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André Gide 337

AT THE age of seventy-seven André Gide has received the Nobel Prize. It is strange that this man who led French literature out of the romantic and symbolist movements of the late nineteenth century, who was the prophet of individualism and the castigator of social injustice, had to wait so long for this honor. Gide has been called a moral philosopher and a dramatist of ideas. He was already celebrated in 1895 when his ardent nature broke the shackles of a narrow religious education and his rigid conceptions of literary art. "Chopin has taught me more technically," he had written, "than any literary master." His moral and intellectual sufferings were revealed in the long series of his published notebooks in which the reader can study this struggle to break forth from the chrysalis of self-imposed upper-class restraint, from which Proust never escaped, into the limitless boundaries of suffering humanity. Indeed, he found the brutal facts of life almost too depressing to be borne, as "The Counterfeiter," his best-known novel, reveals in which he found the whole social order founded on hypocrisy, on counterfeit love and justice and counterfeit morality. In this country he began to be recognized through translations only twenty years ago, through the publication of a half dozen of his novels, a few critical essays, and a book of travel in Africa in which he exposed the cruelty of the French Colonial system. For his long celebrated "Note Books" the American public has had to wait until the appearance this year of the first volume, "The Journals of André Gide, 1889-1913." Aside from being a novelist, dramatist, and moralist, Gide was also one of the most penetrating of French critics and the founder of a new kind of literary magazine, *The Nouvelle Revue Française*, through which he discovered and encouraged many of the greatest of French writers and poets. The Nobel award was given to him for his "extensive and artistically important authorship in which he exposed the problems and conditions of mankind." Perhaps his greatest claim to fame will be his exposure of the development of the soul and nature of André Gide.

H. S.

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