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978-1-108-00229-5 - Unreformed Cambridge: A Study of Certain Aspects of the University in the Eighteenth Century

Denys Arthur Winstanley

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This vintage book by the distinguished historian D.A. Winstanley describes Cambridge University in the eighteenth century, a period supposedly characterised by lazy, drunken students, academics preoccupied with their own advancement, and institutionalised resistance to reform. Winstanley's objective was to discover how such a state of affairs came about, and was able to continue for so long. His book is a gold-mine of facts, anecdotes and contemporary descriptions of life at Cambridge. The author explains how Fellows and Professors were elected, how students chose their colleges, and how teaching was organised. Fellows were not permitted to marry, and graduation involved assenting to Anglicanism. There are accounts of bribery, blackmail and brawls. However, amid the morass of 'torpidity', energetic and right-thinking individuals emerged to challenge the status quo and promote educational and institutional reforms.

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DENYS ARTHUR WINSTANLEY



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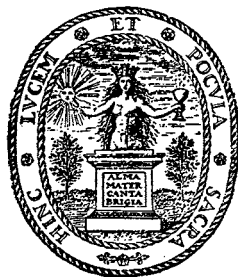
UNREFORMED CAMBRIDGE

A STUDY OF
CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

D. A. WINSTANLEY

VICE-MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE



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Preface

As this book does not in any way claim to be a history of the University in the eighteenth century, no apology is, perhaps, required for the omission or cursory treatment of several important events in the academic life of that age. Nothing more has been attempted than to survey certain activities and inactivities, mainly educational, of the University at that time, and to explain how it came about that the inactivities loom so large in the story. But, unfortunately, it has been found impossible to perform this task, even inadequately, without entering into a good deal of rather wearisome detail; and it can only be hoped that such *minutiae* as the requirements of long-forgotten statutes will be recognised as a regrettable necessity and not censured as a wilful indulgence. For if we are to measure the extent to which our predecessors in the University fell short of their calling, we must at least know to what they were called.

Use has been made of the Cole, Newcastle and Hardwicke manuscripts in the British Museum, and it may be worth while to mention that the letters of Dr Plumptre, President of Queens', which are among the Hardwicke manuscripts, have been found extremely valuable. Dr Plumptre played a very active part in academic life, and as he was Rector of Wimpole, it naturally fell to him to keep Lord Hardwicke, the High Steward, informed about University affairs. He performed this duty very thoroughly and competently, and, as his letters have been preserved, Lord Hardwicke is not his only beneficiary. The collections of documents at the Registry of the University and at Trinity College have also been consulted, and both these collections have well repaid study. But I have pleasure in confessing that I should have been

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unable to grasp the significance of much of what is contained in these various manuscripts without the assistance of George Peacock's *Observations on the Statutes of the University of Cambridge*. Peacock's book, which was published in 1841, was designed to call attention to the crying need of university reform, but it has much more than this merely ephemeral interest. It is a most learned and scholarly work, and moreover, has the merit of having been written by one who had lived and worked in unreformed Cambridge, and therefore had not only a book knowledge of its constitution.

But my debt is not only to a distant past. The late Mr Aubrey Attwater, Fellow of Pembroke, most kindly read my book in manuscript, and generously gave me the benefit of his great knowledge of the archives of his college. I am very grateful for his assistance and most deeply regret that death has deprived us of such a charming and erudite companion. But I am under a great obligation to the living as well as to the dead, and particularly to my two friends, Mr Leonard Whibley and Mr S. C. Roberts. Hearing of the venture upon which I had embarked, Mr Whibley with great generosity and kindness gave me the benefit of his researches into the history of the Regius Professorship of Modern History, which were certainly far more exhaustive than my own; and Mr Roberts most kindly read my manuscript and assisted me with his criticism. Nor is Dr Plumtre the only President of Queens' who has helped me, for the present holder of that office allowed me to consult college records in his possession, and thereby enabled me to supply certain deficiencies in my knowledge of the struggle between Charles Crawford and Queens'. I am exceedingly grateful for all this assistance and regret that I have not produced something more worthy of it.

D. A. W.

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