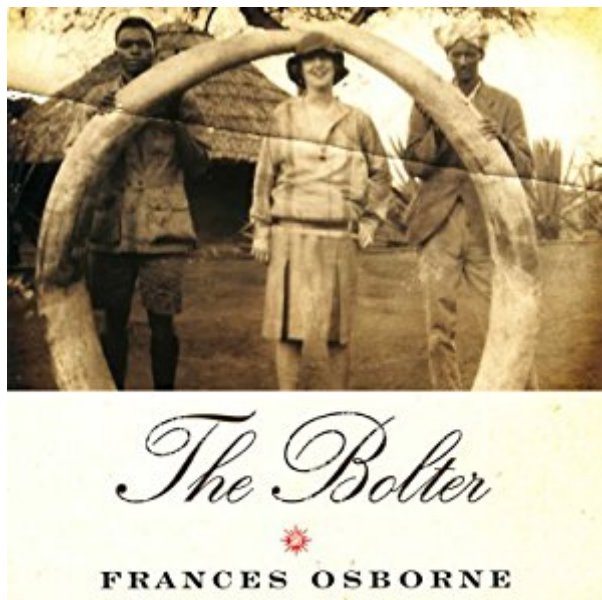


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The Bolter



Synopsis

A San Francisco Chronicle Best Book of the YearAn O, The Oprah Magazine #1 Terrific ReadIn an age of bolters - women who broke the rules and fled their marriages - Idina Sackville was the most celebrated of them all. Her relentless affairs, wild sex parties, and brazen flaunting of convention shocked high society and inspired countless writers and artists, from Nancy Mitford to Greta Garbo. But Idina's compelling charm masked the pain of betrayal and heartbreak. Now Frances Osborne explores the life of Idina, her enigmatic great-grandmother, using letters, diaries, and family legend, following her from Edwardian London to the hills of Kenya, where she reigned over the scandalous antics of the "Happy Valley Set." Dazzlingly chic yet warmly intimate, The Bolter is a fascinating look at a woman whose energy still burns bright almost a century later.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, which held my interest from first to last. Well-written and thoroughly researched, it not only brings the story of the fascinating, and likely misunderstood, Idina to life, but it also gives us a glimpse into the lives of the British expatriates who were living in the British East Africa Protectorate--later the Crown Colony of Kenya--before and during WWII. Mrs Osborne reveals fascinating historical details of which I was previously unaware. For instance, I had no idea that the British government offered up land in a sort of lottery to veterans of World War I (The doling out of other people's land is reminiscent of Marius (and other consuls) in ancient Rome paying off their veterans with land in North Africa). She also provide insight into the mores and double

standards of aristocratic Great Britain during the early half of the 20th century, and the startling changes such norms underwent after the first world war..Osborne's descriptions of Kenya were especially effective in that they actually 'took me there' to the highlands where "explosions of pansies, roses, and petunias" coexisted with giant nettles that "trembled with an unseen animal's roar".I would recommend this absorbing book for anyone who is interested in early 20th-century history in general and British Colonialism and social history in particular.

This book is a true story about Idina Sackville ,told by her great granddaughter . Idina was among a wealthy group of people ,whose heyday started in the early 1900's . Nancy Mitford used Idina's life as the character "The Bolter " in her book " The Pursuit of Love " . Idina was considered quite a rebel during her lifetime . She really didn't care about acting properly ,or following a strict set of rules . She seemed to enjoy making her own rules in life .Whatever made her happy was usually the path she took ,whether anyone else approved or not .She was married and divorced 5 times and had too many other partners to even count . She loved throwing wild parties where pretty much everyone else enjoyed the same lifestyle as she did .Oddly, you'd think she would have had a lot more enemies than she did , but most people who got to know her truly loved her . She was among a group who settled in Kenya in an area nicknamed Happy Valley . It did seem to be a magical place where everyone was happy for many years ,but as time went on, the choices they all made began taking their toll . Other well known people mentioned in the book were Beryl Markham, Karen Blixen , and Denis Finch-Hatton .

In writing *The Bolter* Frances Osborne confronted and dealt with some fascinating albeit unsavory details from her family background. Her great grandmother was Lady Idina Sackville, known as The Bolter in London high society in the 1920s and 1930s due to her string of love affairs, flirtations, and five husbands. Osborne has done a fine job of tracing and telling the story of her ancestress in the context of her times.Lady Idina Sackville was born into an unconventional family. Her parents separated shortly after her birth, and Idina and her sister and brother lived a life of material plenty but emotional shortages. Idina married for the first time at 20, divorced for the first time at 25, and then embarked on a string of love affairs and marriages, none of which lasted for more than a few years. Despite having less money than most aristocrats, she managed to live in luxury in Britain and in Kenya and maintained a reputation for well dressed elegance and panache.Osborne does a good job explaining the ins and outs of her great-grandmother's life, using diaries and letters as well as newspaper accounts of her doings. She never really gives as good a sense of what the five

husbands were like, with the possible exceptions of the first and third, except for the general observation that all of them were just as emotionally needy and rambunctious as Idina herself. There's also quite a bit of interesting information about Kenya in its days as a British colony, when it served as a rendezvous or hide out for aristocrats who wished to lead a more colorful life than was possible back home. Lady Idina and most of her husbands, friends, and lovers were intelligent people who ought to have led fuller, more praiseworthy lives. Their story is both interesting and cautionary.

Since I watched the movie "White Mischief" many years ago, I have been interested in the people and the happenings in that place called "Happy Valley" in Africa. There are bits and pieces of it here and there -- in the movie "Out of Africa", in the book by Beryl Markham, but this book seems to tie it all together from beginning to end by telling the story of one of the very first of the "Happy Valley" set, her almost unbelievable life, and her death, which almost marked the end of those days. Since I had a great interest in the subject matter, I did enjoy this book. However, if you are not familiar with Happy Valley and are not interested in the lives of super-rich and titled Edwardians back in the day, it would be slow-going for you. Today, it is difficult to believe that people led such lives at all -- they make the super-rich of today look like peons. Their total disregard of the fact that England simply went in and took South Africa for themselves, while the English who moved in made slaves of the native peoples seems astonishing to the minds of us living in 2015, but this was European imperialism at its height, and was considered the norm. It is an interesting look back, and perhaps an important look back, at a part of world history that should not be repeated, as full of scandal and gossip, drugs and affairs, coture , jewelry, great architecture and riches untold, as it is.

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