

Vol 2

by **STEPHEN POTTER**

NOT 'le,' boy, 'leurr'
... le, leur."


In the haze of the sleepy classroom I could just understand what the French master was trying to say. "Le" and "leur" were two different words, with two different pronunciations.

My ear permanently stunned by this treatment, I have to read my French nowadays, particularly my modern French, in translation.

How delightful, then, to find a really good English version of a great modern French classic.

André Gide has influenced so much that is good in modern literature. He is the stylist who rejected Style, to return to a "naked, natural" way of writing. There have been competent translations of the great novels—"L'Immoraliste," "Les Faux-Monnayeurs." Now at last there is a satisfactory translation of *The Journals of André Gide, Volume I, 1889-1913*.

What makes this Journal a major work of art? The wide interests? The power of description? Gide's revelation of the experiences of authorship? ("My 'Immoraliste' is already so far be-



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hind me that I cannot bring myself to correct the proofs. . . . Any joy in producing is cancelled by the wild joy of learning.")

Is it the criticisms of English writers, Meredith and Pater? His association with Oscar Wilde, who gave him a text which might have been a clue to Gide's own life when he said: "I put all my genius into my life; I put only my talent into my works"?

"Let me confess to you, my diary . . . Every year ten thousand young women and young men write that sentence or its equivalent in their "Personal Diary—Private." But if only these confessions were truly personal, instead of pictures of the diarist as he sees himself. It is the absolute objectivity, the detachment of the born writer, which makes it impossible, once we have taken up the Journal of Gide, not to read on in a trance of attention.