

THE VALE ARTISTS.

IV.—REGINALD SAVAGE.

The least-known of the illustrators of the *Dial*, Reginald Savage, has published very little work in England, but is, nevertheless, anterior in date to Ricketts, Shannon, and Pissarro. He first exhibited at the



MR. REGINALD SAVAGE.—C. H. SHANNON.

Institute of Painters in Water-Colours, some ten years ago, choosing romantic subjects, such as scenes from the lives of the saints. His "Enid and Geraint" may be taken to represent that period of his work. At the time this picture was painted, Savage was an art-student working with Shannon—who first exhibited in 1886—Ricketts, and Raven Hill. The last work he exhibited in England was his "St. Elizabeth in Exile," which appeared at the first exhibition of the New Gallery. Since that time his work has only appeared in the *Dial*, possibly because at the time the first number appeared the work of the Vale men was, to a certain extent, boycotted by all the galleries. He has engraved some of his own drawings, and Ricketts has engraved one or two. The one reproduced here, "The Lotus-Eaters," is a reproduction of a pen-drawing, and shows the artist to great advantage. His power of imaginative treatment is displayed in the lotus-flowers that grow through the vessel's decaying deck; in the languid mariners, to whom movement of body or brain is alike impossible; in the misty phantoms hovering over all. The mariner in the foreground recalls certain lines of Tennyson's poem—

... if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

Surely, since the Moxon Tennyson was published, few designs could be found showing as much concentration in workmanship and thought as this little drawing.

Some of his earlier work found its way to Belgium, and the Count de Looz commissioned the artist to decorate a family chapel. This work



FOUNDATION OF THE ABBAYE OF AVERBODEN BY THE FIRST COUNT DE LOOZ.—REGINALD SAVAGE.

took three years to execute, and consisted of five compositions painted on the chapel walls, representing incidents in the life of St. Christine l'Admirable. It has been found possible to reproduce a fragment of the preliminary scheme for one of the designs, but this is all that can be given. The interior of the chapel is dimly lighted, and it has been found impossible to photograph the paintings. This is much to be regretted, for they form the most important work of Reginald Savage, and must always remain very little known. Two of them measure sixteen by ten feet, and one contains upwards of a hundred figures.

I have now come to the end of the brief series of articles devoted to the Vale and its works. True it is that Sturge Moore has done thirty or more engravings, but, seeing that he and John Gray really represent the literary rather than the artistic side of the *Dial*, it is not necessary to deal with their work here. It only now remains to consider the main aim of the artists.

The aim of the founders of the *Dial* has been—if I understand it aright—the suppression of outside interference with the artist's work. Their use of original lithography and original wood-engraving has



THE LOTUS-EATERS.—REGINALD SAVAGE.

From "The Dial."

undoubtedly tended to this end, for they draw, execute, and at times even print their own work; in fact, with the exception of Mr. Lane, who has published their engraved books, they have no publisher. The *Dial* has conferred upon all its works the important gift of free expression, in absolute disregard to the traditions of the publishing world. Yet, despite this freedom, none of their work can be deemed flippant in thought or execution. Often imaginative, they show a distinct appreciation of the technique required by the medium they use, so that the pen-drawings are unlike the etchings, the lithographs and woodcuts are unlike either. This conscientiousness in work, this moderate and careful production in times where the output is so vast, has made their rate of progress seem slow. Many men and styles have sprung up, with mushroom-like rapidity, to become scorched by the sun of indiscriminate eulogy, and wither as quickly as they appeared. Meanwhile, the Vale men have found their work steadily increasing in public favour, and, better still, in the favour of those whose likes and dislikes are founded on a full appreciation of merit. Moreover, they have enough experience and knowledge of the world to take their success quietly, and not to allow it either to turn their heads from the ideals they have ever truly followed or their hands from the labour in which they delight.

THEOCRITUS.

"John March, Southerner" (Low) is the best novel that has come from America this year or two. One opens each new story of Mr. Cable's with the expectation of finding it great. The best ones just miss the touch or tone that makes greatness. He knows human nature; he can make living human beings; he has sympathy, a good deal of humour, a sense of poetry, and he writes good English. At least, no American novelist of to-day has greater qualities. And if "John March" be not a great book, it is a very good one. Its plot is a trifle complicated, but it is worth unravelling, for it contains in its entanglements a large part of the history of the South just after the war. But, if you don't unravel it quite, there is a good story left without any tangles in it, and a group of admirably drawn characters—white and coloured—for company, two excellent and widely differing villains among them. By-the-bye, Mr. Cable lavishes his material here as elsewhere, and much of the work in this latest book will not stick in the memory; but the personality of his central figure, John March, most certainly will. He is one of the successful young men of American fiction.