

Review

Formularies which bear on the history of Oxford, c. 1204-1420, vols. I and II. Edited by H. E. Salter, W. A. Pantin and H. G. Richardson. Oxford Historical Society, new series, vols. IV and V. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1942. Pp. 496.

These two volumes form a welcome addition to the works on the *Ars Dictandi* and the legal formularies of ecclesiastical courts. It is good to have in print specimens of the letters of that interesting instructor in the art of elegant letter writing, Thomas Sampson, with an account also of others who taught the art in Oxford. The variety of letters in these collections gives a vivid picture of mediaeval university life and the difficulties and misfortunes which the mediaeval undergraduates might encounter: and they well illustrate the way in which such formularies throw light not only on daily life, but also on the details of events such as the quarrel between the University and the Dominicans from 1312 to 1320. An interesting sidelight on local superstition is the stern letter from the bishop of Lincoln on the subject of the foolish, seeking signs and marvels, who resort to St. Edmund's Well.

The general principle of selection of documents is indicated in the title and while it is understandable that the first interest of a local society is in local history, it is much to be regretted by the student of diplomatic that the earliest of the formularies dealt with, that from the Baltimore MS. W.15, has not been printed in full. Of the documents given, no. 2, *De clerico migrante ab una diocesi ad aliam*, is an excellent example of the routine document which rarely survives in the original and is rarely written in full in the registers even when they exist; its inclusion in this volume is very valuable. But how much one regrets that the deeds of presentation to a rectory and a vicarage, mentioned by Mr. Richardson in his account of the MS. in 'The Oxford Law School under John', *Law Quarterly Review*, LVII, have not been included, for this is the period when the form of such deeds was apparently changing and the inclusion of a form which was in common use would have been invaluable, since original documents have not so far been discovered in sufficient numbers to warrant any general conclusions.

The legal formulary in Royal MS. D xi has happily been printed in full and is a most useful source for the forms used in the daily routine of the university court and, in relation to testamentary business and excommunications, in ecclesiastical courts in general.

It is to be hoped that other formularies of both kinds will be printed. These volumes illustrate clearly that such collections are not only mines of information and sources of pleasure to the students of the history of letter-writing, the drafting of legal documents and the practice of ecclesiastical courts, but are of importance to students in all fields of history.

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