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The Journals of André Gide

Translated by JUSTIN O'BRIEN



ANDRÉ GIDE

This is a book of lasting importance and conspicuous distinction, but not one to pick up idly for light reading. André Gide is a great writer and a strange and interesting personality, a troubled spirit and a first-rate artist. His *Journals* bear out these facts, emphasize and illuminate them. This first of two volumes runs from 1889 to 1913. It is not so much a journal in the sense of diary as the working notebook of a creative artist. He sets down daily events, but he also recalls ideas or detached observations, a mood or a scene to be used later on. This reminded me of an artist's sketchbook—here a hand in a characteristic pose, there the play of light, or the twist of an angry face. He comments on people, on personalities, but principally on his own doubts, hesitations and ideals, both as a man and a writer. A psychiatrist would be interested in the study of the man and how his mind works. Any practising writer would be fascinated, since it is full of the struggles and reflections of the artist. It is packed with the raw material of writing. Another would like it as a picture of the literary life in France. It is a mixture of human hopes and fears, rules of conduct, struggles with conscience, prayers, obsessions, ideas for novels. There are jottings such as, "Lord permit me to want only one thing and to want it constantly," and that human cry, "Could anyone love me?" mixed in with descriptions of trips, people, landscapes, various pleasures and annoyances, and quite a bit about the French literary scene. Justin O'Brien has added some helpful notes, explanations and a glossary of persons to fill in the necessary background. What Gide says is often moving, human, painful, and always beautifully written. For the reader it is like pulling odd bits out of that wonderful grab-bag that is Gide's mind. This is a book that will reward study. It is not a book of today or tomorrow, but for a much longer time. (Price, \$5.00)

ROSEMARY C. BENÉT