

Record

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Fiction From a New Angle by Andre Gide

"THE COUNTERFEITERS," by Andre Gide;
translated from the French by Dorothy
Bussy; Alfred A. Knopf.

Rated as among the foremost men of letters in France today, Andre Gide projects between the pages of "The Counterfeiters" what he asserts to be his "first novel," despite his previous fictional record of 30 years.

"Up until now," says Gide, in explaining his attitude toward the novel, "we have been given novels with a purpose, parading as novels of ideas. I should like to strip the novel of every element that does not specifically belong to it."

That the novelists' ideas of what a novel should really consist of are continually running counter one to the other, the layman suspects, but refuses to be affected. Either he likes what the novelist hands him—or he doesn't. And one recent critic speaks truthfully when she says that "nobody knows anything about the laws of novels anyway."

But the author of "The Counterfeiters" prefers to concern himself with "moral tragedies," which he asserts "are the very essence of man's being"—therefore the proper stuff of which to make novels. It follows that "The Counterfeiters" is such a novel. For the most part it assumes the form of a "journal," except where interrupted by the characters of the narrative, who, at such times, seem almost to get out of hand, and without the volition of their creator, act out their own various destinies in spite of his evident desire to restrain them. In fact they write themselves.

The reader's feelings are continually alternating between repugnance and admiration. Repugnance is engendered for this whole collection of human beings, lacking in repressions, with seemingly nothing fine to tie to, and supposedly reflecting the life of modern France. Yet admiration is aroused for the sentiments of the "journal" as it mirrors the author's high idealism, and his hopes that the present generations may live to "lose their angles" and cease "founding schools with no other object than to pull things down."

In "The Counterfeiters" the mask is off and with the effect of startling candor.

C. D. S.