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THE
CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY
OF ENGLAND
SINCE THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE THE THIRD
1760-1860
BY THE RIGHT HON.
SIR THOMAS ERSKINE MAY, K.C.B., D.C.L.
(LORD FARNBOROUGH) [see [NOTE](#)]
WITH A NEW SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER, 1861-71

[for Volume I.]

Eleventh Edition
IN THREE VOLUMES
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[for Volumes II and III.]

Seventh Edition
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PREFACE
TO
THE FIRST EDITION.

IT is the design of this history to trace the progress and development of the British Constitution, during a period of one hundred years; and to illustrate every material change,—whether of legislation, custom, or policy,—by which institutions have been improved, and abuses in the government corrected.

The accession of George III. presents no natural boundary in constitutional history, but former reigns have already been embraced in the able survey of Mr. Hallam; and frequent allusions are here made to events of an earlier period, connected with inquiries of the present work.

In considering the history of our mixed government, we are led to study each institution separately, to mark its changes, and observe its relations to other powers and influences in the State. With this view, I have found it necessary to deviate from a strictly chronological narrative, and to adopt a natural division of leading subjects. If this arrangement should

appear occasionally to involve an incomplete view of particular events, and repeated references to the same period, under different aspects, I trust it will be found, on the whole, the most convenient and instructive. The form of the work is not the less historical. Each inquiry is pursued throughout the entire century; but is separated from contemporary incidents, which more properly fall under other divisions.

The present volume embraces a history of the prerogatives, influence, and revenues of the Crown; and of the constitution, powers, functions, and political relations of both Houses of Parliament. The second volume will comprise,—among other constitutional subjects,—a history of party: of the press, and political agitation: of the Church, and of civil and religious liberty. It will conclude with a general review of our legislation,—its policy and results,—during the same period.

Continually touching upon controverted topics, I have endeavoured to avoid, as far as possible, the spirit and tone of controversy. But, impressed with an earnest conviction that the development of popular liberties has been safe and beneficial, I do not affect to disguise the interest with which I have traced it, through all the events of history. Had I viewed it with distrust, and despondency, this work would not have been written.

The policy of our laws, as determined by successive Parliaments, is so far accepted by statesmen of all parties, and by most unprejudiced thinkers, of the present generation, that I am at liberty to discuss it historically, without entering upon the field of party politics. Not dealing with the conduct and motives of public men, I have been under no restraint in adverting to recent measures, in order to complete the annals of a century of legislation.

LONDON: January 12, 1861.

ADVERTISEMENT
TO
THE SECOND EDITION.

THE TEXT of the present edition has been revised, and numerous authorities have been added, chiefly from works published since the completion of the first volume.

April 29, 1863.

PREFACE
TO
THE THIRD EDITION.

THE Constitutional History of England, from 1760 to 1860, having been concluded as a complete work, some years since, I have not ventured to disturb the original narrative, by any attempt to continue it to the present time. But more than ten years have since passed, which will ever be memorable in the constitutional history of our country, and in preparing a new edition of this work, I have added a supplementary chapter, in which I have briefly reviewed the more remarkable events of this latter period, in their relations to the history of the previous hundred years, and have endeavoured to measure their influence upon the government and political destinies of England.

September 9th, 1871,

[The title of Baron Farnborough was conferred on Erskine May only six days before his death in 1886; one of the shortest tenures of a peerage on record. It is not often encountered except on the title pages of posthumous editions of his works.]

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