

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

came, after ruining the one and enriching the other. Mr. Nicholson contrives to relate all this without once bringing a blush to the Anglo-Saxon cheek. He diverts the mind from reprehensible speculation by launching as soon as possible into a hymn of praise to Rimbaud, whom he asserts to be a greater genius than Verlaine. Here Mr. Nicholson betrays the weakness so common to critics who discuss a literature other than their own. He has obviously been misled by the latest stunt in certain Paris circles, where Rimbaud has become a part of the Claudel cult, since Claudel professed to owe his conversion to God to the influence of that writer. It would be hard to find anything more incredible, if not actually ludicrous, than this picture of the saturnine, demonic Rimbaud as the inspiration of the Claudelian stream of neo-Catholicism. But, since Claudel says so, it must be so, and as Claudel is the idol of the moment, it follows that the source which he acknowledges must be as great, or even greater than he. So Mr. Nicholson forsakes Verlaine during the space of a long chapter, to tell the fascinating story of Rimbaud, and to proclaim him great. That there were strange potentialities in the chaotic energy of "Le Bateau Ivre" has never been denied; that the author of "Les Illuminations" was a more powerful personality than Verlaine is certain, but this embryonic force cannot be compared to the perfection of achievement which marks the genius of Paul Verlaine.

Mr. Nicholson, continuing to be faithful to his Anglo-Saxon mission, inevitably reaches the point where he has to repeat the credo, formulated by Matthew Arnold, that French poetry is inferior to English. He does, at least, attempt to prove his case by

the insertion of a technical disquisition upon metrics, but it is doubtful if any but the converted will be convinced. He is so determined to establish the charge that French poetry is monotonous that, when confronted with the evidence that Verlaine is not, he declares that the English ear can appreciate his music better than the French. This is a convenient method of meeting the problem which this controversy raises. If French poetry is monotonous and therefore inferior to English, why do the French themselves not think so? Answer: they do not hear it as it sounds to an Anglo-Saxon. But Verlaine is very varied and pleasing to the foreigner. Then, the French cannot properly appreciate him. Q. E. D. And so we obtain our "Anglo-Saxon monograph on the life and works of Paul Verlaine".

Paul Verlaine. By Harold Nicholson.  
Houghton Mifflin Co.

## NATURE SECRETS

By Mary Graham Bonner

ERNEST THOMPSON SETON'S "Woodland Tales" are for all who love the world of out of doors. They describe those things that may be seen in the springtime and in the summer, in the autumn and in the winter, in the wonders of woodcraft, and in the thrilling, mysterious ways of Mother Carey.

We learn that "whenever a Brownie sits, a toadstool must spring up for him to sit on". And we discover that the flowers some of us have called the Dutchman's breeches are not rightly named. For at a certain swimming party the Brownies were driven out of the woods by a fire, leaving their