

Now it is a wholesome characteristic of modern English, as against modern continental, picture galleries, that in the former an honest study of Nature, amid all the changes of wind and weather, is everywhere displayed. The Academy exhibition at Burlington House in 1881 is no exception. Of landscape and sea studies of every kind, stern and soft, there is enough and to spare. To spare, because mere prettiness, and scenery which suggests idleness, are somewhat over numerous. Of course, if Royal Academicians—whether members, associates, or mere tolerated exhibitors—deem these to be main attractions to visitors and purchasers, they have as good a right to find ample space for them as they have to paint them. But the agriculturist, out for the day, and reverently anxious to see what Art has to say to him, is apt to pass the superfluity over with a "Pish," because the land and calling, "Where it is always Afternoon," are most certainly not his. Never, since the first husbandman turned the first clod by aid of animal power, and made preparation in summer for the winter which he knew had to follow, was the husbandman's position more full of anxiety than it is now. Nor has the husbandman's mind ever been more keenly sensitive to aid or insult from its professed teachers. Now the Royal Academy is nothing unless it be a teacher; and the art of 1881, to the husbandman at all events, is an insult rather than an aid. No doubt there are pictures this season able to charm everyone, as critique after critique in the daily papers has already abundantly announced; and the farmer, like his town-bred cousins, examines these with grateful interest, and finds advantage in all that is in itself true and good work. But why should pictures of real husbandry be so conspicuously absent? There is hardly a real farm picture in all the rooms.

Mr. Peter Graham's magnificent landscapes—as No. 55—show Highland cattle, but these seem as if they were there by accident, and to be rapidly on the move out of the scene. Mr. H. W. B. Davis, a painter whose defection from English farm life is a wrong to every English farmer, paints glorious pictures; but his cattle (as No. 263, which really speak and suggest) are of no breed known to the shires, nor such as touch any English grazier's heart. Such pictures as "Milk for the Calves" (No 20) are what the painter of No. 6 calls his picture—"Impotent Cack,le"—for man, as well as geese, can stretch out neck and quill to touch at subjects which they see, and for which they challenge attention, although they cannot understand.

Why cannot some painter see among his countrymen, engaged winter and

summer in facing the elements on land, something of what Mr. John Collier saw and painted in No. 269. This is a picture of some noble weather-beaten seamen turned adrift to face death upon a barren sea and in an empty boat. If "George Elliot" could find, in Loamshire, peasants tragely and comely enough to set half the readers of English-written books crying or laughing, why cannot some one professed artist put before the eye the grander or even the more mirth-provoking side of tillage in English country life? The most distinct attempt to realise peasants in action is No. 420, "The Copse on Furze-field Brow;" yet this is "all wrong." The children bringing daddy his breakfast may be right enough, but no farmer can tell what those horses have been doing since daybreak, nor what they and the driver have done to earn a meal. To say, as some do, "peasant life in England is colourless and void of interest" is simply to contradict all the writers from Shakespeare to the noble intellect newly incapacitated for fresh effort. These have found plenty to interest them. Charles Kingsley once, writing of his Devonshire rustics, said, "And what fine gentlemen some of the old fellows are! how simple and grand their ways! Can no one else, brush in hand, see this, or show us some of the men, or else some veteran dairy-woman, with snow-white linen, looking on upon the day's work done, and saying, as she looks on the result of the churning—as the writer once heard one say at eighty years of age, whose quiet self-respecting and respectful manner would have equalled that of any of the visitors to the Academy—"Ah, next to seeing the sun rise, there is nothing I like to see so much as that!" How many town lives of four-score leave at the end the mind thus fresh and wholesome?—fresh enough to quicken with new energy to meet cheerfully another day, although that is certain to be one of toil, and wholesome enough to feel its pulses glow with satisfaction at the completion of a laborious task, the success of which entirely depends upon constant observance of cleanliness and regularity in applying skilful labour?

It is somewhat humiliating to English farmers to see how many pictures there are of daintily-attired ladies, accompanied by dogs whose silken coats tell of paid attendants, whilst there is not even one of such a companion as Burns' "Honest Luath," nor of women painted in the decent costume which lends itself to a life of labour. Can the artist of the day see nothing in England worth painting, except the milliner and the kennelman have first taxed their knowledge to get up sitters? Of foxhounds and Roman amphitheatres there are theatrical

representations enough. And, in "Sleeping Dogs Lie," No. 402, Mr. B. Riviere gives a powerful representation of a navy in drunken slumber, with white bulldog (torn in many a fray) d on the lap of the prostrate figure. T is a bitter bad truth here to the ill some men and some dogs; but whe English peasant life could not have plied as effective a picture which sh also be more wholesome may be q tioned. One is disposed not merel "let sleeping dogs lie," as one sees picture, but also to keep the wind- of the unsavory group.

Possibly those who love country and have sympathies and knowle rather wilder than these islands alone furnish, will find more pleasure in Italian pictures than in any Engl Scotch, or Irish representation of peas and their pursuits. In No. 95 Mr Beavis gives, with great spirit, a pic of "Herdsman of the Campagna col ing Young Horses." It is not a g picture, nor is the occupation ful honest suggestion, but it has life truthfulness. But No. 71, Gael Chierici, has these and a good deal u besides. This same painter had last a felicitous representation of a b Italian making its first desperate ven to cross the hut upon its own feet. 7 year he, as it seems to us, has the bes all the pictures of the season in its fi ity to the facts of hard-working existe Only an artist of genuine fire could h got so good a picture out of such e commonplace material. Is not that geni To take what everybody has and can and to make it tell quite a new st Colour, handling and moral, seem alike sound in No. 71. Some owne a mere country hut ("a lodge in a gar of cucumbers") has left it with the open, whilst a 2-year old boy gets meal out of a coarse earthen bowl. waddle the geese, ducks, hens, chick cat, &c. The hens fly upon the fa chairs and dresser, and help themse to the homely food. This is terrifi enough to the youngster; but the du are gabbling and the geese come v outstretched necks and hissing serj heads, into terrible proximity. D slips the bowl; up goes the hand w grasped the spoon; and the poor l yells "murder!" The picture is ent "A Frightful State of Things," as ind it is. But the accuracy of every deta the main cause of the delight it certai inspires. These are the real poultry the Mediterranean coast. Not se varieties grouped in order to pander fashionable fancies; but the yell legged, big-combed, precocious b which, in Italy, are in every cabin an everybody's way, except where the l is to be eaten or sold. There is nei