

Cambridge University Press

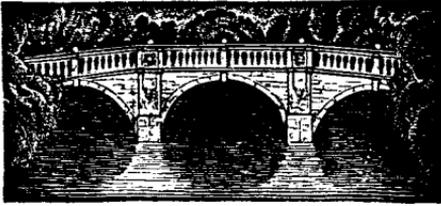
978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE MISCELLANY



VIII

REMINISCENCES OF CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

HENRY GUNNING

Reminiscences of Cambridge

A SELECTION CHOSEN BY

D. A. WINSTANLEY

CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1982

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge
D. A. Winstanley
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

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

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107628298

© Cambridge University Press 1932

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1932
First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-62829-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION	PAGE vii
SECTION i	1
<i>EARLY YEARS AT CAMBRIDGE</i>	
SECTION ii	64
<i>ESQUIRE BEDELL</i>	
SECTION iii	83
<i>CHARACTERS</i>	
Dr Richard Farmer	
Jemmy Gordon	
John Nicholson	
Dr Richard Watson	
Dr Samuel Ogden	
Dr Lowther Yates	
William Pugh	
SECTION iv	114
<i>MISCELLANEOUS</i>	
Stourbridge Fair	
Bourn Bridge	
William V, Prince of Orange	
The Midlent Sermon at Burwell	
Presentation of University Addresses	
Trinity College	

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Introduction

HENRY GUNNING WAS BORN ON 13TH February, 1768, at Thriplow in Cambridgeshire, and received his early education at Ely and Sleaford. In October, 1784, he entered Christ's College as a Sizar. In the December following he became a Scholar of the College, and in 1788 graduated as fifth Wrangler. In October, 1789, when only twenty-one years old, he was elected Esquire Bedell and held this office until his death sixty-four years later. From the outset of his official career he was distinguished by his conscientious discharge of his duties and by his interest in the forms and ceremonies of the University; and until his eightieth year was a well-known and active figure in academic life. In March, 1847, however, he suffered an accident which permanently crippled him; consequently his health began to fail and for long periods he was condemned to the life of an invalid. In the spring of 1852 he went to Brighton for a fortnight's holiday, hoping to be invigorated by the sea-air; but from that holiday he never returned. Shortly after arriving at Brighton he fell seriously ill both in mind and body, and, after many months of physical suffering and mental distress, died on 4th January, 1854.

It was a sad ending to a pleasant and meritorious life. Gunning, indeed, played his part upon a petty

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge
D. A. Winstanley
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

stage and in a trivial drama, but he played it well. He was certainly a very loyal and devoted servant of his University and was probably well content with his modest sphere of activity. Yet he was something more than a painstaking official. He achieved a considerable reputation in his own circle as an amusing talker and raconteur. After his death he was described by a writer in the *Athenæum* as “a cheerful, and, without excess, a convivial man whose company and anecdotes were always welcome”¹; and such tributes were not always reserved until Gunning was no longer alive to enjoy them. In 1852 Dr Graham, then Bishop of Chester, who had been the Master of a Cambridge college, assured him in a letter that one of the happiest of his Cambridge recollections was “the memory of our agreeable intercourse during each of the years when I held the office of Vice-Chancellor. I will recall to mind how often in our official hospitalities the social hour was enlivened by the flow of your cheerful conversation and the variety of your interesting anecdotes”². But Gunning was liked quite as much for himself as for his stories. Professor Adam Sedgwick, after knowing him for nearly half a century, described him as a most valued friend³: and there must have been many who had

¹ *Athenæum*, 1854, p. 1038.

² *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1854, Part 1, p. 207.

³ *Ibid.*

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge
D. A. Winstanley
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Introduction

ix

a very warm corner in their hearts for the pleasant and genial old man. Nor was this affection bestowed upon one who sought at all cost to please. Gunning was a man of strong opinions, especially in politics, and was not deterred from expressing them by the fear of incurring unpopularity. According to his own account he became, when only twelve years old, an ardent adherent of the cause of parliamentary reform, and remained true to his faith even when, in consequence of the fear engendered by the French Revolution, a parliamentary reformer was commonly regarded as an ill-disguised Jacobin. Though he always disclaimed being either an agitator or a propagandist, he boasts that he made no secret of his unpopular opinions and that he suffered for his courage. He never seems, however, to have incurred the extreme penalty of social ostracism. The author of his obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* records that "though of very decided principles, and not slow in expressing his opinions with warmth and earnestness, it is gratifying to add that Mr Gunning enjoyed the friendship of many excellent persons, whose sentiments differed very widely from his own".

The affairs of the University and not politics were, however, his main interest, and early in his career as Esquire Bedell he began to make notes for a volume of Cambridge reminiscences. He had collected a good deal of material when, about

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

middle life, he suddenly fell dangerously ill; and, realising that he might not survive, became panic-stricken at the thought of the combustible matter he was leaving behind him. "At that period", he wrote, many years later, "many persons were living whose reputation might, perhaps, have been seriously affected by the publication of my anecdotes. I began to reflect whether I had exercised due care in selecting them; I was also apprehensive that I might have inserted some things (which I believed at the time to be facts) upon questionable authority. I had no friend near me on whose judgment I could sufficiently rely, who, after having examined them, would exercise a sound discretion in admitting or rejecting. I feared that these papers might fall into the hands of some bookseller whose only object would be gain. . . . Too ill to admit of delay, I decided on committing all my papers to the flames."¹

Many years later he was to have cause bitterly to regret this hasty action. In the winter of 1848–9, when he had already become more or less of a chronic invalid, a friend suggested that he might pleasantly employ his enforced leisure in writing his reminiscences. Though over eighty and compelled to rely almost exclusively upon his memory,

¹ *Reminiscences of the University, Town and County of Cambridge from the year 1780*, by Henry Gunning (2nd Edition), Vol. 1, p. 140.

Introduction xi

he determined to attempt the task and set to work seriously in the spring of 1849. It was a bold undertaking for an octogenarian in failing health, and, as he was unable to write much himself, it is probable that he would have made little headway if he had been left entirely unaided. He was fortunate enough, however, to discover a friend, Miss Mary Beart, who was willing to act as his amanuensis; and by the spring of 1852 he had made sufficient progress to contemplate publication in the near future. He issued a prospectus and appealed for subscriptions, but fate intervened in the form of the illness which overtook him at Brighton, and he died with his task unfinished. The *Reminiscences* leave off abruptly at the year 1830, and the work of preparing them for publication and seeing them through the press was undertaken by Miss Beart at Gunning's special request. He naturally chose her as being conversant with his wishes and most anxious to execute them faithfully, and for her the task was a labour of love. There is no doubt, however, that it was a labour. "My occupation", she writes in April, 1854, "has detained me at Cambridge many weeks longer than I at first contemplated. I have been very desirous, in the arrangement, to give as few opportunities, as circumstances will admit, for the comments of the critical reader. To avoid errors I feel to be impracticable; for the most puzzling part of my

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge

D. A. Winstanley

Frontmatter

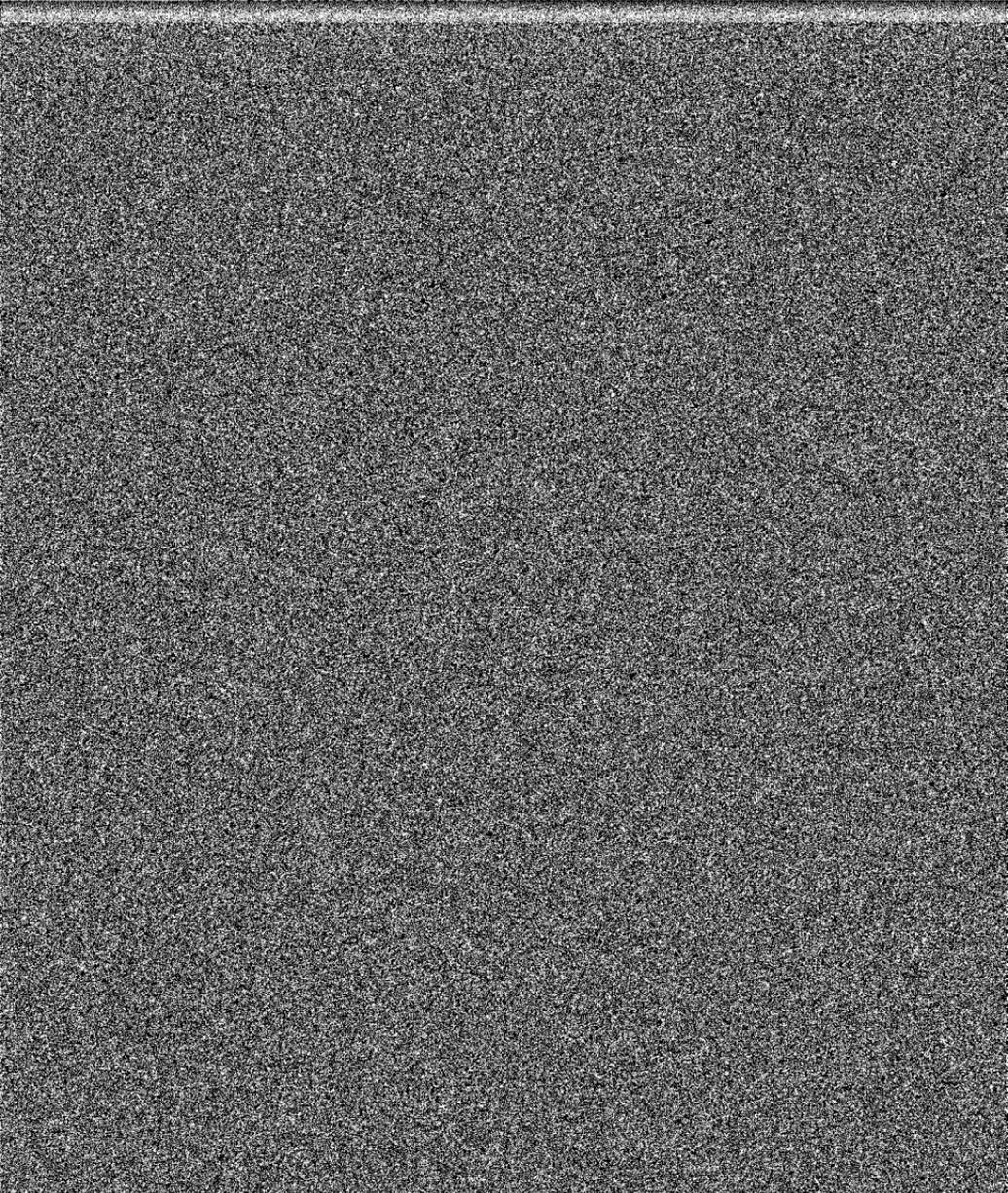
[More information](#)

xii

Introduction

work has been the arrangement of dates, as dear

Mr Gunning was (by his own confession) a very



Introduction

xiii

vinced him of the difficulty of being both charitable and entertaining; and he significantly remarked to Miss Beart that, if she were writing memoirs, she would fall into the error of introducing no character that was not a paragon of virtue and, consequently, bore her readers¹. Yet, though he certainly cannot be charged with making this mistake, a reviewer was able to say that “with the single exception of Mr Beverley...he speaks forbearingly, if not kindly, of everybody, and seems glad to give them credit for all the good qualities they possessed”². This is on the whole a just remark. Generally speaking, and despite his declared intention of shaming his generation, Gunning is content with making his characters more figures of fun than monsters of iniquity. He is not fundamentally malicious, and is content to show his victims as easy-going men who made light of their responsibilities and were singularly unrestrained by restrictive prejudices.

As he was known to have an eye for the frailties of human nature it is not surprising that the Cambridge dovecot was a little fluttered when it became known that the sprightly Henry Gunning was engaged upon his reminiscences. Though we hear that he received many encouraging letters, it seems that in certain quarters something like

¹ *Ibid.* p. 24.

² *Athenæum*, 1854, p. 1038.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge
D. A. Winstanley
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

consternation prevailed. Miss Beart indignantly laments that “there are persons who upon *suspicion* decry the publication”¹, and waxes particularly indignant because, with the exception of the Master of Caius, the Heads of Houses were not subscribers, “although each received a prospectus of the intended publication”². There was, however, no real occasion for alarm. When the *Reminiscences* appeared they were found to deal largely with a long bygone age. Barely more than a quarter of the whole is concerned with the nineteenth century, and the scandals related are mostly drawn from a past which had become a picturesque memory. The Rev. James Backhouse and his associates in the Trinity Seniority were no longer alive to blush for their infirmities.

Expectations, however, were disappointed, as well as fears allayed, by the appearance of the *Reminiscences*. They were found to be not quite so amusing as had been hoped. A reviewer gently complained that the author had hardly lived up to his social reputation, and that he might with advantage have abstained from entering so minutely into the details of University business and forgotten academic controversies. It would be idle to deny the force of this criticism. Gunning is undoubtedly lively but by no means consistently so.

¹ *Gunning's Last Years*, p. 24.

² *Ibid.* p. 3.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-62829-8 - Henry Gunning: Reminiscences of Cambridge
D. A. Winstanley
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Introduction

xv

He includes much which might well have been omitted and at times degenerates into a chronicler of unimportant events. Had he lived to revise his manuscript for the press, he might possibly have curtailed it; and it is perhaps unfortunate that his editor, Miss Beart, was so enthusiastic and so conscientious. There is therefore no necessity to defend the principle of making a selection from the *Reminiscences*; but apologies are certainly required for the selection here presented as much of value and interest has been omitted. It can only be pleaded that lack of space and not a misguided sense of propriety has dictated the omissions. Students of Gunning, who happen to glance at these extracts, will certainly miss many favourite passages; but this little volume is not intended for them but for the many to whom Gunning is only a name and often not even that. Its purpose will have been fully attained if it leads its readers to make themselves more fully acquainted with a work which of late years has fallen into undeserved neglect.

These selections have been taken from the second edition of the *Reminiscences*, in which certain errors in the first edition were corrected. The page references in the margins are to the second edition. A very few notes have been added where thought to be indispensable, and these are distinguished from the original notes,

which are asterisked, by being numbered. But anything like systematic annotation did not seem appropriate; and beyond correcting one or two very obvious printer's errors and endeavouring to establish some sort of uniformity in the use of capitals, the text of the second edition has been left unchanged.