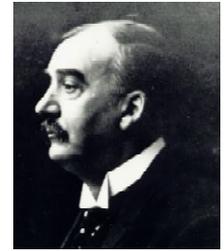


The John Meade Falkner Society

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2023 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Another year and the Sub remains unchanged since 2012 – now 12 years ago - **only £10/\$15/€15.**; paid by **cash, cheque, BACS or Paypal. If either of the latter, I have put the details in the main email.** I am only able to keep the Sub so low because so many of you help with ‘extras’. Thank you so much.

JAVIER MARIAS

One of our long-standing and supportive members, who joined the Society on 17th March 2001, died last September. *The Daily Telegraph's* Obituary was headed ‘**pre-eminent Spanish novelist of his generation and MI6-obsessed Anglophile**’.

He was by general consent the pre-eminent Spanish novelist of his time – to many readers, the greatest since Cervantes. However, he set so many of his novels in Britain, usually in Oxford, where he had been a lecturer, that he was labelled an *angloaburrido*, or Anglo-bore. In his fiction his focus was on the evocation of human consciousness, often with full chapters being focused on the delineation of thought processes lasting a few seconds.

In Europe his novels sold in their millions. His best-known – *A Heart So White* (1992) and *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* (1994) - began with mysterious deaths and are often regarded as thrillers. He also made a name as a translator of Conrad, Updike and Nabakov. Apparently, his *All Souls* (1989), a satirical portrait of Oxford, had some Oxonians furious with their caricatures and others lobbying him to play themselves in a proposed film.

I have the copy of *All Souls* that he sent me, along with eight other works, all signed. The one I treasure most is *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* (Penguin Classics, 2012), where he has written on the title page: *To Kenneth Hillier, Supreme Falknerian, just in case I never before did I send this oldish novel to him. Best wishes.*

Javier was a passionate Real Madrid supporter. He lived on the main square in the city, opposite the town hall – “*which often makes me wish I had a rifle: the mayors here are awful*”. He eventually stopped his regular visits to Britain, fed up with the anti-smoking regulations. He contracted Covid-19 and died of pneumonia. I shall miss his kindly correspondence.

100 YEARS AGO

JMF wrote to his one-time private pupil and long-time close friend, John Noble.

January 1rst, 1923.

My dear John,

This first essay of the new date shall go to you, debita observantia.(1)

Silvester (2) has come and gone, and I am always recalling that it is 40 years since we met; and that now the new generation is singing its '40 years on' and going to Balliol. May Andrew (3) go up as a Scholar, and still more may he have at the end of his 40 years as clean and honourable a record as his father!

Last night we had the newly-hung peal in active service; though there was some hitch in ringing the muffle and so it was omitted. But it sounded very soft, and half-muffled with a sordino of a moon-lit fog. I heard it to perfection, rejoicing like the saints in my bed, and on this acropolis no sounds of brawling reached us from the town.

I see that there is an urgency meeting of the Board for Thursday 4th, and one motive of this letter is to say that (if you are not elsewhere engaged) it would be very nice if you would dine with me at the Athenaeum. (4) Do, if not inconvenient to you. One ignoble motive is a desire to sample some 'Paul Bur' (5), a wine which figures on the club list. I imagine that its great attraction is cheapness, and very likely it combines nastiness with cheapness, but I should like to try. I think you were in Oxford with Andrew recently and wonder whether you eat the traditional oyster with him at the Mitre (6). But alas, there would be no Pego now to pop in with disconcerting suddenness, for a generation has sprung up that does not know Joseph, and the name of Symonds has dropt out of Beaumont Street.

Once again thank you very cordially for another great instalment of pheasants. They came at a very opportune season, were splendid birds, and called forth much gratitude.

All good for this new year,

Affectionately Yours

J.M.F.

- (1) Due respect
- (2) the feast day is held on the anniversary of Saint Silvester's death, 31 December
- (3) John Noble's eldest son
- (4) Both JMF and John Noble were members of the London club
- (5) Paul Bur (Bordeaux) wines still exist
- (6) JMF used to dine at the Mitre. In 2020/21 the whole of the Mitre building was closed for extensive refurbishment, and the ground floor of the former inn reopened as a Gusto Italian restaurant in December 2022.