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Whatever may or may not be the effect of the war on contemporary art, one thing may be reasonably taken for granted—that there will be a host of portraits painted after peace is declared. The surviving protagonists in so colossal a struggle may be forgiven if they regard themselves as in some sort historic characters, and their mothers and wives will share some of that importance as of right.

[. . .]

But while the portrait painter must be warned against the realization of ideals too soon to be discarded, he cannot escape creative responsibility by setting out to tell “the whole truth” of the elusive fabric of flesh and blood before him. Flesh and blood represents a bundle of alternating contradictions; “Persons, the mask,” a thing clear cut and consistently maintained. In a sense it is the portrait painter’s business to disengage this definite symbol. What painter but has felt, as soon as he dropped into a merely passive state, that the sitter’s envelope dissolved into formlessness before his eyes till he was ready to say with Mr. Max Beerbohm, “People say my portraits are not like the people; but then the people are really not like themselves”?

This is the real crux of the portrait painter’s inquiry, “What is truth?” He may approach this flesh and blood imitatively, in which case, with such reasonable capacity as Mr. Fiddes Watt shows in his *Robert Louis Hunter, Esq.* (135), he may, once in a while, as here, the work has been done so quickly that the painter remains throughout under the spell of a definite personality capable of imposing a reading of character. The lack of distinction in Mr. Watt’s painting, even in this instance—his relative failure in his other works—obliges us to class him among the painters whose programme is the compilation of a blurred composite, rather than among the designers who recognize that truth is to be found on many planes, weigh the validity of rival systems, and make a considered statement. Mr. Augustus John’s fine lithograph, *Alastair [sic] Crowley, Esq.* (45), is clear-

ly a selection: there is much besides this in Mr. Crowley's character, but unquestionably the artist has done his selection well and we are not ungrateful. In Mr. Sickert's . . .