

## Mural Decoration in Scotland

long hair soon disappeared. Eventually the whole look gave way to the somewhat careworn features with the deep bar between the eyes, shown in Mr. Watts's somewhat idealised portrait in the same collection.

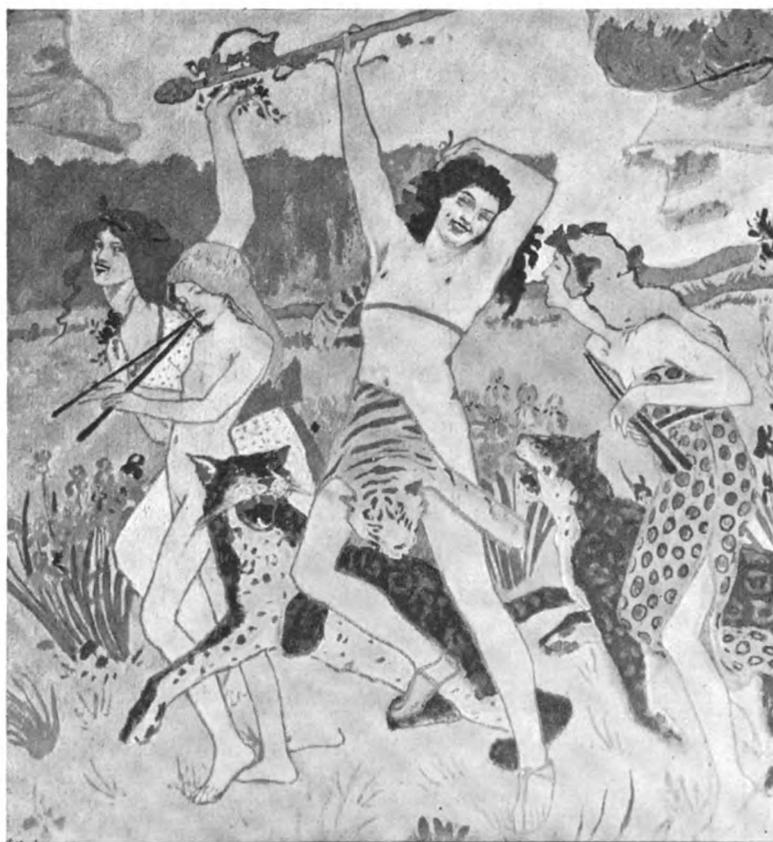
These few notes on an interesting collection of portraits may serve to show that there is material enough within the confines of the National Portrait Gallery to make a national Walhalla of art. Doubtless there exist among the portfolios of artists many studies of their own features. For the purpose of portraiture a mere sketch, such as that of Rossetti, is not unfrequently of greater value than a finished oil-painting. It is a difficult task to select among the numerous votaries of art those who have a claim to national eminence. To some it may seem that a few of those already enumerated are of doubtful worth in the national estimation. Lord Leighton is commemorated by a fine portrait, painted and given by Mr. Watts; but it is impossible not to feel a pang of jealousy that the collection in the Uffizi should possess so magnificent a portrait of Leighton by himself, and so convincing a

monument of his own skill as an artist. The same may be said of his much lamented successor, Sir John Millais, P.R.A. There may be still a Cardinal Leopold de Medicis in England who will make it his hobby to collect the autograph portraits of the artists who have been the chief ornaments of the British School.

### MURAL DECORATION IN SCOTLAND. PART I. BY MARGARET ARMOUR.

THE march of intellect has wavered much in the world's history, but the march of art has wavered more. That a nation like ours, posing as the world's mental pioneer, can endure placidly the chaotic ugliness of its manufacturing towns, and the sordidness of its average street everywhere, is a striking proof of the fluctuating advance of aesthetics. Yet the instinct of beauty, though it often sleeps, never dies. From time to time the creative mandate, "Let there be light," goes forth, and what was without form and void resolves itself into ordered loveliness.

At present the architectural sense, lost so long, seems reviving in us. Many have begun genuinely to sorrow over the grotesque proportions, the stupid ornament, the heavy vulgarity that civic folly or the jerry-builder forces upon us, and to cry out, not only for beautiful lines, but for the old joy of colour as well. This joy of colour was one in which the peoples of *la bonne antiquité* revelled without stint. India, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece, painted their dwellings outside and in. The Romans were insensitive to art harmonies, but the barbarous nations who destroyed them loved and strove for gorgeousness of hue. Gothic architecture, by narrowing the flat wall-spaces, arrested for a time the development of mural decoration. But when the architectural craze was over, painting re-com-



BACCHANALIAN PROCESSION FROM A DECORATIVE PAINTING BY JOHN DUNCAN



DECORATIVE PAINTING  
ILLUSTRATING THE STORY  
OF "ORPHEUS." BY JOHN  
DUNCAN

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scheme corresponds to the view through a window, so that easel methods must be largely unlearned, and other laws than those which concern painting alone must be sympathetically deferred to, if mural art is to live again among us.

Everybody knows what Puvis de Chavannes has done in France, and how adequately he has caught up and continued the best tradition. His frescoes in the Pantheon are not only beautiful in themselves and sympathetically just to the architectural plan; they are drawn to scale with the architect's conception, and impress with the same vastness as the building that contains them. Sir Frederic



DECORATIVE PANEL ILLUSTRATING THE  
STORY OF "ORPHEUS." BY JOHN DUNCAN

menced, and the brush and the chisel worked inseparably together till the Renaissance. Then the brush sued for divorce. It wanted more scope, more independence than the old union allowed of. The high relief, the linear perspective indispensable to its ambitious realism, architecture would none of. And so the rift grew, until it became a gulf which, with the best will in the world, our artists to-day can hardly cross. The easel picture, originally just a portable bit of coloured wall, as it were, has so utterly lost any organic connection with building, that its only possible part in the architectural

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Leighton's frescoes of "Peace" and "War" at South Kensington, though on a different level, have identified a prominent name with the mural movement, and the decoration of St. Paul's by Mr. Richmond, and of the Manchester Town Hall by Ford Madox Brown, are public recognitions of this almost disused art.

But while the revival in France and England is watched with general interest, the public seem hardly to know that, in Scotland, Edinburgh is as busy making art history on her walls as Glasgow is busy making it on her casels.

"The grey old metropolis of the North" had been getting greyer year by year with freestone and slate, when suddenly, on the east slope of the Castle Hill, a bright-hued pile arose, shocking, with its red roofs and gilded spire, the devotees of drab. Professor Geddes, the promoter of the innovation, smiled from his heights, and well he might, for Ramsay Garden is now one of the town's chief show places. The site, the architecture, the function of the building (which is partly that of a University settlement, and partly of a residential *rendezvous* of choice literary and artistic spirits), have much to do with its vogue; but perhaps a more permanent and unique attraction than all these is the mural art which it now enshrines.

The first treasure secured was a frieze in the hall of Professor Geddes' home, by Mr. John Duncan. The subject is *The Evolution of Pipe Music*, portrayed in a procession round the four walls. Heading it is poor Syrinx, transformed into the reed with which Pan made shift to console himself, a fit beginning: sorrow and solace, song's root and flower. Then comes Pan as instructor of Apollo. And



DECORATIVE PANEL ILLUSTRATING "THE JOURNEY OF ST. MUNGO"

BY JOHN DUNCAN

so the wonder grows and spreads, until it is common to king and clown. In the next section of the frieze, the pipes swell through the glades of Arcady, and Corydon and Thyrsis attune them to youth and love. *The Crossing of the Red Sea* and a spirited Bacchanalian procession lead to the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*. The tragic note struck when "the door in the mountain-side shut fast," deepens to *The Coronach of Claverhouse*, where it dies away among the Highland hills. *The Bacchanalian Procession*, reproduced here, shows Mr. Duncan's genius for the blending of dramatic and decorative treatment. The colour in the whole series is very beautiful, the drawing able and full of style. The feeling for movement is wonderful,

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and the figures are most skilfully grouped. The forms are courageously conventionalised, and architectural claims admitted.

Mr. Duncan's next considerable work was the decoration of the Common-room of Ramsay Lodge University Hall. This was a much bigger undertaking, and meant the painting of seven large panels. The subjects are drawn from Celtic history. The first is *The Awakening of Cuchullin*. Cuchullin, the hero of an ancient cycle of Gaelic Saga, wakes refreshed from the fever and the wounds of battle after three days' sleep under the guard of his father Lerg, of Faerieland. The second is *The Combat of Fionn* (Fingal) with Swaran, the Scandinavian. The third is *The Taking of Excalibur*. This is one of the finest of the set, and is reproduced here. The picture tells Tennyson's story, translating the poetry of words into the poetry of paint. The colour-scheme is violet, pale green, lemon, yellow and red. Fourth, we have *The Journey of St. Mungo* (also reproduced here). St. Mungo is taking, to be buried at Glasgow, the

dead St. Fergus, in a waggon drawn by untamed bulls. The fifth panel is *The Vision of Johannes Scotus Erigena*, a weird presentment of the sage's vision of his own naked soul sweeping past him in a flame to perdition. The sixth and last of the executed panels shows *Michael Scot* translating Aristotle with that "maistre o' maistres" standing behind him. The last of the panels, still blank, is to be devoted to *The Admirable Crichton*.

Throughout this series Mr. Duncan has adopted an extremely ornamental method. He has conventionalised in the ancient Celtic taste of the *Book of Kells*. The borders, even more markedly in the same taste, are the work of Miss Helen Hay and other members of the Old Edinburgh School of Art, of which Mr. Duncan is director.

At present, Mr. Duncan is doing for Mr. James Beveridge, of Pitreavie Castle, Dunfermline, a series of mural decorations based on the story of Orpheus, as told by Henryson of Dunfermline, which, as far as they have gone, are most characteristic and beautiful.

Mr. Duncan's mural work is only slightly modelled—has, indeed, just about the same relief as that of Puvis de Chavannes. His arrangements are more ornamental than that artist's, and his ornament is more employed in detail. The tone of his colour, remarkably low and subtle in his earlier paintings, is similar, but less monochromatic.

But comparisons are the last thing suggested by Mr. Duncan. His charm is that there is nobody like him. He is thoroughly individual. Classic restraint marks his composition and technique, while the dramatic intensity of his treatment betrays the fervour of the Celtic temperament. His hand shapes and orders his phantasy, and his phantasy gives verve to his hand.

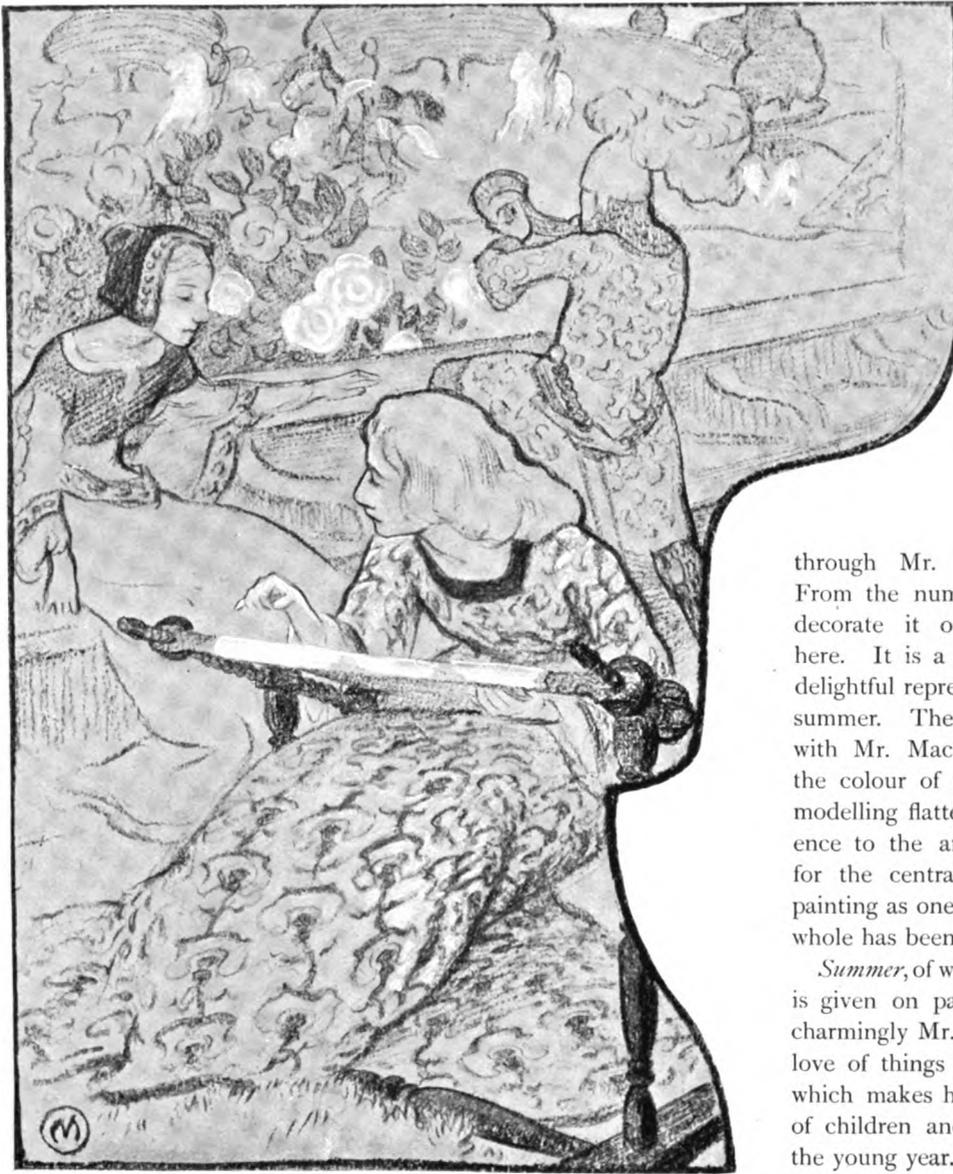
Mr. Duncan's twin star in the strikingly decorative departure on Castle Hill is



"O LANG, LANG MAY THE LADIES SIT"

DECORATIVE PANEL BY CHARLES H. MACKIE

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“THE CALL TO ARMS” DECORATIVE PANEL BY CHARLES H. MACKIE

Less brilliantly coloured, but equally strong in their handling, are the series in the ante-drawing-room. Still another room in Professor Geddes' house has become a small art gallery

through Mr. Mackie's genius. From the numerous panels that decorate it one is reproduced here. It is a season pastoral, a delightful representation of early summer. The tone, as always with Mr. Mackie, is adapted to the colour of the wall, and the modelling flattened out of deference to the architectural lines; for the central idea of mural painting as one part of an organic whole has been firmly grasped.

*Summer*, of which an illustration is given on page 106, expresses charmingly Mr. Mackie's intense love of things youthful and fair, which makes him the playfellow of children and the comrade of the young year.

He sees life less as an ornamentalist than with the broadly human eye, and only after the

Mr. Charles H. Mackie. One is so accustomed to the haphazard landscape whose charms come often so much “more from luck than good guidance,” that a reasoned and calculated landscape design brings one up with quite a shock of surprise—and pleasure.

Nobody with the slightest eye for art could be in Professor Geddes' drawing-room and miss Mr. Mackie's two landscape panels. The audacious forms and colour-schemes are justified by complete success, and, arresting as they are in themselves, they are perfectly harmonious with the room, whose artistic intention they catch and accentuate.

poetry of a theme has appealed to him does he set his ordering hand to create for it a beautiful and significant rendering. Hence the sane and classic balance of all his work.

Originally a painter of easel pictures, and accustomed irresponsibly to assert his own vivid moods, he has now attained to the wider and more impersonal outlook of the decorator; and by yielding no point to the exigencies of the new art without testing the necessity by thought and experiment, he has worked himself into a style individual and distinguished, and has achieved a “grand manner” all his own.

## Mrs. Chance's Studies of Cats

Mr. Beveridge of Pitreavie Castle will soon be the fortunate possessor of a considerable number of mural art-treasures, for, in addition to Mr. Duncan's *Orpheus* panels, he is now having some others painted for his corridor by Mr. Mackie.

The subjects are suggested by the history of the Castle, whose one-time owner, Lady Wardlaw, wrote the ballad of "Hardyknute," and had attributed to her that of Sir Patrick Spens.

Sir Patrick, as all versed in ballad lore will know, is sent on an embassy to Norway:

The King has written a braid letter  
And sealed it wi' his hand,  
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,  
Was walking on the strand.

To Norway, to Norway,  
To Norway owre the faem,  
The King's daughter to Norway,  
'Tis thou maun tak' her hame.

The ship goes down, and the end is a wail:



"SUMMER"

DECORATIVE PANEL BY CHARLES H. MACKIE

O lang, lang may the ladies sit,  
Wi' their fans into their hand,  
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens  
Come sailing to the land.

And lang, lang may the maidens sit,  
Wi' the gowd kaims in their hair,  
A' waitin' for their ain dear loves,  
For them they'll see nae mair.

A panel from the Sir Patrick Spens series is reproduced on page 104. *Hardyknute* gets two panels, *The Call to Arms* (page 105) and *The Battle*, and there are to be two more, illustrating the practical and devotional sides of Queen Margaret of Scotland.

Mr. Mackie's Pitreavie work shows a growth in ornamental treatment. The figures are unmistakably conventionalised, but so artfully as hardly to seem wrested at all from their natural forms; and the composition, though rigidly decorative, is alive with old-world romance.

It is curious how often from the ashes of a burnt-out tradition the best art springs. Who would have looked for such men as Charles Mackie and John Duncan from the school of Beattie Browns and McWhirters?

**M**RS. W.  
CHANCE'S  
STUDIES  
OF CATS.  
BY H.  
STRACHEY.

Too often, alas, is the art of animal drawing given over to the Philistines. That great baby, the British Public, demands its toys, and cats and dogs are drawn for its amusement. Hence a style of art exists, the ingredients of which are kittens, puppies, babies, and children, and out of these elements are compounded the confections so dear to the hearts of the patrons of Christmas numbers. At the hands of some black-and-white artists popular in illustrated supplements and on Christmas cards, the dignity and beauty of the