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THE circle of country which it is the object of the present work to describe, forms a considerable part of the north-western quarter of England. Just approaching the Irish sea to the west, it stretches on the east across the ridge of hills which perpendicularly divides the north of England into two portions, and projects some way into the plain beyond; and extending northwards to the edge of those hilly and barren parts which compose a great share of the northern extremity of the kingdom, it encroaches southwards on the limits of the midland counties.

On taking our central station at Manchester, a grand scenery of strongly contrasted ranges of land presents itself. Westward, a long level plain, broken by a few scattered
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Scattered eminences, partitioned, for the most part, into green and woody inclosures, yet sprinkled with large patches of bare and brown morasfs, affords to the eye an interminable prospect, expanding from side to side, and embracing almost the whole county of Chester, and the broadest and best cultivated portion of that of Lancaster. Northward, the view is soon bounded by a mountainous ridge of moderate elevation, beyond which lies another tract of vale, which is at length lost amidst hills and moors. Southward, a rich and varied country extends for many miles, bounded in the distant horizon by lofty hills in Staffordshire and Cheshire. The country to the east is composed of a vast tract of that chain of mountains which, descending from Scotland, runs like a backbone through all the north of England, till it terminates in the Peak of Derbyshire and the moorlands of Staffordshire, both within the limits of our circle. This rugged region, stretching many miles from east to west, includes a confused assemblage of high barren moors, lofty eminences, and interjacent vales, each watered and fertilized by its winding stream. Its eastern edge declines suddenly in the beautiful and highly-cultured plain of Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

Such
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Such is the general face and situation of the extensive tract over which we are about to travel;—considerably interesting merely as a portion of the surface of our island, and as possessing a great variety of natural and artificial products of the earth. But it is principally as a manufacturing district that it merits the distinction of being made the subject of a particular survey; and in this respect it may confidently challenge any other tract of equal extent within the limits of Great Britain (the vicinity of the metropolis, perhaps, excepted) to exhibit the same number of objects of national importance.

The centre we have chosen is that of the cotton manufacture; a branch of commerce, the rapid and prodigious increase of which is, perhaps, absolutely unparalleled in the annals of trading nations. Manchester is, as it were, the heart of this vast system, the circulating branches of which spread all around it, though to different distances. To the north-western and western points it is most widely diffused, having in those parts established various head-quarters, which are each the centres to their lesser circles. Bolton, Blackburn, Wigan, and several other Lancashire towns, are stations of this kind; and the whole inter-
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Vening country takes its character from its relation to them. Stockport to the south, and Ashton to the east, of Manchester, are similar appendages to this trade; and its influence is spread, more or less, over the greater part of Lancashire, and the north-eastern portion of Cheshire. Under the general head of the cotton manufacture may be comprised a variety of fabrics not strictly belonging to it, but accompanying it, and in like manner centering in Manchester and its vicinity.

To the north-east and east the cotton trade is soon entrenched upon by the woollen manufacture, an object, likewise, of vast importance, which extends through great part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and fills its most bleak and sterile tracts with population and opulence. This has not any one common centre, but the towns of Leeds, Halifax, Bradford, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Saddleworth, and Rochdale, are each centres of particular branches and varieties of the woollen manufacture. This trade, though of older standing and slower advance than the cotton trade, and likewise rivalled in other parts of the kingdom, has, nevertheless, experienced a very rapid increase in late years. It would seem as if a hilly coun-

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try was peculiarly adapted to it, since it almost ceases where Yorkshire descends into the plain.

Southward of the limits of the clothing trade, our circle comprehends the town of Sheffield, so famous for its cutlery and hardware. Passing into Derbyshire it includes all the mining and mineral country of the Peak, and extends to the commercial town of Chesterfield. Staffordshire, besides other branches of manufacture, affords a most curious and valuable one, the pottery, which may be said, as a national object, to be the creation of a few years past, produced by a fortunate combination of chemical skill with taste in the fine arts. This county also participates with Cheshire in the spinning and winding of silk, which is carried on to a moderate extent in several places. Cheshire possesses another article of great importance to the national revenues,—the salt, which is obtained in inexhaustible abundance from its rock-pits and springs.

Though the cotton-trade peculiarly characterises Lancashire as a commercial county, yet it has other considerable branches of manufacture; as that of sail-cloth and coarse
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coarse linens, of nails, of watch tools and movements, of cast-plate and common glass. Its great port of Liverpool, the second for extent of business in the kingdom, and that which has received the most rapid increase, is also within our limits; as is, likewise, the ancient port of Chester.

This general survey of our ground, will, it is presumed, amply justify the choice of Manchester as a grand centre from whence to take a tour, most peculiarly interesting to those who wish for information respecting the commerce and manufactures of this island. It now remains to give some account of the method proposed to be followed in arranging the materials of the ensuing work.

We begin with breaking this large space into its geographical divisions. As the greater part of Lancashire, and a still larger proportion of Cheshire, are comprehended within our bounds, it has been thought proper to give an entire general description of these two counties. Their limits, divisions, face of country, soil, climate, course of rivers, agriculture, and productions, are treated of in a summary way, and every circumstance of importance by which they are characterised is noted. Though a much smaller
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smaller portion of Derbyshire belongs to our plan, yet, as the whole county is not very extensive, and as the two hundreds with which we are concerned are by much the most remarkable for their appearance and productions, we have also extended our general description through the whole of it. Yorkshire being geographically divided into Three Ridings, of which a part of the West alone comes within our circle, we have given a general account of that Riding alone. Of Staffordshire the northern extremity only is described in this general manner. These several territorial descriptions are terminated by a particular account of the whole system of canal and river navigation which extends through and mutually connects these districts, and which cannot be properly understood without tracing the several trunks and communicating branches from county to county, disregarding all artificial boundaries.

The main body of the work then succeeds, consisting of the description of particular places. Beginning with our centre, we proceed through all the principal towns and villages in the same order in which the counties have been treated of. Details are given, as accurate as our
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materials could supply, (in the collection of which neither pains nor expense have been spared) of population, government, institutions public and private, trade, manufactures, and all that is important in the present state of a place, not, however, entirely disregarding narrations of past times, when they appeared interesting. The very different degree in which our inquiries have produced the desired information at different places, has prevented such a proportional adjustment of space to the accounts given of them, as their respective importance would seem always to require; but we trust it will be found, that few matters of real utility have been passed over without some adequate degree of notice. It is hoped that the number of maps and plans for illustration, which, besides the numerous views for ornament, have been allotted to this work, will materially aid the information it is intended to convey.

DESCRIPT-