

*Woodcuts by Charles Shannon, A.R.A.*

**I**DYLLS OF RURAL LIFE: A SERIES OF WOODCUTS BY CHARLES SHANNON, A.R.A.

ABOUT eighteen years ago there was held at the late E. J. van Wisselingh's gallery in Brook Street a charming exhibition of original wood-engravings by Messrs. Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, and their associates Messrs. Sturge Moore, Reginald Savage, and Lucien Pissarro. With these were hung engravings symbolic of rural occupations designed by Jean François Millet, and executed under his supervision by his brother, which were included in the exhibition probably to show what had previously been done in modern times. But the exhibition was practically confined to the work of the "Vale" and "Dial" artists.

Messrs. Ricketts and Shannon have worked so much together in the art of wood-engraving that even they themselves would find it hard in most cases to give credit to each individual artist for the invention of all they have done. After all it hardly matters, for the close partnership has been a most fruitful one. Their first complete work was "Daphnis and Chloe," executed in 1893. It was a work modelled on an old Italian book, "Hypnerotomachia Poliphili," published in 1499, from which also Burne-Jones and William Morris, the predecessors of Messrs. Ricketts and Shannon, drew inspiration. From Burne-Jones came a beautiful series of designs illustrating "The Story of Cupid and Psyche," and Morris alone or with the help of others made woodcuts from them. But only one or two sets of prints of these are known to exist. The illustrators of "Daphnis and Chloe" had mastered the art of woodcutting, and they engraved their own designs, a thing that has rarely been done until modern days.

Interesting as most of these exhibits were at this exhibition at van Wisselingh's gallery, none were more surprising than a series done by Mr. Charles Shannon himself, illustrating in twelve symbolic designs idylls of rural life. This exquisite set of roundels was a revival of another variety of the art of woodcutting, that called *chiaroscuro* or

*camaieu* printing from more blocks than one. This beautiful invention probably originated in Germany, but it was developed by two clever Italians of the Renaissance who used it to interpret other men's designs. One Ugo da Carpi (born in 1486) was a clever sculptor and also woodcutter in *chiaroscuro*. Though not the inventor of the method, he was the first to introduce it into Italy, and to improve



"THE PORCH"



"THE CAPTIVE PEGASUS"