



CHAPTER XXXV.

SKETCHING IN WATER COLORS.

EVERY one who possesses the artistic temperament knows the fascination of sketching in water colors, but the number of those who comprehend the requirements of a well-finished sketch or master the art of water-color painting is comparatively few. The novice who fails in this branch of art may develop considerable skill in oils, but the fact does not argue that permanent and satisfying effects are not attainable in water colors.

This chapter is written for the benefit of students who are not so fortunate as to have a good teacher always within reach, and in it, therefore, such details as will be of advantage to them to understand will be considered, it being too often the case that much valuable instruction which might be made quite as available to the novice as to the more advanced student, is lost to her through ambiguity of expression, or the use of technical terms understood only by the habitués of the studio. A natural study is the best guide, though the novice, untaught in the use of colors and the handling of the brush, may gain valuable practice by copying a few good sketches or bringing out in colors the possi-

bilities of a black and white drawing. Having acquired this practice contentment with mere copying cannot exist in the same mind with the true artistic spirit; but a great deal of time and the waste of materials may be prevented by acquiring facility in the use of the brush and firmness as well as delicacy in the application of colors. Such knowledge cannot be acquired at once, but the novice has made some progress toward it when its importance has been comprehended. The paraphernalia for sketching out of doors may then be prepared, and the pupil may proceed to study under the tutelage of the best of all teachers—Nature. In preparing for outdoor work, a sketching stool, which, when unfolded, also forms an easel, is desirable. Such a stool is not expensive and, with an umbrella having a handle that may be stuck in the ground, is among the indispensables of a sketcher's outfit. Of course there are within the mental vision of almost everybody spots where the artist may obtain delightful views for sketches without the necessity of leaving the shadow of a vine-covered porch or spreading tree; but we have mentioned the stool, easel and umbrella because of their value to the student who hopes to progress beyond the

boundaries of the cool and shady retreats where the dilettante loves to linger.

A sketch may be brilliantly sun-lighted, without compelling the artist to endure the glare of the sun. Indeed, no one should work with the sun shining directly upon the drawing, as such work is fatal to a correct reproduction of the play of light and shade which dominates all color effects. There is another objection, by no means the least serious, to working with a flood of white light upon the paper, and that is its effect upon the eyes; blindness and headache are its consequences.

Whatman's thick imperial paper in quarto or octavo blocks is a good selection for amateurs for their first lessons in out-of-door sketching. It is easiest to gain a free and uncramped method by accustoming the hand and the eye to deal with dimensions that tend toward neither extreme. The same regard for a happy medium may be advised in relation to the texture and finish of the paper. That eminent authority on the principles of water-color sketching, Penley, advises a medium texture for the first efforts of the amateur, though he praises the rough paper (ninety pounds to the ream) for its receptivity to large washes and its adaptability to broad treatment; but even this, he argues, is most satisfactory when procured in a moderate degree of roughness. His observations are verified by the experience of all water colorists and are briefly summed up in the following remarks: fine-grained papers are most desirable for small sized sketches in which details are minutely treated, while the coarser varieties are more desirable for larger sketches and for work in which detail gives way to broad and bold treatment. Quoting directly from Penley, whose influence the writer gratefully acknowledges, the choice of papers may be made with the following hints in mind: "In speaking of papers, of

course much depends upon the style and manner of the sketcher. Some may be extremely careful in their drawing, attending to every detail, and thus produce a faithful rendering of the scene. Others may be so charmed with color as to generalize the accuracy of the drawing, and only represent their impression of the landscape by some peculiarities of harmonizing and contrasting tones. Many, doubtless, will combine the two without neglecting either, and thereby *transmit to their papers* the most agreeable and recognizable effect. It matters but little in what style the drawing is given, provided the mind has been employed upon the work and a due share of careful handling exhibited."

The italics are our own, and the words italicized are emphasized because they suggest one of the most important facts which the artist must master, and that is that it is the *artist's impressions and his method of transmitting them* which constitutes the special advantage of the drawing. The best paper and all the colors known to the artistic profession cannot overcome the effects of weak or slovenly handling. The amateur will learn by experiment that very light boards will warp under heavy washes and even cockle under slight moisture, and that those having a positive tint are inimical to the life and brilliancy of some transparent colors, and will finally arrive at the conclusion that it is inexpedient as well as inartistic to rely upon any fancied effect which the board may impart through its texture or color to the sketch, save in their general harmony and receptivity to the impressions that are to be transmitted to it. White paper is by all means the best choice for colored drawings.

Black lead pencils, H B, B and F, comprise the grades usually required for medium smooth and rough papers. Black sable brushes are commendable because of

their durability and also because of their combined firmness and flexibility. A large flat brush is sometimes needed, and it is well to include it in an outfit, but the amateur should beware of depending on it for laying on color. Its proper function is for wetting the paper and laying on large washes. The swan quill is useful for putting in cloudy and atmospheric washes in raised distances, but its use is only advisable in small sizes which are not liable to become overcharged with color when individuality or detail is to be strongly brought out. While the student must avoid the general use of the very small sizes in brushes, it is well to have one or two very fine ones. The times for using them will be suggested by the progress of the work. Some blotting-paper to absorb moisture and such receptacles as are planned with reference to the preservation of the articles in use are essential.

Now for the color-box. It may contain from twelve colors up to almost any number coming within the range of the color-men's discoveries. A box containing the colors which a sketcher is likely to need for subjects including both land and water views may be stocked with the following: yellow and brown ochre, raw and burnt sienna, crimson-lake, light-red, aureolin, cobalt and Antwerp-blue, gamboge, Indian-yellow, Vandyke-brown, Sepia, brown-madder, indigo, and Naples-yellow, vermilion, Chinese-white and blue-black. The properties of these colors may be briefly explained with advantage to the novice. Yellow and brown ochre are each much esteemed in water-color painting. The yellow ochre is often used for a fundamental tone and enters into the composition of almost all shades of gray, producing in combination with cobalt and lake the tints frequently seen in clouds and reflected in water, and on the sides of hills. The combination mentioned may be so proportioned as to be used for near and far

distances and for effects in which soil, wood tones (such as are seen in old buildings, fences, etc.) are desired.

Brown-ochre is more dusky, and as its name indicates it is of a brownish hue. It is valuable in painting broken ground and for any subject where deep, dusky tones are required.

Raw-sienna is a most agreeable color to use sparingly, and is considered a natural ally of lake in landscape painting. It is a warm but broken yellow, and judiciously used it yields transparent tones which are full of life and brilliancy. Burnt-sienna has an equally wide range of usefulness, and is even more in request than its uncalcined relative. It combines well with all tints used for foliage and foregrounds, and possesses the special advantage of not losing character when applied in light washes; it may also be applied with considerable depth without overshadowing less assertive tones.

Of crimson-lake it must be admitted that its lack of permanence places it second to rose-madder when spirited effects in light tones are required, but it possesses a place in the color-box which no other color can usurp. It assimilates admirably with gamboge, and these two colors, with the addition of indigo, produce soft, gray shadow tones.

Light-red is used by itself more frequently, perhaps, than almost any other shade of red. It is also mixed with blue and indigo for atmospheric effects, and with brown-ochre and Antwerp-blue for roads, banks, etc.

Aureolin is one of the most valuable of yellows in water-color painting. It is clear, transparent and permanent, and may be employed in producing every shade of green. It is useful in sunset tints and sky effects, and, indeed, in all landscape work.

The merest amateur soon learns the value of cobalt, which has to be replaced oftener

than any other color in the box. It enters into all grays and is indispensable in giving the vaporous, far-off tones, as well as the more tangible effects of middle distances.

Antwerp-blue possesses a vividness and body which make it a valuable ally to the siennas, ochres and crimson-lake in producing the depth of shade concentrated within small limits in middle distances. Its abuse is to be guarded against.

Gamboge may be called the foliage and herbage color, because it may enter into all shades and tones seen in either. It may be mixed with burnt-sienna and indigo to produce deep, luxuriant greens, and with Vandyke-brown and indigo for cooler shades. It is also useful in bringing out the brilliancy of sun-touched foliage.

Indian-yellow is often used for foliage painting in conjunction with indigo and burnt-sienna, and it has this advantage over many of the yellows—of looking light, even when used thickly. It is for this reason liked for figure painting, or such portions of figures as call for yellow tones.

Vandyke-brown is a color in much demand for foregrounds, and also enters into the tints seen in trees; for the latter it mixes well with gamboge and indigo.

Sepia is another of the colors most used in foregrounds, and wherever deep, warm or cool, permanent brown tones are in request. Mixed with rose-madder and cobalt, it gives warm, cloudy, but not muddy, grays; with lake and indigo it produces the color which is sold as "Payne's gray," and which is useful for rocks, water in shadow and still-life subjects.

Brown-madder is a general utility color, which by being mixed with other colors becomes tender, strong, brilliant or subdued, according to the power of the supplementary color. Where warm shadows are seen on

buildings, shelving ground or any eminence, it is likely to be used and may be counted upon, in combination with yellows, as an excellent color for changing foliage, while in the lingering warmth of sunset reflections, its glow may often be traced.

Indigo does not enjoy the prestige of being a permanent color, but it is the landscape artist's *vade mecum* in many instances. It is useful in imparting the purplish gray shades which envelop the horizon when the daylight is leaving, and it is also permissible under certain conditions in foregrounds.

Naples-yellow often takes the place of all other yellows in producing the distinct but floating lights which are perceptible in extreme distances. It is also, by admixture with cobalt and rose-madder in varying proportions, according to the depth desired, appreciated for soft air-tones which are more like a luminous haze than anything else.

The artistic value of vermilion has been attested by many artists whose works live after them, but it must be judiciously used to make an agreeable impression. It is apt to precipitate unless applied quickly, and is most satisfactory when used where the effect sought permits of laying it on pure. It is a color which the student can only hope to learn the values and dangers of with time and study, but, for all this, it is essential to certain effects which no other color will yield.

Perhaps there is no color whose use is so belittled as Chinese-white. It is an excellent body color, and mixes with all other colors without impairing its free working qualities. It may be laid on in thin washes or in heavy touches, but beginners who make choice of thin board or paper should beware of resorting to it unnecessarily to fix or hold thin washes, because, thus used, it is apt to detract from the clearness and transparency which the artist is striving to attain.

Blue-black is a valuable color to use in breaking greens and deepening grays.

The amateur, having obtained whatever general knowledge is practicable on the subject of color (such knowledge, as has been previously stated, being facilitated by the practice acquired in copying some good sketches), may proceed to choose a subject from Nature, but should beware of undertaking too massive or complicated a sketch. It is best to aim at depicting one or two features perfectly or at least with a fair degree of naturalness in a single small sketch, and then after a few experiments endeavor to bring contiguous objects into proper relation in a larger sketch, than to attempt too much and become disheartened, because of failure to represent a multiplicity of objects properly. Perspective, form and color are distinct branches which must be studied separately and together.

The eye is too often caught by grand and impressive objects, before the mind has become trained to comprehend the method of suggesting their grandeur and impressiveness within the scale which they must occupy upon the board, and the result is defaced by the apparent exaggeration of the most prominent feature and the dwarfed appearance of others. To obviate such results, let the novice select for first efforts a subject not too markedly conspicuous, but possessing enough variety to make it interesting. A glimpse out of doors in any direction will reveal such studies in infinity. However simple the view may appear, the student must endeavor to represent it with fidelity and with reverence and love for the great teacher whose works are the inspiration of all true artists.

Supposing that the sketcher selects for representation a landscape with water in the foreground, mountains or mountainous elevations in the distance, their altitudes being broken and gradually reduced in the

middle distance, and the foreground nearly level. There will of course be some verdure, and the scene will hold infinite possibilities in air and cloud effects, but it is as simple a theme as can be suggested for adequate practice. Its clouds and mists, its play of light and shade will vary with the daily round of the sun, but the relative positions of the objects which compose the scene are unvarying. Consequently, they are among the first points for the student to determine and locate in the drawing. This may be done very faintly, and yet with sufficient permanency to serve as a guide for the untrained sketcher, by first marking the right lines which designate the principal objects. The horizontal line is easily located, and so also are the water-lines, but the fact that Nature delights in curves, and apparently abhors angles and straight lines, will soon dawn upon the student. The careful observer will notice how gracefully even in her grand and stupendous forms, she leads up to or recedes from absolutely horizontal or straight lines, and the smallest sketch will afford ample opportunity for studying her infinite variety.

In order to train the vision to locate correctly the positions in the sketch of the various features, the student, having determined the line of the horizon, may obtain a reliable idea of the relative positions of other horizontal objects, by holding the brush or pencil horizontally on a level with the eyes, and, closing one eye, focus the other upon the object whose location is to be determined; its position may thus be easily compared with the line of the horizon. This simple expedient will aid amateurs in establishing relative distances and elevations; and, by holding the brush or pencil perpendicularly in line with the most prominent perpendicular object, the relative positions of less prominent features may be accurately estimated.

In order to avoid jaggedness and what may be called a geometrical arrangement in natural scenery, observe closely by what gradations ascents from height to height are made. Note all projections, as they are of especial value in determining different distances, and make upon the paper whatever indications are essential to keeping these before the eyes. Rocks and depressions of sufficient importance to add a marked feature to the landscape must not be ignored. Too much study cannot be given at this stage. The eye should become well acquainted with the different features, and the sketcher thoroughly satisfied that the relative positions of the objects composing the view are correctly understood. Having assured herself of this by studying the outlines and comparing them with the original, the preliminary washes may be laid on and the deeper colors added.

At this stage of the work the amateur, if interested in the completion of the sketch, is apt to sacrifice a great deal to the desire to see it finished. Against the habit too much can scarcely be said. If the original intention was to paint a placid lake-scene, with the mists of early morning disappearing before the sun, the novice can scarcely hope to represent the soft, aerial effects essential, except by faithfully studying them, and until sufficient rapidity of execution is acquired to warrant her in hoping to transmit such views as they really are, she will do well to make her studies at times when the clouds and vapors are less transitional. The trained eye and practised hand alone can represent rapidly fleeting effects, and while the amateur must cultivate the ability to catch them as they pass, too much must not be attempted at once.

Another hint that the amateur will find worthy of consideration is this: Paint as the object appears to you; no matter what preconceived opinions you may have of it. This,

of course, presupposes that the sketch is being made within proper range of vision. It is really of no consequence that the herbage upon a distant hillside is green, if the play of light and shade and the distance at which it seems to be, combine to make the effect only broken shadows and indistinct outlines. It is an amateurish weakness to attempt to strengthen a sketch by perfecting details to such an extent that all idea of distance is lost. If the novice who realizes a weakness in this direction will resolutely set to work to cure herself by rigidly disciplining her perceptive faculties, she may take the following course of treatment with improvement. Let her choose a flat study of growing grass, seeking if she may, one that disappears in the horizon without having its level surface broken. She may begin by painting the grass beneath her feet its natural shade of green, and follow faithfully the color *as she sees* it toward the limits which bound her vision. Before advancing very far her predilection for absolutely green grass will have to give way to the effect of air, light and shade, or else she cannot be said to make a faithful sketch. The experience gained from a flat study of this nature cannot fail to cure her of the tendency to paint separately and in vivid green each blade of grass growing on elevated ground, presumably at a distance.

In selecting a site for sketching, the artist should of course endeavor to secure the happiest effects. Rugged, angular views may be picturesquely represented upon large canvases in conjunction with objects which afford harmonious surroundings or contrasts, but for small and medium-sized sketches, views which represent nature in softer moods and in such forms as win admiration through their power to soothe rather than overawe, are most satisfying, and they certainly are most advisable as studies for beginners. Upon another page



J. Schuler del.

a landscape study in black and white is given, and accompanying it is a description of the method followed in painting the colored sketch from which it was engraved.

✻STUDY ✻ IN ✻ WATER ✻ COLORS. ✻

THE landscape from which this study was engraved was specially prepared for "Needle and Brush," and the treatment of the sketch is explained at considerable length for the benefit of amateurs in water-color painting, whom it is intended to aid.

The subject is a pleasing and fascinating one, and one also that permits of considerable beneficial practice. In preparing a palette for it the colors used were aureolin, cobalt, crimson-lake, yellow-ochre, brown-ochre, raw-sienna, burnt-sienna, light-red and Antwerp-blue. The sky was washed in with aureolin and cobalt, the sunset glow of the former tint fading imperceptibly into the azure hue of the cobalt, and a few light, floating clouds breaking the monotony. The clouds are lightly washed in with crimson-lake, and the further distance is painted with cobalt, aureolin and crimson-lake, while the stronger effects and less vaporous shades of the middle distance were brought out with yellow-ochre, crimson-lake and Antwerp-blue. For the foreground raw-sienna, burnt-sienna, brown-ochre, Antwerp-blue and crimson-lake were used, while for the broken ground, brown-ochre, light-red and Antwerp-blue were employed to produce the desired tints.

The water reflects the tints of the sky and the shadows of the trees and herbage bordering upon it, but there is no commingling of colors which might tend to produce a muddy or disturbed appearance. The surface is unbroken and clear, and beyond the bend in the middle distance there are visible between

the trees glimpses of it which are quite as effective as any feature in the landscape in suggesting the idea of distance and the feeling of openness which impart a sense of space and freedom to the view. There is no attempt at working up the details of the picture. The effect aimed at is brought out by positive touches, and in order to achieve a similar result the student should consider well the relative features of the landscape and then make every stroke of the brush serve a purpose in reproducing them in colors. A great deal more is suggested than is actually revealed, and this, it will be well to remember, is significant of every branch of artistic work.

One instinctively feels in looking at the sketch under consideration that deep, cool retreats may be gained by following the worn path and that further on, the purplish mists give place to clear, high outlooks, beyond which the view broadens into wide vistas, of which the scene before is but a glimpse.

To bring this feeling into a landscape the student must first comprehend that while the sketch must be kept within the limits laid out for it, it must not be treated as if the view it represents were, or could be, bounded by the size of the board.

Amateurs who desire to gain experience in water-color drawing will find this sketch a most desirable one for copying.

No better means of acquiring a reliable knowledge of the use of colors could be suggested than such a sketch affords. It may be copied many times, without exhausting its

possibilities as a study, or the artist's opportunities for helpful experiments; and by comparing the finished sketches with natural

effects the student will obtain helpful hints regarding their deficiencies, as well as hopeful inspirations for their improvement.



Modelling in Putty.

HANDSOME results are obtainable by the exercise of skill and care in this kind of work. First stamp the design on a plaque, panel or box-lid, whichever you may wish to decorate. Then if a flower design is used, stamp it the second time on white foolscap paper. Set the stamping by holding it before a moderate fire two or three minutes. Cut patterns of the leaves and petals of the flowers from the design stamped on the paper.

Add enough linseed oil to the putty to make it work perfectly smooth, and roll it well with a rolling-pin on a clean pine board. Cut the petals of flowers and the leaves with a sharp penknife, and arrange them to correspond with the petals and leaves on the panel or plaque. Press down lightly with the finger; then add the stems, cutting narrow strips of putty and rolling them into shape for the purpose. Make the veins with a darning needle. Set the design in a cool, airy place

until the putty hardens. The luster colors—gold and silver—are used for painting this kind of work. Pale drying-oil may be used to mix the luster, but only a little color should be prepared at one time. Paint the leaves and stems with gold, and the buds and blossoms with silver. The luster color known as "fire" is good for shading and for making stamens. Oak-leaves and acorns are very pretty in this kind of work. If desired, flowers may be painted in natural colors. A wild rose design makes a handsome panel in this kind of work. The black ebonized panels may be used as a foundation. Rose madder, white and scarlet-lake should be used for painting roses and tips of opening buds, and zinnober and chrome-green for the stems and leaves, retouching the stems with a little burnt-sienna and veining the leaves with the sienna. The latter color may be deepened or lightened, according to the leaf represented.

