

ALGERNON SYDNEY

*Aged 41.*

*Engraved by F. Engleheart, from a Drawing by Vertue,  
of a Portrait painted by Van Egmond, at Brussells,  
in 1663.*

*W. A. Warburton July 19<sup>th</sup> 19*

MEMOIRS

H 848  
H 107

9 19219

OF

ALGERNON SYDNEY.

BY

GEORGE WILSON MEADLEY.

WITH

AN APPENDIX.

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LONDON:

*Printed by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars,*  
FOR CRADOCK AND JOY, PATERNOSTER-RROW, LONDON;  
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH;  
AND J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE.

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1813.

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1-75  
P 19219

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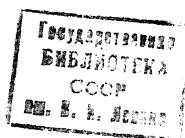
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~7562-53

*Handwritten signature or initials.*

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TO

THE REVEREND JOHN DISNEY, D.D. F.S.A.

OF THE HYDE, ESSEX.

DEAR SIR,

IF your steady attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty, and the early sacrifice which you made to conscience and to principle, had not given you the strongest claims on my attention, gratitude for many personal obligations would alone have prompted me to this address. I am happy, therefore, in the opportunity of thus publicly expressing my esteem; and reflect with pleasure and with pride, that, allowing for some minuter differences of opinion,

our sentiments, on the leading questions of religion and policy, have long been essentially the same. And to whom could I inscribe the *Memoirs of Algernon Sydney* with so much propriety, as to one, who, participating in all his noblest feelings, so worthily dispenses the fortune, and maintains the constitutional principles, of Thomas Hollis of Corscombe, his patriotic admirer.

Accept then, dear Sir, this tribute of affectionate regard ; and permit me to request your friendly notice of a *Work*, which, originating, in some measure, under your auspices, is intended to supply a desideratum in our national biography, and to complete the labours of Thomas Hollis and his associates, in elucidating Sydney's *character* and *writings*. How far I may have succeeded in this bold design must remain for others to decide : but whilst, as a man

and an author, I cannot feel indifferent to the general opinion of my country, I am particularly anxious that my exertions should be found worthy of your approbation.

Honored as I deem myself by your friendship, and gratified by the recollection of your repeated kindness, during the few years of our acquaintance, forgive me, if, in avowing my respect for the dignified consistency of your public conduct, I bear testimony also to the milder virtues of your private life. Nor can I deny myself the pleasure of recurring to the many happy hours, which I have passed in your hospitable mansion, where, among the beauties of cultivated nature, the monuments of ancient art, and the rarer treasures of your library, my greatest happiness has invariably been derived, from the charms of rational and instructive conversation.

That, amidst your various schemes of rural improvement, and the still wider range of your active and enlightened benevolence, you may long continue to enjoy that affluence, by which your integrity has been so signally rewarded, and, in the immediate circle of your friends and family, to receive as well as to communicate happiness, is the sincere wish of,

Dear Sir,

Your very faithful and obliged,

G. W. MEADLEY.

London, August 5, 1813.



## PREFACE.

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ALTHOUGH the name of Algernon Sydney has been long distinguished in the annals of his country, and his conduct held out to ingenuous youth, as an example of pure and disinterested patriotism, his personal history has been hitherto comparatively little known. The meagre detail of Collins, who first attempted to supply the neglect of contemporary writers, in his *Memoirs of the Sydneys*, prefixed to a valuable collection of their *Letters and Memorials*, has been chiefly followed in every subsequent design: whilst the interesting correspondence included in that publication, and other documents of a similar description, which have been for years before the public, furnish materials for a

much more finished work. It is true, indeed, that such direct authorities are confined to a few short, though interesting periods : and that the remainder of Sydney's life must be traced through the scanty sources afforded by collateral records. But still enough remains to reward the search of the diligent enquirer, as, except in a few leading transactions, his sentiments and conduct have been hitherto imperfectly developed. An enlarged view of his life and character has, therefore, long been wanting, to remove the prejudices of the ignorant, and to strengthen the attachment of more generous minds.

In attempting to supply this obvious desideratum in our national literature, the present writer has spared no pains in his enquiries after new and important facts. And, notwithstanding many disappointments, he trusts that some curious and in-

teresting information will be found to have rewarded his research. If, indeed, he had fortunately succeeded in recovering Sydney's letters to his uncle, the Earl of Northumberland, or those successively addressed to Sir John and Sir William Temple, he might have done greater justice to his theme. But, whilst every attention was paid to his enquiries, by the noble families in whose possession there seemed the greatest probability of their being still preserved, no traces of these letters could be found.

The writer's access to manuscript authorities has, consequently, been confined to a few documents which still remain at Penshurst, unnoticed or misquoted by Collins, and to such as, being deposited in the public offices, are now, for the first time, presented to the world. But he has endeavoured to supply the defect of original

information, by a careful search after all that is contained in the *Histories*, or even in the *Journals* of the times. And he has neglected no means of procuring either facts or illustrations, which might tend to the improvement of his work ; ever remembering the chief duty of a *biographer*, to trace the progress of his hero, through surrounding circumstances, and not too minutely to detail the story of his age.

In all his enquiries, however, the writer has endeavoured to avail himself of the first authority, and has only depended, in a few unavoidable cases, on any secondary source of information. With respect to Barillon's letters, indeed, he has been obliged to rely on the extracts produced by Sir John Dalrymple, whose judgment, rather than his integrity, seems liable to some dispute. But he did not give up the pursuit of more authentic testimony, in this instance, till

he had ascertained, that the correspondence of that minister, respecting his intercourse with Sydney, was not included in the papers brought by Mr. Fox from Paris; and was convinced, that in the present state of Europe, every attempt to procure access to the original documents in the *Depôt des Affaires Etrangères* must have terminated without success.

In the more limited sphere of his researches, the writer has to acknowledge his obligations to some respected friends; particularly to Dr. Pearson, the late master of Sidney-college, Cambridge, and Mr. Allen, of Holland-house; by whose assistance he has chiefly been enabled to pursue his enquiries. He has experienced much attention also from the gentlemen entrusted with the care of those public or private repositories of information, to which he had repeatedly occasion to apply. Their libe-

rality does honour to their country, and justly entitles them to this tribute.

He feels himself called upon more especially to return thanks to Mr. Whitton, of Great James-street, for obtaining him a ready access to the manuscripts at Penshurst: to Dr. Charles Burney, for a frequent admission to his rare and valuable collection of newspapers, during the period of the civil wars; and to Mr. Williams Wynn, for allowing him to inspect the papers of his ancestor Sir William Williams, relating to Sydney's Trial and Defence. To them he has been indebted for an important accession of materials, during the progress of his work. And above all, he has to make his grateful acknowledgements to Lord Holland, for procuring him the unrestricted use of several documents in the State Paper Office, and for many other instances of polite attention.

Whatever reception these Memoirs may otherwise meet with from the public, the writer trusts that he shall not be accused of superficial research; since by a constant reference to his authorities, he has distinctly pointed out his various and scattered sources of information. And he finally submits the result of his labours, to the liberal and discerning, with deference, but without distrust.