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for COUGHS**

Pulmonas

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BOOKS

INNOCENCE OR DESIGN?

THE MOONLIGHT. By Joyce Cary. (Michael Joseph Ltd.)

(Reviewed by David Hall)

SOME writers burst upon us with a triumphant first novel and thereafter, smiling blandly, proffer us again and again the same, slightly shuffled cardboard figures with the same unwearying impudence. Not so Mr. Joyce Cary; he

is a novelist who is developing steadily with each new book. Years ago *The African Witch* skilfully used new material, but was too unpretentious and straightforward to foreshadow in any degree the complexity and psychological insight of *The Moonlight*.

If *The Moonlight* has a fault, it is that there is too much in it for one book. It has virtually two heroines, silly old Aunt Ella (a brilliant piece of characterisation) and the enigmatic Amanda, who has such difficulty in convincing herself of what she wants.

Like Miss Ivy Compton Burnett, whom Amanda reads, Joyce Cary portrays the intimate ferocities of family life; the old (like Aunt Rose), so certain and so domineering, the young, so groping and so bewildered and so resentful of interference. Mr. Cary allows his characters to develop under our eyes. As in life they, and the reader, are exposed to their own inexplicable impulses. The teasing sequence of events, running backwards and forwards in time to contrast the emotional fortunes of two generations, shows us nearly everybody from an amazing variety of angles. It is much for a novelist who plunges so deeply into the mind itself to give us such competent pictures of externals, to place his people firmly down among their

Circumstances, families,
And the stare of human eyes.

And there are darned many of them! The ruthless and predatory Dorothy, graceful and selfish grandfather Venn, and the bitter and ineffectual Robin, who sums himself up so well and so often ("one of the fools who never got any cheese because he was so careful to dodge the traps"), all these inhabit the same book.

Mr. Cary is perhaps a little clumsy in his handling of the more priapic phases of his story. The wrong people seem always to get into bed together for the right reasons, but all with a distressingly chilly lack of gusto. However hard these embers are stirred, they obstinately refuse to burst into flame. Amanda, the sophisticated intellectual co-heroine, seems to drift into unmarried motherhood from pure inanition; of course, it is a habit which runs in her branch of the family.

But a cold analysis of the events of *The Moonlight* can give only a false impression of its depth and of its beauty which gleam through the obscuring comicalities of a drooping but too-luxuriant plot. For Joyce Cary has not plunged into this story with the compulsive zest that made *Herself Revealed* such a triumph of conception and form. Here he is experimenting with something new, a step further on in his journey as a novelist, a way that still leads him uphill, over difficult ground, to majestic summits, dimly glimpsed, which he will be the first to tread.

THE AIM WAS GOOD

I HOLD MY AIM. By C. H. Keith. (George Allen and Unwin Ltd.)

GROUP-CAPTAIN KEITH, a serving officer in the R.A.F. from its formation, held during the vital 'thirties an important job in the Air Ministry at the head of a group of armament technicians. Among other things he shows us

(continued on next page)

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