

## ***RSA Obituary, transcribed from the 1920 RSA Annual Report***

The youngest son of Captain Mackie of the 2nd Queen's Royals, Charles H. Mackie was born at Aldershot in 1862. His first few years were spent there and in other military centres of Southern England; but, before he was of school age, the family had come to Edinburgh, where the boy received his education, first at George Watson's College, and, later, at the University.

The intention was that he should follow a scientific career, but his medical studies had barely commenced when the future Academician decided that Art, not Science, was to be the work of his life; though he never regretted the knowledge he had acquired in the anatomical class-room.

At the age of sixteen Mr. Mackie enrolled as a student at the Trustees' School, then under the direction of Mr. C. D. Hodder, and in 1881 he entered the Academy's Life Class, where Mr. Robert Herdman, Mr. M'Taggart, and Mr. Lockhart were then Visitors. In 1884 he divided the Stuart prize with Mr. Tom Scott.

Though his later student years coincided with the Parisian training movement, it is somewhat strange that Mackie, whose work was afterwards to be so closely associated with the continent, does not seem ever to have contemplated such a course of study. One cause of this may have been his ardent participation, about that time, in the Art side of the University Settlement movement associated with the name of Professor P. W. Geddes.

Six designs for panels in the royal Infirmary, exhibited in 1887, and a series of mural paintings executed for Mr. Beveridge of Pitreavie Castle, were amongst the fruits of this phase of Mr. Mackie's versatile talent. Since 1880 he had contributed annually to the Academy's Exhibitions.

For the first few years his subjects are of the local landscape order, but after the middle eighties the titles indicate an acquaintance with various districts of Great Britain and Ireland, and figure subjects, the rustic idyll, and the summer pastoral mingle more and more with the pure landscape element.

His work during these years, and till the close of the century, shows a singular variety of aim and motive, as of one restlessly straining after elusive ideals, both in subject and treatment. "Weaning Time" and "E'ning brings a' Hame," exhibited in 1888, brought him a well-merited popularity, and it looked as if he had found his *métier*.

But it was not so; colour schemes and the technique of his Art were occupying him more and more, and every avenue of approach to a higher excellence had to be explored. Such titles as “Oak in Autumn,” “Winter Sunlight,” “The Jap Album,” “The Silver Bay,” give some indication of the problems of colour and light with which he was grappling.

Towards the close of the century he had made short visits to Normandy and Brittany ; but it was not till more prolonged residences in the vicinity of Étaples (1904-9) that his work was seriously affected by the French environment, as was seen in “The Return of the Flock to the Fold” (1907), and the “Winter Pastoral” of the following year.

These canvases were intermingled with many of a quite different nature, the outcome of other influences, of which the “Girl in Black” and “For Harvest Festival” were notable examples. Fortunately Mackie did not long remain contented with the Pas de Calais. He responded to the call of the further south, and it is with the series of Venetian pictures exhibited between the years 1909 and 1912 that his name will be specially associated. One would have thought that the attentions of landscape painters to Venice for two hundred years would have left little new for later artists to glean.

But Mackie found an aspect of the place not hitherto—or only very inadequately—touched, that glamour of mingled day or moonlight with artificial lights which haunts the recollection and gives an added charm to its many attractions. “La Piazzetta, Venice,” and “Belvedere, Venice” are fine examples of this treatment.

Till 1915 these delightful and original presentments of Venice and its outdoor evening life, with stray canvases from Rome and Bassano, form the bulk of Mr. Mackie’s contributions, and we had fondly hoped for a long continuance of such inspiring works when the black cloud of war closed the continent to British artists.

In 1912 there was exhibited “The Handmaid of Art,” a work on which he had been long engaged, and which showed the painter in still another vein. This was afterwards purchased by subscription and presented to the Scottish Modern Arts Association.

Recollections or impressions of his various visits to the continent, with some landscapes from Wales, were the subjects of most of his exhibited work during the few years between 1914 and the long illness which preceded his death, which took place on 12th July. Mr. Mackie was elected an Associate in 1902, and Academician in 1917. For forty years he had strongly supported the Annual Exhibitions.

It is much more than a valued contributor that the Academy has lost in the untimely death of Charles Mackie. His passionate devotion to his art, his delight in the analytical

discussion of its various problems; and in its practice, his eager search, along many lines, after “higher things” made him a centre of influence amongst his brother artists which it is difficult to overestimate, and which happily will long survive him.

Mr. Mackie took an active part in the founding of the Society of Scottish Artists, and in 1900 he was elected their President. He was also a member of the Royal Scottish Water Colour Society. From an early date he exhibited from time to time in various Continental Art Centres, and in 1912 he was awarded a gold medal at Amsterdam.