

## CHAPTER XXI.

REFLECTIONS ON OBTAINING PLACE-SITUATIONS—LETTERS TO MRS. AND  
MR. S. C. HALL—FAMILY LETTERS—MRS. COPLAND—LAST ILLNESS  
—DEATH AND BURIAL—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

ALTHOUGH Cunningham had attained eminence in literature, and could number several of the nobility among his friends, yet he did not receive the attention which he thought his due, with regard to place-situations for his sons in the Government offices. Writing to a near relative in Dumfries on the subject, he complains of this in the following terms:—"Frank is grown into a man almost. I have been trying to get him a clerkship in one of our public offices, but though Lord Melbourne spoke, nay wrote, very kindly, still the situation is not come, and I believe I *must* accept a cadetship to India for him, which a noble-minded friend holds for the purpose. Now, you see it is not quite my choice to send my son abroad, but then what can I do? There are many places at home in the gift of ministers, and they bestow them freely, but then they bestow them on men who have wealth or influence—not on those who write songs, and romances, and biographies. It was one of the dreams of my youth that patronage followed eminence in literature, but when I see hundreds obtain situations for their sons who have no eminence to plead in anything, I see that I only dreamed. But

this is far from hurting my temper or disturbing my peace. For though these sad times have reduced the profits of literature to the wages of a harvest-reaper, and I have been, by the bankruptcy of one and the knavery of others, deprived of the fruits of my head and hand to the amount of £450, still it is my duty to endure the infliction with patience. With respect to my own health, I still keep out of the doctor's hands. I write much less than I used to do, and must write less yet, for the hard toils of my boyish days are making themselves felt; but as my hand-work has been long over, I must fatigue myself as little with the head as I can help." These last words were not mere matter of course, and were not written without a reason, as coming events were casting their shadows before them, though still at some considerable distance.

But we now turn to his home correspondence, which is always interesting, especially when he writes to his mother:—

“Belgrave Place, 2nd January, 1836.

“My beloved Mother,—When I last heard of you, and that was very lately, you were in excellent health. I need not say with what pain I hear that it is otherwise now, and that you are a sufferer. I have, however, much confidence in the excellence of your constitution, and expect to hear that you have got the better of this attack, as you did that very severe one when your son and grandson hastened from London to see you. The early loss of my father I have often felt was made up by your long life and good health; and as my grandfather lived till he was beyond ninety, I hope the Giver of all things will be equally indulgent to his

daughter. We had a letter from Alexander on Thursday, and one from Joseph yesterday. They were both well, and so was your other grandson, James Pagan. The last account comes down to August 13.

“I am happy to learn that you have such skill at hand as that of the Rev. Mr. Kirkwood, who is the friend of his people both in and out of the pulpit, and also that your nephew Mr. Harley Maxwell is in Dumfries. But what must be your greatest consolation is the presence of your daughters, and the feeling that you have been a good and a kind mother. These are not my words alone, they are the last I remember having heard my father utter, and all your children must join in the sentiments.

“My brother Peter is writing. I shall therefore say no more, but add that your recovery has been the only wish, the sole prayer of my whole household this morning. I am quite well. My wife, who sends her love, has been suffering of late from a cold. Our love to Jean and Mina. I hope the next letter from Newington will tell us that you are better.—I remain, my beloved Mother, your ever affectionate son,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“Mrs. Cunningham.”

With Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall he was on the most intimate terms of friendship, and contributed several articles to the *Art Journal* on “Our Public Statues.” The following reply was sent to a request for a piece of poetry from his pen:—

“Belgrave Place, 3rd August, 1836.

“My dear Mrs. Hall,—I will do anything for you, but my Muse, poor lassie, has lost much of her early readiness and

spirit, and finds more difficulty in making words clink and lines keep time; but she will work for you, and as she loves you, who knows but some of her earlier inspiration may come to her again? for you must know, I think, her strains have lost much of their free, wild nature since WE came from the land of the yellow broom and the blossomed heather.—Yours ever and ever,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.”

The following acknowledgment was sent to Mr. S. C. Hall on receiving a copy of the first volume of his “Book of Gems;” and while giving due praise to the work, it also indicates what he himself had in view, and was preparing:—“Your ‘Book of Gems’ was welcome for your sake, painting’s sake, poetry’s sake, and my own sake. I have done nothing but look at it since it came, and admire the good taste of the selections, and the happy language—clear too, and discriminating—of the biographies. It will do good both to the living and the dead—directing and animating the former, and giving a fresh lustre to the latter. If it obtains but half the success which it deserves, both your publisher and yourself ought to be satisfied. I have made the characters of our poets my study—studied them both as men and as bards, looking at them through the eyes of nature, and I am fully warranted in saying that our notions very seldom differ, and that you come nearer my feelings on the whole than any other person, save one, whom I have ever met. You will see this when my ‘Lives of the Poets’ are published, and that will be soon, for the first volume is all but ready.” This

projected work of the 'Lives of the Poets,' after the manner of Johnson, was not carried into effect, so far as we are aware; but it is doubtless to be found among his literary manuscripts, and may yet be given to the public.

The following letters are interesting:—

“27 Belgrave Place, 17th May, 1838.

“My dear Mother,—We have thought of little else these two months but of your grandson Francis, and his visit to you in Scotland, his fitting-out here, and his departure for India. He is now on the sea. He sailed in the *Asia*, Captain Gillies, from Portsmouth, on Saturday, the 5th of this month; and as the wind was fair, we have no doubt that he is just now at Madeira, where the vessel was to touch and take in wine. He was fitted out in every way more suited to our hopes than to our pocket. He has a whole cabin to himself; he has a hundred guineas in his pocket; he has a full and more than full equipment of clothes, and an excellent little library of books, and three letters of introduction from first-rate men here to Lord Elphinstone, the Governor, and as he has good health, a clear head, an honest heart, and determination to do something worthy, I have no fears for him. He was much made of in Dumfries, he was the same here. All who met him liked him, and tried to do him service. By the direction of my friend the late Archdeacon of Madras he has undertaken to study the Persian language on his way out, for which I bought him Persian grammars and dictionaries; and by the advice of Sir Francis Chantrey he has undertaken for the sake of his health to shoot a little, not at men, but at birds and beasts, for which he gave him a beautiful double-barrelled gun, which cost forty guineas.

“Our eyes, my dear mother, have been a little wet since—from love, not from fear of your grandson, for ‘an’ he live to be a man,’ he will be a distinguished one. It was remarkable that on the very morning before he left us he received a letter overland from his brother Alexander. It was from near Delhi, where he was encamped with the Governor-General. He was well, and so was Joseph, from whom he had heard on the 12th of February. His own letter was dated the 14th. Alexander said he had been on a visit with the Misses Eden, sisters of Lord Auckland, and the Prince of Orange, their visitor to Lucknow, where the Prince of the place gave them a public breakfast, and treated them to the show of a battle between elephants, rhinoceroses, antelopes, and rams. The combat of the elephants was fierce and fearful; tusks were broken and trunks gored, and they were separated by rockets; but neither fire nor water, Sandie says, could separate the rhinoceroses. The antelopes made a poor fight, and two tups in England fought better than the rams.

“He is making drawings of all the old temples, and taking notes of all the conversations with all the native princes, which he says he will send to me. He expects to see Joseph during their visit to Runjeit Sing, the King of the Punjab; but before that he thinks of making a journey into Cashmere. So much for your grandsons. Now for your poor son himself and his household here.

“Instead of writing books, I am busied arranging them. I have turned my wife and daughter, who are now well enough, into the drawing-rooms, and made my back and front parlours, by removing part of the partition, into one room, with book-cases all round, and called it my Library. Nor is it unworthy of the name; for with Pate, your grandson’s volumes, there are in all little short of two thousand, mostly all good select

books. I can now sit at my fireside, and in my arm-chair, and cast my eye, and put my hand, on any book I want. This arrangement was planned by your grandson Francis, who saw it begun before he set sail. I assure you the Library looks handsome. It has pictures too and busts, one of the former of Sir Francis Chantrey, one of the latter of Sir Walter Scott—both benefactors of my house.

Nelly, Thomas' widow, was here with my niece Betsy last night. They are all well. John has got a place at £75 a year; but I hope for his old situation under the Rennies. I shall see Sir John Rennie at the Duke of Sussex's on Saturday night, when I intend to speak in my nephew's favour, and offer myself as his security, if security should be required. Tell Mrs. Pagan that a friend of ours and Peter's, Lieut. Blackett of the Navy, a brother of Sir John Blackett, called the other day, and as he was bound for New Holland, on an excursion of pleasure, though he hopes profit, for he purposes to buy land, he requested introductions to my nieces and nephews on the Hunter River. I wrote to John, and Peter wrote to Jane, and sent her his volumes of Songs. I warned my young friend to beware of his heart and his £800 a-year, for all the ladies of the house of Cunningham were accounted handsome.

“When you see Miss Harley, the kind, the good Miss Harley, give my respects to her. I am concerned to hear that my old and esteemed friend David Rodan is unwell, and that he was compelled to relinquish his farm—also that Jane Taylor, a lady modest and fair, and one whom many loved, is dead and gone. She was my school-fellow at Duncow, and young as I was, I loved to be near her in the class. I heard of my brother Peter the other day; he was well at Athens on the 14th of March. My wife sends her love with mine to my *dear sisters three*, and Pate and Mary

who is well and thriving, join us—Also to you, my beloved mother.—Your ever affectionate son,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“Mrs. Cunningham.”

“Belgrave Place, 29th March, 1839.

“My dear Sister,—I write in hope that my dear mother is so much recovered as to enable her to obtain some rest, and even converse with those who so anxiously and kindly attend her; nay, I trust that this setting in of sunny weather will be much in her favour. I wish I could send her some of the many coloured crocuses blooming in bunches, with snow-drops, at my door, for she is a lover of flowers, and has bestowed her taste on me. I wrote to Peter, and stated how ill our dear mother was at first, but that she was slightly better. He will likely be here soon. I am glad that my sister of Dalswinton has been with you; her's is well-timed attention, and my brother and I will remember her for it.

“We are all in our usual way, and anxious about our beloved mother. Frank says he wrote to his grandmother in December last. He was well on the 12th of January, and in great spirits, for the Bishop of Madras, who, with Sir Robert Comyne, has been very kind to him, has applied to Government to give him the command of the escort which is to accompany him on his Visitation journey through his diocese of Madras. This is high confidence in so young a man, and Francis hopes that his extreme youth will not hinder him from getting such an honourable appointment. Joseph and Alexander both wrote to us on the first day of the year. They were both well and in the Punjab, but Joseph, after having escorted Lord Auckland to the Sutlege, was to return to Lahore, and from thence go to Peshawur



with the King of Cabool and the army. He had hopes, he said, of being called on to besiege the Fortress of Peshawur. He is the only Engineer sent with the forces, and has to act as Political assistant likewise. For all this he is well paid. His salary has been increased £250 a year, so that he has now about a thousand per annum, and expects further honours and higher pay.

“Alexander returns to Scinde with the Governor-General, but Joseph intimates that his brother will soon obtain a political appointment, one he hopes in Afghanistan, the land where his own place is. They have no word of James Pagan, from whom they are now removed more than a thousand miles. I wish that James had volunteered with the invading regiments; such boldness is expected, and always well looked on, and generally remembered when places are to be given away.

“We have our young friend John Harley Maxwell with us for a few days. He is both anxious and clever, and have no doubt will be made an Engineer. I like him very much. He has capital business habits, as well as a good business hand, and will be a credit to the Maxwells, and Hyslops, and Harleys. We must have him appointed to Bengal.

“Will you give my love to my venerable and warm-hearted mother, also to my dear sister Mary, and do not forget my sister Jean, nor my sister Isabel? I hope Allan will be established in due time in the Sandbed, and that he and his will prosper. I trust also that good news have reached the Curriestanes from New Holland, and also from India. My wife joins me in all these remembrances. I wish you to write me soon, if you have not written already.—I remain, my dear Mina, your affectionate brother,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“Miss Mina Cunningham.”

“27 Lower Belgrave Place, 11th July, 1840.

“My dear Mother,—I have given myself too little time to write this letter, for I am anxious to send you the enclosed seven pounds, namely, a five pound note and two sovereigns, which I hope will arrive safe, and which I beg my sister Mina to acknowledge, for the post is by no means a safe mode of conveyance. I hope this will find you easy, if not quite well. It leaves all here in their usual health. Even I have picked up, as we Londoners say, of late; though I feel I must watch over myself, as you did over me, when I first ventured to walk under the Blackwood trees. I find that care, and above all vegetable diet, are the best things for me, and when I go out to dine, I resist all fine dishes and rich wines—indeed, I should like to retire on milk, porridge, and champed potatoes, such as I used to have at the Roads and the Sandbed, in the sunny days of my youth, when all was bright and full of hope before me. I saw it mentioned in the papers the other day that the *Asia* will be in England in August, which I trust will be the case, though Peter does not mention it in his last letters.

“We had letters from your three grandsons of my branch on Monday last—they were all well. Alexander was married at Simla on the 20th of March, and in the middle of April was in his own house at Lucknow with his young wife. Joseph was busy looking to the affairs of the Punjab, but when cold weather came he proposed to visit his brother at Lucknow; and Francis was about to get a year's leave of absence, to visit Calcutta and Lucknow and Lordiana. The three brothers have a strong regard for one another, and take no important steps without each other's concurrence. Give my regards to Mina and Mary, and all friends. My

wife and Mary send their love to you.—I remain, my dear Mother, your affectionate son,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“Mrs. Cunningham.”

“27 Belgrave Place, 18th May, 1841.

“My dear Sister,—I heard through Helen Pagan that our dear mother had been ill, and was recovering, and I now hear from you that she continues to improve. That at her very great age she can have the health of other days may be prayed for, but can scarcely be hoped; yet I was not without that hope which is of the imagination, that as she had endured much when young, her old age would be calm and free from pain. When Helen's letters came I consulted our brother Peter, who did not feel any alarm, and regarded the attack, which frightened you so much, as an illness which would soon subside. Give my love to my dear mother, and say how I sympathize deeply, and would willingly, were such an exchange possible, take a share of her suffering. God knows I have little extra health to spare; for though Peter gave a flattering account of my appearance, my constitution is much shaken, and I feel what doctors close their eyes on. My business, in my declining health, grows no less; my patience in disposing of it lessens as I grow old, and I expect, one of these days, to be buried in the furrow like an old crow whose wing is broken, and cannot carry it out of harm's way.

“Yet I am cheerful, for why should a living man complain? The work which I am unable to do I leave undone, and the letters which I want leisure or power to reply to, I leave unanswered. I have for more than two years desisted from writing anything but letters, and even these are too numerous for a hand so weak and encumbered as mine. So you see, my dear sister, other people may be suffering as well as

yourself, and yet must perform the duties of their station; but you are a complainer, one who often desires to die—you see the cloud and shut your eyes on the sunshine, and the joy of grief, of which Ossian sings, is the delight of your heart. Had my taste been like yours, I should have been in the dark and narrow house long ago. Continue to comfort our mother—do your duties as you have always done them in regard to her, for our business is not to die in despondency, and I have no doubt that you will find ten long years of enjoyment before you, and hope that I may live to see you enjoy them. We are all well—we heard from our three boys in India last mail. They are all well, and very busy. They all sent their love to you and to their grandmother. My wife sends her love to my mother, and Mary unites with her.—I remain, my dear Sister, your very affectionate brother,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“Miss Cunningham.”

We cannot omit to notice, in this concluding chapter, one to whom Cunningham was much indebted for his start in the world as a songster and a poet, Mrs. Copland. In the volume of “Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song,” published by Cromek, but furnished by Cunningham, frequent reference is made to her, as having supplied songs, and snatches of songs, of the olden time for the work, which were used most gratefully, the interstices being supplemented where required. This lady was no myth as some have supposed, but was indeed what Cunningham has represented her to be, one of his main sources of ballad lore. She was brought up with her parents, who were highly respectable, at Gate-

side, in the parish of Newabbey, and when she had attained womanhood she was considered exceedingly good-looking, and was always spoken of as "Bonnie Mary Allan." Her intellectual qualities were much superior to the ordinary standard of young ladies, as well as her physical lineaments, and therefore it was not to be wondered at that she became a special object of attraction to the young men around. Cunningham was a weekly visitor at Gateside, when working in the neighbourhood, while Mary Allan was unmarried, and when he and other young men called there, the whisky bottle was of course produced. Miss Allan was generally seated at the "Wee wheel" on such occasions, but it struck some of the lads that the "rock" continued from week to week about the same size, though it might have been frequently refurnished. Besides, it was not a secret to them that some book or another received far more attention than did the wheel. On one occasion, taking advantage of her temporary absence, a dram glass was removed from the table and secreted in the heart of the "rock and wee pickle tow." Some weeks afterwards, when by any amount of diligence at all, several *rocks* should have been exhausted, the number of young men present being in excess of the dram glasses, one of them opened out the "tow" on the "rock" and brought out the secreted glass. Among the many aspirants for her hand and heart she elected William Copland, Esq., merchant, Dalbeattie, and had a family of four daughters and two sons, one of the latter being John Copland, Esq., surgeon, residing in Dumfries. After Mrs. Copland's marriage Cunningham was a frequent visitor at

their residence of Greenhead, near Dalbeattie, previous to his removal to London, and his letters to her, after taking up his abode in the great metropolis, were neither "few nor far between;" but of these, it is sad to think, that there is not now one in existence, every scrap having been committed to the flames in the same way as those written to G. D. M'Ghie were, alluded to in a former chapter. Mrs. Copland died in Newabbey, in the spring of 1833, and must have been greatly gratified at the success which attended the writings of her friend Allan Cunningham.

Chantrey, as we formerly said, had the greatest affection for Cunningham, and left him an annuity of £100, with reversion to his widow, but he lived to receive only a single payment, for in the year succeeding that of Chantrey's death he followed his master and friend to "the land o' the leal." On Chantrey's death Cunningham was requested to execute the orders which had been received, but he declined to do so, saying it would take the longest lifetime to do that, but he would finish all that his master had modelled. We fear he did not survive to do even that.

On the morning of the 29th October, 1842, he was suddenly seized with paralysis, which was all the more ominous from his having had a similar attack some two years before, from which, however, he had completely recovered, though his health of late had caused some anxiety to his family and friends. Only two days before the attack he had revised the last proof-sheet of the "Life of Sir David Wilkie," which was published after his death. Medical assistance was found of

no avail, and on the night of the following day the life and labours of Allan Cunningham were at an end. Apparently without any suffering, and "in a kind of solemn stillness," he passed away from the world at the comparatively early age of fifty-seven. On the following Friday, at one o'clock afternoon, a hearse and two mourning coaches left a house in Lower Belgrave Place, slowly wending their solemn way to the cemetery in Kensal Green, and there, in a plain grave, with only eight mourners standing round it, was laid the body of Allan Cunningham, far from his native Nithsdale that he loved so well.

He had acquired many friends in the course of his literary career, but none so intimate and valued as William Jerdan of the *Literary Gazette*, who at first so greatly roused his ire about the heretical pronoun. No one had better opportunities for knowing his real character and worth, and no one was better qualified to form a correct opinion. - In publicly noticing his death, he said, "few persons ever tasted the felicity of passing through the world with more of friendship and less enmity than this worthy and well deserving individual. He was straight-forward, right-minded, and conscientious; true to himself and to others." We believe this was the universal opinion. Few men ever had such delight in family and home as he, and few fathers ever had greater cause to be proud of his sons, who all distinguished themselves greatly in the literary world, as well as in their professional positions. His love for his wife was ardent, and many a tribute of affection he paid her in after days, as well as when he

wooded her in the woods of Arbigland. After a separation of twenty-two years she now sleeps by his side.

As a writer his fancy was perhaps a little too luxuriant—he loved nature in her wildest tangles, and to have trimmed the wild-rose bush, or the hawthorn tree, would have been in his sight vandalism which he could not endure. While to the trained critic of modern literature there may appear in his works too great an exuberance of imagination, and too strong a fragrance of flowers, we are much mistaken if these are not the very things that will embalm his memory in the minds of those whom he sought most to please, the peasantry of his native land. We now reverentially let fall the curtain, and would inscribe upon the monolith which covers his grave—"Honest Allan—a credit to Caledonia!"

"Thou, like me, hast seen another grave would suit our Poet well,  
 Greenly banded by the breckan in a lonely Highland dell,  
 Looking on the solemn waters of a mighty inland sea,  
 In the shadow of a mountain, where the lonely eagles be;  
 Thou hast seen the kindly heather blown around his simple bed;  
 Heard the loch and torrent mingle dirges for the poet dead;  
 Brother, thou hast seen him lying, as it is thy hope to lie,  
 Looking from the soil of Scotland up into a Scottish sky:  
 It may be such grave were better, better rain and dew should fall,  
 Tears of hopeful love to freshen Nature's ever-verdant pall.

Better after-times should find him—to his rest in homage bound—  
 Lying in the land that bore him, with its glories piled around."