

Notes on Art.

MR. HERBERT MARSHALL'S "LONDON."

I AM a confirmed Londoner, and as such I give my warmest sympathy to Mr. Herbert Marshall. The moment I hear that he is exhibiting anywhere in London, off I must go, to gloat upon the work of the man who so loves our vast and complicated labyrinth of life—loves, and understands it!

The Fine Art Society has a particularly interesting and varied show this autumn, and it is drawing crowds of visitors. One room is filled with Mr. Frank Abbey's pastel work, about which I will say a word next week, and Mr. Du Maurier's original drawings for the illustration of "Trilby" are also shown.

The most fascinating feature of the "London" of this year is the series of sketches done by Mr. Marshall in the neighbourhood of the Thames during the terrible frost of last February. In a very interesting little introduction to the catalogue, we are told that the water-colours several times froze as they were being put upon the paper, while he was working in those Arctic days.

No. 3, "Charing Cross Bridge and Station in snow," shows most forcibly the winter-bound city in the clutch of the cold; the chief element of colour is very happily got by the flotilla of hay boats in the foreground covered with a brown tarpaulin. No. 24 is even a more triumphant rendering of the same effect,—"The Pool, frost-bound." The great broken ice-masses lie under a sunset sky, the water between them catching a reflection of faint gold.

No. 31, "The Thames, February, 1895" is another variation of the same theme, introducing in the background the looming grey spectre of the mighty St. Paul's Cathedral, indicated by a perfectly drawn surface of soft grey colour, exactly accurate in form, but quite without detail. It is a most artistic effect—the guardian spirit of our London: and it is repeated in the clever view of Cannon Street (No. 12).

Mr. Marshall is able to see clearly, and to indicate convincingly, the wonderful amount of colour which lurks hidden in our smoky city; as you look at his painting you seem to realise, in part, the wondrous vitality of it all—to feel the throbbing of the great arteries, the beat of the restless pulse, the mystery of the mass of human existence, of ambition, of energy, of the ceaseless struggle against decay, disease, death.

Perhaps the most fascinating of all here is the view of Trafalgar Square; here, as I have always felt, is the great focus of life and force in our capital. To the right, the still classic precincts of the National Gallery—up those steps went Sir Joshua Reynolds, to the opening of the very first Academy Exhibition. Over that parapet he doubtless surveyed the scene before him, then unconsecrated by a Nelson's glory, and by the majesty of Landseer's lions. Here, in Mr. Marshall's picture, we look towards the traffic-choked distance of Pall Mall; there, on the left, is the way to Whitehall, laden with memories of regicide; and behind us is the roaring entrance to the Strand, to that labyrinth of theatres, trains, journalism, and all those thousand-and-one interests which make the Londoner enjoy, with so keen and true a love, his hurrying life in the great city. The tangle of many-hued omnibuses, the silent grandeur of the National Gallery, and the grand effect of coppery light in the

misty sunset, the luminous haze that makes all distances mysterious, render this drawing of resistless charm to all who can feel the enchantment of London.

Beauty of quite another kind is to be found in the sympathetic little fragment called "Chelsea, Twilight." The dark red-brown mass of the houses on the Embankment, and the line of pure, cold blue light in the sky behind, are sad beyond expression.

The only other large picture is No. 56, "The Houses of Parliament from the Surrey Side." It is in all respects satisfactory, but to me it does not carry the charm that lies in "Trafalgar Square," perhaps because it has far more of the elements which are usually supposed to go to the composition of a good picture.

G. M. R.

Books of the Week.

TWO CHRISTMAS BOOKS.*

"THE Second Jungle Book" is worthy of the "First," although it is not quite so fascinating. Sequels are seldom equal to the original publications, and the first book of a series generally proves to be the most formidable rival that its followers possess.

Mowgli and Company are well to the fore in this volume, and the first tale records "How Fear came to the Jungle." Kipling has done nothing better in its way than this description of the horrors of drought in the forest:—

"That spring, the *mohwa* tree, that Baloo was so fond of, never flowered. The greeny, cream-coloured wax blossoms were heat-killed before they were born, and only a few bad-smelling petals came down when he stood on his hind legs and shook the tree. Then, inch by inch, the untempered heat crept into the heart of the Jungle, turning its yellow brown, and at last black. The green growths in the sides of the ravines burned up to broken wires and curled films of dead stuff; the hidden pools sank down caked over, keeping the last least footmark on their edges as if it had been cast in iron; the juicy-stemmed creepers fell away from the trees, then clung to and died at their feet; the bamboos withered, clanking when the hot winds blew, and the moss peeled off the rocks deep in the Jungle, till they were as bare and as hot as the quivering blue boulders in the bed of the stream."

The above quotation is only a specimen, but it is impossible to read this first tale without realising in full detail the terror of drought to all the animals in the jungle.

Another Mowgli story relates how he stamped out the whole of a village community by letting in the jungle animals upon them when they were unkind to Messua and her husband.

Further stories record how the man-frog discovered the King's Ankus and hidden treasure, by the help of Kaa, and how the Jungle people, with the help of Mowgli, Kaa and the bees, defeated the red dogs, and finally how at last during the time of the spring-running, when "Time of the New Talk" comes to the Jungle, Mowgli is driven by the voice of Nature to leave them and to rejoin his own people in their village; and, alas! the final line of this powerful tale informs us that this is to be the last of the Mowgli stories. Alack!

* "The Second Jungle Book," by Rudyard Kipling. 6s. (Macmillan.)
"The True Red Story Book," edited by Andrew Lang. 6s. (Longmans.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)