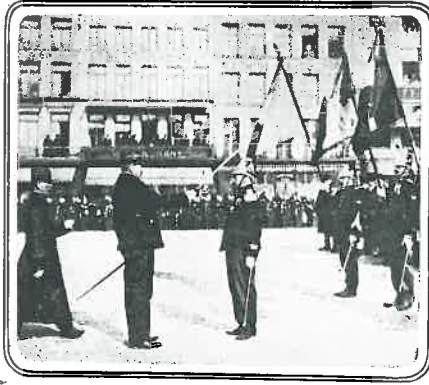


LOMBARDY TOWNS OF ITALY.

VISUALISE in your mind's eye the photograph of a beautiful place and an "impression" of it in water-colour or etching or mezzotint. Note the difference. The one is accurate—absolutely, relentlessly accurate. The other is all vagueness of outline, "atmosphere," mystery. In the former, nothing is omitted. Everything that the rays of light can penetrate is reproduced. It stands before you exactly as it is. The truth of it is beyond dispute. You cannot get away from its awful veracity. Yet there is something missing—something essential. It has no soul. It is a dead thing. All the meaning of it has escaped the photographic lens. One wears of it, because it is shallow, without depths.

On the other hand, an "impression" is often far nearer the real truth than this. It may not be exactly as the thing is, but it often gives a clearer impression of how the thing looks. The artist has caught something more important than mere outline and detail: he has caught something of its soul, its romance, the greatness for which it stands. For each beauty has its own expression, its own atmosphere—even its own mood. This the camera misses. This the artist reflects. And just as a photograph is often less like the object than a pencil drawing, so there are writers who can describe people and places with absolute accuracy, and yet convey nothing of those things which alone make them vital and real. The body is described; the soul is missing. Moreover, so enthusiastic do they become over the body that, metaphorically speaking, they start a *post-mortem* examination and wax exceedingly eulogistic over the separate pieces. They possess all the expert knowledge, and all the lack of imagination, of a dissector.

And such a writer is Mr. Egerton R. Williams—at least, to some extent. In his new book, "Lombardy Towns of Italy" (Smith, Elder), he describes these cities that he loves with immense enthusiasm, but the enthusiasm takes the form of superabundant description of detail, and too little description of their effect as a whole. Although Mr. Williams sees few things which do not "dazzle him beyond conception," he fails to make us enter into his enthusiasm. He stands too near the objects of his adoration. He cannot see the church for the



THE BESTOWAL OF DECORATIONS IN THE FRENCH ARMY: AN OFFICER RECEIVING THE ACCOLADE FROM A FRENCH GENERAL. This interesting photograph was taken recently at a certain place in France during the ceremony of bestowing military decorations on officers and men who have distinguished themselves in the war. Photograph by Sport and General.



THE GENTLER SEX, LIKE RECRUITS, ARE INSPIRED BY MARTIAL MUSIC: A BAND OF THE CHURCH GIRLS' NURSING AND AMBULANCE BRIGADE IN REGENT STREET.

Much interest was aroused in London on Saturday afternoon (the 14th) by the brass band of the Church Girls' Nursing and Ambulance Brigade, which marched along Regent Street playing inspiring airs. The War Office intends to make more use of bands to assist recruiting and stimulate popular enthusiasm. Evidently woman also finds inspiration in music for her duties in time of war.—[Photograph by Topical.]

bricks. At the end of his eulogies one sees nothing. Usually he is far too "eloquent" for easy understanding. Here, for example, is how he puts one of Goethe's aphorisms "in another way": "A traveller is one building a fair house in the mind: but he must have a stout framework of knowledge before he can lay on the shingles of observation." Personally, we prefer Goethe.

Again, in his description of the treasury of Monza Cathedral, he blurs the effect by striving to include too much in his word-painting. Here is part of his description: "Crosses, cups, vases, medallions, chalices, monstrances, pyxes, crucifixes, statuettes, lamps, candelabra, platters, mitres, coffers, goblets, ewers, urns, épergnes, reliquaries, vessels of every shape and size, all glittering in gold or silver, embossed, engraved, perforated, damascened, intagliated, relieved sumptuously with figures and designs, and in large part set with iridescent gems, cymophanous or prismatic as the changing hues of the chameleon. . . ." It reads like a page out of a dictionary, conveying no meaning—only words. The sentence—which, by the way, is not finished—is typical of the literary style in which the book is written.

Nothing escapes his eye: he tells us everything—and yet, because he tells us everything, perhaps, we really see nothing. He is as greedy of facts as Baudelaire himself, and he presents them to us almost as formally.

One longs for the "human" touch, for the sign of poetry and imagination by which alone beauty can be made vivid through words. The book is extremely valuable as information, as history, as a glorified guide-book to be read on the spot; but for those who have never visited the towns of Lombardy, or who wish to see them again through the imagination of an author who knows them and loves them, the result is likely to be disappointing.

A benevolent offer likely to be of wide-reaching benefit has been made by the Council of the National Institute for the Blind, Great Portland Street, London, W. The Institute undertakes to help, as far as practicable, all men who lose their sight while serving their country in the war, and requests that the names and addresses of all who are desirous of its aid should be forwarded to the Secretary-General of the Institute.

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