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FALKLAND

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

"FALKLAND" is the earliest of Lord Lytton's prose fictions. Published before "Pelham," it was written in the boyhood of its illustrious author. In the maturity of his manhood and the fulness of his literary popularity he withdrew it from print. This is one of the first English editions of his collected works in which the tale reappears. It is because the morality of it was condemned by his experienced judgment, that the author of "Falkland" deliberately omitted it from each of the numerous reprints of his novels and romances which were published in England during his lifetime.

With the consent of the author's son, "Falkland" is included in the present edition of his collected works.

In the first place, this work has been for many years, and still is, accessible to English readers in every country except England. The continental edition of it, published by Baron Tauchnitz, has a wide circulation; and since for this reason the book cannot practically be withheld from the public, it is thought desirable that the publication of it should at least be accompanied by some record of the abovementioned fact.

In the next place, the considerations which would naturally guide an author of established reputation in the selection of early compositions for subsequent republication, are obviously inapplicable to the preparation of a posthumous standard edition of his collected works. Those who read the tale of "Falkland" eight-and-forty years ago' have long survived the age when character is influenced by the literature of sentiment. The readers to whom it is now presented are not Lord Lytton's contemporaries; they are his posterity. To them his works have already become classical. It is only upon the minds of the

young that the works of sentiment have any appreciable moral influence. But the sentiment of each age is peculiar to itself; and the purely moral influence of sentimental fiction seldom survives the age to which it was first addressed. The youngest and most impressionable reader of such works as the "Nouvelle Héloïse," "Werther," "The Robbers," "Corinne," or "Rene," is not now likely to be morally influenced, for good or ill, by the perusal of those masterpieces of genius. Had Byron attained the age at which great authors most realise the responsibilities of fame and genius, he might possibly have regretted, and endeavoured to suppress, the publication of "Don Juan;" but the possession of that immortal poem is an unmixed benefit to posterity, and the loss of it would have been an irreparable misfortune.

"Falkland," although the earliest, is one of the most carefully finished of its author's compositions. All that was once turbid, heating, unwholesome in the current of sentiment which flows through this history of a guilty passion, "Death's immortalising winter" has chilled and purified. The book is now a harmless, and, it may be hoped, a not uninteresting, evidence of the precocity of its author's genius. As such, it is here reprinted.

[It was published in 1827]

FALKLAND.

BOOK I.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON. FREDERICK MONKTON.

L—, May —, 1822.

You are mistaken, my dear Monkton! Your description of the gaiety of "the season" gives me no emotion. You speak of pleasure; I remember no labour so wearisome; you enlarge upon its changes; no sameness appears to me so monotonous. Keep, then, your pity for those who require it. From the height of my philosophy I compassionate you. No one is so vain as a recluse; and your jests at my hermitship and hermitage cannot penetrate the folds of a self-conceit, which does not envy you in your suppers at D—— House, nor even in your waltzes with Eleanor.

It is a ruin rather than a house which I inhabit. I have not been at L—— since my return from abroad, and during those years the place has gone rapidly to decay; perhaps, for that reason, it suits me better, *tel maitre telle maison*.

Of all my possessions this is the least valuable in itself, and derives the least interest from the associations of childhood, for it was not at L—— that any part of that period was spent. I have, however, chosen it from my present retreat, because here only I am personally unknown, and therefore little likely to be disturbed. I do not, indeed, wish for the interruptions designed as civilities; I rather gather around myself, link after link, the chains that connected me with the world; I find among my own thoughts that variety and occupation which you only experience in your intercourse with others; and I make, like the Chinese, my map of the universe consist of a circle in a square—the circle is my own empire and of thought and self; and it is to the scanty corners which it leaves without, that I banish whatever belongs to the remainder of mankind.

About a mile from L—— is Mr. Mandeville's beautiful villa of E——, in the midst of grounds which form a delightful contrast to the savage and wild scenery by which they are surrounded. As the house is at present quite deserted, I have obtained, through the gardener, a free admittance into his domains, and I pass there whole hours, indulging, like the hero of the *Lutrin*, "*une sainte oisiveté*," listening to a little noisy brook, and letting my thoughts be almost as vague and idle as the birds which wander among the trees that surround me. I could wish, indeed, that this simile were in all things correct—that those thoughts, if as free, were also as happy as the objects of my comparison, and could, like them, after the roving of the day, turn at evening to a resting-place, and be still. We are the dupes and the victims of our senses: while we use them to gather from external things the hoards that we store within, we cannot foresee the punishments we prepare for ourselves; the remembrance which stings, and the hope which deceives, the passions which promise us rapture, which reward us with despair, and the thoughts which, if they constitute the healthful action, make also the feverish excitement of our minds. What sick man has not dreamt in his delirium everything that our philosophers have said?* But I am growing into my old habit of gloomy reflection, and it is time that I should conclude. I meant to have written you a letter as light as your own; if I have failed, it is no wonder.—"Notre coeur est un

instrument incomplet—une lyre ou il manque des cordes, et ou nous sommes forces de rendre les accens de la joie, sur le ton consacre aux soupirs."

* Quid aegrotus unquam somniavit quod philosophorum aliquis non dixerit?—
LACTANTIUS.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

You ask me to give you some sketch of my life, and of that *bel mondo* which wearied me so soon. Men seldom reject an opportunity to talk of themselves; and I am not unwilling to re-examine the past, to re-connect it with the present, and to gather from a consideration of each what hopes and expectations are still left to me for the future.

But my detail must be rather of thought than of action; most of those whose fate has been connected with mine are now living, and I would not, even to you, break that tacit confidence which much of my history would require. After all, you will have no loss. The actions of another may interest—but, for the most part, it is only his reflections which come home to us; for few have acted, nearly all of us have thought.

My own vanity too would be unwilling to enter upon incidents which had their origin either in folly or in error. It is true that those follies and errors have ceased, but their effects remain. With years our faults diminish, but our vices increase.

You know that my mother was Spanish, and that my father was one of that old race of which so few scions remain, who, living in a distant country, have been little influenced by the changes of fashion, and, priding themselves on the antiquity of their names, have looked with contempt upon the modern distinctions and the mushroom nobles which have sprung up to discountenance and eclipse the plainness of more venerable and solid respectability. In his youth my father had served in the army. He had known much of men and more of books; but his knowledge, instead of rooting out, had rather been engrafted on his prejudices. He was one of that class (and I say it with a private reverence, though a public regret), who, with the best intentions, have made the worst citizens, and who think it a duty to perpetuate whatever is pernicious by having learnt to consider it as sacred. He was a great country gentleman, a great sportsman, and a great Tory; perhaps the three worst enemies which a country can have. Though beneficent to the poor, he gave but a cold reception to the rich; for he was too refined to associate with his inferiors, and too proud to like the competition of his equals. One ball and two dinners a-year constituted all the aristocratic portion of our hospitality, and at the age of twelve, the noblest and youngest companions that I possessed were a large Danish dog and a wild mountain pony, as unbroken and as lawless as myself. It is only in later years that we can perceive the immeasurable importance of the early scenes and circumstances which surrounded us. It was in the loneliness of my unchecked wanderings that my early affection for my own thoughts was conceived. In the seclusion of nature—in whatever court she presided—the education of my mind was begun; and, even at that early age, I rejoiced (like the wild heart the Grecian poet [Eurip. *Bambae*, 1. 874.] has described) in the stillness of the great woods, and the solitudes unbroken by human footstep.

The first change in my life was under melancholy auspices; my father fell suddenly ill, and died; and my mother, whose very existence seemed only held in his presence, followed him in three months. I remember that, a few hours before her death, she called me to her: she reminded me that, through her, I was of Spanish extraction; that in her country, I received my birth, and that, not the less for its degradation and distress, I might hereafter find in the relations which I held to it a remembrance to value, or even a duty to fulfil. On her tenderness to me at that hour, on the impression it made upon my mind, and on the keen and enduring sorrow which I felt for months after her death, it would be useless to dwell.

My uncle became my guardian. He is, you know, a member of parliament of some reputation; very sensible and very dull; very much respected by men, very much disliked by women; and inspiring all children, of either sex, with the same unmitigated aversion which he feels for them himself.

I did not remain long under his immediate care. I was soon sent to school—that preparatory world, where the great primal principles of human nature, in the aggression of the strong and the meanness of the weak, constitute the earliest lesson of importance that we are taught; and where the forced *primitiae* of that less universal knowledge which is useless to the many who in after life, neglect, and bitter to the few who improve it, are the first motives for which our minds are to be broken to terror, and our hearts initiated into tears.

Bold and resolute by temper, I soon carved myself a sort of career among my associates. A hatred to

all oppression, and a haughty and unyielding character, made me at once the fear and aversion of the greater powers and principalities of the school; while my agility at all boyish games, and my ready assistance or protection to every one who required it, made me proportionally popular with, and courted by, the humbler multitude of the subordinate classes. I was constantly surrounded by the most lawless and mischievous followers whom the school could afford; all eager for my commands, and all pledged to their execution.

In good truth, I was a worthy Rowland of such a gang; though I excelled in, I cared little for the ordinary amusements of the school: I was fonder of engaging in marauding expeditions contrary to our legislative restrictions, and I valued myself equally upon my boldness in planning our exploits, and my dexterity in eluding their discovery. But exactly in proportion as our school terms connected me with those of my own years, did our vacations unfit me for any intimate companionship but that which I already began to discover in myself.

Twice in the year, when I went home, it was to that wild and romantic part of the country where my former childhood had been spent. There, alone and unchecked, I was thrown utterly upon my own resources. I wandered by day over the rude scenes which surrounded us; and at evening I pored, with an unwearied delight, over the ancient legends which made those scenes sacred to my imagination. I grew by degrees of a more thoughtful and visionary nature. My temper imbibed the romance of my studies; and whether, in winter, basking by the large hearth of our old hall, or stretched, in the indolent voluptuousness of summer, by the rushing streams which formed the chief characteristic of the country around us, my hours were equally wasted in those dim and luxurious dreams, which constituted, perhaps, the essence of that poetry I had not the genius to embody. It was then, by that alternate restlessness of action and idleness of reflection, into which my young years were divided, that the impress of my character was stamped: that fitfulness of temper, that affection for extremes, has accompanied me through life. Hence, not only all intermediums of emotion appear to me as tame, but even the most overwrought excitation can bring neither novelty nor zest. I have, as it were, feasted upon the passions; I have made that my daily food, which, in its strength and excess, would have been poison to others; I have rendered my mind unable to enjoy the ordinary aliments of nature; and I have wasted, by a premature indulgence, my resources and my powers, till I have left my heart, without a remedy or a hope, to whatever disorders its own intemperance has engendered.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

When I left Dr. ——'s, I was sent to a private tutor in D——e. Here I continued for about two years. It was during that time that—but what then befell me is for no living ear! The characters of that history are engraven on my heart in letters of fire; but it is a language that none but myself have the authority to read. It is enough for the purpose of my confessions that the events of that period were connected with the first awakening of the most powerful of human passions, and that, whatever their commencement, their end was despair! and she—the object of that love—the only being in the world who ever possessed the secret and the spell of my nature—her life was the bitterness and the fever of a troubled heart,—her rest is the grave

*Non la conobbe il mondo mentre l'ebbe
Con ibill'io, ch'a pianger qui rimasi.*

That attachment was not so much a single event, as the first link in a long chain which was coiled around my heart. It were a tedious and bitter history, even were it permitted, to tell you of all the sins and misfortunes to which in afterlife that passion was connected. I will only speak of the more hidden but general effect it had upon my mind; though, indeed, naturally inclined to a morbid and melancholy philosophy, it is more than probable, but for that occurrence, that it would never have found matter for excitement. Thrown early among mankind, I should early have imbibed their feelings, and grown like them by the influence of custom. I should not have carried within the one unceasing remembrance, which was to teach me, like Faustus, to find nothing in knowledge but its inutility, or in hope but its deceit; and to bear like him, through the blessings of youth and the allurements of pleasure, the curse and the presence of a fiend.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

It was after the first violent grief produced by that train of circumstances to which I must necessarily so darkly allude, that I began to apply with earnestness to books. Night and day I devoted myself unceasingly to study, and from this fit I was only recovered by the long and dangerous illness it produced. Alas! there is no fool like him who wishes for knowledge! It is only through woe that we are

taught to reflect, and we gather the honey of worldly wisdom, not from flowers, but thorns.

"Une grande passion malheureuse est un grand moyen de sagesse." From the moment in which the buoyancy of my spirit was first broken by real anguish, the losses of the heart were repaired by the experience of the mind. I passed at once, like Melmoth, from youth to age. What were any longer to me the ordinary avocations of my contemporaries? I had exhausted years in moments—I had wasted, like the Eastern Queen, my richest jewel in a draught. I ceased to hope, to feel, to act, to burn; such are the impulses of the young! I learned to doubt, to reason, to analyse: such are the habits of the old! From that time, if I have not avoided the pleasures of life, I have not enjoyed them. Women, wine, the society of the gay, the commune of the wise, the lonely pursuit of knowledge, the daring visions of ambition, all have occupied me in turn, and all alike have deceived me; but, like the Widow in the story of Voltaire, I have built at last a temple to "Time, the Comforter:" I have grown calm and unrepining with years; and, if I am now shrinking from men, I have derived at least this advantage from the loneliness first made habitual by regret; that while I feel increased benevolence to others, I have learned to look for happiness only in myself.

They alone are independent of Fortune who have made themselves a separate existence from the world.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I went to the University with a great fund of general reading, and habits of constant application. My uncle, who, having no children of his own, began to be ambitious for me, formed great expectations of my career at Oxford. I staid there three years, and did nothing! I did not gain a single prize, nor did I attempt anything above the ordinary degree. The fact is, that nothing seemed to me worth the labour of success. I conversed with those who had obtained the highest academical reputation, and I smiled with a consciousness of superiority at the boundlessness of their vanity, and the narrowness of their views. The limits of the distinction they had gained seemed to them as wide as the most extended renown; and the little knowledge their youth had acquired only appeared to them an excuse for the ignorance and the indolence of maturer years. Was it to equal these that I was to labour? I felt that I already surpassed them! Was it to gain their good opinion, or, still worse, that of their admirers? Alas! I had too long learned to live for myself to find any happiness in the respect of the idlers I despised.

I left Oxford at the age of twenty-one. I succeeded to the large estates of my inheritance, and for the first time I felt the vanity so natural to youth when I went up to London to enjoy the resources of the Capital, and to display the powers I possessed to revel in whatever those resources could yield. I found society like the Jewish temple: any one is admitted into its threshold; none but the chiefs of the institution into its recesses.

Young, rich, of an ancient and honourable name, pursuing pleasure rather as a necessary excitement than an occasional occupation, and agreeable to the associates I drew around me because my profusion contributed to their enjoyment, and my temper to their amusement—I found myself courted by many, and avoided by none. I soon discovered that all civility is but the mask of design. I smiled at the kindness of the fathers who, hearing that I was talented, and knowing that I was rich, looked to my support in whatever political side they had espoused. I saw in the notes of the mothers their anxiety for the establishment of their daughters, and their respect for my acres; and in the cordiality of the sons who had horses to sell and rouge-et-noir debts to pay, I detected all that veneration for my money which implied such contempt for its possessor. By nature observant, and by misfortune sarcastic, I looked upon the various colourings of society with a searching and philosophic eye: I unravelled the intricacies which knit servility with arrogance and meanness with ostentation; and I traced to its sources that universal vulgarity of inward sentiment and external manner, which, in all classes, appears to me to constitute the only unvarying characteristic of our countrymen. In proportion as I increased my knowledge of others, I shrunk with a deeper disappointment and dejection into my own resources. The first moment of real happiness which I experienced for a whole year was when I found myself about to seek, beneath the influence of other skies, that more extended acquaintance with my species which might either draw me to them with a closer connection, or at last reconcile me to the ties which already existed.

I will not dwell upon my adventures abroad: there is little to interest others in a recital which awakens no interest in one's self. I sought for wisdom, and I acquired but knowledge. I thirsted for the truth, the tenderness of love, and I found but its fever and its falsehood. Like the two Florimels of Spenser, I mistook, in my delirium, the delusive fabrication of the senses for the divine reality of the heart; and I only awoke from my deceit when the phantom I had worshipped melted into snow. Whatever I pursued partook of the energy, yet fitfulness of my nature; mingling to-day in the tumults of

the city, and to-morrow alone with my own heart in the solitude of unpeopled nature; now revelling in the wildest excesses, and now tracing, with a painful and unwearied search, the intricacies of science; alternately governing others, and subdued by the tyranny which my own passions imposed—I passed through the ordeal unshrinking yet unscathed. "The education of life," says De Stael, "perfects the thinking mind, but depraves the frivolous." I do not inquire, Monkton, to which of these classes I belong; but I feel too well, that though my mind has not been depraved, it has found no perfection but in misfortune; and that whatever be the acquirements of later years, they have nothing which can compensate for the losses of our youth.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I returned to England. I entered again upon the theatre of its world; but I mixed now more in its greater than its lesser pursuits. I looked rather at the mass than the leaven of mankind; and while I felt aversion for the few whom I knew, I glowed with philanthropy for the crowd which I knew not.

It is in contemplating men at a distance that we become benevolent. When we mix with them, we suffer by the contact, and grow, if not malicious from the injury, at least selfish from the circumspection which our safety imposes but when, while we feel our relationship, we are not galled by the tie; when neither jealousy, nor envy, nor resentment are excited, we have nothing to interfere with those more complacent and kindest sentiments which our earliest impressions have rendered natural to our hearts. We may fly men in hatred because they have galled us, but the feeling ceases with the cause: none will willingly feed long upon bitter thoughts. It is thus that, while in the narrow circle in which we move we suffer daily from those who approach us, we can, in spite of our resentment to them, glow with a general benevolence to the wider relations from which we are remote; that while smarting beneath the treachery of friendship, the stinging of ingratitude, the faithfulness of love, we would almost sacrifice our lives to realise some idolised theory of legislation; and that, distrustful, calculating, selfish in private, there are thousands who would, with a credulous fanaticism, fling themselves as victims before that unrecompensing Moloch which they term the Public.

Living, then, much by myself, but reflecting much upon the world, I learned to love mankind. Philanthropy brought ambition; for I was ambitious, not for my own aggrandisement, but for the service of others—for the poor—the toiling—the degraded; these constituted that part of my fellow-beings which I the most loved, for these were bound to me by the most engaging of all human ties—misfortune! I began to enter into the intrigues of the state; I extended my observation and inquiry from individuals to nations; I examined into the mysteries of the science which has arisen in these later days to give the lie to the wisdom of the past, to reduce into the simplicity of problems the intricacies of political knowledge, to teach us the fallacy of the system which had governed by restriction, and imagined that the happiness of nations depended upon the perpetual interference of its rulers, and to prove to us that the only unerring policy of art is to leave a free and unobstructed progress to the hidden energies and province of Nature. But it was not only the theoretical investigation of the state which employed me. I mixed, though in secret, with the agents of its springs. While I seemed only intent upon pleasure, I locked in my heart the consciousness and vanity of power. In the levity of the lip I disguised the workings and the knowledge of the brain; and I looked, as with a gifted eye, upon the mysteries of the hidden depths, while I seemed to float an idler, with the herd, only on the surface of the stream.

Why was I disgusted, when I had but to put forth my hand and grasp whatever object my ambition might desire? Alas! there was in my heart always something too soft for the aims and cravings of my mind. I felt that I was wasting the young years of my life in a barren and wearisome pursuit. What to me, who had outlived vanity, would have been the admiration of the crowd! I sighed for the sympathy of the one! and I shrunk in sadness from the prospect of renown to ask my heart for the reality of love! For what purpose, too, had I devoted myself to the service of men? As I grew more sensible of the labour of pursuing, I saw more of the inutility of accomplishing, individual measures. There is one great and moving order of events which we may retard, but we cannot arrest, and to which, if we endeavour to hasten them, we only give a dangerous and unnatural impetus. Often, when in the fever of the midnight, I have paused from my unshared and unsoftened studies, to listen to the deadly pulsation of my heart,—[Falkland suffered much, from very early youth, from a complaint in his heart]—when I have felt in its painful and tumultuous beating the very life waning and wasting within me, I have sickened to my inmost soul to remember that, amongst all those whom I was exhausting the health and enjoyment of youth to benefit, there was not one for whom my life had an interest, or by whom my death would be honoured by a tear. There is a beautiful passage in Chalmers on the want of sympathy we experience in the world. From my earliest childhood I had one deep, engrossing, yearning desire,—and that was to love and to be loved. I found, too young, the realisation of that dream—it passed! and I have never known it again. The experience of long and bitter years teaches me to look with suspicion on that far

recollection of the past, and to doubt if this earth could indeed produce a living form to satisfy the visions of one who has dwelt among the boyish creations of fancy—who has shaped out in his heart an imaginary idol, arrayed it in whatever is most beautiful in nature, and breathed into the image the pure but burning spirit of that innate love from which it sprung! It is true that my manhood has been the undeceiver of my youth, and that the meditation upon the facts has disenthralled me from the visionary broodings over fiction; but what remuneration have I found in reality? If the line of the satirist be not true, "Souvent de tous nos maux la raison est le pire," [Boileau]—at least, like the madman of whom he speaks, I owe but little gratitude to the act which, "in drawing me from my error, has robbed me also of a paradise."

I am approaching the conclusion of my confessions. Men who have no ties in the world, and who have been accustomed to solitude, find, with every disappointment in the former, a greater yearning for the enjoyments which the latter can afford. Day by day I relapsed more into myself; "man delighted me not, nor women either." In my ambition, it was not in the means, but the end, that I was disappointed. In my friends, I complained not of treachery, but insipidity; and it was not because I was deserted, but wearied by more tender connections, that I ceased to find either excitement in seeking, or triumph in obtaining, their love. It was not, then, in a momentary disgust, but rather in the calm of satiety, that I formed that resolution of retirement which I have adopted now.

Shrinking from my kind, but too young to live wholly for myself, I have made a new tie with nature; I have come to cement it here. I am like a bird which has wandered, afar, but has returned home to its nest at last. But there is one feeling which had its origin in the world, and which accompanies me still; which consecrates my recollections of the past; which contributes to take its gloom from the solitude of the present:—Do you ask me its nature, Monkton? It is my friendship for you.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I wish that I could convey to you, dear Monkton, the faintest idea of the pleasures of indolence. You belong to that class which is of all the most busy, though the least active. Men of pleasure never have time for anything. No lawyer, no statesman, no bustling, hurrying, restless underling of the counter or the Exchange, is so eternally occupied as a lounge "about town." He is linked to labour by a series of undefinable nothings. His independence and idleness only serve to fetter and engross him, and his leisure seems held upon the condition of never having a moment to himself. Would that you could see me at this instant in the luxury of my summer retreat, surrounded by the trees, the waters, the wild birds, and the hum, the glow, the exultation which teem visibly and audibly through creation in the noon of a summer's day! I am undisturbed by a single intruder. I am unoccupied by a single pursuit. I suffer one moment to glide into another, without the remembrance that the next must be filled up by some laborious pleasure, or some wearisome enjoyment. It is here that I feel all the powers, and gather together all the resources, of my mind. I recall my recollections of men; and, unbiassed by the passions and prejudices which we do not experience alone, because their very existence depends upon others, I endeavour to perfect my knowledge of the human heart. He who would acquire that better science must arrange and analyse in private the experience he has collected in the crowd. Alas, Monkton, when you have expressed surprise at the gloom which is so habitual to my temper, did it never occur to you that my acquaintance—with the world would alone be sufficient to account for it?—that knowledge is neither for the good nor the happy. Who can touch pitch, and not be defiled? Who can look upon the workings of grief and rejoice, or associate with guilt and be pure? It has been by mingling with men, not only in their haunts but their emotions, that I have learned to know them. I have descended into the receptacles of vice; I have taken lessons from the brothel and the hell; I have watched feeling in its unguarded sallies, and drawn from the impulse of the moment conclusions which gave the lie to the previous conduct of years. But all knowledge brings us disappointment, and this knowledge the most—the satiety of good, the suspicion of evil, the decay of our young dreams, the premature iciness of age, the reckless, aimless, joyless indifference which follows an overwrought and feverish excitation—These constitute the lot of men who have renounced *hope* in the acquisition of *thought*, and who, in learning the motives of human actions, learn only to despise the persons and the things which enchanted them like divinities before.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I told you, dear Monkton, in my first letter, of my favorite retreat in Mr. Mandeville's grounds. I have grown so attached to it, that I spend the greater part of the day there.

I am not one of those persons who always perambulate with a book in their hands, as if neither

nature nor their own reflections could afford them any rational amusement. I go there more frequently *en paresseux* than *en savant*: a small brooklet which runs through the grounds broadens at last into a deep, clear, transparent lake. Here fir and elm and oak fling their branches over the margin and beneath their shade I pass all the hours of noon-day in the luxuries of a dreamer's reverie. It is true, however, that I am never less idle than when I appear the most so. I am like Prospero in his desert island, and surround myself with spirits. A spell trembles upon the leaves; every wave comes fraught to me with its peculiar music: and an Ariel seems to whisper the secrets of every breeze, which comes to my forehead laden with the perfumes of the West. But do not think, Mouton, that it is only good spirits which haunt the recesses of my solitude. To push the metaphor to exaggeration—Memory is my Sycorax, and Gloom is the Caliban she conceives. But let me digress from myself to my less idle occupations;— I have of late diverted my thoughts in some measure by a recurrence to a study to which I once was particularly devoted—history. Have you ever remarked, that people who live the most by themselves reflect the most upon others; and that he who lives surrounded by the million never thinks of any but the one individual—himself?

Philosophers—moralists-historians, whose thoughts, labours, lives, have been devoted to the consideration of mankind, or the analysis of public events, have usually been remarkably attached to solitude and seclusion. We are indeed so linked to our fellow-beings, that, where we are not chained to them by action, we are carried to and connected with them by thought.

I have just quitted the observations of my favourite Bolingbroke upon history. I cannot agree with him as to its utility. The more I consider, the more I am convinced that its study has been upon the whole pernicious to mankind. It is by those details, which are always as unfair in their inference as they must evidently be doubtful in their facts, that party animosity and general prejudice are supported and sustained. There is not one abuse—one intolerance—one remnant of ancient barbarity and ignorance existing at the present day, which is not advocated, and actually confirmed, by some vague deduction from the bigotry of an illiterate chronicler, or the obscurity of an uncertain legend. It is through the constant appeal to our ancestors that we transmit wretchedness and wrong to our posterity: we should require, to corroborate an evil originating in the present day, the clearest and most satisfactory proof; but the minutest defence is sufficient for an evil handed down to us by the barbarism of antiquity. We reason from what even in old tunes was dubious, as if we were adducing what was certain in those in which we live. And thus we have made no sanction to abuses so powerful as history, and no enemy to the present like the past.

FROM THE LADY EMILY MANDEVILLE TO MRS. ST. JOHN.

At last, my dear Julia, I am settled in my beautiful retreat. Mrs. Dalton and Lady Margaret Leslie are all whom I could prevail upon to accompany me. Mr. Mandeville is full of the corn-laws. He is chosen chairman to a select committee in the House. He is murmuring agricultural distresses in his sleep; and when I asked him occasionally to come down here to see me, he started from a reverie, and exclaimed — "—Never, Mr. Speaker, as a landed proprietor; never will I consent to my own ruin."

My boy, my own, my beautiful companion, is with me. I wish you could see how fast he can run, and how sensibly he can talk. "What a fine figure he has for his age!" said I to Mr. Mandeville the other day. "Figure! age!" said his father; "in the House of Commons he shall make a figure to every age." I know that in writing to you, you will not be contented if I do not say a great deal about myself. I shall therefore proceed to tell you, that I feel already much better from the air and exercise! the journey, from the conversation of my two guests, and, above all, from the constant society of my dear boy. He was three last birthday. I think that at the age of twenty-one, I am the least childish of the two. Pray remember me to all in town who have not quite forgotten me. Beg Lady ——— to send Elizabeth a subscription ticket for Almack's, and—oh, talking of Almack's, I think my boy's eyes are even more blue and beautiful than Lady C——'s.

Adieu, my dear Julia, Ever, &c. E. M.

Lady Emily Mandeville was the daughter of the Duke of Lindvale. She married, at the age of sixteen, a man of large fortune, and some parliamentary reputation. Neither in person nor in character was he much beneath or above the ordinary standard of men. He was one of Nature's Macadamised achievements. His great fault was his equality; and you longed for a hill though it were to climb, or a stone though it were in your way. Love attaches itself to something prominent, even if that something be what others would hate. One can scarce feel extremes for mediocrity. The few years Lady Emily had been married had but little altered her character. Quick in feeling, though regulated in temper; gay less from levity, than from that first *spring-tide* of a heart which has never yet known occasion to be sad; beautiful and pure, as an enthusiast's dream of heaven, yet bearing within the latent and powerful passion and tenderness of earth: she mixed with all a simplicity and innocence which the extreme earliness of her marriage, and the ascetic temper of her husband, had tendered less to diminish than increase. She had much of what is termed genius—its warmth of emotion—its vividness of conception—its admiration for the grand—its affection for the good, and that dangerous contempt for whatever is mean and worthless, the very indulgence of which is an offence against the habits of the world. Her tastes were, however, too feminine and chaste ever to render her eccentric: they were rather calculated to conceal than to publish the deeper recesses of her nature; and it was beneath that polished surface of manner common to those with whom she mixed, that she hid the treasures of a mine which no human eye had beheld.

Her health, naturally delicate, had lately suffered much from the dissipation of London, and it was by the advice of physicians that she had now come to spend the summer at E——. Lady Margaret Leslie, who was old enough to be tired with the caprices of society, and Mrs. Dalton, who, having just lost her husband, was forbidden at present to partake of its amusements, had agreed to accompany her to her retreat. Neither of them was perhaps much suited to Emily's temper, but youth and spirits make almost any one congenial to us: it is from the years which confirm our habits, and the reflections which refine our taste, that it becomes easy to revolt us, and difficult to please.

On the third day after Emily's arrival at E——, she was sitting after breakfast with Lady Margaret and Mrs. Dalton. "Pray," said the former, "did you ever meet my relation, Mr. Falkland? he is in your immediate neighbourhood." "Never; though I have a great curiosity: that fine old ruin beyond the village belongs to him, I believe." "It does. You ought to know him: you would like him so!" "Like him!" repeated Mrs. Dalton, who was one of those persons of ton who, though everything collectively, are nothing individually: "like him? impossible!" "Why?" said Lady Margaret, indignantly—"he has every requisite to please—youth, talent, fascination of manner, and great knowledge of the world." "Well," said Mrs. Dalton, "I cannot say I discovered his perfections. He seemed to me conceited and satirical, and—and—in short, very disagreeable; but then, to be sure, I have only seen him once." "I have heard many accounts of him," said Emily, "all differing from each other: I think, however, that the generality of people rather incline to Mrs. Dalton's opinion than to yours, Lady Margaret." "I can easily believe it. It is very seldom that he takes the trouble to please; but when he does, he is irresistible. Very little, however, is generally known respecting him. Since he came of age, he has been much abroad; and when in England, he never entered with eagerness into society. He is supposed to possess very extraordinary powers, which, added to his large fortune and ancient name, have procured him a consideration and rank rarely enjoyed by one so young. He had refused repeated offers to enter into public life; but he is very intimate with one of the ministers, who, it is said, has had the address to profit much by his abilities. All other particulars concerning him are extremely uncertain. Of his person and manners you had better judge yourself; for I am sure, Emily, that my petition for inviting him here is already granted." "By all means," said Emily: "you cannot be more anxious to see him than I am." And so the conversation dropped. Lady Margaret went to the library; Mrs. Dalton seated herself on the ottoman, dividing her attention between the last novel and her Italian greyhound; and Emily left the room in order to revisit her former and favourite haunts. Her young son was her companion, and she was not sorry that he was her only one. To be the instructress of an infant, a mother should be its playmate; and Emily was, perhaps, wiser than she imagined, when she ran with a laughing eye and a light foot over the grass, occupying herself almost with the same earnestness as her child in the same infantine amusements. As they passed the wood which led to the lake at the bottom of the grounds, the boy, who was before Emily, suddenly stopped. She came hastily up to him; and scarcely two paces before, though half hid by the steep bank of the lake beneath which he reclined, she saw a man apparently asleep. A volume of; Shakespeare lay beside him: the child had seized it. As she took it from him in order to replace it, her eyes rested upon the passage the boy had accidentally opened. How often in after days was that passage recalled as an omen! It was the following:

Ah me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history
The course of true love never did run smooth!
Midsummer Night's Dream.

As she laid the book gently down she caught a glimpse of the countenance of the sleeper: never did she forget the expression which it wore, —stern, proud, mournful even in repose!

She did not wait for him to wake. She hurried home through the trees. All that day she was silent and abstracted; the face haunted her like a dream. Strange as it may seem, she spoke neither to Lady Margaret nor to Mrs. Dalton of her adventure. Why? Is there in our hearts any prescience of their misfortunes?

On the next day, Falkland, who had received and accepted Lady Margaret's invitation, was expected to dinner. Emily felt a strong yet excusable curiosity to see one of whom she had heard so many and such contradictory reports. She was alone in the saloon when he entered. At the first glance she recognised the person she had met by the lake on the day before, and she blushed deeply as she replied to his salutation. To her great relief Lady Margaret and Mrs. Dalton entered in a few minutes, and the conversation grew general.

Falkland had but little of what is called animation in manner; but his wit, though it rarely led to mirth, was sarcastic, yet refined, and the vividness of his imagination threw a brilliancy and originality over remarks which in others might have been commonplace and tame.

The conversation turned chiefly upon society; and though Lady Margaret had told her he had entered but little into its ordinary routine, Emily was struck alike by his accurate acquaintance with men, and the justice of his reflections upon manners. There also mingled with his satire an occasional melancholy of feeling, which appeared to Emily the more touching because it was always unexpected and unassumed. It was after one of these remarks, that for the first time she ventured to examine into the charm and peculiarity of the countenance of the speaker. There was spread over it that expression of mingled energy and languor, which betokens that much, whether of thought, sorrow, passion, or action, has been undergone, but resisted: has wearied, but not subdued. In the broad and noble brow, in the chiselled lip, and the melancholy depths of the calm and thoughtful eye, there sat a resolution and a power, which, though mournful, were not without their pride; which, if they had borne the worst, had also defied it. Notwithstanding his mother's country, his complexion was fair and pale; and his hair, of a light chestnut, fell in large antique curls over his forehead. That forehead, indeed, constituted the principal feature of his countenance. It was neither in its height nor expansion alone that its remarkable beauty consisted; but if ever thought to conceive and courage to execute high designs were embodied and visible, they were imprinted there.

Falkland did not stay long after dinner; but to Lady Margaret he promised all that she required of future length and frequency in his visits. When he left the room, Lady Emily went instinctively to the window to watch him depart; and all that night his low soft voice rung in her ear, like the music of an indistinct and half-remembered dream.

FROM MR. MANDEVILLE TO LADY EMILY.

DEAR, EMILY,—Business of great importance to the country has, prevented my writing to you before. I hope you have continued well since I heard from you last, and that you do all you can to preserve that retrenchment of unnecessary expenses, and observe that attention to a prudent economy, which is no less incumbent upon individuals than nations.

Thinking that you must be dull at E——, and ever anxious both to entertain and to improve you, I send you an excellent publication by Mr. Tooke, together with my own two last speeches, corrected by myself.

Trusting to hear from you soon, I am, with best love to Henry,

Very affectionately yours,

JOHN MANDEVILLE.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON. FREDERICK MONKTON.

Well, Monkton, I have been to E——; that important event in my monastic life has been concluded. Lady Margaret was as talkative as usual; and a Mrs. Dalton, who, I find, is an acquaintance of yours, asked very tenderly after your poodle and yourself. But Lady Emily! Ay, Monkton, I know not well how to describe her to you. Her beauty interests not less than it dazzles. There is that deep and eloquent softness in her every word and action, which, of all charms, is the most dangerous. Yet she is rather of

a playful than of the melancholy and pensive nature which generally accompanies such gentleness of manner; but there is no levity in her character; nor is that playfulness of spirit ever carried into the exhilaration of what we call "mirth." She seems, if I may use the antithesis, at once too feeling to be gay, and too innocent to be sad. I remember having frequently met her husband. Cold and pompous, without anything to interest the imagination, or engage the affections, I am not able to conceive a person less congenial to his beautiful and romantic wife. But she must have been exceedingly young when she married him; and she, probably, knows not yet that she is to be pitied, because she has not yet learned that she can love.

Le veggio in fronte amor come in suo seggio
Sul crin, negli occhi—su le labra amore
Sol d'intorno al suo cuore amor non veggio.

I have been twice to her house since my first admission there. I love to listen to that soft and enchanting voice, and to escape from the gloom of my own reflections to the brightness, yet simplicity, of hers. In my earlier days this comfort would have been attended with danger; but we grow callous from the excess of feeling. We cannot re-illumine ashes! I can gaze upon her dream-like beauty, and not experience a single desire which can sully the purity of my worship. I listen to her voice when it melts in endearment over her birds, her flowers, or, in a deeper devotion, over her child; but my heart does not thrill at the tenderness of the sound. I touch her hand, and the pulses of my own are as calm as before. Satiety of the past is our best safeguard from the temptations of the future; and the perils of youth are over when it has acquired that dulness and apathy of affection which should belong only to the insensibility of age.

Such were Falkland's opinions at the time he wrote. Ah! what is so delusive as our affections? Our security is our danger—our defiance our defeat! Day after day he went to E———. He passed the mornings in making excursions with Emily over that wild and romantic country by which they were surrounded; and in the dangerous but delicious stillness of the summer twilights, they listened to the first whispers of their hearts.

In his relationship to Lady Margaret, Falkland found his excuse for the frequency of his visits: and even Mrs. Dalton was so charmed with the fascination of his manner, that (in spite of her previous dislike) she forgot to inquire how far his intimacy at E——— was at variance with the proprieties of the world she worshipped, or in what proportion it was connected with herself.

It is needless for me to trace through all its windings the formation of that affection, the subsequent records of which I am about to relate. What is so unearthly, so beautiful, as the first birth of a woman's love? The air of heaven is not purer in its wanderings—its sunshine not more holy in its warmth. Oh! why should it deteriorate in its nature, even while it increases in its degree? Why should the step which prints, sully also the snow? How often, when Falkland met that guiltless yet thrilling eye, which revealed to him those internal secrets that Emily was yet awhile too happy to discover; when, like a fountain among flowers, the goodness of her heart flowed over the softness of her manner to those around her, and the benevolence of her actions to those beneath; how often he turned away with a veneration too deep for the selfishness of human passion, and a tenderness too sacred for its desires! It was in this temper (the earliest and the most fruitless prognostic of real love) that the following letter was written.

FROM ERASMUS FALKLAND, ESQ., TO THE HON. FREDERICK MONKTON.

I have had two or three admonitory letters from my uncle. "The summer (he says) is advancing, yet you remain stationary in your indolence. There is still a great part of Europe which you have not seen; and since you will neither enter society for a wife, nor the House of Commons for fame, spend your life, at least while it is yet free and unshackled, in those active pursuits which will render idleness hereafter more sweet; or in that observation and enjoyment among others, which will increase your resources in yourself." All this sounds well; but I have already acquired more knowledge than will be of use either to others or myself, and I am not willing to lose tranquillity here for the chance of obtaining pleasure elsewhere. Pleasure is indeed a holiday sensation which does not occur in ordinary life. We lose the peace of years when we hunt after the rapture of moments.

I do not know if you ever felt that existence was ebbing away without being put to its full value: as for me, I am never conscious of life without being also conscious that it is not enjoyed to the utmost. This is a bitter feeling, and its worst bitterness is our ignorance how to remove it. My indolence I neither seek nor wish to defend, yet it is rather from necessity than choice: it seems to me that there is nothing in

the world to arouse me. I only ask for action, but I can find no motive sufficient to excite it: let me then, in my indolence, not, like the world, be idle, yet dependent on others; but at least dignify the failing by some appearance of that freedom which retirement only can bestow.

My seclusion is no longer solitude; yet I do not value it the less. I spend a great portion of my time at E——. Loneliness is attractive to men of reflection, nor so much because they like their own thoughts, as because they dislike the thoughts of others. Solitude ceases to charm the moment we can find a single being whose ideas are more agreeable to us than our own. I have not, I think, yet described to you the person of Lady Emily. She is tall, and slightly, yet beautifully, formed. The ill health which obliged her to leave London for E——, in the height of the season, has given her cheek a more delicate hue than I should think it naturally wore. Her eyes are light, but their lashes are long and dark; her hair is black and luxuriant, and worn in a fashion peculiar to herself; but her manners, Monkton! how can I convey to you their fascination! so simple, and therefore so faultless—so modest, and yet so tender—she seems, in acquiring the intelligence of the woman, to have only perfected the purity of the child; and now, after all that I have said, I am only more deeply sensible of the truth of Bacon's observation, that "the best part of beauty is that which no picture can express." I am loth to finish this description, because it seems to me scarcely begun; I am unwilling to continue it, because every word seems to show me more clearly those recesses of my heart, which I would have hidden even from myself. I do not yet love, it is true, for the time is past when I was lightly moved to passion; but I will not incur that danger, the probability of which I am seer enough to foresee. Never shall that pure and innocent heart be sullied by one who would die to shield it from the lightest misfortune. I find in myself a powerful seconder to my uncle's wishes. I shall be in London next week; till then, fare well. E. F.

When the proverb said, that "Jove laughs at lovers' vows," it meant not (as in the ordinary construction) a sarcasm on their insincerity, but inconsistency. We deceive others far less than we deceive ourselves. What to Falkland were resolutions which a word, a glance, could overthrow? In the world he might have dissipated his thoughts in loneliness he concentrated them; for the passions are like the sounds of Nature, only heard in her solitude! He lulled his soul to the reproaches of his conscience; he surrendered himself to the intoxication of so golden a dream; and amidst those beautiful scenes there arose, as an offering to the summer heaven, the incense of two hearts which had, through those very fires so guilty in themselves, purified and ennobled every other emotion they had conceived,

God made the country, and man made the town.

says the hackneyed quotation; and the feeling awakened in each, differ with the genius of the place. Who can compare the frittered and divided affections formed in cities with that which crowds cannot distract by opposing temptations, or dissipation infect with its frivolities?

I have often thought that had the execution of Atala equalled its design, no human work could have surpassed it in its grandeur. What picture is more simple, though more sublime, than the vast solitude of an unpeopled wilderness, the woods, the mountains, the face of Nature, cast in the fresh yet giant mould of a new and unpolluted world; and, amidst those most silent and mighty temples of THE GREAT GOD, the lone spirit of Love reigning and brightening over all?

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