
The letters contained in these volumes are derived chiefly from the ancient correspondence in the Public Record Office. They illustrate the political history of England during the growth of its liberties, and throw considerable light upon the personal history of Simon de Montfort. The affairs of France form the subject of many of them, especially in regard to the province of Gascony.


In the first two volumes is a History of England, from the death of Henry III. to the death of Henry V., by Thomas Walsingham, Preceptor of St. Albans. In the 3rd volume is a Chronicle of English History, attributed to William Rishanger, who lived in the time of Edward I.; an account of transactions attending the award of the kingdom of Scotland to John Balliol, 1291-1295, also attributed to William Rishanger, but on no sufficient ground; a short Chronicle of English History, 1295 to 1300, by an unknown hand; a short Chronicle of Edward III. of Wifredo, written in Anglia, with Annales Regnum Anglie, probably by the same hand; and fragments of three Chronicles of English History, 1295 to 1327. In the 4th volume is a Chronicle of English History, 1290 to 1296: Annales Edw. I., 1307 to 1327, by John de Trockelow, a monk of St. Albans, and a continuation of Trockelow's Annales, 1328, 1329, by Henry de Blanfords: a full Chronicle of English History, 1290 to 1329; and an account of the Benefactors of St. Albans, 793 to 1411, mainly compiled by Thomas Walsingham: with a Continuation. The 8th and 9th volumes, in continuation of the Annales, contain a Chronicle, probably by John Amundesham, a monk of St. Albans. The 10th and 11th volumes relate especially to the acts and proceedings of Abbots Whethamsted, Alban, and Wellingale, and may be considered as a memorial of the chief historical and domestic events during those periods. The 12th volume contains a compendious History of England to the reign of Henry V., and of Normandy in early times, also by Thomas Walsingham, and dedicated to Henry V.


The Chronicle of Evesham illustrates the history of that important monastery from its foundation by Ewain, about 606, to the year 1418. Its chief feature is an autobiography, which makes us acquainted with the inner daily life of a great abbey, such as but rarely has been recorded. Interpolated are many notices of general, personal, and local history.


Richard of Cirencester was a monk of Westminster, 1365-1400. His history, in four books, extends from 447 to 1066. He announces his intention of continuing it, but there is no evidence that he completed any more. This chronicle gives many charters in favour of Westminster Abbey, and a very full account of the lives and miracles of the saints, especially of Edward the Confessor, whose reign occupies the fourth book. A treatise on the Coronation, by William de Selsey, a monk of Westminster, fills book ii. 3. It was on this author that C. J. Bertram founded his forgery, De Situ Britanniae in 1717.


The "Year Books" are the earliest of our Law Reports. They contain matter not only of practical interest to lawyers in the present day, but also illustrative of almost every branch of history, while for certain philological purposes they hold a position absolutely unique.