

AN OUTLINE
OF
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PROBLEMS
OF THE PRESENT DAY

BY
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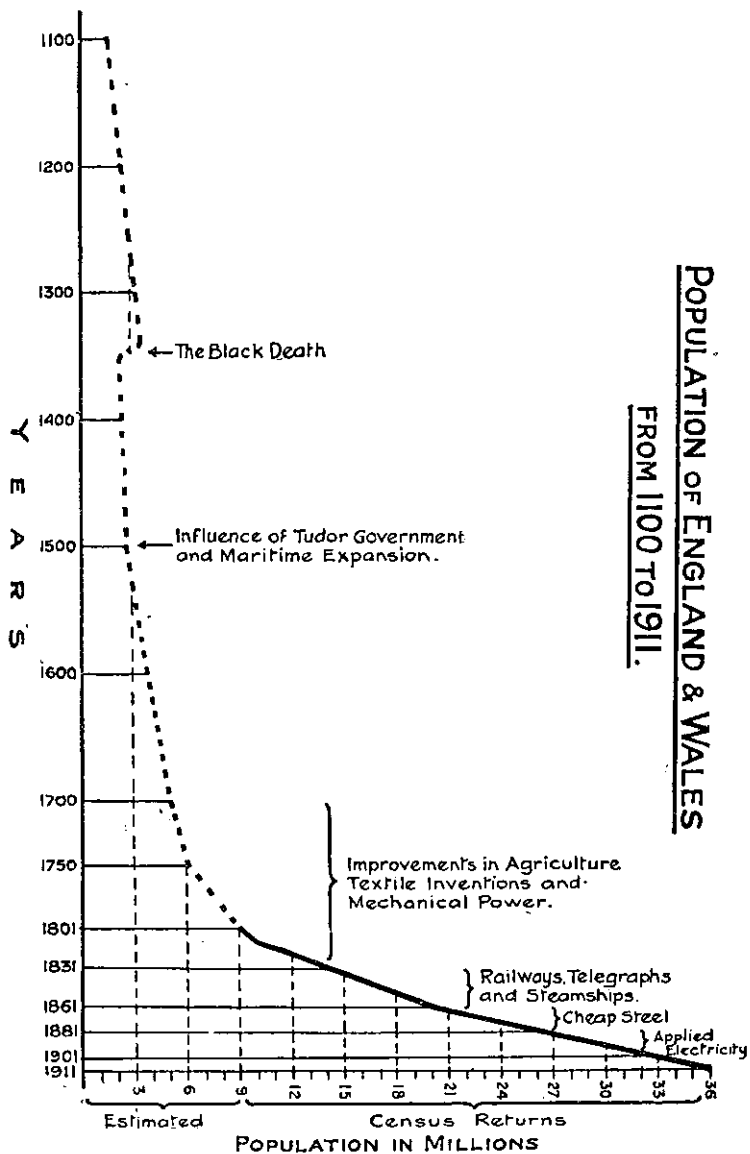
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PREFACE

THE object of this little book is to sketch lightly some of the facts and phenomena which lie between school-boy history and the politics of the man. Modern life is so complicated, and the development of the last two hundred years has proceeded so rapidly, that those who have not specialised in history find it difficult to connect what they have learnt in their youth with the problems upon which they are called to express an opinion in manhood's days. The historian, confining himself to documentary evidence and, in general, limiting his view to times so far remote that his interpretations may be free from suspicion of prejudice or party feeling, endeavours to draw a picture of things as they were, without reference to things as they are or may be. It is an inevitable result of his method that he should, as a rule, stop short of the problems which belong to his own age. And it is equally inevitable in periods of rapid social, economic, and political change, that the predominant features of one epoch should fade speedily and be replaced by others, quite different, in the next. Successive movements rise to maturity, and die away, to be followed by events which could hardly have been foreseen a quarter of a century before.

In no case is this so true as in the industrial history of the last two centuries, and it would be wrong to charge

historians with failing to observe and to record either the character or the importance of the changes which have occurred. But while ample details have been given of the earlier portion, even in elementary books, the striking developments of the later years have only been described in large monographs or in blue-books which the layman has no leisure or no inclination to read. And yet, for the practical purposes of life, this knowledge is clearly a condition precedent to the formation of a sound political judgment. In a word, there seemed to be a need for a book connecting more closely the dead past with the living present; so this little volume is offered as a supplement to the smaller, and as an introduction to the larger histories which trace the growth of our national industry and commerce.

The supplementary character of the book will be apparent from its contents. Emphasis is laid upon the scientific basis of industry, not because it was a conscious feature in the earlier stages of human effort, but because it is a dominant fact to-day. The same principle of selection justifies a mere outline, in the first three chapters, of the economic and social fabric before 1700. From that date the development of certain important groups of industry and certain lines of political activity are traced in a series of parallel chapters. Thus, a brief historical account is given of Agriculture, Textile Industries, Fuel and its Applications, and the Union of Science and Practice, for the purpose of illustrating how scientific discovery and mechanical invention have increased the productive capacity of the individual workman, and have altered and are altering the technical character of industrial control. These are followed by chapters on Transport and Communication, and Banking and the Credit System, which have facilitated

so considerably the growth of trade. From a consideration of technical achievement the book passes to a short account of Combinations of Capital, The Conflicts of Capital and Labour, Co-operation, and Municipal Ownership, as illustrations of modern business management and its problems. The Extension of the Franchise, The Change in the Function of Government, The State and the Factory, The Growth of Economic Thought, and the provision of Education complete the survey.

It is obvious that a book covering so wide a field can be no more than a framework, and the author has endeavoured to keep this fact in view throughout. It purports to give the chief historical landmarks in the evolution of modern problems of industry and politics, rather than a picture corresponding in its entirety to any other period; and the author hopes that this historical continuity will compensate for lack of historical unity which other writers have endeavoured, rightly and not unsuccessfully, to attain. He is under considerable obligations to the works mentioned in the appendix; he has been at some pains to check his facts; he has endeavoured to be fair and moderate in such inferences as it has seemed necessary to draw; and he presents the book as a small contribution to the efforts which are now being made to create a well-informed electorate, competent to maintain the great traditions committed to its care.

E. C.

November 1915.

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