

THE
ECONOMIC WRITINGS

OF

SIR WILLIAM PETTY

TOGETHER WITH THE

OBSERVATIONS UPON
THE BILLS OF MORTALITY

MORE PROBABLY BY

CAPTAIN JOHN GRAUNT

EDITED BY

CHARLES HENRY HULL, PH.D.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

VOL. I

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1899

[All Rights reserved]

Cambridge:

**PRINTED BY J. AND C. F. CLAY,
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.**

TO
M. J. H.

PREFACE.

THE writings of Sir William Petty may be roughly divided into three classes. The first relates to his activities as surveyor of forfeited lands in Ireland under the Protectorate; its present interest is chiefly biographical. The second includes his papers on medicine and on certain mathematical, physical and mechanical subjects. These are now forgotten. The third class comprises his economic and statistical writings. The merit of these has been freely recognized. No writer on the history of political economy who touches the seventeenth century at all has failed to praise them; but the scarcity of the scattered pamphlets in which they were published has prevented them from becoming as generally known as they deserve to be. The present edition of Petty's Economic Writings is designed to meet this difficulty. It has not been undertaken without warrant. Critics as diverse as McCulloch, Roscher and Ingram have noted the need of a collected edition of Petty's economic pamphlets, and it appears that his descendants have twice considered its publication. But the project of the Earl of Kerry was interrupted by his untimely death¹,

¹ 21 August, 1836. See Thomas More's *Memoirs*, VII. 152, 167.

and Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, who had contemplated supplementing his "Life of Petty" by an edition of Petty's works, generously surrendered his intention upon learning that a similar undertaking was already under way.

The editor has endeavoured to include all of Petty's published writings which bear upon economic or statistical subjects. The "Observations upon the Bills of Mortality of London," though they probably were not written by Petty, are also reprinted—not less on account of their intrinsic merits than because of their close connection with his acknowledged works. The text selected for reproduction is, in each case, that of the best published edition, and the original paging is indicated in the margin. By good fortune authentic manuscripts of several of the works are still preserved, and their readings, given in the foot-notes, make a number of passages clear which, as heretofore printed, were confusing or absurd. One considerable tract, the "Treatise of Ireland," and a few fragments, are added from manuscripts hitherto unpublished.

The notes are confined, for the most part, to the economic or biographical aspects of the passages commented upon, and no attempt has been made to elucidate purely historical questions. Thus when Petty asserts that in the Irish Court of Claims after the Restoration all claimants were fully heard, the editor does not enter upon a discussion upon that disputed point. In the introductory sections, likewise, he has not used the opportunity to sketch the general history of political economy apropos of Petty and Graunt, but has confined himself to such remarks as are thought to bear directly upon them and their writings. On the other hand

the history of the London bills of mortality has been entered into at some length, as no place seemed more appropriate to that purpose than a reprint of the writings which first indicated the importance of the bills.

In preparing this book, the editor has received help from a number of persons, to all of whom he would express his appreciation of their kindnesses. It gives him especial pleasure to acknowledge the gracious permission of the Marquis of Lansdowne to consult the Petty papers at Bowed—though it became impossible for him to make use of that privilege—and to thank Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice for repeated suggestions. He has received valued assistance from J. Eliot Hodgkin, Esq., of Richmond-on-Thames, from the Rev. Dr William Cunningham of Trinity College, Cambridge, from Professor F. York Powell of Oxford, from Professor V. John of Innsbruck, from his colleagues H. Morse Stephens and Walter F. Willcox of Cornell, and from his sister. None of these however should be held responsible for such errors as may be found in the book.

Various officials of the British Museum, the Record Office, the Royal Society, the Bodleian Library, the libraries of Cambridge University and of Brasenose College, Oxford, of the Royal Irish Academy, the King's-Inns, and Trinity College, Dublin, of the Institute of France, the Universities of Leipzig and of Pennsylvania, and of Harvard and Cornell Universities have allowed the editor the use of sundry books and manuscripts. For privileges of this character he is under especial obligation to Professor Michael Foster, Secretary of the Royal Society, and to the Rev. Llewellyn J. M. Bebb, Librarian of Petty's college. He cannot omit to mention;

likewise, the services of the proof-readers who have made comparisons with manuscripts and original editions to which he has no present access.

Last but by no means least, he wishes to acknowledge both the generosity of the Syndics of the University Press in providing for the publication of a book whose editor might have looked in vain for assistance at home, and the untiring patience of their Secretary, Mr Richard T. Wright, who must have been sorely tried by its slow passage through the press.

C. H. H.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY.

24 *April*, 1899.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

	PAGES
INTRODUCTION	xiii-xci
PETTY'S LIFE	xiii-xxxiii
GRAUNT'S LIFE	xxxiv-xxxviii
THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE "OBSERVATIONS UPON THE BILLS OF MORTALITY"	xxxix-liv
PETTY'S LETTERS AND OTHER MANUSCRIPTS	lv-lix
PETTY'S ECONOMIC WRITINGS	lx-lxxiv
GRAUNT AND THE SCIENCE OF STATISTICS	lxxv-lxxix
ON THE BILLS OF MORTALITY	lxxx-xci
A TREATISE OF TAXES AND CONTRIBUTIONS. London,	
1662	1-97
VERBUM SAPIENTI. [1664.] London, 1691	99-120
THE POLITICAL ANATOMY OF IRELAND. [1672.] London,	
1691	121-231
POLITICAL ARITHMETICK. [1676.] London, 1690	233-313