

For

Laszlo

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ECHOES o

The Kings Curtailed: I Ex-Crown Prince

The Greatest of All.—John Sargent was probably the greatest portrait painter of the past hundred years, and certainly the greatest of modern times.

Let anyone who doubts this look at those Wertheimers in the National Gallery. I have heard more than one art critic of eminence declare that Sargent's portrait of old Mr. Wertheimer is the finest since Velazquez painted Philip of Spain.

Of late years he has sometimes been uninteresting, and he has been responsible for more than one dull khakied general—dull, that is, as a picture. But his record is amazing.

How Was It Done?—It would require a column of technicalities, into which I do not feel competent to launch, to explain how and why Sargent stood out even among such men of genius as Orpen, Lavery and Laszlo.

John Culler himself has called him "the greatest of the moderns." He undoubtedly founded himself on Hals, "whom he exceeded in the greater delicacy of his flesh tones, and a greater refinement of drawing."

Sargent once wrote, concerning his own procedure, that "it was less a technical process than an order in which to proceed."

America to the Fore.—When the Wertheimer pictures went to the National Gallery last year it was remarkable that the only living painter represented there should have been an American. Just as remarkable, perhaps, as that the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons should have been the American Lady Astor.

Shy.—But genius such as Sargent's banishes such minor points. And he had all the traditional shyness of genius. I have heard it suggested that Arnold Bennett had him in mind when he wrote "Buried Alive"—the story of a great artist who dreaded publicity, a story better known, perhaps, in its dramatic form as "The Great Adventure."

He was rarely seen in public, and social life in the ordinary sense he abhorred.

Caustic.—He had a caustic tongue. It is said that a millionaire was once showing him through his huge gallery of very dubious old masters, and remarked, "I propose leaving in my will these pictures to some public institution. What institution would you suggest?"

"I suggest," said Sargent, "an institution for the blind."

War Experiences.—Sargent, like many other artists, went to France during the war, and a British officer wrote of him "painting unconcernedly under a white umbrella, seeming to gather inspiration from the roar of the guns."

But the famous artist realised his limitations, and declared that "all the picture galleries in the world could give no adequate impression of war, which is indescribable and cannot be put on canvas."