
WILLIAM COBBETT

A BIOGRAPHY

**BY
EDWARD SMITH**

IN TWO VOLUMES.

William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated)

VOLUME II.

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CHAPTER XIV.

“I NEVER SAT MYSELF DOWN ANYWHERE, WITHOUT MAKING THE FRUITS AND FLOWERS TO GROW.”

The summer of 1805 finds Mr. Cobbett again at Botley with his family. A letter to Wright, dated 5th July, says, “I have found here a most delightful house and a more delightful garden.” Preparations are being made for a prolonged stay, and for the occasional entertainment of his correspondent: “I have given you a deal William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) of trouble, and hope that you will find hereafter some compensation during the time you will spend at Botley.” The carpets are to be taken up (in William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) Duke William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) Street), and all the bedding, &c., to be “removed upstairs, packed in mats or something.” On the 28th of July Cobbett writes—

“I am glad that you William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) are like to close your labours so soon, for I really wish very much to see you here, and so do all the children and their mother, all of whom have delightful health; and Mrs. Cobbett is more attached to Botley than I am—one cause of which is, she has made her servants humble, and she bakes good bread. I shall have made it a delightful place before you will have finished your volume.”

There is a good deal about Botley and its neighbourhood to charm the tastes of men like Cobbett. A fine open country, which was then to a great extent unenclosed—it was a genuine agricultural and sporting district, of which the little town was the centre. It was quiet enough, not being on the William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) road to anywhere; and William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) the William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) people were as quiet as the village.

“... Two doctors, one parson. No trade, except that carried on by two or three persons, who bring coals from the Southampton water, and who send down timber. All the rest are farmers, farmers’ men, millers, millers’ men, millwrights, publicans who sell beer to the farmers’ men and the farmers; copse-cutters, tree-strippers, bark-shavers, farmers’ wheelwrights, farmers’ blacksmiths, shopkeepers, a schoolmistress; and, in short, nothing but persons belonging to agriculture, to which, indeed, the two doctors and the parson belong as much as the rest.”

As Cobbett himself described them a few years later. The creek of the little river Hamble touches the end of the principal street; and here was a tiny wharf, and a miller’s house. On the farther side of the creek stood the “delightful house and more delightful garden,” which promised such bliss. Here is one of the first resulting joys:—

“Now, I am going to give you a commission that you must do us the favour to execute with the least possible delay. It is to find out where fishing-nets are sold, and to buy us a net called a Flue or Trammel net. It must be five William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) feet deep, and fifteen yards long; with plenty of linnet, and not too coarse. We have a river full of fish sweeping round the one side of our little lot of land; but for want of such a net, we catch comparatively but few. It will not cost above three or four pounds, and we shall gain that in fish in a month. But the salmon-peel are now coming up with the spring tides, and we hope you will be able to send William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) us the net by the Southampton night coach of Monday, William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) to be left at the coach-office till called for. If William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) you should miss that coach pray get it off by the next after; William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) for this is a subject with regard to which none of us have any patience. The net is for jack, trout, and salmon-peel, &c.”

“... The net is excellent. Plenty of fish. Nobody has such an one in this place!”

“... Since last Saturday morning we have caught nearly as many fish as would sell in London for as much as the net cost you. We have, indeed, famous sport; and I wish to know if Mr. Windham be in town, that I may send him some of this excellent fish. When you come yourself we will show you what we can do; and I really hope William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) that you will be able to get here soon.”

Now, quiet Botley began to rub its eyes. Here was a new neighbour who kept the wheels of life well greased. Visitors came to and fro; and the coach, or the waggon, had more parcels to carry. The precious scribblings from Botley House augmented the weight of the post-bag.

As autumn drew nigh, the bucolic pulses were quickened by the rumoured revival of English rustic sports. So, quiet Botley was awakening into something like fame.

One of Mr. Windham's well-known fancies was the noble art of self-defence. Cobbett was entirely with him there; and it so happened, about this time, that a fatal case of pugilism William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) had brought the William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) matter before the public. Mr. Cobbett defended Boxing in the *Register*, and resolved to promote all kindred manly exercises.

Accordingly, a festive William Cobbett : A Biography : Volume II (Illustrated) gathering was prepared, for this very first autumn. Here is a copy of the handbill:—

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