

# CRITICAL REVIEW

... DEVOTED TO ...

Literature, Music, and the Fine Arts.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

French

MM. PAUL BOURGET

JULES CLARETIE

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

GUSTAVE LARROUMET

JULES LEFEBVRE

HENRI ROUJON

Directeur des Beaux-Arts

VICOMTE MELCHIOR DE VOGÜÉ

M.-D. GALVOCORESSI

ALFRED CAPUS

CAMILLE CHEVILLARD

LOUIS DE FOURCAUD

RÉMY DE GOURMONT

J. K. HUYSMANS

HUGUES IMBERT

VINCENT D'INDY

CHARLES MALHERBE

CATULLE MENDÈS

Dr. E. MÈNE

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AUGUSTE RODIN

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ALFRED KALISCH

PRINCE B. KARAGEORGEVITCH

ARTHUR LAWRENCE

ERNEST NEWMAN

JOHN F. RUNCIMAN

ARTHUR SYMONS

W. B. YEATS

Membres  
de  
l'Institut

## A Musical Critic's Holiday

BY

JOHN F. RUNCIMAN.

Opera is raging in town; concert tickets are hurled by hundreds at the unfortunate musical critic's head; and what he does not spend in the opera house or the concert hall must be devoted—God help him!—to setting down the impressions he has already received in one or another of them. Poor wretch! How he toils, flying now to Queen's Hall, then to St. James's, then to the Crystal Palace or one of the smaller halls; all the time looking forward to an hour's work in a stuffy newspaper office as the fitting ending to so cheerful a day. We may say: "But surely he can look further than the evening, further than to-morrow, further even than next week—can look so far as the holiday which arrives with August?" Alas! gentle reader, pity the poor, over-worked animal! When August comes he may snatch a week at the seaside, perhaps a fortnight; and then he must set to work again at some inventions of the Devil known as "Our Great Provincial Festivals." There stale old works are repeated, there new works, staler than the old, are given for the first, and often also the last, time; and the critic must sit through it all and write about it with the same freshness as might a youth hearing a passable concert for the first time. No wonder the critics of London are a brainless lot; such an interminable, wearisome round would soon destroy the finest brains in the world, which, to do him justice, the musical critic does not always possess. The Bayreuth Festival is not a highly artistic affair; but how much more exhilarating and nerve-soothing is a fortnight amongst the Bavarian hills than a week in Birmingham. There is pure air, and there is not