

BOWEN, BEN (1878 - 1903), student and poet

Name: Ben Bowen
Date of birth: 1878
Date of death: 1903
Parent: Dinah Bowen (née Davies)
Parent: Thomas Bowen
Gender: Male
Occupation: student and poet
Area of activity: Education; Eisteddfod; Poetry; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Benjamin Bowen Thomas

The sixth child of Thomas and Dinah Bowen, Treorchy, Rhondda, he was educated at Treorchy Board School, Pontypridd Collegiate School, and Cardiff University College. As a young coal miner he was precociously interested in poetry under the influence of local literary societies, eisteddfodau, and the writings of **D. W. Jones** (Dafydd Morgannwg) in *The South Wales Weekly News* and **Thomas Williams** (Brynfab) in *Y Darian*. By his eighteenth year he had gained recognition as a poet of promise. He won bardic chairs at Penrhiwceiber (1896) and Aberdare (1897).

He left coalmining in 1897 to train for the Baptist ministry; the same year he published a short collection of poems, *Durtur Y Deffro*. He suffered a serious breakdown in health in July 1899, and continued ill-health prevented his completing his first session (1899-1900) at Cardiff University College. He was second for the 'crown' poem at the Liverpool national eisteddfod, 1900, his poem 'Pantycelyn,' attracting much attention. A national testimonial enabled him to spend January 1901-July 1902 abroad, mainly at Kimberley, South Africa. By this time he was well versed in Welsh and English literature, interested in contemporary scientific thought and its theological implications, and a serious student of German literature. His articles in Welsh periodicals on questions of doctrine led to bitter controversy and personal attacks. On his return to Wales he was excommunicated by his church - Moriah, Pentre. His health deteriorated, and he died at Ton Pentre 16 August 1903. He was buried at Treorchy.

His personality, youthful courage, quick intelligence, and literary promise made a deep impression on his contemporaries. He was limited as a poet by the rapidly outmoding literary forms and artistic principles of the 19th century. In spite of this, some passages of his poems in the *pryddest* and *awdl* forms are of high merit. In his last phase he was much influenced by the new romantic movement in Welsh poetry. His sermons, articles, and letters showed the vigour of his prose style.

His works were edited by his brother, Myfyr Hefin. They include *Cofiant a Barddoniaeth Ben Bowen*, 1904; *Rhyddiaith Ben Bowen*, 1909; *Blagur Awen Ben Bowen*, 1915; *Ben Bowen yn Neheudir Affrica*, 1928; *Ben Bowen i'r Ifanc*, 1928.

Author

Sir Benjamin Bowen Thomas, (1899 - 1977)

Sources

Personal knowledge

Additional Links

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