

PREFACE

vii

contribution to a branch of history that has been rather neglected.

I have not attempted anything in the way of research. As a fairly miscellaneous reader, my plan has been simply to select a route and to go along it gossiping of what memories I have of the imaginary men and women connected with the places we pass by the way. It was wrong of me to allow divers sometime real people haunting the same ground to intrude upon our visionary company, but I have done so partly for the sake of contrast, and partly because I am equally interested in them and could not resist the temptation to let them come in. If I have gone on any principle at all it has been one of including what appeals to me and leaving out what does not. The banks that stand in Lombard Street are so many dead and unattractive piles of stone so far as I am concerned, but if I knew which particular one Thackeray had in mind when he sent Becky Sharp in a coach to Lombard Street to cash the cheque Lord Steyne had given her I should take an interest in that bank. Even before I was aware that Shakespeare lodged for several years in a house that has been replaced by a tavern at the corner of Silver Street and Monkwell Street, I had a sort of sentimental regard for that spot, because Ben Jonson in his *Staple of News* puts Pennyboy, Senr., to live "in Silver Street, the region of money, a good seat for