

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1  
John Morley  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

*Books of enduring scholarly value*

### History

The books reissued in this series include accounts of historical events and movements by eye-witnesses and contemporaries, as well as landmark studies that assembled significant source materials or developed new historiographical methods. The series includes work in social, political and military history on a wide range of periods and regions, giving modern scholars ready access to influential publications of the past.

### The Life of Richard Cobden

Richard Cobden (1804–65) was a manufacturer and Liberal politician, campaigning for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and for a free market economy. His laissez-faire views on protectionism and the role of government intervention in economics had a lasting influence on British politics throughout the twentieth century as the antithesis of socialism. This *Life*, first published in 1881, set new standards for biographical documentation. Morley had the advantage of having not only Cobden's journals and letters to use, but also access to those of many of his friends and political associates. Volume 1 considers his early life and the beginnings of his political involvement, then dealing in great detail with the Anti-Corn Law League. Morley examines the state of society in 1840s, Cobden's role in the campaign, and particularly his influence on Sir Robert Peel. Cobden believed free trade was essential to equality and social progress.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1  
John Morley  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection will bring back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1  
John Morley  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# The Life of Richard Cobden

VOLUME 1

JOHN MORLEY



Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1  
John Morley  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108026819](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108026819)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2010

This edition first published 1881

This digitally printed version 2010

ISBN 978-1-108-02681-9 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1

John Morley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

THE  
LIFE OF RICHARD COBDEN.  
VOL. I.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1

John Morley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



*Thomas Riley fecit*

THE  
  
LIFE OF RICHARD COBDEN

BY  
  
JOHN MORLEY

BARRISTER-AT-LAW; M.A. OXFORD; HON. LL.D. GLASGOW.

*IN TWO VOLUMES*

VOL. I.

LONDON  
CHAPMAN AND HALL  
LIMITED  
11 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN  
1881

[*All rights reserved*]

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-02681-9 - The Life of Richard Cobden, Volume 1  
John Morley  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
JOHN BRIGHT  
THIS MEMOIR  
OF HIS CLOSE COMRADE  
IN THE CAUSE OF WISE JUST AND SEDATE GOVERNMENT  
IS INSCRIBED  
WITH THE WRITER'S SINCERE RESPECT.



## PREFACE.

---

OWING to various circumstances, with which I have no right to trouble the reader, the publication of these volumes has been delayed considerably beyond the date at which I hoped to bring them to an end. As things have turned out, the delay has done no harm. My memoir of Mr. Cobden appears at a moment when there is a certain disposition in men's minds to subject his work and his principles to a more hostile criticism than they have hitherto encountered. So far perhaps it is permitted to me to hope that the book will prove opportune. It is possible, however, that it may disappoint those who expect to find in it a completely furnished armoury for the champions of Free Trade. I did not conceive it to be my task to compile a polemical handbook for that controversy. For this the reader must always go to the parliamentary debates between 1840 and 1846, and to the manuals of Political Economy.

It will perhaps be thought that I should have done better to say nothing of Mr. Cobden's private affairs.

In the ordinary case of a public man, reserve on these matters is possibly a good rule. In the present instance, so much publicity was given to Mr. Cobden's affairs—some of it of a very malicious kind—that it seemed best, not only to the writer, but to those whose feelings he was bound first and exclusively to consider, to let these take their place along with the other facts of his life.

The material for the biography has been supplied in great abundance by Mr. Cobden's many friends and correspondents. His family with generous confidence entrusted it to my uncontrolled discretion, and for any lack of skill or judgment that may appear in the way in which the materials have been handled, the responsibility is not theirs but mine. Much of the correspondence had been already sifted and arranged by Mr. Henry Richard, the respected Member for Merthyr, who handed over to me the result of his labour with a courtesy and good-will for which I am particularly indebted to him. Lord Cardwell was obliging enough to procure for me Mr. Cobden's letter to Sir Robert Peel (vol. i. ch. 17), and, along with Lord Hardinge, to give me permission to print Sir Robert Peel's reply. Mr. Bright, with an unwearied kindness for which I can never be too grateful, has allowed me to consult him constantly, and has abounded in helpful corrections and suggestions while the sheets were passing through the press. Nor can I forget to express the many obligations that

## PREFACE.

ix

I owe to my friend, Sir Louis Mallet. It was he who first induced me to undertake a piece of work which he had much at heart, and he has followed it with an attention, an interest, and a readiness in counsel and information, of which I cannot but fear that the final product gives a very inadequate idea.

J. M.

*September 29th, 1881.*

## CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY LIFE.

	PAGE
Cobden's birthplace . . . . .	1
His family and early education . . . . .	2
Business in London . . . . .	5
Character as a young man . . . . .	7
Commercial journeys . . . . .	8
Family troubles . . . . .	13
Begins business on his own account . . . . .	15

### CHAPTER II.

#### COMMERCIAL AND MENTAL PROGRESS.

Cobden's early enterprise . . . . .	18
At Sabden . . . . .	22
Self-education . . . . .	25
Visits France and Switzerland . . . . .	27
Death of his Father . . . . .	29

### CHAPTER III.

#### TRAVELS IN WEST AND EAST.

Voyage to the United States . . . . .	31
Vindication of his own country . . . . .	33
Niagara . . . . .	35
Estimate of American character . . . . .	39
Publication of pamphlets . . . . .	41
Starts for the East . . . . .	43
Gibraltar . . . . .	45
Malta and Alexandria . . . . .	49
Alexandria . . . . .	51
From Alfeh to Cairo . . . . .	53
The Pyramids . . . . .	55
Cairo . . . . .	57
Visit to Mehemet Ali . . . . .	59

	PAGE
Egyptian Manufactories . . . . .	67
Massacre of Scio . . . . .	69
Constantinople . . . . .	71
Voyage to Smyrna . . . . .	73
Conversations at Smyrna . . . . .	75
At Smyrna . . . . .	77
Athens and the Greeks . . . . .	81
From Athens to Patras . . . . .	83
Malta and the navy . . . . .	87

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE TWO PAMPHLETS.

Mental activity after the Reform Act . . . . .	91
Combe's influence on Cobden . . . . .	93
Application to English policy . . . . .	95
The new problem . . . . .	97
Material well-being and political stability . . . . .	99
Russia and Turkey . . . . .	101
Intervention judged by experience . . . . .	103
The Great Usage . . . . .	105
Decisive importance of American competition . . . . .	107
Extravagances of intervention . . . . .	109
Shelburne as a precursor . . . . .	111

## CHAPTER V.

## LIFE IN MANCHESTER, 1837-9.

Letter on factory legislation . . . . .	115
Rejection at Stockport . . . . .	117
Business and position in Manchester . . . . .	119
Opinion in Manchester . . . . .	121
Struggle for a Charter . . . . .	123
Coldness of Whigs for local self-government . . . . .	125
The Radicals and the people . . . . .	127
The Zollverein . . . . .	129
The Prussian Government . . . . .	131
A Sunday at Berlin . . . . .	133
Manchester and Germany contrasted . . . . .	135
Acquaintances in London . . . . .	137
Incorporation of Manchester . . . . .	139

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE LEAGUE.

Narrow beginning of the struggle . . . . .	141
The London Anti-Corn-Law Association . . . . .	143

CONTENTS.	xiii
	PAGE
The Chamber of Commerce . . . . .	145
The idea of the League . . . . .	147
The corn question in Parliament . . . . .	149
Resentment of the Repealers . . . . .	151
The lecturers in the country . . . . .	153
Hostilities in the press . . . . .	155
Condition of the rural poor . . . . .	157
New settlement in business . . . . .	159
Marriage . . . . .	161

#### CHAPTER VII.

##### THE CORN LAWS.

Huskisson's legislation . . . . .	163
The Corn Bills of 1827-8 . . . . .	165
Attitude of political parties . . . . .	167
The Whig budget . . . . .	169
Defeat of the Whigs . . . . .	171

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### COBDEN ENTERS PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

The new Parliament . . . . .	175
First speech in Parliament . . . . .	177
Protest against the philanthropists . . . . .	185

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### COBDEN AS AN AGITATOR.

Friendship with Mr. Bright . . . . .	191
Their different characteristics . . . . .	193
Cobden's oratorical qualities . . . . .	195
His personality . . . . .	197
Feeling toward his countrymen . . . . .	199
His faculty of veneration . . . . .	201
Conditions of usefulness . . . . .	203
Practical energy . . . . .	205
Genial ideas . . . . .	207

#### CHAPTER X.

##### THE NEW CORN LAW.

The autumn campaign . . . . .	211
The League press . . . . .	213

	PAGE
Thackeray and Carlyle . . . . .	215
Discussion in the Cabinet . . . . .	217
The Ministerial plan . . . . .	219
Feeling in the country . . . . .	221
Cobden's speech on the plan . . . . .	223
The country party and the Manufacturers . . . . .	225
Disappointment of the League . . . . .	227
New Projects . . . . .	229
Attitude of the Clergy. . . . .	233

## CHAPTER XI.

## SIR ROBERT PEEL'S NEW POLICY.

The Imports Committee . . . . .	235
Sir Robert Peel's position . . . . .	237
The new tariff . . . . .	239
Cobden's impressions . . . . .	241
Speech on the state of the country . . . . .	245
Reply to Sir Robert Peel . . . . .	247

## CHAPTER XII.

RENEWED ACTIVITY OF THE LEAGUE—COBDEN AND SIR ROBERT PEEL—  
RURAL CAMPAIGN.

The League and the workmen . . . . .	249
Renewed activity . . . . .	251
Cobden in Scotland . . . . .	253
Mr. Bright upon Scotland . . . . .	255
Speech on Lord Howick's Motion . . . . .	257
Scene with Sir Robert Peel . . . . .	259
Mr. Roebuck's attack . . . . .	263
Feeling in the country . . . . .	265
Reply to the Manchester address . . . . .	267
Meetings at Drury Lane . . . . .	269
Agitation in the counties . . . . .	271
Cobden's position . . . . .	279
Questions in Parliament . . . . .	283
Occupations in the recess . . . . .	285
Distrust of the Whigs . . . . .	289

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE SESSION OF 1844—FACTORY LEGISLATION—THE CONSTITUENCIES.

Statistics of agitation . . . . .	291
The Session of 1844 . . . . .	293

CONTENTS.	XV
	PAGE
The condition of England . . . . .	297
Factory legislation . . . . .	299
English forms of Socialism . . . . .	303
The forty shilling franchise . . . . .	305
Cobden's views on this franchise . . . . .	307

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### BASTIAT—NEW TACTICS—ACTIVITY IN PARLIAMENT—MAYNOOTH GRANT— PRIVATE AFFAIRS.

Bastiat's visit to England . . . . .	309
Bastiat and Cobden . . . . .	311
Seventh year of the League . . . . .	313
Change of tactics . . . . .	315
Effect of Cobden's speech . . . . .	317
Argument of the speech . . . . .	319
The argument . . . . .	321
Cobden's influence on Peel . . . . .	323
Prospects of the question . . . . .	325
The Maynooth Grant . . . . .	327
Letters to Mrs. Cobden . . . . .	329
Private embarrassments . . . . .	331
Letter from Mr. Bright . . . . .	335

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### THE AUTUMN OF 1845.

The Edinburgh letter . . . . .	339
The Ministerial crisis . . . . .	341
Renewed agitation . . . . .	343
Proffer of office to Cobden . . . . .	345
Sir Robert Peel and his party . . . . .	347
Sir Robert Peel's conversion . . . . .	349
Operations of the League . . . . .	351
Reconciliation with Sir Robert Peel . . . . .	353

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS AND FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT.

State of public opinion on repeal . . . . .	357
Difficulties of Peel's position . . . . .	359
Attitude of the Whigs . . . . .	361
Proceedings in Parliament . . . . .	363
Letter to George Combe . . . . .	365
Cobden's view of his own position . . . . .	367



	PAGE
Letter to Mr. Hunter . . . . .	371
The miseries of popularity . . . . .	373
Miscellaneous correspondence . . . . .	375
Progress of the Corn Bill . . . . .	377
London society . . . . .	381
Third reading of the Bill in the House . . . . .	383
The Bill passes the Upper House . . . . .	387
Peel's final tribute to Cobden . . . . .	389

## CHAPTER XVII.

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH SIR ROBERT PEEL--CESSATION OF THE LEAGUE.

Cobden's letter to Peel . . . . .	390
Peel's reply . . . . .	397
Letter from Lord John Russell . . . . .	403
Peculiar work of the League . . . . .	405
New projects . . . . .	409
Reflections on social progress . . . . .	411
The National Testimonial . . . . .	413

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## TOUR OVER EUROPE.

Omens of revolution in Paris . . . . .	417
Cobden's popularity among strangers . . . . .	419
Interview with Louis Philippe . . . . .	421
In Spain and Southern France . . . . .	423
In Italy . . . . .	425
At Rome . . . . .	427
Interview with the Pope . . . . .	433
The Campagna . . . . .	435
Naples and Turin . . . . .	437
The Italian Lakes . . . . .	439
Venice and Trieste . . . . .	441
Interview with Prince Metternich . . . . .	443
At Babelsberg . . . . .	445
Berlin and Potsdam . . . . .	447
Stettin . . . . .	449
The Russian Frontier . . . . .	451
Moscow . . . . .	453
St. Petersburg . . . . .	459
Arrived at home . . . . .	463

## APPENDIX.

Letter on the Hours of Labour . . . . .	464
---	-----