ECONOMIC HISTORY OF ENGLAND

(1760-1860)

Arthur Redford

THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Edited by J. F. REES

Principal of the University College of South Wales and
Monmouthshire

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(1760-1860)

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The Economic History of England (1760-1860)

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Economic History has suffered from the premature generalisations of popular text-books. Within the last twenty years or so there has been a steady progress in correcting these generalisations. It has been an age of monographs. The time has now arrived to attempt to incorporate the new conclusions in a continuous account of economic development. But the task is becoming too formidable for an individual author. In this series an experiment is made with the method of entrusting periods to different writers. The aim is to give an account which will appeal to the general reader, as well as to the academic student.

There is now a virtual concensus of opinion about the scope of economic history. It includes a study of the state of agriculture, industry, commerce, and transport, together with an elucidation of the more technical problems of currency, credit, and taxation. These subjects necessarily involve an examination and description of social conditions. In fact the line between the economic and the social cannot be strictly drawn. No attempt is here made to separate them. Division into departments is even more vicious in History than in Science. Economic History can never be a self-contained account of man's activities for the private use of economists. It is a way of approaching the vast material of history and provides a narrative which is complementary to that of the political historian. There is, indeed, no very definite line of demarcation. Earlier writers, such as Thorold Rogers, incorporated much political history with their economic: recent political historians have shown a tendency to pay increasing attention to economic factors.

PREFACE

A short book does not need a long preface. In seventy thousand words I have tried to tell the plain truth about the most controversial century in the economic history of England, and in doing this I have tried to avoid controversy. In its main outlines the book is based on monographs and other authoritative works published within the last ten years; but on many points of detail I have ventured to supplement (and in some cases to correct) my secondary authorities by independent reference to original sources. To acknowledge all my debts to other writers by means of footnotes would be impracticable, and is perhaps not called for in a work of this size; I hope that the list of books on pp. 209 ff. will be accepted as a partial compensation for the lack of more detailed references.

Several of my academic colleagues have assisted me by reading the book during its progress through the press. Professor G. W. Daniels read the proofs, and gave me sympathetic encouragement mingled with kindly criticism. Mr. T. S. Ashton corrected some serious errors in the chapters on financial subjects. Mr. H. L. Beales, of the London School of Economics, pointed out several weak points in my treatment of social questions. Principal J. F. Rees has not only given skilful editorial help at every stage of my work, but has shown a keen personal interest in discussing the economic problems of the period. My wife has shown unwearying patience in detecting ambiguities and verbal errors. Finally, I must thank the University of Birmingham for inviting me to examine an early draft of Mr. E. Roll's important book on the history of the firm of Boulton and Watt; and I am especially grateful to Mr. A. P. Wadsworth and Miss Julia Mann for allowing me to read in typescript their monumental work on the early development of the Lancashire textile industries.

ARTHUR REDFORD.

MANCHESTER, August 1931.

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LIST OF BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING AND REFERENCE

In making this short list I have given special preference to the books which I have found most useful in my own work; thus the list may partially atone for the scarcity of footnotes in the preceding pages. The books are arranged, in each section, according to their dates of publication.

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