

6 THE LIFE OF WILLIAM COBBETT

that book." Cobbett, though convinced of the immortality of his works, never claimed to be a genius; indeed, somewhat ostentatiously, he repudiated all claims to genius.

Until very lately I have had for the far greater part of the time the whole of the press as my deadly enemy. Yet, at this moment, it will not be pretended that there is another man in the kingdom who has so many cordial friends (he wrote in 1830). The friendship which is felt towards me is pure and disinterested; it is not founded in any hope that the parties can have, that they can ever *profit* from professing it; it is founded on the gratitude which they entertain for the good that I *have done* them; and of this sort of friendship, and friendship so cordial, no man ever possessed a larger portion.

Now, mere *genius* will not acquire this for a man. There must be something more than *genius*: 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 are the things, and *not genius*, which have caused my labours to be so incessant and so successful.¹

Cobbett's industry was, indeed, wonderful—to the ordinary man it seems terrifying—and certainly his capacity for work has never been exceeded. In the diary of the second visit to the United States there is an entry on a day when he had to stay at an inn at Hamsburgh: "*Weary of being idle*. How few such days have I spent in my whole life." One of the most

¹ *Advice to Young Men* (ed. 1837), pars. 5 and 6.