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CRITICAL REVIEW

... DEVOTED TO ...

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FINE-ARTS

A New Painter.

BY
ARTHUR SYMONS

I have just been to the Carfax Gallery, in Ryder Street, to see some of the work of a young man who, if he does not become a notable painter, will owe it entirely to his own fault. Mr. Augustus E. John is, pictorially speaking, a man of substance; grave people say he is squandering his substance in riotous painting; but I contend that he is living within his means, he need have no fear of using up his capital. The paintings, pastels, drawings and etchings which he is now showing to a bewildered public do not represent the whole of his resources; but if you turn over the portfolios lying about the gallery you will come upon drawings done in the tradition of Ingres, suave, precise, punctilious, and done with a delicacy of skill worthy of Ingres. Some of the etchings have the same quality of mastery, more emphatic, but quietly emphatic; readings of character which show a terribly direct eye, and a force of hand at least equal to the strength of sight. As yet, Mr. John has not enclosed himself within any formula; he ranges, a cheerful vagabond, across all the commons of painting, choosing here, rejecting there, and with equal strength to sketch and to kick. He is not a point of view, he is a painter, and at present he is a painter in revolt.

For Mr. John is not only a draughtsman, he is a satirist, and he is a purely pictorial satirist; totally unconcerned with ideas; setting paint and pastel to play games or their own, burlesquing Reubens and Rembrandt and Miller as only a painter could burlesque a painter. He treats these painters and their