

Obituary

CLAUDE MOORE FUESS

Claude M. Fuess was born in Waterville, New York, on January 12, 1885, a son of Louis Philip and Helen Augusta (Moore) Fuess. He graduated at Amherst in 1905 and went on to Columbia, where he took his M.A. in 1906 and his Ph.D. in 1912. In 1908 he had begun his work at Phillips Andover as an instructor of English, and after twenty years was promoted to a professorship. The success of his biography of Daniel Webster, which appeared in 1930, and his popularity with the small army of alumni who had known him, made his appointment to the headmastership of the Academy in 1933 a natural step. Of his administration it is enough to say here that before his retirement in 1948 he had become the personification of his institution and of a great academic tradition. Eight honorary degrees are a measure of his reputation.

Dr. Fuess moved from Andover to Chestnut Hill, in part to be nearer the libraries in which he was to be so active for the rest of his life. He was not, however, a deep-delving researcher, but rather an artist in words, trying always to capture with his pen, in his many biographies, the true spirit of his subjects. It might be said that in his writings he was concerned with the truth, as he comprehended it, and not with facts. It was the skillfully written biography rather than the learned one which won the praise which he was quick to bestow. He was a very popular reader of papers in his societies, which included the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the American

Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Antiquarian Society. He was elected to the last in 1933 but, as he gleefully told the story, had his first paper stifled by his predecessor on the program who read on and on until the audience was either sound asleep or suffering agonies of hunger for lunch. Almost twenty years later, in October, 1953, he spoke before the Society on the same subject, "Calvin Coolidge—Twenty Years After." A Republican himself, he was gently amused by his academic friends who tightroped along the party line of the New Deal.

On June 27, 1911, Dr. Fuess married Elizabeth Cushing Goodhue, who died on July 26, 1943. On December 15, 1945, he married Lulie Anderson Blackfan, who died on November 6, 1956. His own health held up remarkably well, as did his incredibly good game of golf. He failed rather rapidly during the past year, however, and he died on September 11. The newspapers paid little attention to the passing of a man who thirty years ago was a famous biographer, but in the meetings of the societies which he so loyally supported, his kindly, gentle presence will be missed.

C.K.S.

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