

P R E F A C E .

THE following chapters, extracted from my larger work, and printed in a cheap form, have been published separately in order that they may reach those who might be deterred by larger volumes, and especially by those portions of them which deal with political history and bygone social conditions. I have, therefore, printed those chapters only which deal with comparatively modern facts.

It is significant and instructive, that at present persons are beginning to take a novel but profound interest in the condition and the history of those who live on wages, and to consider the narrative of their fortunes to be as interesting and important as constitutional antiquities, to be more important than military and diplomatic annals.

It is still more significant, that the political economist appears to be returning to his proper and ancient function, that of interpreting the causes which hinder the just and adequate distribution of wealth, and that he is putting into the background those airy and unreal speculations which have, during the last three-quarters of a century, been made his main business, to the serious injury of the practical lessons which he might have inculcated.

JAMES E. THOROLD ROGERS.

OXFORD,