

#### THE AUTHOR

John Meade Falkner was a remarkable character, as he was not only a scholar and a writer, but a captain of industry as well. Born in 1858, the son of a clergyman in Wiltshire, he was educated at Marlborough and Hertford College, Oxford. On leaving the university, he became tutor to the sons of Sir Andrew Noble, then vice-chairman of the Armstrong-Whitworth Company; and his ability so much impressed his employer that in 1885 he was offered a post in the firm. Without connections or influence in industrial circles, and solely by his intellect, he rose to be a director in 1901, and finally, in 1915, chairman of this enormous business. He was actually chairman during the important years 1915-1920, and remained a director until 1926.

His intellectual energy was so great that throughout his life he found time for scholarship as well as business. He travelled for his firm in Europe and South America; and in the intervals of negotiating with foreign governments studied manuscripts wherever he found a library. His researches in the Vatican Library were of special importance, and in connection with them he received a gold medal from the Pope; he was also decorated by the Italian, Turkish and Japanese governments.

His scholastic interests included archæology, folklore, palæography, mediæval history, architecture and church music; and he was a collector of missals. Towards the end of his life he was made an Honorary Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford, Honorary Reader in Palæography to Durham University, and Honorary Librarian to the Chapter Library of Durham Cathedral, which he left one of the best cathedral libraries in Europe. He died at Durham in 1932.

Apart from *The Lost Stradivarius*, Falkner was the author of two other novels, *The Nebuly Coat* (1903—also published in Penguin Books) and *Moonfleet* (1898). He also wrote a *History of Oxfordshire*, handbooks to that county and to Berkshire, historical short stories, and some mediævalist verse.