

people are not always after "character study" and "real life", thank Heaven. If they were, it is true, why discover Joseph Conrad for what he is, instead of for what he seems to be? Which might be doubtful gain.

Like "The Four Horsemen", "Our Sea" is not a profound study of human motive and action, and it has not the lure of continual eventfulness which puts the *pop* in popular novel-writing to-day. "Our Sea" is in the main, an essay on the Mediterranean, at times beautiful, moving and passionate. The people in the story are always the excuse for the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean the excuse for the people.

Certain of those who love the descriptive essay more than the eventful novel will probably be won to Ibanez by such a book, but their winning will mean the loss of a good many of "The Four Horsemen" readers. Some at least of the "Four Horsemen" readers will put down "Our Sea" and feel that the Ibanez glory is departed.

"The Dead Command", a third book by the same author, is different. It is a book somewhat between the other two. It is a steady story, moving through a certain amount of zig-zag philosophizing to a conclusion that can be called happy. It has something of the sea and the sun in it, and Ibanez, as always, shows his power to achieve physical brilliance.

Ibanez is not a new writer. His first novel was written in 1894. His first English translation, "The Shadow of the Cathedral", appeared in 1909. He has become a fad in this country, but fads have their function and often a basis that is sound. The function of this interest in Ibanez, which becomes a fad, will be to make Canadians a little more cosmopolitan, a little readier to receive "foreign" work, a little more experienced and more sophisticated in matters of literary taste. After "The Four Horsemen" is a little forgotten and the rest of the Ibanez books cease to be read in its borrowed light, Ibanez will be really

discovered as a modern writer whose chief characteristic lies in his power to evoke scenes, to give a sense of brilliance and clarity in the eye of the reader.

There are passages in "Our Sea" which are like colour photography—a bit of the shore of the Mediterranean when Ferragut steered his ship close in, old Uncle Caracol swimming out to sea after the disaster and the cask striking him riding down the vivid billow—the berth of the *Mare Nostrum* when in port.

Ibanez will be loved and remembered for these things even by the people who think Freya is ill-drawn. He is an author who comes near to greatness, but not greatness in character sketching.

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#### WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCH- ING HOME.

BY MILDRED ALDRICH. Toronto: The Musson Book Company.

THE reader has grown a bit wary in the matter of published letters in these latter days. One remembers the cruel hoax of "Christine", and another imagines that Coningsby Dawson, as he wrote those intimate and moving home letters, knew nevertheless that they were for printer's ink and public barter. The only thing that justifies "letters", as letters, is that they are letters. Miss Aldrich, in those further letters of hers from the Hilltop on the Marne, has a way of making misgivings evaporate. Somehow one doesn't imagine her writing these pages carefully and deliberately with an eye ever lifted, not to her intimate correspondent, but to her publisher and the general public. One doesn't imagine her doing this, though how she could avoid it is a mystery, with two or three Hilltop books of letters, acclaimed by the public, to her credit. At any rate these "letters" have verve and personality and charm — and opinions!—If you could dangle President Wilson before Miss Aldrich's eyes you wouldn't have to dress him in red in order to make her see large areas of that interesting colour.