

Moonfleet

Some Reviews of *Moonfleet*

in *The Spectator*, 3 December 1898

"We have had to wait some years for a successor to The Lost Stradivarius – that excellent ghost-story, finely imagined and told with rare distinction of style – but Moonfleet is such an admirable achievement in a somewhat different line that Mr. Falkner may surely be forgiven for his leisurely method of production. It argues no small sense of artistic responsibility in an author who leads off with a conspicuous success to avoid the example of those popular authors who, on establishing a market for their wares, cease to create, and take to manufacture.

Moonfleet, though it is written with the utmost simplicity of style, is not the sort of book that can be "knocked off" in this perfunctory fashion. This fascinating ease of narrative is not attained without the expenditure of a great deal of "elbow-grease", to use Stevenson's phrase. Evidence of curious and recondite learning, so artistically employed as never to seem pedantic, may be found in every chapter. Then again, the story has the qualities – denied to modern machine-made fiction – of "atmosphere" and, above all, of vision, which immensely reinforce the impressiveness and picturesqueness of a tale of adventure. It is an easy thing to label your story "1757"; it is another thing to carry your readers back, or, at any rate, to transport them clean out of their present environment, and in this refreshing emancipation from the tyranny of actuality, in this magical power of putting the clock back, Mr. Falkner need fear comparison with no living author, unless it be the Mr. Shorthouse who wrote John Inglesant.

As for the story of Moonfleet, it comes much under the same category of Treasure Island, - that is to say – it is suited to any reader from about sixteen upwards. It is a tale of the gentlemen of the contraband on the Dorsetshire coast in the middle of the last century, brimful of fearful joys, unexpected sensations, unfamiliar horrors, and midnight mysteries. We will not discount the pleasure that lies in store for the reader by disclosing the plot, which deals with the Nemesis attaching to the discovery of a fatal diamond. It is enough to say in Moonfleet Mr. Falkner has given us what in the present writer's opinion is the best tale of fantastic adventure since Stevenson's pen was prematurely laid aside."

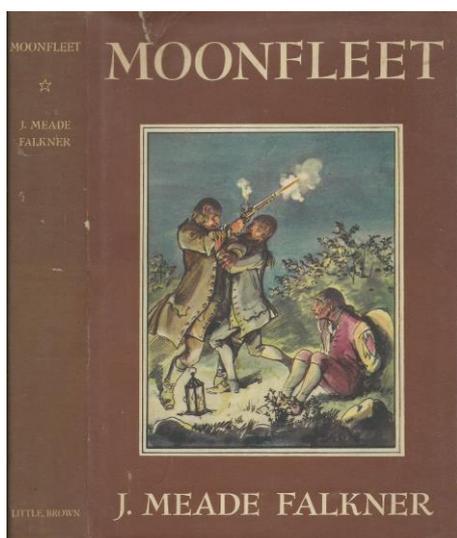
by **Walter D. Edmonds** [on the dustwrapper of the USA first edition]

“The brooks and rivers are flooded and continual rain and snow enough to whiten the banks and woods have kept me from touching a rod, and instead I have buried myself in Moonfleet for two days. Even in galley form it’s been a Godsend, for it has the quality of books stumbled on in boyhood of completely transporting the reader into its own world.

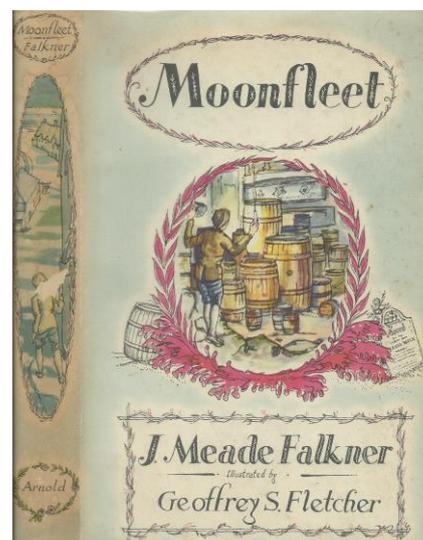
Treasure Island and Kidnapped do this. I remember other books: The Wreck of the Grosvenor in the old Seaside Library I once found in the bottom of an old corner cupboard here when I was thirteen, and a year later in the same cupboard but behind a row of paper-bound French classics (in French and therefore to me sacrosanct, or inedible) all the copies of Munsey’s Magazine that carried King of the Khyber Rifles.

These stories have on first encountering a kind of wonder and excitement. They are adventure for adventure’s sake. The best of them are carried by people of solid flesh and blood, so one accepts instinctively elisions of time and remembers with their own actuality the moments of crisis that make the story run. So, in Kidnapped it is the fight in the Roundhouse or that awful moment at the top of the stairs in the House of Shaws. In Moonfleet the back hair stiffens in the same way to the scene under the cliffs and the escape up the track in the chalk face.

Moonfleet can be compared to Stevenson at his best, for it is full of wind and weather, which is true, too, of Buchan when he is riding high. But it needs no comparisons to sustain it. It lives in its own right.”



USA first edition (1951)



Fletcher Illustrated edition (1955)