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WILLIAM ORPEN

England's Foremost Portrait Painter

WILLIAM ORPEN has gone up like a rocket, and, fortunately for him, there is no sign of his coming down like a stick. When he settled in London it was at the lucky moment when John Sargent had grown tired of painting portraits, and was willing to see another take his place. So, whereas everybody who was anybody used to feel unhappy if he had not been "done" by the American, now the same sort of successful, or *conspicuous*, person insists on being immortalized by the Irishman.

There is however a difference in the methods of the two artists. Sargent had a way of showing his sitters as they didn't think they looked. On the other hand, Orpen has a trick of making his sitters look like what they would like to be. Both painters *avoid* the *obvious*, but it is plain that the younger man can cause no such terror to *mediocre* greatness as his older contemporary used to do. It is impossible to imagine a provincial mayor hiring a burglar to steal his portrait painted by Orpen, as was reported to have happened in the case of a too acute analysis of a self-made man that came from the brush of Sargent.

As far back as 1907, when Sir Hugh Lane had got together the excellent Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin, Orpen's fame as a portrait painter was pretty firmly established. The Davitt and William O'Brien in that collection are sound but not surprising academic works. It is only in the Lord O'Donnell and the J. P. Mahaffy that the painter has allowed himself to enjoy the luxury of *psychological* analysis.

William Orpen is another example of the curious and perhaps significant fact that the pillars of the English School are usually men who come from Scotland, Ireland and Wales.



Orpen's portrait of
Mrs. Oscar Lewisohn, formerly Miss Edna May