

Studio-Talk

STUDIO-TALK

(From our own Correspondents)

LONDON.—The quality of the exhibition brought together at the Grafton Gallery by the Society of Portrait Painters is this year of quite average excellence, in spite of the absence, or inadequate representation, of more than one of the more prominent supporters of the Society. Fortunately there are among the pictures hung some interesting contributions by foreign artists, and a group of paintings by Sir John Millais of various members of his family; and these add distinction to a show in which commonplace might otherwise have largely predominated. As it is, there is far too much space assigned to the fashionable producers of pretentious incapacities, to painters of formal conventions, of which the large full length of *The Duchess of Sutherland* may be taken as a type. However, every here and there is to be found a canvas of real importance, such as Mr. Whistler's *Rose and Silver*, M. J. E. Blanche's large group *Thaulow and Family*, Mr. Guthrie's *Alexander Sinclair*, or Mr. Lavery's *Thalia*. A large pastel, too, by M. Helleu, a portrait of a young girl in a white dress, is eminently artistic and skilful; and much of the same sort of dainty refinement is shown in the *Girl in Red*, a pretty blonde wrapped in a scarlet Japanese robe, painted by M. Gustave Courtois. Mr. William Stott of Oldham's *My Mother and Father* is a curiously sombre arrangement, by no means lacking in power, but erring somewhat in the direction of ugliness. A three-quarter length of a middle-aged man, painted by Mrs. Jopling, is one of the best portraits she has exhibited for some time; and Mr. Stuart Wortley's full length of the *Prince of Wales* may be reckoned a success for a painter who is not in the first rank, but has the capacities that come from laborious application. The Society of Miniaturists, which has on this occasion joined forces with the portrait painters, has brought together more than three hundred and fifty examples by living artists as well as a large loan collection of miniatures by deceased masters.

Mr. Francis E. James's water-colour drawings at the Dutch Gallery are welcome as the productions of an artist who combines in an unusual degree originality of view with charm of technical manner. He sees his subjects in the right way, without eccentricity, but also without descending into convention; and he paints them with a freedom that never degenerates into carelessness or exaggeration.

206

He has, too, a rare capacity for treating motives full of minute detail with largeness and breadth. As a colourist he is especially happy, and his studies of flowers and landscapes are excellently refined and harmonious. His work has, in fact, the distinction which comes from instinctive knowledge expressed by the aid of sound training and rightly balanced experience.

At the Rembrandt Gallery Mr. Dunthorne has gathered together a small show of oil paintings by Mr. Fred Hall, and drawings in water-colour on which Mr. Hall and Mr. Leghe Suthers have worked in collaboration. The oil pictures are interesting on account of the poetic and imaginative view which the artist has taken, a view which is helped by refinement of colour expression and delicacy in treatment of atmospheric effects. The drawings have a different character; they are studies of rural types belonging to a period already past, and are drawn somewhat in the manner of the older caricaturists. They are less water-colours in the modern sense, than pen designs finished in colour. Their power is, however, beyond question; and they afford fascinating material for an exhibition.

Messrs. Dowdeswell are holding a show of "South African Studies," by Mr. Percy Dixon. These are water-colour drawings of picturesque places in Cape Colony, Natal, and the districts adjacent, produced by an artist whose training in the interpretation of landscape has been thorough, and who has had opportunities of studying varieties of subject in many parts of the world. He has succeeded, in this instance, in expressing with ability the character of African scenery, and has brought together a series which is no less attractive to artists than to people who are interested in the topography of a continent which has lately been the scene of many stirring political and commercial incidents. The exhibition is distinctly appropriate at this moment.

An interesting collection of sketches by Japanese artists is being exhibited at the Burlington Gallery, Old Bond Street. Especially good and worthy the attention of connoisseurs are the drawings by Kiosai, who must ever rank as one of the most notable of Japanese artists of this century.

Special interest must necessarily be attached to the sketch made by Lord Leighton, so late as the Sunday preceding his death and which is believed