a truth one does not need to take the Whig or the Piccadilly view of him to accept. But then Mr. Drinkwater is instinctively the apologist of his heroes: Byron came dangerously near to receiving commiseration at the poet's hands a while ago. He now dwells on Charles's loyalties, common sense and regard for his office. And above all he emphasises the king's favourable attitude to the arts.

Granting that the Restoration court was a loose one, "often a dull one," Mr. Drinkwater points out that in spite of this it encouraged wit and learning, and here Charles gave "a decisive lead."

"He was the most enlightened patron of the drama that has ever been on the English throne. He cared for poetry, suggested the subject of 'The Medal' to Dryden, and made him a present of a hundred gold pieces for writing it. Lely was his court painter. So good a judge as Pepys tells us that he had some knowledge of music, and liked it: he made Purcell organist at Westminster and the Chapel Royal."

Mr. Drinkwater also mentions the king's own accomplishments as an amateur of science. He founded the Royal Society and took a personal interest in its proceedings, attending its meetings and, according to John Evelyn, providing the table at its first anniversary dinner with venison. "He chaffed the members for trying to weigh the air, and lost no opportunity of watching and encouraging their experiments."

"There have been greater kings in England, but few abler and more entertaining," concludes Mr. Drinkwater. "If he talked a little too much and told his stories too often, we at least who do not need to listen need like him none the less for that." And one might add in similar strain that if he harassed his subjects by tampering with the national credit and by selling himself to the French king to supply his financial wants, we at least who live too long afterwards to be so directly affected by it as were the common people of the time "need like him none the less for that."

This "vindication" of one whom previous historians have condemned as licentious, extravagant and unscrupulous to the last degree, is entirely poetic. While following it we are quickly lost in admiration of the biographer, and our attention never really returns to his subject. In the end the "vindication" becomes simply an earnest revelation of a poet's misapplied charity.

THOMAS MOULT.

MACHIAVELLI AND THE ELIZABETHANS.*

When England, reviving from her long dynastic war, resumed in lyric, drama, and romance, her young tradition of song and story, she returned for inspiration where she had been led before by Chaucer, to the fair half-mythical shores of Italy, where now all the sirens were singing because they had seen again upon the waters the phantom sails of the Greeks. With no antique history of culture behind her, the least sophisticated of the Western nations answered the Renaissance call of the new morning and the renewed world with all the wonder, and also all the crudity of a feverish adolescence. In Italy the first rapture of the Renaissance was over; and, exhausted by invasions and divisions, the lovely land was sinking into a state of wanton ironic grace and baroque reminiscence when the young Elizabethans gazed at her, not only with delight, but with an excited sense of sin, in the adolescent way. The sensuous Puritan Spenser did not dare to think of Italy but as he might imagine his tender witch Acrasia; not till the day of that more arrogant and not less sensuous Puritan Milton were Renaissance antinomies deliberately resolved in English music. Meanwhile the Italian scene was distorted by half-mediæval Elizabethan eyes into a golden mystery play of lawless love and death against a darkening sky, while, for supporters at once comic and sinister as the "Iniquities" of the Moralities, on either side the stage stood the infamous Aretine and the damnable Machiavelli.

* "The Lion and the Fox: The Rôle of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare." By Wyndham Lewis. 16s. (Grant Richards.)

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Machiavelli's symbol of the conjunction of the lion and the fox, as the " impossible union of incongruous opposites " that distinguishes the invincible Prince, gives Mr. Wyndham Lewis the title of his book. Machiavelli's unique dispassionate treatise, crystallised from the passionate preoccupation of a despairing patriot, and penetrated by the mystic politics of the " De Monarchia," was known to most of the Elizabethan dramatists merely as an evil rumour. Englishmen like Cardinal Pole who had read " The Prince," ignored, as did even Mr. Gladstone in later days, all the author's reservations and ultimate intentions in their revulsion from Machiavelli's candour—his unwelcome assumption that you cannot eat your cake and have it, that a Christian ethic lies outside a national policy intent on security and dominance, that the conscience of a saint will never make a conqueror-at-arms, that the inflexible will of the Prince must outwit fraud and violence, and sacrifice even personal honour in bringing a distracted country into unity. Englishmen who knew no more of the matter than Gentillet's garbled " maxims," believed that the book was the " queen-mother's Bible," responsible for red massacre in the pointed streets of Paris, though they did not think of applying its precepts to the judicial murder of the hapless guest of Fotheringay. For the crowd, Machiavelli was simply an Italian devil, specially versed in poisons and strange fornications.

His name became a catchword with those splendid careless people the Elizabethan dramatists, a catchword charged with a connotation of unimaginable evil. The audacious genius of Marlowe, by thrusting the figure of Machiavelli on the stage to speak the prologue for the " Jew of Malta," confirmed him in devilish pride of place. Marlowe was writing down to his public, for he knew his Machiavelli better. Whether Shakespeare, who remembered Marlowe in composing " Richard III," was as knowledgeable concerning the Italian politician is doubtful; but that the " lion-fox " idea is the " most central " knot of Shakespeare's conception of his kingly heroes and the complex of characters in which they are involved is Mr. Lewis's ill-sustained argument. It certainly seems hard to prove that the Machiavellian symbol is as constantly present in Shakespeare's artistic consciousness as the dragon-conflict is in Leonardo's.

But the notion of the lion and the fox hardly seems the " most central " knot in Mr. Wyndham Lewis's own book. In considering the rôle of Shakespeare's heroes the author begins and forgets many arguments, though he conveys much criticism of life and art which is at least first-hand and provocative. The ellipses are violent, the sentences are rhythmless and inorganic, the progression is haphazard. Sometimes he seems to talk at random of " cabbages and kings." The book is of a zigzag pattern that does not interlock into a design, at least within the covers of this volume. Though the tone is that of a special pleader there is doubt as to what the changeable case may be.

A certain want of tact, a natural intransigeance of temper, makes him often beat the air, intent on the destruction of idols that have already dissolved under some quietly satiric regard. Others, for instance, have realised a Shakespeare with no facile final optimism regarding a world of jealous fools like Leontes and knaves like Iachimo, withdrawing at last for comfort to the pure enchantment of art, the faery singing at the edges, and for consolation to the vision of the endless mutation of matter, the wave-like passing of things. Even as did Leonardo, imaginatively akin, temperamentally so different. Sometimes, again, a salutary note in Mr. Lewis's criticism is over-emphasised. One may recognise that Shakespeare responded sensitively to the Renaissance ideal of passionate male friendship, may scientifically allow the bi-sexual character of supreme creative genius, and yet instantly reject the theory of " shamanisation," which seems to introduce a kind of primeval hysteria alien to the motions of that august as well as delicate spirit.

Still, when Mr. Lewis sets his oddly shaded footlights here and there, under the Dark Lady, her hands on the virginals, and the young man coloured like a May-king, under Falstaff, Thersites, Antony, Othello, the unusual upward illumination often strikes out a novel, arresting effect, a kind of distorted veracity. His impatient attacks on the Elizabethan picture as a whole at least shake the image of Shakespeare into a vibrating life—a figure moving suave and secret among Italianate lords, Mermaid wits, and girlish boy-actors.

The book is indeed a series of notes of unequal value, to which the good will of some readers may give coherence. Too often the writer promises and disappoints, throwing a bright notion into the air like a coloured balloon, and losing it in a sudden diversion of interest. So he begins to speak with real eloquence and comprehension of the Spirit of the Renaissance, but soon becomes merely capricious. He is more often eccentric than original, and some of his chapter headings convey the sense of queer disquiet with which one occasionally meets a new Baconian cipher. But the real value of the book is a Renaissance value. Both when it succeeds and when it fails it passionately defends the rights of personality and resists the imposition of monotony upon the pattern of life. Therefore he talks of Frazer's sacrificial kings, of Georges Sorel, Nietzsche, Cervantes, Shaw's non-mediæval Saint Joan, Frederick of Prussia, Renan's Caliban and Matthew Arnold's Celts, while the lion-fox sports occasionally in the bosky distances.

But why must " proper " adjectives lose their capitals ? It is in the genius of the highly individual English language to defend the ego and to salute the pride of nationality with stately letters. And the " proud full sail " of the Shakespearean speech flew its capitals like pennons. For our eyes " spanish " has nothing to do with galleons and conquistadors, " french " has no panache, " italian " is sucked of its honey and its poison, " english " is creepingly humble, and an " elizabethan " looks like a strange creature out of a bestiary than a courtier or poet or pirate of the great age.

RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR.

Novel Notes.

THE THREE TAPS. By R. A. Knox. 7s. 6d. (Methuen.)

When we had finished Father Knox's ingenious and well written detective story, we could not help feeling that the best part of the book consists in the false clues which most readers will follow, at any rate for a chapter or two. The solution is extraordinarily ingenious ; but it assumes a kind of roguish slyness in one of the characters which we find it rather difficult to believe. Mottram seems too direct a person to design the curious plan with which Father Knox credits him, and in the execution of which he meets his death. Apart from this, however, no connoisseur of detective stories will find anything to complain of in " The Three Taps." The scene in the village inn; the characters of the old schoolmaster, Pulteney; of Brinkman, the secretary ; of Bredon, the detective from the insurance company, and of the police inspector are handled with real humour, and a quiet sense of human weakness and cleverness. With Mrs. Bredon Father Knox is not quite so successful. She is a little too continuously bright, and is one of those maddening women whom all women readers will recognise at once as a bachelor's idea of what a good wife ought to be. Still " The Three Taps " is a story of exceptional merit; and shows a distinct advance on Father Knox's previous detective story.

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