

CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM'S DEATH

SOCIALIST PIONEER

Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham, the Scottish laird who became a Socialist, author and traveller, died on Saturday, in Buenos Aires (as reported in special late editions of the "Daily Herald"). He was 84.

Throughout his life his sympathies and his efforts were always with the under-dog.

He went to prison for his part, along with John Burns and others, in the historic fight for free speech in the 80's. He gave much of his time and money to help the struggling Socialist and Trade Union Movements in the early days.

Mr. Ben Tillett pays him this tribute: "Cunninghame Graham was one of those free-hearted and determined democrats who were a tower of strength to us in the dark and difficult days of the new Trade Unionism and Labour Movement."

MR. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

Mirages. By R. B. Cunninghame Graham.
(Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

This is the last book written by Mr. Cunninghame Graham, whose death at Buenos Aires, at the age of 84, is announced in another page. Had these tales been published anonymously there would have been a chorus from the critics that a new genius had arrived. For who could have written those pleasant fantasies where we read of the Three Kings dreaming in bed together with their crowns on? The music of the names of Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar is not wasted. Clearly the author is a man who knows desert travel, too, as we see in *The Mirage*. Then that light, fanciful pen switches us from Palestine to Patagonia and the Banda Oriental.

There is only one man living who could have known *Facón Grande* and *Facón Chico* and the little *Penknife*, though he omits to translate the *Gaucha's* wit. For these are fine memories of the heroic days of the steppes of South America. It is more than literature—it is history. The book is small, but as full of fire and beauty as an egg of food.

The scene is varied, but all the tales are good. *Bibi of Tangier*, who pulled the *Kaid's* beard, the drab arena of Caracas, lifted out of the sordid only by the divine courage of the boy bullfighters, these are all fine to read about; but right on top comes *Charlie the Gaucha*, the well-bred Englishman who "went native" and beat the *Gauchos* at their own game. If Mr. Cunninghame Graham had never written anything else, the knowledge, the verve, romance, and artistry of this dignified gem would have placed him promptly and firmly in the front rank of storytellers. Behind all these stories is the romantic personality of the writer himself, and his love of manipulating words:

Dry tufts of grass are by its magic, forests, waving with green leaves. It turns the colocynths that nestle lowly in the sand, veritable dead sea apples, with their striped yellow rinds, to luscious water-melons. Bones of dead animals that have died of overwork or thirst become the ruins of strange prehistoric beasts. The grey metallic lizards squatting through the sand, appear as fearsome and as large as crocodiles.

It would have helped the average reader if the memories of *Facón Grande* had been put at the beginning, not only to capture the atmosphere at the start, but because in that tale the unusual words in the vernacular are explained in the footnotes, and that would have made *Charlie* even more comprehensible.

Last of the Romantics

"REYNOLDS" CORRESPONDENT

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Mar 22/36

ONE of the few traces of romance in a drab and practical world vanishes with the death, in Buenos Aires, of Robert Bontine Cunninghame-Graham, at the age of 84.

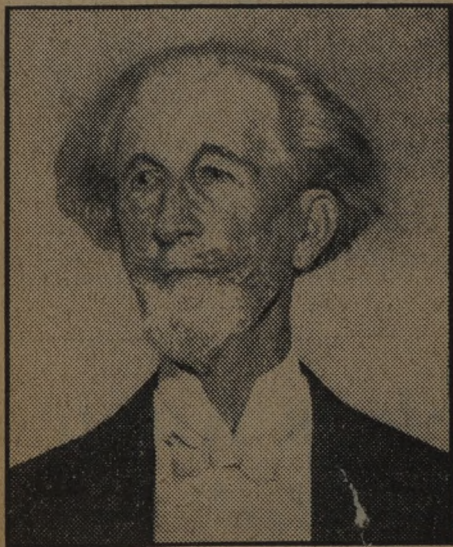
Tall, of distinguished appearance, with imperial beard and fierce moustache, he looked what he was—a temperamental crusader and knight errant.

His whole life was devoted to causes that seemed hopeless, and for them he would make any sacrifice.

Despite his "gentle" birth—his mother was a sister of the 14th Baron Elphinstone, and his father a Scots laird of ancient lineage—the first cause that aroused his enthusiasm was that of Socialism.

With John Burns he figured in the famous "Bloody Sunday" riot in Trafalgar Square in 1887, and served a short term of imprisonment for assaulting the police. As M.P. for North Lanarkshire from 1886 to 1892, he was a vigorous defender of the Socialist Movement.

As a man of letters—and he was undoubtedly one of the finest stylists of our time—Cunninghame-Graham made it his special task to interpret to



the British reader the somewhat unsympathetic personality of the Spaniard, and the South American Spaniard in particular.

Scottish Nationalism was his last crusade, but advancing years made his incursions into public life on its behalf spasmodic and not particularly effective.

"GENTLEMAN" SOCIALIST

He will be remembered as a man who retained his peculiarly romantic and adventurous view of life to the last, and as the author of some of the best stories, travel books, and biographies.

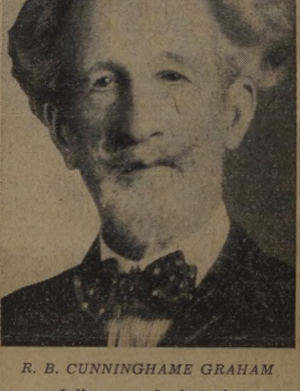
He will also be remembered for the remark made by Bernard Shaw's mother, when told who was the distinguished-looking stranger who had politely raised his hat when passing her and her son in the street: "Nonsense! Cunninghame-Graham's one of your Socialists. That man's a gentleman."

March 21/36

MR. R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, the Scottish laird who became a Socialist, a Bohemian, a great traveller and a master of the craft of writing, died early to-day at Buenos Aires.

He was 84, and since the beginning of the week had suffered from congestion of the lungs.

On Wednesday the crisis of the illness was reported to have been



R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

successfully passed, but late last night he had a relapse.

Mr. Cunninghame-Graham went to Argentina early this year and was received in audience by President Justo last week.

For two generations he had been a lively and picturesque figure.

He went to prison for his part, along with John Burns and others, in the historic fight for free speech in the '80's; he gave much of his time and money to help the struggling Socialist and Trade Union Movements of those early days; and throughout his life his sympathies and his efforts were always with the under-dog.

Robert Bontine Cunninghame-Graham was born in 1852, the elder son of a big Scottish land-owner of Ardoch and Gartmore, Dumbartonshire and a

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grandson on his mother's side of Lord Elphinstone. His early days were spent with his family in Spain where, as he himself afterwards confessed, he developed the romantic tradition, and acquired his love of adventure.

He came home to school at Harrow, however, and leaving there at the age of 17, he went ranching in Argentina, Texas and Mexico.

He spent 13 years in the rough and tumble of life in Central and South America, learnt to ride untamed horses, and had many a bout with the unruly Indians, until, succeeding at the age of 30 to estates in Scotland, he came back to put his affairs in order.

STORMY CAREER

In 1886 he was elected Liberal M.P. for North Lanark, and entered upon a stormy career at Westminster. Impatient of Party discipline, his sympathies with the workers rapidly developed, and his conviction of the futile inactivity of complacent politicians in those days caused him rapidly to become an outstanding figure in the House.

His polished oratory, with a rare combination of wit, imagery, and denunciation, startled and angered Parliament.

Despairing of arousing his fellow members to a sense of social injustice and the sufferings of the unemployed, he allied himself with the Social Democratic Federation and its leaders, like H. M. Hyndman, John Burns and H. H. Champion.

In 1877 the Home Office refused permission for an unemployed demonstration in Trafalgar-square, and Cunninghame Graham, with other leaders, determined to defy the Government in the cause of free speech.

WITHOUT MERCY

The demonstration was fixed for Sunday, November 13; processions converged on the Square, but were repulsed without mercy.

Cunninghame Graham, with Burns, made a vigorous effort to force his way through the police barrier, but they were both roughly handled and arrested, tried at the Old Bailey, and sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment.

By this time Mr. Cunninghame Graham was one of the acknowledged leaders of the workers, and in May, 1888, he helped to establish the Scottish Labour Party, of which he was elected chairman, with the late Mr. Keir Hardie as secretary.

For a great many years afterwards he remained one of the most vigorous champions of Trade Unionism and political Labour; but alongside his political work, however, he turned his attention to literature and, inspired by his early experiences, and his subsequent travels and adventures, he began to write short stories, novels and records of his experiences, in a style and with a force which soon won for him widespread recognition.

WROTE 40 NOVELS

From 1895, with his first book, which was a volume of Scottish local history, down to his 80th year, he wrote between 30 and 40 novels, sketches and chronicles of his experiences, which had large sales all over the English-speaking world, and were translated into many foreign languages.

His literary work, and his constant journeys abroad, left him little time in later years for politics, but his support of the Labour Movement and his intense deep-rooted sympathy with the workers, never faltered, and to his last days he remained their friend and champion.

In 1918 he contested unsuccessfully in the Labour interest the Stirlingshire division and when, in 1927, he was candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University Mr. Baldwin defeated him by only 66 votes.

He married, in 1879, the daughter of a Spanish grandee, who died in 1906 and was buried on the historic Isle of Rest off the Scottish coast, which has been in the possession of the Grahams for centuries. They had no family.

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