

THE GROWTH
OF
ENGLISH INDUSTRY
AND
COMMERCE

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to give such an account of the growth of English industry and commerce as may be easily followed by readers who are but slightly acquainted with the history of the country, and who have no knowledge of Political Economy: in the notes will be found matter of more importance for students, as they contain, not only full references to the authorities used, but brief discussions of disputed points, and allusions to interesting analogies in the experience of other peoples. To introduce more than a passing reference to such matters might distract attention from the *continuity* which exists between the earliest and the latest stages of our national life, and from the *interdependence* between our industrial and our political history.

The narrative is a simple relation of facts, interrupted only by such explanations of economic terms as seemed absolutely necessary: but it has not been forgotten that the spread or prevalence of some idea or aspiration may be a fact of the

first importance. Only by being fully alive to the ordinary tone of morality and opinion in industrial matters at each stage of our history, can we really understand the nature of the customs and institutions of bygone days.

To give a brief description of the general state of the industry and commerce of our country at any one time must be difficult, but to depict the nature of the changes that occurred throughout the land, during a long period of years, must be well-nigh impossible. It is hard enough to reconcile Harrison's description of England in Elizabeth's reign with the account of his contemporary Stafford, but how are we to picture to ourselves the nature and rate of the changes that had occurred between the time of Fortescue and that of these later writers¹?

General descriptions of the state of Society, or the progress of Society, must necessarily be very inaccurate, and I have preferred to call attention to the causes which dominated over industrial and commercial affairs at different periods, and to shew by reference to particular cases the nature of the effects produced by each such cause—and if possible the length of time during which it continued to operate actively. By this method of statement, we can never perhaps obtain a very vivid picture of the general characteristics of a period, or the

¹ See pp. 217 and 269 note.

general rate of advance, but we can at least put forward the results in a form in which each step can be verified by the reader, and which may render the links, that connect the whole course of events, more comprehensible.

I have been indebted to Dr Luard, Mr F. W. Maitland, Mr A. Toynbee and several other friends for valuable suggestions while the sheets were passing through the press: from Miss Martin, of Newnham College, I have received constant assistance in collecting and arranging the materials. She has also kindly undertaken the labour of compiling the instructive diagrams which form Appendix IV. The engraving of the noble of Edward III. on the title-page has been drawn, with the permission of the authorities, from one of the examples preserved in the British Museum.

W. C.

TRINITY COLLEGE,

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