

THE VALE ARTISTS.

II.—CHARLES RICKETTS.

If Charles Shannon be destined to leave his name written boldly in the annals of lithography, that of his friend and fellow-worker, Charles Ricketts, will be equally *en evidence* in the history of bookbinding and wood-engraving. To see the many specimens of his work, the Lares and Penates of his home in Chelsea, to pass from one design to another, is to be almost bewildered by the charm of delicacy and bold beauty. To see the collection of books he has bound is to experience a feeling of absolute delight, to find in the sight of such dainty work a relief to the crude barbarities that must, alas! cumber one's own book-shelves. The skill of his draughtsmanship must strike the most casual observer, and it is not too much to say that he has made bookbinding in cloth an art, for, before his time, very few men had touched it. The interest aroused by Rossetti's work on his own and Swinburne's poems faded away, and was in danger of disappearing, when Ricketts woke it again to life. This can safely be said, for neither Walter Crane nor William Morris have done noticeable designs for cloth.

Of course, we cannot all afford to indulge in the beautifully bound and strictly limited editions of Messrs. Elkin Mathews and John Lane, but it is a popular mistake to imagine that they are exceedingly dear. I contend that, if we consider the workmanship and the material, the price is moderate. Moreover, the public has greatly benefited by the existence of beautiful books. Who cannot recollect how, a few years ago, the yellow-backed novel with poster-like picture was always with us? Nowadays we are lucky enough to have much less of it. Where, formerly, we saw three, we now see one, and, except in a few instances, publishers are moving with the times, and becoming more particular about the bindings they select. During the last decade special designs for special books have been made, in defiance of the old custom by which the publisher bought a stock of bindings to suit his own taste, or lack of taste, and put the books in them as soldiers are put in uniform.

There is one serious obstacle in the way of elaborate bookbinding, and that is, the fear of being misunderstood. The Philistine will not appreciate too decorative a book-cover, and will probably deery what he cannot understand. Strange though it may appear, this fact has made many publishers prefer the safety of monotony.

The *modus operandi* followed by Charles Ricketts in his work is similar to that which obtained before process-blocks were used, and is of great interest. He uses brass plates in place of the zinc generally used by the trade, and the work is all the better, by reason of the fact that he, being himself an engraver, fully appreciates the limitations of the engraver's art. Moreover, he draws his designs in gold, and not in black, so that they are seen from the very commencement in the form they will ultimately retain. Once these facts are clearly grasped, it is not difficult to understand the superiority of his work over that of his many imitators. Not content with his natural gifts, he takes the fullest opportunities of improving the conditions under which the work is done.



CHARLES RICKETTS.—A LITHOGRAPH BY CHARLES H. SHANNON.

It was for Messrs. Osgood, McIlvaine, and Co. that Charles Ricketts first started his cloth-binding, and it was, I believe, for this firm that he bound the earliest edition of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and Oscar Wilde's "Intentions." Next in the sequence of his progression come the "House of Pomegranates," also by Oscar Wilde, and the "Bard of the Dimbovitza," by Carmen Sylva. He has bound many more books, the very happiest of his achievements being "The Sphinx," by Wilde,

recently published by Messrs. Mathews and Lane. He illustrated this book in addition to binding it. "Silverpoints," by John Gray, is also the more attractive by reason of his binding, and it is a curious but noteworthy fact that some of his bindings, notably that of "Silverpoints," have been very much imitated. Whether the imitation is conscious or unconscious, I should not care to say; but, if innocent, it is a striking testimony to the influence of his work.

Charles Ricketts does not rely entirely upon bookbinding. As an artist in pen-and-ink, and an original wood-engraver, he occupies an enviable position. His work is deeply tinged with symbolism, and, better still, is at times intensely dramatic. The dramatic feeling is admirably shown in his illustrations to the poems of Lord de Tabley and



PHAEDRA AND ARIADNE.—C. RICKETTS, REPRODUCED BY WALKER.
From "The Dial."

in his drawings for the *Dial*, more especially in the third issue. A specimen of his work is given here, and admirably illustrates his qualities.

For his original wood-engravings we may refer to the second number of the *Dial*, of which he engraved the cover and all the text illustrations. In addition to this are the thirty-six designs to Daphnis and Chloe. Although Shannon partially designed them, it was Ricketts who drew them all upon the wood.

THEOCRITUS.

MISS MADGE McINTOSH.

Miss Madge McIntosh, who plays small parts in "An Innocent Abroad" and "High Life Below Stairs," at Terry's Theatre, made her professional debut, only some two years ago, with Mr. Ben Greet's company. Last winter she made a most successful London debut in "The Other Fellow," at the Court Theatre, since which she has been "out" with Mr. Terry's company. She comes of military stock, and, though of Scotch descent, was born in Calcutta nineteen years ago. However, she came West while a baby, and was educated in London and on the Continent. Showing the most marked dramatic talents, she studied elocution under the late Emil Behnke, and also became a proficient skirt-dancer. Her mother, who was a shining light in the amateur dramatic world, purposed taking her out to India, when the sudden death of her husband altered all their plans. Both mother and daughter have been seen several times at the famous theatrical performances given at Bushey by Professor Herkomer. Mrs. McIntosh has thought seriously of adopting the boards professionally herself. She has a sympathetic voice and manner, which remind one of Miss Marion Terry. The McIntoshes live in a dainty flat at Kensington Palace Gardens, as happy a sextet as one could find, composed of mother, three daughters, "Miser," a clever black terrier, and a cosy cat.