

A True Patriot: Lucius Carey, Viscount Falkland.

BY THE REV. C. SYDNEY CARTER, M.A.

JUST over 300 years have passed since the birth of Lucius Carey, Viscount Falkland; and although we know all too little of the details of his short life, he still remains one of the most fascinating and attractive figures in English history. Probably most of us are familiar with the glowing picture of his character painted by Lord Clarendon, his great friend and admirer. In personal appearance he was apparently far from prepossessing. Short of stature, ungraceful of motion, and of a harsh and offensive voice, yet "that little person and small stature was quickly found to contain a great heart, a courage so keen, and a nature so fearless, that no composition of the strongest limbs, and most harmonious and proportioned presence and strength, ever more disposed any man to the greatest enterprise." In spite of his "untuned voice," he was "of an inimitable sweetness and delight in conversation." "His disposition and nature was so gentle and obliging, so much delighted in courtesy, kindness, and generosity, that all mankind could not but admire and love him." "A man," as Clarendon describes him in another place, "of such excellent parts, of a wit so sharp, and a nature so sincere, that nothing could be more lovely."¹ "He was guilty," he declares, "of no other ambition than of knowledge, and to be reputed a lover of all good men."

Born about the year 1610, he spent part of his youth in Ireland, where his father was Lord Deputy, and before he was twenty years old he inherited a considerable fortune from his grandfather. Short as is the period covered by his life (1610-1643), it nevertheless introduces us to one of the most stirring epochs in English history, and it is therefore impossible to form a correct estimate of Falkland's character and position unless we understand something of the circumstances of the

¹ "History of Rebellion," i. 268 (1704).

time in which he lived. The struggle between the Calvinists and Arminians was at its height. The Synod of Dort in 1618 had indeed strongly condemned the new Arminian "heresy," but the strife was carried on in almost every parish pulpit in England with ever-increasing bitterness, until at length, in 1622, a royal proclamation silenced the combatants. Open argument was, however, succeeded by persecution, and proscription, as the Arminian party, secure in the royal favour and urged on by the injudicious zeal of Archbishop Laud, the Court favourite, condemned their opponents as pragmatists or nonconforming Puritans, aiming at the overthrow of the Church system. Every pretext was employed to expel the Calvinistic clergy from their livings. Their lecturers were suppressed and their clergy fined or suspended for refusing to publish the Royal Book of (Sunday) Sports in their churches. The Archbishop divided the Calvinists from the "orthodox" under the opprobrious name of "Puritans," to prevent them obtaining any share of Church patronage. Innovations, ceremonies and ritual were introduced by the triumphant Arminians, which seemed to the older school of clergy perilously akin to the detested practice and worship of the Roman Church, the bitter memories of which the successful persecuting policy the Jesuits were then pursuing in Europe only served to increase. Any attempt to decry or oppose these "novelties" was met by fines, imprisonments, or excommunications, by the all-powerful Court of High Commission, while those presuming to libel the actions of the Bishops were summarily dealt with by the barbarous sentences of the Star Chamber.

To this strife in the Church was added an equally bitter struggle in the State between the supporters of royal prerogative and arbitrary government, and a powerful "popular" or patriot party resolutely fighting for civil and political liberty. In Parliament those who were fighting "absolutism" in the State championed the cause of those who were suffering from "absolutism" in the Church.

It was in the midst of these momentous strifes and controversies that the young Lord Falkland received his education. It is singular that a man of such a peaceable and lovable disposition should have had a natural inclination towards a military career. As a young man, however, he went to the Low Countries seeking for active service, and it was only on account of the peace then prevailing there that he was led to turn his attention to the life of a student. So zealous was he in anything he undertook that Clarendon relates that he refused to gratify his great desire to see London until he had perfectly learned the Greek tongue, and in a very short time he was able to read accurately all the Greek historians. In his quiet country-house at Great Tew, only ten miles from one of the national centres of learning, he pursued his studies with such diligence that his reputation as a scholar of the first order was soon established. "He was of so stupendous learning in all kinds and in all languages, that a man would have thought he had been entirely conversant with books, and had never spent an hour but in reading and writing." He was on most intimate terms with all the learned men of his day, so that, as Clarendon tells us, "the most polite and accurate men" from Oxford found "such an immenseness of wit and solidity of judgment in him" that they resorted to his house as to a "college situated in a purer air," "a University in a less volume."¹ Here all the liberal and enlightened thinkers of the day foregathered for intercourse and fellowship. William Chillingworth, the apostle of the tolerant and charitable views of the later Latitudinarians, found a friend and sympathizer in the cultured young nobleman who was "a great enemy to all passion and uncharitableness." Prominent Restoration divines like Sheldon and Morley sought the advice of the conscientious layman, whose devotion to the Church did not prevent him from vigorously denouncing the serious faults of its over-zealous and high-handed ecclesiastics. He was generous even beyond his means, and Ben Jonson, the celebrated poet, was one of the recipients of his liberal patron-

¹ "History," ii. 271.

age, while many other necessitous cases were secretly indebted to his bounty.

Falkland was, however, no mere literary recluse, and was always ready to place his services at the disposal of his country, whether in the field or in the forum. He served as a volunteer with the Earl of Essex in the war against the Scots in 1639, and sat as Member for Newport in the Short Parliament of 1640. He was returned again to the Long Parliament, and soon became the leader of a party of moderate patriots, whose ultimate adhesion to the King's cause, in all probability, alone made the later contest between the Crown and Parliament possible.

As religious questions from the first played the most prominent part in the history of this eventful Parliament, we are able to form, from the debates which took place on these subjects, a clear estimate of Falkland's attitude as a Churchman. The tyrannical ecclesiastical régime, carried out during the last eleven years by Laud and the Arminian Bishops, had created great discontent in the country, and excited the strong animosity of the members of the Long Parliament. It was certainly not likely to meet with the approval of such a strenuous champion of religious and political liberty as Falkland. There was therefore practical unanimity in Parliament on the necessity of reducing the absolute power and jurisdiction of the Bishops, but there was also a section of extremists anxious to overthrow the Episcopal government of the Church altogether. Such a revolutionary policy in no way commended itself to one whose whole nature always inclined to peaceful compromises, and was greatly averse to violent and radical changes in old-established institutions. The fact that Episcopacy was the ancient form of Church polity in England was sufficient for Falkland to wish for its preservation, unless it could be proved absolutely harmful to the cause of religion. "He had in his own judgment," says Clarendon, "such a latitude in opinion, that he did not believe any part of the order or government of it to be so essentially necessary to religion, but that it might be parted with and

altered for a notable public benefit and convenience." But "he was never in the least degree swayed or moved by the objections that were made against that government (Episcopacy) in the Church, holding them most ridiculous."¹

The Parliament met in November, and voices were soon raised for reformation in the Church. In February a petition from the citizens of London was presented, praying for the "utter extirpation of Episcopacy," and it is from the report of the debates occurring on this "Root and Branch" petition that we get a clear view of Falkland's attitude. The tempers of all men were inflamed by the recent policy of the Bishops, and the speech of Falkland, in its calm impartial review of ecclesiastical affairs, probably gives us the best view of the average Churchman's opinion of the reforms that were needed. He adopted the attitude of the moderate or "central" Churchman of his day. Falkland was certainly neither a Puritan nor an Arminian, and not even a Calvinist in any party sense of the term. As we read his speech we feel that he well represents the ecclesiastical position of the Reformers, of Cranmer, Latimer, and Jewel, and all the great Elizabethan divines. He was a resolute and intelligent opponent of Popery, for he had carefully studied the whole controversy from the writings of the Fathers. Personal considerations had also increased this hostility. His mother was a zealous Romanist, and every effort had been made to shake his faith in the Anglican Church. His two young brothers, to his great indignation, had by "sinister arts" been corrupted by Romish teaching, "stolen from his house and transported beyond seas," and his two sisters had also been perverted. On the other hand, he had no sympathy with those "glorious and unquiet spirits" whose narrow and overscrupulous consciences turned them into factious Puritans refusing to conform to the simple discipline of the Reformed Church. The principal cause of the oppressions and distractions of the kingdom was, Falkland told the Commons, "that some Bishops and their adherents under pretence of uniformity have brought in super-

¹ "History," ii. 275.

stitution and scandal under title of decency, have defiled our churches by adorning them, and slackened the strictness of that union that was between us and those of our religion beyond sea, an action both unpolitic and ungodly." He complained that Laud and his party had been more eager to condemn men who went to a neighbouring parish to hear a sermon than to suppress "obstinate and perpetual (Popish) recusants." Conformity to ceremonies was rigorously enforced, while notorious evil-livers had gone unpunished. He accused them of suppressing all Gospel preaching, and encouraging political sermons in favour of absolute government or the "*jus divinum* of Bishops and tithes and the sacredness of the clergy." "Their work had been," he declared, "to try how much of the Papist could be brought in without Popery." They were betrayers of our rights and liberties, and had been the principal cause of the recent Scotch Rebellion. Yet, in spite of this strong denunciation, Falkland did not allow his just indignation to obscure his calm and impartial judgment. "This charge of guilt," he carefully pointed out, "does not lie against Episcopacy, but against the persons who have abused that sacred function." The early propagators of Christianity had been Bishops, as well as our Reformers; Bishops therefore have been, and may be, good men, and let us then, he concludes, "but give good men good rules, and we shall have good government and good times." "If it is found that they oppress their weaker brethren with unnecessary ceremonies, let none which any number count unlawful be imposed, but let us not abolish after a few days' debate an order that has lasted in most churches these 1,600 years." "I do not," he declares, "believe the order of Bishops to be *jure divino*, nor do I think them unlawful; but since all great changes in government are dangerous, I am for trying if we cannot take away the inconveniences of Bishops and the inconveniences of no Bishops."¹

There is little doubt that this wise and moderate counsel expressed the general sentiment at the time; and if only the proposals, which Falkland cordially approved, for moderate

¹ Neal, "History of Puritans," ii. 365-367 (1822).

reform and reduction of Episcopal authority, put forward at this time by Archbishop Williams and Archbishop Usher, had been adopted, the civil strife and religious confusion which so soon followed might have been altogether avoided. Archbishop Williams had proposed that the diocesan Bishops' supreme authority in jurisdiction and ordination should be shared between twelve assistants besides the Dean and Chapter; while Archbishop Usher advocated the appointment of Suffragan Bishops for each rural deanery, who should be advised by monthly synods of their clergy. Diocesan synods of Suffragan Bishops and a select number of clergy should assemble twice a year, while a provincial synod consisting of all Diocesan and Suffragan Bishops and elected representatives of diocesan clergy should be called together every three years. The opportunity for such compromises was, however, thrown away, for, as Fuller quaintly observes: "Some hot spirits would not have one ace of Episcopal power or profit abated, and, though since confuted by their own hunger, preferred no bread to half a loaf."¹

Falkland was wise enough to perceive that some reforms and concessions were absolutely necessary if the Church itself were to be saved from the destruction threatened by the more rabid spirits. Realizing this, some two months later he gave his vote in favour of removing the Bishops from the House of Lords, not only because he thought that, removed from all secular and State duties, they would more zealously carry out their spiritual functions, but because he believed, and was also strongly persuaded by others, that this step was necessary for the preservation of Episcopacy itself. "Many men," says Clarendon, "of excellent judgments and unquestionable affections" believed truly at that time "that the passing of this Act was the only expedient to preserve the Church."² Six months later, however, when Falkland discovered that this concession was merely regarded by the extreme Puritan faction as the first step towards the complete overthrow of the Church, he voted against the same proposal, although Clarendon implies that he

¹ "Church History," iii. 417 (1837.)

² "History," i. 185.

would have done so before if he had then fully understood the ancient indubitable title which the Bishops possessed to their places in the Upper House.

It was the rejection of the tolerant and enlightened policy of men like Falkland at this critical juncture which brought such disaster and suffering on the country during the next twenty years, and we cannot doubt that had his spirit of moderation and compromise been displayed at the Restoration, a far different, or at least more national, religious settlement might have been obtained. Falkland's position as a patriotic statesman, with his liberal principles and his love of compromise, was pathetically tragic, at a time when few men on either side shared his opinions or comprehended his attitude. He was fighting for the constitutional and religious freedom of his country against royal and ecclesiastical tyranny. He loved both the Crown and the Church as ancient and venerable institutions, but he had no sympathy with the *jus divinum* of Bishops or with the divine hereditary rights of Kings. He greatly revered Parliamentary government, "believing Parliaments most solicitous for justice," and did not consider the country could be prosperous or happy under the personal rule of an irresponsible monarch; and yet he was fated in the end to throw in his lot with the Court party, whose policy he disapproved and distrusted, and to abandon the popular cause which lay nearest his heart. The march of events proved too strong for him, and he had to choose, as Bolingbroke expressed it, either to have "the Constitution destroyed under the pretence of prerogative or under the pretence of liberty." He preferred to fall "under absolute monarchy" rather than face the dangers of "absolute anarchy." He could not fight, as Matthew Arnold said, "for a sound cause," but only for what he considered "the least bad of two unsound causes." There was no possibility of compromise, and it was largely due to the attitude which the Commons finally adopted on Church questions that led Falkland to throw in his lot with the Crown. Clarendon tells us that at the commencement of the Parliament "the major part of the members consisted of men who had no mind to break

the peace of the kingdom, or to make any considerable alteration in the government of Church or State ;¹ but only a year later a clause in the Grand Remonstrance seemed to show that Parliament was determined to substitute Presbyterianism for the Episcopal government of the Church. This led to the alienation of Falkland and the moderate party. The King was only too pleased to obtain the services of a man of such known integrity, the sincerity and honesty of whose convictions were universally acknowledged. Falkland was therefore reluctantly persuaded to become the King's Principal Secretary of State, and carried out his duties with that scrupulous regard for truth and honour so characteristic of him. He could never be induced, says Clarendon, in the conduct of the Civil War, to give any countenance to the employment of spies who by false representations contrived to learn important secrets, and he considered "no qualification by office" could justify him in so far violating the law of nature as to open private letters on suspicion of their dangerous contents.²

Falkland believed, like many others at that time, that one engagement would end the dispute, and the failure of this expectation was a terrible blow to him. "From the entrance into this unnatural war his natural cheerfulness and vivacity grew clouded, and a kind of sadness and dejection of spirit stole upon him, which he had never been used to."³ He became absent and morose, careless in his appearance and habits, and his health soon began to be affected. It is pathetic to think of the sufferings which this peaceable and high-souled nature endured from the continuance of this fratricidal struggle. Great was his joy at any proposals for peace, and great his dejection at their failure. "Sitting among his friends often, after a deep silence and frequent sighs, he would with a shrill and sad accent ingeminate the word Peace, Peace, and would passionately profess that the very agony of the war, and the view of the calamities and desolation the kingdom did and must endure, took his sleep from him and would shortly break his heart."

¹ "History," i. 147.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 274.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 275.

He was, however, not destined to endure this mental agony for long, as the Battle of Newbury in September, 1643, put an end to his short but sad career. He had a presentiment of his fate on the morning of the battle, as he put on a clean shirt, remarking that "he would not be found in foul linen among the slain." Vainly his friends sought to dissuade him from joining in the fight. "I am weary," he replied, "of the times, and foresee much misery to my country, and believe I shall be out of it before night." He placed himself in the front rank, and was killed at the very commencement of the day's engagement. "Thus fell," observes Clarendon, "that incomparable young man, in the four-and-thirtieth year of his age, having so much dispatched the true business of life, that the eldest rarely attain to that immense knowledge, and the youngest enter not into the world with more innocency. Whosoever leads such a life needs be the less anxious upon how short warning it is taken from him. If there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed Civil War than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to all posterity."¹

Only two months before, his friend Richard Hampden, a patriot whose championship of the cause of liberty was equally as sincere as his own, had been killed at Chalgrove Field, fighting on the side of the Parliament, and died, like him, deploring the unhappy condition of his country. Falkland's hopes and aspirations had been shattered because he, and the few liberal and tolerant thinkers who shared his principles, were far ahead of the spirit of their age. They were the advance-guard of a future generation. They "laboured, and others entered into their labours." It was the stern age of repression and the sword rather than Falkland's more excellent way of toleration and compromise. Another fifty years of suffering, of persecution and animosity, of narrow prejudice and suspicion, had to be endured before the enlightened ideals of Falkland and the Cambridge Platonists found expression in the Bill of Rights, the Toleration Act, and in the teachings of men like Burnet and Tillotson.

¹ "History," ii. 270-277.