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The History of the Anglo-Saxons

Sharon Turner (1768–1847) practised as a solicitor in London, specialising in the law of copyright, but devoted his free time to studying Anglo-Saxon literature and history. In 1799–1805 he published this four-volume work, still acknowledged as a turning point in Anglo-Saxon studies and a benchmark in historiography. Turner was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1800, soon after the first volume appeared. His approach of contrasting ‘Anglo-Saxon freedom’ with ‘the Norman yoke’ held particular appeal at a time of deteriorating political relations with France. Turner’s lasting achievement, however, was to draw public attention to the rich and fascinating material contained in the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts he had studied at the British Museum. This work went through many editions, but was eventually superseded by Kemble’s *The Saxons in England* (1849, also reissued). Volume 4 (1805) is a survey of Anglo-Saxon culture, including domestic life, law, religion, and literature.

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The History of the Anglo-Saxons

*The History of the Manners, Landed Property,
Government, Laws, Poetry, Literature,
Religion, and Language, of the Anglo-Saxons*

VOLUME 4

SHARON TURNER



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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
MANNERS, LANDED PROPERTY, GOVERNMENT,
LAWS, POETRY, LITERATURE,
RELIGION, AND LANGUAGE,
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

==
BY SHARON TURNER, F.A.S.
==

LONDON:
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1805.

P R E F A C E.

IN presenting to the public this last volume of my Anglo-Saxon History, I have completed my original undertaking. No labour has been spared to collect information from every accessible source, and to state the facts obtained with as much conciseness as was consistent with intelligibility. I could have wished to have extended my inquiries on some of the topics discussed, but as it appeared to me unreasonable to devote five volumes to that period of our history which precedes the Norman conquest, I have confined the present publication to a single volume, and have endeavoured within that compass to comprise all that was material to be known on the subjects mentioned in the title page.

The great object of the work has always been to preserve those interesting particulars concerning our Anglo-Saxon ancestors which had been left unnoticed in their ancient MSS., and to throw light where it was possible on those parts of their history which had been usually deemed confused and obscure. To fulfil these purposes, I have examined every MS. and author within my reach which promised to be useful. I have been scrupulous

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a

pulous to insert no circumstance without a sufficient authority, and it has been always important to me that my quotations should be faithful.

Some of the subjects of this volume have been the object of zealous controversy. In these questions I have disregarded all theory and dispute, and have confined myself to the task of stating with care and truth the facts which I have found recorded on such points in the Anglo-Saxon writers. I hope the present work will add much original information to the first periods of our history.

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