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978-1-108-00446-6 - The Whistler at the Plough: Containing Travels, Statistics, and Descriptions of Scenery and Agricultural Customs in Most Parts of England

Alexander Somerville

Frontmatter

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The Whistler at the Plough

Alexander Somerville (1811-85) was an extraordinary figure, notorious in his own lifetime for his espousal of political reform. The youngest child of impoverished farmers from the Scottish border country, he was the last soldier to be flogged publicly in Britain, after openly stating that his regiment would not fire on Reform agitators. In his subsequent journalistic career his stance was influenced by his concern that violent revolution would inevitably be crushed and so lead to greater suffering among the working class, and he therefore supported the less radical reform movement urged by Cobden. He was a passionate opponent of the Corn Laws, and *The Whistler at the Plough* (published in 1852) is a collection of his letters and essays for the Anti-Corn-Law League, based on information gathered during his own travels around the country. The volume also contains his eye-witness account of the Irish famine of 1847.

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ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE



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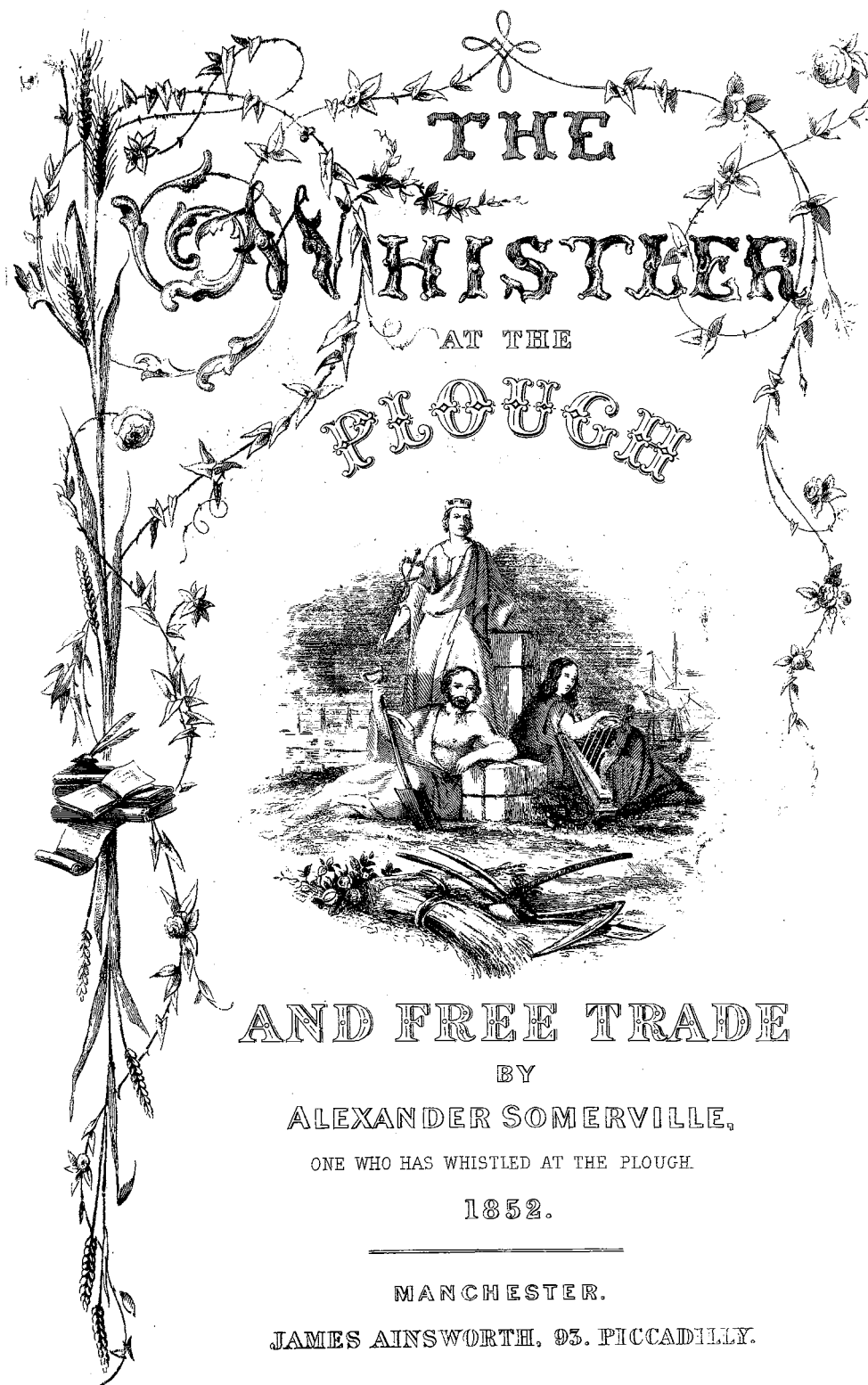
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THE
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CONTAINING

TRAVELS, STATISTICS, AND
DESCRIPTIONS OF SCENERY & AGRICULTURAL CUSTOMS
IN MOST PARTS OF ENGLAND:

WITH

LETTERS FROM IRELAND:

ALSO

“FREE TRADE AND THE LEAGUE;”

A BIOGRAPHIC HISTORY.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE,

AUTHOR OF LETTERS

SIGNED

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

MY LORD,

You were the first statesman who, as leader of a great party in the British Legislature, pronounced that "Protection has not been the support, but the bane of Agriculture." Those who had, up to then, 1845, laboured to prove that truth, were filled with hope, which soon became a national joy, when they heard these words.

This Volume comprises a selection of Letters and Essays, written by me, and addressed to the demerits of Protection, from 1842 to 1847, inclusive. The two succeeding Volumes are a BIOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF FREE TRADE AND THE LEAGUE. They embrace Memoirs of Persons identified with the rise and progress of commerce and constitutional liberty, from earliest English History, to 1850.

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In looking around, in 1846, when I first announced this work, to inquire which of her Majesty's subjects had a name, that, in a dedication, would do such a book the greatest honour, the history of two centuries, and the legislation, expansive of constitutional liberty in my own time, (without which an Anti-Corn-Law League could not have existed) answered—RUSSELL.

I am,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE,

“ONE WHO HAS WHISTLED AT THE PLOUGH.”

May, 1852.