

The Famous Mural Paintings, "The Prophets," by John S. Sargent, in the Boston Public Library



(From a Coplay Print, copyright by Curtis & Cameron, Boston.)



HE frieze of "The Prophets" is probably the most popular mural decoration in America. It was painted in 1894 for the Boston Public Library by John Singer Sargent, the noted

American artist, who is a prominent member of the Royal Academy, London. It is part of an elaborate and not yet completed scheme of decoration of what is known as Sargent Hall, on the third floor of the Library Building.

There are eighteen figures in the frieze. The central figure is Moses, supporting the Tables of the Law. Moses is considered as the ideal and almost superhuman exponent of the Divine will, and is therefore treated with great conventionality. His priestly garment arranged in formal folds, contrasting with the loose robes of the other prophets, and, above all, the golden wings of the Spirit which enfold him, are all intended to symbolize the authority of the spokesman of Jehovah.



(From a Coplay Print, copyright by Curtis & Cameron, Boston.)



N the right hand is Joshua sheathing his sword, on the left is Elijah—the three forming a group by themselves.

In the right-hand panel the three extreme figures are exulting, in strong antithesis to the three prophets on the opposite wall, in the sure hope of a Messiah who shall relieve Israel of her woes, and are pointing in the direction of the panels which, in a few years, Mr. Sargent is to decorate with a painting of Christ preaching to the nations.

The names of the prophets, beginning at the left, omitting the central three, are Zephaniah, Joel, Obadiah, Hosea, Amos, Nahum, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Jonah, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Micah, Haggai, Malachi, and Zachariah. Those to the left of Elijah are the prophets of despair, relieved by one prophet of hope, Hosea, (Mr. Sargent's favorite figure, it is said,) while among the prophets of hope beyond Joshua there is a prophet of despair, Micah. Daniel bears a scroll inscribed in Hebrew, with the words, from Daniel xii:3, "And they that be wise shall shine." Jonah bears a scroll inscribed with the word "Jehovah."



(From a Coplay Print, copyright by Curtis & Cameron, Boston.)