

# PICTURES OF THE YEAR AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

## A San Francisco Artist In London Writes an Interesting Story of the Paintings and the Painters



The author of the following article, Julie Heyneman, is a San Francisco artist who now ranks among the great women portrait painters. She has made several long sojourns abroad, and during the past several years, spent mainly at her London studio, no less an artist than Sargent has lent his careful criticism to everything that has come from her brush. She was in San Francisco early last year and a splendid collection of her pictures, stored temporarily at the Art League building on Montgomery avenue, was lost in the fire. In her article she has omitted mention of the fact that a portrait of two children done by her is conspicuously placed in the spring exhibition at the Royal Academy.

By Julie Heyneman

**V**ARNISHING day at the Paris salon has lost character since it is possible, for 10 francs, to secure an entrance ticket. The artists are overwhelmed, lost sight of, in a swarm of fashionables, of tourists, of models, dealers and critics. At the Royal academy the occasion is still held sacred to its avowed purpose, though the artists themselves have converted it into a huge, informal reception. They remain all day, talking over the pictures, offering their congratulations or condolences, making new acquaintances, renewing old friendships. Their verdict on the exhibition is the vital one, their opinions are re-echoed by the critics; the pictures then acknowledged and acclaimed are—to quote a tiresome but descriptive phrase—"the pictures of the year."

With the exception of the workmen in blouses ready to shift ladders or to scour or varnish at command, every person present is an exhibitor—a painter or a sculptor, an illustrator or an architect. Without strangers to be impressed or instructed or cajoled, the small but thickly peopled world of art young girls, innumerable middle aged painters of both sexes, and even one long haired lad—preternaturally grave, competing—in short trousers and an e-ton collar—with his rapidly vanishing boyhood. It is sufficiently easy to discover the victor in the great game of life—cheerful, well fed, prosperous and somewhat inclined to corpulence—and the thin tragic figure of the vanquished, the unpractical dreamer, fierce eyed, contemptuous, half starved, with failure written large on his pallid countenance and his nondescript garments.



AN ISLAND FESTIVAL BY CHARLES SIMS

is seen from the inside, at its best, in the ease and intimacy of a kind of family reunion. The faces have even a vague resemblance, a clearly defined type.

As the morning advances ever increasing numbers fill the great galleries. An economist might view them with secret uneasiness; here is the most evident divergence between supply and demand, and when it is remembered that similar genial throngs may be collected in any of the great cities of Europe or America the fact suggests the most sinister possibilities. What becomes of these miles of paintings? How do these hordes of artists manage to extract a possible livelihood from their exigent profession? This particular crowd is, however, quite evidently free from misgivings; eminently cheerful, voluble light hearted. In spite of the vague resemblance—a keenness of glance, a certain alertness of expression common to them all—the sharpest contrasts are afforded in dress, bearing and manner. There are women and men, white haired and bowed with years; exuberant youths, clean shaven, robust, clear eyed, moving about with defiant gaiety, the arrogance of young conquerors; men, hardly older, but of haggard mien, unkempt, disheveled, in garments conspicuously grotesque. The equal physical havoc of dissipation or of extreme poverty makes it difficult to use them in order to point a moral. There are a surprising number of

pieces be on the line, or, if not, on the line, at least hung well in view above a low picture—or—hopelessly skiffed?

In any case, what a curious, what a terrible metamorphosis has taken place since the picture was sent from the studio! This is certainly not the familiar vision that was to bring fame, to leap, at the first glance, to the consciousness of the beholder. It looks ridiculously small, quite unobtrusive; parts of it seem hideously ugly or strange. Whatever the agonized sensation of private disappointment may be, it must be instantly swallowed and the dismal fact faced with an appearance of cheerful unconcern.

**The Last Touch**

A general air of gaiety, of industry, and disorder pervades the galleries. Huge ladders, like fire escapes, stand ready for those who require them. The fastidious nervously refuse the assistance of the workmen; not for worlds would they allow the touch of a rough hand upon the canvas, and so they hang suspended like acrobats, making passes in the air with their paint brushes and holding in one hand a dangerously tilted palette or a saucer with varnish. Every now and then there is a small crash of a broken bottle or a fallen saucer; the fine floors are strewn with bits of rag, with ashes and cigarette ends. In the center of each room rough tables are loaded with paint boxes. At the last moment aspirants for fame attempt to add the touch that is to make gently against a doorway; he also is short and stout and gray; but his eyes still retain a youthful fire and light up a strong, square, humorous countenance. John Sargent, tall, brown

boarded, dark haired, towers above the crowd, with which he moves slowly, waylaid continually by anxious acquaintances eager to get a word of encouragement or kindly criticism. David Murray, the Scotch academician, a painter of brilliant if somewhat conventional landscapes, may be seen scratching at his canvas with a pocket knife, his straight brimmed hat tilted back on his thick gray hair.

**Among the Immortals**

With every moment a new luminary appears. Frank Dicksee, tall, spare, aristocratic, animated; Alfred Parsons, fresh colored, with a kindly smile and somewhat lame, alas, after a recent operation; Napier Henry, painter of fishermen and of the sea, recalling Sargent's wonderful sketch of him exhibited a year ago. He has a striking head with a thatch of rough gray hair, deep set luminous eyes under jutting gray brows, a lean, brown face with an expression of amazing energy and force. J. J. Shannon, Tuke, Stanhope Forbes, George Henry and other associate members by the score contemplate their own and other pictures.

A frank, keenly critical spirit underlies the desultory talk; the appreciation is quick and generous and apparently quite free from professional jealousy; the language, for once, is the free, untrammelled jargon of the studio; for this occasion only, without the suspicion of self-consciousness, "shop" is indulged in without reproach and without apology.

Of the exhibition itself it is the habit to speak with extraordinary cynicism, to dismiss it with a contemptuous, a

sorrowful or an indulgent shrug; but what is true of the Royal academy is no less true of all great picture shows, crowded for sheer lack of space and forced to accept all the work sent in by old members who have lost or forgotten their one-time gift of expression. In opening a reluctant door to such men as Sargent, Abbey, the late Charles Furse and several others the Royal academy has admitted at the same time a wholesome breath of fresh air. The spirit of Sir Frederick Leighton might well find something of retrogression in the gradual submersion of the old, severe academic ideal. There are still coldly classical compositions, still many pictures sacred to the mid-Victorian legend of sentimentality and sweetness, but they no longer dominate the walls. There are, it may be noted, landscapes and portraits in the most modern, impressionist manner, and it upsets all accepted standards of academic narrowness to find them not only hung, but conspicuously well placed.

If the first impression of the walls is disheartening it is largely the deplorable result of inevitable overcrowding, the grouping together of light and dark, of brilliant and dull, of brown and gray. Here there is no attempt at spaciousness or a general harmony; the exhibition is a pictorial battle field, with all the warring elements productive of wholesale slaughter. The second impression, however, is distinctly more cheering, and with it comes the discovery that the prospect is by no means unlit and that new stars have begun to twinkle in the artistic firmament. From this standpoint alone this year's academy is exceptionally important—it is in a way the triumph of the younger men and the modern spirit. The president maintains, in somewhat melancholy dignity, the old tradition and shows a number of carefully drawn, precisely colored subject pictures. There is the usual portrait of King Edward VII, but with a quite unusual attempt at characterization. Arthur S. Cope has departed from the convention of a monarch of putty set up in a vast space of meaningless architecture. The royal countenance has features painted and modeled on a foundation of firm bone and muscle. If it is somewhat over-weighted by ribbons and orders, these insignia of majesty have, at least, not been made the excuse for the complete absence of personality that ordinarily distinguishes these representations.

Mr. Sargent sends five portraits, single figures, none of them full length, but all of them painted with the authority, the beautiful ease and the full realization of character to which he has accustomed his generation. The one of Lady Eden is luminous in surroundings that would kill anything less vitally alive. The lady, once painted by Whistler in a portrait that was made the subject of one of his famous legal



"THE REHEARSAL," BY CAMPBELL TAYLOR, WHICH HAS ALREADY WON FAME



PORTRAIT GROUP BY GEORGE LAMBERT

are in fact badly drawn and hot in color, but the arrangement and balance of the large spaces, the harmony of line and the style and distinction of the composition are evident at the first glance. George Lambert in his portrait group gallily defies tradition and places his figures, two ladies and two children, against an outdoor sky that however conventionalized is full of freshness and movement. The whole group is, though most evidently studied and delightfully decorative, full of a kind of careless freedom. The figure of the boy with a man's overcoat suggests both Manet and Velasquez; the entirely absorbed baby, with a head solidly and delicately modeled in light, is in itself an exquisite piece of painting.

These three younger men are occupied with the great problems—beauty of arrangement, of line, of color. It is of the best augury that the Royal academy should have instantly recognized their importance in any exhibition. Mr. Hughes-Stanton is perhaps the only exception to this generous treatment of outsiders. His extraordinary if somewhat severe canvas entitled "Segovia, Spain," has been "skied." In view of the fact that the French government has just purchased for the Luxembourg a large landscape exhibited in the salon, and that this is the second time in three years that he has been thus distinguished, he can afford to suffer in magnanimous silence.

F. Cadogan Cowper carries on with new vigor and immense skill the pre-Raphaelite ideal. His picture of "How the devil disguised as a vagrant troubadour, having been entertained by some charitable nuns, sang to them a song of love," is sure to be surrounded by a crowd blinded by its intense realism, the illusion of actuality. The figures of the nuns are seen against a background of stained glass, through which the light shines. The glow of color fills the whole picture. It may be confessed, however, that the smaller canvas, entitled "Vanity," is a far more complete artistic success. It is the Florentine and not the English pre-Raphaelite that this laborious but most lovely canvas recalls. The background is dark blue, studded with stars and hung with clusters of purple grapes; a fine chain with a jeweled ornament gleams on the round brow; the costume is edged with gold and the head is most firmly and delicately drawn and deeply and richly colored.

Frank Craig with a huge composition called "The Maid," Mrs. Swynerton with two pictures of great power and brilliance and Bertram Mackennal in his small marble group called "The Earth and the Elements" add to an exhibition that, while perhaps no higher than usual in its standard of general accomplishment, shows distinct promise of new life and vigor, and certainly celebrates less than formerly the melancholy triumph of mediocrity.

After Mr. Sargent's contributions it is entirely to the younger men that we must turn for sensations of surprise and delight. Charles Sims in his "Island Festival" gives us a work of monumental size and of astonishing freedom and delicacy. It does not at all matter that it is quite unexplained where the "island" may be or what ceremony the festival celebrates; it is not too much to say that it is not a cause for concern that it is not positive, that the exuberant procession is even human—they might be sprites, nymphs, shepherds—creatures of the air or of the deep.

The beautiful painting, however, is a revelation of joy. It is via Venice and Paris that Mr. Sims has reached his Arcadia. There is more than a reminiscence of Tiepolo, with a suggestion of Sargent, of Anders Zorn—a technique learned in France—but the expression is so personal, so individual and so accomplished that the critical faculty is, for the time being, in abeyance and sheer gratitude takes its place.

Campbell Taylor follows close at heel in a large canvas, a portrait group called "The Rehearsal." Here we have a group of five figures, somewhat formally arranged in early Victorian costumes in a light modern room. It would not be possible to compare the painting of the musical instruments with that superb violin in the hands of Lady Speyer painted by Sargent; they