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The History Of The English People 1000-1154 (Oxford World's Classics)



Henry of Huntingdon
The History of the English
People 1000-1154

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



Synopsis

Henry of Huntingdon's narrative covers one of the most exciting and bloody periods in English history: the Norman Conquest and its aftermath. He tells of the decline of the Old English kingdom, the victory of the Normans at the Battle of Hastings, and the establishment of Norman rule. His accounts of the kings who reigned during his lifetime--William II, Henry I, and Stephen--contain unique descriptions of people and events. Henry tells how promiscuity, greed, treachery, and cruelty produced a series of disasters, rebellions, and wars. Interwoven with memorable and vivid battle-scenes are anecdotes of court life, the death and murder of nobles, and the first written record of Cnut and the waves and the death of Henry I from a surfeit of lampreys. Diana Greenway's translation of her definitive Latin text has been revised for this edition.

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Latin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Diana Greenway is Professor of Medieval History at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London.

Henry of Huntingdon lived in England shortly after the Norman Conquest. He was a well-educated half-English, half-Norman. This book was actually quite popular during his lifetime and during the Middle Ages. While his writing is not history in the modern sense of historical research and work, it is an invaluable resource for anyone studying the late Anglo-Saxon/Early Norman world. Henry's writing provides vivid descriptions, personal observations, and insights into the attitudes of the time period. The only drawback to the book are the endnotes. They are marked with an asterisk and then the reader must flip to the back pages and search for the appropriate note, which becomes annoying after a while. I much prefer footnotes at the bottom of the page. Maybe those are harder to typeset, but they are much nicer for the reader. Anyway, other than the annoying endnotes, this is an excellent translation of Henry's work for those interested in learning about this fascinating time period.

For those who are into historical source documents and English history, it'd be very, very hard to beat this one. Henry of Huntingdon was not an eyewitness to the Norman conquest and surrounding decades (he was born 22 years after the battle of Hastings) but he was close enough in time to the action to give you a more visceral, detailed, up-close-and-personal account of the action than is available pretty much anywhere else. There are some (including the introduction in this book) who point out that this isn't "historical analysis" in the way we understand it these days. In the 11th century, history was more of a rhetorical art, with fake (made-up) speeches intending to communicate how the author imagined the main characters' thought processes, and so forth. However, I found that it was actually a pretty straightforward historical work, minus the tedious "and the English lost because they had failed God" type of stuff, which is endemic to any period writing. They just had a very different view of the role of God in the everyday happenings of man, than we do. It's easy to find historical errors in his work, but he did not have Google, Wikipedia and a modern, large body of historical books on the subject available to him. Constructing his history from hearsay, scant source documents, and passed-down oral history, it's remarkable how well his history squares with the known facts and other contemporary-ish sources. As he himself points out, once the book gets to his era, that is, roughly 1100 and later, the history-telling is much more based on his own observations, and it shows; it becomes more personal, fact-based and confident in its assertions. The only criticism I am going to level at this book is that the footnoting is terrible. Why, oh

why, oh WHY, did they not put the footnotes, which often contain the most important and interesting information, directly on the pages where they are referenced? And, OK, if one has to put them at the back of the book, fine. But why use asterisks instead of numbers to reference the footnotes? Try to imagine counting how many asterisks have already been used in the section of the book you're reading, so that you can find the matching footnote. Yurgh. Hands down this is the most awkward footnoting system I've seen in a book. I'm docking it a star for that. Well, there's a subset of people out there who are going to be interested and fascinated in this book, and you know who you are, so I don't feel it necessary to say "highly recommended," although it certainly is, if you're looking to take your Norman conquest reading to another level of depth.

How could I pass up the chance of reading a contemporary account of the Norman Conquest and its aftermath? As with all Oxford World Classics the introduction is enough to give the reader some background but not overwhelm them with every iota of modern scholarship. It is affordable and nicely presented. It is not difficult to read either. I read the whole thing in about 4 hours.

Good to see a nice copy of (part of) a medieval historical chronicle on the sales lists again - it's hard to get ahold of this kind of literature unless you want to shell out 180 bucks for a library-quality full hardcover copy. This is a good edition too, by the scholar who (literaly!) wrote the book on Henry of Huntingdon - they couldn't have found a better person to do the job. The only thing I didn't understand was why Dr. Greenway re-arrainged the order of the selections from the original work. In the front of the book she gives the original positions of everything according to her edition, though, so you can read them in that order if you want. I suppose this new order does make for a more unified and enjoyable read, even if it slightly anachronistic. So, whether you're a specialist or just casually interested, this is a great volume to pick up - lots of good stuff directly from the medieval world. Also, in response to the earlier reviewer - the notes are numbered in the back according to the page they refer to, which is standard practice with the Oxford World's Classics series. I don't tend to like endnotes either, but personally, I didn't find them difficult to use.

you feel just as if you are sitting down over a cup of coffee and hearing the story of the English, Anglo-Saxons, from an eye witness to the events.

a great view into the understanding of a contemporary writer of the period. not an easy read because of the archaic way of writing history.

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