



NOTES.

Any mention of the quiet failure of the Théâtre Libre in London would interfere with an article on M. Antoine and his theatre, shortly to appear. The ahurissement of the audiences was comic to behold ; the expressions of awkward ennui, of mistrust, spoke the complete lack of sympathy they felt with the aims of this earnest and original movement.

As I write, the Exposition des Vingt in Brussels is still open, but it shuts before this will be seen. Imagine a collection of such varied works of those of MM. Paul Dubois, Besnard, Fremiet, Rops, Rodin, Pissaro, such variety of aims and modes of expression in one English exhibition ! Imagine such appreciative catholicity to make it possible ! sufficient reverence for the conscious aims of different artists to make a combination so free from the narrowness of cliques, the bigoted aims of those whose privilege it is for the time being to guard the door !

The success of Mr. Stott's exhibition in Paris caused no small surprise, and it is but just to add that the artist stood the test bravely. If scarcely a thinker, or large in his sympathies, he displayed an earnest and manful wish to show what he feels, and escaped certain square-brush mannerisms so dear to some of our younger realists.

It is unnecessary to say anything of Mr. Seymour Hayden, one of those rare artists appreciated alike by his own cloth and the public. I would speak of Mr. Strang, destined to great things; one of those artists sufficiently out of date to keep his aims and his method in harmony and under control. If he is greatly indebted to Legros, he has not for the rest stooped to employ the technical means which are public property, but has shown a wide sympathy with the rarer masters, with Holbein, with Rembrandt, with Dürer, with Millet.

M. Degas does not himself exhibit this year at the New English Art Club, and M. Jacques Blanche is all but absent. There are two brilliant studies by Sargent, that varied and undulating artist, and exquisites by Mr. Whistler.

Though M. Claude Monet's exhibition proved a shilling trappe à bêtises pour les bourgeois, it was a breath of fresh air, turning into snuff and treacle the pictures in the next room. I will not press the point that Monet's work is not so original as some English artists appear to think, but accede to the entreaty of the catalogue not to criticise the pictures too hastily, as they are *so* new.

In the Salon, M. Roll is bravely to the fore. It is curious to note the incapacity of the English to grasp the note this artist has struck, to follow his variety of subject, the genuine manliness that characterises everything he has laid his hand to, that variety of aim, enabling him to paint such deeply moving poems as his War, his Work, and like a real master, strengthen these works with vivid studies of the poetry of a back in sunlight, of living portraits standing in full light and atmosphere. I suppose these debar him, according to our English notions, from ever being a poet, and a poet in the highest sense.

Madame Cazin makes her appearance again. It is unnecessary to add that her picture is full of that charm, that perfume, so delightful, so rare.

M. Besnard once more shocks the public with the best picture in the Salon, a radiant piece of colour, of which it is difficult to convey an idea, with our deeply rooted conviction that good colour must be brown. This artist has for some time been startling the honest Salon walls with pictures full of a poetry of vision to be found elsewhere only in Turner. Besides the distinct éblouissement one feels before his canvases, the visible melody they emit, he has the exceptional gift of understanding that something rare that floats round a face, that something Da Vinci and Boticelli understood. I do not mean each work of his contains all these qualities, as well as the distinct and almost literary imagination he has displayed in larger works; this would actually destroy the oneness of each picture

which is his greatest trait, and enables him frankly to vary himself, and be genuine each time.

La Sirene is not valuable as a piece of literature, has nothing to do with the moral tract. A modern woman near some water, it is frankly visual, and yet possesses that poetry of vision, the painter's poetry par excellence, to such a degree that the impression left is a deeply moving one.

M. Dagnan Bouveret has won the Médaille d'Honneur, and few artists have better deserved it. Admirable in every detail, his quiet picture delights the art world after Lepage, as J. Breton delighted after Millet. Pages might be written to describe its excellent qualities, yet like all his works, this picture will not push art one step towards its future ; it belongs simply to its time and the past.

M. Falguiere's Juno, though very graceful, is hardly worthy of him ; it remains a sweet piece of colour and true painter's drawing, drawn with the brush.

One cannot praise too highly Uhde's triptych, with its solemn homeliness and holiness. The bevy of children, tumbling about like bees, on the side wing, is very charming, but the whole work is a little too small for the artist's touch, which tells to greater advantage in larger works. The central panel is beyond praise.

M. Raffaelli's picture has the strange and piquant aroma that belongs to so much of his work.

The same thing may be said of M. Ary Renan's subtle contribution.

'Tis hard not to experience a slight feeling of disappointment before M. Falguiere's statue, and yet how to express that disappointment, when all he does displays such temperament ? Has M. Fremiet improved his Joan of Arc ? The original statue made such a deep impression on me that I can scarcely feel grateful for any alteration. The rumour of M. Albert Wolff's influence in the matter is almost an excuse for my sense of irritation. It is a thing to be deeply thankful for that we are not blessed with a M. Albert Wolff.

M. Dubois' Joan of Arc is very interesting. I feel great difficulty to follow his ideal of the heroine in this naive and strange little woman with her face like M. Dubois' exquisite Faith. My objection, I know, is outside the question, as the statue is, after all, M. Dubois'. I feel a slight sense of complication about it, and quite outside the superior originality of M. Fremiet's design, much prefer its energetic sense of oneness, the more ardent and square-jawed heroine.

Madame Besnard sends one of the sweetest things in the Salon, full of delicate things in modelling.

A new technical method infallibly contains, to the average artist, the secret which belongs to the admired past, and it is almost impossible to appear sincere in appreciating work quite obviously without this ease, this freedom, which is the last phase of artistic development. M. Christophe has no learnt graces ; he is, in fact, a little dry, yet his statue kills the realistic knees and feet, the liquid workmanship that surrounds him. The poetry of conception, the genuinely manly poetry, is striking. His statue arrests you with its dramatic enigma, with its original and forcible lines ; it throbs with intention and the impress of a human mind. All this the artist has done with a very old myth ; and besides the technical side, in defiance of the newest theories that modern clothes alone give value to a work, the work is nothing if not modern.

R. SAVAGE.