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G. S. R. Kitson Clark

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AN EXPANDING SOCIETY

Britain 1830-1900

G. S. R. KITSON CLARK

Reader in Constitutional History

University of Cambridge



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FOREWORD

GEORGE ERNEST MUELLER SCOTT, who from 1918 to 1924 was a member of Ormond College in the University of Melbourne, never lost interest in its well-being. He was a graduate of this University in medicine, and on his death left half the residue of his estate to the University of Melbourne, and half to this College. In his lifetime he had already made regular and substantial contributions to the College's Endowment Fund. Dr Scott's will leaves the Council a wide power of discretion, but at the same time indicates ways in which he hoped that the money might be used. Foremost among the objects listed was the establishment of a Fellowship or Fellowships at this College. In a codicil to his will Dr Scott declares 'By Fellowship herein I am intended to mean a lecturer of eminence in his subject of scholarship'.

It was with great satisfaction that this College learnt that the first holder of the George Scott Visiting Fellowship would be Dr George Kitson Clark, whose visit to Melbourne was also assisted by a grant from the Margaret Kiddle Fund, in the gift of the Professors of History in the University. During his time in Melbourne Dr Kitson Clark delivered lectures which form the basis of this book. Those who read it will now have the opportunity of gaining a fresh view of the position reached in historical study of nineteenth-century England, a period which deeply influenced the life and development of the State of Victoria and the shape and tenor of our community life.

This College is, and will remain, grateful to Dr Kitson Clark for giving us the distinction of his presence and mind, so that we were able worthily to inaugurate this Fellowship, and fulfil so adequately the intentions of our benefactor.

J. DAVIS McCAUGHEY
Master of Ormond College
9 May 1966

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ERRATA

p. 28, lines 1 and 2

‘the legitimate . . . secured’, remove inverted commas.

lines 4 and 5

‘I should deplore the day when the land lost its legitimate influence. But that day will never come, the land always must, and will, retain its legitimate influence.’ (Peel, Hope, Feb. 21, 1850. *Hansard*, 3rd ser: Vol. 108, 1250.)

p. 44, line 5

Gladstone’s wife was Catherine, daughter of Sir Stephen Glynne; her sister married George William, Lord Lyttelton.

p. 50, line 11

The words should rather be ‘suggested and not requested’. My account of the incident is oversimplified, but its general significance is as stated. See A. W. Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea* (6th Edition, 1883), Vol. II, p. 110.

p. 87, line 25

‘Koenig’.

p. 181, line 29

‘attach to the doctrine’.

G.K.C.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK is founded on the lectures which as George Scott Visiting Fellow I delivered at Ormond College in June and July 1964, and my first task is to thank as warmly as I can the Master and other members of the College for giving me this opportunity, and also for their unremitting kindness and friendliness to me throughout my visit. To this I would wish to add my thanks to my colleagues, if I may still presume to call them so, in the Department of History in the University of Melbourne. I would like to thank them for their cheerful companionship, and for all that they were prepared to do for me, and not least for the help they have given in getting this book published. I would like to feel that I still remained in some small way a member both of Ormond College and of the University of Melbourne.

Before I left for Australia I did not feel that it would be desirable to prepare lectures for an audience of whose nature and needs I was ignorant. I still think this was right, but it meant that I had to prepare what I had to say, when I reached Melbourne, without the help of my own library or the libraries of Trinity College and Cambridge University on all of which I am used to depend, while a rather full programme of visits and lectures left me less time than I would have desired to use the library facilities which were generously put at my disposal at Melbourne. The lectures had in fact to be composed to some extent under pressure and I had little time to do more than check facts and verify references. There may have been advantage in this. A sense of urgency is an effective tamer of inhibitions, and there may be considerable advantage in a man being forced to produce opinions upon which he might be tempted to hedge, or which he might keep to himself if he had been given time to develop doubts. But it is desirable that this work should be recognized for what it is, work produced to some extent in an extemporary fashion without much opportunity to revise or confirm it before delivery. Not, except in two cases, have I re-

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vised them much for publication since I delivered them. The lectures were given from notes and subsequently transcribed from a tape recording. They needed therefore a certain amount of editing and reshaping. But, except in two cases, they have not I believe been fundamentally altered in the process, for I thought that it was best to put them forward as they were given, as far as that was possible.

The two exceptions are lectures 5 and 8 which have now become the chapter on 'imperialism' and the chapter on 'the modern state'. To the chapter on imperialism, on the advice of scholars who read it in draft, I added passages to cover two points which they thought it important to make. I did not revise it as radically as I might have been tempted to do by the results of a coincidence. After I had left England in 1964 the Cambridge University Press published *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* by R. Koebner and H. D. Schmidt. This treats much the same problem that I have tried to treat in my lecture, only with much more learning and after more prolonged research than I have been able to apply to it. When I conceived this lecture I was unaware of the existence of this book. I have been long convinced of the importance of this approach to this subject, indeed an address by me on this subject had been printed in a journal as long ago as 1952. When I actually composed this lecture, just before its delivery, I knew of the book's existence and, in general terms of its argument, for I had seen a review, but I had had no opportunity to read it. Indeed I believe that no copies had as yet reached Australia. If I had read it at that time no doubt what I produced would have been different, though I am pleased to say that what I said seems in many points to be confirmed by what the book establishes. But it seems to me to be undesirable to rewrite what I had produced quite independently. I have therefore as far as what is covered by this important work is concerned, left things exactly as they were.

With regard to the last chapter the case is different. When I returned to Cambridge I found that much work was going forward on this subject. Research students were working upon it, and there was sufficient undergraduate interest in it to make it desirable for me to take two series of classes on it in two succes-

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sive terms. All this was a stimulus to thought and when in my editing of the transcribed tape recording I came to this lecture I found I could not bring myself to publish exactly what I had said the year before. I, therefore, completely rewrote it making, I am afraid, the chapter considerably longer than the lecture ever had been, though the lecture had been the longest of the series.

In doing this reconstruction one particular object seemed to be almost more important than anything else. When discussing this subject both with undergraduates, and with groups of people from outside Cambridge, I came to the conclusion that a clear minded approach to this subject was often impeded by the use of abstract phrases and general assumptions which, at least in the form in which they were normally understood, had no satisfactory relationship with reality. The best corrective to this tendency seemed to me to insert into any account of it as many concrete examples of what was being discussed as possible. I could not have done this when composing a lecture largely from memory at Melbourne, but I have tried to do it, perhaps to the point of tediousness, when re-writing it at Cambridge.

The rewriting of this lecture has put me under certain obligations. Any one who has any knowledge of the subject will realize how much I owe to those who have previously written about it, and in particular to Dr Oliver MacDonagh, to whom during his years in Cambridge I owed very much. I would also like to confess my debt to Dr Greenaway of the Science Museum from whom I first learnt of the importance of the Alkali Acts. But I would most particularly like to put on record how much I have learnt from three research students now working with me, from Roy Macleod, now working on a critical period in the development of public health in the twentieth century, but also, as a necessary preliminary, conducting a variety of enquiries into the relationship between the development of public administration and the development of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century; and also from Richard Johnson and Henry Roper, who are dealing with the problems of the Education Department. I feel confident that in the not very distant future they will publish work which will both shew how great is my obligation to them, and also carry the whole subject far beyond my competence.

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Introduction

It is invidious to single out any particular individuals from my colleagues in Melbourne, but two of them unavoidably stand out for special mention. Miss G. H. Williams organized the typing of the lectures, and did the most difficult parts herself. It was often, I am afraid, a most distasteful task. For much of the work all she had to go upon was the transcript of a tape recording most obscurely corrected by myself. Upon Dr F. B. Smith fell a large part of the labour which was the unavoidable result of the need to convert the lectures into a state suitable for printing after I had returned to England. He also helped to supply the lists of books and articles, which I hope will be of assistance to those who may use this book. My debt to him is very great indeed. Indeed I do not see how without the devoted help of Miss Williams and Dr Smith this book could ever have come out. I owe them both my warmest thanks. I must add that for any mistakes in the book I alone am wholly responsible.

G. KITSON CLARK

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NOTE ON AUTHORITIES AND FURTHER READING

IT DOES NOT SEEM to be desirable to burden a book of this kind with an array of footnotes, which indeed in the circumstances in which much of it was composed it would have been very difficult to supply. Nor would it be easy to equip so general a book with an adequate bibliography which was not impossibly long. However, there may be an advantage in adding a postscript which would serve the double purpose of making suggestions for further reading for those wishing to study the subject and of giving some idea of the authorities upon which the work is founded.

It will probably be best to divide this postscript into two sections, first a section discussing very shortly general background reading, and then a section dealing with each chapter in turn.

This work is not intended to be a comprehensive account of British history between 1830 and 1900, it does not even intend to deal with all the matters which are immediately relevant to the process of expansion. There is nothing in it for instance about the problems of the accumulation of capital or about industrial growth. All that it intends to do is to suggest some lines of thought upon particular aspects of this period. For this reason this book is no substitute for a study of general works on the nineteenth century, indeed, like other books of its sort it cannot be properly understood without some knowledge of the general background.

The trouble about all general books is that with the development of historical research and the realization of new insights into historical processes they tend nowadays to get out of date rather quickly. This tendency has, however, this result. If the most modern books soon need supplement or correction, it is equally convenient to use older books of merit if one remains always prepared to reconsider their conclusions in the light of more recent thought. In my view the most valuable book on

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those parts of British nineteenth century history which it touches is still Élie Halévy, *Histoire du Peuple Anglais au XIX^e Siècle* (in either French or English). The standard books which many people use are the relevant volumes of the *Oxford History of England*, both are good, particularly that by Ensor, but both are out of date and there is a great deal to be gained even now from older books of the full old-fashioned leisurely sort such as Spencer Walpole's *History of England*.

Possibly the most remarkable general book on British nineteenth century is G. M. Young's *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*, a book of great charm and great penetration. In any study of nineteenth-century problems I would say it would be necessary to read G. M. Young at some point. With this advice it is necessary to give two warnings. Because of its fondness for obscure allusions and its lack of notes and references it is in some ways a tiresome book, and fairly often I have found that students to whom I have commended it have been made, for reasons I do not fully understand, extremely angry by it. Other teachers in other universities have had the same experience. The second warning is this. Young apparently habitually quoted from memory without, it would seem, often verifying his quotations. As a result he often misquotes, even from his favourite Tennyson. Sometimes, in my view, he also misremembers the significance of a passage he uses, and once at least he misnames the leading person in a story. None of this in my view really detracts from the value and charm of his work, supported as it was by an acute intelligence, a remarkable memory and reading so wide that I have never yet met a scholar who recognized all, or even most of, his allusions. But it means that his readers must be circumspect.

There are more modern general books which I would commend as being peculiarly relevant to the subjects with which this book tries to deal: Professor Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, Professor W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise* and my own *Making of Victorian England* of which this book is in a way an extension.

There are of course many other books on particular subjects on Economic History, on Literary and Political History and a growing number of important biographies, all of which would

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help the understanding of the general history of this period. But it would go beyond the purposes of this postscript to name them except in so far as they relate to particular chapters.

The lists of books appended to each chapter are not intended as bibliographies of the material included in the chapter, but rather as guides to help the reader to follow up some of the points that are raised.