

wonder who that Mr. Falkland was, for every body to think so much about him?—Do you know?

If I could once again be thoroughly myself, I should tell such tales!—Some folks are afraid of that, do you see, and so—But I never shall—never—never!—I sit in a chair in a corner, and never move hand or foot—I am like a log—I know all that very well, but I cannot help it!—I wonder which is the man, I or my chair?

I have dreams—they are strange dreams—I never know what they are about—No, not while I am dreaming—they are about nothing at all—and yet there is one thing first, and then another thing, and there is so much of them, and it is all nothing—when I am awake it is just the same!—I used to have dreams of quite a different kind—and to talk in my dreams—and some folks said I disturbed them—and so, I believe they have given me something to quiet me.

Well, it is all one at last—I believe there was nothing in life worth making such a bustle about—no, nor in SECRETS—nor in MURDERS neither, for the matter of that—when people are dead, you know, one cannot bring them to life again!—dead folks tell no tales—ghosts do not walk these days—I never saw Mr. Tyrrel's—Only once!

Well then,—It is wisest to be quiet, it seems—Some people are ambitious—other people talk of sensibility—but it is all folly!—I am sure I am not one of those—was I ever?—True happiness lies in being like a stone—Nobody can complain of me—all day long I do nothing—am a stone—a GRAVE-STONE!—an obelisk to tell you, HERE LIES WHAT WAS ONCE A MAN!

APPENDIX II

GODWIN'S ACCOUNT OF THE COMPOSITION OF CALEB WILLIAMS

*Quoted from Godwin's preface to the 'Standard Novels' edition (1832)
of Fleetwood*

London, November 20. 1832.

'CALEB WILLIAMS' has always been regarded by the public with an unusual degree of favour. The proprietor of 'THE STANDARD NOVELS' has therefore imagined, that even an account of the concoction and mode of writing of the work would be viewed with some interest.

I finished the 'Enquiry concerning Political Justice,' the first work which may be considered as written by me in a certain degree in the maturity of my intellectual powers, and bearing my name, early in January, 1793; and about the middle of the following month the book was published. It was my fortune at that time to be obliged to consider my pen as the sole instrument for supplying my current expenses. By the liberality of my bookseller, Mr. George Robinson, of Pasternoster Row, I was enabled then, and for nearly ten years before, to meet these expenses, while writing different things of obscure note, the names of which though innocent, and in some degree useful, I am rather inclined to suppress. In May, 1791, I projected this, my favourite work, and from that time gave up every other occupation that might interfere with it. My agreement with Robinson was, that he was to supply my wants at a specified rate, while the book was in the train of composition. Finally, I was very little beforehand with the world on the day of its publication, and was therefore obliged to look round and consider to what species of industry I should next devote myself.

I had always felt in myself some vocation towards the composition of a narrative of fictitious adventure; and among the things of

obscure note, which I have above referred to, were two or three pieces of this nature.¹ It is not therefore extraordinary that some project of the sort should have suggested itself on the present occasion.

But I stood now in a very different situation from that in which I had been placed at a former period. In past years, and even almost from boyhood, I was perpetually prone to exclaim with Cowley,—

What shall I do to be for ever known,
And make the age to come my own?²

But I had endeavoured for ten years, and was as far from approaching my object as ever. Every thing I wrote fell dead-born from the press. Very often I was disposed to quit the enterprise in despair. But still I felt ever and anon impelled to repeat my effort.

At length I conceived the plan of Political Justice. I was convinced that my object of building to myself a name would never be attained, by merely repeating and refining a little upon what other men had said, even though I should imagine that I delivered things of this sort with a more than usual point and elegance. The world, I believed, would accept nothing from me with distinguishing favour, that did not bear upon the face of it the undoubted stamp of originality. Having long ruminated upon the principles of Political Justice, I persuaded myself that I could offer to the public, in a treatise on this subject, things at once new, true and important. In the progress of the work I became more sanguine and confident. I talked over my ideas with a few familiar friends during its progress, and they gave me every generous encouragement. It happened that the fame of my book, in some inconsiderable degree, got before its publication, and a certain number of persons were prepared to receive it with favour. It would be false modesty in me to say, that its acceptance, when published, did not early come up to every thing that could soberly have been expected by me. In consequence of this, the tone of my mind, both during the period in which I was engaged in the work, and afterwards, acquired a certain elevation, and made me now unwilling to stoop to what was insignificant.

I formed a conception of a book of fictitious adventure, that

¹ Among his early, obscure works are three short novels, *Damon and Delia*, *Italian Letters*, and *Imogen*, all published in 1784.

² Quoted from Abraham Cowley's *Miscellanies*, 'The Motto', ll. 1-2.

should in some way be distinguished by a very powerful interest. Pursuing this idea, I invented first the third volume of my tale, then the second, and last of all the first. I bent myself to the conception of a series of adventures of flight and pursuit; the fugitive in perpetual apprehension of being overwhelmed with the worst calamities, and the pursuer, by his ingenuity and resources, keeping his victim in a state of the most fearful alarm. This was the project of my third volume.

I was next called upon to conceive a dramatic and impressive situation adequate to account for the impulse that the pursuer should feel, incessantly to alarm and harass his victim, with an inextinguishable resolution never to allow him the least interval of peace and security. This I apprehended could best be effected by a secret murder, to the investigation of which the innocent victim should be impelled by an unconquerable spirit of curiosity. The murderer would thus have a sufficient motive to persecute the unhappy discoverer, that he might deprive him of peace, character and credit, and have him for ever in his power. This constituted the outline of my second volume.

The subject of the first volume was still to be invented. To account for the fearful events of the third, it was necessary that the pursuer should be invested with every advantage of fortune, with a resolution that nothing could defeat or baffle, and with extraordinary resources of intellect. Nor could my purpose of giving an overpowering interest to my tale be answered, without his appearing to have been originally endowed with a mighty store of amiable dispositions and virtues, so that his being driven to the first act of murder should be judged worthy of the deepest regret, and should be seen in some measure to have arisen out of his virtues themselves. It was necessary to make him, so to speak, the tenant of an atmosphere of romance, so that every reader should feel prompted almost to worship him for his high qualities. Here were ample materials for a first volume.

I felt that I had a great advantage in thus carrying back my invention from the ultimate conclusion to the first commencement of the train of adventures upon which I purposed to employ my pen. An entire unity of plot would be the infallible result; and the unity of spirit and interest in a tale truly considered, gives it a powerful hold on the reader, which can scarcely be generated with equal success in any other way.

I devoted about two or three weeks to the imagining and putting down hints for my story, before I engaged seriously and methodically in its composition. In these hints I began with my third volume, then proceeded to my second, and last of all grappled with the first. I filled two or three sheets of demy writing-paper, folded in octavo, with these memorandums. They were put down with great brevity, yet explicitly enough to secure a perfect recollection of their meaning, within the time necessary for drawing out the story at full, in short paragraphs of two, three, four, five, or six lines each.

I then sat down to write my story from the beginning. I wrote for the most part but a short portion in any single day. I wrote only when the afflatus was upon me. I held it for a maxim, that any portion that was written when I was not fully in the vein, told for considerably worse than nothing. Idleness was a thousand times better in this case, than industry against the grain. Idleness was only time lost; and the next day, it may be, was as promising as ever. It was merely a day perished from the calendar. But a passage written feebly, flatly, and in a wrong spirit, constituted an obstacle that it was next to impossible to correct and set right again. I wrote therefore by starts; sometimes for a week or ten days not a line. Yet all came to the same thing in the sequel. On an average, a volume of 'Caleb Williams' cost me four months, neither less, nor more.

It must be admitted however, that, during the whole period, bating a few intervals, my mind was in a high state of excitement. I said to myself a thousand times, 'I will write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before.'—I put these things down just as they happened, and with the most entire frankness. I know that it will sound like the most pitiable degree of self-conceit. But such perhaps ought to be the state of mind of an author, when he does his best. At any rate, I have said nothing of my vain-glorious impulse for nearly forty years.

When I had written about seven-tenths of the first volume, I was prevailed upon by the extreme importunity of an old and intimate friend¹ to allow him the perusal of my manuscript. On the second day he returned it with a note to this purpose: 'I return you your manuscript, because I promised to do so. If I had obeyed the impulse of my own mind, I should have thrust it in the fire. If you

¹ James Marshal, Godwin's secretary.

persist, the book will infallibly prove the grave of your literary fame.'

I doubtless felt no implicit deference for the judgment of my friendly critic. Yet it cost me at least two days of deep anxiety, before I recovered the shock. Let the reader picture to himself my situation. I felt no implicit deference for the judgment of my friendly critic. But it was all I had for it. This was my first experiment of an unbiased decision. It stood in the place of all the world to me. I could not, and I did not feel disposed to, appeal any further. If I had, how could I tell that the second and third judgment would be more favourable than the first? Then what would have been the result? No; I had nothing for it but to wrap myself in my own integrity. By dint of resolution I became invulnerable. I resolved to go on to the end, trusting as I could to my own anticipations of the whole, and bidding the world wait its time, before it should be admitted to the consult.

I began my narrative, as is the more usual way, in the third person. But I speedily became dissatisfied. I then assumed the first person, making the hero of my tale his own historian; and in this mode I have persisted in all my subsequent attempts at works of fiction. It was infinitely the best adapted, at least, to my vein of delineation, where the thing in which my imagination revelled the most freely, was the analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind, employing my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating impulses, which led the personages I had to describe primarily to adopt the particular way of proceeding in which they afterwards embarked.

When I had determined on the main purpose of my story, it was ever my method to get about me any productions of former authors that seemed to bear on my subject. I never entertained the fear, that in this way of proceeding I should be in danger of servilely copying my predecessors. I imagined that I had a vein of thinking that was properly my own, which would always preserve me from plagiarism. I read other authors, that I might see what they had done, or more properly, that I might forcibly hold my mind and occupy my thoughts in a particular train, I and my predecessors travelling in some sense to the same goal, at the same time that I struck out a path of my own, without ultimately heeding the direction they pursued, and disdaining to enquire whether by

any chance it for a few steps coincided or did not coincide with mine.

Thus, in the instance of 'Caleb Williams,' I read over a little old book, entitled 'The Adventures of Mademoiselle de St. Phale,'¹ a French Protestant in the times of the fiercest persecution of the Huguenots, who fled through France in the utmost terror, in the midst of eternal alarms and hair-breadth escapes, having her quarters perpetually beaten up, and by scarcely any chance finding a moment's interval of security. I turned over the pages of a tremendous compilation, entitled 'God's Revenge against Murder,'² where the beam of the eye of Omniscience was represented as perpetually pursuing the guilty, and laying open his most hidden retreats to the light of day. I was extremely conversant with the 'Newgate Calendar,'³ and the 'Lives of the Pirates.'⁴ In the mean time no works of fiction came amiss to me, provided they were written with energy. The authors were still employed upon the same mine as myself, however different was the vein they pursued: we were all of us engaged in exploring the entrails of mind and motive, and in tracing the various rencontres and clashes that may occur between man and man in the diversified scene of human life.

I rather amused myself with tracing a certain similitude between the story of Caleb Williams and the tale of Bluebeard,⁵ than derived any hints from that admirable specimen of the terrific. Falkland was my Bluebeard, who had perpetrated atrocious crimes, which if discovered, he might expect to have all the world roused to revenge against him. Caleb Williams was the wife, who in spite of warning, persisted in his attempts to discover the forbidden secret; and, when he had succeeded, struggled as fruitlessly to

¹ *The History of Mademoiselle de St. Phale: Giving a Full Account of the Miraculous Conversion of a Noble French Lady and her Daughter to the Reformed Religion, with the Defeat of the Intrigues of a Jesuit their Confessor.* Translated out of the French, 1690 (9th edition, 1787).

² John Reynolds, *The Triumphs of God's Revenge against the Crying and Execrable Sin of Murder*, 1621-35 (published in altered form in 1770 as *God's Revenge against Murder and Adultery*).

³ A collection of histories of notorious criminals. See note to p. 180.

⁴ Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, 1724.

⁵ In Charles Perrault's collection of fairy tales, *Histoires et contes du temps passé* (1697), Bluebeard's young wife, overcome by curiosity, opens a forbidden closet and finds the bodies of Bluebeard's former wives.

escape the consequences, as the wife of Bluebeard in washing the key of the ensanguined chamber, who, as often as she cleared the stain of blood from the one side, found it showing itself with frightful distinctness on the other.

When I had proceeded as far as the early pages of my third volume, I found myself completely at a stand. I rested on my arms from the 2d of January, 1794, to the 1st of April following, without getting forward in the smallest degree. It has ever been thus with me in works of any continuance. The bow will not be for ever bent.

Opere in longo fas est obrepere somnum.¹

I endeavoured however to take my repose to myself in security, and not to inflict a set of crude and incoherent dreams upon my readers. In the mean time, when I revived, I revived in earnest, and in the course of that month carried on my work with unabated speed to the end.²

Thus I have endeavoured to give a true history of the concoction and mode of writing of this mighty trifle. When I had done, I soon became sensible that I had done in a manner nothing. How many flat and insipid parts does the book contain! How terribly unequal does it appear to me! From time to time the author plainly reels to and fro like a drunken man. And, when I had done all, what had I done? Written a book to amuse boys and girls in their vacant hours, a story to be hastily gobbled up by them, swallowed in a pusillanimous and unanimated mood, without chewing and digestion. I was in this respect greatly impressed with the confession of one of the most accomplished readers and excellent critics that any author could have fallen in with (the unfortunate Joseph Gerald³). He told me that he had received my book late one evening, and had read through the three volumes before he closed his eyes. Thus, what had cost me twelve months' labour, ceaseless heart-aches and industry, now sinking in despair, and now roused and sustained in unusual energy, he went over in a few hours, shut the book, laid himself on his pillow, slept and was refreshed, and cried,

To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.⁴

¹ Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, l. 360. 'When a work is long, a drowsy mood may well creep over it' (Loeb Classical Library trans.).

² Godwin chooses not to mention his false ending and revision. See Appendix I.

³ Joseph Gerald (or Gerrald) was a political reformer who urged universal suffrage and annual parliaments. He was convicted of sedition in 1794, transported to Botany Bay, and died soon after at the age of 33.

⁴ Milton, *Lycidas*, l. 193.