

THE VALE ARTISTS.

I.—CHARLES HAZELWOOD SHANNON.

Art for Art's sake sounds very well, but is only practicable under certain conditions. The necessity of earning a living must ever break upon the dreams of the idealist, who works according to his own beliefs. Yet it is, perhaps, fortunate, alike for art and literature, that some men prefer



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to pursue their ideals through long and tedious years rather than do work in which they do not believe.

The little *coterie* with whose labours I am about to deal has forced itself into public notice. Appealing at first to but a small section of the *cognoscenti*, Charles Ricketts, Charles Hazelwood Shannon, Lucien Pissarro, Reginald Savage, Sturge Moore, and others, have slowly but surely advanced. True it is that the man in the street knows them not, nor does the Philistine aspire to

understand them; but that is because they have not courted the glare of publicity, and have been content to discover and emend their own imperfections, to work out their own artistic salvation, unknown, save to a few.

In the stress and turmoil of our daily life, where those of us who have aught to say wish to say it before the best-paying public, where with absolute frankness we praise our friends and decry our enemies, there is some strange charm to be found in circles where work is not measured by the usual standard of pounds, shillings, and pence. I do not pose as being free from the mercenary taint; I write for the papers that pay me best, and am not ashamed of the fact. I only confess that a change from the mercenary motive is pleasant—to contemplate. Of course, the true artistic cult has many imitators; but with regard to the men now under discussion, there is no room for doubt as to the genuine nature of their principles. In the early days they were often compelled to take what came, in the way of work; as soon as they were able to choose they decided to follow their own opinions. Success has now reached them, and finds them hard at work, rejoicing in the past, satisfied with the present, and hopeful for the future.

Charles Hazelwood Shannon, who may claim, since Whistler's retirement to France, to be the greatest English lithographer of the present time, came into notice when, in conjunction with Ricketts and others, he started the *Dial*. The reproductions given here will



A ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE.—CHARLES H. SHANNON.

indicate the charm of his work, which, from inception to completion, passes through no hand save his own. It is, however, right to mention that a certain number of designs for exhibition and for two numbers of the *Dial* were printed by Thomas Way, who, since the 'seventies, has done so much towards the revival of lithography in England. Apart from this single instance, Shannon has done everything by himself. He draws his design upon the stone with lithographic chalk; he puts it under acid to render it insensible to water; he presses and prints the limited number of impressions, and then removes the design from the stone, so that no success, however great, can result in the publication of more than the advertised number of copies. It may be advisable to pause here and say a few words about lithography itself.

One Senefelder claims the honour of its invention, but his object would seem to have been nothing more than the cheaper reproduction of music sheets. The first man to bring lithography into high repute was Goya, the brilliant, eccentric, and often indecent Spaniard, whose lithographs of bull-fights in Spain are as marvellous in execution as they are daring in design. Goya was exiled, and did his lithographs in France at the beginning of the present century. He may, I fancy, be regarded as the father of the impressionist school which has produced Camille Pissarro,



LINEN-BLEACHERS.—CHARLES H. SHANNON.
A Lithograph from a recent Portfolio.

Degas, Manet, and other celebrated men. Delacroix is famous for his illustrations to "Faust," which were so admired by Goethe, while Daumier and Gavarni, the caricaturists, did valuable lithographic work, but only because lithography afforded the cheapest and most rapid method of reproducing their cartoons. Some time in the 'sixties, Braquemont, Legros, and Fantin Latour started experiments together, but discontinued them, and, of the three, only Fantin Latour continued to regard lithography as a direct artistic medium. His work was undoubtedly the best until Whistler turned his attention to lithography, and further developed the process by the introduction of "wash." Whistler may be said to have done for it what Rembrandt did for etching, or Turner for water-colour.

The commercial value of lithography lies in the practically unlimited number of impressions to be obtained from a single stone, but, for trade purposes, photography is largely used for putting the design on to the stone. As I have said, the value of Shannon's work lies in the fact that every impression is a piece of his original work. The same remark applies with equal force to the wood-engravings he has made with Ricketts, and the engravings in colour by Lucien Pissarro.

Shannon was a frequent exhibitor at the Grosvenor Gallery during its latter years. Sir Coutts Lindsay started the Pastel Society, of which he was one of the original members, and his work there attracted considerable attention. He is a member of the Royal Society of Painter Etchers, but, unless I am mistaken, has only once exhibited at the gallery in Pall Mall. Conjointly with Ricketts he published "Daphnis and Chloe," illustrated with some thirty-six woodcuts. They designed and engraved them together after a year's work, and their success is shown by the fact that the book is now out of print and very scarce. A year later, the two produced "Hero and Leander." Shannon's latest work is a portfolio of lithographs from which "The Linen-Bleachers," here reproduced, is taken.

To attempt a detailed criticism of such work is impossible. Such specimens as are here represented cannot give a really adequate idea of the ground he has covered. His lithographs in line, his studies in grey chalk and in silverpoint, are all worthy of special study. They have delicacy of treatment, refinement of conception, and some subtle charm, difficult to analyse.

THEOCRITUS.