

Rural Rides - Volume 1 (Cosimo Classics Travel & Exploration)

William Cobbett

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Upon beholding the masses of buildings, at Oxford, devoted to what they call "learning," I could not help reflecting on the drones that they contain and the wasps they send forth!

-from "Burghclere (Hants), Sunday, 18 Nov."

Son of an innkeeper, former soldier, champion of the working class, early anticorporate activist, and future Member of Parliament-Will Cobbett's unique eye offers us a perspective on 19th-century England we won't find anywhere else.

Cobbett roamed Southern England on horseback in the years between 1821 and 1832, gathering his "economical and political observations relative to matters applicable to, and illustrated by, the state of" that charming part of the world, one in the throes of massive change in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

Volume 1 covers the years 1821 to 1825 and features cutting observations on the smokelike fogs of London, the price of lodgings in Oxford, the meanness of landlords, and the pleasures of watching "very pretty girls" in their Sunday best going to church.

This is an extraordinary record of a world long gone, one very little documented when it existed, by a voice who was far ahead of his time.

British journalist and radical WILLIAM COBBETT (1762-1835) is also the author of The Progress of a Ploughboy to a Seat in Parliament (1830).



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