

**THE CELTIC
TEMPERAMENT
AND OTHER ESSAYS**

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The Celtic temperament and other essays by Francis Grierson

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FRANCIS GRIERSON

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TEMPERAMENT
AND OTHER ESSAYS**

THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE INVINCIBLE ALLIANCE

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LA VIE ET LES HOMMES (in French)

JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

SITTING one evening with the author of *Monte Cristo*, in his study, on the Boulevard Malesherbes, I was for the first time impressed by what might be called the personality of a free and experienced mind.

"You are a foreigner," he said, half indifferently. Then he added with some curiosity in his look: "You are very young"; and then, as if by a sort of intuition: "With your gifts you will find all doors open before you."

Dumas was now an old man. He had seen the world; but not as I was to see it. He began his career on the incoming tide of Romanticism; I was beginning mine on the incoming tide of Realism. But not as a writer; for I was too young to write about

Introduction

anything, nor did I bother myself about schools and systems. I lived in a world of illusions, impressions, and intuitions. I floated about, in and on these air-bubbles, at a time when von Moltke and Bismarck were concocting schemes for the overthrow of the Empire—the one stroke of destiny which was to usher in the school of Realism, make a pessimist of Renan, the optimist, and put Alexandre Dumas and Auber in their graves. Who could have guessed that with the descent of the Prussian eagles on Sedan, the great romancist would leave that *appartement*, with its life-sized figures from *Faust* painted on the walls, and its artistic associations, to die in the country, almost in distress, far removed from the Empire of poetic adventure?

From 1830, down to the time I mention, poets like Hugo and Alfred de Musset, novelists like Balzac and Dumas, impressionable natures like Chopin, found an element of romance in which to live and work. They

Introduction

had a public. They were liberally supported, not by small groups, but by a nation, and beyond that nation by a whole world of culture. It was not a question of combating and development, but one of working and enjoying. They appeared on the scene, and triumphed from the beginning to the end; for even Hugo had the way prepared for him by the creative magic of Chateaubriand; and after Chateaubriand, Chopin was perhaps the only one who brought with him a unique creative force. Yet, strange and original as his personality was, he had a public waiting for him; he had no conditions to seek out and create. In his time, poetry, art, and emotion were one; sentiment, spontaneity, and enthusiasm, belonged to the age of romance; people listened or read from choice, not because of passing fashions and isms.

When, one year previous to the awakening at Sedan, I sat listening to the author of *Monte Cristo* explaining the spiritual state of

Introduction

his mind, I little thought that in thirty years I should arrive at something like the same conclusions — but by experiences totally different. I arrived in Paris just as all the romance was fading out of art and literature ; but I was not yet old enough to understand the things that were happening ; so I moved along on the stream of experience under the illusion that society was full of poetry and romance. To me the world was a sort of dream, and through it I walked, a living but sealed book of illusions. My head was full of unwritten Arabian Nights adventure, and in my ignorance I imagined that the world was full of charming and generous people willing to aid art for art's sake, and to further truth for truth's sake. I walked and existed on the dividing line of romance and reality.

I had, for two or three years before meeting Dumas, "gone where I pleased" ; and it was the facile success which I met with, and a half blind, half clairvoyant enthusiasm for