

**ENGLAND UNDER THE YORKISTS, 1460-
1485: ILLUSTRATED FROM
CONTEMPORARY SOURCES.
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON INTERMEDIATE
SOURCE-BOOKS OF HISTORY, NO. II**

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ILLUSTRATED FROM CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE.

THE general scope and object of the series of Intermediate Texts, of which the present is the second volume, have been indicated in the preface to Miss Dorothy Hughes's "Illustrations of Chaucer's England". The first object is to supply University students of history with some means of appreciating and understanding the materials out of which English history is, or should be, constructed; and the second is to provide a different if not a wider public with a sort of introductory library of English historical sources, particularly with a view to illustrating those periods which are commonly but erroneously supposed to be poor in original records. The two objects are not incompatible. There is no reason, apart from the limitations of editorial scholarship, why collections of sources intended for use in schools and colleges should be limited to extracts from printed authorities. There are materials as appropriate in manuscript as in print, far more abundant, and often more apt; and it is quite feasible, while catering primarily for the needs of junior students, to multiply the printed sources available for their elders.

"England under the Yorkists" does not make quite the same appeal to students of literature as "Illustrations of Chaucer's England". But for those in search of fresh historical truth it has greater attractions. The stereotyped commonplace that, with the decline of the Middle Ages, the sources of English history diminish in quantity and deteriorate in quality is no more than a hasty generalisation from the facts that the monastic chronicles, which form the bulk of the Rolls Series, dwindle, and that the Rolls Series still constitutes for many students the *ne plus ultra* of historical research. It would be as rational to think that the sources of English history grow worse in the eighteenth century because the golden age of political pamphleteering then passed away; and this, too, would have become a commonplace, did there exist a corpus of political pamphlets so comprehensive, and so exclusive of other sources, as the Rolls Series of chronicles. The decline of monastic historiography is a symptom of a general failure in outlook and intelligence in monastic orders; but it was accompanied by a wider development outside their walls which we call the Renaissance. The tree does not die because new buds sap the old leaves, and the withering of monastic records was followed by an efflorescence of other growths. Town chronicles supplant those of the monasteries, lay minds supersede ecclesiastical intelligence, and the activities of the State surpass those of the Church. All these intellectual phenomena, which

necessarily preceded the changes of the sixteenth century, left their mark on the fifteenth and produced fresh categories of historical material. Until, however, the New Monarchy had done its work, England remained locally-minded and English history a matter largely of local record. Hence the importance of those town chronicles, some of them unprinted and none of them collected into a body of historical evidence, upon which Miss Thornley has frequently drawn.

The bulk of historical material does not in fact diminish during this period. It changes its form and direction, but it rapidly increases as a whole, in spite of gaps caused by the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses; and its multifarious variety is exemplified in these pages. A striking instance of the neglect of materials is afforded by the Calendars of State Papers. Historians of the sixteenth century have drawn freely upon them, but mediævalists have apparently been under the impression that such sources throw no light upon any period prior to 1485, although the first volume of the Venetian Calendar has been in print for fifty years. There is more excuse for the neglect of the numerous MS. sources from which Miss Thornley has drawn much of her material. Their abundance makes the task of selection arduous; but few, even among specialists, will fail to find some fresh light on the Yorkists and their kingdom, and Miss Thornley has, in her "Brief Account of Sources," provided

students with better guidance than has hitherto been available for the Yorkist period.

This volume, like its predecessor, is not intended to supplant the teacher's comment or the student's thought; its purpose is to supply the teacher with material for his discourse and the student with food for historical reasoning. For help in interpreting this evidence they must have recourse to histories like the relevant volumes in Longmans' and Methuen's series, Ramsay's "Lancaster and York," the later chapters in Stubbs' "Constitutional History," and Gairdner's "Richard III," and introduction to the "Paston Letters". Every student should have at hand the "Index and Epitome" to the Dictionary of National Biography; and even those who possess the 'Dictionary' itself will find in these two hundred documents material for correcting and supplementing that monumental work.

A. F. POLLARD.

