

INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

GROWTH OF THE NATION

TO THE MIDDLE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

1. **The Geography of England.** — The British Isles lie north-west of the Continent of Europe. They are separated from it by the Channel and the North Sea, at the narrowest only twenty miles wide, and at the broadest not more than three hundred.

The greatest length of England from north to south is three hundred and sixty-five miles, and its greatest breadth some two hundred and eighty miles. Its area, with Wales, is 58,320 square miles, being somewhat more than one-quarter the size of France or of Germany, just one-half the size of Italy, and somewhat larger than either Pennsylvania or New York.

The backbone of the island is near the western coast, and consists of a body of hard granitic and volcanic rock rising into mountains of two or three thousand feet in height. These do not form one continuous chain but are in several detached groups. On the eastern flank of these mountains and underlying all the rest of the island is a series of stratified rocks. The harder portions of these strata still stand up as long ridges, — the “wolds,” “wealds,” “moors,” and “downs” of the more eastern and southeastern parts of England. The softer strata have been worn away into great broad valleys, furnishing the central and eastern plains or lowlands of the country.