REPARATIONS

THE COMMISSION'S DECISIONS

REQUESTS TO GERMANY

Paris, Thursday.—The Reparation Commission met to-day under the presidency of

ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY

FEATURES OF THE 98TH EXHIBITION

FEW OUTSTANDING WORKS

BY OUR ART CORRESPONDENT

To-morrow there opens to the public the ninety-eighth annual exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy. It contains a number of very interesting works, a few, alike of to-day and of the past, of outstanding character and quality. Nevertheless, even the staunchest, most optimistic supporter of the R.S.A. would not maintain that at this moment the institution's barque is riding on the crest of a great wave, its valiant crew full of æsthetic initiative and vigour, prepared to take advantage of favourable winds and tides. Let us hope that when two years hence the Academy celebrates the hundredth anniversary of its birth as an exhibiting body it will, under wise, enlightened guidance, again conclusively proclaim to the world the value of present-day Scottish art. So far as artists resident in Scotland are concerned, the 98th exhibition shows them, with a few exceptions, to be marking time. Apparently there has been a dearth of contributions of considerable size, such as are needed on the walls for purposes of support. This may explain the fact that certain important positions are assigned both in the picture and sculpture sections to commonplace or unsuccessful exploits, whose merits are in inverse proportion to their ambitious scale. Whereas in 1923 two of the three central communications were blocked up, circulation is now freed and pleasure increased by entrance to the main gallery being gained through the middle opening instead of from the corners. Room III., where hang but 60 pictures, mostly of quite modest size, is divided into panels by means of upright lengths of serim, with small festoons of gold above, placed centrally in each wall. This is a decoratively effective departure.

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING"—HUMOROUS

Was it as evidence of an endeavour to keep abreast of modernist movements, in order to rebut any charge of narrowness, or tangibly to exemplify its sense of humour that the Hanging Committee gave conspicuous places to Mr W. Roberts's "Dock Gates," and Mr. J. S. Claud Chambers's "Pastoral Symphony"? Whatever the explanation, the two canvases are entertaining. Much water has flowed under London Bridge since in 1919 Mr Roberts startled many staid students with his Cubistic "Shell Dump, France," painted for the Imperial War Museum. In go-ahead Paris, for instance, Cubism and Futurism have been relegated to a "fumistic" past, so that if Edinburgh pundits do homage to the "Dock Gates" their appreciation will be ludicrously belated. Perhaps Mr Roberts—who has a store of mordant wit as well as a capacity for broad, genuine characterisation—himself gives the clue to his ironical intent, for the only recognisable forms in his Edinburgh picture are the Roman numerals and the name, "Sea Glory," on the stern of one of the boats. Nevertheless, there is a certain curious rhythm, a hint of disquieting power, in this company of Robots at their dock work. They are fashioned not of flesh and bone, but of brilliantly coloured metal tubing, their limbs mechanically articulated, their faces—when you discover them—grim and contorted as though shaped by some cruel demon bent on transforming human existence into a hideously galvanised chimera. Visitors, however, should not dismiss Mr Roberts as no more than a democratic jester. Before doing so, let them look at his angularised yet salient portrait-drawing, No. 573. After examining for a moment or two in a puzzled way this "Dock Gates" a veteran Scots artist turned to me and said, "A religious subject, I suppose!" In a wholly different kind, much less "abstract," and shall we say fiendishly geometrical, and, too, the work of a much less disciplined painter, is Mr Claud Chambers's humorously entitled "Pastoral Symphony." This in part rich-coloured picture, which caused a considerable stir in London, looks effectively tapestry-like from a distance, and at closer quarters is anyhow very entertaining. One fact the artist makes plain: as depicted the cow, whose tail-end is held by a participant in the so-called "symphonic" drama, required immediately

very entertaining. ed the cow," the so-called
plain; as depicted in the
held by a parna required immediately
is symphonic." For pleases the collied ser-
to be milked. the rest, each
can interpret as he and the bottle of
the ankles, e of the oblong man
ment. (!) in the centre post, headed
whisker," the tall lamp-post, who is an object
position, the red portfolio, lads, the buxom
with the for the country blue, the excited
derision in bright red and this pseudo-rustic
woman in other actors in regarded as the
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SOME NOTABLE EXHIBITS

Turning to more responsible, or at any rate more serious, endeavours, we find interest enlisted in several directions. Sir James Guthrie is represented by his never-breaker," exhibited picture, originally somewhat larger, was begun at Kirkcudbright some years earlier, and has no doubt, been "touched" in several places during the past few months. It shows Guthrie emerging, with the colourist he is, from the semi-fusion of the stonebreaker, with red tie, is figure of the characterised, the pictorially understood and picture-setting boldly decorative. Now that nature-setting has by the distinguished ex-President, his hand though and practice informed, as he was but development. Sir Lawton susceptibility, as he would in starting to do wise to give disciplined instinct full play. That is one of the salient lessons of the resurrected picture, which instructively foreshadows Guthrie's fruitful development. The art Wingate, may be exhibited in two landscapes typical of his studied during the last few years, also in activity "Nest Among the Reeds," This "A Swan's Nest" the R.S.A. of 1881. first appeared at the delicate knowledge of last makes plain with trees, grasses, later and sympathy thereupon Sir Lawton atmosphere wherein of Scotsmen based his less detailed of to-day Cameron, who in their output Mr D. Y. Cameron, achieve I would first cite Mr D. Y. Cameron, perceived His "Temple of Venus, Rome," impressive with authority, is wrought to buildings whose beauty, mass of and grandeur, seen ruined state seems to add to grandeur, archeyond a succession of small Roman arches, is established with the surety of an archi-tect, their characterising depth of luminous shade—note the unifying central arch—the shadow in the noble and environment, are finely observed unobtrusively rich pic-rendered in terms of suggest with ment. One question only I would direct special attention to Mr regard to this modern masterwork, which I hope may soon be seen at the Glasgow In-stitute: Should not the sky be a thought warmer in tone? Having studied Cameron's "Temple of Venus," those who profess to themselves should on no account fail to technique Duncan's "Children of Lir." mark Mr John Duncan with which apart from the appropriateness with the pic-ture is noteworthy by reason of the success attained by the artist in The tempera precepts of Benvenuto Cellini, does not permit of experimental ...rthroughts. Note with what purity and ...rtitude Mr Duncan has used it to render, for instance, the delicately suffused flesh of the chief figure. On behalf ...nes of the ask him to accept sincere ...udents of art, I of lesser known contribu-...ngratulations. Of special attention to Mr ...rs. B. Souter's "Lot's Wife." The heavily ...ked figure in this brown-toned design as ...mplitude and expressive dignity, and ...e castellated hill beyond is attuned to the ...ominantly effective motive. Mr D. Forrester Wilson's ...ery effective "Field Life" has rightly a ...entre in the first room, where also are Mr ...hilip de Laszlo's elegant and accomplished ...uch or little does owe to Mr Sargent's not distinctive. "Mrs Blackie—how influence, one asks?—Professor Anning ...ell's delightfully pearly "Pont Valentre, ...aliors," which puzzled guessers at the ...ameless exhibition in London, and Mr A. Haswell Miller's forcible ...astle."

A LIGHTNING SURVEY

A visit to the Academy should not miss the section of portraits those who pay first visit to the Academy should not miss Mr Glyn Grant," Sir John Lavery's ...udovic," at a moment of rapt abandon as ...Pavlova," Mr Herbert Gunn's "Lieutenant-...dancer, Sir Harold Walker," no less sincere ...eneral, Sir John M. ...rman shrewdly expressive; Mr William ...itken's keen and earnest Rothenstein's ...ely, "Professor but in characterisation ...h facture, rough William Watt's exqui-...secure self-portrait, Mr Fildes's

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lent three-quarter length of a man in brown, Mr W. D. Hutchison's unforcedly childlike "Mary Heather," and Mr David Alison's "Dr Macgillivray," penetratively intent, in his LL.D. robes. Mr S. J. Peploe, who sends only a broadly lucid study of a woman's head, is at this moment more adequately represented in the West George Street gallery of Mr Alex. Reid, while by Mr F. C. B. Cadell there is nothing. Mr Robert Gibb is the sole exponent of historical motives. In his "Napoleon's Farewell"—the imprisoned hero is quitting the Bellerophon in a pinnace—the chief figure is of no mean stature. Mr Gerald Moira's "Cornish Floral Dance" has genuinely decorative elan. Landscapes, town subjects, etc., with or without figures, include Mr Sargent's scintillatingly vivid "Albanian Olive Gatherers," Mr Corsan Morton's emphatically handled "Durham Cathedral," Mr Whitelaw Hamilton's well-planned "Valley of the Lune" and "St Wilfred's Fair, Ripon," a fruitful departure for him, Mr David Gauld's "The Ferry," which scores here no less than it did in Glasgow last autumn; Mr R. Sivell's "Window in the Country"—surely it merited a place on the line; Mr Tom Hunt's spacious oblong showing two riders on (hired?) horses moving "Along the Shore"; a romantic Corsican theme by Mr James Paterson; and Sir David Murray's large "Sunbeams o'er Snowden," the work of a most practised painter who knows how to compass desired effects. Of numerous interiors I may name those of Mr Patrick Adam, which are well up to his accustomed level of proficiency; "The Red Bed," unmistakably by the idiosyncratic Mr James Pryde; and not least Mr W. Somerville Shanks's harmonious rendering of a room, into whose prevailing grey the red couch and chair are admirably introduced. The Guthrie prize of £50 for what is deemed to be the best work by a young Scots artist has this year been divided. Half goes to Mr Donald Moody for "An Autumn Day," the gay-robed figures in which point to the influence of Mr Henry Lintott; half to Mr G. W. Salvesen for his sculptured group, "The Dance," a back-to-back study of a man and a woman, both with arms outheld at shoulder level. The figure of the woman gives promise of a developing art. Than Professor Derwent Wood's "Abundance" the central position in the Sculpture Hall could hardly be more stylistically or welcomingly occupied. Here we find, too, Mr Alfred Gilbert's beautifully expressive "Charity," several pieces by Dr Macgillivray, among them a virile "Goat Kid" and the original model of his dignified Byron Statue in Aberdeen, and the head of a veritable duck of a child, "Little Betty," in which Mr Benno Schotz shows an instinctively pure response to innocent youth. The Architectural Room richly repays a visit, if only because of contributions from Sir Edwin Lutyens, Mr Harold Baker, and Sir J. J. Burnet, and the same holds good about the water-colour and black and white rooms, where are, for instance, Mr Edwin Alexander's irresistible "Bullfinch" on a sloe branch, a landscape as refreshingly patterned by Mr Ethelbert White, Mr M'Evoy's sketch of Venice, and a "slightness"—not quite of his capturing best, it must be said—by Mr Wilson Steer. Mr Muirhead Bone and his able follower, Mr Rushbury, send black and white drawings.

OF THE PAST

The largest picture on view—it must be some twelve feet high—is Burne-Jones's "Sposa di Libano," dated 1891, done apparently in water-colour on rectangular strips of paper. What a vast labour, how through-and-through earnest! Yet in facture how meticulously uninteresting. The first study for the Bride of Lebanon was embodied in one of a series of designs on the "Song of Solomon" prepared in 1876. Only the one picture was completed, and that not for fifteen years. We are sensible of the Botticellian tradition which was Burne-Jones's ideal to achieve, but this vast water-colour (?) showing the rather fibreless Bride of Lebanon walking by the side of a lily-bordered stream, with the personified South and North Winds in overwhelmingly tempestuous draperies beyond, was, despite the artist's fine intention, not carried to a vitally pictorial birth. Whistler's "Blossoms"—surrounded by an outer frame of very alien character — is as the dainty, distinctive shadow of an Exquisite's dream. William Stott of Oldham's "Alps by Night" has also a certain dream quality by reason of its intentional evanescence. Honour is rightly paid to two deceased members, and their work in turn honours the R.S.A. Mr W. Y. Macgregor's "Durham" of 1903, alike as to design and colour, is seen to signal advantage in Room V.—here it tells better than at Kelvingrove—and his "Crail Garden" of about 1882 is in its faithful-to-fact but unphotographic way a second achievement. Who could have more eloquently painted those red-tiled roofs and other parts of the never so veracious picture? Besides "Watching and Waiting," Mr Robert Alexander's interpretations of animal life include a small study for "The Happy Mother" of 1887, so exquisite in its tender, unsentimentalised understanding that, were it not punishable, I would fain snatch from the wall and purloin the little treasure.

ART AS THE RECONCILER

sub-consciousness issued the inspiration so in reverently faithful way to depict those pious Breton women, in black cloaks and white coifes, kneeling in prayer before a wayside shrine. Their natural attitudes, their gravely supplicating hands, the communion of devout purpose uniting them —everything, even to the wondering child, the beggar with the crutch, the finely realised market basket and country umbrella, utter a prayer potent with faith. At the unveiling of "The Glasgow Herald" War Memorial last evening, as Mr James Gourlay and the minister of Glasgow Cathedral spoke, I felt that in this "Pilgrimage" Legros had with profound sincerity enduringly pictorialised the burden of their solemn message.

the wall and purloin the little treasure.

ART AS THE RECONCILER

"Competent, even skilled, work abounds. Few, however, are the artists who have anything to say." It was after seeing thousands of pictures submitted by non-members for exhibition at Burlington House that within the last few days thus remarked to me an experienced Royal Academician, endowed with that rare quality we call vision. From art schools all over the country annually emerge hundreds of men and women who as students of "grammar" and "eloquence" have profited by their training, and thus are technically by no means ill-equipped. The further—even more important—requisite for an artist cannot be imparted. If the reaction to the theme rendered be hackneyed, a merely mob-reaction, so to say, technical facility is in the long run of little avail. In that case the painter or sculptor is as a man provided with an ample vocabulary, a store of well-turned phrases, who has no vitally perceived tidings to communicate. A great work of art is, surely, the revelation, albeit partial only it may be, of a great spirit; something "felt in the blood and felt along the heart" which quickens response, perhaps from hitherto latent faculties in the beholder. Lacking a measure of power to discern the vitalising breath that links external and internal, lacking the urge to shape a recognisable symbol of that visioned unity in picture, sculpture, or other medium, creative art is non-existent. Though frequently adequate expression is frustrated; it is emancipating inward vision, not carefully trained capacity to use a common language, which counts as of paramount value. Never should that fundamental truth be overlooked. Turning to the R.S.A. catalogue of 50 years ago, one finds on the title-page a correlative idea from the interpretative writings of Coleridge:—"Art, used collectively for painting, sculpture, architecture, and music, is the mediatress between and the reconciler of nature and man." Those words image the abiding importance of the arts to the world of to-day and of the uncountable to-morrows hidden in the womb of time. As a nineteenth century exemplar at the R.S.A. of art endowed with that spirit of reconciliation I name Alphonse Legros's "Pilgrimage." Painted in 1871, it hangs facing Burne-Jones's vast "Sposa di Libano" in the large room. From the deeps of Legros's