



*Rev. Gauntlett*

# MEMOIR

OF THE LATE

REV. HENRY GAUNTLETT,

VICAR OF OLNEY, BUCKS.

BY

CATHARINE T. GAUNTLETT.

“THE LAW OF TRUTH WAS IN HIS MOUTH . . . . . HE  
WALKED WITH ME IN PEACE AND EQUITY, AND DID TURN  
MANY AWAY FROM INIQUITY.”

---

LONDON :

R. B. SEELEY AND W. BURNSIDE, FLEET-STREET  
HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

---

1835.

supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' ” 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

In the latter end of the year 1809, a person of deistical principles, resident in the town, published a pamphlet, under the title of “The Stranger in Reading ;” which he made a vehicle for mis-stating facts, calumniating individuals, and ridiculing religion. This he styled a faithful picture of the town and its inhabitants ; representing the latter as professors of a religion, which omitted to include morality in its system ; and as destitute alike of honesty and common sense. Such a publication might be considered scarcely worthy of notice ; but as it excited a lively interest in the neighbourhood, contained aspersions of the local, benevolent, and religious societies ; and of the sentiments, modes of worship, and even moral conduct of many of the inhabitants, an answer was considered desirable, if not absolutely necessary. The task was undertaken by my father ; and “Letters to the Stranger in Reading, by Detector,” appeared in the ensuing year. The motives by which he was actuated, are thus explained in the advertisement.

“The writer had but little time to appropriate to this work till after the usual labours of the day were completed, when he was frequently very unfit to enter on a new employment ; and he actually would have desisted from his intention, had he not considered himself under an obligation to proceed, in consequence of having declared in company, that the Stranger’s Letters would be answered : which

declaration he always viewed as the means of preventing a reply from another hand, and as the occasion of an advertisement in the Reading Mercury, promising a series of letters to the ‘Stranger,’ by Detector. If it should be asked why any answer at all should be given to a work, which has excited so general a disapprobation as the Stranger’s Letters ? it is replied, that despicable as they are in some respects, they might have left an unfavourable impression on the minds of some persons respecting the character of the inhabitants of Reading in general, and that of the professors of religion in particular. The author is likewise convinced, that in these letters to the Stranger, he has had an opportunity of discussing many interesting subjects, of which some may communicate important information to the majority of his readers, while others in the most eminent degree are connected with the welfare of them all.”

A short extract from these “Letters” is subjoined, as characteristic of their general spirit and tendency. In answer to some of the Stranger’s sarcastic observations relative to the study of the Scriptures, Detector writes—

“The Bible, sir, is not only the most ancient, but infinitely the most excellent book that ever was penned—as much superior to every composition merely human, as the works of the Author of nature are to those of human art. The matter, the manner, the harmony, the effect of the Bible, unite in illustrating the important declaration—‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God.’ Infidels may reject the sacred writings, and *strangers* to their important and glorious contents, may speak evil of what they know not ; but what other book can they mention, which will bear any comparison with this, whether we consider the infinite importance of its doctrines, the sublimity of its language, the excellence of its morality, or the character of its penmen ? ‘It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. It is the sure word whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place.’ Has not the blessed founder of the Christian religion—the author of the hopes and consolations of his people—the great prophet

and teacher of the church—has not He given his followers a command to read the Bible, and to read it with frequency and diligence? *Search* the scriptures, is his precept:—a precept which eminently deserves the special regard of all who are called after his name. The term *search* which our blessed Lord has here condescended to use, is strikingly emphatic. According to some critics it signifies to *trace by the foot*, as dogs trace their game; hence they render it by the Latin verbs *indago* and *investigo*. According to this etymology, the disciples of Christ are required to *investigate* the sacred truths of scripture, and carefully to *trace* out their meaning. And will not this require *reading*, nay, will it not require *frequent* reading? But other critics (I hope, sir, you will bear with my observations on this occasion—the subject is of the highest importance; every *inhabitant* as well as every *stranger* in Reading is intimately concerned in it), I say, other critics consider the word as borrowed from the practice of *miners*, and suppose that it implies to *dig* and *examine*. Miners, who search for gold in the bowels of the earth, first pierce the ground to a great depth, and when they have found a vein of ore, they break and carefully sift the earth, that no part of the metal may escape. Indeed, such is the trouble to procure this precious mineral, which so many human beings worship, that it has been asserted that no possessor of a gold mine ever grew rich. And what is its value to the poor slaves who labour in it? Of all employments, theirs is one of the most miserable. With immense toil they dig, search, sift, and examine—but for what purpose? To obtain a wretched livelihood—a support merely sufficient to preserve them from perishing by hunger! and wherefore do the inhabitants of this town read the Bible so much? Why, sir, some of them at least, *search* the scriptures because they are ‘a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths,’ because they testify of that Redeemer on whom their hopes of salvation depend, and whom, not having seen, they love—because, under the gracious influences of that Holy Spirit, by whom they were indited, they confer on them riches infinitely superior to those which are procured from a mine of gold, or of the most precious stones—they make them *rich in faith*, and heirs of that kingdom which the blessed God has promised to them that love him.”

The Letters to the Stranger met with a reception gratifying to the author, from the inhabitants of Reading, and all who were interested in, or connected with that place.

Mr. Simeon, at that time one of the members for Reading, wrote on this occasion:—

“London, Aug. 4, 1810.

“DEAR SIR,

“A hamper from the country brought me, two or three days ago, a pamphlet, called Detector, sent me by the author. I feel very much obliged to the author, whoever he may be; and from what report says, the thanks due will not fall very far from the mark, if shot into your hand. At all events I will take my chance, well satisfied that, if I should be mistaken, I cannot hurt your feelings by attributing to you a work which, whether measured by the motives that gave rise to it, or by the learning and ability with which it is executed, would, in my estimation, do credit to any pen in this country.

“Believe me to remain, with much esteem, my dear Sir,

“Your obliged and obedient servant,

“J. SIMEON.”

Another correspondent, the late estimable Mr. Hughes, says—“Your pamphlet appears so excellent that I only regret it cannot circulate without reminding the public that this living body drags a dead one after it; without tending, in short, to make buoyant, a little longer, one of the most miserable performances that Lethe ever received.”

“The Stranger in Reading” was written by an elderly person named Mann. In allusion to this coincidence, my father prefixed, as a motto to the Letters, the following line, adapted from Homer:

Ὅν δὴ τὰντα γε πάντα, ΓΕΡΟΝ, κατα μῦθον ἔειπες.

In the Reading Mercury, for July 16th, 1810, the subjoined epigram appeared in allusion to my father's pamphlet; to explain which it may be necessary to state that he had, in some degree, qualified the praise lavished, by the Stranger, on a well-known authoress.

## EPIGRAM,

OCCASIONED BY READING A LATE PUBLICATION.

In controversy's listed fields,  
 DETECTOR conquers no MAN;  
 Baffled, his ponderous lance he wields,  
 Then turns to helpless Woman.

"If authoresses write so fast,"  
 Quoth he "Why not attack them?"  
 The age of Chivalry is past—  
 He throws the GAUNTLET at them.

One of my father's pupils, a youth of great promise, wrote, without the knowledge of his tutor, an answer, which was inserted in the Reading paper for the ensuing week.

## IN ANSWER TO A CERTAIN EPIGRAM.

Brave STRANGER, sheath your useless sword—  
 Your glowing zeal repress;  
 (Like Quixote, valiant to afford  
 Imagined wrongs redress:)

For know! the Fair disdains to own,  
 As champion of her fame,  
 Him, who, to heavenly truth unknown,  
 Is MAN alone by name.