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THE

PRACTICE & SCIENCE

OF

DRAWING

BY

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With 93 Illustrations & Diagrams

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[Illustration: Plate I.

FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS OF SAME MONOCHROME PAINTING IN DIFFERENT STAGES ILLUSTRATING A METHOD OF STUDYING MASS DRAWING WITH THE BRUSH]

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PREFACE

Permit me in the first place to anticipate the disappointment of any student who opens this book with the idea of finding "wrinkles" on how to draw faces, trees, clouds, or what not, short cuts to excellence in drawing, or any of the tricks so popular with the drawing masters of our grandmothers and still dearly loved by a large number of people. No good can come of such methods, for there are no short cuts to excellence. But help of a very practical kind it is the aim of the following pages to give; although it may be necessary to make a greater call upon the intelligence of the student than these Victorian methods attempted.

It was not until some time after having passed through the course of training in two of our chief schools of art that the author got any idea of what drawing really meant. What was taught was the faithful copying of a series of objects, beginning with the simplest forms, such as cubes, cones, cylinders, &c. (an excellent system to begin with at present in danger of some neglect), after which more complicated objects in plaster of Paris were attempted, and finally copies of the human head and figure posed in suspended animation and supported by blocks, &c. In so far as this was accurately done, all this mechanical training of eye and hand was excellent; but it was not enough. And when with an eye trained to the closest mechanical accuracy the author visited the galleries of the Continent and studied the drawings of the old masters, it soon became apparent that either his or their ideas of drawing were all wrong. Very few drawings could be found sufficiently "like the model" to obtain the prize at either of the great schools he had attended. Luckily there was just enough modesty left for him to realise that possibly they were in some mysterious way right and his own training in some way lacking. And so he set to work to try and climb the long uphill road that separates mechanically accurate drawing from artistically accurate drawing.

Now this journey should have been commenced much earlier, and perhaps it

was due to his own stupidity that it was not; but it was with a vague idea of saving some students from such wrong-headedness, and possibly straightening out some of the path, that he accepted the invitation to write this book.

In writing upon any matter of experience, such as art, the possibilities of misunderstanding are enormous, and one shudders to think of the things that may be put down to one's credit, owing to such misunderstandings. It is like writing about the taste of sugar, you are only likely to be understood by those who have already experienced the flavour; by those who have not, the wildest interpretation will be put upon your words. The written word is necessarily confined to the things of the understanding because only the understanding has written language; whereas art deals with ideas of a different mental texture, which words can only vaguely suggest. However, there are a large number of people who, although they cannot be said to have experienced in a full sense any works of art, have undoubtedly the impelling desire which a little direction may lead on to a fuller appreciation. And it is to such that books on art are useful. So that although this book is primarily addressed to working students, it is hoped that it may be of interest to that increasing number of people who, tired with the rush and struggle of modern existence, seek refreshment in artistic things. To many such in this country modern art is still a closed book; its point of view is so different from that of the art they have been brought up with, that they refuse to have anything to do with it. Whereas, if they only took the trouble to find out something of the point of view of the modern artist, they would discover new beauties they little suspected.

If anybody looks at a picture by Claude Monet from the point of view of a Raphael, he will see nothing but a meaningless jargon of wild paint-strokes. And if anybody looks at a Raphael from the point of view of a Claude Monet, he will, no doubt, only see hard, tinny figures in a setting devoid of any of the lovely atmosphere that always envelops form seen in nature. So wide apart are some of the points of view in painting. In the treatment of form these differences in point of view make for enormous variety in the work. So that no apology need be made for the large amount of space occupied in the following pages by what is usually dismissed as mere theory; but what is in reality the first essential of any good practice in drawing. To have a clear idea of what it is you wish to do, is the first necessity of any successful performance. But our exhibitions are full of works that show how seldom this is the case in art. Works showing much ingenuity and ability, but no artistic brains; pictures that are little more than school studies, exercises in the representation of carefully or carelessly arranged objects, but cold to any artistic intention.

At this time particularly some principles, and a clear intellectual understanding of what it is you are trying to do, are needed. We have no set traditions to guide us. The times when the student accepted the style and traditions of his master and blindly followed them until he found himself, are gone. Such conditions belonged to an age when

intercommunication was difficult, and when the artistic horizon was restricted to a single town or province. Science has altered all that, and we may regret the loss of local colour and singleness of aim this growth of art in separate compartments produced; but it is unlikely that such conditions will occur again. Quick means of transit and cheap methods of reproduction have brought the art of the whole world to our doors. Where formerly the artistic food at the disposal of the student was restricted to the few pictures in his vicinity and some prints of others, now there is scarcely a picture of note in the world that is not known to the average student, either from personal inspection at our museums and loan exhibitions, or from excellent photographic reproductions. Not only European art, but the art of the East, China and Japan, is part of the formative influence by which he is surrounded; not to mention the modern science of light and colour that has had such an influence on technique. It is no wonder that a period of artistic indigestion is upon us. Hence the student has need of sound principles and a clear understanding of the science of his art, if he would select from this mass of material those things which answer to his own inner need for artistic expression.

The position of art to-day is like that of a river where many tributaries meeting at one point, suddenly turn the steady flow to turbulence, the many streams jostling each other and the different currents pulling hither and thither. After a time these newly-met forces will adjust themselves to the altered condition, and a larger, finer stream be the result. Something analogous to this would seem to be happening in art at the present time, when all nations and all schools are acting and reacting upon each other, and art is losing its national characteristics. The hope of the future is that a larger and deeper art, answering to the altered conditions of humanity, will result.

There are those who would leave this scene of struggling influences and away up on some bare primitive mountain-top start a new stream, begin all over again. But however necessary it may be to give the primitive mountain waters that were the start of all the streams a more prominent place in the new flow onwards, it is unlikely that much can come of any attempt to leave the turbulent waters, go backwards, and start again; they can only flow onwards. To speak more plainly, the complexity of modern art influences may make it necessary to call attention to the primitive principles of expression that should never be lost sight of in any work, but hardly justifies the attitude of those anarchists in art who would flout the heritage of culture we possess and attempt a new start. Such attempts however when sincere are interesting and may be productive of some new vitality, adding to the weight of the main stream. But it must be along the main stream, along lines in harmony with tradition that the chief advance must be looked for.

Although it has been felt necessary to devote much space to an attempt to find principles that may be said to be at the basis of the art of all nations, the executive side of the question has not been neglected. And it is hoped that the logical method for the study of drawing from the two opposite points of view of line and mass here advocated may be

useful, and help students to avoid some of the confusion that results from attempting simultaneously the study of these different qualities of form expression.

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THE PRACTICE AND SCIENCE OF DRAWING

I

INTRODUCTION

The best things in an artist's work are so much a matter of intuition, that there is much to be said for the point of view that would altogether discourage intellectual inquiry into artistic phenomena on the part of the artist. Intuitions are shy things and apt to disappear if looked into too closely. And there is undoubtedly a danger that too much knowledge and training may supplant the natural intuitive feeling of a student, leaving only a cold knowledge of the means of expression in its place. For the artist, if he has the right stuff in him, has a consciousness, in doing his best work, of something, as Ruskin has said, "not in him but through him." He has been, as it were, but the agent through which it has found expression.

Talent can be described as "that which we have," and Genius as "that which has us." Now, although we may have little control over this power that "has us," and although it may be as well to abandon oneself unreservedly to its influence, there can be little doubt as to its being the business of the artist to see to it that his talent be so developed, that he may prove a fit instrument for the expression of whatever it may be given him to express; while it must be left to his individual temperament to decide how far it is advisable to pursue any intellectual analysis of the elusive things that are the true matter of art.

Provided the student realises this, and that art training can only deal with the perfecting of a means of expression and that the real matter of art lies above this and is beyond the scope of teaching, he cannot have too much of it. For although he must ever be a child before the influence that moves him, if it is not with the knowledge of the grown man that he takes off his coat and approaches the craft of painting or drawing, he will be poorly equipped to make them a means of conveying to others in adequate form the things he may wish to express. Great things are only done in art when the creative instinct of the artist has a well-organised executive faculty at its disposal.

* * * * *

Of the two divisions into which the technical study of painting can be divided, namely Form and Colour, we are concerned in this book with Form alone. But before proceeding to our immediate subject something should be said as to the nature of art generally, not with the ambition of arriving at any final result in a short chapter, but merely in order to give an idea of the point of view from which the following pages are written, so that misunderstandings may be avoided.

The variety of definitions that exist justifies some inquiry. The following are a few that come to mind:

"Art is nature expressed through a personality."

But what of architecture? Or music? Then there is Morris's

"Art is the expression of pleasure in work."

But this does not apply to music and poetry. Andrew Lang's

> "Everything which we distinguish from nature"

seems too broad to catch hold of, while Tolstoy's

> "An action by means of which one man, having experienced a feeling, intentionally transmits it to others"

is nearer the truth, and covers all the arts, but seems, from its omitting any mention of #rhythm#, very inadequate.

* * * * *

Now the facts of life are conveyed by our senses to the consciousness within us, and stimulate the world of thought and feeling that constitutes our real life. Thought and feeling are very intimately connected, few of our mental perceptions, particularly when they first dawn upon us, being unaccompanied by some feeling. But there is this general division to be made, on one extreme of which is what we call pure intellect, and on the other pure feeling or emotion. The arts, I take it, are a means of giving expression to the emotional side of this mental activity, intimately related as it often is to the more purely intellectual side. The more sensual side of this feeling is perhaps its lowest, while the feelings associated with the intelligence, the little sensitivenesses of perception that escape pure intellect, are possibly its noblest experiences.

Pure intellect seeks to construct from the facts brought to our consciousness by the senses, an accurately measured world of phenomena, uncoloured by the human equation in each of us. It seeks to create a point of view outside the human standpoint, one more stable and accurate, unaffected by the ever-changing current of human life. It therefore invents mechanical instruments to do the measuring of our sense perceptions, as their records are more accurate than human observation unaided.

But while in science observation is made much more effective by the use of mechanical instruments in registering facts, the facts with which art deals, being those of feeling, can only be recorded by the feeling instrument--man, and are entirely missed by any mechanically devised substitutes.

The artistic intelligence is not interested in things from this standpoint of mechanical accuracy, but in the effect of observation on the living consciousness--the sentient individual in each of us. The same fact accurately portrayed by a number of artistic intelligences should be different in each case, whereas the same fact accurately expressed by a number of scientific intelligences should be the same.

But besides the feelings connected with a wide range of experience, each art has certain emotions belonging to the particular sense perceptions

connected with it. That is to say, there are some that only music can convey: those connected with sound; others that only painting, sculpture, or architecture can convey: those connected with the form and colour that they severally deal with.

In abstract form and colour--that is, form and colour unconnected with natural appearances--there is an emotional power, such as there is in music, the sounds of which have no direct connection with anything in nature, but only with that mysterious sense we have, the sense of Harmony, Beauty, or Rhythm (all three but different aspects of the same thing).

This inner sense is a very remarkable fact, and will be found to some extent in all, certainly all civilised, races. And when the art of a remote people like the Chinese and Japanese is understood, our senses of harmony are found to be wonderfully in agreement. Despite the fact that their art has developed on lines widely different from our own, none the less, when the surprise at its newness has worn off and we begin to understand it, we find it conforms to very much the same sense of harmony.

But apart from the feelings connected directly with the means of expression, there appears to be much in common between all the arts in their most profound expression; there seems to be a common centre in our inner life that they all appeal to. Possibly at this centre are the great primitive emotions common to all men. The religious group, the deep awe and reverence men feel when contemplating the great mystery of the Universe and their own littleness in the face of its vastness--the desire to correspond and develop relationship with the something outside themselves that is felt to be behind and through all things. Then there are those connected with the joy of life, the throbbing of the great life spirit, the gladness of being, the desire of the sexes; and also those connected with the sadness and mystery of death and decay, &c.

The technical side of an art is, however, not concerned with these deeper motives but with the things of sense through which they find expression; in the case of painting, the visible universe.

The artist is capable of being stimulated to artistic expression by all things seen, no matter what; to him nothing comes amiss. Great pictures have been made of beautiful people in beautiful clothes and of squalid people in ugly clothes, of beautiful architectural buildings and the ugly hovels of the poor. And the same painter who painted the Alps painted the Great Western Railway.

The visible world is to the artist, as it were, a wonderful garment, at times revealing to him the Beyond, the Inner Truth there is in all things. He has a consciousness of some correspondence with something the other side of visible things and dimly felt through them, a "still, small voice" which he is impelled to interpret to man. It is the expression of this all-pervading inner significance that I think we recognise as beauty, and that prompted Keats to say:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty."

And hence it is that the love of truth and the love of beauty can exist together in the work of the artist. The search for this inner truth is the search for beauty. People whose vision does not penetrate beyond the narrow limits of the commonplace, and to whom a cabbage is but a vulgar vegetable, are surprised if they see a beautiful picture painted of one, and say that the artist has idealised it, meaning that he has consciously altered its appearance on some idealistic formula; whereas he has probably only honestly given expression to a truer, deeper vision than they had been aware of. The commonplace is not the true, but only the shallow, view of things.

[Illustration: Plate II.

DRAWING BY LEONARDO DA VINCI FROM THE ROYAL COLLECTION AT WINDSOR

Copyright photo, Braun & Co.]

Fromentin's

"Art is the expression of the invisible by means of the visible"

expresses the same idea, and it is this that gives to art its high place among the works of man.

Beautiful things seem to put us in correspondence with a world the harmonies of which are more perfect, and bring a deeper peace than this imperfect life seems capable of yielding of itself. Our moments of peace are, I think, always associated with some form of beauty, of this spark of harmony within corresponding with some infinite source without. Like a mariner's compass, we are restless until we find repose in this one direction. In moments of beauty (for beauty is, strictly speaking, a state of mind rather than an attribute of certain objects, although certain things have the power of inducing it more than others) we seem to get a glimpse of this deeper truth behind the things of sense. And who can say but that this sense, dull enough in most of us, is not an echo of a greater harmony existing somewhere the other side of things, that we dimly feel through them, evasive though it is.

But we must tread lightly in these rarefied regions and get on to more practical concerns. By finding and emphasising in his work those elements in visual appearances that express these profounder things, the painter is enabled to stimulate the perception of them in others.

In the representation of a fine mountain, for instance, there are, besides all its rhythmic beauty of form and colour, associations touching deeper chords in our natures--associations connected with its size, age, and permanence, &c.; at any rate we have more feelings than form and colour of themselves are capable of arousing. And these things must be felt by the painter, and his picture painted under the influence

of these feelings, if he is instinctively to select those elements of form and colour that convey them. Such deeper feelings are far too intimately associated even with the finer beauties of mere form and colour for the painter to be able to neglect them; no amount of technical knowledge will take the place of feeling, or direct the painter so surely in his selection of what is fine.

There are those who would say, "This is all very well, but the painter's concern is with form and colour and paint, and nothing else. If he paints the mountain faithfully from that point of view, it will suggest all these other associations to those who want them." And others who would say that the form and colour of appearances are only to be used as a language to give expression to the feelings common to all men. "Art for art's sake" and "Art for subject's sake." There are these two extreme positions to consider, and it will depend on the individual on which side his work lies. His interest will be more on the aesthetic side, in the feelings directly concerned with form and colour; or on the side of the mental associations connected with appearances, according to his temperament. But neither position can neglect the other without fatal loss. The picture of form and colour will never be able to escape the associations connected with visual things, neither will the picture all for subject be able to get away from its form and colour. And it is wrong to say "If he paints the mountain faithfully from the form and colour point of view it will suggest all those other associations to those who want them," unless, as is possible with a simple-minded painter, he be unconsciously moved by deeper feelings, and impelled to select the significant things while only conscious of his paint. But the chances are that his picture will convey the things he was thinking about, and, in consequence, instead of impressing us with the grandeur of the mountain, will say something very like "See what a clever painter I am!" Unless the artist has painted his picture under the influence of the deeper feelings the scene was capable of producing, it is not likely anybody will be so impressed when they look at his work.

And the painter deeply moved with high ideals as to subject matter, who neglects the form and colour through which he is expressing them, will find that his work has failed to be convincing. The immaterial can only be expressed through the material in art, and the painted symbols of the picture must be very perfect if subtle and elusive meanings are to be conveyed. If he cannot paint the commonplace aspect of our mountain, how can he expect to paint any expression of the deeper things in it? The fact is, both positions are incomplete. In all good art the matter expressed and the manner of its expression are so intimate as to have become one. The deeper associations connected with the mountain are only matters for art in so far as they affect its appearance and take shape as form and colour in the mind of the artist, informing the whole process of the painting, even to the brush strokes. As in a good poem, it is impossible to consider the poetic idea apart from the words that express it: they are fired together at its creation.

Now an expression by means of one of our different sense perceptions does not constitute art, or the boy shouting at the top of his voice,

giving expression to his delight in life but making a horrible noise, would be an artist. If his expression is to be adequate to convey his feeling to others, there must be some arrangement. The expression must be ordered, rhythmic, or whatever word most fitly conveys the idea of those powers, conscious or unconscious, that select and arrange the sensuous material of art, so as to make the most telling impression, by bringing it into relation with our innate sense of harmony. If we can find a rough definition that will include all the arts, it will help us to see in what direction lie those things in painting that make it an art. The not uncommon idea, that painting is "the production by means of colours of more or less perfect representations of natural objects" will not do. And it is devoutly to be hoped that science will perfect a method of colour photography finally to dispel this illusion.

What, then, will serve as a working definition? There must be something about feeling, the expression of that individuality the secret of which everyone carries in himself; the expression of that ego that perceives and is moved by the phenomena of life around us. And, on the other hand, something about the ordering of its expression.

But who knows of words that can convey a just idea of such subtle matter? If one says "Art is the rhythmic expression of Life, or emotional consciousness, or feeling," all are inadequate. Perhaps the "rhythmic expression of life" would be the more perfect definition. But the word "life" is so much more associated with eating and drinking in the popular mind, than with the spirit or force or whatever you care to call it, that exists behind consciousness and is the animating factor of our whole being, that it will hardly serve a useful purpose. So that, perhaps, for a rough, practical definition that will at least point away from the mechanical performances that so often pass for art, "#the Rhythmic expression of Feeling#" will do: for by Rhythm is meant that ordering of the materials of art (form and colour, in the case of painting) so as to bring them into relationship with our innate sense of harmony which gives them their expressive power. Without this relationship we have no direct means of making the sensuous material of art awaken an answering echo in others. The boy shouting at the top of his voice, making a horrible noise, was not an artist because his expression was inadequate--was not related to the underlying sense of harmony that would have given it expressive power.

[Illustration: Plate III.

STUDY FOR "APRIL"

In red chalk on toned paper.]

Let us test this definition with some simple cases. Here is a savage, shouting and flinging his arms and legs about in wild delight; he is not an artist, although he may be moved by life and feeling. But let this shouting be done on some ordered plan, to a rhythm expressive of joy and delight, and his leg and arm movements governed by it also, and he has become an artist, and singing and dancing (possibly the oldest of the

arts) will result.

Or take the case of one who has been deeply moved by something he has seen, say a man killed by a wild beast, which he wishes to tell his friends. If he just explains the facts as he saw them, making no effort to order his words so as to make the most telling impression upon his hearers and convey to them something of the feelings that are stirring in him, if he merely does this, he is not an artist, although the recital of such a terrible incident may be moving. But the moment he arranges his words so as to convey in a telling manner not only the plain facts, but the horrible feelings he experienced at the sight, he has become an artist. And if he further orders his words to a rhythmic beat, a beat in sympathy with his subject, he has become still more artistic, and a primitive form of poetry will result.

Or in building a hut, so long as a man is interested solely in the utilitarian side of the matter, as are so many builders to-day, and just puts up walls as he needs protection from wild beasts, and a roof to keep out the rain, he is not yet an artist. But the moment he begins to consider his work with some feeling, and arranges the relative sizes of his walls and roof so that they answer to some sense he has for beautiful proportion, he has become an artist, and his hut has some architectural pretensions. Now if his hut is of wood, and he paints it to protect it from the elements, nothing necessarily artistic has been done. But if he selects colours that give him pleasure in their arrangement, and if the forms his colour masses assume are designed with some personal feeling, he has invented a primitive form of decoration.

And likewise the savage who, wishing to illustrate his description of a strange animal he has seen, takes a piece of burnt wood and draws on the wall his idea of what it looked like, a sort of catalogue of its appearance in its details, he is not necessarily an artist. It is only when he draws under the influence of some feeling, of some pleasure he felt in the appearance of the animal, that he becomes an artist.

Of course in each case it is assumed that the men have the power to be moved by these things, and whether they are good or poor artists will depend on the quality of their feeling and the fitness of its expression.

[Illustration: Plate IV.

STUDY ON TISSUE-PAPER IN RED CHALK FOR FIGURE OF BOREAS]

The purest form of this "rhythmic expression of feeling" is music. And as Walter Pater shows us in his essay on "The School of Giorgione," "music is the type of art." The others are more artistic as they approach its conditions. Poetry, the most musical form of literature, is its most artistic form. And in the greatest pictures form, colour, and idea are united to thrill us with harmonies analogous to music.

The painter expresses his feelings through the representation of the visible world of Nature, and through the representation of those combinations of form and colour inspired in his imagination, that were all originally derived from visible nature. If he fails from lack of skill to make his representation convincing to reasonable people, no matter how sublime has been his artistic intention, he will probably have landed in the ridiculous. And yet, #so great is the power of direction exercised by the emotions on the artist that it is seldom his work fails to convey something, when genuine feeling has been the motive#. On the other hand, the painter with no artistic impulse who makes a laboriously commonplace picture of some ordinary or pretentious subject, has equally failed as an artist, however much the skilfulness of his representations may gain him reputation with the unthinking.

The study, therefore, of the #representation of visible nature# and of #the powers of expression possessed by form and colour# is the object of the painter's training.

And a command over this power of representation and expression is absolutely necessary if he is to be capable of doing anything worthy of his art.

This is all in art that one can attempt to teach. The emotional side is beyond the scope of teaching. You cannot teach people how to feel. All you can do is to surround them with the conditions calculated to stimulate any natural feeling they may possess. And this is done by familiarising students with the best works of art and nature.

* * * * *

It is surprising how few art students have any idea of what it is that constitutes art. They are impelled, it is to be assumed, by a natural desire to express themselves by painting, and, if their intuitive ability is strong enough, it perhaps matters little whether they know or not. But to the larger number who are not so violently impelled, it is highly essential that they have some better idea of art than that it consists in setting down your canvas before nature and copying it.

Inadequate as this imperfect treatment of a profoundly interesting subject is, it may serve to give some idea of the point of view from which the following pages are written, and if it also serves to disturb the "copying theory" in the minds of any students and encourages them to make further inquiry, it will have served a useful purpose.

II

DRAWING

By drawing is here meant #the expression of form upon a plane surface#.

Art probably owes more to form for its range of expression than to colour. Many of the noblest things it is capable of conveying are expressed by form more directly than by anything else. And it is interesting to notice how some of the world's greatest artists have been very restricted in their use of colour, preferring to depend on form for their chief appeal. It is reported that Apelles only used three colours, black, red, and yellow, and Rembrandt used little else. Drawing, although the first, is also the last, thing the painter usually studies. There is more in it that can be taught and that repays constant application and effort. Colour would seem to depend much more on a natural sense and to be less amenable to teaching. A well-trained eye for the appreciation of form is what every student should set himself to acquire with all the might of which he is capable.

It is not enough in artistic drawing to portray accurately and in cold blood the appearance of objects. To express form one must first be moved by it. There is in the appearance of all objects, animate and inanimate, what has been called an #emotional significance#, a hidden rhythm that is not caught by the accurate, painstaking, but cold artist. The form significance of which we speak is never found in a mechanical reproduction like a photograph. You are never moved to say when looking at one, "What fine form."

It is difficult to say in what this quality consists. The emphasis and selection that is unconsciously given in a drawing done directly under the guidance of strong feeling, are too subtle to be tabulated; they escape analysis. But it is this selection of the significant and suppression of the non-essential that often gives to a few lines drawn quickly, and having a somewhat remote relation to the complex appearance of the real object, more vitality and truth than are to be found in a highly-wrought and painstaking drawing, during the process of which the essential and vital things have been lost sight of in the labour of the work; and the non-essential, which is usually more obvious, is allowed to creep in and obscure the original impression. Of course, had the finished drawing been done with the mind centred upon the particular form significance aimed at, and every touch and detail added in tune to this idea, the comparison might have been different. But it is rarely that good drawings are done this way. Fine things seem only to be seen in flashes, and the nature that can carry over the impression of one of these moments during the labour of a highly-wrought drawing is very rare, and belongs to the few great ones of the craft alone.

It is difficult to know why one should be moved by the expression of form; but it appears to have some physical influence over us. In looking at a fine drawing, say of a strong man, we seem to identify ourselves with it and feel a thrill of its strength in our own bodies, prompting us to set our teeth, stiffen our frame, and exclaim "That's fine." Or, when looking at the drawing of a beautiful woman, we are softened by its charm and feel in ourselves something of its sweetness as we exclaim, "How beautiful." The measure of the feeling in either case will be the

extent to which the artist has identified himself with the subject when making the drawing, and has been impelled to select the expressive elements in the forms.

Art thus enables us to experience life at second hand. The small man may enjoy somewhat of the wider experience of the bigger man, and be educated to appreciate in time a wider experience for himself. This is the true justification for public picture galleries. Not so much for the moral influence they exert, of which we have heard so much, but that people may be led through the vision of the artist to enlarge their experience of life. This enlarging of the experience is true education, and a very different thing from the memorising of facts that so often passes as such. In a way this may be said to be a moral influence, as a larger mind is less likely to harbour small meannesses. But this is not the kind of moral influence usually looked for by the many, who rather demand a moral story told by the picture; a thing not always suitable to artistic expression.

One is always profoundly impressed by the expression of a sense of bulk, vastness, or mass in form. There is a feeling of being lifted out of one's puny self to something bigger and more stable. It is this splendid feeling of bigness in Michael Angelo's figures that is so satisfying. One cannot come away from the contemplation of that wonderful ceiling of his in the Vatican without the sense of having experienced something of a larger life than one had known before. Never has the dignity of man reached so high an expression in paint, a height that has been the despair of all who have since tried to follow that lonely master. In landscape also this expression of largeness is fine: one likes to feel the weight and mass of the ground, the vastness of the sky and sea, the bulk of a mountain.

On the other hand one is charmed also by the expression of lightness. This may be noted in much of the work of Botticelli and the Italians of the fifteenth century. Botticelli's figures seldom have any weight; they drift about as if walking on air, giving a delightful feeling of otherworldliness. The hands of the Madonna that hold the Child might be holding flowers for any sense of support they express. It is, I think, on this sense of lightness that a great deal of the exquisite charm of Botticelli's drawing depends.

The feathery lightness of clouds and of draperies blown by the wind is always pleasing, and Botticelli nearly always has a light wind passing through his draperies to give them this sense.

As will be explained later, in connection with academic drawing, it is eminently necessary for the student to train his eye accurately to observe the forms of things by the most painstaking of drawings. In these school studies feeling need not be considered, but only a cold accuracy. In the same way a singer trains himself to sing scales, giving every note exactly the same weight and preserving a most mechanical time throughout, so that every note of his voice may be accurately under his control and be equal to the subtlest variations he may afterwards

want to infuse into it at the dictates of feeling. For how can the draughtsman, who does not know how to draw accurately the cold, commonplace view of an object, hope to give expression to the subtle differences presented by the same thing seen under the excitement of strong feeling?

[Illustration: Plate V.

FROM A STUDY BY BOTTICELLI

In the Print Room at the British Museum.]

These academic drawings, too, should be as highly finished as hard application can make them, so that the habit of minute visual expression may be acquired. It will be needed later, when drawing of a finer kind is attempted, and when in the heat of an emotional stimulus the artist has no time to consider the smaller subtleties of drawing, which by then should have become almost instinctive with him, leaving his mind free to dwell on the bigger qualities.

Drawing, then, to be worthy of the name, must be more than what is called accurate. It must present the form of things in a more vivid manner than we ordinarily see them in nature. Every new draughtsman in the history of art has discovered a new significance in the form of common things, and given the world a new experience. He has represented these qualities under the stimulus of the feeling they inspired in him, hot and underlined, as it were, adding to the great book of sight the world possesses in its art, a book by no means completed yet.

So that to say of a drawing, as is so often said, that it is not true because it does not present the commonplace appearance of an object accurately, may be foolish. Its accuracy depends on the completeness with which it conveys the particular emotional significance that is the object of the drawing. What this significance is will vary enormously with the individual artist, but it is only by this standard that the accuracy of the drawing can be judged.

It is this difference between scientific accuracy and artistic accuracy that puzzles so many people. Science demands that phenomena be observed with the unemotional accuracy of a weighing machine, while artistic accuracy demands that things be observed by a sentient individual recording the sensations produced in him by the phenomena of life. And people with the scientific habit that is now so common among us, seeing a picture or drawing in which what are called facts have been expressed emotionally, are puzzled, if they are modest, or laugh at what they consider a glaring mistake in drawing if they are not, when all the time it may be their mistaken point of view that is at fault.

But while there is no absolute artistic standard by which accuracy of drawing can be judged, as such standard must necessarily vary with the artistic intention of each individual artist, this fact must not be taken as an excuse for any obviously faulty drawing that incompetence

may produce, as is often done by students who when corrected say that they "saw it so." For there undoubtedly exists a rough physical standard of rightness in drawing, any violent deviations from which, even at the dictates of emotional expression, is productive of the grotesque. This physical standard of accuracy in his work it is the business of the student to acquire in his academic training; and every aid that science can give by such studies as Perspective, Anatomy, and, in the case of Landscape, even Geology and Botany, should be used to increase the accuracy of his representations. For the strength of appeal in artistic work will depend much on the power the artist possesses of expressing himself through representations that arrest everyone by their truth and naturalness. And although, when truth and naturalness exist without any artistic expression, the result is of little account as art, on the other hand, when truly artistic expression is clothed in representations that offend our ideas of physical truth, it is only the few who can forgive the offence for the sake of the genuine feeling they perceive behind it.

[Illustration: Plate VI.

STUDY IN NATURAL RED CHALK BY ALFRED STEPHENS

From the collection of Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon]

How far the necessities of expression may be allowed to override the dictates of truth to physical structure in the appearance of objects will always be a much debated point. In the best drawing the departures from mechanical accuracy are so subtle that I have no doubt many will deny the existence of such a thing altogether. Good artists of strong natural inspiration and simple minds are often quite unconscious of doing anything when painting, but are all the same as mechanically accurate as possible.

Yet however much it may be advisable to let yourself go in artistic work, during your academic training let your aim be #a searching accuracy#.

III

VISION

It is necessary to say something about Vision in the first place, if we are to have any grasp of the idea of form.

An act of vision is not so simple a matter as the student who asked her master if she should "paint nature as she saw nature" would seem to have thought. And his answer, "Yes, madam, provided you don't see nature as you paint nature," expressed the first difficulty the student of

painting has to face: the difficulty of learning to see.

Let us roughly examine what we know of vision. Science tells us that all objects are made visible to us by means of light; and that white light, by which we see things in what may be called their normal aspect, is composed of all the colours of the solar spectrum, as may be seen in a rainbow; a phenomenon caused, as everybody knows, by the sun's rays being split up into their component parts.

This light travels in straight lines and, striking objects before us, is reflected in all directions. Some of these rays passing through a point situated behind the lenses of the eye, strike the retina. The multiplication of these rays on the retina produces a picture of whatever is before the eye, such as can be seen on the ground glass at the back of a photographer's camera, or on the table of a camera obscura, both of which instruments are constructed roughly on the same principle as the human eye.

These rays of light when reflected from an object, and again when passing through the atmosphere, undergo certain modifications. Should the object be a red one, the yellow, green, and blue rays, all, in fact, except the red rays, are absorbed by the object, while the red is allowed to escape. These red rays striking the retina produce certain effects which convey to our consciousness the sensation of red, and we say "That is a red object." But there may be particles of moisture or dust in the air that will modify the red rays so that by the time they reach the eye they may be somewhat different. This modification is naturally most effective when a large amount of atmosphere has to be passed through, and in things very distant the colour of the natural object is often entirely lost, to be replaced by atmospheric colours, as we see in distant mountains when the air is not perfectly clear. But we must not stray into the fascinating province of colour.

What chiefly concerns us here is the fact that the pictures on our retinas are flat, of two dimensions, the same as the canvas on which we paint. If you examine these visual pictures without any prejudice, as one may with a camera obscura, you will see that they are composed of masses of colour in infinite variety and complexity, of different shapes and gradations, and with many varieties of edges; giving to the eye the illusion of nature with actual depths and distances, although one knows all the time that it is a flat table on which one is looking.

Seeing then that our eyes have only flat pictures containing two-dimension information about the objective world, from whence is this knowledge of distance and the solidity of things? How do we _see_ the third dimension, the depth and thickness, by means of flat pictures of two dimensions?

The power to judge distance is due principally to our possessing two eyes situated in slightly different positions, from which we get two views of objects, and also to the power possessed by the eyes of focussing at different distances, others being out of focus for the time

being. In a picture the eyes can only focus at one distance (the distance the eye is from the plane of the picture when you are looking at it), and this is one of the chief causes of the perennial difficulty in painting backgrounds. In nature they are out of focus when one is looking at an object, but in a painting the background is necessarily on the same focal plane as the object. Numerous are the devices resorted to by painters to overcome this difficulty, but they do not concern us here.

The fact that we have two flat pictures on our two retinas to help us, and that we can focus at different planes, would not suffice to account for our knowledge of the solidity and shape of the objective world, were these senses not associated with another sense all important in ideas of form, #the sense of touch#.

This sense is very highly developed in us, and the earlier period of our existence is largely given over to feeling for the objective world outside ourselves. Who has not watched the little baby hands feeling for everything within reach, and without its reach, for the matter of that; for the infant has no knowledge yet of what is and what is not within its reach. Who has not offered some bright object to a young child and watched its clumsy attempts to feel for it, almost as clumsy at first as if it were blind, as it has not yet learned to focus distances. And when he has at last got hold of it, how eagerly he feels it all over, looking intently at it all the time; thus learning early to associate the "feel of an object" with its appearance. In this way by degrees he acquires those ideas of roughness and smoothness, hardness and softness, solidity, &c., which later on he will be able to distinguish by vision alone, and without touching the object.

Our survival depends so much on this sense of touch, that it is of the first importance to us. We must know whether the ground is hard enough for us to walk on, or whether there is a hole in front of us; and masses of colour rays striking the retina, which is what vision amounts to, will not of themselves tell us. But associated with the knowledge accumulated in our early years, by connecting touch with sight, we do know when certain combinations of colour rays strike the eye that there is a road for us to walk on, and that when certain other combinations occur there is a hole in front of us, or the edge of a precipice.

And likewise with hardness and softness, the child who strikes his head against the bed-post is forcibly reminded by nature that such things are to be avoided, and feeling that it is hard and that hardness has a certain look, it avoids that kind of thing in the future. And when it strikes its head against the pillow, it learns the nature of softness, and associating this sensation with the appearance of the pillow, knows in future that when softness is observed it need not be avoided as hardness must be.

Sight is therefore not a matter of the eye alone. A whole train of associations connected with the objective world is set going in the mind when rays of light strike the retina refracted from objects. And these

associations vary enormously in quantity and value with different individuals; but the one we are here chiefly concerned with is this universal one of touch. Everybody "sees" the shape of an object, and "sees" whether it "looks" hard or soft, &c. Sees, in other words, the "feel" of it.

If you are asked to think of an object, say a cone, it will not, I think, be the visual aspect that will occur to most people. They will think of a circular base from which a continuous side slopes up to a point situated above its centre, as one would feel it. The fact that in almost every visual aspect the base line is that of an ellipse, not a circle, comes as a surprise to people unaccustomed to drawing.

But above these cruder instances, what a wealth of associations crowd in upon the mind, when a sight that moves one is observed. Put two men before a scene, one an ordinary person and the other a great poet, and ask them to describe what they see. Assuming them both to be possessed of a reasonable power honestly to express themselves, what a difference would there be in the value of their descriptions. Or take two painters both equally gifted in the power of expressing their visual perceptions, and put them before the scene to paint it. And assuming one to be a commonplace man and the other a great artist, what a difference will there be in their work. The commonplace painter will paint a commonplace picture, while the form and colour will be the means of stirring deep associations and feelings in the mind of the other, and will move him to paint the scene so that the same splendour of associations may be conveyed to the beholder.

[Illustration: Plate VII.

STUDY FOR THE FIGURE OF APOLLO IN THE PICTURE "APOLLO AND DAPHNE"

In natural red chalk rubbed with finger; the high lights are picked out with rubber.]

But to return to our infant mind. While the development of the perception of things has been going on, the purely visual side of the question, the observation of the picture on the retina for what it is as form and colour, has been neglected--neglected to such an extent that when the child comes to attempt drawing, #sight is not the sense he consults#. The mental idea of the objective world that has grown up in his mind is now associated more directly with touch than with sight, with the felt shape rather than the visual appearance. So that if he is asked to draw a head, he thinks of it first as an object having a continuous boundary in space. This his mind instinctively conceives as a line. Then, hair he expresses by a row of little lines coming out from the boundary, all round the top. He thinks of eyes as two points or circles, or as points in circles, and the nose either as a triangle or an L-shaped line. If you feel the nose you will see the reason of this. Down the front you have the L line, and if you feel round it you will find the two sides meeting at the top and a base joining them, suggesting the triangle. The mouth similarly is an opening with a row of

teeth, which are generally shown although so seldom seen, but always apparent if the mouth is felt (see diagram A). This is, I think, a fair type of the first drawing the ordinary child makes--and judging by some ancient scribbling of the same order I remember noticing scratched on a wall at Pompeii, and by savage drawing generally, it appears to be a fairly universal type. It is a very remarkable thing which, as far as I know, has not yet been pointed out, that in these first attempts at drawing the vision should not be consulted. A blind man would not draw differently, could he but see to draw. Were vision the first sense consulted, and were the simplest visual appearance sought after, one might expect something like diagram B, the shadows under eyes, nose, mouth, and chin, with the darker mass of the hair being the simplest thing the visual appearance can be reduced to. But despite this being quite as easy to do, it does not appeal to the ordinary child as the other type does, because it does not satisfy the sense of touch that forms so large a part of the idea of an object in the mind. All architectural elevations and geometrical projections generally appeal to this mental idea of form. They consist of views of a building or object that could never possibly be seen by anybody, assuming as they do that the eye of the spectator is exactly in front of every part of the building at the same time, a physical impossibility. And yet so removed from the actual visual appearance is our mental idea of objects that such drawings do convey a very accurate idea of a building or object. And of course they have great advantage as working drawings in that they can be scaled.

[Illustration: Diagram I.

A. TYPE OF FIRST DRAWING MADE BY CHILDREN, SHOWING HOW VISION HAS NOT BEEN CONSULTED

B. TYPE OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED IF CRUDEST EXPRESSION OF VISUAL APPEARANCE HAD BEEN ATTEMPTED]

If so early the sense of vision is neglected and relegated to be the handmaiden of other senses, it is no wonder that in the average adult it is in such a shocking state of neglect. I feel convinced that with the great majority of people vision is seldom if ever consulted for itself, but only to minister to some other sense. They look at the sky to see if it is going to be fine; at the fields to see if they are dry enough to walk on, or whether there will be a good crop of hay; at the stream not to observe the beauty of the reflections from the blue sky or green fields dancing upon its surface or the rich colouring of its shadowed depths, but to calculate how deep it is or how much power it would supply to work a mill, how many fish it contains, or some other association alien to its visual aspect. If one looks up at a fine mass of cumulus clouds above a London street, the ordinary passer-by who follows one's gaze expects to see a balloon or a flying-machine at least, and when he sees it is only clouds he is apt to wonder what one is gazing at. The beautiful form and colour of the cloud seem to be unobserved. Clouds mean nothing to him but an accumulation of water dust that may bring rain. This accounts in some way for the number of good

paintings that are incomprehensible to the majority of people. It is only those pictures that pursue the visual aspect of objects to a sufficient completion to contain the suggestion of these other associations, that they understand at all. Other pictures, they say, are not finished enough. And it is so seldom that a picture can have this petty realisation and at the same time be an expression of those larger emotional qualities that constitute good painting.

The early paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood appear to be a striking exception to this. But in their work the excessive realisation of all details was part of the expression and gave emphasis to the poetic idea at the basis of their pictures, and was therefore part of the artistic intention. In these paintings the fiery intensity with which every little detail was painted made their picture a ready medium for the expression of poetic thought, a sort of "painted poetry," every detail being selected on account of some symbolic meaning it had, bearing on the poetic idea that was the object of the picture.

But to those painters who do not attempt "painted poetry," but seek in painting a poetry of its own, a visual poetry, this excessive finish (as it is called) is irksome, as it mars the expression of those qualities in vision they wish to express. Finish in art has no connection with the amount of detail in a picture, but has reference only to the completeness with which the emotional idea the painter set out to express has been realised.

[Illustration: Plate VIII.

STUDY FOR A PICTURE

In red conté chalk and white pastel rubbed on toned paper.]

The visual blindness of the majority of people is greatly to be deplored, as nature is ever offering them on their retina, even in the meanest slum, a music of colour and form that is a constant source of pleasure to those who can see it. But so many are content to use this wonderful faculty of vision for utilitarian purposes only. It is the privilege of the artist to show how wonderful and beautiful is all this music of colour and form, so that people, having been moved by it in his work, may be encouraged to see the same beauty in the things around them. This is the best argument in favour of making art a subject of general education: that it should teach people to see. Everybody does not need to draw and paint, but if everybody could get the faculty of appreciating the form and colour on their retinas as form and colour, what a wealth would always be at their disposal for enjoyment! The Japanese habit of looking at a landscape upside down between their legs is a way of seeing without the deadening influence of touch associations. Thus looking, one is surprised into seeing for once the colour and form of things with the association of touch for the moment forgotten, and is puzzled at the beauty. The odd thing is th