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Date ... 21 August 1979



GEN. SIR MARTIN HUNTER
(of Melanley)

THE JOURNAL
OF
Gen. Sir Martin Hunter

G.C.M.G., G.C.H.

And Some Letters of his Wife,
LADY HUNTER

Put together by their
Daughter, Miss A.
Hunter, and by their
— dear Friend, Miss Bell,
and caused to be printed
by their Grandson,
James Hunter

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INTRODUCTION.

MY father was the second son of Cuthbert Hunter, Esq. of Medomsley, and of Aane; daughter of the Rev. Martin Nixon, Rector of Wooler, and Vicar of Haltwhistle. He was born on the 7th of September 1757, at Medomsley.

His first school—a very primitive one—was at Allandale, on his father's estate. He always retained a very lively recollection of the little, old, pompous schoolmaster, and of the neat way he was in the habit of collecting, while teaching, the pieces of coal or cinders in the grate into a cone or pyramid. But a still more favourite recollection was a display the old man made at an examination of his pupils. A boy was asked to spell "Anchovy," which he did very correctly, pronouncing each syllable as he proceeded, "An-cho-vy," but the master promptly and sharply corrected him, calling out, "Anckovy! Anckovy! you rascal," adding, as a farther proof of his own learning, in a loud, angry voice—"an island in the West Indies." From this school my father was sent to one at Newcastle, and while there either lived or spent his holidays at the Rectory of Washington, six miles from Newcastle, where Mr Wilson, who had married his aunt, was Rector. It was at this time, though so young, that he displayed the activity and cool daring so marked in his character in after

life. On one occasion, when returning from Washington to Newcastle, he found that the bridge across the Tyne, from the flooded state of the river, had been rendered quite impassable. So great was the flood, that many people had assembled on the banks looking at the river rushing past, and watching what it was carrying away. Suddenly all were alarmed to see, according to the county of Durham mode of expression, "a little lad" struggling in the water. This was my father, who, determined to return to the Rectory, undaunted by the swollen state of the river, resolved to swim-across, as the bridge could not be made use of, and most providentially succeeded in the bold attempt.

In 1771 General Sir John Clavering, afterwards Governor-General of India, gave him his ensigncy in the 52nd Light Infantry. Sir John was an old and intimate friend of his father, and also a very near neighbour, Greencroft, one of his residences, being only a short distance from Medomsley. Sir John Clavering, thinking he could better regulate my father's education now he was to enter the Army, proposed that he should join his family in Hampshire, and go with his sons to a school at Bishops-Waltham. This being agreed to, the young ensign made his first journey under the motherly care of Sir John's fat housekeeper, who, with the other servants, were to travel to Hampshire in a large family coach, drawn by four long-tailed black horses. By Sir John my

father was treated as a son, and the friendships he then contracted with this family lasted without interruption to the end of his life. I have already mentioned that Miss Clavering, afterwards Lady Warren, made the first knots for his gorget, and we as children were amused to hear Mrs Charles Clavering, Lady Napier, and other members of the family calling my father "Martin," and he giving them their Christian names. Sir John was so great a martinet that his sons and my father quite dreaded the holidays, for then they had masters for French, drawing, etc.—in short, for everything they had not time for at school. Sir John himself superintended the lessons, besides keeping up, at all times, a strict military discipline among them. Sir John felt more called upon to watch over his children from having unfortunately lost his wife Lady Diana, six years before. She was a daughter of the Earl of de la War. Except for the charming rides with the Miss Claverings, my father would have much preferred being at Bishops-Waltham.

In 1773 he joined the 52nd Regiment at Quebec, and went out under the charge of Major Williamson. He was little of his age, and when he first put on his regimentals, had great difficulty in avoiding being tripped up by his sword, and was much annoyed by the notice he attracted in the streets, the people and children following him and calling out, "Voila le petit officier!"

That he might acquire greater proficiency in French, he was boarded with a French priest at St Annes, and while there, having no notion of the intensity of the cold, he laughed at the idea of being unable to carry the church plate in his naked hands from the priest's house to the church, as the distance was very short. It was betted he could not. He however, sure of gaining the wager, set out, but had scarcely got half-way when the pain became intolerable, and, as his fingers seemed actually getting frozen to the plate, he was obliged to throw it down. About this time, meeting with a party of Indians who were going a-beaver-hunting, the charms of the sport, as they pictured it, proved quite irresistible to the young ensign. He agreed to join them, and accordingly left St Annes—of course, without the priest's permission. His courage, sporting tastes, and activity so delighted the Indian chief, that he offered him his only daughter as wife, promising that after his death he should succeed to the chieftainship.

Unfortunately the first sixteen pages of my father's journal are lost. I never read them, so cannot even attempt to recall their contents, which I have been told were very amusing. I have therefore only been able, though very imperfectly, to supply the loss by a few of my own recollections of what was told me by my father.

ANNE HUNTER.