

WOLMER WOOD,

MARLOW, COMMON,

MARLOW, BUCKS.

August 12th 1936.

My dear Philip

many thanks for the "Apollo" number and the Society of Arts report; I wonder what further comment Turst intends to make, though really he is far too unimportant to be worth worrying about. I have known him, more or less, for a number of years and I have never felt that I could take him seriously.

I was very sorry that, when I made my trip to town the other day, I could not arrange things so as to get up to you; I much wanted to but I had fixed an appointment in Kensington which kept me till 1.15 and my appointment with the Curtis Brown people was for 2.30 — and I had another some way off at 3.30 — so there was not time to do them all and fish in a run up to Hampstead as well. If I come up again before you move down to Wentworth I will try to arrange things better as I very much want to see you and the work you have been doing lately. I did stop for a few

minutes, on my way to Curtis Brown's place, to look at the Leicester Gallery show, which I thought was mainly ridiculous. The one thing that consoled me and made me feel that I had not wasted my time was Nicholson's "Sweet Peas" and I am delighted to find that it made so strong an appeal to you too — it is an exquisite study. I have always looked upon him as a really great master and I have seen very few paintings of him that were not perfectly understood and brilliantly handled. He is an admirable example of the finely trained artist who can by intimate and searching knowledge of nature give an "abstract" impression of his subject which is perfectly true and expressive — and entirely right — without being merely literal in its statement of facts. His "Sweet Peas" struck me as a really lovely piece of colour and a wonderfully subtle study of delicate tone relations and its painterly quality is quite admirable. Yet I do not think there was any mention of the picture in the "Times" notice of the show, though there was a lot about Sickert's silly and clumsy caricature of the King.

This is an extract from the life of Alfred Gilbert; the words quoted are his own.

"I have always held strong and possibly debatable views upon the subject of portraiture in its highest form in Art: i.e. the portrayal of an individual by method of manual intellectual skill. Manual skill alone may produce an excellent likeness, yet not a complete portrait, for although it may hold a spectator spell-bound through its resemblance, it conveys through the painted mask nothing of the soul qualities hidden behind the living original's features. Such a portrait must be but an ephemeral resemblance, suggesting no biography! A portrait which is the production of skill and intellectual insight combined is a complete one, for it portrays the mind and the likeness together!"

I thought that the quotation I enclose from Alfred Gilbert's life would interest you, as it expresses very much the same feeling that you have about the need for understanding a sitter's personality and character if a portrait is to be really satisfying. "A painted mask" conveying nothing of the sitter's soul qualities is not a bad description of the majority of the portraits that one sees nowadays.

You seem to be very busy and to be painting a number of interesting people; I hope, though, that you are not doing too much and tiring yourself unduly. I expect you really need a rest at Wentworth — a quiet time there and a trip to Scotland afterwards ought to do you good. I hope that you will have time for a run here before long, I do much want to see you and to have a chat about your doings. I am keeping pretty busy, as I am doing a lot of things in the garden now that the weather has improved. I hope it will keep fine for a while.

So, au revoir — our love to you and Lucy

always yours J. K. B.