





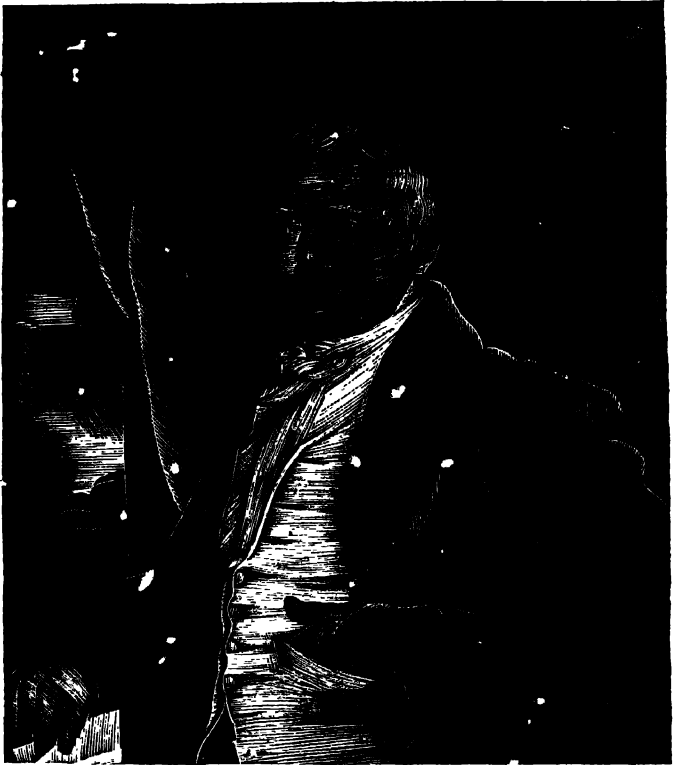








**THE  
PROGRESS OF A PLOUGH-BOY  
TO A  
SEAT IN PARLIAMENT**



WILLIAM COBBETT

A WOOD-ENGRAVING BY JOHN FARLEIGH

THE  
PROGRESS OF A PLOUGH-BOY  
TO A  
SEAT IN PARLIAMENT

*AS EXEMPLIFIED IN  
THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE  
OF  
WILLIAM COBBETT*

MEMBER FOR OLDHAM

*EDITED BY*  
WILLIAM REITZEL

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

IN 1834, COBBETT ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS his intention to close the *Political Register* and to publish, "as the work of another year", the history of his life. He later expands this idea. "I shall entitle my book 'The Progress of a Plough-boy to a seat in Parliament, as exemplified in the History of the Life of William Cobbett, Member for Oldham'; and, I intend that the frontispiece to the book shall represent me, first in a smock-frock, driving the ricks from the corn; and, in the lower compartment of the picture, standing in the House of Commons, addressing the Speaker." This intention was never carried out.

The present work was prepared with Cobbett's plan in the editor's mind. The method, that of using the autobiographical parts of Cobbett's writings, was suggested by the anonymous *Life* of 1835 and by the more fully developed work of E. I. Carlyle in 1904. In the present book the method has been used to its fullest extent, and all but a few linking passages are of Cobbett's own composition.

All editorial insertions have been enclosed in square brackets. The exact source of all the material used has been indicated in the Sources of the Text. Any reader who wishes to see exactly what has been done in the way of combining

### *Editor's Note*

separated passages, or what changes in grammatical construction have been made for the sake of continuity, will find it easy to refer to the original passages. The latter changes have not been indicated in the notes, except when the source is still unpublished, and then the passage has been printed for convenience of reference.

The editor wishes to thank H. W. Cobbett, Esq., of Manchester, for his courtesy in permitting the *Cobbett Papers* in his possession to be examined, and for his kindness in permitting them to be examined frequently.

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## CHAPTER I

1763-1782

I WAS BRED AT THE PLOUGH-TAIL, AND IN <sup>1763</sup> the Hop-Gardens of Farnham in Surrey, my native <sup>to</sup> place, and which spot, as it so happened, is the <sup>1782</sup> neatest in England, and, I believe, in the whole world. All there is a garden. The neat culture of the hop extends its influence to the round about. Hedges cut with shears and every other mark of skill strike the eye at Farnham, and become fainter and fainter as you go from it in every direction. Arthur Young calls the vale between Farnham and Alton the finest ten miles in England.

To [a taste for farming], produced in me by a desire to imitate a father whom I ardently loved, and to whose every word I listened with admiration, I owe no small part of my happiness, for a greater proportion of which very few men ever had to be grateful to God. These pursuits, innocent in themselves, instructive in their very nature, and always tending to preserve health, have been a constant, a never-failing source, of recreation to me.

Early habits and affections seldom quit us while we have vigour of mind left. I was brought up under a father, whose talk was chiefly about his garden and his fields, with regard to which he was

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1763 famed for his skill and his exemplary neatness.  
to From my very infancy, from the age of six years,  
1782 when I climbed up the side of a steep sand rock,  
and there scooped me out a plot four feet square  
to make me a garden, and the soil for which I car-  
ried up in the bosom of my little blue smock-frock,  
I have never lost one particle of my passion for  
these healthy and rational and heart-cheering pur-  
suits, in which every day presents something new,  
in which the spirits are never suffered to flag, and  
in which industry, skill, and care are sure to meet  
with their due reward. I have never, for any eight  
months together, during my whole life, been with-  
out a garden. So sure are we to overcome difficul-  
ties where the heart and mind are bent on the  
thing to be obtained!

All that I can boast of in my birth is that I was  
born in old England. With respect to my ancestors,  
I shall go no further back than my grandfather,  
and for this very plain reason, that I never heard  
talk of any prior to him. He was a day-labourer,  
and I have heard my father say, that he worked  
for one farmer from the day of his marriage to that  
of his death, upwards of forty years. He died be-  
fore I was born, but I have often slept beneath the  
same roof that had sheltered him, and where his  
widow dwelt for seven years after his death. It  
was a little thatched cottage with a garden before  
the door. It had but two windows; a damson tree  
shaded one, and a clump of filberts the other. Here  
I and my brothers went every Christmas and

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Whitsuntide, to spend a week or two, and torment the poor old woman with our noise and dilapidations. She used to give us milk and bread for breakfast, an apple pudding for our dinner, and a piece of bread and cheese for supper. Her fire was made of turf cut from the neighbouring heath and her evening light was a rush dipped in grease. 1763  
to  
1782

My father, from the poverty of his parents, had received no very brilliant education; he was, however, learned for a man in his rank of life. When a little boy, he drove the plough for two pence a day and these his earnings were appropriated to the expenses of an evening school. What a village schoolmaster could be expected to teach he had learnt, and had besides considerably improved himself in several branches of the mathematicks. He understood land-surveying well, and was often chosen to draw the plans of disputed territory; in short, he had the reputation of possessing experience and understanding, which never fails in England, to give a man in a country place, some little weight with his neighbours. He was honest, industrious, and frugal; it was not, therefore, wonderful, that he should be situated in a good farm, and happy in a wife of his own rank, like him, beloved and respected.

I was born in the month of March, 1766:<sup>1</sup> the exact age of my [three] brothers I have forgotten, but I remember having heard my mother say, that there was but three years and three quarters

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1763 difference between the age of the eldest and that of  
to the youngest.

1782 I do not remember the time when I did not earn my living. My first occupation was, drying the small birds from the turnip seed, and the rooks from the peas. When I trudged afield, with my wooden bottle and my satchel over my shoulders, I was hardly able to climb the gates and stiles, and, at the close of day, to reach home was a task of infinite labour. My next employment was weeding wheat, and leading a single horse at harrowing barley. Hoing peas followed, and hence I arrived at the honour of joining the reapers in harvest, driving the team and holding the plough. We were all of us strong and laborious, and my father used to boast, that he had four boys, the eldest of whom was but fifteen years old, who did as much work as any three men in the parish of Farnham.

I have some faint recollection of going to school to an old woman who, I believe did not succeed in teaching me my letters. In the winter evenings my father taught me to read and write, and gave me a pretty tolerable knowledge of arithmetic. Grammar he did not perfectly understand himself, and therefore his endeavours to teach that, necessarily failed; for, though he thought he understood it, and though he made us get the rules by heart, we learnt nothing at all of the principles.

'As to politics, we were like the rest of the country people in England; that is to say, we neither knew nor thought anything about the

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matter. The shouts of victory or the murmur at a defeat, would now-and-then break in upon our tranquillity for a moment; but I do not remember ever having seen a newspaper in the house, and most certainly that privation did not render us less free, happy, or industrious. 1763  
to  
1782

After, however, the American War had continued for some time, and the cause and nature of it began to be understood, or rather misunderstood, by the lower classes of people in England, we became a little better acquainted with subjects of this kind. My father was a partisan of the Americans: he used frequently to dispute on the subject with the gardener of a nobleman who lived near us. This was generally done with good humour, over a pot of our best ale; yet the disputants sometimes grew warm, and gave way to language that could not fail to attract our attention. My father was worsted without a doubt, as he had for antagonist, a shrewd and sensible old Scotchman, far his superior in political knowledge; but he pleaded before a partial audience: we thought there was but one wise man in the world, and that one was our father.

My father used to take one of us with him every year to the great hop fair at Weyhill. The fair was held at Old Michaelmaside, and the journey was to us, a sort of reward for the labours of the summer. It happened to be my turn to go thither the very year that Long Island was taken by the British.<sup>2</sup> I rode a little pony, and remember how

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1763 proud I was on the occasion; but, I also remember,  
to that my brothers, two out of three of whom were  
1782 older than I, thought it unfair that my father  
selected me; my own reflections upon the occasion  
have never been forgotten by me.

A great company of hop-merchants and farmers were just sitting down to supper as the post arrived, bringing in the extraordinary Gazette which announced the victory. A hop-factor from London took the paper, placed his chair upon the table, and began to read in an audible voice. He was opposed, a dispute ensued, and my father retired taking me by the hand, to another apartment where we supped with about a dozen others of the same sentiments. Here Washington's health and success to the Americans were repeatedly toasted, and this was the first time, as far as I can recollect, that I ever heard that General's name mentioned.

It would be [as] useless as unentertaining to dwell on the occupations and sports of a country boy; to lead the reader to fairs, cricket-matches, and hare-hunts; [but one occasion I must recount.] A huntsman, named George Bradley, who was, huntsman to Mr Smither, of Hale, very wantonly gave me a cut with his whip, because I jumped in amongst the dogs, pulled a hare from them, and got her scut, upon a little common, called Seal Common, near Waverley Abbey., I was only about eight years old; but my mind was so strongly imbued with the principles of natural justice, that I did

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not rest satisfied with the mere calling of names, of which, however, I gave Mr George Bradley a plenty. I sought to inflict a just punishment upon him. 1763  
to  
1782

Hounds (hare-hounds, at least) will follow the trail of a red herring as eagerly as that of a hare, and rather more so, the scent being stronger and more unbroken. I waited till Bradley and his pack were trailing for a hare in the neighbourhood of that same Seal Common. They were pretty sure to find in the space of half an hour, and the hare was pretty sure to go up the Common and over the hill to the south. I placed myself ready with a red herring at the end of a string, in a dry field, and near a hard path, along which, or near to which, I was pretty sure the hare would go. I waited a long while; the sun was getting high; the scent bad; but, by and by, I heard the view-halloo and full cry. I squatted down in the fern, and my heart bounded with the prospect of inflicting justice, when I saw my lady come skipping by, going off towards Peppor Harrow; that is to say, towards the south. In a moment, I clapped down my herring, went off at a right angle towards the west, climbed up a steep bank very soon, where the horsemen, such as they were, could not follow; then on I went over the roughest part of the common that I could find, till I got to the pales of Moor Park, over which I went, there being holes at the bottom for the letting in of hares. That part of the park was covered with short heath; and I gave



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1763 some twirls about to amuse Mr Bradley for half  
to an hour. Then off I went, and down a hanger at  
1782 last, to the bottom of which no horseman could  
get without riding round a quarter of a mile. At  
the bottom of the hanger was an aldermoor, 'in a  
swamp. There my herring ceased to perform its  
'service. The river was pretty rapid: I tossed it in,  
that it might go back to the sea and relate to its  
brethren the exploits of the land. I washed my  
hands in the water of the moor; and took a turn,  
and stood at the top of the hanger to witness the  
winding-up of the day's sport, which terminated a  
little before dusk in one of the dark days of Novem-  
ber. After over-running the scent a hundred  
times; after an hour's puzzling in the dry field,  
after all the doubles and all the turns that the sea-  
born hare had given them, down came the whole  
posse to the swamp; the huntsman went round a  
millhead, not far off, and tried the other side of the  
river: "No! damn her, where can she be?" And  
thus, amidst conjectures, disputations, mutual  
blamings, and swearings a plenty they concluded,  
some of them half-leg deep in dirt, and going  
soaking home.

In those "dark ages" that the impudent Scotch  
economists talk about, we had a great many holi-  
days. There were all the fairs of our own place,  
and all the fairs of the places just round about.  
There were several days at Christmas, at Easter,  
at Whitsuntide; and we had a day or two at  
Hollantide, as we used to call it, which came in

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November, I believe, and at Candlemass. Besides 1763  
these, there were cricket-matches, and single-stick to  
matches; and all these were not thought too much. 1782  
I verily believe, that if I had been born in these  
[present] days of slavery, of rags, and of hunger, I  
should never have been any more known in the  
world, than the chap I, this very moment, see slink-  
ing by the side of a road-waggon, with scarcely a  
shoe on his foot, and with a smock-frock that none  
but actual beggars wore in the "dark ages", when  
I was a boy. I never knew a labouring man, in  
those "dark ages", go out to his work in the morn-  
ing without a bottle of beer and a satchel of  
victuals, containing cheese, if not bacon, hung  
upon his crook. A bottle-crook made as usual a  
part of the equipage of a labourer, as his smock-  
frock, or his hat did. Except in about five or six  
instances, in Essex, I have not seen a bottle-crook  
these twenty years.

In the "dark ages", when I was a boy, country  
labourers' wives used to spin the wool, and knit  
the stockings and gloves that were wanted in  
the family. My grandmother knit stockings for  
me after she was blind. Farmers' wives, and  
daughters, and servant maids, were spinning, reel-  
ing, carding, knitting, or at something or other of  
that sort, whenever the work of the farm-house  
did not demand them.

Accordingly, be it observed, that there wanted  
no schools, no Lancastrian or Bell work, no Tracts,  
no circulation of Bibles, to make the common

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1763 people generally honest and obedient. I remember  
to a little sort of fair that used to be held at a village  
1782 in Surrey. I remember the white smock-frocks  
and red handkerchiefs, and nice clean clothes of  
the girls, that used to ornament that fair. By  
accident, I stumbled upon it in a rural ride [in  
• 1822]. Not a tenth part of the people, and these, in  
general ragged and dirty, with some few girls  
drawn off in tawdry cottons, looking more like  
town prostitutes than country girls; and this was  
a pretty fair sample of the whole country.

The truth is, that the system which has been  
pursued in England from the time of the Revolution  
[of 1680], the system of government debt, is  
a system which begins by totally debasing the  
labouring classes, and that ends by producing its  
own overthrow, and, generally, that of the state  
along with it. It draws property into great masses;  
it gives to cunning the superiority over industry;  
it makes agriculture a subject of adventure; it puts  
down all small cultivators; it encloses every inch  
of that land which God himself seems to have in-  
tended for the poor.

[There is] a place called the Bourne, which lies in  
the heath at about a mile from Farnham. It is a  
winding narrow valley, down which, during the  
wet season of the year, there runs a stream be-  
ginning at the Holt Forest, and emptying itself  
into the Wey just below Moor Park, which was the  
seat of Sir William Temple, when Swift was resid-  
ing with him. There is a little hop-garden in which

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I used to work from eight to ten years old; from 1763  
which I have scores of times run in order to follow to  
the hounds, leaving the hoc to do the best that it 1782  
could to destroy the weeds; but the most interest-  
ing thing was a sandhill, which goes from a part  
of the heath down to the rivulet.

As a due mixture of pleasure with toil, I with  
my two brothers, used occasionally to disport our-  
selves, as the lawyers call it, at this sandhill. Our  
diversion was this: one used to draw his arms out  
of the sleeves of his smock-frock, and lay himself  
down with his arms by his sides; and then the  
others, one at head and the other at feet, sent him  
rolling down the hill like a barrel or a log of wood.  
By the time he got to the bottom, his hair, eyes,  
ears, nose and mouth, were all full of this loose  
sand; then the others took their turn, and at every  
roll, there was a monstrous spell of laughter. I  
often told my sons of this while they were very  
little, and [in 1822] I took one of them to see the  
spot. But that was not all. This was the spot  
where I was receiving my education; and this was  
the sort of education; and I am perfectly satisfied  
that if I had not received such an education, or  
something very much like it; that, if I had been  
brought up a milk-sop, with a nursery-maid ever-  
lastingly at my heels, I should have been at this  
day as great a fool, as inefficient a mortal, as any  
of those frivolous idiots that are turned out from  
Winchester or Westminster School or from any of  
those dens of dunces called Colleges and Univer-

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1763 sities. It is impossible to say how much I owe to  
to that sandhill; and I went to return it my thanks.

1782 [At this time] when my chief occupation was to  
hobble over the clods by the side of the plough-  
horses, I remember, that I used to wonder how it  
happened, that the land produced enough, and  
only enough for all the animals that fed on its  
produce. My mind did not penetrate so far as the  
human species: it found quite sufficient to be  
astonished at in perceiving, that there was always  
just horses enough to eat the hay, and just hay  
enough for the horses; just meadows enough for  
the cattle, and cattle for the meadows; sheep  
enough for the downs, and downs enough for the  
sheep. If I rambled into the forest or over the  
common, I never found a blade of grass to spare,  
and yet there was always enough to maintain all  
the various kinds of animals that fed on it, though  
they belonged, perhaps, to a thousand different  
persons, every one of whom wished to feed thereon  
as many animals as he could, and though there was  
no active law to regulate the conduct of these  
persons. Such astonishment was natural enough  
in a boy nine or ten years old.

At eleven years of age my employment was clip-  
ping of box-edgings and weeding beds of flowers in  
the garden of the Bishop of Winchester, at the  
Castle of Farnham. I had always been fond of  
beautiful gardens; and, a gardener, who had just  
come from the King's gardens at Kew, gave such  
a description of them as made me instantly resolve

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to work in these gardens. The next morning, with- 1763  
out saying a word to anybody, off I set, with no  
clothes, except those upon my back, and thirteen 1782  
halfpence in my pocket. I found that I must go  
to Richmond, and I, accordingly, went on, from  
place to place, inquiring my way thither. A long  
day (it was in June) brought me to Richmond in  
the afternoon. Two pennyworth of bread and  
cheese and a pennyworth of small beer, which I  
had on the road, and one halfpenny that I had  
lost somehow or other, left three pence in my  
pocket. With this for my whole fortune, I was  
trudging through Richmond in my blue smock-  
frock and my red garters tied under my knees,  
when, staring about me, my eye fell upon a little  
book, in a bookseller's window: "Tale of a Tub;  
price 3d." The title was so odd, that my curiosity  
was excited. I had the 3d., but, then, I could have  
no supper. In I went and got the little book, which  
I was so impatient to read, that I got over into a  
field, at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, where  
there stood a haystack. On the shady side of this,  
I sat down to read. The book was so different from  
anything that I had ever read before: it was some-  
thing so new to my mind, that, though I could not  
at all understand some of it, it delighted me be-  
yond description; and it produced what I have  
always considered a sort of birth of intellect. I  
read on till it was dark, without any thought about  
supper or bed. When I could see no longer, I put  
my little book in my pocket, and tumbled down

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1763 by the side of the stack, where I slept till the birds  
to in Kew Garden awaked me in the morning; when  
1782 off I started to Kew, reading my little book. The  
singularity of my dress, the simplicity of my  
manner, my confident and lively air, induced the  
gardener, who was a Scotchman, I remember, to  
give me victuals, find me lodging, and set me to  
work. And, it was during the period that I was at  
Kew, that the King<sup>3</sup> and two of his brothers  
laughed at the oddness of my dress, while I was  
sweeping the grass plat round the foot of the  
Pagoda. The gardener, seeing me fond of books,  
lent me some gardening books to read; but, these  
I could not relish after my Tale of a Tub, which I  
carried about with me wherever I went, and when  
I, at about twenty years old, lost it in a box that  
fell overboard in the Bay of Funday in North  
America, the loss gave me greater pain than I have  
ever felt at losing thousands of pounds.

Towards the autumn of 1782, I went to visit a  
relation who lived in the neighbourhood of Ports-  
mouth. From the top of Portsdown, I, for the first  
time, beheld the sea, and no sooner did I behold it  
than I wished to be a sailor. I could never account  
for this sudden impulse, nor can I now. Almost all  
English boys feel the same inclination: it would  
seem that, like ducks, instinct leads them to rush  
on the bosom of the water.

• But it was not the sea alone that I saw: the  
grand fleet was riding at anchor at Spithead. I had  
heard of the wooden walls of Old England: I had

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formed my idea of a ship and of a fleet; but what I 1763  
now beheld so far surpassed what I had ever been to  
able to form a conception of, that I stood lost 1782  
between astonishment and admiration.

I arrived at my uncle's late in the evening, with my mind full of my seafaring project. Though I had walked thirty miles during the day, and consequently was well wearied, I slept not a moment. It was no sooner daylight than I arose and walked down toward the old castle on the beach at Spithead. For a sixpence given to an invalid I got permission to go upon the battlements: here I had a closer view of the fleet, and at every look my impatience to be on board increased. In short, I went from the castle to Portsmouth, got into a boat, and was in a few minutes on board the Pegasus man-of-war, commanded by the Right Honourable George Berkley, brother to the Earl of Berkley.

The Captain had more compassion than is generally met with in a man of his profession: he represented to me the toils I must undergo, and the punishment that the least disobedience or neglect would subject me to. He persuaded me to return home, and I remember he concluded his advice with telling me, that it was better to be led to church in a halter to be tied to a girl that I did not like, than to be tied to the gang-way or, as the sailors call it, married to Miss Roper. From the conclusion of this wholesome counsel, I perceived that the Captain thought I had cloped on



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1768 account of a bastard. I blushed, and that con-  
to firmed him in his opinion.

1782 I in vain attempted to convince Captain Berkley, that choice alone led me to the sea; he sent me on shore, and I at last quitted Portsmouth; but not before I had applied to the Port Admiral, Evans, to get my name enrolled among those who were destined for the service. I was, in some sort, obliged to acquaint the Admiral with what had passed on board the Pegasus, in consequence of which my request was refused, and I happily escaped, sorely against my will, from the most toilsome and perilous profession in the world.

I returned once more to the plough, but I was spoiled for a farmer. I had, before my Portsmouth adventure, never known any other ambition than that of surpassing my brothers in the different labours of the field; but it was quite otherwise now; I sighed for a sight of the world; the little island of Britain seemed too small a compass for me. The things in which I had taken the most delight were neglected; the singing of the birds grew insipid, and the heart-cheering cry of the hounds, after which I formerly used to fly from my work, was heard with the most torpid indifference. Still, however, I remained at home till the following spring, when I quitted it for ever.

## CHAPTER II

1783—1784

\* \* \* \* \*

IT WAS ON THE SIXTH OF MAY, 1783, THAT I, 1783  
like Don Quixote, sallied forth to seek adventures. to  
I was dressed in my holiday clothes, in order to 1784  
accompany two or three lasses to Guildford Fair.  
They were to assemble at a house about three  
miles from my home, where I was to attend them;  
but unfortunately for me, I had to cross the London  
turnpike road. The stage-coach had just turned  
the summit of a hill, and was rattling down to-  
wards me at a merry rate. The notion of going  
to London never entered my mind till this very  
moment, yet the step was completely determined  
on, before the coach came to the spot where I  
stood.

It was by mere accident that I had money  
enough to defray the expenses of this day. Being  
rigged out for the fair, I had three or four crown  
and half-crown pieces (which most certainly I did  
not intend to spend) besides a few shillings and  
halfpence. This my little all, which I had been  
years in amassing, wilted away like snow before  
the sun, when touched by the fingers of the inn-  
keepers and their waiters. In short, when I arrived  
at Ludgate Hill, and had paid my fare, I had but  
about half a crown in my pocket.

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1788 By a commencement of that good luck, which  
to has attended me in all the situations in which for-  
1784 tune has placed me, I was preserved from ruin. A  
gentleman, who was one of the passengers in the  
stage, fell into conversation with me at dinner,  
and he soon learnt that I was going I knew not  
whither or for what. This gentleman was a hop-  
merchant in the borough of Southwark and, upon  
closer inquiry, it appeared that he had often dealt  
with my father at Weyhill. He knew the danger  
I was in; he was himself a parent, and he felt for  
my parents. His house became my home, he wrote  
to my father, and endeavoured to prevail on me  
to obey his orders, which were to return im-  
mediately home. I am ashamed to say that I was  
disobedient. Willingly would I have returned,  
but pride would not suffer me to do it. I feared  
the scoffs of my acquaintances more than the real  
evils that threatened me.

My generous preserver, finding my obstinacy  
not to be overcome, began to look out for an em-  
ployment for me, when an acquaintance of his,  
an attorney, called in to see him. He related my  
adventure to this gentleman, whose name was  
Holland, and who, happening to want an under-  
strapping quill driver, did me the honour to take me  
into his service, and the next day saw me perched  
upon a great high stool, in an obscure chamber in  
Gray's Inn, endeavouring to decipher the crabbed  
draughts of my employer.

I could write a good plain hand, but I could not

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read the pothooks and hangers of Mr Holland. He was a month in learning me to copy without almost continual assistance, and even then I was of but little use to him; for, besides that I wrote at a snail's pace, my want of knowledge in orthography gave him infinite trouble: so that for the first two months I was a dead weight upon his hands. Time, however, rendered me useful, and Mr Holland was pleased to tell me that he was very well satisfied with me, just at the very moment when I began to grow extremely dissatisfied with him.

1783  
to  
1784

No part of my life has been totally unattended with pleasure, except the eight or nine months I passed in Gray's Inn. The office (for so the dungeon where I wrote was called) was so dark, that, on cloudy days, we were obliged to burn candle. I worked like a galley-slave from five in the morning till eight or nine at night, and sometimes all night long. I never quitted this gloomy recess except on Sundays, when I usually took a walk to St. James's Park, to feast my eyes with the sight of the trees, the grass, and the water. In one of these walks I happened to cast my eye on an advertisement, inviting all loyal young men, who had a mind to gain riches and glory, to repair to a certain rendezvous, where they might enter into His Majesty's Marine Service, and have the peculiar happiness and honour of being enrolled in the Chatham division. I was not ignorant enough to be the dupe of this morsel of military bombast; but a change was what I wanted; besides, I knew that marines went

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1783 to sea, and my desire to be on that element had  
to rather increased than diminished by my being  
1784 penned up in London. In short, I resolved to join  
this glorious corps; and, to avoid all possibility  
of being discovered by my friends, I went down  
to Chatham, and enlisted into the marines as I  
thought, but the next morning I found myself  
before a Captain of a marching regiment.<sup>1</sup> There  
was no retreating: I had taken a shilling to drink  
His Majesty's health, and his further bounty was  
ready for my reception.

When I told the Captain that I thought myself  
engaged in the marines "By Jásus my lad", said  
he, "and you have had a narrow escape". He told  
me, that the regiment into which I had been so  
happy as to enlist was one of the oldest and boldest  
in the whole army, and that it was at that time  
serving in that fine, flourishing and plentiful  
country, Nova Scotia. He dwelt long on the  
beauties, and riches of this terrestrial paradise,  
and dismissed me, perfectly enchanted with the  
prospect of a voyage thither.

I enlisted in 1784, and, as peace had then taken  
place, no great haste was made to send recruits off  
to their regiments. I remember well what six-  
pence a day was, recollecting the pangs of hunger  
felt by me, during the thirteen months that I was  
a private soldier at Chatham, previous to my em-  
barkation for Nova Scotia. Of my sixpence, nothing  
like fivepence was left to purchase food for the  
day. Indeed, not fourpence. For there was wash-

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ing, mending, soap, flour for hair-powder, shoes, stockings, shirts, stocks and gaiters, pipe-clay and several other things to come out of the miserable sixpence! Judge then of the quantity of food to sustain life in a lad of sixteen, and to enable him to exercise with a musket (weighing fourteen pounds) six or eight hours every day. The best battalion I ever saw in my life was composed of men, the far greater part of whom were enlisted before they were sixteen, and who, when they were first brought up to the regiment, were clothed in coats made much too long and too large, in order to leave room for growing.

1788  
to  
1784

We had several recruits from Norfolk (our regiment was the West Norfolk); and many of them deserted from sheer hunger. They were lads from the plough-tail. All of them tall, for no short men were then taken. I remember two that went into a decline and died during the year, though when they joined us, they were fine hearty young men. I have seen them lay in their berths, many and many a time, actually crying on account of hunger. The whole week's food was not a bit too much for one day.

My leisure time was spent, not in the dissipations common to such a way of life, but in reading and study. In the course of this year I learnt more than I had ever done before. I subscribed to a circulating library at Brompton, the greatest part of the books in which I read more than once over. The library was not very considerable, it is

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1783 true, nor in my reading was I directed by any  
to degree of taste or choice. Novels, plays, history,  
1784 poetry, all were read, and nearly with equal  
avidity.

Such a course of reading could be attended with but little profit: it was skimming over the surface of everything. One branch of learning, however, I went to the bottom with, and that the most essential too, the grammar of my mother tongue. I had experienced the want of knowledge of grammar during my stay with Mr Holland; but it is very probable that I never should have thought of encountering the study of it, had not accident placed me under a man whose friendship extended beyond his interest. Writing a fair hand procured me the honour of being copyist to Colonel Debieg, the commandant of the garrison. I transcribed the famous correspondence between him and the Duke of Richmond. The Colonel saw my deficiency, and strongly recommended study. He enforced his advice with a sort of injunction, and with a promise of reward in case of success. I procured me a Lowth's grammar,<sup>2</sup> and applied myself to the study of it with unceasing assiduity.

The edge of my berth, or that of the guard-bed, was my seat to study in; my knapsack was my bookcase; a bit of board lying on my lap was my writing desk; and the task did not demand anything like a year of my life. I had no money to purchase candle or oil; in winter time it was rarely that I could get any evening light but that of the

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fire, and only my turn even of that. To buy a pen or a sheet of paper I was compelled to forgo some portion of food, though in a state of half-starvation; I had no moment of time that I could call my own; and I had to read and to write amidst the talking, laughing, singing, whistling and brawling of at least half a score of the most thoughtless of men, and that, too, in the hours of their freedom from all control. Think not lightly of the farthing that I had to give, now and then, for ink, pen, or paper. That farthing was, alas! a great sum to me! I was as tall as I am now; I had great health and great exercise. I remember, and well I may! that, upon one occasion, I, after all absolutely necessary expenses, had, on a Friday, made shift to have a halfpenny in reserve, which I had destined for the purchase of a red herring in the morning; but, when I pulled off my clothes at night, so hungry then as to be hardly able to endure life, I found that I had lost my halfpenny! I buried my head under the miserable sheet and rag, and cried like a child.

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to  
1784

[But this labour was] not without some profit; for, though it was a considerable time before I fully comprehended all that I read, still I read and studied with such unremitting attention, that, at last, I could write without falling into any very gross errors. The pains I took cannot be described: I wrote the whole grammar out two or three times; I got it by heart. I repeated it every morning and every evening, and, when on guard, I imposed on myself the task of saying it all over once every



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1783 time I was posted sentinel. To this exercise of my  
to memory I ascribe the retentiveness of which I  
1784 have since found it capable, and to the success  
with which it was attended, I ascribe the per-  
severance that has led to the acquirement of the  
little learning of which I am master. .

I was soon raised to the rank of Corporal, a rank, which, however contemptible it may appear in some people's eyes, brought me in a clear two-pence per diem, and put a very clever worsted knot upon my shoulder too. As promotion began to dawn, I grew impatient to get to my regiment, where I expected soon to bask under the rays of royal favour. The happy days of departure at last came: we set sail from Gravesend, and, after a short and pleasant passage, arrived at Halifax in Nova Scotia.

When I first beheld the barren, not to say hideous, rocks at the entrance of the harbour, I began to fear that the master of the vessel had mistaken his way; for I could perceive nothing of that fertility that my good recruiting captain had dwelt on with so much delight. Nova Scotia had no other charm for me than that of novelty. Everything I saw was new: bogs, rocks, and mosquitoes and bull-frogs. Thousands of Captains and Colonels without soldiers, and of Squires without stockings or shoes. In England, I had never thought of approaching a Squire without a most respectful bow; but, in this new world, though I was but a corporal, I often ordered a Squire to bring me a glass of grog,

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and even to take care of my knapsack. We staid 1783  
but a few weeks in Nova Scotia, being ordered to  
St Johns in the Province of New Brunswick. Here,  
and at other places in the same province, we re-  
mained till the month of September, 1791, when  
the regiment was relieved and sent home. 1784

Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada, are the horns, the head, the neck, the shins, and the hoof of the ox, and the United States are the ribs, the sirloin, the kidneys, and the rest of the body. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were one great heap of rocks, covered with fir trees, with here and there a little strip of land capable of cultivation, by the sides of the rivers. What these countries are, you may judge from the following facts; that almost all the meat and all the flour consumed in them, is carried from the United States, and even cabbages; that, as to fruits, cherries, apples, pears, all go from the United States. In short, the most barren, the most villainous piece of waste land; the thin shell upon the top of a gravel pit in England compared with the fat meadows and gardens in the Medway, or the beautiful valleys in Wiltshire, is precisely what Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are to the United States of America.

Then the horrible climate; the land covered with snow seven months of the year; the danger of death if any man be lost in the snow for only ten minutes. Thousands of deaths took place every year from people being what is called frost-bitten. The men going on guard were wrapped up in great

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1783 cloth coats lined with flannel, their head covered  
to with caps of the same sort, leaving only an opening  
1784 for the eyes and the nose. I have seen half a dozen  
men at a time with their noses frost-bitten, which  
you perceive the moment you see them, by their  
having become white. The remedy is instantly to  
rub with snow the part affected; but, very fre-  
quently, if this be delayed only for half an hour,  
mortification takes place; and there are thousands  
of men in those countries with their hands or feet  
cut off in order to save their lives.

I was stationed on the banks of the great and  
beautiful river St John, which was more than a  
mile wide at a hundred miles from the sea. That  
river, as well as all the creeks running into it on  
both sides, were so completely frozen over every  
year by the seventh of November, or thereabouts,  
that we could skate across it and up and down it,  
the next morning after the frost began, while we  
could see the fish swimming under the ice upon  
which we were skating. In about ten days the  
snow came; until storm after storm, coming at in-  
tervals of a week or a fortnight, made the mass,  
upon an average, ten feet deep; and there we  
were, nine days out of ten, with a bright sun over  
our heads, and with snow, dry as hair powder,  
screeching under our feet. In the month of April,  
in the last week of that month, the meltings of the  
snow turned the river into ice again. Soon after  
this, symptoms of breaking-up began to appear,  
the immense mass of ice was first loosened near

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the banks of the river; the creeks where the masses were not so large, and the lakes where the freezing had not been so severe, began to give way, and you every now and then heard a crack at many miles distance, like the falling of fifty or a hundred or a thousand very lofty timber trees coming down all together, from the axes and saws of the fellers. These cracks indicated that the ice had bursted asunder, and was beginning to roll down the great streams made by the melting of the snow: day after day, the cracks became louder and more frequent; till by and by, the ice came tumbling out of the mouths of the creeks into the main river, which, by this time, began to give way itself, till, on some days, toward the latter end of May, the whole surface of the river moved downwards with accelerating rapidity towards the sea, rising up into piles twice as high as [the Duke of Wellington's] great fine house at Hyde Park Corner, wherever the ice came in contact with an island, of which there were many in the river, until the sun and the tide had carried the whole away, and made the river clear for us to sail upon again to the next month of November; during which time, the sun gave us melons in the natural ground, and fine crops of corn and grass. [It is impossible not to be] revisited by the feelings which I participated with others, when the sun began to bless our eyes with the sight of grass, to make us cast off our furs, and to resume our dresses as men, instead of those of bears.

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to  
1784

## CHAPTER III

• 1784-1791

1784 WHILE I WAS CORPORAL I WAS MADE CLERK  
*to,* to the regiment. In a very short time, the whole  
1791 of the business in that way fell into my hands;  
and, at the end of about a year, neither adjutant,  
paymaster, or quarter-master, could move an inch  
without my assistance. The accounts and letters  
of the paymaster went through my hands; or,  
rather, I was the maker of them. All the returns,  
reports, and other official papers were of my  
drawing-up.

Then I became Sergeant-Major to the regiment, which brought me in close contact at every hour, with the whole of the epaulet gentry, whose profound and surprising ignorance I discovered in a twinkling. The military part of the regiment's affairs fell under my care. In early life, [I] contracted the blessed habit of husbanding well my time. To this more than to any other thing, I owed my very extraordinary promotion in the army. I was always ready: never did any man, or anything, wait one moment for me. Being raised from corporal to sergeant-major at once, over the heads of thirty sergeants, I naturally should have been an object of envy and hatred; but this habit

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of early rising really subdued these passions; because everyone felt that what I did he had never done, and never could do. Long before any other man was dressed for parade, my work for the morning was well done, and I myself was on parade walking, in fine weather, for an hour perhaps. My custom was this: to get up, in summer, at daylight, and in winter at four o'clock; shave, dress, even to the putting of my sword belt over my shoulder, and having my sword lying on the table before me, ready to hang by my side. Then I ate a bit of cheese, or pork, and bread. Then I prepared my report, which was filled up as fast as the companies brought me in the materials. After this I had an hour or two to read, before the time came for any duty out of doors, unless when the regiment or part of it went out to exercise in the morning. When this was the case, and the matter was left to me, I always had it on the ground in such time as that the bayonets glistened, in the rising sun, a sight which gave me delight, of which I often think, but which I should in vain endeavour to describe. If the officers were to go out, eight or ten o'clock was the hour, sweating the men in the heat of the day, breaking in, upon the time for cooking their dinner, putting all things out of order and all men out of humour. When I was commander, the men had a long day of leisure before them: they could ramble into the town or into the woods; go to get raspberries, to catch birds, to catch fish, or to pursue any other recrea-

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to  
1791

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1784 tion, and such of them as chose, and were quali-  
to fied, to work at their trades. So that here, arising  
1791 solely from the early habits of one very young  
man, were pleasant and happy days given to  
hundreds.

About this time, the new discipline,<sup>1</sup> as it was called, was sent out to us in little books, which were to be studied by the officers of each regiment, and the rules of which were to be immediately conformed to. Though any old woman might have written such a book; though it was excessively foolish from beginning to end; still, it was to be complied with, it ordered and commanded a total change.

To make this change was left to me, while not a single officer in the regiment paid the least attention to the matter; so that, when the time came for the annual review, I had to give lectures of instruction to the officers, themselves, the Colonel not excepted; and, for several of them, I had to make out, upon large cards, which they bought for the purpose, little plans of the position of the regiment, together with lists of the words of command, which they had to give in the field. There was I, at the review, upon the flank of the grenadier company, with my worsted shoulder-knot, and my great high, coarse, hairy cap; confounded in the ranks amongst other men, while those who were commanding me to move my hands or my feet, thus or thus, were, in fact, uttering words, which I had taught them; and were, in everything except

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mere authority, my inferiors; and ought to have been commanded by me. It was impossible for reflections of this sort not to intrude themselves; and, as I advanced in experience, I felt less and less respect for those, whom I was compelled to obey. 1784  
to  
1791

But, I had a very delicate part to act with those gentry; for, while I despised them for their gross ignorance and their vanity, and hated them for their drunkenness and rapacity, I was fully sensible of their power. My path was full of rocks and pitfalls; and, as I never disguised my dislikes, or restrained my tongue, I should have been broken and flogged for fifty different offences, had they not been kept in awe by my inflexible sobriety, impartiality, and integrity, by the consciousness of their inferiority to me, and by the real and almost indispensable necessity of the use of my talents. They, in fact, resigned all the discipline of the regiment to me, and I very freely left them to swagger about and to get roaring drunk.

To describe the various instances of their ignorance, and the various tricks they played to disguise it from me, would fill a volume. It is the custom in regiments to give out orders every day from the officer commanding. These are written by the Adjutant, to whom the Sergeant-Major is a sort of deputy. The man, whom I had to do with was a keen fellow, but wholly illiterate. The orders, which he wrote, most cruelly murdered our mother-tongue. But, in his absence, or, during a severe drunken fit, it fell to my lot to write orders. As we



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1784 both wrote in the same book, he used to look at  
to these. He saw commas, semi-colons, colons, full  
1791 points, and paragraphs. The questions he used to  
put to me, in an obscure sort of way, in order to  
know why I made these divisions, and yet, at the  
same time, his attempts to disguise his object,  
have made me laugh a thousand times. He, at  
last, fell upon this device: he made me write, while  
he pretended to dictate! Imagine to yourself, me  
sitting, pen in hand, to put upon paper the precious  
offspring of the mind of this stupid curmudgeon!  
But, here, a greater difficulty than any former  
arose. He that could not write good grammar,  
could not, of course, dictate good grammar. Out  
would come some gross error, such as I was ashamed  
to see in my handwriting. I would stop; suggest  
another arrangement; but, this I was, at first,  
obliged to do in a very indirect and delicate manner.  
But, this course could not continue long; and he  
put an end to it in this way; he used to tell me his  
story, and leave me to put it upon paper; and this  
we continued to the end of our connection.

He played me a trick upon one occasion, which  
was more ridiculous than anything else, but will  
serve to show how his ignorance placed him at my  
mercy. There were three or four commissioners  
sent out to examine into the state of the provinces  
of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They closed  
• their work at Fredericton, in New Brunswick,  
where I was with my regiment. As the arrival of  
every stranger was an excuse for a roaring drunk

*to a Seat in Parliament*

with our heroes, so this ceremony now took place. 1784  
But, the Commissioners had their report to make. to  
And, what did my ass of an Adjutant do, but offer 1791  
to do it for them! They took him at his word; and,  
there was he in the sweetest mess that ever vain  
pretender was plac'd in. He wanted to get some  
favour from these Commissioners, and relied upon  
me, not only to perform the task, but to keep the  
secret. The report of these fellows was no concern  
of mine. It could not, by any contrivance, be  
hooked in among my duties. He, therefore, talked  
to me at first in a sort of ambiguous manner. He  
said, that the Commissioners wanted him to do it,  
and, d-n them, he would not do it for them. Then,  
when I saw him again, he asked me something  
about it, showing me their rude mass of papers, at  
the same time. I now began to find what he would  
be at; but, I affected not to understand him, turned  
the matter as soon as I could, and so we parted.  
At this time, I had been long wanting to go and  
see an old farmer and his family and to shoot wild  
pigeons in his woods; and, as the distance was  
great, and a companion on the journey necessary,  
I wanted a serjeant to go with me. The leave to do  
this had been put off for a good while, and the  
Adjutant knew that I had the thing at heart. What  
does he now do, but come to me and after talking  
about the report again, affect to lament that he  
should be so much engaged with it, that there was  
no hope of my being permitted to go on my frolic,  
till he had finished the report. I, who knew very

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1784 well what this meant, began to be very anxious  
to for this finishing, to effect which I knew that there  
1791 was but one way. Tacked onto the pigeon-shooting,  
the report became an object of importance, and I  
said, "perhaps I could do something, Sir, in put-  
ting the papers in order for you." That was enough.  
Away he went, brought me the whole mass, and,  
tossing them down on the table: "There", said  
he, "do what you like with them; for, d-n the  
rubbish, I have no patience with it".

Rubbish it really was, if we looked only at the  
rude manner of the papers; but the matter would  
to me, at this day, have been very interesting.  
I d-d the papers as heartily as he did, and with  
better reason; but, they were to bring me my  
week's frolic, and, as I entered into everything  
with ardour, this pigeon-shooting frolic, at the age  
of about 23, was more than a compensation for all  
the toil of this report and its appendix. To work I  
went, and with the assistance of my shooting com-  
panion sergeant, who called over the figures to me,  
I had the appendix completed in rough draft in  
two days and one night. Having the detail before  
me the report was a short work, and the whole  
was soon completed. But, before a neat copy was  
made out, the thing had to be shown to the Com-  
missioners. It would not do to show it them in my  
handwriting. The Adjutant got over this difficulty  
by copying the report; and, having shown it, and  
had it highly applauded, "Well, then," said he,  
"here, Sergeant-Major, go and make a fair copy".

*to a Seat in Parliament*

This was the most shameless thing that I ever 1784  
witnessed. to

A copy, which I made for the purpose, was de- 1791  
posited with the Governor at Halifax, which copy  
the Duke of Kent had, in the year 1800, when he  
was commander-in-chief in [the] province. He  
showed it to me in Halifax, when I was there, in  
the year 1800. When I told him the whole story,  
he asked me how much the Commissioners gave  
me; and, when I told him not a farthing, he ex-  
claimed most bitterly, and said that thousands of  
pounds had, first and last, been paid by the country  
for what I had done.

I first saw my wife [in New Brunswick]. She  
was thirteen years old, and I was within about a  
month of twenty-one. She was the daughter of a  
sergeant of artillery.<sup>2</sup> I sat in the same room with  
her for about an hour, in company with others, and  
I made up my mind that she was the very girl for  
me. That I thought her beautiful was certain, for  
that I had always said should be an indispensable  
qualification; but I saw in her what I deemed  
marks of that sobriety of conduct, which has been  
by far the greatest blessing of my life. It was dead  
of winter, and, of course, the snow several feet  
deep on the ground, and the weather piercing cold.  
In about three mornings after I had first seen her,  
I had got two young men to join me in my walk;  
and our road lay by the house of her father and  
mother. It was hardly light, but she was out on  
the snow, scrubbing out a washing-tub. "That's

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1784 the girl for me", I said, when we had got out of her  
to hearing.\*

1791 From the day that I first spoke to her, I never had a thought of her being the wife of any other man, more than I had a thought of her being transformed into a chest of drawers; and I formed my resolution at once, to marry her as soon as we could get permission, and to get out of the army as soon as I could. So that this matter was at once settled as firmly as if written in the book of my fate.

At the end of about six months, my regiment, and I along with it, were removed to Fredericton, a distance of a hundred miles up the river; and, which was worse, the artillery was expected to go off to England a year or two before our regiment! The artillery went, and she along with them; and now it was that I acted a part becoming a real and sensible lover. I was aware that, when she got to that gay place Woolwich, the house of her father and mother, necessarily visited by numerous persons not the most select, might become unpleasant to her, and I did not like, besides, that she should

\* One of these young men came to England soon afterwards; and he, who keeps an inn in Yorkshire, came over to Preston, at the time of the elections, to verify whether I were the same man. When he found that I was, he appeared surprised; but what was his surprise when I told him that those tall young men he saw around me were the sons of that pretty little girl that he and I saw scrubbing out the washing-tub on the snow at New Brunswick at daybreak in the morning.

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continue to work hard. I had saved a hundred and fifty guineas. I sent her all my money before she sailed; and wrote to her, to beg of her, if she found her home uncomfortable, to hire a lodging with respectable people: and, at any rate, not to spare the money, by any means, but to buy herself good clothes, and to live without hard work, until I arrived in England; and I, in order to induce her to lay out the money, told her that I should get plenty more before I came home.

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1791

At the end of four years, home I came. I found my little girl a servant of all work (and hard work it was) at five pounds a year, in the house of a Captain Brissac; and without hardly saying a word about the matter, she put into my hands the whole of my hundred and fifty guineas unbroken.

[But before I came home] I did a wrong, [of which] I will here give a history. [It was one of those cases] in which you are, by degrees and by circumstances, deluded into something very nearly resembling sincere love for a second object, the first still, however, maintaining her ground in your heart; cases in which you are not actuated by vanity, in which you are not guilty of injustice and cruelty; but cases in which you, nevertheless, do wrong.

In one of my rambles I came to a spot at a very short distance from the source of one of the innumerable small rivers, called creeks. Here was everything to delight the eye, and especially of one like me, who seems to have been born to love

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1784 rural life, and trees and plants of all sorts. Here  
to were about two hundred acres of natural meadow,  
1791 interspersed with patches of maple trees in various  
forms and of various extent; the creek ran down  
the middle of the spot, which formed a sort of dish,  
the high and rocky hills rising all round it, except  
at the outlet of the creek, and these hills crowned  
with lofty pines: in the hills were the sources of  
the creek, the waters of which came down in cas-  
cades, for any one of which a nobleman in England  
would, if he could transfer it, give a good slice of  
his fertile estate; and in the creek at the foot of  
the cascades, there were, in season, salmon, the  
finest in the world, and so abundant, and so easily  
taken, as to be used for manuring the land.

If nature, in her very best humour, had made a  
spot for the express purpose of captivating me,  
she could not have exceeded the efforts which she  
there made. But I found something here besides  
these rude works of nature; I found something in  
the fashioning of which man had had something  
to do. I found a large and well-built log dwelling-  
house, standing (in the month of September) on  
the edge of a very good field of Indian corn, by the  
side of which there was a piece of buckwheat just  
then mowed. I found a homestead and some very  
pretty cows. I found all the things by which an  
easy and happy farmer is surrounded; and I found  
still something besides all these, something that  
was destined to give me a great deal of pleasure  
and a great deal of pain, both in their extreme

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degree; and both of which, in spite of the lapse of 1784  
forty years, now make an attempt to rush back to  
into my heart. 1791

I had lost my way; and, quite alone, but armed with my sword and a brace of pistols, to defend myself against the bears, I arrived at the log house in the middle of a moonlight night, the hoar frost covering the trees and the grass. I, being very tired, had tried to pass the night in the woods, between the trunks of two large trees, which had fallen side by side, and within a yard of each other. I had made a nest for myself of dried fern, and had made a covering by laying boughs of spruce across the trunks of the trees. But unable to sleep on account of the cold; becoming sick from the great quantity of water that I had drunk during the heat of the day, and being, moreover, alarmed at the noise of the bears, and lest one of them should find me in a defenseless state, I had roused myself up, and had crept along as well as I could.

A stout and clamorous dog, kept off by the gleaming of my sword, waked the master of the house, who got up, received me with great hospitality, got me something to eat, and put me into a feather-bed, a thing that I had been a stranger to for some years. So that no hero of Eastern romance ever experienced a more enchanting change.

I had got into the house of one of those Yankee loyalists, who, at the close of the Revolutionary War (which, until it had succeeded, was called a



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1784 rebellion), had accepted of grants of land in the  
to King's province of New Brunswick; and who, to  
1791 the great honour of England, had been furnished  
with all the means of making new and comfortable  
settlements. I was suffered to sleep till breakfast  
time, when I found a table, the like of which I  
[later saw] so many in the United States, loaded  
with good things. The master and mistress of the  
house, aged about fifty, were like what an English  
farmer and his wife were half a century ago. There  
were two sons, tall and stout, who appeared to  
have come in from work, and the youngest of  
whom was about my age. But there was another  
member of the family, aged nineteen, who (dressed  
according to the neat and simple fashion of New  
England, whence she had come with her parents  
five or six years before) had her long light-brown  
hair twisted nicely up, and fastened on the top  
of her head, in which head were a pair of lively  
blue eyes, associated with the features of which,  
that softness and that sweetness so characteristic  
of American girls, were the predominant expres-  
sions; the whole being set off by a complexion in-  
dicative of glowing health and forming, figure,  
movements, and all taken together, an assemblage  
of beauties, far surpassing any that I had ever  
seen but once in my life. That once was, too, two  
years ago; and in such a case and at such an  
age, two years, two whole years, is a long, long  
while! It was a space as long as the eleventh part  
of my then life. Here was the present against the

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absent: here was the power of the eyes pitted 1784  
against that of the memory: here were all the *to*  
senses up in arms to subdue the influence of the 1791  
thoughts: here was vanity, here was passion, here  
was the spot of all spots in the world, and here  
were also the life, and the manners and the habits  
and the pursuits that I delighted in: here was  
everything that imagination can conceive, united  
in a conspiracy against the poor little brunette  
in England! What, then, did I fall in love at once  
with this bouquet of lilies and roses? Oh! by no  
means. I was, however, so enchanted with the  
place; I so much enjoyed its tranquillity, the shade  
of the maple trees, the business of the farm, the  
sports of the water and of the woods, that I stayed  
at it to the last possible minute, promising, at my  
departure, to come again as often as I possibly  
could; a promise which I most punctually ful-  
filled.

Winter is the great season for jaunting and  
dancing (called frolicking) in America. In this pro-  
vince, the rivers and the creeks were the only  
roads from settlement to settlement. In summer  
we travelled in canoes; in winter in sleighs on the  
ice or snow. During more than two years I spent  
all the time I could with my Yankee friends; they  
were all fond of me; I talked to them about country  
affairs, my evident delight in which they took as a  
compliment to themselves: the father and mother  
treated me as one of their children; the sons as a  
brother; and the daughter, who was as modest and

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1784 as full of sensibility as she was beautiful, in a way  
to which a chap much less sanguine than I was  
1791 would have given the tenderest interpretation;  
which treatment, I, especially in the last-men-  
tioned case, most cordially repaid.

It is when you meet in the company with others of your own age that you are, in love matters, put most frequently to the test, and exposed to detection. The next-door neighbour might, in that country, be ten miles off. We used to have a frolic, sometimes at one house and sometimes at another. Here, where female eyes are very much on the alert, no secret can long be kept; and very soon, father, mother, brothers, and the whole neighbourhood looked upon the thing as certain, not excepting herself, to whom I, however, had never once even talked of marriage, and had never even told her that I loved her. But I had a thousand times done these by implication, taking into view the interpretation that she would naturally put upon my looks, appellations and acts; and it was of this that I had to accuse myself. Yet I was not a deceiver; for my affection for her was very great: I spent no really pleasant hours but with her; I was uneasy if she showed the slightest regard for any other young man; I was unhappy if the smallest matter affected her health or spirits: I quitted her with dejection and returned to her with eager delight: many a time when I could get leave but for a day, I paddled in a canoe two whole succeeding nights, in order to pass that day with her. If this

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was not love, it was first cousin to it; for as to any criminal intention, I had no more thought of it in her case, than if she had been my sister. Many times I put to myself the questions: "What am I at? Is not this wrong? Why do I go?" But still I went.

Then, further in my excuse, my prior engagement, though carefully left unalluded to by both parties, was, in that thin population, and owing to the singular circumstances of it, perfectly well known to her and all her family. It was a matter of so much notoriety, that General Carleton, who was the Governor when I was there, when he, about fifteen years ago, did me the honour, on his return to England, to come and see me, asked, before he went away, to see my wife, of whom he had heard so much before her marriage. So that here was no deception on my part; but still I ought not to have suffered even the most distant hopes to be entertained by a person so innocent, so amiable, for whom I had so much affection, and to whose heart I had no right to give a single twinge. I ought, from the very first, to have prevented the possibility of her ever feeling pain on my account. I was young, to be sure; but I was old enough to know what was my duty in this case, and I ought, dismissing my own feelings, to have had the resolution to perform it.

The last parting came; and now came my just punishment! The time was known to everybody, and was irrevocably fixed; for I had to move with

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1784 a regiment, and the embarkation of a regiment is  
to an epoch in a thinly settled province. To describe  
1791 this parting would be too painful even at this  
distant day, and with this frost of age upon my  
head. The kind and virtuous father came forty  
miles to see me, just as I was going on board in the  
river. His looks and words I have never forgotten.  
As the vessel descended, she passed the mouth of  
that creek, which I had so often entered with de-  
light; and though England, and all that England  
contained, were before me, I lost sight of this  
creek with an aching heart.

On what trifles turn the great events in the life  
of a man! If I had received a cool letter from my  
intended wife; if I had only heard a rumour of any-  
thing from which fickleness in her might have been  
inferred; if I had but found in her any, even the  
smallest, abatement of affection: if she had but  
let go any one of the hundred strings by which she  
held my heart: if any of these, never would the  
world have heard of me. On the lonely banks of  
this branch-covered creek, which contained (she  
out of the question) everything congenial to my  
taste and dear to my heart, I, unapplauded, un-  
feared, unenvied and uncalumniated, should have  
lived and died.

Late in the year 1791, I returned to England  
with my regiment. We landed at Portsmouth on  
the 3rd of November, and on the 19th of the next  
month I obtained my discharge, after having  
served not quite eight years, and having, in that

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short space, passed through every rank, from that of private sentinel to that of Sergeant-Major, without ever once being disgraced, confined, or even reprimanded. I obtained my discharge after many efforts on the part of the commanding officer, Major Lord Edward, Fitzgerald,<sup>3</sup> and of General Frederick, the Colonel of the regiment, to prevail on me to remain (upon a promise of being specially recommended to the King, as worthy of being immediately promoted to the rank of Ensign). 1784  
to  
1791

## CHAPTER IV

1784-1791

1784 SUCH WAS MY CONDUCT DURING THE TIME  
*to* that I had the honour (and I shall always think it  
1791 a high honour) to wear a red coat, and such was  
the character, with which that coat was laid by.  
To the army, to every soldier in it, I have a bond  
of attachment quite independent of any political  
reasonings. I [was] a soldier at that time of life  
when the feelings are most ardent and when the  
strongest attachments are formed. "Once a soldier,  
always a soldier," is a maxim, the truth of which I  
need not insist on to anyone who has ever served  
in the army for any length of time, and especially,  
if the service he has seen has embraced those  
scenes and occasions where every man, first or  
last, from one cause or another, owes the preser-  
vation of his all, health and life not excepted, to  
the kindness, the generosity, the fellow-feeling of  
his comrades. ;

There was one of our sergeants, whose name was  
Smaller, and who was a Yorkshire man, who began  
learning his ABC (under my direction), and who,  
at the end of the year, was as correct a writer as I  
ever saw in my life. He was about my own age;  
he was promoted as soon as he could write and

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read; and he well deserved it, for he was more fit to command a regiment than any Colonel or Major that I ever saw. He was strong in body, but still stronger in mind. He had a capacity to dive into all subjects. Clean in his person, an early riser, punctual in all his duties, sober, good-tempered, honest, brave, and generous to the last degree. He was once with me in the dreary woods, amongst the melting snows, when I was exhausted at night-fall, and fell down, unable to go farther, just as a torrent of rain began to pour upon us. Having first torn off his shirt and rent it in the vain hope of kindling fire by the help of his pistol, he took me upon his back, carried me five miles to the first dwelling of human being, and, at the end of his journey, having previously pulled off his coat and thrown it away, he had neither shoe, nor stocking, nor gaiter left; his feet and legs were cut to pieces, and covered with blood; and the moment he had put me down and saw that I was still alive, he bursted into a flood of tears that probably saved his own life; which, however, was there saved only to be lost in Holland, under the Duke of York.<sup>1</sup>

Of this military feeling, I do not believe that any man ever possessed greater portion than myself. I like soldiers, as a class in life, better than any other description of men. Their conversation is more pleasing to me; they have generally seen more than other men; they have less of vulgar prejudice about them. Amongst soldiers, less than



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1784 amongst any other description of men, have I observed  
to served the vices of lying and hypocrisy.

1791 The object of my quitting the army, to which I was attached, was to bring certain officers to justice for having, in various ways, wronged both the public and the soldier. I was so situated as to save England thousands and thousands of pounds during the time that my regiment was stationed in New Brunswick. My vigilance was incessant; and I pursued the interest of the government at home, with as much zeal as if my life depended on the result. I would take my oath that I never saw any other man that did the same, while I was in that country, with the exception of General Carleton the Governor, and the unfortunate Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who was a really honest, conscientious, and humane man.

If my officers had been men of manifest superiority of mind, I should, perhaps, not have so soon conceived the project of bringing them, or some of them, at least, to shame and punishment for the divers flagrant breaches of the law, committed by them. The circumstance which first disgusted me, and that finally made me resolve to tear myself from a service to which my whole mind and heart were devoted, was, the abuses, the shocking abuses as to money matters, the peculation, in short, which I witnessed, and which I had, in vain, endeavoured to correct.

This project was conceived so early as the year 1787, when an affair happened, that first gave me

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a full insight into regimental justice. It was shortly 1784  
this: that the Quarter-Master, who had the issuing to  
of the men's provisions to them, kept about a 1791  
fourth part of it to himself. This, the old sergeants  
told me, had been the case for many years; and,  
they were quite astonished and terrified at the idea  
of my complaining of it. This I did, however; but,  
the reception I met with convinced me, that I  
must never make another complaint, till I got safe  
to England, and safe out of the reach of that most  
curious of courts, a court-martial.

From this time forward, I began to collect  
materials for an exposure, upon my return to  
England. I had ample opportunities for this, being  
the keeper of all the books, of every sort, in the  
regiment, and knowing the whole of its affairs  
better than any other man. But, the winter pre-  
vious to our return to England, I thought it neces-  
sary to make extracts from the books, lest the  
books themselves should be destroyed. In order  
to be able to prove that these extracts were correct,  
it was necessary that I should have a witness as to  
their being true copies. This was a very ticklish  
point. One foolish step here, could have sent me  
down to the ranks with a pair of bloody shoulders.  
I hesitated many months. At one time I had given  
the thing up. I dreamt twenty times, I daresay,  
of my papers being discovered, and of my being  
tried and flogged half to death. At last, however,  
some fresh act of injustice towards us made me set  
all danger at defiance. I opened my project to a

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1784 corporal, whose name was William Bestland, who  
to wrote in the office under me, [and] who was very  
1791 much bound to me, for my goodness to him. To  
work we went, and during a long winter, while the  
rest were boozing and snoring, we gutted no small  
part of the regimental books, rolls, and other docu-  
ments. Our way was this: to take a copy, sign it  
with our names, and clap the regimental seal to it,  
so that we might be able to swear to it, when pro-  
duced in court.

All these papers were put into a little box, which  
I myself had made for the purpose. When we came  
to Portsmouth, there was a talk of searching all  
the boxes, etc., which gave us great alarm; and  
induced us to take all the papers, put them in a  
bag, and trust them to a custom-house officer,  
who conveyed them on shore to his own house,  
when I removed them in a few days after.

Thus prepared, I, [after securing my discharge],  
went to London, and, on the 14th of January,  
1792, I wrote to the then Secretary of War, Sir  
George Yonge, stating my situation, my business  
with him, and my intentions; enclosing him a  
letter or petition from myself to the King. I waited  
from the 14th to the 24th of January, without  
receiving any answer at all, and then all I heard  
was, that he wished to see me at the War Office.  
At the War Office I was shown into an ante-  
chamber amongst numerous anxious-looking men,  
who, every time the door which led to the great  
man was opened, turned their heads that way

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with a motion as regular and as uniform as if they had been drilled to it. These people eyed me from head to foot, and, I shall never forget their look, when they saw, that I was admitted into Paradise without being detained a single moment in Purgatory. Sir George Yonge heard my story; and that was apparently all he wanted of me. I was to hear from him again in a day or two; and, after waiting for fifteen days, without hearing from him, or anyone else, upon the subject, I wrote him again, reminding him, that I had, from the first, told him, that I had no other business in London; that my stock of money was necessarily scanty; and, that to detain me in London was to ruin me. I, therefore, began to be very impatient, and, indeed, to be very suspicious, that military justice in England was pretty nearly akin to military justice in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The letter I now wrote was dated the 10th of February, to which I got an answer on the 15th, though the answer might have been written in a moment. I was informed, that it was the intention to try the accused upon only a part of the charges which I had preferred, [and,] even on those charges that were suffered to remain, the parts the most material were omitted. But, this was not all. I had all along insisted, that, unless the court-martial were held in London, I could not think of appearing at it; because, if held in a quarrelsome place like Portsmouth, the thing must be a mere mockery. In spite of this, the Judge-Advocate's letter of the

1784  
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1791

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1784 23rd of February informed me, that the court was  
to be held at Portsmouth, or Hilsa. I remon-  
1791 strated against this, and demanded that my re-  
monstrance should be laid before the King, which,  
on the 29th, the Judge-Advocate promised should  
be done by himself; but, on the 5th of March, [he]  
informed me, that he had laid my remonstrance  
before—whom, think you? Not the King, but the  
accused parties; who, of course, thought the court  
ought to assemble at Portsmouth.

Plainly seeing what was going forward, I, on  
the 7th of March, made, in a letter to Mr Pitt, a  
representation of the whole case. This letter had  
the effect of changing the place of the court-  
martial, which was now to be held in London; but,  
as to my other great ground of complaint, the  
leaving of the regimental books unsecured, it had  
no effect at all; and, it will be recollected, that  
without those books, there could be no proof pro-  
duced, without bringing forward Corporal Best-  
land, and the danger of doing that will presently  
be seen. Without these written documents no-  
thing of importance could be proved, unless the  
non-commissioned officers and men of the regiment  
could get the better of their dread of the lash; and,  
even then, they could only speak from memory.  
As the court-martial was to assemble on the 24th  
of March, I went down to Portsmouth on the 20th,  
in order to know for certain what was become of  
the books; and, I found, that they had never been  
secured at all; that they had been left in the hands

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of the accused from the 14th of January to the 1784  
very hour of trial. to

There remained, then, nothing to rest upon with 1791  
safety but our extracts, confirmed by the evidence  
of Bestland, and this I had solemnly engaged with  
him not to have recourse to, unless he was first out  
of the army; that is to say, out of the reach of the  
vindictive and bloody lash. There was a suspicion  
of his connection with me, and, therefore, they re-  
solved to keep him.

I resolved not to appear at the court-martial,  
unless the discharge of Bestland was first granted.  
Accordingly, on the 20th of March, I wrote from  
Fratton, a village near Portsmouth, to the Judge-  
Advocate, stating over again all the obstacles that  
had been thrown in my way, and concluding by  
demanding the discharge of a man, whom I should  
name, as the only condition upon which I would  
attend the court-martial. I requested him to send  
me an answer by the next day, and told him, that,  
unless such an answer was received, he and those  
to whom my repeated applications had been made,  
might do what they pleased with their court-  
martial; for, that I confidently trusted, that a few  
days would place me beyond the scope of their  
power. No answer came, and, as I had learned in  
the meanwhile, that there was a design to prose-  
cute me for seditjion, that was an additional motive  
to be quick in my movements.

As I was going down to Portsmouth, I met  
several of the sergeants coming up, together with

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1784 the music-master; and, as they had none of them  
to been in America, I wondered what they could be  
1791 going to London for; but, upon my return, I was  
told by a Captain Lane, who had been in the regi-  
ment, that they had been brought up to swear,  
that, at an entertainment given to them by me,  
before my departure from the regiment, I had  
drunk "the destruction of the House of Brun-  
swick". This was false; but, I knew that that was  
no reason why it should not be sworn by such  
persons and in such a case. I had talked pretty  
freely upon the occasion alluded to; but I had  
neither said, nor thought anything against the  
King, and, as to the House of Brunswick, I hardly  
knew what it meant. My head was filled with the  
corruptions and baseness in the army. I knew  
nothing at all about politics. Nor would any threat  
of this sort have induced me to get out of the way  
for a moment; though it certainly would if I had  
known my danger; for "glorious "Jacobinical"  
times were just then beginning. Of this, however,  
I knew nothing at all. [I was] told they would  
send me to Botany Bay; and, I now verily be-  
lieve, that, if I had remained, I should have fur-  
nished a pretty good example to those, who wished  
to correct military abuses. I did not, however,  
leave England from this motive. I could not ob-  
tain a chance of success, without exposing the  
back of my poor faithful friend Bestland. It was  
useless to appear, unless I could have tolerable  
fair play; and, besides, it seemed better to leave

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the whole set to do as they pleased, than to be made a mortified witness of what it was quite evident they had resolved to do.

1784  
to  
1791

I have good reason to believe, that my failure upon [this] occasion was, in no way, to be ascribed to Mr Pitt, who, as far as a person in so obscure and perfectly friendless a situation as I then was, could judge, was the friend of fair inquiry and of justice. [Yet] I remember, that in dining with Mr Pitt at Mr Windham's in August, 1800, the former asked me about Lord Edward Fitzgerald. We talked about him a great deal. I gave the company present (of which Mr Canning was one) an account of his conduct, while at the regiment; I spoke in very high terms of his zeal for the service, and I told Mr Pitt, that Lord Edward was the only sober and the only honest officer, I had ever known in the army. I did this for the express purpose of leading him on to talk about the court-martial; but, it was avoided. In fact, they all knew well that what I had complained of was true, and that I had been baffled in my attempts to obtain justice, only because I had neither money nor friends.

During the [same] interval of my discharge and of my departure for France, a proposition, preceded by a speech of the Secretary of War, was made, in Parliament, to augment the pay of the army. Some parts of the speech contained matter which a person, with whom I was acquainted, and to whom I had communicated my information upon such subjects, thought worthy of remark in



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1784 print. Hence arose a little pamphlet, entitled the  
to "Soldier's Friend".<sup>2</sup> As to the matter of the  
1791 pamphlet, I cannot now speak in very positive  
terms, not having read it these fifteen years; but,  
I can say that, then, I most heartily approved of  
every word of it, and that, as well as my recollec-  
tions will enable me to speak, there were some  
parts of it, of the publication of which I should  
disapprove now.

But, the reader will have the justice to re-  
collect, that this [was] in 1792; a time when the  
principles of demolishing governments were little  
known and little dreaded. Let it be considered  
that I had just arrived in England; that I was a  
perfect novice in politics, never having, to my  
recollection, read even a newspaper while abroad;  
and, let it be considered, too, that I took up the  
book of Paine<sup>3</sup> (just then published) with my mind  
full of indignation at the abuses which I myself  
had witnessed. Under such circumstances, it  
would have argued not only want of zeal, but a  
want of sincerity, and even a want of honesty, not  
to have entertained sentiments like those ex-  
pressed in the "Soldier's Friend".

Previous to my leaving England for France,  
previous to my seeing what republicanism was, I  
had not only imbibed its principles, I had not only  
been a republican, but an admirer of the writings  
of Paine. I will not be much blamed by those who  
duly reflect. Instead of blame, I am not without  
hope, that the reader will find something to com-

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mend, in a person, who, having imbibed erroneous opinions, was so soon taught, by experience, to correct them. 1784  
to  
1791

By way of episode, I had now married.<sup>4</sup> I had, in the whole world, but about 200 guineas, which was a very great deal for a person in my situation. From the moment that I had resolved to quit the army, I had also resolved to go to the United States of America, the fascinating and delusive description of which I had read in the works of Raynal.<sup>5</sup> To France I went [first] for the purpose of learning to speak the French language, having, because it was the language of the military art, studied it by book in America. To see fortified towns was another object; and how natural this was to a young man who had been studying fortification, and who had been laying down Lisle and Brissac<sup>6</sup> upon paper, need not be explained to those who have burnt with the desire of beholding in practice that which they have been enamoured of in theory. I went to France, in the spring of 1792.

## CHAPTER V

1792-1795

1792 I ARRIVED IN FRANCE IN MARCH, 1792, AND  
to continued there till the beginning of September  
1795 following, the six happiest months of my life. I  
went to that country full of all those prejudices,  
that Englishmen suck in with their mother's milk,  
against the French and against their religion: a  
few weeks convinced me that I had been deceived  
with respect to both. I met everywhere with  
civility, and even hospitality, in a degree that I  
had never been accustomed to.

I did intend to stay in France till the Spring of  
1793, as well to perfect myself in the language, as  
to pass the winter at Paris; but I perceived the  
storm gathering; I saw that a war with England  
was inevitable, and it was not difficult to foresee  
what would be the fate of Englishmen in that  
country. I wished, however, to see Paris, and had  
actually hired a coach to go thither. I was even  
on the way, when I heard, at Abbeville, that the  
King was dethroned and his guards murdered.  
This intelligence made me turn off towards Havre  
de Grace, whence I embarked for America.\*

\* Mrs Cobbett had memories of these events, which  
she communicated to her daughter Susan, who recorded

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I lived at Wilmington, a town about 20 miles from [Philadelphia]. It is generally said, and

1792  
to  
1795

them in a letter to her brother John, dated from Brighton, 30 September, 1835.

“... At one place, which they arrived at on a Sunday, they were very closely examined and made to unpack everything and show all papers, and, as the man could not understand English, he made Papa read the contents of them to him in French... the reason the man... was so particular in his examinations, was because Mama had no passport... this man chose to suspect that she was a Frenchwoman, and she would not give him an opportunity of being undeceived by speaking, for she was so insulted at his behaviour that she would not answer him when he spoke to her, and this confirmed him in his suspicions... They then went on and were not threatened, or molested much, but there was, of course, a good deal of parleying wherever they stopped. When they got to Havre de Grace, however, things seemed to have assumed a warmer appearance; the people in the streets came running to the carriage and climbed up to look in at the windows, the coachman being much frightened thereat; he begged them to put the windows down, and drove very slowly through the streets till they came to the “Municipality”, where Papa was closely questioned as to what and who he was, and where he was going and what for; but they were polite here. They stayed, Mama thinks, a fortnight at Havre de Grace, waiting for a vessel... The passage, she thinks, was eight weeks long, the name of the captain and the Grenouille, the passage was very dangerous and the Captain very diligent and skillful. The name of the vessel she does not remember, but it was on board of her that Papa looked at a map and fixed upon Wilmington as the place where he would go and settle and keep school. They went to Wilmington, but they did not keep school because they found a great many Frenchmen there... who wanted to be taught English. Papa then went regularly to the

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1792 often with much justice, that a rolling stone never  
to gathers moss; this, however, was not the case  
1795 with me; for though my rambles in France cost  
me above a hundred and ninety guineas, and  
though I was reduced to about eighteen at my  
arrival at Wilmington, I was [soon] better off than  
ever, notwithstanding my expenses in my family  
had been enormous. I must not take the merit for  
this entirely upon myself: my dear [wife] is en-  
titled to her share of it; it was perhaps owing  
entirely to her care, industry, and sweetness of  
temper.

The country was good for getting money: that  
is to say, if a person was industrious and enter-  
prising. Exactly the contrary of what I expected  
it. The land was bad—rocky—houses wretched—  
roads impassable after the least rain. Fruit in  
quantity, but good for nothing. One apple or  
peach in England or France was worth a bushel

boarding-house where they lived, and taught them, and  
they gave him a great deal of money. . . . They went to  
Philadelphia in the February of '94. . . . Mr Matthew was  
one of those French gentlemen, but he was so pleased with  
Papa's company that he would insist on living in his  
house, as well as being taught by him, and they used to go  
on together, Mama says, like you and the likes of you,  
stealing each other's bread at supper, and so on. . . . They  
continued to receive boarders for some months, but Mama  
found them disagreeable and got to dislike Wilmington,  
and Mr Matthew thought Papa might do much better. . .  
in Philadelphia. . . . so to Philadelphia they went in the  
Spring."

*The Cobbett Papers; cf. Notes.*

*to a Seat in Parliament*

of them [there]. The seasons were detestable.° All 1792  
burning or freezing. There was no Spring or to  
Autumn. The weather was so very inconstant that 1795  
you were never sure for a single hour at a time.  
The whole month of March was so hot that we  
could hardly bear our clothes, and three parts of  
the month of June there was a frost every night,  
and so cold in the daytime, that we were obliged  
to wear great-coats. The people were worthy of  
the country—a cheating, sly, roguish gang. Yet  
strangers made fortunes in spite of all this,  
particularly the English. The natives were by  
nature idle, and sought to live by cheating, while  
foreigners, being industrious, sought no other  
means than those dictated by integrity, and were  
sure to meet with encouragement even from the  
idle and roguish themselves; for, however roguish  
a man may be, he always loves to deal with an  
honest man. [The plague was at Philadelphia that  
year.] It was no plague; it was a fever of the  
country, and was by no means extraordinary  
among the Americans. In the fall of the year,  
almost every person has a spell of the fever, and  
the only way to avoid it is to quit the country.  
But this fever was not all—every month had its  
particular malady. In July, for example, at least  
one half of the people are taken with vomitings for  
several days at a time; often carrying off the  
patient and almost always children.

I began my young married days in and near  
Philadelphia. I had business to occupy the whole

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1792 of my time, Sundays and week-days, except sleep-  
to ing hours; but I used to make time to assist [my  
1795 wife] in taking care of her baby,<sup>1</sup> and in all sorts  
of things: get up, light her fire, boil her teakettle;  
carry her up warm water in cold weather, take the  
child while she dressed herself and got the break-  
fast ready, then breakfast, get her in water and  
wood for the day, then dress myself neatly, and  
sally forth to my business. The moment that was  
over I used to hasten back to her again; and I no  
more thought of spending a moment away from  
her, unless business compelled me, than I thought  
of quitting the country and going to sea. The  
thunder and lightning are tremendous in America,  
compared with what they are in England. My  
wife was, at one time, very much afraid of thunder  
and lightning; and, as is the feeling of all such  
women, and, indeed, all men too, she wanted com-  
pany, and particularly her husband, in those  
times of danger. I knew well, of course, that my  
presence would not diminish the danger; but, be  
I at what I might, if within reach of home, I used  
to quit my business and hasten to her the moment  
I perceived a thunder storm approaching. Scores  
of miles [did] I, first and last, run on this errand in  
the streets of Philadelphia! I followed the pro-  
fession of teacher of the English language to  
Frenchmen. The Frenchmen who were my scholars  
used to laugh at me exceedingly on this account;  
and sometimes, when I was making an appoint-  
ment with them, they would say, with a smile

*to a Seat in Parliament*

and a bow, "Sauve la tonnerre toujours, Monsieur Cobbett". 1792  
to

For about two or three years after I was 1795  
married, retaining some of my military manners,  
used, both in France and America, to romp most  
famously with the girls that came in my way. In  
France, there happened to be amongst our ac-  
quaintance a gay, sprightly girl, of about seven-  
teen. I was remonstrating with her, one day, on  
the facility with which she seemed to shift her  
smiles from object to object, and she, stretching  
one arm out in an upward direction, the other in a  
downward direction, raising herself upon one foot,  
leaning her body on one side, and thus throwing  
herself into a flying attitude, answered my grave  
lecture by singing, in a very sweet voice (signifi-  
cantly bowing her head, and smiling at the same  
time), the following lines from the vaudeville, in  
the play of "Figaro":

"Si l'amour a des ailles,  
N'est-ce pas pour voltiger?"

The wit, argument, and manner altogether silenced  
me. She, after I left France, married a very  
worthy man, had a large family, and has been,  
and is, a most excellent wife and mother. But that  
which does sometimes well in France [would] not  
do [in America]. Not only could no mistress pass  
for a wife; but no woman would find admission  
[in] any circle if she had had the misfortune to  
have been connected by anticipation with her



## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1792 husband, which I used to think was being starched  
to overmuch.

1795 ' One day, at Philadelphia, [when I was romping,] my wife said to me, in a very genteel manner, "Don't do that: I do not like it." That was quite enough: I had never thought on the subject before: one hair of her head was more dear to me than all the other women in the world, and this I knew that she knew; but I now saw that this was not all that she had a right to from me; I saw that she had the further claim upon me that I should abstain from everything that might induce others to believe that there was any other woman for whom, even if I were at liberty, I had any affection.

If prudery mean false modesty, it is to be despised; but if it mean modesty pushed to the utmost extent, I confess that I like it. Your "free and hearty" girls I liked very well to talk and laugh with; but never, for one moment, did it enter my mind that I could have endured a "free and hearty" girl for a wife. Skipping, capering, romping, rattling girls are very amusing, where all costs and other consequences are out of the question; and they may become sober in the Somersetshire sense of the word. But while you have no certainty of this, you have a presumptive argument on the other side. If I could not have had a young woman (and I am sure I never should have married an old one) who I was not sure possessed all the qualities expressed by the word

*to a Seat in Parliament*

sobriety, I should have remained a bachelor to the end of life. This sobriety was a title to trustworthiness. I have had all the numerous and indescribable delights of home and children and at the same time all the bachelor's freedom from domestic cares; and to this cause, far more than to any other, my readers owe those labours, which I never could have performed, if even the slightest want of confidence at home had ever once entered into my mind.

1792  
to  
1795

Till I had a second child, no servant ever entered my house, though well able to keep one; and never, in my whole life did I live in a house so clean, in such trim order, and never have I eaten or drunk, or slept, or dressed, in a manner so perfectly to my fancy, as I did then. I had a great deal of business to attend to, that took me a great part of the day from home; but whenever I could spare a minute from business, a child was in my arms. I rendered the mother's labour as light as I could; any bit of food satisfied me; when watching was necessary we shared it between us. We had a cradle, and I rocked the cradle in great part, during the time that I was writing my first work, that famous "Maître d'Anglois,"<sup>2</sup> which has long been the first book in Europe, as well as in America, for teaching of French people the English language.

[This] work was written by me in hours not employed in business, and, in great part during my share of the night watchings over a sick, and

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1792 their only child, who, after lingering many months  
to died in my arms. [For,] on the 3rd of June,  
1795 [1794, the] dear little fellow was snatched from us.  
He was just beginning to prattle and chase the  
flies about the floor with a fan. During a month,  
I seldom had my clothes off, being occupied with  
the hope of saving his life, and having to assuage  
the grief of his young and most affectionate  
mother. There were these anxieties at home, while  
my scholars were importuning me, the bookseller  
and printer bothering me, and their devils haunt-  
ing me.

[My wife having been brought to bed of a still-  
born child a short time before,] I was greatly  
afraid of fatal consequences, she not having, after  
[all] was over, had any sleep for forty-eight hours.  
All great cities, in hot countries, are, I believe, full  
of dogs; and they, in the very hot weather, keep  
up during the night, a horrible barking and fight-  
ing and howling. Upon the particular occasion to  
which I am adverting, they made a noise so terrible  
and so unremitted, that it was next to impossible  
that even a person in full health should obtain a  
minute's sleep. I was, about nine in the evening,  
sitting by the bed: "I do think", said she, "that  
I could go to sleep now, if it were not for the dogs".  
Downstairs I went, and out I sallied, in my shirt  
and trousers, and without shoes and stockings;  
and, going to a heap of stones lying beside the  
road, set to work upon the dogs, going backward  
and forward, and keeping them at two or three

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

hundred yards distance from the house. I walked thus the whole night, bare-footed, lest the noise of my shoes might possibly reach her ears; and I remember that the bricks of the causeway were, even in the night, so hot as to be disagreeable to my feet. My exertions produced the desired effect: a sleep of several hours was the consequence; and, at eight o'clock in the morning, off I went to a day's business which was to end at six in the evening. Women are all patriots of the soil; and when her neighbours used to ask my wife whether all English husbands were like hers, she boldly answered in the affirmative.

Soon after, I translated for a bookseller in Philadelphia, a book on the law of nations.<sup>3</sup> A member of Congress had given the original to the bookseller, wishing for him to publish a translation. The book was the work of a Mr Martens, a German jurist, though it was written in French. I called it "Martens' Law of Nations". The President, the Vice-President, and every member of Congress had a copy of the work, which is now to be found in most of the law-libraries in the United States. I translated it for a quarter of a dollar (thirteen pence halfpenny) a page; and, I made it a rule to earn a dollar while my wife was getting breakfast in the morning, and another dollar after I came home at night, be the hour what it might; and I earned many a dollar in this way, sitting writing in the same room where my wife and child were in bed and asleep.

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1792 This was the way we went on: this was the way  
to that we began the married life; and that which we  
1795 did with pleasure, no young couple, unendowed  
with fortune, ought to be ashamed to do.

When I first came to Philadelphia,<sup>4</sup> I was charmed with the liberty which its inhabitants seemed to enjoy. I saw pamphlets in every window, and newspapers in every hand. I was, indeed, rather surprised to find, that these pamphlets, and these newspapers, were all on one side: but, said I to myself, this must be the fault of the authors and editors. Long did I hope and expect to see something like a manly and effectual opposition, but I hoped and expected in vain. At last, it was my fate to enter the field. It is now [a long time] since I first took up the pen with an intention to write for the press on political subjects; and the occasion of my doing so is too curious in itself, as well as of too much importance as to the sequel, not to be described somewhat in detail.

[It was] at the memorable epoch of Dr Priestley's emigration to America. Newspapers were a luxury for which I had little relish, and which, if I had been ever so fond of, I had not time to enjoy. The manifestoes, therefore, of the Doctor, upon his landing in that country, and the malicious attacks upon the monarchy and the monarch of England which certain societies in America thereupon issued from the press, would, had it not been for a circumstance purely accidental, have escaped,

*to a Seat in Parliament*

probably forever, not only my animadversions, 1792  
but my knowledge of their existence. to

1795  
One of my scholars, who was a person that we call in England a Coffee-House Politician, chose, for once, to read his newspaper by way of lesson; and, it happened to be the very paper which contained the addresses presented to Dr Priestley at New York, together with his replies. My scholar, who was a sort of republican, or, at best, but half a monarchist, appeared delighted with the invectives against England, to which he was very much disposed to add. Those Englishmen who have been abroad, particularly if they have had time to make a comparison between the country they are in and that which they have left, well know how difficult it is, upon occasions such as I have been describing, to refrain from expressing their indignation and resentment; and there is not, I trust, much reason to suppose, that I should, in this respect, experience less difficulty than another. The dispute was as warm as might reasonably be expected between a Frenchman, uncommonly violent even for a Frenchman, and an Englishman not remarkable for *sang froid*; and, the result was, a declared resolution, on my part, to write and publish a pamphlet in defence of my country, which pamphlet he pledged himself to answer: his pledge was forfeited: it is known that mine was not. Thus it was that, whether for good or otherwise, I entered on the career of political writing; and, without adverting to the circumstances under

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1792 which others have entered on it, I think it will  
to not be believed that the pen was ever taker. up  
1795 from a motive more pure and laudable.

From [that] time (the summer of 1794) to the year 1800 my labours were without intermission. During that space there were published from my pen about twenty different pamphlets, the whole number of which amounted to more than half a million copies. During the three last years, a daily paper, surpassing in extent of numbers, any ever known in America, was the vehicle of my efforts; and, [by] the year 1800, I might safely have asserted, that there was not in the whole country, one single family, in which some part or the other of my writings had not been read; and in which, generally speaking, they had not produced some degree of effect favourable to the interests of my country.

The people of America, still sore from the wounds of their war against England for liberty, were so loud and enthusiastic in the cause of the French, that the far greater part of the young men, hoisted the famous tri-colour cockade; and everything seemed to indicate that the Government would be forced into a war with England in aid of the French. I took the English side; the force of my writings gave them effect; that effect was prodigious; it prevented that which both Governments greatly dreaded; peace between America and England was preserved; but the hostility excited against me produced unjust and villainous

*to a Seat in Parliament*

prosecutions; and though the main part of the 1792  
expense of one of the prosecutions was generously *to*  
defrayed by some public-spirited men in Canada, 1795  
I had to return to England in 1800 stripped of a  
fortune; leaving thousands of pounds in small debts  
due to me; leaving behind me my curses on the  
tyrannical and corrupt Government of Pennsyl-  
vania; but leaving also my blessings on some of  
the kindest friends that man ever knew.



## CHAPTER VI

1796-1800

1796 IN THE SPRING OF THE YEAR 1796, I TOOK  
*to* a house in Second Street, Philadelphia, for the  
1800 purpose of carrying on the book selling business,  
which I looked upon as being at once a means of  
getting money, and of propagating writings against  
the French. I went into my house in May, but the  
shop could not be gotten ready for some time; and,  
from one delay and another, I was prevented from  
opening till the second week in July.

Till I took this house, I had remained almost  
unknown as a writer. A few persons did, indeed,  
know that I was the person, who had assumed the  
name of Peter Porcupine, but the fact was by no  
means a matter of notoriety. The moment, how-  
ever, that I had taken the lease of a large house,  
the transaction became a topic of public conver-  
sation, and the eyes of the Democrats and the  
French, who still lorded it over the city, and who  
owed me a mutual grudge, were fixed upon me.

I thought my situation somewhat perilous. Such  
truth as I had published, no man had dared to  
utter, in the United States, since the rebellion. I  
knew that these truths had mortally offended the  
leading men amongst the Democrats, who could,

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

at any time, muster a mob quite sufficient to destroy my house, and to murder me. I had not a friend, to whom I could look with any reasonable hope of securing efficient support; and, as to the law, I had seen too much of republican justice, to expect anything but persecution from that quarter. In short, there were, in Philadelphia, about ten thousand persons, all of whom would have rejoiced to see me murdered; and there might, probably, be two thousand, who would have been very sorry for it; but not above fifty of whom would have stirred an inch to save me.

1796  
to  
1800

As the time approached for opening my shop, my friends grew more anxious for my safety. It was recommended to me, to be cautious how I exposed, at my windows, anything that might provoke the people; and, above all, not to put up any aristocratical portraits, which would certainly cause my windows to be demolished.

I saw the danger; but also saw, that I must, at once, set all danger at defiance, or live in everlasting subjection to the prejudices and caprices of the democratical mob. I resolved on the former; and, as my shop was to open on a Monday morning, I employed myself all day on Sunday, in preparing an exhibition, that I thought would put the courage and powers of my enemies to the test. I put up in my windows, which were very large, all the portraits that I had in my possession of kings, queens, princes, and nobles. I had all the English Ministry; several of the Bishops and Judges; the

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1796 most famous Admirals; and, in short, every pic-  
to ture that I thought likely to excite rage in the  
1800 enemies of Great Britain. In order to make the  
test as perfect as possible, I had put up some of  
the worthies of the Revolution, and found out fit  
companions for them. I had coupled Franklin and  
Marat together; and, in another place M'Kean  
and Ankerstrom.<sup>1</sup>

Early on the Monday morning, I took down my  
shutters. Such a sight had not been seen in Phila-  
delphia for twenty years. Never since the begin-  
ning of the rebellion, had anyone dared to hoist  
at his windows the portrait of George the Third.  
I had [also] put up a representation of Lord Howe's  
victory<sup>2</sup>, [from] the "European Magazine"; but,  
a bookseller, with whom I was acquainted, and  
who came to see how I stood it, whispered me,  
while the rabble were gazing and growling at my  
door, that he had two large representations of the  
same action. They were about four feet long and  
two wide: the things which are hawked about and  
sold at farm-houses in England, and had been  
crammed, more perhaps, by way of packing stuff  
than otherwise, into a parcel of goods that had  
been sent out from London. But the letters were  
large; the mob, ten or twenty deep, could read,  
and they did read aloud too, "Lord Howe's De-  
cisive Victory over the French Fleet", and, there-  
fore, though the price augmented from sixpence  
to two dollars, I purchased them, and put one up  
at the window. The other was sold.

*to a Seat in Parliament*

At the time when I adopted my defiance, I knew not one British subject in America besides myself, who was not afraid to own his country and his King. [Yet this print] was sold to two Englishmen, who were amongst the numbers that went to America about the years 1794 and 1795, misled by the representations of Paine and others, and being, as they frankly acknowledged to me, enemies of their country when they left it. They had mixed among the crowd, had taken the part of their country, and had proposed to maintain their words with their fists. After the quarrel had, in some degree, subsided, they, partly, perhaps, by way of defiance, came into the shop to purchase each of them a picture of Lord Howe and his victory. Finding that I had but one for sale, they would have purchased that; but, as it amounted to more money than both of them were possessed of, they went, and, in their phrase, which I shall never forget, "kicked their master", that is to say got money in advance upon their labour, which was then engaged in the digging of a cellar. Having thus obtained the two dollars, each of them took an end of the print in his hand, displayed it, and thus carried it away through the mob, who, though they still cursed, could not help giving signs of admiration.

1796  
to  
1800

It was no sooner discovered that I was Peter Porcupine, and that I had taken [an] excellent house and shop, than the French faction began to muster their forces. Several infamous publica-

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1796 tions appeared in Bache's paper, declaring me to  
to be a deserter, a felon, a thief who had fled from the  
1800 gallows, etc. Amongst my opponents with the  
pen, the most persevering and bitter were the Irish  
emigrants, and amongst these, the most able were  
Mr Casey and Mr Duane, the former of whom was  
a bookseller in Philadelphia, and the latter the  
proprietor of a newspaper published in that city.  
These gentlemen, and the Irish emigrants gener-  
ally, were distinguished amongst the most furious  
partisans of the French, and of course amongst the  
most virulent enemies of England. [But] Time,  
while it wears away life, softens our asperities,  
and, if it did not, in what a state mankind must  
soon be. When I was in America [in 1817,] I shook  
hands with Mr Casey and Mr Duane; that as our  
enmity rose out of error, it was put an end to by a  
knowledge of the truth.<sup>3</sup>

I cannot refrain from relating, though it be  
rather of a private character, a circumstance that  
took place in Philadelphia, because it is illustrative  
of my disposition. I rented my house [and shop]  
at more than £300 sterling a year of Mr John Old-  
den, of that city, who was a very rich man, a  
Quaker, having a wife, two sons, and a daughter.  
He was rather a free Quaker; liked to laugh and  
liked my gay and slap-dash conversation. He  
offered to give me the house. I refused to have it  
in spite of all he could say. He then wanted to  
give it to my wife, who also refused. Mr Oldden  
died suddenly in 1799, and his eldest son was sur-

*to a Seat in Parliament*

prised, that I did not come with the will and take the house, his father having told many persons that I was to have that house. I had rendered no service to Mr Oldden, and, therefore, did not think it just to take the property from his family. 1796  
to  
1800

From my very first outset in politics, I formed the resolution of keeping myself perfectly independent. In adherence to this resolution, I rejected, in America, many offers of great pecuniary advantage. Had I been willing to become what they call a citizen of the United States in how many ways might I have profited from it! There were no reasonable bounds, to which I might not confidently have looked forward to see my fortune extended! My perseverance in a contrary line of conduct appeared so unaccountable, upon any common principle, that the people in America, friends as well as foes, regarded me as being in the pay of the British government. I always denied the fact; but my zeal, my efforts, my sacrifices of every sort, were such that it was impossible to make men believe that I was not regularly and amply supplied with "the gold of Pitt"!

While I was making gallant and effectual stand against the French influence, our Envoy [at] Philadelphia was Sir Robert Liston, who, on the part of the Government at home, offered me, in the presence of Lord Henry Stuart, great pecuniary reward. This reward I refused. [He then] informed me, in the year 1798, I think it was, that the Ministers at home were fully sensible of the

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1796 obligations due to me from my country, and that,  
to if I would accept of nothing for myself; they  
1800 wished me to point out any of my relatives, in the  
army or elsewhere, whom they might serve. To  
which I answered, as nearly as I can recollect,  
“As to my relations, in the army, I can ask for  
no promotion for them, because I have not an  
opportunity of knowing whether such promotion  
would be consistent with the good of the service;  
and, with respect to my relations out of the army,  
a sudden elevation might, perhaps, be very far  
from contributing to their happiness, besides  
which, though it would be my duty to assist them  
by means of my earnings, I should not think it  
just in me to be instrumental in throwing them as  
a burden upon the nation”. I must suppose that  
[Sir Robert] was utterly astonished. The Govern-  
ment did nothing wrong in making the offer; for  
my services to England were so great, so manifest,  
that it would have been a criminal not to have  
made [it].

As Lord Henry Stuart was very intimate with  
Lord Folkestone (now Earl of Radnor) I daresay  
that the latter frequently heard my conduct de-  
scribed by the former; and, perhaps, to this I owe  
the unbroken friendship of the Earl of Radnor for  
now thirty years. The late Lord Henry Stuart told  
him, that when I was at Philadelphia, [carrying]  
on single-handed such a fight for my country, I  
was his criterion whereby to judge men's prin-  
ciples; that he used to put them the question,

*to a Seat in Parliament*

“How do you like Mr Cobbett’s writings?” If they applauded, he set them down as sincere friends of England: if not, if he found them even cold in their commendations, he set them down as enemies. 1796  
to  
1800

[From the other side, too, were offers made. The atheistical Bishop Talleyrand] assumed the character of a gentleman, at the same time removing to Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> Some months after his arrival, he left a message with a friend of his, requesting me to meet him at that friend’s house. Several days passed before the meeting took place. I had no business to call me that way, and therefore I did not go. At last, this modern Judas and I got seated by the same fireside. I expected that he wanted to expostulate with me on the severe treatment he had met with at my hands: I had called him an apostate, a hypocrite, and every other name of which he was deserving; I therefore leave the reader to imagine my astonishment, when I heard him begin with complimenting me on my wit and learning. He praised several of my pamphlets, the “New Year’s Gift” in particular. I did not acknowledge myself the author, of course; but yet he would insist that I was; or, at any rate, they reflected, he said, infinite honour on the author. Having carried this species of flattery as far as he judged it safe, he asked me, with a vast deal of apparent seriousness, whether I had received my education at Oxford or at Cambridge! Hitherto I had kept my countenance pretty well;



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1796 but this abominable stretch of hypocrisy, and the  
to placid mien and silver accent with which it was  
1800 pronounced, would have forced a laugh from a  
Quaker in the midst of meeting. I don't recollect  
what reply I made to him; but this I recollect  
well, I gave him to understand that I was no trout,  
and consequently not to be caught by tickling.

This information led him to something more  
solid. He began to talk about business. I taught  
English; and, as luck would have it, this was the  
very commodity that Bishop Périgord wanted. If  
I had taught any language, or sold sand or ashes,  
or pepper-pot, it would have been just the same  
to him. He knew the English language as well as  
I did; but he wanted to have dealings with me in  
some way or other. I therefore did not care to  
take him as a scholar. I told him, that, being en-  
gaged in a translation for the press, I could not  
possibly quit home. This difficulty the lame friend  
hopped over in a moment. He would very gladly  
come to my house. I cannot say but it would have  
been a great satisfaction to me to have seen the  
ci-devant Bishop of Autun come trudging through  
the dirt to receive a lesson from me; but, on the  
other hand, I did not want a French spy to take a  
survey either of my desk or my house. My price  
for teaching was six dollars a month; he offered  
me twenty; but I refused; and before I left him,  
I gave him clearly to understand that I was not  
to be purchased.

I frequently met with him in the shop of a

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French bookseller, named Moreau de St Méry,<sup>5</sup> 1796  
who had himself acted a conspicuous part in the rebellion of the famous 14th of July. One day, in  
to  
1800  
a conversation respecting Buonaparte, who was just at that time beginning his robberies and murders, I observed to Talleyrand, that, seeing the state of degradation to which the French nation was sunk, I should not be at all surprised to see even this new-fledged cut-throat finish his career by wearing the crown of the Bourbons; to which Talleyrand made the remarkable reply: "Je ne sais pas, M. Cobbett, si le scélérat portera la couronne des Bourbons; mais ce que je sais, c'est que Barras l'a bien coiffé du bonnet de Moïse". In the witticism, Talleyrand evidently alluded to that appearance on the head of Moses, which painters have generally represented by horns.

I began my editorial career with the presidency of Mr Adams, and my principal object was to render his administration all the assistance in my power. I flattered myself with the hope of accompanying him through [his] voyage, and of partaking in a trifling degree, of the glory of the enterprise; but he suddenly tacked about, and I could follow him no longer. I therefore waited for the first opportunity to haul down my sails. My Gazette, instead of being a mine of gold to me, never yielded me a farthing. Gain was never a primary object with me. The other branches of my business enabled me to support the loss. It was my intention to continue it till the month of

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1796 March, 1801; but as this intention was founded  
to entirely upon my persuasion of the public utility  
1800 of the continuation, it fell, of course, the moment  
that persuasion was removed from my mind. [I  
addressed] a Farewell Number of "Porcupine's  
Gazette" [from New York City in January of the  
year 1800, and] I congratulated myself on having  
established a paper, carried it to a circulation un-  
paralleled in extent, and preserved the circulation  
to the last number; on having, in the progress of  
this paper, uniformly supported with all my feeble  
powers, the cause of true religion, sound morality,  
good government, and real liberty.

When I determined to discontinue the publi-  
cation of "Porcupine's Gazette", I intended to  
remain, for the future, if not an unconcerned, at  
least a silent spectator of public transactions and  
political points; but the unexpected and sweeping  
result of a lawsuit decided against me, induced  
me to abandon my lounging intention. The suit to  
which I allude, was an action of slander, com-  
menced against me in the autumn of 1797, by  
Dr Benjamin Rush,<sup>6</sup> the noted bleeding physician  
of Philadelphia. It was tried on the 14th of De-  
cember, [1798,] when "the upright, enlightened,  
and impartial republican jury" assessed, as dam-  
ages, five thousand dollars; a sum surpassing the  
aggregate amount of all the damages assessed for  
all the torts of this kind, ever sued for in [the  
United States] from their first settlement to the  
time of the trial. To the five thousand dollars must

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be added, the costs of the suit, the loss incurred by the interruption in collecting debts in Pennsylvania, and by the sacrifice of property taken in execution, and sold by the Sheriff in public auction in Philadelphia, where a great number of books in sheets (among which was a part of a new edition of "Porcupine's Works") were sold, or rather, given away, as waste paper; so that, the total of what was wrested away from me by Rush, fell little short of eight thousand dollars.

1796  
to  
1800

To say that I did not feel this stroke, and very sensibly too, would be a great affectation; but, to repine at it would have been folly, and to have sunk under it cowardice. I knew an Englishman in the Royal Province of New Brunswick, who had a very valuable house, which was, I believe, at that time, nearly his all, burnt to the ground. He was out of town when the fire broke out, and happened to come home just after it had exhausted itself. He came very leisurely up to the spot, stood about five minutes looking steadily at the rubbish, and then, stripping off his coat, "Here goes", said he, "to earn another!" and immediately went to work, raking the spikes and bits of iron out of the ashes. This noble-spirited man I had the honour to call my friend; and if ever this page meet his eye, he will have the satisfaction to see, that, though it was not possible for me to follow, I, at least, remembered his example.

We came home [to England] from New York, I, my wife, and two little children, in the post-office

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1796 packet, for which I paid very highly. Stopping at  
to Halifax, I was very graciously received by the  
1800 Duke of Kent, then commander-in-chief in the  
province of Nova Scotia. Arrived at Falmouth, I  
was most kindly lodged and entertained by the  
collector of customs. For my fame had, even then,  
spread very widely amongst all persons connected  
with the Government. Arrived in London (July,  
1800) I took a hired lodging, and deliberated what  
I should do with my slender means, amounting to  
only about £500, the proceeds of the sale of goods  
and books at New York.

That I was most unjustly and basely treated in  
the American States, and by two of the Govern-  
ments of that country, is a fact pretty well known  
to every person, who reads or hears much about  
America. With the exception of the Quakers of  
Pennsylvania, many other individuals in that  
State, and the people of New England, I hate the  
United States and all their mean and hypocritical  
system of rule.

I saw the defenders of America holding forth  
the United States as the only free and virtuous  
country in the world. It, therefore, became me to  
show, that the government of America was, in  
fact, one of the very worst in the world, the most  
profligately dishonest that I have ever seen or  
heard described. I say, that a judge was detected,  
in Philadelphia, stealing bank-notes out of the  
till in a shop; was afterwards driven from the  
bench by the shopkeeper's holding up and shak-

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ing his fist at him; and that no public proceedings, and no public expressions of indignation, were the consequence. 1796  
to  
1800

I lived, first and last, seven or eight years within a few hundred yards of the Court of St James. I had my ears and eyes open as well as other people, and was not much prone to give the best interpretation to acts of baseness and corruption; and I declare, that, in the whole of [those] years, I never saw and heard of so much place-hunting, profit-hunting, political intrigue, bargaining about jobs and bills; in short, no such low, filthy, odious, political corruption, as I had before my eyes, and in my ears, in one single fortnight while I was at Harrisburgh, the seat of the government of Pennsylvania. London police-runners, select vestrymen of petty parishes in England, appeared gentlemen to my recollection, during my stay at Harrisburgh.

I am, [at the end of my life,] no republican in principle, any more than I am in law and allegiance. I hold, that this, which we have [in England,] is the best sort of government in the world. I hold that a government of king, lords, and commons, the last of which chosen by all men, who are of full age, of sound mind, and untainted by indelible crime, is the best of governments. I lived eight years under the republican government of Pennsylvania; and I declare, that I believe that to have been the most corrupt and tyrannical government that the world ever knew;

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1796 added to which, were the lowness, the dirtiness  
to of the villainy, the vulgarity, the disregard of all  
1800 sense of morality and of honour, making the whole  
thing so disgusting, as to drive an Englishman  
half mad at the thought of ever seeing his country  
subjected to such rulers. • •

I must forget the votes in the legislature bought by losing a game at cards at a tavern; I must forget the great game which the Bank of Philadelphia lost, in [a] room of borrowed light in the centre of the tavern, where the card-playing was going on day and night, Sundays not excepted, during the whole of [the] session. I must forget the court-house at Harrisburgh, and the judge, with a twisted silk handkerchief around his neck, and a quid of tobacco in his cheek. I must forget that dirty-faced and unshaven jury, sitting with their hats on, talking over the back of the box to the parties or their friends, and having glasses of grog handed to them to drink in the box; I must forget all these things, and a great many others, before I can begin to think that kings and lords are the worst people in the world. •

The Americans, under pretences the most false, by the violent mockery of judicial proceedings, by openly avowed and boasted-of perjury, robbed me of earnings, left me to begin anew with a family dependent solely upon my exertions, and cruelly persecuted several of my friends. For the sake of these friends more than for my own sake I hate the unprincipled nation.

*to a Seat in Parliament*

[Yet this applies only to officials and their political toadies: the people are good.] I lived in Philadelphia with every disposition to find fault with everything that was amiss. I never heard of any person, except in one instance, being tried for his life or her life; I never heard of a murder, a highway robbery, or of a house being broken open. I never heard of an execution of death on any person, except of three men hanged on the banks of the Delaware, for piracy and murder. These men were foreigners, and such was the horror of an execution, even in such a case, that the executioner was obliged to be disguised in such a way, that it was impossible that anyone should recognize either his person or features; being brought to the spot, in carriage, under an escort of constables, and taken away, in a similar manner, so as to make it impossible for him to become publicly known. Philadelphia, at the time I speak of, contained about 70,000 inhabitants.

1796  
to  
1800

[In England we had to] have laws to guard our turnip fields from robbery, and very necessary they are; for without them there is no man, in any part of the country, who could depend on having the use of his crop even of that coarse and bulky article. To steal corn out of a field, after it was cut, was punished with death by our laws; and if we had fields of Indian Corn, which is a delightful food for several weeks before it be ripe, I cannot form an idea of the means that would be necessary to preserve it from being carried away. As to



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1796 poultry, no man in England has the smallest ex-  
to pectation of being able ever to taste what he  
1800 raises, unless he carefully locks it up in the night,  
and has dogs to guard the approaches to the hen-  
roost. In America, at within ten or twelve miles  
of Philadelphia, it is the common practice of the  
farmers to turn the flocks of turkeys into the  
woods, in the latter end of August, there to re-  
main until towards winter, when they return half  
fat. A farmer in England would no more think of  
doing this, than he would think of depositing his  
purse in any of the public foot-paths across his  
fields. In order to preserve their fences, the  
farmers sometimes resorted to this expedient:  
they bored holes in the stoutest of their stakes,  
which sustained their hedges; put gunpowder in  
these holes; then drove in a piece of wood very  
firmly upon the powder; so that the stolen hedge,  
in place of performing its office of boiling the  
kettle, dashed it and all around it to pieces. This  
mode of preserving fences I first heard of at  
Alresford, a town at about twelve miles distance  
from Botley, [where I at one time farmed;] and  
although it certainly does appear at first sight, a  
very cruel one; what was a man to do? The thieves  
were so expert as to set detection at defiance.

## CHAPTER VII

1800—1805

\* • \* \* \*

ARRIVED IN LONDON, ALL WHO KNEW THE 1800  
history of my exploits in America, supposed as a to  
matter of course, that showers of gold were about 1805  
to fall upon me. Many persons will recollect, that,  
in 1803, the late Mr Windham said in the House  
of Commons,<sup>1</sup> that I, for my services in America,  
“merited a statue of gold”. In a few days after  
my arrival, I was, by him, who was then Secretary  
of War, invited to dine at his house, with a party,  
of whom Pitt and Canning were two. I was, of  
course, very proud of this invitation: and I felt  
more than ever disposed to use my talents in sup-  
port of the system as it was then going on; which  
stood in real need of support, for Buonaparte was  
making fearful progress; and I resolved in my  
mind to set up a daily paper.

While, however, I was thinking about this,  
Mr George Hammond, the Under Secretary of  
State for Foreign Affairs (Lord Grenville being  
the Secretary) sent for me to his office, and made  
me an offer of a Government paper. The Govern-  
ment had two, “The True Briton” and “The  
Sun”, the former a morning and the latter an  
evening paper. They were their property, office,

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1800 types, lease of houses, and all; and the former was  
to offered to me as a gift, with all belonging to it.

1805 My refusal of Sir Robert Liston's offer had convinced them, that to offer money was of no use. I refused the offer, though worth several thousand pounds. From that moment, all belonging to the Government looked on me with great suspicion.

When I returned to England, after an absence from the country parts of it, of sixteen years, the trees, the hedges, even the parks and woods, seemed so small! It made me laugh to hear little gutters, that I could jump over, called Rivers! The Thames was but a "Creek"! But, when, in about a month after my arrival in London, I went to Farnham, the place of my birth, what was my surprise! Everything had become so pitifully small! I had to cross in my post-chaise, the long and dreary heath of Bagshot. Then, at the end of it, to mount a hill, called Hungry Hill; and from that hill I knew that I should look down into the beautiful and fertile vale of Farnham. My heart fluttered with impatience, mixed with a sort of fear, to see all the scenes of my childhood; for I had learnt before, the death of my father and mother. There is a hill, not far from the town, called Crooksbury Hill, which rises up out of a flat, in the form of a cone, and is planted with Scotch fir trees. Here I used to take the eggs and young ones of crows and magpies. This hill was a famous one in the neighbourhood. It served as the superlative degree of height. "As high as

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Crooksbury Hill" meant, with us, the utmost degree of height. Therefore, the first object that my eyes sought was this hill. I would not believe my eyes! Literally speaking, I for a moment, thought the famous hill removed, and a little heap put in its stead; for I had seen in New Brunswick, a single rock, or hill of solid rock, ten times as big, and four or five times as high! The post-boy, going downhill, and not a bad road, whisked me, in a few minutes to the Bush Inn, from the garden of which I could see the prodigious sandhill, where I had begun my gardening works. What a nothing! But now came rushing into my mind, all at once, my pretty little garden, my little blue smock-frock, my little nailed shoes, my pretty pigeons that I used to feed out of my hands, the last kind words and tears of my gentle and tenderhearted and affectionate mother! I hastened back into the room! If I had looked a moment longer, I should have dropped. When I came to reflect, what a change! I looked down at my dress. What a change! What scenes I had gone through! How altered my statè! I had dined the day before at a secretary of state's in company with Mr Pitt, and had been waited upon by men in gaudy liveries! I had had nobody to assist me in the world. No teachers of any sort. Nobody to shelter me from the consequences of bad, and no one to counsel me to good, behaviour. I felt proud. The distinctions of rank, birth, and wealth, all became nothing in my eyes; and from that moment (less

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1800 than a month after my arrival in England) I resolved never to bend before them.

1805 At the time of my return, the great government writers and political agents were<sup>2</sup> John Reeves, who had been chairman of the "Loyal Association against Republicans and Levellers"; John Bowles; John Gifford; William Gifford; Sir Frederic Eden; the Rev. Mr Ireland, now dean of Westminster; the Rev. John Brand; the Rev. Herbert Marsh, now Bishop of Peterborough; Mallet du Pan; Sir Francis D'Ivernois; and Nicholas Vansittart. These were all pamphlet writers, supporting Pitt through thick and thin. They, looking upon me as a fellow-labourer, had all sent their pamphlets to me at Philadelphia; and all of them, except Marsh, Vansittart, and the two Frenchmen, had written me laudatory letters. All but the Parsons called themselves 'Squires in the title-pages of their pamphlets. Look at me now: I had been bred up with a smock-frock upon my back; that frock I had exchanged for a "soldier's coat"; I had been out of England almost the whole of my time, from the age of sixteen; we used to give, in those times, the name of 'Squire to none but gentlemen of great landed estates, keeping their carriages, and so forth: look at me, then, in whose mind my boyish idea of a 'squire had been carried about the world with me: look at me, I say, with letters from four 'squires and from reverends on my table; and wonder not that my head was half turned! Only think of me (who just

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

about twelve years before, was clumping about with nailed shoes on my feet) {and] wonder that I did not lose my senses! And if I had remained in America, God knows what might have happened. 1800  
to  
1805

Luckily I came to England, and that steadied my head pretty quickly. To my utter astonishment and confusion I found all my 'Squires and Reverends and my Baronet too; all, in one way or other dependants on the Government; and, out of the public purse, profiting from their pamphlets. Hey! Dear! as the Lancashire men say: I thought it would have broken my heart!

Of all these men, Reeves and William Gifford were the only ones of talent. The former was a really learned lawyer, and, politics aside, as good a man as ever lived. A clever man; a head as clear as spring water; considerate, mild, humane; made by nature to be an English judge. I did not break with him on account of politics. We said nothing about them for years. I always had the greatest regard for him: and there he now is in the grave, leaving, the newspapers say, two hundred thousand pounds, without hardly a soul knowing that there ever was such a man! The fate of William Gifford was much about the same thing. Amongst the first things that Reeves ever said to me was: "I tell you what, Cobbett, we have only two ways here; we must either kiss their —, or kick them: and you must make your choice at once". William Gifford had more asperity in his temper, and was less resigned. He despised Pitt and Canning and

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1800 the whole crew; but he loved ease, was timid; he  
to was their slave all his life, and all his life had to  
1805 endure a conflict between his pecuniary interest  
and his conscience.

As to the rest of my 'squires and other dignified pamphleteers, they were a low, talentless, place and pension-hunting crew; and I was so disgusted with the discoveries that I had made, that I trembled at the thought of falling into the ranks with them. Love of ease was not in me; the very idea of becoming rich had not entered into my mind; and my horror at the thought of selling my talents for money, and of plundering the country with the help of the means that God had given me wherewith to assist in supporting its character, filled me with horror not to be expressed.

[For the parsons, this will show what I learnt. An] Act provid'd that anyone might lay an information *qui tam* against a non-resident parson; and a gentleman, whose name was Williams, who was resolv'd to put the law in force, laid informations against great numbers; brought them into the court of King's Bench; obtained convictions upon some, and was proceeding with the rest. Whoever has seen a shot fired into a rookery in the month of June, when the young rooks are just beginning to flutter from the nest; whoever has heard the cawing, the sort of half-squalling, and seen the fluttering and dashing about of the old ones among the boughs; whoever has witnessed this uproar amongst these feathered incumbents

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of the tops of the trees, may form some faint idea 1800  
of the bustle among the black-coats and bush-<sup>to</sup>  
wigs, at the appearance of this bundle of *qui-tam* 1805  
actions; but no other man can have even a faint  
idea of their confusion. I had a very fair oppor-  
tunity of hearing the cawings of these clerical  
incumbents. I well remember breakfasting with  
Dr Rennel (now Dean of Winchester), he being  
then Master of the Temple; and I remember that  
he and his wife (daughter of Judge Blackstone)  
entertained me with most strenuous efforts to ex-  
cite my indignation against the men who had laid  
*qui-tam* informations. I, who understood no more  
of this matter than if I had been in China, had it  
all explained to me very patiently by the Doctor,  
and of course thought that the Doctor must be  
right, yet, somehow or other, I perceived that the  
parsons had been in fault; and my doubts were  
greatly augmented by the violent railing of the  
Doctor against the informer. That which took  
place in the Temple, [took] place everywhere.  
Jacobin, Leveller, Infidel, Atheist, Traitor, were  
heard, even in the streets, poured out against this  
Mr Williams. After a little while, I asked a parson  
one day, why they railed so against this man; why  
they had not resided; and how they came to think  
of anything else than residing upon their livings;  
upon which he told me that I was as bad as the  
informer himself. This was a little too much, and  
I, in my own mind, began to side with the in-  
former, especially when I found that this parson



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1800 had one living in Suffolk, and one living in Surrey,  
to , and that he seldom showed his face at either of  
1805 them.

It was the custom in those glorious times of Pitt and Paper, to give to the literary partisans of the Government what were called "slices" of a loan. For instance, Moses was the loan-monger; and, as the scrip, as it used to be called was always directly at a premium, a bargain was always made with the loan-monger that he should admit certain favourites of the government to have a certain portion of the scrip, at the same price that he gave for it; I was offered such portion of scrip, which, as I was told, would put a hundred pounds or two into my pocket, at once. I was frightened at the idea of becoming responsible for the immense sum, upon which this would be the profit. But I soon found that the scrip was never even to be shown to me, and that I merely had to pocket the amount of the premium. I positively refused to have anything to do with the matter, for which I got heartily laughed at. But this was of great utility to me; it opened my eyes with regard to the nature of these transactions; it set me to work to understand all about the debt and the funds and the scrip and the stock and everything belonging to it. At every step I found the thing more and more black, and more and more execrable, and it soon brought my mind to a conclusion, that the system was what the accursed thing was in the camp of the Israelites,<sup>3</sup> and that the nation never could be

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happy again until it was got rid of; in which 1800  
opinion I have remained from that day to this. • to

I set out as a sort of self-dependent politician. 1805  
My opinions were my own. I dashed at all prejudices, I scorned to follow anybody in matter of opinion. Before my time, every writer of talent enlisted himself under the banners of one party, or one minister, or other. I stood free from all such connections; and, therefore, though admired by many, I was looked upon with an evil eye by all. All had been used to see men of no rank glad to receive the approbation of men of rank. All had been used to see talent crouch to power. All were, therefore, offended at my presumption, as they deemed it. My great success as a writer; the great admiration which my writings frequently excited; the effect on the public mind which they frequently produced: these were much more than sufficient to draw down on me the mortal hatred of the "rascals that write".

[I set up a daily paper.] My undertaking was my own; it was begun without the aid, without the advice, and even without the knowledge of any person, either directly or indirectly connected with the Ministry. "The Porcupine" never was in America, nor was it ever in England, the blind instrument of party. In the days of youth and ignorance, I had been led to believe that comfort, freedom, and virtue, were exclusively the lot of Republicans. A very short trial had convinced me of my error. During an eight years' absence

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1800 from my country, I was not an unconcerned  
to spectator of her perils, nor did I listen in silence  
1805 to the slanders of her enemies. Once more re-  
turned, I felt an irresistible desire to communicate  
to my countrymen the fruit of my experience.

[It] surpassed expectations. [It] commenced at  
a very short notice, with 700 orders, and, in the  
short period of five weeks, gradually rose to up-  
wards of 1500. "The Porcupine" could not boast  
of being seen in the numerous pot-houses of  
[London]; but had the superior advantage of being  
generally read by persons of property, rank, and  
respectability.

[At the same time] I formed a partnership [in  
the bookselling business] with Mr John Morgan,  
of Philadelphia,<sup>4</sup> to whom [I had] been long at-  
tached by a friendship founded in a concurrence  
in political principles, and on a similarity of con-  
duct at a time when few Englishmen were to be  
found loyal and bold enough openly to defend the  
character of their King and Country. On the  
success of this business [I rested my] principle  
hope of pecuniary gain.

I had no intention to range myself in a syste-  
matic opposition to His Majesty's Ministers, or to  
their measures. The first object was to contribute  
my mite toward the support of the authority of  
that Sovereign, whom God had commanded me  
to honour and obey. The uniform intention of my  
writings was, and is, to counteract the effects of  
the enemies of monarchy in general, and of the

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monarchy of England in particular, under what-  
ever disguise those enemies have appeared; to check  
the spirit and oppose the progress of levelling  
innovation, whether proceeding from clubs of  
Jacobins, companies of traders, synagogues of  
saints, or boards of government; to cherish an ad-  
herence to long-tried principles, an affection for  
ancient families and ancient establishments.

1800  
to  
1805

[But many things led me into an opposition.]  
The ancient nobility and gentry of the kingdom  
had been thrown out of public employment: a  
race of merchants and manufacturers, and bankers  
and loan-jobbers and contractors had usurped  
their place. Good honest men, plain men, men in  
the middle classes of life, as Mr Wilberforce said,  
may be excellent judges of public measures; but,  
unfortunately, in searching after these men, we  
went too far, and took them out of the lower classes  
of life. Who was it that stirred up these leas? It  
was Mr Pitt himself. [Another thing was the fund-  
ing system. I agreed with] Lord Darnley, that,  
“were all the Jew-brokers become bankrupt, and  
all three-per-cent mongers no more, there would  
still be a country to fight for”! Woeful experi-  
ence [showed that] the funds were [not] a criterion  
of the national spirit. Generally speaking, the  
great evil of a national debt, of a great accumula-  
tion of personal property of any sort [is that] the  
holders of such property are ever upon the rack  
to increase its immediate value. Hence the sub-  
serviency of statesmen to the views of money-

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1800 lenders. The funding system was eating the heart  
to out of the nobility; stifling every high and honour-  
1805 able feeling. It was engaged in a desperate contest  
against the aristocracy and monarchy of England,  
and this contest must finally terminate in the de-  
struction of one or the other.

[Mr Pitt had a] partiality for young and new men, for persons of his own creation, to the almost total exclusion of the old nobility and gentry. This upstart system was adhered to from the first moment of his administration to the last: he never voluntarily and cordially gave the hand to anything great, whether of birth, character, or talent.

[I naturally opposed the Preliminaries of the Peace of Amiens in 1801.]<sup>5</sup> From the scenes of violence and outrage, which had taken place in some parts of the town, not far [from my shop] in Pall Mall, I had reason to expect, that, on the arrival of the Ratification of the Preliminaries, my dwelling-house there, as well as my printing-office in Southampton Street, would be attacked, because my sentiments respecting these Preliminaries were publicly known. It happened precisely as I had expected: about eight o'clock in the evening, my dwelling-house was attacked by an innumerable mob, all my windows were broken, and when this was done, the villains were preparing to break into my shop. The attack continued at intervals, till past one o'clock. During the whole of this time, not a constable nor peace officer of any description made his appearance;

nor was the smallest interruption given to the 1800  
proceedings of this ignorant and brutal mob, who *to*  
were thus celebrating the Peace. "The Porcu- 1805  
pine" office experienced a similar fate.

[With the signing of the Peace in a few months' time, this scene was repeated.] In the same degree that I perceived the illumination on this [occasion] was to be compulsory, I became resolved not to submit to the degradation, and, therefore, it was with great mortification, that, on the evening before the Proclamation, I saw my wife actually confined in that situation, which, above all others, requires comfort and tranquillity. I wrote immediately to Lord Pelham, informed him of this untoward circumstance, but, at the same time, expressed my resolution not to illuminate my house. His Lordship assured me that he had given orders to protect from insolence, my family, and my premises.

I began to grow apprehensive of the consequences of resistance. To hazard the life of her, who had been my companion and support through all the storms I had endured; to make this sacrifice was no longer to be thought of, and I had made up my mind to yield, when she bravely determined to be removed to the house of a friend, rather than her husband should submit to the mandates of a base and hireling mob. A private individual may, with propriety, yield to the torrent, and subject himself to the imputation of openly approving what he secretly condemns. But

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1800 the man who aspires to the honours of attracting  
to the attention, and influencing the opinions of  
1805 others, must submit his conduct to the guidance of  
a different principle. His ease and comfort [must]  
never be consulted at the expense of his consistency; he must never be seduced by persuasion, allured by promises, nor intimidated by threats, to swerve, in the smallest degree, from the straight line of duty.

[My wife's] removal had not taken place many hours before I had reason to congratulate myself upon it. A numerous and boisterous rabble, coming from Cockspur Street, began to assault the house, at about half past nine o'clock. The Bow Street Magistrate with his men, used their utmost exertions to prevent violence, but in vain. The attack continued, with more or less fury, for about an hour and a half, during which time a party of horse-guards were called in to the aid of the civil power. Great part of the windows were broken; the sash frames of the ground floor almost entirely demolished; the panels of the window shutters were dashed in; the door nearly forced open; and much other damage done to several parts of the house.

[With such troubles, and since] I knew nothing of business which demanded thousands in place of a few hundreds [of pounds], my daily paper was soon gone,<sup>6</sup> and with it more than all that I possessed in the money way. I lost about £450, which was enough, in all conscience, to reward me for all

my exertions, dangers, and losses in America. The light was extinguished completely. One half of the [public] papers were devoted to France, and the other half to the Ministry. I had done all I could do without exposing my family to beggary. 1800  
to  
1805

I had not the means, fairly my own, of establishing a [new work]. The risk of a beginning was more than I dared to encounter; was more than I should have been justified in encountering. If I had not been aided by a private subscription, set on foot by Mr Windham and the good Dr Lawrence, gentlemen conspicuous in what was then called the New Opposition,<sup>7</sup> [the now] famous "Register" never could have been begun. I should explicitly state in what light I viewed the proposed enterprise. I had sunk about £450 in "The Porcupine". The remainder of my capital was joined to that of my partner; Mr Morgan, who, soon after our partnership was formed, had returned to the United States of America, with many of the towns of which we carried on a sort of mercantile trade of considerable magnitude, and not contemptible in point of profit. From that trade I could not withdraw any considerable sum. [Nor could] I think of setting on foot any sort of subscription, or collection, of which my emolument should be regarded as the object. I disclaimed all desire to derive pecuniary advantage from the proposed undertaking, and all idea of personal obligation towards anyone who [might have thought] proper to contribute toward it. I



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1800 was willing; even anxiously desirous, to conduct  
to the publication; but, that desire, great as it was,  
1805 would not suffer me to do, or to accept of, any-  
thing, that should, in the smallest degree, work  
a forfeiture of that independence, to preserve  
which, I had all my life time, practised, and I still  
do practise, industry and economy to their utmost  
extent. Thus the foundation of "The Register"  
was laid; being, I trust it will be thought, a foun-  
dation as fair and as honourable as any of which  
the mind of man can possibly form an idea. It  
was building upon a rock; and the house has  
stood, accordingly, in spite of the winds and the  
floods. [In a year,] there were sold weekly, of this  
work, upon an average, in the United Kingdom  
alone, more than two thousand numbers, an in-  
stance of success unparalleled in the history of  
periodical literature.

Indulging, as I [did,] and as I yet do, the hope  
of being, for a few years, at least, now and then  
remembered as one of those, whom the spirit-  
stirring circumstances of those awful times drew  
forth from their native obscurity, I never ceased  
anxiously to desire, that the events, amidst which  
I had lived, and in which I had taken so deep an  
interest, might be handed down to posterity un-  
disfigured by falsehood. Actuated by this desire,  
I bent my mind on securing a faithful record of  
these events. [I published "The Political Reg-  
ister", "The Parliamentary Debates", "The  
Spirit of the Public Journals", "The State Trials",

“The Parliamentary History”]; and it appeared 1800  
to me, that in possession of {these} works, the • to  
politician and the historian [would] possess every 1805  
help afforded to them by the press relative to the  
feelings, opinions, and the facts of the times. If  
popular delusion and popular baseness, fed by the  
corruptions of the commercial system, should con-  
trive to triumph till the very names of liberty and  
honour shall be expunged from the English lan-  
guage, and till every man be brought to lend his  
hand to the muzzling of his neighbour, I shall still  
have the satisfaction to reflect, that, on my part,  
no effort has been wanting to prevent this con-  
summation of national infamy.

[My opinions were strengthened by my ex-  
perience of the changes undergoing in the nation.]  
I liked not the never-ending recurrence to Acts of  
Parliament. Something must be left and some-  
thing ought to be left, to the sense and reason and  
morality and religion of the people. There were a  
set of “well-meaning” men in the country, who  
would have passed laws for the regulating and re-  
straining of every feeling of the human breast,  
and every motion of the human frame: they would  
have bound us down, hair by hair, as the Lilli-  
putians did Gulliver. Instead of retrenching the  
enormous sinecures and pensions; instead of en-  
deavouring to lessen taxes, which were the cause,  
and the sole cause, of the fearful and deplorable  
pauperism, instead of measures of this sort, [they]  
proposed schools and badges for the poor. [They

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1800 were hostile] to rural and athletic sports;<sup>8</sup> to those  
to "sports which string the nerves and strengthen the  
1805 frame, which excite an emulation in deeds of  
hardihood and valour, and which imperceptibly  
instil honour, generosity, and a love of glory. Men  
thus formed are unfit for the puritanical school;  
therefore it was, that the sect were incessantly  
labouring to eradicate, fibre by fibre, the last poor  
remains of English manners. Their pretexts were  
plausible: gentleness and humanity were the cant  
of the day. Instead of preserving those assem-  
blages and those sports, in which the nobleman  
mixed with his peasants, which made the poor  
man proud of his inferiority, and created in his  
breast a personal affection for his lord, too many  
of the rulers of this land were hunting the common  
people from every scene of diversion, and driving  
them to a Club or a Conventicle, at the former of  
which they sucked in the delicious rudiments of  
earthly equality, at the latter, the no less delicious  
doctrine, that there was no lawful king but King  
Jesus.

[William Wilberforce,] with talents, which in  
spite of twenty years cultivation, still remained  
far beneath mediocrity; with an abundant stock  
of that presumption of which a conceit of extra-  
ordinary purity was at once the cause and the  
effect: all at once started forth, a puritan in re-  
ligion and in law, a reformer of the church and the  
parliament. [Yet,] the full force of [his] philan-  
thropy [never moved] in behalf of the more than

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

a million paupers in existence in England. Yes, in 1800  
England! English men and women and children! • to  
One eighth of our whole population! But they 1805  
were not slaves. Say, rather, they were not black;  
a thing which they might, seeing the preference  
which was given to that colour, have well regarded  
as extremely unfortunate. The politics of the whole  
sect of the Methodists were very bad. Never was  
anything done by them, which bespoke an attach-  
ment to public liberty. “Their kingdom”, they  
told us, “was not of this world”; but they did,  
nevertheless, not neglect the good things of it;  
and, some of them, were to be found amongst the  
rankest jobbers in the Country. Indeed, it was  
well known, that that set of politicians, ironically  
called the Saints, were the main prop of the Pitt  
System; it was well known, that under the garb of  
sanctity, they aided and abetted in all the worst  
things that were done. The political history of the  
Saints, would exhibit a series of the most infamous  
intrigues and most rapacious plunder, that, per-  
haps, ever was heard of in the world. They were  
never found wanting at any dirty job; and in-  
variably lent their aid in those acts, which were  
the most inimical to the liberty of England.

[On the other hand was the Pitt System of  
government, with all its debasing effects.] The  
tendency of [his] funding and taxing system was  
to draw the produce of labour into unnatural  
channels, into the hands of upstart cormorants,  
and to deal it back again in driblets, under the

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1800 name of relief, or of charity, just to support the  
to life of those from whose pores it had been drained.

1805 "Well", some overgorged upstart [would] say,  
"and what matter is it, so they are supported,  
whence the support comes?" The matter was this,  
that the labourers were humbled, debased, and  
enslaved. And thus was the nation debased; thus,  
without any direct abolition of the liberties of the  
common people, those liberties were being de-  
stroyed.

When you had restrained your surprise, and  
could hardly restrain your indignation, at seeing  
a broker, a contractor, a placeman, or speculator  
of any description, start all at once from the dung-  
hill to a coach and four, you were told that his  
rise was a proof of his merit. For my part, I  
generally drew an exactly opposite conclusion.

[In consequence of these opinions publicly ex-  
pressed, the Ministers] attempted to establish no  
less than six periodical papers for the express  
and openly avowed purpose of destroying "The  
Register", all of which papers, in due succession,  
perished, not from want of funds but for want of  
readers. To obtain success for these publications,  
no expense, no device was spared; advertisements  
and handbills, announcing a determination to  
"detect and expose Cobbett" were published in  
numbers far exceeding those of the several works  
to which they related. The wretches published a  
thing which they pretended was a true account of  
[the] Court-Martial, in which I was concerned, at

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the time of my leaving the army. They sent 1800  
hundreds and thousands of copies into Hamp- • to  
shire, [where my farm was.] All the gentlemen 1805  
received them for nothing. The post-office at  
Winchester charged only a penny for their trans-  
mission, for instance. The robbers, as they came  
down from London in their carriages, brought  
with them whole bales, which they tossed out to  
all whom they met or overtook on the road. A  
landau full of he and she speculators passed through  
Alton, tossing out these pamphlets as they went.  
The thing was put into all the Inns, and other  
public places, particularly at Winchester, where  
it would certainly have been put into the churches,  
had they been places of public resort.

[In 1806, I announced my intention to stand  
for the borough of Honiton. My expressed prin-  
ciples] were the necessity for a strong front against  
bribery; never to touch the public money either  
by [my] own hands, or by those of relatives. All  
professions, short of this, I accounted as nothing.

Before I set off from London, having fixed  
upon the hour of my departure on Friday morn-  
ing the 6th [of June], I met Mr Johnstone (Lord  
Cochrane's uncle), and asked him if he had any  
news of his nephew, of whose recent gallant  
conduct the newspapers had just informed us.  
Mr Johnstone said, that he was then going to the  
Admiralty, in order to get him leave of absence to  
come part of the way [from Plymouth] to London  
to meet him upon some business; whereupon I

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1800 observed, that as I was going to Honiton, he might  
to as well go with me. Mr Johnstone accepted of my  
1805 offer, and we set off accordingly at three o'clock  
on Friday. We arrived at Honiton on Saturday,  
and, on the same day, Mr Johnstone received a  
letter from Lord Cochrane informing him that his  
Lordship could not leave Plymouth just then.  
But, on Sunday, while we were at dinner, there  
came an express from Lord Cochrane, bearing a  
letter for me, informing me, that his Lordship,  
having read my address to the people of Honiton  
in the London newspapers, and having perceived  
that I had resolved to stand myself merely be-  
cause I could find no other independent man, he  
had determined to accept of my general invita-  
tion, and that he was actually on his way (dating  
his letter from Exeter) to put his purpose in ex-  
ecution. In an hour afterward, having stopped at  
Exeter to provide lawyers, his Lordship arrived.  
I declined proceeding to the poll.

Now, as to the state of this borough, who shall describe it? Who shall describe the gulph whercin have been swallowed the fortunes of so many ancient and respectable families? There was, the electors would tell you, no bribery. They took a certain sum of money each, according to their consequence; "but this", they said, "came in the shape of a reward after the election, and, therefore, the oath might be safely taken". Considered as a question of morality, how contemptible this subterfuge was need hardly be noticed; but, to say

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

the truth, they did not deceive themselves, and I 1800  
must do them the justice to say, that they were • to  
not very anxious to deceive anybody else. They 1805  
told you, flatly and plainly, that the money which  
they obtained for their votes, was absolutely  
necessary to enable them to live; that, without it,  
they could not pay their rents; and that, from  
election to election, poor men ran up scores at the  
shops, and were trusted by the shopkeepers, ex-  
pressly upon the credit of the ensuing election;  
and that, thus, the whole of the inhabitants of the  
borough, the whole of the persons who returned  
two of the members to every parliament, were  
bound together in an indissoluble chain of venality.

The poorest of the people made a sort of pun  
upon my name as descriptive of my non-bribing  
principles, and moulded their sentiments into a  
cry of: "Bread and Cheese, and no empty Cup-  
board"; and some of them in a very serious and  
mild manner, remonstrated with me upon my en-  
deavour to deprive them of the profits of their  
vote, or, in their own phrase, "to take the bread  
out of poor people's mouths".

In quitting this scene, looking back from one of  
the many hills that surrounded the fertile and  
beautiful valley in which Honiton lay, with its  
houses spreading down the side of an inferior  
eminence crowned by its ancient and venerable  
church; in surveying the fields, the crops, the  
cattle, all the blessings that nature could bestow,  
all the sources of plenty and all the means of com-



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1800 fort and happiness, it was impossible to divest  
to myself of a feeling of horror at reflecting upon the  
1805 deeds which the sun witnessed upon this one of  
his most favoured spots.

The more I reflected upon what I had seen with my own eyes, the more firm my conviction became, that [such] was the cause of our calamities and our dangers, and that it was not, as was vainly imagined, to be removed by laws [then] in existence. The greater fault was in those who exposed the poor and miserable to the temptation of selling their votes; [and for these something more radical was needed.]

## CHAPTER VIII

1805-1810

[I MUST NOW TELL OF MY OTHER ACTIVITIES; for, I was a countryman and a father before I was a writer on political subjects.] The first thing that I did, when [my] fourth child had come, was to get into the country, and so far as to render a going backward and forward to London, at short intervals, quite out of the question. [While in Hampshire, in 1804, I saw the village of Botley, and determined on living there.] Botley was the most delightful village in the world. It had everything in a village, that I loved; and none of the things that I hated. It was in a valley, the soil was rich, thick, set with woods; the farms were small, the cottages neat; it had neither workhouse, nor barber, nor attorney, nor justice of the peace. There was no justice within six miles, and the barber came three miles once a week to shave and cut hair! Would I were poetical, I would write a poem in praise of Botley. [Within a year, I had purchased land and a house there, and removed my family from London.]

Born and bred up in the sweet air myself, I was resolved that [my children] should be bred up in it too. Enjoying rural scenes and sports, as I had

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1805 done, when a boy, as much as anyone that ever  
to was born, I was resolved that they should have  
1810 the same enjoyments tendered to them. When I  
was a little boy, I was, in the barley-sowing season,  
going along by the side of a field, near Waverley  
Abbey; the primroses and bluebells new spangling  
the banks on both sides of me; a thousand lin-  
nets singing in a spreading oak over my head;  
while the jingle of the traces and the whistling of  
the plough-boys saluted my ears from over the  
hedge; and, as it were to snatch me from the en-  
chantment, the hounds, at that instant, having  
started a hare in the hanger on the other side of  
the field, came scampering over it in full cry,  
taking me after them many a mile. I was not  
more than eight years old; but this particular  
scene presented itself to my mind every year from  
that day. I always enjoyed it over again; and I  
was resolved to give, if possible, the same enjoy-  
ments to my children.

I did not lead an idle life; I had to work constantly for the means of my living; my occupation required unremitting attention; I always saw the possibility, and even the probability, of being totally ruined by the hand of power; but happen what would, I was resolved, as long as I could cause them to do it, my children should lead happy lives; and happy lives they did lead, if ever children did in this whole world.

My intention was to make the boys fit to fight their way through life, for, who [could have been]

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

so weak as to imagine, that they would ever see many days of tranquillity! To write English; to speak French; to read a little Latin, perhaps; to ride, to play at single-stick, and, above all, to work at husbandry. It was my intention to teach them, in all by precept and in the most instances by example. I had seen too many proofs of the insufficiency of riches in the obtaining of happiness and too many instances of the misery to which a dependence on patronage led. [I had no wish] to stifle genius; but if it were not of a stamp to rise of itself, there was no raising it.\*

1805  
to  
1810

\* Cobbett left no detailed description of Botley, but Miss Mitford's is very good, and gives exactly the picture wanted.

"He had at that time a large house at Botley, with a lawn and gardens sweeping down to the Bursledon River . . . His . . . house, large, high, massive, red, and square, and perched on a considerable eminence, always struck me as not being unlike its proprietor. . . . There was a large fluctuating series of guests for the hour or guests for the day, of almost all ranks and descriptions, from the Earl and his Countess to the farmer and his dame. The house had room for all, and the hearts of the owners would have had room for three times the number.

"I never saw hospitality more genuine, more simple, or more thoroughly successful in the great end of hospitality, the putting everybody completely at ease. There was not the slightest attempt at finery, or display, or gentility. They called it a farm-house, and everything was in accordance with the largest idea of a great English yeoman of the old time. Everything was excellent—everything abundant—all served with the greatest nicety by trim waiting damsels; and everything went on with such quiet regularity that of the large circle of guests not

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1805 My two eldest sons, when about eight years old,  
to were, for the sake of their health, placed, for a  
1810 short time, at a clergyman's at Micheldever, and  
my daughter, a little older, at a school a few miles  
from Botley, to avoid taking them to London in  
the winter. But, with these exceptions, never had  
they, while children, teacher of any description.  
What need had we of schools? What need of scolding  
and force, to induce children to read, write,  
and love books? We did not want to "kill time";  
we were always busy, wet weather or dry weather,  
winter or summer. There was no force, in any case;  
no command; none of these was ever wanted. To  
teach the children the habit of early rising was  
the great object; and everyone knows how young  
people cling to their beds. This was a capital  
matter; because here were industry and health  
one could find himself in the way. I need not say a word  
more in praise of the good wife . . . to whom this admirable  
order was mainly due.

" . . . fields lay along the Bursledon River, and might  
have been shown to a foreigner as a specimen of the  
richest and loveliest English scenery . . . Few persons  
excelled him in the management of vegetable, fruit, and  
flowers . . . His wall-fruit was . . . splendid, and much as  
flowers have been studied since that day, I never saw a  
more glowing or more fragrant autumn garden than that  
at Botley, with its pyramids of hollyhocks, and its masses  
of china-asters, of cloves, of mignonette, and of variegated  
geranium. The chances of life soon parted us, as, without  
grave faults on either side, people do lose sight of one  
another; but I shall always look back with pleasure and  
regret to that visit."

*Recollections of a Literary Life*, Chap. xvii.

*to a Seat in Parliament*

both at stake. The child that was downstairs first, 1805  
was called the lark for that day, and, further, sat to  
at my right hand at dinner. They soon discovered, 1810  
that to rise early, they must go to bed early; and  
thus was this most important object secured,  
with regard to girls as well as boys. Nothing is  
more inconvenient, more disgusting, than to have  
to do with girls, or young women, who lounge in  
bed: "A little more sleep, a little more slumber,  
a little more folding of the hands to sleep". Solo-  
mon knew them well: he had, I daresay, seen the  
breakfast cooling, carriages and horses and ser-  
vants waiting, the sun coming burning on, the day  
wasting, the night growing dark too early, ap-  
pointments broken, and objects of journeys de-  
feated; and all from the lolloping in bed of persons  
who ought to have risen with the sun.

Health, the greatest of all things, was provided  
for. Next, my being always at home was secured  
as far as possible; always with them to set an  
example of early rising, sobriety, and application  
to something or other. Children will have some  
out-of-doors pursuits; and it was my duty to lead  
them to choose such as combined future utility  
with present innocence. Each his flower-bed,  
little garden, plantation of trees; rabbits, dogs,  
asses, horses, pheasants and hares; hoes, spades,  
whips, guns; always some object of lively in-  
terest, and as much earnestness and bustle as if  
our living had solely depended on them.

In the meanwhile the book-learning crept in of

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1805 its own accord. Children naturally want to be  
to like their parents, and to do what they do; and as  
1810 I was always writing or reading, mine naturally  
desired to do something in the same way. Fond  
of book-learning, and knowing well its powers, I  
naturally wished them to possess it too; but never  
did I impose it upon anyone of them.

I accomplished my purpose indirectly. Health was secured by the deeply interesting and never-ending sports of the field and pleasures of the garden. Luckily these things were treated of in books and pictures of endless variety; so that, on wet days, in long evenings, these came into play. A large strong table in the middle of the room, their mother sitting at her work, used to be surrounded with them, the baby, if big enough, set up in a high chair. Here were inkstands, pens, pencils, india-rubber, and paper, all in abundance, and everyone scrabbled about as he or she pleased. There were prints of animals of all sorts; books treating of them; others treating of gardening, of flowers, of husbandry, of hunting, coursing, shooting, fishing, planting, and, in short, of everything with regard to which we had something to do. One would be trying to imitate a bit of my writing, another drawing the pictures of some of our horses and dogs, a third poking over Bewick's "Quadrupeds", and picking out what he said about them; but our book of never-failing resource was the French "Maison Rustique", which, it is said, was the book that first tempted Dusquesnois, the

*to a Seat in Parliament*

famous physician, in the reign of Louis XIV, to learn to read. And there was I, in my leisure moments, to join this inquisitive group, to read the French, and tell them what it meant in English. When my business kept me away from the scabbling-table, a petition often came, that I would go and talk with the group, and the bearer generally was the youngest, being the most likely to succeed.

1805  
to  
1810

To do the things I did, you must love your home yourself; to rear up children in this manner, you must live with them; you must make them, too, feel by your conduct, that you prefer this to any other mode of passing your time. My occupation, to be sure, was chiefly carried on at home. Many a score of papers have I written amidst the noise of children, and in my whole life never bade them be still. When they grew up to be big enough to gallop about the house, I have written the whole day amidst noise that would have made some authors half mad. That which you are pleased with, however noisy, does not disturb you. I found time to talk with them, to walk, to ride about, with them; and when forced to go from home, always took one or more with me.

I remember that, one year, I raised a prodigious crop of fine melons, under handglasses; and I learned how to do it from a gardening-book; or, at least, that book was necessary to remind me of the details. Having passed part of an evening in talking to the boys about getting this crop,



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1805 "Come", said I, "now, let us read the book".  
to Then the book came forth, and to work we went,  
1810 following very strictly the precepts of the book.  
I read the thing but once, but the eldest boy read  
it, perhaps twenty times, over; and explained all  
about the matter to the others. [There] was a  
motive! Then he had to tell the garden labourer  
what to do to the melons. Now, I will engage, that  
more was really learned by this single lesson, than  
would have been learned by spending at this son's  
age, a year at school and he happy, and delighted  
all the while.

They began writing by taking words out of  
printed books; finding out which letter was  
which, by asking me, or those who knew the  
letters one from another; and by imitating bits of  
my writing, it is surprising how soon they began  
to write a hand like mine, very small, very faint-  
stroked, and nearly as plain as print. The first use  
that anyone of them made of the pen, was to  
write to me, though in the same house with them.  
They began doing this in mere scratches, before  
they knew how to make any one letter; and as I  
was always folding up letters and directing them,  
so were they; and they were sure to receive a  
prompt answer, with most encouraging com-  
pliments.

All the meddlings and teazings of friends, and,  
what was more serious, the pressing prayers of  
their anxious mother, about sending them to  
school, I withstood without the slightest effect on

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my resolution. "Bless me, so tall, and not learned 1805  
anything yet!", [a meddling woman friend would  
say of one of my sons]. "Oh, yes, he has", I used to  
to say, "he has learned to ride, and hunt, and 1810  
shoot, and fish, and look after cattle and sheep,  
and to work in the garden, and to feed his dogs,  
and to go from village to village in the dark." This  
was the way I used to manage with troublesome  
customers of this sort. And how glad the children  
used to be when they got clear of such criticising  
people!

The great business of life, in the country, ap-  
pertains, in some way or other, to the game. If it  
were not for the game, a country life would be  
like an everlasting honeymoon, which would, in  
about half a century, put an end to the human  
race. In towns, or large villages, people make a  
shift to find the means of rubbing the rust off from  
each other by a vast variety of sources of contest.  
A couple of wives meeting in the street, and giving  
each other a wry look, or a look not quite civil  
enough, will, if the parties be hard pushed for a  
ground of contention, do pretty well. But in the  
country, there is, alas, no such resource. [There]  
are no walls for people to take of each other.  
[There] is more room of every sort, elbow, leg,  
horse, or carriage, for them all. Even at Church  
(most of the people being in meeting-houses) the  
pews are surprisingly too large. Where all circum-  
stances seem calculated to cause never-ceasing  
concord with its accompanying dullness, there

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1805 would be no relief at all, were it not for the game.  
to This, happily, supplies the place of all other sources  
1810 of alternate dispute and reconciliation; it keeps  
all in life and motion, from the lord down to the  
hedger. The wives and daughters hear so much of  
it, that they inevitably get engaged in the dis-  
putes; and thus all are kept in a state of vivid  
animation.

I always encouraged my sons to pursue these sports. I remembered, too, that I myself had had a sportsman-education. I many and many a day followed the hounds, and returned home at dark-night, with my legs full of thorns and my belly empty, to go supperless to bed, and to congratulate myself if I escaped a flogging. All the lectures, all the threats, vanished from my mind in a moment upon hearing the first cry of the hounds. I remembered all this, and resolved to leave the same course freely open to my sons. They, until the ages of 14 or 15, spent their time, by day, chiefly amongst horses and dogs, and in the fields and farmyard; and their candle-light chiefly in reading books about hunting and shooting, and about dogs and horses.

I always admired the sentiment of Rousseau: "The boy dies, perhaps, at the age of ten or twelve. Of what use, then, all the restraints, all the privations, all the pain, that you have inflicted upon him? He falls, and leaves your mind to brood over the possibility of your having abridged a life so dear to you". I do not recall

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the very words; but the passage made a deep impression upon my mind, just at the time when I was about to become a father; and I was resolved never to bring upon myself remorse from such a cause. I was resolved to forgo all the means of making money, all the means of living in anything like fashion, all the means of obtaining fame or distinction, to give up everything, to become a common labourer rather than make my children lead a life of restraint and rebuke: I could not be sure that my children would love me as they loved their own lives; but I was, at any rate, resolved to deserve such love at their hands. 1805  
to 1810

[I learnt much of the state of the country through going into Hampshire.] It was when the madness for enclosure raged most furiously. I [used to go] around a little common, called Horton Heath on a Sunday. I found the husbands at home. The Common contained about 150 acres; and I found round the skirts of it, and near to the skirts, about 30 cottages and gardens, the latter chiefly encroachments on the common, which was waste (as it was called) in a manor of which the Bishop was the lord. I took down the names of all the cottagers, the number and ages of their children, and number of their cows, heifers, calves, ewes, pigs, geese, ducks, fowls, and stalls of bees; the extent of their little bits of ground, the worth of what was growing, the number of apple trees, of the black-cherry trees, called by them "merries", which was a great article in that part of

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1805 Hampshire. I have lost my paper, and, therefore,  
to I cannot speak positively as to any one point; but,  
1810 I remember one hundred and twenty five, or  
thirty five stalls of bees, worth at that time ten  
shillings a stall, at least. Cows there were about  
fifteen, besides heifers and calves; about sixty  
pigs great and small; and not less than five  
hundred head of poultry! The cattle and sheep  
of the neighbouring farmers grazed the common  
all the while besides. The bees alone were worth  
more annually than the common, if it had been  
enclosed, would have let for deducting the ex-  
pense of fences. The farmers used the Common  
for their purposes; and my calculation was, that  
the cottagers produced from their little bits, in  
food, for themselves, and in things to be sold at  
market, more than any neighbouring farm of 200  
acres! The cottagers consisted, fathers, mothers,  
and children, grandfathers, grandmothers, and  
grandchildren, of more than two hundred persons!

[I learnt to hate] a system that could lead  
English gentlemen to disregard matters like these!  
That could induce them to tear up "wastes" and  
sweep away occupiers like those I have described!  
Wastes indeed! Give a dog an ill name. Was  
Horton Heath a waste? Was it a "waste" when  
a hundred, perhaps, of healthy boys and girls were  
playing there of a Sunday, instead of creeping  
about covered with filth in the alleys of a town?

[I always was a good] master and employer. I  
never higgled as to prices in any case whatsoever;

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I never attempted to cheapen anything; never 1805  
wasted any of the precious moments of life in this • to  
sort of lying and cheating. Accordingly I have 1810  
been, and am better served than anybody else.  
Those who have been long employed by me, not  
only like my employment, but they like me per-  
sonally better than they like any other man in the  
world; and this, not from any cant about hu-  
manity; but on account of the frankness and  
sincerity which they always experienced from me,  
that freedom in conversation, that unrestrained  
familiarity, and that absence of anything like  
superciliousness or austerity, which have always  
marked my character, and, in all which, to the  
surprise of most observers, I indulged with my  
children as well as with all others under me, with-  
out at all lessening my authority.

I made it a rule that I [would] have the labour  
of no man who received parish relief. I gave my  
men constant pay, all seasons and all weathers,  
and though I had no rule about sickness, I never  
had, among my constant labourers, a sick man,  
whom I did not pay all the same as if he were well.  
I do not pretend, that it was from a regard for  
my labourers that I gave such great wages; for,  
I was convinced, that it was to my interest to do  
it. One of my labourers was worth two or three  
half-famished creatures. But, my great motive  
was, the lessening of the number of paupers; to  
raise part, at least, of the labouring people from  
that state of slavery, commonly called pauperism.

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- 1805 [Farming showed me much of these things.]  
to " That one half, or more, of the labourers of a  
1810 country should have been paupers, was really something too disgraceful to think of. A constant state of pauperism would debase the best nature that man ever possessed. A labourer in this state was always studying deceit; he was afraid of nothing so much as of appearing prosperous, healthy, or happy; he contracted a plaintive language and manner. His children were studiously clad in rags and covered with filth; his wife was always "poorly". A family, thus reared, not only was likely to be, but was sure to be, a nest of thieves and imposters. The way in which we proceeded [in Hampshire,] is really worth being [mentioned]. As an instance: we had two families, one of which contained nine children and the other seven, the whole of whom, drawn up in rank entire, and set off to the best advantage, that is to say, half hung over with rags, the rest of the body being naked, were arrayed against us, [the farmers,] before a bench of magistrates. We were satisfied, that owing to particular circumstances they had quite a sufficient income; but, as we could not prove it upon oath, the magistrates were about to order them relief, when I offered to pay them weekly all that they said they earned, and, besides that, as much as they received from the parish, rather than suffer them to continue paupers. They declined my offer, got no relief, and not only did without relief, but gradually

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assumed a more decent appearance; and, for this 1805  
obvious reason, that they had no longer an in- • to  
terest in being thought miserable. [This was better 1810  
than] the comforting system; the cow system; the  
child-bed-linen system; and the industry system;  
all which, like the schools of Mrs Hannah More,  
did more harm than good.

A lad, about 16 or 17 years of age, named Jesse Burgess, was my servant in husbandry, [in the year 1809]. In the latter end of February, I found fault with him for coming into breakfast before he had cleaned out his stable; and, [again in] March, I found fault with him, and that, too, in very sharp language, for lying in bed after I myself was up, that is to say, after 5 o'clock. The next morning the boy got up very early and set off from his service. There was, in the case of a servant running away and setting me at defiance, a duty which I owed to the community, and especially to my neighbours, occupying lands, who would have experienced great injury from such an example, if this boy had been suffered to get off with impunity. The mother of the boy had come, a few days before his running away, and had got his wages up to the 1st of March. It was, therefore, clear, that the intention was to get the boy away for the spring and summer, after having placed him in good keep during that part of the year when there was little to do. This was a very common trick through the country; my neighbours, the farmers, were plagued half out of their



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1805 lives with these desertions, which always took  
to place, just when the sun began to shine on both  
1810 sides of the hedge; that is to say, when those who  
had been warmed and fed all the winter, were  
called upon to make some remuneration by their  
labour. Nothing was so common as the sending  
people to prison for this offence.

I got a warrant from Southampton, and delivered it to Mr Astlett, the constable of Botley, in order that he might take up the boy. Mr Astlett took him at his father's house, and brought him to Botley, to a public-house called the Dolphin, whither, by the indulgence of the constable, he was accompanied by his mother and his elder brother, William. In the morning, Mr Astlett, who was a blacksmith, had occasion to go to his own house, and, while he was away, he left his prisoner in the hands of the tythingman, whose name was Dubber. While the boy was in the custody of Dubber, the mother came with a pretended message from me, desiring that the boy might be permitted to come to my house. He thereupon let the boy go, and the mother and the two sons went off together. [The boy] ran away somewhere, and the mother and her elder son made the best of their way towards their home.

Mr Astlett, finding what had taken place, set out, ordering Dubber to go with him, in pursuit of them. The boy was not to be found; but, they took the brother and the old woman, for having aided in the escape, and brought them to Botley.

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They were suffered to depart, [on the advice of the magistrate at Southampton], having been in duress for not more than nine hours, having suffered no assault, and having sustained no other injury than the loss of a day's work. •

1805  
to  
1810

Upon principle, when the boy had escaped, I spared no pains or expense to recover him. In about a fortnight, Mr Astlett and Dubber found him at his father's house. Things took a turn, that Mr Astlett came to Botley for assistance, while Dubber was left in the garden to see that the boy did not escape. A new character came upon the scene—one Stone, bailiff to Mr Goodlad (whose house stood at a little distance) came to Dubber, and told him to go away, for that he had no business there. Suffice it to say, that the boy was taken to Winchester, and was, after a full examination, and a remarkably patient hearing of all he had to say, committed to prison. The example was of general utility.

I was very much surprised when the constable told me, that the Burgesses boasted of having the support of Mr Goodlad. I accordingly wrote to him, stating to him the whole of the circumstances, and expressing a hope, that he, as a magistrate, would give the constable countenance and support. To my utter astonishment, the answer I received was, as nearly as I can recollect, this:—that the whole of the fault of resistance lay with the constable of Botley, whose ignorance of his duty had induced him to execute a warrant

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1805 out of his own hundred. The answer further in-  
to formed me, that the old woman and her son  
1810 William had been at the bench at Droxford,  
where they had been told, that, if their story was  
true, they might bring an action for false im-  
prisonment. It appeared that the Magistrates at  
this bench, sitting in their capacity as magistrates,  
not only told the old woman and her son, that  
they had a ground for action, but advised them to  
go to the Attorney for the purpose of commencing  
the action.

The Attorney was soon in motion. Botley, Droxford, Hill-Pound, Southampton, and the borders of the Forest, heard the sound of his horse's feet, and were struck with the eager countenance of the rider. I was sued for £333. 6s. 8d. and the jury said, that, at most, I ought to pay the odd £3. 6s. 8d.

[Another thing followed. I was] informed, that, the very day after the trial, the walls of London were covered over with large bills about the "Oppressions of Cobbett"; and, "Cobbett the Oppressor of the Poor", etc. These posting bills cost, perhaps, fifty pounds a day! Notwithstanding the great events that were passing upon the continent of Europe, there was, in England, no subject whatever, which excited so much public interest as the character and conduct of William Cobbett.

[The conclusion of this incident will show that I had raised up the government and its supporters

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against me. I had come over to the cause of Par- 1805  
liamentary Reform.] A remark or two seems to  
necessary here, [to show] the insinuation, and, 1810  
indeed, open accusation, brought against all those,  
who stood prominently forward in the cause of  
Reform: it was this, that they wished for con-  
fusion; for the annihilation of property; and for  
uproar and bloodshed. This has always been the  
charge against all those, who have had the courage  
to take the lead in endeavouring to root out cor-  
ruption. From the nature of things it is a charge  
that must be preferred against such men; because  
the corrupt will naturally seek to disarm those  
who attack them, and, it being impossible to say  
that corruption is right, there is no mode of at-  
tacking its assailants, other than that of repre-  
senting them as wishing for confusion and uproar,  
by which representations, the uninformed are  
misled and the timid frightened. By this mode,  
the nation was long deceived and alarmed. Pos-  
terity will, I hope, hardly believe; I hope that our  
children will hardly credit the true history of the  
delusions and alarms [from the years 1792 to  
1809]. The disgraceful days of alarm had passed  
by then; and, I thought, it would be difficult for  
the friends of corruption to cause their return;  
but, still they harped upon the dangers of change,  
though they could not deny that change would be  
for the better; still they accused us of a wish to  
introduce confusion and uproar and bloodshed.

The greatest compliment that could be paid to

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1805 any writer, to answer his arguments by an attack  
to upon his person, [or, to appeal] to his opinions  
1810 formerly expressed, especially under a total change  
of circumstances, was made most liberal use of  
against me.<sup>1</sup> Just as if opinions formed and ex-  
pressed, when I was not much more than half as  
old, and when I had, in fact, no experience at all,  
could invalidate, or have any weight, against the  
arguments that I [later had] to offer. Upon my  
return from America I received marks of appro-  
bation from all the men then in power. When  
Mr Canning looked back to the time, when I dined  
at his house at Putney, and when he paid me so  
many just compliments for my exertions in my  
country's cause, I can hardly think, that he did  
not view with some degree of shame [such] at-  
tempts on the part of persons, who were publicly  
said to have written under his particular patron-  
age.

[On the occasion of King George's Jubilee in  
October, 1809], the Jubilee Crew exhibited at  
Charing Cross, a placard respecting me, with the  
following words:

**MAY GOD**  
disperse  
The Votaries of  
**COBBETT**  
As the Clouds  
of this Day.

The effect of this placard is worthy being re-

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corded. Some persons among the many thou- 1805  
sands, who composed the continually shifting *to*  
crowd of gazers at the placard, asked a very 1810  
worthy friend of [mine], what the thing meant,  
and who "Cobbett" was; to which he answered,  
that Mr Cobbett was a gentleman, who wished  
to see sinecure places and unmerited pensions  
abolished, who wanted all peculators and public  
robbers to be punished, and by such means to  
lessen the taxes and give people encouragement  
to fight for their country. This ran, of course,  
from one to another; and, it was no wonder, that,  
on the fourth night after it was put up, the stupid  
wretch who had ordered it to be hoisted, found  
somebody to beat into his addled brains the  
prudent measure of taking it down.

The best of it was, that, while these senseless  
creatures were plotting and conspiring against  
me, I was leading a life the most pleasing and un-  
disturbed that could be conceived; I was walking  
over a very beautiful farm and pleasure grounds.  
And, at the very moment when the placard was  
hoisted, I was in a farm-yard in Berkshire, taking  
and noting down the dimensions of a sheep-crib.

## CHAPTER IX

1810-1812

1810 IN 1809, SOME YOUNG MEN AT ELY, IN WHAT  
to was called the "local militia", had refused to  
1812 march without the "marching guinea", which the  
Act of Parliament awarded them. This was called  
Mutiny; and a body of Hanoverian horse were  
brought from Bury St Edmunds, to compel these  
young Englishmen to submit to be flogged! They  
were flogged, while surrounded by these Hano-  
verians; and the transaction was recorded in "The  
Courier" ministerial paper. I, in my "Register",  
expressed my indignation at this, and to express,  
it too strongly was not in the power of man. The  
Attorney-General, Gibbs, was set upon me; he  
harassed me for nearly a year, then brought me  
to trial. [This] took place on the 15th of June,  
1810, when I was found guilty [of treasonous  
libel] by a Special Jury. On the 20th, I was com-  
pelled to give bail for my appearance in court to  
receive judgement, and, as I came from Botley (to  
which place I had returned on the evening of the  
15th) a Tip-Staff went down in order to seize me  
personally, and to bring me up to London to give  
bail.

I went home to pass the remaining short space of

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personal freedom with my family. I had just begun 1810  
farming projects, and also planting trees, with the<sup>o</sup> to  
hope of seeing them grow up as my children 1812  
grew. I had a daughter fifteen years of age, whose  
birthday was just then approaching, and, destined  
to be one of the happiest and one of the most un-  
happy of my life, on that day my dreadful sentence  
was passed.\* One son eleven years old, another  
nine years old, another six years old, another  
daughter five years old, and another child nearly  
at hand. It was at this crisis, no matter by what  
feelings actuated, I wrote to my Attorney, Mr  
White, to make the proposition, "if I were not  
brought to justice, I never would publish another  
'Register' or any other thing". But, fits of fear  
and despair [were] never of long duration in my  
family. The letter was hardly got to the Post  
Office at Southampton before the courage of my  
wife and eldest daughter returned. Indignation  
and resentment took place of grief and alarm; and  
they cheerfully consented to my stopping the  
letter. Mr Peter Finnerty was at my house at the  
time; a post-chaise was got; and he came off to  
London during the night, and prevented Mr White  
from acting on the letter.

I was brought up to receive judgement on the  
5th of July, when, after the Attorney-General had  
made the speech, I was sent to the King's Bench  
Prison, and ordered to be brought up again on the  
9th of July. On this day I was, by Ellenborough,  
Grose, LeBlanc and Bailey, sentenced to be im-



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1810 prisoned two years in Newgate amongst felons, to  
to 'pay a fine to the King of a thousand pounds, and  
1812 to be held in heavy bail for seven years after the  
expiration of the imprisonment! And, what was  
never heard of before, my printer, my publisher,  
and a bookseller, were all prosecuted and put in  
prison. Everyone regarded it as a sentence of  
death, and it was intended to be a sentence of  
death. I lived in the country, seventy miles from  
London; I had a farm on my hands; I had a family  
of small children, amongst whom I constantly  
lived; I had a most anxious and devoted wife,  
who was, too, in that state which rendered the  
separation more painful tenfold. .

During the time that I was absent from home  
for the purpose of giving bail, a man, dressed like  
a gentleman, went upon my land in the neigh-  
bourhood of Botley, got into conversation with  
my servants, asked them how much property I  
had, where it lay, of whom I had purchased it,  
what I had given for it, and a great many other  
questions of the same sort. When he went away  
from one of them, he told him: "You'll not have  
Cobbett here again for one while"; or words to  
that effect. I leave [my readers] to form their  
opinions as to the object of this visit. Another  
person, of a similar description, went to another  
man who worked for me, asked him what sort of  
man I was, what he had heard me say about the  
King or the Government, and told him that some  
people thought me a very great enemy of the

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government. He heard nothing but good of me 1810  
as a neighbour and a master; and, as to politics, • to  
• not a soul that he talked to knew what he meant, 1812  
never having in their lives heard me utter a word  
upon any subject of the sort. •

I was followed to prison by an excellent friend,  
Mr Peter Walker, Major Cartwright, and Mr  
Asbury Dickins, an American, whom I had known  
in Philadelphia. [The first had] found me in  
King's Bench Prison, previous to my being taken  
up for judgement [the second time]. It had been  
expected [then], that, in order to disable me from  
writing for the press, I [was to] be sent to some  
distant jail. In this expectation [he] had proposed,  
• that a certain number of friends should agree to  
succeed each other in living, at their own expense,  
in whatever town that jail should be, in order to  
afford me society and assistance; and, he proposed  
to fill this part [himself] for the first four months.

I was hardly arrived at Newgate when the brave  
old Major Cartwright came. "And", exclaimed  
he, "is this the place they have sent you to! I am  
seventy years old, but— —I shall yet live to see  
— —!" [Mr Walker was] the next to arrive, and  
when, by dint of money, I had obtained the favour  
to be put into a room by myself, [he] hurried  
home and brought me bedstead, chairs, tables,  
bedding, and everything; and, I think I see [him]  
now, stripped in [his] shirt, putting the bedstead  
together and making up my bed.

My wife arrived in about half an hour; but

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1810 before that time I had bought myself out of the  
to 'company of felons. By great favour I finally  
1812 obtained leave to occupy two rooms in the jailer's  
house, paying for them twelve guineas a week, and  
it required eight more to fee the various persons,  
and to get leave to walk an hour in the leads of  
the prison in the morning: so that here were  
£2080 during the two years besides the £1000 to  
the good old King. These direct losses were, how-  
ever, trifling compared with the indirect. I was  
engaged in the publication of two works, called  
"The State Trials" and "The Parliamentary  
History". There had been a great outlay for these  
works; several thousands of pounds were due to  
the paper-maker and the printer. These works  
were, as far as regarded me, ruined. I had bought  
land in 1806 and 1809. This land, about 500 acres,  
was in hand. I had made plantations, and had  
made preparations for others. I had then a trifling  
mortgage to pay off, but quite within reach of my  
earnings; and, in short, if it had not been for this  
savage sentence, I should, by the year 1814, have  
had my estate cleared. [Almost] exactly ten  
years [after landing] in England, having lost a  
fortune in America, solely for the sake of England,  
I was sent to prison in that same England! It was  
quite impossible for me to banish reflections of  
this sort from my mind.

Many gentlemen; by letter as well as verbally,  
proposed to me the putting forward a subscrip-  
tion, for the purpose of indemnifying me and my

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family against the heavy expense and loss, which had been incurred in consequence of the prosecution. I was, however, happy to say, that I had been not only able to withstand all pressure; but, that, without any extraordinary aid, from any quarter, I felt confident of my ability to proceed, and, with the blessing of continued health, make a suitable provision for all my children. My health, thank God, was as good as ever it was. But, I had no security for either health or life; any more than other men; and, if I had attempted an insurance upon my life, Newgate would have told pretty strongly against me. It was, therefore, impossible for me not to feel an anxious desire to see my family, at least, guarded against certain expense and loss.

Everyone will easily imagine, that every debt that I owed,<sup>1</sup> of every description, came pouring in for payment. The whole nation was cowed down at the time, and under the sway of Perceval, Gibbs, and Ellenborough, and with several parts of the country actually under the command of Hanoverian generals; the people seemed like chickens, creeping and piping to find a hiding place, while the kite was hovering in the air. The sons and daughters of corruption openly chuckled at what they thought my extinguishment. Almost everyone stood aloof, except my creditors (never the last to visit you in such a season), who pressed on amain; so that I really forgot that I was in prison, so great and so numerous were the tor-

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1810 ments arising. I was looked upon as a man given  
to over by the doctors; and everyone to whom I  
1812 owed a shilling, brought me sighs of sorrow indeed; but, along with these, brought me his bill. Why, the truth is, that had it not been for one thing, I should not have been able to bear up under this accumulation of evil; and, that one thing was that, I had a friend, to whom, on the third day after I entered the accursed jail, I wrote, requesting him, in case of my death, to send for, and take care of my wife and children, and from whom I received an answer, containing, amongst others, these words. "Give thyself no trouble about Nancy and the children. If thee should die, which I hope thee will not for years to come, thy dear family shall find a home under my roof, and shall be to me and all of us as our own kindred". At [70] years of age, I feel the tears of gratitude on my cheeks as I transcribe his words. It was James Paull,<sup>2</sup> a Quaker farmer, of Lower Dublin Township, in the state of Pennsylvania; a native American; a man, on whom I had never conferred a favour to the amount of the value of a pin.

My children [were] at Botley. The tears of the postman, a rough and hardy fellow, who had lost an arm in the military service, prepared my daughter for the news. The three boys were in the garden hoeing some peas. My daughter called the eldest to tell him what had been done. He returned to the others, and they hearing their sister cry,

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asked him what was the matter. He could make 1810  
them no answer, but, pulling his hat over his eyes, • to  
took up the hoe in a sort of wild manner and 1812  
began to chop about, cutting up the peas and all  
that came his way. The second took hold of him,  
and seeing his face bathed with tears, got, at last,  
an account of what had been done to a father,  
who had never given either of them a harsh word  
since they were born. By that very night's post  
I got a letter from my eldest son, and he con-  
cluded his in these words: "I would rather be now  
in the place of my dear Papa, than in that of  
those who have sent him to prison". I wrote them  
back for answer, that I was very well; that im-  
prisonment would not hurt my health; and con-  
cluded by saying, "be you good children, and we  
shall all have ample revenge".

In a few days after this, five big brutal farmers,  
trotting along towards Fareham Market, on a  
road by the side of which my carpenter was  
erecting a sort of picket fence, called out to him,  
"where be the iron bars?" and then set up a loud  
laugh. Need I say, that it gave me pleasure to  
know, that every one of these unfeeling monsters  
was reduced to insolvency [in 1822], brought into  
that state, too, by [the] very paper-money system,  
for endeavouring to check which in time was my  
real offence.

The sentence, though it proved not to be one of  
death, was, in effect, one of ruin, as far as then  
possessed property went. But this really appeared

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1810 as nothing compared with the circumstance that I  
to ' would have a child born in a felon's jail, or be  
1812 absent from the scene at the time of birth. My  
wife, who had come to see me for the last time  
previous to her lying-in, perceiving my deep de-  
jection at the approach of her departure for  
Botley, resolved not to go, and actually went and  
took a lodging as near to Newgate as she could  
find one, in order that the communication between  
us might be as speedy as possible, and in order  
that I might see the doctor, and receive assurances  
from him relative to her state. The nearest lodging  
that she could find was in Skinner Street, at the  
corner of a street leading to Smithfield. So that  
there she was, amidst the incessant rattle of  
coaches, dogs, and bawling men, instead of being  
in a quiet and commodious country house, with  
neighbours and servants and everything necessary  
about her. Yet, so great is the power of the mind  
in such cases, she, though the circumstances proved  
uncommonly perilous, and were attended with the  
loss of the child, bore her sufferings with the  
greatest composure, because at any minute she  
could send a message to, and hear from me. If  
she had gone to Botley, leaving me in that state  
of anxiety in which she saw me, I am satisfied that  
she would have died; and that event taking place  
at such a distance from me, how was I to con-  
template her corpse, surrounded by her distracted  
children, and to have escaped death or madness  
myself? If such was not the effect of this merciless

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act of the Government towards me, that amiable 1810  
body may be well assured that I [took] and re-<sup>to</sup>  
corded the will for the deed, and that as such it 1812  
will live in my memory as long as that memory  
shall last.

When the Government crammed me into a jail amongst felons it added to the difficulties of my task of teaching [my children;] for now I was snatched away from the only scene in which it could, as I thought, properly be executed. But even these difficulties were got over. The blow was, to be sure, a terrible one; and, O God! how it was felt by [those] poor children! [The] account [of their feelings,] when it reached me, filled me with deeper resentment, than any other circumstance. And, oh! how I despise the wretches who talk of my vindictiveness; of my exultation at the confusion of those who inflicted those sufferings! How I despise the base creatures, the crawling slaves, the callous and cowardly hypocrites, who affected to be "shocked" (tender souls!) at my expressions of joy, at the death of Gibbs, Ellenborough, Perceval, Liverpool, Canning, and the rest of the tribe that I have already seen out, and at the fatal workings of [their] system.

[This was the way we worked at education.] I had a farm in hand. It was necessary that I should be constantly informed of what was doing. I gave all the orders, whether as to purchases, sales, ploughing, sowing, breeding; in short, with



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1810 regard to everything, and the things were endless  
to in number and variety, and always full of interest.

1812 My eldest son and daughter could now write well and fast. One or the other of them was always at Botley; and I had with me one or two, besides either this brother or sister, the mother coming up to town about once in two or three months, leaving the house and children in the care of her sister. We had a hamper, with a lock and two keys, which came up once a week, or oftener, bringing me fruit and all sorts of country fare, for the carriage of which, cost free, I was indebted to as good a man as ever God created, the late Mr George Rogers, of Southampton.

This hamper, which was always, at both ends of the line, looked for with the most lively feelings, became our school. It brought me a journal of labours, proceedings, and occurrences, written on paper of shape and size uniform, and so contrived, as to margins, as to admit of binding.<sup>3</sup> The journal used, when my son was the writer, to be interspersed with drawings of our dogs, colts, or anything that he wanted me to have a correct idea of. The hamper brought me plants, bulbs, and the like, that I might see the size of them; and always everyone sent his or her most beautiful flowers; the earliest violets, and primroses, and cowslips, and bluebells; the earliest twigs of trees; and, in short, everything that they thought calculated to delight me. The moment the hamper arrived, I, casting aside everything else, set to work to answer

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every question, to give new directions, and to add 1810  
anything likely to give pleasure at Botley. Every <sup>to</sup>  
hamper brought one "letter", as they called it, 1812  
if not more, from every child; and to every letter  
I wrote an answer, sealed up, and sent to the  
party, being sure that that was the way to produce  
other and better letters; for though they could not  
read what I wrote, and though their own consisted  
at first of mere scratches, and afterwards, for a  
while, of a few words written down for them to  
imitate, I always thanked them for their "pretty  
letter", and never expressed any wish to see them  
write better; but took care to write in a very neat  
and plain manner myself, and to do up my letter  
in a very neat manner.

Thus, while the ferocious tigers thought I was  
doomed to incessant mortification, and to rage  
that must extinguish my mental powers, I found  
in my children, and in their spotless and courageous  
and most affectionate mother, delights to which  
the callous hearts of those tigers were strangers.  
"Heaven first taught letters for some wretches'  
aid." How often did this line of Pope occur to me  
when I opened the little spuddling "letters" from  
Botley! This correspondence occupied a good part  
of my time: I had all the children with me turn  
and turn about; and, in order to give the boys  
exercise, and to give the two eldest an oppor-  
tunity of beginning to learn French, I used, for a  
part of the two years, to send them a few hours in  
the day to an Abbé, who lived in Castle Street,

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1810 Holborn. All this was a great relaxation to my  
to mind; and, when I had to return to my literary  
1812 labours, I returned fresh and cheerful, full of  
vigour, and full of hope, of finally seeing my un-  
just foes at my feet.

The paying of the work people, the keeping of the accounts, the referring to books, the writing and reading of letters; this everlasting mixture of amusement with book-learning, made me, almost to my own surprise, find, at the end of two years, that I had a parcel of scholars growing up about me; and, long before the end of the time, I had dictated many "Registers" to my two eldest children. Then there was copying-out of books, which taught spelling correctly. The calculations about the farming affairs forced arithmetic on us: the use, the necessity of the thing led to the study. By and by, we had to look into the laws, to know what to do about the high-ways, about the game, about the poor, and all rural and parochial affairs.

I was, indeed, by the fangs of the Government, defeated in my fondly cherished projects of making my sons farmers on their own land, and keeping them from all temptation to seek vicious and enervating enjoyments; but these fangs were not able to prevent me from laying in for their lives a store of useful information, habits of industry, care, sobriety, and a taste for innocent, healthful, and manly pleasures; the fangs had me and them penniless; but they were not able to take from us our health or our mental possessions; and these

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were ready for application as circumstances might ordain. 1810 to 1812

Judges Grose and Ellenborough and Bailey and LeBlanc did, indeed, sentence me to be imprisoned for two years, but they did not sentence me to be blindfolded and have my hands tied all the time. They did, indeed further adjudge that a thousand pounds should be taken from me and paid to the King, but they did not condemn me to be bereft of my reason, they passed no sentence of imprisonment upon my thoughts. [While] I was in this jail, I was never ill for a single moment; I never had even a headache, and I felt myself as strong as at any period of my life.

[Shortly] after I had been got safe in Newgate, an American friend of mine, who had the clearest and soundest head of almost any man I ever knew in my life, came to see me. Being seated, one of us on each side of a little bit of table he said, looking up into my face, with his arms folded upon the edge of the table, "Well! they have got you, at last. And now what will you do?" After a moment or two I answered, "What do you think I ought to do?" He then gave me his opinion, and entered pretty much into a plan of proceedings. I heard him out, and then, I spoke to him in much about these words: "No, Dickins, that will never do. This nation is drunk, it is as mad as a March hare, and mad it will be till this beastly frolic [the war] is over. The only mode of proceeding to get satisfaction requires great

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1810 patience". I then described to him the outline of  
to 'what I intended to, do with regard to the paper-  
1812 system; and, after passing a very pleasant after-  
noon, during which we selected and rejected  
several titles, we at last fixed upon that of "Paper  
Against Gold", which I began to write and to  
publish in a few weeks afterward.

I had long had it in contemplation to make the  
Paper Money system familiar to the understand-  
ings of the nation at large; but, until I was put  
into jail, I wanted the time to do the thing to my  
wish. Nothing [could] make me quit it, till it was  
made so plain, that children at school, and even,  
Doctors at the University, nay, that the Pitt  
Statesmen themselves, [could] understand it as  
well as they understood how to calculate the  
amount of their salaries. The Government gave  
me the leisure, and I in return, gave the world the  
true history of its Funding System.

For seven years previous to 1810, I had con-  
tended, and, indeed, I had been repeatedly prov-  
ing, that the paper-money was depreciated, and  
that it must in the end, produce a convulsion in  
the country, unless prevented by a diminution in  
the Debt, and a return to payments in gold,  
always considering the latter as impossible with-  
out the former. On account of these opinions, I  
had to undergo the almost incessant abuse of the  
base press of London; and, indeed, of the whole  
country; and, which was a more serious matter, I  
had to undergo the consequences of the wrath of

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the people in power, including that of the far 1810  
greater part of the members of the two Houses of <sup>to</sup>  
Parliament. Really, from the acrimony and rage, 1812  
to which, upon this subject, my opponents gave  
way, a stranger to the controversy would, were he  
first to dip into their writings, were he to hear  
them reviling me, certainly have concluded, that  
I myself owed the whole of the [national] debt.

I remember the time, when there was scarcely  
ever seen a bank-note among Tradesmen and  
Farmers; and, when the Farmers in my country  
hardly ever saw a bank-note except when they  
sold their hops at Wey-hill Fair. People, in those  
days, used to carry little bags to keep their money  
in, instead of the paste-board or leather cases that  
they now carry. If you looked back, and took a  
little time to think, you could trace the gradual  
increase of paper-money, and the like decrease of  
gold and silver money. At first there were no bank-  
notes under 20 pounds; next they came to 15  
pounds; next to 10 pounds: at the beginning of  
the last war, they came down to 5 pounds; and,  
before the end of it they came down to 3 and to 1  
pounds. How long it was before they came down  
to parts of a pound, it would, perhaps be difficult  
to say; but in Kent, at least, there were country  
notes in circulation to an amount as low as that of  
seven shillings.

I long saw, that the Bank could never pay again  
in Gold and Silver, and, at the same time, pay the  
full interest of the debt. For several years, I en-

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1810 deavoured to persuade the Government to lower  
to the interest. In 1806, I published an argument to  
1812 prove, that it was just, as well as necessary, to  
make this reduction. Many and many a time did  
I endeavour to convince Mr Windham, that, unless  
this measure was adopted in time, a complete  
convulsion must finally be the consequence. I  
never could get him to pay attention to me. In-  
deed, I was a great fool for my pains in this private  
way. I ought to have put my opinions boldly  
forth to the world, and have left talking alone.

Just about the time that there needed some-  
thing to take to school the young men who suc-  
ceeded those that had been taught by Mr Paine,  
"The Register" made its appearance; and, in a  
short time it entered upon that series of teachings,  
the fair fruits of which [did not become] visible  
[for twenty years]. The great subject of "The  
Register" always was, the Paper Money. I knew  
nothing of this matter in the year 1802, any more,  
and perhaps not quite so much as Mr Canning or  
the Old Doctor, [Lord Sidmouth, knew] of it [in]  
1822. I did not know what had made the Bank of  
England. I did not know what the slang terms of  
Consols meant. I did not know what Dividend,  
Omnium Scrip, or any of the rest of it, imported.  
Finding it necessary to understand something of  
the matter, and about taxation, and other things  
relating thereto; I read, by the advice of that  
excellent man, Dr Lawrence, the work of that old  
Scotch tax-gatherer, Adam Smith. I could make

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neither top nor tail of the thing. After a great 1810  
hunting about in search of books to give me in- to  
formation, I set to work to read the Act of Parlia- 1812  
ment by which the Bank of England was created,  
and all the Acts about loans, and funds, and divi-  
dends and payings-off and sinking-funds; and  
disgusting as this would have been to almost any  
other man upon the face of the earth, to me it was  
pleasant; for I soon got something of an insight;  
and I soon began to perceive that the fate of the  
Kingdom must finally turn upon what should be  
done with regard to the accursed thing called the  
National Debt. I saw the purpose for which it  
had been founded; I saw how completely it had  
answered that purpose; I saw how it had been the  
instrument of putting unbounded power into the  
hands of the Government; I saw how it had drawn  
the wealth of the country into masses, how it had  
destroyed the lower and middle classes of farmers,  
how it had added to the list of paupers, how it had  
beggared and degraded the country.

I took up a little essay by Paine.<sup>4</sup> Here I saw to  
the bottom at once. Paine not only told me what  
would come to pass, but showed me, gave me con-  
vincing reasons, why it must come to pass, and he  
convinced me also, that it was my duty to en-  
deavour to open the eyes of my countrymen to the  
truths which I myself had learnt from him; be-  
cause his reasoning taught me, that, the longer  
these truths remained hidden from their view, the  
more fatal must be the consequences. How happy



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1810 would it have been for this nation, if the opinions  
to 'of Mr Paine had produced, at the time, their  
1812 wished-for effect ! In my opinion, [his] little work,  
in the space of twenty-five pages, conveyed more  
useful knowledge upon this subject, and discovered  
infinitely greater depths of thought and general  
powers of mind, than were to be found in all the  
pamphlets of the three-score and two financiers,  
who favoured the world with their opinions upon  
the state of our money system. I saw, but not  
without the assistance of Mr Paine, how the Bank  
came to be restrained in 1797. I soon arrived at  
a conclusion of this truth; that, the Nation must  
destroy that monster the Debt; or that the  
monster must destroy this form of government.

This was in the year 1804. From this time, a  
new era commenced in the political education of  
the people of England. I attacked a thing which  
Mr Paine had but lightly touched on, for, before  
his "Decline and Fall" came out, his writings had  
been suppressed by brute force; and, when that  
came out, he had, unfortunately rendered himself  
unpopular amongst the very best part of the  
people, by his gratuitous and rude assault on the  
Christian religion. My manner of attack on the  
accursed system of funding had its charms in its  
boldness and originality. My style was such as to  
please all those who read with a desire of acquir-  
ing knowledge. I always reasoned, and yet in a  
sort of way, that seldom created weariness in the  
reader.

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Now, out of this arose that new sort of education, that new turn in the minds of men, of which I have before spoken. During all this time, the people were reading; and especially the labouring classes. So that England presented to the world this singular spectacle. The Government, the Parliament, the rich, the pretended learned, ignorant of the causes, which were shaking society to its base, while a considerable part of the middle class and a large part of the very poorest class of all, understood these causes perfectly well. 1810  
to  
1812

At last, however, [in the year 1810], a portion of the Parliament came to make the assertion, that a depreciation in the value of paper-money had actually taken place; and, finally a Committee of the people who had got into the Commons House, was appointed to inquire into the matter. This Committee, which might have been called the Paper-Committee, was called the Bullion-Committee, had for its Chairman one Horner, a Scotch lawyer. After immense volumes of "evidence" [it] reported to the House, that bank-notes were depreciated, and that, in order to prevent future fatal consequences, a law ought to be passed to compel the Bank to pay in gold at the end of two years from that time. The Ministry contended, that bank-notes were not depreciated, and that the notes could, at any time, be paid in gold, but that during the war, the proposed measure was inexpedient.

I contended that both sides were totally ig-

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1810 norant in the subject; and that the bank-notes,  
to without a great reduction in the interest of the  
1812 debt, and of all other out-goings, never could be  
paid in gold, without plunging the country into  
ruin. To prove this opinion to be correct, and to  
show that I understood more of the matter than  
both sides of the House put together, I wrote and  
published "Paper Against Gold", with an avowed  
intention, too, of having it to produce, when time  
should have verified its doctrines, and when the  
sufferings of the nation should have disposed it to  
listen to truth and reason.

[An example of the nation's fate was very soon  
given by] the scenes at Salisbury, or account of the  
failure of the Banks of that City. Poor people  
were without victuals or drink for some time, and  
many persons, in a respectable way of life, were  
for many days together, obliged to sit down to  
dine upon little more than bread, no meat being  
to be purchased [with paper money]. Many  
persons, who had gathered together a few pounds,  
the fruit of long labour and anxious care, of  
frugality, and of forbearance from enjoyment;  
many of these very best of people, saw their little  
all vanish in a moment, and themselves reduced to  
the same state with the improvident, the careless,  
the lazy, the spendthrift, the drunkard, and the  
glutton. Here Pitt, if he had still been alive,  
[would] have seen a specimen of the fruits of his  
system!

[My work on Paper Money, I believe to be the

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best of my life, but] I was [only] regarded as a 1810  
very clever man,<sup>5</sup> with rather a twist in the head; <sup>to</sup>  
and being of an odd taste, having selected the 1812  
subject of the Debt and Paper Money as my  
particular hobby. [I continued], however, to ride  
this hobby without anyone to trot along side of  
me for fourteen years.

[In addition to this labour], during my im-  
prisonment, I wrote and published 364 Essays  
and Letters upon political subjects; during the  
same time, I was visited by persons from 197  
cities and towns, many of them as a sort of  
deputies from Societies and Clubs; and, at the  
expiration of my imprisonment, on the 9th of  
July, 1812, a great dinner was given in London  
for the sake of receiving me, at which dinner up-  
wards of 600 persons were present, and at which  
Sir Francis Burdett presided. Dinners and other  
parties were held on the same occasion in many  
other places in England. On my way home [to  
Botley], I was received at Alton, the first town in  
Hampshire, with the ringing of the church bells.  
A respectable company met me and gave me  
dinner at Winchester. I was drawn for more than  
the distance of a mile into Botley by the people;  
upon my arrival in the village, I found all the  
people assembled to receive me. I concluded the  
day by explaining to them the cause of my im-  
prisonment.\*

\* Anne Cobbett, who accompanied her father on his

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1810 return from prison, wrote of the journey to her uncle, to ' Lieut. Frederick Reid.

1812 "... We got to Bagshot about ten o'clock on Friday evening, where we slept, and the next morning left it about six o'clock, and breakfasted at Alton, the bells rung a merry peal as we entered the town and continued to ring about an hour. We proceeded from Alton to Alresford, and from thence to Winchester, where we arrived about one. About five minutes after we got there, Mama came in a post-chaise with all the children." After staying there a little while, Mama returned home with her three daughters, leaving the three boys to come home with Papa after the dinner. Parson Baker refused the keys of the church, so that the people could not ring the bells which they wished very much to do. However, they sufficiently testified their respect to Papa, and their pleasure at his return, without the assistance of the church. For a party of young men... accompanied by a band of music which they had hired themselves for the purpose met him about a mile out of Botley... where they insisted upon taking the horses out of the carriage, which they did, and with colours flying, and the band of music marching before them, they brought him into Botley... Mama had ordered four hogsheads of ale one at each of the public-houses, in the morning, but she had no idea of what was to be done. Papa arrived here about eight o'clock, and after we had drank tea about nine, the band came and stationed themselves on the lawn where they continued playing for some time, after which we called them into the hall, and gave the young men and young women of the village a dance. Mr Walker and your humble servant opening the ball. They danced till Sunday morning and then dispersed."

*The Cobbett Papers.* Letter dated from Botley House, 13 July, 1812.

## CHAPTER X

1812-1817

\* , \* \* \*

WHEN I LEFT PRISON, IN 1812, I THOUGHT <sup>1812</sup> it prudent to quit so large a house as my own [at <sup>to</sup> Botley] was, and to lessen all my expenses. I, <sup>1817</sup> therefore, took [the] place [of a] Mr Kempt, which had a neat little gentleman's house on it, and the best gardens in the country, having nearly three quarters of a mile of high walls, for fruit trees. I laid out more than £150 in purchasing and planting the walls and gardens with all the finest sort of peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums, cherries, pears, and apples. The vines against the walls, which bore nothing scarcely before I went to the place, I made, by my management, [in time] bear half a ton of grapes. There were three vines in a grape-house, which bore the first summer only five or six bunches of grapes. I cut out two of them, leaving one, and, [four years later], that one bore me more than 300 pounds of grapes. I trusted nobody to prune this vine but myself. My excellent friend, Mr Brown, of Peckham Lodge, measured one single grape from this vine, which was three inches and three quarters in circumference. I mention these things to show what pains I took with these gardens, where I grew as

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1812 great a weight of melons as was grown in any 20  
to gentlemen's gardens round the country; where I  
1817 had very large watermelons, which I never saw in  
England except in my gardens. In short, I never  
saw myself down in any spot in my whole life,  
without causing fruits and flowers and trees (if there  
was time) and all the beauties of vegetation to rise  
up around me.

My imprisonment gave me, as to money matters,  
a blow not easily recovered. The Peace came, too,  
in about twenty months afterward, which was  
greatly injurious to me as a farmer, and at the  
same time as a writer; for, in its fit of drunken  
joy, the nation in general laughed at me.

The intelligence of this grand event reached me  
in the following manner. I had been out very  
early in the morning, and, in returning home to  
breakfast, I met a populous gang of gypsies. At  
the first view of them, I thought of nothing but  
the robberies which they constantly committed  
upon us, and I began to plan my measures of  
defence. But, upon a nearer approach to them,  
I perceived the whole caravan decorated with  
laurel. The blackguard ruffians of men had laurel  
boughs in their hats; the nasty ferocious-looking  
women, with pipes in their jaws, and straddling  
along like German trulls, had laurel leaves pinned  
against their sides. The poor asses, that went  
bending along beneath their burdens laid on them  
by their merciless masters, and that were quiver-  
ing their skins to get the swarms of flies from

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those parts of their bodies which the wretched drivers had beaten raw, had their bridles and halters and pads stuck over with laurel. Somewhat staggered by this symbol of victory, I hesitated what to do, passed the gang in silence, until I met an extraordinarily ill-looking fellow, who, with two half-starved dogs, performed the office of rear-guard. I asked him the meaning of the laurel boughs, and he informed me, that they were hoisted on account of the "glorious victory obtained by the Duke of Wellington over Boney"; that they were furnished them by a good gentleman, whose house they had passed the day before, between Andover and Botley, and who had given them several pots of ale, wherein to drink the Duke's health. "And to be sure", added he, "it is glorious news, and we may now hope to see the gallon loaf at a 'grate' [a groat] again, as 'twas in my old father's time." I left this political economist, this "loyal man and friend of social order", to overtake his companions, I went homeward with a mind far from being as completely made up as that of the Gipsy and his black-coated and white-wigged benefactor.

[But], which was the heaviest blow of all, I, under such heavy bonds [to keep the peace], did not dare to be the proprietor of "The Register"; it was transferred to another, in order to screen me. That other, of course, had the greater share of the profits. By the beginning of the year 1816, my pecuniary affairs became so desperate as to make



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1812, me determine on selling my land and everything  
to else, and on beginning the world afresh: [I did  
1817 not, however, become poor at once; and I saw the  
nation grow poor along with me.] \*

When I looked back [ten years or so] and considered how the country then stood, what a contrast presented itself to my mind! The preliminaries of peace had just then been concluded; the price of provisions had just then been lowered; the people were on tiptoe for commerce and manufactures; every print-shop window presented something demonstrative of friendship with Buonaparte. What was the picture [that followed]? A war with that same Buonaparte, [which] led to the overthrow of every state formerly in alliance with us, [which] put into the hands of that same Buonaparte the whole of Italy from the confines of France down to the shores of Calabria, [which] raised a new kingdom in the heart of Germany.

It added five hundred millions to the National Debt of England. It banished gold from circulation. It ruined commerce and manufactures in England; [in which] respect, it produced a new order of things both in Europe and America, both of which could then dispense with English goods. What inroads were made upon English liberty during this period, I need not attempt to describe; and, as to the weight of taxes, who needs to be told of that?

[If you asked] any man, be he of what party he

might, what he thought of the state of things, 1812  
you found, that he expected, that a great change, to  
of some sort or other, would take place ere long. 1817  
He could not tell what it would be; he could not  
even guess; he was full of fears, and that was all.  
The very hirelings of the press, whose trade it was  
to buoy up the spirits of the people, had no  
longer any plausible grounds of hope to hold out.

At any rate, the people could not blame the  
“Jacobins and Levellers”. They had been against  
the war; they had been for letting the French  
Republicans alone. They had no hand in any of  
the measures that were pursued, and were liable  
to no responsibility and no blame. {Yct] they  
were an object of incessant abuse. The next ten  
years showed whether they merited this.

It is the common practice of men to judge from  
experience; but, it really seemed, that govern-  
ments acted upon no such principle; that they  
were wholly deaf to the voice of experience; that  
they either did not see, or they heeded not, the  
consequences of their measures. Were this not the  
case, how could it possibly be, that no change  
took place in the measures of any of the old  
governments that we saw annihilated [during  
these years]? In no instance did we see them  
attempt to make any change; nay, they [seemed  
to grow] more and more attached to their several  
systems in proportion as the evil consequences of  
them became manifest to all the world. It could  
only be accounted for in this way: that the persons

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1812 in the enjoyment of power and of the emoluments  
to belonging to power, thought, that they would lose  
1817 both by a reformation as effectually as by a  
destruction of the government; and, therefore,  
that, as they could lose no more by the latter than  
by the former, they, in every case, endeavoured  
to uphold corruptions and abuses to the last  
possible moment.

We here see, also, the cause of that persecution of opinions, which invariably increased as the old governments felt their dangers increase. The persecution was the effect of fear; and, it is well known, that cruelty is never so great as when it has such a foundation. When men have expressed their surprise at seeing these old governments grow more and more tyrannical and cruel in proportion as their situation became perilous, they have not duly considered the motive of these governments; if they had, they would have felt no surprise.

[In these ten years] the reputation of party was wholly destroyed. The people became weary of the thing. They saw that no change of men did them any good; they saw that the difficulties of the country and their own burdens still went on increasing; hope was, at last, dead within them. This was an awful state for a country to be in. Was there one man, who sincerely believed, that we could, without some great change of system, extricate ourselves from this state? There were men, and some of them very well-meaning men,

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who still railed against Jacobins and Levellers. 1812  
The railing against them might, at one time, have  
proceeded from alarm; but, it was now the effect of *to*  
a sort of senseless resentment that knew not what 1817  
to fall upon. If there had been any great body of  
the nobility and gentry, standing forward for a  
reform of the system,, the spirit of the country  
would have been very different from what it was;  
but, we saw no such body. The gentlemen of  
England seemed to have given up the country to  
the Minister of the day. Each seemed to care for  
nobody but himself; and to think himself pretty  
well off, if he had weight enough left to secure him  
the permission, to have a sufficiency to live upon.  
The barriers erected by the pride and circum-  
stance of family worth and by the circles of  
hospitality, were all swept away. There was no  
longer any intermediate link. The natural magis-  
tracy, as Hume calls it, was extinguished. All  
authority proceeded immediately from the govern-  
ment. There was not a village in England where  
the Surveyor of Taxes was not a more powerful  
man than the Lord of the Manor. The principle of  
obedience was that of fear and not of love.

What must have been the feelings of an English  
gentleman, if there was one with any feeling left,  
who had first mounted his hunter fifty years ago,  
and who now saw his son a subscriber to a county  
pack; and, in public places, instead of a bold  
assertor of his country's rights, an humble and  
awkward imitator of the special pleaders of the

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1812 day, anxious only not to be thought the friend of  
to those few, who still were not ashamed to contend  
1817 for the liberties of England. The lot of such a  
father was not to be envied even by the hoary  
beggar that swept the crossing of the streets.  
Both were but one remove from a return to the  
earth whence they had sprung; but the latter, if  
not quite unconscious of the fallen state of his  
country, had, at least, the consolation of knowing  
that he had never, by act of omission, contributed  
toward the cause by which it was produced.

[By 1816], whole parishes were left destitute of  
the means of feeding the poor. It has been thought  
to be an exaggeration to say this, but, from what  
passed under my own eyes, I have not the smallest  
doubt of the fact. The misery of the country  
seemed to have travelled in all directions towards  
[Botley]. From the North, from the East, from  
the West, it crept on to what the country people  
call, the “zunny zide ’o Lunnon”. At last, it  
reached us there, upon the verge of the channel,  
where less misery has always existed, I believe,  
than in any other part of the kingdom. The  
paupers swarmed about our fields and hedges. Or,  
rather, the labouring people were almost all be-  
come paupers. The notions about daily and weekly  
and yearly wages seemed to be all disappearing  
from men’s minds. Nothing struck me so forcibly  
as to find that this was the case in the adjoining  
parish of Titchfield. A parish rich in its soil, in its  
woods, in its waters, in its inhabitants, consisting

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of many gentlemen of fortune, and of numerous, 1812  
opulent and most excellent farmers, and of a neat to  
little town, not surpassed in point of appearance 1817  
by any in England. And yet, in this parish,  
decent, honest, able, and well-behaved labourers,  
and those in great numbers, too, were compelled  
to become paupers. So that really, one-half of the  
people were, at this time, living upon the means  
possessed by the other half. I am here, not stating  
what I have been told, what I have heard; but  
what I have seen, and what I daily saw with my  
own eyes.

Just after Easter Tuesday, [in 1816,] the  
officers of the several Parishes [near me,] held a  
meeting, at which, by way of lottery, they distri-  
buted amongst the most able parishioners, young  
paupers to be kept by the said parishioners and  
brought up by them in their own houses, or, at  
any rate, maintained by them, clothed, fed,  
lodged, and doctored, at their own particular  
expense, until they grew up to be men, or women.  
I had drawn for me in this lottery, a girl about 10  
or 12 years of age. If I had had all my share of  
paupers quartered upon me as this girl was, I  
should have had about twenty-eight of all ages.  
In my own house we were twelve altogether. So  
that I had more than one pauper to every other  
human being moving within the sphere of my  
support.

It is from facts like these that we are enabled to  
judge of the real state of the nation. The coaches

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1812 and chariots and landaus that rattled through the  
to squares and streets of London; the forests of  
1817 masts that rose in the seaports; the loads of pearls  
and diamonds that shone at the court; even the  
beautiful mansions and pleasure grounds that  
were seen all around the metropolis; these: no one,  
no, nor all of these put together, were proof of the  
prosperity of a nation: all these could exist, and  
the nation [yet] be plunged into the deepest of  
misery and degradation.

[By the enclosing of land] numerous families of  
the children of labourers were crammed into the  
stinking suburbs of towns, amidst filth of all sorts,  
and congregated together in the practice of every  
species" of idleness and vice. In the stinking  
houses of towns, the labourer's children could not  
have health. If they had not health they were  
miserable in themselves and a burden to the  
parish. [The potato became] a favourite because  
it was the suitable companion of misery and filth.  
It could be seized hold of before it was half ripe, it  
could be raked out of the ground with the paws,  
and without the help of any utensils, except, per-  
haps, a stick to rake it from the fire, could be  
conveyed into the stomach in the space of an  
hour. We had but one step further to go, and that  
was, to eat it raw, side by side with our bristly  
fellow-creatures, who, by the by, reject it as long  
as they can get at any species of grain or at any  
other vegetable. I can remember when the first  
acre of potatoes was planted in a field, in the

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neighbourhood of the place where I was born; and, 1812  
I very well remember, that even the poorest of the to  
people would not eat them. They called them hog- 1817  
potatoes. . . .

Before the year had expired, "agricultural distress" began to make the nation listen to the call for parliamentary reform; and the latter part of 1816, saw the kingdom agitated from one end to the other.<sup>1</sup> Now was the time for me to lay on. Sometime in the month of September, I was conversing on this subject with a neighbour, and we both agreed, that, if the people could but be enabled to see the matter in its true light, there would be an end to all such acts of violence, [as food-riots,] at once, and, of course, to the ignominious deaths of fathers and sons, and the miseries of wives, children, and parents, produced in the end by these acts of violence. My neighbour was of opinion, that it was in my power to effect this desirable purpose, by writing an Essay upon the subject. But, though I had a strong desire to do it, I was aware, that the high price of "The Register", though it had not prevented it from being more read than any other publication, still, it prevented it from being so generally read as would be necessary to put the people right upon this important subject. Hence came the observation from one of us, I forget which, that if, for this one time, for this particular purpose, the price could be, by some means or other, reduced to twopence, then the desired effect would be produced



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1812 at once. I said, before we parted, that this should  
to be done.

1817 But, as it was impossible for me to prove to the people what was *not* the cause of their misery, without proving to them what was the cause of their misery; as the remedy, at last, came to a Reform of Parliament; and, as I feared, that the best time was not come for urging on this grand question, I delayed, from time to time, the fulfilment of my promise to my neighbour, who, on his part, never saw me without pressing me hard upon the subject; and, on the 2nd of November, I wrote an "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers", on the aforementioned subject.<sup>2</sup>

As the topics had long been passing through my mind, they came very naturally and easily into their place upon paper; and, as I most sincerely felt the truth and justice of all that I wrote, I wrote with as much force both of language and argument as I had at my command. The arrangements had been made the week before for the manner and price of publication; and I felt quite confident not only of a great sale, but of a very great effect. [I changed] the price of "The Register" from 1s. to 2d., publishing it without a stamp, and keeping myself sheltered from the law by not being the legal proprietor.

After the manuscript had gone off, my fears of premature effect returned; and, after two days resolving and re-resolving and misgiving, I sent off my son John by the night coach to prevent the

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Cheap Edition being published for a short time at any rate. But, instead of informing me that he had obeyed my orders, he informed me that six thousand of the Cheap Edition had been sold before his arrival. It was too late to balance. I had put myself before the wind, which I well knew would prove too strong to suffer me to stop, or to slacken my pace. It was impossible now, in this new scene, to remain at Botley. I went off to London in a few days, and remained there until my final departure for Liverpool; and, of the eventful days of my wonderful life, these were certainly the most eventful.

The effects of No. 18, [the first cheap "Register"], were prodigious.<sup>3</sup> It occupied the conversation of three-fourths of all the acting men in the kingdom. The whole town was in a buzz. The labouring classes of people seemed as if they had never heard a word on politics before. The effect on their minds was like what might be expected to be produced on the eyes of one bred up in the dark, and brought out, all of a sudden, into broad daylight. In town and country, there were, in two months, more than two hundred thousand of this one Number printed and sold; and this, too, in spite of all the means which the Government, the Church, the Military, the Naval Half-Pay, and all the innumerable swarms of Tax-Gatherers and Tax-Eaters, were able to do to check the circulation. The "Paper Against Gold", was selling in weekly numbers at the rate of twenty to thirty

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1812 thousand a week. In short, clear of all expenses,  
to there was a profit of £200 a week; so that, if I had  
1817 been let alone, if no law had been passed to stop  
and ruin me, my estate would have been clear at  
the end of two years, and I should have been as  
rich as I ever wanted to be.

Amongst the striking and instantaneous effects  
of this Cheap Register was the unlocking of the  
jaws of the London Press with regard to me and  
my writings. For nearly five years I had been  
unable to extort a word from this Press. Upon the  
appearance, however, of No. 18, away went all  
the *chuchutments*, and all the pretendings of ig-  
norance; and the corrupt part of the press, instead  
of its apparently sworn silence, treated the public  
with volleys of lies and execrations against me  
that never had a parallel in the world. It seemed  
as if the curses of these hirelings had, for years  
past, been kept without sound, like those of  
Mandeville's sailors, which having been uttered  
during a terrible hard frost, filled the air with their  
cracklings when the thaw came.

Early in December, Mr Becket, the Under  
Secretary of State to Lord Sidmouth, said, in  
answer to a proposition for silencing me in some  
very atrocious manner, "No: he must be written  
down". Accordingly, up sprang little pamphlets  
at Norwich, at Romsey, at Oxford, and at many  
other places, while in London, there were several,  
one of which could not cost less than two thousand  
guineas in advertising and in large and expensive

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placards, which were pulled down, or effaced, the hour they were put up, and which were replaced the next hour, as one wave succeeds another in the sea. At last, after all the other efforts of this kind, came "Anti-Cobbett", written "by a Society of Gentlemen", amongst whom, I was told, were Canning, Mr Gifford, and Southey. Not content with advertisements in three hundred newspapers; not content with endless reams of placards; the managers of this concern actually sent out two hundred thousand circular letters, addressed to persons by name, urging them to circulate this work amongst all their tradesmen, farmers, work people, and to give it their strong recommendation; and this they were told was absolutely necessary to prevent bloody revolution.

By the beginning of January, [1817,] or thereabouts, the Government had discovered that it was quite useless to carry on any longer this contest with the pen. But, though open force appears now to have been resolved on, it was very hard to make out any pretext for employing such force. Sidmouth and Castlereagh were authorized to shut up in prison every one "suspected of treasonable practices"; and, when Sidmouth brought in the bill, he distinctly stated, as a reason for it, that the publications then going on were such that the law-officers of the crown *could find nothing in them to prosecute with any chance of success!!!* Lord Holland asked Sidmouth, why, if there were such seditious works going forth from the press, he did

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1812 not cause them to be prosecuted; to which the  
to latter answered, that he had laid them all before  
1817 the law-officers, and that they could find nothing  
to prosecute, such was the art and malignity of the  
writers! Therefore, the Power of Imprisonment  
Bill was passed!<sup>4</sup> a law to enable some of *them-*  
*selves* to shut me up in prison *at their pleasure*; to  
keep me in a dungeon as long as they pleased; and  
this too without even telling me what I was  
accused of; and all this they did, as expressly  
stated by Sidmouth, because I had committed  
no offence against the laws; because the law-  
officers could find nothing to prosecute in my  
publications.

One of my sons brought me, from the House of  
Lords, an account of this speech of Sidmouth.  
“Oh! then”, said I, “we must strike our tent and  
be off.” If I had had a mind to touch the public  
money, I might have remained in safety, and with  
ten thousand pounds in my pocket; or, at least,  
such an offer was made me, by a gentleman in  
whose word and authority I firmly believed. The  
sole condition was *future silence*.

I gave no answer, but, with my two eldest  
sons, resolved upon flight, it being manifest that  
silence, or a dungeon, must attend my staying.  
I sent for my wife to come up from Botley, and  
told her what I had resolved on. She did not  
utter a single plaintive accent; a few big tears  
rolled down her face; she resumed her smiles in an  
instant, and, having come up in the night, she

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prepared for returning (seventy miles) to her children, the next night, which she did. 1812  
to

Nothing could have induced me to quit [my] country, while there remained the smallest chance of my being able, by remaining, to continue to aid her cause. The laws which had just been passed, forbade [me] to entertain the idea, that it would be possible to write on political subjects according to the dictates of truth and reason, without drawing down upon [my] head certain and swift destruction. If I removed to a country where I could write with perfect freedom, it was not only possible, but very probable, that I should, sooner or later, be able to render that cause important and lasting service. 1817

Upon this conclusion it was, that I made my determination: for though life would have been scarcely worth preserving, with the consciousness that I walked about my fields, or slept in my bed, merely at the mercy of a Secretary of State; though, under such circumstances, neither the song of the birds in spring, nor the well-thatched homestead in winter, could make me forget that I and my family were slaves, still there was something so powerful in the thought of country, and neighbourhood, and home, and friends, there was something so strong in the numerous and united ties with which these and endless other objects fastened the mind to a long-inhabited spot, that to tear oneself away nearly approached to the separating of the soul from the body.

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1812 A few years [before], being at Barnett Fair, I  
to saw a battle going on, arising out of some sudden  
1817 quarrel, between a Butcher and the servant of a  
West-country grazier. The Butcher, though vastly  
superior in point of size, finding that he was getting  
the worst of it, recoiled a step or two, and drew  
out his knife. Upon the sight of this weapon, the  
Grazier turned about and ran off till he came up  
to a Scotchman who was guarding his herd, and  
out of whose hand the former snatched a good ash  
stick about four feet long. Having thus got what  
he called a long arm, he returned to the combat,  
and, in a very short time, he gave the Butcher a  
blow upon the wrist which brought his knife to the  
ground. The Grazier then fell to work with his  
stick in such a style as I never before witnessed.  
The Butcher fell down and rolled and kicked; but,  
he seemed only to change his position in order to  
insure to every part of his carcass a due share of  
the penalty of his baseness. After the Grazier had,  
apparently, tired himself, he was coming away,  
when, happening to cast his eye upon the knife,  
he ran back and renewed the basting, exclaiming  
every now and then, as he caught his breath:  
“dra thy knife wo’t!” till at last the Butcher was  
so bruised, that he was actually unable to stand,  
or even to get up; and yet, such amongst English-  
men was the abhorrence of foul fighting, that not a  
soul attempted to interfere, and nobody seemed  
to pity a man thus unmercifully beaten. It was  
my intention to imitate the conduct of this

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Grazier; to resort to a long arm, [by going to 1812  
America,] and to combat Corruption while I kept  
myself out of the reach of her knife. Nobody 1817  
called the Grazier a coward, because he did not  
stay to oppose his fists to a pointed and cutting  
instrument.

I and my two sons, William and John, set off  
from London early in the morning of Saturday,  
the 22nd of March [1817]. We reached Litchfield  
that night, and Liverpool the next night about  
ten o'clock. Of the whole country, through which  
we passed (and all of which was very fine) we were  
more delighted with, the ten miles from Dunchurch  
to Coventry, in Warwickshire. The road very  
wide and smooth; rows of fine trees on the sides of  
it; beautiful white-thorn hedges and rows of ash  
and elm dividing the fields; the fields so neatly  
kept; the soil so rich; the herds and flocks of fine  
fat cattle and sheep on every side; the beautiful  
homesteads and numerous stacks of wheat! Every  
object seemed to say: here are resources! here is  
wealth! Here are all the means of national power,  
and of individual plenty and happiness! And, yet,  
at the end of those ten beautiful miles, we entered  
that city of Coventry, which, out of twenty thou-  
sand inhabitants contained at that very moment,  
upwards of eight thousand miserable paupers.

As we passed onwards through Staffordshire  
and Cheshire all the same signs of wealth and of  
the sources of power, on the surface of the earth  
struck us by day; and, by night, those more sub-



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1812 lime signs, which issued from the furnaces on the  
to hills. The causeways for foot-passengers, paved,  
1817 in some instances, for tens of miles, together; the  
beautiful rows of trees shading these causeways;  
the canals winding about through the valleys,  
conveying coal, lime, stone, merchandise of all  
sorts; the immense and lofty woods of the hills;  
every object seemed to pronounce an eulogium  
on the industry, skill, and perseverance of the  
people. And, why, then, were those people in a  
state of such misery and degradation?

On Wednesday evening, the 27th of March, we embarked on board the ship "Importer", D. Ogden master, bound to New York. When we went on board it was nearly dark. The boat was so full that some of the passengers were obliged to quit it and go to another boat. Amongst these was a youngish man, who, in a voice half nasal and half squeal, cried out, "but where is my Portfolio! I cannot go and leave my Portfolio! I shall be ruined if my Portfolio gets wet!" The Captain, who was going with us, pledged his life for the safety of everything. One of my sons, who said in my ear, "who can that be?" was answered by me, "Oh, he is only an Envoy-Extraordinary from some Dry Good Store, be assured", which afterward proved to be the case to the very letter.

The next day, when we came to muster, we found our cabin companions to be, a Mr Astor,<sup>5</sup> son of a respectable merchant of New York, who had been some years in Europe, who had travelled

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over the greater part of it, and who was perfectly 1812  
civil and polite. Two young men, who belonged to to  
Manchester establishments at Manchester, who 1817  
were going out with goods, and who, from the very  
little that I heard them say, seemed to think that  
sinecures were no bad things, because, as one of  
them explained the matter, every man would get  
one if he could. The fourth was the Captain's  
brother, a tailor of New York, who reviled Paine's  
memory without being able to tell why, and who  
approved of the employment of spies, asserting,  
that spies were constantly employed by the  
Corporation of New York. The fifth was a very  
pretty woman from Manchester, with two small  
children, going out to her husband, who, if it was  
impossible for her wholly to avoid giving us  
annoyance, conducted herself with the most ex-  
emplary patience, never uttering one word of  
complaint or of apprehension, during a most dis-  
agreeable and perilous voyage. The Captain's  
brother, the aristocratical tailor, died at the end  
of about three weeks of a lingering disease, the  
effects of which, while he was alive (confined in so  
small a place as we were), formed a subject, not  
only of most horrible disgust, but of some appre-  
hension on account of possible infection. The sixth  
and last of our inmates was the Envoy-Extra-  
ordinary, who called himself a Federalist, as did  
also the Captain call himself, and certainly, with  
the exception of Mr Astor, we could not well have  
fallen into more disagreeable company.

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1812 The few times that I have ever travelled in a  
to stage coach, I have held my tongue, and; in order  
1817 to keep all quite quiet, I have generally taken a  
French book to read. However, as my sons spoke  
French as well as myself, we could talk and laugh  
about all sorts of things quite at our ease, and  
without interfering with the people. We had also  
some books, and sometimes we would write a  
little. Nevertheless, talk amongst us all would  
sometimes arise; and, as it was one of the features  
in the Envoy's character to affect an understanding  
in matters that he knew nothing of, he one day  
told us, that Dr Mitchell of New York, was writing  
a very interesting work on "The Theology of  
Fishes". I ought to have let it pass; but the  
Envoy was a great stickler for religion as he called  
it, and I could not help exclaiming, "I wonder  
what religion they are of!" A laugh ensued, and  
the Envoy curled up his sharp nose a quarter of an  
inch beyond its usual point of altitude.

One Sunday morning, the weather being fine,  
the Envoy had dressed himself out in all his Bond  
Street gear, not by any means forgetting his high-  
heeled boots, and perceiving, without doubt, the  
obduracy of our feelings, which remained wholly  
unmoved towards admiration by all these at-  
tempts, seemed to have resolved, as a last shift, to  
try the virtues of his portfolio upon us. Out, there-  
fore, it came, and with a thundering slap upon the  
table, at which we sat attentively reading, having  
been, for a short time, delivered from the com-

*to a Seat in Parliament*

pany of the sick tailor. Down came the portfolio, and I could have cursed the impertinent fop most heartily for the interruption; but, I had scarcely had time to look up, when a part of the contents of this important depository was laid before me for my inspection. 1812  
to  
1817

I, at first, looked at it merely because I could no longer read; but, my eye was soon attracted more closely; not by the snips of cloth, but by an engraving at the top of the card. This card had been made for the purpose of being exhibited in the Store, or Shop, in Connecticut; at the head of it was an engraving, as follows. In the middle was a shield, on the right hand America represented by a fair Virgin, surrounded with the emblems of wisdom, science, agriculture and commerce, on the left an old lion with a figure seated on him in the shape of a woman with a spear in her hand and some bales of goods behind her. To the American flag the post of honour was given, and, at the top, the British crown was represented as stricken down by the beak of the American Eagle, which was waving its wings over it in triumph. Could you, taking the motive into view, imagine anything more base than this, on the part of the English manufacturer? Another ruffian, a crockery-ware man, had furnished mugs with engravings on them representing an old crazy lion, all skin and bones, with an American standing with his foot on his neck.

Every morning of my passage I was up, shaved

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1812 and dressed, before any other person was stirring.  
to Then I called up my sons. Our place was swept  
1817 out, or washed out, aired and beds made by ourselves before breakfast. While others were lolling in their berths, we were out on deck. During the time of sea-sickness, which I had none of, I took care of my sons, attended them on deck, brought them down, waited on them like a nurse, gave no trouble to anybody; and when that was over, our room was, at all times, night as well as day, fair weather or foul, as clear from all annoyances as one of our fields at Botley. We were stinted to one tumbler of fresh water a day, to wash in. We never complained of this, and we kept ourselves perfectly clean. The consequence was, we landed at New York as fresh as we were when we went on board the ship. We arrived on the 5th of May. In all respects that can be named our passage was disagreeable; and, upon one occasion, very perilous from lightning, which struck the ship twice, shivered two of the masts, killed a man, struck several people slightly, between two of whom I was sitting without at all feeling the blow.

## CHAPTER XI

1817-1819

WE [WENT TO] AN INN, 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> MILES FROM 1817  
New York, in [Long Island]. It was on the main *to* .  
road to [the] city. We lodged and boarded in this 1819  
Inn, had each a bedroom and a good bed, had a  
room to sit in to ourselves, ate by ourselves; and  
it really was eating. We had smoaked fish, chops,  
butter and eggs, for breakfast, with bread,  
crackers, sweet cakes; and, when I say, that we  
had such and such things, I do not mean that we  
had them for show, or just enough to smell to;  
but in loads. Not an egg, but a dish full of eggs.  
Not a snip of meat or of fish; but a plate full.  
Lump sugar for our tea and coffee; not broke into  
little bits the size of a hazel-nut; but in good  
thumping pieces. For dinner we had the finest of  
fish, bass, mackèrel, lobsters; of meat, lamb, veal,  
ham, etc. Asparagus in plenty, applepies (though  
in the middle of May). And for all this an excellent  
cider to drink, with the kindest and most obliging  
treatment, on the part of the Landlord and Land-  
lady and their sons and daughters, we paid no  
more than twenty-two shillings and sixpence a  
week.

But, there were two things which no money

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1817 could purchase anywhere. The first was, no  
*to* grumbling on the part of the Landlady, except on  
1819 account of our eating and drinking too little; and  
the other was, that Mr Wiggins had no fastening  
but a bit of a chip run in over the latch of the door  
to a house which was full of valuable things of all  
sorts. All this was the effect of good government,  
of just and mild government, which took so little  
from the people in taxes, that they had the means  
of happiness fully left in their hands.

We [soon, however, took] a place, pleasant and agreeable, a beautiful place, called Hyde Park; a fine park, orchards, gardens, and fields and woods. It was at North Hempstead in Long Island. A fine house too, but out of repair. Everybody was kind and obliging. If this untaxed, beautiful, fertile, and salubrious island had been inhabited by Englishmen, it would very far have surpassed the Garden of Eden; for here the trees produced golden fruit, and we were forbidden to eat none of them. I had good servants in my man Churcher and his Wife, and I heard their Hampshire tongues so often, that I almost conceited myself at home; only the fine sun, the fine roads, the fine fruits and the happy labourers told me that I was not. Tranquillity I enjoyed unalloyed by one single bitter reflection as to any one act of my whole life. Simply to preserve life and health was all that reason, or common sense, permitted me to go to the expense of.

At the place where I lived, which was in

*to a Seat in Parliament*

Queen's County, and very nearly in the middle of the island, crosswise, we had no water, except in a well seventy feet deep, and from the clouds; yet, we never experienced a want of water. A large rain-water cistern to take the run from the house, and a duck-pond to take that from the barn, afforded an ample supply. The rains came about once in fifteen days; they came in abundance for about twenty-four hours; and then all was fair and all was dry again immediately. [The summers] were very, very hot. The thermometer 85 degrees in the shade; but a breeze. I worked in the land morning and evening, and wrote in the day in a north room. The dress became very convenient, or, rather, a very little inconvenient affair. Shoes, trousers, shirt, and hat. No plague of dressing and undressing! I never slept better in all my life. No covering. A sheet under me, and a straw bed. My window looked to the East. The moment Aurora appeared, I was in the Orchard. It was impossible for any human being to lead a pleasanter life than this. How I pitied those, who were compelled to endure the stench of cities! The dews were equal to showers; I frequently, in the morning, washed hands and face, feet and legs, in the dew on the high grass.

[In the winter], the frost made us jump and skip about like larks. Very seasonable for a sluggish fellow. [To prepare] for the winter, [I] patched up a boarded building, which had formerly been a coach-house; but, which was not so neces-



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1817 sary to me, in that capacity, as in that of a fowl-  
to house. The neighbours told me, that the poultry  
1819 would roost out on the trees all the winter; and,  
indeed, they must, if they had no house, which  
was almost universally the case. However, I  
meant to give them a choice. I lined the said  
coach-house with corn-stalks and leaves of trees,  
and tacked up cedar boughs to hold the lining to  
the boards, and laid a bed of leaves a foot thick  
all over the floor. I secured all against dogs, and  
made ladders for the fowls to go in at holes six  
feet from the ground. I made pig-styes, lined  
round with cedar-boughs and well covered. Also  
a sheep-yard, for a score of ewes to have lambs  
in the spring, surrounded with a hedge of cedar-  
boughs and well covered, and with a shed for the  
ewes to lie under, if they liked. The oxen and cows  
were tied up in a stall. The dogs had a place well  
covered, and lined with corn-stalks and leaves.  
And I could without anxiety, sit by the fire, or lie  
in bed, and hear the North Wester whistle.

Let not my countrymen, who may happen to  
read this suppose, that these, or any other, pur-  
suits, withdrew my attention from, or slackened  
my zeal in that cause, which was common to us  
all. That cause claimed, and had, my first atten-  
tion and best exertion; that was the business of  
my life, these other pursuits were my recreation.  
King Alfred allowed eight hours for recreation, in  
the twenty-four, eight for sleep, and eight for busi-  
ness. I did not take my allowance of the two former.

*to a Seat in Parliament*

[Early in 1818, I made] a journey into Pennsylvania, [which] had, for its principal object, an appeal to the justice of the Legislature of that state for redress, for great loss and injury sustained by me, nearly twenty years [before], in consequence of the tyranny of one M'Kean, who was then Chief Justice of that State.<sup>1</sup> The appeal was not successful; but, my journey was productive of much and various observation, and, of useful knowledge.

[I went] over a space of more than two hundred miles, passing through the city of New York; through a list of towns in the State of New Jersey; then crossing the Delaware [River] into Pennsylvania; stopping some days to see my old friends at Bustleton and Philadelphia. The question eagerly put to me by everyone in Philadelphia was, "Don't you think the city greatly improved?" They seemed to me to con- found augmentation with improvement. It always had been a fine city, since I first knew it; and it was very greatly augmented. It had, I believe, nearly doubled its extent and number of houses since the year 1799. But, after having been, for so long a time, familiar with London, every other place appeared little. After having lived within a few hundred yards of Westminster Hall, and the Abbey Church, and the Bridge, and looked from my own windows into St James's Park, all other buildings and spots appeared mean and insignificant. I went to see the house I had formerly

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1817 occupied. How small! It is always thus: the  
to words *large* and *small* are carried about with us in  
1819 our minds, and we forget real *dimensions*. All  
nations like to boast of their populousness. It is  
the same with cities and towns. The great subject  
of rivalry between those two fine cities, New  
York and Philadelphia, was that of the number of  
their inhabitants. Nothing tickles the vanity of  
the mass of a community more than the idea of an  
increasing population. The greater part of man-  
kind like to make part of a crowd. Divide a  
crowd at any time: send one part to the right and  
the other to the left: let there be a great many  
more in one parcel than in the other, and the  
beggar man who is in the big parcel, will, for the  
moment, think himself better than the 'squire  
that is in the other parcel.

Leaving Philadelphia, [I passed] through a  
most beautiful country, studded with neat towns  
and villages, and with farm-houses, barns, and  
homesteads, such as I never before saw, and of  
which, without actually seeing them, I could have  
formed no idea; over all this space, amongst all  
these various scenes, I never saw a beggar, nor  
did I see, or hear of, a single person in distress.  
The skirts of the towns were not, as in England,  
rendered loathsome and dismal by miserable habi-  
tations. [However], the dwellings and gardens  
and little out-houses of labourers, which form  
so striking a feature of beauty in England, and  
especially in Kent, Sussex, Surrey, and Hampshire,

*to a Seat in Parliament*

and which constitute a sort of fairy-land, were what I, for my part, most felt the want of seeing. Instead of the neat and warm little cottage, the yard, cow-stable, pig-sty, hen-house, all in miniature, and the garden, nicely laid out and the paths bordered with flowers, while the cottage door is crowned with a garland of roses and honeysuckle; instead of these, we here saw the labourer content with a shell of boards, while all around him was as barren as the sea-beach; though the natural earth would have sent melons, the finest in the world, creeping around his door, and though there was no English shrub, or flower, which would not grow and flourish. This want of attention in such cases was hereditary from the first settlers. They found land so plenty, that they treated small spots with contempt. Besides, the example of neatness was wanting. There were no gentlemen's gardens, kept as clean as drawing rooms, with grass as even as a carpet. From endeavouring to imitate perfection, men arrive at mediocrity; and those who have never seen, or heard of perfection, in these matters, would naturally be slovens. Yet, notwithstanding these blots, as I deemed them, the face of the country was very fine.

[On my way, I saw a great many Pennsylvania wagons.]<sup>2</sup> Perhaps nothing of the kind was ever seen in the world so worthy of admiration as everything belonging to these Pennsylvania wagons. They have a tilt over them, neatly put upon hoops

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1817 of hickory wood, as slender as whale-bone would  
to be, and as tough, if not tougher. A manger for  
1819 horses is hung at the tail of the wagon. The wagon  
carries the provender for man and horse. A  
Pennsylvania wagon is loaded with barrels full of  
fine flour, at three or four hundred miles westward  
of Philadelphia. It carries from three to four ton  
weight. It comes over rocks and along roads  
upon which an Englishman would not believe it  
possible for an empty wagon to go. It has two  
horses abreast next the wagon, with a pole  
between them; two horses abreast before them;  
and one horse in front. The left-hand pole horse  
has a saddle upon him. This horse, the driver  
occasionally rides; and, with the enormous load,  
you see it rattling down hills and over rocks at a  
full trot.

In summer time, the man, wrapped in his  
blanket, sleeps in the wagon. In winter time,  
wrapped in his blanket, he sleeps upon the floor of  
the tavern where he halts, with his feet to the fire  
and his head upon a log of wood. And, as to the  
horses, never do they, in these their journeys, see  
the inside of a stable or feel covering of any sort.  
Five hundred of these wagons, and five times  
five hundred horses may be seen in the high street  
of Philadelphia at one and the same moment. The  
men are taking out their flour or taking in loads to  
carry back; and you see the horses feeding at the  
tail of the wagon, or lying about in the dirt, in the  
snow, or the dust.

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[But yet], in everything where horses are the chief instruments (and horses are second only to men) the English so far surpass all the rest of the world, that there is no room for comparison. The man who has a mind to know something of England in this respect, should walk from the Tower of London to Charing Cross a little after daybreak in the morning, while the streets are clear of people. He would then see the teams of immense horses, drawing up from the bank of the Thames, coals, timber, stone, and other heavy materials. One morning I counted in various places, more than a hundred of these teams, worth each of them, harness, wagon, load and all, little less than a thousand pounds. The horses, upon an average, weigh more than a ton. But, next after a fox-hunt, the finest sight in England is a stage-coach just ready to start. A great sheep or cattle fair is a beautiful sight; but, in the stage-coach you see more of what man is capable of performing. The vehicle itself, the harness, all so completé and so neatly arranged; so strong and clean and good. The beautiful horses impatient to be off. The inside full, and the outside covered in every part, with men, women, children, boxes, bags, bundles. The coach-man, taking his reins in one hand and his whip in the other, gives a signal with his foot, and away go, at the rate of seven miles an hour, the population and the property of a hamlet. The horses are now all sweat and foam, the reek from their bodies ascending like a cloud.

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1817 The whole equipage is covered, perhaps, with  
to dust or dirt. But still, on it comes as steadily as the  
1819 hand of a clock. As a proof of the perfection, to  
which this mode of travelling has been brought,  
there is one coach which goes between Exeter and  
London, the proprietors of which agree to forfeit  
eightpence for every minute that the coach is  
behind its time at any of its stages; and this  
coach, I believe, travels eight miles an hour, and  
that, too, upon very hilly, and, at some seasons,  
very deep roads.

[I reached] Harrisburgh, which lay about a hundred miles from Philadelphia. It had been laid out about thirty years [before], and contained a population nearly equal to that of Winchester. It was close on the left bank of the river Susquehanna, which had not frozen over, but had large quantities of ice floating on its waters. I tired to death of the tavern at Harrisburgh, though a very good one. I was weary of the everlasting loads of meat. Weary of being idle. How few such days had I spent in my whole life.

My business not coming on, I went to a country tavern, to get a room to myself, in which to read my English papers, and [to] sit down to writing. McAllister's tavern was situated at the foot of the first ridge of mountains; or rather, upon a little nook of land, where the river had found a way through a break in the chain of mountains. I had great enjoyment here. My mind was again in England. Mrs McAllister just suited me. [She

*to a Seat in Parliament*

did] not pester me with questions, did not cram 1817  
me with meat, let me eat and drink what I liked, to  
and when I liked, and gave mugs of nice milk. The 1819  
spot was the most delightful that my eyes ever  
beheld. It was at once the most rich and the most  
romantic. From one side of my room I looked out  
into a farm-yard, full of fodder, and of cattle,  
sheep, hogs, and multitudes of poultry, while, at  
a few paces beyond the yard, ran the river Sus-  
quehanna, which was wider than the Thames, and  
had innumerable islands lying in it, a quarter of  
an acre to five or six acres in extent. From the  
other side of my room I looked into an Orchard of  
Apples and Peaches of forty acres, lying in a  
narrow valley, which ran up between two moun-  
tains, about a quarter of a mile high, formed  
precisely like the ridge of a house, the gable ends  
being towards the river. These mountains were  
covered with woods. [One] night it rained: it  
froze before morning, and the frost caught the  
drops hanging upon the trees; so that the sun,  
shining as bright as in England in the month of  
May, exhibited these icicles in countless millions  
of sparkling diamonds.

[I] quitted Harrisburgh, very much displeas'd  
[at the failure of my petition]. Lancaster, [on the  
road to Philadelphia], was a pretty place. No fine  
buildings, but no mean ones. The people of this  
town seem'd to have had the prayer of Hagar  
granted them: "Give me, O Lord, neither poverty  
nor riches". This was a fine part of America. Big



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1817, barns, and modest dwelling-houses. Barns of  
to stone, a hundred feet long and forty wide, with  
1819 two floors, and raised roads to go into them, so  
that the wagons went into the first floor upstairs.  
Below were stables, stalls, pens, and all sorts of  
conveniencs. These were very fine buildings.  
And, then, all about them looked so comfortable,  
and gave such manifest proofs of ease, plenty, and  
happiness!

It was a curious thing to observe the farm-houses in this country. They consisted, almost without exception, of a considerably large and a very neat house, with sash windows, and of a small house, which seemed to have been tacked on to the large one; and, the proportion they bore to each other, in point of dimensions, was, as nearly as possible, the proportion of size between a Cow and her Calf, the latter a month old. But, as to the cause, the process was the opposite of this instance of the works of nature, for, it was the large house which grew out of the small one. The father, or grandfather, while he was toiling for his children, lived in the small house, constructed chiefly by himself, and consisting of rude materials. The means, accumulated in the small house, enabled a son to rear a large one; and though, when pride entered the door, the small house was sometimes demolished, few sons in America had the folly or want of feeling to commit such acts of filial ingratitude, and of real self-debasement. For, what inheritance so valuable and so honourable

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could a son enjoy as the proofs of his father's industry and virtue? The progress of wealth and ease and enjoyment, evinced by this regular increase of the size of the farmer's dwelling, was a spectacle, at once pleasing, in a very high degree in itself, and, in the same degree, it spoke the praise of the system of government, under which it had taken place.

[When] I arrived at Philadelphia, they were roasting an ox on the Delaware. The fooleries of England [were being] copied here, and everywhere, with wonderful avidity. [Soon, however, there was a] complete thaw. I hated this weather; hot upon my back, and melting ice under my feet. The people (those who had been lazy) were chopping away with axes the ice, which had grown out of the snows and rains, before their doors, during the winter. The hogs (best of scavengers) were very busy in the streets seeking out the bones and bits of meat, which had been flung out and frozen down amidst water and snow, during the two foregoing months. At New York (and, I think, at Philadelphia also) they had corporation laws to prevent hogs from being in the streets. For what reason, I knew not, except putrid meat was pleasant to the smell of the inhabitants. But, Corporations are seldom the wisest of law-makers. It was argued, that, if there were no hogs in the streets, the people would not throw out their orts of flesh and vegetables. Indeed! What would they have done with those orts, then? Made

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1817 their hired servants eat them? The very proposi-  
to tion would have left them to cook and wash for  
1819 themselves.

[In returning to New York, I went] in what is called a Jersey-wagon, through such mud as I never saw before. Up to the stock of the wheel; and yet a pair of very little horses dragged us through it. The best horses and driver, and the worst roads I ever set my eyes upon. New Jersey was a sad spèctacle, after leaving the brightest of all the bright parts of Pennsylvania. My driver, who was a tavern-keeper, would have been a very pleasant companion, if he had not drunk so much spirits on the road. This is the great misfortune of America! Ás we were going up a hill very slowly, I could perceive him looking very hard at my cheek for some time. At last, he said: "I am wondering, Sir, to see you look so fresh and so young, considering what you've gone through in the world", though I could not imagine how he had learnt who I was. "I'll tell you", said I, "how I contrived the thing. I rise early, go to bed early, eat sparingly, never drink anything stronger than small-beer, shave once a day, and wash my hands and face clean three times a day, at the very least." He said, that was too much to think of doing.

I got, [at length,] to Elizabeth Town Point through beds of mud, twenty minutes too late for the steam-boat. [The next day,] I went to New York by the steam-boat; over to [Long Island] by

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another, took a little light wagon, that whisked me home over roads as dry and smooth as gravel walks in an English bishop's garden in the month of July. [It was] a great contrast with the bottomless muds of New Jersey!

1817  
to  
1819

There were two things, which were almost wholly wanting in America: the singing birds and the flowers. There were many birds in summer, and some of very beautiful plumage. There were some wild flowers, and some English flowers in the best gardens. But, generally speaking, they were birds without song, and flowers without smell. The linnet (more than a thousand of which I have heard warbling upon one scrubbed oak on the sandhills of Surrey), the skylark, the goldfinch, the woodlark, the nightingale, the bullfinch, the blackbird, the thrush, and all the rest of the singing tribe were wanting in these beautiful woods and orchards of garlands. When these latter had dropped their bloom, all was gone in the flowery way. No shepherd's rose, no honeysuckle, none of that endless variety of beauties that decorate the hedges and the meadows in England. No daisies, no primroses, no cowslips, no bluebells, no daffodils, which, as if it were not enough for them to charm the sight and the smell, must have names, too, to delight the ear. All these were wanting in America. [There were,] indeed, birds, which bore the name of robin, blackbird, thrush, and goldfinch; but, alas! the thing at Westminster has, in like manner, the

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1817 *name* of parliament, and speaks the voice of the  
*to* people whom it pretends to represent, in much  
1819 about the same degree that the blackbird [in  
America] spoke the voice of its namesake in  
England.

I met with an accident from fire [in the summer of 1819]. The house, in which I lived, was burnt down. I should have gone to New York, and remained there till the time of my departure for England; but, when I considered the interruptions which such a removal would occasion, and when I thought of the injury that these and the air of a city might be to my literary labours; I resolved on making a sort of thatched tent, in which I might enjoy tranquillity and in which I might labour without intermission. From this tent, made of poles, thatch, and English newspapers, I had the honour to address [many "Registers"]. Happiness never depends upon mere place. It depends little more on food or raiment. My diet all came from my own fields, and my cow was my vintner and brewer. I was asleep on my straw by nine o'clock, and I was in my orchard before four o'clock. Books and documents were rescued from the flames in Long Island, in consequence only of the extraordinary fidelity, zeal, and courage of my housekeeper, to whom, in my absence, my books and papers had been entrusted. She rushed into the room, which was in flames, and when no man was bold enough to enter it, and dragged out the trunk to the door at the manifest risk of her life.

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I had given her particular charge about the trunk, and in her confusion she had forgotten it until it was nearly too late. Oh! let us not talk, then, about being sick of the world, because we now and then meet with ingratitude and perfidy. [They] would not weigh a feather in the scale against Mrs Churcher. .

1817  
to  
1819

That melancholy, mean fellow, Doctor Johnson, observes, that when a man plants a tree, he begins to think of dying. If this were the fact, is that to prevent the planting of trees? I have been planting of trees in every spot that I have ever occupied, all my life time; and, [in America,] I collected seeds of trees to carry home, and to sow in England. I expected to sit under the shade of the trees which [those] seeds would produce; and, if I only saw them six inches high, had I not the enjoyment of so much of them? [The same,] in seeking justice on our oppressors: if we die before we have obtained that justice, we enjoy, in the meanwhile, the blows we inflict on them. We enjoy their fears, their embarrassments, their disgrace, their infamy. If I wrote grammars, if I wrote on agriculture; if I sowed, planted, or dealt in seeds; whatever I did had first in view the destruction of infamous tyrants.

I resolved, while in [America], to write an account of the Life, Labours, and death of that famous Englishman, Thomas Paine;<sup>3</sup> and, perhaps, to collect and republish the whole of his writings complete in a cheap form, and with some

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1817 explanatory notes to the "Rights of Man" parti-  
to cularly. I had within my reach all the means of  
1819 correct information. There was only Long Island  
Sound and a few miles of land between me and the  
spot where he died. Justice in his memory,  
justice to the cause of freedom, justice to the  
country that gave him birth, justice to his friends  
on both sides the Atlantic, demanded at my hands  
an earnest endeavour to perform this task in a  
manner worthy of the subject. [For in spite of my  
early hatred], old age having laid his hand upon  
this truly great man, this truly philosophical  
politician, at his expiring flambeau I lighted my  
taper.

I published my intention of writing an account  
of [his] life. Soon after this, a Quaker at New  
York, named Charles Collins, made many applica-  
tions for an interview with me, which at last, he  
obtained. I found that his object was to persuade  
me that Paine had recanted. I laughed at him,  
and sent him away. But, he returned again and  
again to the charge. He wanted me to promise  
him that I would say "that it was said" that  
Paine recanted. "No", said I, "but, I will say,  
that you say it, and that you tell a lie unless you  
prove the truth of what you say; and if you do  
that, I shall gladly insert the fact." This posed  
"friend Charley", whom I suspected to be a most  
consummate hypocrite. He had a sodden face, a  
simper, and manœuvred his features, precisely  
like the most perfidious wretch. He was the

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reverse of my honest, open, and sincere Quaker friends, the Paulls of Pennsylvania. Friend Charley plied me with remembrances and reasonings; but, I always answered him, "Give me proof; or I denounce you as a liar". Thus put to his trumps, Friend Charley resorted to the aid of a person of his own stamp; and, at last, brought me a paper, very cautiously and craftily drawn up; [containing] only the initials of the names. I made him, at last, put down the full name and the address of the informer, "Mary Hinsdale, No. 10 Albany Street, New York".

1817  
to  
1819

The informer was a Quaker woman, who, at the time of Mr Paine's last illness, was a servant in the family of Mr Willett Hicks, an eminent merchant, a Quaker, and even, I believe, a Quaker preacher. Mr Hicks, a kind and liberal rich man, visited Mr Paine in his illness, and, from his house, which was near that of Mr Paine, little nice things (as is the practice in America) were sometimes sent to him; of which this servant, friend Mary, was the bearer, and this was the way, in which the lying cant got into the room of Mr Paine.

To "Friend Mary" I went, with friend Charley's paper in my pocket. I found her in a lodging in a back room up one flight of stairs. I knew that I had no common cunning to set my wits against. I began with all the art that I was master of. I had got a prodigiously broad-brimmed hat on. I patted a little child that she had sitting beside her; I called her *friend* and played all the awkward



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1817 tricks of an undisciplined wheedler. But, I was  
to compelled to come quickly to business. She asked,  
1819 "What's thy name, friend"? and, the moment I  
said *William Cobbett*, up went her mouth as tight  
as a purse! Sack-making appeared to be her  
occupation; and that I might not extract through  
her eyes that which she was resolved I should not  
get out of her mouth, she went and took up a sack,  
and began to sew: and not another look or glance  
could I get from her.

However, I took out my paper, read it, and  
stopping at several points, asked her if it was true.  
She shuffled; she evaded, she equivocated, she  
warded off; she affected not to understand the  
paper; not to remember. The result was: that it  
was so long ago, that she could not speak posi-  
tively: and that she had never given "friend  
Charley" authority to say anything about the  
matter in her name. "Oh! no! Friend, I tell thee,  
that I have no recollection of any person or any-  
thing that I saw at Thomas Paine's house."

I had now nothing to do but bring Friend  
Charley's nose to the grindstone. But, Charley,  
who was a grocer, living in Cherry Street, though  
so pious a man, and, doubtless, in great haste to  
get to everlasting bliss, had moved out of the city  
for fear of the [Yellow] Fever. And thus he  
escaped me, who sailed from New York in four  
days afterward. [My business with Paine, for  
other reasons, was never completed.]

After twenty-one days sailing over a sea almost

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

as smooth as the beautiful Long Island Lake, I <sup>1817</sup> arrived at Liverpool, on a Sunday evening, [in <sup>to</sup> November 1819]. We were not permitted to land <sup>1819</sup> until Monday about two o'clock. There had been a great multitude assembled on the wharf the whole of the day; and, when I landed, I was received with cheers and with shakings of the hand, which made me feel that I was once again in England. I soon learned that the whole county of Lancashire was in a stir to give me a hearty welcome. The news of my arrival, upon reaching Bolton, was announced by a man, who went round the town with a bell. He stopped at different parts of the town, and, after ringing his bell, said: "Our countryman, William Cobbett, is arrived at Liverpool in good health." This man, for this act, was taken before a Magistrate.

On Sunday, the 28th of November, I, accompanied by [my sons] William and John, left Liverpool, on my road to Manchester, which I had been invited to visit, and where I had been invited to partake of a dinner on the Monday. We proceeded on our way to an Inn at a little hamlet called Irlam, which was within ten miles of Manchester. There we slept, and, the next morning prepared to get into our coach and to go to receive the welcome intended for us. A deputation had arrived to accompany us on the way, when, not to my surprise at all, arrived a messenger on horseback with a notification from the Borough-reeves and Constables of Manchester and Salford,

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1817. interdicting any further advance toward the  
to Town! It would have been really criminal in me  
1819 to proceed, for the purpose of receiving marks of  
approbation, and without any other purpose,  
when there manifestly would have been danger to  
the lives of some persons or other if the military  
had been brought out to obstruct my entrance  
into Manchester.<sup>4</sup>

We went back to Warrington and took the road to London; not, however, before I took an opportunity to make a short address to about two hundred persons who had assembled round the Inn, some of whom had come on foot all the way from Manchester. I shall never forget the looks of these men, and, indeed, of these women, for there were some of both sexes. My hand yet reminds me of the hard squeeze I had from them; and, [it is well known,] how great a favourite of mine a hard squeeze of the hand is.

We arrived at Coventry late on the evening of the 30th. When I came down into a front room of the house to breakfast, [the next day,] I found a great number of persons assembled in the street opposite the house; and finding that they were there for the purpose of seeing me, I informed them that I should set off in precisely an hour. When we started a great number followed us to a distance of about a mile out of the city, where there was an open space on the side of the road, surrounded by some high banks. Having drawn the chaise up in a suitable position, and having

*to a Seat in Parliament*

placed myself upon the outside of the chaise on, 1817  
the foot-board, I found myself surrounded by to  
several thousands of persons of both sexes, the 1819  
females forming a very beautiful battalion, many  
of them with children in their arms, in one part  
of the circle, not mixed among the men, while  
other persons, were running towards us not only  
along the track of the chaise from the city, but in  
all directions over the fields and meadows. This  
was not a meeting. There had been nothing done  
to call it together. It was spontaneous, it was  
collected of itself, by the mere sound of my name.  
Never did I behold any spectacle in my whole life  
that gave me so much pleasure as this.

[My son] William and I [went] down from  
London [to Botley in December]. The people of  
the village, notwithstanding the threats of the  
Parson, came to meet us upon the hill on the  
Winchester road. They took out the horses and  
drew us into the village, whence, after I had  
shortly addressed them, they took us to [my]  
house. The farm was in very neat order, the turn-  
pike perfectly good, the trees monstrously grown;  
the American trees of finer growth than any that  
I ever saw in America of the same age.

## CHAPTER XII

1820-1825

\* \* \* \* \*

1820 [AFTER MY RETURN, THOUGH] MY HEART  
*to* was always at home, [I had to] have my mind and  
1825 hand [in London]. We started a daily paper.<sup>1</sup> It  
was a trying time and fortitude was required.  
[My] boys were wonders of activity and sense and  
spirit. [And then, the opportunity coming, I  
resolved to stand for Parliament again.]

I set off for Coventry with [my eldest daughter],  
on the 28th of February. We went all the night  
(the coldest of the winter) in a post-chaise; break-  
fasted at Daventry, and then proceeded on to-  
wards Dunchurch, which is eleven miles from  
Coventry. Here we were met by messengers who  
brought accounts that I should certainly be mur-  
dered, if I attempted to enter the city. A band of  
rich ruffians had leagued together against me.  
They had got together a parcel of men, whom they  
made partly drunk, and whom they gave orders  
to go out, meet me at a bridge about a mile from  
the city, and if I refused to return to London, to  
fling me over the bridge.

While we were deliberating on what course to  
pursue, a gentleman arrived with intelligence,  
that the enemy had drawn up, rank and file, in

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

the city; that they were marching off with four-<sup>1820</sup>  
teen banners waving over their heads, and with <sup>to</sup>  
drums and music in their front; and that they had <sup>1825</sup>  
not reached the outside of the city, when our  
friends sallied forth upon them, took away their  
banners, staved in their drums, dispersed them  
in all directions, and set off to meet me.

At about four miles from Coventry, we met  
with small advanced parties of young men, with  
leaves of laurel in their hats and boughs in their  
hands. The groups grew more frequent and larger  
as we approached the city. The curiosity to see  
me was so strongly expressed, that I was obliged  
to get out of the chaise and stand upon the foot-  
board with my hat off. I was drawn through all  
the principal streets [for] two hours, in [the] frosty  
evening, part after sunset, [and] the loss of my  
voice, [from the chill,] was nearly as complete as  
if I had been dumb from my birth.

[My] friends, satisfied with the victory of the  
day, had retired to their houses, when the savages  
sallied forth, dashed in the windows of the house  
of Mr Serjeant, at which I was, and made many  
brutal attacks upon individuals, whom they took  
unawares in the street or at public-houses. Even  
at this early period they cut several persons with  
knives. On Monday, the sixth of March, Moore  
and Ellice [my opponents] arrived, and as a  
signal of their arrival, their hired savages again  
dashed in the windows of Mr Serjeant. Upon this  
occasion, [they] made an attempt to enter the

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1820 house; but, they, after getting into the passage,  
*to* were beaten back into the street.

1825 On Wednesday morning, the election began; and the poll closed in the afternoon, leaving me at the head of it! On Thursday, the savages came well fed and well supplied, all the day long, with gin and brandy, brought out to them in glass bottles, and handed about from one to another. I, that day, saw about twenty of my voters actually torn away from the polling-place, and ripped up behind, and stripped of their coats. During the afternoon, several fresh bands of savages [arrived] from the country; so that, by the hours of closing the poll, an immense multitude of these wretches roaring like wolves, and foaming with rage and drink, were collected round the Booth.

[As] I went out of the Booth, I had to pass through bands of savages; and I was scarcely among them, when they began an endeavour to *press me down*. I got many blows in the sides, and, if I had been either a short or a weak man, I would have been pressed under foot, and inevitably killed. However, the crowd took a sway toward a row of houses, standing on a pavement above the level of the area of the open street. With a good deal of difficulty I reached the pavement keeping my feet. I had to fight with my right hand. I had to strike back-handed. One of the sharp corners of [my] snuff-box, which stuck out beyond the bottom of my little finger, did good

## to a Seat in Parliament

service. It cut noses and eyes at a famous rate, 1820  
and assisted mainly in securing my safe arrival, to  
on the raised pavement. Just at this time, one of 1825  
the savages exclaimed: "damn him, I'll rip him  
up". He was running his hand into his breeches  
pocket, apparently to take out his knife, but I  
drew up my right leg, armed with a new and sharp  
gallashe over my boot, [and] dealt [the] ripping  
savage so delightful a blow, just between his two  
eyes, that he fell back upon his followers. For  
this I should certainly have been killed in a few  
moments, had not Mr Frank Serjeant made shift  
to get along, by the side of the houses, to the spot  
where I was. [Getting] to me, he turned round,  
saying, *follow me, Sir*, and, beating back three or  
four so as to make them press upon others behind  
them, the whole body turned about, while he with  
thumps on some, with kicks bestowed on others,  
set the body on a sway toward the house, at which  
we arrived safely.

[The next day], we were informed that the  
bands had been greatly augmented from the  
country; that they were now divided in regular  
bodies, fed and drenched at different houses, regu-  
larly paid, and ready to be brought out in succes-  
sion, in order to relieve each other. When the poll  
opened, we had between three and four hundred  
men, all ready to poll; all was quiet. The Booth  
had no railway, or any other protection for the  
voters. The ground, too, was sloping, and the  
slope ran longways of the Booth. So that, though



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1820, my men might be ready to poll, it was by no means  
to difficult to force them away.

1825 The Ruffians came, not less than five hundred in number, in regular order, about eight or ten deep, with drums and banners at their head. They made their approach by the higher part of the ground, [and] began the attack upon my voters. All attempts to resist were in vain. And, in five minutes, three hundred of my voters were as completely driven away as if an army had made an attack upon them. After this, not a man dared to show his face to vote for me.

The way I managed [these] brutes was well calculated to sting them and their employers to madness. My way was to stand and look upon the yelling beasts with a most good-humoured smile, turning my head now and then, as it were to take different views. Now and then, I would put my mouth close to the ear of some friend, and then point to some beast, giving him at the same time a laughing look, such as we bestow on a dog that is chained up and barking at us. I never had so good an opportunity to philosophize before. The scene was far more horrible than anything of which any man not actually present, could have formed an idea. The bottles of gin and brandy continually passed from mouth to mouth; and, from the mass of heads which were closely jammed together, there arose a reek, or steam, just like the reek that rises, in a morning, from a heating dung hill. What was still more shocking and disgusting

*to a Seat in Parliament*

than all the rest, was the sight of the wives and daughters of the Rich Ruffians, who were seated on the balconies and at the windows, looking directly down upon this scene, and discovering every symptom of satisfaction and delight, at hearing what would have made a bevy of common prostitutes hang their heads with shame. I remember seeing crowds of prostitutes on the Point at Portsmouth; and, I once saw three hundred on board of a Seventy-Four at Spithead; but I never before saw anything in the shape of woman, that would have remained and listened to what appeared to give delight to [those] wives and daughters.

The [savages finally] conceived the idea of driving me out of the city. [They] made a regular attack upon Mr Serjeant's house. They first dashed in the upper-room windows; next they pulled down the shutters of the ground-floor room. They then broke into the house passage by forcing the door; and while the main body were entering in front, others were (as we could see from the window of our room) scaling a wall to get into the house in the rear. I, who was very ill with a cold, was sitting in my bedroom with my [daughter] Nancy. Some gentlemen came running up for our poker and tongs. One or two took station at the top of the stairs; while I fixed the bedstead in a way to let the door open no wider than to admit one man only at a time, and stood with a sword. I had pulled off my coat, and was prepared to give

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1820 with a clear conscience, as hearty a thrust as was  
to ever given by man.

1825 However, their cowardize soon put an end to  
the siege. They entered the passage, stabbed one  
man twice in his arm and did some other mischief:  
retreated hastily into the street. The thing went  
off without bodily hurt to any but our friends!  
And the natural-consequence was, that the poor  
men who wished to vote for me dared no longer  
even talk of it! We got some firearms, and were  
quite secure in the house; but, as to the election,  
there remained nothing belonging to it worthy of  
the name. [I stood at the bottom of the poll.]\*

[In this same year, money troubles came upon  
me again. I owed money to Sir Francis Burdett  
and others, and I had written the former] a letter  
from America, containing an assertion, that a  
man against whom ruinous laws had been singly  
pointed, was, by the law of nations, exonerated  
from obligations by which men, not so singled

\* Letter from J. M. Cobbett to his brother James, at  
New York; dated London: 12 April 1820.

“Papa has failed in his election, and he has been so ill-  
used by several persons, to whom he owed money, that he  
will shortly be compelled to surrender himself, and to  
yield up all the property he has, though he could so easily  
clear off all the claims upon him, and though he is so  
anxious to do it to the last farthing. But, the spiteful  
villains, urged on no doubt by the Government, will not  
give him any time at all, and, therefore, he must take  
the usual protection of the law, and be either a bankrupt  
or an insolvent; and we all insist that he ought to do  
it....” See *Cobbett Papers*.

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out, were bound; but, at the same time, saying, <sup>1820</sup> that I would not avail myself of that principle.<sup>2</sup> <sup>to</sup> [Though,] for seven long years, I had been his sole <sup>1825</sup> prop, the ungrateful fellow, keeping the letter out of sight, published an answer to it, misrepresenting its meaning. A good large volume would not have contained the facts that I had collected for him; the notes that I had made for his speeches; the various things that I had written to uphold him. Two particularly I must mention. His sensible speech on the currency, recorded in "Paper Against Gold", I wrote out for him, and then published it and praised it as his. In 1812, he moved the answer to the King's Speech, or, rather, the Regent's. I wrote the answer and the speech; and the former was copied by his own daughter, that my hand might not appear. Nay, these were published in a pamphlet, by subscription, and I was myself the greatest subscriber! Shame, indeed, would it be to relate this; but, what has he left undone that he thought had a tendency to destroy my character!

I had sent a copy of the same letter [from America] to my friend Mr Timothy Brown. He did [not] cavil at it; but, though then bandaged up for the gout, took me to his house [and] brought on my bankruptcy in the most friendly manner. [And] Mr Tipper, a paper-maker, to whom I owed £3000, and with whom I was but slenderly acquainted, signed my certificate at the first possible moment; and he, or Mr Brown, I

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• 1820 forget which, actually gave me a pound note and  
to a few shillings, that I might, for form's sake, have  
1825 something to surrender to the commissioners.  
[These] commissioners, seeing a great crowd in Guildhall staring at me, behaved towards me in a manner that showed the best of feelings; put no questions to me, dismissed me in a minute, and very kindly shook me by the hand when I went away. Everyone, even the bitterest political enemy; everyone felt, but Burdett. The old Lord Chancellor [Eldon], though he had advocated the bills that had ruined me, signed my certificate out of rule: "It is too late", said the officer: "his Lordship will not sign any more until such a day". I wrote my name upon a bit of paper, and begged him just to show it to the Chancellor. When he came out, he smiled with surprise, and said, "His Lordship will sign it". Every soul but that of Burdett was softened.

In January 1821, my family, after having for years been scattered about like a covey of partridges that had been sprung and shot at, got once more together in a hired lodging at Brompton. I was without one single article of furniture of my own; and, when we were all got together in that lodging, all that we could muster out of all our pockets, were three shillings and a few halfpence! No man to let me have paper to print the next Register upon, without having the money first; no man to print that Register, unless he had the money down before he began to print, or unless

## *to a Seat in Parliameht*

he had guarantee for that money from somebody • 1820 •  
besides me! A friend lent me twenty pounds to <sup>to</sup>  
purchase the paper with, and the printing was 1825  
done by some arrangement which I have now  
forgotten.

This was a season to try what a man and his family were made of. Here, indeed, was fortitude required, not only on my part, but on the part of every one of my family old enough to think. Mrs Williams of Brompton [could tell] whether she ever lodged a more happy or cheerful family. Our delight and our mutual caresses, and our tears of joy, experienced no abatement at our actually finding ourselves with only three shillings in the whole world.

Since that day, what, Good God!, have been my labours! A "Register" every week; nearly 500 "Registers", more than enough to occupy the whole time of any other man; my French Grammar, Woodlands, Gardening Book, Cottage Economy, Sermons,, Protestant Reformation, Corn-Book, Advice to Young Men, and Guide to Emigrants, besides all my labours and cares about everything that I could possibly think of, leading to the good of my country.

My endeavours to stop the evil [facing my country] in time [had now] cost me the earnings of twenty long years! I did not sink, no, nor bend, beneath the heavy and reiterated blows of the accursed system, [but] dealt back blow for blow; and, blessed be God, I now saw it feel! It was

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1820<sup>r</sup> staggering about like a sheep with water in the  
to head: turning its p<sup>r</sup>te up on one side: seeming to  
1825 listen, but had no hearing: seeming to look, but  
had no sight: one day it capered and danced: the  
next it moped and seemed ready to die.

Approbation [was again] bestowed on my  
"Trash",<sup>3</sup> which had, for 30 many years, been a  
mark for the finger of scorn to be pointed at by  
ignorant and arrogant and selfish power. [That]  
"Trash" was now triumphant; its triumph  
[people] met to celebrate. Proofs of its triumph  
I myself witnessed [at Norwich at a public dinner  
given to me]. In walking through St Andrew's  
hall [there], my mind was not so much engaged  
on the grandeur of the place, or on the gratifying  
reception I met with. The melancholy reflection  
engaged my mind, that, of the two thousand  
farmers then in my view, there were probably  
three-fourths who came with aching hearts. What  
a thing to contemplate! A set of men, occupiers  
of the land; producers of all that we ate, drank,  
wore, and of all that formed the buildings that  
sheltered us; a set of men industrious and careful  
by habit; cool, thoughtful, and sensitive from the  
instructions of nature; engaged in pursuits in their  
nature as stable as the very earth they tilled: to  
see a set of men like this plunged into anxiety,  
embarrassments, jeopardy, would have been more  
than sufficient to sink my heart within me, had  
I not been upheld by the reflection, that I had  
done all in my power to prevent calamities, and

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that I still had in reserve that which, with the assistance of the sufferers themselves, would restore them and the nation to happiness. 1820  
to  
1825

[In April I went, with my family, to a convenient house at Kensington.] I was here most delightfully situated. We kept five fine cows. We had a pigeon-house to hold a hundred pair; and [my youngest son] Dick was the grand pigeon-master. Pigs in styce, and a most abundant and fruitful garden. [My] publications, particularly the "Sermons", were more famous than ever; [there were] no villains to cheat us any more.

[I began, too, to ride about the country, and when] I had put an end to my ride of August, September, and October 1826, I had travelled [hundreds of miles]. I had been in cities, market towns, and villages. During the whole of [these rides] I was rarely abed after daylight; I drank neither wine nor spirits. As to drink, the less the better; and mine was milk and water, or, not-sour small beer, if I could get the latter. I liked the milk and water best; for, if I drank much milk, it loaded and stupefied and made me fat. I ate no vegetables, and only a very moderate quantity of meat. Many days I had no breakfast and no dinner. I sometimes took, from a friend's house, a little bit of meat between two bits of bread, which I ate as I rode along. Whoever tries it will find, that the less they eat and drink, when travelling, the better they will be. But, whatever I saved from this fasting work, I thought I had a



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1820 clear right to give away; and, accordingly, I  
to generally put the amount, in copper, into my  
1825 waistcoat pocket, and disposed of it during the  
day. I knew well, that I was better for not stuffing  
and blowing myself out, and with the savings I  
now and then gave a whole family a good meal  
with the cost of a breakfast, or a dinner, that  
would have done me mischief. \*

During [these rides] I was several times wet to the skin. At some times of my life, after having indulged for a long while in coddling myself up in the house, these soakings would have frightened me half out of my senses; but I [learnt to] care very little about them, and, it was very seldom that rain, come when it would, prevented me from performing the day's journey that I had laid out beforehand. Now, this was the advantage of going about on horseback. On foot, the fatigue was too great and you went too slowly. In any sort of carriage you could not get into the real country places. To travel in stage-coaches was to be hurried along by force, in a box, with an air-hole in it, and constantly exposed to broken limbs, the danger being much greater than that of shipboard, and the noise much more disagreeable, while the company was frequently not a great deal more to one's liking.

Could you have seen and heard what I saw and heard during [my] Rural [Rides], you would [not have said] that the House "worked well". [There] were two hundred thousand men, who by the Acts

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of this same House, saw wives and children doomed 1820  
to beggary, and to beggary too never thought of, 1825  
never regarded as more likely than a blowing up  
of the earth or a falling of the sun. It was reserved  
for this "working well" House to make the fire-  
sides of the farmers scenes of gloom. These facts  
were notorious: the House had made all the loans  
which constituted the Debt: the House had put  
a stop to gold payments in 1819; the House had  
unanimously passed Peel's Bill [in 1819].<sup>4</sup> Here  
were all the causes of the ruin, the misery, the  
anguish, the despair.

[In 1822] I went to Beauworth to inquire after  
the family of a worthy old farmer, whom I had  
known there some years [before]. A bridle road  
over some fields and through a coppice took me  
to Kilmston, formerly a large village, but now  
mouldered into two farms, and a few miserable  
tumble-down houses for the labourers. Here was  
a house, that had been the residence of the land-  
lord of the place, but was now occupied by one of  
the farmers. Kilmston had belonged to a Mr Ridge  
who had been a famous fox-hunter, and who was  
accused of having spent his fortune in that way.  
He had a right to spend his income, as his father's  
had done before him. It was the Pitt-system, and  
not the fox-hunting, that took away the principal.

[On the same journey I] crossed the River Wey.  
Here I found a parcel of labourers at parish-work.  
Amongst them was an old playmate of mine. The  
account they gave me of their situation was very

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1820 dismal. The harvest was over early. The hop-  
to picking was over; and they were employed by the  
1825 parish; that was to say, not absolutely digging  
holes one day and filling them up the next, but at  
the expense of half-ruined farmers and tradesmen  
and landlords, to break stones into very small  
pieces to make nice smooth roads lest the jolting,  
in going along them, should create *colic* in the  
stomachs of tax-eaters. [This] was a state of  
things where all was out of order; where self-  
preservation, that great law of nature, seemed to  
be set at defiance; for here were farmers unable to  
pay men to work for them, and yet compelled to  
pay them for working in doing, that which was  
really of no use to any human being. There lay  
the hop-poles unstripped. You saw a hundred  
things in the neighbouring fields that wanted  
doing. The fences were not nearly what they ought  
to have been. The very meadows, to my right and  
left in crossing [the] little valley, would have oc-  
cupied these men advantageously until the setting  
in of the frost; and here were they, not, as I said  
before, actually digging holes one day and filling  
them up the next; but, to all intents and purposes,  
as uselessly employed.

I am sure I saw produce enough in [some] farm-  
yards, to feed the whole of the population of  
[some] parishes. But the infernal system caused  
it all to be carried away. Not a bit of good beef,  
or mutton, or veal, and scarcely a bit of bacon  
was left for those who raised all this food. The

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labourers looked as if they were half-starved. 1820  
Good God! what a life to live! What a life to see to  
people live; to see this sight in our own country, 1825  
and to have had the base vanity to boast of that  
country, and to talk of our "constitution" and  
our "liberties". The fact was, that, where honest  
and laborious men could be compelled to starve  
quietly, with old wheat ricks and fat cattle under  
their eyes, it was a mockery to talk of their  
"liberty" of any sort; for, the sum total of their  
state was this, they had "liberty" to choose be-  
tween death by starvation (quick or slow) and  
death by the halter! I really was ashamed to ride  
a fat horse, to have a full belly, and to have a clean  
shirt on my back, while I looked at these wretched  
countrymen of mine.

However, even this was necessary, as long as  
[the] bank-note system continued; and all com-  
plaints about severity of laws, levelled at the poor,  
were useless and foolish. What, short, of such laws,  
could prevent starving men from coming to take  
away the dinners of those who had plenty? "Edu-  
cation"! Despicable cant and nonsense! What  
education, what moral precepts, could quiet the  
cravings and ragings of hunger?

[Look,] for a minute, to the little village of  
Stoke-Charity, near to Winchester, that grand  
scene of ancient learning, piety, and munificence.  
The parish formerly contained ten farms, and it  
contained but two [in 1824]. There used to be ten  
well-fed families in this parish, at any rate; and

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1820 [in 1824] all were half starved except the curate  
to and two families. The blame was not the land-  
1825 lord's; it was nobody's; it was due to the infernal  
funding and taxing system, which of necessity  
drove property into large masses in order to save  
itself; which crushed little proprietors down into  
labourers; and which pressed them down in that  
state and made them paupers, their share of food  
and raiment being taken away to support debt  
and dead-weight and army and all the rest of the  
enormous expenses, which were required to sus-  
tain [the] intolerable system. Those, therefore,  
were fools or hypocrites, who affected to wish to  
better the lot of the poor labourers, while they, at  
the same time, either actively or passively, upheld  
the system which was the manifest cause of [all].  
The coaxing work of schools could only add to  
what was quite enough without them.

I have never been able clearly to comprehend what the beastly Scotch *feelosofers* meant by their "national wealth"; but, as far as I could understand them, this was their meaning: that national wealth meant, that which was left of the products of the country over and above what was consumed, or used, by those whose labour had caused the products to be. This being the notion, it followed, of course, that the fewer poor devils you could screw the products out of, the richer the nation was. What, then, was to be done with this over-produce? Was it to go to pensioners, placemen, gendarmerie, and, in short, to whole millions, who

*to a Seat in Parliamen*

did no work at all? By national prosperity, [such] 1820  
writers meant something very different indeed to  
from that which I, who had no desire to live upon 1825  
taxes, should have called national prosperity.  
They looked upon it as being demonstrated in the  
increase of the number of chariots and fine-dressed  
people in and about the purlieus of the court. This  
was a demonstration of the increase of the taxes,  
and nothing more. National prosperity shows it-  
self in very different ways: in the plentiful meal,  
the comfortable dwelling, the decent furniture  
and dress, the healthy and happy countenances,  
and the good morals, of the labouring classes of  
the people. National wealth means, the Common-  
wealth, or Commonweal; and these mean, the  
general good, or happiness of the people, and the  
safety and honour of the state; and, these were  
not to be secured by robbing those who laboured,  
in order to support a large part of the community  
in idleness.)

[One had only] to look, at the face of the country,  
including [the] Wen [of London], to behold the  
effects of taking property from one man and  
giving it to another. The monstrous streets and  
squares, and circuits, and crescents; the pulling  
down of streets and building up new ones; the  
making of bridges and tunnels, till the Thames  
itself trembled at the danger of being marched  
and undermined: the everlasting ripping-up of  
pavements and the tumbings up of the earth to  
form drains and sewers, till all beneath us was like a

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1820 honeycomb.\* [One had only] to look at the thou-  
to sands employed in cracking the stones upon the  
1825 highways, while the docks and thistles and couch-  
grass were choking the land on the other side of  
the hedges; to see England, land of plenty and  
never-ending stores, without an old wheat rick,  
and with not more than a stock of two-thirds the  
former cattle upon the farms: to see the troops of  
half-starved creatures flocking from the fields,  
and, in their smock-frocks and nailed shoes, beg-  
ging their way up to [the cities], in order to get a  
chance snap at the crumbs and the orts rejected by  
idleness and luxury—of all the destructive things  
that could fall upon a nation; of all the horrid  
curses that could afflict it, none was equal to that  
of robbing productive labour of its reward, of  
taking from the industrious and giving to the idle.

\* My Lord Holland disfigured and half spoiled his beautiful park and farm at Kensington, during the building madness of “matchless prosperity” of 1824 and 1825. When, in the former of those years, I saw “Addison Road” come and cut his beautiful farm across, and when I saw “Cato Cottage” and “Homer Villa” start up on the side of that road, I said, My Lord will pay pretty dearly for his taste for the “classics”. These “classics” are, sometimes, not very safe guides even in matters of a merely literary nature. So long, however, as you confine your enthusiasm to paper and print, you merely expose yourself to ridicule; but when your taste pushes you on to the levelling of banks, the tearing up of trees, the felling of oaks fifty years old, and, above all the rest, to dabbling in brick and mortar, the classics become most perilous and pernicious companions!

*to a Seat in Parliament*

To have plenty of everything that made life easy and pleasant was formerly one of the great characteristics of the English people. Good eating, good drinking, good clothing, good lodging; without these people do not really live: it is staying upon the earth. Good government is known from bad government by this infallible test: that, under the former, the labouring people are well fed and well clothed, and under the latter, they are badly fed and badly clothed.

1820  
to  
1825

It was deeply interesting to observe how the taste of this country appeared to have changed. The fashion became to cry up spare diet, and to preach content with hunger. One of the Tracts put forth by canting hypocrites who pretended to exclusive grace, was entitled "The Life of Peter Kennedy, who lived on, and saved money out of eighteen pence a week". And this to his praise, mind! I never considered empty bellies and ragged backs as marks of the grace of God. [Never] did we, until these days, hear of millions of "Tracts, Moral and Religious" for the purpose of keeping the poor from cutting the throats of the rich. The parson's sermon, once a week or a fortnight, used to be quite sufficient for the religion and morals of a village. Now we had a busy creature or two in every village, dancing about with "Tracts" for the benefit of the souls of the labourers and their families. The gist of the whole of the "Tracts" was to inculcate content in a state of misery! To teach people to starve without



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1820 making a noise! What did all this show? Why, a  
to consciousness on the part of the rich, that the poor  
1825 had not fair play; and that the former wished to  
obtain security against the latter by coaxing.

A parson said to me, once, by letter: "Your religion, Mr Cobbett, seems to me to be altogether political". "Very much so indeed", answered I, "and well it may, since I have been furnished with a creed which makes part of an Act of Parliament." And, the fact is, I am no Doctor of Divinity, and like a religion, any religion, that tends to make men innocent and benevolent and happy, by taking the best possible means of furnishing them with plenty to eat and drink and wear.

Once, coming through the village of Benenden, I heard a man talking very loudly about houses! houses! houses! It was a Methodist parson, in a house, close by the roadside. I pulled up, and stood still, in the middle of the road, but looking, in silent soberness, into the window (which was open) of the room in which the preacher was at work. I believe my stopping rather disconcerted him; for he got into shocking repetition. "Do you KNOW", said he, laying great stress on the word KNOW:—"do you KNOW, that you have ready for you houses, houses I say; I say do you KNOW; do you KNOW that you have houses in the heavens not made with hands?" And, on he went to say, that, if Jesus had told them so, they would be saved, and that if he had not, and did not, they would be damned. Some girls whom I saw in the

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room, plump and rosy as could be, did not seem at all daunted by these menaces; and indeed, they appeared to me to be thinking much more about getting houses in this world first: houses with pigstyes and little snug gardens attached to them, together with all other domestic and conjugal circumstances. The truth is, these fellows had no power over the minds of any but the miserable. •

A full belly to the labourer was, in my opinion, the foundation of public morals and the only source of real public peace. It was with this opinion in my mind, that I wrote and published my little work, called "Cottage Economy".<sup>5</sup> It was written at North Lodge, a farm-house in Sussex, whither I had gone to reside for some time, for the purpose of teaching [my] youngest son how to go about in the fields and the woods and the lanes; teaching him to ride upon a pony, and to begin to be hardy and strong. I do not deny that Mrs Brazier, the farmer's wife, helped me a great deal; for she, though then nearly eighty years of age, had brought up forty children and grandchildren, and had it said of her, that she had done more work herself than any woman in Sussex; and that there was not a working-man or woman in the parish who had not, first or last, either resided or been fed under her roof; and though she could neither write nor read, understood well the making of bread, the brewing of beer, the keeping of cows, the rearing of pigs, and was able to teach me practically, all that I myself did not know

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1820 touching the subjects upon which I was writing.  
to To her, who is now dead, I thus record my  
1825 acknowledgements.

[With this book] I did more good than Bailey, [who once judged me,] ever did in the whole course of his life, notwithstanding his pious Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer. I will allow nothing to be good, with regard to the labouring classes, unless it make an addition to their victuals, drink, or clothing. As to their minds, that was much too sublime a matter for me to think about. I knew that they were in rags, and that they had not a belly-full; and I knew that the way to make them good; to make them honest, to make them dutiful, to make them kind to one another, was to enable them to live well; and I also knew that none of these things would ever be accomplished by Methodist sermons, and by stupid, at once stupid and malignant things, and roguish things, called Religious Tracts.

[I must add that I brought back from my rides] the most pleasing impressions. It is not for [me] to descend to particulars in characterizing personal friends; and, therefore, I will content myself with saying, that the treatment I met with was much more than sufficient to compensate me, personally, for all the atrocious calamities, which, for twenty years, I had had to endure.

## CHAPTER XIII

1825-1830

ALL OUR PROPERTIES, ALL OUR LAWS, ALL 1825  
our manners, all our minds changed. This, which *to*  
I noticed, took place within forty, and, most of it, 1830  
within ten years. The small gentry, to about the  
third rank upwards (considering there to be five  
ranks from the smallest gentry up to the greatest  
nobility), all went, nearly to a man, and the small  
farmers along with them. The Barings alone,<sup>1</sup> I  
should think, swallowed up thirty or forty of these  
small gentry without perceiving it. They, indeed,  
swallowed up the biggest race of all; but, in-  
numerable small fry slipped down unperceived,  
like caplins down the throats of sharks while these  
latter feel only the cod-fish. It frequently hap-  
pened, too, that a big gentleman or nobleman,  
whose estate had been big enough to resist for a  
long while, and who had swilled-up many caplin-  
gentry, went down the throat of the loan-dealer  
with all the caplins in his belly.

Thus the rivulet went on, shifting property  
from hand to hand. My Lord, De Bombastville  
(the Norman, who came in with the Conqueror),  
had, for instance, mortgaged his estate to Moses  
Oraculo, the Jew, who had come in with the Dutch

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1825 and the Devil. The estate, when mortgaged in  
to 1812, had been worth two hundred thousand  
1830 pounds, and Moses lent a hundred thousand upon  
it. Peel's Bill passed in the memorable year 1819,  
and in 1821, the estate was the Jew's. The three  
great estates near the place where I was born were  
the Bishop of Winchester's Castle; Moor Park,  
occupied by the descendants of Sir William  
Temple; and Waverley Abbey, which belonged to  
Sir Robert Rich. [During my Rides I found] Moor  
Park in the hands of Mr Timson, and Waverley  
Abbey in those of Mr Tomson, the one a dealer in  
spirits and the other a dealer in wine. The Bishop  
was standing his ground. And, really, it was a  
consolation to me to find something [the same].

[You added, too], the work of sublimating  
farmers out of their senses, [that had been] pro-  
moted by the Nobility and Gentlemen of great  
estates, who, by means of agricultural societies,  
cattle shows, and the like, had given every en-  
couragement to this class of men to become con-  
ceited and presumptuous. The King, too, had had  
to have a farm. It was "Farmer George"! Be-  
tween the commercial people on the one side and  
the farmers on the other, the far greater part of  
the country gentlemen in England were fairly  
squeezed out of existence.

Now, this process produced no diminution of  
consumption, no falling off of revenue. What the  
Norman had before, the Jew had now. The rents,  
which the Norman had spent, were now spent by

*to a Seat in Parliament*

the Jew, who lived in a square of London where<sup>1825</sup> the Norman had lived before. The land was just <sup>to</sup> what it was before. It yielded the same produce. <sup>1830</sup>  
[And then the farmers themselves, under the effects of Peel's Bill, began to sink.] I had an opportunity of hearing something about this. I asked the farmers of my old neighbourhood, one by one, of the condition of the country; and the answers I received only tended to confirm me in the opinion, that the whole race would be destroyed; and that a new race would come, and enter upon farms without capital and without stock; be a sort of bailiff to the landlord for a while, and then, if the funding system went on, bailiffs to the Government as trustee for the fundholder.

The big [men], to save themselves from being "swallowed up quick" (as we used to say, in our church prayers against Buonaparte), made use of their voices to get, through place, pension, or sinecure, something back from the taxes. Others of them fell in love with the daughters and widows of paper-money people, big brewers, and the like; and sometimes their daughters fell in love with the paper-money people's sons, or the fathers of those sons; and, whether they were Jews or not, seemed to be little matter with this all-subduing passion of love. But, the small gentry had no resource. While the war lasted, "glorious war", there had been a resource; but now, alas! not only was there no war, but there was no hope of war.

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1825 "There was no place for them in the army, church,  
to navy, customs, excise, pension-list, or anywhere  
1830 else. All these were now wanted by "their  
betters". A stock-jobber's family would not look  
at such pennyless things. So that while they had  
been the active, the zealous, the efficient instru-  
ments, in compelling the working classes to sub-  
mit to half-starvation, they had, at any rate, been  
brought to the most abject ruin themselves. I  
should not have minded this sweeping away of  
the little old aristocracy, if a worse had not come  
in its place, which invariably looked upon every  
labourer as a thief.

[Once], at Up-Street, [near Canterbury], I was  
struck with the words written upon a board which  
was fastened upon a pole, which pole was standing  
in a garden near a neat little box of a house. The  
words were these; "Paradise Place. Spring guns  
and steel traps are set here". A pretty idea it gave  
of Paradise to know that spring guns and steel  
traps were set in it! This was doubtless some  
stock-jobber's place; for, in the first place, the  
name was likely to have been selected by one of  
that crew; and, in the next place, whenever any  
of them went to the country, they looked upon it  
that they were to begin a sort of warfare against  
everything around them.

Some were ready to cry, and I knew one that  
did actually cry to a farmer (his tenant) in 1822.  
The tenant had told him, that "Mr Cobbett had  
been right about this matter [of the funds]".

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“What!” exclaimed he, “I hope you do not read Cobbet’s! He will ruin you, and he would ruin us all. He would introduce anarchy, confusion, and the destruction of property!” Oh, no Jolterhead! There was no destruction of property. Matter, the philosophers say, is indestructible. It was [only] all easily transferable, as [became] well known to the base jolterheads. 1825  
to  
1830

[In these days, too], Wens devoured market towns and villages; and shops devoured markets and fairs; and this, too, to the infinite injury of the most numerous classes of the people. All was looked for at shops: all was to be had by trafficking: scarcely anyone thought of providing for his own wants out of his own land and out of his own domestic means. To buy the thing, ready made, was the taste of the day: thousands, who were housekeepers, bought their dinners ready cooked: nothing was so common as to rent breasts for children to suck: a man actually advertised, in the London papers, to supply childless husbands with heirs! In this case, the articles were, of course, to be ready made.

Shopkeeping, merely as shopkeeping, is injurious to any community. The shop must be paid for; the shopkeeper must be kept; and the one must be paid for and the other must be kept by the consumer of the produce. When fairs were very frequent, shops were not needed. A manufacturer of shoes, of stockings, of hats, of almost anything that man wanted, could manufacture at



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1825' home in an obscure hamlet, with cheap house-  
to rent, good air, and plenty of room. He needed pay  
1830 no heavy rent for shop: and no disadvantages  
from confined situation: and, then, by attending  
three or four or five or six fairs in a year, he sold  
the work of his hands, unloaded with a heavy ex-  
pense attending the keeping of a shop. Could not  
everyone see, in a minute, how this exchanging of  
fairs and markets for shops created idlers and  
traffickers; created those locusts, called middle-  
men, who added to the value of nothing, who im-  
proved nothing, but who lived well out of the  
labour of the producer and the consumer.

There was that numerous sect, the Quakers, engendered by the Jewish system of usury. Till excises and loan-mongering began, these vermin were never heard of in England. They seemed to have been hatched by that fraudulent system, as maggots are bred by putrid meat. All they talked about was dealing; and the government, in place of making laws that should have put them in the stocks, really seemed anxious to encourage them. But, everything tended the same way: all the regulations, all the laws that were adopted, had a tendency to give encouragement to the trickster and the trafficker.

There was something new in the manner and shape of manufacturing. Formerly the business was carried on in all parts of the country: now it had been so managed; the taxing and paper-money system had created such a mass of mono-

*to a Seat in Parliament*

polies; had drawn the wealth of the country into such great heaps, as to cause the manufacturing work-people to be collected into enormous masses, and that, too, in those parts of the country least productive of food. This was a most unnatural state of things; it robbed the land of all that which would have been earned by the wives and the small children of the agricultural labourers; and, in case of any fluctuations in the manufacturing business, all the horrors attendant upon ruin and poverty [were to] be witnessed, in the parts of the country in which great numbers of people were collected together. For years I had been endeavouring to call the attention of the country to this great evil. I stood alone; and was, indeed opposed by the whole of the press, and by every speech that I ever heard of, that ever uttered a word upon the subject.

The editor of the "Morning Chronicle", [Dr Black,] invariably advised [the farming labourers] to go North, and there to become manufacturers. That was, according to him, the only possible way of obtaining for themselves and their families a sufficiency of food. He had, indeed, suggested another mode of lessening their wants: namely, that of abstaining from breeding, which mode, if it had been recommended to people of threescore years and ten, might have had some chance of success; but, as the recommendation had addressed itself to bouncing girls of eighteen or twenty, with the blood ready to burst through

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1825 their skins, and to young fellows that valued life  
to itself only because it afforded them the gratifica-  
1830 tion of their tastes and passions, the recommenda-  
tion dropped dead.

The truth was, that these men were mere writers: they were writers by trade: they understood that trade pretty well; but, they knew nothing of the real situation of the people of this or of any other country. Such men knew a great deal about words, but, what the devil could they know of men or of things; they were extremely enlightened; but they had no knowledge. Hence all this stupid stuff in praise of manufacturing establishments: hence all their exaltations at the prosperity of Manchester and Paisley: hence all their everlasting clamour in praise of paper money.

The villages down [the] Valley of the Avon, [near Salisbury,] and, indeed, it was the same in almost every part of the country, used to have great employment for the women and children in the carding and spinning of wool for the making of broad-cloth. It was now wholly gone; and this made a vast change in the condition of the people, and in the state of property and of manners and morals. In 1816, I had written and published a "Letter to the Luddites",<sup>2</sup> the object of which had been to combat their hostility to the use of machinery. The arguments I there had made use of were general. I had taken the matter in the abstract. The principles had all been correct

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enough; but their application could not be universal; and, we had a case here before us, which, in my opinion, showed, that the mechanic inventions, pushed to the extent that they were, were productive of great calamity to this country. The greater part of manufacturing consisted of clothing and bedding. Now, if by using a machine, we could get our coat with less labour than we got it before; the machine was a desirable thing. But, then, mind, we had to have the machine at home and we ourselves had to have the profit of it; if it was worked by other hands; if other persons had the profit of it; and if, in consequence of the existence of the machine, we had hands at home, who had nothing to do, and whom we had to keep, then the machine was an injury to us, however advantageous it might have been to those who used it, and whatever traffic it might occasion with foreign states.

1825  
to  
1830

[Not all] manufacturing was like that of cottons, a mere gambling concern, making Baronets to-day and Bankrupts to-morrow, and making those who did the work slaves. [In many] there were no masses of people, called together by a bell, and "kept to it" by a driver; no "patriots", who, while they kept Englishmen to it by fines, and almost by the scourge, in a heat of 84 degrees, were petitioning the Parliament to give freedom to the South Americans, who, as these "patriots" had been informed, used a great quantity of cottons! A considerable part of the decay and misery of

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1825 [the country side] was owing to the use of  
to machinery and to the monopolizing, to that  
1830 system of gambling and fictitious money, which  
conveyed property from the hands of the many  
into the hands of the few.

[And worst of all] how many greedy gambling [people] were there in England; not only in and about the Wen [of London]; but in every country town, in every village you found them, [eager] to gamble in Funds or shares of some sort or other; and who could not sit with you five minutes without your hearing some of their slang about fives and fours and threes and consols and reduceds and India and Greek and so on. A woman asked me my opinion one day, about *investing*, as she called it, some money that she had. I made free, as to giving men advice, now and then; but, experience had taught me to be very careful how I presumed in this way, with petticoat speculators. Being pressed, however, with some degree of earnestness, I advised the getting rid of all the securities of every sort, and took an opportunity of showing, very clearly, as I thought, how much more secure, as well as more honourable, the possession of land or house, or security on land or house, would be than the possession of a thing that might become of no value at all to-morrow; adding some observations on the lowness, the meanness, the filthiness of these sort of usurious transactions, appcaling, by a side wind, to her religion. In short, I, before I concluded, had

made, as I thought, great impression upon her mind, if I had not already converted her. After this, a short pause ensued, while we were looking out of the window, and I was admiring some very pretty rose trees. And she, all at once, as if I had never said a word to her on the subject of funds and bonds, asked me, with great seeming earnestness: "Mr Cobbett, what do you think of Columbians?"

1825  
to  
1830

I knew what I thought of her, though I did not tell her; and that was, that she was a nasty, gambling, grovelling, mercenary, sordid, merciless devil in petticoats, who did not care if the whole people of the village in which she lived, perished of hunger, provided the cause of that perishing were also the cause of making her gain a few additional pounds a year. Were it not for the system that created them, there could be no such wretches who, being too lazy to work, wished to make fortunes out of the sweat; and, if necessary, the blood of the people; and who, therefore, might be, with justice, called muckworms. But, this was no justification of the wretches themselves; the system merely presented the temptation; that was the greater crime of the two, certainly; but the wretches who yielded to the temptation were criminal also.

[Whenever I] sallied forth to see the farmers, to view the state of the crops, and to philosophize, unchoked by smoke and unstunned by the rattle of the infernal coaches and drays, [I met evidences

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1825 of change]. I went, [one of these times,] to a sale  
to at a farm, which the farmer was quitting. Here  
1830 I had a view of what had long been going on all  
over the country. The farm, which belonged to  
Christ's Hospital, had been held by a man by the  
name of Charrington, in whose family the lease  
had been a great number of years. The house was  
'hidden by trees. It stood in the weald of Surrey,  
close by the River Mole, which was here a mere  
rivulet, though just below this house the rivulet  
supplied the very prettiest flour mill I ever saw  
in my life.

Everything about this farm-house was formerly  
the scene of plain manners and plentiful living.  
Oak clothes-chests, oak bedsteads, oak chest of  
drawers, and oak tables to eat on, long, strong,  
and well supplied with joint stools. Some of the  
things were many hundreds of years old. But all  
appeared to be in a state of decay and nearly of  
disuse. There appeared to have been hardly any  
family in that house, where formerly there had  
been, in all probability, from ten to fifteen men,  
boys, and maids: and, which was the worst of all,  
there was a parlour! Aye, and a carpet and bell-  
pull too! One end of the front of this once plain  
and substantial house had been moulded into a  
"parlour"; and there was a mahogany table, and  
the fine chairs, and the fine glass, and all as bare-  
faced upstart as any stock-jobber in the kingdom  
could boast of. And I daresay it had been 'Squire  
Charrington and the *Miss* Charringtons; and not

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plain Master Charrington and his son Hodge and his daughter Betty Charrington, all of whom the accursed system had, in all likelihood, transmuted into a species of mock gentlefolk. 1825  
to 1830

This 'Squire Charrington's father used, I dare say, to sit at the head of the oak table along with his men, say a grace to them, and cut up the meat and the pudding. He might have taken a cup of strong beer to himself, when they had none; but, that was pretty nearly all the difference in their manner of living. So that all lived well. But, the 'Squire had many wine-decanter and wine-glasses and a "dinner-set", and a "breakfast-set", and "desert knives"; and these implied carryings-on and a consumption that must of necessity have greatly robbed the long oak table. That long table could not share in the work of the decaners and the dinner-set. Therefore, it became almost untenanted; and the labourers retreated to hovels, called cottages; and, instead of board and lodging, they got money; so little of it as would enable the employer to drink wine; but, then, that he might not reduce them to quite starvation, they were enabled to come to him in the King's name, and demand food as paupers.

I could not quit this farm-house without reflecting on the thousands of scores of bacon and thousands of bushels of bread that had been eaten from the long oak table which, I said to myself, is now perhaps, going, at least, to the bottom of some bridge that some stock-jobber will stick up



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1825 over an artificial river in his cockney-garden.  
to “By—, it shan’t”, said I, almost in a real passion:  
1830 and so I requested a friend to buy it for me, and kept it for the good it had done in the world. When the old farm-houses were down, what a miserable thing [for] the country! Those that were erected were mere painted shells, with a Mistress within, who was stuck up in a place which she called a parlour, with, if she had children, the “young ladies and gentlemen” about her: some showy chairs and a sofa (a *sofa* by all means): half a dozen prints in gilt frames hanging up: some swinging book-shelves with novels and tracts upon them. a dinner brought in by a girl that was perhaps better “educated” than she: two or three nicknacks to eat instead of a piece of bacon and a pudding: the house too neat for a dirty-shoed carter to be allowed to come into; and everything proclaiming to every sensible beholder, that there was a constant anxiety to make a *show* not warranted by the reality. The children (which was the worst part of it) were all too clever to work: they were all to be *gentlefolks*. Go to plough! Good God! What, “young gentlemen” go to plough! They became *clerks*, or some skimmy-dish thing or other. What misery was all this!

Strange were the workings of Peel’s Bill [among such men; it left] no vestige of the fine spirit that had been floating about in [earlier] years. The yeomanry cavalry we never heard mentioned, except cited as the cause of heavy expense. The

*to a Seat in Parliament*

bang, bang from their pistols, and the rattle of the feet of their horses, that charming music, really appeared to be gone forever. No parading in parks; no dinnerings and toasting at taverns, or at Lord's houses; no votes of thanks and stupid correspondence in the newspapers, between troops and their commanders; no boastings about gallant exploits in sallies on old women and boys. All was gone; and the rusty sword, the furred-up pistol, and helmet cap, and uniform jacket were all thrown aside. They did not hang these up now in the "parlour" for everybody to see them: they hung them up in their bedrooms, or in a cockloft; and when they met their eye, they looked at them as a bridegroom does at a girl that the overseers are about to compel him to marry. When any of them complained of those acts of the Government which stripped them, [they should have recollected] their own base and malignant conduct towards those persecuted reformers, who, if they had not been suppressed by these very yeomen, would have put an end to the cause of that ruin of which these yeomen now complained. [They should have remembered] the toasts which they had drunk in anti-jacobin times; their base and insulting exultations of the 16th of August at Manchester;<sup>3</sup> their cowardly abuse of the men, who had been endeavouring to free their country from that horrible scourge which they themselves now felt.

[It was] the sound and consistent and faithful

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1825 "Peel. [He] brought in [his] Bill, to "restore the  
to currency of our ancestors"! The Parliament was  
1830 delighted, the drunkards and gluttons of the city  
were charmed, the old debauched *al. nuitants* were  
bewitched by this fine young man who was giving  
them gold instead of flimsy paper.

In spite of all this, however, the stupid hogs of  
landlords soon found that their estates were slip-  
ping from under them. They had looked upon their  
buildings and their stock as being worth, from  
time to time, certain sums; but, whenever they  
came to the sale, they always found themselves  
deceived; they found their fortunes and their  
possessions diminished. No man, however care-  
ful, and of how solid a nature soever his means,  
knew what he would be worth [one] day month.  
One convulsion ended only to make way for  
another; one class of the community was crushed  
[one] three months; another next three months;  
a general and terrible convulsion was always  
threatening. To pay the interest of [the] Debt in  
gold, of the full weight and fineness, was impos-  
sible; that was, without taking away the estates  
of the present possessors, and transferring them  
directly or indirectly to those who owned the  
securities on the debt.

The world never beheld a triumph more com-  
plete and more honourable than that which time  
and events awarded me. In the city of Bath, the  
people, amidst the crash of Banks, shouted in the  
streets, "COBBETT IS RIGHT! COBBETT IS

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A TRUE PROPHET!" It was my anxious wish<sup>1825</sup> to put a stop to the fatal progress of hideous re-<sup>to</sup>volution. I was well aware that it was no easy<sup>1830</sup> task to effect an object like this. No small part of every twenty-four hours, whether on sea, or on land, on my pillow, in my garden, on my horse, or on my feet, was spent in thinking of the means necessary, when the danger should have become clear to all eyes, to the rescuing of England from the natural and inevitable consequences of all-corrupting, all-enfeebling, all-degrading curse of paper money.

The measures I proposed, subverted nothing that was acknowledged by the laws and constitution of England; tended not to pull down, but to uphold, the government of King, Lords, and Commons; took away no lawful privilege or immunity; tended to destroy no lawful establishment; and they would have restored a fixedness as to property, and that harmony and good will between the rich and the poor, which had so long been banished from the land.

It, however, pleased God to [give me] numerous faithful friends and adherents, and constantly to give me that which was, perhaps, the best sort of vengeance, namely, a constant fulfillment of my predictions, and most severe punishments inflicted upon those who despised those predictions. I had that species of vengeance, which truth always, at last, gains over falsehood. .

[One of my adherents was Sir Thomas Beevor,

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1825<sup>1</sup> of Hargham Hall in Norfolk. He published the  
to opinion that]<sup>4</sup> “with regard to the present calam-  
1830 ity, nothing was so likely to effect the purposes  
(of preventing the ruin that must fall upon trade,  
manufactures, and commerce) as the placing of  
Mr Cobbett in the Common’s House of Parlia-  
ment”; [and to this end he collected the necessary  
funds. For the attempt,] I hesitated some time  
between Westminster and Preston; yet when I  
think of the excellent people of the North, I can  
feel sorrow at nothing that tended to take me into  
their country. I went to the North a total stranger  
as to person, I had, no friends. Yet, on my first  
entrance into Preston, I was met and accom-  
panied by, at least, ten thousand people, and was  
received with marks of attention and respect  
surpassing those ever shown to any other man.

[The election failed, and] calumniators of mine  
began to comfort themselves with the thought  
that I was a “Poor Old Man”; and that I could  
not possibly last long. It was an “old man”, re-  
collect, who could travel five hundred miles, make  
speeches of half an hour long twice a day for a  
month; put down the saucy, the rich, the tyran-  
nical; that could be jostled out of his majority at  
an election; and that could return towards his  
home through forty miles of huzzas from the lips  
of a hundred and fifty thousand people.

What of those landed gentlemen, who admired,  
who applauded the spirit of Sir Thomas Beevor,  
and yet were not found at his back? We are to

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think not that they were corrupt, but we are to think of them as of men trammelled by an accursed system, that took from the mind every spark of conscious dignity, and that made him that should have been the lord truckle to him that should have been the lackey. It was impossible to look, without indignation, at the group who wielded the destinies of England; who, amidst a mass of blunders that covered a country with misery, sat, perked up like schoolmasters and their ushers, while the owners of the soil, the natural magistrates of the country, the guardians of its happiness and its honour, stood before them like a set of schoolboys, silently listening to their pompous imbecility, and patiently waiting for their fate at their hands.

[During these years, I made, at Kensington,] a nursery ground, which had been, for the greater part, a rough and sour meadow in 1823. [By 1827,] on about four acres of land, disposed in about four hundred and fifty beds, there stood, more than a million of seedling forest trees, and shrubs, and about three thousand young apple trees. Yet, as if this place were insufficient to provide occupation for my leisure hours, I had another nursery ground on the Surrey side of the Thames, which also was a walled-in plot. There, I made experiments. There, too, I was as safe from the world as a monk of Latrappe. I positively shut all out, except the gardeners and one gardener's wife, who kept the key of the door. I

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1825 did this, not for the sake of secrecy; but because  
to I would be certain of being uninterrupted when  
1830 I was in that place. [I got in time] at Barn Elm,<sup>o</sup>  
a farm of nearly a hundred acres, the richest land  
I believe in this whole world, except those marshes  
which bring diseases along with their riches. My  
farm was taken care of by my only surviving  
brother, who had been either gardener or farmer  
all his life time. He, from the fruit of his own  
labour, raised a family of ten able children, who  
brought him a score of grandchildren.

I never could go out "to take a walk" in the  
whole course of my life; nor to take a ride: there  
had to be something to make me take either one  
or the other, and, though it would be pretty diffi-  
cult to make me lie abed late in the morning, with-  
out actually tying me down with ropes, I might,  
I daresay, have degenerated in time into that  
disgraceful thing called a sluggard, if I [had not  
had my work] to call me out into the gardens or  
the fields.

I derived the greatest of pleasures from the re-  
flection, that I caused millions of trees and shrubs  
to be planted in England, that would never have  
been planted in England, for ages yet to come,  
had it not been for me. [Years later, when in  
Scotland, I saw in an orchard] some American  
[apple] trees, sent by me, which were beginning  
to bear. "Cast your bread upon the waters", says  
the precept, "and have patience to wait to see it  
return." I had sent from England to Long Island

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[for] some cuttings of apple trees; they had come 1825<sup>•</sup>  
to me at Kensington; Mr M'Gavin, at Hamilton to  
(four hundred miles from Kensington), had got 1830  
some of the cuttings after they came from Long  
Island; he had put some of them upon some of the  
branches of his trees! and he showed me a bough  
which had proceeded from this cutting, from which  
he had gathered forty pounds weight of fine apples!  
What a deal I did in my lifetime to produce real  
and solid good to my country! and how different  
was the tendency of my pursuits to that of the  
pursuits of the noisy, canting, jawing, popularity-  
hunting, newspaper-puffing fellows!

[In June, 1829, I began to publish my famous  
"Advice to Young Men".] The work was intended  
to contain twelve Numbers, and the price of each  
Number was Sixpence. So that, for six shillings,  
expended in one year of his life, any youth or  
young man might acquire that knowledge, which  
would enable him to pass the rest of his life with  
as little as possible of those troubles and incon-  
veniences which arise from want of being warned  
of danger in time. At any rate, I, who had passed  
safely through as many dangers as any man that  
ever lived, gave my young countrymen the means  
of acquiring all the knowledge which my experi-  
ence had given me.

[As the agitation for Reform began to grow  
again, I began to lecture, first in London, and then  
about the country.]<sup>5</sup> I gave above one hundred  
and fifty in number, one or more in every con-



## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

• 1825 considerable town in twenty-one of the counties of  
to England, during two journeys of about three  
1830 thousand miles, and all between December 1829,  
and July 1830. If you could have heard one of  
these, you could not wonder that the nation was  
roused, that all spoke as one man, and that we  
now have that Reform which the nation owes to  
those lectures more than to all other causes put  
together. I cannot lay down my pen here without  
expressing my gratitude to the public who gave  
me their countenance at the first lecture [in  
London]. The assembly was, in numbers and of a  
character, so far beyond my expectation, that,  
for the first time in my life I felt my voice falter;  
for which, however, I was not sorry; for it would  
have been a shame indeed, if, under the then cir-  
cumstances, I had discovered a want of sensibility.  
I had only just arrived from Barn Elm; I had no  
idea of meeting more than three or four hundred  
friends; and, therefore, when all of a sudden, I  
found myself before such an audience, the twenty  
years of calumnies on me, my long and cruel per-  
secutions, the merciless and degrading and ruinous  
imprisonment, the exile, the bonds, my sufferings  
of all sorts, only for inculcating the very principles  
which I was then about to enforce, all these rushed  
into my mind in a moment; and seeing in this  
audience my just countrymen assembled, to wipe  
away the thousands of indignities that had been  
heaped upon me, I was overpowered with feel-  
ings of joy, of just pride, and of gratitude.

## CHAPTER XIV

1830-1834

[BY THE YEAR 1830,] AS THE WORKING 1830  
people went on getting poorer and poorer, they *to*  
became more and more immoral, in innumerable 1834  
instances men committed crimes for the purpose  
of getting into jail; because the felons in jail were  
better fed and better clad than the honest working  
people. As the working people became poor, the  
laws relating to them were made more and more  
severe; and the Poor-Law, that famous law of  
Elizabeth, which was the greatest glory of Eng-  
land for ages, had by degrees been so much muti-  
lated and nullified, that, at last, it was so far from  
being a protection for the working people, that it  
had, by its perversions, been made the means of  
reducing them to a state of wretchedness not to  
be described. The sole food of the greater part of  
them had been, for many years, bread, or pota-  
tocs, and not half enough of these. They had eaten  
sheep or cattle that had died from illness; children  
had been seen stealing food out of hog-troughs;  
men were found dead, [in] May [of that] year,  
lying under a hedge, and when opened by the  
surgeons nothing but sour sorrel was found in  
their stomachs. The spot on which these poor

## *The Progress of a Plough-boy*

1880 creatures expired was surrounded with villas of  
to Jews, and fund-jobbers, living in luxury, and in  
1884 the midst of pleasure-gardens, all the means of  
which living they had derived from the burdens  
laid on the working people.

Besides suffering from want, the working people were made to endure insults and indignities such as even Negroes were never exposed to. They were harnessed like horses or asses and made to draw carts and wagons; they were shut up in pounds made to hold stray cattle; they were made to work with bells round their necks; and they had drivers set over them, just as if they had been galley slaves; they were sold by auction for certain times, as the Negroes were sold in the West Indies; the married men were kept separated from their wives, by force, to prevent them from breeding; and, in short, no human beings were ever before treated so unjustly, with so much insolence, and with such damnable barbarity, as the working people of England had been. Such were the fruits of public debts and funds! Without them, this industrious and moral and brave nation never could have been brought into this degraded state.

[For some years,] I had seen the cause of Reform fast gaining ground; but, it was not until the month of October, 1830, when the chopsticks set about the work, that I really expected it to come in any reasonable time. Every event must have a beginning; and the greatest events have frequently had their beginnings in trifling causes.

*to a Seat in Parliament*

I had often used to tell [my] friends, in Long Island and at New York, that no change would ever take place, unless it were begun amongst the hedgers and ditchers and the ploughmen and the thrashers; how often had I told them that people were not formidable when assembled together in great towns. What, then, was it not the meetings and petitions of the great towns that produced Parliamentary Reform? They did good, particularly by the speeches they brought forth, but, the great and efficient cause was, the movements of the chopsticks. I had had my eye upon all the movements of the great bodies, I had, in the two preceding years, been about lecturing in person over the far greater part of England; [but, until I found] the working people in almost all of the counties of England in a state of commotion [my hopes did not grow fixed].

1830  
to  
1834

All across the South, from Kent to Cornwall, and from Sussex to Lincolnshire, the commotion extended. It began by the labourers in Kent entering the buildings of the great farmers and breaking their thrashing machines; for, please to observe, one effect of heavy taxation was the invention of machinery. The farmer or manufacturer was so pressed for money by the government, that he resorted to all possible means of saving the expense of labour; and as machines would work cheaper than men, the machines were preferred. The labourers saw, at any rate, that the thrashing machines robbed them of the wages that they

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1830 should have received. They, therefore, began by  
*to* demolishing these machines. This was a crime;  
1834 the magistrates and jailers were ready with  
punishments; soldiers, well fed and well clothed  
out of the taxes, were ready to shoot or cut down  
the offenders. Unable to resist these united forces,  
the labourers resorted to the use *of fire*, secretly  
put to the barns and stacks of those who had the  
machines, or whom they deemed the cause of their  
poverty and misery. The mischief and alarm that  
they caused by this means were beyond all cal-  
culation. They went in bands of from 100 to 1000,  
and summoned the farmers to come forth, and  
then they demanded that they should agree to  
pay them such wages as they thought right.

The farmers, in their defence, said that they  
could not pay the wages, that were demanded,  
because they had so much to pay in rent, taxes,  
and in tithes. The labourers, therefore, in many in-  
stances, went to the parsons; and in one parish, in  
Sussex, they ordered the collector of the taxes not  
to take the money out of the parish, as it was, they  
said, wanted there. These proceedings would have  
been put an end to had it not been for the fires.  
The military forces, backed by all the great  
farmers, the land-owners, and especially the  
parsons, would have subdued these half-starved  
machine-breakers; but the Fires! No power on  
earth could have prevented them, if the millions  
of labourers resolved to resort to them.

The fires, after spreading westward along the

*to a Seat in Parliament*

county of Kent, soon stretched through Sussex, 1830  
and thence through Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dor- to  
setshire, Berkshire, and all the most fertile corn- 1834  
growing countries. A Special Commission, sent  
into the West and Southwest, transported about  
four hundred men, and left a fearful number for  
execution. This mass of punishment did not,  
however, destroy the effects of these risings of the  
labourers. The trials, the publications making  
observations of the trials, the endless discussions,  
in all shapes and sizes, relative to the poor-laws;  
and, I may say, my "Protestant Reformation"  
and "Poor Man's Friend", made the *Swing* men,  
these thrashers, hedgers, ditchers, plough-men,  
mowers, and reapers understand [a great deal].

Such was the state of England. Here you saw  
a people, inhabiting the most productive land in  
the world, a people to whom God had given a  
large portion of all his choicest blessings, safety  
from foreign foes, climate, soil, mines, woods,  
downs, flocks and herds, and, above all, *industry*  
perfectly unparalleled; a people, too, whose fore-  
fathers gave them the best laws that ever existed  
in the world; here you saw this people, who were  
famed for their willing obedience to the laws, and  
whose forefathers had scorned the thought of main-  
taining even a single soldier except in case of war;  
here you saw this people, whose laws said that no  
man should be taxed without his own consent;  
first reduced to a state of half-starvation; next  
setting the laws at defiance; and then attacked by

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1830 a standing army sent against them to capture  
to them and put them in prison. Such were the effects  
1834 of heavy taxes, and particularly when raised for  
the purpose of upholding a funding system, which  
was a system of usury and monopoly added to  
that of grinding taxation.

[I was accused by the Government of being engaged in inciting these labourers in their work of destruction, and I was indicted by the Whigs.] According to our laws and usages, a man by whom a woman is in a family way is, in certain cases, compelled to marry her, and then he is said to be led to the church by a halter. Yet he, when in the church, promises and vows that he will love and cherish the bride to the end of their days! Just such a marriage took place between the Whig-Ministry and Reform; I had very kindly, [by my activities], furnished the halter for the happy occasion: and they showed their gratitude by this prosecution.

When the news of the indictment was brought to my house in Bolt Court, by a reporter of "The Star" newspaper, about eight o'clock in the evening, and when the servant came up and told me of it, after I was in bed, I prayed to God to protect me, turned myself round, and fell fast asleep. The next morning I went home to Kensington, and set down with my family whom I found at breakfast; the whole group heard my resolution with delight. They had made up their minds to the same thing before my arrival. Not a tear, not a

*to a Seat in Parliament*

sigh, not a sorrowful look did this dreadful menace produce, if I except one little mark of anxiety which discovered itself in my wife on the morning of the trial. She had got me a pair of new silk stockings to wear on that day; and when I put them on, I found them too short, and spoke rather hastily about it, whereupon she made a little bit of a cry. As to my two sons John and James, it would have been worth years of imprisonment to witness their conduct. They instantly set to work to prepare the defence, as soon as we found that the Whigs were in real earnest; my son John undertook the preparing my case, assisted by his brother in the evenings, the latter being engaged in the daytime with his master in town.

1880  
to  
1884

On the day of my trial,<sup>1</sup> [the 7th of July 1831], I, having had seven hours sound, unbroken sleep, got up at four o'clock, went into the garden and gave instructions for the day, came off for Bolt Court at six, arrived there [and] found breakfast ready for me and a good many friends; and now, mind, ate about half a pound of good fat leg of mutton, roasted the day before, ate no bread or anything else with it, and no salt, and never drank one drop of anything that whole day until after the conclusion of my speech, when I drank two stone bottles of milk, out of a horn, given me [the] summer [before] by a pretty little American lady, the wife of Mr Cooke, the portrait painter.

When I went into the Court, which was about ten minutes before the Judge entered it, I found



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1830 the whole of the Court crowded in every part, so  
to as to find great difficulty in getting in; and indeed,  
1834 a body of doorkeepers made a desperate effort to  
keep out my three sons and three other gentlemen  
who accompanied me. The moment I entered,  
there was a great and general clapping and cheer-  
ing for some time. When I got to my station I, in  
order to produce silence, turned round, and, ad-  
dressing myself to the audience, said, "Be patient,  
gentlemen, for, if truth prevail, we shall beat  
them". Soon after this the Chief-Justice entered  
the court and took his seat. Soon after him, came  
in the Attorney-General; and he, in opening his  
address to the Jury, told them that I had come  
into court with a great mob at my heels; and, that  
a shouting had taken place, which showed the  
spirit in which the defence was to be conducted.  
This was an abominable falsehood. I had come  
from Kensington in a close-carriage, hired at  
Kensington. At Bolt Court I had taken into the  
carriage Sir Thomas Bævor, Mr Palmer, Mr  
Blount, and my attorney, Mr Edward Faithful,  
of Staple's Inn, and one of my sons rode on the  
box with the coachman.

I had forced the [Whig Ministers] to come by  
subpoena; and I intended to question them every  
one, if the Judge permitted me, with regard to the  
grounds on which they had advised his Majesty  
[to proceed in the agricultural commotion]. For  
this purpose, I brought together, to sit upon the  
bench in front of me, Lords Grey, Brougham,

*to a Seat in Parliament*

Melbourne, Durham, Goderich, and Palmerston. 1830  
There they sat, ranged in a row, to hear my defence; and there sat between two and three thousand intelligent men to witness the scene. From every county in England, I believe, some one man or more was present. Well might I say that it was a day of joy to me! it was a reward going ten thousand times beyond all that I had ever merited. to 1884

[The cry for Reform reached its loudest at this time. Its history and its success are now well known. I might say, that] if the Lords had been wise [then, and were wise now], they would see, that their danger arises from the very class that sets up an outcry against the Radicals. The further men are removed from them, the less envy they have of them; that it was not the artisan and the labourer that looked with an eye of envy on the Lord's town-house, and on his country-mansion and park; but the money-monger in the town, and the great swelled-up bull-frog farmer in the country. I have known for many years, and have been a strict observer of all classes of men in this country; and I never heard amongst common tradesmen, little farmers, artisans or labourers, anything indicating a wish to see the nobility pulled down; but, amongst those; amongst the *parvenus*, as the French call them, I have seen one portion aiming at getting to the height of the nobility, and have seen those who despair of ever doing that, always trying to pull them down. The

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1880 Liberals, or those<sup>1</sup> that the French call *Doctri-*  
*to* *naires*, a race, whom I hate (oh, God, how I hate  
1884 them!) were always talking in the same strain;  
one of their sayings being, "that men are not born  
legislators". Why to be sure they are not: -but  
that is not the question: the question is, whether  
[our institutions] be, taking the defects along  
with the advantages, for the good of the people  
amongst whom they exist?

The working people, the common tradesmen,  
and the farmers, had, [and have,] none of the  
envies that bother the brains of this monied tribe:  
the change that they wanted was a change from  
bad living to good living: a single thought about  
the change of the constituent parts of the state,  
never, even by accident, came athwart their  
minds: they took the country as they found it;  
and if they had had the means of leading those  
happy lives, to which their virtues and their in-  
dustry entitled them, I would have defied all the  
*feelosofers* and *liberals* that the devil ever sent  
upon the earth, to have persuaded them that  
there ought not to be Lords, or that there ought  
to be any change at all in the government.

So early as June, 1803, I had begun to predict  
that this nation must be brought to ruin, if [the]  
system of squandering were persevered in. I was  
actuated by no party or factious motives: I never  
was; and am not now, any more than I was then.  
I never in my life did that which ought to offend  
any nobleman or person in authority, unless I had

## *to a Seat in Parliament*

been ill-treated by that person. I never showed <sup>1830</sup> any mark of disrespect to any person of rank or <sup>to</sup> station. I never was amongst those who ridiculed <sup>1834</sup> titles of nobility; not that I thought persons in that station wiser or better than men in general; but because long experience had shown to this nation, that the greatest degree of freedom and of happiness, of which communities were capable, had been enjoyed, and for centuries too, under a government, in which hereditary honours and hereditary rights had formed so large a part.

I had had too much opportunity of studying men and things to be led astray by any wild theories about liberty. I knew, that there must be a government, and that there must be law, without which there could be no such thing as property, nor any safety even for our own persons. I wanted to see no innovation in England. All I wished and all I strove for, was the Constitution of England, undefiled by corruption.

It had always been my wish, that the institutions of England and her fundamental laws should remain unchanged. There was so much of good in the institutions which we had inherited from our fathers, that I always looked at any change in them with great apprehension. But, with regard to the *innovations* in these institutions; with regard to the monstrous encroachments of the aristocracy and the usurers, within the last fifty years especially, it was impossible for me not to wish for a change. It was impossible for me to

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1830 look at the new treason laws, new felony laws,  
to Bourbon-police laws, laws violating the compact  
1834 between the people and the clergy, new and multiplied laws hostile to the freedom of the press, hundreds of acts of parliament, subjecting men's persons and property to be disposed of, to a certain extent, without trial by jury; the monstrous partiality in taxation; a standing army in time of peace, greater than was ever before needed in time of war; new crimes in abundance, created by act of Parliament; new punishments for old crimes; employment of spies justified in the Houses of Parliament; or, at least, no punishment inflicted on anyone for being a spy, or for having employed spies.

It was impossible for me to behold these things, and not exert myself in an endeavour to put a stop to these encroachments, and to bring my country back to something like the government that had existed when I was born. I was in hopes that the "Reformed Parliament" would, at once, set to work to sweep away these innovations. [As events turned out], not only did it not do this, but it set itself to work to add to them in number, and to enlarge those that already existed.

[Near the end of 1832, I visited the North and Scotland, and was] upon the most interesting [spots] of earth that I ever set foot upon in the course of my long and rambling life. It is hard to say which part of [England] is the most valuable gift of God; but everyone must see how perverse

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and injurious it is to endeavour to produce in the one that which nature has intended to confine to the other. [In the North, there were] unnatural efforts made to ape the farming of Norfolk and Suffolk; it was only playing at farming, as stupid and "loyal" parents used to set their children to play at soldiers during the last war. It was a most lamentable thing that the paper-money price of corn tempted so many men to break up [their] fine pastures; the turf thus destroyed could not be restored, probably in a whole century; the land did not yield a clear profit, anything like what it would have yielded as pasture; and thus was destroyed the goose with the golden eggs. The accursed paper money caused even the fruitful qualities of the earth to be anticipated, and thus was the soil made worth less than it was before the accursed invention appeared!

[In Scotland, it was] very fine: cornfields, woods, pastures, villages; a church every four miles, or thereabouts; cows and sheep beautiful; oak trees, though none very large; and, in short, a fertile and beautiful country, wanting only the gardens and vine-covered cottages that so beautify the South and West. All the buildings were of stone. Here were coal-works and railways every now and then. The farms were all large; and the people who worked on them either lived in the farm-house, or in the buildings appertaining to the farm-house; and they were well fed, and had no temptation to acts like those which sprang up

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1836 out of the ill-treatment of the labourers in the  
to South. Such stack-yards, and such a total absence  
1834 of dwelling-houses, as never were before seen in  
any country. You very frequently saw more than  
a hundred stacks in one yard; all built in the  
neatest manner; thatched extremely well, the  
thatch bound down by exterior bands, spars not  
being in use owing to the scarcity of wood. In  
some of these yards the thrashing machine was  
worked by horses, but in the greater part by  
steam; and where the coals were at a distance, by  
wind and water; so that in this country of the  
finest land that ever was seen, all the elements  
seemed to have been pressed into the amiable  
service of sweeping the people from the face of  
the earth, in order that the whole amount of the  
produce might go into the hands of a small number  
of persons, that they might squander it at London,  
at Paris, or at Rome. A man who had lived here  
all his lifetime, could form no judgement at all with  
regard to the situation, the wants, and the treat-  
ment of the working people in the counties of the  
South. Yet Scott Elton and Dr Black used to  
prate away about the poor-rates not being ex-  
cessive in the North. A man who had been paid  
as a statesman for pretty nearly fifty years, and  
another who had been a professed enlightener of  
the people for twenty years, ought to have known  
that there was no such thing as a village purely  
agricultural, to the north of Leeds, while the  
southern, eastern, and western counties consisted

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of very little else. Such men ought to have known this; but they did not know it, therefore, they spread about error.

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to  
1834

[I was shown much of manufacturing during my journey.] I never liked to see machines, lest I should be tempted to endeavour to understand them. I constantly resisted all the natural desire which people had to explain them to me. As in the case of the sun and the moon and the stars, I was quite satisfied with witnessing the effects. [These] things afforded nothing interesting to me, who thought a great deal more about the condition of the people, than I did about the cause of the movement, or about the mechanical effects of the machines.

Being at New Lanark, however, I was rather curious to know whether there was any reality in what we had heard about the effects of the Owen "feelosofy". The building which Owen had erected was used as a schoolroom; and here I saw boys in one place and girls in another, carrying on what was called "education". There was one boy pointing with a stick to something stuck up upon the wall, and then all the rest of the boys bawling out what that was. In one large room they were all singing out something at the word of command. In another great apartment there were eighteen boys and eighteen girls, the boys dressed in Highland dresses, without shoes on, naked from three inches above the knee, down to the foot, a tartan plaid close round the body, in their shirt



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1836 sleeves, each having a girl by the arm, duly pro-  
to portioned in point of size, the girls without caps,  
1834 and without shoes and stockings; and there were  
these eighteen couples marching, arm in arm, in  
regular files, slow march, to the sound of a fiddle,  
which a fellow, big enough to carry a quarter of  
wheat, was playing in a corner of the room. They  
seemed to perform with great regularity and ele-  
gance; and, it was quite impossible to see the half-  
naked lads and girls, without clearly perceiving  
the manifest tendency of this mode of education,  
to prevent "premature marriage", and to "check  
population".

It was difficult to determine, whether, when  
people were huddled together in this unnatural  
state, this sort of soldier-ship discipline might or  
might not be necessary to effect the purposes of  
schooling; but I thought it a very strange thing,  
if a man, calculated to produce effect from his  
learning, could ever come to perfection from a  
beginning like this. It was, altogether a thing that  
I abhorred. I do not say that it might not be  
useful when people were thus unnaturally con-  
gregated; and, above all things, I was not disposed  
to bestow censure on the motives of the parties  
promoting this mode of education; for the sacri-  
fices which they made, in order to give success to  
their schemes, clearly proved that their motives  
were benevolent; but I was not the less convinced  
that it was a melancholy thing to behold; that it  
was the reverse of domestic life, that it reversed

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the order of nature, that it made minds a fiction; and, which was among the greatest of its evils, it fashioned the rising generations to habits of implicit submission. However, the consolation was, that it was impossible, that it ever should become anything like general in any nation. The order of the world demands that nine-tenths of the people should be employed on, and in the affairs of the land; being so employed, they must be scattered about widely: and there must be homes and domestic life for the far greater part of the rising generation. When men contract a fondness for anything which has a great deal of novelty and of strangeness in it; when they brood over the contemplation of some wonderful discovery which they think they have made; when they suffer it long to absorb all the powers of their minds; they really become mad, as far as relates to the matter which has thus absorbed all their mental faculties; and they think themselves more wise than all the rest of mankind.

[I do not say], that there should be no schools! Oh, no! Schools are very proper things in many cases: in large cities and towns they are very necessary for many reasons. But, because it is indeniably true, that there are many professions and pursuits in life, which require book-learning; because it is equally true that book-learning is very frequently not to be acquired without schools, does it follow, that all boys and girls, nine-tenths of whom must live by manual labour,

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1830 or become thieves' and strumpets, are to be  
to crammed up in schools, instead of being employed  
1834 from their infancy in those little labours and cares  
which make them valuable when they grow up to  
be men and women? But, "they can go to school  
before they are old enough to work". [Some time]  
ago, I had a string of diggers at work in a field at  
Barn Elm. In this string an awkward big boy from  
the country happened to have his station cast be-  
tween two gardeners of Felham, the name of one  
of whom was John Ives. The young chap, though  
very tall, was only about sixteen; and though he  
would have beaten Ives at plough, there he was  
with both his feet close up to the trench, toiling  
and sweating, while Ives and his companion were  
going on, leaving him upon a narrow causeway,  
and laughing to themselves all the while. "Come";  
said I, "Ives, why don't you show that young  
fellow how to dig? You were young yourself once,  
recollect." "Aye, Sir", said he, "and *very* young,  
too, when I did not know how to dig." [I do not  
know] how soon the doctrinaires would take them  
from school and put them to work; but I do know,  
that I myself was at work in the fields before I  
was six. And this was "education", properly so  
called. Education means *rearing-up*, not teaching  
to read and write. He is a learned man, who has  
great knowledge in his profession or calling; and  
not he who can read about the knowledge of others.

Why, I, who wrote the Grammar, was a plough-  
boy myself, and a real and good and true plough-

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boy, too, and so early was I such, that I was compelled to get up upon a gate, to put the bit-halter upon a cart-horse's head. And, observe, never did I acknowledge schoolmaster to be my master; and long after I could mow short grass in the Bishop of Winchester's garden, I could no more have read this paragraph and understood the sense of it, than I could have driven the Bishop out of his palace.

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Being a plough-boy and having had resort to grammars to teach myself, when I took a fancy to book-learning; having experienced the want of a grammar at once simple and profound, I wrote one myself for the use of other plough-boys, and to commemorate my attachment to that class of society, amongst whom I was born, and to live and die amongst whom impediments raised up by hell itself shall not prevent me.

On my own personal account, I set not the value of a straw upon a seat in Parliament. I had, for a long while, wished to be in the Common's House; but never for the sake of any advantage or personal pleasure of my own. From a very early age, I had imbibed the opinion, that it was every man's duty to do all that lay in his power to leave his country as good as he had found it. I knew that my country presented a scene of wretchedness and disgrace, compared with the scene it had presented at the time that I was born. I hated the life of the great cities: I hated their everlasting noise and bustle: my taste, all my own personal

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1830 enjoyments would have led me far away from  
to them for ever. I could, if I had been so minded,  
1834 have secured out of my own earnings, much  
greater possessions and in a state of tranquillity,  
much greater than I ever had a desire to be master  
of. But, feeling that I possessed the mind to en-  
able me to assist in restoring my country to the  
state in which I found it, a sense of duty to that  
country restrained me from consulting my own  
ease and my own private enjoyments. Nothing  
[other than duty] could have induced me to sit by  
candle light. It was impossible that an assembly  
keeping such hours, even if it consisted of wise and  
upright men, could produce good works. All the  
world knows, that the morning is the time for all  
matters of importance; that the mind is then  
serene, if it ever be; that it is then unclouded by  
heavy food and muddling drink; that it is then, if  
ever, fit to be employed in the making of laws;  
that is to say, in the performance of things affect-  
ing the happiness of millions.

The invitation to become a candidate [for Par-  
liament] came first from Manchester. The people  
of Oldham, about eight miles distant from Man-  
chester, knowing how difficult it would be to carry  
an election for Manchester, by mere voluntary  
support, came to the resolution to secure my re-  
turn for Oldham, which, though inferior to Man-  
chester, in point of population, was still a very  
large and opulent town. Had the invitation come  
first from Oldham, I should certainly have de-

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clined that from Manchester, because my object was not to disturb any place, but to take the seat with as much quietness as possible.

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I was at the opening of the elections at Manchester; where, having obtained an immense majority upon the *view*; having obtained the decision of the public at Manchester; having, upon these hustings, seen hooted off that very Mr Sharpe, who was the boroughreeve that forbade me to enter Manchester on my return from America in 1819; having done this, I went off to Oldham, there to remain until I should come back to Manchester a member of Parliament. The election at Manchester was, doubtless, greatly influenced by the election at Oldham, which was known at the former place by twelve o'clock of the first polling-day. So that, after that it was naturally to be expected that the electors of Manchester who had intended to vote for me, would either transfer their votes, or that they would not vote at all. Yet, in spite of this, the state of the poll, at its close, was as follows:

Phillips	...	2923
Thompson		2069
Loyd	...	1823
Hope	'...	1560
Cobbett	...	1305

This result was sufficiently honourable to me. Not one single pint of beer, or glass of gin, had been given to any human being on my part; no at-

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1880 torney, and no attorney's clerk had been em-  
to ployed, and not a single person hired, I believe,  
1884 to do any one thing connected with my election.  
All, except the mere printing, and the hire of a  
few carriages, was the effect of voluntary exertion,  
chiefly by young men in the middle rank of life,  
whose zeal and activity I never can sufficiently  
applaud.

So much for the election at Manchester. [At  
Oldham] the polling was over on the 13th [of  
December], when the numbers stood as follows:

Fielden	...	670
Cobbett	...	642
Bright	...	153
Burge	...	101
Stephen	...	3

At this election not one single farthing's worth of victuals or drink was given to anybody, for any services whatsoever. The committee, composed of sensible and sober manufacturers and tradesmen, paid for the printing that they had done, and paid all the expenses of the hustings, polling-places, clerks, etc. They paid also for the entertainment of the candidates at the hotel: and even the carriages to and from Manchester that I went in, I found paid for; and not a man nor woman in this excellent town, attempted to obtain from [me] either money, drink, or any promise to do anything for them in their private concerns. This was *purity of election* indeed. It was an honour, indeed,

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to represent a people like this. Neither [Mr Fielden 1830  
nor myself] ever canvassed in any shape or form, to  
either individually or collectively; neither of us 1834  
ever asked the people to give us a vote; but we  
contented ourselves with saying, that, if they  
chose us to represent them, we would be their true  
representatives to the best of our power.

Of one thing we were both of us particularly  
proud; and that was, that the people had the good  
sense; that sense of their own worth and our rights,  
as to scorn to attempt to *chair* us, or to drag us  
through the streets. In my address to them, I be-  
sought them not to think of imitating the slaves  
of the borough-mongers. "Now", said I, "my  
friends, I shall come down from the hustings, and  
the first handloom weaver I meet with, I shall  
take by the arm and walk with him up to the hotel  
from which I came." I did this, Mr Fielden did  
the same; and thus, in this appropriate manner,  
we closed this election, which should be an ex-  
ample to every borough and every county in the  
kingdom: Not a disturbance of any sort; not a  
blow given in anger; scarcely an abusive word  
from one person to another; not a single drunken  
man to be seen about the streets; much singing,  
much playing music, much joy, much triumph;  
but all was peace and decorum, from the begin-  
ning to the end. As a mark of victory over the  
combined malignity of factions, I set a very high  
value upon this seat in Parliament. But I set a  
higher value upon it, as vindicating the character



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1880 of the Commons, or, common people of England.  
to I always stood firmly up in defence, not only of  
1834 the rights, but of the character of the common  
people, who, of late years, were looked upon by  
both, the political factions, and by all the hordes  
that lived upon the taxes, as not being of the same  
flesh and blood with themselves. . .

[As I have said before,] I was in hope that the  
“Reformed Parliament” would set itself to work  
to sweep away innovations [and encroachments].  
[Lord Grey could have proceeded] at once to  
make great changes. I do not say have proceeded  
to make them in a hurry; but, to have shown an  
intention to make them. He was sure that he  
would have the people at his back. He could have  
done what he liked for the people, who now knew  
the extent of their power. For many, many years  
they had not known it. They were patient, they  
were not unreasonable; they were full of know-  
ledge; they desired to overthrow nothing that  
ought to have remained; to assert of them, that  
they sought anarchy and a scramble, was the  
most atrocious slander that ever was uttered by  
mortal man. There never was a working people  
in the whole world, so reasonable, so just, and so  
easily satisfied. These were the materials with  
which Lord Grey had to work; [and worse than  
nothing was done, for the new Poor-Law was  
passed]. Having got parliamentary reform, in  
name, at any rate, my resentment was becoming  
blunted. But, the Poor-Law Bill I could not

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stomach! That revived all that was dying in my 1830  
breast. I had no direct power; but I had great to  
indirect power; and that I used to the utmost 1834  
of that capacity which it pleased God to give  
me, always remembering His promise to be  
the protector of him "who considereth the  
poor".

[I wrote much,] the object of which was to induce [the labourers] resolutely to maintain the rights which, agreeably to the laws of our country, we all had inherited from our forefathers. Amongst these rights was, the right to live in the country of our birth; the right to have a living out of the land of our birth in exchange for our labour duly and honestly performed; the right, in case we fell into distress, to have our wants sufficiently relieved out of the produce of the land, whether that distress arose from sickness, from decrepitude, from old age, or from inability to find employment; because there were laws, and those laws were just, to punish us if we were idle or dissolute. For a thousand years, necessity was relieved out of the produce of the Tithes. When the Tithes were taken away by the aristocracy, and by them kept to themselves, or given wholly to the parsons, provision was made out of the land, as compensation for what had been taken away. That compensation was given in the rates as settled by the poor-law. The taking away those rates [by the new poor-law] was to violate the agreement, which gave as much right to receive, in case of

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1830 need, relief out of the land, as it left the land-  
to owner a right to his rent.

1834 [It was easy, after this, to see] in what the present Lords differed from the Lords of former times. In everything; except in the shape of their bodies. It had been the business of the Lords, each one to protect his people from wrong; to see that they had fair play; they were their advocates in courts of justice. The bishops and abbots were in Parliament to take care that the the poor were not plundered out of their patrimony; and thus nobility was "the cheap defence of the realm". What do we behold now? a prodigious band of spungers, living upon the labour of the industrious part of the community.

For many years there existed a fashion of looking upon the working people, and particularly the labourers in husbandry, as an inferior race of human beings, and of treating them as such. [It still goes on.] They are the contrary of this; they are the superior race, and they have always been so; they are content as to their station in life; they are unpretending; they are honest; they are sincere; and he who says the contrary is a base and infamous slanderer. It has been among the greatest delights of my life to see them happy, and amongst my most ardent desires to contribute to that happiness. I have admired their character and their conduct ever since I was able to estimate them; and I would willingly strike dead at my feet the insolent brutes who speak contemptuously of them.

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I was born and bred a farmer, or a sort of labourer; and I have never desired to have any rank, station, or name, or calling, more and other than that of a farmer. [Everyone had known] that I wanted nothing for myself, but they knew that I wanted to take [away] the power of oppressing and pillaging the order to which I belonged; admire my industry, my perseverance, my wonderful exertions; but there was at the bottom, to balance against all these, my strong and implacable hatred of oppression of all sorts; and particularly the partiality of taxation; the stripping of the working people of their earnings, and the heaping of these earnings upon idlers. This has been the constant ground of hostility to me; and I must say, that I trust in God that I shall so conduct myself as to cause the hostility to continue until the last hour of my life.

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to  
1884

## CHAPTER XV

1835

\* \* \* \* \*

1835 THE STATE OF MY HEALTH [NOW] IS THIS: [a] cough reduces me pretty nearly to hoarseness, [and it] will not quit me until the wind shift from the east to the west and the south-west. The experience of fifty years assures me this. When I was young and cared less about the matter, I was hoarse, and it did not signify whether I was or not. I beat my way through it, and had more strength in proportion, to bear up against the attack. It is a curious thing; it has nothing at all to do with the lungs; never affects the breast; its great symptom is, and I know nothing else about it, that there is a tickling in the throat, just below the chin, producing a very constant inclination to cough. It was just the same in New Brunswick; just the same in Pennsylvania; just the same in Long Island. I have very seldom missed it in any year; but I should have missed it, now, if I and my secretary had not been so busy, as not to attend to the circumstance that the careless wench had been heaping on coals in an American fireplace, till we were both pretty nearly suffocated. I cannot go to sleep for fear that the cough will come. I dare not go out of doors, though I want to be out from

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morning till night. However, I have been able<sup>1835</sup> to-day to think about dining upon a sucking pig on Sunday next; and to think about it without loathing. [~~And~~ now I must go on.]

To communicate to others the knowledge that I possess has always been my taste and my delight; and few will be disposed to question my fitness for the task. Talk of rocks and breakers and quagmires and quicksands, who has ever escaped from amidst so many as I have! Thrown (by my own will indeed) on the wide world at a very early age, without money to support, without friends to advise, and without book-learning to assist me; passing a few years dependent solely on my own labour for subsistence; then becoming a common soldier, and leading a military life, chiefly in foreign parts, for eight years; quitting that life after really, for me, high promotion, and with, for me, a large sum of money; marrying at an early age, going at once to France to acquire the French language, then to America; passing eight years there, becoming bookseller and author, and taking a prominent part in all the important discussions of the interesting period from 1793 to 1799, during which there was, in that country, a continued struggle between the English and French parties; conducting myself, in the ever-active part which I took in that struggle, in such a way as to call forth marks of unequivocal approbation from the government at home; returning to England in 1800, resuming my labours here, suffering two years' imprison-

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1885 ment, heavy fines, three years' self-banishment to the other side of the Atlantic, and a total breaking of fortune, so as to be left without a bed to lie on, and, during these years of trouble and punishments, writing and publishing every week of my life, whether in exile or not, eleven weeks only excepted, a periodical paper, containing more or less matter worthy of public attention.

Writing and publishing during the same years, a grammar of the French and another of the English language, a work on the "Economy of the Cottage", a work on "Forest Trees and Woodlands", a work on "Gardening", "An Account of America", a book of "Sermons", a work on the "Corn-Plant", a "History of the Protestant Reformation"; all books of great and continued sale, and the last unquestionably the book of greatest circulation in the whole world, the Bible only excepted.

During these same years of troubles and embarrassments without number, [I] introduced into England the manufacture of straw-plat; also several valuable trees; the cultivation of the corn-plant, so manifestly valuable as a source of food; and always (whether in exile or not) sustained a shop of some size in London; and during these years, bred up a family of seven children, to man's and woman's estate.

Not all the genius in the world could, without something more, have conducted me through these perils. There must be something more than genius:

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there must be industry: there must be perseverance: there must be, before the eyes of the nation, proofs of extraordinary exertion: people must say to themselves, "What wise conduct must there have been in the employing of the time of this man! How sober, how sparing in diet, how early a riser, how little expensive he must have been!" These were the things, and not genius, which caused my labours to be so incessant and so successful.

I am sure that everyone will say, without any hesitation, that a fourth part of the labours I have performed never would have been performed if I had not been a married man. In the first place, they could not; for I should, all the early part of my life, have been rambling and roving about as most bachelors are. I should have had no home that I cared a straw about, and should have wasted the far greater part of my time. The great affair of home being settled, having the home secured, I had leisure to employ my mind on things which it delighted in. I got rid at once of all cares, all anxieties, and had only to provide for the very moderate wants of that home. But the children began to come. They sharpened my industry: they spurred me on. To be sure, I had other and strong motives: I wrote for fame, and was urged forward by ill-treatment, and by the desire to triumph over my enemies; but, after all, a very large part of my nearly a hundred volumes may be fairly ascribed to the wife and children.



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1835 I might have done something; but, not a thousandth part of what I have done; for the chances are, that I being fond of military life, should have ended my days ten or twenty years ago in consequence of wounds or fatigues, or, more likely, in consequence of the persecutions of some haughty and insolent fool whom a system of corruption had made my commander. Love came and rescued me from this state of horrible slavery; placed the whole of my time at my disposal; made me free as air; removed every restraint upon the operations of my mind, naturally disposed to communicate its thought to others; and gave me a companion, who, deprived of all opportunities of acquiring what is called learning, had so much good sense, so much useful knowledge, was so innocent, so just in all her ways, so pure in thought, word, and deed, so disinterested, so generous, so devoted to me and her children, so free from all disguise, and, withal, so beautiful, so talkative, and in a voice so sweet, so cheering, that I must, seeing that health and capacity which it has pleased God to give me, have been a criminal, if I had done much less than that which I have done: and I have always said, that if my country feel any gratitude for my labours, that gratitude is due to her as full as much as to me.

Care! What care have I known! I have been buffeted about by a powerful and vindictive government; I have repeatedly had the fruit of

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my labour snatched away from me by it; but I <sup>1835</sup> had a partner that never frowned, that was never melancholy, that was never subdued in spirit, that never abated a smile on these occasions, that fortified me, and sustained me by her courageous example, and that was just as busy and as zealous in taking care of the remnant as she had been in taking care of the whole; just as cheerful, and just as full of caresses, when brought down to a mean hired lodging; as when the mistress of a fine country house with all its accompaniments; and, whether from her words or her looks, no one could gather that she regretted the change. What have I had worthy of the name of cares?

And, how is it now? How is it when the [end] has come [near]? And how should I have been without this wife and these children? I might have amassed a tolerable heap of money; but what would that have done for me? It might have bought me plenty of professions of attachments; plenty of people impatient for my exit from the world; but not one single grain of sorrow for any anguish that might have attended my approaching end. To me, no being in the world appears so wretched as an old bachelor.

What do I want in the world but the things that I have. I have a house in Fleet Street, I have another in Kensington, I have another at [Normandy Farm, near the place of my birth]. These are all good houses, too; they are furnished with every necessary. What more than this can I want?

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1835 I have horses at my will: always not less than half a dozen men to start at my call: God has blessed me with health and strength very rare at my age. Has ambition its calls upon me? What can it suggest beyond the farm that I have? Beyond the real power which I possess of upholding my friends and beating down my enemies?

An old Quaker, at Philadelphia, when I was writing away at a famous rate, used to send me a letter about once a week, containing these words, and no more: "Friend William, keep thyself cool". In the rigid sense of the term, I am certainly very far from being a Christian: I feel the dominion of the turbulent passions: when my coat is taken from me, I cannot give my cloak; nor does a buffet on the one cheek incline me patiently to turn the other. How many well-meaning people have exclaimed, "It is a pity that Cobbett is so *violent*"; such persons never asked themselves whether they would think a man too violent who should knock down a ruffian. This has been my state: when I began to write, I was as modest as a maid, and dealt in qualifications, and modifications, and mitigations to the best of my poor powers in the line of palavering; [but,] when I was first unprovokedly assaulted, I instantly resolved to proceed in the very same way, giving three, four, or ten blows for one.

It is a curious thing how the government of England has worked along with regard to me. Since about the year 1797 it has grown into a new

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sort of government; and I do verily believe, that 1835  
the history of my life will be the history of its life;  
for we have been at war from the day of its birth;  
or, at least, from its very infancy. It has, in its  
march, destroyed, or silenced every formidable  
assailant except myself; and the war between me  
and it is certainly as curious a matter as ever  
attracted the attention of mankind. The irrésistibility  
of its power had been confirmed by the melancholy  
fate of so many victims, that it laid hold of me,  
expecting that one good sharp bite would be enough.  
It did bite sharply, to be sure. As the French say,  
it carried away the piece. It regarded surviving  
as impossible; it was deceived for once; it had  
never had to do with a plough-boy before. It is  
truly curious, that I, at [this] time, who had  
always hated cities, and London in particular,  
was actually entering into arrangements for  
getting rid of everything in London, publications  
and all; was sowing seeds of trees, and plants  
of trees, and making all my calculations for  
bringing up my family as farmers. Some time  
in 1809 I had brought me a copy of the *ex-officio*  
information [against me]. I was leaning over a  
gate, and looking at the turnips in the field.  
I saw at once the hell-born intention, and I  
saw the consequences. The beautiful field  
disappeared, and, in my imagination, I saw  
the walls of a prison. My blood boiled with  
resentment and, cramming the paper into my  
pocket, I made an oath never to cease to  
oppose, never cease to annoy, as far

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1835 as I legally could, [this] body of men. Which [oath] I have kept, with a little more fidelity than Tories keep their pledges. God is just; and as man is said to be made in the image of God, man should be just too; and to forget or not to punish as far as we are able, and legally can punish, is a neglect of sacred duty.

For now more than twenty-five long years, I was the great and constant and only really sharp and efficient thorn in the side of that system which, at last, brought this great country to the edge of convulsive ruin. I was the evening and the day star, the moon and the sun and the aurora of the press; all other parts of it have come twinkling behind me, shining now and then, indeed, but shining with a borrowed light. I always led the way at a great distance forward; I foresaw, foretold every event, every effect; my predictions in due succession became history; I was the teacher of the nation; "the great source of political knowledge, and of all those powerful arguments by which so many hundreds of thousands were able to combat [the] nefarious and desolating system of sway."

It was, [not long ago,] my intention to close the "Register", and then I intended to publish, as the work of another year, "The History of My Life";<sup>1</sup> and then I intended to go into Hampshire, there to cultivate a garden and a few fields to the end of my life, the close of which I hoped to pass amongst that class of society that I have always

most loved and cherished, the people employed in the cultivation of the land. I have it rooted in me, 1835  
that happiness and riches are seldom companions; I have seen too much of the misery and opprobrium attending the living upon the public money not to have long ago resolved never to pocket a single farthing of it; and as to what are called honours, they have always been with me objects of contempt.

Born amongst husbandmen, bred to husbandry, delighting in its pursuits even to the minutest details, never having, in all my range of life, lost sight of the English farm-house and of those scenes in which my mind took its first spring, it is natural that I should have a strong partiality for country life, and that I should enter more in detail into the feelings of labourers in husbandry than into those of other labourers.

If the cultivators of the land be not, generally speaking, the most virtuous and most happy of mankind, there must be something at work in the community to counteract the operations of nature. This way of life gives the best security for health and strength of body. It does not teach, it necessarily produces early rising; constant forethought; constant attention; and constant care of dumb animals. The nature and qualities of all living things are known to country boys better than to philosophers. The seasons, the weather, the causes and effects of propagation, in cultivation, in tillage, are all known from habit, from incessant

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1835 repetition of observation. The nature, the properties, the various uses, of different soils and woods are familiar to the mind of country boys. Riding, climbing, swimming, nothing comes amiss, and they are come, and are not sought. Rural affairs leave not a day, not an hour, unoccupied and without its cares, its promises, and its fruitions. The seasons, which wait for no man; the weather, which is no respecter of person, and which will be what it will be, produce an habitual looking forward, and make the farmer provident, whatever might have been his natural disposition. The farmer's cares are pleasing cares. His misfortunes can seldom be more than lessons. His produce consists of things wanted by all mankind. His market-day is a ready-money one. No day-books, bills, and ledgers haunt his mind. Envy can, in the natural state of things, find no place in his breast; for, the seasons and the weather are the same to all; and the demand for his produce has no other measure than the extent of his crops.

I [repeat], I intended to drop "The Register"; but I could not do [it]. It was so efficient! People got into the habit of taking it in in clubs and societies so nicely. Like the sun, it shed its beams so truly all over the kingdom, that I could not cease to publish it.

[But now,] I am once more in a farm. I might have been, I am aware of it, possessed of bags of public gold or of landed domains, purchased with that gold. I trudge through the dirt, and I might

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have ridden in the ring at Hyde Park, with four 1835  
horses to draw me along in a gilded carriage, with  
a coachman before me and footmen behind me.  
What I might have been, it is hard to say; what  
I have been and what I am, all the world knows;  
I was a plough-boy and a private soldier, and I  
am a Member of the House of Commons, sent  
thither by the free voice of a great community.  
I started at the same age, or thereabouts, with  
Canning, Liverpool, and Huskisson. I always told  
them that it was judgement as well as taste, that  
led me into a path different from theirs. Time has  
shown that my judgement was as sound as my  
taste; for, if we are to estimate the future as well  
as the past: they are already rotten; and the King-  
dom hardly recollects that there were such men.  
Whereas, some generations, at least, will pass  
away before the name of William Cobbett will  
cease to be familiar in the mouths of the people  
of England; and, for the rest of the world, I care  
not a straw.

If I have one wish more ardent than all other,  
it is this; that I, enjoying my garden and few  
fields, may see England as great in the world, and  
her industrious, laborious, kind and virtuous  
people as happy as they were when I was born;  
and that I may at last have a few years of calm  
at the close of a long life of storms and of tempests.

This morning, long before four o'clock, I heard  
the blackbirds making the fields echo with their  
whistle; and a few minutes after four I, for the



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1835 first time this year, heard the cuckoo, which I never before heard earlier than May-day. And now, this cuckoo will, on Midsummer day, cease to call us up in the morning, and cease its work of sucking the hedge-sparrow's eggs, depositing its own in the nest, making the poor hedge sparrow bring it up, until it be big enough and strong enough to kill and eat the hedge-sparrow; in all which respects it so exactly resembles the at once lazy and greedy and ungraceful and cruel vagabonds, who devour the fruit of our labour. But, my friends, I do verily believe that, before we shall hear this harbinger of summer again, the vagabonds, of whom it is the type, will have received a souse, such as they never received before.

\* \* \* \* \*

[These concluding paragraphs were written by Cobbett's sons.]

A great inclination to inflammation of the throat caused him annoyance from time to time, for several years, and, as he got older, it enfeebled him more. He was suffering from one of these attacks during the late spring, and it will be recollected, that when the Marquis of Chandos brought on his motion for the repeal of the malt-tax, my father attempted to speak, but could not make his voice audible beyond the few members who sat around him. He remained to vote on that motion, and increased his ailment; but on the voting of Supplies on the nights of Friday the

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15th and Monday the 18th of May, he exerted 1835 himself so much, and sat so late, that he laid himself up. He determined, nevertheless, to attend the House again on the evening of the Marquis of Chandos' motion on Agricultural Distress on the 25th of May, and the exertion of speaking and remaining late to vote on that occasion were too much for one already severely unwell.

He went down to his farm early on the morning after this last debate, and had resolved to rest himself thoroughly and get rid of his hoarseness and inflammation. On Thursday night, last, he felt unusually well, and imprudently drank tea in the open air, but he went to bed apparently in better health. In the early part of the night he was taken violently ill, and on Friday and Saturday was considered in a dangerous state by the medical attendant. On Sunday he revived again, and on Monday gave us hope that he could yet be well. He talked feebly, but in the most collected and sprightly manner upon politics and farming; wished for "four days' rain" for the Cobbett-corn and the root-crop; and, on Wednesday, he could no longer remain shut up from the fields, but desired to be carried round the farm; which being done, he criticised the work that had been going on in his absence, and detected some little deviation from his orders, with all the quickness that was so remarkable in him. As he was carried to see the fields, a little boy in a blue smock-frock happened to come by us, to whom my father

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1835 gave a laughing look, at which I thought I should have dropped, I knowing what was passing in his mind. He seemed refreshed at the sight of the little creature, which he had once precisely resembled, though now at such an immeasurable distance.

On Wednesday night he grew more and more feeble, and was evidently sinking; but he continued to answer with perfect clearness every question that was put to him. In the last half-hour, his eyes became dim; and at ten minutes after one P.M., he leaned back, closed them as if to sleep, and died without a gasp.

THE END

## NOTES



## CHAPTER I

1. *page 3.* Cobbett's Age.

The facts are confusing. Cobbett himself said that he was born in March 1766. His son, John Morgan, wrote in 1835 (*Pol. Reg.* 26 June 1835), that the date was 9 March 1762. E. I. Carlyle, after examining the parish register, at Farnham, concluded that the date was 9 March 1763. (See Carlyle, *William Cobbett*, Appendix A.) The reader must keep in mind these variations, for Cobbett consistently makes himself younger than is the fact.

2. *page 5.* Long Island was taken by the British in August 1776.

3. *page 14.* George the Fourth, who was Prince of Wales at the time of this incident.

## CHAPTER II

1. *page 20.* Cobbett's Regiment was the 54th, Major Lord Edward Fitzgerald commanding. (See Note 3, p. 45, Chap. III.)

2. *page 22.* Lowth's Grammar.  
*A Short Introduction to English Grammr.* London, 1762. By John Lowth. He was later Bishop of London. There were numerous editions.

## CHAPTER III

1. *page 30.* The "new discipline".  
This probably refers to the *Principles of Military*

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*Movements, chiefly applied to Infantry, etc.*, by Sir David Dundas, Field-Marshal. London, 1788.

2. *page 35.* The Reid Family.

Cobbett's father-in-law was Serg. Thomas Reid of the Royal Artillery. The following brothers and sisters-in-law were closely connected with Cobbett:

Thomas: b. Woolwich, 31 March 1777.

Eleanor: b. Woolwich, 2 August 1781.

Frederick: b. Gibraltar, 11 February 1785.

Cobbett's wife, Anne, was born at Chatham, 28 March 1774.

(See *Cobbett Papers.*)

3. *page 45.* Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763–1798).

After an excellent military career, he joined his regiment, the 54th, in New Brunswick. Under the influence of Rousseau, he carried his admiration for the "noble savage" to the extent of living in the American wilderness, joining the Bear Tribe at Detroit, and journeying down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. He returned to Ireland, and, becoming involved in the circulation of revolutionary propaganda, was cashiered from the army. In 1796, he was deeply concerned in the conspiracy of the United Irishmen against England, and when the conspiracy was betrayed, he was shot in the arm and died in Newgate in consequence of his wound.

(See *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*)

## CHAPTER IV

1. *page 47.* The Campaign of 1793 is referred to. The Duke of York was sent to the Low Countries to reinforce the Allies against the republican armies of France. The campaign was so disastrous that Wellington, who served in it, thought it a marvel that any of the English escaped.

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2. page 56. *The Soldier's Friend; or, Considerations on the late pretended Augmentations of the Subsistence of the Private Soldier.* Ridgway, London, 1792 (July).

Cobbett both denied authorship (in 1805) and claimed it (in 1832). All his biographers accept his claim. The editor has here used the account which best suits the story Cobbett is telling.

(See Carlyle, pp. 33 ff.)

(See Cole, *Life of William Cobbett*, pp. 43 ff.)

3. page 56. The volume of Haine referred to is *The Rights of Man*. London, 1791.

4. page 57. The marriage certificate of William Cobbett and Anne Reid is dated 5 February 1792, at the parish church Woolwich. Cobbett is described as of the Parish of Portsmouth.

(See *Cobbett Papers*.)

5. page 57. The Works of Raynal.

Guillaume-Thomas-François, Abbé Raynal (1713–1796). Cobbett may be referring to one of two books:

1. *Histoire philosophique et politique des Établissements et des Européens dans les deux Indes.* Amsterdam, 1770.

2. *Tableau et Révolutions des colonies anglaises de l'Amérique Septentrionale.* Amsterdam, 1781.

For an analysis of the significance of the work of the Abbé Raynal, see Fay, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire en France et aux États-Unis...* Paris, 1926.

6. page 57. Lisle and Brissac.

Efforts to trace Lisle and Brissac as personal names have been unsuccessful. Captain Liddell Hart suggests that as Cobbett has just been speaking of fortified towns, and as he is not above taking liberties with his spelling, he is referring to Lille and Neu-Breisach, for the fortification of the latter place by Vauban (1698) was always regarded as the perfected example of Vauban's method, and is commonly referred to as his



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“third system”, being a development of the method which he had employed in his still more celebrated fortification of Landau.

### CHAPTER V

1. *page 62.* The following is a list of Cobbett's children. Those surviving infancy are in italics.

1. A boy: b. ?, d. 3 June 1794.
2. Child: Still-born 15 March 1794.
3. *Anne: b. 11 July 1795, d. 22 October 1877.*
4. *William: b. 26 November 1798, d. 12 January 1878.*
5. *John Morgan: b. 13 November 1800, d. 13 February 1877.*
6. Child: Still-born 1 May 1802.
7. *James Paul: b. 23 June 1803, d. 11 March 1881.*
8. A boy: b. 9 December 1804, d. 27 December 1804.
9. *Eleanor: b. 6 December 1805, d. 11 January 1900.*
10. *Susan: b. 24 April 1807, d. 2 February 1880.*
11. ?
12. Child: Still-born 27 August 1809.
13. Child: (Still-born during his imprisonment).
14. *Richard: b. 18 March 1814, d. 3 June 1875.*

There is a difficulty about the eleventh child. Cobbett writes (*Pci. Reg.* 13 July 1810): “I have acquired the means of making provision for a family of six children (the remains of thirteen). . .”.

2. *page 65. Le Maître Anglois.*

This first appeared with the title *Le Tuteur Anglais ou Grammaire régulière de la langue Anglaise*. Bradford, Philadelphia, 1795.

(See E. Smith, *William Cobbett*, I, 102, for details of later editions.)

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### 3. page 67. *The Law of Nations.*

First published in Philadelphia, 1794. There are also, 2nd ed., London, 1802, with a dedication to John Penn, Esq.; 3rd ed., which the editor has not seen; 4th ed., London, 1829.

### 4. page 68. On the Political State of America, 1794--1800.

When Cobbett entered American politics, differences of opinion were clearly defined. There were two parties, calling themselves Federalists and Democrats. The former, which had the mercantile, industrial, and banking interests as its chief supporters, maintained the policy of a strong central government soundly financed, of friendliness to England as an important factor in American commercial life, and of aloofness to the overtures of the new French republic. The latter party, consisting of land-owners, the dwellers on the American frontier, and the urban proletariat, advocated strong local government, the perpetuation of revolutionary hatred of England, and assistance to the French in their struggles against "outworn" monarchies.

Philadelphia was the capital of the United States, and was the scene of the most frank intrigues between the Democrats and the agents of France. As far as Cobbett can be said to have fought on any side, it was on the side of the Federalists; but, more exactly, he was fighting for England against the ideas and practices of French republicans, as these showed themselves in America. This was his interest, and that he became involved in American affairs was largely an accident of the times and of his character.

His sympathy with the Federalist position was, at most, an abstract sympathy, and any services he rendered to their cause was by the way. His difficulties in Philadelphia came from the fact that, although the government of the United States was Federalist

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in tone, the local government of Philadelphia and of the State of Pennsylvania was Democratic. It was with the law, dubiously administered by democratic judges, that he had his troubles.

After 1798, when President Washington retired and President Adams was elected, Cobbett seems to have become the even more outspoken supporter of England and so laid himself open to the charge of being a dangerous alien. He says that President Adams had listed him for deportation under the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798. Although there is no evidence in support of this statement, it is correct to say that the tension of American politics had so increased that Cobbett could no longer occupy his unstable position among local contentions.

The circulation of his once-popular *Porcupine's Gazette* dropped by the end of 1799; his point of view no longer fitted with that of the Federalists; and when the blow of his lawsuit with Dr Rush fell (see Note 6, p. 82, Chap. VI), he found that his wisest course was to remove to England.

(See Fay, *op. cit.*, Chap. v, for a detailed discussion.)

## CHAPTER VI

1. *page 74.* M'Kean and Ankerstrom.

Thomas M'Kean: Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and later Governor. Cobbett met him judicially on two occasions.

Ankerstrom: Swedish gentleman who assassinated Gustavus Adolphus III of Sweden in March 1792.

2. *page 74.* Admiral Earl Howe defeated the French fleet under Villaret de Joyeuse in a battle off the northern coast of France 28 May to 1 June 1794.

3. *page 76.* Benjamin Franklin Bache (1769-1798) was a Philadelphia journalist, founder of *The Aurora*, a

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leading democratic newspaper. William Duane (1760–1835) was its editor after Bache's death.

• Matthew Carey (1760–1839) was an Irish economist, pamphleteer, and publisher in Philadelphia. Being Irish, his anti-English feelings brought him into conflict with Cobbett.

4. page 79. Talleyrand was in Philadelphia from 22 May 1794 to 11 June 1796.

5. page 81. Moreau de St Méry (1750–1819).

Born in Martinique, went to Paris and was president of the *électeurs* when the Bastille fell, receiving the key of the fortress in the name of the city. Fled to America at the beginning of the Terror and became a bookseller in Philadelphia, 1794 to 1798. He was the author of: *Description topographique . . . de la partie espagnole de l'île Saint-Domingue*. (English translation by Cobbett, 1796.)

(See *Voyage aux États-Unis de l'Amérique*, 1793–1798, ed. S. L. Mims, New Haven, 1913.)

6. page 82. The Rush Libel Suit.

In 1798, in *Porcupine's Gazette*, Cobbett began to attack Dr Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia for advocating copious bleeding followed by a violent purge as a cure for the Yellow Fever. The abuse resulted in a libel suit. The occasion was improved by Cobbett's democratic opponents, who used every device to delay the cause, and who inconveniently brought it on in 1800 after Cobbett had moved his business to New York. Cobbett's only consolation was the knowledge that, when General Washington died, the use of Rush's treatment to reduce fever probably hastened his end. A full account is found in a pamphlet called *Farewell Number, Porcupine's Gazette*, published in New York, 13 June 1800; and in a brief periodical of seven issues, *The Bushlight*, New York and London; February to October 1800.

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### CHAPTER VII

1. page 89. Windham's Speech. (See *Hansard Parliamentary History*, xxxvi (1801-1803), 1679.)

2. page 92. The Pitt Pamphleteers.

Bowles, John.

*Reflections on the Political and Moral State of Society at the Close of the Eighteenth Century.* London, 1800.

Brand, John, d. 1808. Presented by Lord-Chancellor Loughborough to rectory of St. George's, Southwark.

*Historical Essay on the Principles of Political Associations in a State.* . . . London, 1796.

D'Ivernois, Sir Francis.

*Histoire . . . des finances de la République Française.* 1796.

*Immense préparatifs de guerre . . . après le Traité d'Amiens.* London, 1801.

Eden, Sir Frederick (1766-1809).

*The State of the Poor.* . . . London, 1797, 3 vols.

*Eight Letters on the Peace.* . . . London, 1802. Originally addressed to Cobbett's *Porcupine* over the signature "Philanglus". The opinion of Karl Marx can be placed beside Cobbett's: "the only disciple of Adam Smith during the eighteenth century that produced any work of importance".

Gifford, John (1758-1818), properly John Richards Green. Prefixed an essay to the English reprint of Cobbett's *Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats*, London, 1797. He was also concerned in *The Porcupine*. Edited the *Anti-Jacobin Review*.

Gifford, William (1756-1826).

*Baviad*, London, 1794.

*Maeviad*, London, 1795.

These were republished in Philadelphia by Cobbett in the year 1799. Edited *Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly*

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*Examiner*, 20 November 1797 to 9 July 1798. Edited *Quarterly Review* which began February 1809.

• Ireland, John (1761–1842).

• Close friend of William Gifford.

*Letters of Fabius to William Pitt* . . . London, 1801.

First addressed to the *Porcupine*.

• Marsh, Herbert (1757–1839).

*History of Great Britain and France, from the time of the conference of Pilnitz to the Declaration of War against Great Britain*. Originally written in German, it had great influence on the continent.

du Pan, Mallet (1749–1800).

• Edited the *Mercure Britannique*, a fortnightly paper, distributed on the continent.

Reeves, John (1752–1829).

Appointed King's Printer in 1800 by William Pitt.

Vansittart, Nicholas (1766–1851), first Baron Bexley. His pamphleteering consisted chiefly of defences of Pitt's system of finance. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer 1812 to 1824.

3. page 96. "The accursed thing in the camp of the Israelites." (See Joshua vii.)

4. page 98. Mr John Morgan.

After Morgan's return to America, his close connection with Cobbett was maintained. He distributed Cobbett's writings in America and owned the American copyrights of many of his books. In 1817, he acted as Cobbett's banker, and assisted him in the seed business which the latter started in New York.

5. page 100. The news of the Preliminaries of the Peace was announced in London on 10 October 1801, and Cobbett's shop in Pall Mall was attacked the same evening.

The Treaty itself was signed at Amiens 27 March 1802. Cobbett's house was again attacked when the news reached London a day or two later.

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6. *page 102.* *The Porcupine* was sold to John Gifford, one of the Pitt pamphleteers, on 21 November 1801. Gifford immediately transferred it to Mr Redhead Yorke, who had "an allowance from the Ministry"; and it disappeared, by a merger with *The True Briton*, a ministerial sheet.

(See Cobbett to Windham: 24 November 1801. Add. mss. 37,853.)

7. *page 103.* The New Opposition.

This was a small parliamentary group that broke with Pitt at the time of the Peace with Napoleon, and maintained its antagonism to Bonaparte. The group looked upon *The Political Register* as its mouthpiece. Windham was its leader and represented it in the Ministry of All-Talents.

8. *page 106.* Single-stick at Botley.

A match took place at Botley 11 October 1805. It was part of the campaign against those who would destroy old English sports and tastes; a campaign in which Windham's speech in favour of bull-baiting and a series of articles in *The Political Register* also played a part.

(See Add. mss. 37,853, fol. 186, for a copy of the "Advertisement"; and also Cobbett to Windham, 6 October 1805. Add. mss. 37,853.)

## CHAPTER VIII

1. *page 132.* The following is a list of the anti-Cobbett publications during the great outburst of 1807-1809.

Cobbett Against Himself . . . . .	1807
The Camel . . . . .	1807
A Refutation of the present Political Sentiments of Himself . . . . .	1808
Blagdon's Political Register . . . . .	1809
Cobbett's Oppression! . . . . .	1809

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Caution against Future Subscriptions for Prostitutes and their Associates . . . . .	1809
Observations on the Political Tendency of the late Public Meetings . . . . .	1809
Thought on Libels . . . . .	1809
The Beauties of Cobbett . . . . .	1809
The Rival Imposters . . . . .	1809
Elements of Reform . . . . .	1809
Proceedings of a General Court-Martial . . . . .	1809
Caricatures by James Gillray, published throughout the year 1809.	

### CHAPTER IX

#### 1. page 139. Cobbett's Debts in 1810.

A great deal of correspondence is extant covering this matter. It can be found in *Cobbett Papers*.

Mss. Eng. Hist. C. 33 in Bodleian Library, contains correspondence between the Swanns, who were paper-makers, Cobbett, and John Wright.

Add. mss. 22,906, 22,907, 31,126 contain correspondence with John Wright.

#### 2. page 140. James Paull, or Paul.

A Quaker farmer, living at Bustleton, in Lower Dublin Township, Bucks County, to the north of Philadelphia. Cobbett first met him when he removed his family to Bustleton to avoid the Yellow Fever of 1793. Several open letters in *The Political Register* were addressed to him. In 1818, Cobbett visited James Paull and found him, then an old man, near his death.

(See *A Year's Residence*.)

#### 3. page 144. Farming Correspondence.

This has been in great part preserved in *Cobbett Papers*.



## Notes

4. page 151. Paine's *Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance*.

Published in Philadelphia and London, 1796. This pamphlet had some of the same delusive simplicity that made Malthus' work so attractive. Paine found that the National Debt of England had increased through the eighteenth century in a fixed mathematical progression—a series in which a given number was produced by taking the preceding number and adding to it one-half of itself, thus, 8, 12, 18, 27, etc. Paine confidently, therefore, predicted the end of the English financial system about 1805–1815. The work is not as delusive in its details as in its fundamental assumption.

5. page 155. Charles James Fox to Windham: 24 November 1801.

“I suggest he (Cobbett) pushes his notions concerning the depreciation of money too far, though they are by no means without foundation. . . . I mention this subject the rather, because I am informed Cobbett has rather fatigued his readers by dwelling too much upon it.”

(See *Windham Papers*, II, 242.)

## CHAPTER X

1. page 167. The Riots of 1816.

These outbursts, the consequence largely of industrial misery, were marked by episodes of machine-breaking and food riots. The rioters acted under the feigned leadership of Capt. Ludd., Attempts were made to link these sporadic incidents to an agitation for the reform of Parliament. The movement collapsed in the following year, with results to himself that Cobbett records in Chap. XI.

(See *The Last Hundred Days of English Freedom*, extracted from *Pol. Reg.*, ed. J. L. Hammond, London, 1921.)

2. page 168. *A Letter to the Journeymen and Labourers of England, Scotland and Ireland. On the Causes of their present miseries.* . . . Published in *Pol. Reg.* xxxi, 2 November, 1816.

3. page 169. Samuel Bamford writes:

“At this time the writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts. . . . This influence was speedily visible; he directed his readers to the true cause of their sufferings—misgovernment; and to its proper corrective—parliamentary reform. Riots soon became scarce, and from that time they have never obtained their ancient vogue with the labourers of this country.”

(See *Life of a Radical*, 1859, p. 6.)

4. page 172: Sidmouth's Bill.

Seditious Meetings Bill and Suspension of Habeas Corpus.

(See *Hansard*, 1st Series, xxxv, 554.)

5. page 176. Mr Astor.

This apparently is William Backhouse Astor, the second son of John Jacob Astor of New York, the famous fur merchant. This son, who had been studying in European universities, was returning to enter his father's business. The date is incorrectly given in *Dict. of American Biog.*

## CHAPTER XI

1. page 185. The Harrisburg Petition.

This petition was for the restitution of recognizances in connection with a suit for libel brought against Cobbett in 1797 by Count Yrujo, Spanish Envoy to the United States. The Grand Jury had dismissed the case. An account of the incident is to

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be found in *The Democratic Judge*, for M'Kean, the hero of that pamphlet was the Count's father-in-law.

The petition, in Cobbett's hand, is in the collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society at Philadelphia.

2. page 187. The "Pennsylvania wagons" described by Cobbett are better known by the name of "Conestoga wagons". They should be familiar to English readers from such films as *The Covered Wagon*.

3. page 197. The Life of Paine.

A full account can be found in Moncrieff-Conway's *Life of Paine*, II, Appendix A.

In 1818, Cobbett negotiated with Madame Bonneville, then living in New York, agreeing to give her \$1000 for the ms. of a Life on which she was working, and which contained important letters. She stipulated that it should be published in England without additions, and that it should be separate from all other writings. The bargain fell through.

Cobbett worked on another Life, although he never published it. Moncrieff-Conway saw this latter ms. through the courtesy of Eleanor Cobbett and her nephew Sir William Cobbett of Manchester. The present editor, however, could not find it among the *Cobbett Papers*.

4. page 202. Cobbett in agreeing not to enter the city of Manchester was making capital of the notorious "Peterloo" massacre", which had taken place the 16th of August previous.

(See Note 3, p. 241, Chap. XIII.)

## CHAPTER XII

1. page 204. Cobbett's paper was *The Evening Post*; his son William was printer and publisher. It began 29 January 1820, and ran for about two months.

## Notes

Public taste apparently found *The Political Register* a more satisfactory vehicle for Cobbett's abilities.

2. page 211. The ill-judged letter from America about his debts received a good deal of attention from pamphlet-writers.

Correspondence between Mr Cobbett, Tipper,  
and Sir Francis Burdett . . . . . 1819  
A Letter to the Friends of Liberty on Mr Cob-  
bett, Mr Tipper, and Sir Francis . . . . . 1819  
Cobbett and the Pickpocket Club . . . . . 1819

This is a single-sheet folio, in which Cobbett is elected to the Club with applause, after passages have been read from his letter.

(See ms. Montagu d. 17, in the Bodleian Library.)

3. page 214. My "Trash".

The name of "Two-penny Trash" was given by Cobbett's opponents to the cheap *Political Register* of 1816. He kept the name in his mind and, when the later agitation for reform was under way, he used the title for a cheap publication which ran monthly from July 1830 to July 1832. *Cobbett's Two-penny Trash; or, Politics for the Poor* consisted of reprints of articles from *The Political Register*. There was no number for March, 1832.

4. page 217. "Peel's Bill" for the resumption of cash payments, i.e. return to the gold standard, was passed April-May, 1819. The nature of the distress occasioned by the consequent deflation of money value is amply indicated by Cobbett.

5. page 225. *Cottage Economy: containing Information . . . relative to . . . matters deemed useful in the conducting of the Affairs of a Labourer's Family*. London, 1822.

This was first issued in seven parts, from 28 July 1821 to 1 March 1822.

## Notes

### CHAPTER XIII

1. *page 227.* Baring Brothers and Co., the London financial house, consisted of Alexander, Baron Ashburton; Francis, Lord Northbrook; and Thomas Baring, during this period. They were all active in political life.

2. *page 234.* *Letter to the Luddites* was one of the cheap *Registers*, published in xxxi, 30 November 1816.

3. *page 241.* "The 16th of August at Manchester" refers to the Peterloo Riot, when an assembly of workers, meeting in St. Peter's Fields, were ridden down by the yeomanry under the direction of the local magistrates.

4. *page 244.* Sir Thomas Beevor, 3rd Bart. (1798-1879). This baronet, whose seat was Hargham Hall, near Attleborough, Norfolk, first became acquainted with Cobbett through his interest in timber growing. He stocked his plantations from Cobbett's nursery, and Cobbett conducted experiments in setting-out, grafting, etc. with his help. Sir Thomas was the bearer of a letter of congratulation from the English Reformers to the French republicans at the conclusion of the Revolution of 1830.

5. *page 247.* Readers wishing to judge the character of these lectures will find some of them in a series of pamphlets published in 1830, and entitled *Eleven Lectures on the French and Belgian Revolutions, and English Borough-mongering...* They were delivered in the Theatre of the Rotunda, Blackfriars Bridge, between 2 September and 7 October 1830. Another collection is *Cobbett's Manchester Lectures, in Support of his Fourteen Reform Propositions...* These were given at the end of December 1831. For the most part Cobbett spoke from brief notes, several sets of which

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have been preserved in the *Cobbett Papers*. The itinerary of the lectures can easily be traced in G. D. H. Cole's edition of the *Rural Rides*.

### CHAPTER XIV

1. page 255. Cobbett's Trial.

*The Political Register* contains only a brief article of comment. The detailed report is to be found in a pamphlet, *A Full and Accurate Account of Mr. Cobbett's Trial, etc.*, London, 1831. The contemporary importance of the occasion can be judged from the description given of it in *The Examiner*, where it is called "a trial of the Government more than of Cobbett".

### CHAPTER XV

1. page 284. "History of My Life."

Cobbett writes: "...my chief object in writing it, or, at least, one of my chief objects, being to assert the natural rights of the working people; to assert the superiority which nature frequently gives them over birth, title, and wealth. I shall entitle my book 'The Progress of a Plough-boy to a seat in Parliament, as exemplified in the History of the Life of William Cobbett, Member for Oldham'; and, I intend that the frontispiece to the book shall represent me, first in a smock-frock, driving the rooks from the corn; and, in the lower compartment of the picture, standing in the House of Commons, addressing the Speaker".

(See *Pol. Reg.* LXXXIII, 15 February 1834, p. 409.)

# THE SOURCES OF THE TEXT

The paragraph numbers at the left refer to the preceding text; the page numbers at the right refer to the various sources

## CHAPTER I

¶ 1	{ <i>A Year's Residence</i> (London, 1822, 3rd ed.), iv, ¶ 8 } <i>Rural Rides</i> (London, 1830) p. 289 }
2	<i>A Year's Residence</i> v, ¶ 9
3	" " " " iii, ¶ 6
4	<i>Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine</i> p. 9, 10 (Phila., 1796)
5	" " " " p. 11, 12
6	" " " " p. 12
7	" " " " p. 12, 13
8	" " " " p. 13
9	" " " " p. 14
10	" " " " p. 14, 15
11	{ " " " " p. 15 } <i>Rural Rides</i> p. 45, 46 }
12	<i>Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine</i> p. 16
13	{ " " " " p. 17 } <i>Political Reg.</i> , LXXXI, 21 Aug. 1833 p. 513, 514 }
14	" " " " p. 514, 515
15	" " " " p. 145, 144
16	" " " " p. 452
17	" " " " p. 145
18	" " " " p. 146
19	<i>Rural Rides</i> p. 17
20	" " " " p. 17, 18
21	<i>Political Reg.</i> , VI, 8 Dec. 1804 p. 874
22	" " " " p. 23, 24
23	<i>Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine</i> p. 17
24	" " " " p. 17
25	" " " " p. 18
26	" " " " p. 18, 19
27	" " " " p. 19
28	" " " " p. 19, 20





## Sources of the Text

¶ 10	{	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 95, ¶ 94
		(Footnote)	p. 96, ¶ 94
11			p. 96, ¶ 95
12	”	”	p. 96, ¶ 95
13	”	”	p. 97, ¶ 96
14	”	”	p. 129, ¶ 141
15	”	”	p. 130, ¶ 143
16	”	”	p. 131, ¶ 144
17	”	”	p. 131, ¶ 145
18	”	”	p. 131, ¶ 145
19	”	”	p. 132, ¶ 146
20	”	”	p. 133, ¶ 147
21	”	”	p. 134, ¶ 148
22	”	”	p. 135, ¶ 149
23	”	”	p. 135, ¶ 150
24	”	”	p. 136, ¶ 151
25	{	<i>Political Reg.</i> , xv, 17 June 1809	p. 899, 900
		<i>Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine</i>	p. 28, 29. }

### CHAPTER IV

1	{	<i>Political Reg.</i> , viii, 5 Oct. 1805	p. 521
		” ” xviii, 21 July 1810	p. 39, 40
2	”	” xxxii, 6 Dec. 1817	p. 1109, 1110
3	”	” xviii, 21 July 1810	p. 40
4	{	” ” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 900
		” ” lxvi, 22 Nov. 1828	p. 661
5	{	” ” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 902
		” ” viii, 5 Oct. 1805	p. 521
6	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 902
7	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 902
8	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 903
9	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 903, 904
10	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 904, 905
11	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 906
12	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 906
13	”	” xv, 17 June 1809	p. 906, 907

## Sources of the Text

¶14	{ <i>Political Reg.</i> , VIII,	5 Oct. 1805	p. 522
	" " "	XV,	17 June 1809
15	" " "	VIII,	5 Oct. 1805
16	" " "	VIII,	5 Oct. 1805
17	" " "	VIII,	5 Oct. 1805
18	" " "	XV,	17 June 1809
	" " "	VIII,	5 Oct. 1805

### CHAPTER V

1	<i>Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine</i>	p. 32
2	" " " "	p. 33, 34
3	Letter to Rachel Smithers. Phila., 6 July 1794. (Printed in Melville, <i>Life and Letters</i> , I, 85 ff.)	
4	Letter to Rachel Smithers. Phila., 6 July 1794	
5	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 145, ¶ 166, p. 146, ¶ 167
6	{ " " " <i>Emigrant's Guide</i> (London, 1830)	p. 169, ¶ 192 p. 102, ¶ 100
7	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 139, ¶ 101
8	" "	p. 169, ¶ 192
9	{ " " " " " "	p. 89, ¶ 90, p. 92, 93, ¶ 92 p. 142, ¶ 161
10	{ " " " Letter to Rachel Smithers. Phila., 6 July 1794	p. 220, ¶ 259 p. 143, ¶ 162
11	{ " " " <i>Political Reg.</i> , XXXII, 6 Dec. 1817	p. 1094
12	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 145, ¶ 166, p. 146, ¶ 167
13	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXVIII, 22 Aug. 1829	p. 229
14	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 143 ¶ 162
15	{ <i>The Democratic Judge</i> (Phila., 1798) <i>Political Reg.</i> , VI, 29 Sep. 1804	p. 7 p. 450
16	" " " 29 Sep. 1804	p. 450

## Sources of the Text

¶16	Political Reg., VI, 29 Sep. 1804	p. 450
17	„ „ VI, 29 Sep. 1804	p. 451
18	„ „ LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 453, 454

### CHAPTER VI

1	Porcupine's Works (London, 1801)	iv, p. 3
2	„ „ „ „ „ „	iv, p. 3
3	„ „ „ „ „ „	iv, p. 3, 4
4	„ „ „ „ „ „	iv, p. 4
5	„ „ „ „ „ „	iv, p. 4
6	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	iv, p. 4 }
	{ Political Reg., VIII, 5 Oct. 1805	p. 519 }
7	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 519 }
	{ The Democratic Judge	p. 9 }
8	{ Political Reg., LIII, 29 Jan. 1825	p. 264, 261, }
	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 280 }
9	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 455 }
10	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 549 }
	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 547 }
11	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 454 }
	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 547, 548 }
12	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 455 }
	{ „ „ „ „ „ „	p. 545 }
13	Porcupine's Works	v, p. 361, 362
14	„ „ „ „ „ „	v, p. 362, 363
15	The Porcupine (London, 1801). 26 Aug. 1801	„
16	Porcupine's Gazette. No. 799, 13 Jan. 1800	p. 50, 51
17	The Rushlight, I, 1, 15 Feb. 1800	p. 1, 2
18	„ „ „ „ „ „	p. 2
19	Political Reg., LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 454
20	„ „ „ „ „ „	p. 486
21	„ „ „ „ „ „	p. 489
22	„ „ „ „ „ „	p. 284, 285
23	„ „ „ „ „ „	p. 258
24	„ „ „ „ „ „	p. 259

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¶25	<i>Political Reg.</i> , XIII,	26 March 1808	p. 490
26	" " "	XXVI, 19 Nov. 1814	p. 655, 656
27	" " "	XXVI, 19 Nov. 1814	p. 656

### CHAPTER VII

1	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIX,	10 April 1830	p. 455, 456
2	" " "	LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 456, 457
3	<i>A Year's Residence</i>		p. 24, ¶ 15
4	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIX,	1 May 1830	p. 567
5	" " "	LXIX, 1 May 1830	p. 568
6	" " "	LXIX, 1 May 1830	p. 569
7	" " "	LXIX, 1 May 1830	p. 569, 570
8	" " "	LXXV, 14 Jan. 1832	p. 153, 154, p. 155
9	" " "	LXXV, 4 Feb. 1832	p. 364, 365
10	" " "	XXXV, 2 Oct. 1819	p. 214, 215
11	<i>The Porcupine</i> , 30 Oct. 1800		
12	" " "	9 Dec. 1800	
13	" " "	24 March 1801	
14	{ <i>Facts and Observations</i> (London, 1802, 2nd ed.)		p. 19 footnote }
	<i>Political Reg.</i> , VI,	6 Oct. 1804	p. 529
15	" " "	II, 17 July 1802	p. 56
	" " "	IV, 9 July 1803	p. 30, 29
	" " "	III, 5 Feb. 1803	p. 159
	" " "	I, 10 April 1802	p. 378, 379,
16	" " "	II, 17 July 1802	p. 57
17	<i>Facts and Observations</i> (Phila., 1802)		
18	<i>Political Reg.</i> , I,	1 May 1802	p. 124, 125 p. 510
19	" " "	I, 1 May 1802	p. 510
	{ <i>The Porcupine</i> , 15 Oct. 1801 }		
20	<i>Political Reg.</i> , I,	1 May 1802	p. 510
21	" " "	LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 457
	{ Letter to William Windham, 24 Nov. 1801 }		

(Add. mss. 37,853, f. 17.

"...Mr. Gifford has lost about £300, and I about £450, which is enough, in all conscience, to reward me

## Sources of the Text

for all my exertions, dangers and losses in America. The light is now extinguished completely. One half of the papers are devoted to France, and the other half to the Ministry. . . . I have done all I could do without exposing my family to beggary.”)

¶ 22	{	<i>Political Reg.</i> , VIII, 12 Oct. 1805	551	}
	"	" " LXIX, 10 April 1830	457	
	"	" " VIII, 12 Oct. 1805	552, 553, 554	
	"	" " III, 8 Jan. 1803	1	}
23	{	" " IX, 4 Jan. 1806	22	
	"	" " VII, 26 Jan. 1805	120	}
	"	" " III, 29 Jan. 1803	99	
24	{	" " XI, 28 Feb. 1807	324	}
	"	" " I, 27 Feb. 1801	176	
	"	" " III, 15 Jan. 1803	34	}
25	{	" " VII, 9 Feb. 1805	220	
	"	" " XIX, 25 May 1811	1283, 1284	}
26	"	" " IX, 8 Feb. 1806	169	
27	"	" " VI, 1 Sep. 1805	340	}
28	{	" " IV, 31 Dec. 1803	p. 930, 931	
	"	" " XV, 17 June 1809	p. 898, 899	}
29	"	" " X, 20 Sep. 1806	451	
30	"	" " IX, 28 June 1806	968, 969	}
31	"	" " IX, 28 June 1806	970	
32	"	" " IX, 28 June 1806	971	}
33	"	" " IX, 28 June 1806	972	
34	"	" " IX, 28 June 1806	972, 970	

### CHAPTER VIII

- 1 { *Advice to Young Men* p. 241, ¶ 283 }  
 { Letter to Windham, 12 Aug. 1805 }  
 (Add. mss. 37,853, f. 177.)

“ . . . Botley is the most delightful village in the world. It has everything in a village, that I love; and none of the things I hate. It is in a valley. The soil is

## Sources of the Text

rich, thick set with wood; the farms are small the cottages neat; it has neither workhouse, nor barber, nor attorney, nor justice of the peace. . . there is no justice within six miles of us, and the barber comes three miles once a week to shave and cut hair! 'Would I were poetical', I would write a poem in praise of Botley.")

2 *Advice to Young Men*, p. 246, ¶ 288

3 " " " p. 241, ¶ 282

4 Letter to Windham, 6 Dec. 1805

(Add. mss. 37,853, f. 191)

" . . . My intention is to make the boys fit to fight their way through life, for, who can be so weak as to imagine, that we shall, or, that they will, ever see many days of tranquillity! To write English; to speak French; to read a little Latin, perhaps; to ride, to play at single-stick, and, above all things, to work at husbandry, it is my intention to teach them, in all by precept and in the most instances, if please God to spare me, by example. I have seen too many proofs of the insufficiency of riches to the obtaining of happiness and too many instances of the misery to which a dependance upon patronage leads. . . I shall do nothing to stifle genius; but, if it be not of a stamp to rise of itself, there is no raising it."

5	{	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 247, ¶ 290
		" "	p. 249, ¶ 292
6	" "	" "	p. 241, ¶ 283
7	{	" "	p. 255, ¶ 297
		" "	p. 246, ¶ 288
8	{	" "	p. 248, ¶ 291
		" "	p. 251, ¶ 293
9	{	" "	p. 250, ¶ 293
		" "	p. 219, ¶ 258
10	" "	" "	p. 255, ¶ 298
11	" "	" "	p. 256, ¶ 299
12	" "	" "	p. 256, ¶ 299
			p. 257, ¶ 300

## Sources of the Text

¶ 13	<i>Rural Rides</i>	p. 267, 268, p. 269
14	<i>A Year's Residence</i>	p. 208, ¶ 374 p. 209, ¶ 375
15	<i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 240, ¶ 281
16	<i>Political Reg.</i> , XXXIX, 26 May 1821	p. 518, 519, p. 520
17	„ „ XXXIX, 26 May 1821	p. 520, 521
18	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 115, 116
19	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 111, 112
20	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 113, 114
21	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 100, 101, p. 103
22	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 101, 103, p. 104
23	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 104, 105
24	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 102, 105, p. 106
25	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 106, 107
26	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 108, 99
27	„ „ XVI, 29 July 1809	p. 111, 117
28	„ „ XV, 20 May 1809	p. 775, 776
29	„ „ XV, 20 May 1809	p. 778, 777
30	„ „ XVI, 4 Nov. 1809	p. 649, 650, p. 651, 652

### CHAPTER IX

1	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIX, 10 April 1830 <i>Advice to Young Men</i>	p. 459, 460 p. 148, ¶ 168
2	„ „ XXXII, 4 Jan. 1817 „ „ XVIII, 14 July 1810	p. 2 p. 13 p. 2
3	<i>Advice to Young Men</i> <i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 148, ¶ 168 p. 460
4	„ „ XVIII, 14 July 1810	p. 17, 18
5	„ „ LXIX, 10 April 1830 „ „ XXVI, 25 Oct. 1817	p. 460 p. 897, 898

## Sources of the Text

¶ 6	Political Reg., xxvi, 25 Oct. 1817	p. 898
7	{ " " LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 469, 461 }
8	{ " " xvii, 7 July 1810	p. 994 }
9	{ " " xvii, 7 Aug. 1810	p. 182, 183 }
10	{ " " LXIX, 10 April 1830	p. 461, 462 }
11	{ " " XLIV, 19 Oct. 1822	p. 145, 146 }
12	{ " " XLIV, 19 Oct. 1822	p. 146, 147 }
	Advice to Young Men	p. 148, 149,
		¶ 169
13	" "	p. 257, 258,
		¶ 301
14	" "	p. 259, ¶ 302
15	" "	p. 259, 260,
		¶ 303
16	" "	p. 260, ¶ 304
17	" "	p. 261, ¶ 305
18	" "	p. 261, ¶ 305
19	{ Political Reg., XXI, 1 Feb. 1812	p. 144 }
	{ " " XXI, 23 May 1812	p. 641 }
20	{ " " XLIII, 20 July 1822	p. 145, 146,
		p. 147, 148
21	{ " " XIX, 16 Jan. 1811	p. 111
	{ " " XXXI, 16 Nov. 1816	p. 626
22	{ Paper Against Gold (London, 1828)	p. iii, iv }
	{ Political Reg., v, 21 April 1804	p. 589 }
23	Paper Against Gold	p. 4, 5
24	Political Reg., xxxiv, 22 Aug. 1818	p. 11, 12
25	" " XLIV, 21 Dec. 1822	p. 710, 711
26	{ Paper Against Gold	p. 28 }
	{ Political Reg., XLIV, 21 Dec. 1822	p. 712 }
27	" " XLIV, 21 Dec. 1822	p. 712, 713
28	" " XLIV, 21 Dec. 1822	p. 714, 717
29	Paper Against Gold	p. iv
30	" "	p. iv, v
31	Political Reg., xviii, 29 Sep. 1810	p. 458, 459
32	" " LXVI, 13 Sep. 1828	p. 322
33	" " XXII, 1 Aug. 1812	p. 160



## *Sources of the Text*

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¶	Page	Text	References
1	<i>Political Reg.</i> ,	xxxii, 12 July 1817	p. 460, 461
2	" "	lxix, 10 April 1830	p. 464
3	" "	xxvii, 1 July 1815	p. 801, 802
4	" "	lxix, 10 April 1830	p. 464
5	" "	xxi, 4 Jan. 1812	p. 1
6	" "	xxi, 4 Jan. 1812	p. 1, 2
7	" "	xxi, 4 Jan. 1812	p. 2
8	" "	xxi, 4 Jan. 1812	p. 2
9	" "	xxi, 4 Jan. 1812	p. 3
10	" "	xxi, 4 Jan. 1812	p. 4
11	" "	xxi, 11 Jan. 1812	p. 58, 59
12	" "	xxi, 11 Jan. 1812	p. 59
13	" "	xxxI, 6 July 1816	p. 11, 12
14	" "	xxx, 18 May 1816	p. 611, 612
15	" "	xxx, 18 May 1816	p. 612
16	{	" "	xxiv, 31 July 1813
" "		xxiv, 2 Oct. 1813	p. 138, 139
17	{	" "	lxix, 10 April 1830
" "		xxxii, 2 Aug. 1817	p. 464
18	" "	xxxii, 2 Aug. 1817	p. 549, 550
19	{	" "	xxxii, 2 Aug. 1817
" "		lxix, 10 April 1830	p. 550
20	" "	xxxii, 2 Aug. 1817	p. 464
21	{	" "	xxxii, 2 Aug. 1817
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22	" "	xxxii, 2 Aug. 1817	p. 551
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2	" "	xxxii, 12 July 1817	p. 468
3	Letter to Wife, 19 May 1817. (See Melville, II, 91) Letter to R. Hinxman, 3 Oct. 1817 (See <i>Cobbett Papers</i> "...If this untaxed, beautiful, fertile, and salubrious island were inhabited by Englishmen, it would very far surpass the garden of Eden; for here the trees produce golden fruit, and we are forbidden to eat none of them. I have such good servants in my man Churcher and his wife, and I hear their Hampshire tongues so often, that I almost conceit myself at home; only the fine sun, the fine roads, the fine fruits and the happy labourers tell me I am not there.") Letter to Anne Cobbett, 19 June 1818. (See Melville, II, 92.)		
4	<i>A Year's Residence</i>		p. 2, ¶ 14; p. 12, ¶ 28; p. 10, ¶ 10; p. 12, ¶ 29 p. 22, ¶ 4 p. 109, ¶ 163 p. 23, ¶ 10
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9	{ " " XXXIII, 11 April 1818 <i>A Year's Residence</i>	p. 412 p. 3, ¶ 18
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- 1 { Letter to his Wife, 2 Feb. 1820. (See Melville, II, 128)}  
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- 2 *Political Reg.*, xxxvi, 25 March 1820 p. 86, 87
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- 16 { " " LXXIX, 26 Jan. 1833 p. 195 }  
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- 17 " " LXIX, 10 April 1830 p. 473
- 18 *Rural Rides* (Ed. G. D. H. Cole, London, 1930), i, p. 8
- 19 " " (Cole) i, p. 50, 51
- 20 Letter to J. P. Cobbett, 25 May 1821. (See *Cobbett Papers*)

"...I am here most delightfully situated. We keep five fine cows. We have a pigeon-house to hold a hundred pair; and Dick is the grand pigeon-master. Pigs in sty; and a most abundant and fruitful garden. Our publications, particularly the Sermons, more

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famous than ever...and no villains to cheat us any more."

¶ 21	<i>Rural Rides</i> (London, 1830)	p. 665, 547
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24	{ " " }	p. 76, 77
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30	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXVIII, 17 Oct. 1829	p. 495, 496
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33	<i>Rural Rides</i>	p. 498
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35	{ <i>Political Reg.</i> , XLIII, 17 Aug. 1822 " " LXXXII, 28 Dec. 1833	p. 441 } p. 777, 778 }
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37	{ " " } (Cole)	i, p. 29

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¶ 6	<i>Rural Rides</i>	p. 209
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8	{ " " "	p. 647
9	{ " " "	p. 643
10	" " "	p. 647
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13	" " LXI, 6 Jan. 1827	p. 71
14	<i>Rural Rides</i>	p. 71, 72
15	{ " " "	p. 74, 76
16	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIII, 22 Sep. 1827	p. 385
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18	{ <i>Rural Rides</i> (Cole)	p. 530
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20	" "	p. 778
21	" "	p. 778, 769,
22	{ <i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIX, 27 Feb. 1830	p. 779
23	{ <i>Rural Rides</i>	p. 250
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28	" " LVII, 31 Dec. 1825	p. 267
29	" " LVII, 31 Dec. 1825	p. 403
30	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXVII, 25 April 1829	p. 522
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30	<i>Tour of Scotland</i> (London, 1833).	Footnote, p. 88

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¶ 31	{	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXIII, 28 July 1827	p. 298
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33	" " LXIV, 10 Nov. 1827	p. 394, 395	
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34	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXVII, 23 May 1829	p. 213	
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16	" " XV, 15 April 1809	p. 550
17	<i>Legacy to Labourers</i> (London, 1835), Dedication	p. 5, 6
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24	<i>Political Reg.</i> , LXXXI, 21 Sep. 1833	p. 730, 731

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25	Political Reg., LXXXI,	21 Sep. 1833	p. 729	
26	„ „ „	LXXXI, 21 Sep. 1833	p. 729, 730	
27	{	„ „ „	LXXVIII, 22 Dec. 1832	p. 713, 714
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12	„ „ „	LXXXVIII, 4 April 1835	p. 143, 144	



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¶ 13	<i>Political Reg.</i> ,	LXIX,	10 April 1830	p. 452	
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