

## ART STUDENTS AND SOME ART SCHOOLS.

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How easy it is to mistake a little taste for talent! The average student of law or medicine takes up his profession hoping to do good useful work, to earn a fair living and to become as prosperous as his powers and opportunities will allow, and this is all. It is

well that his desires are so moderate, for of the many hundreds who each year enrol themselves at the various colleges to study these subjects, it is certain that not very many will end by becoming physicians to the Royal Family or Queen's Counsels. But, whilst the ambitions of the greater number of legal and medical students are so reasonably limited, why is it that so many art students mislead themselves or allow themselves to be misled as to their powers, and start their career in confident expectation of widely-spread fame and abundant fortune?

Even if they do not look for so much as this, it is certain that the greater number start by expecting to be able to paint large pictures satisfactorily and look down on the minor but very important branches of art. If pressed on the point they will probably insinuate that these minor lines are for the "failures," and inquire why they should be expected to turn their attention to them so early in the day? Now, nobody is a failure who does serviceable work and does it well. The greatest artists of all time have not thought it beneath them to employ their genius in decorating buildings, as the works they have left behind them abundantly prove. Great talent will always be made manifest. The mistake is when a natural inclination for and love of the pursuit is mistaken for a burning genius that cannot and will not be suppressed.

Is every boy who enjoys making simple chemical experiments a genius? Certainly not. He will probably make an excellent doctor or analytical chemist and so be able to earn his own living satisfactorily and do useful work into the bargain; but, in most instances, his family, though pleased with this interest in scientific matters, will not expect him to attain wonders.

The boy who makes these and similar experiments is probably no more of a genius than a little girl that I know living in Leicestershire, whose dearest joy in life is to play with a little piece of uncooked pastry, carefully moulding it up the leg of a chair in imitation of the cook, whom she has just seen making the pork pies. It is the natural bent that is showing itself, and that is all; in the one case for science, in the other for domestic matters, and no one claims anything more for either. But when the natural bent is towards

art, why is it that it is so generally taken for granted that there must be genius? It is very much to be hoped that all intelligent boys and girls should show an inclination towards some special subject, but if the quality is exaggerated, deep disappointment, the outcome of much heartburning and misery, will ensue. The average boy or girl with a taste for art can find suitable occupation if they are properly trained and can find their own level. All the art students cannot be celebrated artists; they certainly cannot all expect to exhibit at the Royal Academy or even to exhibit at all, but there may be room for them in the present scheme of things for all that. Sixty years ago matters were very different. The life of the minor artist was often one of sordid drudgery.

How does Thackeray describe poor Rubbery, the drawing-master, who daily goes a weary round of girls' schools? "He has a select seminary to attend at every one of these places, and if from all these miseries of youth he obtains a sufficient number of half-crowns to pay his week's bills, what a happy man is he! . . . Rubbery's butcher looks down upon him with immense scorn, and his wife, poor gentle soul (a clergyman's daughter who married him in the firm belief that her John will be knighted and make an immense fortune), his wife has many fierce looks to suffer from Mrs. Butcher."

In the days of poor Rubbery and his fellows there was little work for the minor artist to do save crayon portraits, presentments of meek-faced damsels with enormous eyes and egg-shaped faces labelled "Amanda," "My Delight," and so on. Thackeray was full of indignation against the tricks of the artists of his day, and certainly the average work of the time was very artificial. But so many branches of art have developed since then that no one need persist in painting inferior pictures on the plea that there is no other scope for their efforts. Many who could not accomplish a whole picture can do graphic pen-and-ink illustrations or good designs for wall-papers, book-covers or furniture.

Forty years ago it was the exception to meet with a book with pictures; almost the only illustrated papers were *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*. To-day, pictorial magazines and books are countless. Dainty pen-and-ink sketches are a great feature of the illustrating work of the time, and many aspire to follow in the footsteps of Du Maurier, Hugh Thomson, Bernard Partridge and others. A good illustrator can earn some hundreds a year. Excellent artists are employed by the large artistic furnishing houses to design their goods. Poster-painting, that was looked down upon a few years ago, has made great advancement and is most remunerative. The ornamenting of calendars and menu cards, gesso, china-painting, all these pursuits are the means of income to thousands of clever workers.

Art education in England is plentiful, and the fees are not high.

The most important school in the kingdom is the Royal Academy School at Burlington House; this is only entered by examination, and has no fees. The Royal Academicians undertake the teaching, each giving a month's tuition to the students. For the probationer's examination, a study of the antique in crayon and a head and arm from the "life" are required. The authorities are merciful, and do not keep the students long in suspense; the candidate knows in a few days

if she has passed or not. There is an upper and a lower school, and these again are divided into classes. The student sets to work at first on the antique (*i.e.*, drawing in crayon from copies of celebrated antique statues and busts), and does some work from the life as well.

Sketches are sent up for examination every three months, and, if they are up to the required standard, the student is passed on from class to class. A successful student who is not sent back at any point may go through the school in about eight months. The Academy Schools are very richly endowed, and offer very many encouragements to students. As much as twelve thousand pounds in money is given every year in prizes and scholarships. A special gold medal is given every two years. Every year a prize of twenty-five pounds and a medal are given for a cartoon, the subject for which is always set by the authorities to represent a draped figure, life size. Such subjects as "Julius Cæsar at the base of Pompey's statue," "Penelope with the bow of Ulysses," have been chosen in past years. The prize and medal for the last-named subject were gained by Mr. Bernard Ward, whose beautiful cartoon is at present in the People's Palace at Mile End. Scholarships of two hundred pounds each and medals are given for the best historical works in sculpture, painting, and architecture. Then there is the Turner medal and fifty pounds for landscape. Prizes of fifty pounds, twenty-five pounds, fifteen pounds, and ten pounds are awarded for the best drawings from life. A prize of fifty pounds is given for decorative design.

Occasionally, if this work is good enough, the successful student is allowed two pounds a week as well as the prize to pay his expenses whilst the work is actually carried out in some church or public building. The Church of St. Augustine's, Kilburn, has recently been further beautified in this manner. Some schools make a special feature of preparing the students for the Academy Schools. Mr. Bernard Ward's excellent school in Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood, is the best known of these, and rightly so, for he has passed more students into the Academy Schools than any other teacher. He has gained deserved renown for his careful and conscientious teaching, as well as for the sympathetic help which he deals unstintingly to his old pupils. The course of training in his schools is progressive, and is divided into four stages, *viz.*, elementary, antique, preliminary painting, and painting from the life. Lectures are given in the school from time to time, which students are expected to attend. Every week a subject is given for black and white composition, and, besides this, there is a monthly sketching competition. The sketches are always criticised by some well-known artist. Mr. Ward is assisted in his teaching by Chevalier Taylor. The inclusive terms for a year's tuition including all the classes are eighteen guineas, but students can attend on alternate days at reduced fees.

Visitors to the school will not fail to notice the very clever and spirited burlesque fresco which the male students have painted in the "life" room representing Old King Cole and his court sitting at the banquet. On the wall at the back of the seated figures, the arms of the Cole family are emblazoned; the quarterings represent a glass of wine (proper), a carving-knife (rampant), three sausages (couchant), and a lion (rampant). The supporters



are two wild cats. The whole work is very clever and spirited in design and execution. Mr. Sigismund Götze, and Mr. E. H. Reed, the well-known *Punch* artist, are both old pupils of Mr. Ward's school. Messrs. Cope and Nicholl also prepare for the Academy Schools at their studio in Pelham Street, South Kensington. This school is smaller than the one in Elm Tree Road. There are two rooms, one for antique and the other for "life"; the "life" room is divided by a curtain, so that two models can sit at once. Mr. Nicholl's house is hard by—in fact, the studio is almost in his garden. He does the teaching in the antique room, and poses the models for the life. Mr. Cope comes down about three times a week and teaches in the life studio. Students are not allowed to draw from the life unless they are very well advanced with the antique.

The Slade School at University College, Gower Street, does not prepare pupils for the Academy, but teaches students on different lines. This is an excellent school for enabling the student to find out what she will do eventually, as there are so many outlets. There are a black and white club and a sketching club; sculpture is taught, and decorative work of various kinds. Professor Fred Brown is the principal; Mr. George Frampton teaches sculpture; excellent classes for black and white are held by Mr. Pennell. Mr. Steer teaches painting; his work is rather eccentric, but very clever, and the colouring is beautiful. He is a well-known exhibitor at the New English Art Club; in fact, it may be said that the work of the Slade professors and their pupils is to be found at the New English Art Club rather than at the Royal Academy. The Slade School offers six scholarships valuing thirty-five pounds a year for a term not exceeding three years, to be awarded to students for proficiency in drawing and sculpture. Two of these may be awarded every year. Competitors must attend the day classes in the fine art school at the college during the session previous to the date of election. Examinations are held in the college in January of each year. The fees at the Slade School are now eighteen guineas a year. They used to be fifteen guineas.

Professor Herkomer's school at Bushey in Hertfordshire is limited to one hundred students who all work under his supervision. The students live in the village, which is given over to their accommodation almost entirely. All the lodgings in the village are let at a fixed price, none being allowed to charge more than a guinea a week. Professor Herkomer's fame as an artist and teacher is widely known.

The Westminster School of Art at the Architectural Museum in Tufton Street is conducted much on the lines of the French studios, and the work there somewhat emulates that of certain French masters. The head master is Mr. Mouat Loudain, gold medallist of the Royal Academy, who teaches drawing and painting from the life and antique. Mr. J. Holgate teaches decorative painting and design, whilst Messrs. F. E. Schenck and Mervyn Lawrence teach modelling, wood-carving and architectural decoration. As in the French schools, the masters visit the various rooms at certain times during the day, but the students are allowed to do a good deal by themselves and so have the opportunity of working out their own ideas without being corrected at every turn by a master continually at their elbow, as is sometimes the case. Students entering the Westminster School are not allowed to draw from the life unless they can satisfy the professors as to their ability to do so, either by showing previous work, or by the fact of their having attended other life classes for a considerable time. Even in the latter case their draughtsmanship is not always

sufficiently advanced to enable them to draw entirely from the life, so they are advised to draw from the antique for two or three days in the week and from the life on other days. Great attention is paid to accuracy of form and correctness of motion. The work is done almost entirely with the point and hardly at all with the stump; in other words, "stippling" is avoided, all forms being clearly shown but not frittered away by over-elaboration. Examinations are held here in connection with the Science and Art Department, although the work here is absolutely different from that at South Kensington, but it must be remembered that the examining board is not made up of Kensington officials but of Academicians, associates, and others. At the last examination one of the students was second in the whole kingdom for anatomy, and out of sixty-four who sent in studies from the life only two failed. First and second class certificates are awarded for all subjects, but for the life studies they are assessed "excellent" as well. To the best of the "excellents" the "Queen's prizes" are given. These are books to the value of two guineas.

The fame of the Westminster School of Art is spreading; many of the students come from a great distance, some even from British Columbia.

The Royal College of Art at South Kensington Museum is established for the purpose of training art masters and mistresses for the United Kingdom for the instruction of students.

The instruction includes freehand, architectural and mechanical drawing, geometry and perspective, painting in oil and water colours. The terms for the classes are five pounds for five months, with an entrance fee of ten shillings. Examinations of candidates are held weekly at the commencement of each term and at intervals throughout the year besides. The student begins with freehand drawing and is gradually passed on through the different rooms by examination.

The Kensington School is excellent for those wishing to study decoration and design, but the hard and fast rules of the institution do not always suit an artistic bias. For the entrance examination a specimen of freehand drawing is required which must be up to a certain standard. Many students with a considerable amount of talent do not do freehand drawing well, whereas many without any talent can do it very fairly. Many wish that some other test was required, as, for instance, a sketching test. The freehand test is very unsatisfactory in many instances, as it does not sufficiently gauge a pupil's capacity. Some years ago a little girl of thirteen presented herself for examination at the South Kensington School, but the freehand drawing which she sent up for examination was so badly done that she was plucked. When she went home she sat down to read Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales, and as she read she illustrated the stories on blank pages at the end of the book. The illustrations were so cleverly done and showed so much originality, that her mother took them to the school to show the head mistress, inquiring why, if her daughter could draw so well, she could not be admitted to the schools. The head mistress was delighted with the sketches and showed them to the head of one of the departments, who inquired from what book they had been copied, as he did not remember having seen them before. When he heard that they were original he was most surprised and did not hesitate to prophesy a brilliant future for the little artist; but at the same time he regretted his inability to alter the rules of the institution.

Mr. Llewellyn, the portrait painter, and Mr. Leon Solon, whose clever posters are so well known, both studied at the Kensington School of Art.

The Camden School of Art in Holloway Road is in connection with South Kensington, and there are upwards of twenty-eight schools of art in London that receive aid from the Science and Art Department.

Many well-known artists aver that the mistake in the English Schools is the routine—the red tapeism. In the French schools no one decrees on what a student must begin; he starts himself, attacking whatever he feels inclined on his own responsibility. Perhaps this is going rather too far in the other extreme. Visits to some of the Paris studios certainly lead one to think that many of the students would do better if they would consent to proceed by steps instead of attempting to move on by flying leaps and headlong bounds.

The Grosvenor Life School is conducted on the lines of several well-known Paris studios. Drawings and paintings are made by students from the head, the draped model and from the full length life. Landscape, oil, water colour, and pastel painting are also taught.

Mr. Ludovici, the well-known teacher, has an art studio in the Brompton Road. A student on entering the school can start drawing from the life at once, if she wishes; or if she feels nervous about attempting that, she can try her hand at something else, perhaps a vase of flowers or an arrangement of drapery. Mr. Ludovici teaches rapid light painting, delicate colour and elegant pose.

Most of his pupils have had considerable artistic experience before they go there, but some go with hardly any previous knowledge and accomplish charming work under his tuition. Two or three terms at this school would be of wonderful value to anyone wishing to make a particular study of rapid illustrating or of a certain kind of decoration.

Mr. Ludovici teaches his pupils to get the pose of the model before he has got tired, and before the lines of the figure have become strained and ugly-looking. Under these circumstances much has to be painted from memory. The fault of many art schools is that the students are taught to emphasise so much that is ugly. They study the model through lorgnettes and carefully copy every blemish, every tired line. In their anxiety to avoid "mere prettiness" many artists are inclined to go too far in the other direction. A good art education will take at least three years. Many students have not the opportunity of pursuing their studies at a good school for that length of time, but let them get as much of an art education as they can, and they will certainly reap the benefit if they work carefully and keep their ambition within reasonable bounds.

Many very clever and successful illustrators have had very little systematic tuition, and the same may be said of certain skilful designers.

Light decorative art, such as the ornamentations of fans and calendars, is a thing by itself, and in some senses can scarcely be learnt. Flowers, for instance, must be natural, and yet not quite natural; slightly exaggerated perhaps in form and colour, yet graceful and artistic. A lady once took some hand-painted fans to the manager of a well-known firm, hoping to sell them. They were painted very delicately with fresh, natural-looking may-blossom, and yet somehow the result was ineffective. "This is too sentimental for us, madam," said the manager; "we want a flower that is not quite a flower," and he was quite right. The most successful work in this line is that which just hits the happy medium, such as the beautiful calendars of Miss Jessie Watkin.

The drawing mistresses at most of the high schools throughout the kingdom are pupils of Mr. T. R. Ablett, the head of the Royal Drawing Society, 50, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.