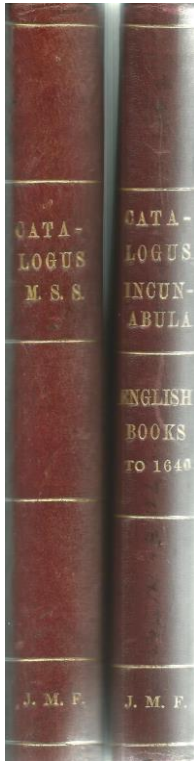


John Meade Falkner as a Book Collector: A Footnote
John Coulter and Godfrey Smith

In 2004, for the fifth number of the Journal, we wrote a study of Falkner's life as a book collector, and an analysis of his library as revealed by the incomplete evidence of the Sotheby sale catalogue of December 1932. Since then, thanks to the patient perseverance of our founder, Kenneth Hillier, important new evidence about the library has become available, and in the last year a new life of Falkner has been published. The business of this footnote is to discuss in which ways these developments modify the conclusions of the original article.



Kenneth Hillier gave this account of his discovery in the Newsletter No. 56 of the 3rd January 2018: *"In the early 1990s, when I was in contact with the late John Noble, he mentioned that he had found at his home in Ardkinglas two hand-written volumes cataloguing the most important works in JMF's Library. After John's untimely death in 2002, they appeared to be lost. However, thanks to the good offices of Sir Timothy Noble, one of our members, and the searching capabilities of David Sumsion, who now lives at Ardkinglas, the volumes reappeared. We have purchased them for the Society."*

The manuscript catalogue, or hand-list as Falkner called it, is in two volumes, each 9¼ by 7¼ inches, quarter bound in reddish-brown calf, with grey marbled boards. The pages are ruled in green (23 lines) with a red inner margin. They would have been standard stationers' notebooks of the period. The first volume has 356 unnumbered pages. The title page reads 'Catalogue of

Manuscripts, J. Meade Falkner, The Divinity House, Durham, 1925-6. E.V.S.’ The spine is lettered ‘Catalogus M.S.S.: J.M.F.’ The third, fourth, and fifth pages give the contents, then there are 92 numbered folios, the recto only written on, filling a little over half the book. The rest of the pages are blank except for twelve of index at the end, one of them incorrectly numbered 276 in pencil. Each of the numbered folios contains the description of a single manuscript, some bound in more than one volume. This first volume of the catalogue we will refer to as C. 1, with a folio number where appropriate.

The second volume has 273 pages. The title page reads ‘Catalogue of Incunabula, English Books to 1640, Mearne Bindings, etc., J. Meade Falkner, The Divinity House, Durham, E.V.S. 1922-7.’ The spine is lettered ‘Catalogus Incunabula: English Books to 1640: J.M.F.’ There is a pencilled page number on each of the rectos and a page number in dark blue ink on some of the few versos that have been used. The verso of the title page gives the contents and page 1 the list of abbreviations. Page 2, like most of the versos, is blank. Pages 3 to 131 (rectos and a few versos) list the incunabula or supposed incunabula. Pages 132 to 153 are blank. Pages 154 to 161 list ‘English-Printed Books before 1641,’ with an index of printers on pp. 162-3. Page 165 lists ‘Mearne Bindings or in Mearne Style,’ p. 167 ‘Baskerville Press’ books, pages 168 to 173 ‘English Printed Books After 1640’ (obviously only a very small selection of the whole) and pages 176 to 211 ‘Foreign Printed Books after 1500,’ also selective. Pages 214 to 221 have an index of ‘Foreign Printers after 1500,’ pages 250 to 258 indices to the incunabula under various headings, and page 260 a chronology of the incunabula. The remaining pages, and those not listed above, are blank. This volume we will refer to as C. 2, with a page number where appropriate.

The catalogues feature two distinct handwritings. The substantive entries were written between 1922 and 1927, in dark blue ink, with just a few brief notes in pencil, by Edward Vazeille Stocks (the

'E.V.S.' of the title pages) who was Librarian to the University of Durham and a friend of Falkner.

At some date between 1927 and 1932 a second person made additions, corrections, and comments in pencil, and in most cases provided a valuation in pounds. That these are valuations rather than purchase prices seemed proved by the fact that in a few cases (for example C. 1 fol 42) there is no figure stated, but instead the words 'valued elsewhere.' This second writer was not



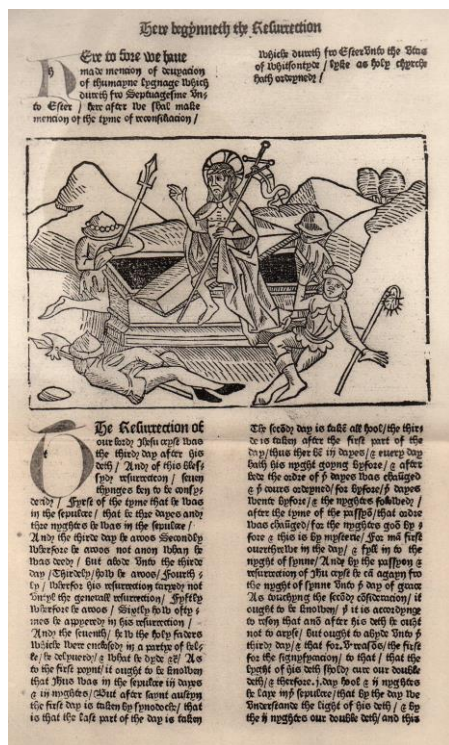
Falkner, as the hand is an ugly **JMF with Stocks at Finchale Priory** forward-sloping sprawl, not remotely similar to Falkner's neat upright script. Besides, he marked a few items (for example C. 2 p. 74) as 'not seen.' That suggests he was working in Falkner's absence, most likely after his death. He was clearly an expert on liturgical books and incunabula – more so than Stocks. This anonymous second writer we will call 'Pencil.'

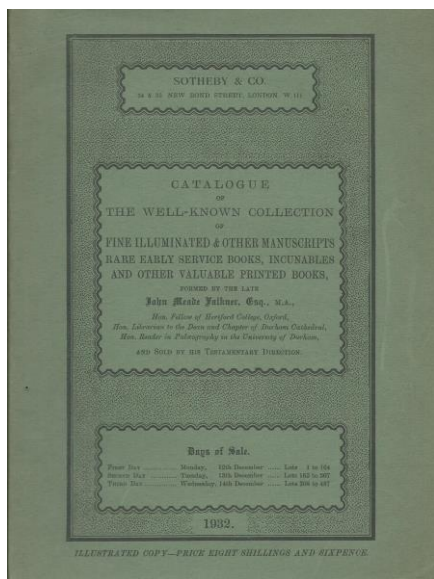
One motive for the making of the catalogues was stated by Falkner in a letter of the 2nd October 1927 to John Noble, where he describes them as "the only real *pièce justificative* for the insurance people." The estimated valuations of 'Pencil,' however, even if they were written in Falkner's lifetime, would not have been so convincing to an insurance company as the invoices that Falkner, the businessman, would undoubtedly have kept. The value of the catalogues for insurance purposes lay in the descriptions and in the independent evidence they gave that the books remained in Falkner's possession.

That 'Pencil' was working very late in Falkner's life or after his death is strongly suggested by the low valuations. 'Pencil' sometimes noted a sale in which one of Falkner's books had previously figured, with the price realised, and Stocks in one instance tipped in a page of the 1922 bookseller's catalogue from which Falkner purchased an item. In all but one case the 'Pencil' valuation is lower than the former sale price, frequently less than half. For example, the 'Breviarium Eboracense' (C. 1 fol. 11) is noted by 'Pencil' as having been in the Poyntz sale of 30th June 1921, when it was knocked down to Ellis for £155. 'Pencil' first gave a valuation of £120 but crossed that out and substituted £70. Antiquarian book prices were buoyant in the roaring Twenties, but plummeted in the depression of the early Thirties.

The only exception to this downward trend in Pencil's valuations was the Caxton Golden Legend (C. 2 p. 119), which went for £480 at Sotheby's in 1907, but which he valued at £500. It went on to be the star item (lot 484) in the Falkner sale, where it reached much the highest price of £1,100. (We gave this as £11,000 in 2004, nearly £3,000 more than the total realised by the sale.)

**The largest Caxton known
(after 20 Nov. 1483)
*The Golden Legend***



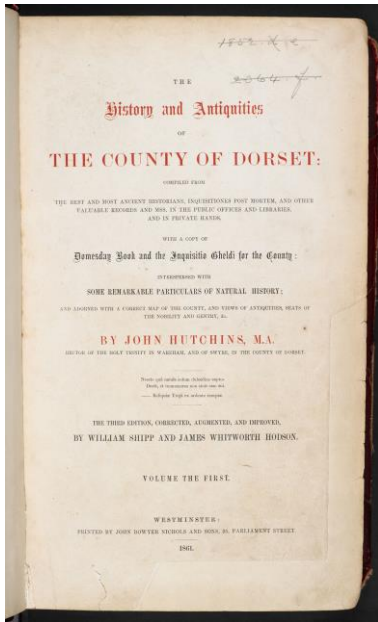


‘Pencil’ may have been an expert employed by Falkner to value the books in the last year or two of his life, but it is far more likely that he was the Sotheby man called in by Falkner’s executor in 1932 to prepare the collection for the December sale. In that case the prices noted may have been tentative insurance values or reserves, but not estimates. Sotheby’s did not include estimates in the published catalogues until the 1980s.

Suggestive of an auctioneer are the comments added by ‘Pencil’ about many of the printed books: ‘wormed,’ ‘fair copy,’ ‘good copy,’ ‘fine copy,’ ‘very fine copy,’ ‘perfect.’ A representative of Sotheby’s informs us that the records of the firm are not nearly full enough to break Pencil’s alias.

These newly discovered catalogues do not add greatly to our knowledge of Falkner’s library, because Stocks concentrated on the same manuscripts and books – the ones of scholarly and commercial value in the 1920s – as the Sotheby cataloguer of 1932. The bulk of Falkner’s working library of modern books, which provided the models and part of the inspiration for his own novels and poems and topographical works – and which would have been so helpful to those investigating their sources – vanished into the infinite waste of the book market without leaving much trace of their residence at the Divinity House. However, some works appear

in Stocks that did not make it into the auction, or which were there only as anonymous 'others' in multiple lots.



In the field of local history and topography, which must have figured largely in the library but is scarcely represented in the Sotheby catalogue, there are the History of Dorset by John Hutchins, 2 vols. 1774 (C. 2 p. 170) and the Essay towards a Description of Bath by John Wood, 2 vols. 1749. This was the first of the 'other Bath books which may interest casual visitors' recommended in Falkner's Bath in History and Social Tradition (1918). An interesting historical work that we overlooked in 2004 was the first edition of the Paston letters, as lot 174 in the Sotheby catalogue, and among the topo-

Hutchins' Dorset
 geographical books we should have noted The Glastonbury Lake Village (1911) by Bulleid and Gray (lot 129).

To Falkner's collection of poetry can be added George Buchanan's Poemata, Elzivir, Leyden, 1628 (C. 2 p. 180), and Paolo Zazzaroni's Giardino poetico, Verona 1642 (C. 2 p. 210); to fiction both the Argenis, Elzivir, Amsterdam 1655, and the Satyricon, Elzivir, Leydon 1637, of John Barclay (C. 2 pp. 176 and 178). An item that should have been mentioned in 2004 as part of Falkner's music collection is Polypheme, an opera, London 1734 (C. 2 p. 172; lot 70 in Sotheby). This was a work - libretto by Paolo Rolli, music by Nicola Porpora - that was performed for the Opera of the Nobility in 1735, at the

King's Theatre, Haymarket, in opposition to Handel's season at Covent Garden.

The wreck of the secondhand book market occasionally throws up a treasure featuring Falkner's distinctive bookplate or his neat ownership signature, and offers a glimpse of the lost sections of his library. Kenneth Hillier's collection includes the first edition of the fourth series of Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of My Landlord* (4 vols. 1832), which formed part of lot 452 in the Sotheby sale, and three books from the Falkner library that do not feature in either the manuscript or printed catalogue: *The British Compendium*: or, *Rudiments of Honour*



(1721), a pocket peerage and introduction to heraldry with several



Falkner family signatures; *The Visitations of the County of Oxford* (1871), the 5th volume of the publications of the Harleian Society; and Edmund Bishop's *Liturgica Historica* (1918). *The Visitations* may be a relic of a large body of material, as Falkner very

Pocket Peerage and Book of Heraldry

likely subscribed to the Harleian and to other national and county record societies. The Liturgica was given to the Durham Cathedral Library in September 1932, perhaps with many others, shortly after Falkner's death, and marked by a specially printed label recording it as "Ex Dono John Meade Falkner." The library sold the book in 2005.

The liturgical manuscripts and the incunabula, being the most valuable items, nearly all found their way into the auction catalogue in recognisable form. Sotheby's included 90 manuscript lots out of a total of 489. The majority of these were books for church service use, including the services of the religious orders. They include breviaries, manuals, missals, psalters, antiphonaries, graduals, processional, etc.

There are also 13 horae (books of hours) for private or lay use. The manuscripts made a large contribution to the total realised by the auction: fifteen of them fetched over £100, a figure passed by only one printed book. The scarcity and value of such liturgical treasures is not a mere matter of natural wear and tear. There were heavy penalties for ownership of these Catholic books and manuscripts through much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and at times they were actively hunted down and destroyed.



Horae. Use of Sarum XV Cent.

This was particularly the case with the English ‘uses,’ e.g. Sarum, York, Bangor, etc. The Sarum use eventually became the national standard and is by far the least uncommon, accounting for 22 of the manuscript lots in the Sotheby catalogue.

Only these four items listed in C. 1 appear to be missing from the Sotheby catalogue:

C. 1. fol. 26. *Horae, Abbatiae Aquiseindue* (French). In Latin; described by Pencil as ‘illustrated’ and ‘insignificant’ and valued at £8.

C. 1. fol. 42. Noted as “valued elsewhere” by ‘Pencil’.

C. 1. fol. 63. Noted as “valued elsewhere” by ‘Pencil’.

C. 1. fol. 78. Priest’s *Vade-Mecum*. Pencil offered no valuation.

These miscellaneous items have little in common except their poor quality. The words “valued elsewhere” are of uncertain significance, but may possibly indicate that Sotheby’s used a minor, provincial auction house to dispose of material not thought worthy of the London saleroom.

C. 1. fols. 7 & 8, making up a 3 vol. thirteenth century breviary, appear together in the Sotheby catalogue as lot 102.

The discrepancy between the manuscript and printed catalogues is not all the one way. Seven manuscript lots appear in the Sotheby sale for which no Stock equivalents can be found. These are four paper manuscripts, lots 180, 371, 431, and 432, of late date and miscellaneous subject matter, two vellum manuscripts, lots 89 and 185, and one, lot 193, of mixed vellum and paper. These were possibly items that came into JMF’s possession after the Stock catalogue was completed in 1927. None are major items that would have involved a large outlay.

In 2004 we reported the fate of some of the manuscripts, including that of the Shepton Beauchamp Sarum missal (C. 1. fol. 8, lot 294 in the Sotheby catalogue), which was then in the library of the

University of Liverpool, as part of the Radcliffe Collection. That collection has now been moved to the Liverpool Hope University Library. The fact that it includes three more of the manuscripts is of some interest, because the Radcliffe Collection has at its core the library of JMF's great liturgical mentor, Christopher Wordsworth (1848-1938). It was bought by Sir Frederick Radcliffe (1861-1952) and given by him to the Liverpool Cathedral Library in 1952.

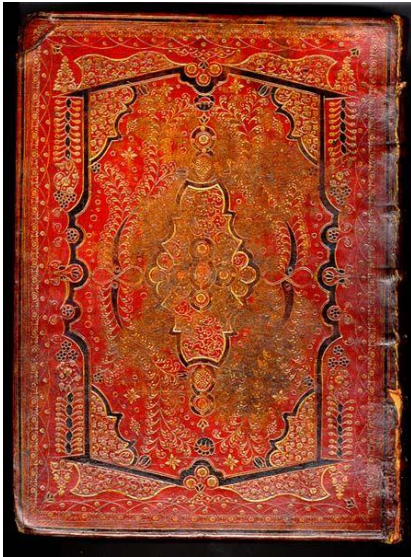
Whether Wordsworth or Radcliffe acquired these manuscripts in 1934 is not revealed by the Liverpool Hope University list. The three other manuscripts are:

- C. 1. fol. 50. Sarum Manual (lot 264 in the Sotheby catalogue).
- C. 1. fol. 81. Sarum Processional (lot 397).
- C. 1. fol. 48. Cologne Manual (lot 262).

Of the 74 books that Stocks identified as incunables – 'Pencil' relegated a few to the first decade of the sixteenth century – all but four went into the Sotheby sale. Of these, one (C. 2 p. 61) was a Venetian Latin Bible that 'Pencil' rated a "moderate copy" and valued at £2. The other three are more surprising omissions: Werner Rolevinck's *Fasciculus temporum*, Venice 1484 (C. 2 p. 53); a Venice Suetonius of 1490 (C. 2 p. 73); and the first edition of the *Catalogus Sanctorum* of Petrus de Natalibus, Vicenza, 1493 (C. 2 p. 111). The Rolevinck was one of those marked as "not seen" by 'Pencil,' so it may have been disposed of by Falkner after 1927 or kept by John Noble.

Stocks included shelf marks and other location guides for all the books he listed. These were usually lettered and numbered bookcases, but a few he gave as 'Bedroom.' If these were the books Falkner reserved for bedtime reading, they have a biographical interest. Among them were a 1629 Cambridge Bible, a 1629 London Book of Common Prayer, The John Hutchins History of Dorset and John Wood's *Essay towards a Description of Bath*, noted above, Anthony Wood's *Athenae Oxoniensis*, 2 vols. 1721 (large folios

hardly suitable for reading in bed), a Plantin Euripides, Antwerp 1571, and Zazzaroni's Giardino poetico, also noted above.



Stocks devoted a separate page (C. 2 165) to the work of Samuel Mearne (1624-1683), bookbinder to Charles II, and to bindings 'in Mearne Style.' These are mostly Prayer Books or works of devotion like *The Whole Duty of Man* and *The Ladies' Calling*. They were sold by Sotheby's as bindings (lots 36 etc.) but not there attributed to Mearne. There is also Gregorio Leti's *Del teatro britannico*, 2 vols., London 1683, which the Sotheby catalogue listed as a binding

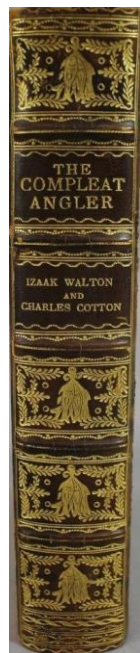
A Samuel Mearne binding under its title (lot 75), but attributed to the 'Oxford Devotional Binder.' This should have been included in 2004 among Falkner's topographical works. (Cyril Davenport's Caxton Club monograph on Samuel Mearne is lot 159 in the Sotheby catalogue.) There is also a separate page (C. 2 p. 167) for Falkner's examples of the work of the Birmingham Baskerville Press, all classical texts. The Sotheby catalogue grouped them in three lots (22-24).

The manuscript catalogues provide an insight into another aspect of Falkner's book collecting life, because Stocks noted the names of the binders of the books he described, where known. Those that recur frequently can probably be taken as the binders Falkner liked to employ. The most commonly found names are Maltby of Oxford, Riviere (including one dated 1918), and Cockerell. Maltby's was well established when Falkner went up to Oxford and the firm still

flourishes. The fashionable Robert Riviere & Son were of Heddon Street, off Regent Street, in Falkner's day. The great craft bookbinder, Douglas Bennett Cockerell (1870-1945) was established at Letchworth Garden City in the years when Falkner would have employed him. A single curiosity is a binding by Waters of Newcastle-on-Tyne, perhaps a case of encouraging the local tradesman.

In his new biography, *John Meade Falkner: Abnormal Romantic* (The Roxburghe Club, 2018) Richard Davenport-Hines makes some important points about Falkner's book collecting. In his youth he concentrated on local history and topography, gathering the works that were the foundation of his Murray guides and Oxfordshire history, published between 1894 and 1902, and his little Bath tribute of 1918. The first spark of interest in liturgical books may have been struck in 1887. Falkner told Henley Henson a story of his father Thomas

Alexander Falkner's papers being burnt after his death in that year. "*He rescued from the bonfire some leaves of a Sarum missal of great rarity.*" The story is not necessarily true; Falkner was fond of spinning romantic yarns. The only paternal relic noted in the catalogues is a manuscript sixteenth century book of devotion, in French, with illuminated initials, that "belonged to T. A. Falkner: St John's College: Oxford" (C. 1, fol. 5; lot 85 in the Sotheby catalogue.)



Riviere

If the taste was inherited, it took a long time to mature. Davenport-Hines shows that it was the works of Canon Christopher Wordsworth that introduced Falkner to liturgical books, and that it was the study of the *Breviarium ad usum insignis Ecclesiae Sarum* by Wordsworth and Francis Procter, a book that Falkner kept in his Elswick office when he slept there during the First World War, that turned the interest into an obsession. This work formed part of lot

285 in the Sotheby catalogue. The first major liturgical purchase that Davenport-Hines could trace was made in Rome in April 1916. This was the Martyrologium Romanum (C. 1 fol. 52) which 'Pencil' rated at £4.

Most of the valuable manuscripts and incunabula that dominated the Sotheby auction catalogue were acquired in the frenzied decade 1916 to 1926. Between 1915 and 1920 Falkner was chairman of Armstrong, Whitworth, rich but with little leisure. From 1921 to 1926, comfortably pensioned, he had the time and money to pursue his hobby almost full-time, for he wrote little but private letters in his old age. After 1926 declining health and income (following the collapse of Armstrong, Whitworth and the loss of his pension) reduced Falkner's ability to compete for these treasures.

Falkner's library was changing throughout his life as his interests and pursuits shaped and reshaped it. If 'Pencil' had examined the collection in 1914 he would probably have reported that it was an excellent antiquary's library that would do well in a country sale, but was scarcely suitable for a big Sotheby's auction. The novels and poems, the histories and topographical books that Falkner bought and read in the first half of his life, most of them no longer extant or wandering unidentified, helped to inspire his own important works in those fields. Yet it is for the missals and breviaries, the manuals and the books of hours, which inspired nothing from Falkner's pen, that his library will be remembered. The Sotheby catalogue is their sepulchral monument.