

8 JUN 1927

NOTABLE PORTRAITS OF ROYALTY

Mr. Philip A. de Laszlo's Exhibition

THE DUCHESS OF YORK

By *Our Art Critic*

Mr. Philip A. de Laszlo's portraits and studies at the French Gallery, 120, Pall Mall, remind us that King Sargent is dead, but we cannot in their presence say, "Vive le Roi."

Yet Mr. de Laszlo has certainly succeeded the American as a painter of eminent people. With three or four exceptions his subjects are either royal or aristocratic, and the others include the Archbishop of Canterbury and two Cambridge professors, but these are not among the best of his portraits.

He has the happy knack of catching the sort of likeness that each sitter wants, or so it seems, and his methods of reaching this end are summary, rather than subtle or distinguished.

If there is no sign of spiritual probing, or inquisitorial judgment of character, he presents the superficial graces of women and children, and the official dignity of men with considerable facility and persuasiveness.

A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

Mr. de Laszlo found it easy to suggest the beauty of face and figure, and the refinement of spirit that make the "Duchess of York" (4) popular wherever she goes, and he also without difficulty presents "The King and Queen of Spain" (13 and 14) as they are known and beloved by their fellow countrymen.

The Spanish Royal Family, too, are set before us with endearing charm, and it is interesting to note the resemblance of "H.R.H. Prince of Asturias" (24) to the Prince of Wales, particularly in the upper part of the face.

Another strong Spanish portrait to attract attention is that of "H.E. President Primo di Rivera" (31). These portraits have come direct from Spain, and the King and Queen of Spain are to visit the exhibition in the course of the month.

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ART EXHIBITIONS.

MR. P. A. DE LÁSZLÓ.

Every kind of art has its own convention, and to complain that the portraits by Mr. P. A. de László at the French Gallery, 120, Pall Mall, lack depth and subtlety would be like complaining that you did not get a heart-to-heart talk with your hostess at a social function. It is the public rather than the private appearance of his subjects that Mr. de László presents, and he must be judged accordingly. On his own lines, as a fashionable portrait painter, he is not without his defects. He has a remarkable gift for filling a canvas easily, but for permanent satisfaction his pictures would gain by a more architectural filling—not with architectural features but with a more stable system of horizontals and verticals. Too many of his larger compositions—"His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury" is the worst example, but it vexes also in "The Marquess of Reading"—have what may be called a diagonal drift, as if the artist were determined at all costs to keep things moving. His colour, too, would lose nothing in bravery if it were truer in values. For lack of attention to this rather than from defective construction the figure of "His Majesty the King of Spain" looks incoherent under a well-painted head, and there are several instances in the exhibition in which the ribbon of an Order jumps out of the context with disturbing effect. Time may do something to remedy this, but as painted Mr. de László's work is more pleasing when it depends upon relations of tone and not colour—"Madame la Duchesse d'Ursel," for a good example.

What really commands itself in the work of Mr. de László is his whole-hearted enjoyment of the social scene. There is no suggestion that he comes to it by anything but positive preference, and that in itself is enough to account for his popularity. He fulfils on canvas with unfailing gusto and "chic" what people aim at in their public appearances, and he gives to it just the slight foreign accent which pleases a people naturally reserved. "H.R.H. The Princess Beatrice" is one of the best heads in the exhibition. "Her Grace the Duchess of Portland" pleases by the aptness of the placing on the unprinted canvas, the accent of the head, and the hang of the veil and pearls; and among the more successful of the other portraits are "H.R.H. the Duchess of York," "The Marquess of Reading," "H.R.H. the Prince of Asturias," and "Miss Dorothy Carnegie." From the point of view of distinguished personalities, the special feature of the exhibition is the series of Spanish Royal portraits.

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De Laszlo's Beautiful Women

Kings and queens seem to crop up in De Laszlo's life as more ordinary mortals do in mine. Now he has returned from Spain with portraits of King Alfonso, Queen Ena, and the rest of the Spanish Royal family, and these, with many other beautiful portraits, are hung in his exhibition at the French Gallery in Pall Mall, which will open to the public to-morrow.

De Laszlo, like many other artists, prefers to disappear when the critics are present, but I was lucky enough to catch him for a few minutes yesterday as he was leaving the galleries, with a remarkable looking old clergyman named Heckler, who, for twenty-five years, was attached to the British Embassy in Berlin.

Royal Sitters

De Laszlo—a Tom Titt portrait of whom you see here—told me that the portraits of the Spanish Royalties who sat to him at the Palace were shown last month at the Modern Gallery in Madrid, and the entire Diplomatic Corps came to see them.

"They were painted in honour of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the King's accession," he said, "and when this exhibition in London is over they will go back to the gallery in Madrid."

The King's portrait in Hussar uniform is an excellent likeness. The artist has caught that alertness of expression so typical of the slight, boyish-looking King.

The Queen's fair beauty is enhanced by a black mantilla.

I was interested, too, in the study of General Primo de Rivera, which is going to the War Ministry in Madrid, and the portrait of Sir Horace Rumbold, the British Ambassador, whose bulldog expression made me wonder what would happen if he had differences with the Spanish Mussolini.

Portrait a Duke Will Not Part With

Many people have painted the Duchess of York, but it is many a day since I saw such a delightful picture of her as De Laszlo has done.

The blue, smiling eyes, the soft, simply-dressed hair, the little hand toying with her pearls, the turquoise drapery harmonising with her eyes make a fascinating portrait.

As for the picture of the Duchess of Portland, a study in semi-profile, with its elusive expression and dreamy eyes, I am not surprised to hear that the Duke always has it with him wherever he goes.

A full-length portrait of Lord Reading in viceregal robes, a small head study of Princess Beatrice, the Queen of Greece with her lovely auburn hair and slender hand clasping a lily, a charming interior with Lord and Lady Lee of Fareham are some of the other pictures well worth seeing.

