

Mr. Cabell Replies

To the Editor of *The Literary Review*:

SIR: The paper headed "The Essentials of Nonsense," by Maurice Hewlett, has a very nicely descriptive title, but as a review of my book it leaves me oddly dissatisfied. It is not merely that I can read between the lines, as it were, that Mr. Hewlett found little to enjoy in "Figures of Earth." What troubles me is that his indignant brayings partake rather of such personal idiocy as ought to be restrained in anybody who was formerly an ornament of English letters.

To the more or less crushing charge that in Manuel's dream chronology and geography and nomenclature are jumbled (as in most mediæval legends) the one possible reply must be, "Of course they are." To like or dislike such a *mêlée* is optional: and while such frenzied objection to it would have come with a queer grace from the author of "The Forest Lovers" and "Lore of Proserpine," it comes, like any other balderdash, naturally enough from the concocter of "The Little Iliad" and "Love and Lucy." There is, thus far in Mr. Hewlett's spasms, no cause for special astonishment.

With real astonishment, however, one gathers that Mr. Hewlett is not sufficiently acquainted with the familiar story of Mélusine to know that the Albania over which King Helmas reigned was in Scotland; that he is not aware St. Ferdinand was King of Castile and Léon; that his knowledge of Gaelic legend does not extend to the very common word "geas," or to the famous fairy song "Pighin, pighin, da phighin, pighin go ieith agus leith phighin," and that he is even ignorant of the cries which the Talmudic stories about Solomon ascribed to the various birds.

Still, it is not fair that I should profit by Mr. Hewlett's lack of such elementary erudition. Plain honesty compels me thus publicly and modestly to admit that when Mr. Hewlett accredits to me the invention of (and blame for) all these, and other, matters he honors me beyond my due. And while these deficiencies in Mr. Hewlett's knowledge are interesting, why, after all, should his naïve confession of them be printed as a review of a book written by somebody who does happen to know about these things?

Yours faithfully,
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