

**THE EXCHEQUER IN
THE
TWELFTH CENTURY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649130061

The Exchequer in the twelfth century by Reginald L. Poole

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REGINALD L. POOLE

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HENRY FROWDE, M.A.
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK
TORONTO AND MELBOURNE

THE EXCHEQUER
IN THE
TWELFTH CENTURY

THE FORD LECTURES
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
IN MICHAELMAS TERM, 1911

By REGINALD L. POOLE, M.A., LL.D.

KEEPER OF THE ARCHIVES
AND FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE.

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1912

College
Library

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1028

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PREFACE

TEN years ago I gave a course of lectures on the *Dialogus de Scaccario*, and the book interested me so much that I determined to remodel my materials so as to form a treatise on the subject. My preparations, however, went on slowly, and it was not until I retired from College work in the summer of 1910 that I had leisure to advance them very much. My election as Ford's Lecturer in English History, in November of that year, gave me the opportunity of planning in a different form the book which I had contemplated. The form was necessarily that of a course of lectures; but the subject was not the Dialogue but the Exchequer itself. I have printed the lectures substantially as they were delivered in last October and November; but I have enlarged the introduction to the first lecture into a separate chapter, and I have added a supplementary lecture, which, though prepared, there was not time to deliver. Hence the six lectures now appear as eight chapters.

The form of a lecture will explain and partly excuse the limitations and defects of the work. In a lecture a certain amount of repetition is unavoidable: it is necessary also to avoid

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obscurity of statement; one must not introduce reserves and qualifications overmuch. I have no doubt that I have made many rash assertions and not a few technical mistakes. But I have sought before all things to be plain and free from ambiguity in expression. It has also resulted that a great deal of illustrative detail has been omitted. Part of this has indeed been supplied by means of notes. But a large area has been designedly left untouched. I have considered the Exchequer as a machine at work and have tried to explain how it worked. This was all that I could attempt within the limitations of a short course. The other side of the subject, the sources from which the payments came, I have treated summarily. To have entered at all usefully into such matters as the assessment of Danegeld or of scutage would have required an apparatus of detailed calculations which could not practically have been given in lecture; and it would besides have distracted attention from my main subject.

Confining myself in principle to the twelfth century, while I have briefly indicated the continuity of various offices down to modern times, I have avoided saying anything of the more complicated system of controlling the business of the Exchequer which arose when the practice of enrolling the Chancery records led to the making of estreats and counterwrits, or of the specialization of accounts which began under Edward I.

Nor have I entered upon the wide field occupied by the remembrancers in subsequent times, though I have given reason for believing that their offices were already in existence. Until the memoranda rolls are accessible in print it will hardly be possible to survey with profit the work which fell to the remembrancers' departments.

It will prevent misunderstanding if I mention that in my frequent quotations from the Dialogue I never profess to give a strict translation. I render freely and usually abridge. My obligations to the editors of the Oxford edition of that work are, I hope, sufficiently implied in what I have said of it in my opening chapter, which also explains the nature of my indebtedness to other writers. But I should like to thank Messrs. C. G. Crump, Charles Johnson, and C. Hilary Jenkinson, of the Public Record Office, for their extreme kindness in answering questions which I addressed to them at various times. Had I ventured to ask any of them to look over my proof sheets, I am sure the text would have been freed from many errors. Nor should I omit to express my gratitude to the Secretary to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for the readiness with which he arranged for my convenience that my lectures should all be in print before they were delivered.

R. L. P.

January 1912.