

# Local Government

THE ENGLISH CITIZEN:  
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# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BY

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## PREFACE.

OUR political constitution rests for the most part on the unwritten customs of England, but our system of Local Government is almost entirely regulated by statute law, even to its minutest details. There are about 650 Acts, or fragments of Acts, of general application relating to local affairs. These public Acts are supplemented by some thousands of local and special Acts, which apply to particular towns or districts, and accumulate at the rate of about sixty a year. Our local legislation begins with the statute *De Officio Coronatoris*, passed in 1275, and ends for the present with the Divided Parishes Act of 1882. Between these terminal marks the various Acts are scattered up and down in wild confusion. The reader's journey through this dark valley of statutory dry bones must needs be a dull one. Writing law books is not a good literary training, and I have no power of enlivening the pilgrimage, or making the way seem picturesque. I have tried, however, to make the book as intelligible and accurate as the nature of the subject admits of. My difficulty is this:—Every principle that can be stated is liable to be obscured by a dense overgrowth of local exceptions. To attempt to go into local