

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04255-0 - Memorials of Henry the Fifth, King of England

Edited by Charles Augustus Cole

Frontmatter

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Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, usually referred to as the 'Rolls Series', was an ambitious project first proposed to the British Treasury in 1857 by Sir John Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, and quickly approved for public funding. Its purpose was to publish historical source material covering the period from the arrival of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII, 'without mutilation or abridgement', starting with the 'most scarce and valuable' texts. A 'correct text' of each work would be established by collating 'the best manuscripts', and information was to be included in every case about the manuscripts used, the life and times of the author, and the work's 'historical credibility', but there would be no additional annotation. The first books were published in 1858, and by the time it was completed in 1896 the series contained 99 titles and 255 volumes. Although many of the works have since been re-edited by modern scholars, the enterprise as a whole stands as a testament to the Victorian revival of interest in the middle ages.

Memorials of Henry the Fifth, King of England

First published together in 1858, these three memoirs of Henry V provided Victorian historians and politicians with a valuable account of the 'actions, motives, and career' of the second monarch of the House of Lancaster. The work was compiled and edited by Charles Augustus Cole (*fl.* 1850–60) as part of the Rolls Series. Prefaced by an introduction to the contributing biographers, Robert Redmayne, Thomas of Elmham, and an anonymous member of the royal household, the collection contributes much to our understanding of early fifteenth-century court life. Presenting the king variously as a philosopher, a pious but mildly eccentric benefactor of the church, and finally, as a zealous and aggressive political strategist, the biographies reveal the many public and private faces of this medieval monarch, though, interestingly, none of them places much stress on the victory at Agincourt in 1415 for which (thanks to Shakespeare) he is principally remembered today.

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