

Machiavelli

NICOLO MACHIAVELLI THE FLORENTINE. By GIUSEPPE PREZZOLINI. New York: Brentano's. 1928. \$3.50.

Reviewed by COUNT CARLO SFORZA

WHY is Machiavelli held in such bad repute by those whose knowledge of him is drawn from "The Prince" and not from familiarity with his entire works? To my mind, for three reasons. First, because, though his most famous work, "The Prince," is still a subject of discussion four centuries after its writing, and—since it is as brief and as captivating as a novel—is still read, it is read by a world that lifts it out of its context of fifteenth and sixteenth century political Italy, and out of relation to the rest of its author's works. Second, because the Roman Church and Protestant literature have united as perhaps they have never united before and never will again in fighting and condemning him,—the former, because Machiavelli, Italian patriot that he was, hated the Holy See as an obstacle to the unity of Italy, and the latter because Machiavelli accepted in his own way the orthodox view of original sin, and so appeared to innocent Protestant souls the very embodiment of Papist wickedness. Finally because it is almost impossible to write about Machiavelli in a serene and dispassionate way. Most books on the great Italian political thinker end, almost unconsciously, by associating him—so alive is he still—with the struggles, political or moral, of their own day.

This is more or less true of these two volumes before me by Prezzolini and Janni which the fourth centennial of Machiavelli's death has called forth. Signor Janni's book is one of the two historico-political books to be written by a non-fascist which have found a publisher in Italy—the other being Croce's "Storia d'Italia." The product of an ex-journalist, it is written in the spirit in which our forefathers wrote history or romance in the days of the Austrian rule, that is with a passion for liberty which betrays itself despite precautions against the censorship. Pathos is in this book as well as in those earlier works.

Signor Prezzolini certainly cannot be styled a Fascist writer, but even less can he be regarded as an adversary of Fascism, so careful is he to avoid offense to the existing régime. It is to his credit, that anxious as he is not to displease the powers that be, he never yields to that cheap admiration of Machiavelli now in fashion with the journals of Italy. Signor Prezzolini's Florentine shrewdness eschews the half-sentimental, half-utilitarian manner of the papers. It is indeed pathetic and touching in its mental innocence, this tendency of persons of the Fascist type, be they Black Shirts in Italy or Steel Helmets in Germany or Camelots du Roy in France, to proclaim that they are realists—in France and Italy they even call themselves *real-politiker* because they are copying all of Hohenzollern Germany—and to state after a flippant and cursory reading of "The Prince" that they admire the "brutality" or the "cynicism" of Machiavelli. It is these men and their words, especially if they come from Italy, that help to propagate the old myth of a Satanic Machiavelli, the Machiavelli of the "necessary cruelties," of the "arming of our own followers," of "make people believe by force," of "not keeping the given word."

How remote, however, in actuality are these detached sentences from "The Prince," from the deeper and more real Machiavelli as he discloses himself when studied in all his works, and especially in the most profound of them, the "Discorsi!"

No one appears less Machiavellian than Machiavelli does there. If he happened to make the grim statements of the "Prince," it was because it is only the pure in heart that can say what is generally hidden by most men in the depths of their souls. The "Prince" was a complete and serene survey of the political possibilities of the sixteenth century. It cannot be understood, it cannot be judged apart from the period that gave it birth. More than that: with the "Prince," Machiavelli tried to use the schemes and methods in vogue in his time, to have Italy free and united. There was no time to lose, if Italy was not to be enslaved by France or Spain: Machiavelli looked for the remedies at hand—and, of course, the remedies were of the same age as the evils.

The "Prince" was simply a *pamphlet d'actualité*. It is but just to add that the example of great

modern nations finding their salvation in themselves, through heroism and endurance in face of common dangers, was outside the experience of Machiavelli's time. There had been no great collective demonstrations of moral force such as, later on, showed in what spirit alone national unity is possible of achievement and lasting success, such, for instance, as the action of the French people when faced by reactionary Europe, and of the Americans in the War of Independence.

Had Machiavelli witnessed events analogous to these, he would probably have written another "Prince." He would have realized that what is necessary to create a great nation is not an individual will dominating a people (the two Bonapartes, with the masters they brought on France, would have been a counterpart to his Valentino); he would have seen that what is necessary is the organic action of many individual wills, united in an ideal of progress for all.

Indeed, this ideal is outlined in many passages of his immortal "Discorsi": but political adventurers—and authors who court them—will always find it easier and more practical to read only the "Prince"—and therefore to misunderstand Machiavelli.

Revolutionary Ireland

THE ASSASSIN. By LIAM O'FLAHERTY. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PEADOR O'DONNELL

ONE of his Majesty's ministers in Southern Ireland was assassinated on his way to Mass. The assassination stirred Dublin profoundly, the man in the street wondering in a hopeless way whether the shooting was merely the opening of another campaign against the "Treaty," Republicans shrinking from the thought of reprisals such as had occurred a year previously, while here and there a mind searched the philosophy out of which such acts of assassination arise. Liam O'Flaherty was one of those who dipped into the philosophy, and Mr. O'Flaherty found it empty. "The Assassin" reveals O'Flaherty's search, and because assassination is to him a mere waste the story moves grudgingly, without adequate spiritual impulse or excitement; the characters are generally unhealthy, and finally dissolve. They sweat clammy in their fear and Tumulty alone sparkles on occasion with the fanaticism of the assassin.

The publisher's note rightly states, that Mr. O'Flaherty has sought to examine the idea of political assassination, but makes the mistake of adding that he also swings the forces now in play in revolutionary Irish politics. If Mr. O'Flaherty has led foreign readers into sharing the latter view then that is Mr. O'Flaherty's little joke. Mr. O'Flaherty would not pretend to know anything of Camann Ne M Can of whom Kitty Mellett was supposedly a member and whose executives never met, nor would he claim knowledge of the more significant Irish Revolutionary organization, so that the "facts" Mr. O'Flaherty uses in revealing the forces now in play in Revolutionary Irish politics have no place except in the world of Mr. O'Flaherty's imagination.

Mr. O'Flaherty has a right to furnish the world of his imagination with the facts and the people that he requires to reveal his thoughts on this explosion that occurred in his neighborhood, and he very nearly succeeds in making us give a footing to his characters in the city streets. Almost, but not quite. MacDora fails to reach us as a mind in torture; he is more a pain in Mr. O'Flaherty's mind than a distressed human being.

Kitty Mellett is too like MacDora to convince us that any real depth of passion could bind them. She is a sand-bagged repetition of MacDora. She is clammy as MacDora is clammy, petulant as MacDora is petulant; she staggers on her way to the task before her just as MacDora staggers and minds the simple task of killing an unarmed, however important man, with a medley of doubts and mincing panics.

But the weaknesses of these two characters express Mr. O'Flaherty's feelings on their purpose. The thing they are about to do will mean nothing except the ending of a human life and to the people who are to do it Mr. O'Flaherty refuses to give significance. His triumph would have been great had he succeeded in giving them identity. They almost touch life. It is doubtful whether any person writing in English today could have come so

near giving reality to meaningless people to do what he considered a wasteful and meaningless act.

In Tumulty he produces a man whose feet touch the sidewalks. Tumulty is a human being and is the one man of the conspirators who could ever have given us the actual shooting. MacDora, stupid and meaningless, talks incessantly about things that matter nothing, and is saved from the effect of his sickness and stupidity by the fact that Tumulty is all fired up within himself with the illumination that will light him to the deed that is before him. He is moved by the beauty of the lesser people and sees the county up in a blaze as a result of the assassination. In Tumulty we recognize the visionary who is forever picturing deep reaching explosions following from mild detonations.

The description of the actual shooting is the best chapter in the book and is really powerful. Here Mr. O'Flaherty was not surveying an idea, but touching to life a scene that is convincing and terrible. Mr. O'Flaherty creates this scene under fierce light and it dazzles; and his characters in motion challenge the sickness of their other days of waiting.

Has Mr. O'Flaherty succeeded in convincing us that political assassination even in the minds of his characters is empty and meaningless? He has, but he has not convinced us that MacDora and Kitty Mellett could ever have assassinated anybody. Tumulty saves the conspirators from being unreal and if the space devoted to MacDora had been made available to increase knowledge of Tumulty there might be some lingering memory of the story to haunt the mind of the reader. As it is, a desperate deed is done, and we remember the terrific intensity of the moment, but the memory fades away as the insignificant perpetrators of the deep creep off and tremble, and the deed itself loses stature and dissolves until we do not even remember that a man is dead.

But that is the end Mr. O'Flaherty sought, and he achieves it in a novel that is unusual and while not always brilliant never becomes less than puzzling when it ceases to be convincing.

"Lord Haldane's death is the fourth this year in the Order of Merit, following upon those of Mr. Thomas Hardy, Lord Haig, and Sir George Trevelyan," says the *London Observer*. "It also makes a gap among the surviving 'Liberal Imperialists' of a generation ago, who resented the opposition of certain of their party leaders to the South African War. The group was inaugurated at a memorable dinner given to Mr. Asquith, and among those present who still maintain their public activities are Viscount Grey, Lord Reading, Mr. Runciman, Mr. Justice Astbury, and Sir Martin Conway. Perhaps the most surprising name encountered in *The Times* report of the dinner is that of Mr. Sidney Webb. Every schoolboy knows for the moment that Lord Haldane did not allude to Germany as his 'spiritual home,' but that is no guarantee that the legend will not crop up again in the by-ways of political literature. Among apocryphal defamations it almost ranks with 'Every man has his price'—from which the late Lord Morley cleared Sir Robert Walpole. False ascriptions are numerous in history, but they generally lean to virtue's side. Washington could not have founded an action for libel upon the story of his axe, nor Wellington on 'Up, Guards, and at 'em!'"

Louis Tracy, author of many novels and detective stories, died recently in England. A journalist by profession, he was a prolific writer of romance, turning out an average of a novel a year. Among his tales was the notable "Wings of the Morning."

The Saturday Review of Literature

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NOBLE A. CATHCART.....Publisher

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Men With the Bark On

HOMER IN THE SAGE-BRUSH. By JAMES STEVENS. New York: Knopf. 1928. \$2.50.

MR. STEVENS has returned—for his last book was a satirical story of soldiers—overseas—to the people and country he knows best, and with the happiest results. The thirteen tales of this book are divided into three groups: tales of the forest country of western Washington and Oregon, tales of the sage-brush land of eastern Oregon and Idaho, and "idylls of western youth." Mr. Stevens writes of the roughest of Far Western workers; of lumberjacks, bullpunchers, stevedores, freighters, river-cooks, saloonkeepers, and miners. He knows their work, their amusements, their lingo, and their minds. His book is full of the raw stuff of the West, presented in stark, unadorned, unrefined fashion.

The strength of the collection is the strength of close observation and unflinching verity; the weakness is the lack of structure and finish. The tales—Mr. Stevens himself seems to prefer the word "sagas"—are for the most part crudely formed and some are frankly inchoate. Sometimes the author seems to be attempting a genuine short-story, and does not achieve it. But there is a certain fitness in this roughness, for he is writing of men with the bark on, of life that is lousy, dirty, lewd, profane, and toilsome, and of scenes that are utterly primitive. He furnishes us chunks or transcripts from the hard workaday existence of the Northwest, and the book owes something of its effect to its very lack of narrative art. Greater than art is truth. There is truth in the description of a reeking bunkhouse; of two thousand lumbermen hitting it up at Christmas in dance-hall, saloon, and sporting-house; of lines of freighters lurching and stalling in the rain-soaked Shaniko Flat. In his speeches he gives us the very flavor of the Westerner, now simple, now boastful, now ribald. Witness his river cook awakening the galley to action for a boatload of hungry passengers:

"Make way!" roared Spud Hawley. "Make way for the mightiest hot cakes and gravy cook that ever was! Come on, ye hellions, and swab the galley floor! Roll the coal into the range, my hearty second man! You, Arthur, lift the lids and lay the griddles! You, Joe, roll out a fresh barrel of flour! You, Mike, getch the round brown gravy bowls and the long-handle' ladles! I want cans of sweet milk, pitchers of sweet cream, I want shakers of pepper and salt, I want cases of eggs fer richness and a jar of pork-juice fer shortenin'! Grease the griddles, git the gravy kittle to smokin'! Heat up the chiny platters fer stacks of the brownest, crispiest, lightest, flakiest, tastiest hot cakes ever was! Heat up the round brown bowls fer the drippin'est, bubbliest, pepper-specked gravy that ever made a hot-cake lover roll his eyes with joy as he wallered fine breakfast flavors around in his mouth until they descended fer his innards' comfort and peace! Come on, you men! Let the range fires roar. Spud Hawley's makin' the reppitation of his life today.

Or, in the quieter, but equally humorous vein, take the irrigation-ditch tender revealing to a sympathetic audience his religious scruples:

You take the Mormons, now, down here in Bannock County. I run water fer them as far back as the seventies, and they treated me fine. Both the Utah and Idyho Mormons is real people, and I been tempted time and again to take three or four wives for myself and settle down among them as a sugar-beet rancher. What has always galled me, though, is tithin'. I'm a free and liberal man and it'd gall me to be tithed as though I couldn't be trusted to be free and liberal. Now, take the Presbyterians. Once I was tempted to settle down in a Pecon Valley Presbyterian settlement, and raise alfalfa and run sheep. But infant damnation stuck in my craw. So I couldn't stand the Presbyterians, though they were fine, fine as they make 'em, outside of infant damnation. Take the Methodists. You don't find 'em any finer than the Methodists. I was 'empted many a time in the early days to join the Yuma, Arizoner, Methodist settlement. But I absolutely kicked at the doctrine of sanctification. Take the Christian Advents. . . . All fine people, mighty fine; but I could never swaller the doctrine that the sperrit is the breath.

Mr. Stevens's report of a half dozen other figures is equally striking and fresh: of the French-Canadian trapper, Johnny Flemmand; of the broken-down old saloonkeeper of Cœur d'Alene, A. P. Carver, whose collection of grisly relics of shootings and lynchings has ceased to draw men to his bar; of the hardshell Baptist elder who sinned and confessed to his congregation; of the gambler Poker Tom Davis, who knew his Homer. When his tales fall into exaggeration, as they sometimes do, Mr. Stevens's effects are weakened. When he draws out the sentimental stops, as in one story of an old head-sawyer in a lumber mill who fought to have his job given to his son, he is weaker still. But for the most part he is restrained and hard-boiled. Even his "idylls" have a stern ironic quality.

The best of them, and one of the best stories in the book, shows the mistress of a "parlor-house" telling a naive youngster how she fell in Paris, where (so she romanced) she had been known as the "Queen of the Ate-leears." Mr. Stevens has given us a book full of vivid and unhackneyed reality; he may yet learn to throw his admirable material into an artistic form that will lift his tales indubitably and impressively into the realm of literature.



The bookplate reproduced was made by Dürer for his friend and patron, Willibald Pirckheimer, and is from the Pirckheimer copy of Aldus's first dated book which is now in the Pynson Printers' Library.

A Posthumous Novel

DESTINY BAY. By DONN BYRNE. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THURSTON MACAULEY

DONN BYRNE, even to himself, was something of a legendary figure. In a foreword to "Hangman's House"—one of his poorest efforts, by the way—he characterized himself as "the last traditional Irish novelist," to whom had fallen the task of writing the last traditional Irish novel. "So the school of Goldsmith and Sterne will pass," he continued—and, perhaps added under his breath, "with myself." However, in the dedication of "The Wind Bloweth"—this, of all his books, is the one I like best to remember him by—he made a better plea when he wrote "whilst doing this, it seemed to me that I was capturing for an instant a beauty that was dying slowly, imperceptibly, but would soon be gone. . . . It is a very pathetic thing to see a literature and a romance die."

With those who have accused Donn Byrne of being a synthetic Irishman I do not agree; that he did his best to keep hidden the fact that he happened to be born in Brooklyn seems evidence enough that he was Irish to the core. (In the British "Who's Who" he is described as an "Irish writer" and no birthplace is given.) In "Messer Marco Polo" he wrote: "Antrim will ever color my own writing. My Fifth Avenue will have something in it of the heather glen. My people will always have a phrase, a thought, a flash of Scots-Irish mysticism. . . ." And a great point in his favor was his utter disregard of politics. For the purpose of avoiding political matters he took for the time of nearly all his Irish tales some generation long past. In "Destiny Bay," his first posthumous book, he expressed his attitude thus: "He has never yet seen a government that brought heavier apples to the trees or heavier salmon in the rivers or a more purple heather, and for this reason politics mean nothing to him."

Between the covers of this book are some nine stories of varying lengths about the people of Destiny Bay, an unfrequented spot on the north coast of Ireland. With but several exceptions, these tales are already known to periodical readers, having appeared in either *The Saturday Evening Post* or *Pictorial Review*, during the past several years. Whether or not they were written with the idea of some day being published together I do not know, but there is a unity about the book which would make this seem probable. Some of Donn Byrne's finest work has been done for the popular magazines, and it is fortunate, indeed, that they should

have been thus rescued from a too early oblivion. In "Destiny Bay" we see Donn Byrne at his best, writing about the things he loved most of all: horse races, prize fights, and, above all, graceful courtships between gallant gentlemen and lovely ladies.

A Civil War Novel

WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE. By HONORÉ WILLIS MORROW. New York: Morrow. 1928. \$2.50.

MRS. MORROW'S second novel upon Lincoln in Washington opens at the beginning of 1863, and closes with the triumphant return of the President from City Point after the fall of Richmond. In these crucial two years the same natural theme serves history and historical fiction: the clash between the President's conservative group and the radicals of Congress and Cabinet. The future of the nation seemed at times to hang on this clash. Determining great events as it did, it also filled the President's household and his private life; for his intimate friend Sumner, a man whom he respected and almost loved, was a convinced radical, and others whom he met on close terms took sides vehemently. Mrs. Morrow, in fact, makes Charles Sumner almost as important a figure in the story as Lincoln himself. Somewhat exaggerating, perhaps, the assiduity with which he made himself at home in the White House, she revolves her tremendous panorama about his and Lincoln's private friendship and public antagonism.

In her brisk, realistic way, with a constant play of incident, with nearly every page full of colloquial speech, and with great characters introduced in their informal and sometimes ungirt aspect, Mrs. Morrow ably presents a surface impression of truth. As a surface impression, it may even be called admirable. The general reader will find the Washington of 1863-64 brought more vividly before his eye than in almost any history or biography. The special student will find his imagination stimulated, and in addition, some important facts brought home to his consciousness—for Mrs. Morrow has given devoted study to an enormous amount of Lincoln literature. Much of the effect is gained, and legitimately, from that mixture of the important and the trivial which made up life even for President Lincoln, and which we fail to find in histories which strain out the unimportant. On one page is Lincoln reading to a crowd in Lafayette Square the news of Lee's retreat after Gettysburg; on the next is Lincoln bantering John Hay upon the failure of his attempted flirtation with Kate Chase. Here is Tad weeping over some sudden reminder of his dead brother Willie; here are Lincoln, Hannibal Hamlin, and Frederick Douglass talking over the results of emancipation. One chapter shows Sumner at fifty paying court to Alice Hooper; another Ben Wade telling Sumner of Trumbull's desertion of the radicals' cause to support the President. Lizzie Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln's confidential maid, figures as prominently at one point as Andrew Johnson, drunk while reciting his inaugural address, does at another.

It is an effective and vigorous book; more effective than its predecessor, "Forever Free," because the plot is more simple and natural throughout. It helps to humanize a great era of American history. But it is not unfair, since the boldness of the theme challenges comparison with the really great historical novels, to say that it lacks the profounder elements of truth. Mrs. Morrow's Lincoln is a natural and human man, but he is even a bit too natural and understandable. There is a want of psychological subtlety, of which he had a great deal; there is no depth of novelty of interpretation. The same may be said of the portraits of some of the other great figures, notably Stanton and Sumner. In rendering an impression of the war, of Congress, of public opinion, and of the vast complex of forces which we think of in connection of the period, Mrs. Morrow oversimplifies. Everything is in the foreground, and little is suggested of the vast lowering background. The book, in short, is excellent in two dimensions, slights the third dimension somewhat, and has none at all of that fourth dimension which a genius would somehow give to his creation of time, place, and human beings. But it is warranted praise to say that it is a book which every American who desires an accurate, spirited, and stimulating picture of the outward aspects of the Civil War, will find interesting and enlightening.