

Extract from
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RECENT FICTION.

"THE COUNTERFEITERS."

M. André Gide is one of the most eminent of contemporary French novelists, and we were therefore particularly interested to see an English translation of his "Les Faux-Monnayeurs," by Dorothy Bussy, under the title of "The Counterfeiters" (Alfred A. Knopf, 10s. 6d.). It is a very difficult book to judge. One of the characters, a novelist, called Edouard, who is writing a novel called "The Counterfeiters," remarks somewhere that it is remarkable how far literature has lagged behind painting at the present day. M. Gide is himself an illustration of this truth. A man of tremendous talent, who possesses in a high degree that honesty before nature which enabled the in some ways meagrely endowed Cezanne to become a truly great painter, he has yet failed to produce a novel that is a work of art as "War and Peace" or "Tristram Shandy" are works of art. There seems to be a conflict all through "The Counterfeiters" between the claims of art and reality. M. Gide's honesty forbids him from sacrificing or perverting real values in the interest of any artistic synthesis; and he has not yet arrived at a synthesis which would not necessitate this.

It is evident that M. Gide has a great admiration for Dostoevski. Like that writer he excels in the portrayal of abnormal types and morbid states of mind; and like him "The Counterfeiters" has little or no surface unity or tightness of dramatic construction. Theoretically, of course, a novel can dispense with surface unity and still be a work of art; Dostoevski is a practical proof; but it is a dangerous sacrifice, and must be replaced by another harmony and progress on the spiritual plane. This Dostoevski achieves through the steadiness and intensity of his moral passion, to which all aspects are related. M. Gide seems to have found no fixed point (which would give him a synthesis) from which to regard the actions and qualities of his characters, and as a result "The Counterfeiters" lacks both kinds of form, outer and inner, dramatic and spiritual. One is conscious in reading it of a sense of waste. There are wonderful scenes in the authentic Dostoevski manner. There are materials for a really first-rate novel. What is lacking? Everyone who is interested in the novel as a literary form should read "The Counterfeiters" and attempt to find his own solution to the problem.

Extract from
Portsmouth County Times.

The Counterfeiters.

Amongst recent translations there is one that certainly merits mention, and that is M. André Gide's "Les Faux-Monnayeurs." It is rather an unsavoury tale of the adolescence and young manhood of one who was, to say the least, extraordinarily unfortunate in his associates. M. Gide is always a force to be reckoned with, but "The Counterfeiters" is not, on the whole, a good novel, by reason of its uneven construction, and aged ends. It is very distinctly out of the rut, however. All those who are interested in modern French literature should read this, although they will not find it too edifying!