

## **Aikin's Description of Robert Peel's cotton mills at Bury, 1795**

(J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester (1795)*, pp. 268-269; in A. Aspinall and E. Anthony Smith, eds., *English Historical Documents, XI, 1783-1832*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 512-13.)

The town and neighbourhood of Bury have been highly benefited by the establishment of the very capital manufacturing and printing works belonging to the company of which that very respectable gentleman, Robert Peel, Esq., Member of Parliament for Tamworth, is the head. The principal of these works are situated on the side of the Irwell, from which they have large reservoirs of water. There is likewise a separate reservoir supplied by a spring of fine clear water, which is used for the washing of goods when the river is muddied by floods. The articles here made and printed are chiefly the finest kinds of the cotton manufactory, and they are in high request both at Manchester and London. The printing is performed in the most improved methods, both by wooden blocks and copper rollers, and the execution and colours are some of the very best of the Lancashire fabric. The premises occupy a large portion of ground, and cottages have been built for the accommodation of the workmen, which form streets, and give the appearance of a village. Ingenious artists are employed in drawing patterns, and cutting and engraving them on wood and copper, and many women and children in mixing and pencilling the colours, &c. The company has several other extensive works in the neighbourhood, as well on the Irwell as on the Roch. Some of these are confined to the carding, stubbing, and spinning of cotton; others to washing the cottons with water wheels, which go round with great velocity, but can be stopped in an instant for taking out and putting in the goods. Boiling and bleaching the goods are performed at other works. In short, the extensiveness of the whole concern is such as to find constant employ for most of the inhabitants of Bury and its neighbourhood, of both sexes and all ages, and notwithstanding their great number, they have never wanted work in the most unfavourable times. The peculiar healthiness of the people employed may be imputed partly to the judicious and humane regulations put in practice by Mr. Peel, and partly to the salubrity of the air and climate. At a short distance from Bury and the works is a large well built house, called Chamber-hall, in which Mr. Peel himself resides, and in an adjoining meadow is a cottage or nursery for his young family. The whole is fitted up in a style of neatness and elegance, and surrounded with ornamental grounds and rising plantations.