‘That Man Will Be Eaten by Worms’*

Ernest Rhys

Another and an earlier chance meeting with George Moore¹ occurred one evening at the theatre which is now the Playhouse, near the Embankment, when they were giving a triple bill, one part of which was filled by Yeats’s *Countess Cathleen*.

Moore and I were sitting together in the stalls in which, as it was a first night, there were many well-known people, and we sauntered out at the end of the first piece talking of the play and of Willie Yeats as a dramatist whose poetry sometimes ran away with his drama. Then, as we passed through the bar, Moore nodded towards two men who were standing drinking there together. One of them was Oscar Wilde, who looked portentously and lavishly fashionable, and physically perhaps a trifle gross. So at any rate he impressed us, but I was not prepared for the comment that Moore made upon his fellow-countryman, or the vim he put into it. ‘That man,’ he said in his muffled, most telling tone, ‘that man will be eaten by worms.’ As he said it it seemed ominous that such a dictum should be uttered upon a fellow scribe by one who himself looked, with his battered nose, like a sybarite who had known all the mortal indulgences.

* *Wales England Wed; An Autobiography* (London: J. M. Dent, 1940) pp. 184–5. Editor’s title.

NOTE

For a note on Ernest Rhys see p. 125.

1. For a note on George Moore see p. 176.