

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 pre-occupation 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 intransigence 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.

**LEADON HILL.** By Richmal Crompton. 7s. 6d. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

The community of Leadon Hill is a little world in miniature, complete in itself, and gives Miss Richmal Crompton's remarkable gift of character drawing excellent scope. Here are all the elements that go to the making of such a picture, etched in with the keen insight and delicacy of touch without which such fragile material would be utterly spoiled. Miss Mitcham, the industrious busybody and her "Treasure," Lady Dewhurst the social leader, the Misses

Martyn with their niece Olive, who is such a pious little humbug, the Misses Painton, the poverty-stricken daughters of the late doctor, whose pathetic attempts to keep up appearances amount to tragedy. These and various others are drawn with such realism that a vivid impression is created, and the tense atmosphere caused by the intrusion of a stranger in their midst is quickly sensed. Helen West, whose whole life has been spent in Italy, decides on the death of her father to settle in England. Large-hearted and truth-loving, her whole nature is utterly foreign to the pettiness and complexities of village life. Petty humanity makes a sorry picture, but Miss Crompton's characters are all so utterly human, and so attractive in spite of their whimsicalities, that it is like shutting the door on personal friends when we close the book.

**MOONRAKER; OR THE FEMALE PIRATE AND HER FRIENDS.** By F. Tennyson Jesse. 5s. (Heinemann.)

An admirably executed bit of work, which appears to be rather in the nature of a book for boys than a full-dress novel. It is told from the standpoint of a Cornish ship-boy, Jacky Jacka; every incident is seen through his eyes. And this imparts a peculiar simplicity of diction, a *naïveté* of manner, to Miss Tennyson Jesse's beautiful style. One feels that she has written and illustrated this book for her own pastime, and for a boy's pleasure, rather than as another of her notable novels, such as "Tom Fool." For although its hero is an eighteenth century pirate captain, cutlass, curses, and seamanship all complete, the deeds of blood are toned down to a minimum. And while its twin-hero, so to speak, is the unfortunate Toussaint l'Ouverture, the massacres and Voodooisms of San Domingo are slurred over in few words, *virginibus puerisque*. The fatal weakness of unrequited love which descends upon Captain Sophy Lovel, is redeemed by the magnificence of her superb finale. This is a delightful book; and if its subject-matter is more compressed than it would have been in a tale for adults, that fact stands out finely against the floods of verbosity to which too many authors accustom us.

**YOUR CUCKOO SINGS BY KIND.** By Valentine Dobree. 7s. 6d. (Knopf.)

Here is a book dealing with lovely and bitter things, with the most difficult problem of a child's life, venturing on the most sensitive and intimate things, and succeeding in a very rare way. Mrs. Dobree has achieved a remarkable mixture of reticence and frankness, of delicacy and candour. Christine, her heroine—she is only a little over fifteen years old when her story ends—is a susceptible, imaginative child, whose mother left her father when the child was two, and whose father lives in India. For the early part of the book Christine and her two elder brothers are living with Mrs. Harris and her children; for the later part of the story she lives with Mrs. Dean. Her life with Mrs. Harris is a desert of disappointment and misunderstanding, not that Mrs. Harris is unkind—she is merely vulgar and stupid. At Mrs. Dean's Christine learns to develop, learns to sing, learns to enjoy life and beauty, and learns, too, that happiness has its moments of agony no less than unhappiness. Still she is happy, and can hardly bear the agony of separation when her father decides to return to England and have his children at home. Christine is the book, and makes it a poignant and beautiful one. Mrs. Dobree is also extremely successful with her older people; and with Mary Harris and Lavinia Dean—but the boys are rather stock-size, ready-to-wear children.

**THE INFATUATION OF PETER.** By Katharine Tynan. 7s. 6d. (Collins.)

Madame Patourel is a character of such singular force that her personality dominates the book as it dominated the heart and mind of Peter Orde. Very ingeniously Miss Katharine Tynan works up the atmosphere of Madame Patourel's household at the Villa Emilie—her husband, her dogs, the little drudge Cecile, the English student-boarders divided against themselves as those who fought

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