

BRITISH ART.

A Bird's-Eye View of Its Monuments.

Several years ago, when M. Salomon Reinach published his "Apollo," that little manual of European art instantly achieved the popularity which belongs to an idea equally new and good. Surveys of the architecture, painting and sculpture of the world had been made before, but never in a single volume at once so compact and so comprehensive, so learned and so readable. With a charming lightness of touch this French scholar moved easily through countless works of art, always selecting for comment just the right representative pieces



MRS. DESAGULIERS.
(From the portrait by Hogarth.)

and always supplying, in a few clear words, just the illumination needed. There was nothing surprising about the speedy circulation of this book everywhere, first in the original and then in the translations which readers outside of France had inevitably demanded. Incidentally, the success of the work paved the way for a far more important scheme. It suggested the application of M. Reinach's idea to a voluminous series, each member of which would be concerned with the art of a single country. The task was forthwith begun and arrangements were made for volumes to be prepared by critical writers of authority throughout the world. These volumes, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, in America, and by Heinemann, in London, are also brought out by leading houses on the Continent in French, German, Italian and Spanish under the general title of "Ars Una: Species Mille." The first, which has recently been issued here by the Scribners, is further called "Art in Great Britain and Ireland." In it Sir Walter Armstrong shows how effectively the plan laid down by M. Reinach for all the schools may be used in the exposition of the traits of one. It should be added that an important detail in this series is the printing of the text within the limits of a really handy little volume, with beautifully clear halftones on a small scale on every page, sometimes as many as three, or even four, on a page. Add to this a number of full page illustrations in colors, and it will be seen that into what is practically a pocket volume the publishers pack an extraordinary quantity of material.

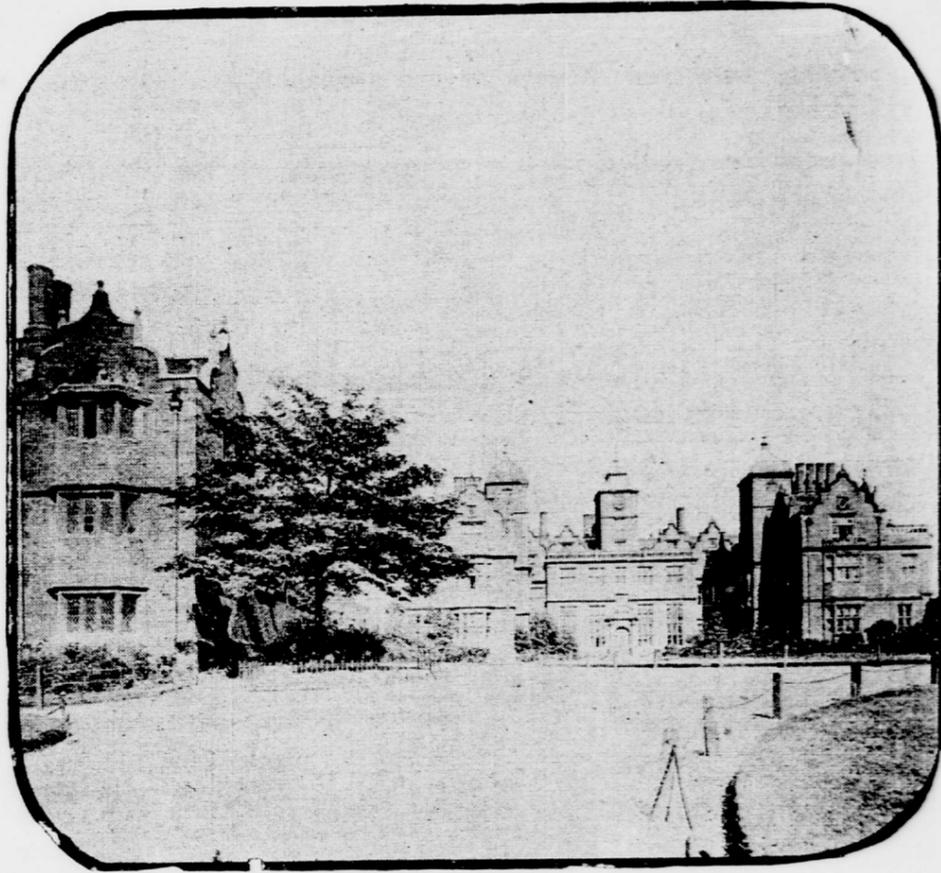
Sir Walter Armstrong, inaugurating the series, faces a peculiarly difficult test. The first to take up M. Reinach's formula, he is, of course, subjected to jealous scrutiny. One naturally looks to see if he has done as well as the French writer, and the problem is the more interesting inasmuch as he is obviously somewhat at a disadvantage. M. Reinach had all the artistic treasures of Europe to draw upon. Sir Walter Armstrong is confined not only to a much narrower territory but to one much poorer in artists of genius than almost any European state. This fact has reacted a little unfortunately upon him, for it has thrown him, as it were, upon the defensive. He is un-

duly anxious to prove that British art deserves more credit than has always been granted it. On the other hand, he is abundantly worthy of his model in that which is most important, the lucid and workmanlike analysis of all the developments of a large theme. In the first half of his book he traces the growth of architecture. Then, after a few pages on ironwork, enamels, stained glass, illuminated manuscripts and prints, he examines the British school of painting, including miniatures and water colors, and winds up with an account of the sculptors. For smoothness and rapidity this terse history could not be too warmly commended.

The generous space given to architecture is readily accounted for. It is in this field of art that the British genius has left its most characteristic monuments. The author justly dwells in his opening pages on the beauty of primitive Celtic craftsmanship in metal, but the souvenirs of that remote age are soon disposed of, and have, indeed, little bearing upon the broad stream of artistic endeavor in the British Islands. That is a stream almost exclusively architectural in its significance. There are monuments not a few which testify to the taste and skill of the early Anglo-Saxon church builders, and, of course, as the Norman influences come in, the material available increases in bulk and grows richer in quality. Sir Walter Armstrong duly pays his compliments to the well-worn problem as to the relations of French and

times, alas! to the loss of both." It is better for the general reader—to whom a manual of this sort is especially addressed—to grasp the common sense point thus made than to fret himself over those mysteries of origin which to this day keep the pundits of architectural style at loggerheads. The main thing is that he should gain some idea of the character and evolution of the architecture in Great Britain, and there Sir Walter Armstrong makes a most sympathetic guide.

If anywhere in his book he might safely have been a little more enkindling than we find him it is in his chapter on what he calls "The Tudor Chaos." Chaotic the activities of the builders at the dawn of the English Renaissance may have been, but in castle, manor house and half-timbered grange they produced much that possessed a wholesome British quality, much that still has for us a kind of stately charm. On the other hand, the author is doubtless right in reserving keener appreciation for Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren. They had what their predecessors lacked, something like creative genius, for all that they, too, leaned heavily upon classical and Italian precedent. It was a good idea, by the way, to terminate the architectural part of the book with a few pages on modern tendencies. In a history like this it would be a pedantic affectation, and, indeed, a disservice to the reader, altogether to ignore contemporaneous types. Sir Walter Armstrong remembers them,



ASTON HALL.
(From a photograph.)

English Gothic. It will continue to engage the energies of scholars. He leaves it where he found it. But while he rejects the hypothesis which would give all the honors to France, and insists that the British made themselves felt in the handling of the Gothic idea after a fashion of their own, he has this eminently fair saying on the subject: "In France, the structural skeleton was made the most of and developed to its logical conclusion, which often led to sublimity, but sometimes to ugliness, and even absurdities. In England, the architect was overready to hide structure with an irrelevant skin, leading sometimes to beauty with character, sometimes to beauty without it; some-

too, when treating of the painters and sculptors, though it may be noted in passing that his critical touch here is not always impeccable. Whistler, for example, does not belong in the volume at all, but two of his paintings and one of his etchings are reproduced, and, not content with thus annexing him, the author says: "During most of his career Whistler posed as anti-English, although his art was mainly British, in spite of his American birth and French training." The words we have italicized are enough to make Whistler turn in his grave. We wonder, too, why one of Mr. Sargent's portraits should be reproduced. Even his membership in the Royal Academy has not made him a British painter. But these are subordinate details. The summary of what was done by the followers of Holbein, by Hogarth, by Reynolds and the rest, down to the pre-Raphaelites and artists like the late Charles Furse, is written with knowledge and judgment. Sir Walter Armstrong is, as we have said, worthy of his French exemplar. He begins well a series by which the art student and the layman alike will greatly profit.

He brings substantial evidence, moreover, to justify some, if not all, of the emphasis which he places upon the racial strength of the British in the sphere of art. It is idle to ignore the fact that they have not been anything like so fecund as either the French or the Dutch, to say nothing of the Italians, and it would be equally foolish to underestimate what they have owed to foreign visitors. What would the early portrait painters have done without the example of Holbein? What would the eighteenth century group have done without the souvenirs that Van Dyck left behind him? But no answer to these questions would be complete that failed to include testimony to the great inborn gifts which have also gone to the making of British art. Britain can claim in Hogarth an original genius, comparable in matters of technique to Velasquez and Hals, and further notable for an amazingly just fusion of purely painter-like qualities with a satirical and literary inspiration profoundly significant of the character of his countrymen. Then, too, what



LADY CAROLINE PRICE.
(From the portrait by Reynolds.)

a brilliant galaxy is that which is formed by the masters of eighteenth century portraiture! Reynolds, with his instinct for the grand style; Gainsborough, with his magic in the handling of paint; Romney, with his grace and sentiment; Hoppner, with his sweet sincerity and Raeburn, with his masculine vigor—these men by themselves could have made the glory of a nation. They ranged British portrait painting with that of Europe for authority and distinction, and Constable, Bonington, Turner and divers comparatively minor types created a landscape school of singular power and far-reaching influence. In later times the pre-Raphaelites may not have had quite the weight that is attributed to them by Sir Walter Armstrong, but, on the other hand, neither were they a negligible company, and in his notes on their characteristics, as on those of men like Watts, Albert Moore and the sculptor, Alfred Stevens, the author demonstrates conclusively enough that his native land has not lacked sterling representatives of the artistic temperament. It is, in fact, for the outstanding individual that you look in British art, rather than for widely diffused movements, and this search is richly rewarded. R. C.

IN GEORGIA.

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DEDHAM VALE.
(From the painting by Constable.)