

Thoreau's "Walden", and Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister". And the only way of accounting for the "neglect" of Melville in America is that he is dead, and the American system of book publishing and distribution does not make for immortality.

Mr. Weaver has done the thing for once and all. Here we have everything that anyone can conceivably desire to know of Melville. It is a question not yet answered to the present writer's satisfaction, whether he is any happier now than before reading it. Melville had not a personality like Stevenson's or, let us say, Jack London's. The lives of these men were as interesting as their books. This is not depreciating Melville. It was simply a difference, not of quality, but of type. Melville was a member of that class of writers who, if destiny furnishes a sufficiency of pecuniary reward, sink back into a pleasant and dignified obscurity, letting the world go by. In England he would have secured a Civil List pension and ended his days in peace as a still living classic. But this pecuniary reward did not come to him. He did not arrive at what he calls "unobstructed leisure" until he was about to die.

Care must be taken just now lest the enthusiasm engendered by the first reading of Melville's great book "Moby Dick" hurry us into faulty judgments. He will ever remain a magnificent torso. What he did and what he might have done, with his gifts, are two very different things. He was betrayed into an unreasonable exasperation with humanity and no man can do humanity or himself justice in such a condition of mind. Only once did he achieve what can be called a masterpiece. In "Moby Dick" he can be compared with no one, at times, save Shakespeare, in his supreme mastery

of character drawing. In that book he clears the ground and goes soaring on giant pinions. Let the incredulous read again the scenes at the Try Pots Inn, and compare Mrs. Hussey with Dame Quickly. Let them read again the scenes in the fore-castle at midnight. Here we are on enchanted territory, beyond the reach of literary rules and conventions, floating in a magic ocean. We close the book and whisper, "Oh what might he not have done?" And there is no answer. The story of Melville's life is simply a confirmation of the tragic fact, that only once did he wrench himself free from the corporeal encumbrances which held him down. It was his misfortune to imagine that he was unkindly used by fate, when he was only encountering the usual and inevitable agonies of the artist when his own personality is the raw material of his art.

Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic. By Raymond M. Weaver. George H. Doran Company.

FORETELLING THE THEATRE'S FUTURE

By Oliver M. Saylor

ART, like artists, is usually in greater peril from its friends than from its enemies, and never more so than when it is all dressed up and bound for uncharted playgrounds. The abject adoration of every canvas that looks as well upside down as it does inside out has done more to obscure the sound contributions of the futurists and the cubists than all the vetoes of the Academies. What the critical gentlemen have been pleased to call the New Movement in the Theatre—for want of a term connoting its old and perpetual nature as well as its

new—is particularly fortunate, therefore, to find an appraiser and an apologist who, in the person of Kenneth Macgowan, keeps his head on his shoulders and his tongue well anchored within his head.

It may be because I know him so well—his faults as well as his talents—but this, his first book, seems to me nothing short of remarkable for its detached, impersonal, and comprehensive character. The author of "The Theatre of Tomorrow" isn't the Macgowan who sits in crisp and hasty nightcourt judgment on passing plays for the "Globe", though his book has the apt, concrete phraseology of the best of his daily critiques. Nor is it the more penetrating and loquacious Macgowan of "Vogue", nor yet the austere and priestly editor of "The Theatre Arts Magazine", though the volume combines fulness of treatment with fitting authority.

Instead, it seems to me that here is the real K. M., the K. M. whom his friends conjure up when someone complains of his other embodiments, the K. M. who analyzes the latest "ism" or interviews the latest "ist" over the soup at the Harvard Club, the K. M. who, as offhand as a surgeon, dissects the profoundest problems of the theatre while he puts together a Chinese puzzle. Unlike some staff contributors who have achieved self-determination between cloth covers and yet have clung to their old inhibitions, he appears to have realized to the full the freedom underlying the old adage, "Ye shall write a book and your book shall make you free."

Now, this question of freedom with Macgowan, I am sure, is no issue of honesty or tact or policy in expressing his opinions. It is simply that he is writing for himself and not for the more or less vaguely personified audi-

ence of a newspaper or magazine. Authors sometimes dramatize and personify their audience, too, but not authors of first books. A first book is as engrossing as a hootch party, with the reading of proof and the making of the index corresponding to the morning after, and if you don't believe it, try it! And it is due in part to that exhilaration as well as to a practical idealism that Macgowan is such a complacent and unconcerned apologist for the new theatre. He doesn't see the need of fighting for it; he just predicts it. It's coming, anyhow, and that's that!

Admittedly a sequel to Hiram Kelly Moderwell's "The Theatre of Today"—and an invaluable sequel, for the theatre, despite the war, has moved far since 1914—Macgowan's survey is really written in the three tenses of research, observation, and speculation. Nothing is likely soon to take its place on reference shelves for resume and appraisal of the past. Anyone who desires sound and not too technical analysis of the present will be compelled to turn to it. And while the future of anything in these fluid times is discouragingly difficult to predict, the volume fully justifies its title in its penetrating foreview along probable paths. It would be a more valuable, vivid, and incontrovertible work in its present and future tenses if its author had had opportunity to check up on his European observations of a decade ago and his reading of contemporary signs from afar by personal contact with those signs. But if every author were to wait until he knew everything possible to know about his subject, nine-tenths of the printers, booksellers, and public libraries would have to go out of business and we'd still be reading Aristotle and Lessing in a futile attempt to understand Reinhardt

and Arthur Hopkins and Robert Edmond Jones, while the Expressionists would be as incomprehensible as Einstein and the virtues of the Eighteenth Amendment.

The Theatre of Tomorrow. By Kenneth Macgowan. Boni and Liveright.

VERLAINE WITHOUT TEARS

By Ernest Boyd

ALTHOUGH the publishers of Harold Nicholson's "Paul Verlaine" issued a book on the same subject by Wilfrid Thorley a few years ago, they have allowed the author of this volume to state on the first page that "there exists no Anglo-Saxon monograph on the life and works of Verlaine". It is, therefore, evident that neither he nor they are aware of his predecessor's existence—unless it be that they expect the public to forget Mr. Thorley's excellent little book, the work of a writer who is himself a poet, and a translator of French poetry whose skill in the rendering of Verlaine is unmatched. Mr. Nicholson, on the contrary, confesses that he had intended to include his versions of Verlaine's poems, but finally renounced what seemed to be a hopeless task. He is therefore extremely apologetic in presenting a subject which "has been worn threadbare", and he fears that "what has been done so adequately by Lepelletier and Delahaye" may be "a gratuitous undertaking". His oblivious publishers must clearly have brushed aside these scruples, since they have issued the book, ignoring their earlier affection for Mr. Thorley, and their reward has been to gather encomiums in the English press. But the question remains as to whether the public will take the hint and give to Mr.

Nicholson what was meant for Wilfrid Thorley, credit for having written the first "Anglo-Saxon monograph" on Verlaine.

At the outset let it be said that the adjective is well chosen. This is a thoroughly Anglo-Saxon tome, wherein it differs somewhat from the English book of Mr. Thorley. Thus, by a subtlety, the accuracy of both author and publisher is secured for that claim to pioneering! This is the life of Verlaine as viewed by a respectable British taxpayer, who knows these foreigners are lewd and dirty fellows, but whose education has not been so neglected as to permit of a too impatient dismissal of wayward genius. Consequently, he is able to relate in a readable and informing manner the life of that thoroughly un-Anglo-Saxon poet, who has been called the modern Villon, and whose claim it is to have shared with Baudelaire the creation of modern French poetry. Mr. Nicholson has a sharp eye for the defects of Verlaine, whom he shows as an amiable, drunken weakling, and it is a cold, somewhat supercilious glance which rests from time to time upon the poet, as he emerges from prison, hospital, or from the gutter, after one of his innumerable escapades. One feels that such adventures are not dreamed of in the philosophy of the playing fields of Eton (where Waterloo was won!) and that the Anglo-Saxon monographer is only too conscious of the fact. However, he brings himself to give a patronizing smile and proceeds with the narrative.

Thus he is able to recount the amazing apparition of Rimbaud and to set out in some detail the story of his irruption into the life of Verlaine and into French literature, and his departure from both, as suddenly as he