

Appendix III Scottish Nationalism

In the last part of a life still manifold in literary, travel and artistic interests, wide-ranging in its communication with people all over the world, Cunninghame Graham's attention turned, full flood, to Scottish Nationalism. As a Scottish Nationalist he narrowly lost the Glasgow Rectorial Election to Stanley Baldwin in October 1928. From then on he was an exponent of the movement in gatherings at Stirling and Elderslie, on the platform, and in print. The stand he took was on these grounds:

1 Scotland was a distinctive nation. Her culture was suffering from her being treated as "a mere appendage to the predominant partner"; "a mere county of England"¹:

"We want a renaissance, a re-birth of Scottish literature art and sentiment. We can induce these things only by agitating for national self-government"².

2 That the old Scottish Parliament was a mere court of law was an affront to the nation's respect and to reason. Its form, with Lords, Commons and Clergy in one House was better than that of the British Parliament: and its Acts were short and understandable in comparison. A national Parliament was the right of Scotsmen, filched away by fraud: Scotsmen would prefer to be ill governed by their own folk who understood them, than be better governed by intruders. A Scottish Parliament needed to be restored³.

3 Scotland was not dependent on England for its prosperity. Historically, Scotland had merely shared in the rising prosperity of Europe. Rather the partnership had proved detrimental to her. Her shipyards were paralysed, factories were closed, industries were drifting southwards, railways and commercial enterprises were managed in London, the Highlands were a sporting desert. No party in Westminster gave Scotland its due⁴.

4 ".....the Union was brought about by bribery, chicanery and wire-pulling".

"at least a half of Scotland was opposed to it": "Had I lived in the time of the Union with England I would have resisted it to the best of my ability with Fletcher of Saltoun, and had it gone to arms, I would have been beside the Scottish patriots"⁵.

Scotland's present position was reached probably not by "the fault of Englishmen but by our own apathy". In arousing the Scots, Cunninghame Graham was never anti-English, and he appealed to their idealism rather than to material advantage.

His personal opinion of the programme which should be adopted was stated at the Wallace Commemoration at Elderslie on the 627th anniversary of Wallace's death. The first step would be to repeal the Union and make a solemn declaration of Scottish sovereignty.

¹ From "Scotland's Day", a supplement to "The Scots Independent".

² *Ibid.*

³ Pamphlet, "Self-Government for Scotland"; cf. "Notes on the District of Menteith", where he says Scots would prefer to have taxes wasted in Edinburgh rather than in London.

⁴ "The Awakening of a Nation" in "Scots Independent", October 1932.

⁵ "Scotland's Day"; Supplement to "The Scots Independent".

There should follow a General Election, members of the Scottish Parliament being elected on a basis of adult suffrage, with Peers on the same footing as others. If an Imperial Parliament were in being, Scots representatives should sit in it. Scotland would have her own Territorial Force, and ships to protect her fisheries; and her own coinage and postage stamps, with power to send ambassadors to other countries (as with Eire). She would institute her own fiscal system. There would be a Coronation in Edinburgh as well as in London; and if there were a Vice-Regency, a member of the Royal Family would take up permanent residence in Edinburgh.

After being President of the Scottish Home Rule Association, he became President of its successor, the National Party of Scotland, in 1928. He was prime mover in the fusion of the National Party with the Scottish Party in 1934, and was made Honorary President of the Scottish National Party which resulted.

I think this phase of this life can best be understood in the light of certain characteristic features.

He had a romantic love of challenge. Dr John McCormick has described the occasion of his meeting with the students who supported his candidature in the Glasgow Rectorial Election. They had no funds, and represented a forlorn hope. Having no financial means of hiring halls, they audaciously took over the platforms of their opponents. It was a situation which called out a full response of imagination and oratory from Cunninghame Graham. When the Home Rule movement went on in strength, it was still forlorn enough in its prospects and audacious enough in its method to carry his full co-operation to the end of his life.

He had a bulldog grip on injustices which required remedying. Long before the I.L.P. adopted Home Rule as part of its programme Cunninghame Graham had it in his. At times it seemed more, at times less important. But from first to last it was there as a personal conviction never to be erased.

Though I consider that Tschiffely does not have the whole story, there is some truth in his contention that Cunninghame Graham felt less enthusiasm for a movement once it was established and ready to settle into an institutional form, with all the small personal failings of people writ large in it. Scottish Nationalism had not reached this stage ere his death.

He saw no conflict between nationalism and internationalism. Supporting W. Oliver Brown's Scottish Nationalist candidature in the East Renfrew election, he stated in a speech on the day before the poll: "Personally, he was an Internationalist, but they could not have true Internationalism, unless, firstly, they had nationalism well-developed".

Of his speech at the PEN Congress in 1934, William Power wrote in his book "Should Auld Acquaintance": "The Scotland of my dreams lived in the golden moments of his brave and beautiful utterance". The genuineness of the Scottish Renaissance which derives from this time, must surely owe something to the promptings of such a cultured and realistic mind as was his. Again it was William Power who said in a funeral oration: "Scotland for him was not an old song ended, but a new song for the Lord".