

**THE LITERATURE OF  
LOCAL  
INSTITUTIONS**

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The Literature of Local Institutions by Geo. Laurence Gomme

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BY  
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## PREFACE.

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*The interest of this little work to book-lovers will, I hope, be twofold. At a time when local muniments are being examined and edited, and at last preserved from the wholesale destruction of past years; and when the Bill in the present session of Parliament for the enfranchisement of Copyholds provides by one of its clauses that the whole of the most important class of historical documents in this kingdom, namely, the manor rolls, shall be delivered up to the world of letters, it is time for the book-lover to take stock of what has been already accomplished towards printing these and other records.*

*A further result of this little work is that the book-lover is able to place at the disposal of thinking men some idea of the extent of the literature of local institutions; and, by indicating how important that literature is, to urge that it should not be neglected now that current*

*thought is so much occupied with the question of reform in local government.*

*Local institutions have been the subject of study with me for many years, and I had hoped ere this to have published a long-projected volume dealing with their early history in this country; but my many avocations, official and private, have prevented this cherished idea ever being completed. The materials collected for this undertaking, however, are of great value; and the books which have from time to time been consulted, form a branch of literature which is now being fully recognised as perhaps the only source of information on the social manners and customs of the people in the past. Nothing had ever been done to bring this literature together until, in 1882, in the BIBLIOGRAPHER, I gave some instalments of the subject. The interest excited by these papers encouraged me to proceed in collecting and describing books on the literature of local institutions, and the present volume is the result of these labours.*

*It is useless to hope that my collection of titles*



*is absolutely complete—so many books of this class have been privately printed, or else printed for purely local purposes, and have hence not found their way into the general market. The British Museum is notoriously deficient in this branch of literature. I have in nearly all cases consulted and used each work referred to. To many of the titles I have given special bibliographical information. Where such information is not given, it is generally because no practical good would come of such information. In some instances I am indebted to kind friends for references to out-of-the-way works, and I must particularly mention, at the risk of being invidious, Mr. J. Newman, Mr. W. Macmath, Mr. R. B. Prosser, Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, and the late Professor Stanley Jevons and Mr. Cornelius Walford. My visits to the libraries of the two last-mentioned scholars and book-lovers will not be easily forgotten; and it was this subject which first took me thither.*

*Of the faults, both of commission and omission, in this book, I trust a kindly view may be taken; and for any information helping*

*me to fill up gaps, or correct errors, I shall be deeply thankful. Even as I go to the press, too late for insertion in their proper places, two very interesting additions may be made to the literature of local institutions, namely, a translation of Gneist's great work, which is mentioned on page 13, and Miss Toulmin Smith's edition of Lady Caroline Kerrison's Commonplace Book of the 15th century.*

*Barnes, S.W.*



## THE LITERATURE OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS.

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### INTRODUCTION.

ENGLISHMEN of the nineteenth century are just as active in the "making of England" as their ancestors were in the early period to which the title of Mr. Green's famous book refers. And it must ever be so : the means and process differ as the ages differ ; but it must be a question of *making* England until that period arrives when the downward progress commences. Closely connected with this continuity of development are the powers and privileges of local government. When the Saxon conquerors of Britain carved out the boundaries of our modern shires by their ethnic settlements; when they settled down in their several village communities, they were solving in their own fashion—the only one then