

REPRINT OF GIDE ON OSCAR WILDE

"Oscar Wilde" (Philosophical Library; \$2.75) by Andre Gide is a slim little book, reprinting some earlier criticism and reviews, without change, as they appeared in the early 1900's.

The tragic failure of Wilde after 1895 is explained on the basis of a paradox and a parable of Wilde's own—a story of a man who did nothing, but invented glorious tales of his empty day; when he really beheld an adventure he had nothing to say. So Wilde, out of imagination, could create; out of real drama, was only silent. Of the relative value of the art as opposed to the life is the judgment passed by Wilde himself too, in conversation with Gide. "Would you like to know the great drama of my life? It's that I've put my genius into my life; I've put only my talent into my works."

If this is true, how insignificant Wilde becomes? As we know more of the aberrations of man, Wilde's drama and tragedy are reduced to merely a somewhat unpleasant case history, and no more. But the spirit of wit and polish in two of the plays, in three of the essays, in a dozen of the epigrams surpass this. Wilde purely as a person, Mr. Gide notwithstanding, is not very important. As a craftsman, though a very limited one, he is brilliant. When he lost his clientele, he lost his desire to create.

H. I. VARLEY