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### Tropical Observations

*Travels in the Congo, by André Gide. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.00.*

WHILE M. Gide was traveling "officially" through French equatorial Africa he kept an unusually observant diary. The two volumes of this were published in France with great success, partly because there exists a public interested in Africa but mostly because of the personal charm of M. Gide. Few men maintain a better balance between the outer world of event and panorama, and the inner world of self. Though one turns page after page anxious to discern what the Negro opines, eats and suffers, the satisfaction that

comes with learning what our author thinks of the books he has carried with him into the wilderness is very great indeed. M. Gide is, however, no fastidious European. The desert makes him feel much healthier, his sympathy with the primitive remains well-nigh unbounded, and his gracious moralizing is often really fine. I am afraid the dust cover gives a false impression of this book. It suggests a world of alluring forms and sensuous fancies, whereas the reality is simple, crude, laborious.

The Congo offers comparatively little to the eye excepting forests broken up by fields and little villages, some of them curious agriculturally or architecturally. Gide is concerned with the petty abuses of colonial administration, the lack of sympathy with native aspiration, and the gross avarice of some commercial organizations. Few books are poorer advertisements for European exploitation than his. And yet he never fails to suggest the dimensions of the white man's opportunity, or to portray worthy officials, administrators and missionaries. The universe thus evoked is lush but not lawless, tropical but not languid, ugly with disease and ignorance but not hopeless. It is a compound of Rousseauistic sympathy and modern scientific curiosity. And as such it can be warmly recommended, even though it needs editing for the young.

GEORGE N. SHUSTER.