

Extract from .

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Faux-Monnayeurs

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A GREAT FRENCH NOVELIST.

M. André Gide has been spoken of as the finest stylist of his generation—a fact that will hardly intrigue English readers so much as the fact that since Proust and Anatole France are dead he is probably the greatest living French novelist. M. Gide has written poetry, dramas, and some important criticism besides novels, the best known of which include "La Porte Etroite" (1909), "Les Caves du Vatican" (1913), and "Les Faux-Monnayeurs" (1925). This, his most important novel, appears in translation by Dorothy Bussy as "The Counterfeiters" (Knopf, 10s. 6d.).

A psychological novelist, though he might deplore the term, he may be paralleled by, rather than compared to, Dostoevsky. This novel presents some developments of human interrelations, particularly some studies in friendship. In an artistic sense it is more purely and in an actual sense more naturally a slice of life than any novel we know that has attempted the same deliberate end. The author lets his plot "flow where it will." He obtrudes constantly, without distracting the attention, as confidential and curious observer. The casual air in which he envelops the action is not the least masterly side of his art. In Edouard we are to see something of himself, of his artistic self as he states his aims and discusses his theory of the novel. Despite these seeming preoccupations, and somewhat because of them, the drama flows on naturally, unforcedly.

This is not to say that he has simply "set down everything." He has expressed that selection in which art flowers, and has made a very deliberate choice of material, though beyond that it has shaped its own course with a remarkable effect of truth. Incidentally the cerebral activity of the characters is remarkable. They are full of ideas. The artifice by which the preliminary interlocking is introduced jars slightly until its subtleties are appreciated. Less easily acceptable, or comprehensible, is little Boris's suicide. It serves as a climax, where one was hardly needed, and it underlines the futility of life perhaps more than the author intended, for his philosophy is not a negative one, but is decidedly based on a belief in an omnipresent deity.

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