

**THE SCOTSMAN
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND
14 MAY 1948**

AUGUSTUS JOHN

First Show for 11 Years

PORTRAITS AND FLOWERS

It is eleven years since Augustus John held a show, so it is natural that all London should be flocking to the Leicester Galleries to see the present one. Investors and art lovers alike are competing with one another for the works, most of which are new to the public.

Although John is above all a portrait painter, he has qualities as a painter of flowers that are unsurpassed by any artist of any time. The texture of the petals—the feel of them—is indicated, whether the flowers are magnolias or Sweet Williams; and in his "Mixed Flowers and Yellow Books" he has a rhododendron bloom of an exquisite transparency.

The portraits are, of course, the thing. John has a curious way of making his sitters tuck their chins almost under their collars. In the strong "Governor Alvan T. Fuller" (painted "In Memoriam Sacca and Vanzetti") the strong features are placed against a gaily coloured screen that re-echoes the healthy colour of the sitter's face.

Few painters catch the character and the atmosphere of a man's mind so completely as John. His portrait of Dylan Thomas has something of Elizabethan puckishness about it, and Matthew Smith, sharp and concentrated, is that of a man who will go his own way. Finest of all is "Henry in Moorish Costume," a lyrical work of regal dignity. The costume swings finely and he has lit up the mauve tunic so as to harmonise the whole painting.

SLATIER THAN SLATE

One end of the Hogarth Room is taken up with a cartoon in *grisaille*. This is, in ordinary parlance, something a little slatier than slate. In sunlight or electric light there are parts of the work that seem to be wet and other parts dry, giving an impression of "bitterness." Behind the beautifully drawn figures

there is a lovely lake surrounded by mountains. The figures, however, do not seem to belong to the same state of mind. Some of them might have come out of an ancient classical myth, one of them is a native of Wales, and one has not quite dressed for the part, being a young woman in her shift, who may be about to change into the right costume.

The Drawings are, of course, superb. "Lady Killearn" is ethereal, "Aleister Crowley" wild-eyed and strange (but not as forbidding as a really wicked man ought to be), and the studies of "Dolores" filled with wonderment. For once Mr Churchill is not quite as we would have him. He looks too like a boat-race trainer for Oxford. Still, all these works were done by a master.