

# Turriff & District Advertiser.

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## JAMES LEATHAM. X

"A man's interest in the world is only the overflow of his interest in himself." Captain Shotover's dictum is singularly appropriate to James Leatham. For what an overflow was his! How torrential it must have been in the days of his prime! Few there are who survive to bear testimony to the early days of the Social Democrats under Hyndman, when James Leatham's name was often canvassed as a possible member of the first Labour cabinet.

In all his varied activities, covering many fields, as prophet, publicist, pioneer and printer, one's abiding impression is of a tremendous zest for life. The output of his pen in the realm of pure literature alone reveals wide ranging knowledge, sanity and breadth of judgment and a surprising comprehension of the foibles of human nature. The style is typical of the man, vigorous and direct. His was an easy mastery of racy phrase, rich in proverbial lore, and studded with many a felicitous inversion and many a forceful epigram.

Yet literature to him was of interest only as an expression of life. Art for art's sake he deemed an empty shibboleth. His outlook was positivist and practical. Words were the raw material to subserve, in enlightened minds, an end beyond themselves. Art found its glory in service of the fuller life. "Too see clearly is poetry, philosophy and religion, all in one." Ruskin's phrase was for him merely a half truth, unless clarity of vision became the spur to right action. It is, therefore, the high quality of intellectual sincerity, allied with a stubbornly consistent refusal to compromise on matters of conviction, which constitutes the paradox of his long career of public service. To judge that career from the standpoint of wordly prudence is irrelevant. This Gallo cared for none of these things. That unswerving adherence to principle compels admiration, however much one may deplore the hasty temper and fiery impatience which were so frequently evident to those who worked with him. Yet one must also remember the ready courtesy, the unforced geniality, equally characteristic of his more expansive moods.

What an amazing wealth was his of personal reminiscence, what an inexhaustable storehouse of apt anecdote—all exemplifying his Gargantuan appetite for life, and how inadequate this random reverie dealing with his latter years! So recently was he with us one can almost see the ironical lift of the eyebrows, the quizzical faintly contemptuous glance of those steel blue eyes and hear his murmured word, "Tailpiece, Tenpence."

"The river, flooded, full and brown,

Divides the green and daisied lea,

Swift urging, surging, seawards down,

Like life towards Eternity."

Friend, Hail and Farewell!