

**The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University**  
**Ohio State Engineer**

**Title:** The Bookshelf Speaks

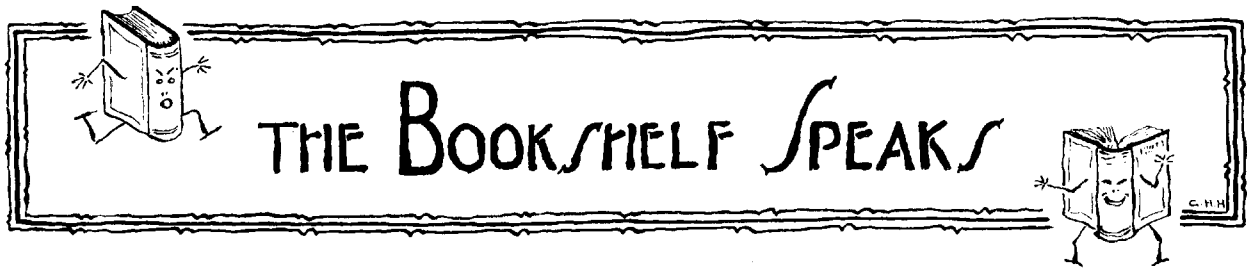
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## PIRATES AHOY!

**O**OOooo! Lookee! Pirates are loose again and buried treasure is getting found all over again! Christopher Morley and Don Marquis did it in *Pandora Lifts the Lid*, and the combination is like pouring soda water on bromo seltzer, things happen and happen fast. This little book will probably never live to be a classic novel of the day, probably not even a best-seller; it doesn't strike deep enough, isn't filled with flights of lyric prose, nor overflowing with sparkling style. But it is a clever story with a clever plot and told with a naive sort of charm that makes you uninstinctively lay the book down and say, "There's a good story." Pan and seven other girls get into more than a peck of trouble and you'll have a lot of wholesome fun holding your breath while she gets them all out of it. You see, Pan and the girls kidnapped a chummy old millionaire and set out to convert him, and through him the financial world, to socialism, thereby doing the world in general a great favor. The old man caught cold, though, and the girls had to drop their evangelism and turn nurse, to say nothing of coping with a burly bunch of modern rum-running pirates.

## PAGE COHEN

The Bookshelf would hardly be complete if I didn't remind you of another one of Joseph Conrad's stories. This month I'd like to call your attention to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Conrad in a foreword to American readers says of *The Nigger*, "For the book written around him is not the sort of thing that can be attempted more than once in a lifetime. It is the book by which, not as a novelist perhaps, but as an artist striving for the utmost sincerity of expression, I am willing to stand or fall. Its pages are the tribute of my unalterable and profound affection for the ships, the seamen, the winds and the great sea-moulders of my youth, the companions of the best years of my life." He dedicates the book as "this tale about my friends of the sea." One never need hesitate about recommending a Conrad tale to his friends; he may forget the details of the story but he can't forget how clean it tasted.

There are a lot of other books I'd like to tell you about. *Wild Asses* by J. G. Dunton is another "college" book, this time about undergraduate life at Harvard; *The White Monkey*, a splendid thing by John Galsworthy; and *Arrowsmith*, a worthy book in which Sinclair Lewis retrieves himself and justifies his place as an author of importance.

This is the last time this year "The Bookshelf" will speak and there's a whole summer ahead in which to read. Some of the old books are worth rereading. Weighty little books that were drudgery when you staggered through the min High School are enchanting things to read now—*Silas Marner*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Vision of Sir Launfal*, *Travels With a Donkey*, and the rest. Try some poetry—Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sara Teasdale, Walt Whitman, John Masefield, Laurence Housman. There is *Old Morocco and the Forbidden*

*Atlas*, another splendid thing by Dr. C. E. Andrews of our own Campus that displays this elusive spark of vision. The foreigners are not so bad—Anatole France, Turgenev, Tolstoi, Checkov. And then there are plays—George B. Shaw is always amusing, Schnitzler, O'Neill, Ibsen and others. And so it goes.

Perhaps all this space is wasted. If you like to read you will have found these things for yourself; if you don't like to read no amount of cajoling will put the spark in you.

## GET THIS, ENGINEER

I picked a book from the shelf of the circulating library a few days ago that said on the end, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. I asked the attendant what it was and she said, "Oh, haven't you ever read that?" and then added reverently in the same breath, "It's beautiful." The nice part about it is that the girl was right, for the story, or rather play, reads like a delicate fairy tale. It's a love story written after an old formula, but with a lyric charm that is positively captivating.

It is lamentable that more books of this nature do not find their way into engineering libraries, or rather the libraries of engineers. We are all concerned with this business of getting the most satisfaction, the most enjoyment out of life. In this Christian era we call it the ideal of service and say, "he lives best who serves best." There is no one who needs to appreciate this more than the engineer, whose consecration to his ideal of service is measured by the insignificance of the quotient of pay check divided by the number of people served.

What's this got to do with *Cyrano de Bergerac*, eh? Simply this: I believe, sincerely and passionately, that the engineer can be a better engineer, can build a better bridge or draw a straighter line, who has learned to enjoy books like this one. I am speaking now not alone of books but of all we call the better things of life, a bit of poetry, a symphony, a pretty picture of the curve of a new moon. These are the things I would teach a child, until his imagination was so stimulated it could people a dozen worlds like ours, and I miss my guess if a good fairy story is not more valuable to a child of six than the ABC's.

A carrot, you know, grows and matures by sending down a single root; an oak tree spreads many roots out in many directions over a large area. Now carrots are all right and they make a good sidedish, but we build us the more stately mansions out of oak trees! We have too many carrot engineers.—good technicians and valuable, but men who address themselves to other fields of knowledge and culture with a "shut-up-Sesame" and who lack the spark of vision to see their own work in its true relation to this thing we call life.

The April (1925) issue of *The Bookman* carries a very interesting article by one Edward Wasserman concerning his acquaintance with the late Anatole France. France must be acknowledged as the foremost among modern French writers and this little personal insight into his character is well worth reading.