

A FEW WORDS TO TEACHERS .



ADVICE or counsel for teachers ought to be almost superfluous, inasmuch as out of individual experience, the best counselor of all, ought each one to seek to impart knowledge to others. And yet the wording of many

letters coming to this department, as well as actual personal observation, have proved that many, very many unfortunately, fail to realize the fundamental requirements of anyone desirous of taking up the position of a teacher in art of whatever branch. Living in a large city in the east one sees in the course of a year a number of women coming from distant states or country districts in order to take a few lessons, usually in the latest decorative craze, with the object of teaching it again. They paint a few specimen pieces with some artist, which probably can hardly, with the utmost stretch of the imagination, be termed in any sense their own work, although they may possibly have watched the painting of them, and taken copious notes as to the colors used and method of treatment for future reference in "teaching again."

NOW, the fact of coming to any art center for such a purpose as that indicated is legitimate enough in itself, provided the woman in question has a good knowledge of art principles, and particularly of drawing, with some experience in color; it is not only legitimate, but a wise investment of time and money from a business standpoint, but the cases where the proceeding is all wrong, and the instances of it are not infrequent, is where the would-be teacher is herself without the least elementary training in the rudiments of art, and often very incapable into the bargain. Possessed of a few specimens as a bait for prospective pupils, she returns to her native place and the outcome of her endeavors as a teacher, when she has probably proved the most unsatisfactory of pupils in the studio where she gained her very superficial knowledge and her specimens, may be more readily imagined than described. Furthermore, to press the question closer, let each one tempted to try to make an uncertain living in this way put it secretly to herself—is it quite honest to seek to sell to other persons a knowledge which you actually do not possess yourself? To try to teach where you need instruction as much as any of your pupils, to pass off as specimens of your work pieces, which although you may have painted them partially, are to all intents and purposes the work of the artist in whose studio you took lessons? Is it doing as you would be done by? Various answers may be given to avoid taking home any such unpleasant questions, doubtless, but without having any particular instance in mind, the fact remains that such cases are, and that such cases ought not to be.

TO turn to another point concerning teachers who having the needful capability are in possession of a studio and are receiving pupils privately or in classes. It is most important, more than a beginner can imagine, that a woman in such a position should be tactful, capable and business-like apart from her artistic qualifications, or rather, in addition to them. She must be frank and upright in all her dealings, because not only is that one's duty from a moral standpoint, but that honesty is the best policy is a business principle requisite to the best kind of success. It is a wise plan to always tell a pupil when arranging about lessons as nearly as possible just about how much the expense for lessons and materials is likely to be. This prevents any future dissatisfaction as to the amount of bills and rids one's studio, if the prices are high, of pupils who cannot afford to pay, and whom, therefore, a teacher cannot afford to take. It is fair both ways. Furthermore, a wise woman will require a deposit from every new and unknown pupil before cutting canvas or preparing work, and also the payment for lessons in advance or at the time of taking them. This is due to one's self, minimizes the probability of bad debts, and if it is the rule, everyone will accept it as such. The pupils lost by such a regulation are not desirable in any studio. Fair dealing should tell both ways. A teacher gives her knowledge and attention for so much money and for a certain length of time. At the close of that time the lesson is over, and although the principle cannot always be rigidly adhered to, yet the teacher who allows her pupils to occupy her studio and take up her time for an hour or so before and after every class is very foolish and unbusiness-like, and as a word of warning to the inexperienced there are a certain class of pupils who do not hesitate to impose on the good nature of a teacher if she does not from the beginning maintain her just position in the matter, which can be done quietly and imperceptibly without giving offence.