

(? Decembre) 1927

Spectator *Flamie*
The Counterfeiters *Tou*
USA

(The Counterfeiters, by Andre Gide. Knopf—The Macmillan company of Canada, Toronto, \$3.)

Andre Gide, who has been, with the sole exception of Proust, the foremost figure in the last generation of French literature, has written what he describes as his "first novel." Published in Paris in 1925 under the title of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, it is now available in a brilliant translation under the title of The Counterfeiters.

The dictionary defines the novel as "a fictitious prose tale or narrative of considerable length, in which characters and actions professing to represent those of real life are portrayed in a plot. Novels usually deal with the passions, especially love. . . ." Gide's understanding of this is a work in which there exist a conflict of characters and a conflict of ideas. According to the journal which Gide kept during the composition of The Counterfeiters, it was his intention to "purge the novel of all those elements which do not belong specifically to the novel." The result is a novel in the strictest sense of the word . . . not a book in which the author obtrudes his personality and ideas . . . but one in which the characters created by the author express theirs. In real life one touches

many lives, lives replete with unsuspected gold or dross which we are unable to divine beneath the counterfeit surface; so in this life-like portrayal of characters and actions we follow the complete course of human existence—adolescence, middle-age, senility; passion and degeneracy; self-denial and sensuality. Gide has so faithfully discharged the first duty of the novelist, which is to report truthfully life as he sees it, that we have the feeling that the entire book belongs to the characters; they make of it what they will with their varying ages and temperaments, although youth has the pre-eminent place with all its enthusiasms, passions and struggles.

From the beginning of the book, when the boy, Bernard Profitendieu, leaves his father's house and we are brought into contact with the persons whose lives impinge on his, we see people as they are—counterfeiters all—not to be taken at their face value, but with masks laid aside. So individual is the presentation of their lives, thoughts and emotions that more than one narrative could be written from the material provided.

Discriminating readers will find The Counterfeiters a remarkable book and a very fine novel. G. T.