

EXHIBITION OF ARTISTS SCRAPS & SKETCHES



EVERY artist objects to showing to his patrons or to others who are not members of his craft his picture unframed, his creed being—doubtless it is the result of accumulated wisdom and experience—that the canvas, no matter how well painted, needs the mass of gold or other material which he puts around it to separate it from adjoining objects and to give it a proper and fitting dress.

With him beauty unadorned is not adorned the most—unless his unadorned beauty is shown to those who, like himself, know its intrinsic merit or demerit without any adventitious aids; and the painter's understanding of the advantage to be gained by a good frame is perhaps, after all, more the artist's love for the symphonic tone of the gold than anything else. The dealer, however, understands not only this value, but also the effect to be produced on the expectant purchaser by the twists and curves of the carving, the play of light and shade of the gilding, and the general effect of a mass of suggested costliness as implied by so much gold, even when that gold is but a cobweb surface on plaster. But the dealer goes even farther. He is brought constantly in close contact with the great public. He knows their weaknesses and foibles, and can run the whole gamut of the various beliefs or suggestions which cause the man to make up his mind to exchange his money for a bit of painted canvas or paper. He not only uses the frame,—and he never spares expense on this adjunct of the picture,—but oftentimes places a glass in the front of an oil painting, to protect, as he tells his patron, this precious work from smoke and dust and dirt. He places around the outside of the frame what he calls a "shadow box," usually of some costly and rich-colored wood, and lined with crimson plush or silk velvet. Here is a gorgeous dress. Surely a thing which is worthy of so much costly decking out—a decking out of velvet,

precious woods, crystal, and gold—must have great value in itself. And yet almost every artist feels that this stage business of the dealer ought not to be necessary, and tolerates it only because the butcher and the baker will not wait longer and the studio rent must be paid. It was probably this feeling that caused so many New York artists to allow The Fellowcraft Club to take their canvases and their drawings and to place them on their walls without frames or decorations or any adventitious aid whatsoever.

The public, or rather such of the public as were fortunate enough to secure invitations, were asked to come to see artists' sketches and scraps. I am free to confess that without some explanation this latter term would have been meaningless to me. The word sketch everybody, or nearly everybody, understands; but what was the meaning of scrap?

The visitor understood after having seen the material exhibited. It consisted of outdoor studies, sketches from nature, figures made in the studio, *ébauches*, *pochades*,—the inspirational data, as one newspaper called these, for larger, more important works,—memoranda from pocket note-books; portrait studies, etc. Every medium was represented—oil, water color, crayon, pencil, pen and ink, and pastel. Nearly one hundred artists of New York had ransacked their portfolios, and turned out the corners of their *ateliers*, and given to the art committee of the club such material as is rarely seen even by the frequent visitor to the studios. For the artist is strong in his faith that such things as were here exhibited—things made with a real purpose, to aid in making something else—are not to be shown to those whom they expect to buy their finished works.

And yet perhaps no more interesting exhibition was ever held in New York; certainly none with so complete an absence of what for a better term might be called the commercial side of the artists' life. Only a few of the three or four hundred works exhibited had come into

existence in the expectation that anybody would want to buy them. Hence there was a better opportunity for judging the abilities of the exhibitors than at any of the regular picture exhibitions, and the universal feeling of artists, connoisseurs, and critics was that the exhibitors showed themselves stronger, truer, and better artists than they did in their completed works. This was especially apparent in some of the black and white rooms, where were seen, among other things, the original sketches by the side of the finished cartoons made by the staff of artists of one of the leading comic papers. After redrawing, and, in some cases, putting into color to attract the public eye, the virility and the artistic sentiment of the original sketch were often destroyed. Such of the art-loving public as knew the work of these men only by their published efforts obtained a more just and proper idea of their value as artists.

Again, the exhibited outdoor studies of one of the leading portraitists showed a phase of his art with which the public was unacquainted. One study in particular—a piece of Vermont hillside, with flying clouds and a group of trees, full of light and air and movement—had more of the *plein-air* quality than many works ostensibly of this school.

The exhibit (of which examples are given in the following pages) seemed to be strongest in its black and white work and weakest in its water color. In fact, in regard to the latter, although there were charming works by several of the leading men in this line, it seems as though we as a people have not yet risen to a sense of the beauty and power of this medium. When one thinks of the brilliancy, richness,

and directness of which water color is capable, one cannot help wishing that the tentative, or the merely clever, had not taken so firm a hold on our public. Perhaps the development of this art is hindered by the absurd feeling on the part of the picture buyer, confined happily to the United States, that it is not so serious or so valuable as oil painting.

There were, however, one or two notes which gave a suggestion of improvement in this respect, a few things bright, luminous, and sparkling—the true quality of water color.

I have said that the exhibition was strongest in its black and white. This was felt by all visitors. Here was a line of art in which New York was equal to any other city in the world, although it must be admitted that in the more important compositions there was, as a rule, a certain lack of true artistic strength. Technically everything was excellent.

There were drawings in pencil to which the adjective “charming” would be weak; splendid studies of heads and figures excellently drawn in charcoal and in crayon; while, as was to be expected, the work done with pen and ink was perhaps the best of all.

The teaching of this exhibition—and the artists have to thank The Fellowcraft Club for this—was, that the artist when unhindered does his best work; that rarely does a suggestion either from patron or dealer tend to improve at least the art quality. It may make it more literary, more understandable, or more interesting to the layman, but if the artist is to give us truly artistic work,—granted that he is an artist,—he had better be left alone to work out his conception.

William Lewis Fraser.

A collection of handwritten signatures of artists, including names like Wm. Lewis Fraser, John F. Kensler, and others, arranged in several rows.

AUTOGRAPHS OF EXHIBITORS.



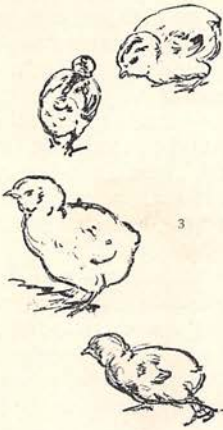
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1. Diana. Sketch for a decoration, oil, by Frank Fowler.
2. A Vermont Hillside. Oil study, by John W. Alexander.
3. Chickens. Pen sketches from

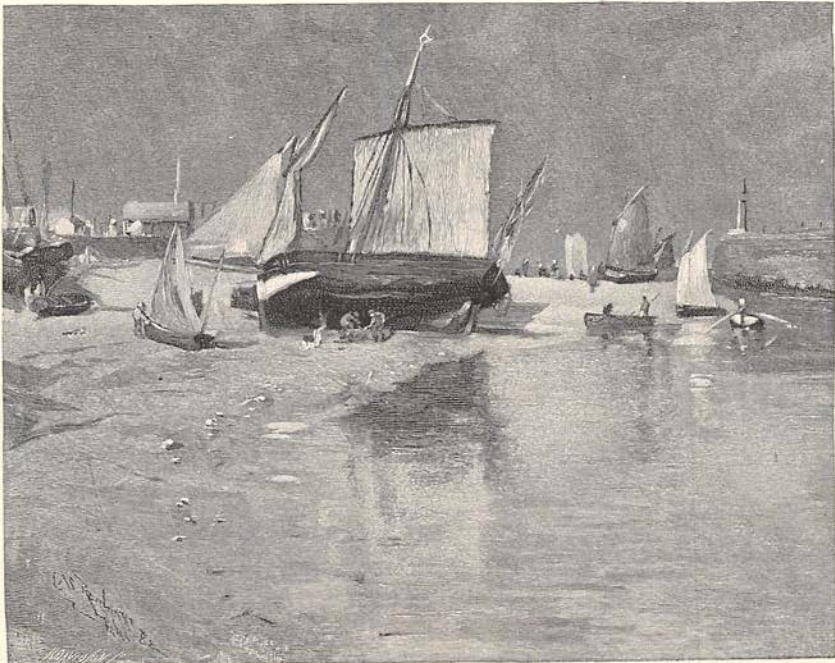
nature, by Walter Shirlaw.

4. 4. Pencil sketches from nature, by J. Wells Champncy.

5. Threshing. Oil study, by Will H. Low.

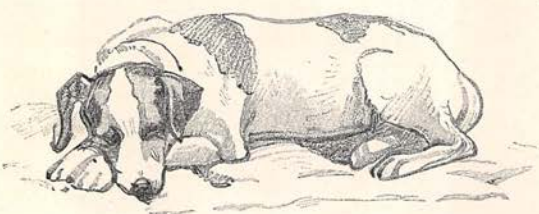


6. For Sheep-shearing in the Bavarian Highlands. Crayon study, by Walter Shirlaw.
 7, 7. Pugs. Pencil sketches, by H. A. Ogden.
 8. At Tréport, France. Oil study, by Charles S. Reinhart.





9. Reverie. Water-color study, by A. M. Turner.
 10, 10. Dogs. Pencil sketches, by H. A. Ogden.
 11. A Paris Cocher. Pen drawing from nature, by J. Wells Champney.
 12. A Quick Note at the Hippodrome. Pencil drawing, by J. Wells Champney.



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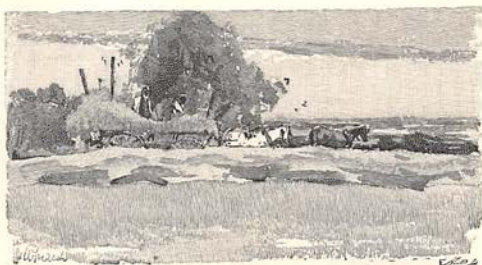
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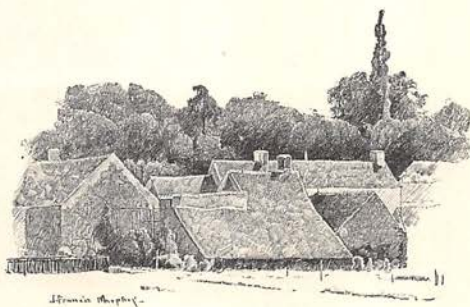
13. In Holland. Pencil study from nature, by Charles A. Vanderhoof.

14. Winter. Water color, by William J. Whittemore.

15. Oil study of beach-grass, by Francis C. Jones.

16, 16. In an English Hay-field. Ten-minute sketches in water color, by J. A. Fraser.

17. At Martigny. Pencil sketch, by J. Francis Murphy.



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18. A Bavarian. Crayon study from life, by George W. Cohen.
19, 19. One and two minute pencil sketches, by Otto Toasperm.
20. Pencil sketch from nature, by E. W. Kemble.
21. Crayon study from nature, by Carroll Beckwith.



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CARROLL BECKWITH



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22. Sketch for "A first view," by F. B. Opper. Finished drawing published in "Puck."
 23. Mamma's Sunbonnet. Pen sketch from life, by E. W. Kemble.
 24. Pencil sketch from life, by E. W. Kemble.
 25. A Good Job. Water-color study, by George W. Edwards.
 26. Two-minute sketch, by Otto Toasperm.
 27. A Question of Politics. Sketch from life, by W. A. Rogers.