



Dead Men's Money

J.S. Fletcher

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The very beginning of this affair, which involved me, before I was aware of it, in as much villainy and wickedness as ever man heard of, was, of course, that spring evening, now ten years ago, whereon I looked out of my mother's front parlour window in the main street of Berwick-upon-Tweed and saw, standing right before the house, a man who had a black patch over his left eye, an old plaid thrown loosely round his shoulders, and in his right hand a stout stick and an old-fashioned carpet-bag. He caught sight of me as I caught sight of him, and he stirred, and made at once for our door. If I had possessed the power of seeing more than the obvious, I should have seen robbery, and murder, and the very devil himself coming in close attendance upon him as he crossed the pavement. But as it was, I saw nothing but a stranger, and I threw open the window and asked the man what he might be wanting. "Lodgings!" he answered, jerking a thickly made thumb at a paper which my mother had that day set in the transom above the door. "Lodgings! You've lodgings to let for a single gentleman. I'm a single gentleman, and I want lodgings. For a month-maybe more. Money no object. Thorough respectability-on my part. Few needs and modest requirements. Not likely to give trouble. Open the door!"

Dead Men's Money Details

Date : Published October 23rd 2013 by Createspace (first published 1919)

ISBN : 9781493571628

Author : J.S. Fletcher

Format : Paperback 116 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Dead Men's Money for online ebook

Susan says

Hugh Moneylaws a lawyer's clerk, on an errand for his mother's lodger discovers a body. Mr. Lindsey, the lawyer and Hugh attempt to unravel the mystery if his name and make sense of everything that follows, as Hugh is not really the brightest of people. But an enjoyable tale, set and written in 1919.

Nev Thomas says

Really excellent old time thriller

Thomas Cotterill says

Dead Men's Money is my first J. S. Fletcher mystery. The novel dates to the golden age of mystery writing, the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, and is an appealing "cozy." When I read books from this era I always enjoy picturing the hissing steam engines, compartmented passenger coaches, and smoky railway stations that were such a romantic aspect of the time.

The story is set mostly in Berwick-upon-Tweed, a town on the English side of the border with Scotland, but the characters walk and bicycle about the surrounding countryside (often at night!), visit a stately home, and do a fair bit of travelling by rail. There is even an episode aboard a sailing yacht. The changing locales keep the unfolding mystery fresh and absorbing.

We see events through the eyes of a rather slow-witted but sincere young man, Hugh Moneylaws, who works in a lawyer's office. His employer, Mr. Lindsey is the brains of the piece. He is always there to ask the sharp questions and shrewdly put two and two together while young Hugh dreams of marrying his sweetheart and tries to find the money to furnish a home. While none too swift - one wonders how he ever got a job with a law firm - his direct honesty and simple decency make him likable. I found myself rooting for him as he works past the obstacles standing between him and his girl.

Hugh becomes central to the tale entirely by accident. He hopes to earn some much-needed cash while running a mysterious nighttime errand for a sick lodger in his mother's house, but instead stumbles into murder. The law firm gets involved and Hugh accompanies Mr. Lindsey on his various investigative rounds. The young man also sneaks in a bit of snooping on his own. Who the guilty party might be seems at first obvious, but the situation quickly becomes more complex, and a lot must be uncovered before the murderer's true motive is revealed. A second murder adds a wonderful plot twist to what is already an engaging story.

Fletcher is a capable writer well equipped to handle the ins and outs of the mystery genre. I especially enjoyed the unfamiliar border setting and the book's relatively brisk pace. Hugh's obtuseness may occasionally try your patience, but the novel never bores.

Keith says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book except for the ending. It seemed uncharacteristic of the the rest of the story. I have come to love early twentieth century mysteries though, more, I think, than pulp fiction as of late.

Monica says

Published in 1920, this is a classic little mystery that contains many twists and turns. While the main character, Hugh, isn't too bright this also makes him appealing in just the right way. And perhaps intellect is redeemed in the ever-thinking Lindsey. Even though I still prefer more modern mysteries it's nice to take time to read something a bit more quaint. I might have to try another one of Fletcher's mysteries.

Andrew says

Long-winded and somewhat predictable.

Pamela says

Another quiet little cozy from Fletcher. His books always deliver good characters, a couple of well handled twists, and nice quiet plot. No blood. No gore. No sex. Perfect as a "palate cleanser" after a week spent immersed in modern and classic noir.

Every time I finish one of his books, I ask the same question: Why isn't this guy better known? He may not be as good as the Great Christie, but he's definitely in the running for second place.

El says

Once you get over the dim-wittedness and naivety of the protagonist, Hugh, this is an engaging mystery set back in the days when everyone got about on bicycles, often in the middle of the night, and the baddie would not murder the goodie if the latter promised on his honour not to snitch about the baddie! An interesting and intriguing murder mystery where nothing is as it seems and the plot races along at a fair clip while all the time holding your attention. Definitely recommended.

Twilightwatchers says

Good classic mystery.

Edward Anderson says

Very good rread

A fine story and good suspense. Would read more of his work.
I am very glad to have fun into it.

Nazim says

Loved it I dare say! Of course, you can't hang it in the hall of fame of the intellectual cold-blooded classic detective novels which I prefer mostly. but overall not bad!

Ela says

gripping story, thought i'd read a little bit before going to bed, ended up reading until 4am (finishing the book) without realising.
some things might be clear to the reader before they are to the main character (who isn't exactly the brightest spark in the box) but that doesn't lessen the tension.

Julia says

Another fast-paced murder mystery by J.S. Fletcher. It was first published in 1920, and has just the right stock of truly good characters, balanced by a couple of nasties. A young apprentice solicitor in a rural English town bordering Scotland, is riding his bike through lonely stretches of countryside very late in the evening, to run a strange errand for a mysterious lodger at his mother's house. He finds a recently murdered body at the end of his ride, and the mysteries keep piling up from there. He's WAY too trusting, and that trait gets him into serious trouble several times. Very enjoyable reading. I listened to this novel as a free audio download from LibriVox.org.

Cheryl says

Really 3 and 1/2 stars, due to an abrupt ending. Fast-paced 1920 mystery told in the first person. A strange lodger in Hugh's mother's boardinghouse sends Hugh to meet a man at midnight, because the lodger is too ill to go himself. At his destination Hugh finds a man murdered, and upon returning finds the lodger dead from his illness. The body count increases while the authorities, with Hugh's help, try to find the murderer.

The narrator, Hugh, is a likable character, if a bit naive. The chapters are short and most end with some sort of tantalizing info that makes you want to read the next chapter to find out more. A fun mystery that's a quick read. Found at Project Gutenberg.

Randy Rasa says

My first exposure to J.S. Fletcher, and an overall "like but not love" experience. I enjoyed the plot, and some of the characters, but the ending was pretty abrupt, without tying up loose plot threads. It's always frustrating to me when a story's development depends on the main character's repeated incompetence and denseness, and that's unfortunately the case here. But I absolutely adored the fact that major characters got around by bicycle, and it was the most normal thing in the world. So civilized and sensible.

The voice actors for the Librivox recording were generally quite good, though the sound level and recording quality was all over the place.

John says

Good old murder mystery set in English Scottish border town of Berwick Upon Tweed. An old seafaring type turns up from nowhere seeking lodgings with the narrators mother. He spends his time wandering around graveyards, obviously looking for something. He is taken ill and while incapacitated he receives a letter. He then asks the narrator, Hugh, who is a solicitors clerk, to keep an appointment for him and explain that he is too ill to come himself. He goes out late at night and, of course, finds the person murdered. The police do not figure much in this story but there is a good deal of detection done by Hugh and his employer. All the clues are there with a few red herrings. Not bad at all.

michael pilgrim says

Great read. Cute english drama

The story line was well written. It kept you guessing. My only problem was Maisie. I kind had it figured out but the actual turn of events caught me off guard. Good read based on the English side of the Scotland border. Language was G+.mp

Ape says

Another twists-and-turns filled mystery tale from J S Fletcher. This time we're all about ancestry and inheritance in Dead Men's Money.

This one is set in north Northumberland, in Berwick-upon-Tweed, and with many a journey over the border into Scotland to conduct investigations. Our main character, and first person narrator, is Hugh Moneylaws, a young solicitor in training who has to be one of the most naïve and gullible characters known to literature. He doesn't twig that people might not be who they say they are, even when it's blindingly obvious. He even sits through a discussion of same said topic, and it's not until someone spells it out – that man is someone else – that Hugh M almost falls out of his chair with amazed shock. Yep, not the brightest lightbulb.

This whole mess starts up when his mother takes in an old sea dog lodger, complete with heavy, locked up

chest (pirate treasure!) who wants to stay in the area for a month or two as he apparently once had relatives in the areas and wants to go about looking at their graves. He falls gravely ill the same day as receiving a letter, and pays our innocent muppet ten pounds to cycle a few miles to meet with a man and speak in codes to him. Hugh merrily sets off on his way, in the semi darkness sees a suspicious character, and when he arrives at the meeting place, discovers a dead murdered and bloody body... What would you do? Would you mention the suspicious person you saw? Not old Hugh. That person probably wasn't involved, so he doesn't want to cause trouble. He has a nice chat with said person to assure himself they're not involved and when said person offers him a job at five times his current salary, he thinks it's due to his own merit and good luck and the idea of blackmail doesn't cross his little mind once. Even when another potential witness is murdered, he doesn't think that he perhaps ought to mention what he really saw. How he manages to survive the book I don't know.

Wills and inheritance always cause problems and greed, and this is a classic tale of skulduggery built around that idea. It all builds up to a complex case that has been in the making for many a year. But the final two murders... their explanation felt a bit – really?... and it all ended so quickly, that it was a bit of a sudden shock, even for Mr Fletcher, who (I have noticed) does have a tendency to wrap things up rather abruptly and suddenly at the end.

John Macnelly says

Good book. I always like Christi's books.

Joel Wolfrom says

This my first exposure to J.S. Fletcher's books. This story is one of those warm, fuzzy British murder mysteries. It takes place primarily in Berwick, but there is Scottish influence included. I enjoyed this who-done-it although every time I thought it was about done, it headed out into another twist. Then when I thought there was going to be one more twist, it was over. Written almost a century ago, I found this novel quite quaint and interesting. I shall read more of these quaint stories ----and they cost almost nothing.
