

PENGUIN CLASSICS



MARIA EDGEWORTH
CASTLE RACKRENT
AND ENNUUI



believing that a debtor is able by a few cant phrases to alter the nature of right and wrong. We had once thoughts of giving to these books the title of FASHIONABLE TALES: alas! the Dun could never have found favour with fashionable readers.

MANŒUVRING — is a vice to which the little great have recourse, to show their second-rate abilities. Intrigues of gallantry upon the continent frequently lead to political intrigue: amongst us the attempts to introduce this *improvement* of our manners have not yet been successful; but there are, however, some, who, in every thing they say or do, show a predilection for 'left-handed wisdom'. It is hoped that the picture here represented of a *manœurer* has not been made alluring.

ALMERIA — gives a view of the consequences which usually follow the substitution of the gifts of fortune in the place of merit; and shows the meanness of those who imitate manners and haunt company above their station in society.

Difference of rank is a continual excitement to laudable emulation; but those who consider the being admitted into circles of fashion as the summit of human bliss and elevation, will here find how grievously such frivolous ambition may be disappointed and chastised.

I may be permitted to add a word on the respect with which Miss Edgeworth treats the public — their former indulgence has not made her careless or presuming. The dates subjoined to these stories show, that they have not been hastily intruded upon the reader.

RICHARD LOVELL EDGEWORTH
Edgeworthstown,
March 1809.

Maria Edgeworth, Emmi
1809

ENNUI

'Que faites-vous à Potzdam?' demandois-je un jour au prince Guillaume. 'Monsieur,' me répondit-il, 'nous passons notre vie à conjuguer tous le même verbe: *Je m'ennuie, tu t'ennuies, il s'ennuie, nous nous ennuyons, vous vous ennuyez, ils s'ennuient; je m'ennuiois, je m'ennuierai, &c.*

ТНЕБАУЛД, Мѣм. de Frederick le Grand. ?

CHAPTER I

Bred up in luxurious indolence, I was surrounded by friends who seemed to have no business in this world but to save me the trouble of thinking or acting for myself; and I was confirmed in the pride of helplessness by being continually reminded that I was the only son and heir of the Earl of Glenthorn. My mother died a few weeks after I was born; and I lost my father when I was very young. I was left to the care of a guardian, who, in hopes of winning my affection, never controlled my wishes or even my whims: I changed schools and masters as often as I pleased, and consequently learned nothing. At last I found a private tutor who suited me exactly, for he was completely of my own opinion, 'that every thing which the young Earl of Glenthorn did not know by the instinct of genius was not worth his learning'. Money could purchase a reputation for talents, and with money I was immoderately supplied; for my guardian expected to bribe me with a part of my own fortune, to forbear inquiring what had become of a certain deficiency in the remainder. This tacit compact I perfectly understood: we were consequently on the most amicable terms imaginable, and the most confidential; for I thought it better to deal with my guardian than with Jews. Thus at an age when other young men are subject to some restraint, either from the necessity of their circumstances, or the discretion of their friends, I became completely master of myself and of my for-

tune. My companions envied me; but even their envy was not sufficient to make me happy. Whilst yet a boy, I began to feel the dreadful symptoms of that mental malady which baffles the skill of medicine, and for which wealth can purchase only temporary alleviation. For this complaint there is no precise English name; but, alas! the foreign term is now naturalized in England. Among the higher classes, whether in the wealthy or the fashionable world, who is unacquainted with *ennui*? At first I was unconscious of being subject to this disease; I felt that something was the matter with me, but I did not know what: yet the symptoms were sufficiently marked. I was afflicted with frequent fits of fidgeting, yawning, and stretching, with a constant restlessness of mind and body; an aversion to the place I was in, or the thing I was doing, or rather to that which was passing before my eyes, for I was never doing any thing; I had an utter abhorrence and an incapacity of voluntary exertion. Unless roused by external stimulus, I sank into that kind of apathy, and vacancy of ideas, vulgarly known by the name of *a brown study*. If confined in a room for more than half an hour by bad weather or other contrarieties, I would pace backwards and forwards, like the restless *caziz* in his den, with a fretful, unmeaning pertinacity. I felt an insatiable longing for something new, and a childish love of locomotion.

My physician and my guardian, not knowing what else to do with me, sent me abroad. I set out upon my travels in my eighteenth year, attended by my favourite tutor as my *companion*. We perfectly agreed in our ideas of travelling; we hurried from place to place as fast as horses and wheels, and curses and guineas, could carry us. Milord Anglois³ rattled over half the globe without getting one inch farther from his ennui. Three years were to be consumed before I should be of age. What sums did I spend during this interval in expedition-money to Timel; but the more I tried to hasten him, the slower the rogue went. I lost my money and my temper.

At last the day for which I had so long panted arrived — I was twenty-one! and I took possession of my estate. The bells rang, the bonfires blazed, the tables were spread, the wine flowed, huzzas resounded, friends and tenants crowded about me, and nothing but the voice of joy and congratulation was to be heard. The bustle of my situation kept me awake for some weeks; the pleasure of property was new, and, as long as the novelty lasted, delightful. I cannot say that I was satisfied; but my mind was distended by the sense of the

magnitude of my possessions. I had large estates in England; and in one of the remote maritime counties of Ireland, I was lord over an immense territory, annexed to the ancient castle of Glenthorn; — a noble pile of antiquity! worth ten degenerate castles of modern days. It was placed in a bold romantic situation; at least as far as I could judge of it by a picture, said to be a striking likeness, which hung in my hall at Sherwood Park in England. I was born in Ireland, and nursed, as I was told, in an Irish cabin; for my father had an idea that this would make me hardy; he left me with my Irish nurse till I was two years old, and from that time forward neither he nor I ever revisited Ireland. He had a dislike to that country, and I grew up in his prejudices. I declared that I would always reside in England. Sherwood Park, my English country-seat, had but one fault; it was completely finished. The house was magnificent, and in the modern taste; the furniture fashionably elegant, and in all the gloss of novelty. Not a single luxury omitted; not a fault could be found by the most fastidious critic. My park, my grounds, displayed all the beauties of nature and of art, judiciously combined. Majestic woods, waving their dark foliage, overhung — But I will spare my readers the description, for I remember falling asleep myself whilst a poet was reading to me an ode on the beauties of Sherwood Park. These beauties too soon became familiar to my eye; and even the idea of being the proprietor of this enchanting place soon palled upon my vanity. Every casual visitor, all the strangers, even the common people, who were allowed once a week to walk in my pleasure-grounds, enjoyed them a thousand times more than I could. I remember, that, about six weeks after I came to Sherwood Park, I one evening escaped from the crowds of *friends* who filled my house, to indulge myself in a solitary, melancholy walk. I saw at some distance a party of people, who were coming to admire the place; and to avoid meeting them I took shelter under a fine tree, the branches of which, hanging to the ground, concealed me from the view of passers. Thus seated, I was checked in the middle of a desperate yawn, by hearing one among the party of strangers exclaiming —

'How happy the owner of this place must be!'

Yes, had I known how to enjoy the goods of life, I might have been happy; but want of occupation, and antipathy to exertion, rendered me one of the most miserable men upon earth. Still I imagined that the cause of my discontent proceeded from some