

**LIFE, POETRY, AND LETTERS OF  
EBENEZER ELLIOTT, THE  
CORN-LAW RHYMER. WITH AN  
ABSTRACT OF HIS POLITICS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649111756

Life, poetry, and letters of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-law rhymers. With an abstract of his politics  
by John Watkins

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Cover @ 2017

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**JOHN WATKINS**

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253  
EAG2  
W3

ERRATUM.

In page 131, second line from bottom, for "erector," read "establisher."

DEDICATORY EPISTLE

(WITH PERMISSION)

TO SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

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SIR ROBERT,—To you I dedicate this *Life of Ebenezer Elliott*, because, since the effective part you took in the repeal of those laws which at once made bread dear, trade profitless, and labour vain, he became one of your warmest admirers. Posterity will do justice to the statesman who sacrificed party, and with it place and power, to principle and the good of his country; who elevated the politician into the patriot; who, belonging to no party, yet fears not the factious opposition of all; who stands alone, a free, philosophical, and independent advocate of national interests.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Sir Robert,

Your much obliged and most obedient Servant,

JOHN WATKINS.

*Clapham Rise, 1st July, 1850.*

N.B.—The above was written previous to the lamented Baronet's decease.

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## SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

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At a time of peace and pleasantness, when all was quiet around, the world has been startled with one of those shocks which "overcome us like a summer-cloud," creating wonder and dismay. Sir Robert Peel is dead! Never, perhaps, was the loss of one man so nationally felt. The deceased was the most distinguished patron of the fine arts, and the greatest statesman of the age.

This book derives a melancholy interest from the fact that one of the latest acts of the Right Honourable Baronet was an instance of his generous urbanity in granting permission that it should be dedicated to him.\* Elliott's memory will receive this posthumous honour; and the name of the Apostle of Corn-law Repeal will be linked in history with the Accomplisher of that great boon.

May we not hope that those truly disinterested benefactors of their kind and country are now in the enjoyment of the everlasting reward which is reserved for all who have done or suffered well in this life?

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\* See the fac-simile at the title-page.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE late Ebenezer Elliott, a short time before his death, requested me to write his life. He said he had thought at one time of engaging his son Francis to the task ; but had altered his mind because he deemed an own son less likely to execute it impartially than a son-in-law. He gave me some general directions as to the plan of the work, and told me that he had written an autobiography up to his 25th year. He was desirous, above all things, that a true portrait of himself should be drawn, omitting the colouring or dress of adventitious circumstance ; “ For,” said he, “ that is not myself !” I promised to comply with his request, and to write such a Biography as I trusted public opinion would ratify.

His decease made me regard his will as a sacred obligation, to be fulfilled before the wish of any one else on the subject. But a natural diffidence caused me to desire that some one more known



in the world than myself, and better qualified than I, should undertake the task. Accordingly, Mr. Fox, M.P., was solicited, but declined on account of his Parliamentary engagements. Application was also made to Mr. Thomas Carlyle, who replied that he had not been personally acquainted with Mr. Elliott.

There seemed no alternative but that I should perform my promise to the deceased. I was partly encouraged to this by the example of the sons-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, of Southey, of Dr. Chalmers and others.

I wanted not for materials, possessing, indeed, a greater quantity than I could render available. Many printed memoranda of the Life and Character of Elliott exist in reviews, magazines, and newspapers, together with notices of his works; these I have not transcribed, because I felt desirous to make the contents of this book as original as possible, and not to republish what had already been published. I have given a somewhat elaborate account of his poetic works and made liberal extracts from them: this I felt necessary in order to do justice to the merits of a poet whose writings are not so generally known as they deserve to be,

and concerning whose character much misrepresentation exists.

Readers of poetry are seldom readers of politics—they seek amusement rather than instruction; but politics could not be wholly omitted in a life of the Corn-law Rhymer. I have, therefore, made a “brief abstract and chronicle” of them, introducing them without amplification.

The letters written by Ebenezer Elliott to a great variety of correspondents are very numerous, and would, of themselves, fill a large volume. But as he was in the habit of copying himself in his epistolary correspondence, the reader will not be desirous to see more than a few specimens. In selecting these, I have had regard to one beautiful phase in the character of the writer, namely, his condescension to the wishes of young authors who needed his advice and encouragement. He himself said that his chief pleasure in old age was to converse with the young minds of the country; and those who sought him found him indeed a literary pastor. The letters in this volume furnish the most valuable portion of its contents.

I have now a grateful duty, which I cannot conclude without fulfilling, namely, to express my

heartfelt thanks to those gentlemen who have kindly answered my requests for assistance. These are particularly due to Mr. Tait, of Edinburgh; the Rev. Jacob Brettel, of Rotherham; Dr. Beard, of Manchester; William Fisher, Esq., of Sheffield; Mr. Ebenezer Hingston, Mr. Beddingfield, and, above all, to Sir Robert Peel, who politely granted me his permission to dedicate to him this book.