

doggedly, determined to know what happened to these two likeable people. Miss Fargeter, however, is equally determined that nothing of all youn

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ground is both and interesting.

Dr. Cronin's self and his reputation scant justice. *Common's Way*, which is largely a re-issue, is a slightly refurbished, of all that has gone before and sold so well. All that is, except for *Dr. Cronin's* whose sombre magnificence nothing remains. Dr. Cronin has gone a long way since then, and not always forward.

## André Gide

by JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

*André Gide and the Crisis of Modern Thought*: Klaus Mann. *Dennis Dobson*. 15/-.  
*The Journals of André Gide*: translated by Justin O'Brien. Volume II., 1914-1927. *Secker & Warburg*. 30/-.

It is the honour of some of the greatest of French writers that they have endeavoured to tell the truth about the human being, as they found that truth in their own hearts. Among these great *moralistes* (there is scarcely an English equivalent) we must class figures so different as Montaigne and Pascal, La Rochefoucauld and Rousseau, and it is to this succession that M. Gide belongs. His seventy-nine years—he was born on November 22nd, 1869—have brought him into touch with every vital movement which, during that period, has affected the spirit of Europe.

Some of the most important leaders of those movements have been among his personal friends and acquaintances. In his youth, he learnt from Mallarmé and the Symbolists that the search for integrity of style is the artist's primary vocation, while he liberated his senses through the aesthetic hedonism of Wilde. In the 'twenties he contributed, as a novelist, to that exploration of the subliminal consciousness which is perhaps this century's greatest achievement in literature. He was affected by, but could not ultimately share in the imaginative rediscovery of Catholic faith brought about by his friends Claudel and Maritain. His disenchantment with Soviet Communism, after a visit to Russia in 1936, came more rapidly than with some others. He has not forsworn the ideals for which international Communism claims to stand. But this life-long individualist could not accept the bureaucracy, the grandiose cult of Stalin's personality, and, above all, the narrow and *petit*

*bourgeois* spirit which, it seemed to him, prevailed in the Soviet Union, and which he considered, in the profoundest sense, counter-revolutionary. Since then he has lived to see France invaded, defeated, and finally liberated. He remains amongst us, a courageous and still youthfully curious figure, whom Europe delights to honour.

Behind and beyond M. Gide's lifelong search for truth of style and expression, yet at the same time informing it, there has been his search for God. He sees himself as the Prodigal Son, who knows that he can never be really far from his Father, wherever his wanderings may take him. His experiences in North Africa in 1894, when, under the tutelage of Oscar Wilde, he made the discovery of his own nature and of its sensual requirements, signalled his emancipation from a narrow Puritan upbringing. But it would be shallow to regard the Protestantism of M. Gide's youth merely as a starting point, something from which he escaped into intellectual and emotional maturity. It has given to him his sense of the pre-eminence of individual integrity over all other values, and of the immediacy of the naked Gospel of personal salvation at whatever cost—a gospel not to be overlaid or softened by traditional or scholastic glosses. His life has been a continual protest against any easy conformism. It is from protest that Protestantism takes its very name. And Protestant religion may count it among her graces that the protest for which she stands has so often been directed against herself, as well as against her enemies, by her own prodigal sons.

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The influence of M. Gide's Protestant upbringing is important from another point of view. The Protestant community in France is a minority—often provincial and narrow in its culture. Yet its members must necessarily feel themselves in possession of certain important truths which their Catholic neighbours have neglected. They can look back to a great tradition in the past, and are aware of their affiliation to others beyond the frontiers of the nation of their birth. Their position, in fact, is not at all unlike that of the Roman Catholics in England, of whom all the above statements could equally well be made. In either contingency, such a background is apt to leave indelible traces on the character of a writer's work. In M. Gide's case it may account for his profound understanding of authors—German, Russian, English and American—who are outside the Latin tradition. These include Goethe and Nietzsche, Pushkin and Dostoevsky, Browning and Blake, Whitman and Melville; to these we may add the Dane, Kierkegaard.

Mr. Klaus Mann, himself a German by birth, and the son of Thomas Mann, is in an excellent position to bring out the significance of this side of M. Gide's genius. His book is the work of one who has had personal contacts with his subject, as well as an obvious enthusiasm for and understanding of his writings. It is a well-documented and comprehensive survey of M. Gide's work, and also of his outward life and his spiritual progress. For this we must be grateful; but it has to be confessed that Mr. Mann's book is often tiresome reading. The style is prolix, while the author's personality too frequently obtrudes itself between M. Gide and the reader. Mr. Mann has learnt to employ the English language with a good deal of freedom and gusto; it is perhaps churlish to complain that his taste in the selection of phrases—



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especially the would-be hearty journalistic cliché—is sometimes excruciating.

It is pleasant to turn to the civilised ease of M. Gide's own journals, of which the second volume has now appeared. The translator would seem to have done a competent job of work in rendering the intimate and informal, yet restrained and classical manner of his original. The years 1914 to 1927 which this volume covers were important in M. Gide's development, and saw the publication of *Les Caves du Vatican*, *La Symphonie Pastorale*, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Si le Grain ne Meurt*. These were works in which the author widened the scope of his exploration of the human personality—its search for self-realisation and its need of God. As with many other writers of a restless and curious spirit, M. Gide has always felt the need to accompany his spiritual pilgrimage with a series of actual journeys—into distant lands and alien cultures. From July, 1925, to June, 1926, he was occupied with a voyage to the Congo. What he recorded of that voyage forms no part of the journal, and will not be found here. But it is of significance to the story; for the horrors of African colonial exploitation which he witnessed, and courageously exposed, impressed on him the truth that he who follows a gospel of personal realisation cannot afford to tolerate what dishonours the personality in other men.

For the rest, almost every facet of M. Gide's genius finds expression in these pages: his psychological curiosity, his demand for freedom and frankness in the discussion of sexual questions (especially homosexuality), his love of music, his shrewd literary and philosophic judgments, his continual preoccupation with the question of religion. It is the informal record of a fundamentally honest mind, which refuses to be taken in by emotional shams and false romanticism (note particularly his ironic comments on the sentimental "Nature-mysticism" of Maeterlinck, who claimed to find "intelligence" in the adaption of plants to their environments).

**Ideals and Illusions:** L. Susan Stebbing. *Watts (Thinker's Library)*. 3/6.

THIS book, now posthumously reprinted in a cheap edition, has as great a relevance to current worries as it had when it was first published in 1941. We seem to live in an age of loud talk, punctuated by louder explosions. Not since the French and American revolutions has there been so much talk of ideals and rights and freedoms. But unfortunately, although this talk reflects our recognition of a threat to the ideals of Western civilisation, the very imminence of the threat has encouraged an indiscriminately emotional use of abstract words like Freedom, Spiritual Values, and the Importance of the Individual.

Miss Stebbing's object, in *Ideals and Illusions*, was to try and clear up some of the nonsense which results from such abuse of abstractions. Her method was to analyse particular examples of muddled thinking, taken from eminent writers (such as F. H. Carr and Lord Lindsay) in various fields of thought—political, sociological, ethical, etc.—and to show not only where the muddles occur (by exactly pin-pointing relevant distinctions) but also why they sound so plausible. The resultant polemics are stimulating, illuminating, and at the same time constructive. For Miss Stebbing was one of the few professional philosophers who talked sense and who also had a genius for making the sense clear to laymen.

RUPERT CRAWSHAY-WILLIAMS.