

(continued from previous page)

itself, to value "good theatre" and "technique" ("a grandiloquent name . . . a word which is thought to cover a whole ragbag of sins") as ends instead of means and so loses "just that contact with the common apprehensions of life without which an art becomes stale or thin." The amateur with his surer knowledge of life as it is lived and his healthy ignorance of life as it is supposed to be acted can help to hold the mirror at the right angle and do a real service to the art of which he is so enamoured and he may do for some new and different play what amateurs did for *The Seagull* and *The Family Reunion* when they were new and different.

Dobree, whose opinions on the art of acting are in line with those of Shakespeare and Tchekov, has the craftsman's attitude towards the theatre and his essay is as sound and as simple as an honest piece of carpentry. In short, *The Amateur and The Theatre* is a concise, clear analysis of the nature and purpose of the amateur's contribution to the theatre—the how as well as the why of it. I wish some amateur producer would insist that his cast read it before the first rehearsal and would hand it out with the programmes for the audience to read in the intervals between the acts.

PHILOSOPHY IN VERSE

SANITY RARE. By E. S. Hole. George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

SANITY RARE is a philosophical essay—in verse which is reminiscent sometimes of Alexander Pope, occasionally of Ogden Nash. It is an ambitious project—even more ambitious than its prototype "The Essay on Man," since Pope takes 600-odd couplets to draw "The Measure of Man" and Hole gives him a bare 80 before

CONTRAST

I HAVE a gay and streamlined home
Set high on a windswept rise,
With a view of the shore and the scudding foam
And the changing western skies.
And a bent old woman lives down below
In a house worn grey with years,
Four-square to the gap where the westerlies blow,
And the paint peeled from its ears.

I'VE sat in my all-electric house
And watched on a winter day
While the little old woman's ageing spouse
Hauled driftwood from the bay.
I've lain at night while the rain beat down
On our tiles with a muffled tread,
And known that their roof iron, rusted brown,
Would echo to wake the dead.

BUT now I would trade my dream home in,
If they would but trade with me
For the drab frame house where the westerlies spin

Clean in from the open sea.
Oh, who would have thought that I could change
To envying their lot?
But they have a squat and ugly range
That makes their water hot!

Nancy Bruce

hurrying on to "The Limits of Logic," "The Problem of Purpose," "The Rays of Reason," etc. The obvious answer to that is that "The Limits of Logic," "The Snare of Science" and "The Coils of Commerce" all, in their own way, do take the measure of man, but that does not make the criticism invalid. Bits and pieces of philosophy, however clever, are merely incoherent if lumped together, and the sum total of them does not make a philosophical essay. Hole has collected (that is the right word—he borrows freely and punctiliously acknowledges his debts) a number of thoughts, fitted them with considerable technical skill into quatrains, and presents them to us as gospel according to Hole. The result is an anthology of truisms, which is not as bad as it sounds, because the truisms are stated vigorously, I almost said lustily, in a style which varies from colloquial simplicity to an almost pontifical solemnity but which is sometimes witty and almost always free from humbug.

The essay is in verse because "he (Hole) holds that the great power of poetry is that it can say things *arrestingly*." It can, but not many will feel that this, his summary to the chapter "Fancies of Fact," does:

So when to-day our so-called facts we face,
They change their form at very rapid pace;
If any other things are so bizarre,
Then I for one do not know what they are.

There are better and worse stanzas than that, but it is a fair example.

—S.P.McL.

LIFE IS EARNEST

CALL IT LIFE. By George Sava. Macdonald and Co. Ltd., London.

THIS is a story of a failure and a success. Margaret was a German woman of good birth, but brought up as the family drudge. She ran away to become the wife of Isaac Jacobi, a Jewish industrialist. For several years life was good; she had children, position, wealth. But with Hitler's rise, Jacobi's business went to the wall and the family sought refuge in England. From this point onward the reader finds himself deep in the subject of psychiatric healing, with occasional excursions into surgery. Dr. Sava asserts that this is a true story, with changes only in the names of the characters who, by the way, all call him "George." But he strains credulity to the breaking point by asking us to believe that Margaret, once the charming hostess of a lovely home, can take to the streets, acquire the habits and jargon of the uneasy London twilight, and return, almost in a flash, to her former status of utter respectability. Margaret marries David, an English widower with a small boy whose custody is sought by an impossibly vicious type of mother-in-law. A court scene, the submissions of counsel and the judicial reactions make up one of the better scenes in the book, relieving Sava's numerous essays at philosophic calmness in extraordinarily trying circumstances. The story is an interesting study of a complex subject, but a fault is the characters' too frequent protestations to George that he is "so good to us." It is almost a monument to the author's virtue as a comforter. It ends happily, at least with a strong suggestion that Margaret "sees into the future and sees that it is good."

—E.R.B.



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