

RECENT ACTIVITIES OF AUGUSTUS JOHN



STUDY OF A HEAD, BY AUGUSTUS JOHN

AUGUSTUS JOHN is now at the height of his fame. At least so it would seem. Not even the war, with its great domestic dispute over conscription or no conscription has taken public attention off Britain's most conspicuous native painter. The attitude of the interesting and picturesque Welshman is, in a word, this: "I care not who fights the battles of the Empire and the Allies, so long as I may paint the heroes who have won immortal glory, at the front, or on the floor of the House of Commons."

John's portrait of David Lloyd George, the Minister of Munitions, is much talked about just now. It seems to have given London the sort of aesthetic thrill that it needed. Besides, the appearance of this work of art at the present moment might be used as an argument to show how the national spirit could rise superior to a crisis. The French, for instance, can think of only one thing at a time—it happens to be fighting just now. But England is not to be shaken out of her set habits. So, just as a Zeppelin raid would not be allowed to interfere with the sacred ceremony of five o'clock tea, the other rooted British habit of sitting to Augustus John is not suspended in the evil hour of storm and stress.

There is sedateness about the English School even when it cuts up. For example, the recent New York exhibition of works by the younger Anglicans, in which John was represented slightly, proved quite soothing even to our most conservative of Academicians.

Still, it cannot be denied that Augustus John is interesting. The English, with their love of conventionality, really like their poets and painters to be not like other men. The prejudice extends even to the clothes and the cut of the hair. An American genius may look like a broker; an English genius, never. And it must be admitted that Augustus John is thoroughly consistent in living up to the high standard of what he ought to look like.

THE drawing by John, which is shown on this page, was brought to this country, only last month, by Mr. John Sargent, an admirer of John's art, as a gift for his friend, Mr. Carroll Beckwith, whom he visited during his stay in New York. It is published here with the kind permission of Mr. Beckwith.