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JOHN S. SARGENT'S FLORIDA WATERCOLORS

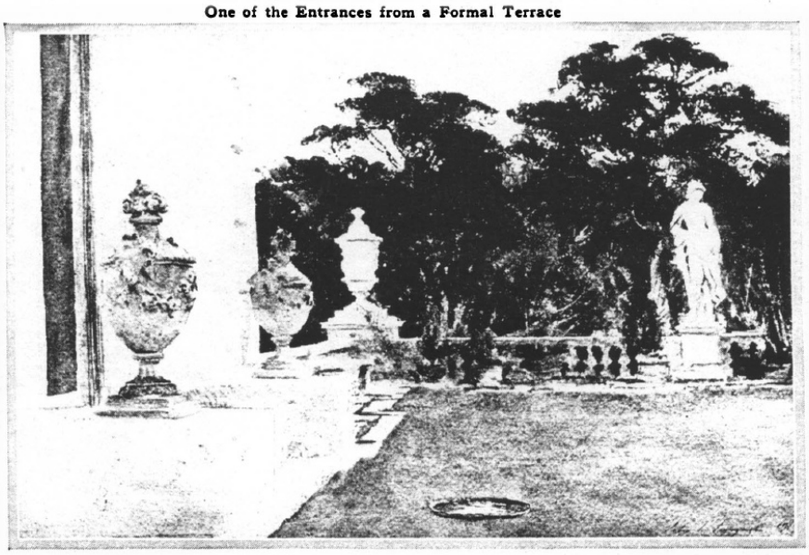
Painted at the Villa Viscaya, and Purchased by the Worcester Museum

By Frederick James Gregg

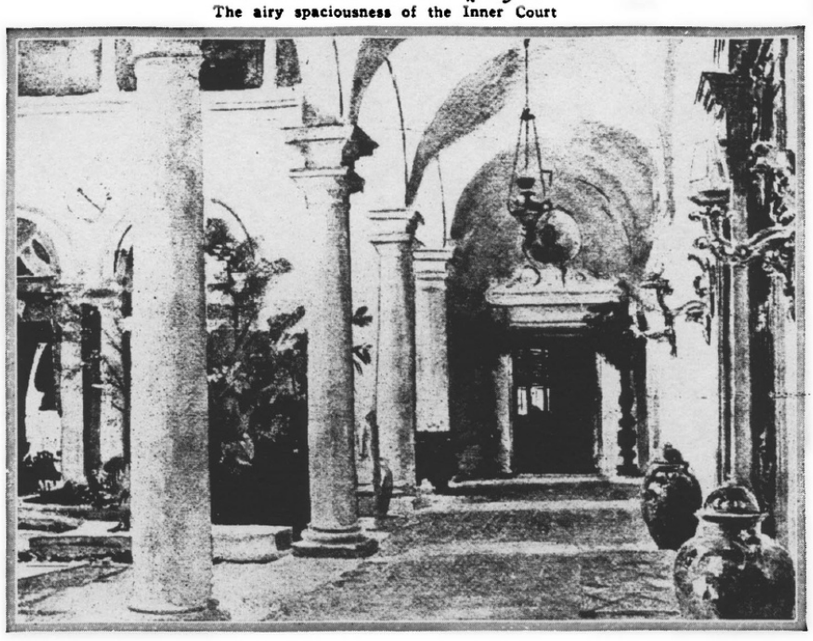
JOHN SINGER SARGENT, since he turned his back on the scene of his triumphs in Europe, has been doing what he felt like doing—that is to say, he has been painting American landscapes. It appears that, in the course of what might be described as his busy holiday, he has found nothing more to his taste than the Villa Viscaya at Miami, Florida, which has been built for James Deering on a coral reef, between the sea and the Everglades, by the architects Paul Chalfin and E. Burrall Hoffman, Jr. At the time when the painter was lured down to the Italian estate for a flying visit, by Charles Deering, the brother of James, the house had reached a stage fit for occupancy, though thousands of workmen were still busy on the buildings and the gardens.

THE almost casual visitor surrendered at once. The vivid color that was everywhere, in the sky, the sea, and in the material used in the construction of the palace, induced on his part an immediate and passionate desire to work. So absorbed did the artist become that, every day, as long as the light held out, he was quite oblivious to the presence of the other guests. These, in turn, took care to respect the desire of the great man to be left to his own devices, and the business in hand. The result is a set of splendid watercolors that have been procured by the Art Museum of Worcester, Massachusetts. So the villa will have, from now on, in addition to its intrinsic interest, the important quality of high art association.

One of the Entrances from a Formal Terrace



The airy spaciousness of the Inner Court



MR. SARGENT grew tired, some years back, of being thrust into the position of master psychologist of British notabilities. Of course it was a tribute not to be ignored or despised, that famous individuals felt that they had not quite hit it off in life if they "had not been done by Sargent." But the painter had never been fashionable, for he had never yielded to the inevitable vice of the popular artist, that of compromise. First and last he was true to his own vision and his own judgment. He created neither a type nor a pleasant illusion. In the long run it is better that a portrait should break the heart of the sitter, who had hoped to be let down gently—as is the way with many patrons—than that it should help to ruin the reputation of the man who made it.

When Mr. Sargent said that he would paint no more portraits, he reckoned without three things—the War, Sir Hugh Lane and his own impulses. Sir Hugh, the well-known Irish collector, who went down with the *Lusitania,* persuaded his friend to promise to do a picture for the Red Cross. This was sold, in advance, for ten thousand pounds. Lane himself was the buyer. He bequeathed it to the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin, and the Governors of that institution, having come to an agreement with Mr. Sargent, have asked President Wilson to be the subject. The request, sent to Washington by James Stevens, the novelist and secretary of the Gallery, was sufficiently polite and emphatic. It was to the effect that the Irish capital desired to have "the portrait of the greatest American President, painted by the greatest American artist."

PERHAPS, in order to get his hand in for what will be an international task, in the best sense of the word, Mr. Sargent is making some interesting additions to his American portraits. In the course of his present visit to the Pocantico Hills estate, in Westchester, he has done John D. Rockefeller, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

There are few pictures anywhere with such an interesting history as the "Wilson Sargent" will have from the very beginning. Hanging in a public gallery in the British Isles it will commemorate the first real co-operation of America and England, by sea and land. Nobody who ever looks at it will fail to reflect on the curious combination of subject, artist and donor—the first, Wilson, a famous war President; the second Sargent, a painter, drawn from his retirement by the war; the third, Lane, a notable patron of the fine arts, who lost his life through German treachery when at the height of his usefulness to Ireland, the empire, and this country.

The Dublin National Gallery, with which Sir Hugh Lane was associated, in an official way, at the time of his death, must not be confused with the Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, which, but for aldermanic stupidity, he would have made a model for such collections.

Shrewd and far-sighted in his pursuit of the beautiful, Lane never forgot that, as a collector, he had a duty to the public. This gift of his, to America and Ireland, shows how his imagination arose to a fine situation.