

BABBAGE, CH.

Science économique des manufactures, Traduit de l'Anglais de Ch. Babbage, sur la troisième édition, par M. Isoard.

Reference: 4244

Paris, A la librairie Orientale de Dondey-Dupré, 1834. xxiii, (1), 392 pp. 8vo. Contemporary half calf, marbled boards, spine gilt in compartments, gilt lettering, a bit rubbed. Goldsmiths 28497; not Einaudi; not in Kress. First edition of Isoard's translation of the second part of Babbage's *Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* - the domestic and political economies of manufactures - published just a year after Biot's first translation into French. This translation is taken from the important third edition containing the final text of the classic treatise on the economics of the manufacturing industry. Isoard's translation differs from the translation by Edouard Biot. While Biot chose to translate the entirety of Babbage's work, Isoard was more selective, with the aim of reaching a wider and more varied readership than Biot. He therefore dropped technical chapters on mechanics, translated much of the technical vocabulary into layman's terms, and rearranged many of the paragraphs in order to improve the continuity of each subject. The *Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* was Babbage's 'brilliant and utterly original foray into political economy ... Adam Smith had analysed the sources of increases in labour productivity to be found in the division of labour: Babbage took this fundamental principle of economic growth and applied it to the individual firm. His obvious first-hand knowledge of a wide variety of industrial and business processes, combined with general analysis of production systems, made the work a tour de force. At a time of anxiety and ambiguity over the reception of new technology, he also offered authoritative policy statements on a wide range of machinery issues, including patent reform, export of machinery, crises of over production, and technological unemployment. The book's intellectual position in relationship to political economy was not, however, easily apparent, and few apart from J.S. Mill and Karl Marx appreciated its significance to their discipline' (Maxine Berg in the introduction to the Pickering Masters edition of Babbage's works, 1989).

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