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The Art Of J. S. Sargent, R. A. Part I. By A. L. Baldry.

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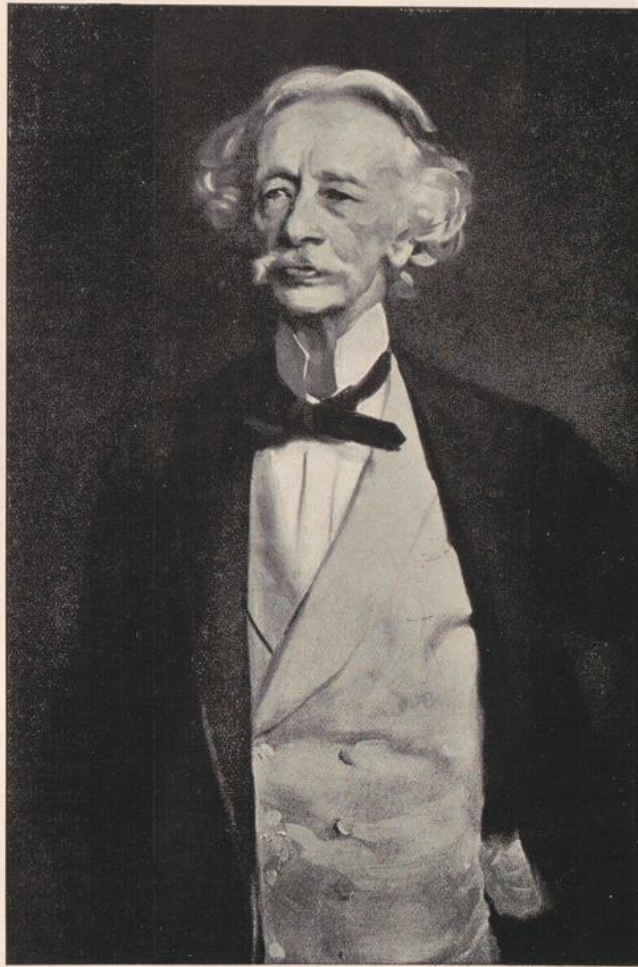
THE STUDIO

THE ART OF J. S. SARGENT, R.A.
PART I. BY A. L. BALDRY.

THERE has been long in existence a tradition that it is only from nations of respectable antiquity that the manifestation of anything like a definite inclination towards æstheticism is to be expected. The slow maturing of centuries is supposed to be necessary to call into existence the particular condition of thought that encourages artistic effort and makes possible the appearance of the artist among the other busy workers who are labouring to advance the national interests. Indeed, some theorists do not hesitate to say that the people whose art taste is highly developed, and the country which produces artists of notable capacity, must be regarded as having reached the furthest limit of progress. Æstheticism, according to this argument, is a signal of coming decadence, and the more obvious its effects, and the more perfect its manifestation, the nearer at hand the national degeneration may be assumed to be.

Yet against such theories it is possible to quote the example of America. To say that the newest nation in the world is already in sight of its decadence would be a little too sweeping an assertion to be quite credible, one that it would

be difficult to induce many people to accept. But it is undeniable that in the United States there is growing up rapidly an art movement of a very vigorous kind, and that not only intelligent collectors of art examples, but also artists of quite exceptional power are being produced



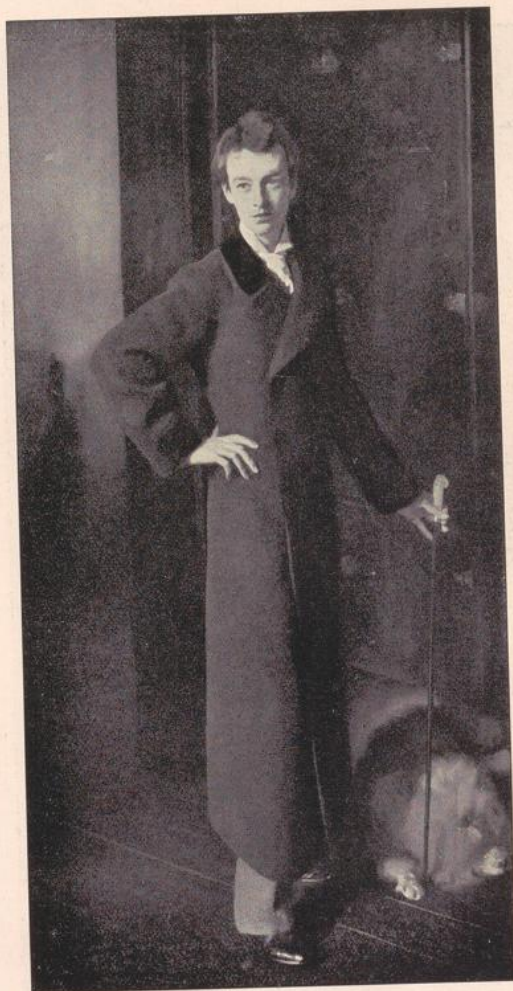
PORTRAIT OF COVENTRY PATMORE, ESQUIRE

BY J. S. SARGENT, R.A.

John S. Sargent, R.A.

by that country in ever increasing numbers. As yet, perhaps, America cannot be said to have a national school or to have so formulated its artistic beliefs that the character of its art, as a whole, has become completely and unquestionably individual, but the men who have come from there have distinguished themselves by their remarkable readiness to profit by the traditions of European æstheticism, and by the originality with which they have applied the teaching that they have obtained in the Old World.

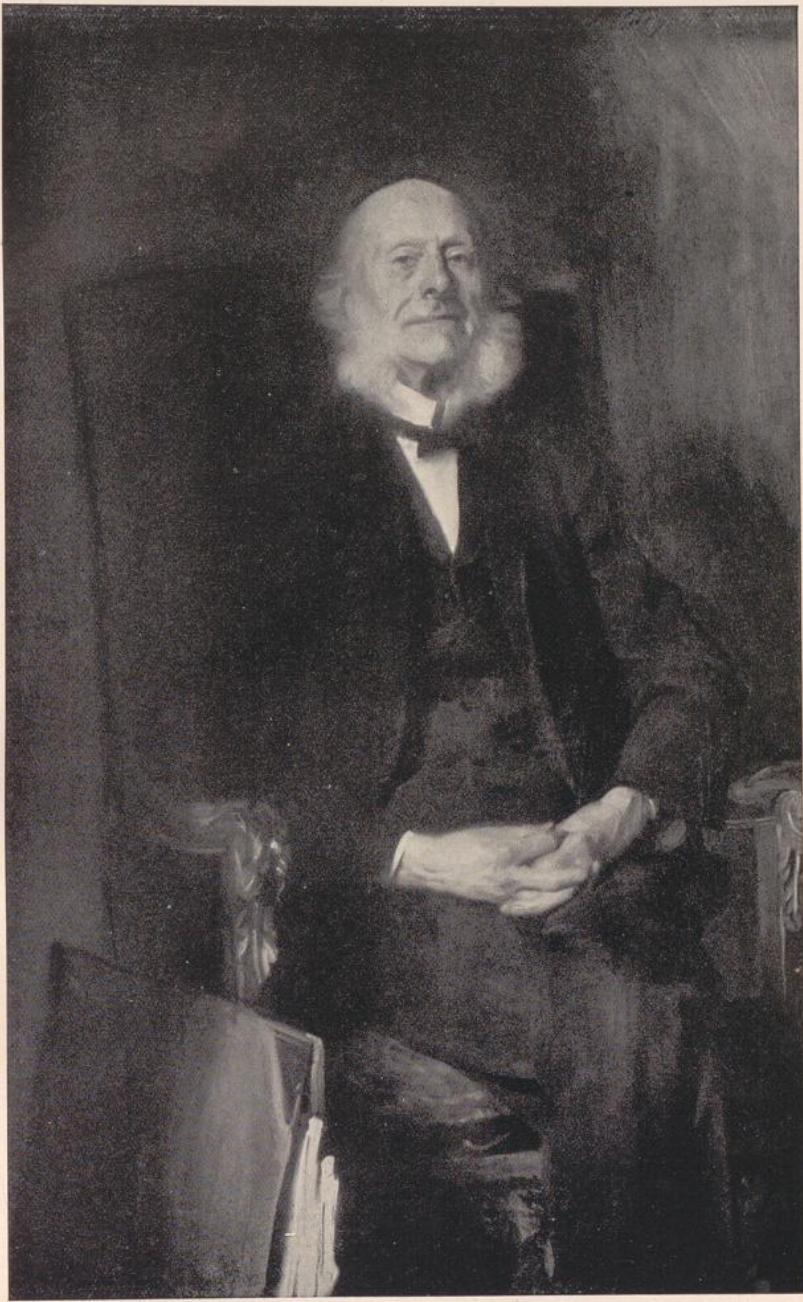
There are in England many conspicuous instances of the results that may be gained by



PORTRAIT OF W. GRAHAM ROBERTSON, ESQ.
BY J. S. SARGENT, R.A.

bringing the American mind under the influence of the art creed that in one or other of its various forms is generally accepted in Europe. There is Mr. Whistler, with his superlative craftsmanship, and his exquisitely sensitive appreciation of refinements of colour and tone, an observant genius, who has always known exactly how to use the example of the great masters of the past to help the development of his own originality. There is Mr. Boughton, whose artistic method was born in America, trained in France, and, matured in England, and retains to-day something that is reminiscent of each of the countries that has contributed to his equipment. We have also Mr. Abbey, who may, without exaggeration, be said to be the greatest black and white draughtsman among modern men, as well as a decorative colourist of sincere and sturdy inventiveness; and we are closely in touch with that large group of American artists who have settled in Paris, and from there send constantly to our chief exhibitions examples of pictorial production that are invariably conspicuous for manly directness, and for a characteristically ingenious adaptation of the principles that with little modification have governed for centuries the practice of European schools.

In some respects, however, the most typical illustration of the alliance between the keen intuition and quick receptivity of the New World and the carefully considered and long established beliefs of the Old is provided by the pictures of Mr. J. S. Sargent. He has the brilliancy and happy audacity of the pioneer, the readiness to face difficulties and to attack complicated problems that is characteristic of a race full of youthful energy, but he has acquired also the sense of style and the respect for established authorities that come from close and careful observation of what has been done by the nations among which artistic creeds have been elaborately built up by a slow process of gradual construction. His instincts are essentially American, but his methods declare emphatically the part that Europe has played in his training. Among all his compatriots he stands out as at once the most original and the most efficiently equipped in a company that numbers many men of real distinction; and he holds his place, not by some vagary of passing fashion, but honestly and securely by right of conquest.



PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS
CRANMER PENROSE, ESQ.
BY J. S. SARGENT, R.A.



PORTRAIT OF M. LÉON DELAFOSSE
BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.



Chas. L. ...
25 April 1896
London ...



...and the artist who has ideas that rise a little above the ordinary dead level, and to the dilettos who wish to progress beyond the narrower lines that satisfy the small mind, he is a good deal more than a reckless opponent of established institutions. That he sets himself apart from the bulk of his contemporaries, and that he prefers to aim at results unlike those that satisfy nearly all the men who follow his branch of the profession, is an obvious fact; but it is equally obvious that he has taken his independent course out of no wilful disregard of the best authorities, but rather because he has formed, by the closest possible study of those very authorities, a perfectly sincere conviction about the path in art which it is his bounden duty to follow. He is not drifting about in a vague pursuit of eccentricity, he is not cynically setting himself against the rest of the world so that he may gain advertisement by the strange peculiarity of his manner; he is giving himself up, heart and soul, to the avowal of his love for the art of the past as he understands it, and is content, whether it secures acceptance or not, to profess his own

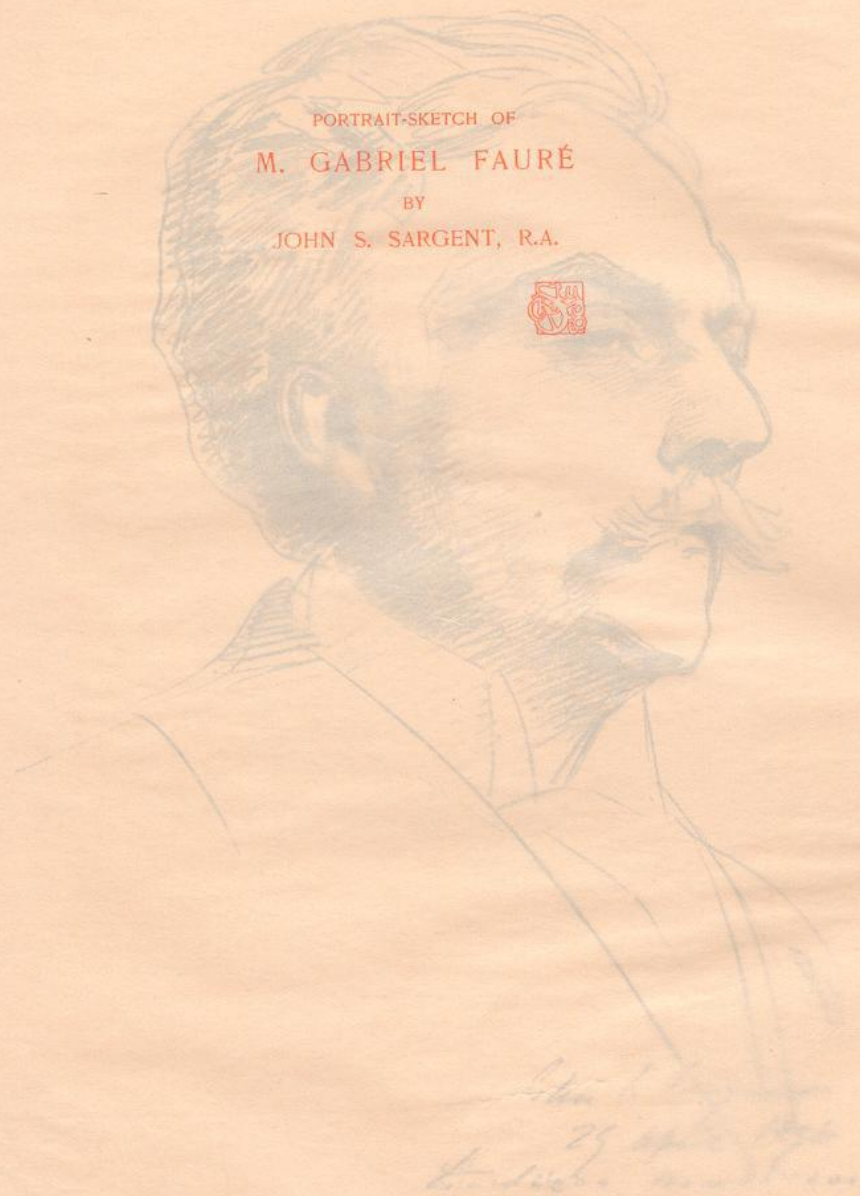
...and earnestly. If he had been ready to wear certain articles of this creed because they were opposed to the tenets of some of his critics, or if he had changed his faith so as to conform to the views of the good people who prefer to be deceived and deceived, he might perhaps have gained light of some kind, but he would have been a false and unworthy leader.

BY
JAMES S. SARGENT, R.A.

...as an artist for artists. He has taken to these occupations, the place that Mr. Whistler held during the period of his latest years in art politics, and has become the most argued about of contemporary painters. Professional opinion divides itself into two camps over his work, and wages a war of words for and against his achievements. To those who have fallen under the spell of his unique personality, he is the one commanding figure of our times, the chief exponent of the great technical truths that have been handed down to us from the mightiest of the old masters. On him has descended the mantle of Velasquez, and a double portion of his spirit; and that he has passed himself fully worthy to receive such an endowment is earnestly contended by a whole host of admirers. But that he jars on the nerves of other men who are not in tune with him is quite undeniable. They accuse him of breadth; they say that he is wanting in a sense of beauty, that he exaggerates the characteristics of his subjects and over-accentuates personal peculiarities. He is a clever man—no one ever attempts to deny that—a great one perhaps; but he has no sweetness, no suavity of manner, and seeks to emphasize the defects of a peculiar type that to seek out those latent possibilities of idealism which it is the duty of every self-respecting painter to discover at all costs, or even to invent if they do not exist. He is horribly literal, appallingly uncomplimentary, no respecter of persons, and terribly unresponsive—worst heresy of all—to the charms of a pretty girl.

However, there is one point on which both sides of the argument agree, that he is an artist who has to be reckoned with, and that he stands—for good or ill—practically alone among the art-workers who at this century-end are important enough to quarrel over. Whether he is popular in the ordinary sense is certainly open to discussion, for he has never laid himself out to acquire that capacity for appealing to the fancies of the public, which is a necessary part of the stock-in-trade of the picture painter who likes to hear himself well

PORTRAIT-SKETCH OF
M. GABRIEL FAURÉ
BY
JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.



John S. Sargent, R.A.

It is easy to understand the interest that his work has excited, from the first moment that he claimed the attention of art lovers by the marked and definite individuality of his practice. There is no possibility of ignoring him, or of passing him over as a negligible quantity. His qualities are far too brilliant, and far too assertive, to escape notice; and whether the onlooker likes or dislikes his art, the fascination of it is irresistible. Its cleverness of expression, its amazing vividness of insight into character, and its superb control over those points of craftsmanship which are always recognised as providing the surest tests of professional knowledge, cannot be disregarded by anyone who sincerely thinks out æsthetic questions. Nothing that he has ever done has been of a nature to leave no impression on the observer; and perhaps the highest compliment paid to his work has been the frenzied irritation expressed about it by those worthy and honestly self-convinced people who argue in favour of art that is tame and innocuous, and prefer pictorial efforts that lisp prettily harmless little commonplaces, rather than those which have something definite to say, without very much respect for the tender feelings of the weaker brethren. To the drawing class in a girls' school he would be, as can be well imagined, quite a terrifying example—a bold, bad innovator, with all kinds of wicked designs against the purity of many cherished ideals.

But to the artist who has ideas that rise a little above the ordinary dead level, and to the thinker who wishes to progress beyond the narrower limits that satisfy the small mind, he is a good deal more than a reckless opponent of established institutions. That he sets himself apart from the bulk of his contemporaries, and that he prefers to aim at results unlike those that satisfy nearly all the men who follow his branch of the profession, is an obvious fact; but it is equally obvious that he has taken his independent course out of no wilful disregard of the best authorities, but rather because he has formed, by the closest possible study of those very authorities, a perfectly sincere conviction about the path in art which it is his bounden duty to follow. He is not drifting about in a vague pursuit of eccentricity, he is not cynically setting himself against the rest of the world so that he may gain advertisement by the strange peculiarity of his manner; he is giving himself up, heart and soul, to the avowal of his love for the art of the past as he understands it, and is content, whether it secures acceptance or not, to profess his own

creed frankly and earnestly. If he had been ready to waive certain articles of this creed because they seemed opposed to the tenets of some of his critics, or if he had diluted his faith so as to make his peace with the good people who prefer to take their beliefs in small doses, and disguised under a coating of sugar, he might perhaps have been more popular, but he would have been a drawing-room favourite, and not a militant leader of the modern art world.

As things are, he is eminently an artist for artists. He has taken, in studio conversation, the place that Mr. Whistler held during the period of his busiest activity in art politics, and has become the most argued about of contemporary painters. Professional opinion divides itself into two camps over his work, and wages a war of words for and against his achievements. To those who have fallen under the spell of his artistic personality, he is the one commanding figure of our times, the chief exponent of the great technical truths that have been handed down to us from the mightiest of the old masters. On him has descended the mantle of Velasquez, and a double portion of his spirit; and that he has proved himself fully worthy to receive such an endowment is earnestly contended by a whole host of admirers. But that he jars on the nerves of other men who are not in tune with him is quite undeniable. They accuse him of brutality; they say that he is wanting in a sense of beauty, that he exaggerates the characteristics of his subjects and over-accentuates personal peculiarities. He is a clever man—no one ever attempts to deny that—a great one perhaps; but he has no sweetness, no suavity of manner, and prefers to caricature the defects of a peculiar type than to seek out those latent possibilities of idealisation which it is the duty of every self-respecting painter to discover at all costs, or even to invent if they do not exist. He is horribly literal, appallingly uncomplimentary, no respecter of persons, and terribly unresponsive—worst heresy of all—to the charms of a pretty girl.

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PORTRAIT OF THE HON. LAURA
LISTER. BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.



PORTRAIT OF MRS. CARL MEYER
BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.

John S. Sargent, R.A.

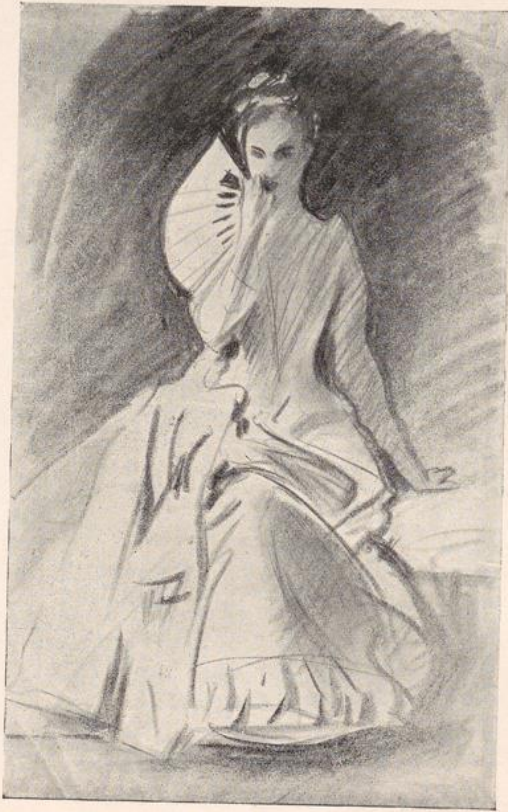
spoken of by the indiscriminating masses. Just as his fellows in the profession are divided in opinion about him, so the generality of art lovers cannot meet on a common ground in any estimate of his ability. The more intelligent people, who look below the superficialities of art and consider its aims seriously, certainly respond to his influence and give him full credit for the amazing grasp of his craft that distinguishes every canvas that comes from his easel. They feel his competence, his sureness, and his undeviating regard for the principles to which he has subscribed; and even if they do not understand his aims, or appreciate the profoundness of his observation, they acknowledge his right to be ranked among the best of the modern masters who are keeping art alive. It scarcely matters that the less enlightened section of the public should miss the point of his work. With them he has nothing to do, and it is to be accounted to him for righteousness that he has

never tried to convert them. That he should have succeeded in pleasing the thinkers, or even that he should have gained over to his side the best men in his own profession, would probably be the most he ever expected; for the rest, whether he is respected by them or feared, whether they speak well of him or ill, must always remain a matter of complete indifference.

The whole history of his career has been marked by a steady intention to form his own opinion, and to follow it out with all possible thoroughness and consistency. His American ingenuity and inventiveness were used to analyse and investigate the facts that were presented to him by his teachers and to help him in the formation of an independent method that would guide him later on when, no longer in leading-strings, he had to make a place for himself among the men who were fighting the battle of art. He worked then, as he has since, with a firm belief in the necessity for understand-

ing what he had to do. His study was by no means of a perfunctory nature, but was governed by a full recognition of the need of keeping mere executive dexterity under the control of his observation and intelligence, by the knowledge that the most learned and skilful handiwork would be unmeaning unless the ideas it had to express were the outcome of close attention to the principles by which all that is best in art is infallibly directed. His was not the nature to be satisfied with a liberal equipment of tricks and devices by the use of which he could pose as a master full of resource though he had nothing to say; and certainly it was foreign to his instincts to believe that superficial accomplishment, no matter how elegant and attractive, would make up for the absence of the deeper qualities of insight and analysis that he could perceive in the productions of the masters who appealed to him as most deserving of regard. To base himself upon them, and to carry out the suggestions which he gathered from their works, were the chief intentions of his student days, and they have remained ever since the ideas with which he is engrossed.

It was at Florence, in 1856, that Mr. Sargent was born, and in that city his boyhood was passed. The surroundings in which he found himself there can hardly have failed to influence such a temperament as his, and it is more than probable that his



SKETCH FOR A PORTRAIT

BY J. S. SARGENT, R.A.

"MRS. IAN HAMILTON"

FROM THE PAINTING BY
JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.



John S. Sargent, R.A.

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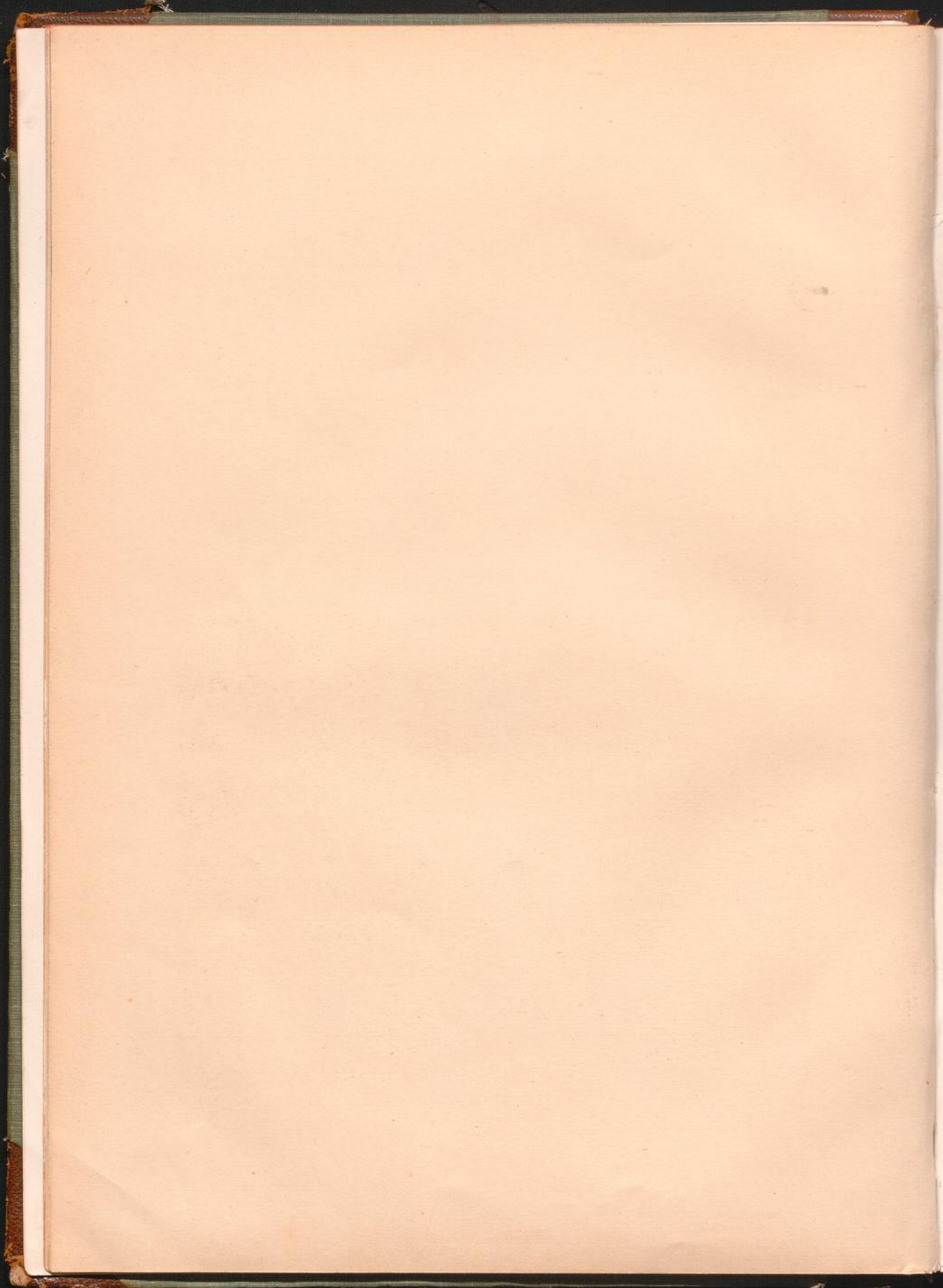
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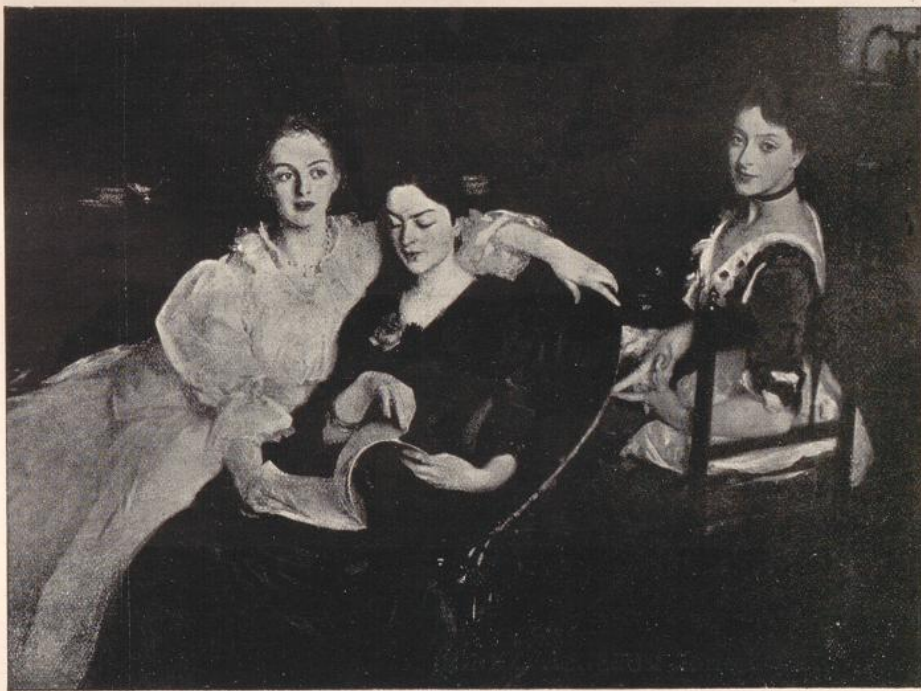
John S. Sargent, R.A.

artistic character was very perceptibly shaped by the atmosphere of one of the greatest storehouses of art treasures that exists in the world. The exquisite charm of Botticelli, the splendour of Tintoretto, the imagination and accomplished craft of Titian, and the noble achievements of many other masters, were all to be studied there under advantageous conditions; and that he had profited by his experiences became evident enough when, at the age of nineteen, he came to Paris to begin the systematic training that was to fit him for the profession he had decided to follow. He was already, even at the moment of entering the studio of M. Carolus-Duran, an artist of brilliant promise, and quite in keeping with this promise was the nature of the progress that he made under the direction of the great French painter. His work was emphatically that of a man who knew his own mind and had decided what course was best to follow in building up an artistic method that would serve him well later on.

Nothing showed his shrewdness and balance of judgment better than the steadiness with which he applied himself to learning all that his master had to teach him. He wasted no time in those futile

experiments with which students are apt to express their impatience of restrictions and their ambition to run before they have discovered how to walk without stumbling. He did not even try to be original or to assert his own individuality in a premature effort after independence. On the contrary, his reputation at the time was that of a careful and industrious worker, obedient to the precepts of the professor, and exact in his respect for the system that was followed in the studio. Out of this obedience came the certainty and command of device that he wanted. He acquired thoroughly the science of brushwork from a man who had the whole thing at his fingers' ends, and he secured just that intimacy with the mechanical side of painting without which he would have been hampered ever after in his struggle with those intricacies of execution that lie in wait to ensnare the student who has not mastered his lesson.

Yet his submission to authority had by no means the effect of making him simply an imitator and follower of M. Carolus-Duran, and certainly it did not perceptibly delay the growth of that personal quality which has now become so evident in his



THE MISSES VICKERS

BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.



PORTRAIT OF MRS. RUSSELL COOKE.
BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.

John S. Sargent, R.A.

art. Towards the close of his period of training in the studio of the Boulevard de Mont Parnasse he painted a portrait of his master that was not only a masterly summary of all the knowledge that he had acquired during the preceding years, but was, as well, a forecast of the work that he has done since. It had the French spirit that was to be expected from a student in such a studio and under such a master, but it had also a good deal of the Sargent who is to-day not a pupil in Paris but a leader of the English school. The attention it excited was considerable, for in it experts perceived the arrival of an artist who was to go far and to take his place indisputably among the elect.

From Paris the young artist's next move was to Madrid, where he was attracted by the glamour of the canvases by Velasquez in the galleries of the Prado. This journey was almost in the nature of a pilgrimage, the visit of a devotee to a shrine that contained the most precious relics that he could choose for worship. Wisely he had waited till his æsthetic intelligence had so matured that he could grasp the perfection of the greatest painter that perhaps the world has ever known. He went not as a sightseer to wonder at things he could not grasp, and to sigh over a secret that would remain sealed to him because his inexperience would not permit him to find the key to the puzzle, but rather



PORTRAIT SKETCH

BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.

John S. Sargent, R.A.

as one who would receive a revelation for which he had prepared himself by a long course of illuminating exercises. He chose the moment well, while the discipline of the studio was still a directing memory, and yet while he was enjoying the first flush of a freedom in which the fascinations of the future were opening up before him. Thoughtful observation, minute and exact analysis, had been impressed upon him day by day, and year by year, as he painted in Paris with his master at his elbow, and now it was for him to apply these habits of mind to the dissection of an art greater by far than

that of even such a consummate craftsman as M. Carolus-Duran himself.

That Mr. Sargent should have come back from Spain different in many respects from what he was before, was, under such circumstances, almost inevitable. Yet he became, even then, no more a mere copyist of Velasquez than he had been an imitator of the French master. Something of the grace, something of the refinement, of the divinity of the Prado was added to his own artistic achievement, but not to such an extent as to swamp and obscure his proper personality. He bartered away some of the Gallic vivacity he had acquired for a share of the splendid dignity of the Spanish Don, but he kept as the chief part in the alloy the Anglo-Saxon directness and independence that came to him with his American blood. He chose wisely just what he considered necessary to fill up and round off any deficiencies in his point of view without allowing anything to grow beyond its proper proportions, or to upset the just balance of conviction that seemed to him to be the one object at which he ought to aim. In this, as in other things, he showed that excellent discretion which has contributed so much to the success which has attended all the stages of his career.

Early in the eighties, when the Spanish visit had come to an end, he established himself in a studio on the Boulevard Berthier in Paris, and set assiduously to work to prove that the promise of his earlier years was going to be amply fulfilled. Already he was recognised as a man of note among the artists living in the French capital. His portrait of M. Carolus-Duran had been followed by some other paintings of the same type, among which the *Portrait of a Young Lady*, exhibited in 1881, was most conspicuous, and by two or three pictures, such as *En route pour la Pêche*, and *Smoke of Ambergris*; and in 1882 appeared the amazing technical triumph *El Jaleo*, that was the sensation of the season in which it was exhibited. Immediately afterwards he painted the *Portraits of Children*—four young children grouped in a large dimly-lighted hall—which is



PORTRAIT SKETCH

BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.

PORTRAIT-SKETCH OF
MISS PAGET ("VERNON LEE")
BY
JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A.



*Portrait of Miss Vernon Lee
John S. Sargent*



John S. Sargent, R.A.

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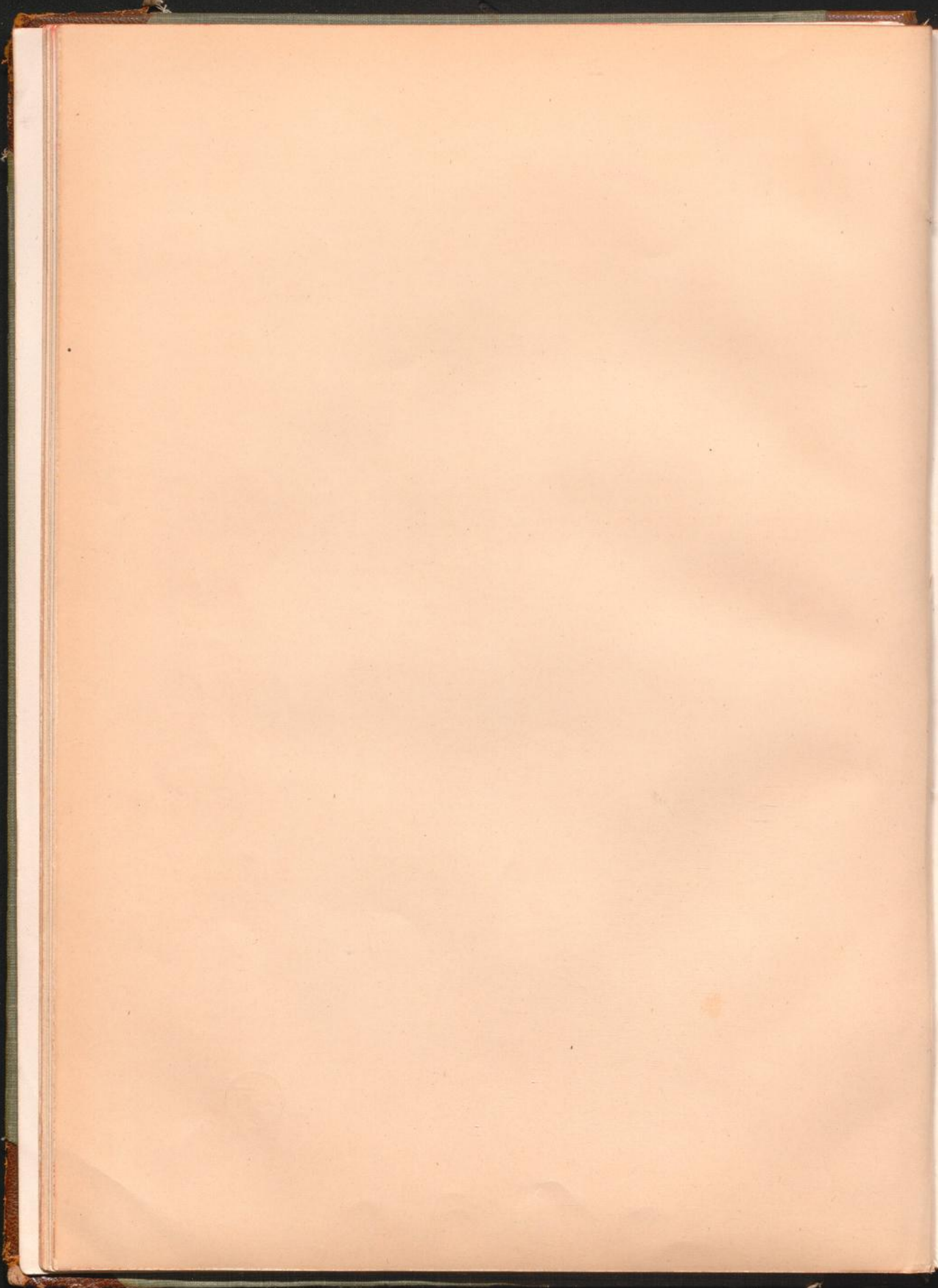
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The Early Fountains at Versailles

perhaps the best remembered of all his pictures of this period—and the portrait of *Madame Gautreau*, over which Parisian critics were wildly excited on account of its audacity of treatment and novelty of manner. Although he made Paris his headquarters, he was, however, by no means always at work there. He paid visits at more and more frequent intervals to London, where, year by year, his reputation was growing as surely as it had in France; and finally, some half-dozen years after his trip into Spain, he crossed the Channel, not on a visit, but to take up his abode permanently in England. Since then, there has been no break in a progress that has brought him into the innermost sanctuary of British art, and his election as an Associate of the Academy in 1894, and as a Royal Academician in 1897, have followed as a matter of course.

In the twenty years, or so, over which his practice has so far extended he has proved himself capable of many things, and has made excursions into many fields of art. Far the largest share of his time, however, has been given to portrait painting, and, in any record of his production, what he has done in this branch of work calls for the chief attention. His portraits, indeed, make up a long list punctuated by great successes. Few of his canvases could with justice be ignored, or passed over as commonplace or uninteresting, but every now and then he has made a leap forward in which with a single stride he has covered more ground than other men can pass over with a decade of assiduous toil; and, curiously, after each advance there has been no perceptible recoil to prepare for the next effort. If he marks one year by a success, in the next, though he may possibly not provide another sensation, he brings up all his canvases to the level of the best that has gone before. It is this faculty that gives him a hold upon even that section of the public which does not understand him. No one can prophesy exactly what he will do next, and he keeps alive a spirit of speculation that is most fascinating to everyone who loves surprises.

There are not many gaps in the series of portraits which he has, since he first began exhibiting in this country, contributed to the chief London galleries. He has been fairly prolific, especially of late years, and he has almost always added to the interest of the exhibitions in which he has appeared: *Mrs. H. White* (1884), *Lady Playfair* (1885), the admirable group of *The Misses Vickers* (1886), the masterly picture of *Mrs. Henry*

G. Marquand (1888), were the most memorable of his canvases during the period that ended with his migration from Paris to London. Since then he has given us *La Carmencita*, at the Academy in 1891, and now hanging in the Luxembourg; and, also at the Academy, *Lady Agnew* (1893), *Miss Chamler* (1894); *W. Graham Robertson, Esq.*, *Mrs. Russell Cooke*, and the two portraits of *Mr. Coventry Patmore*, in 1895; *The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain*, *Mrs. Ian Hamilton*, *Sir George Lewis*, and *Mrs. Colin Hunter*, all in 1896; *Mrs. Carl Meyer*, one of his happiest pieces of unconventional composition, and *The Hon. Laura Lister*, a delightful study of dainty childhood, in 1897; three of the strongest renderings that he has ever produced of male sitters, *Francis Cranmer Penrose, Esq., P.R.I.B.A.*, *Sir Thomas Sutherland, G.C.M.G., M.P.*, and *Asher Wertheimer, Esq.*, with several others, in 1898; and last year four equally notable paintings of feminine sitters, *Mrs. Charles Hunter*, *Miss Octavia Hill*, *Miss Jane Evans*, and *Lady Faudel-Phillips*. To the New Gallery he has sent from time to time pictures of superlative quality, among them more than one that can fairly be said to mark great moments in his practice. There was the great full length of *Mrs. Hammersley*, for instance; and the more recent, but somewhat similar, portrait of *Mrs. Thursby*; and there have been besides *The Countess Clary Aldringen*, *Mrs. George Swinton*, *Mrs. Ernest Franklin*, and *Mrs. Anstruther Thomson*, as well as the vividly realised and intensely characteristic half length of *Colonel Ian Hamilton*, which was at the gallery last summer. A few other important works, like the character portrait, *Miss Ellen Terry as "Lady Macbeth"*, and the occasional canvases which he contributed to the exhibitions of the New English Art Club, while he was a member of that society, have found their way to other galleries. Altogether his record in this direction is an ample one, and it is not less deserving of comment on account of the sustained effort to reach a high standard to which it bears witness than it is as a proof of indefatigable energy and zealous practice.

(To be continued.)

THE EARLY FOUNTAINS AT VERSAILLES. BY PIERRE DE NOLHAC.

THE fountains in the Gardens of Versailles have enjoyed a curious celebrity from the first. The difficulty experienced by the engineers in the matter of supplying running water to a place