

The Morning Post.

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THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF PAINTERS IN WATER COLOURS.

The Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours style their winter show an exhibition of studies and sketches. It is hardly, therefore, to be expected that there should be found at the Gallery many pictures of large size or of any special importance. Yet the collection has been very modestly named, comprising as it does some attractive figure subjects and landscapes and a great variety of smaller works, which will well repay a careful inspection. Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr. Alma-Tadema, Mr. G. du Maurier, Mr. Carl Haag, and Mr. Heywood Hardy exhibit nothing, but the majority of the other members are well represented. Among the most liberal contributors is Mr. J. D. Watson, a painter whose versatile power makes his works ever welcome. The first drawing of his which one lights upon is "A Good Story." Two provincial friends, meeting on the road, draw rein. One of them, a stout yeoman, listens with amused expression to the recital with which he is regaled by the other, who looks as though he might be a country doctor. The foreshortening of the horses is accomplished in a very skilful fashion. And not alone in this picture is Mr. Watson's knowledge of equine form evinced. It is as ably exemplified in "A Boy's Delight" and in "A Gay Young Butcher." "The Poisoned Cup" is dramatic in its theme. It shows us a sixteenth century villain pouring into a goblet of wine the contents of a suspicious-looking little phial, and watched meanwhile by an awe-struck face peering through the hangings at his back. In contrast to the tragic sentiment of this is the comedy of "Her Chief Treasure," a drawing whose frolicsome feeling cannot but provoke a laugh. In it is illustrated Bürger's legend of the general who condemned to death the tacn of a captured city, but allowed the women to come out carrying their chief treasures. The dutiful wives sallied forth, each bearing her husband, and a strangely-assorted couple is this now portrayed—a sturdy old woman, with lined face and wrinkled brow, clinging to whom is a little round, plump-visaged gentleman, who seems fully conscious of the humour of cheating his conquerors. "The Khan Asad Pasha, Damascus," is a large composition, by Mr. Charles Robertson, expressive of the animated scene consequent on the arrival of a caravan from Persia. Within the lofty building are congregated groups of merchants and their numerous following. The dust rises as the camels continue to arrive. From some of these their loads have been removed, so that rich carpets and Oriental pottery are already being displayed and chaffered for. The strong light, piercing through the latticed windows in the domed roof, traces a filigree pattern on the wall. Without, through the high-arched doorway, can be seen the sunlit minarets of the surrounding dwellings. Gay as are the many varied hues employed, the painter has exercised a judicious control over the wealth of colour at his disposal, with the result of producing a brilliant but harmonious whole. From Damascus to Plymouth Sound is a far cry, but in his beautiful little drawing of "Cawsand Bay," Mr. Robertson is as successful in representing English scenery as he is in depicting the men and manners of an Eastern land. From a hill in the foreground one looks down upon the slate-roofed, white-walled houses of Cawsand, upon its market-place adorned with an old-fashioned cross, upon its beach and boats, upon the blue waters of the Sound, and the distant hills chequered with the sunshine which permeates through the shifting grey clouds. There is a wonderful amount of detail, realized with all the delicacy of handling to be found in a miniature, yet with a breadth and a sense of aerial perspective that could scarcely be excelled. As clever in its way, although a very different mode of treatment is adopted therein, is "French Peasants Arriving for the Vintage," by Mr. R. W. Allan. The vineyard workers are being put ashore from three large sailing boats, doubtless not sorry to be on *terra firma* once more, for there is an unpleasant wind abroad, as is sufficiently evident from the flapping of the sails, the bending over of the rushes on the margin of the shore, and the disturbed surface of the water in which the craft are unevenly reflected. There is an open-air feeling, too, about Mr. Allan's "Alkmaar Cheese Market, Holland," which is remarkably good. It is rather a pity that the figures crowding this large square have not a little more character in them. They form blots of colour, as it were, in the right place and they are small, it is true; but they are not too small to be invested with a little more individuality than they possess, and the scene, picturesque as it is, would have gained vastly by the accession of human interest thus obtained. The quaintly-constructed houses, the canals and quays of the Netherlands, have found a delineator likewise in Mr. Herbert M. Marshall. "Zanddam," "Hoorn Quay," "Middleburg," and "An Old Dutch Port" are delightful little sketches, exquisite in colour, and as fresh and full of light as they well could be. Nor less pleasing are the same artist's small views of Canterbury, of Sonning, and of Fowey. "Westminster Abbey from Lambeth," is another of those London studies for which Mr. Marshall has won himself a reputation. Mr. J. H. Henshall's large picture, "In Wonderland," forms an instance of the depth and solidity which it is possible to gain through the medium of water-colour. It is a technical *tour de force*, although in point of subject it does not aim high, merely representing a young girl lolling in a cane chair in a well-stocked library. Mr. E. K. Johnson has put an immense amount of conscientious work into his drawing of a fine old garden wherein flourish abundantly roses, lilies, poppies, pinks, and many other flowers. The somewhat stilted title "Oculus non manibus" conveys presumably the sentiments of the two old gardeners, who, with some young ladies, rejoice in this rustic paradise. Gathered blossoms indicate a disregard on the part of some one for the precept inculcated. "A Bishop," by the President, is notable for its dignity of treatment and for its mellowness of tone. The venerable prelate is reading from a volume held up by an acolyte; he wears a mitre and a robe stiff with golden embroidery. Sir John Gilbert contributes, in addition, a smaller subject, "The Sonnet." Mr. R. Beavis contributes some of the fruits of his travels at home and abroad. His four drawings, "Tilling the Ground in Normandy," "Heavy Weather in the Mediterranean," "Herring-boats putting to sea—North Coast of Scotland," and "Caravansary—Haifa, Mount Carmel," bear evidence to his observant eye and to his facility of execution. "Say I'm not at home," says the gentleman in Mr. Glendon's picture. He is sitting by the fireside about to take breakfast. But before indulging in the matutinal meal he has accomplished a rather elaborate toilette. His high stock may perhaps be uncomfortable—it certainly looks so—but then, no doubt, it is the right thing to wear. His silk coat and waistcoat are of joyous tint, and the fit of his tight pantaloons unexceptionable. Having arrived at such a happy stage on his journey through the day, it is the height of impertinence for anyone to have interrupted him before he has had time to recruit himself after his labours. That such is his opinion the expression of his face would seem to imply as, uttering the words of the title, he hands back to the domestic a letter with its seal unbroken. This self-satisfied individual is limned in a very humorous vein; while brilliancy of colour and deft workmanship are happily allied in the realisation of the incident. In a pretty drawing by Mr. Tom Lloyd, the golden light of evening lies upon a field of barley, amid the yellow stalks of which peep forth thistle blossoms and scarlet poppies. To the charms of Surrey scenery Mr. Charles Gregory does full justice in "On the Wey, Guildford." Mr. E. A. Waterlow, Mr. Birket Foster, and Mr. J. W. North are exponents of landscape art the mention of whose names is sufficient to suggest the presence of works upon which the eye will willingly linger long. Mr. Basil Bradley in "The Invaders" and "The Morning of the 12th—near Loch Earn, Perthshire," wherein sheep and cattle respectively resent the approach of shooting parties, evinces how efficiently his brush can deal with Highland moors and their denizens as well. It may be added that in the exhibition are displayed a number of pencil and chalk studies by Mr. Burne-Jones and a collection of sketches by the late Mr. Frederick Tayler.