

# Chapter 1

## Frances Brooke



### The Author

English Canadian literature has its roots in the European Old World. If anyone can be esteemed a literary pioneer in Canadian literature that links the new continent of North America with Britain, it is none other than Frances Brooke (1724-1789), widely acclaimed as the first North American novelist whose works fuse the different literary milieus as well as sensibilities of the two continents separated by the Atlantic Ocean. Frances Brooke was born in England and spent her childhood and adolescence in the various country rectories of clerical relatives. After the death of her parents she left her family home. She earned her literary credit and reputation well, for she had established her name as a novelist, essayist, dramatist, translator, theatre manager, and opera producer before she went to Quebec in 1763 as a military chaplain to join her husband John Brooke. While in London, she had already been an active part of the literary circle that included such big names as Samuel Johnson, Samuel Richardson, James Boswell. She edited thirty-seven issues of her own weekly periodical, *The Old Maid* (1755-1756), wrote verse as well as drama, and published her first epistolary novel, *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville* in 1763. After her return to England five years later, she resumed her literary career, producing two more novels, a drama, and two comic operas which were staged with success in London, gaining her considerable popularity.

### Major Works

Of special mention about Frances Brooke's literary significance in Canadian writing is her *The History of Emily Montague*, which, despite its fame as the first Canadian novel, has to be placed within the larger context of 18th-century English literature because of its intended English readership. As was customary of early colonial writing, Frances depicted the landscape, people, customs, and events in the North American colony from the perspective of a tourist and observer, reporting back to her mother country on the daily happenings in Quebec. The book has been variously labelled a romance, a novel of sentiment, or a novel of manners. Adopting the form of an epistolary novel typical of 18th-century English literature, Frances voices her observations of Quebec's society, politics, religion, and cultural atmosphere. The novel fits well in the category of a novel of sensibility, which foregrounds the importance of subtle feelings, with a dramatisation of the romantic relationships of three pairs of lovers. The letters in the novel are arranged numerically, and most of the letters, 228 in total, are written by Colonel Ed. Rivers, Emily Montague's lover, and by Arabella Fermor, her friend and confidante. The main story line centres around the changing fortunes of the titular heroine, Emily Montague, and her lover Colonel Ed. Rivers. Following the Treaty of Paris after the English-French War in 1766, the latter is posted to the colony of Quebec as a colonial military officer. Soon after his arrival in the New World, Rivers

finds himself in love with Emily Montague, who is engaged with Sir George Clayton, a young and handsome baronet. The story thus unfolds itself, informing the reader through exchange of letters, of the Rivers's courtship, frustration, misunderstanding, and his final winning Emily's hand before their return to the native land. Interspersed with the love story of the hero and the heroine are accounts of the relationships between Captain Fitzgerald and Arabella Fermor and between John Temple and Lucy Rivers, the hero's sister. The novel embodies a hidden political strategy in its literary artifice, using the character of William Fermor to make appraisals of the social order in North America. The novel follows closely the political, military, and social conflicts that were going on between England, the rebellious Thirteen Colonies, and the then (French) Canada, and it chronicles the initial adjustments that Canada had to make in the series of triangular configurations and shifting allegiances. Cultural tensions and conflicts are seen in the novel, but we also see a stronger note of acculturation that is suggestive of a transnational perspective.

The novel is important in several ways. First, it is the first novel to be set in Canada. Despite its impalpable direct influence on later Canadian writers, the novel provides one of the earliest delineations of and imaginative responses to the new land, and has thus come to be deemed as a very important work for understanding the Canadian literary tradition. Canada is depicted by the English characters as a wilderness which invites taming and transformation, an act of perseverant will to "see order and beauty gradually rise from chaos." Geographic descriptions are provided in ample detail, including the grandeur of Montmorency Falls, the floating ice on the rivers, the perpetuity of the St. Lawrence, as well as the wintry cold and bitterness which, however, is offset by the cheerfulness and festivity of human community. In the novel, the author chronicles a detailed observation of the French and English manners and customs as well as the cultural landscape of the Native people. Cultural encounters and pluralism typical of contemporary Canadian literature have found their expression at the inchoate stage of literary writing. The novel records not so much the military conflicts between the French and the English as the cultural intermingling and exchanges between them, thus setting the key tone of a literary tradition that embodies diverse elements of cultural enunciation. The novel serves as a classic example through which the reader is able to understand the cultural differences and interactions between the two founding nations of the modern Canadian nation. Second, the novel exhibits Brooke's true literary craftsmanship, infused with literary allusions and intertextual elements so that the text becomes a dialogue with her literary predecessors and contemporaries. Her adaptation and parody of Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, etc., her inheritance of the epistolary form, her concealed satire against patriarchy, and so on, contribute to the uniqueness of the novel. Most notably, her novel even permits of a contemporary, dialogic reading in that it contains a disparity between two opposing viewpoints—that of a didactic, prosaic man of sensibility (Ed. Rivers) who forever seeks to inculcate the ideal of feminine etiquette and virtue and that of the witty, incisive woman (Fermor) who not only has a head of her own but also aims to build a "system of ethics" of her own. Disguised under the prim, almost insipid preachings of a patriarchal edict on feminine coquetry, the novel conceals a double consciousness in which the author may have utilised the overly flirtatious Fermor as a potentially subversive spokesman on behalf of her feminist assertions. French manners are contrasted with English ones. Whereas Fermor lacks the decorum of an English lady, she excels in the vivacity and effulgence of a Frenchwoman who is never ashamed of her feminine power to charm and delight. Brooke also extols Native culture—Indians are remarked as disdainful of rank or riches and more

civilised in many ways than the West. Women, for instance, have their own power to select their leaders whereas Western women have no political power.

*The History of Emily Montague* treats the earliest immigrant experience in the New World while adding some freshness to the otherwise conventional romance. At the end of the novel, Brooke's English characters leave Canada with regret. Arabella wishes that she "had rather live at Quebec, take it for all in all, than in any town in England, except London: the manner of living here is uncommonly agreeable: the scenes about us are lovely, and the mode of amusements makes us taste those scenes in full perfection." Brooke visualises North American society as a new land worthy of full exploration and rewarding in fresh cultural and spiritual experiences. Brooke expresses her feminist aesthetics and "petticoat politics" through the wit, humour, and acumen of her female character. Her major contribution to Canadian literature stems in a large part from *The History of Emily Montague*, which conveys with grace, wit, intelligence, and perception what it meant to experience Canada in the 18th century.

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## Selected Readings

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### The History of Emily Montague

#### LETTER X

Sillery, August 24.

I have been a month arrived, my dear, without having seen your brother, who is at Montreal, but I am told is expected to-day. I have spent my time however very agreeably. I know not what the winter may be, but I am enchanted with the beauty of this country in summer; bold, picturesque, romantic, nature reigns here in all her wanton luxuriance, adorned by a thousand wild graces which mock the cultivated beauties of Europe. The scenery about the town is infinitely lovely; the prospect extensive, and diversified by a variety of hills, woods, rivers, cascades, intermingled with smiling farms and cottages, and bounded by distant mountains which seem to scale<sup>1</sup> the very Heavens.

The days are much hotter here than in England, but the heat is more supportable from the breezes which always spring up about noon; and the evenings are charming beyond expression. We have much thunder and lightening, but very few instances of their being fatal: the thunder is more magnificent and awful than in Europe, and the lightening brighter and more beautiful; I have even seen it of a clear pale purple, resembling the gay tints of the morning.

The verdure<sup>2</sup> is equal to that of England, and in the evening acquires an unspeakable beauty from the lucid splendor of the fire-flies sparkling like a thousand little stars on the trees and on the grass.

There are two very noble falls of water near Quebec, la Chaudiere and Montmorenci: the former is a prodigious sheet of water, rushing over the wildest rocks, and forming a scene grotesque, irregular, astonishing: the latter, less wild, less irregular, but more pleasing and more

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1 scale: to reduce the size, amount, importance, etc. of.

2 verdure: the fresh green colour of lush vegetation.

majestic, falls from an immense height, down the side of a romantic mountain, into the river St. Lawrence, opposite the most smiling part of the island of Orleans, to the cultivated charms of which it forms the most striking and agreeable contrast.

The river of the same name, which supplies the cascade of Montmorenci, is the most lovely of all inanimate objects: but why do I call it inanimate? It almost breathes; I no longer wonder at the enthusiasm of Greece and Rome; 'twas from objects resembling this their mythology took its rise; it seems the residence of a thousand deities<sup>1</sup>.

Paint to yourself a stupendous rock burst as it were in sunder<sup>2</sup> by the hands of nature, to give passage<sup>3</sup> to a small, but very deep and beautiful river; and forming on each side a regular and magnificent wall, crowned with the noblest woods that can be imagined; the sides of these romantic walls adorned with a variety of the gayest flowers, and in many places little streams of the purest water gushing through, and losing themselves in the river below: a thousand natural grottoes<sup>4</sup> in the rock make you suppose yourself in the abode of the Nereids;<sup>5</sup> as a little island, covered with flowering shrubs, about a mile above the falls, where the river enlarges itself as if to give it room, seems intended for the throne of the river goddess. Beyond this, the rapids, formed by the irregular projections of the rock, which in some places seem almost to meet, rival in beauty, as they excel in variety, the cascade itself, and close this little world of enchantment.

In short, the loveliness of this fairy scene alone more than pays the fatigues of my voyage; and, if I ever murmur at having crossed the Atlantic, remind me that I have seen the river Montmorenci.

I can give you a very imperfect account of the people here; I have only examined the landscape about Quebec, and have given very little attention to the figures; the French ladies are handsome, but as to the beaux,<sup>6</sup> they appear to me not at all dangerous, and one might safely walk in a wood by moonlight with the most agreeable Frenchman here. I am not surprised the Canadian ladies take such pains to seduce our men from us; but I think it a little hard we have no temptation to make reprisals.

I am at present at an extreme pretty farm on the banks of the river St. Lawrence; the house stands at the foot of a steep mountain covered with a variety of trees, forming a verdant sloping wall, which rises in a kind of regular confusion,

“Shade above shade, a woody theatre,”<sup>7</sup>

and has in front this noble river, on which the ships continually passing present to the delighted eye the most charming moving picture imaginable; I never saw a place so formed to inspire that pleasing lassitude, that divine inclination to saunter, which may not improperly be called, the luxurious indolence of the country. I intend to build a temple here to the charming goddess of laziness.

1 deity: gods or goddesses.

2 sunder: to split apart.

3 give passage to: to allow to pass.

4 grotto: a small picturesque cave.

5 the Nereids: sea nymphs.

6 beaux: dandy; a rich fashionable young man.

7 Taken from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*: “Cedar, and pine, and fit, and branching palm, / A sylvan scene, and, as the ranks ascend / Shade above shade, a woody theatre / of stateliest view” (IV, 139-42). Milton's descriptions of the Garden of Eden frequently appear in Brooke's delineations of Canadian landscape.

A gentleman is just coming down the winding path on the side of the hill, whom by his air I take to be your brother. Adieu! I must receive him: my father is at Quebec.

Yours,

ARABELLA FERMOR.

## LETTER XI

To Miss RIVERS, Clarges Street.

Quebec, Sept. 10.

I find, my dear, that absence and amusement are the best remedies for a beginning passion; I have passed a fortnight at the Indian village of Lorette, where the novelty of the scene, and the enquiries I have been led to make into their ancient religion and manners, have been of a thousand times more service to me than all the reflection in the world would have been.

I will own to you that I stayed too long at Montreal, or rather at Major Melmoth's; to be six weeks in the same house with one of the most amiable, most pleasing of women, was a trying situation to a heart full of sensibility, and of a sensibility which has been hitherto, from a variety of causes, a good deal restrained. I should have avoided the danger from the first, had it appeared to me what it really was; but I thought myself secure in the consideration of her engagements, a defence however which I found grow weaker every day.

But to my savages: other nations talk of liberty, they possess it; nothing can be more astonishing than to see a little village of about thirty or forty families, the small remains of the Hurons, almost exterminated by long and continual war with the Iroquoise,<sup>1</sup> preserve their independence in the midst of an European colony consisting of seventy thousand inhabitants; yet the fact is true of the savages of Lorette; they assert and they maintain that independence with a spirit truly noble. One of our company having said something which an Indian understood as a supposition that they had been *subjects* of France, his eyes struck fire, he stopped him abruptly, contrary to their respectful and sensible custom of never interrupting the person who speaks, "You mistake, brother," said he, "we are subjects to no prince; a savage is free all over the world." And he spoke only truth; they are not only free as a people, but every individual is perfectly so. Lord of himself, at once subject and master, a savage knows no superior, a circumstance which has a striking effect on his behaviour; unawed by rank or riches, distinctions unknown amongst his own nation, he would enter as unconcerned, would possess all his powers as freely in the palace of an oriental monarch, as in the cottage of the meanest peasant: 'tis the species, 'tis man, 'tis his equal he respects, without regarding the gaudy trappings, the accidental advantages, to which polished nations pay homage.

I have taken some pains to develop their present, as well as past, religious sentiments, because

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1 This description refers to the Iroquois Wars, also known as the Beaver Wars, which were a series of 17th-century conflicts for economic welfare throughout the St. Lawrence River valley and the lower Great Lakes region. The wars were fought because the Iroquois were trying to take control of the fur trade from the Hurons, the northern Algonquians.

the Jesuit missionaries<sup>1</sup> have boasted so much of their conversion; and find they have rather engrafted a few of the most plain and simple truths of Christianity on their ancient superstitions, than exchanged one faith for another; they are baptized, and even submit to what they themselves call the *yoke* of confession, and worship according to the outward forms of the Romish church, the drapery of which cannot but strike minds unused to splendor; but their belief is very little changed, except that the women seem to pay great reverence to the Virgin, perhaps because flattering to the sex. They anciently believed in one God, the ruler and creator of the universe, whom they called *the Great Spirit* and the *Master of Life*; in the sun as his image and representative; in a multitude of inferior spirits and demons; and in a future state of rewards and punishments, or, to use their own phrase, in *a country of souls*. They revered the spirits of their departed heroes, but it does not appear that they paid them any religious adoration. Their morals were more pure, their manners more simple, than those of polished nations, except in what regarded the intercourse of the sexes: the young women before marriage were indulged in great libertinism, hid however under the most reserved and decent exterior. They held adultery in abhorrence, and with the more reason as their marriages were dissolvable at pleasure. The missionaries are said to have found no difficulty so great in gaining them to Christianity, as that of persuading them to marry for life: they regarded the Christian system of marriage as contrary to the laws of nature and reason; and asserted that, as the *Great Spirit* formed us to be happy, it was opposing his will, to continue together when otherwise.

The sex we have so unjustly excluded from power in Europe have a great share in the Huron government; the chief is chose by the matrons from amongst the nearest male relations, by the female line, of him he is to succeed; and is generally an aunt's or sister's son; a custom which, if we examine strictly into the principle on which it is founded, seems a little to contradict what we are told of the extreme chastity of the married ladies.

The power of the chief is extremely limited; he seems rather to advise his people as a father than command them as a master: yet, as his commands are always reasonable, and for the general good, no prince in the world is so well obeyed. They have a supreme council of ancients, into which every man enters of course at an age fixed, and another of assistants to the chief on common occasions, the members of which are like him elected by the matrons: I am pleased with this last regulation, as women are, beyond all doubt, the best judges of the merit of men; and I should be extremely pleased to see it adopted in England: canvassing for elections would then be the most agreeable thing in the world, and I am sure the ladies would give their votes on much more generous principles than we do. In the true sense of the word, *we* are the savages, who so impolitely deprive you of the common rights of citizenship, and leave you no power but that of which we cannot deprive you, the resistless power of your charms. By the way, I don't think you are obliged in conscience to obey laws you have had no share in making; your plea would certainly be at least as good as that of the Americans, about which we every day hear so much.

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1 In the 1600s, Jesuits of French origin did considerable missionary work among the Indians of North America to spread Christianity and convert the native people. John de Brebeuf was one of the first three Jesuits assigned to the Canadian mission. He preached among the Hurons, which lasted for more than twenty years with slight success. He was joined by Gabriel Lalemant on the Huron Mission in 1648; the following spring, the two priests were captured in an Iroquois raid and were horribly tortured. De Brebeuf survived only a few hours. Lalemant lived through the night and died the following day.

The Hurons have no positive laws; yet being a people not numerous, with a strong sense of honor, and in that state of equality which gives no food to the most tormenting passions of the human heart, and the council of ancients having a power to punish atrocious crimes, which power however they very seldom find occasion to use, they live together in a tranquillity and order which appears to us surprising.

In more numerous Indian nations, I am told, every village has its chief and its councils, and is perfectly independent on the rest; but on great occasions summon a general council, to which every village sends deputies.

Their language is at once sublime and melodious; but, having much fewer ideas, it is impossible it can be so copious as those of Europe: the pronunciation of the men is guttural,<sup>1</sup> but that of the women extremely soft and pleasing; without understanding one word of the language, the sound of it is very agreeable to me, their style even in speaking French is bold and metaphorical: and I am told is on important occasions extremely sublime. Even in common conversation they speak in figures, of which I have this moment an instance. They have no idea of letters, no alphabet, nor is their language reducible to rules: 'tis by painting they preserve the memory of the only events which interest them, or that they think worth recording, the conquests gained over their enemies in war.

When I speak of their paintings, I should not omit that, though extremely rude, they have a strong resemblance to the Chinese, a circumstance which struck me the more, as it is not the style of nature. Their dances also, the most lively pantomimes I ever saw, and especially the dance of peace, exhibit variety of attitudes resembling the figures on Chinese fans; nor have their features and complexion less likeness to the pictures we see of the Tartars,<sup>2</sup> as their wandering manner of life, before they became Christians, was the same.

...

Their general character is difficult to describe; made up of contrary and even contradictory qualities, they are indolent, tranquil, quiet, humane in peace; active, restless, cruel, ferocious in war: courteous, attentive, hospitable, and even polite, when kindly treated; haughty, stern, vindictive, when they are not; and their resentment is the more to be dreaded, as they hold it a point of honor to dissemble their sense of an injury till they find an opportunity to revenge it. ... They despise death, and suffer the most excruciating tortures not only without a groan, but with an air of triumph; singing their death song, deriding their tormentors, and threatening them with the vengeance of their surviving friends: yet hold it honorable to fly before an enemy that appears the least superior in number or force.

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What a letter have I written! I shall quit my post of historian to your friend Miss Fermor; the ladies love writing much better than we do; and I should perhaps be only just, if I said they write better.

Adieu!

ED. RIVERS.

1 guttural: produced in the throat.

2 Tartar: a member of any of the various tribes, chiefly Mongolian and Turkish, who, originally under the leadership of Genghis Khan, overran Asia and much of eastern Europe in the Middle Ages.

## LETTER XV

To Miss MONTAGUE, at Montreal.

Sillery, Sept. 16.

Take care, my dear Emily, you do not fall into the common error of sensible and delicate minds, that of refining away your happiness.

Sir George is handsome as an Adonis; you allow him to be of an amiable character; he is rich, young, well born, and loves you; you will have fine cloths, fine jewels, a fine house, a coach and six; all the *douceurs* of marriage, with an extreme pretty fellow, who is fond of you, whom *you see with pleasure, and prefer to all his sex*; and yet you are discontented, because you have not for him at twenty-four the romantic passion of fifteen, or rather that ideal passion which perhaps never existed but in imagination.

To be happy in this world, it is necessary not to raise one's ideas too high: if I loved a man of Sir George's fortune half as well as by your own account you love him, I should not hesitate one moment about marrying; but sit down contented with ease, affluence, and an agreeable man, without expecting to find in life what it certainly is not, a state of continual rapture. 'Tis, I am afraid, my dear, your misfortune to have too much sensibility to be happy.

I could moralize exceedingly well this morning on the vanity of human wishes and expectations, and the folly of hoping for felicity in this vile sublunary world: but the subject is a little exhausted, and I have a passion for being original. I think all the moral writers, who have set off with promising to shew us the road to happiness, have obligingly ended with telling us there is no such thing; a conclusion extremely consoling, and which if they had drawn before they set pen to paper, would have saved both themselves and their readers an infinity of trouble. This fancy of what one knows is not to be found, is really an ingenious way of amusing both one's self and the world: I wish people would either write to some purpose, or be so good as not to write at all.

I believe I shall set about writing a system of ethics myself, which shall be short, clear, and comprehensive; nearer the Epicurean perhaps than the Stoic; but rural, refined, and sentimental; rural by all means; for who does not know that virtue is a country gentlewoman? all the good mammas will tell you, there is no such being to be heard of in town.

I shall certainly be glad to see you, my dear; though I foresee strange revolutions *in the state of Denmark* from this event; at present I have all the men to myself, and you must know I have a prodigious aversion to divided empire: however, 'tis some comfort they all know you are going to be married. You may come, Emily; only be so obliging to bring Sir George along with you: in your present situation, you are not so very formidable.

The men here, as I said before, are all dying for me; there are many handsomer women, but I flatter them, and the dear creatures cannot resist it. I am a very good girl to women, but naturally artful (if you will allow the expression) to the other sex; I can blush, look down, stifle a sigh, flutter my fan, and seem so agreeably confused—you have no notion, my dear, what fools men are. If you had not got the start of me, I would have had your little white-haired baronet in a week, and yet I don't take him to be made of very combustible materials; rather mild, composed, and pretty, I believe; but he has vanity, which is quite enough for my purpose.

...

Adieu! I am going to ramble in the woods, and pick berries, with a little smiling civil captain,



who is enamoured of me: a pretty rural amusement for lovers!  
 Good morrow, my dear Emily,  
 Yours,

A. FERMOR.

LETTER XXI

To JOHN TEMPLE, Esq; Pall Mall.

Montreal, Sept. 24.

What you say, my dear friend, is more true than I wish it was; our English women of character are generally too reserved; their manner is cold and forbidding; they seem to think it a crime to be too attractive; they appear almost afraid to please.

'Tis to this ill-judged reserve I attribute the low profligacy of too many of our young men; the grave faces and distant behaviour of the generality of virtuous women fright them from their acquaintance, and drive them into the society of those wretched votaries of vice, whose conversation debases every sentiment of their souls.

With as much beauty, good sense, sensibility, and softness, at least, as any women on earth, no women please so little as the English: depending on their native charms, and on those really amiable qualities which envy cannot deny them, they are too careless in acquiring those enchanting nameless graces, which no language can define, which give resistless force to beauty, and even supply its place where it is wanting.

They are satisfied with being good, without considering that unadorned virtue may command esteem, but will never excite love; and both are necessary in marriage, which I suppose to be the state every woman of honor has in prospect; for I own myself rather incredulous as to the assertions of maiden aunts and cousins to the contrary. I wish my amiable countrywomen would consider one moment, that virtue is never so lovely as when dressed in smiles: the virtue of women should have all the softness of the sex; it should be gentle, it should be even playful, to please.

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Yours,

ED. RIVERS.

LETTER LXXXII

To Miss RIVERS, Clarges Street.

March 1.

I was mistaken, my dear; not a word of love between your brother and Emily, as she positively assures me; something very tender has passed, I am convinced, notwithstanding, for she blushes more than ever when he approaches, and there is a certain softness in his voice when he addresses her, which cannot escape a person of my penetration.

...

If beauty, as I will take the liberty to assert, is given us for the purpose of pleasing, she who

pleases most, that is to say, she who excites the most passion, is to all intents and purposes the most beautiful woman; and, in this case, I am inclined to believe your little Bell stands pretty high on the roll of beauty; the men's *eyes* may perhaps *say* she is handsome, but their *hearts feel* that I am so.

There is, in general, nothing so insipid, so uninteresting, as a beauty; which those men experience to their cost, who choose from vanity, not inclination. I remember Sir Charles Herbert, a Captain in the same regiment with my father, who determined to marry Miss Raymond before he saw her, merely because he had been told she was a celebrated beauty, though she was never known to have inspired a real passion: he saw her, not with his own eyes, but those of the public, took her charms on trust; and, till he was her husband, never found out she was not his taste; a secret, however, of some little importance to his happiness.

I have, however, known some beauties who had a right to please; that is, who had a mixture of that invisible charm, that nameless grace which by no means depends on beauty, and which strikes the heart in a moment; but my first aversion is your *fine women*: don't you think a *fine woman* a detestable creature, Lucy? I do: they are vastly well to *fill* public places; but as to the heart—Heavens, my dear! yet there are men, I suppose, to be found, who have a taste for the great sublime in beauty.

Men are vastly foolish, my dear; very few of them have spirit to think for themselves; there are a thousand Sir Charles Herberts: I have seen some of them weak enough to decline marrying the woman on earth most pleasing to themselves, because not thought handsome by the generality of their companions.

Women are above this folly, and therefore chuse much oftener from affection than men. We are a thousand times wiser, Lucy, than these important beings, these mighty lords,

“Who strut and fret their hour upon the stage;”<sup>1</sup>

and, instead of playing the part in life which nature dictates to their reason and their hearts, act a borrowed one at the will of others.

I had rather even judge ill, than not judge for myself.

Adieu! yours ever,

A. FERMOR.

## Questions for Analysis

1. Some critics assert that Brooke is ambivalent in her attitude towards gender issues. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Is Arabella Fermor described as a rebellious feminist with independent thinking or a coquettish girl to be condemned?
3. What is Ed. Rivers's attitude towards the Indian women described in the story?

<sup>1</sup> A quotation from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (v. 5). “Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”

4. Does the story impart an ironic reflection on weaknesses of the English nation? Why or why not?
  5. In what sense do you see Brooke's telling of the story and her characterisation as dialogic in nature?
  6. Some argue that Ed. Rivers is more feminine and sentimental than men who usually are described in 18th-century novels of sensibility. What do you think?
  7. How does the author convey her attitude towards French manners through Ed. Rivers and Arabella Fermor?
  8. What are the cultural, social, and moral differences in feminine coquetry in 18th-century Britain and France? And how are they reflected in the novel?
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