LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

VITAL TEMPO.

ART AND HUMAN LIFE.

VERNON LEE'S STUDY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—Will you allow me to answer Mr. Walter Sickert, and all the too gratifying criticism in The Times of October 29? By so doing I hope to add to the number of those who have been awakened in this obscure and neglected subject; perhaps even to bring it under the consideration of the younger generation to whom we must, alas! leave an unenlightened approach to the truth in similar matters.

This leads me to premise that although I strongly suspect (evidences have rashly maintained) that, as Mr. Walkley suggests, the vital tempo of the individual artist and of his correlated individual appreciator must be derived from the life of the person as the individual of the individual heart, and breath, yet I believe that physiological psychics may suggest explanations more reasonable than any dreamed of by us lay-theorists. Moreover, conceiving that the vital tempo may derive from the co-operation of various impulses and respirations themselves but a group of very noticeable sensations; because each of these seems to be the result of a chemical, electrical, chemical-mechanical action and reactions of which I, at all events, have no adequate understanding of.

Having thus established my utter ignorance as to what is really meant by the so-called "tempo," I submit that Mr. Walkley's belief that the vital tempo, whatever it is, varies from artist to artist is absolutely correct. Indeed, just as it varies from artist to artist, so, I fear, it varies from the man who likes one artist—say B clot—to the man who temperamentally prefers, say, Watteau. In short, a study of the intellectual, moral, and emotional conditions, in more than the Galtonian sense, seems to have been combined with very great success when I was asked to examine, with the great authority of Wilhelm Stern, the tremendously interesting dissertation, "Die Individualität der Jeugd und die Lebensarbeit" some 25 years ago. These methods will, I trust, be applied to the study of art and artistic preference. Indeed, I venture to think, though I hesitate to assert, that the absence of the scientific study which my beloved art critic, Mr. Walkley, is, I think, only through such study that such results can be arrived at, and which are the basis of scientific standing (and standards)!

So much for the point I am arguing. The point is: that persons who temperamentally must not condemn (for let us rather say Mozart, reminding us it is the only case) Mr. Walkley, or, on the contrary, that such enjoyment in preference does not imply the "universal art," which rather establishes if or the principle that daily and little by little can make up the world. To which I would add that, whilst the recognition of such individual differences will put an end to disputing about tastes, it will bring us all on more and more under scientific discussion.

By an odd coincidence, Mr. Walkley has given me some interesting views. For if my dear old friend Maurice Baring had pushed his partiality and his intellect a little further, Mr. Walkley (and the public) might have heard a second much more recent letter in which, just as I had once hurled out my ideas about Wagner, I should have hurled out Mr. Walkley; and if, as I am bound to say, a repetition of friendly wrongdoing might have saved me from now attempting to write capriciously, I, as I see, have a mischance on Mr. Walkley's part. Since in the following (slightly altered my) letter I not only repudiated the supposition about watching a slag, the slag being this time Proust, I compared Proust's, which, with that of another minutely analytical novelist, named Stendhal, I remember remarking that it was "the best known style which made him, whatever he was writing, one of the cleanest and sweetest of writers, and even when dealing with dénigre romantisme and Reaisma, he could not escape the odions of sensuality or morbidity. I have repeated the word style, because I sense that it is not in what a man tells us or talks about, but in his manner of telling or talking, that I recognized a vital tempo. It is in his handling of words as I have tried to show in a very small published under that title. What for me corresponds to the pattern of melody and harmony of the musician, to the pattern of lines and colours of the painter, is not the events and feelings of which he tells us but the details with which he fills in his events and feels them, the way he tells of words, the co-ordinations of verbal terms, of prepositions and conjunctions, by which he selects his responsive sensitivity and imagination, a response independent of mood and familiar of degree of "realism," and even of such audible rhythm as belongs more to verse than prose.

And now, having let slip the expression of one more point of a momentary vein of enthusiasm or imagination, I have come to my final disagreement with Mr. Walkley. Certain parts of his art (I had already warned Wagner's) can, of course, act as a kind of hypnotic suggestion. But as Wagner, I have had the testimony of dozens of persons, musical and un, of the sense of music and the sense of the artist has not met a adequate response, but rather many of the nerves and the different imagination (I think my friend, Dr. Head, will recognize something akin to that "psychopatie" he refers to), I believe that the artist's consciousness that his music is not for the deeper, or for the reader.

Furthermore, I venture to think that if the idea of a vital tempo is not less if in the broadest and most general sense of the active and hidden concentration necessary for aesthetic effective responsiveness. We do not of this much I am certain, we do not get the benefit of this creative or abstract power from any by similar impotence or abstraction, vesting the artist's life whole way with such best resources. For instance, it is the artist who to whom we respond. It is the artist's sense the art. In our mental, emotionally we can respond, they forth modes of being similar to his own spirit, as an artist, not merely as a man, as a son, or a husband) and transcending our habitual status in social and social positions, sweetness, liquidity, depth, and manifold harmonious complexity, that art can, for however brief an infinity in eternity, life, uplift, strength, purity, and console and uplift, and at all events, in the concurrent of art in relation to human life which has resulted from all my studies on the subject, I am I, I am I, I am grateful to Mr. Walkley (among others for gratitude) for the opportunity of submitting these views to the scrutiny of students better equipped than myself, and with more time still before then.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully.

V. LEE.