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Lollardy and the Reformation in England

James Gairdner (1828–1912) was one of the foremost authorities of his day on the Tudor period. This magisterial four-volume survey (originally published 1908–1913) argues that the impetus for the English Reformation came from the Lollard movement of the late fourteenth century. A prolific researcher and editor, Gairdner devoted his career to English history, and his study is both meticulous and factually sound. His critics, however, were quick to observe that the Lollard hypothesis was tenuous, and this mature work is most valuable today to those interested in the history of Reformation scholarship. Published in 1913, Volume 4 focuses on the first year of the reign of Mary Tudor and her marriage to Philip of Spain. Left unfinished on the death of the author, the book was completed by the Reverend William Hunt and includes a preface outlining Gairdner's life and career.

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Lollardy and the Reformation in England

An Historical Survey

VOLUME 4

JAMES GAIRDNER



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108017749

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2010

This edition first published 1913

This digitally printed version 2010

ISBN 978-1-108-01774-9 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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An Historical Survey

BY

JAMES GAIRDNER, C.B.

LL.D., D.LITT.

VOL. IV

EDITED BY WILLIAM HUNT, M.A., D.LITT.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1913

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P R E F A C E

DR. JAMES GAIRDNER, C.B., younger son of an eminent Scottish physician, was born at Edinburgh on the 22nd March 1828, and died at his residence at Pinner, Middlesex, on the 4th November 1912. He entered the Record Office as a clerk in 1846, became Assistant Keeper of the Records in 1859, and retired from the Office in 1900, his long and distinguished service being recognised by his promotion to the rank of C.B. In 1856 he became associated with the Rev. J. S. Brewer in the preparation of the *Calendar of Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII.*, and on Brewer's death, in 1879, after the completion of four volumes of the Calendar, in nine parts, became the chief editor of the series, which was completed, in 1910, to the death of the King, in twenty-one volumes, divided into thirty-three parts, containing valuable prefaces to the documents calendared. The series presents a collection of the historical materials for the reign of all kinds, letters public and private, and State papers relating alike to foreign and domestic affairs, whether existing in the Record Office or elsewhere, and as a

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whole is unrivalled as regards completeness, and probably unsurpassed as regards the skill and judgment exhibited in its composition. Dr. Gairdner's predominant share in it entitles him to be remembered with lasting gratitude by all students of English history. He edited the prefaces to the volumes brought out by Brewer as a separate work under the title of *The Reign of Henry VIII. from his Accession to the Death of Wolsey*, in two volumes, 1884, and in view of the bulk and cost of the volumes through which his own prefaces are dispersed, it is much to be wished that they may receive like treatment.

Dr. Gairdner was an extraordinarily diligent scholar, and in addition to this great work found time to promote historical learning by many other publications. In the Rolls Series of Chronicles and Memorials, he edited *Memorials of King Henry VII.*, 1858, and *Letters and Papers of the Reigns of Richard III. and Henry VII.*, 2 vols., 1861–63; and for the Camden Society, *Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, 1876; *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, 1880; and *The Spousells of the Princess Mary, 1508*, in Camden Miscellany IX., 1895. A more important work, his edition of the *Paston Letters*, comprising a large number of letters not printed in Fenn's earlier edition, and with an admirable introduction, first appeared in three vols., 1872–75, again in 1901, and with additions in 1904. In 1881 he published

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Studies in English History, collected papers by himself and James Spedding, the editor of Bacon's *Works*, then lately deceased, with an estimate of Spedding's writings. To the *Dictionary of National Biography* he contributed seventy-seven biographies of various personages of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, amounting together to five-eighths of a volume, and marked by accuracy and precision of statement as well as by fullness of knowledge. In the *Cambridge Modern History* he wrote a chapter in each of the first two volumes, 1902, 1903. He was a constant contributor to the *English Historical Review* from its inception in 1886 to the year of his death, wrote occasionally in the *Guardian* on subjects connected with the history of the Church of England, and read two papers on the "Death of Wolsey" and on the "Burning of Brighton in the Reign of Henry VIII." before the Royal Historical Society, which are printed in its *Transactions*, the one in the 2nd series, xiii., 1899, the other in the 3rd series, i., 1907. The substantive books of which he was the author are a *Life of Richard III.*, 1878, revised 1898; *Henry VII.*, 1889, in the *Twelve English Statesmen* series; a *History of the English Church from the Accession of Henry VIII. to the Death of Mary*, 1902, reprinted with corrections 1903, 1904, 1912, forming vol. iv. of the *History of the English Church*, edited by Dean Stephens and W. Hunt; and *Lollardy and the Reformation in England*, vols. i. and ii. 1908, vol. iii. 1911, and vol. iv. which he left

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nearly finished at his death, and which is presented here.

During all his long life, then, he worked with unflagging industry at about a century of English history, roughly from the beginning of the Wars of the Roses to the death of Queen Mary. On that period he was justly considered an authority, and the value of his work was recognised by the University of Edinburgh by the grant of an honorary LL.D. in 1897, and too tardily by the grant of an honorary D.Litt. by the University of Oxford in 1910. That, owing perhaps to his training and the principal occupation of his life, he was more successful as an archivist than as an historian must be conceded, for his writing lacks some qualities essential to the literary treatment of history. Yet along with its accuracy and thoroughness in research, it gives evidence of philosophic thought and breadth of view; for Dr. Gairdner looked on events in their connection with the influences that shaped them, whether proceeding from domestic or foreign sources, and perceived, sometimes perhaps more clearly than he was able to expound them, the relations in which a religious or political movement stood to what he believed to have been its determining causes and its later developments. And he was thoroughly honest; he set down what he found in his authorities with a fidelity as complete as that with which he calendared State papers. During the larger part of his life his perpetual diligence, apart from the performance

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of his official duties, was simply the outcome of his love of historical study; in his latest years an added motive spurred him on. He believed that he had a special work to do; indeed, it may almost be said, a message to deliver. Modest and humble as he was, he could not but be conscious that he had gained a fuller knowledge of the Reformation period in our history, of the influences which gave rise to it and directed its course, and of the characters and aims of the principal persons who favoured or opposed it, than was in the possession of the public. He felt constrained to publish the results of his labours, for he considered that much error was current on these matters, that religious prejudice had warped the judgment of many who had written on them, and that too little account was taken of the wrongs inflicted on Catholics, and of the tyranny, greed, and irreverence, the robbery of God and His Church, which in his view disgraced the Reformation in England.

It was under the belief that he had a duty to perform that he undertook to write the volume in the *History of the English Church* mentioned above. Of that book he says, in a letter that he wrote to me on the 22nd April 1906, that, while it had met with a reception more gratifying than he was prepared for, it had also met with criticism of a kind he fully expected, and that it had been impossible for him to say all that he felt he ought to say on his subject within the comparatively narrow limits necessarily prescribed to

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him. He had, therefore, felt “irresistibly impelled to do something on a larger scale,” and had begun his book on *Lollardy and the Reformation in England*, which at first he planned to carry down to the excommunication of 1570, as the event marking the final separation of the Church of England from Rome. It was the resolution of a noble mind, for by the date of this letter he was, as he proceeds to say, seventy-eight, and as he had then written about half of his first volume, it must have been made and acted upon in the previous year, at an age long past that at which most of us would hold ourselves fully justified in ceasing to work, if indeed we should not be compelled to do so. Nor was this resolution made in any forgetfulness that the time allowed him would probably be short: he hoped “to see a volume (perhaps two) through the press,” and he asked me to promise that if any part of his work was left unpublished, I would bring it out. His life was prolonged to the age of eighty-four, but his work from the very outset grew under his hand, and the three volumes which he lived to see published only brought it to the death of Edward VI.: he left the manuscript of a fourth volume, dealing with the first year of Mary’s reign, from her accession to her marriage, in an unfinished state. The promise he asked for was made, and was finally confirmed in a farewell visit to him shortly before his death. It has now been fulfilled.

When the author of a book has not lived to see it

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through the press, an editor in most cases should not meddle with the text beyond correcting obvious slips. My work would have been more satisfactory to Dr. Gairdner's readers and to myself, as well as far less laborious, had it been possible for me to observe this general rule. Unfortunately Dr. Gairdner was prevented from revising his manuscript by physical weakness and distress, and by rapid failure of eyesight, troubles which he bore with manly fortitude and Christian resignation, and to have published his work as it stood would have been unjust to his memory and to his readers. In addition, therefore, to those trifling matters which an editor usually has to set right, it has been necessary in this case to make a large number of verbal alterations and many excisions of passages more or less repeated, together with some few abbreviations of the text and of quotations in it from printed books. Perhaps more should have been done, perhaps less: it was often difficult to decide between the duty of producing the author's very own words, and that of doing for him what he would probably have done for himself had sufficient time, health, and eyesight been granted him. For, having read the proofs of his three earlier volumes, I can confidently say that the alterations made in this volume, though owing to the author's physical afflictions far more in number, are of the same nature as suggestions that I made and that he accepted in revising the proofs of its predecessors. Readers are assured that the exact import of every sentence that

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he wrote has been preserved with religious care, and they are requested kindly to note that I am not responsible for any of his opinions. I have verified and in some cases completed his references to authorities both in manuscript and in print, and hope that they are stated correctly. Some additions have been made both in the text and the footnotes, especially towards the end of the volume, for the sake of such completeness as seemed possible; they are distinguished from Dr. Gairdner's work by means of square brackets.

WILLIAM HUNT.

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