

DR. BOYD LOOKS AT LITERATURE (1)

PORTRAITS, REAL AND IMAGINARY, by Ernest Boyd. George H. Doran Co. \$2.50.

In the early part of the last year, Mr. Ernest Boyd, an Irish scholar, one time member of the British consular service, and indefatigable translator, exploded a veritable bomb; it was his celebrated essay, *Aesthete: Model 1924*, with which the first number of the *American Mercury* was successfully launched. The immediate effect produced by this notable work of criticism (now known to millions of American readers) causes it to be placed at the head of Mr. Boyd's collection of essays. Since the succeeding critical portraits were evoked as a result of the stir made by the "Aesthete," it would seem fitting to judge Mr. Boyd through his most telling piece of work.

The success of this daring exposé of our young aesthetes was highly deserved. Mr. Boyd, beyond question, must be complimented for importing into American letters the spirit of controversy. His blows fell upon the heads of the generation of Younger Writers at a moment when they

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(1) It seems imperative that an explanation be made of the above review, which Mr. Hankel has been so kind as to publish. Upon second thought (although I hold rigidly to my first of publishing) it is only too apparent that the piece is written with a most left-handed irony, that it lacks almost entirely vigour or wit, and that its reasoning is of the most commonplace order. However, the matter can be cleared up very quickly: this review was intended for the weekly literary press. I had pleaded stoutly with the editors of one of our outstanding literary supplements for the right to criticize Mr. Boyd, and during a brief twenty-four hours remained victim to the illusion that I had been definitively commissioned to do this. With a strange fatuousness I believed that the same press which welcomed Boyd's vulgar yelping would permit me to make a gentlemanly reply. But more, I acted craftily. I planned to praise the Boyd, to applaud him generously for all of his bad qualities, and thus annihilate him allegorically. These are tactics, so I have learned, which the Russians resorted to under the censored press of the Czars. With a sudden show of