

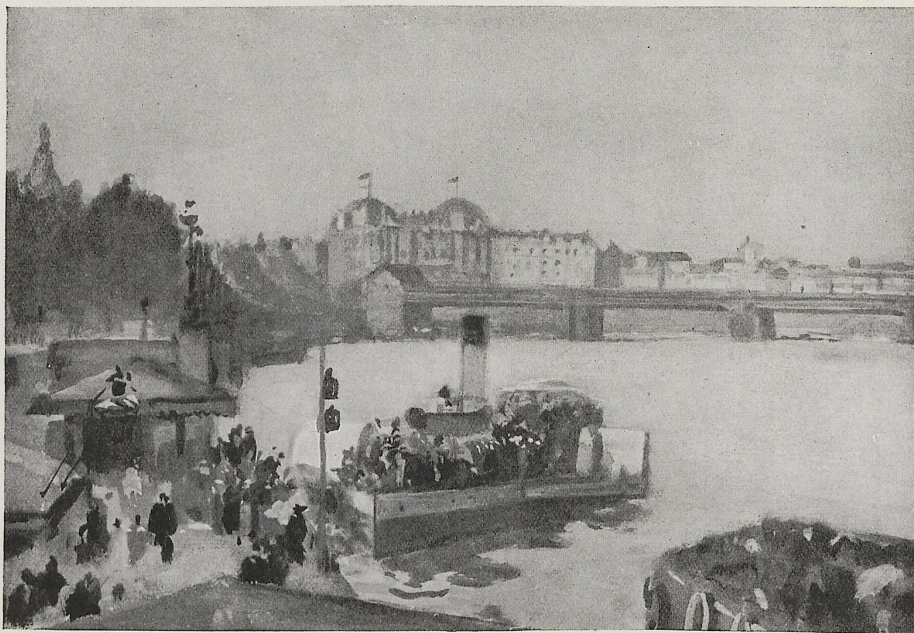
*Cecil King, R.B.A.***C**ECIL KING, R.B.A.: A PAINTER OF CITIES.

If it were necessary to define the position which Mr. Cecil King occupies among present-day painters, he would probably be best described as a realist, because he concerns himself entirely with records of the world about him and with studies of the things he sees. And yet such a definition would be liable to be misunderstood if it were put forward without some qualification. Realism, as a term in art, is very often grievously misapplied. It has been claimed, for instance, by a class of painters who go out of their way to seek subjects from the most decadent and repulsive side of life and who delight in representing the most debased aspects of modern humanity. An artist calls himself a realist because he presents with a blatant and exaggerated affectation of reality subjects that are happily comparatively uncommon, because he shuts his eyes to the many beauties of the world and hunts assiduously for the few gross and hideous things which saner men are anxious to forget. He idealises ugliness, and the more unpleasant he can make his idealisations the more loudly he asserts his claim to be considered a devoted lover of truth

and an uncompromising delineator of the real facts of existence.

We may be thankful that Mr. Cecil King is not a realist of this sort. His realism is, indeed, of a much truer and more rational type, something much more intimately related to the characteristic actualities of our times and much more attractive in its rightness of outlook and sense of propriety. For what he really does is to study shrewdly and sensitively those aspects of the world which most of us who have kept our instincts reasonably clean habitually see. He will, no doubt, disappoint the specialists in abnormalities who look at one small side of life and are blind to everything else, but he will please and convince the far larger number who have the good sense to prefer the agreeable things and derive enjoyment from the art that deals with them.

But, again, he does not belong to that school of realism which insists upon the exact statement in a painted work of every trivial detail that the laborious observer can discover in nature. He holds the conviction that such exactness as this is opposed to true reality and that its inflexible pedantry defeats the end of art. What he wants is to create the impression of reality by seizing upon



"WESTMINSTER PIER"

WATER-COLOUR BY CECIL KING, R. B. A.