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THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY

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THE VILLAGE LABOURER, 1760-1832

THE TOWN LABOURER, 1760-1832

THE SKILLED LABOURER, 1760-1832

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THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY

BY
J. L. HAMMOND
AND
BARBARA HAMMOND

SECOND EDITION



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TO
VAUGHAN AND ROSALIND NASH

PREFACE

IN preparing this book the writers have received a great deal of help from various friends, among whom they must mention specially Professor Henry Clay, Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Mr. H. J. Laski, Mr. Reginald Lennard, Mr. C. M. Lloyd, Mr. R. H. Tawney, Mr. Arnold J. Toynbee, and Mr. G. M. Trevelyan. They had the good fortune to benefit in their work on this book, as on other occasions, by the suggestions and criticisms of the late Professor George Unwin, who was known to all who came under his influence as the most generous and stimulating of teachers and friends.

This book is written for the general reader and not for the specialist. It is an attempt to put the Industrial Revolution in its place in history, and to give an idea both of its significance and of the causes that determined the age and the society in which it began. The scope and intention of the volume will perhaps best be made clear by means of a short synopsis of its contents. The book is divided into three parts.

PART ONE

In this part the authors discuss the development of commerce before the Industrial Revolution. The argument runs as follows: The reader who turns to Roman history, or to the history of Italy in the days of the ascendancy of Venice, will recognize several of the features of our modern industrial civilization; for example, capitalist organization and large scale production. There is, however, a very important difference. In those days the needs of the ordinary man were supplied either by himself or by his neighbours, whereas to-day they are supplied by a world-

wide economy of production and exchange. For the beginning of this new system we have to go back to the commercial revolution that followed the discoveries of Columbus and the other great explorers of his time. For that revolution was a revolution in the character, as well as in the scale, of commerce: shipbuilding was greatly improved, more capital was used, and in time commerce came to supply things like tea for popular consumption, whereas in earlier days it had mainly carried silks and spices for the rich. This commercial revolution was a necessary precursor of the Industrial Revolution, for it is a mark of that revolution that industry, which at one time was mainly confined to the manufacture of articles used by the well-to-do, came to supply clothing for the poor. *Mass production demands popular consumption.*

Why did this revolution come in England in the eighteenth century?

For the new commerce the Atlantic was as important as the Mediterranean had been for the old. The most active trading peoples, after the discoveries of Columbus, were those who looked out on the Atlantic. Of these peoples the English were in a specially favourable position, in the middle of the eighteenth century, as a result of their geographical situation, their climate, and their history. The Spaniards used their control of the New World for politics, and the wealth they drew from the American mines was spent, in the main, in ways that discouraged industrial expansion. The English colonists in America, on the other hand, settled where there was little gold and silver, and they grew into communities which needed British goods for their own consumption, and sent home products that were useful for industry.

Events in Europe also favoured the more rapid expansion of English industry, for the European wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did more harm to industry on the continent than in England, and the religious and political strife of the seventeenth century left England with

a constitution and government more favourable to commercial development than those of France. Among other advantages which a comparison of the state of England with that of France discloses are the supremacy of the common law, internal free trade, an aristocracy interested in commerce, a mistrust of State regulation, fostered by memories of the Stuarts, and toleration in religion. The stagnation of politics, religion, and local life in the eighteenth century encouraged the concentration on industry, and this concentration drew to mechanical invention all the ardour and imagination that had been fired by the revival of mathematics, and the discoveries of physical science. For these reasons England was the most likely theatre for the Industrial Revolution.

PART TWO

In this part the writers attempt to give some account of the Industrial Revolution, describing the changes in transport which preceded the railways, the dissolution of the peasant village, the destruction of custom in industry, and the free play that capital found in consequence. One chapter is devoted to the invention of the steam engine, and separate chapters to the changes that took place at this time in iron, pottery, and cotton. It is obviously impossible to cover the whole field of English industry in a book on this plan and scale; these industries have been taken because they illustrate different aspects of the revolution.

PART THREE

In this part the writers examine the first social effects of the change from a peasant to an industrial civilization. One chapter discusses the influence of the tradition of the Slave Trade on the early industrial system, and calls attention to the resemblance between the arguments by which that trade, and those by which child labour, were defended. The next chapter, "The Curse of Midas," seeks to show that the spell of production overpowered the age,

making it indifferent to all other aspects of life, beauty, culture, and pleasure.

The last two chapters describe the struggle between this passion for production and the deeper instinct to make a society. This struggle is put into its perspective by a comparison with two other ages of disorder: (1) the period of pillage that followed the Roman seizure of the Mediterranean and its wealth, and (2) the violence and confusion which followed the discovery of America. Just as in these other cases mankind had made some recovery from its first lapse into chaos, so the English people began to devise constructive institutions, such as the Civil Service, the Trade Unions, and the system of Factory Law. An attempt is made to estimate the several influences that helped the English people to create a new society.

HEMEL HEMPSTED
August, 1925

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

SOME critics have suggested that the picture of town life given in the chapter called "The Curse of Midas" is drawn from exceptional cases. That this view is not well founded will be clear to anybody who studies the most important public documents of the time: the Report prepared by Chadwick and other Poor Law Commissioners in 1842 on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population and the Report of 1844 of the Commission on the State of Towns. This Commission examined fifty large towns and reported that there was scarcely one in which the drainage was good and only six in which the water supply was good: in seven the drainage and in thirteen the water supply was indifferent: in forty-two the drainage and in thirty-one the water supply was

decidedly bad. It would have been possible to illustrate the argument of that chapter from the conditions of almost any large industrial town, though for reasons given in the text some towns were worse than others. A description of Leeds for example may be cited. The Commission after stating that the contractor for street sweepings rented a vacant plot of land in the heart of the poorest and most populous ward of the town, where he piled up all the refuse he could find and kept it to sell as manure, gave this further picture of slum life. "In one cul de sac there are thirty-four houses, and in ordinary times there dwell in these houses 340 persons or ten to every house: but as these houses are many of them receiving houses for itinerant labourers, during the period of hay time and harvest and the fairs, at least twice that number are congregated. The name of this place is the Boot and Shoe Yard in Kirkgate, a location from whence the Commissioners removed in the days of the cholera seventy-five cart-loads of manure, which had been untouched for years, and where there now exists a surface of human excrement of very considerable extent, to which these impure and unventilated dwellings are additionally exposed." The passage concluded with a sentence which may be said to sum up the argument of the chapter. "This property is said to pay the best annual interest of any cottage property in the borough."

HENEL HEMPSTED

February, 1928

CONTENTS

PART I

COMMERCE BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

CHAP.	PAGE
I FROM THE LEVANT TO THE ATLANTIC	1
II ENGLAND AS AN ATLANTIC POWER	24
III THE EFFECT OF THE WARS OF EUROPE	38
IV THE NEW PRESTIGE OF COMMERCE	50

PART II

THE ENGLISH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

V THE REVOLUTION IN TRANSPORT	66
VI THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PEASANT VILLAGE	81
VII THE DESTRUCTION OF CUSTOM IN INDUSTRY	97
VIII THE STEAM ENGINE	110
IX THE REVOLUTION IN IRON	131
X THE REVOLUTION IN POTTERY	162
XI THE REVOLUTION IN COTTON	178

PART III

THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

XII THE SHADOW OF THE SLAVE TRADE	190
XIII THE CURSE OF MIDAS	210
XIV A WORLD IN DISORDER	233
XV THE BEGINNINGS OF A NEW SOCIETY	245
INDEX	263

INDEX

- Aberdare, 78
 Aberman, 146 n.
 Achin, 179
 Acre, 25
 Addenbroke, 150
 Aden, 179 n.
 Ethiopians, 9 n.
 Africa, 8, 9, 13, 26 n., 39, (West) 180, 247
 African Company, and slavery, 192
 Agriculture, Annals of, 74, 86, 139 n., 148 n., 198 n., 211
 Agriculture, Board of, 198 n., 211
 Agriculture, Chapter VI *passim*; see also Village
 Danish, 89, 90
 French, 88, 89, 90 n.
 Roman, 5, 10
 "Aïdô," 243
 Aikin, 69
 Aire, 77
 Albion Mills, 128
 Albuquerque, 239
 Alocck, 45
 Alexander Severus, 5, 235 n.
 Alexander VI (Pope), 26, 236
 Alexandria, 6; culture, 10, 11-12; fall of, 24
 Allotments, 92, 93
 Alsace, 47
 America, 66; discovery of, 16, 212, 235 ff; commerce with, 21
 North, French and English in, 34, 38, 42, 239, 240n.; iron from, 31, 33, 135 n., 146 n.; market for iron goods, 143; cotton industry in, 184, 185, 208, 209; slavery in, 190 ff, 198, 199, 249 n.; see also Slave Trade and Cotton, and United States.
 South, 42, 185; as a market, 36, 37
 American Congress (prohibition of slavery in 1776), 193
 Amiens, Peace of, 46, 220
Amis des Noirs, 255
 Amphictyonic Council, 236
 Amsterdam, 49, 57, 62 n., 219; Bank of, 60
 Amusements, English love of, 230
Annual Register, 118 n.; on iron-workers, 143 n., 144 n.
 Anson, Lord, 78
 Antioch, 16, 18, 209
 Antonines, the, 229, 235 n.
 Antonius Pius, 12
 Antony, Mark, 233
 Antwerp, 57, 180, 219
 Apprentices, in guilds, 99, 101, 196; and Statute of Artificers, 101, 108; decay of system, 228; parish, 198-201, 243
 Aquileia, 6
 Arabia, 6, 19, 178
 Aratus, 11
 Archimedes, 10, 11, 65
 Arezzo, 6
 Argentina, 36 n., 66
 Aristocracy, French, 59; English, and commerce, 60, 61; and canals, 78; and agriculture, 88-9; recruited from trade, 147; taste of, 219
 Aristotle, 195
 Arkwright, R., 3, 185, 211, 221; his water frame, 182; introduced into France, 45; into United States, 184
 Artificers, Statute of, 101, 108
 Artistic power, lack of at Ind. Rev., 251, 251 n.
 Ashby, A. W., 93 n.
 Ashby, Lord, 226; see Shaftesbury
 Ashley, Sir William, 53 n., 61 n., 90 n., 220 n.; on internal free trade, 58 n.
 Ashton, T. S., 31 n., 77 n., 121 n., 136, 220 n., and Chapter IX *passim*.
 Ashton, 224 n., 231
 Ashtons, the, 243
 Asia, trade with, 6, 18, 23, 24, 27; skilled slaves from, 61; commerce in, 179, 180

264 THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY

- Assiento*, the, 193, 199
 Assistants, Court of, 100
 Assize of Bread, 108
 Astbury, J., 165, 166, 168
 Aston, Joseph, 76 n.
 Athens, 229
 Atlantic Routes, discovery of, 4,
 21, 24, 27, 38, 53, 54, 235
 Atticus, Marcus, 12, 16, 220
 Attwood, Thomas, 147 n.
 Augsburg, 21, 24, 180
 Augustine, St., 253, 259
 Augustus (Emperor), 5, 12; arrest
 of abuses, 8, 9, 233; and food
 gratuities, 13 n.; and public
 games, 14 n.
 Austen, Miss, 250 n.
 Austerlitz, 193
 Australia, 66, 95
 Austria, 85
Averia, the, 29, 30 n.
 Avon, the, 77
- Babylon, 6, 23
 Bacon, Anthony, 138, 146 n.
 Bacon, Francis, on Spain, 27 n.,
 28 n.; on plantations, 31 n.; his
Novum Organum, 64; and
 enclosures, 84; on truth, 249
 Baines, Sir E., 180 n., 184 ns.,
 185 n., 186 n.
 Baines, E., 75, 76, 204 n.
 Bakewell, R., 86
 Baltic, the trade with, 6, 9 n., 25,
 52
 Bancroft, 193
 Bank of England, 57
 Bank of France, 57 n.
 Banking, development of, 49, 56,
 57, 68
 Bantam, 179
 Barcelona, 17
 Barkham, 92, 93
 Barnard Castle, 76
 Bateson, M., 240 n.
 Bavaria, 85
 Baxter's *Christian Directory*, 196 n.
 Beche, de la, 257 n.
 Bedford, Duke of, 86
 Belgium, 58, 66; industrialization
 of, 46, 47; cotton manu-
 facture, 188
 Bell, Henry, 129
 Bengal, 185
 Benians, E. A., 239 n.
 Bennett, Arnold, 167. *See also*
 Clayhanger
- Benson, Thomas, 167
 Bentham, J., 215, 254, 255; his
 Industry Houses, 197, 198;
 his influence, 216 n., 225
 Berkshire, 94, 95
 Berlin, 66
 Berlin Decrees, 43, 49 n.
 Bermuda, 54
 Beverley, 17, 68
 Bewdley, 77
 Bible, the, 252
 Bingley, 78 n.
 Binning, Lord, 44 n.
 Birmingham, 68, 116, 118, 126,
 130, 147, 172; canal to, 78;
 Boulton's Works, 118; iron-
 works near, 135, 144, 152;
 growth of population, 152,
 153; holidays and hours, 158
 Black, Dr., 116, 117
 Black Country, 131
 Black Sea, 19; slaves from, 190,
 191
 Blackburn, 211
 Blackpool, 230
 Blacksmiths, 69
 Blake, William, 247
 Blenheim, 193
 Blockade, continental, 47
 Bloomfield Colliery, 122
 Bologna, 18
 Bolshevik revolution, 250
 Bolton, 6, 211; its economy, 67;
 communications, 75, 76; popu-
 lation, 222
 Booth, Enoch, 167, 168
 Bootle, Wilbraham, 200
 Bordeaux, 220
 Borgia, Alexander, 26, 236
 Boroughs, English, 98
 Boston (Lincs), 68
 Botsford, J. B., 21 n., 22 n.
 Boulton, Matthew, early life and
 character, 118, 119; scientific
 management, 119; associa-
 tion with Watt, 120, 121 ff.;
 financial troubles, 125, 128;
 on rotary power, 126, 127, 212;
 coining, 128; old age, 129;
 death, 130
 Bow china, 165 n.
 Bow engine, 122, 123
 Bradford, 68; 76; population, 223
 Bradwell, 165
 Brazil, 26 n., 36, 180; raw cotton
 from, 184
 Breconshire, 151 n.

- Bridges, Dr., 196
 Bridgewater, Duke of, 78
 Bright, John, 243 n., 253
 Brindley, James, 78
 Bristol, commercial port, 7, 58, 68, 77, 80, 169; turnpike riots, 73; mail coach, 75; merchants and S. Wales mines, 146 n.
 Britain, Roman, exports to, 9
 Brontë, Charlotte, 106
 Broseley, 122
 Brougham, Lord, and education, 231, 254, 259
 Bruges, 21, 24, 25, 219
 Brutus, Marcus, 12
 Bryce, James, 15 n.
 Buccaneers, suppression of, 239; *See also* Piracy
 Bucks, 96
 Burke, Edmund, 239; on American taxation, 33; on importance of England, 51 n.; on E. India Company, 65 n.; and minimum wage, 92; and Watt's patent, 121; and Watt's son, 129; on slavery, 205; on capital, 218 n.; and India, 253
 Burley, 197 n.
 Burns, C. Delisle, 219 n.
 Burslem, 163, 166, 172 n.
 Bury, Prof., 20 n., 215 n.
 Bury, 76
 Butts, Lord, 154
 Byron, Lord, 106, 219, 255
- Caerphilly, 154
 Cæsar, Julius, 7, 233
 Caffa, 190
 Cairnes, J. E., 184 n., 249 n.
 Cairo, 17, 24
 Calcutta, 18
 Calder, the, 77
 Calonne, 45
 Calvin, 53
 Cambridge Modern History, quoted on Egypt, 42 n.; on Napoleon, 46 n.; on Spaniards and natives, 239 n.; on textiles, 251 n.
 Camden, 56
 Canada, 34, 66. *See also* America, North
 Canals, Napoleon's, 46; Early French, 77; English, 77, 78; Ellesmere, 75; Grand Trunk, Bridgewater, Glamorgan, 78; Monkland, 117; Trent and Mersey, 169; and potteries, 173
 Canaries, the, 54
 Canning, George, 153, 156
 Capitalism, in Roman Empire, 5, 12, 13; in Middle Ages, 16, 17, 240, 247; in Tudor England, 56; early eighteenth century, 58; in agriculture, 82; commercial in guilds, 17, 99; complete victory, 108; benefit to consumers, 210 and note, and Chapter XIII *passim*
 Cardiff, 70, 78, 79; cavalry, 155
 Cardwell, E., 204
 Carlisle, 75
 Carlyle, Thomas, 255
 Carnarvonshire, 151 n.
 Carolina, South, 193
 Carron Iron Works, 116, 117, 138, 148
 Carthage, 7, 10, 20
 Cartwright, E. (power loom), 182
 Cartwright, Major, 182
 Caste system, 214, 215
 Catherine of Russia, 119, 162
 Carlton, 249
 Cecil, Lord Hugh, 214
 Cesena, 52
 Cetta, 77
 Ceylon, 6, 19
 Chadwick, E., 226, 227
 Chalons, 17
 Chamberlayne, 230 n.
 Chapman, Sir S., 181 n.
 Chaptal, 48 n.
 Chardin, 62 n.
 Charité sur Loire, 45
 Charles I, 102
 Charles II, 106
 Charles V, 27, 30 n., 252 n.
 Charlesworth, M.P., quoted, 9 n.
 Charlotte, Queen, 119
 Chartered Companies, rise of, 54, 55. *See also* under Company
 Chartists, the, 228, 256, 258, 259, 260
 Chatham, Lord, 203, 253; on trade with America, 32
 Chaucoer, 215
 Chelsea china, 165 n.
 Chersonese Tauric, 9 n.
 Cheshire, 80; cotton factories, 189
 Chester, 206
 Chesterton, G. K., 249

- Children, in ironworks, 133-4, 149-52; in potteries, 175-7; in cotton, 183, 197 ff., 201 ff.
- Children's Employment Commission, on ironworks, 149-53; on social conditions of ironworkers, 156-8; on potteries, 175-7
- Chili, 36 n.
- China (porcelain), 165; production cheapened, 171
- China (country), trade with, 19, 20, 23, 66, 185, 186, 187; home of silk industry, 178, 187; cotton manufacture, 188; child labour, 208 n.
- Chinese traders, 9 n., 179
- Chorley, 76
- Christianity, mediæval, 253, 254, 260
- Church, mediæval, 51, 53, 64, 212, 215; property of, 85; Councils of, 236; of eighteenth century, 212, 253, 254
- Cicero, 195, 242, 253, 254; on commerce, 5; *De Officiis*, 232-5
- Civil Service, as civilizing force, 255-7
- Clapham, J. H., 45 n., 47 n., 48 ns., 90 n., 130 n.; on London finance, 49 n.; on German life, 66, 67
- Clark, Alice, 242 n.
- Classics, advantages of study of, 251-3
- Claudian, 14 n.
- Clayhanger*, 170 n., 176, 177
- Clement VII, Pope, 52
- Climate, importance of, 218
- Cloth industry (British), effect of growth on villeinage, 82; statistics of expansion in sixteenth century, 56; debt to the religious refugees, 62
- Clutton-Brook, A., 245 n.
- Clyde, the, 129
- Coal, in Belgium and France, 47, 48; in England, 62; early transport of, 70; canals and, 77, 78, 79; and cotton industry, 181. *See also* Chapter IX
- Coal mines, steam engines in, 112, 113
- Coalbrookdale Works, 147, 148 n., 149, 150; described, 136-8
- Coalfields and iron industry, 144
- Cobbett, William, 21, 261; and agriculture, 90 n., 91, 93; and factories, 203
- Cœur, Jacque, 16
- Coining, Boulton and, 128, 154
- Coke of Norfolk, 86
- Colbert, and colonists, 34; his economic policy, 40, 41, 59; and foreign workmen, 61, 62; and guilds, 101
- Colchester, 17
- Cole, G. D. H., 258 n.
- Coleridge, S. T., 255
- Colombia, 36 n.
- Colonies, British, settled on soil that needed work, 31; conflict of interest between mainland colonies and sugar islands, 32; commercial restrictions, 33; liberty in other respects, 33; prosperity of, 34
- Columbus, Bartholomew, 27
- Columbus, Christopher, discovery of New World, 26, 27, 236, 237 n., 243, 249; on uses of gold, 221
- Combination Acts, 207, 250 n.
- Commerce, early, 4; mediæval, 16, 18-20; change in character, 21-3; Spanish regulation of colonial commerce, 30; British regulation of colonial commerce, 32, 33; British commerce with America after separation, 35; Dutch commerce, 39; French, 41, 45; effect of French wars on French and British commerce, 42-7; Chartered Companies for, 54; English aristocracy interested in, 60; English commerce slight in Middle Ages, 25; reasons for expansion after discovery of America, 25, 60-5; Burke on, 51 n., 65 n.; Napoleon's interest in, 46
- Comum, 9
- Condorcet, 231 n., 239
- Conservatives, and new system, 213, 214, 217
- Constance, Council of, 50 n.
- Constantine, 214
- Constantinople, 20; fall of, 24, 191, 237
- Corinth, 19, 229
- Corn Laws, 108
- Corn prices, 88
- Corn supply, of Rome, 6, 13, 29
- Cornford, F. M., 61 n.
- Cornishmen, Watt on, 124

- Cornwall, steam engines in, 124-7 ;
clay from, 168, 173 n.
- Corsairs, 28
- Cort, Henry, 136, 142, 147 ; his
inventions, 138, 139 ; financial
failure, 139
- Cortez, 27
- Cotton (raw material) from America
and West Indies, 32, 44, 183,
184, 186 ; Sea Island cotton,
183, 184 n. ; importance of saw
gin, 183, 184, 249 n. ; figures
of imports, 184 ; cost, 186
- Cotton clothing, 187
- Cotton Exchange, 57, 187
- Cotton industry, Napoleon and, 47 ;
French compared to English,
48 ; English climate, 63 ; de-
veloped before railways, 79 ;
concentration in Lancs, 80,
163 ; Luddites in, 107 ; Arbit-
ration Act, 107 ; and steam
power, 127, 182 ; individualism
of, 145 ; in India, 178, 179, 180,
186 ; introduced into Europe,
180 ; development in England,
181 ; flying shuttle, spinning
jenny, water frame and mule,
181, 182 ; power loom, 182,
183 ; as factory industry, 182,
183 ; increased production,
183 ; sources of raw material,
183, 184 ; development in
United States, 184, 185 ; in
Egypt, 184 n. ; Indian market,
185, 186 ; organization of
industry, 186, 211 ; figures of
comparative progress, numbers
employed and factories, 188,
189 ; pioneer of improvement,
266
- Coupland, R., 192 n., 255 n.
- Craesus, 16
- Crawshay, W., 146 n.
- Crompton, Samuel, 3, 46, 185, 211,
221 ; his mule, 182
- Cromwell, Oliver, 39, 52
- Cronstadt, 121
- Cross, Sir Richard, 227
- Crowley, Ambrose, 146 n., 148 ;
works, 135 n. (spelt Crawley),
153
- Crusades, the, 16, 222, 247 ; and
commerce, 18, 25
- Ctesibius, 11
- Cunningham, Dr., 194 n., 243 n.
- Curriers Company, The, 102
- Cuthbert of Kendal, 17 n.
- Cyfarthfa, 146 n., 159
- De Gama, Vasco, 236, 243
- Damascus, 6, 18, 23
- Daniels, Professor, 44 n., 69 n.,
76 n., 185 n., 186 n. ; quoted
on mule, 182 n. ; researches of,
189
- Danish Companies, 54 n.
- Dante, 260
- Danube, 6
- Darby, Abiah, 136, 137
- Darby, Abraham, the first and
second, 136, 138, 142
- Darby, Alfred, 158
- Darby, Henry, 146 n.
- Darwen, 223
- Dauphiné, 45
- Davies, Rev. David, 91, 92, 93
- Davy, Sir Humphry, 249 n.
- Debts, of landlord class, 84 n.
- Defoe, on cloth merchants, 68 ; on
transport, 70 ; on clothiers, 197
- Delos, 194, 195, 237
- Delphi, 229
- Denmark, and agrarian reform, 82,
89-90
- De Officiis*, 233
- Deptford, 127
- De Quincey, 196 n.
- Derby, 77 ; china, 165 n.
- Derbyshire pedlars, 69 ; iron in-
dustry, 144 ; pottery wages,
177 ; cotton factories, 189
- Derwent, the, 77
- De Suffren, 42
- Devonshire, clay from, 166, 168, 173 n.
- Dias, 236
- Dickens, Charles, 226, 244, 261
- Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,
Society for, 210
- Dill, Dr. Samuel, 215 n., 220 n.,
253 n. ; on games, 14 n. ; on
public amenities, 228, 229
- Diocletian, 15 ; and caste system,
214
- Doherty, J., 174, 258
- Domitian, 235 n.
- Dorset, 95, 173 n.
- Douai, 17
- Dowlais, 70, 146 n.
- Drainage, 223, 227 n., 232 n.
- Drake, Sir Francis, 236, 238, 239,
244
- Drogheda, 52
- Dryden, 64

- Dudley, Dud, 136
 Dunmow, 92
 Dupleix, 42
 Durham, 76, 94, 158, 222
 Dutch, The, and commerce in East, 21, 179, 180, 243; commerce in West, 26; capitalists, 30; as a commercial power, 32, 38, 39, 40, 50; effect of Napoleonic wars on, 49; reasons of success, 58; population, 40 n.; Chartered Companies, 54; as bankers, 57; as immigrants, 62, 165; and *Assiento*, 193
- East India Company, English, 21, 42, 54, 62 n., 135 n., 185, 186; Burke on, 65 n.; Dutch, 54; constitution of, 55 n.; French, 55
 Edinburgh, 75
 Education, importance and deficiency of, at Industrial Revolution, 228-32, 248; classical, of governing class, 251-3; zeal for, 259
 Education in Wales, Commission on, 156-8, 231, 248 n.
 Edward III, 61
 Edwards, Ness, 148 n., 159 n., 223 n., 231 n., 232 n.; on capital for S. Wales, 146 n.
 Egypt, and commerce, 7, 18, 20, 24, 178; Napoleon and, 42; Leibnitz on, 42 n.; raw cotton from, 66, 184, 184 n., 186; and mediæval slave trade, 190, 191, 238
 Elers, the brothers, 165, 166 n., 167
 Elizabeth, Queen, 83; and immigrants, 61; industrial legislation, 91, 101; and forests, 134; slave trade, 192
 "Elizabethan," 236
 Ellesmere Canal, 75
 Empire, Eastern, 19; fall of, 24, 191, 237; Roman, Spanish, etc., see *under* Countries
 Enclosures, in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 83, 84, 103, 254; in eighteenth century, 84-8, 103; procedure, 87; in Denmark, 89, 90
 Encyclopædia, French, 261
 Engineering, 79
 Engineers, Society of, 122
 Erasmus, 53
 Ernle, Lord, see Prothero
- Essex, 95
 Ethelred, Statute of, 25
 Etienne, St., 48 n.
 Etruria, 13, 163
 Etruria (Wedgwood's), 173 n.
 Euclid, 10
 Euripides, 256
 Evangelicals, 239
- Factories in India, 180; for cotton, 182, 188, 189; discipline in, 207, 208
 Factory Acts, observance of, in Manchester, 158; and Potteries, 173, 177; early legislation, 201-2; as civilizing force, 255-8; inspection, 255, 256
 Factory system, 248; in Potteries, 168
 Faustus (Marlowe's), 244
 Fay, C. R., 181 n., 225 n.
 Ferdinand and Isabella, 27
 Ferrero, Guglielmo, 9 n., 235 n.; on dealings of Rome with the East, 7, 8 n.
 Fielden, John, 203, 243; and minimum wage, 107; on apprentice children, 197; on factory conditions, 201, 208, 209
 Fieldings, the, 198
 Five Towns, 163, and Chapter X *passim*
 Flanders, social war in, 17; commerce, 24, 54; cotton industry, 180
 Flemish immigrants, 61
 Fletcher, J. S., 73 n., 75 n., 76 n.; on roads, 69 n., 71 n.; on opening of canal, 78 n.
 Florence, cloth, 17, 65; silk, 18; guilds, 97
 Florida Blanca, 36 n.
 Foley, Lord, 147 n.
 Fothergill, 119, 121, 125
 Fox, C. J., 239; and minimum wage, 92; and slave trade, 193, 194, 203; and India, 253
 Fox, Henry, 140 n.
 Framework knitters, 106
 France, modern, 4; eighteenth century, 14; and early commerce, 20; and New World, 26; capitalists, 30; and colonies, 33, 34; and natives, 33 n., 239, 240; rivalry with England, 38, 40 ff., 50, 186, 239, 240; Colbert's policy, 41;

- effect of Napoleonic wars on industry, 42-4; taxation in 1815, 44 n.; industrial progress before war, 45; population, 40 n., 45; exports, 45; in India, 38, 55 n., 179, 185, 186; internal customs regulations, 59; agriculture, 82, 88, 89; aristocracy, 59, 60, 85, 88, 89; guilds in, 97, 101; metal workers, 142; cotton industry, 183, 184, 188; and Assiento, 193; abolitionist movement in, 255; and equality, 240; taste in textiles, 251 n.; intellectual relations with England, 254, 255
- Francis, St., 254
- Franklin, Benjamin, 239; and steam engine, 119
- Free Trade, internal, in England, 46, 58, 59, 71; in France, 46
- French Chartered Companies, 54, 55
- French India Company, 42
- French peasant, 230
- Friends, Society of, 239
- Fuggers, The, 29, 50, 54 n.
- Galileo, 249, 260
- Galloway, R. L., 113 n.
- Game Laws, The, 256
- Gas, introduction of, 138, 220
- Gaul, 8, 247; industry in, 6, 9, 10 n.
- Genoa, 219; silk mills, 16, 18; and commerce, 17, 18, 24, 25, 180; and slave trade, 190, 191, 243; and piracy, 238
- George, M. Dorothy, 187 n., 196 n.
- George II, 91
- George III, 86, 198 n.
- Germany, social strife in Middle Ages, 17; commerce, 24, 25; capitalists, 30; thirty years' war, 39, 53 n.; Germans as money lenders, 52, 56; Huguenots and, 63; economic life a century ago, 66, 67; effect of railways on, 1, 79; agricultural revolution in, 82; peasants in, 83 n.; aristocracy, 85; textile taste, 251 n.; mystics, 255
- Gibbins, H. de B., 47 n.
- Gibbon, Edward, on Roman commerce, 6; on national status in 1414, 50 n.; on Justinian and silk, 187
- Giddy, D., 232 n.
- Gig mills, 105
- Ginghis Khan, 28 n., 246
- Gladstone, W. E., 257 n.
- Glamorganshire, 151 n., 153, 154; militia, 155; population, 223
- Glasgow, 76; Watt and, 114, 115, 116; University, 115; Corporation, 115
- Gloucester, 72, 80, 95; magistrates and wages, 105
- Good Hope, Cape of, 22
- Gould, Nathaniel, 158, 201
- Gower, Lord, 167
- Gracchi, The, 5
- Graham, Sir James, 204, 205
- Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, 155
- Grant, I. F., 86 n.
- Grant, Professor A. J., on guilds, 101 n.
- Gravesend, 173 n.
- Greece, and arts of East, 6; and industry, 10, 11; and tyrants, 11 n.; civilization, 52; quarrels, 52, 236; immigrants into, 61; intellectual speculation, 63; simple habits, 218; views of life, 222, 235, 251; public buildings, 228
- Greenock, 114
- Gregg, the, 243
- Gretton, R. H., 99 n.; 220 n.; on Guild merchants, 100 n.
- Grey, Charles, 92
- Guest family, 146 n., 147 n.
- Guiana, 54
- Guild, commonly found in Western Europe in Middle Ages, 97; guild merchant, 97; history of English guilds like that of English town, 98; internal struggles, 98, 99; defeat of small master by commercial capitalist, 99; craft guild superseded by bodies like Livery Companies, 99; references to mediæval guilds in other chapters, 17, 23, 51, 52, 65, 196, 213, 215, 240; of merchants, 54; of Hammermen, 115
- Guinea Coast, 199, 203
- Gujarat, 179, 243
- Hadrian, 5, 235 n.
- Halifax, 68, 76, 211
- Hamilton Alexander, 239
- Hammermen, Guild of, 115

- Hampshire, 95
 Hanley, 163
 Hannibal, 234 n.
 Hanseatic League, 21, 25, 179
 Hanse Towns, 24, 52
 Hanway, Jonas, on tea 22; and pauper children, 198
 Hardy, Thomas, 3
 Hargreaves, James, 46, 211; his jenny, 181, 182
 Haring, C., 28 n., 29 n., 30 n.
 Harrogate, 72
 Hastings, Warren, 239
 Hawkins, Sir John, 192
 Hayes, Carlton, 20 n., 26 n., 30 n., 193 n.; on banking families, 54 n.
 Hayti, 237 n.
 Health, Board of, 226
 Health, Public, Acts, 227
 Health of Towns Commission (1844), 156, 223, 224
 Health of Towns Committee (1840), 226
 Hecksher, 44 n.
 Heitland, W. E., 14 n., 214 n.; on reaping machine, 10 n.; on extortions of officials, 15 n.
 Helens, St., 76, 78
 Helps, Sir Arthur, on Peru, 30 n.; on wars in New World, 252 n.
 Henry IV (of France), 4, 55 n.; and customs regulations, 59; and immigrants, 61
 Henry VII, 27
 Henry VIII, and Church lands, 60, 85
 Herefordshire, 70, 72
 Hero of Alexandria, 11, 12, 110
 Herodes Atticus, 220, 229
 Herodotus, 235 n.
 Hewins, W. A. S., on Dutch East India Company, 55 n.
 Heyd, W., 17 n., 18 n., 20 n., 25 n., 190 n., 191 n.; on Jacques Cœur, 16 n.
 Hiero, 11
 Highlanders, 93rd, 155
 Highlands, 86 n.
 Hispaniola, 237
 Hobhouse, L. T., 216 n.
 Hobson, J. A., 18 n., 63 n.
 Hodder, E., 245 n.
 Holidays, in Rome, 14 n.; in Middle Ages, 229
 Holker, John, 45
 Holland, and Berlin Decrees, 49 n.
See also Dutch
 Holyhead, 75
 Home Office Papers, 154 n., 174 n., 202 n.
 Homfray, 146 n.
 Horner, Francis, 199
 Horner, Leonard, 231, 257 n.
 Horrocks, H., 183
 Horsehay Works, 148 n., 150
 Horwich, 223
 Housing. *See* Towns
 Howlett, Rev. John, 92
 Huddersfield, 68
 Hudson Bay, 42, 54
 Huguenot immigrants, 61, 62
 Hull, 77, 78, 169
 Hume, Joseph, 207
 Hume, Martin, 27 n., 30 n.
 Hunts, 95
 Huntsman, Benjamin, 141, 142, 143
 Hurst, G. B., on American trade, 34 n.
 Hutchins and Harrison, 188 n.
 Hyde, 224 n.
 Immigrants, and industry, 61, 62, 165, 180
 India, commerce, 6, 8, 9 n., 19, 23, 66; British Empire in, 15, 31 n., 38, 185, 186, 240; tea from, 21, 22; Portuguese and, 39, 180; rivalry of French and English in, 38, 42, 55 n., 179, 185, 186; home of cotton industry, 178, 179, 180, 182 n.; market for English cotton, 185-7; pillage in, 237, 253
 Indians (American), 33 n.; cruelties to, 192, 237, 252
 Indies, East, raw cotton from, 184
 West, 31, 32, 42; cotton from, 32, 184; slavery, 193, 194, 198, 199, 201, 203; conflict of interest between British West Indies and colonies on mainland, 32
 Inquests, absence of, 152, 158, 159, 243
 Inventions, outburst of, 63-5
 Invergarry, 134 n.
 Ipswich, 98
 Ireland, 9 n., 51 n.; immigrants from, in Lancs, 107; in S. Wales, 156
 Irish Commercial Propositions, 145

- Irish peasant, 230
 Iron industry, and America, 31, 33, 135 n., 146 n.; and Severn, 77, 134, 136; and Russia, 123 n.; decline in early eighteenth century, 132; production of pig and bar iron, 132, 133; workers, 133; districts, 79, 80, 131, 134, 135; Darby's discoveries, 136-8; cast iron goods, increase in, 138, 220; Cort's inventions, 139, 140; steam power, 141; rapid expansion, 143; stimulus of war and slump, 143; misery of workers, 143 n.; concentration and large-scale organization, 144; ironmasters, political power and character, 145, 146, 147; new types of workers, 147, 148; wages and hours, 148, 149; conditions in Staffs and Shropshire, 149, 150; in S. Wales, 151; in Scotland, 153; Canning on ironworks, 153; life in new districts, 153-9; Truck system, 154, 155; masters as magistrates, 154; figures of production and distribution, 160, 161
 Irwell, the, 77
 Isabella, Queen, 237 n.
 Italian, City States and commerce, 18, 54; and Guilds, 97; money lenders, 52, 56; bankers, 56, 57; cotton industry, 47, 180; mediæval slave trade, 191, 238; wars, 237
 Jacquard's loom, 45; Napoleon and, 46
 Jamaica, as slave market, 193, 195
 James I, 56, 91
 Japan, trade with, 179
 Java, 22
 Javan merchants, 179
 Jefferson, Thomas, 239
 Jellicoe, Adam, 140
 Jellicoe, Samuel, 140
 Jenny spinning, in France, 45; invention of, 181
 Jerome, St., 253
 Jerusalem, 18
 "Jesus," The, 192
 Jevons, H. S., 70 n., 79 n.
 Jews, as traders, 20; financiers, 49 n.; money lenders, 52, 56; expelled by Spaniards, 63
 John of Newbury, 17 n.
 Johnson, A. H., 83 n.
 Johnson, Dr., 5
 Joint Stock Companies, 55, 102
 Jones, Stuart, 14 n.
 Jones, W. H. S., 15 n.
 Junot, 36
 Justinian, and silk, 16 n., 187
 Juvenal, 13; on commerce, 6
 Kay, John, 46; flying shuttle, 181
 Kendal, 17 n., 76
 Kensington, 70
 Kent, 95
 Kent, Nathaniel, 91, 93
 Kidderminster, 6
 Kinneil House, 117, 120, 121
 Kirkby Lenadale, 76
 Kirkcaldy, A. W., 37 n., 39 n.
 Knaresborough, 74
 Knowles, L. C. A., 34 n., 45 n., 181 n., 183 n.; on British shipping, 37 n.; on population, 40 n.; on German economic life, 53 n.
 Laistner, J., 11 n.
 Lancashire, 219; Luddites, 104, 107; climate suitable for cotton industry, 181 n.; cotton factories, 189, 199; population, 80, 223; magistrates and concerts, 229; education in, 248; improvement in, 256
 Lancaster, 76
 Lanchester, H. V., 221 n.
 Las Casas, 237, 239, 254; on Peru, 30 n.; and slavery, 193
 Laski, H. J., 214 n.
 Latimer, Bishop, 254
 Lead poisoning, 168
 Leathe, Stanley, Sir, 227 n.
 Lecky, W. E. H., 21 n., 34 n., 36 n., 193 n., 235 n.; on American Indians, 33 n.
 Leeds, 68, 91, 211; communications, 75, 76, 77; gas in, 220; population, 222
 Leibnitz, 43 n.
 Leipsic fair, 68
 Levant, trade with, 24, 54, 55, 180; pirates, 238
 Levasseur, E., 215 n.
 Liability, Limited, 223 n.

272 THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY

- Liberalism, and new system, 214-17
 Liège, 148
 Lille, 48 n.
 Lima, 30
 Lincoln, 17
 Lipsen, E., 17 n.
 Lisbon, 36
 Liverpool, commercial centre, 7,
 10, 58, 68, 80; cotton ex-
 change, 57; communications,
 76, 77, 78, 79; and Potteries,
 169, 172; slave trade, 203,
 204 n.; death rate, 223
 Livery Companies, 99, 101
 Lloyd, G. I. H., 138 n.
 Lloyds, the, 147
 Locke, John, 53, 215, 241; on
 children's work, 197
 Loire, the, 77
 London, commerce, 19, 25; finan-
 cial centre, 48, 49, 58; Stock
 Exchange, 57; communica-
 tions with provinces, 68, 69, 70,
 76, 77, 172
 Longton, 163
 Lord, J., 129 n.
 Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland,
 49 n.
 Louis XI (of France), 4; and silk
 industry, 18; and immigrants,
 61
 Louis XIV, 241; his wars, 39, 40;
 his policy, 40-2
 Louis XV, 34
 Louvois, 41
 Lovett, William, 259, 261
 Lowe, Vere and Williams, 125
 Lucca, 18, 65
 Lucretius, 234 n.
 Lucullus, 13, 236
 Luddite Riots, 104-7
 Luther, 53

 Macadam, J. L., 75
 Macaulay, T. B., on Baconian
 philosophy, 64 n.; on Southey,
 225; on his classical educa-
 tion, 253 n.; and Civil Service,
 257 n.
 Macedon, 7, 8 n., 30
 Mackintosh, Sir James, 254
 Madeley Iron Works, 150
 Madras, cotton from, 186
 Magellan, 236, 243
 Magistrates, scarcity in S. Wales,
 154
 Mahomet Ali, 184 n.

 Malabar, 6
 Malaria, 15 n.
 Malplaquet, 193
 Manchester, 91, 126, 127, 172, 174;
 cotton industry, 23, 44, 163,
 180; chapmen, 69; com-
 munications, 76, 77, 78, 79;
 population, 153, 222; death-
 rate, 223; public spirit, 158;
 squalor, 219, 221, 224, 229;
 gas, 220
 Manor system, 81, 104, 215, 240
 Manorial Courts, 81, 82, 83, 85,
 104
 Mantoux, P., 17 n., 77 n., 78 n.,
 145 n.
 Marburg, 111
 Marcus Aurelius, 14 n., 229
 Markham, Sir C. R., 27 n.
 Marlborough, Duke of, 193
 Marlowe, C., 238, 244
 Marseilles, 220
 Marshall, T. H., 130 n.
 Marvin, F. S., 196 n.
 Massey, 174
 Mauritius, 184
 Mechanics, Watt's difficulties with,
 122, 123, 127 n.
Mechanics' Magazine, 160 n.
 Medici, Cosimo dei, 16
 Medici, the, 54 n.
 Melbourne, Lord, 155, 225, 227
 Meredith, H. O., 185 n.
 Merlin, Monmouth, 159 n.
 Mersey, the, 77, 169, 181
 Merthyr Tydfil, transport of coal,
 70; canal, 78; ironworks,
 134, 138, 146 n., 154; riots,
 155; conditions, 159, 229,
 232 n.; water supply, 159,
 220; population, 223
 Mesta, the, 30 n.
 Metcalfe, J., 74
 Meteyard, E., 163 n., 167 n.
 Methodist movement, 260, 261
 Mexico, 27, 30, 36 n., 185, 237
 Middle Ages, commerce in, 16-21;
 as civilization, 51 ff.; changes,
 54; peasant life, 81, 82
 Middlesex, 80
 Midlands, coal and iron, 58, 80,
 148, 155; enclosures, 84;
 migration of ironworks to, 134,
 144
 Milan, Duchy of, 59
 Mill, J. S., 255
 Mines, Cornish, 124-7

- Mining, capitalism in, 240; connexion with development of ironworks, 144, 147, 161, 163, 166
- Mint, Royal, 128
- Mirebeau, 239
- Missionaries in New World, 236, 239
- Moffitt, L. W., 223 n.
- Monmouthshire, numbers employed in iron industry, 151 n.; social conditions, 156-9, 248, 256; population, 223
- Monroe, President, 35 n.
- Montoalm, 42
- Monton, 223
- Montpellier, 16 n., 17
- Moors, 180, 191
- More, Sir Thomas, 224, 254; *Utopia*, 237
- Morland, W. H., 27 n., 39 n., 179 n.
- Morley, Anthony, 134
- Morocco, 54
- Muirhead, J. P., 115 n., 120 n., 130 n.
- Muir, Ramsay, 203 n.; on colonial rivalry, 26 n.
- Mule, invention and importance of, 182
- Mulhausen, cotton statistics, 48, 188
- Municipal Corporations Act (1835), 225
- Municipal Corporations Commission, 98
- Murdock, William, wages, 123 n.; inventions, 126, 129
- Murray, Gilbert, 243 n.
- Mutiny, Indian, 54
- Myos, Harma, 6
- Nantes, Revocation of Edict of, 61
- Napoleon, 96; his wars, 42; Berlin Decrees, 43; economic policy, 46, 47; Bank of France, 57 n.
- Narbonne, 17
- National Association for the Protection of Labour, 155
- Navigation Acts, 39, 40
- Navy Board, 127, 140
- Needles, the, 19
- Nero, 9, 14 n., 235 n.
- Nerva, 5
- Netherlands, Spain and, 27; religious differences, 58
- Newcastle (Staffs), 172
- Newcastle-on-Tyne: communications, 76, 77; Guild merchant, 100 n.; ironworks, 135 n.
- Newwomen, Thomas, his engine, 115, 119, 122, 124; described, 112, 113
- Newhaven, 173 n.
- Newton, Sir Isaac, 64, 65, 249, 260
- Nile, the, 6
- Nonconformists, ironmasters as, 146. *See also* Methodists and Quakers
- Norfolk, 80, 95
- Normanby, Lord, 226
- Normandy, 9
- Normans, 19
- Northamptonshire, 80
- Northumberland, 94, 158
- Norway, 66
- Norwich, 68, 97, 219
- Nottingham, 77; Luddites, 104, 106
- Novgorod, 20
- Nuremberg, 18
- Oastler, R., 201, 203
- Oldham, 67; population, 223; and schools, 231
- Oldknow, Samuel, 189
- Orders in Council, 43, 44, 47
- Ordnance, Office of, 138
- Orleans Canal, 77
- Ostia, 6, 10, 16
- Owen, H., 166 n., 172 n.
- Owen, Robert, 261; national movements, 155, 226, 258, 260; factory legislation, 201, 243; education, 259
- Oxford, 95
- Paine, Tom, 231
- Palestina, 9, 24
- Palladius, 10 n.
- Papin, Dionysius, 111
- Papplewick, 127 n.
- Paraguay, 36 n.
- Paris, 97, 118, 218
- Parliament, reformed, and abuses, 225; anomalies in eighteenth century, 213; Liberals and, 216
- Parliamentary Inquiries and Reports, 3, 226
- Parma, Duke of, 58
- Parthenon, the, 247
- Passy, 46
- Paul, St., 246
- Paul's, St., Cathedral, 222
- Paulus, 7
- Pedlars, 68, 69

- Peel, Sir Robert (first Baronet), estate at death, 49 n.; and turnpike road, 73 n.; factory legislation, 173, 201; slave trade, 203
- Peel, Sir Robert (second Baronet), 227
- Pembrokeshire, 151 n.
- Pepper, as article of commerce, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 179
- Percival, Dr., 158, 201, 223
- Pericles, 61 n., 246
- Persia, commerce with, 19, 178, 179
- Peru, mineral treasures, 27; Las Casas on, 30 n.; liberation, 36 n.; cruelties in, 237
- Peruzzi, the, 54 n.
- Peter the Great, 123 n.
- Peterloo, 44
- Petty, Sir William, on Dutch, 57, 58
- Philip II (of Spain), 27, 30 n., 241
- Phillipps, L. March, 222 n.
- Piacenza, 180
- Piece Halle, 68
- Piracy, 238, 239
- Pisa, and commerce, 18, 25
- Pitt, William (the younger), 239; and industry, 40; Board of Agriculture, 74; minimum wage, 92, 214 n.; Cotton Arbitration Act, 107; Irish Commercial Propositions, 145; taxation of iron, 145; slave trade, 193; on children's labour, 197; Combination Act, 207; and classics, 253
- Pitta, the, and commerce, 60
- Pizarro, 27, 237, 244
- Place, Francis, and cotton clothing, 187; and Combination Laws, 207; and education, 259
- Plague, The Great, 82
- Playfair, Lyon, 257 n.
- Pliny the Elder, 10 n.; on agriculture, 5; luxuries, 13; and sails, 63
- Pliny the Younger, public gifts, 229
- Plutarch, on Pompey, 8 n.; on Archimedes, 11 n.; on Sulla, 234 n.
- Plymouth, 98
- Po, Valley of the, 6, 9
- Polo, Marco, 16, 191
- Pompey, his spoils, 8 n., 236; his slaves, 196 n.
- Ponsonby, Arthur, 133 n.
- Poor Law system, 94, 95
- Populations, in eighteenth century, 40 n., 45; changes of distribution in England, 80
- Porter, G. R. (*Progress of the Nation*), 48 n.; iron figures, 161; cotton figures, 188, 189
- Portland Vase, 170
- Portuguese, and New World, 24, 26, 27, 180, 191; break up of empire, 36, 37; Regent, 36; in India, 39, 178, 179, 180, 181; in Africa, 39, 180, 191; slave labour, 191
- Postlethwayt, 194 n.
- Potter, Humphrey, 113
- Potteries, the, early transport in, 70; nature of district, 163, 164; early peasant industry, 164; changes, 164; the Elers, 165; salt glazed ware, 166; Astbury and whitened body, 166; potters' rot, 166; Benson's water mill, 167; introduction of moulds, 167; Booth and fluid glaze, 167, 168; lead poison, 168; importation of clay, 168; growth of capitalism, 168; improvements in transport, 169, 170; Wedgwood's improvements, 170, 171; blue printing, 171; cheap china, 171; absence of mechanical power, 172; division of labour, 172; Wedgwood on condition of workers, 173; Unions and strikes, 174, 175; revelations of Children's Employment Commission, 175-7; wages, 175; Factory Acts, 177
- Potter's Examiner*, 175
- Potters' rot, 166
- Power, E., 86 n.
- Power looms, in France, 48; in England, 107, 108; invention of, 182, 183; numbers, 183
- Prescot, 76
- Pres gangs, 114
- Preston, 76, 97, 211; housing, 223, 224
- Prestonpans, 118
- Pretender's Raid, 72
- Price, Dr., 231
- Prothero, R. E. (Lord Ernle), 88 n.; on Tull, 86 n.
- Prussia, 188
- Prussian Companies, 54 n.

- Puritans, 212; cruelties to natives, 237, 252
- Quaker, ironmasters, 137, 141, 147
- Quebec Act, 34
- Quesnai, 254
- Rackham and Read, on Wedgwood, 170 n.
- Radcliffe, William, 183
- Radicals, and new system, 213; and natural rights, 216; early, 230, 260
- Railways, introduced after textile revolution, 2, 79, 80; and Potteries, 170
- Raleigh, Sir Walter (1552-1618), 236; on Spanish treasure, 29 n.; on English trade, 39 n.
- Raleigh, Sir Walter (professor), 27 n., 29 n., 221 n.; on Hispaniola massacres, 237
- Ramillies, 193
- Rathbone, E. F., 242 n.
- Rathbone, W., 203
- Raynal, 239
- Reaping machine (Roman), 10 n.
- Redmayne, Sir R., 48 n.
- Red Sea, 6, 179 n.
- Reform Bill, first, 257
- Reform, Parliamentary, 174
- Reformation, the, 4, 53; refugees, 61
- Religion, wars of, 38, 40, 55 n.; importance in mediæval commerce, 20; object of munificence, 220 n., 221; Columbus on, 221
- Renaissance, the, 53; intellectual activity, 64, 110; art, 222
- Renard, G., 18 n.
- Rennie, John, 128 n.
- Restoration, English, and physical sciences, 64
- Results of Machinery, The*, 210
- Revolt of 1830, 95
- Revolution, agrarian, Chapter VI *passim*, changes before sixteenth century, 82, 83; enclosures of sixteenth century, 84; of eighteenth century, 87-8; compared with French agrarian revolution, 89; with Danish, 89, 90; social consequences, 91-6
- commercial, 21-3
- French, 4, 241; effects on French industry, 46; on agriculture, 88, 89; panic in England, 207, 250; Code of, 254; influence on English thought, 258, 259, 261
- Revolution, Whig, 60, 85
- Reynolds, Richard, 146 n., 147
- Rheims, 17
- Rhine Valley, 9
- Ribble, the, 181
- Rice, introduction of, 22
- Richelieu, 4, 59
- Rights, Natural, 216
- Rio di Janeiro, 36
- Risca, 146 n.
- Roads, condition of, 70, 71; improvements, 71-6; French, 71
- Roanne, 45
- Robert of Geneva, 52
- Robison, Dr., 121
- Rochdale, 69, 76, 211
- Rodney, Admiral, 203
- Roebuck, Dr., connexion with Watt, 116, 117; bankruptcy, 120, 124, 126
- Rome, economic life, 5-16; capitalism in, 6, 12, 13; commerce in, 6, 7, 9 ff.; its limited character, 10; industrial development, 8, 9-16; absence of mechanical invention, 10 ff., 63; usury, 12; corn dole, 13; rifling of Mediterranean and East, 7, 8, 233, 236, 237; recovery under Augustus, 8, 233-5, 255 n.; slavery in, 5, 61, 194, 196; architecture, 8; roads, 8, 70; public games, 13, 14; care for towns and amenities, 220, 221, 228, 229; simplicity of food and clothing, 218; use of Greek teaching, 235, 251; influence of Roman literature, 252, 253
- Rome (the town), 218, 221; sack of, 237
- Romilly, Sir Samuel, 254; on apprentice children, 199, 200
- Roscoe, William, 203
- Rosa, George, 203
- Rotary motion, 126, 130, 141
- Rotherham, 144
- Rothschilds, the, 49
- Roubaix, 48 n.
- Rouen, 45
- Roundman system, 94
- Runcorn, 77

276 THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY

- Royal Society, 64
 Russell, Charles, 248 n.
 Russia, commerce, 20, 54; and mechanics, 123; iron industry, 123 n.
 Ryswyk, Peace of, 239 n.
- Saddler and Green, 171
 Saddlers Company, 102
 Saddleworth, 69
 Sadler, 129
 Sadler, M. T., 202, 203
 Sagnac, M., 45 n.
 Salford, 224 n.
 Salonica, 62
 Salvioni, 12 n., 218 n.; on Roman doles, 13 n.
 Samos, 163
 San Domingo, 192, 237 n.
 Sandwich, 19, 25
 Saracens, 18
 Savery, Thomas, his steam engine, 111-12
 Saw-gin, invention of, 183, 249 n.
 Saxony, 188
 Schelt, the, 47
 "Scotch Cattle," the, 155, 156
 Scotland, 59, 68, 71; cattle from, 69; iron industry, 131, 134 n., 138, 148; conditions in ironworks, 152, 153; cotton factories, 189
 Scotsmen as mechanics, Watt on, 122
 Scott, Sir Walter, 219
 Scott, W. R., on stockbroking, 55 n.
 Scottish companies, 54 n. peasant, 230
 Scrivenor, on ironmasters, 146 n.; ironworks, 160, 161
 Scythia, 6
 Seducing of artisans, 123, 206, 207
 Seine, the, 77
 Selby, 72
 Seneca, 5
 Sepulveda, 252 n.
 Severn, the, 136, 169; highway for iron industry, 77, 134; cast-iron bridge over, 138
 Seville, 30
 Shaftesbury, Lord, 203, 254, 261; on industrial system, 247. *See also* Ashley, Lord
 Shakespeare, William, 244, 256, 260; definition of man quoted by Burke. 205. 246
 Shanghai, 208 n.
 Sharp, Granville, 194
 Sheffield, 6, 174; ironworks, 135, 144; cutlers, 68, 138, 142
 Shelley, P. B., 219, 255
 Shipley, 78 n.
 Shoemakers Company, 102
 Shops, early, 68, 69; and agrarian changes, 91
 Shropshire, iron industry, 146 n., 148; conditions in, 149-50
 Sicily, 18
 Sidmouth, Lord, 108
 Sierra Leone, 192
 Silk, introduction of industry into Europe, 16, 187; development in Europe, 16, 18; in France, 18, 45; from India, 185. *See also* Spitalfields.
 Silk mills, in East, 16, 209, 247; in Genoa, 16
 Simon, Sir John, 257 n.
 Simon Stylites, St., 222
 Simpson, F. A., on Holland and Berlin Decrees, 49 n.
 Sinclair, Sir John, 74
 Slaney, R. A., 226
 Slavery, Roman, 5, 194, 195, 196 n., 247; protection of slaves, 235 n.; mediæval, 16 n., 190, 191, 238; forbidden in England, 194; American, 249 n. *See also* Slave Trade.
 Slave Trade, African, 208, 237, 243, 247; Bristol merchants and, 146 n.; origin and growth, 191, 192; England's share, 192; her monopoly after 1713, 193; prohibited by American Congress, 193; abolition of, by Fox, 194; Liverpool and, 203, 204; agitation against, 239, 254, 255
 Smart, William, 35 n., 49 n.
 Smeaton, John, 122, 127
 Smiles, Samuel, 120 n., 130 n., 138 n., 140 n.
 Smith, Adam, 53, 215; on Spain, 27, 28 n., 31; on colonists, 33; on Navigation Acts, 40; on Dutch taxes, 40; on free trade, 59; on division of labour, 228, 231, 248; and Quesnai, 254
 Smith, General, 197 n.
 Smith, Dr. Southwood, 226
 Smithfield, 69

- Smoke, nuisance of, 119, 187 n.;
in Burslem, 166
- Smollett, Tobias, 71
- Socialists, 230
- Soho Works, 118 and Chapter VIII
passim; lit with gas, 138 n.,
220
- Solon, 61
- Somerset, 72, 80
- Somerset, Duke of, 84
- Sophocles, 235
- Southampton, 19, 25
- Southey, Robert, 255; and housing,
224, 225; and factory children,
245
- Southport, 76 n.
- South Sea Bubble, 55
- South Seas Company, 193
- Spain, 17, 50; in Roman times, 8,
9; and New World, 24, 26-31,
212, 221; use of opportunities,
27; concentration on precious
metals, 28; effect on politics and
industry of Spain, 28-30; colon-
ists strictly regulated by
Spanish Government, 33; break
up of empire, 36, 37; religious
wars, 40; population, 40 n.; cot-
ton industry, 180; African slave
trade, 191, 192, 198; cruelties
in New World, 237; regulations
to protect natives, 239
- Specialization, industrial, early, 5,
6; in Middle Ages, 16, 17, 18
- Speenhamland system, 94
- Spice Islands, 19, 31 n., 39, 179,
243, 256; early importance, 21
- Spices, 25, 27. *See also* Pepper.
- Spinoza, 211
- Spitalfields regulations, 107
- Spode, brothers, 165, 171
- Staffordshire, 80, 146 n., 148; iron-
workers' misery at peace, 143 n.;
conditions in ironworks, 149-
50, 158; potteries, 163 and
Chapter X *passim*
- Stage coaches, 71, 75-6
- Stalybridge, 224 n.
- Stamford, 17
- Stamp Act, 34
- Steam engine, pioneers, 111;
Savery's, 111, 112; New-
comen's, 112, 113; Watt's dis-
covery of separate condenser,
110, 113; distribution of en-
gines, 129 n.; used for iron
industry, 136, 141, 142; for
cotton mills, 137 n., 182; Dr.
Bridges on, 196. *See also* Watt
- Steam navigation, 129
- Steel, 131; Huntman's process,
141, 142
- Stephenson, George, 3, 80
- Stockbroking, 55
- Stock Exchange, 57
- Stockholm, 218
- Stockport, 224 n.
- Stocks, M. D., 71 n.
- Stockton and Darlington Railway,
79
- Stoke, 163, 173 n.
- Stour, the, 77
- Stourbridge fair, 68
- Stow, John, 236
- Streeter, Canon, 64 n.
- Strutt, the, 243
- Stuarts, the, industrial policy, 60,
61, 102, 103
- Sturt, George, 248 n.
- Suessa Senonum, 220
- Suetonius, 10 n., 14 n.
- Suffolk, 92, 95
- Sugar, increased consumption of, 23
- Sugar Islands, 32
- Sulla, 61, 234
- Sully, 41
- Sumatra, 19
- Sunderland, 148
- Sussex, 95; iron industry, 80, 134;
charcoal burners, 133
- Swansea cavalry, 155
- Sweden, iron from, 135 n., 140, 142
- Swedish Companies, 64 n.
- Switzerland, 188
- Symington, 129
- Syracuse, 7, 11
- Syria, and Roman commerce, 8,
9; weavers, 18; medieval
commerce, 20, 24; capitalists,
247
- Tacitus, 13, 253 n.
- Taff Valley, 70
- Talents, Ministry of all the, 145
- Tamburlaine, 238, 244, 246
- Tana, 190
- Tartars, the, 28
- Taakurgan, 9 n.
- Tawney, J., 196 n.
- Tawney, R. H., 53 n., 99 n., 241 n.;
on German peasants, 83 n.;
on landlords' debts, 84 n.
- Tea, importance of, 21, 22, 23
- Telford, Thomas, 74, 75

- Ten Hours Bill, 202, 203, 204
 Thrace, 247
 Thucydides, 253
 Tiberius, 5
 Tilley, A., 41 n., 89 n.
 Tingtang mine, 124
 Tobacco trade, 116
 Tories, 60
 Toulouse, 77
 Tours, 18
 Townshend, Lord, 86
 Towns (including Housing), Town-planning in earlier times, 218; lack of, in Industrial Revolution, 219; neglect of problem compared with Roman Empire, 220, 221; its significance, 222; urgency of problem, 222, 223; example from Preston in 1844, 223; great increase of town population, 223; new evils, 224; government of towns before 1835, 225; Improvement Commissioners set up by private legislation, 225; Parliamentary Committee of 1840 and its proposals, 226; Normanby's Bill of 1840, 226; disclosures before Commissions of 1867 and 1884, 227; lack of amenities, 229; comparison with Roman towns, 229; curse of Midas on new town, 232
 Toynbee, A. J., 234 n., 252 n.; on Greek thought, 63 n.
 Tractarian movement, 254
 Trade Unions, as civilizing force, 255, 258
 Trajan, 6, 12, 14 n.; vigorous administration, 9
 Transport, Chapter V *passim*, in Potteries, 169, 170, 171, 172
 Tredegar, 146 n.
 Trent, the, 77
 Trentham, 167
 Trevelyan, Sir Charles, and Civil Service, 257 n.
 Trevelyan, Sir George, 253 n.
 Trevelyan, G. M., 75 n.; on roads to London, 69
 Truck system, in ironworks, 154; in potteries, 175
 Trusts. *See* Turnpike
 Tucker, Dean, 58
 Tudors, the, 39, 99; and industry, 59; and boroughs, 98
 Tull, Jethro, 85, 86
 Tunstall, 163
 Turgot, 41, 215; on America, 34, 35; on internal customs regulations, 46, 59; and education, 231 n.
 Turkey, cotton from, 184
 Turks, 24
 Turner of Worcester, 171
 Turnpike Trusts, 71-6
 Two Seas Canal, 77
 Twyford, J., 165
 Tydesley, 207
 Tyranny, Greek, 11 n.
 Tyre, silk mills, 16, 209; commerce, 18, 219
 Tysoe, 93 n.
 Ulm, 180
 Union Clubs, 155
 Union, the, with Scotland, 59, 116
 Unitarians, 239
 United States, 1, 37, 181; War of Independence, 33, 35, 37; War of 1812, 35, 44; policy of Protection, 35; raw cotton supply from, 32, 44, 66, 183, 184; cotton industry, 181, 184, 185, 188; effects of Whitney's invention, 183, 184, 249 n.
 University of Glasgow, and Watt, 115
 Unwin, Professor George, 59 n., 60 n., 101 n., 102 n., 180 n., 189; on social conflicts in fifteenth century, 17 n.; on journeyman class, 99 n.; on craftsmen, 100; on quarrels, 203
 Upholsters, London, 102
 Ure, A., 45 n., 48 n., 185 n., 188; on cost of spinning, 186 n.
 Ure, P. N., 11 n.
 Usury, 53 n.
 Utrecht, Treaty of, 40, 42; and slave trade, 193
 Uttoxeter, 164
 Valladolid, 252 n.
 Varro, 6, 15 n.
 Vauban, 59, 62
 Vaucanson, 45
 Venice, 219; as commercial power, 4, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 32; and silk, 18; slave trade, 191, 243; and piracy, 238
 Verona, 9
 Vespasian, 10, 220
 Vienna, Peace of, 47

- Village, destruction of, Chapter VI, 2, 213; village life in Middle Ages, 81, 83; changes in English village after Great Plague and growth of cloth industry, 83; villeinage loses servile character, 83; enclosures of sixteenth century, 84; of eighteenth century, 87; new problem of village after enclosures, 91; proposal for minimum wage, 91; for allotments, 92; Speenhamland system, 93; village riots of 1830, 95; auction of labourers, 96
- Villeinage, 81, 82, 83
- Virgil, 6
- Virginia, 31, 193
- Vitruvius, 221
- Viviana, the, 147 n.
- Voltaire, 239; on English aristocracy and trade, 60
- Wages, minimum, legislation, 91, 105, 108; proposals, 92, 106, 107, 214 n.
- Wakefield, 68, 77
- Wales, South, iron industry, 79, 131, 144, 147 n., 148; capital for, 146 n.; conditions in iron-works, 151; truck system, 154; social conditions, 156-9, 248, 256; towns, 220; illiteracy, 231
- Walker, Aaron, 146 n.
- Walker's Iron Works, 138, 144, 148 n.
- Walker, Samuel, 142
- Walpole, Sir Robert, 40, 60
- War of American Independence, 33, 35, 37, 116, 220; and iron trade, 138, 143, 147
- American (1812), 35, 44
- Dutch (1652), 39
- French (1793-1802, 1803-15), 145, 147, 193; effects on Industrial Revolution, 43, 249, 250; on enclosures, 88; on condition of labourers, 93; on iron trade, 143; on French industry, 44 f.; on English financial capitalism, 49
- Great (1814-18), 93, 250
- Hundred Years (1338-1453), 52
- of Louis XIV, 40, 41, 42
- Thirty Years (1618-48), 39, 53 n.
- Peloponnesian (431-404 a.c.), 247
- Warwick, Earl of, 84
- Warwickshire, 80, 148
- Washington, George, 239
- Water pipes, 138, 220
- Water supply, Roman, 221, 228; South Wales, 159, 220
- Watt, James, 3, 12, 211, 249; his invention of separate condenser, 110, 113; early history, 114; life at Glasgow, 115; association with Roebuck, 116-18; with Boulton, 118 f.; settles in England, 122; first successful engine, 122; difficulties with workmen, 123, 123; goes to Cornwall, 124; financial troubles, 124, 125; rotary motion, 126; scepticism about it, 127; other inventions, 127; improved financial position, 128; on steam navigation, 129; old age, 129, 130; importance of invention to iron industry, 136, 141, 142; on Cort, 140 n.; invention used for cotton mills, 127 n., 182; author of modern civilization, 130
- Watt, James, junior, 129 n.
- Weaver, the, 77, 169
- Weavers, Cotton, petition, 108
- Webb, Sidney, and Beatrice, 71 n.; on Turnpike Trusts, 72, 73 n.; on capitalism, 210 n.; on housing, 224 n.
- Wedgwood, Francis, 177
- Wedgwood, Josiah; dinner service for Catherine of Russia, 162; his improvements in pottery, 165, 170, 171, 172 n.; his energy over roads and canals, 169, 170; on improved conditions, 173
- Wedgwood, Josiah (the second), 173
- Wedgwood, J. C., 169 n., 173
- Wedgwood, Dr. Thomas, 165
- Wells, H. G., 12 n.
- West India Company, Dutch, 54; French, 55
- West Riding, 69, 80; cotton factories, 169
- Wharfedale, 73
- Wheat Busy mine, 134
- Whigs, 60; and State control of industry, 61, 103
- Whitbread, Samuel, on Orders in Council, 43; on minimum wage, 92, 214 n.; and education, 231

280 THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY

- Whitney, Eli, his saw-gin, 183, 184, 249 n.
- Wigan, 76, 78; Factory Acts disregarded in, 202 n.
- Wilberforce, William, 239; on iron districts, 131; on iron workers, 148 n.; and slave trade, 193, 254; and Combination Act, 207; on working classes, 250
- Wilkins, C., 146 n., 159 n., 160 n.
- Wilkinson, John, in France, 45; and steam engine, 121, 122, 124, 141, 143; his character, 147; his assignata, 154
- William III, 62, 165
- Wilmington, 169
- Wiltshire, 80, 95
- Winchelsea, Lord, 93
- Winchester, 68
- Windham, William, 205
- Winsford, 169
- Wise, Mr. 125
- Wolsey, Cardinal, 84
- Wolverhampton, 152, 153
- Woman, effect of Industrial Revolution on, 187 n., 242
- Wood, John, 243
- Wool, early export of, 178
- Woollen industry, early specialization, 17; organization of, 68, 69, 211; gradual changes, 79; shifting of centre, 80; regulations, 105; repealed, 108; Luddites, 105, 106; fear of Indian fabrics, 180. *See also* Cloth
- Worcester, 77; china, 165 n., 171
- Worcester, Marquis of, 111
- Wordsworth, William, 219, 255
- Worsley, 78
- Worsteds Acts, 104 n.
- Worsted industry, 79, 80
- Wortley, Mr., 200
- Wrottersley, Sir J., on iron industry, 137 n.
- Wyatt, J. and Paul, L., 182
- Xenophon, 11
- Yarranton, A., 77
- York, 17, 97; communications, 71, 74, 75, 76
- Yorkshire, Luddites, 104-6; iron-works, 134, 144, 148; cotton factories, 199
- Young, Arthur, 74, 90 n., 108; and minimum wage, 91, 92; and allotments, 92; on iron-works, 135 n., 137, 144, 148 n.; on potteries, 172 n.
- Yprees, 97
- Zimmerman, A. E., 11 n., 187 n., 218 n.

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