

REVIEWED BY HAMILTON THOMPSON

AFRICA has been thoroughly and variously described by a heterogeneous assortment of writers. Stanley, for instance, spoke of it as "darkest Africa," and then came the late Carl Akeley and revised it to read "brightest Africa." All phases of life and customs, all angles of governmental administration, all types of races and peoples, all sections of the vast continent have been treated of in volumes of all sizes, styles and shapes. And still the deluge of books about Africa sweeps on.

Here are listed five of the latest effusions on that selfsame land of dark-skinned folk. Heading the group is the work of a novelist who has satisfactorily demonstrated the keenness of his insight into human traits and conduct through the *dramatis personæ* of his fictional successes. Chosen as one of a group directed to make a survey of administrative conditions in the French possessions in Africa, André Gide kept his weather eye on the alert and during his tour indited a journal which, though far from having even the semblance of a report on the colonial régime, provides a competent picture of the natives in their element. Fortunately for the travel-reading public, his concern was most frequently with the rituals, songs and dances of the tribes, and the psychological slant thus given his record adds to its value as leisure-hour entertainment.

The stupidities committed in the name of religion and the cruelty of white toward black and even in many instances of native toward native appall M. Gide, but he finds a forecast of relief in the observation that there is an increasing display of intelligence and sympathy marking the contact of the two races.

THE French Government did not send Albert Londres to Africa to inquire into colonial administration. But Albert Londres went with that purpose and from his journey emerges a scathing arraignment of French efforts to rule the black men. Exploitation of the natives, taxation which in many instances amounts to virtual slavery, wasting of time and lives through lack of proper mechanical equipment—these are some of the evils which constitute the counts in the investigator's bitter indictment of his Government's régime. The style of the book is brisk and dexterous, like that of his previous shocker, "The Road to Buenos Ayres," in which he laid bare the traffic in female flesh. He is, fortunately, not without a sense of humor and the few amusing anecdotes of native customs and psychology which he introduces afford a measure of comic relief.

While M. Gide made an official inspection, he has not seen fit to dwell extensively on the results of that angle of his trip; M. Londres, however, goes straight to the heart of what he would have us believe amounts to misrule and provides a story of conditions which should at least be a valuable supplement to the report of the official commission.

580

TRAVELS IN THE CONGO, by André Gide (Knopf).

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