

A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH LAW

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FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE END OF THE YEAR 1911

BY

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
FREDERIC WILLIAM MAITLAND

PREFACE

ABOUT ten years ago, Messrs. Methuen & Co. approached the author with a proposal for a History of English Law in one volume.

At the time when the approach was made, the author's time was deeply pledged in other directions ; and he doubted, also, whether the moment had arrived at which the state of available knowledge rendered such a work possible. He therefore suggested an application to his friend Dr. Holdsworth.

As is well known, that application was not made in vain ; and the world is to-day the richer by Dr. Holdsworth's three volumes. But, in the hands of Dr. Holdsworth, the work has proved to be something very different from what was at first contemplated ; and the plan for a single volume has developed into a scheme of which the first three volumes bring us down only to the end of the sixteenth century.

Meanwhile, largely owing to the labours of Professor Maitland and other contributors to the noble series of volumes produced by the Selden Society, more material has become available ; while the recent publication, the fruit of American enterprise, of the three volumes of *Select Essays in Anglo-American Legal History*, has further stimulated interest in the subject.

It seemed, therefore, to the author, that the time had at last arrived, at which Messrs. Methuen & Co.'s original idea might be realized ; and he ventured to approach them with a