of Nations, which, besides giving an interesting biographical dissertation on Chadwick, contains extracts from many of his most famous reports and is in every way of invaluable assistance.

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M. M.

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INTRODUCTION

WITH the coming of peace after the Napoleonic Wars, the latent desire for reform in England was intensified. The advent of machinery had transformed the country from an agricultural to an industrial state, and the conditions created by this change were felt to be intolerable. During the war men's minds had been too preoccupied to worry over social conditions. New voices, those of Paine, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and others, that had arisen as a result of the French Revolution, had been ruthlessly suppressed by Pitt as being seditious Jacobinism, but in spite of his oppressive legislation the country was seething with discontent.

The Toryism of the day owed its existence to the prestige of the Crown and the aristocracy, and to the cruel legal machinery for enforcing the laws. Hitherto the landed interests had governed the country, and a

paternal government had watched over the destinies of the nation. But it was out of touch with the new conditions. Jealous of the manufacturing interest, terrified of the new working classes, they hung on to the last remnants of their existence with astonishing endurance. The King (George IV), was personally discredited; all attempts at reform were resisted. The criminal law was barbarously savage. Offenders could be hanged for offences such as forging a bank note, or stealing property valued at five shillings, and more than two hundred crimes were punishable by death. The flogging of women was legal punishment for certain offences. The system of jurisprudence made it almost impossible for poor men to get justice. The prisons were a national disgrace. Instead of acting as a deterrent to wrongdoers they were centres of vice and crime. There were no police, but only a few corrupt watchmen who indulged in such practices as waiting to arrest a known offender until he had committed a crime worth the maximum reward of forty pounds. The underlying principle of our modern police system, the prevention of crime, was unknown in England a hundred years ago.

The application of the Poor Law for the relief of the destitute was in a state of chaos. The existing law, which had not been appreciably altered since the Act of Elizabeth, was totally unsuitable for dealing with the new conditions. Under the "Speenhamland Edict" of 1795 the principle of relief in aid of wages—which relief varied with the price of the loaf—was nothing more than an incentive to moral degradation. It meant that the country was adding to its financial burden a liability which should have been borne by the employers of labour. It meant that the price of labour would be left at the lowest possible level so that the highest possible profit might be made. It was a system which helped the loafer and discouraged the worker.

It was a time when the conditions of the workmen mattered nothing compared with the mad rush for production. New factories were springing up everywhere. To serve the new machines men, women and children were toiling day and night under inhuman conditions in these factories and in the mills. Accommodation had to be provided for the new workers. New houses,

new streets, new towns sprang into existence to house the thousands of workmen pouring up from the South of England to seek employment in the North. Houses were erected with such speed and lack of foresight that they were for the most part scarcely fit to be lived in. Faulty construction and bad drainage were characteristic, and no thought of hygiene or sanitation entered the heads of the builders.

Representation in the House of Commons was in a hopeless and ludicrous tangle. The great new manufacturing towns in the North of England—Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford—were entirely unrepresented, whilst villages such as Dunwich—now almost under the sea—returned two members each. The newly arisen manufacturing classes had no representatives in the House of Commons. The land-owning class was the only one from which representatives of the people were drawn, and these representatives were utterly divorced from the aspirations of the people they were supposed to represent.

Such, briefly, were the conditions in England after the Napoleonic Wars. But the spirit of reform was everywhere. New

ideas, new creeds gradually developed. Apathy was giving place to action; individualism, itself in time to be replaced by collectivism, was beating at the doors of paternal government; a new sense of social welfare was being awakened in the conscience of the people. The attack on the rotten system of jurisprudence was led by Jeremy Bentham, whilst William Cobbett preached to the toiling masses the necessity for the reform of the franchise.

Many honoured names stand out as great reformers in the social history of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is a half-century of swiftly moving events, great social upheavals, and tremendous advances in knowledge, a period when old ideas die hard, and new ones are impatient to take their place. Protection gives way to the beginnings of Free Trade, slavery is abolished, the repeal of the Combination Laws is followed by effective Trade Unionism, Chartism rises out of working-class discontent.

New creeds, new ideas burst forth. Some wither away, some stay but a short time; one at least remains, Democracy.

It is the century in which democracy is

born. The social reformers made this birth possible. They called the attention of an apathetic public to social evils until that public was forced to listen. They exerted every effort to awaken that social conscience without which democracy cannot be created, and amongst these pioneers, these men and women who forced people to think and feel their responsibility towards the community, was Edwin Chadwick.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL

EDWIN CHADWICK belongs to that type of men the details of whose life add but little to our knowledge of their character. He *was* his public career.

Edwin Chadwick was born at Longsight, near Manchester, on 24th January, 1800. His paternal grandfather, Andrew Chadwick, lived at Rochdale. Andrew was a friend and admirer of John Wesley. He was a man of resolute determination, strict and stern, a man for whom the pleasant amenities of life had no attractions, for whom duty was the first governing principle. The family carried on business as landowners and manufacturers in Lancashire. Andrew, who was intensely religious after the austere manner of dissenters, founded the first four Sunday Schools in Lancashire. It is not difficult to imagine in what awe