Observations on the Loss of Woolen Spinning, 1794

Many things combine to make the Hand Spinning of Wool, the most desirable work for the cottager's wife and children. - A Wooden Wheel costing 2s. for each person, with one Reel costing 3s. set up the family. The Wool-man either supplies them with Wool by the pound or more at a time, as he can depend on their care, or they take it on his account from the chandler's shop, where they buy their food and raiment. No stock is required, and when they carry back their pound of Wool spun, they have no further concern in it. Children from five years old can run at the Wheel, it is a very wholesome employment for them, keeps them in constant exercise, and upright: persons can work at it till a very advanced age.

But from the establishment of the Spinning Machines in many Counties where I was last Summer, no Hand Work could be had, the consequence of which is the whole maintenance of the family devolves on the father, and instead of six or seven shillings a week, which a wife and four children could add by their wheels, his weekly pay is all they have to depend upon…

These Machines then once set up, and the expense of them does not appear very great, 20 Girls do the work of 2,000 Women and Children, and when these Girls are of age to go into a Farmer’s Service, how can they endure the fatigue and exposure to weather, necessary to their situation. Numbers confined together in one room cannot make them so hardy and strong, as running at the wheel in a cold cottage, and frequently at the outside of their door in the open air. - If they marry, they can neither teach their children to work, or spin, or bring in any earnings to maintain them. Who then shall patch the clothes, mend the shoes, and economize their little store?...
If these are the miseries that result from the Machines to the day labourer’s wife and children during his life, what must be their lot when deprived by his death of all support, but the pittance their own industry affords them. A widow could assist to maintain herself and her children by her spinning when she was paid 1d. for every skain; but now, she must become a parish pauper, a wretched inhabitant of a Workhouse...

**Context:**

The Industrial Revolution changed not only the means and methods of production, but also wreaked immense changes on how society organized itself and how families survived. Child factory labor proved one of industrialization’s most noteworthy scandals. The societal and commercial changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution rivaled or surpassed the social and political changes incited by its twin the French Revolution.

Source: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1794woolens.html

**Questions:**

1. As the Twin Revolutions, Industrial and French, commenced at roughly the same time, is it a fair assertion that these events ushered in the modern age?
2. Why was it that Great Britain industrialized before its European competitors and such non-Western states as Japan and China?

**Assignment:**

Compare the living circumstances - type of housing, diet, work hours, home furnishings, entertainment, income e.g. - between an English small farm owner and his brother who went to work in a Manchester factory.
Bibliography:


