

Notes on Art.

"WESSEX."

UNDER this style, Messrs. Dickinson and Foster, 114, New Bond Street, have got together one of the most charming exhibitions of the season, and the only regret attaching to it is that it should have opened so late in the day. All cultivators of Thomas Hardy should certainly make a point of going, and for those to whom "Wessex" is so far an undiscovered country, the pictures here on view will instantly inspire a wish to investigate that fascinating district.

Two artists contribute the lion's share to the show—Mr. Barraud in water-colour, and Mr. Fred. Whitehead in oils. The charms of the two are so completely distinct that they never seem to clash with each other at all. Mr. Whitehead is what might be described as a poet-artist. His pictures are so permeated with the effect that the place made upon his sympathetic soul, that they kindle perforce in the spectator the same subtle stirring of emotion. In short, he seems, in paint, akin to Wordsworth in speech. The place, the storm, the lake, the bridge, are all linked to a certain thought, and ever after haunt the mind together.

The picture that, of all here, most brings out what is meant above, is the small one called "Egdon Heath," under which title is a quotation from "The Return of the Native": "When the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland." The composition of the simplest—withered brake and fallen, rotting tree—brings home the remoteness of the spot, the depth of the thought, in the very truest spirit of Art.

Mr. Whitehead's work sometimes suffers from a certain opaqueness of colour which approaches dullness, and which seems a pity in the work of so sympathetic a painter. It is noticeable chiefly in his treatment of buildings, but also in the rocks of the finely-conceived picture of "Stair Hole, Lutworth."

"A Mill on the Frome," is the most ambitious of his works, and is very lovely in its soft greens and harmonious colour. Perhaps the one that took my fancy most, in its immense capacity for expressing distance, was "The Blackmore Dale, from Mappowder." The carts in the foreground it would be difficult to over-praise.

The two small bits called "The Hangman's Cottage" and "Fifehead, Magdalen Mill," must also be singled out for special praise; also the charming distant view of "Wolfreton House," and "Sturminster, Newton," but many more than space allows call for recognition.

"Wool Bridge Manor," the former seat of the d'Urbervilles, naturally comes in for much attention. Mr. Barraud has no less than three pictures of it, and certainly the old irregular pile and bridge are almost unique from an artist's standpoint. Mr. Barraud's delicacy of colour and feeling are admirable, but his sketches lack the depth and substance of Mr. Whitehead's.

Here and there he is quite beautiful, but sometimes he is "thin." His foregrounds are specially good—notably in "Wool Village" (No. 55). One sketch by Mr. F. Williamson calls for special commendation, "Studland" (No. 67), the painting of the sheep in the foreground is so good.

The Drama.

ON Saturday night, Sir Henry Irving said good-bye on the Lyceum stage to a most enthusiastic British audience, preparatory to the departure of the Lyceum Company for a nine months' tour in the States. He said—

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is difficult to thank you for your greeting to-night, or indeed for any night, and I can but regret that it will not be our happiness to meet you again until next year. We have had a busy season, and have done considerable work, presenting altogether fifteen plays, the new ones being 'King Arthur,' 'A Story of Waterloo' (the romantic and the realistic), 'Don Quixote' and 'Journeys end in Lovers Meeting,' and I cannot help expressing my great pleasure that the 'King Arthur' of my friend Comyns Carr was received with enthusiasm for 105 representations, while exciting that pleasing diversity of opinion, without which an actor's life might, like a statesman's, develop into a too agreeable monotony. In presenting many of the plays of our repertoire, I think I had the good fortune to hit the public taste, for they were one and all received with uncommon enthusiasm. You have, I dare say, heard that we are about to pay another visit to the many friends which we have the good fortune to number in the United States, and during our absence this theatre will be under the control of our old friend and colleague, Mr. Forbes Robertson, who has our warmest good wishes, and, I may say, those of a multitude of playgoers, who take the greatest interest in the success of his enterprise. Later on, during Mr. Robertson's season, there will, at Christmas time, be a series of morning performances under the direction of Mr. Oscar Barrett, similar to those which he has so successfully pioneered for the past two years. Not unmindful of certain promises made some time ago, it is my intention on our return to produce Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus.' It has long been my wish to present that play, and I am glad to tell you that in my delightful task I shall have the co-operation of Mr. Alma-Tadema, perhaps the greatest authority in the world for the adornment of so noble a theme. This I mean to follow with an English version of 'Madame Sans-Gêne,' in which Sardou's heroine will be impersonated by our lady of the Lyceum, Miss Ellen Terry. I might also tell you that I am desirous of presenting an historical play by Mr. W. L. Courtney, based upon a German source, of which I shall take the opportunity of saying more upon another occasion. It will be interesting to you to know that I am promised a play by an old fellow-worker in this theatre—who has since won golden opinions from all sorts of people—A. W. Pinero, and the production of a play by him would be to me a matter of infinite pleasure. And now, ladies and gentlemen, for a time we must say good-bye, and during our wanderings we shall be cheered by recollections of your kindness and of your affectionate goodwill; and remembering gratefully the encouragement and support which you have extended to us for so many years, for myself and for my dear friend, Ellen Terry, I thank you with the fulness of a loving heart."

"Coriolanus" has not been seen on the stage by many of the present generation of play-goers, and will be anticipated with much interest.

Mr. Forbes Robertson will start his season at the Lyceum on September 14th, with "Romeo and Juliet." The Juliet of Mrs. Patrick Campbell is a performance which we do not doubt "tout Londres" will flock to see and criticise. Miss Dolores Drummond has been engaged to play the Nurse—a part Mrs. Stirling has made so famous.

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