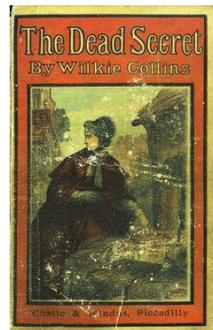


Moonfleet in the Kingfisher Library 1946
(and other by-ways in Bibliography)
Kenneth Hillier



What set out as a brief article on the issue of *Moonfleet* in Edward Arnold's short-lived *Kingfisher Library* series has developed into a more detailed look at the other authors in the series and the books chosen by the publisher.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, with the growth in lay literacy and the reading 'market', publishers brought out cheaper reprints of well-known, if not always well-regarded, novels, short stories and non-fiction. Michael Sadleir's *XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record* (1951) devotes the whole of his Volume II to such productions. Apart from what became known as *Yellow-Backs*, there were series such as Bentley's *Standard Novels* (1831-1862); the *Parlour Library* (1847-1863) and Routledge's *Railway Library* (1849->).



A Yellow-back

In 1901, Grant Richards published ten reprints in a 'portable octavo' format. They included Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and William Hazlitt's *Table Talk*. Richards named his new series *The World's*

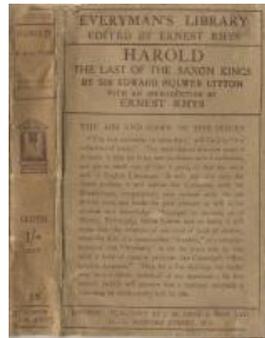


Classics and had published sixty-five volumes by 1905. However, he went bankrupt that year and the Oxford University Press acquired the series in October; by the end of 1931, Oxford had published nearly 400 volumes.

Some early volumes

J. M. Dent's *Everyman's Library* published its first 50 volumes in February 1906. By 1931, the series had reached over 700, selling at the remarkably low price of 1/- each.

Other publishers were quick to catch on. In May 1907, the Edinburgh firm of Nelson, published the first titles in their Sevenpenny Library – the very first volume being Mrs.



Humphry Ward's *The Marriage of William Ashe*. **No. 15 Harold**



Spurred on by their new partner, John Buchan, the firm had already published 177 books in the 7d editions by 1912. Nelson's technological efficiency ensured that their series revolutionised the habits of the book-buying public and

competitors quickly responded. Methuen's *Cheap Novels* and *Shilling Library* series, Murray's *Shilling Library* and Dent's *Wayfarer Library* (which embraces all that is healthy, clean and good in the

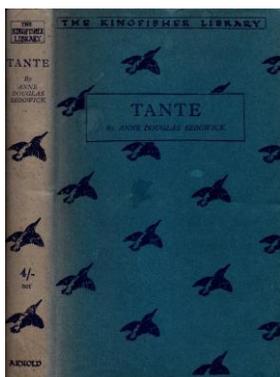
lighter field of modern literature) are just three of the increasing number of publishers plunging into the cheaper, reprint market.

Edward Arnold was born in Truro in 1857, the grandson of Thomas Arnold and nephew of Matthew Arnold. Educated at Eton and Hertford College, Oxford (did he know Meade Falkner, who was just a year younger?), from 1883 he worked as a magazine editor for the publisher Richard Bentley. In 1887, he became the editor of *Murray's Magazine*. Just three years later, in January 1890, he established his own business at 37, Bedford Street on the Strand. His firm specialised in educational books as well as works on mountaineering, exploration, Egyptology, and medical and scientific texts.

In 1931, Arnold decided to launch a new series, with a similar emphasis on exploration, travel and adventure. This *Kingfisher Library* was issued in two main periods: 1931 to 1933 (15 titles) and 1946 (1 title). There were also a few reprints in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The first five were all from Arnold's back catalogue, bar one. *Tales of Ægean Intrigue* by J. C. Lawson, had been published by Chatto & Windus in 1920. Lawson, a Fellow and Tutor at Pembroke College, Cambridge, had worked as an Intelligence Officer in Crete and was heavily involved in the plottings and counter-plottings of the Allies and its enemies on the island. He tells of his share in preparing for the Cretan revolution under Venizelos. Edmund Candler's *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (Arnold, 1905) also told of intrigue and derring-do. He was the *Daily Mail* correspondent accompanying the expeditionary force led by Sir Francis Younghusband into Tibet in 1903-4, and witnessed the storming of the Gyantse Dzong.

Tibet figured again in Capt. J.B.L. Noel's *Through Tibet to Everest* (Arnold, 1927). Commissioned into the East Yorkshire Regiment in 1909 and posted to India, Noel spent summers near the Himalayas and in 1913 he travelled in disguise into Tibet in order to approach Mount Everest. A keen photographer and filmmaker, he joined the 1922 Everest expedition as its official cameraman and produced a short film, *Climbing Mount Everest*. He also made the film *The Epic of Everest* in 1924, which had the added drama of the disappearance of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine. A note from Mallory to Noel was the last contact from the former before his body was discovered in 1999. F. Wood Jones wrote extensively on early humans and was one of the founding fathers in the field of modern physical anthropology. He was President of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Ireland 1943-5 and a strong opponent of Darwinism. He wrote that his *Unscientific Essays* (Arnold 1925) were *the products of idle moments, some of which were passed in London, some in Australia, and some upon a coral island*.



All four of the above books have a linking theme of exploration and travel. Not so, the fifth book, which was a novel. *Tante* was written by Anne Douglas Sedgwick (Arnold 1911), an American-born British writer who had married the British essayist and journalist, Basil de Selincourt in 1908. *Tante* reached No. 9 in the USA best-seller list in 1912. The novel concerned the destructive relationship between a concert pianist (Baroness Mercedes von Marwitz *aka* Madame Oranska) and her 'adopted daughter' Karen Woodruff. It was so well received that it was made into a film in 1919.

This slightly strange selection was bolstered in 1932 by the arrival of seven more in the series. Two followed in the well-worn path of travel and adventure. Maud Doria Haviland was an English ornithologist, who travelled on expeditions abroad – such as that down the Yenisei River in Siberia to the Kara Sea in 1914. Her *The Wood People: and Others* (Arnold 1914) contained *charming stories in which birds and beasts of many kinds play the leading parts.*

By far the most exciting was **Major General Lionel Charles**



Dunsterville's *The Adventure of Dunsterforce* (Arnold 1920). Not only was he a famous Army officer but he was the inspiration for 'Stalky' in Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* (1899). He served on the North-West Frontier in India and in China during the Boxer Rebellion (1900-02). In the Great War, he was appointed to lead an Allied force (Dunsterforce) – his 'Hush-Hush' army – into

the Caucasus and Persia, whose purpose was to forestall Bolshevik inroads into the Middle East and India. His army succeeded in cutting Persia off from enemy influence.

What is more interesting is that five of the seven Kingfisher Library publications in 1932 were novels or short stories. *The Seething Pot* by George A. Birmingham (Arnold, 1905) was a tale of Ireland in the days of Home Rule, of political intrigue and assassination. Birmingham was the pen name of James Owen Hannay, a Church of Ireland clergyman and prolific novelist. His personal network of Irish islanders included those from the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin movement. The novel *negatively portrays various individuals and organizations of County Mayo* and aroused furious criticism when first published. Mary J. H. Erskine's *Shepherd Easton's Daughter*

(Arnold 1925) was a tale of a rural saint and the effect he had on his village. *The Port Allington Stories* were first published by Heinemann in 1921; their author, R. E. Vernède, was already dead, killed on the Western Front in April 1917 by machine gun fire. He is now remembered as a War Poet, but these short stories are about an



isolated village where life preserved a Victorian standard of primness and propriety, with the love of scandal common to villages in all ages and places. The most famous novels reprinted in the Kingfisher Library series were two of E. M. Forster's: *Howard's End* (Arnold 1910) and *A Passage to India* (Arnold 1924). Both are too well-known to need any commentary here.

R. E. Vernède

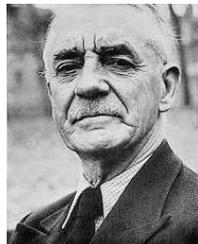
Only three further books were produced in the series in 1933, all non-fiction. Sir Sainthill Eardley-Wilmot's *The Life of a Tiger* (Arnold 1911) and *The Life of an Elephant* (Arnold 1912) were combined in a single volume, both were written from his experiences as a forestry officer and conservationist in India and Burma. He advocated methods of numbering and ageing trees and introduced a ban on the felling of the best specimens.



Eardley-Wilmot

The Romance of Plant Hunting by Francis Kingdon-Ward (Arnold 1924) suggests a genteel pursuit. However, the author survived many accidents on his expeditions, including being impaled on a bamboo spike; falling off a cliff (saved only by a tree growing out

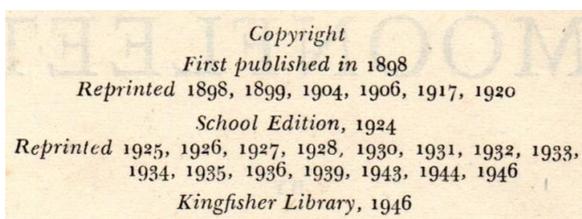
from the face); his tent crushed by a tree in a storm; being close to the epicentre of a 9.6 Richter scale earthquake; and being arrested by Tibetans. His book, not surprisingly, stressed not only the joys of plant collecting but its dangers.



Kingdon-Ward

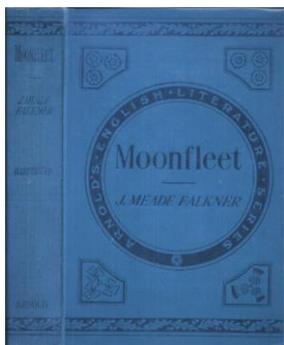
Finally, Major Michael Charles Cooper Harrison and Captain Henry Antrobus Cartwright produced a joint memoir of their time as Prisoners of War in the Great War. *Within Four Walls* (Arnold 1930) is written with a stiff-upper lip and with a decidedly superior attitude to their dull-witted captors. They made several attempts to escape, which were often foiled by informers and spies within the camps. Many of the devices used were later mirrored in *The Great Escape*.

Then, nothing for thirteen years. Why Arnold decided to publish *Moonfleet* in the series in 1946 is not known. The fact that he and Meade Falkner were within a year of each other at Hertford College, might shed light on why the latter originally chose the publisher for his boys' novel. He had used Blackwood for *The Lost Stradivarius*.



Moonfleet had reached its fourth impression by 1904 and was published in Arnold's Popular Novels in 1917 and 1920. On 6th February 1924, Arnold wrote to Meade Falkner: *My partner is very anxious to try the experiment of bringing out a School Edition of 'Moonfleet'. We discussed this once before and offered you £40 for*

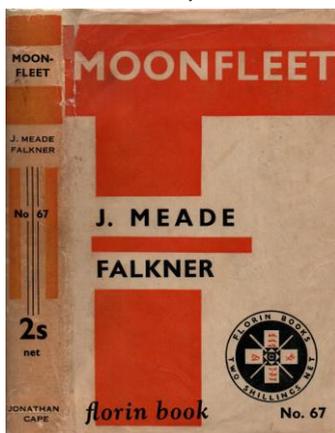
the right of publishing it in that special form, which you accepted, but our literary advisers at that time wanted to have the scene in the Vault omitted, which you could not see your way to do, and the matter therefore dropped. My partner thinks that at the present time it might be possible to bring out the book unexpurgated, and if you are agreeable to our doing so we should like to try the experiment. I believe there are just one or two places where the



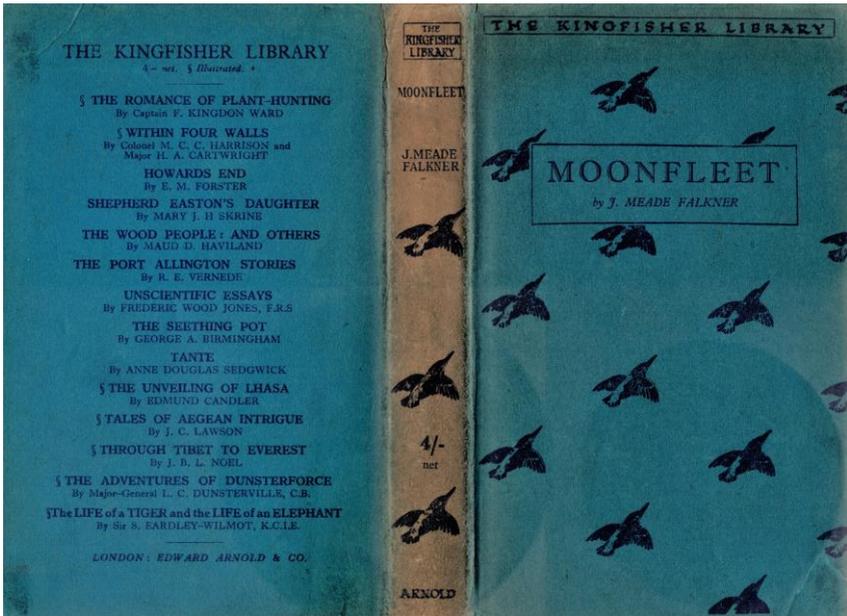
word 'damned' occurs, which perhaps you would not mind being modified. Falkner accepted three days later, saying Please eliminate all the 'damns'; they are stupid expressions which seldom add any real picturesqueness to narrative.

Arnold's English Literature Series – for use as a Reading-book at home and in school.

Meade Falkner got his payment of £40 in lieu of Royalties. Arnold got fifteen reprints by 1946. Strangely, Jonathan Cape was allowed to publish the novel as No. 67 in its Florin Books series, surprisingly cheap at only 2/-. No mention was made of any other edition but the first of 1898. Back in 1907, Nelson's had also been allowed to bring out the book in its 7d. Nelson's Library edition – it was one of the earliest, numbered 47.



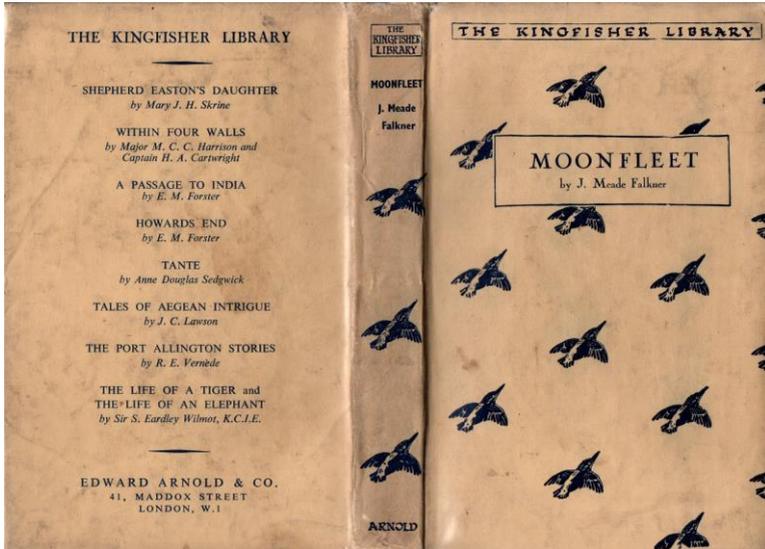
Then it was Arnold's turn, and *Moonfleet* came out in the Kingfisher Library – the only one in 1946 and the last in the series.



By now the books were being priced at 4/- (before the Second World War they had reached 3/6). Not only were the World's Classics volumes only 2/-, but Penguin Books had led the paperback charge from 1935; followed by the Hutchinson "Pocket" Library the same year and Jarrold's 'Jackdaws', running from 1936. All were priced at a mere 6d.

When '*Moonfleet*' was published in 1946, fourteen other works were listed on the back of the dust wrapper. There were, therefore, fifteen of the original sixteen in the series still in print, some clearly reprints. '*Moonfleet*' was republished in 1947.

In 1952, there was a further reprint.



Now, there were only eight books listed, five of them novels. The price had gone up to 7/6d (*World's Classics* pocket books were 5/-). Arnold couldn't, or wouldn't, compete with other publishers' series, whether their books were in hardback or paperback. A decade later, *Moonfleet* was published as No. 168 in the rapidly expanding Puffin Story Books.

It is left for us to wonder why Arnold never added *The Nebuly Coat* to the Kingfisher series. First published by his firm in October 1903, it had reached its sixth impression a year later. He had also included it in his 2/- Novels in September 1919. But it was Penguin who issued it in an abridged version by Christine Longford in their green coloured Mystery & Crime edition in July 1943; and it was the Oxford University Press who brought it out in 1954, in its double *World's Classics* volume with *The Lost Stradivarius*.