

The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



Newsletter No. 39

8 May 2012

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

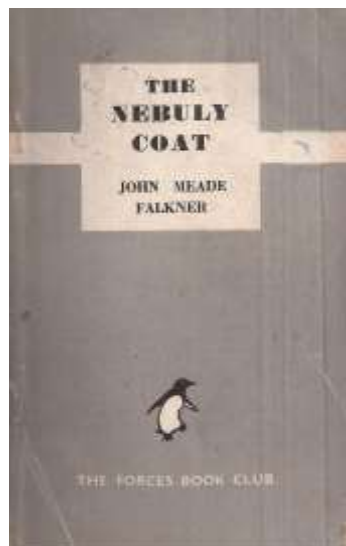
I am afraid that there are 14 subscriptions (out of 55) still outstanding. I do hope it is because it has slipped your mind, rather than a decision to call it a day. Most of you will know that the postage costs in the UK have gone up from 46p to 60p (1st class) and 36p to 50p (2nd class) on 30th April, and the overseas postings have also increased. Thus, it was a timely, if reluctant, decision of mine to raise the subs. There will be a "Black Spot" on your envelope if you are one of the 14. If I can, however, I will send this Newsletter by email to the overdue members – to save postage!

ANNE LOUISE FALKNER

I did email several of you recently about the kind offer from **Dr. Pamela Gerrish Nunn**, to give a talk to the Society on JMF's sister, Annie Falkner. As you already know, Dr. Nunn has written an article on Annie for this summer's **Journal**. The responses I had were that members would attend if it was part of a more general weekend. As Dr. Nunn is over in the U.K. for this year and just the first part of 2013, it looks unlikely that we can take up her offer. The plans for the Burford-Oxford weekend are for the summer or early autumn of next year.

THE NEBULY COAT

I regularly scour EBay and other websites, looking for JMF books and ephemera. In late March, I pounced – on EBay – and captured what, I believe, is a very rare Penguin issue of *The Nebuly Coat*. Only the insides of the covers are different from the normal green Penguin format. Even the latter is now very collectible.



The Penguin Forces Book Club started in late 1942 and ran for 120 titles. There were ten published each month.

The Nebuly Coat is numbered 10 and was published in July 1943.

This copy is faintly stamped "Sgt's Mess, Greenford". I hope the sergeants all enjoyed the yarn

THE FRIENDS OF BURFORD CHURCH

Once again, I am delighted to report that our Society has been able to help **Burford Church**, a building JMF loved, was exceedingly generous to, and, of course, is buried in its churchyard.

This time, our donation of £36 is particularly apt, as it pays for the re-written descriptions of the JMF Italian altar frontals, which are situated in the north aisle of the nave. Dare I whisper it, that Falkner's surname was at last spelt correctly! The Friends of the church have also replaced the frontal frames, which were in a bad state. We look forward to meeting the Friends again in 2013.

DORSET Magazine and Moonfleet Article

At the back end of March, I was contacted by **Jon Desborough**, who had been commissioned to write a tribute and appreciation of JMF's *Moonfleet*. Jon was asking for help with 'good quality' illustrations.

Those of you who have been members from the earliest days, may remember that **Peter Davey** (once a member of our little Society) wrote about *The Lost Stradivarius* (January 1999) and that Alan J. Miller penned an article on *The Mohuns of Hammon and Fleet* (May 2001).

I was able to send Jon not only pictures but more details about JMF for his article. Keep a look-out for it; **Dorset** has its own website - dorset.greatbritishlife.co.uk – and maintains that it celebrates "all the finer things in life including food and drink, fantastic properties, events, celebrity interviews, walks and competitions".

JMF's TRAVELLING WRITING BOX

I collected the writing box from the Museum Resources Centre at Standlake in mid-February. Thanks to a very generous donation from **Celia Grover** (from whence the box came to the Society), the full conservation work was carried out. It is still under wraps and, hopefully, its condition will now not disintegrate any further.

JMF AUTOGRAPHED LETTER

Thanks to two members' eagle eyes, I was alerted to the fact that **Paul Rassam**, based at Charlbury in Oxon, was selling in his **Catalogue** an autographed letter from JMF to his physician, Sir Thomas Oliver. Headed *Elswick Works* ("I have come into Elswick because things here amuse me, and I feel more at home in my office than anywhere else in the world"), and dated 21st March 1911, JMF apologises for an earlier indecision, which might somewhat "be set down to the lack of a proper supply of blood to the brain". Being a medical adviser to JMF was a full-time occupation, it seems. The letter's cost of **£375** was beyond the Society's pocket, I am afraid.

MOONFLEET ON THE SCREEN?

Searching through the archives for information on *The Lost Stradivarius* and its transference to the screen, I came across the following correspondence on *Moonfleet* – nearly 30 years before Fritz Lang's effort.

30th March 1927

My dear Falkner,

I think we might be able to get "Moonfleet" serialised in some Juvenile Paper or elsewhere, and I should also like to try and persuade one of the Film Companies to consider it with a view to Cinematograph work. Would you be willing to let me try what can be done in these directions on the basis dividing any profits which may be realised, in the proportion of Two thirds to yourself and One third to us? If so I will do what I can and let you know the result.

I have not seen you in London for a long time and should be glad to hear from you how you are getting on. I suppose you have retired from business, and perhaps you may be doing some writing, in which case I hope you will give me a chance of publishing again for you.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD ARNOLD

The letter below is a response to one written by Arnold in September. It suggests JMF had replied to the earlier missive.

September 30th. 1927.

My dear Arnold,

You will see that I have taken to heart your 'urgency' instructions, and am replying with almost bewildering rapidity.

I know so very little about cinematograph arrangements that I have no right to have an opinion, much less to express it. I should not like to do anything vulgar or pushful; but if it is a usual thing to have a book cinematographed, and you are quite satisfied, and some tangible financial result is to be obtained, it would be foolish of me to raise objections. So please go ahead.

With regard to any arrangement between you and me for sharing profits in this venture; I cannot recollect the terms proposed in the letter to which you refer, but if I agreed then, I am sure I should now, so please take them as agreed to. The first thing is certainly to obtain some profits to divide, in fact to catch your hare; so, Macte virtute to you, which I take to mean 'Go on and Good Luck be with you'!

Sincerely yours JMF.

Arnold replied almost immediately (this letter is not in our archives) and occasioned this JMF response.

October 5th. 1927.

My dear Arnold,

Thankyou for your letter of October 3rd, with copy enclosed of your former letter of March 30th. I agree to the terms (for division of profit) set out in your letter of March 30th last.

I read your letter of October 3rd very hastily at breakfast, and thought that the negotiation was for the Nebuly Coat, but saw at lunch that it was for Moonfleet. Why I mention this, is because it reminded me that I had received, some months since, a proposal for filming the Nebuly Coat. I cannot remember from whom it came, and as I was ~~very~~ ill in Italy, I fear that it probably

remained without acknowledgement. At the time it did not seem worth bothering about.

Yours sincerely JMF

It was only in October 1927 that the first motion picture, in which spoken dialogue was heard (*The Jazz Singer*), was screened. Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, the first talking film made in England, was yet to be released (30th June 1929). Hitchcock later made *Jamaica Inn* (1939), but allegedly disliked costumed dramas, so probably would have 'passed' on *Moonfleet*.

If the film had been made, say in 1928, one can but speculate on which actors would have taken which role (assuming the film stayed closer to the book than the 1955 version). Lilian Gish as (the older) Grace? George Arliss as Master Ratsey, with Robert Newton as a youngish smuggler? Emil Jannings as Elzevir? Donald Calthrop as Maskew? Lou Chaney or Frederic March as the well-house turnkey? Marie Dressler ("the grand old firehorse of the screen") as Aunt Arnold? As for John Trenchard – Jackie Cooper would only have been six; Lew Ayres would have been 19, not too far removed for a 15 year old (but who would be 26 at the time of the shipwreck in Moonfleet Bay). Any ideas – not that I am suggesting you are contemporary with the late 1920s.

Nothing seems to have come of the Toronto-based **Tapestry Films Ltd.**'s plans to make a feature film of *Moonfleet* (see Newsletter No.6 – 8th May 2001)

WEST WALKS, DORCHESTER

Once again, EBay provided a morsel of JMF, when I bought this sepia postcard which clearly shows the Falkner home. The card dates from the inter-war years.



JMF remembered "*the day-nursery of us children looked out, across the promenade of the Walks, onto the so-called water-reservoir of the Roman town...*"

JOURNAL No. 13

I have a few articles lined up for the July **Journal** and am hopeful for at least one more on **JMF and Bath**. I would love to hear from those of you who have not yet contributed, or who have allowed a period to elapse since your last article. They do not have to be 'academic' and can be on the period in which JMF lived or places and people with whom he consorted, not just on his actual works. Please.

Best Wishes,

Kenneth Hillier

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