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TATE GALLERY LOAN.

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS AT HARROGATE.

The Tate Gallery or the National Gallery of British Art, to give that institution its proper title, has lent a collection of pictures to the Harrogate Corporation. These paintings have now been placed on exhibition, as many in the art gallery as that room will comfortably hold, and the remainder in the library reading-room below, and on the staircase.

Whether the Harrogate Corporation had the opportunity of a free or even a restricted choice from the treasures of the Tate Gallery, or whether the selection was made principally by the lenders the writer is unaware, but in any case there is room for speculation as to why these particular pictures were sent.

It might, of course, be possible to justify the choice. It might—rightly or wrongly—be contended that Harrogate has never shown any enlightened interest in the higher forms of art, and that to put before the unsophisticated townsfolk paintings by the leaders of the modern movement would not lead to the conversion of the Philistines, but would merely confirm them in their philistinism. Far better, it might be argued, to show the people of Harrogate the intellectually undisturbing products of the Victorian anecdote and of recent paintings in the same tradition. After all, although one may not learn a great deal about art from Landseer, Faed, E. M. Ward, or William Mulready, one may derive a good deal of innocent pleasure, and glean a little knowledge about the costume and manners of other days and other countries, and, of course, of pictures of this sort the Tate Gallery has enough and to spare—thanks to the Tate Gift, the Vernon collection, and the persistently ill-judged beneficence of the trustees of the Charity Fund, whereas of good examples of the work of contemporary painters who matter it has far too few, despite the progress which has been made in recent years.

Whether the considerations suggested above were actually those which determined the character of the exhibition at Harrogate, and if so, whether the implied estimation of the taste of Harrogate is correct, are questions which are left open.

Of course the exhibition is not entirely barren of works of aesthetic interest. There is, for instance, "The Tenth Plague of Egypt," by Turner. It is one of the more sombre of his great landscapes, but it has a monumental dignity which is lacking in some of his more famous works at Millbank and Trafalgar Square in which form has been sacrificed in a riot of splendid colour.

There is also an admirable little landscape from the Vernon collection, by Patrick Nasmyth, in which the influence of Hobbema is plainly evident.

Linnell's well-known "Noonday Rest," E. W. Cooke's "Boats in a Calm," David Robert's "Interior of Bruges Cathedral," and portraits by John Jackson and Sir Martin Shee are not without some little merit. For the rest, the older pictures of Harrogate are a melancholy reminder of the appalling ignorance of those who built up the national art collection in the past, and of the burden they have permanently inflicted on us.

Some of the pictures by contemporary painters are a little better. "Lady Wautage," by Mr. P. A. de Laszlo, is a characteristic example of fashionable portraiture by an artist of considerable technical ability, and there is a landscape with cattle, by Mr. Arnesby Brown and an "Interior of the Beverley Arms Kitchen," by Mr. Frederick Elwell, which are, interesting in their own way, good art.

It is rather curious that the exhibition should contain, in addition to the Tate pictures already spoken of, two paintings, one by Mr. William Nicholson and the other by Mr. J. B. Manson, who is the deputy-director of the Tate Gallery. These two pictures look strangely out of place in such company, and neither of these artists is in the vein of the modern movement, but is what "The Burlington Magazine" would call an "intermediate." The painting by Mr. Nicholson, is entitled "Cinerarias." It is evidently a recent work, and it indicates a remarkable modification of the artist's early and best-known style. Undoubtedly Mr. Nicholson has permitted himself to be influenced by the moderns, though not entirely for his good. Perhaps he is still in the process of assimilating new ideas. That rate it is a proof of his open-mindedness and flexibility.

Mr. Manson's contribution, "Sparkling Sea, Cornwall," is an interesting essay in a technique derived ultimately from the French divisionists.

It is a great pity that these two are the only serious paintings by present-day artists in the collection.

Since the last exhibition the gallery has been renovated, and the upper part of the wall hung with a grey fabric which forms a non-obtrusive background