

*A letter to the Revd. W. Miles Barnes*  
John Meade Falkner

Nov.r 21 1902

Elswick Works,  
Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Dear Mr. Barnes

Very many thanks for your kind note: and for the compliment which is implied by your invitation. I must think over what I could write of: but at this moment the severe pressure of business makes it impossible to promise anything. It would be a sincere pleasure to me if I could do anything that would be of the least good to your Society - for Dorset is always very close to my heart.

I know your house very well. I must pass it at least 20 times every year, on bicycle journeys between Dorchester and Weymouth. I always look out for it, and note how it gradually (very gradually) weathers & mellows. I always think of your father\*, when I see it; because I know you live there. Your father was an object of childish reverence and affection to me: as I have no doubt he was to hundreds of other Dorchester children - and grown-ups too. One of the first things I recollect is the playing of some game - croquet I suppose - on the little lawn in front of his old house at Came: and some of his sweet country poems are often in my mind to-day.

I envy you, the living in Dorset and the being near the old house all your life. I do not know you (I think) by sight: but some three weeks ago as I rode up from Weymouth I passed a clergyman on a bicycle, not very far from Monkton, & thought it might be you - but very likely you never ride a bicycle at all. With many thanks for having written to me, I am

Very truly Yours

J. M. Falkner

(\* **William Barnes** was born at Rushay, near Salisbury, on 22nd February 1801. He became master of a school at Mere in Wiltshire in 1823, returning to Dorchester in 1835. He was ordained in 1847, and became curate at Whitcombe in 1847, and rector of Winterbourne Came, near Dorchester, in 1862, where he died in 1886. He began to write his Dorset poems in 1833, publishing *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* (1844), *Hwomely Rhymes* (1857), and a third volume in 1863. )