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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

by

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LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO
LONDON • NEW YORK • TORONTO

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO LTD
6 & 7 CLIFFORD STREET LONDON W I
ALSO AT MELBOURNE AND CAPE TOWN
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO INC
55 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK 3
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO
215 VICTORIA STREET TORONTO I
ORIENT LONGMANS LTD
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS

First Edition, June 1926
New Impressions :—*August* 1926, *November* 1926, *December* 1926, *August* 1927, *May* 1928, *July* 1929, *May* 1932, *June* 1934, *April* 1934, *December* 1934
Second Edition, July 1937
New Impressions :—*December* 1937, *February* 1939, *January* 1941
Second Edition revised, April, 1942
New Impressions :—*January* 1943, *August* 1943, *December* 1943, *December* 1944
Third Edition, October 1945
New Impressions :—*April* 1947, *August* 1948
Reissue (with minor corrections), 1952

Printed in Great Britain
SPOTTISWOODE, BALLANTYNE & CO. LTD.
London & Colchester

To

PRESIDENT LOWELL

OF HARVARD

NOTE TO THE REISSUE (1952)

THE only substantial addition appears on page 676B which records the final settlement with India and Pakistan. Minor corrections and deletions have been made from page 673 to the end of the book.

PREFACE TO LATER EDITIONS

In 1945 and again in 1952 a few alterations and additions have been made to the text of this work, and some recent publications have been added to the lists of 'Books for Further Reading.'

G. M. Trevelyan

PREFACE

A book that traverses so vast a field as the whole of English history in the course of seven hundred pages is apt to be either a text-book or an essay. It can in no case be a full narrative of events. This work is an essay in so far as it attempts to analyze the social development of the nation in relation to economic conditions, political institutions, and overseas activities. It is a text-book in so far as it preserves the narrative form in brief, deals in dates, and gives prominence to leading events and persons.

Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and overseas Imperial history are treated, I trust not in all cases from too English a point of view. But what unity the book has, especially in its earlier parts, is necessarily derived from England as the centre. Not to arouse expectations which I may not fulfil, I have called the book merely a History of England.

The original nucleus out of which the work has grown was the Lowell Lectures which I had the honour of delivering in Boston, Mass., in the spring of 1924. I therefore dedicate the book in its present form to President Lowell of Harvard and my other kind hosts on that occasion.

I am greatly indebted to two friends at the older Cambridge, Dr. Clapham of King's, and Mr. Claude Elliott of Jesus: to the former for allowing me to see the early part of his *Economic History of Modern Britain* before it went to press, a privilege of which I have made extensive use; and to Mr. Elliott for reading the earlier half of my work and giving me valuable advice on numerous points.

G. M. Trevelyan

Berkhamsted,
April 1926.

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The frontispiece map of Celtic and Roman Britain is based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office.

INTRODUCTION

THE history of civilized man in our country is very old ; it begins long before the reign of Alfred. But the history of Britain as a leader in the world's affairs is of much shorter date ; it begins with the reign of Elizabeth. The reason can be read upon the map. Map-makers, whether in ancient Alexandria or in mediæval monasteries, placed our island on the north-west edge of all things. But, after the discovery of America and the ocean routes to Africa and the East, Britain lay in the centre of the new maritime movement. This change in her geographic outlook was employed to good purpose by her inhabitants, who in the era of the Stuarts made her the chief seat of the new trans-oceanic commerce and of the finance and industry that sustained it. Next, with the aid of modern science, the land of Newton applied machinery to manufacture and began the world-wide Industrial Revolution. Meanwhile, Britain was peopling and giving laws to North America; and after she had lost the Thirteen Colonies, she built up a second Empire, more widely scattered and more vast.

These latter centuries of material growth and leadership correspond with the period of greatest intellectual achievement. In spite of Bede, Roger Bacon, Chaucer and Wycliffe, Britain's contribution to mediæval science and literature is slight when compared to the world of her intellectual creation from the time of Shakespeare onward. The era when London awoke to find herself the maritime centre of the suddenly expanded globe, was also the era of the Renaissance and the Reformation—movements of intellectual growth and individual self-assertion which proved more congenial to the British than to many other races, and seemed to emancipate the island genius.

In the sphere of pure politics Britain is famous as the mother of Parliaments. In answer to the instincts and temperament of her people, she evolved in the course of centuries a system which reconciled three things that other nations have often found incompatible—executive efficiency, popular control, and personal freedom.

It is indeed in the Middle Ages that we must seek the origin

of Parliament, and of the English Common Law which the ultimate victory of Parliament over the Royal power has made supreme in all English-speaking lands. The political merit of the Mediæval period lay in its dislike of absolutism in the Temporal sphere, its elaborate distribution of power, its sense of corporate life, and its consultation of the various corporate interests through their representatives. But, although Parliament was a characteristic product of the Middle Ages, the development of its powers in Tudor, Stuart and Hanoverian days, its resistance to the political theories of the Roman law received in contemporary Europe, and its transplantation to America and the Antipodes, are the great events which raised the political history of Britain into a sphere apart from the political life of the Continent. For, although France and Spain had a number of mediæval Estates and Parliaments, they failed to adapt them to modern conditions. On the passing of feudalism, the Latin peoples read despotic monarchy as the political message of the new era. Against Machiavelli's princely interpretation of the new nationalism, Britain alone of the great national States successfully held out, turned back the tide of despotism, and elaborated a system by which a debating club of elected persons could successfully govern an Empire in peace and in war. During the commercial and military struggles with foreign rivals which followed between 1689 and 1815, our goods, our ships, and our armies proved that Parliamentary freedom might be more efficient than despotism as a means of giving force to the national will. Nor, in the new era of man's life introduced by the Industrial Revolution, has this verdict yet been reversed.

In the Nineteenth Century the same Parliamentary institutions, while undergoing democratic transformation, were put to the severer test of coping with the new and bewildering conditions of social life created by the Industrial Revolution. At the same time the vast and ever-increasing Empire, of white, brown, and black communities, presented diverse and complicated problems, each one recurring in new guise every few years under the stimulus that modern economic conditions give to social and political change. Parliamentary government for the white races, and the desire to govern justly societies not yet prepared for self-government, have so far preserved this astonishing association of peoples.

Whatever, then, be our chief interest in the past—whether material progress and racial expansion, the growth of political and social institutions, or pure intellect and letters—it is the last four hundred years in British History which stand out. Yet I have not hesitated to devote a third of this work to a

survey of the pre-Tudor epochs. The mingling of the armed races poured into Britain from the earliest times until 1066, and the national temper and customs which they developed in the shelter of the island guarded by the Norman and Plantagenet Kings, alone rendered it possible for five millions of people, ruled by Elizabeth, to lay hold on the splendid future offered to themselves and their descendants by the maritime discoveries and intellectual movements of that age. If the hour then came, the men, too, were ready.

Britain has always owed her fortunes to the sea, and to the havens and rivers that from the earliest times opened her inland regions to what the sea might bring. Long before she aspired to rule the waves she was herself their subject, for her destiny was continually being decided by the boat-crews which they floated to her shore. From Iberian and Celtic to Saxon and Danish settlers, from pre-historic and Phœnician traders to Roman and Norman overlords, successive tides of warlike colonists, the most energetic seamen, farmers and merchants of Europe came by the wave-path to inhabit her, or to instil their knowledge and spirit into the older inhabitants. Her east coast lay obvious and open to Teuton and Scandinavian immigrants; her south coast to cultural influences from the Mediterranean by way of France. From Teuton and Scandinavian she acquired the more important part of her population and character and the root of her language; from the South she received the rest of her language, the chief forms of her culture, and much of her organizing power.

The Norman Conquest severed her ties with Scandinavia, which Canute had drawn very close. For several hundred years the Nordic islanders were governed by a French-speaking aristocracy and a Latin-speaking clergy. By a significant paradox it was under this foreign leadership that the English began to develop their intense national feeling and their peculiar institutions, so different in spirit from those of Italy and France. Already among the fellow-countrymen of Chaucer and Wycliffe, even when engaged in the disastrous adventure of the Hundred Years' War, we see the beginnings of a distinct English nationality, far richer than the old Saxon, composed of many different elements of race, character and culture which the tides of ages had brought to our coasts and the island climate had tempered and mellowed into harmony. At the Reformation the English, grown to manhood, dismissed their Latin tutors, without reacting into close contact with the Scandinavian and Teuton world. Britain had become a world by itself.

It was at this crisis in England's cultural and political growth, when she was weakening her ties with Europe, that the union with Scotland came about, and at the same time the ocean offered the islanders a pathway to every corner of the newly discovered globe. The universality of the Englishman's experience and outlook—quite as marked a characteristic as his insularity—is due to his command of the ocean which has for more than three centuries past carried him as explorer, trader, and colonist to every shore in the two hemispheres.

Thus, in early times, the relation of Britain to the sea was passive and receptive; in modern times, active and acquisitive. In both it is the key to her story.

EPILOGUE.

THE AFTERMATH

When at last the German line gave way before Foch's strategy and Haig's attack, and victory came with unexpected suddenness in November 1918, England and France were called upon in an instant to switch their minds from the fierce mood of war to the prudence, foresight and generosity that peace-making requires. It took long years before France could think sanely, but in a year or two England had recovered her usual good nature but scarcely her good sense; unfortunately the peace had to be made in the first six months, while the war passions were still aflame in every land. Nor was Lloyd George the man to risk his great popularity and spend his immense influence in a struggle against the passions of the hour, which always had an undue influence on his susceptible and mercurial mind. Moreover the circumstances under which he had replaced Asquith as Prime Minister had led to a breach between him and the major half of the Liberal party during the last two years of war; the Armistice found him in political alliance with the proprietors of certain popular journals, then fiercely calling out for vengeance on German war crimes. And so at the General Election of December 1918 Asquith's followers, who would have stood for moderation in peace-making, were deliberately proscribed by Lloyd George and annihilated at the polls; the Liberal party was rent and destroyed, and has never recovered importance, for the Labour party in later elections step by step took its place.

In the General Election held in these circumstances between the Armistice and the peace-making at Versailles, a House of Commons was returned pledged to make Germany pay for the War. Lloyd George held a huge majority—and the huge majority held Lloyd George. After tying this millstone of a mandate round his own neck, he went to Versailles to help Clemenceau and Wilson give peace to the world. France, who had suffered more, was yet more intent on vengeance than England, and Wilson, meaning well, understood little of realities in Europe, or of opinion in America.

Jan.-June 1919.

Wilson and Lloyd George prevented France from permanently occupying the German part of the left bank of the Rhine; they obtained this only by a promise that America and England would guarantee the frontiers of France against attack, a promise which America refused to ratify; consequently England also

declined this obligation for awhile, thereby losing for some years all control over the policy of France towards Germany, and at the same time encouraging Germany to revive her ambition of conquest.

Upon the whole, the drawing of European boundaries was not ill done at Versailles. The new Europe consisted of a number of States based on the real principle of nationality. Indeed, the States that became the heirs of Austria-Hungary, had been formed by the act of their own populations, as a result of the last stage of the War, before ever the statesmen met at Versailles to confirm the change. It was the War, not the Peace, that destroyed the Empire of the Hapsburgs. In 1920, as a result of a war with Soviet Russia, Poland rashly expanded her eastern frontier far beyond the 'Curzon line' approved and guaranteed by England.

The treatment of Germany by the victorious Allies erred in two respects. In the first place no effective system of inspection was enforced to prevent the war chiefs in Germany from secretly preparing rearmament. And at the same time nothing was done to make the new German Republic popular with the German people. It should have been the first object of England and France to enable it to survive as a peaceful democracy. But the German nation was humiliated by the dictation of terms on the hardships of which she was not even permitted to plead before the victors; she was forbidden to unite peacefully with Austria; she was excluded from the League of Nations; in the matter of Reparations she was treated in a manner so fantastic as to help to exasperate her without benefiting her creditors.

At the same time the League of Nations was set up and was closely associated with the terms of the Treaty. But England alone of the Great Powers gave support to the true spirit of the League, and made some effort to remedy the grievances of Germany, particularly as regards Reparations. The mood of the unhappy General Election of December 1918, having dictated the Treaty, soon died out in the placable breasts of the English, who hastened to disarm and put the war memories behind them, trusting with too complete a confidence in the power of the maimed League of Nations to avert the natural consequences both of the War and of the Peace.

America retired into herself. Having been instrumental in pledging Europe to the policy of the League of Nations, she refused at the last moment to join it. Nor would she any longer co-operate in any practical way to preserve peace. It was a vicious circle: her withdrawal made the European anarchy worse, and the European anarchy has made her more determined than ever

not to interfere in Europe again. She even withdrew from the Reparations Commission, where her support would have enabled England to restrain France; the French were therefore able to find a quasi-legal excuse for their rash invasion of the German territory of Ruhr in 1923, England vainly protesting. The outcome was the Germany of Hitler. The other main cause of the rise of the Fascist and Nazi forms of government has been the simultaneous imitation of and reaction against Communism, to which doctrine the success of the Bolshevist Revolution in Russia gave a great impetus throughout the Continent. The outcome of the War was to destroy liberty, democracy and parliaments in the greater part of Europe. And the Nazi form of government, based on wholesale torture and massacre, was so immeasurably worse than anything in the experience of modern Europe, that its reality and implications were not believed in England until in 1940 it had extended its frightful operations over almost the whole Continent.

In the years that followed the signature of the Peace Treaties, English policy had the one merit of goodwill, but showed neither foresight nor firmness. Nothing really effective was done to appease German opinion in the earlier years while appeasement was still possible, nor until very late to prepare for the storm when the storm became only too probable.

The English people, in a natural reaction after four years' experience of the unspeakable horrors of modern 'total' war, regarded pacifism and unilateral disarmament as a method of securing peace, and hailed the League of Nations as a machine for making all safe by some magic or automatic process not clearly defined. Alas, if England intended the dictates of the League to be respected, she should have put herself in a position to enforce them, for no other nation had both the strength and the will. If she meant to remain a European power, she should have armed as others were arming. Even after the Nazi Revolution of 1933—an event ominous enough in all conscience—Germany was allowed, without any corresponding effort on our part, not only to build up her great army again but to obtain a temporary predominance in the air, to militarize the Rhine Land contrary to Treaty, and to make upon it the Siegfried Line to block us out of Central Europe. At the same time Italy, whose geographic position controlled our other contacts with Austria and the Balkans, was driven into the arms of Germany by the feeble application of 'economic sanctions' against Mussolini's Abyssinian aggression (1935–6): England in that fatal affair would neither abstain from interference nor threaten to fight in earnest. Europe was sacrificed to Abyssinia—and in vain.

Meanwhile no serious effort was made to come to an agreement with Russia for the restraint of Nazi German aggression.

Future historians will have the unenviable task of dividing the blame for a long series of errors between the successive governments of the country and the ever varying moods of the opposition and public opinion which those governments too often weakly followed. It was early in 1939, on Hitler's occupation of Prague in violation of the Munich agreement of a few months before, that the British people and Government woke up to the dread realities of the situation into which they had been drifting for twenty years. Even then the pace of rearmament was by no means what the crisis required, and the union of parties and full development of war effort was only effected after six months of actual war. At length England faced supreme danger with her old courage, of which she found the symbol in Winston Churchill.

So the isolationist movement in America and the pacifist movement in Britain between them handed the world over to its fate, by permitting the ' unnecessary war ' as Winston Churchill called it. After the First World War the States of Europe had been free and independent ; even Poland, Czecho Slovakia, Hungary, the Balkan and Baltic States enjoyed independence, because the war that ended in 1918 had resulted in the defeat both of Russia and of Germany. Therefore Europe was free, and would be free to-day, if there had been no second war. That war (1939–45) resulted in a second defeat of Germany but in the triumph of Russia in the East. Many of the States for whose freedom we fought against Germany have now lost it to Russia. And the material and moral devastation in Europe is without precedent in any war that history records.

The Twentieth Century has been kept in perpetual movement and unrest by the headlong progress of inventions, which hurry mankind on, along roads that no one has chosen, a helpless fugitive with no abiding place. The motor age has changed life even more than the railway age, and now the air-age is changing it again, with atomic power or what-not to follow. Life in great cities has divorced most Englishmen from nature. And the disappearance of craftsmanship and the substitution of mass production by machinery has taken out of men's lives much of the joy and pride of work. But there has been a very great advance in education ; and broadcasting is effecting an intellectual change which it is too early yet to estimate. It is hard to cast the balance of the vast account. The most encouraging feature is that, in spite of the frightful handicap of the First World War and its

consequences, the material well-being of the majority of the inhabitants of this island was greater in 1939 than a generation before; and the Second World War has been waged by the British people with a manifestation of ability and morale even greater, perhaps than that shown by their fathers in the First. There is therefore a hope that in the end man may use his new powers to make his life fuller and happier than of old, if only an escape is found from totalitarian war and violence.

In this short volume I have tried to set down some aspects of the evolution of life upon this island, since the ages when it lay as nature made it, a green and shaggy forest, half water-logged, while here and there, on the more habitable uplands, the most progressive of the animals gathered his kind into camps and societies, to save himself and his offspring and his flocks from wolves and bears and from his fellow-men—down to the very different scene of our own sophisticated times. In the earlier age, man's impotence to contend with nature made his life brutish and brief. To-day his very command over nature, so admirably and marvellously won, has become his greatest peril. Of the future the historian can see no more than others. He can only point like a showman to the things of the past, with their manifold and mysterious message.

SOME LEADING EVENTS BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

1918 (Dec.).	Lloyd George's General Election.
1919.	Treaty of Versailles.
	League of Nations set up.
	Britain disarms, France and Italy do not.
	Montagu-Chelmsford reforms establish Dyarchy in India : disturbance and repression : Gandhi.
1920.	United States Senate prevents America entering into League of Nations. America refuses to guarantee French territory and therefore Britain follows suit. 'Ulster' obtains a separate Parliament (Dec.).
1921.	War against Sinn Fein ended by Treaty in December : Irish Free State set up as a Dominion.
1922.	Turks drive Greeks out of Asia Minor : Britain stops Turks at the Straits.
	Fall of Lloyd George Ministry.
	Mussolini establishes Fascism in Italy.
1923.	French occupy the Ruhr.
1924.	First Labour Government, dependent on Liberal vote, lasts eight months.
1925.	(Dec.) Locarno Treaties : temporary relaxation of European tension.
	Germany joins the League of Nations.
1926.	General Strike and Miners' Strike.
1927.	Disarmament Conferences fail.
1928.	Local Government Act.
1929.	Second Labour Government, dependent on Liberal vote, lasts two years.
1931.	World Slump and Financial Crisis.
	(August) Break-up of Labour Ministry.
	National Government formed and wins General Election against Labour.
	Statute of Westminster gives new legal status to Dominions.
1932.	Unemployment question acute : gradual, partial recovery.
	World Economic Conference fails. Japan defies and leaves League of Nations about Manchuria.
1933–1934.	Hitler establishes Nazi rule in Germany. Leaves League of Nations, repudiates obligations of Versailles Treaty and rearms Germany.
	European tension again becomes acute.

1935.	Jubilee of King George V.
	Act of Parliament gives Responsible Self-government and Federal constitution to India.
	Mussolini attacks Abyssinia, a member of the League of Nations.
1936.	League ' economic sanctions ' fail to save Abyssinia.
	Hitler re-occupies Rhineland.
	Treaty with Egypt as an independent Nation.
	George V dies, succeeded by Edward VIII (Jan.–Dec.), who abdicates. George VI succeeds.
	Spanish Civil War begins.
	British rearmament begins slowly.
1938.	March. Hitler annexes Austria.
	September. Munich. Hitler occupies defensive frontier of Czecho-Slovakia.
1939.	March. Hitler enters Prague.
	September. Hitler attacks Poland.
	Second World War begins.

LIST OF MINISTRIES

1770–1782.	North (Tory, King's Friends).
1782.	Rockingham (Whig).
1782–1783.	Shelburne (King's Friends and Chathamites).
1783.	Coalition of North and Fox (Whigs and Tories).
1783–1801.	Pitt (Chathamites and King's Friends, gradually becoming Tory ; Conservative Whigs join in 1794).
1801–1804.	Addington (Tory).
1804–1806.	Pitt's Second Ministry (Tory).
1806–1807.	Ministry of All-the-Talents (Whigs and Tories).
1807–1809.	Portland (Tory).
1809–1812.	Perceval (Tory).
1812–1827.	Liverpool (Tory), becoming more liberal in policy after 1822.
1827.	Canning (Liberal Tory).
1827.	Goderich (Liberal Tory).
1828–1830.	Wellington-Peel (Tory).
1830–1834.	Grey (Whig).
1834.	Melbourne (Whig).
1834–1835.	Peel (Conservative).
1835–1841.	Melbourne (Whig).
1841–1846.	Peel (Conservative).
1846–1852.	Russell (Whig).
1852.	Derby-Disraeli (Conservative).
1852–1855.	Aberdeen Coalition (Peelites and Whigs).
1855–1858.	Palmerston (Whig).
1858–1859.	Derby-Disraeli (Conservative).
1859–1865.	Palmerston (Whigs and Peelites, Liberals).
1865–1866.	Russell (Whig and Liberal).
1866–1868.	Derby-Disraeli (Conservative).
1868–1874.	Gladstone (Liberal).
1874–1880.	Disraeli (Conservative).
1880–1885.	Gladstone (Liberal).
1885–1886.	Salisbury (Conservative).
1886.	Gladstone (Liberal).
1886–1892.	Salisbury (Conservative, supported by Liberal Unionists).
1892–1894.	Gladstone (Liberal).
1894–1895.	Rosebery (Liberal).
1895–1902.	Salisbury (Unionist).
1902–1905.	Balfour (Unionist).
1905–1908.	Campbell-Bannerman (Liberal).
1908–1915.	Asquith (Liberal).
1915–1916.	Asquith (Coalition).
1916–1922.	Lloyd George (Coalition).
1922–1923.	Bonar Law (Conservative).

1923–1924.	Baldwin (Conservative).
1924.	MacDonald (Labour).
1924–1929.	Baldwin (Conservative).
1929–1931.	MacDonald (Labour).
1931–1935.	MacDonald (National).
1935–1937.	Baldwin (National).
1937.	Neville Chamberlain (National).
1940.	Winston Churchill (Coalition).
1945.	Attlee (Labour).
1950.	Attlee (Labour).
1951.	Winston Churchill (Conservative).