

**INDUSTRIAL ENGLAND
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649129362

Industrial England in the middle of the eighteenth century by Sir Henry Trueman Wood

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Cover @ 2017

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UNIV. OF
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LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1910

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UNIVERSITY OF
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PREFACE

THIS little book grew out of a paper read last April at a meeting of the Royal Society of Arts, in which the author endeavoured to describe the industrial condition of the country at the time of the foundation of the Society in 1754. The task turned out to be one of considerable interest, and the available material soon proved itself to be in excess of the limits even of a paper far exceeding the normal length.

The time dealt with was the period just preceding that of the Industrial Revolution. The prime factors of that revolution were the introduction of machinery, and the improvement of the steam-engine, but there were many other causes at work, chief among them the application of Science to Arts and Manufactures. The development of the factory system, the destruction of the old domestic industries of the country, the concentration of the people into cities, the changes thereby brought about in the conditions of agriculture—these are some of the effects, as they are also some of the causes, of the changes

in the social, economic, and industrial life of the country. The growth of the iron manufacture and its effects on large districts of the North of England, the development of mining, are other effects, bringing in their train still further changes. How far these rapid and extensive alterations in the conditions of production affected men's minds, and how far they were the result of developed—or modified—mental capacity, is a question too large for consideration here; but if it be worth argument, material for the discussion may be provided by a general view of things as they were when the change was impending, or had indeed begun.

Hence it appeared possible that an account of the conditions which led to or accompanied the change from the old mercantile system under which industry was officially controlled and regulated, to the modern method of "laissez faire" and unrestricted competition, might interest others than members of a Society whose establishment was an indication of the tendency of the time, and whose success has certainly justified the intentions of those who established it. With this idea some considerable additions were made to the original paper, and it is now issued in its present form.

The Industrial Revolution in England has not indeed attracted the same attention as the contemporary Political and Social Revolution in

France, but it has of course been adequately described by historians, who have appreciated the interest of the subject and the importance of the changes involved. Nobody, however, has yet taken the trouble to prepare a technical account of each industry and to describe it with sufficient detail to enable a comparison to be drawn between its condition then and its condition now. That has been the endeavour of the present writer, who, if he cannot profess an expert knowledge of any single manufacture, has been obliged for many years past to familiarise himself to some extent with the science and technics of them all, and to make a special study of the history of invention in England. He hopes, therefore, that the present treatise may be of use as ancillary to the work of the historians of the eighteenth century, and as containing, in a collected form, information now for the most part scattered about in trade and local histories. In such work no claim can be made for originality. The information is all available somewhere, for those who know where to look for it; but perhaps not very many do know where to look, or would care for the trouble of the search. In all cases acknowledgment has been made of the sources from which information has been derived, and references are given, for the benefit of any who desire ampler knowledge.

The aim of the writer has been in every case

to describe the state of each industry as it existed in the year 1754 or thereabouts, but it has generally been necessary, for the sake of intelligibility, to deal to a certain extent with its earlier history, and its later development. Perhaps the treatment has not always been as uniform as it should have been, but some attempt has been made to devote more space to the less familiar subjects, and to treat in more summary fashion those which have already been sufficiently dealt with by previous writers.

Some changes have been made in the arrangement of the different sections, and some fresh matter has been added, but on the whole the book retains the original form in which it was first presented to the audience of the Society of Arts. It has been thought well to preserve the introductory chapter, though its contents have but little of an industrial character. It was meant to indicate very briefly the general condition of the country in 1754, and it may serve the same purpose still.

It would be hopeless to expect that, in dealing with such a variety of technical subjects, there have not been a good many mistakes. If such blunders are less numerous than they might have been, it is due to the friendly criticism to which the proofs of the original paper were subjected. The writer desires specially to acknowledge the help he received from two old

friends, Mr R. B. Prosser, formerly librarian of the Patent Office, and Mr H. B. Wheatley, for many years assistant secretary of the Society of Arts. Sir William White contributed the section on shipbuilding. The late Mr Lewis Day, Mr William Burton, Mr Seymour Jones, Mr Knight Clowes, Mr John Cross, Professor John Millar Thomson, Mr William Whitaker, Mr Frank Cundall (the secretary of the Institute of Jamaica), Mr E. W. Hulme (the librarian of the Patent Office), Mr Mervyn Macartney (the architect to St Paul's Cathedral), and Mr Ernest Pullan (of Messrs Barclay, Perkins & Co.) have all helped most kindly in different sections of the book. Mr Henry Tedder, the librarian of the Athenæum, has saved the writer much labour by his frequent and valuable suggestions, and Mr G. K. Menzies, the present assistant secretary of the Royal Society of Arts, has rendered useful aid in the revision of the proofs.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS,

August 1910.