

Winfield, Percy H., The Chief Sources of English Legal History, Harvard University Press, 1925 (reprint: New York, Franklin, 1972, xviii, 374 p.)

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(3) WILLIAM HAWKINS. *A Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown*. The author was born in 1673, and educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple. He became a serjeant-at-law in 1723, and died in 1746.\*

In his preface, Hawkins, after a panegyric on the existing criminal law which staggers any modern lawyer accustomed to something less brutal, points out the imperfections of previous attempts to expound it, and states his own object to be the reduction of all the laws relating to it under one scheme. His first book deals with crimes, his second with the manner of bringing criminals to punishment. The work, as a whole, is very comprehensive, and, for a book of that period, well arranged. It shows plenty of critical ability, and in gen-

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\* *Dictionary of National Biography*.

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eral it is a reliable statement of the law as Hawkins knew it. On historical points, it occasionally requires verification, and in the editions, which we have used, it is often overloaded with marginal references, some of which are untraceable and others worthless; but it may be that these are due to later editors. Hawkins's work is deservedly of high authority and is still cited. It was the starting-point of modern laborious treatises on the criminal law which are valuable as digests of the subject, but which make no advance on Hawkins's plan or style, and are not invariably reliable on matters of history.

*Printed editions.* 1716, 1724, 1739, 1762, 1771, 1787, 1795.

The third edition by G. L. Scott includes references to Hale's *Historia placitorum Coronae*; the fourth follows the same method of bringing the treatise to date; the fifth has extracts from Foster's *Crown Law*, and Blackstone's *Commentaries*; the sixth (the title-page of vol. I is mistakenly dated 1777 instead of 1787) by Thomas Leach claims to have expunged references "which were found to burthen the margin without illustrating the text"; the seventh (in 4 vols.) is also by Leach. An abridgment entitled *A Summary of the Crown Law* was published in 1728 and 1770.