

PREFACE.

THE title of this book is built upon the assumption that humour is a sense of incongruity, not that there was anything specially humorous in the affairs of '37 beyond that which arose from the crudeness of the times.

A medium between the sacrifice of detail attendant on compilation, and the loss of effect in a whole picture through too close application of the historic microscope, has been attempted. True proportion is difficult to compass at short range, yet the motives, ideas and occurrences which produced the animosities leading to the Rebellion were the inheritance, the special property, of the men who lived then ; and of them few remain. To those who do and who have so kindly given their reminiscences special thanks are due. The works of the documentary and the philosophic historian lie on the shelves ready to one's hand ; but those who were "Loyalist" and "Rebel" are quickly dropping into that silence where suffering and injustice, defeat and victory, meet in common oblivion.

Like lichens on rocks, myths have grown about that time ; but the myth is worth preserving for the sake of the germ of truth which gave it birth. Historians sometimes tell the truth, not always the whole truth, certainly never anything but the truth, and nothing is to be despised which gives a peep at the life as it really was. For complexion of the times, the local colour of its action, there can be nothing like the tale of the veteran, of the white-haired, dim-eyed survivor, whose quaking voice tells out the story of that eventful day. A page from Pepys or Bellasys lifts a curtain upon what really took place when the historic essence fails ; then some morsels of secret