

**ESSAYS RELATING TO
IRELAND: BIOGRAPHICAL,
HISTORICAL AND
TOPOGRAPHICAL**

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Essays relating to Ireland: biographical, historical and topographical by C. Litton Falkiner & Edward Dowden

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BY
C. LITTON FALKNER

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

BY
EDWARD DOWDEN, LL.D.

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MEMOIR

THE accident near Argentière, in the Chamonix Valley, of August 5, 1908, which caused the death of Cæsar Litton Falkiner, not only carried sorrow into a happy home and brought a deep sense of deprivation to friends who regarded him with honour and affection, but was felt as a public calamity by lovers of literature, and especially by those who are interested in the history and the literature of Ireland. He died when all his powers were at the full, before he had completed his forty-fifth year, and when he was actively engaged in several literary undertakings of importance. I shall set down in the briefest way some facts of a happy, laborious, and well-spent life.

He was born in Dublin, September 26, 1863, the second son of the late Sir Frederick Richard Falkiner, Recorder of Dublin and Privy Councillor, Ireland. His mother was a daughter of Mr. Sadlier, of Ballinderry Park, Co. Tipperary. The 'Litton' of Falkiner's Christian name had been the maiden name of his grandmother; the 'Cæsar' came from a friend, and, I believe, a kinsman of the family, the Rev. Cæsar Otway, an antiquary and a writer of popular books on Irish topography, who had projected a History of Ireland and an edition of the works of Sir James Ware. For a time Falkiner was a pupil in the Royal School, Armagh. In Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated B.A. in 1886, M.A. in 1890, his career was not undistinguished. He took a prominent part in the discussions of the Philosophical Society, whose composition prize was awarded to him for an essay on Macaulay. At a later time he referred to the 'juvenility' of this essay, though he retained a certain respect for his early achievement; in

truth it is mature in judgment beyond the writer's years, and already shows something of the judicial character of his mind. The esteem in which he was held by his fellow-students is evidenced by the fact that they elected him President of the Society—a coveted honour—for the session 1885-86. His opening address, delivered before a large and distinguished audience, entitled in its printed form 'The New Voyage to Utopia,' is a kind of appeal from the New Whigs to the Old. The spirit engendered by the recent Reform Act, and that expressed in a still more recent political manifesto of Mr. Gladstone, supplied the text for Falkiner's discourse. Utopian visions, rash designs of innovation, the temper of change for the sake of change, and the consequent sense of insecurity and the violations of justice to minorities were the subjects of his criticism.

In 1887 Falkiner was called to the Bar. I knew him in those days and earlier days, and I imagined that in order to be a great advocate it would be needful for him to strive against his own judicial temper. Yet letters addressed by several Irish judges to his father testify to their high opinion of Falkiner's conduct of cases in their Courts. And he could vigorously take a side in controversy, for, when deliberation had resulted in convictions, those convictions were steadfast and became the basis of action. In the year after that in which he was called to the Bar he began to take an active part in political work in connexion with the Unionist Registration Associations for the City of Dublin and the South County Dublin. Of the former association he was for many years an honorary officer, secretary or treasurer, and threw himself into the work with the energy and practical ability which were characteristic of him. At the same time he was engaged in politics as a regular contributor of leading articles to a Dublin newspaper—the *Daily Express*. Such dealings with contemporary politics doubtless had their influence upon him afterwards, when he became a historical student of the past. He felt more vividly the living spirit in and behind external events; history could not appear to him as a mere accumulation of inanimate facts piled up by scientific coral-insects.

He acquired much knowledge of the inner working of party government, and a sense of those forces with which the legislative has to reckon. He developed a feeling for the values of personal influences in politics. And while untiring in historical research, and aware of the importance of those minute contributions to knowledge which delight the specialist, he saw the necessity of co-ordinating such facts under ideas and wider views, which can be appreciated, at least in a measure, by all intelligent readers.

At the General Election of 1892 Falkiner as a Unionist candidate contested South Armagh, making the best poll that has ever been recorded for a candidate of his political persuasion. Again in 1895 he was invited to contest the same constituency, and also that of East Donegal, but he was unable to accept either of these invitations in consequence of the task of organising the extensive campaign of the Irish Unionist Alliance at the General Election of that year—a task for which his zeal, his energy, his caution, and his sound judgment eminently qualified him, and which he conducted to the most successful results.

Before this date a great happiness had come to Falkiner. On August 4, 1892, took place his marriage to Henrietta Mary, only daughter of Sir Thomas Newenham Deane, the eminent architect, to whom Ireland owes its Art Museum and National Library, and Oxford its University Physiological Laboratory and Anthropological Museum. Even if it were possible, this is not the place to tell of the incalculable gains added to his life by his marriage and by the birth of two daughters.

In 1896 he became a member of the Royal Irish Academy. Having served for some years on the Council, he was elected secretary to that body in 1907, a position which he held until the close of his life. His successor in that office, Dr. L. C. Purser, in noticing the losses of the Academy during the session 1908–09, spoke of Falkiner's work thus: 'His work (in the secretaryship of the Council) was indefatigable and thorough-going, and was always inspired by the consciousness of the dignity and high position which the Academy