

If this bird is in the habit of carrying in its beak for several miles, or even for less than one mile, so large a seed as an acorn, then such birds may have brought all manner of seeds across the Channel, when it was narrower than it is now. Small hard seeds can be carried by birds for much greater distances than the present width of the Channel provided that the parent-plant envelopes them in a covering sufficiently attractive to tempt the bird to eat them. In such cases the seeds escape digestion by reason of their hardness, and are excreted by the birds in a condition to germinate. Acorns eaten by rooks or squirrels or any other animal are of course totally destroyed, but out of every hundred acorns gathered by rooks or squirrels a few are sure to be lost—that is, lost to the animals, and gained, with perhaps great advantages as to nourishment, to the race of oaks.

Mr. Reid has long suspected rooks of eating and carrying about acorns, but it was not until the end of last month that he was quite convinced of it. He disturbed a number of rooks from the branches of oak trees, and found in the field adjoining the copse hundreds of acorns, with the coverings stabbed and picked, with strips torn off, beginning at a puncture, and showing signs of recent attack. The inside of the acorn, when exposed to the air, turns brown just as an apple does, and the pecked surfaces of these acorns were white. Many of the acorns also were in their cups, and, as Mr. Reid remarks, how much easier it must be for a rook to carry an acorn by the stem of the cup (or even by the cup itself), than when removed from its cup. It must frequently happen, however, that the acorn falls from its cup during the passage of the bird through the air, and also when the bird alights on rough or mossy ground to attack the acorn it may easily be lost, driven deep into the ground, perhaps, by a too vigorous peck.

Mr. Reid has observed that rooks, roosting in elm trees near Brighton during the autumn and winter, were in the habit of crossing the downs to feed in the weald. He has also frequently noticed seedling oaks growing up in positions far removed from any mature oak tree, and where they were not likely to have been left by mammals, for instance, in peat bogs in the New Forest, or near the top of the escarpment of the South Downs.

### Notes on Art.

#### ROYAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS.

THIS is an exceedingly interesting exhibition. The work is, most of it, decidedly above the average, and that with but a very thin sprinkling of names well known to fame.

It is to be regretted that, opening as it does in the fall of the year, when all daylight has foresworn London interiors by 3.30 at the very latest, the lighting of the galleries is so inadequate. I had the misfortune to get there at ten minutes to four, and the conflict of half-hearted gas with sickly twilight was exasperating in the extreme; but I found much to delight me.

Mr. Wyke Bayliss, as a painter of architecture, always confers pleasure. His feeling is so true and so forcible; to look upon his harmonious blending of line and atmosphere is to feel one's self, with Milton, in "the dim, religious light," caused by the filtered illumination "through storied windows, richly dight,"

falling athwart the majestic spaces of pure Gothic. His entrance to the cathedral, Aix-la-Chappelle, is conspicuously successful (No. 118). The spring of the groined roof, the delicacy of the decorated tracery, and the peep of blue sky through the open door, are admirable. His Westminster and St. Paul's Cathedral are also full of thought and meaning, and the quotations affixed very appropriate.

"*Ecce Ancilla Domine*" (No. 7) is an Annunciation which in parts pleased me much. The faces are finely painted, and the whole scheme of composition carefully Pre-Raphaelite, even to the charming bit of landscape in the middle distance. The Virgin's head is too narrow from front to back, and why did this artist give his otherwise most artistic angel wings? Yes, they do compose well, I know, and are an admirable excuse for a bit of lovely colour, but he could not possibly fly with them—they are anatomical impossibilities!

Among the water colours is a strange allegorical picture, "*The Wooing of Death*," by R. Machell (No. 284). Among rocks, in a cold, livid, purple light, lies a girl; Death stoops over her, raising her to his embrace. Above, in a flood of orange and scarlet radiance, stand the two, clasped in each other's arms, with glorified faces. Around the quaint conceit the snake of immortality coils itself as a border. Significant this, that the art which speaks by symbols is not dead, but only sleepeth. The same painter has elsewhere a less successful venture in the same class, "*Twixt Priest and Profligate*" (No. 183).

There is, of course, a special attraction this year, in the shape of the screen full of small landscape studies in oils, by Sir Frederick Leighton. There is a most wonderful charm about these little things. One is eager to know what this wonderful man, who looks upon a woman as a flexible bit of grace for decorative arrangement, will make of a real place when he sits down to paint what he sees as he sees it.

He seems wonderfully truthful. There is none of that artificial beauty which we might expect, only a certain elusive glamour about them all which marks them as something touched by a master's hand. "*The Coast of Caramania*" (No. 22) is an excellent example of this. It is just a foreground of white sand, scintillating with heat, an indigo-purple bay, curving inwards, and a horizon of faint mountains—the merest sketch, but conveying at once that suggestion of the infinite which Wordsworth felt when he saw, in the picture of Peel Castle, "the light that never was, on sea or land." "*The Southern part of Lindos, Rhodes*," "*Malinbeg*," "*The Convent of Capri*," and several others, are touched with the same power.

There are numerous charming landscapes, and one or two portraits of real ability, about which I should like to say a word next week. G. M. R.

### A Book of the Week.

#### JUDE THE OBSCURE.

MR. HARDY'S last novel is the most terrible book that it has ever been my lot to review. Its extreme cleverness and awful pessimism make the remembrance of its pages like lead in the memory. I should like to induce everybody *not* to read it, only experience has led me to believe that when every reviewer adopts

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