

BOOK REVIEWS

By SALLY KNOW
CHILDREN OF THE EARTH by Ethel Mannin. Doubleday Doran, and Co. publishers.
 The story of the married life of Jean and Marie le Camillon is told in their children, who reflect in their characters the emotions of their parents at the time of their conception. Their first child, Jon, was their love child; their second, Jeanne Marie, the child of marital happiness; the next two represent a period of uncertainty and restlessness when the two were somewhat estranged; and the last, causing his mother's death, came in a time of peace.
 The father was a poor fisherman who never knew any joy in life until he met Marie, who became his wife, and brought him happiness and prosperity. Their estrangement was caused by the reappearance of Marie's former lover, who still fascinated her. Jean expelled the intruder on finding him with his wife on one occasion, but years of unhappiness for the two resulted. Finally she died at the birth of her fifth child, Jean's star again goes on the sclipse. He becomes very poor, and his children either die or marry and leave him. Jean is left alone, in age as in rags, bitter, friendless and poor.
 Miss Mannin has written a book of simplicity and power, and shows herself to be a novelist of great technical skill, human sympathies, and unusual artistic versatility. It is a fine well-planned book, written in prose that approaches the poetic. The figure of Jean is in-

lessly real and appealing, and is drawn with sincerity and sympathy.
THE GREAT MEADOW, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. The Viking Press publishers.
 Reading a book whose reputation has gone far and whose greatness has been proclaimed widely, produces in us a prejudiced and somewhat rebellious state of mind. But it has certain advantages: it puts the reader on the guard and it allows him to have at the moment of reading the realization that he is enjoying (or enduring) what the critics have acclaimed a Great Book.
 Such was the case with "The Great Meadow" by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Unstinted praise for it had dinned upon our ears ever since it was first published several months ago, but on reading it our hypercritical attitude was soon lost in real enjoyment of the book and appreciation of other reviewers' attitudes. That "The Great Meadow" is an outstanding American novel cannot be denied.
 Historical novel without the intrusion of historical events and persons is somewhat of a novelty to literature. And one without romanticism is surely a newcomer. The characters in "The Great Meadow" are presented in as simple and matter-of-fact tone as if they lived in this century, and there is no awe about them because they lived 150 years ago. The seamy side of frontier life is presented with real understanding and power; and the viewpoints of pioneers, especially pioneer women, are clearly revealed.
 The plot is simple: Diony Hall, reared in a Virginia town, marries a fellow-villager, named Berk Jarvis, and goes with him to a frontier Kentucky fort. She accustoms herself to the life there, and bears him a child. Soon after, he departs on a hunt and is absent for many months. All while he is dead, and Diony marries another man. She bears him, too, a son, and when the second child is a few weeks old, Berk returns. According to the law of the frontier, she must choose—and she chooses Berk.
 The emphasis of the book is on character. Diony's character, which is realistically and sympathetically developed, and on the presentation of life as it truly is, without sentimentalism. The diction is the common speech of the Kentucky frontiersman, and adds to the convincingness of the book.

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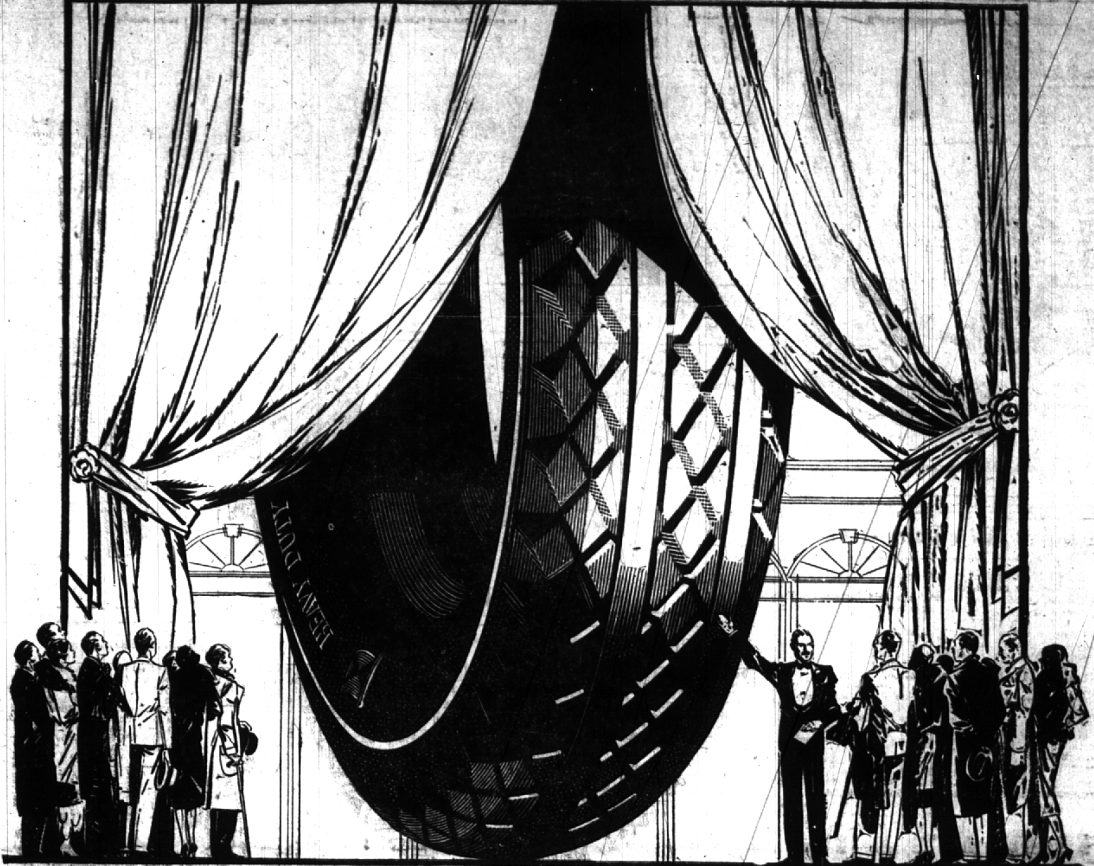
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