performed in dumb show. The movable two-decked stage was taken from place to place, according to the arrangement made with

<sup>85</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 21 Eliz xxvii. f. 122.

the civic authorities. They assembled on Pageant Green, and proceeded to Trinity Priory, where the first play was acted. In 1569 we find an entry—

& nowe was appoynted places for hearing Corpus Christi play on Whitsun Tewesday.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) At trinitie gail                      | (7) At the Common Hall gail                 |
| (2) Ageynst M <sup>r</sup> Heweson's Hows | (8) Abowte Chris. Willings hows             |
| (3) Abowte St Johns                       | (9) Mynster gait                            |
| (4) At M <sup>r</sup> Parkis dore         | (10) At M <sup>r</sup> Barnards hows        |
| (5) At Owse brig                          | (11) At M <sup>r</sup> Huton's              |
| (6) At M <sup>r</sup> Appleyards          | (12) At the lord mayors place <sup>86</sup> |

The 13th and 14th places are not appointed; probably no one had applied for them, for the plays were only performed before those houses the owners of which were willing to pay for the privilege.

Provyded that if the said persones will not pay for the said place as the lord mayor & chamberlaynes shall thynke requisite that further order therin shall be taken at dyscreton of my l. mayor.

The prices differ considerably; the lord mayor and his brethren pay nothing. The house at the gate of the gildhall in Coney Street was always let with the proviso that the civic authorities and their wives should have the right of watching the pageants from the windows. Davies quotes from the 'chamberlayne's' accounts prices varying from 13*d.* to 3*s.* 4*d.*<sup>87</sup> Could it be that where a short play was performed the payment was smaller? The craftsmen did not always appreciate the honour of bringing forth their pageant. In 1505

John Langton draper came tofore the said presens & shewed yat ther wer but 111 persons & ye pagent of theyr craftte is so costly upon Corpus Christi day [that he asks] that every person either taillor or hoseer that cutteth or selleth cloth by retaille should yerely be contributory to the bringing forth of ye drapor pagent.<sup>88</sup>

Toulmin Smith,<sup>89</sup> following Drake, confuses the procession of the gild of Corpus Christi with the pageant plays on Corpus Christi Day; but the procession and the plays were perfectly distinct, in the hands of different people, and took place on different days. Early in the fifteenth century an ordinance passed the council that the Corpus Christi plays should be played on a Wednesday, and the procession of Corpus Christi should be made on the day itself; but the regulation was never enforced, the only change made being that the plays were held on one day, the procession on the next, the craft gilds still persisting in exhibiting their pageants on the day of

<sup>86</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 11 Eliz. xxiv. f. 139.

<sup>87</sup> Davies, *Municipal Records*, appendix.

<sup>88</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 20 Hen. VII, ix. f. 25.

<sup>89</sup> *English Gilds*, p. 141.

the festival.<sup>90</sup> Evidently the pageants were made a pretext for a great deal of general holiday-making and amusement, and the authorities interfered in vain.

And for so muche as the lait easte of Corpus Christi is not nowe celebrate & kept holyday as was accustomed it is therefore agreed that on Corpus Christi day my lord mayor and alderman shall in making the proclamation go abowte in seemly sad apparrell & not in scarlet.<sup>91</sup>

The gild of Corpus Christi was established in 1408, in order to do honour by a procession to the feast of that name. The gild was extremely popular; during its brief existence of a century and a half 16,850 persons, including Richard, afterwards Richard III, numerous archbishops, bishops, and abbots, were members.<sup>92</sup> The gild was abolished in 1547 by the act of dissolution, but the hospital of St. Thomas, to which it was united, succeeded in retaining possession of the estate for nearly thirty years longer. In 1582 the house, lands, and tenement of the gild were handed over to the mayor and commonalty of York, 'to be ymployed for the benefit of the poor.' The procession was extremely magnificent. It assembled at the gate of the Holy Trinity priory, in Micklegate. The parochial clergy in their surplices marched first; they were followed by the master of the gild in silk cope, attended by two clergy; six keepers of the gild with silk stoles guarded the shrine, white wands in their hands. The shrine itself had been given to the gild in 1449 by the bishop of Hereford, and every year its beauty and value had been enhanced by the gifts of some fanatical devotee or penitent sinner.

The said shryne is all gilt, havynge six ymages gylded, with an ymage of the birth of our lord of mother of perle and 88 small ymages ennamyllled . . . a steple with a wether cokke, a sylver belle and 14 crucifixes, the value of the whole was £210 . 18 . 2.<sup>93</sup>

The shrine was followed by people singing, and only those of the clergy who had good voices were allowed to join in the music. Then came a crowd of unofficial people bearing banners, crosses, and tapers. Then the civic dignitaries followed, and the officers and members of the crafts, bearing torches. The procession does not seem to have been very popular with the laity, for they were constantly being fined for neglecting to bear their torches in the procession. Although the gild had nothing to do with the pageants exhibited by the crafts, it had a play of its own, which was bequeathed to the gild by the author, a priest of St. William's chapel, on condition that it should be played once every ten years. The play seems to have been exhibited instead of the mystery plays,

<sup>90</sup> Davies, *Municipal Records*.

<sup>91</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' 8 Eliz. vol. xxiii. f. 9.

<sup>92</sup> *Corpus Christi Gild, York*, Ed. Skaife (Surtees Society), preface.

<sup>93</sup> *Archaeologia*, x. 469.

so it must have been of considerable length. Davies suggests that the subject was a representation of the several events as they occur in the creed, the creation, the nativity, the crucifixion, the communion of saints. Unfortunately the play is lost. It was sent in 1568 by the master and brethren of St. Thomas's hospital to Dr. Hutton, the dean of York, to be examined as to its fitness for representation, who replied—

I have perused the books which yo<sup>r</sup> brethren sent me, and as I find manie things that I much like because of th'antiquities, so see I many things that I cannot allow because their be disagreeing from the sinceritie of the gospel, the which things, yf they should either be altogether cancelled or altered into other maters the whole drift of the play shuld be altered . . . surelie merie advice shuld be that it should not be plaid.<sup>94</sup>

The book was not heard of again. The gild of our Lord's Prayer, to which Wycliffe refers, had long been in existence; it consisted of more than 100 members and their wives. It did not escape the dissolution, but the play book remained in the hands of the master of St. Antony's gild, and in 1558 it was performed instead of the pageant plays. In 1572 the mayor sent for the book 'to be reformed;' it fell into Archbishop Grindal's hands, and we need hardly say was heard of no more. The citizens made various strenuous but ineffectual efforts to recover it.<sup>95</sup>

When the Corpus Christi plays were discontinued, as 'savouring of superstition,' other shows took their place. 'Midsomer Evyn' was devoted to a show of armour, and 'one John Grafton schole master' wrote 'certayne compiled speeches for the occasion.' Fortunately Grafton's bill of charges has been preserved, from which we gain some idea of the properties used by the actors.

A crowne for the angell  
Spangells for his shirte  
the mending of the queene crowne  
paintinge of the childe one of the fures bare  
with some other trifells 4/-  
5 visards we borrowed and with rayne were rotte in peeces 4/-.<sup>96</sup>

Plays were often performed in the common chamber by companies of players belonging to the queen or various noblemen. They received in payment sums varying from 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* to 10*s.*

'Players of Interludes nowe come & comyng from henceforth to this citie shall play but twice in the comon hall of this citie, viz once before the l. maior and the ald'men & the other before the Comons.'<sup>97</sup> Bear-baiting was a common amusement; it gene-

<sup>94</sup> Davies, *Municipal Records*, app.

<sup>95</sup> *York Mystery Plays*, L. Toulmin Smith, *Introd.* p. xxx; 'York Corp. Min. xxx. f. 17.

<sup>96</sup> 'Chamberlaynes Accounts,' 1585, quoted by Davies.

<sup>97</sup> 'York Corp. Min.' xxx. f. 95.

rally took place on Peaseholme Green, and, by an order made in the council chamber, all bulls had to be baited before they were killed. The Midsummer shows were very popular. Robert Peacock, who refused to attend, was fined 3s. 4d., and was committed to prison for his reply: 'I have boght a halbert which cost me xx' and it is so moche dearer by the 34/ which I have nowe paid, and I will selle it & never come at that shewe whil I live fine me 20<sup>li</sup> and ye will.'<sup>98</sup> The time had not yet come when the maypole dance and the Christmas mince pies were regarded as aliurements of the evil one, and York was not a place where the holder of such opinions was popular. The people of York remained faithful to their pageants and shows when they had been put down over the greater part of England.

The more the York records are studied the clearer it appears 'that not only we who prate of rights and wrongs have loved the people well:' the mayor and his brethren had onerous duties to perform; these they performed well. The laggard brother, who refused to attend the meeting, was fined; the cowardly brother, who fled from the plague, was forced to return to his duty; the slovenly brother had to mend his ways. Ignorant and prejudiced probably they were, but they had sufficient sense to avoid the gloomy month of November and chose the bright summer weather for the display of their pageants, sufficient sympathy with the suffering of the poor to make some rude attempts at sorting their paupers, and sufficient economic judgment to make their relief works remunerative. Retrogression rather than progress is the keynote to the industry of York during the century, but in social and municipal matters it stood *facile princeps* amongst the towns of England.

MAUD SELLERS.

<sup>98</sup> 'York. Corp. Min.' xxx. f. 95.