

The Cork Constitution.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1877.

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ROYAL HIBERNIAN ACADEMY.

One of the most gratifying circumstances connected with the exhibition now open is the number of visitors which it is attracting. Too often on former occasions the number in the rooms at Lower Abbey street might have been counted on one's fingers. On Saturday afternoon there were nearer a hundred people either attentively studying the pictures or resting after having done so on the forms and chairs which have been very properly provided for that purpose. Amongst ideal pictures, one of the most conspicuous both for aim and treatment is "Lenore," by Mr. Alfred Elmore, R.A. The subject is taken from Walter Scott's "William and Helen," an imitation of the "Lenore" of Burger, a German poet. Our readers will, of course, remember what the poem is about, or if they don't they had better refer to their copy of Scott before they look at the picture. William was a crusading warrior, and Helen was his beloved. When the war was over he returned not—for he had fallen in battle—and while other maidens and wives were rejoiced by the advent of their husbands and lovers, Helen in her distraction almost curses Providence for having turned her "bliss to bale." At midnight she is amazed by the appearance of what seems her lover; and he constrains her to mount a black horse and ride away with him in order that their nuptials may be performed. In mingled joy and terror she complies. But—like Alonzo the Brave—her lover is a ghost. His vizor conceals a death's head, his armour a skeleton, and he gallops away with her to the grave. The moonlight ride over land and sea, and the troops of spectres who rise from their graves and follow the living Helen and her spirit lover are graphically portrayed in the poem; and such is the subject of which Mr. Elmore has given a view. The moment he has selected seems to be an advanced state of this infernal gallop, for besides the black horse and William and his Helen a crowd of supernatural personages are introduced, not alone on earth below, but even in the sky. One stanza from the poem is a key to the picture:—

Tramp, tramp, along the land they rode,
Splash, splash, along the sea;
The scourg is red, the spur drops blood,
The plashing pebbles flee.

Undoubtedly there is power of a very high order in the conception of the picture, while the artist has displayed an amount of technical skill in putting his idea on canvas, and in dealing with the difficulties incidental to the portraiture by form and colour of that which is most legitimately presentable to the eye of the imagination, that is possessed by few. The lover still seems to preserve his human face—a noble Saxon countenance, with massive forehead and wavy hair. Immense vigour and energy appear in the head and form of the horse, though the outstretched legs as to length and position don't look quite correct. It is really difficult to describe, not to say criticise, the troop of supernatural figures which sweep along with the galloping pair. It is a moonlight scene; and while, on the one hand, the figures are brought out in the faint, dusky weird light with triumphant art; on the other, it is questionable whether much possibility of perfection is not cut off by attempting to paint a moonlight myth. No doubt it may render the blending of the real and the ideal easier than it would otherwise be; still if we had as much light as would show the faces and the feelings of the actors more clearly it would be better. The splendours of form and colour, as seen in high light, are a possession given by Nature to the painter, which he should never barter save for the very highest price. Nevertheless, Mr. Elmore has placed us under an obligation to him for sending so fine a work and so interesting a study here.