

Notes on Art.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF PAINTERS IN WATER COLOURS.

THE exhibition of the "Old Water-colours," as we are apt to irreverently style them, is always a rest and a refreshment. Perhaps it lacks the excitement of the other shows, where there is always the certainty of novelty in some degree to look forward to. In Pall Mall East, you know what you have come to see; you look forward to Mrs. Allingham, Tom Lloyd, Glindoni, Weguelin, Carl Haag, and the rest of the band that has given you so much delight in former days, and you are not disappointed.

The first thing that strikes you with a soothing influence is a certain felicity of hanging, which is perhaps due in part to the fact that water-colours blend more readily than the more imperious medium of oil, or perhaps it is merely the tranquillizing knowledge that here is no more than you can in a single afternoon understand and appreciate; at any rate the first glance round puts you in just the mood to enjoy, to receive delightful impressions, and carry away a clear image of what you have seen.

The very first thing your eye rests on is a thing of beauty and a joy to behold—"The Image Seller," by G. L. Bulleid. The delicacy and clearness of the pure, clear colour, the loveliness of the faces, and the graceful drawing cannot be too highly praised. Alma Tadema himself need not be ashamed of the marble, with its adorable transparent stains of brown discolouration.

No. 2 is a very typical example of Tom Lloyd, and one is sorry to notice that he seems to be on the road to become too typical—in other words, to repeat himself. His dominant idea, repeated three times over in this very exhibition, is to have a pale sky, reflected in a foreground of pale water, the land and the figures intervening as a horizontal band of dark between these two lights.

In "Miss Dorothy" this arrangement is so suitable and so lovely that one forgives it. Miss Dorothy sits by a pool, her guardian a huge dog; the warm brown of autumn is over all the landscape, the cotton-grass is blooming on the swampy waste, and the open iron gate of the old red mansion in the distance tells whence come the dog and his mistress. But in "You and I" the recurrence of the same arrangement more than suggests picture-making, and the same thing mars even the tender harmonious colour and poetical feeling of "The Forbidden Visitor."

There is a genuine comedy in A. E. Emslie's "Married Late." The irate elderly gentleman, the unrepentant little spoilt child, and the deprecating air of the pretty young mother, are all admirable. Besides this picture, Mr. Emslie has three small heads of little girls, all gems in their way, though I think the sweetest is the one called "Innocence."

As a figure subject, the picture of the year is Mr. Hughes' large one called "Bertuccio's Bride." The subject is from a somewhat recondite mediæval story, which the catalogue explains. The depth and strength of this are quite wonderful, and the drawing fearless and bold.

I do not at all like Walter Crane's idea of Lohengrin. Not only is the picture, as are all his, too much like a

design, but the mystic knight is such a knock-kneed champion, as could, one would think, inspire no sort of confidence.

Of the charming landscapes I have no time to speak, but must try to describe some of them next week.

Science Notes.

THE Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire whether any changes, and if any, what changes in the present system of weights and measures should be adopted, has been published as a Parliamentary paper. The recommendations of the Committee are as follows:—

(1) That the metrical system of weights and measures be at once legalised for all purposes.

(2) That after a lapse of two years the metrical system be rendered compulsory by Act of Parliament.

(3) That the metrical system of weights and measures be taught in all public elementary schools as a necessary and integral part of arithmetic, and that decimals be introduced at an earlier period of the school curriculum than is the case at present.

The changes recommended are apparently in the interests of everybody, except those who have become familiar with the present system of reckoning, and are too selfish and too lazy to learn anything new. The present system, differing as it does from that employed by almost every other European nation, is a serious hindrance to foreign trade. It is a hindrance even to home trade, as everyone who has become familiar with the decimal system can testify, for calculations in the decimal system are so much more speedily accomplished.

It is estimated that about a year of school-time will be saved to the children who are relieved from learning our complicated system of weights and measures. This would be indeed no small gain when so much useful knowledge is crowded out of the school curriculum by want of time, and even then the health of some of the children sacrificed by over-work. It is true that the same plea of school-time saved has been raised with equal justice by spelling reformers, but those who want to reform weights and measures have the advantage of the spelling reformers in one respect. There is nothing in the metric system to excite the derision which greets all attempts at phonetic spelling.

Competent witnesses have proved to the Committee that their recommendation to render the metric system compulsory by Act of Parliament may be adopted with every hope of success. A similar compulsory change has been carried out in Norway and Sweden, in Germany, in Italy and in Switzerland. The change was effected in a comparatively short period, and as soon as the simple character of the new system was understood, it was appreciated by all classes of the population, and no attempt was made to return to the old system.

In the United States the system of weights and measures in use is based on English units, but there is now in existence a commission charged to report thereon, and the Federal Government has this year passed an Act making the metric system compulsory for pharmaceutical purposes.

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