

*A contribution
to the study of
Dutch painting.* The "Portfolio" monographs, one of the most valuable series on artistic subjects in English, has recently, after several years' interregnum, given us matter for congratulation in the publication of Sir Walter Armstrong's volume on "The Peel Collection and the Dutch School of Painting" (Dutton). The purpose of the author, one of the most discriminating of art critics, is to refute that premature judgment of Ruskin which is quoted from the opening pages of his "Modern Painters" to the effect that "most pictures of the Dutch School, except always those of Rubens, Van Dyke, and Rembrandt, are ostentatious exhibitions of the artist's power of speech, the clear and vigorous elocution of useless and senseless words." Sir Walter doubts if this be true, and shows convincingly that the great Dutch painters speak "the same language as the great Italians of the sixteenth century or the great Athenians of

twenty centuries before." Although the book nominally deals only with the pictures in the Peel Collection, it is really a monograph on the whole Dutch School. In his treatment of the painters of still life, of landscape, and of portraits, the author makes clear who are the greatest masters in each group and gives his reasons for their rank. Among artists of the present day our critic will find ready sympathy for all that he says in regard to the slight importance of subject as compared with the supreme importance of style, of artistic worth. The chief difference between the Dutch and Italian artists, so Sir Walter argues, lies in their choice of subject. The landscapes and the models which these painters of the North portray are inferior in beauty to those which naturally served as material for the artists of the South. Yet no art has ever been condemned for the humbleness of its subject-matter. Among the many interesting points in this book are the author's illustrations of the familiar idea that a work of art is the interpretation of nature through the temperament of the artist. He makes another good point in what he says about the focus of a painting, — the size and character of the brush-strokes in relation to the size of the painting and to the distance proper to a correct view. Since this is not a history of painting, but a critical monograph, the author is perfectly justified in omitting discussion of certain important painters, as Hals and Rembrandt, who are not represented in the Peel Collection. The volume is perhaps the best contribution to the critical study of Dutch painting since the publication of "*Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*" (1875). It will enhance the appreciation of these great painters. It is something new in the literature of art. Its criticism is fresh and stimulating. It is a book which every lover of the Dutch School should possess, in order to read and re-read.