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WHAT ARTISTS EARN.

BY ONE OF THEM

The Royal Academy is less of a market-place than it was, but for many artists it is still the one great opportunity for bringing their work to the notice of the buying public.

Most well-known artists hold their own shows now before the Academy comes off. Sometimes a dealer will put up the money for the show, or the artist himself will speculate. One well-known young artist told me that a show which he organised in New York lost him nearly £500. His expenses were nearly £1,000, and he only sold pictures for half that amount.

Artists absolutely dependent on their work find it hard to live unless they are celebrated, or unless they do posters and illustrating work. Few even of the known artists now think it infra dig to accept commercial commissions. The recent enterprise of a railway in commissioning a number of well-known artists to paint the beauty spots along its route has given a fillip to this branch of the artist's work.

Nevinson, perhaps the best-known of the younger artists, complained recently that his art in three years has brought him in over £300. But his pictures increase in value every year; and his poster and other work must be very lucrative.

Lavery, De Lazlo, Sergeant, and Orpen are comparatively wealthy as artists go. For men of this calibre from 1,000 to 3,000 guineas is a common price for a portrait. Orpen's dispute with Lord Leverhulme over the price to be paid for a portrait shed light on the fees which millionaires have to pay for the privilege of being done in oils by a master for posterity.

An artist is in the unfortunate position often of having to sell a picture for five pounds which he knows a dealer may eventually dispose of for £50. For a picture is one of those things which is worth just what anyone is prepared to pay for it. There are shrewd speculators in pictures, just as there are shrewd speculators in the stock market.

Early investors in Orpens and Johns have been very lucky. Not long ago John Quinn, the New York collector, threw on the market his entire collection of Johns. There were thirty or forty pictures, and naturally they did not fetch "boom" prices. John bought one in for £250, and coolly priced it at his Alpine Gallery show two years ago at eight hundred guineas.

But for every John and Orpen there are thousands of painters for whom the art season holds the most vital of hopes and fears. A picture or two sold may mean a precarious livelihood guaranteed for another few months, may mean a respite from pot-boiling for serious artistic labour.

The cost of canvasses, brushes, studios, models, and the artist's living is not excessive; but it is serious enough for men and women making such slender incomes as do the vast majority of artists.