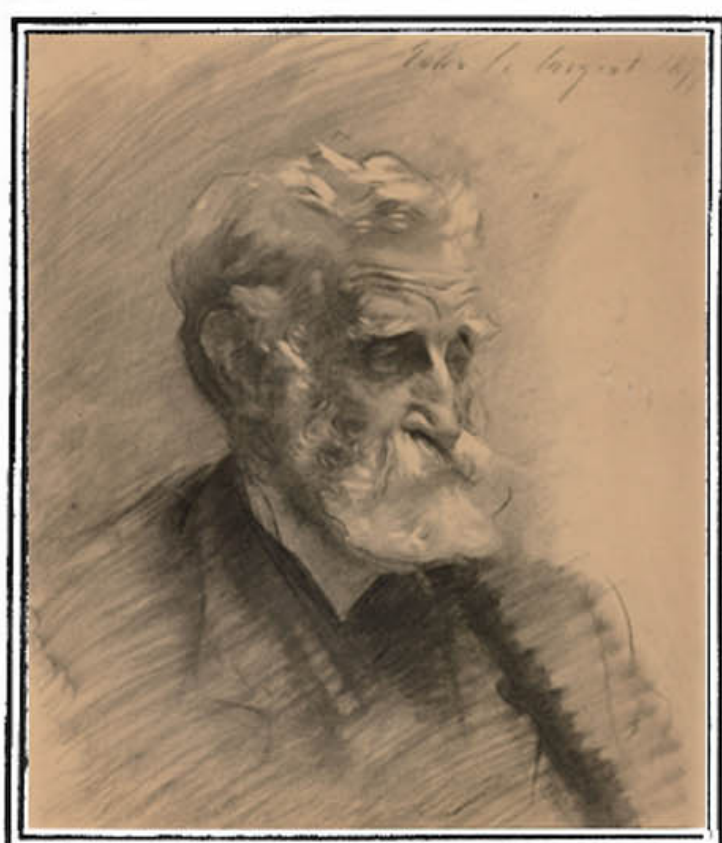


JOHN SARGENT

His Genius for Character
and a Word About His Recent Work

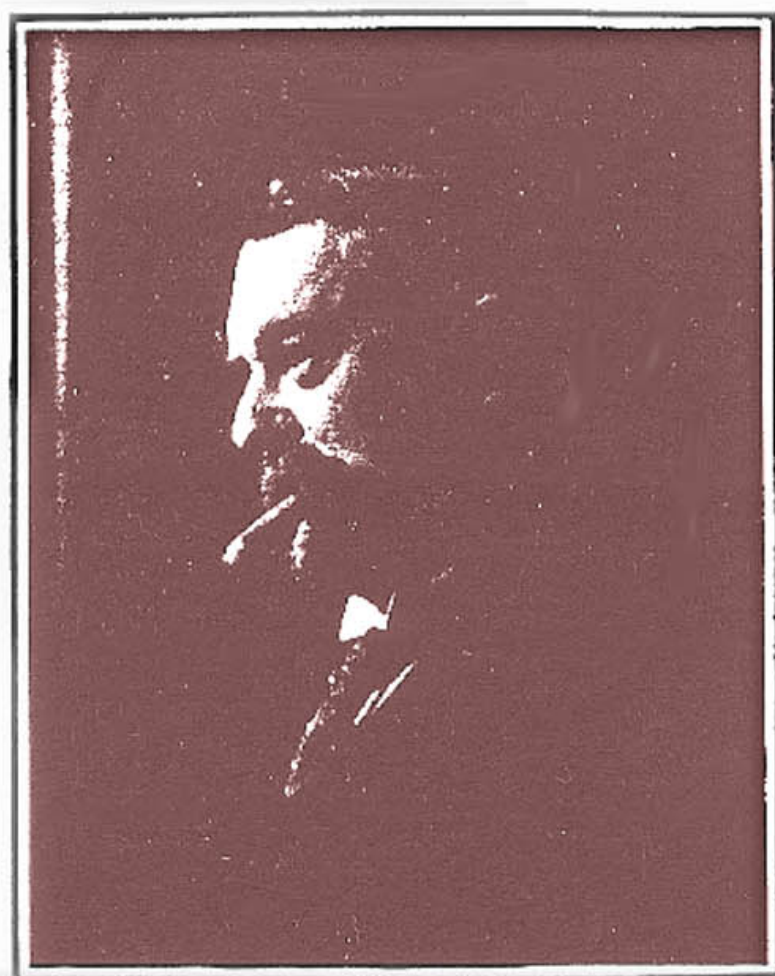


EDWARD SILSBEE

*A charcoal portrait by Sargent now
in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*

“THE fool sees not the same tree as a wise man sees,” said Blake, in one of the curtest of known art criticisms. That might be the motto over the door of an exhibition of paintings by John Sargent. Very differently indeed does he see the notabilities of our age from the way in which their admirers see them, or, for that matter, in which they see

themselves. To be painted by him is regarded, in America and England, as the crowning event of a successful life, a brilliant emergence from the rut of mere celebrity. But, like other forms of eminence, this honor carries its own perils with it. While Whistler only permitted a professional beauty to contribute her exact share to the divided interest of a picture, Sargent made a professional beauty contribute practically all of the interest in it, as he is more interested in the kernel of character—even if ignoble—than in the backgrounds, accessories or externals of his portraits. Imagine pompous statesmen trying to preserve their House of Commons manner, or successful doctors their guinea-a-visit bedside manner, or self-made men their self-satisfied manner in the presence of that cold, ironic eye! That eye that sees *through* the transparent beauty of a woman, down to the last little meanness of her soul. In him portrait painting has found a typical exponent of our age—an age of restlessness, electric energy, self-analysis, cunning, daring, and invention.



JOHN SARGENT

A recent and unpublished photographic study by Sarah C. Sears

THE perhaps apocryphal story is told of the provincial mayor who, duly knighted like many other unworthy mediocrities, received, proud man, as a reward for his so-called services to his city, his portrait by Sargent, paid for by public subscription. When he finally saw it, finished and installed in his dining saloon, he was so disturbed by the revelation of his true and heretofore unsuspected character, that he hired a burglar to steal it and left a window open to aid the thief in his flight.

Three years ago Sargent decided that he would paint no more portraits. He was, as the British say: “fed up with it.” No wonder he grew tired of it. Only occasionally has he broken his rule, as in the Henry James portrait, recently hacked by militants.

For three years Sargent’s time has been occupied with (1) watercolor, in which medium he has added a distinctly new region to modern art; (2) portraits in crayon, in which he has developed an almost inconceivable facility. One of his most important watercolors is shown here, as well as one of his crayon sketches.