

Original Letters and Biographic Epitomes eBook

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LONDON:

Sprague & co., Limited, 4 & 5 East Harding Street, E.C.

PAINTING.

From the Western daily Press, Feb. 20th, 1901.

An impression of "Ecce homo."

To the Editor of the Western Daily Press.

Sir,—First impressions forced upon me by an inspection of the picture, "Ecce Homo," by *Mons. de Munkacsy*, would be succinctly expressed in few words. It is haply, although not highly, inspired. It constitutes a work of laborious but of average ability, and descends to a lower technical state of imaginative eclecticism and expression than I had indeed expected to encounter in so lavishly-applauded a work. Let it be granted in the first instance that the theme is an onerous one; the problem afforded by the venture should have been met in a manner skilful in art, commensurate with its righteous obligations and its lofty demands by the artist. The one fine attribute conspicuously lacking in the work is its illumination, generally too yellow; the fine quality of light, naturally directing the hearts with the intelligences of the beholder to the central fact of the subject theme, "I am the Light of the World." The broad use and disposition of whitish pigment; I mean whitish, snowy light flecked, pimpled, dimpled with tints of orange and purple, like snow about to thaw, here and there, honeycombed or stippled to mark the intensity of its native regard for its own divine, suffering, martyred Lord, would have attracted the attention and won the curiosity, the sympathy, of many finer sensibilities. A dramatic and subtle sense of distance, such a powerful agent of spiritual injection in the hands of real artists is in this work absent; never skilfully employed either for negative or positive reflections of emotion. Linear perspective there is, and employed to much scenic advantage; but aerial perspective, utilised towards expressing overlapping figures, there is not, save in meagre degree. The canvas is too crowded, the sense of vision and admiration is nowhere at all lulled by repose. We may point to successful juxtaposition of individual figures, to masses of harmonious tones, but not to masterly composition. The mind of the artist is intent upon the bitterness of turmoil; it does not reach us directly by imperishably revealing or extolling the divine nature of "The Man," "Homo;" and is throughout the field of interest usually recognised in overstrained partiality for attitude and outline. Hence the title of the picture is almost sought for, expected in the multitude on the left, which should have been isolated. "Ecce Homo," briefly and emphatically, is not so suitable a title as I would suggest, with the utmost regard for reverence, might be described, as the interval between the two cries: "Away with Him," "Crucify Him," such intensely dramatic particles of time finding expression and vent throughout the work in coarse silhouetting.

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The crowding of the lawless throng against the front of the tribune, on which the chief characters of the scene are portrayed, though not in a material sense wrong, must be open to much aesthetic dispute; must mar the success and the action of reflex thought, the spiritual contest waging and recoiling between the Divine, meek victim and the surging rabble. At all events, it is sad to trace no direct or secret hint at new or transcendental methods conspicuous or even dimly apparent in the painter's art. Little there is in the effort to draw our finer instincts to spiritual truths. The utmost mechanical skill of the diligent artist is discernible, labouring incessantly without extraordinary or transcendental light to the appointed end, the goal accomplished. It should be understood that as spiritual Art of its own property and nature is beset, environed on all impinging sides with a multifold range, a series of difficult corners around which the sense cannot immediately travel, but would for the fructification or sustentation's sake of its etherealism, a process of counter argument may deduce this aphorism, that in works of art in which the eye travels quickly round all the corners of thought, motive, and expression, the priceless, highest crown of spirituality cannot be awarded to it. The painter, honestly striving with his subject, and on lines of intimate understanding, has none of his physical reasons thrown into shade, either be it for the nobility of his art, or for urgency's sake, or for the softer assuaging of sensitiveness in the breasts of his academic audience, having no inclination to be stung when in the precincts, the hands of Art; for to whom else is the pictorial homily directed? The group of figures upon the raised tribune is classically adjusted to its position of prominence. The spare figure of Christ, "The Man of Sorrows," is well conceived; the face is wan, haggard, the attitude tastefully depicted. A palpable and perilous digression is made by the artist in ignoring the text of Holy Writ, "Wearing the purple robe," electing to substitute for the purpose of his science a scarlet "toga." But the "torso"! This is essentially lacking in consummate understanding, skilful address. In all that assists most to mature a native work of this immense importance it is sound sense, equivalent to the gravest optimism, to express this opinion, that the highest powers of science ought humbly, intelligently to co-operate towards achieving a grand and triumphant finale, perfect, harmonious in all its parts, and responsible to the academic dictates of its sacred title. Such a figure Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, or Rubens would have painted and blessed our reasons with, for a certainty: bountifully inspiring us at once and for time with their divine interpretation of the great, the majestic omnipotence.

Any failure in Art cannot rouse us to this pitch; our sensitive, appreciative spirits would assuredly flag unless some keynote of resonant power were sounded.

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The figure of Pontius Pilate is realistically depicted; it has not the aristocratic air of a Roman Governor, yet the face, not caring to meet the gaze of the people, is a work exhibiting some power. It sardonically, satirically suggests the thought, "I find in Him no fault at all," possessing a semblance of three meanings. The people, deputy officers, and supernumeraries assembled upon this elevation are somewhat stiffly grouped, and the architectonic embellishments—no unimportant feature—well conceived, as they form the framework of the drama, and must be considered well painted. Let it be observed that the basket capital of the arch is out of perspective; a like error is to be observed in the roof of certain of the houses on the left; the blue of the distance, although luminous and atmospheric, is too opaque. The arches forming the left-hand middle distance are finely depicted; correct as far as local traditional art will inform us, and of considerable value in such a work as ballast, substance, in steadying the erratic fancies or emotions of the painter. Criticism must justly deal with the figures of the Jewish rabble. The attitudes are telling, but over angular and rather vulgar. The populace, I may remark, are too excited; such sustained, extravagant attitudes, whether in a picture of large or small scale, but particularly in the former, are upon canvas rarely satisfactory; they mock with littleness at a Providence that made Art, and become puppets in the hands of artists. The heads of not a few of the spectators are too large, coarse, and expressionless. Here and there, in the distance for instance, amongst the living panorama, there appears a figure hinting at a better type of gesture, with a human heart, suggesting an acquaintance with refinement, but the breadth of awe, the girdle of salvatory redemption, even in coarse brutality is not even here apparent. The work is a mute exposition of gesture. The higher, the acute, the really more intense connection of poetry is absent.

J. ATWOOD.SLATER

4, Hill Side, Cotham Hill, Bristol.

From the Western daily Press, Feb. 25th, 1901

"Ecce homo."

To the Editor of the Western Daily Press.

Sir,—A correspondent whose letter is to-day published, calling attention to my remarks upon the celebrated picture "Ecce Homo," of February 20th, cannot, I suppose have understood that the motive which impelled me in my previous letter was that the enlightenment of the public having the interest of art might follow; next to whom, as derivees of fresher, newer light, the spectators of the painting "Ecce Homo," impersonally and politely apostrophised as "his academic audience," may now be mentioned. Neither fault nor question was found with any of such for so being; your

correspondent introduced this side view, I believe, irrelevantly—but with the picture alone.

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The mission of art royal should, I hold, be understood to elevate, to raise the public taste, to cultivate or correct a wrong line of popular impression; that of pictures of the like of "Ecce Homo," being to enlighten the current interest for whose delight moreover art, from a social point of view, is justified in its mission, having a yet higher motive, the kindling of rapture in the heart of the creative artist.

Pictures since earlier times have been vehicles as well as ventilators of popular belief. It is for this cause, and in instances where it is proven, painful to touch or shake the constitutive elements of other people's faith; an acute sense of this compunction on the whole restraining the weight of my recent remarks. But, conjecturally speaking, in a world wherein all things are so public, it must be conceded that strong light should at stated times fuse the impinging points of understanding, that truth and common sense may scrutinise their sound bearings; moreover, also, that academic science may arraign itself with dignity.

Your correspondent's remarks with reference to the colour of the robe are, upon the whole, useful, purple and scarlet being synonymous terms; preponderance of mention, rests though with the former.

Pictures cannot be considered too much as books; such truth, Art, by the concurrence of testimony, has manifested in its destiny from time immemorial, confirming afresh benefits on man. Open discussion will not only add to, magnify, or deduct from their lustre, but cause their aims, in short, to redound to the public weal. Such being so, it is rational to expect an expression of opinion thereupon. They are not, universally, to be regarded as graven tablets, to be gazed at, nor to be received as infallible oracles of law. They are—at the same time, barometers, charts, and weather-glasses—chronicles towards the fine ends of justice, peace and mercy.

Your correspondent has stated that my remarks are ambiguous. They may have been technical and recondite, but, as such, are excusable, and, in their sphere, just.

J. Atwood.Slater.

4, Hill Side, Cotham Hill, Bristol.

SOCIAL SCIENCE.

From the Western daily Press, Aug. 1st, 1901.

Locomotive steam whistles.

To the Editor of the Western Daily Press.

Sir,—It is essential, and, according to my instincts of decorum, necessary, to call the attention of those charged with authority in such matters, and the public generally, to the

growing misuse, in the hands of engineers, of the locomotive steam whistle, the employment thereof having especially in town districts, grown to be out of all dimensions of private service, injurious to those whether officially called, or who, pending the pleasure of mercantile circumstance, are publicly obliged to pursue abstruse mental occupation, necessitating labour and much concentration of thought[t]. A reasonable use of this means, or instrument, of signal and alarm, must be conceded to those in whose hands resides its use, but at the same time a firm directorship or jurisdiction ought to repress its extravagant or wanton employment.

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To warn passengers of the starting and of the approach of trains only a moderate application of the whistle is needed, whilst for the diplomatic the discreet purpose of practical manoeuvre, namely, to draw the attention of signalmen to the passing of points by trains, extra power is requisite; but the gruesome display, I maintain, of vocative sounds tuned to an intellectual point of mood is needless.

Those daily engaged upon manual work only are not in a like manner affected, though for all reasons of civil and common honour the supercilious cry referred to should be deprecated. Rather tune and sound the whistle to two simultaneous notes in sharp, brief accent than that the chambers of the minds of the hearers of those sounds should be so continuously, remorselessly entered. Anything lengthy aggravates the auditory crisis. The stream of daily occupation with the set purpose of sedentary exploit is competent to regulate itself without an articulate "voice" from the railway companies.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

J. ATWOOD.SLATER

4, Hill Side, Cotham Hill, Bristol,

July 29th, 1901.

SCULPTURE.

From the WESTERN DAILY PRESS, Nov. 16th, 1901.

ALFRED STEVENS, SCULPTOR.

ADDRESS BY MR. J. ATWOOD.SLATER.

Sir,—I send you with the thought that you may wish to publish them the precise substance of my remarks verbally delivered at the meeting of the Bristol Society of Architects, November 11th, on which occasion a refreshing paper upon the works of Alfred Stevens was delivered, a man of high artistic repute, whose fame in this district is but dimly recognised, being of another parent soil.

Yours faithfully,

J. ATWOOD.SLATER.

4, Hill Side, Cotham Hill, Bristol,

Nov. 12th, 1901.

Mr. Slater spoke as follows:—The importance of the moment bids me hasten with all seriousness to support the special retribution of plausible justice, amounting to adulation, which has been lavished on the labours of the distinguished English sculptor. Had it been necessary I should have travelled a greater distance to have paid with my testimony homage to the words of this evening's lecturer. It is not saying more than the truth will allow me, or admitting more than my own poignant feelings may to such expression give justification, when I confirm with my lips the belief that I have for much time dispassionately held that Alfred Stevens, with Turner, were the first artists that England produced from the middle of the eighteenth to that of the nineteenth centuries; and that, compared with the great oracles of the past, he reasonably approaches Michael Angelo, who he unquestionably touches and sometimes surpasses. To state my views, having received elementary drawing instructions from a friend of Stevens, I think that there is evidence, in carefully examining the figures

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upon the Wellington Monument and the Dorchester House chimney-piece a finer knowledge of line in Stevens's work. Michael Angelo's Medici figures, and indeed, his other famous works, are not so unequivocally good; the effigies superimposing the sarcophagi are, for brief instance, "pillowy," though they may be more anatomic. The suavity of nature's hypo-refined grace is not traceable in their easy posture. The fact is, that they pose for something; generally their own animal idiosyncrasy, if not respectable vanity. Stevens's figures, on the contrary, always for their own decency, which throws into the core, the heart of the monument such an expression of beauty, giving rise to the word innate, quenching the sense of frivolity, which unrestrained, disordered state of things oozes out somewhere, or is at any rate felt "in the air" in Michael Angelo's works. Stevens's head was wonderfully poised on his own "torso" to know and feel this with such thrilling, vital, consistent certainty. You catch awhile his lovely idea in the strong fragrant symmetry permeating his work. The iron soul of the man implants his lines of strength far inside the actual bounds of the visible crust, and the mind of the idea, naturally expanding is caught at the salient "processes" in curves and features, betokening nothing—that touches—but grace. I should mention that there is one fact which describes minutely my veneration for Stevens's work at its best, perhaps the fullest; whereby I mean that inspection of his intellectual labour has always restored to me the time so wisely occupied in regarding it, proving that there is goodness, virtue, essence in it, past all fellowship with ephemeral things. There is a true, not a laconic, logical, and prophetic inference in it that is appropriately styled, "time"; the finest embodiment of musical equipoise; felt to a "tick"; no faltering, barbaric, or false quantities, but a sustained and equable, uniform tone of chromatic measure, meted out as by a mind imbued by but sacrificing the scale of colour to its own actual, achieved end. One misses the heated passion of Watts's best pictures, which flow through the ordered channel of recognisable expression and make one adore them as poetry. But there, of a truth, invidious comparison ends, and reticence shall ever guard the space that intervenes betwixt the grounds sacred to the exposition of the embodiment of these master lights.

MUSIC.

From the BATH CHRONICLE, January 30th, 1902.

MEDITATION ON BERTHOLD TOURS' EVENING SERVICE IN "D."

To the Editor of the Bath Chronicle.

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Sir,—Personally it occurs to me that in a public sense it may not appear to be out of due place nor uninstrusive to the readers of the pages of the “Bath Chronicle,” if they were allowed to pursue quietly the “meditation” which I have thought fit, with, some amount of feasible excuse, to set in fair order, concerning the apotheosis of an evening service in musical form, from the versatile pen of Mr. Berthold Tours, in the key of D, which, with no inconsiderable *ec/lat* was in the sequence of events, produced at St. Raphael’s Church, Bristol, on Sunday, the 12th inst. A companion to the graceful evening service or setting of the appointed Canticles in F major, which be it observed, is the most popular, and from a purely suitable point of view, most successful of modern evening services, it marks a phase of expression, at once ethereal and predilectionous. Produced at a more mature period, and under certainly different circumstances, it confirms, honours indeed, the fecundity of the age of its inception, namely, the era of British AEstheticism.

Commenting upon its attributes discursively, it was at the period of its original initiation in London my privilege to be present; nor must I omit to graphically allude to my belief, not choosing to be otherwise than candid with my first impressions, that I had never listened to anything which so rapturously illustrated the spirit of those soul-elevating times; even to experiencing a passing pang, since the perplexing principles or established secrets of decorative or AEsthetic art, as understood by me, had so curiously been cajoled or interwoven into the very sanctuary of Classic Music. Every phrase appeared eloquently to illustrate and tell aloud the great burst of passionate fervour, felt to be with serious activity glistening, sparkling around, in painting and in decorative device. It was, as it were the union, the brazing together of these serious impinging forces, and re-fusing them with fresher melody, newer vital ecstasy. (Sir) Edward Burne Jones, Oscar Wilde and W.S. Gilbert had all not dubiously striven nor for shallow effect. They had, though labouring incessantly apart, built up a ghost which was in no fear of glimmering or dissolution; and now Berthold Tours, spright of another element of sentimental, I should say continental mythical music, upon the scene springs with his amazing apparatus of staves and octaves, aiding the *chef-de-musique* and his trained voices to make sound within the very presence chamber of Divine Worship this phantasmagoria of Teuton intellectualism!

Be it understood that this Classic exercise is not to be ceremoniously regarded, nor classified, nor by me upheld as an example of Creative Art, but as the brightest pledge of homage aesthetically offered to a vital movement, essentially fundamental and wise; furthermore, must be allowed to occupy a position subsidiary to the works of the artists enumerated who evidently inspired it; unique and decidedly without an exact parallel in the inspired annals of modern phonetic literature; preferring at a more intimate examination to classify with it Professor C. Villiers Stanford’s setting of the Te Deum and Jubilate in B flat—works, easily gracing the “Summus Mons” of co-spiritual achievement; that impulse which selects, confirms, and then unites all the fair fibres of Art.

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Berthold Tours personally possessed the evident characteristics of a musician. No doubt could be entertained whatsoever, by any who once saw him or his large meditative form, that music was his calling. The duties inherent to the post of “music taster” to the house of Novello, Ewer, & Co., he hopefully acquitted for many years, succeeding to that office on the retirement of my once, in a choral sense, esteemed conductor, Sir Joseph Barnby. The pianoforte accompaniment to many of the classical works of continental composers he transcribed and carefully arranged for his employers, whose confidence he completely enjoyed, whether in addressing them on matters relative to prospective treaties with contemporary composers, or in regard to works tendered to them for publication, or on recommending them upon the pianoforte arrangement of orchestral scores. Personally, I participated in the satisfaction of frequently dining in his company. Amongst the personal memories which I might in passing allude to, being my entire deferential attitude towards him of reverence, ere ever being acquainted with his patronymics, although already largely conversant with, and a sincere admirer of his music. To have been spoken amiably to by this distinguished “virtuoso” is a not unnoteworthy reminiscence to be recorded. He evinced much concern in the early rehearsals of his choral works; being individually present at the moment of their preparation; but it not infrequently appeared to me ambiguous, that unless accounted for by the responsibility of vast calls, he with frequency turned his back upon the musical conservatories wherein his choral works were performed; a custom due evidently to his innate modesty, and perhaps to his susceptibilities as a foreigner. Berthold Tours was a famous violinist of the first class, besides being a recognised composer of music, and edited with Natalia Macfarren a superb edition of the Italian, the German, and the French Operas.

JOHN ATWOOD.SLATER,

4, Hill Side, Cotham, Bristol.

ARCHITECTURE.

From the BRISTOL TIMES AND MIRROR,

April 18th, 1902.

BRISTOL SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS.

The Annual General Meeting of this society was held in the Fine Arts Academy, Queen’s Road, Clifton, on Monday, Mr. Frank W. Wills (President) in the chair. After the confirmation of the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, the annual report of the council was then read by the Hon. Secretary, and the audited accounts presented, and, upon the motion of the PRESIDENT, were adopted.

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A highly interesting lecture devoted to architectural research was delivered by Mr. J. ATWOOD SLATER, first silver medallist and premium holder in design in the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and Sharpe Prizeman of the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, describing an architectural tour undertaken in 1880, and detailing picturesquely the architecture and incidents of personal concern dependent on travel met with in the departments of Seine Inferieure, Seine and Oise, and Seine, penetrating into the heart of France as far as Auxerre. The course of the Seine, with its diverse monuments, was topographically followed from Harfleur to Paris, and subsequently in its considerable ramification the stately River Yonne, Melun, Fontainebleau, Sens, and finally the rich town of Auxerre coming under consideration. The lecturer also drew special attention to the advantage derived from travelling alone for the purpose of observing better the archaeological wealth, and the customs of the French, having a distinct and definite line of study and object lesson ever in view; to his wide sympathy with the French people, to their sumptuous care for their ancient monuments, their courtesy and reverential manner of hospitality towards English speaking students; and also in particular to the unsuspicious, deferential manner in which they are entertained and regarded by the Ministerial authorities: detailing in precise biographical manner his experience with bourgeoisie and peasant, ecclesiastic and soldier. He recorded also minutely the incidents and popular events associated with travel, as study and the tide of time goaded him onward, the wave of diurnal events lying upon the open page of history, here dishevelled, here streaked with adverse episode, and here becalmed. The hour being late, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded the lecturer, and the hearing of the conclusion of a most interesting tour was adjourned to another meeting.

AQUATICS.

From the CORNISHMAN, August 2nd, 1902.

SWIM AROUND ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT.

On Wednesday, a visitor to Marazion, Mr. J. ATWOOD.SLATER, from Bristol, in a sea for tranquility suited for the saline venture, swam completely round St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall. Accompanied by a local boatman the swimmer rowed out from the mainland, quitting his boat, and entering ten fathoms in depth of water at two o'clock. A mean distance of a hundred yards from the coast was, whilst the circuit was made, preserved. No inconvenience of any sort—excepting, towards the conclusion,—the chilliness of the water, was encountered; the distance of one mile and a half being accomplished in the space and record time of three-quarters of an hour. The swimmer at the finish expressed himself entirely satisfied with the nerve and capacity of his boatman (Ivey) and accorded a tribute to the romantic style in which the Mount and Castle proper are kept. The view from the watery verge being replete with quaint interest

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and delightful variety. The previous occasion to this feat being performed was three summers ago, when Lady Agnes Townshend, and six years since, when Colonel Townshend swam the same distance; but no other authentic instance is credited, or preserved on record. The swimmer on this latest occasion is a Royal Academy exhibitor, and the designer of the subject panels in the reredos in the neighbouring Cathedral of Truro; having moreover aided the architect, now deceased, of the Cathedral of Cornwall in other departments of Architectural service.

From the CORNISHMAN, September 4th, 1902.

LONG DISTANCE SWIMS.

IN A CORNER OF MOUNT'S BAY.

(BY THE SWIMMER).

On Thursday, August 14th, Mr. J. Atwood Slater, then staying at Marazion, who, as recorded in a recent issue, swam completely round St. Michael's Mount, made an attempt to swim from St. Michael's Mount to Newlyn. With his boatman (Ivey), he started from Marazion, entering the water at S.W. corner of the Mount.

Whilst engaged in the preliminaries of the start a moment of suspense was passed, the distance appearing sufficient (when out of water) to unnerve all but the most intrepid of swimmers. Striking out in the direction of Newlyn, and using the breast stroke, the shore and beetling Mount were gradually left behind, but when a full distance of a mile and a half was covered, a swell got up from the S.W. and blew a quantity of water into the face of the swimmer. At each impulse progress becoming extremely difficult; nevertheless a yet further interval of half a mile was placed to the swimmer's credit; when, deeming it impracticable to continue further, and having covered relatively more than half the distance, in a mood of chagrin, he re-entered his boat.

Then seizing the oars, and murmuring an ejaculatory note to the ocean which had sent him not a few malign caresses, he pulled, boatman, craft and all to Marazion; the time exactly occupied in the exploit, of two miles and an eighth, being forty-five minutes.

On Saturday, August 23rd, Mr. Slater again, taking with him E. John, swam in deep water, from close to the pier head St. Michael's Mount to a point contiguous to Longrock; a distance of a mile and an eighth. Progress was without hap or hindrance, though in a grey misty light. At length, whilst the disappearing sun sank to rest behind a belt of clouds, parted asunder over Penzance, the boatman was called upon to draw in his boat, the swimmer thereupon going on board.

Experience gained upon these occasions teaches that it emphatically requires greater nerve to swim in the open sea, always going straight in deep water, than is called for when propelling oneself round the Mount.

Again, on Tuesday, at ten minutes to two, the swimmer, to confirm his past exploits and as a climax to his stay in Mount's Bay, swam from Venton cove to St. Michael's Mount, rather in excess of a mile, in thirty-one minutes, Ivey, his boatman merely steering his boat alongside.

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It is the swimmer's opinion, that the timing of mid, or half stroke, is the most elegant, most difficult, and to conceal, yet fully make use of this "break," constitutes the criterion as to whether the swimmer, be he amateur or professional, is first-class or not.

From the EXMOUTH JOURNAL, Sept. 6th, 1902

A NOTEWORTHY SWIM.

A long swim from Exmouth to half-a-mile beyond the pier of Starcross, was on Thursday evening undertaken and accomplished by Mr. J. ATWOOD.SLATER, an Exmouth visitor. Starting from opposite the pier head, the swimmer, piloted by Mr. H. Tupman, in the *Ernest*, swam round the Bight on the west side of the Warren, passing the ships anchored therein, and hugging the west shore of the Exe, paused finally under the lodge at the further end of Starcross at 5.45 p.m., having, in logic swum the distance of two-and-a-quarter miles in twenty-three minutes. The aid the swimmer derived from choosing the flood tide he admitted was considerable, and served him for nearly half the distance; when out of the influence of this, the water suddenly became very choppy, the waves being too small for the swimmer to time, yet with annoying frequency throwing their crests above the surface of the water. Subsequently a great stillness was encountered, until Starcross was neared and passed; the boat, swimmer and pilot lying finally becalmed at the point aforesaid.—J.A.S.

From the WESTERN DAILY PRESS, Sept. 15th, 1903.

A SWIM ROUND MONT ST. MICHAEL, NORMANDY.

Sir,—On August 22nd, at 5 p.m., on August 28th, at 9 a.m., and on August 29th, at 10 a.m., I achieved in a more successful measure than had hitherto been accomplished the problem of swimming round Mont St. Michael, Normandy, at high water. Previously acquainted with the certainty that an adverse current would at one point or another be met, I pre-arranged, and made three bold attempts, and by going in a certain direction, met with the greatest success at the first essay. The tides that rise and flow against the base of the mount are more insidious and taxing to strike against than those which encircle the Mount of St. Michael, in Cornwall; but then the quality of the sea must be more pure and far more buoyant off the Cornish coast, and freshens to a greater extent the elastic movements of the swimmer. The sea, speaking from experience, does not harass one, swimming in the bay of St. Michael, Normandy, until the "retirage" is met; when all the force that can be exerted is necessarily called forth to prevent being seaward swept.

Yours faithfully,



J. ATWOOD.SLATER

Albi, Tarn, France,

September 7th, 1903.

ARCHITECTURE.

From the PATRIOTE ALBIGEOIS, Sept. 29th, 1903.

Albigeois, vous qui passez frequemment dans les rues adjacentes a votre cathedrale, n'avez-vous pas remarque la figure d'un artiste recemment installe, avec son chevalet, aupres du gigantesque monument et mettant toute la science technique de son art a le reproduire exactement.

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C'est M. John ATWOOD.SLATER qui avait visite notre cite, il y a quelques annees, il avait alors dessine une belle perspective de Sainte-Cecile qu'il a exposee a l'Academie Royale de Londres. Il a admire la plupart des cathedrales gothiques de notre pays et, en fin connaisseur, il nous informe que nous possedons un des plus recherches specimens d'architecture qui existent en France. Quelques-unes de ces cathedrales sont a peine plus merveilleuses, mais il n'en est guere qui se pretent favorablement comme elle a l'esprit tranquille de devotion.

Maintenant pour le profit de ceux a qui cela pourrait faire plaisir M. John ATWOOD.SLATER, cet artist nous communique benevolement ce renseignement tres special: Il est encore fort nageur! C'est lui qui aux dates de 22, 28 et 29 aout a ete signale par la Normandie pour avoir fait a la nage le tour du Mont St. Michel: ce que personne jusqu'ici n'avait ose pretendre faire a cause des marees qui sont toujours tres contraires.—J.A.S.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS.

MUSIC.

To the Editor of The Times, London.

Sir,—Whilst admitting the all-importance and the austere role of circumstance weighted with interest, and fused to an all-volatile point sufficient to write to you concerning, and always entering, freed from *schism*, the moot point, I beg leave to advance the suggestion that (with correct apposition of sentiment, already said) the moment has arrived for an improvement to be effected in the Hymnal, in the public offices of St. Paul's Cathedral employed.

For the furtherance of this important item of diocesan and divine service, "Hymns, Ancient and Modern," be it well known, has stood the crucial test of a number of years; while its mechanical characteristics have been demonstrated all the way along the metronome number of decades it has served to mollify and assuage the griefs and passions, and inspire the consciences of congregations using it habitually as a *vade mecum*.

While believing in the sedate grandeur of its stereotyped orthodoxy, I powerfully plead, and in a tone of restraint, this prerogative: that the edition of hymns known as "The Hymnary," should upon examination be found to contain more agreeable, versatile value and fecundity of literary nutrition: honourably and scholastically capable of out-classing the rival for whose displacement I plead; and competent at once to put yet better light with wholesomer sustenance and rarer spiritual food into the minds of its privileged students.

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The ideas and principles conceived by the once editors and publishers of the volume whose richly bestraught merits I champion, and whose solemn rights I plead, (in the year 1871), was to place in society at once, all electrified, au premier coup canonized (armed at all points), a work which should at a moment be complete in law; self-contained and academically referable to the stringent junctures of an ecclesiastical, a national, and a polyphonic tribunal: a work which should loyally attract the acclaim of co-existing literary hymnals, and ever would, it was reverently hoped—a sentiment which I, for one, favourably concur in—remain, the key-symbol of the Reformed, Anglican faith, with its near, true, and ever new ally—a note as high, silvery and jurisprudential; purified domestic co-partnership!

To further substantiate and enhance my devoutly expressed remarks, I confidently state that the compilation of “Hymns Ancient and Modern” was not originally in fact the outcome of an individual movement, or yet of a moment. At periods diverse, and at stages various, it matured its conditional purpose by repeated acts of regeneration and reform, by keeping generally within the radius of a stereotyped policy of pruning and paring; which consolidated by degrees and swept it on to the confines and the platform of its national respectability.

Be it even tacitly acknowledged, in surveying the genesis of Hymnology that the function of revision has once been, a fact, applied to the “Hymns Ancient and Modern” since the appearance of “The Hymnary,” in my estimation under a less searching eye than that which all impartially discriminated and directed, at one and at one time only, the laying together and the consolidating of the “particles predelix” of this frankincense offering of the National Church; a work of classic intent and aesthetic outcome. Personal labour designed it *purposely* for the hearts of men, but not for their *faces*; a character which, Christian-like, it inseparably wears, like French martial music.

Herein exemplified to noble British hearts is a bulwark that at once completely puts to rout no inconsiderable amount of the mildew mould of “Hymns Ancient and Modern,” while never so much as tarnishing or jeopardizing the aroma of its native asceticism.

Interested bibliophiles may peruse pleasantly the trenchant remarks launched by the editors, (of the work upheld) literary and musical; and examine for their predilection by turning its pages the analytical merit of its composer’s names; all serious-minded men; capable lamp-bearers in the wide arcana of classic music.

Stoical people do not know the wealth of chaste language stored up within the covers of “The Hymnary.” A rare musician-poet is needed to resolve its pulpy flavour and discipline to the polemics of common life; whilst one, a connoisseur, would readily congratulate the sanguine, sensible, and all-seeing management, as regards to authors of words, indices of composers, indices of metres, metronome marks, which heralds and places it, in respect of completeness, ahead of all contemporaneous editions.

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Epiphany, 1903.

LITERATURE.

To the Editor of THE BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

March, 1903.

Sir,—Touched by a virtuous sense that a noble writer has passed from the central and celestial sphere of his vocation, and discharging the offices of respect voluntarily admitted as a literary admirer, with sympathy in a bruised state of liquefaction, I maintain that the season for uttering a few words is clearly at hand, and should be turned to the advantage of retrospect.

Being bred of a generation which has read, with a spirit attuned to the pleasant influences of an Academic and a Saracenic art, the writings of John Henry Shorthouse, and ever discovering them to contain philosophic importance and psychologic expression decidedly above the astuteness and ability of average writers; and having usually in them remarked wisdom, council and knowledge reminiscent of the inspired logical writers and divines of the law-given Testaments; in point of enquiry, I am summarily induced to champion the belief that the psychologic, emphatic style adopted by the writer, with the success in high quarters attendant the disposal of his works, has not, convincingness being the indicator, been reached, nor surpassed. The Warwickshire alchemist invariably throws across his scenes and to the centre, a glare, a strong ray, which burns to the water-line the barque of Agnosticism. This is tacitly recognised, concurrently and alternately traced in the selection of the phrases, and in the subtle or dramatic sense of the scene photographed; the second inspiration springing into immediate co-operation, linking to the first the thought by a magnetised hyphen, causes his symbolistic pictures to thrive gloriously, rapturously; the first touch of sensitized matter at times appearing grotesque, dimly lit, although never flimsy. This pedantic, pictorial, even scholarly system by our revered writer adopted, is bent, applied to meet extreme passes of imaginative perfection and delicacy. The picture is naively introduced and obscurely, somewhat trenchantly elaborated, allows itself to be apologetically understood; whilst in succession the lower taste for animal sentiment is sorcerized by vivid flashes of captivating contrast, forked, as lightning, and left, as embers smouldering to glow in the crucible of memory's recesses. Specious instances of irony playing the manliest part: flashes of meteoric, mesmeric eloquence, fitfully flecking the embossed page, as one tier or set of ideas, in rhetoric orchestration,

symphonizes with or eclipses another. Connection, an element of robust mesmeric cohesion with this prized author being the adamantine hyphen, the articulating link, which compacts the roll. John Henry Shorthouse, the templar, the confessor of music, was, and concurrently, the apologist

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of philosophic light. Engaged to a powerful mechanism of romantic dogma, the nett article of its creed; the neochromatic acoustic regalia of stage eloquence, the key, or longest recurrent note; the van or middle the next, the sinuous lever of stage discipline. After all, concurrently may it not, be said that this colour instinct aspect of cosmically conceived romanticism is never wilfully vulgarized. For its incomparable, iconographical purpose it exists, and is as intrinsically useful and serviceable to the scheme as the figures which admirably illustrate the pictures of Hogarth and Holman Hunt. When introduced, music is rarely intended to edge itself into the important place of "first study." This in alchemy or personification being occupied by the circumstantial cruxes of life, philosophic morality, vested usually in courtly attire; I would not say abstract attire, for the clean-cut character it bears is too strictly defined (for the sake of that Artist's art) for such an impression to be born, or even to lurk by sentiment, there beneath.

The mould employed at all times is minutely fashioned, as a sculptor would, by investing his model with a code of spirituality, inspired with fire, which epicureanly endows fleeting emotion with a voice, and vitality lends also to distant-reaching invisible ends: hinting that the picturesque alchemy of music is potential too in reaching and touching the lower chords of animal passion, where movement is rapid and light redundant. The breast of the thoughtful writer heaved ever to animal instincts without measure in extolling the complex phases of court, ecclesiastic, and domestic oligarchy. Statesmanship and subjunction rise and peacefully sink together, and in his magnetic touch, are made to harmoniously coalesce in the political balance. Shorthouse the author, a believer in, a champion was of two-fold or dual cosmos: his colour sense being susceptible to and wrought upon in singular consular consistence with the effulgent dogmas of its creed, and in alliance with the spirit of the *cinque cento* Italian Renaissance Schools of Painting and Architecture. Practically speaking, he conceived a train of adept ideas, at times fanciful, and at times morbid, transforming them adroitly by adept excursions of cross-lit introspection, accentuation, and by dint of manual caress, as the first of players upon stringed instruments.

Music, I would apologetically infer, being the middle, the rallying feature, of Mr. J.H. Shorthouse's verbose apology. If fictionizing in prose, he writes with brief orange-hued flashes of liquid ether; each of short, all but, brief span. Characteristically, he belongs to the same school and unapproachable law as the French organist-composer, C.M. Widor: stringent, petulant observance of free uncurbed metronome time, allied to picturesque handling; punctuality of tidal consort rigidly regarding, when each, the one to the other, linked; less a care, by virtuous intuition

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displaying for lyric measure. The writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne more forcibly and piquantly evince cylindrical flow, and strike at the object lesson with less artificial, *cadavre*, fastidious touch; but Mr. Shorthouse, speaking strictly, as to temper and *tempo* is a trifle more rugged; and never a shadow of suspense suffered he to stir a hand's breadth, that is, rest 'twixt poetic certainty and doubt, lest the ultimate end should all-attainable be or not. For freedom from this, and other literary ambiguity, yet never manifesting anxiety of freeing himself in prose from its insidious and arbitrary restraint, I attribute his tragical, subtle, gentle power of "connection," *liaison*; feeling for time; planetary time, be it lunar time, sometimes unmistakably, solar time; disallowing, by potency of sentimental touch, a sense of rupture, to linger. A noble stream by mute comparison, pursuing its course unwavering; interrupted but now and again, to the vast expansive ocean of shapeliness, of unity.

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