

# Artist Puts Roosevelt, Wilson and Edison in His Temple of Fame

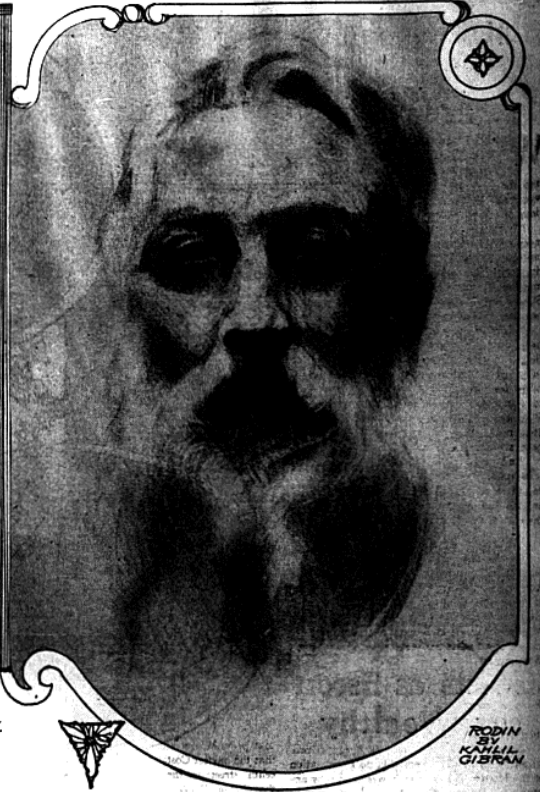


PERCY MACKAYE BY KAHILIL GIBRAN.



STRAND

MR KAHILIL GIBRAN, AUTHOR AND ARTIST WHO IS MAKING THE PORTFOLIO OF "THE GREATEST MEN AND WOMEN."



RODIN BY KAHILIL GIBRAN

Others Whom Kahlil Gibran Includes in His List of Immortals Are the Late Henri Rochefort, Rodin, Bernhardt, Pierre Loti, Maeterlinck, Jane Addams and Luther Burbank.

By RUTH DANENHOWER.

IN the old Tenth street studio building, on the top floor, where La Farge used to have his rooms, is a Syrian artist who has the fabled powers of the Fates, for he looks over the world and decides who shall enter the Elysian fields of fame and who shall be left to molder in the Hades of obscurity.

Not only Americans, but men and women of the entire world, are weighed by him to see if they are worthy to be included in his portfolio of the great.

The idea was suggested to this Syrian, Kahlil Gibran, by his very good friend, the late Henri Rochefort, world famous as a journalist and duellist in Paris. Rochefort's idea was to have the portfolio include the twenty-five greatest living contributors to the creative arts and to publish it under the title of "The Temple of Art." Mr. Gibran immediately started the portfolio with a drawing of the journalist himself, and now counts himself fortunate to have made it before the death of his friend two months ago.

Mr. Gibran is many-sided enough to understand different forms of greatness. He is himself the author of many plays, allegories, poems and novels in Arabic which are widely read in Egypt, Syria and Persia, and some of which have been translated into French and English.

**Artist and Musician.**

His paintings give him such a high rank among artists that it is difficult to say whether he is an artist who writes or an author who paints and draws. He has a wide knowledge of music, both Oriental and Occidental, and through residence in all the great European cities and knowledge of five languages his acquaintance with many other sides of modern life is both wide and deep. One thing he does not attempt is sculpture, yet so strong and well-modified are his drawings that Rodin nicknamed him "the high rominess of his studio."

In the wide, high rominess of his studio Mr. Gibran, earnest, quiet and dignified, moving with the noiseless speed of the East, put out his drawings for his visitors to see. I found mystery and subtlety in that studio. Over an easel some damasks were thrown, with their bright gold and saffron tints half hidden by a brown veil.

On the wall was a death mask of a woman, her beauty and spirituality made elusive with a will. In a box of Eastern workmanship burned sweet smelling incense: "the gums of Araby."

In this Oriental atmosphere I expected strange, allegorical studies of the great, with symbols and subtleties that I should try vainly to understand.

**Comment on His Sitters.**

To my surprise the drawings stood out clear-cut, strikingly convincing expressions of their subjects. Some, like the study of Rochefort, with his noble brow, have all the beauty of

splendid heads in sculpture; others are as unforgettably ugly as their subjects, for greatness and beauty so seldom go hand in hand.

Mr. Gibran's comment on his sitters is as interesting as the drawings themselves. Many are his warm friends, others he has known only through their work until they posed for him.

"When I meet them for the first time it is so interesting to study their personalities," he said to me in his perfect English—he had an English tutor as a boy. "Then sometimes they study me to find out how I am studying them, and in my turn I study the way they study me! You see the Eastern subtlety is there.

He showed me a tall, sinuous-looking drawing of Bernhardt. "The most great artificial artist of the nineteenth century," he commented. "Every feature, every limb, every gesture has been worked over to produce the effect of youth. Not one natural tone or movement."

He recalled with horror the afternoon "the woman who tries to be young" posed for him. She insisted on keeping at the far end of the room so that he might not see her wrinkles. She covered her neck with veils in a vain attempt to give the illusion of youth with which she can deceive her audiences only by the aid of cunning stage appliances. Mr. Gibran's study of her gives the impression of a woman whose youth and beauty is veiled, lost in shadow.

"It is such a pity to strive against old age," he said. "It is such a pity to strive against old age," he said, deprecating way, looking mournfully at the drawing. "The women I have known who were most beautiful in their spiritual qualities were old."

He told of his grandmother, back in Mount Lebanon, that independent state in Syria, in which his father was an official. His grandmother is the widow of a bishop of the ancient Maronite church and still has great power and influence, though she is 103 years old, the grandmother of a grandfurther!

**His View of Rostand.**

Turning Bernhardt to the wall, Mr. Gibran set out interesting studies of the lean, good-looking Rostand with the self-satisfied expression. Mr. Gibran characterized him as clever, but artificial; one who started as a dreamer and continues as a money maker.

Then came a delightful study of Debussy and reminiscences of the afternoon he posed for it in his Paris studio. He inquired eagerly of Mr. Gibran about the Oriental scale, a subject vital to the musician in his present method of introducing Oriental themes into his compositions.

Perhaps Mr. Gibran's most interesting recollection of the genius he did in France is of Rodin, a giant of genius whom he considers will be known and honored in future ages when most of the great ones of the portfolio will be forgotten. Before Mr. Gibran considered the drawing of the sculptor finished Rodin insisted he should not touch it further.

"Don't you know the saying that it takes two artists to make a picture?" the sculptor demanded. "One to do the work and the other to chop off his head at the point where he should stop!"

To a Paris newspaper Rodin wrote that he considered Mr. Gibran's drawing the only ade-

quate likeness of himself ever made. Mr. Gibran modestly says this is not so much a compliment to him as a true statement of the inadequacy of all other portraits, drawings and photographs of Rodin.

**Still on Loti's Trail.**

Other great ones whom Mr. Gibran will include in his portfolio are Pierre Loti and Maeterlinck. When Pierre Loti, who was a friend of Mr. Gibran's father, was in New York last year Mr. Gibran asked him to sit for the drawing. Mr. Loti refused, saying he would do anything for him but that.

Mr. Gibran shrewdly suspects he asked him about twenty years too late to suit his vanity, for in care of his personal appearance and desire to appear young he is a second Bernhardt.

His face is always carefully massaged and rouged and his eyebrows penciled. Mr. Gibran says that, like "the divine Sarah," M. Loti is careful where he sits, always avoiding a strong light and proximity to a window shade of an unbecoming color.

However, when next they meet Mr. Gibran hopes to persuade M. Loti to change his mind and have the drawing made. That day in New York he was not in just the mood to please Mr. Gibran, for he berated the Syrian author for his last novel, saying it showed he was allying himself with modern ideas instead of always keeping his face to the East, in Loti's opinion the only place where beauty can be found today.

"New York? Why should you stay in New York?" M. Loti asked contemptuously. "It

will ruin your art and your writing. It is the most vulgar city in the world."

Mr. Gibran hotly disputed him, calling New York the most dynamic of cities. "It is creative," he explained to me. "It may have vulgar aspects, but that is only one side of its creative power. As for vulgar display of wealth, that has been in every city at every time. To me the spiritual longings of New York, the human hunger for betterment, is immensely inspiring.

"Look at lower New York, with all its great buildings—a new type of city created in the last forty years. Loti may say, 'Go to Damascus. There alone by a fountain in a garden of flowers and fragrance you will find inspiration.' But I remain in New York."

**His American Subjects.**

That brought us to the men of this country whom Mr. Gibran has drawn for his portfolio. He finds that American creative genius does not now express itself chiefly in the three arts. So instead of following Rochefort's plan of a temple of art with twenty-five niches, he will include forty or more representatives of all kinds of creative genius and call the portfolio "The Temple of Art and Knowledge," or perhaps "The Temple of Life."

Thus he will draw Luther Burbank, whose wonderful work he considers creative in both a scientific and poetic sense. There will also be Mr. Edison, Miss Jane Addams, Mr. Roosevelt and President Wilson.

Already Mr. Gibran had a drawing of President (Emeritus) Eliot of Harvard. It is a profile and has been jocosely called "a study of an ear," so carefully did he draw the large

ear, which he considered a characteristic feature. Mr. Gibran told me that President Eliot, like most Boston people, has wide knowledge, but that it is bookish, unrelated to life.

Other Americans of whom Mr. Gibran has already made drawings are the sculptor Paul Bartlett, the poets Richard Le Gallienne, Edwin Markham and Percy Mackaye, and the dancer Ruth St. Denis. For British subjects he has so far done the Celtic Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats. Just which of these Anglo-Saxons and Celts will be included in "The Temple of Life" remains for Mr. Gibran and his publishers to decide.

Mr. Gibran declares his test is not whether a man's work has the sincerity and originality that are essential parts of genius. If he used that acid test "The Temple of Life" might contain only Rodin and one or two others. He includes those who through their creative work have largely influenced their times.

A well known American company is negotiating to publish the portfolio here, but at a German house has already arranged to bring it out in de luxe form Mr. Gibran naturally feels compelled to include only those who are known on the Continent.

**To Draw D'Annunzio and Kaiser.**

"I must disregard those whose influence is only in this country," he said with decision.

While he uttered this he soothed my ruffled sensibilities by offering me delicious candied apricots from Syria to enjoy while I looked over the rest of the drawings. There was the benign patriarch, Abdul Bahai, the Persian prophet of a universal religion; there was Earl Jung, the German psychologist, whose clean-cut features and look of strong precision make him resemble Kipling, one of the English great ones whom, along with Barrie and Bernard Shaw, Mr. Gibran has yet to draw.

He told me of his plan to journey to Italy next year to make drawings of D'Annunzio, of Canonica, a sculptor of children too little known in this country, and of Duse, whose art, in contrast to Bernhardt's, he declares will never grow old, for she feels everything she does. A journey northward to draw the German Emperor, and the portfolio will be completed.

As I left Mr. Gibran in his studio, where the sweet-smelling incense still burned "because sometimes he got so homesick for Syria that he simply must have the fragrance," I felt his was a delicate task to decide whether Ruth St. Denis should go into "The Temple of Life" beside President Eliot and whether the Kaiser should be cheek by jowl with G. B. Shaw!

My only fear was that those pseudo-great ones who will be debared from "The Temple of Life" might rise and attack Mr. Gibran.

Perhaps when the portfolio is published he will find it convenient to retire to Mount Lebanon, where he can write, paint and draw undisturbed until he attains the great age of his grandmother.