

**CPOCHS OF CHUCCH
DISTORP. A
HISTORY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**

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Cpochs of Chucch Distorp. A History of the University of Oxford by G. C. Brodrick & Mandell Creighton

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G. C. BRODRICK & MANDELL CREIGHTON

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Epochs of Church History

EDITED BY THE

REV. MANDELL CREIGHTON, M.A.



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A HISTORY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

BY THE
George Charles
HON. G. C. BRODRICK, D.C.L.

WARDEN OF MERTON COLLEGE

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1886

PREFACE.

THE present volume is an attempt to present in a succinct form the history of an University which, however uncertain its origin, is among the oldest institutions in Europe. The result of such a task must needs fall very far short of perfection, and it is probably a just appreciation of its difficulties which has deterred abler historians from undertaking it. The voluminous remains of Anthony Wood contain a mine of precious records, but they are singularly ill-arranged, and his narrative breaks off long before the end of the seventeenth century. The great monograph of Father Denifle, now in course of publication, on the early history of European Universities, promises to be an exhaustive discussion of its subject; but its enormous bulk and unwieldy construction will repel most English readers, while it deals only with the rudimentary development of academical

constitutions. The well-known compilation of Huber shows considerable research and grasp of the subject, but it follows no historical order, and is disfigured by much irrelevance and prejudice. The publications of the Oxford Historical Society have already placed documents hitherto scarcely accessible within the reach of ordinary students, but it will be long before the series can be completed. All these works, as well as the valuable 'Munimenta Academica' of Mr. Anstey, Professor Burrows' 'Visitors' Register,' and many other treatises of less note, have been freely consulted by me. I have also made use of the Merton College Register, which has been kept with few interruptions since the year 1482, and of other MSS. documents in the possession of my own College. But I have not thought it well to encumber the pages of so compendious a narrative with constant references to authorities. My principal aim has been to exhibit the various features and incidents of University history, age by age, in their due proportion; dwelling more upon broad and undisputed facts than upon comparatively obscure points which are the natural field of antiquarian speculation or criticism. Guided by a similar principle, I have not treated all periods of University history with equal detail. Thus, I have devoted a large share of space to the period of the

Civil Wars, during which the University played a great part in the national drama ; while I have passed lightly over the reign of George III., when the University had not only lost all political importance, but had forfeited its reputation as a place of the highest education and learning. In the selection of topics from so vast a mass of materials, I have sought to preserve the continuity of events, so far as possible, rather than to produce a series of essays on special aspects of University life. I have deviated, however, from this method in one or two instances, such as the chapter on Oxford politics in the eighteenth century, and that on the Neo-Catholic Revival. In several of the earlier chapters, and in those on Oxford in the present century, I have borrowed the substance of passages from my own volume, 'Memorials of Merton College,' and from articles on recent University reforms contributed by myself to various periodicals. If I have succeeded in bringing within a single view the successive phases of development through which the University has passed in the course of seven hundred years, and in paving the way for a more comprehensive and detailed history, the object of this little volume will have been attained.

GEORGE C. BRODRICK.

