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Extract from
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A FRENCH POET'S FIRST NOVEL.

THE COUNTERFEITERS. By André Gide.
London: Alfred Knopf. Pp. 305.
10s. 8d. net.

It must not be assumed that, because the author has put into this remarkable work "everything I see, everything I know, everything that other people's lives and my own teach me" it is stocked with what Synge called the "drugs of many seedy problems," or that in transferring his allegiance to the art of the novel after a lifetime in poetry M. André Gide has merely joined the familiar host of French realistic-fiction writers. He remains a poet, and the problems with which he deals are spiritual. They arise out of "the struggle between what reality offers and what we desire to make it"; they are regarded from a standpoint at the farthest extreme from the commonplace and conventional, and yet the total effect is just as human. Or rather one should say it is more human, for while the stock types in modern fiction are dangerously near losing all resemblance to living beings, M. Gide's fine young men, Bernard (an exquisitely portrayed adolescent), Edouard, and Olivier; his villain, the Comte Robert de Passavant; and his poor victim of circumstances, Vincent, are ourselves in counterpart. Indeed "The Counterfeiters" is only a novel in the sense that it treats imaginatively of a group of people in Paris belonging to the intellectual and artistic classes. The story, moreover, is unimportant. In the course of it a young married woman has a child by a man other than her husband, and a young man is seduced by an unscrupulous woman; but these things are of no more account than the tritest epigram attributed to Passavant. Nor does the book possess a theme. "My novel hasn't got a subject," admits Edouard. "Yes, I know it sounds stupid. Let's say, if you prefer it, it hasn't got *one* subject." The Count's influence for evil in the lives of all the characters is, however, a very near approach to a theme, and by M. Gide's consummate artistry he suggests the most subtle developments of it. "The Counterfeiters" is a memorable book, and Miss Dorothy Bussy's conscientious rendering into English has retained much of its original brilliance.

T. M.