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(Queens 1901)

JAMES F. BRYANT B.A.

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THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH OF ENGLAND

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THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH OF ENGLAND.

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" There be three things which make a nation great and prosperous: a fertile soil, busy workshops, and easy conveyance for man and beast from place to place". — Bacon.

Two elements enter into the discussion of the material progress of a nation namely man and his environment. We shall first call attention to the inhabitants of England and notice how often and how effectively the race has been replenished with fresh blood; we shall note the surroundings and see how the climate and soil have assisted agricultural development, how easy internal communication and mineral wealth have assisted the industrial progress and how the maritime position and coast line of Great Britain have assisted trade. We shall then examine the state of society in the early days, taking as our unit the manor, and shall see how the man of the thirteenth century tried to render his estate self-sufficing and thus to keep apart from the rest of the realm. We shall note the conditions of economic life in the towns and shall pass on to consider the gradual growth of national organization until it exercised control over all the various developments of industrial life throughout the country. We shall then try to trace the changes that have occurred in the great departments of economic life, in the use of money and in finance, in agriculture and in manufacturing; and shall bring the thesis to a conclusion by taking a brief review of the growth of the nation along industrial and commercial lines during the past century.

Although the Britons were the early inhabitants of the southern part of the island of Great Britain yet the basis of our civilisation may be said to be Teutonic. About 449 A. D. the English came across the German Ocean from the country around the River Elbe, drove out the Britons and took possession of the country. The influence of the earlier civilisation had little effect on the growth of the newly transplanted English stock because society had been broken up before the English came to the Roman Province of Britain and the conquest was so slow that the Britons withdrew from before the invaders

Soon, however, the influence of the Roman missionaries was brought to bear on the heathen English and England was converted to Christianity. The monastic houses which sprung up here and there throughout the country were centres of learning as well as of religion. The monks acted as scribes and introduced the legal conceptions of the Later Roman Empire into the charters and wills. The communication of the churchmen with Rome furnished opportunities for trade and did something towards improving the arts of life. Under Christian influence, also, frequent and friendly communication between the tribes became possible.

The next foreign influence was that of the Danes. Sweeping down from the North, they ravished the country and devastated the land. They were defeated by Alfred the Great but were permitted to remain in England on condition that they would settle down and become Christians. Nearly half the country was treated as Danelagh and was ruled by Danish rather than English law. As time went on the two peoples became one and a new element was infused into English blood. The English people were fond of rural life but the Danes preferred to live in towns. The English were farmers the Danes were traders and seamen. Towns were established in England and soon signs of commercial activity were exhibited. The Danes were also skilled in metal work and other industrial pursuits and it is to the energy and enterprise engrafted by these settlers that England owes her shipping supremacy and commercial greatness.

The next great immigration was that of the Normans who were kinsmen of the Danes. During the reign of Edward the Confessor, Norman artisans settled in England, but after William had conquered the country great numbers came over and were given estates by the king. The most striking economic result of the Norman conquest was the introduction of the intellectual and religious movements of Europe into the island so that England entered for the first time into the common life of Christian Europe. During the next two centuries, the new element coalesced with the English and Danish immigrants to form one people. The united race had

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every to make the most of the natural advantages. The country is rich in mineral wealth. Before the Roman conquest the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians came to the British Isles for tin. During the middle ages tin together with lead formed one of the chief articles of export. Iron also was found before the Conquest and is to-day the basis of one of England's greatest industries. But coal perhaps is the mineral which is of greatest value. It was used originally for fuel only, but since the invention of the blast furnace in the eighteenth century, coal has been used for smelting, and still further after the introduction of steam power has it come to be much more largely used. The large deposits of coal and of iron ore close at hand have done much for the manufacturing industry.

The climate and soil of Great Britain have been specially favorable to agriculture. During the Roman period England was one of the granaries of the Empire. From that time till the present agriculture has been one of the prominent industries of the island, and although at the present time the people of Great Britain have to import a great deal of their grain from foreign countries, yet at no time in the history of the industry has the produce per acre been greater than it is at present. England was also rich in forest lands. From these an abundant supply of fuel for the building of houses and the constructing of ships was obtained. The most of the forests, however were ruthlessly burned up by the iron manufacturers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Excellent pasturage has made England a wool growing country. Sheep farming became important about the twelfth century. It was carried on largely by the Cistercians and chiefly in the North and in the hilly country. The wool that was grown was not manufactured in England but was shipped to the low countries. In the sixteenth century sheep farming took the place of tillage owing to the scarcity occasioned by the Black Death. Numbers of Flemings moved across the Channel and the English began to keep their wool at home. It was of a superior qual-