PREFACE

This volume is the first step in an effort to write a comprehensive history of England in the time of King John. It is essentially a political and administrative history of his reign. Some day I hope to produce a companion volume under some such title as "England in the reign of King John." This would cover the numerous and fascinating phases of the history of the time that have been neglected here.

I have made no attempt in this book to deal with King John's over-seas domains, the lordship of Ireland and his continental fiefs, because I believe that they have been treated adequately by other historians. Then I have left for the later volume such subjects as military and naval institutions and the development of the common law. Excellent arguments can be advanced for putting these subjects in either volume, and this one grew large enough without them.

When someone writes a book because he wants to and deals with the subjects that interest him most, he finds it hard to explain why the result should interest others. When I started to write this volume, there was no adequate account of the reign of a mediæval English king. Now Sir Maurice Powicke's *King Henry III and the Lord Edward* has filled that gap in historical literature, and I can only hope that the *Reign of King John* can hold its place beside it. Actually this book can make only one claim for the interest of the general reader with a fondness for the Middle Ages—it attempts to delineate fully the background and immediate consequences of the issuance of Magna Carta.

No historian can ever adequately recognize his obligations to other scholars, but I should like to mention a few to whom I am particularly indebted. I have benefited far more than meagre footnote references can indicate from the works of Sir Maurice Powicke, Sir Frederick and Lady Stenton, Mr. H. G. Richardson, and Professor C. R. Cheney. I have pillaged both references and ideas from my friend and former student Mr. Fred A. Cazel, Jr. I have
also made use of some material from a manuscript written by the late Professor Sydney Knox Mitchell that I am preparing for publication. In the actual writing of this volume I have been assisted by the members of the Johns Hopkins Historical Seminar who read and criticized two chapters, by my colleague Mrs. John Van Eerde who read the entire manuscript, and by Sir Maurice Powicke who gave me valuable advice on a number of difficult points. Finally I should like to express my gratitude to Miss Lilly Lavarello who, I am convinced, is without a peer as either editor or typist.

Sidney Painter

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