

## JOHN SARGENT, R. H., AT WORK

HOW THE GREATEST PORTRAIT PAINTER POSES A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

At the End of the First Sitting the Canvas Shows a Good Likeness—He Completes a Portrait With Rapid Sweeps of His Brushes.

From the New York World.

While no two painters adopt exactly the same methods in producing their pictures, there is yet a certain similarity of procedure among most of them. John Sargent, America's and England's greatest portrait painter, has, however, a method entirely his own.

He is a rapid worker if his sitter is a good subject, but at the same time he is exceeding painstaking, and will often paint out a whole day's work because



JOHN SARGENT.  
as he advances and retreats to and from his canvas.

At the first sitting he will spend perhaps three minutes in conversation with his sitter, all the while watching his subject closely.

As soon as his client is seated upon the throne he discusses the pose, not dictatorially, but suggesting and encouraging suggestion. Generally he waits for the subject to fall into some natural and unrestrained attitude peculiar to himself or herself.

Having agreed upon the pose, more or less, he seizes his palette and a handful of brushes. These brushes are huge in size and look the implements of an artisan rather than of the greatest of living portrait painters.

Mixing on his palette some umber and

in his opponent's defense. Like magic the doubt of paint begins to take shape until one suddenly realizes that every shade and shadow is indicated and a decided semblance of the sitter already is upon the canvas.

Now he selects another brush, and, squeezing a tube or two, he mixes a new shade. He dashes at the canvas and dabs a flesh that upon the spot where the forehead is to be. He steps back with great rapidity and looks at the effect. With head on one side and right hand gently fanning the air, his attitude reminds one of a boxer more than ever.

In fifteen minutes there is a recognizable semblance of the sitter.

All this time there is a rapid cross-fire of conversation if the portraitee is as good a talker as the artist. Mr. Sargent rather encourages his sitters to talk, believing that by this means he keeps an animated and natural expression of countenance. With remarkable skill he leads the conversation in directions suitable and interesting to his sitter. Every conceivably subject seems to interest him. Politics, he admits, puzzles him. "English politics I don't understand," he says, "and American is worse." But on literature—French, German, English and American—he is thoroughly fluent. He holds strong opinions on the work of the great masters of the painter's art, and his views are rather unconventional as to their merits in relation to one another. Rubens is evidently his bete noire. He has little admiration for the too solid flesh of the great Dutch painter.

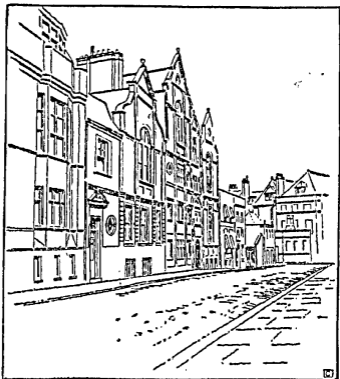
The dainty models of the French schools are much more to his liking. He is not one of those who scorn American art. On the contrary, he has a high opinion of contemporary painters on this side, and rattles off a list of American artists whose work he admires.

While he works Mr. Sargent smokes innumerable cigarettes of Egyptian tobacco. There is not a better cigarette in London than the one smoked by Mr. Sargent. Having lighted a cigarette, he smokes the fragrant morsel till it burns his beard, without removing it once from his mouth. Then he drops the stub into a little bronze saucer of water.

At the end of the first sitting the canvas shows a good likeness, and with the second the hair and eyes are finished off. At the end of the third the hands are dealt with. The painting of hands is one of Mr. Sargent's delights. He spends more time upon a good hand than upon any other part of a portrait. At the fourth sitting the details of dress are painted in, while at the fifth a general touching up or toning down takes place.

Like all great artists in any department of fine arts Mr. Sargent is entirely lacking in self-consciousness. He is quite without "frills" or eccentricity. He has no highfalutin ideas about the art of portraiture. He is no painter of men's souls. He dismisses rather impatiently any suggestion that he is clairvoyant and through the faces reads the innermost workings of their minds.

"I paint what is before me," he says in effect. "If the subject's character is not represented in his features and expres-



SARGENT'S ROW OF STUDIOS IN CHELSEA.

yellow ochre, he advances toward his canvas, his right hand on a line with his eye. With rapid swishing strokes he daubs the canvas and then retreats, glancing rapidly from subject to canvas. Again he stretches out his brush hand, describing little imaginary circles in the air. His movements suggest a boxer sparring for an opening

sion, so much the worse for the subject. I portray externals. It is not the artist's business to dig and delve for subtle shades of character."

A writer in Everybody's Magazine has said of Mr. Sargent: "He is a sort of Prince Charming of art—a trifle cold and worldly, perhaps, but phenomenally gifted. Yet in summing up his work it is obvious that these gifts are not gifts of the spirit, but gifts of sense—of eye and hand rather than of heart and mind."

In appearance Mr. Sargent does not suggest the artist. He does not affect the slovenly, artistic style of dressing, nor does he wear his hair long. He looks like a successful architect or medical man who possesses a good valet.

Six feet in height, broad of shoulder, upright and athletic, he appears to be a man in the pink of condition who is just beginning to take on a little of the weight that comes to a man of fifty.