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Eveline, the wife who learned through stages of disillusioning experience to steel herself against her own fears and the sentimentality of others, is a charming woman. She was brought up under standards of an older day; all she wanted was to serve her husband. She kept a diary during her engagement, and it was the first breach of confidence in her fiancé that caused her to abandon it. Years later she took to writing her thoughts down once more; and the lacuna is at once adequately filled for the reader by implication. Eveline's profoundest wish at marriage was to be worthy of her husband, for she was convinced of his greatness. Unfortunately, he is of the innumerable breed that never has a wholly disinterested thought. His chief aim was to serve himself—always, however, with the noblest sentiments on his lips and the most self-righteous reasons for his acts.

THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES by *André Gide* (KNOFF, \$2.00)

ALTHOUGH it is a slight thing, quantitatively speaking, *The School for Wives* is not in the least negligible. If it is true that we in America withhold our worship for the merely physically imposing, then it is entirely possible that this short novel by André Gide will be forgotten long before *The Counterfeiters*. But the characterization of one woman in *The School for Wives* is superior to that of any single figure in the larger book. For one thing, Eveline, whose two diaries make up the novel, is not troubled by the dark and perverse imperatives that so disturb the people of *The Counterfeiters*, and hence Gide, as the omniscient creator, has not so much to hide or to make cryptic through suggestion in the interests of good taste. We know Eveline more completely than we know the appealing Olivier, or the uncle who kept the journal, or young Profitendieu; the book is plainer sailing. It is nowhere near so intricate as *The Counterfeiters*; its pattern is, in fact, almost childishly simple. But the quality and the subtlety of exposition are of Gide's highest level.

Did he believe all he said? We never know, for we get our knowledge of him through the eyes of others. He seems one of those borderline cases in which bluff and sincerity are indistinguishably mixed. At any rate, Eveline ceases to believe in him. She tries to deny her thoughts, but they will not be crammed back below the line of consciousness. Her moral nature is distinctly like Gide's; the woman is a subject made to her creator's pen. She does not necessarily want to hurt; but the truth must be learned and acted upon, regardless of its savor. Kenneth Burke has said with reason of Glenway Wescott (who is an American disciple of Gide) that this young writer whose *The Grandmothers* drew much attention is determined to give no offense, but equally determined to let the offensive be said. That is even more true of Gide himself. It is not so apparent in this book as in *The Counterfeiters* because Eveline is fundamentally a very healthy person. It is Eveline herself in *The School for Wives* who doesn't want to offend, but who will offend when the logic of a situation demands it.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

Sept. 1929