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# THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

"I can promise to be candid but not impartial."

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## Three Books on Textile Capitalism

*Sir Charles Macara*, by W. Haslam Mills. (Sherratt & Hughes, Manchester. Remaindered. 2/6).

*The Making of Modern Yorkshire*, by J. S. Fletcher. (G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 7/6.)

*Cotton as a World Power*, by Jas. A. B. Seherer. (Frederick A. Stokes Co., New York. 12/6).

WHAT most conspicuously differentiates the modern industrial system from that which prevailed before the Industrial Revolution is the fabrication and manipulation of products by means of machinery. The whole of modern society is upborne on a solid framework of iron and steel, and interlaced across land and sea by the same means. These materials are required at once for the creation of wealth and then for its conveyance in the guise of commodities from one place to another. For the arts of peace and the conduct of war the machine, whether stationary or movable, is indispensable. Hence, the all-importance of understanding the structural development of those industries which are concerned with the production of the means of production and of transit. Coal and iron may be said to be the basic factors in modern industry and commerce, and for that reason the education and organization of the workers engaged in their handling to be our most urgent task.

But in order more clearly to grasp the full meaning of the statement that this is the age of coal and iron it is necessary to know how and why these two industries have attained to this pre-eminence, and to trace their con-

nexion with the other great branches of production which have played their mighty part in moulding the habits and thoughts of civilized humanity. Prior to these latter days of world industry and commerce the businesses of clothing and feeding mankind have been of prime importance in the scheme of things. Hence, woollens, corn and cotton have, at various times, swayed the destinies and determined the life of men. The material of capitalist production in its classic era was, essentially, cotton, and cotton it was that, spun and woven by labour, made Lancashire. Of somewhat less consequence were the woollen and worsted fabrics of the West Riding, the linens of Belfast and Fife, and the jute materials of Dundee. These, amongst them, constituted the great Textile Manufactures on which was built up the economic and political greatness of 19th-century Britain, and which made of her the Workshop of the World. The reservoirs of surplus values which gathered in Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Glasgow, Paisley, Dundee and Liverpool are almost unfathomable in their content. From these centres drained off innumerable canals of capitalization in every conceivable direction. Not only the great merchant houses, banks and investment corporations of this country, but the towering might of Wall Street is reared upon "dry goods."

Three books lie before me which have much to tell of these all-important topics of textiles. Perhaps it may seem strange that a student of Steel should manifest so much interest in Cotton, but one whose earliest memories are of the gleaming windows of spinning mills seen across the night, whose first wanderings were from the place whence George Stephenson directed the construction of the Manchester & Liverpool Railway, on the march where Cotton meets Coal, has a romantic predilection for the fascinating story of Lancashire and the sympathetic histories of Yorkshire and the Clyde.

Mr. Mills' sketch of the career of Sir Charles Macara is interesting to one who knows Manchester, and invaluable for the connexions which it reveals between Dundee jute magnates, Glasgow merchants and Manchester cotton "houses." Perhaps, unwittingly, he makes certain things plainer than he meant, and when he shows the relationships of the great Lancashire magnate to the Cox family of Dundee he gives a clue to the enormous financial and political influence wielded by his hero. Also when he recalls the part played by Macara in the campaign against the Tariff, he puts one in mind that there was probably no accident about the transference of Winston Churchill from North-West Manchester to the banks of the Tay. Massed money—the sinister power of jute-made millions—stands behind the pushful scion of the house of Marlborough. The cousin of the Guests, the political choice of the cotton and jute lords, American land speculators, Indian merchants and railway stock magnates of Manchester and Dundee is a catspaw worth watching. It is good to be reminded that Sir Charles Macara was the inventor of the National Register as a means of estimating "the human resources" of the nation. The genius of the Brooklands Agreement and the British Empire Cotton Growers' Association is a type fit to rank with the notable instruments of capitalist Lancashire, and his career and associates will repay study just as will those of Huskisson, Peel, and Gladstone.

J. S. Fletcher is a writer of another order. He has put out a most readable, somewhat superficial sketch of the history of Yorkshire from 1760 to 1914. The best thing in the book—and it is well done—is his introductory chapter on "Yorkshire in 1750." If he was as keen in his appreciation of modern institutions as he is in his treatment of the Anglican Church in that year, methinks he would be less agreeable to some of his friends. There is much that is very useful in his chapters on means of communication, power and machinery, and his comments on such firms as Fairbairn's, Marshall's, Crossley's, Kitson's, Gott's, Lister's, Salt's, Holden's, are good as indicators for students of a more analytical and scientific turn. His later sections, dealing with "Reform," "Thrift," and "Nineteenth Century Yorkshiremen" strike me as being distinctly scrappy and inadequate.

The story of Yorkshire would well repay the attention of some of our Marxian students, fortunate in their access to good libraries in Leeds and Bradford (Sheffield is *the limit*). The stories that can be collected on the Dales, traces of old customs, relics in stone, both secular and ecclesiastical, suggest a veritable store-house of material for devotees of Morgan. There are appearances that point to something other than religious opposition to Protestantism in Tudor times, for nowhere did the old faith die harder than in Yorkshire. Later, Chartism and the "Plug" Riots might well engage attention, for was there ever a place so radically obstreperous as Halifax? Whilst to turn from the people to their livelihood, the rise of the iron and engineering industries of Keighley, Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield awaits its chronicler. Meanwhile, on the practical side, might I urge on our people to "get a move on" around Barnsley and from Doncaster southwards on what is destined to be the most productive coalfield in Britain.

In Yorkshire, the industrial aspects of the transition in Capitalism from textiles to minerals can be followed perhaps better than in Lancashire, for Sheffield and Middlesbrough have absorbed immense volumes of money from Manchester, where the wealth of Free Trade marches on without its soul, and where John Bright's nephew may be found, not in cotton, but as head of the pioneer producers of armour-plate.

Now for a really *great* book—*Cotton as a World Power*. It is American, and a monument of research as well as a pillar of understanding. Would it were not so expensive! To Marxists it is a treasure-trove indeed, with its exquisite revelation of the material basis of those successive waves of "disinterested and high-souled idealism" which perhaps cause our pacifist brethren to quiver with emotion at the very thought of President Wilson. The spectacle of the North and the South changing their gospels with their changing interests is not spoiled by the author's tribute—"For it is true, as Karl Marx pointed out, that in changing the modes of production mankind changes all its social relations." First in favour of a greater measure of federalism and protectionist, the South voted strongly against slavery before Eli Whitney's gin brought the cotton boom. Then it championed "State rights," swung over to Free Trade, and fought for slavery. Meanwhile the North changed as completely in the opposite direction and ended up, like Morgan and Rockefeller, in going to war for Liberty! We see, as of course is shown by Gustavus Myers, the struggle for fresh cotton lands with its influence on the Mexican War and, ultimately, on the Civil War.

We must give just a few quotations from a work far too rich to condense or to rifle:—

According to Adams, the Constitution was "the work of the commercial people in the seaport towns, of the planters, of the slave-holding states, of the officers of the Revolutionary army, and the property holders everywhere."

And this for the Free Trade enthusiast:—

The South, now conscious of its strong solidarity, alining itself on the side of Free Trade and States-rights, while the manufacturing North preferred protection, and became the defender of the Union.

Again:—

Unquestionably an important impetus in the wave of law for liquor restraint that has recently swept over the South was supplied by far-sighted mill-management, anxious to enliven temperance in the interest of efficiency, and inducing operatives to vote for it.

The book is admirably checked with references and has an excellent bibliography of works on the industrial and political development of America.

It affords a valuable introduction to the study of the cotton period of Capitalism, and I heartily recommend it to those who have the means to acquire it.

J. T. WALTON-NEWBOLD.