

**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE.  
COLLEGE HISTORIES.  
JESUS COLLEGE**

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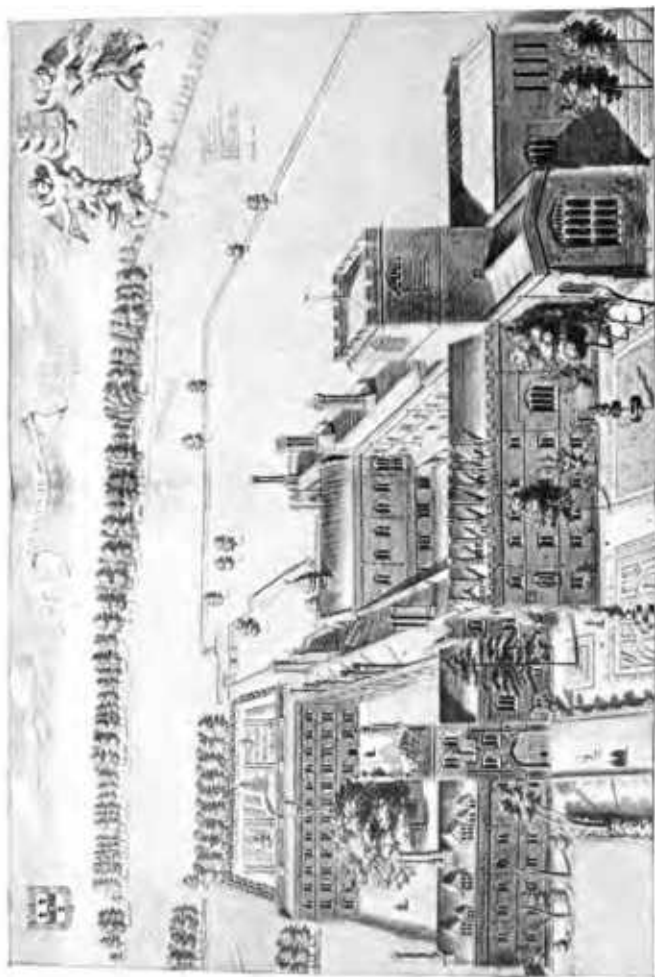
**ARTHUR GRAY**

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VIEW BY LOGGAN (c. 1688)

University of Cambridge

COLLEGE HISTORIES

JESUS COLLEGE

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

THE writer of a College history must cut his coat according to the measure of his cloth. A knowledge of the conditions of his task should make the historian of Jesus take a modest view of its importance ; for, though the tree sprung from Alcock's acorn has now grown to some size and not a little vigour, for the best part of its existence it was overshadowed by taller neighbours in the academic grove. In fact, except in some short periods of unwonted prosperity, Jesus was, until recent times, emphatically a 'small college,' low in revenues, and in numbers competing with Peterhouse and Magdalene rather than with Caius or Christ's. Nor does the College figure much in the annals of the University. A survey of its history from the first leaves the impression that it generally kept quietly out of the main channel of University affairs. Geographical position may have had something to do with this aloofness, but I think that more is to be attributed to the fact that the shadows of Ely have been a little repressive to vigour and spontaneity in Jesus. The College of Cranmer and Bancroft, of Laurence Sterne and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, may certainly claim to have contributed, in proportion to its size, at least as many

names as any other to the roll of famous men whom Cambridge has nurtured. But the greatest of Jesus men cracked the academic shell early in life, and took no considerable part in shaping the destinies of the University. Jesus has had no Fisher or Parker, no Cheke or Bentley. It never marched in advance of the rest of the University, and it produced no leaders of forlorn hopes or confessors in unpopular causes. Except in the two periods of the Great Rebellion and the French Revolution, there are not many incidents in the annals of the College to relieve them of monotony. But my book is principally for Jesus men, and they, it may be hoped, will find matter of interest in details which are of small concernment to the general reader. On the other hand, the materials for illustrating the domestic life of the College are, I think, exceptionally ample. In sketching the daily lives and changing manners of 'dons' and undergraduates in successive periods I have endeavoured to give my subject more interest and continuity than was to be got by treating it as a bundle of biographies of minor celebrities.

Much of the matter contained in the chapter on the nunnery is taken from my *Priory of Saint Radegund*, published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in 1898. In that chapter I have given my reasons for intruding the subject in a College history. Here I would only add that I have ill accomplished my purpose if I have not made it clear in Chapter II. that the College of Alcock's design was to have been of a totally different plan from that of any other Cambridge college. His scheme for breathing the evangelizing spirit into the dry bones of monasticism had some promise of success

about it in 1496. The lapse of a generation made it a barren anachronism. But the monastic type remained far on into the history of the College, and leaves a trace of itself at this day. The undergraduate, as I have shown, scarcely got a footing in the place before the reign of Elizabeth; and the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century Jesus, relatively to its total endowment, is poor in foundation scholarships is in a principal degree due to Alcock's designed omission of the scholar from the society which he constructed on the monastic model. That this exceptional position of Jesus has not hitherto been recognised is to be ascribed to the circumstance that the earliest existing statutes of the College—those of Bishop Stanley, which, no doubt, were in their main features a re-enactment of Alcock's—unaccountably disappeared from observation for some generations. They have never been printed, and they exist in a single copy written in a hand of the eighteenth century. It has been assumed in all recent works on Cambridge that the earliest extant statutes of Jesus were the so-called West statutes, printed in *Documents relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge*; but the 'West' statutes are, as I have shown, of post-Reformation date.

To the Master and Fellows of my College are due my grateful thanks for committing the key of the muniment room from time to time to my custody with a liberality for which, I fear, they find no warrant in the statutes. To the Rev. Osmond Fisher, late Fellow and tutor, now Honorary Fellow of the College, I am much indebted for valuable information about times for which he is the sole living witness. And to Mr. C. J. B.