

d. Status of Women

We have already seen, under the head of equality, in his Social Outlook, his support of women's claims for emancipation, and also his shrewd estimate of the contribution which they could give only through their womanhood, an influence which could exist when their status was low and could be abrogated when they had formal freedom. He seems to have published nothing but occasional observations, which serve to show him the champion of the underdog, the underprivileged in this instance, without his mind catching alight to the subject. It was my very good fortune to be able to handle, in the Dartmouth College Library collection of his works, an original, early, unpublished manuscript entitled "The Real Equality of the Sexes". In it he declares that he has little interest in the struggle for the franchise "now going on". The movement is great and just - but the hope that the franchise will gain women social freedom is illusory, for so it had proved for men. He goes on:

"My real sympathy is with their social and economic position. Almost every institution, economic, social, political and religious (especially religious) is designed, or has become without design, a means to keep them dependent upon men".

He argues that working-class socialism would be a means of freedom for all - that women should share the benefit. He would have women earning money, with equal wages paid for equal work. He would change the legal position. "Once alter all the laws which set up property above human beings and women will be free, men also.". The Church is accused of having fought against equal status for men and women before the law for 1900 years. In the mediaeval Church woman was unclean, the seducer: virginity was exalted: "Thus did the Church degrade both sexes and constitute itself the universal brothel-keeper of mankind". Sacramental marriage, at first the means of regulating natural affection, had become an instrument for the protection of property: so women were slaves. They needed economic freedom (through earning for themselves and obtaining legal equality) and sexual freedom - divorce should be made available at the will of both or either party to the marriage.

The lack of prophetic protest at the low status allowed to women on the part of the Church, the self-interest shown, receives shrewd and just criticism. The remedies proposed seemed extravagant in his day; but, except for the extreme facility of divorce they get to the root of women's economic and sexual degradation.

e. Work

In the novels of Anthony Trollope a sure "audience reaction" is obtained wherever a character is described as undertaking lazily a work for which he had been paid. Victorians had the strain (justly, I think, ascribed to Puritanism) in their make-up which firmly adjudged work a good, an unqualified obligation.

Cunninghame Graham indicates sufficiently that he does not think work is an ill. When he writes of humble toilers he sees them as sustaining the fabric of the universe¹. When he writes of the leisured class he refers to "the obligation to work, natural in itself to existence"². But he does confront with full challenge the assumption that work is a self-justifying activity, one which should be continually setting its claim on human beings. Abroad he had met a different attitude to work:

"In all Morocco, no man can be found as foolish as to say he likes to work, far less to labour, except under the pressure of hunger or of his superiors"³.

It was the graces of living he sought to preserve, in face of the elevation of work as an unqualified good in Victorian and Edwardian society. His position, I think, is best expressed in a sketch in "The Ipane". Of Tangier he writes:

"I am glad that the chief industry is intermittent, leaving full time for meditation and for faith"⁴.

Work had to be seen in perspective. Work had to be put in perspective. It was human beings, it was life which mattered first and most. He distinguished only loss in the pressure put on people to make work the be-all and end-all of life in an industrialised society.

He makes the common mistake of relating the necessity to work to the fall of man⁵.

¹ As in "Progress", p.141; cf. Ecclesiasticus 38, v v. 27-34.

² Article "Notions" in "The People's Press", November 15th 1890.

³ "Father Archangel of Scotland", p.119.

⁴ "Father Archangel of Scotland", p.154.

⁵ "Thirteen Stories", pp. 44, 45.

f. Patriotism and War

Cunninghame Graham's attitude to war appears to be equivocal. It may be illustrated from his having spoken furiously on the iniquity of going to war in Trafalgar Square, on the brink of the 1914-18 conflagration, and then having attempted to join the services as a Rough Rider when war did break out. The contrast, I think, is that between an impending situation which one will try to avert, and a decision which has to be made in terms of the real situation to be faced. It was not pacifism but the conviction that the Boers had justice on their side, which made him oppose Britain's policy in an earlier instance.

".....the pomps and circumstances of foolish war"¹ saddened him. Its futility struck him forcibly². He saw ordinary men as the dupes and sufferers, the population deluded by politicians³, a ring of stockbrokers manipulating national policies for their own ends⁴. It continually appears to him a contradiction that Christians should engage in war. His anger and hurt is expressed when he uses such phrases as "Christian carnival of blood" of Great War I⁵. Futility, victimisation and violation of Christian principles are indicated in a scornful passage in "Redeemed" where he broods on an Alpine war. The mountain flowers represented the "deliverance" of the territory:

"They were all redeemed, and raised their eyes to heaven, rejoicing that one national flag had been substituted for another, and that the world had made a step upon the road to perfection.

These brethren in the faith of Christ, who till the time that they first met in strife had been generally ignorant of each other's existence upon earth, had fought like wolves to redeem or to defend a territory that most of them had never heard of in their lives"⁶.

During the 1914-18 war, Cunninghame Graham surveyed South American resources and even shipped his beloved horses to slaughter in the "Carnival of blood". He seems to me to affirm that we need to discriminate, look into causes, be free agents, and only take part in war if heart and head go together.

He was a real British and Scottish patriot. When in an article in "The People's Press" entitled "Patriotism"⁷, his whole theme is compassed in the words "Patriotism is a swindle and a lie. The brotherhood of man is worth a dozen of it", his great concern is to give warning. As long as this country is a prison yard for workers, as long as patriotism is the fake the sweater firm traffics in to expand markets and reduce wages, it should be treated as a deluding catchword. He confronted the jingoism of his time with whole-hearted opposition.

¹ "Mogreb-el-Acksa", p.7.

² e.g., "Success", p.5.

³ "Jose Antonio Paez", p.174.

⁴ Speaking on Lord Beaconfield's policy in the Argyll Hall, Glasgow. Cutting undated but early. cf. "Success", p.6.

⁵ "Jose Antonio Paez", p.175. He says here that human progress is in savagery.

⁶ pp. 174, 175.

⁷ September 26th 1890.