

Poems

Some Reviews of *Poems*

It is worth quoting **Graham Pollard** * on the slight mystery involving the publication of this – brown wrapped – version of Meade Falkner’s collected poetry. *“The Poems in brown wrappers and the Poems in green wrappers present a problem. They are quite distinct editions, differently set up by different printers in different text types; but sufficiently alike for the format of one to have been copied from the other. There is no mystery about the green wrapper edition, of which 500 copies were printed for Mrs Meade Falkner in July 1933. The brown wrapper edition looks like a piece of provincial printing and contains several obvious misprints. There has never been any popular, or even collectors’, demand for these poems; and it seems inconceivable that the brown wrapper edition should be a piracy or a copy of the edition in green. The presumption, therefore, is that the green wrapper edition is the second edition set up from the one in brown wrappers...”*

Kenneth Warren says that it was early in the summer of 1932 that the first steps were taken towards publication. Anne Falkner was staying at the family home in Weymouth and found a bundle of her brother’s verse which she had typed up previously. When she showed them to Falkner, he produced some more. By the time he returned to Durham they had sent off a selection to Geoffrey Madan, who promised to take charge of their publication. Falkner remarked “I should like to live to see them through”. Within eight weeks he was dead.

Warren has a useful chapter in his biography of Falkner, where he discusses the latter’s talent as a poet. Falkner wrote poetry whilst at school in Marlborough, where he won the Plater Prize for heroic verse at the age of eighteen. He seems to have written poetry for most of his life and several appeared either in the Spectator or the Cornhill magazines. As Warren rightly says, Falkner has had his champions – such as **Geoffrey Grigson, John Betjeman** and **David Cecil**, but also slighting critics. Falkner ranges over historical, topographical and religious themes, often combining them, with a marked emphasis on *“the past, a fanciful past, graceful, charming or melancholy, not nasty, painful or sordid”*. Whilst there are no love themes, death is referred to. Some examples have already been published in the Society’s **Newsletter** or, with analysis and commentary, in the **Journal**.

The Last Church

Friend, when the dews are falling,
When the red sunset fades,
When summer owls are calling
Deep in the darkening glades;
Some day we shall see beckoning
A spire over the hill,
A church beyond our reckoning,
One church still.....

.....*Dirige, de profundis,*
For churches of the past,
Deus obruimur undis,
Is this church to be the last?
And the lights will seem to us lower,
The altar candles dim,
And the voices softer and slower,
A funeral hymn.

* **Graham Pollard**: *Some Uncollected Authors XXV: John Meade Falkner, 1858-1932*
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