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LIFE, PEOPLE—AND BOOKS

Chiaroscuro. Fragments of Autobiography. By Augustus John (Cape, 30s.)

The word "Chiaroscuro," chosen by Augustus John as the title for the first section of his autobiography, is a painter's term for the contrast between light and shade in a picture.

As a title it is a little misleading, for in these notes on life and characters by Britain's greatest living romantic painter there is a great deal of light, but very little shade. In "Chiaroscuro" the dark places of the mind are left unexplored. Instead the great Augustus draws on a rich store of comic anecdotes. He is indiscreet, but always within the bounds of reasonable discretion.

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Here are some plums pulled almost at random from this rich cake:

On black magician Aleister Crowley: "He held me by his glittering eye, as any bore is apt to do."

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