

**LORD BOWEN, A
BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH**

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Lord Bowen, a biographical sketch by Sir Henry Stewart Cunningham

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SIR HENRY STEWART CUNNINGHAM

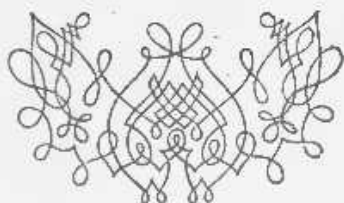
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A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

By SIR HENRY STEWART CUNNINGHAM

K.C.I.E.



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PREFACE.

I HAVE to acknowledge my obligation to several of Lord Bowen's friends who have helped me in the compilation of this sketch—notably, to the Hon. George Brodrick, Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, Lord Justice Fry, Lord Davey, Mr. Justice Mathew, Mr. Bullock Hall, the Dean of Westminster, Professor Robinson Ellis, the Rev. E. Cole, and the Rev. A. Austen Leigh, who have been good enough to furnish personal recollections or letters.

These communications, too long to be conveniently embodied in the sketch, and too valuable to be curtailed, are collected in a separate volume; but I have taken advantage

of the writer's permission to make free use of them whenever it seemed desirable for the purposes of the memoir. As I am writing for Charles Bowen's family, I have not attempted to delineate phases of domestic life with which they are far better acquainted than I, and of which they will, probably, prefer to treasure the recollection undisturbed by any record coming from without the home-circle. On the same ground, I have sometimes inserted letters which, from their familiarity, might seem scarcely fitted, as they were certainly not intended, for the eyes of any but intimate friends.

H. S. C.

November 12, 1895.

LORD BOWEN.

WHEN a friend, loved and admired, passes away from us, there is a natural desire for something which may serve to give distinctness and permanence to the impression which he made upon us in his lifetime. Such a desire is reasonable. When nothing of the sort is done, we become more than ever conscious of a loss which, in one sense, grows with the lapse of time. The definite outline becomes blurred; year by year the figure stands out in less bold and clear relief; the colours fade; recollections, however affectionately cherished, become vague, faint, and inaccurate. So the dull processes of oblivion

begin. Natural, however, as such a wish may be, its fulfilment presents grave difficulties to him who attempts it. It is no easy task to delineate or analyze the qualities which have combined to form an impressive and delightful personality. So much, in such cases, is indescribable, or describable only by reference to those inner and subtle phases of character which cannot be dragged into publicity. We know by melancholy experience how perilous is the attempt to portray, through the cold medium of written description, the influence of personal charm. The pen, however, conscientiously handled—is, as a hundred ambitious failures remind us—but a coarse and feeble instrument for the appreciation of the nameless magic, the infection of intellectual or spiritual mood, the moral magnetism, the indefinable influence on heart and nerve, which give some favoured natures so powerful a hold upon the affections of their fellow-men. The volatile essence escapes while we examine it.

The residuum is always disappointing. How vapid, trivial, and overstrained seems often the recorded eloquence which, we know, stirred great assemblies to the quick, "shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece"! How commonplace the treasured sayings of historical conversationalists! What less exhilarating than the array of witticisms with which too faithful chroniclers justify the reputation of accomplished members of Society! Whence, we wonder, came the magic which gave phrases such as these their potency over the hearts and intellects of mankind? As well ask whence comes the magic of music, or the charm of the landscape which fades from our view before we have drunk our fill of its delight.

The difficulty of adequate portraiture is enhanced in the case of men whose energies have been concentrated on an absorbing profession. Such a man's real work, the serious efforts and successes of his career, his intellectual

idiosyncrasies, his moral gifts, are known to a comparatively narrow circle of observers, who watch him from day to day at his task, and are competent to form a just estimate of his achievements. The outside world must take him largely on trust. It sees the result in his successes, his rise to eminent position, his selection for important and difficult duties, the professional ascendancy which the verdict of his contemporaries accords. But the real nature of these successes it knows only by hearsay. The distinguished judge leaves no adequate monument but his judgments; and these are accessible and intelligible to none but the few who possess the requisite knowledge, skill, and assiduity to study them understandingly. Outside his Court and the Reports in which his utterances are recorded, he is—so far as any real appreciation of his powers goes—almost unknown. If he lapses into literature, or amuses himself with Society, it is in leisure moments when his real business is, perforce, at