

My Dear Mr. Stone
John Meade Falkner

Elswick Works
Newcastle-on-Tyne
Sept. 9 1902

My dear Mr. Stone

Thank you very much for your kind letter. It was very welcome to me: and if nearly a month has passed without my answering that has been because I have not found time till now for writing a letter, as against those hurried scrawls that pass for letters now-a-days.

Your letter reached me at Weymouth. I was down there with my wife making strenuous holiday for a fortnight: and have come back feeling younger, and much refreshed by sea and sun. Of Weymouth visits, excursions to Dorchester always form a very integral part to me - I love the old place - and generally manage to get down there 4 or 5 times a year. The 'Walks' are as familiar to me still, as they were when I was a boy, and I never pass the top of the High Street and your house without a very kindly, and a very grateful thought of you. The inscription dedicatory of the fragment of wall recording how Lucia Stone gave it to the Corporation, calls up another association to me now: and that is the little book of memoirs of your mother. I only saw it for the first time a year or two ago - and the person who lent it to me was Miss Panton, who now lives in a little house by herself in Alexandra Terrace. I think she is Miss Annie - in case you should recollect them; and she often goes to stop with her sister Mabel who married a rather good artist called Mead, and has a nice little boy by him. I do not know when anything gave me more interest than the reading of your mother's memoirs. They were of complicated interest to me. The interest of a period in which I always delight, the earlier part of the 19th century; combined with the local interest of one's native place, and with the tender memories of childhood.

The 'walks' are I suppose the least changed part of Dorchester - though they have of course made the 'Borough Gardens' in front of the West walks - and the High Street is not much altered structurally: except that shops have crept in every-

where in the upper part which was almost entirely residential. But if the houses have remained the same, what a complete change there has been in the inhabitants. I suppose it is so in every place, & yet I



West Walks, Dorchester

scarcely think it is to so great an extent. It seems to me that there is scarcely one single house which has now the same family as tenants (either gentlefolk or tradesmen) as were there say 30 years ago. Do you not think this rather unusual - I saw Henry Moule once or twice, and he & Mrs Moule came down and spent the day at Weymouth with us. I have learned to like him very much indeed in these last years: and am very glad that we have his brother Handley as our bishop at Durham. Henry is the oldest of the family - 77 this year but has hitherto been very young and active. Now he is troubled with heart weakness and dropsical symptoms. They were very anxious about him, but he is a little better now, and will I hope pull through.

I had forgotten that you were at Abingdon. I have always had an affection for the cheery little place; and I think I know almost exactly where your house is. Abingdon in the evening as one comes down stream, is one of the most picturesque bits on the river. I am venturing to send you a handbook to Berkshire, which I have just finished for Murray - whose series of Guides has been lately bought by Stanford. If you will accept it, it will give me much pleasure: only you must deal leniently with it, as I know you will, because no care or exploration of an outsider can possibly stand the test of local knowledge. The man on the spot is so immeasurably stronger than the tourist. I have tried to make the churches the strong point of the

book - and only to put down such things as would be of interest to a reasonably educated sightseer, who was not above taking note of small things. I do not know whether you have my Oxfordshire books - if you have not I should like to send you copies of them. Only mind that you do not bother to acknowledge or thank me for this. I generally manage to get down to Oxford once a term - oftenest from Saturday to Monday - and I hope to bicycle over some day and see you.

Thank you for your kind words - about the death of my dear sister and brother. Both were entirely unexpected - and, to me, inexpressibly tragic. They are losses that one never can get over. My sister had been for years my closest intellectual companion. She was a woman of quite extraordinary refinement and literary taste, and I relied more on her judgement in all literary matters than on that of anyone else. I suppose that the loss of sisters and brothers in middle life is often less poignant than before the family is broken up. But in our case affection had only increased with years - and principally owing to Bohemian habits, I think, and to none of us marrying (until I did so myself at 41) we had never any of us in the least lost touch of one another. My brother who was with us at Manchester, I mean with our firm, died of a sudden & fierce attack of pneumonia, in the hey-day of his strength at 34. He was fond of old things, as I am: and was with me through all our Berkshire expeditionizing.

With me all is well - at any rate from the material point of view. I am a director now of this firm, and a managing director. But sometimes I have grave misgivings whether life in these dreary, grimy, money-making places is really worth living. Our climate and surroundings are so distasteful. Sometimes I think of giving it all up, and coming south to live in some little house, and in some sunny spot, and vegetate or write. But with every year such change becomes a harder matter, and one does not know whether one could find happiness now without some strenuous work to do.

I have not written anything of any length lately, though I have kept my pen from rusting by a little writing of 'serious' articles in some of the heavy magazines, but not over my own name. Writing is a great refuge and consolation, in times of fretfulness and depression: and I have another story about $\frac{3}{4}$ finished which I hope to print some time next Spring, if I live.

The boy Morris is a nice boy: but not strong. I doubt whether he will stand the rude climate of the North, and the wear and tear of a manufacturing works. But I am going to put him into the

drawing office this winter, and I hope that may make things easier for a time until he has grown stronger.

Now I must stop this long letter - and when you next write you must retaliate with as long a one. There is much more that I wished to say but have forgotten. Please accept all kind regards from my wife - who knows Dorchester now, and knows your name well. My aunt, also Miss Mead - who has been a mother to me talks often of you, and of your kindness which gave me such help at a very critical period: a fact which I never forget, and for which I am always most truly grateful. Goodbye for the present.

Yours most sincerely
J. M. Falkner

John Noble who has just come in bids me remember him most kindly to you. He has married last month. He is our treasurer, a man of pleasant tastes, & my devoted friend.

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Constantinople

July. 11. 1904

My dear Mr. Stone,

Thank you very much indeed for your kind letter, and for two postcards with variants. I like your dedication very much.* It seems to me admirable, terse, and clear. The only point that is perhaps liable to criticism is the one which you yourself point out, the assonance of the two *-avits*: though I am not quite sure even that any just exception could be taken to that.

But I will wait as you ask me to do, for your authoritative version, and there is no hurry in the matter, for I have just heard that the tomb is put up, so that the inscription will be added afterward. I have not seen the tomb itself, but I trust it is sound and modest. If you go to Burford I hope you will see it. The church is an interesting one to me. John Noble & I put up the restored figures at the East End; and I have a (bad) painted window there by Kempe to my brother and sister.

These Quasi-ecclesiastical, and mediaeval survivals will not appeal to your progressive & enquiring mind: yet I think the tranquility and old-world grace of Burford itself, will soothe you, especially after the training of what must be more or less a

lotus-eating life at Abingdon. To me the love of the country, and the quiet of a routine life, seem always more and more desirable. I do not know whether they will grow so strong as to lead me to give up work. It is difficult to make up one's mind, and burn one's boats - but at times I wonder whether a writing life would not be more congenial & happy for me.

Please accept my apologies for careless neglect, re. Miss Combes. I will try to remedy it at once but I am not quite sure about the way of remitting money from here. Yours always very truly, and with much gratitude for your kindness in framing the inscription.

J. M. Falkner

* this refers to an inscription for the 'wool bale' tomb in Burford churchyard, under which his brother was buried. Falkner's ashes were to be placed there 28 years later.

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November. 7. 1905

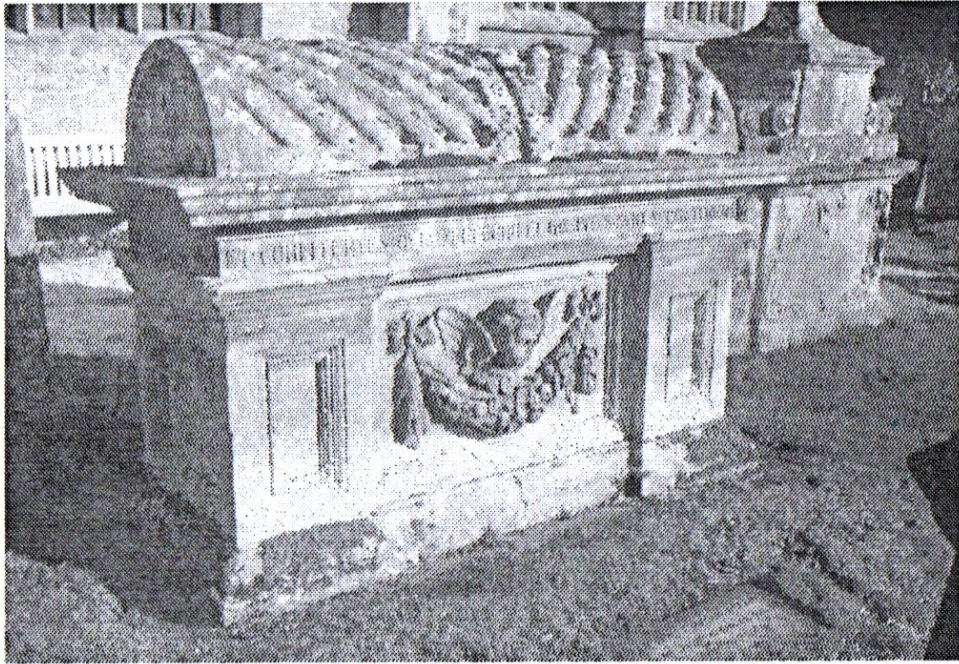
Elswick Works,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.

My dear Mr. Stone,

It is very long since I wrote to you, or heard from you. But in the interval I see that Mr. Walter Stone has passed away; and I should like to say that you have my sympathy, whatever is the meaning or value of that phrase. The longer I live, the less store I set by either life or death: both seem to me so essentially trivial and meaningless, that neither is worth much discussion or attention. Certainly, none of what are called the "problems" of life and death have much interest for me. The things that really appeal to me - more and more strongly - are the beauties of nature, the delights of literature, and the physical pleasures in which one may still indulge. The charm of the "country", of the outdoor life, with its simple pleasures of sunny or even rainy days, and above all of star light nights continually grows upon me.

Politics have ceased to interest me entirely and religious questions almost entirely and I shrink from all Propaganda because I am so uncertain as to all criteria. I am sorry for "thrusting" all these very egotistic and personal remarks upon you: but I do not think you will mind, and I hope you will retaliate by telling me a little about

your own attitude. Do you think we shall ever know anything about anything about such things - I mean - as the stars?



When we last wrote, you were promising to give me an amended version of the Latin inscription for my brother's "tomb" at Burford. Could you let me have it? You had thought of a delightful quip (do you remember) "migraturus vixit, victurus migravit" - and the other facts were, that he died on May 5. 1903 - and that at the end, he remembered Burford with great longing and asked to be buried there. I think we had arrived at the use of desiderium ineffabile. I am anxious to get the inscription cut. I was interrupted by a serious illness - chronic appendicitis - and other graver internal troubles which confined me to bed for three months and led to an operation. But since then I have been gradually gathering strength and hope ere long to be myself again.

A few weeks ago I was at Burford, and was sorry to find that the Oxford Colony was flown, and Lady Ham (?) Shut up. I cannot remember whether I sent you a photograph of the grave for which you so kindly agreed to furnish the inscription. Any how I will risk sending you another with this letter. I have just outlined the tomb with ink on the back of the photograph, so that you will know which it is.

I think that I have nothing more to say, except that if you should find time to write, it would give me much pleasure to hear from you - and that I am always yours with affectionate and grateful remembrances.

J. M. Falkner

January 6th 1910

Elswick Works,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.

My dear Mr. Stone,

I am writing a few lines to wish you all good in the New Year - and this reminds me to enclose £2/2 which I hope you will kindly put into Miss Coombs' Burse. Last week I was in Dorchester and had a little chat with Henry Ling the Bookseller. You will remember that he took Mr. Patch's business in the early '60s, and has now retired, himself, in favour of his son. We talked about Dorchester worthies, and he said that he thought Miss Coombs knew as much as anyone living now of old Dorchester. Then we talked of your mother's Memoirs, (which have had a very special charm for me since I first saw them) and then, he asked if I had ever read a book called (I think) Memoirs of Old Dorchester, by Mr. Keats, in which the music of the place, at that time, is rather specially treated. I wonder if you know it. He said that only 20 (I think) copies had ever been printed, and that it was now quite unattainable. I suspect that you will know it quite well. But if you should not, I will see whether it is of real interest, and if it is will get leave to pass it on to you.

I was at Weymouth, and Dorchester, for this Christmas, and new year. It was a great pleasure to me to find myself again in England - I had been much abroad during the year - and only got back two days before Christmas from 3 months in Greece and Turkey. The Spectator was kind enough to ask me for some Christmas verses; but I found it impossible to attune my mind to English Christmas ideas, or ideals. The East, the caravan, the Sunlight, the "Mandrake-root", were too predominant. I have always found the same effect whenever I have gone Eastward.

It is only now after Christmas, New Year, and 12th night, that I am beginning to come back to my bearings. I have always wondered how Newman was able to write *Lead Kindly Light* in those Summer, classic, seas. His faith, and mental outlook must have been indeed steady and unobscurable. I think it was in the Aegean (or was it the bay of Baia?) That he wrote it. When I came through the Aegean on Dec 17th I saw the sun rise, splendid over a calm sea - and thought of the old story of how the fishermen under Lesbos, at sunrise on the first Christmas morning, heard a wail coming over the

sea, the death-wail of all the Pagan Gods and Goddesses and of the host of Fauns, & Satyrs, nymphs, Nerrids, Dryads, Hamadryads, and all the Host of Olympus. It was "like the cry that Mandrakes make, when they are torn out of the ground" and was "the saddest sound that had ever been heard upon earth".

Yet, I could not bring myself to write Christmas verses - the cry of the mandrake was too strong in those surroundings. It drowned the rest. I read the Odyssey again from cover to cover - I think it must be for the 14th or 15th time - perhaps more. It is one of those things which improve the oftener one reads, and which remain eternally new. (Falkner then transcribes 4 verses in Greek)... Greek has been such an abiding pleasure to me all my life. I feel so thankful that I was taught Greek. I feel so sorry, so very sorry, for well nurtured boys who are not being taught Greek now. I never really knew Greek, till I had learned to speak Greek. I think that the veil never really lifts till one has a knowledge of the Greek as it exists today. I dare say that you may have lost something of your keen interest in Greek; that all this may merely bore you. But, if you still care for these things, do you know the Great Greek Grammar of Jannaris (MacMillan 1897)? It is a monumental, and, to me, intensely interesting book.

I must not write more. I have written too much already. All goes well with us here - as I hope it does with you. We are all growing older, but I hope we are "going down the hill cheerily". Do you know a pamphlet - "120 years of life and how to attain them" (London Publicity Co. 379 Strand, London W.C.) It is an interesting subject. I believe much in the theory, though, I fear that we should bore our friends dreadfully, if we were really to attain this longevity.

John Noble desires his duty and affection to you. I send as much, and more, on my own account. Do not bother to acknowledge this: but believe me ever to be yours

J. M. Falkner

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October 25. 1910

Elswick Works,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.

My dear Mr. Stone,

Tonight, at 7 pm I am going to begin a few lines to you; which I shall probably not get off till tomorrow, or the day after. First let me thank you very much for your kind letter of the 7th. I

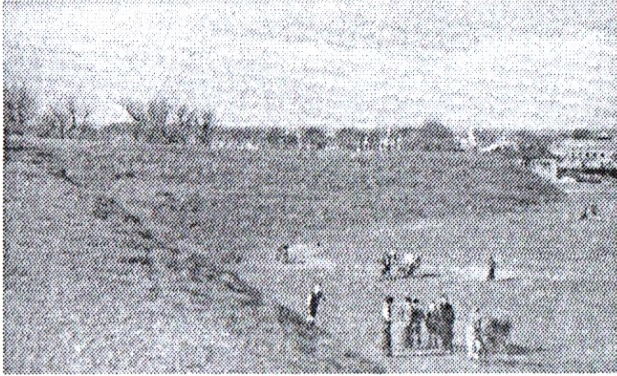
enclose a cheque for £5. I dare say that the Boys Club will want all of it, and a great deal more. But if it does not, would you turn over the surplus to Miss Coombs. On no account bother to write to thank me.

Your handwriting is always very welcome to me - as welcome as it used to be in days long gone by, when I was turning every stone (no pun - Forgive the strangely apt equivoque) to try to find work. How joyous a thing it was to me, to see a neat envelope, in your neat and scholarly hand. It was always a presage of some thing good; generally a hint that Luxmoore was going to write, to offer me some delightful and delightfully paid tutorship. It is none the less pleasant to me now to hear from you, and I look back for nearly 50 years now to when you gave me some first hints in Latin verse at Dorchester. It is a long vista, and I have benefitted (*sic*) much, and for many years now, by your kindness, by your kindness that gave me the chance. "The chance" comes I believe to everyone; but that is no reason not to be grateful to the person who gives the chance, and I do feel so very grateful to you. And through me, my brother and my sister (the only ones now left to me) have benefitted too. So, you see that you have the gratitude of the whole Falkner family weighing heavily upon your shoulders. I never come to the top of High West Street, and take the turning down the West Walks, without thinking of it all, and how you went out of your way to do a kindness to my father, through me his unworthy son, and how you unconsciously turned the tide of our affairs (then very low) and set us all on our feet again. It is your own fault if I weary you by repeating these things - I am not going to be done out of the expression of my gratitude. It is your kindness that has come home to roost.

What a striking and strange place all that West Walks is. It is very dear to me: yet there is something triste and sunless about it, something foreboding if not forbidding. I don't know what it is. There is a suggestion of gloom, and damp about it. The lichens have grown, till all the tree-trunks look as if they were actually painted a bright green; and there is something weird and sombre about the fragment of Roman core, that your mother gave to the town. Then, just below, are those gloomy houses, with their sad and shaded outlook, where Henry Barnes the architect & the Burnets used to live. They still fill me with dismay.

This autumn I spent - with my wife - 3 weeks between Weymouth and Dorchester. Ostensibly, I was spending my holidays in the excavations of Memory Rings. But the imperious tyranny of

golf has fallen upon me, late in life, and my days were spent from sunrise to sunset on Came down golfing. The weather was glorious - sunshine, full, and unflinching. So I played golf all day, and then, when the dusk fell, tricycled in to Memory Rings, to see how things had got on during the day.



'Memory Rings'

Dorchester

The excavations were in charge of a clever, very clever, fellow Gray; and he was assisted by a Dorchester dentist Prideaux. I have a natural dislike of dentists as a class: but this one is a delightful man - well-

read, highly cultivated, companionable, earnest, philanthropic, archaeologic. I generally kept a sort of table-d'hôte in the great bay window of the King's Arms, & there we all, with our wives, dined in the evenings - and often, were back at Memory Rings, in the moonlight, till Midnight. It was often a striking sight enough; the silver wreaths of mist hanging on the dew-dripping grass in the bottom of the Rings, the gleam of the moonlight on the white chalk diggings, the lanterns, and grinning jaws of some skeleton down below in the trenches. The digging interests me much, the more so that it all goes to prove a theory, that grew into a conviction with me, as long ago as 20 years, that Memory Rings was no Roman amphitheatre at all, but just one of the countless and often unintelligible earthworks, that bristle in those parts. Bit by bit, I think, it must be admitted that this is being proved. For date it must be compared with maiden castle, and Poundbury, and the other great hill-forts; and for type, with Knowlton Rings, and the ring-barrow on Cerne hill and many elsewhere.

I am glad that you are going to be with your son at Radley. It is good to be with ones own kin as we get older. I do so want to ramble on to you, on general subjects, to speak of the wider outlook, that seems to me to be soberer, and saner, and much happier, as we grow older. But I must stop now. I think I will write soon to you again on general subjects, but I doubt of my own resolves. I dare say it will be Christmas 1911, before you hear from me again. But I mean to try to write. Meanwhile Goodnight, and goodbye for the present

J. M. Falkner

December. 9th 1910

Elswick Works,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.

My dear Mr. Stone,

I am just back from 3 weeks in cholera-stricken, or much rather panic-stricken, Naples. Even the panic is largely confined to the foreigners; the natives care very little, and, indeed, I think that there is but little to care about. But what I wanted to say was, that in writing to you last time, I quite forgot to thank you for sending me "The Divine Presence".

It was kind of you to think of me; and I very much appreciated it. The spare copies I passed on to some, that I knew would, and who did, much value it. There is a melodious and equable weight about your verse. In its simplicity and direct march it recalls Dr. Watts or Wesley to me. Yet, one verse seems to my judgement distinctly displaced - Surely the verse beginning "His too the heat of fiery zeal" should follow, not precede, the one beginning "The clinging spreading clustering vine". Should it not? The heat & fiery zeal verse is a very difficult one to fit in. It would not do to omit it; on the contrary, I am not sure that it ought not to be amplified a little. I think that side of the all-dwelling of the Deity, wants more elaboration in your poem. Yet that verse, comes in anywhere rather abruptly. I rather fancy that you ought to write at least one more stanza, to introduce it. To me, the omnipresence of the Deity is such an omnipresent thought, as to require some times checking, lest it should develop (sic) into a potential Pantheism - or what we commonly understand by Pantheism, and I dare say that real Pantheistic doctrine is something entirely different. Pantheism is a very beautiful, & seductive doctrine. So, to me, is the personification of material things. I am little short of a dendrosebist (?). But I must stop. If I do not write again, before Christmas, let me heartily wish you all happiness in that Season.

Yours always sincerely

J. Meade Falkner

(Falkner wrote another letter to the Revd. Stone, on December 13th 1910, thanking the latter for "the amended copy of *The Divine Presence*" with its much improved change of order of verses!)

Elswick Works
Augt. 26. 1914

My dear Mr. Stone,

Your letter was very welcome. I like to see your clear scholarly hand, still as firm as ever, whereas mine is spoilt by stylography, and grows more and more shaky.

I have a bed in my room here and sleep here now, or wake, for my nights are troubled enough. Just underneath my windows we have had to put up temporary factories for field-guns; and the banging and slamming and the sawing of iron make such a noise at night, that sleep is sometimes quite impossible. We are working full tilt, day and night, Sundays and weekdays. We have some 200 soldiers and sailors in the works as a guard, and the output of war-material is enormous. I hope that it will all be for the best - but I am not nearly so easy in my mind as I should like to be, and I don't think that people in general at all recognise the gravity of the position - or that one side of the question involved is, that we should be come an appanage of Germany, if we get beaten now. How far that would be a bad thing, or a good thing, is quite another question - but I hope we may not come to that - I hope we may remain a great, or become a greater nation: but I am sure if we are to, we want a thorough purgation and cleansing from excessive luxury, and all the evils that it brings with it.

It may be that this scourge of war will cleanse us. Of the Germans I have the highest opinion. I think that they are higher, and cleaner, and much simpler livers than we are. All these stories of brutality and atrocities I set down as fiction - the wickedest fiction. They no doubt will behave in war just as well as we do. But there are quite sure to be excesses on both sides. War is no Sunday School. For years I have spent 6 weeks in Summer in Germany, and year by year come away impressed with the immense material progress that is being everywhere made there, and with the great order and sobriety. It is quite certain that there are very many lessons that we can learn of them, and it goes to my heart to think of two great nations being at war who ought to be walking hand in hand in the van of progress. In a moment it seems as if centuries of Christianity and Civilisation had been finally swept away, and that the only court of appeal was the method of Attila or Tammerlane (*sic*). It is all too dreadful. No-one seems to be able, up to now, to stop or effectively check the fierce on-rush of the Germans. Our own men seem to be

fighting excellently and up to the old traditions, but they are so hopelessly outnumbered, that they are forced back, faster or slower, and just now it is faster.

At dear Dorchester there are over 1,000 "prisoners" swept up from one place or another. They are housed in the old Georgian red brick barracks - which (as you know) have been out of use for many years now. Their exercise ground is that old grassy barrack square, with the hospital and a few sycamores on the Poundbury side, and the ball-courts at the bottom. In the evening the Townspeople walk on the ramparts of Poundbury so that they can overlook the prison-court and listen to al-fresco concerts which the prisoners get up. It all seems history repeating itself, and to take one back to Napoleon and the Trumpet Major.

I get the local paper every week. Last week there was a little paragraph describing the scene, and saying how much the townsfolk were pleased with the German music. At the end they said that the Austrian anthem was played, and then "God save the King". The last item was given, the paper said, as a token of the appreciation of the kind entertainment which was being extended to the prisoners in their compound. It was a curious mistake, because what was really being played was of course the German national anthem which, as you know, is the same tune as our "God save the King".

I began this letter two or three days ago, and have added a little to it at nights before I go to bed in my office here. My room is a very fine one looking out sheer over the Tyne which runs about 40 feet below. It is a strange scene at night - all the shops working exactly as in the day, the dull grumble of the machinery, the search lights sweeping the river unintermittingly, the patrol boats, and the calls of the guards, and now and then a rifle shot or two when some boat does not answer the challenge, and just opposite my window Jupiter blazing.

I have made things as comfortable as possible for myself, and have a great armchair in my room: where last night I skimmed through your mother's "Memories and Traditions" which you gave me in 1902. It came as a pleasant and tranquilizing breath, a graceful souvenir of a past age to which there is no return. Nor will there be any return for me and you to that life which we were living a month ago. It is as far from us as the days of which your mother tells. Before long I hope to write to you again: but for the moment I shall say Good night. Yours Ever

J. M. Falkner

Elswick
Sepr. 24. 1915

My dear Mr. Stone

I know that I am greatly in your debt, and that more than one of your letters have remained without answer. But you must not gauge my appreciation of them by my slowness in replying. It is merely that the times are out of joint, and that my nose is so very close to the grindstone. I am in command now of this vast place where we have 60,000 or 70,000 men. Noble's father - Sir Andrew Noble - is our chairman still in name, but he has lost his mental powers, and can no longer come. He is not a really old man, 84 this month, which in these days is not past reasonable enjoyment. But he has worked very hard all his long life, and is feeling the reaction now in body and more in mind. They made me Vice-Chairman this summer, so now I have the "care of all the churches".

The time would naturally be coming now for me to begin to take stock of my life. I am 57 and even if my constitution were quite normal, might be beginning to think of who is to come after me. I have had 33 years of this Elswick life - happy, hardworking - probably too severe years full of intense and varied interest; but this is no time to attempt to strike a balance. One has to go on headlong, as if one was a young man, with a young man's health and strength. I ought to be very thankful that opportunities have been given me and that I have been enabled to make some use of them up to now. I do thank God for that, for I am old-fashioned and these uproarious times only make me more dogmatic, and clinging more closely to the old beliefs.

Under that, I do not forget that it was you who sent me here. I never pass the bit of Roman core in the West Walks, and the little dedicatory tablet of Lucia Catharine, without thinking of you, and of your kindness in looking at my Latin verses, some half-century gone. A week or two ago Christopher came to see me here. It was a great pleasure to me to meet him - above all to see him in uniform. What good fellows all these younger men are - how we wish that we too could stand shoulder to shoulder with them. I feel like Achilles. I would take a day labourer's work, and dig in the trenches, if I were young again (there follows two lines of Greek)... But here we are in the grey asphodel meadow of old age, and can only bid the younger men God Speed. I was glad to see Christopher. We had a long talk over men and things and his features recalled you to me, strangely. I don't know how long it is since I saw you last, but

I remembered your face in his, very clearly. It is strange, I dare say you will not know that he is like you at all. But there must be strong family resemblances. He is a good fellow. I wish him very well.

I read Sinister Street. I began with many misgivings as to its great length. But I finished it all, all the 1140 (?) Pages quite easily, from the dedication to the finish. It is well written, and might have been better. Part I and Part III (Oxford) were the best to me. Part IV I did not care for so much. There was too much of the lower side in it for me. The capital fault seemed to me the attempt to invest what should be the loose amusement of an hour with permanent romance. The pursuit of "low flesh", if it exists at all, and I suppose for most it has existed, can surely be only for a moment, in our class. Personally I might fall much, but it would be with my eyes open. I never could invest with a halo, people or things or places like that. There could be no "romantic education" of that kind for me, because there is to me no "romance" possible in such places. But perhaps for Michael it was natural, his origins and environment made it possible.

You ask "shall we ever wake up in our right senses from this nightmare of a war?" Certainly we never shall wake up the same. I suppose it would be a horrible thing if we should go through all we are going through, and not be changed.

Yet I am a medievalist with the cramped old schoolman's mind, and, to me, change is terrible. I feel as if I should like to drink of the blameless herb nepenthe, to fall asleep, and wake in some old abbey of Touraine with the figs ripening on the cloister wall.

But, as it is, I must content myself with my very pleasant room here, with great southern windows, and amazing (for a gigantic factory) view over green fields, woods, & hills, and wide champaign generally. I cannot grumble; and my fire is bright and my bed looks comfortable enough in the corner. So I shall look out over my moonlight river and then turn in wishing you a very good night.

J. M F

The war gives us cause for thought, and anxieties for all the fine lives lost, and for the terrible money cost. But of the issue I have no doubt at all: the Germans are fighting with the halter round their necks.