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London

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The Journals of André Gide. Vol. III.  
Translated by Justin O'Brien.

Secker and Warburg. 30s.

Mr. O'Brien's third volume takes us from 1928 to 1939, the seventieth year of Gide's life and the fiftieth of his *Journal*. The clarity of the old man's daily thought, the quality he calls his 'inner azure', is keen and youthful as ever; he was never more alert, harmonious and joyful.

But the tone of the light has shifted, and the appreciation of this nuance is one of the special pleasures of being in his life's third quarter. In the 'twenties the radiance of the *Journal* was like a first fine day in spring; in the 'thirties it is a first cool day in autumn.

The climactic of Gide's life as an artist was his novel *The Counter-letters*; but the fertility and happiness of his old age, if they were ever really in doubt, were decided by his journey to the Congo with Marc Allégret, which ended a year before the present volume begins. In his youth he used to say 'happiness is my duty': in later life happiness became, so to speak, his pleasure. In the last published pages of the *Journal*, written in 1942 amid the Allied air-raids on Tunis, he could write 'ecstasy has become my normal state'. 'Fervour' and 'liberation' had been the watchwords of his youth, 'inquietude' and 'constraint' of his middle years. Now the tapestry woven by these themes, or, to use Gide's beloved metaphor from Henry James, the figure in the carpet is complete, and its name is 'serenity'. It is thanks in part to Marc Allégret and the Congo that Gide's life, itself a joyfully-fashioned work of art, has been not a 'Lear' but a 'Tempest'.

Another consequence of the Congo journey was the re-kindling of interest in social questions that led to Gide's hitch-hike with communism in the 'thirties. The process can be followed day-to-day in the *Journal*. 'What leads me to communism is not Marx, it is the Gospels', he says, and quotes with approval Marx's epigrammatic 'I am not a Marxist'. Then his visit to Russia showed him the reality behind the ideal; he jumped off the bus just as others jumped on, and was rewarded with the execration of both Montagues and Capulets. Now, when the western world has followed him, it is possible to see his brief conversion nor as a false step, but as a prophetic detour, and his journal thereof as a permanent contribution to political philosophy. More personally, Gide gained as a man and artist by his disabusal. A new awareness of human oppression had filled an empty arc in his ethic and aesthetic, and a hard-earned faith in human progress survived his realisation that Stalin was no more a Messiah than Stavisky. If the 'thirties were a barren period for Gide as a writer, the 'forties produced *Theseus*; and he summed up his final creed in the gnomic formula of his Beirut broadcast of 1943: 'the world will be saved—by a few'.

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Among other noteworthy themes of this volume are the tragi-comedy of his relationship with Valéry ('if he were deaf and dumb I couldn't wish for a better friend'), and the

moving pages devoted to the 'disorder, distress and despair' that followed the death of his wife; these last are likely to surprise the many, whose view of Gide's marriage is based on assumption rather than study of the abundant available evidence. Otherwise, it is the incessant but classical renewal of thought and feeling, the enormous quantities of work, the reading,

travel, piano-practice and glimpses of landscape and people, that graced the earlier volumes. Gide's *Journal* makes the reader feel more intelligent, observant, sensual, charitable, free; and if ever that dying quality, genius, returns to the world, Gide, as much as the greatest among his kin, will have helped it to free itself in youth and to remain productive and undespairing in

old age. Mr. O'Brien has carried out his long task devotedly and worthily. He is blessed with a mind that is panchromatic to the *Journal*, and his translation is suitably brisk, pure and witty; for the rest one must go to the original. His index is one of the most useful instruments for Gidian studies yet produced, and if it did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it.

July 1949