

**ENGLISH INDUSTRIES OF THE
MIDDLE AGES, BEING AN
INTRODUCTION TO THE
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF
MEDIAEVAL ENGLAND**

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English industries of the Middle Ages, being an introduction to the Industrial history of mediaeval England by L. F. Salzman

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Being an Introduction to the Industrial History
of Medieval England

BY

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PREFACE

THE title of this book indicates at once its aim and its limitations. It makes no pretence to be a complete history of the early industrial life of England, but at the same time it does claim to be an introduction to the study of that subject. It is my hope, and indeed my belief, that from it the general reader, equipped with interest in the history of his country rather than with technical knowledge, will obtain something more than a bare outline of industrial conditions in pre-Elizabethan days. The student who is anxious to go more deeply into the subjects here treated may use this book as a road map and the footnotes as finger-posts to guide him to the heights of completer knowledge.

From the nature of my subject it was inevitable that the book should be full of technicalities, figures, and statistics, but it has been my endeavour to render the technicalities intelligible, and to prevent the significance of the statistics being obscured by an excess of detail. The scheme which I have adopted is to treat the leading medieval industries one by one, showing as far as possible their chief centres, their chronological development, the con-

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ditions and the methods of working. With the disposal of the finished products through intermediaries, merchants, or shopkeepers, I have not concerned myself, deeming such matters rather to belong to the realms of trade and commerce than of industry; and for this same reason, and also because it has been dealt with by other writers, I have not dealt with the great source of England's wealth—wool. Agriculture, also, and fishing I have excluded from my definition of industry. A more culpable omission, which I think calls for a word of explanation, is shown in the case of building. This, however, is not omitted by an oversight, nor yet through any desire to save myself trouble. I had collected a great mass of material for an intended section on the Building Industry, but after careful consideration I came to the conclusion that the material available was so exceedingly technical, and the obscurity of the details so greatly in excess of their value when elucidated, as to render such a section rather a weariness and a stumbling-block to the student than a help. The subjects treated in the several sections are thoroughly representative, if not completely exhaustive, of English industrial life, and a general survey of the subject is contained in my last chapter, where I have outlined as broadly as possible the general principles that governed the Control of Industry—the typical regulations made by, or for, the craftsmen in the interest of the

employer, the workman, or the consumer. This last section might, of course, easily have been extended to cover more pages than this whole volume, but it is questionable whether multiplicity of detail tends to ease of assimilation. A single typical instance of a prevalent custom or regulation is as significant as a list of a dozen local variations, and far easier to remember. A rule is more easily remembered by one example than by a score, and with such a wealth of material as exists the risk of obscurity is greater from amplification than from concentration.

As to defining what is meant by the medieval period, it is not easy to lay down any hard and fast rule, for the change from old methods or conditions to new, which practically constitutes the division between the medieval and the modern periods, occurred at a different date in each industry. The crucial point in gunfounding was the invention of solid boring in the time of Henry VIII.; in the cloth industry it was the introduction of the 'new draperies' by Protestant refugees in the reign of Elizabeth; for iron mining it was the adoption of pit coal for smelting in the seventeenth century; for coal mining, the application of steam power to solve the problems of drainage at great depths early in the eighteenth century. Yet, taking one thing with another, the sixteenth century may be considered to be the period of transition.

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The rise of the capitalist and the monopolist, the social revolution of the Reformation, with the abolition of the monastic houses and the beginnings of the Poor-Law system constituted a new era for the working classes even when unaccompanied by any startling change in methods or mechanical media. Moreover, from the middle of the sixteenth century documents and records relating to industrial matters become more numerous and more accessible, and this is therefore the usual starting-point for those who write upon these subjects. For these reasons my accounts of the various selected industries will be found to end at such dates within the sixteenth century as have seemed convenient, though I have not slavishly refrained from taking out of the seventeenth century occasional details applicable to the earlier period.

Such, then, are the lines upon which I have built my book. If any critic considers that the subject should have been dealt with on another plan, he is at liberty to prove his contention by so treating it himself.

As to the sources from which my information is taken : I believe that every statement will be found to be buttressed by at least one reference, and I may add that the reference is invariably to the actual source from which I obtained my information. Of printed sources much the most valuable have been the series of articles on local industries printed

in the *Victoria County Histories*, those on mining and kindred subjects by Mr. C. H. Vellacott being of exceptional importance. In very few cases have I found any published history of any industry dealing at all fully with the early period: the one conspicuous exception was Mr. G. Randall Lewis's book on *The Stannaries*, second to which may be put Mr. Galloway's *Annals of Coal Mining*. The various volumes of municipal records published by, or with the consent of, the public-spirited authorities of some of our ancient boroughs, notably those of Norwich, Bristol, Coventry, and Leicester, have been of great value to me, as have Mr. Riley's *Memorials of London* and his editions of the *Liber Albus* and *Liber Custumarum*. To such other printed works as I have drawn upon, acknowledgment is made in the footnotes, but so far as possible I have made use of unpublished manuscript material at the British Museum and still more at the Record Office. Needless to say, I collected far more material than it was possible to use, and I can only hope that my selection has been wise, as it certainly was careful, and that I have not overlooked or omitted any evidence of essential importance. It had originally been my intention to compile a series of transcripts of industrial records on lines similar to the *Documents relatifs à l'Industrie* of M. Fagniez, but the enormous mass of material available for such a work, coupled with the fact that in England such