

CRITICAL REVIEW

... DEVOTED TO ...

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FINE-ARTS

Art in the Midlands. — David Cox

BY

M. E. POUNTNEY

The Midland counties of England have produced, and still are producing great men; but it is noticeable that few noted painters have come out of them. It is not unfair to say, I think, that Midland people, as a rule, are not artistic, or even great art lovers, yet they have produced a David Cox; and a collection of his works in the Birmingham Art Gallery is one of the city's proudest possessions.

This collection shows David Cox at his best, and with all his limitations. He probably loved the sky as deeply as did Turner, and studied it with equal earnestness, but his imagination never fired his brain as he tried to paint its ever-changing beauties, his eyes never saw the flaming fires, or purple depths that Turner's did; and his kindly, more conventional nature brought all his work down to a lower level than the one on which Turner stands.

He shows excellence, but not genius; technical skill, but limited knowledge; and feeling, with but little imagination. His composition is careful and pleasing, his colouring deep and restrained.

Nothing of his is poor or thin, and there is an effect of movement in his pictures which makes them pleasant companions. There is wind in his trees, his storm clouds rush across the sky, birds actually fly, and silly sheeps tumble over one another in their haste to get through a gateway. "On the Sands" is to my mind, one of his most perfect compositions, full of true poetic feeling, entirely dependent on sea and sky for its interest.