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THE BOOKSHELF SPEAKS

JALNA—By MAZO DE LA ROCHE

Superficially, this novel appears to be just another one of that kind with "trick" titles. One must not be deceived, for in *Jalna* is found a tale quite out of the ordinary. The incomprehensible title has long been used by second-rate authors as a "come-on" for the unsuspecting and innocent reading public.

This story concerns a Canadian family, a large one, that forms in itself quite a self-contained community. There are three generations of *Whiteoaks* living together, from the old grandmother to a youngster of nine. There are numerous household pets, from a parrot that swears in Hindustani to a Persian cat. No doubt the cat swears in its native tongue also, but that cannot be vouched for.

The old grandmother, who hangs tenaciously on to life so that she may boast of having lived a century, is not apt to prove herself very likable to the reader. She seems to be some evil spirit that hangs as a pall over the entire family. In spite of her age and decrepitude, her influence over each member of the family is remarkable. Undoubtedly it is the unknown contents of her will that makes the group so subservient, each hoping that he or she by apparent willing obedience, will earn the whole of the old hag's estate.

Wakefield, the youngest member of the clan, is a perfect specimen of the English schoolboy. He fits in perfectly with Kipling's picture of *Stalky*, who holds the highest honors in that field. This young Canadian is abnormally witty for his nine years. His repartee is so biting at times that he holds his own with apparent ease against his older brothers.

What makes this book so out of the ordinary is the fact that the plot is subordinated to character study. One might imagine that the author was a psychologist airing some of his views as to the inner workings of the human mind.

Jalna received the *Atlantic Monthly* award of \$10,000. Miss de la Roche, the author, has no previous books to her credit, yet the writing is worthy of an experienced novelist. It is interesting to note that this book was picked out of eleven hundred manuscripts submitted for the prize.

A sequel may be expected. Two of the characters, *Alayne* and *Eden*, are left more or less in a bewildering position. The further exploits of this family may be as interesting as those related in this book, providing the same style is used.

COUNT LUCKNER, THE SEA DEVIL—By LOWELL THOMAS

Here is a book that may be readily termed a "breather." After a decade of gory war stories in which the daring young American (some-

times British) buck private captures single-handed, a score or more of the Kaiser's pet Hessian Hussars and returns home to receive his laurels (including the fair maid), the jaded follower of Romance and Adventure may turn to this yarn with a great sigh of relief. The Germans have been getting the dirty end of practically all of the war stories published in this country and in England. This book serves a much-needed change.

Lowell Thomas, who wrote *With Lawrence in Arabia*, gave us a most interesting account of the most picturesque character in the Allied armies, Colonel Lawrence. It remained for him to also portray a similar character of the other side. This is certainly fine sportsmanship.

Cout von Luckner ran the Allied blockade in the North Sea during the closing part of the late war. When it is considered that the British had the German Navy bottled up in Kiel, the North Sea strewn with mines, besides patrolling the whole expanse of briny in that locality, such a feat appears almost superhuman.

The *Seeadler*, a remodeled windjammer, was Luckner's vessel. It was boarded only once by the British, who sent a squad of six men from a destroyer to see if the ship's papers were in proper order. The Count, by means of his clever disguise as well as that of his men and ship, completely tricked the English captain. This point ought to make the book quite popular with the Lord Mayor of Chicago.

The Count's damage to Allied shipping in the Atlantic ran into some twenty-five millions of dollars. In spite of all this plunder, not a life was lost by either side. The Count did his part to carry on a bloodless war.

Before his days in the German Navy, von Luckner was a common jack tar on various and sundry windjammers. He spent a hectic sojourn in the Antipodes, where he worked for the Salvation Army, as a lighthouse tender, a kangaroo hunter and a prize fighter.

Mr. Thomas' latest effort ought to do much to dispel the post-war effect of anti-German propaganda. Our Teutonic brethren really are not so bloodthirsty after all.

—Mark Allen '31.

OIL by Upton Sinclair is a picture of the oil industry of Southern California. It is a complex pattern of present day life into which oil magnates and labor leaders, financiers and soviet agents, "holy rollers" and agitators, motion picture stars and producers, are woven; and is a swiftly moving panorama of business and politics, love and war and diplomatic intrigue.

The environment in which J. Arnold Ross, Jr., son of J. Arnold Ross, the oil magnate, grows up

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furnishes the background of the story. Then his experiences in college and during the war are the finishing touches to the development of a man who should do big things. Like Hamlet, tho, he falls prey to his own soliloquies and undecisiveness and never accomplishes much.

In this book the cards of life have been shuffled and dealt out again so that any attempt to identify names, dates or incidents, is a waste of time.

—L. G. Stewart '28.

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