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THE TRAINING OF THE MEMORY IN ART
AND
THE EDUCATION OF THE ARTIST

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TORONTO

THE TRAINING

OF

THE MEMORY IN ART

AND THE

EDUCATION OF THE ARTIST

BY

LECOQ DE BOISBAUDRAN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

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" Ainsi, le but auquel doit tendre tout professeur chargé d'un enseignement des beaux-arts, quel qu'en soit le degré, est le développement des aptitudes artistiques, naturelles, de chaque élève. Les moyens, exercices ou procédés d'enseignement les meilleurs sont ceux qui concourent le plus sûrement et le plus directement à ce but."

H. Lecoq de Boisbaudran.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It seems astonishing that the teaching and the name of Lecoq de Boisbaudran should be so little known, even in his own country, considering how many of the famous French artists of the generation that has almost passed away were among his pupils. For the names of Cazin, Fantin-Latour, Legros, Lhermitte, Guillaume Rigamey, Tissot, among painters — and Whistler, and Bracquemond too — who by their association with Fantin, Legros, and other of his students fell under his influence ; of Rodin and Dalou among sculptors ; of Gaillard, engraver ; Roty, medallist ;

Solon, designer of pottery ; form a very remarkable list, which contains more than one name of genius. It suggests, moreover, by its variety, that he achieved his aim as a teacher, which was to develop each student in the direction of his natural bent.

While education cannot create genius or talent, or even supply their deficiencies, it must help or thwart their full development. Indeed, the importance of early education is universally admitted, for it is one of the ineffaceable influences upon a man's work up to the very end of his career. And it is because this book seems to me to lay down the fundamental

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principles of a thorough and absolutely liberal artistic education, that I have taken the trouble to translate it. I have further been at some pains to follow up the subject by interviewing such of his pupils as are still living, to get all the information I could upon the author and his teaching.

If I have not gathered very much beyond what is to be found in these pamphlets, it is perhaps because, as M. Solon wrote to me, " Lecoq was very chary of his words in his intercourse with his students."

This statement is confirmed by some MSS. notes of her husband's early reminiscences, kindly lent me by Mme Fantin-Latour. They describe Lecoq's teaching as " d'ailleurs tres simple," and show how careful he was to take into account each student's individual temperament, and give him the particular counsel that he felt was best suited to his needs at the moment :
"... l'un des traits les plus frappants de ses conseils, c'est prcisement le tact avec lequel, a ce propos, il garde la mesure toujours." He very rarely took up brush or charcoal when criticising his pupils' studies ; and never allowed them to see his own work, for fear lest they should be led into imitation.

Fantin-Latour tells of the expeditions into the country which he and his fellows made upon Sundays - — often to the pond at Villebon, where they bathed and made memory studies of each other in the open air ;

and of how they discovered on the outskirts of Paris an inn which had a high-walled garden, where Lecoq organised classes for working from the model out of doors, a great innovation in those days.

Here is an account by one of his pupils of the

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first lesson he had from him : " Lecoq set me down to copy an engraving. When I showed him the result, confident that I had done it rather well and expecting him to praise me, he took out his pen-knife and with its point showed me where I had failed in really giving the line of the back, of the foot, and other parts. I set to work again, determined this time to win the approval which had been withheld. 'Better,' was his comment, 'but still not exact enough/ and again the pen-knife relentlessly pointed out the inaccuracies. Five times I had to make the drawing before he was satisfied."

While revising the translation I have had the opportunity of seeing M. Rodin, who in telling me of his early days with Lecoq de Boisbaudran paid him the following tribute : " We did not fully appreciate at the time, Legros, and I, and the other youngsters, what luck we had in falling in with such a teacher. Most of what he taught me is assuredly in me still."

In fact, the enthusiasm with which his pupils, one and all, speak of the value and stimulus of his teaching is only equalled by the affection with which they speak of the man himself.

The three pamphlets which make up this book were written at intervals of some years. Thus " The Training of the Memory in Art " (U Education de la memoire picaresque) was published originally in 1847, and again in 1862 ; "A Survey of Art Teaching" (Un Coup d'oeil sur l'enseignement des beaux-arts) in 1872 and 1879 ; and " Letters to a Young Professor — Summary

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of a Method of teaching Drawing and Painting " {Lettres
h un jeune professeur — sommaire d'une methode four
l y enseignement du dessin et dela peinture) in 1877.

In consequence, as the French editors point out
in a note to the collected edition of 1879, "the
three pamphlets do not follow each other like the
chapters of a book, but overlap upon some of the
more essential points. They are, however, very closely
connected through their unity of aim and principle,
and amplify and explain each other, thus forming a
complete statement of their author's doctrines."

In translating the book the original order has been
preserved, while it seemed best to retain intact the
pamphlet called " A Survey of Art Teaching," despite a
few parts that are merely topical. For it treats the
subject invariably from general principles, and is far
more than a criticism upon the teaching of the time
at which it was written.

The photographs of memory-drawings, which will
be found at the end of the volume, are reproduced
by the kind permission of Dr. Pierre Rondeau, late
"chef-adjoint honoraire des travaux physiologiques k
la Faculty de Medecine k Paris," a nephew of Lecoq
de Boisbaudran, who has in his possession portfolios
full of the pupils' drawings. I take this opportunity
to thank him for the readiness with which he has put
at my disposal his rights over the drawings and the
writings left him by his uncle ; and to acknowledge
the kindness and help which he has invariably shown
me.

I wish also to thank Mme Cazin, Mme Fantin-
Latour, and Lecoq's old pupils, MM. Rodin,

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Lhermitte, Legros, Bellenger, Boutelie, Ferrier, Solon,
Ottin, and Frederic Regamey for the readiness with
which they gave me information upon the author and
his methods. And further, I must acknowledge the
help which I received from Mr. G. D. Luard in

revising the translation.

L. D. L.

Paris, 191 i.

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR'S LIFE

Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, who came of an old family of Poitou, was born at Paris in 1802.

He entered the Ecole des Beaux- Arts in 1819, and exhibited from 1831 to « 1844, at which date his own work gave way to his teaching,

His painting was cold and hard, showing unmistakable signs of a very bad education. One feels that he recognised this for himself, and that it was an incentive to him in his search for sound principles for teaching others.

What he might have done as a painter if he had not devoted all his time to teaching is an interesting speculation, for his later productions show a breadth, a looseness, and a modernity in striking contrast to his early pictures ; and such was his enthusiasm that he continued working until the very last, even when too ill to leave his bed.

I feel that he is thinking of the bad education from which his own work suffered, when he writes that some artists manage by sheer force of will to leave the wrong road up which their early training led them, and create a manner of their own, but that such "manufactured originality" can never have the individuality and the

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virtue that belong to one who " has not lost his artistic virginity."

Whether it was this conviction or the call of his

genius for teaching that led him to become a teacher matters little ; but we should have lost more than we could have gained if he had remained a producer and not a teacher of art. For a "master teaches by his work, a professor by his instruction and his method." Of the former class we have many, of the latter not one who has left us so clear a notion of his principles.

His first post was that of assistant professor at the Ecole Royale from 1841 to 1844. In 1847 he became professor at the School of the Legion of Honour, where he began his experiments in memory training.

In 1851 he submitted the results of his system to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and again in 1856 to the Society for the Encouragement of Industries.

In addition to their approval, he received open encouragement from Viollet Le Due, who strongly advocated the adoption of his methods in an article that he wrote condemning the academic teaching of the day. In 1865 he received official recognition by being created a member of the Legion of Honour.

He was authorised in 1863 to employ his own methods of teaching, and to open a class for memory training at the Ecole Imperiale, of which school he became the head in 1866. Yet such was the opposition roused by the originality of his methods, even among his own subordinates, that in 1869 he resigned his post. He continued for one year longer at the Lycée Louis Legrand, and the School of Architecture founded by Trelat, when he finally gave up teaching altogether.

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Of the students that passed through his hands, it is only those whom he took to work with him in his private class that can be properly considered to be his pupils. And it must be remembered that most of these had to earn their living at a very early age, before they had had time to complete their artistic education. His interest in his pupils never waned, and many of them turned for counsel to the "Pere Lecoq," as he was affectionally called, to the end of his life. In his concern for their welfare he impressed upon them that

an artist must be able to live if he is to produce, and that the surest means of earning a living by art is a power of drawing. He followed up this practical counsel by leaving certain of them money in his will.

He looked to Qizin to carry on his teaching, and Cazin had the natural gifts for it. He was indeed in mental attitude a teacher all his life. Having, however, his own original work to do, he naturally put teaching aside, so that there has been no real successor in the tradition.

Let us be thankful that at least his principles were laid down for us by himself, and only need to be put in practice with a true understanding of their spirit to again produce living results.

To those who read this book carefully the liberality of his outlook and the large handling of his theme must be evident. He was by temperament a philosopher, with an instinct for liberty and justice, and of a very reasonable and logical turn of mind.

He stood for liberty of thought and practice in religion, as in art. For himself, he was a professed agnostic. "Gardons intacte la . raison," he writes,

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"notre guide essentiel, le précieux instrument de nos projets passés et futurs ; et en même temps comprenons tout ce qu'il peut y avoir d'espérances et de consolation dans ce mot, dans cette idée, Peut-être."

A good musician — -playing both piano and violin, with a voice fit for opera — and a man of wide culture, he understood the similarity of purpose of all the arts, and declared that some cultivation is necessary to every student who is to gain the width of outlook indispensable to the highest production.

He denied that an artist need be, or can be without injury to himself, a bad citizen, or that his conduct is excused by his work.

In stature he was tall, and towards the close of his

life bore a curious resemblance to the portrait of Veronese in the big " Supper of Cana " in the Louvre. A charcoal drawing of his own head is reproduced in Rigamey's pamphlet entitled " Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran et ses 61&ves," * to which pamphlet I am indebted for the facts of his life given here.

He was a contemporary of the great French painters that belong properly to the nineteenth century.

He died in 1897, at the advanced age of ninety-five, and was buried in the Cimetière Montparnasse in Paris, without ceremony of any kind, at his expressed wish.

While the systematic training of the memory is perhaps the most novel idea in his teaching, it is, as he is careful to remind us, only one of the parts which form a complete scheme of artistic education, Another point, worth the serious attention of all teachers, is his

1 By Felix Regamey, published by Honore Champion. Paris, 1903.

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insistence upon the educational value of copies when properly employed, in moderation and with tact.

Teaching, such as he conceived it, requires a professor of unusual talent, willing to devote his best energies to the task. Undoubtedly Lecoq's own gift of teaching amounted to genius, and genius of a very rare kind, the combination of strong personality with a complete power of self-effacement.

" If only people could understand," he writes, " the immense self-denial, devotion, knowledge, and breadth of mind that is demanded by his office, they could not fail to hold the teacher in the honour he deserves."

For himself, so disinterested was he in his teaching, that if the force of his example and the results of his experience should influence art teaching, and quicken it to better issues, he will be receiving from posterity the sole honour or reward for which he cared.

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N.W.

INTRODUCTION

Over questions of artistic education, whether considered definitely" with reference to an artistic career, or as a new element in the general educational curriculum of our young people, the authorities are to-day seriously concerning themselves. It seems, therefore, most happy, that at such a moment Mr. Luard should have come across M. Lecoq de Boisbaudran's three treatises on " The Training of the Memory in Art " ; " A Survey of Art Teaching" ; and " Letters to a Young Professor," and have been so struck by them as to undertake their translation into English. I call this most happy, because, at any rate, to my thinking, and to put it restrainedly, in soundness of theory and practicalness of method these treatises are not to be surpassed ; and I feel it a singular privilege that I have been honoured by the invitation to write this short introduction to them, now that for the first time they are being brought within the reach of all our English teachers.

The treatises are short, systematic, eminently lucid ; so that there is no need for me here to analyse either their principles or their methods. They were written with a direct aim at practice, to show how step by step

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a pupil can be led on securely, through carefully graded stages, from the first lesson in drawing till he has become a trained and fully equipped artist. This little book can be read through easily, yet carefully, in a couple of reasonable sittings ; and, if I may advise, for the first time it would be well so to read it, that one may have the author's intention and doctrine grasped, so to say, at once as a whole. One can afterwards go back upon it, considering it point by point ' curiously ; it calls for such consideration, and is worthy of it.

But in our reading let us remember this. No doubt from time to time we shall be brought up against statements that, at first sight, strike us as strange, even impracticable, and this, perhaps, because they seem a little over-austere. Well, I say, do not let us reject them off-hand, but let us throughout be careful to

remember this. Lecoq de Boisbaudran was not only a teacher with ideas, a theorist, a teacher of genius : he had immense experience of teaching, and was eminently a successful teacher in practice, as the names of his famous pupils, and their devotion to him, prove.

What he says, then, comes to us with authority. We are not listening to a doctrinaire. We are listening to a practical man, who accomplished what he aimed at accomplishing, and who is telling us what it was that he aimed at, and by what means he accomplished it. cc If you follow my counsel," says he, " which I am giving you as frankly and as plainly as I can, I am confident that you, too, will arrive at no little measure of success."

It is probable that there is nothing in Lecoq's teaching that will strike us more than the insistence

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he lays upon the cultivation of the memory. This is fundamental with him. Now memory-drawing is in name, indeed, and in a certain sense in practice, not unfamiliar to us here in England to-day. If one were in a caustic humour, one might almost go the length of saying, it is only too familiar. Really, to hear some people talk, one might fancy that we had invented it within these few years past ! It is salutary, 'therefore, to discover that Lecoq urged with importunity its value, its incomparable, indispensable value, as long ago as 1847, that is to say, sixty-four years since. But alas ! there is much to reflect upon. Between this great master's idea of what drawing from memory means and what it means for so many of us, ah ! what a world of difference. I write this not petulantly, not sarcastically, but with keen, enforced regret. For the truth is, how many of us just now are content with results merely plausible, with but tolerable impressions of, and approximations to, this or that, which our pupils have been called on to look at, and then reproduce ! Not so Lecoq. Here, as in everything, he will not let the pupil go till he has reproduced the object with accuracy.

Accuracy. Just so. And accuracy of knowledge, accuracy of craftsmanship, this is by us poor mortals not easy of attainment. Its attainment means discipline;

and discipline means trouble, disappointment, pain — the going back and again back on the unrelished task, when we are itching to be off and at play — it means struggle and tears. Though, thank heaven, it has its immense compensations, and these not only in the future, yet it does mean all this. Yes, we are not easily

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to content ourselves, nor, as pupils, to be allowed easily to content ourselves. Let it not be thought that this is mere hard-hearted, unsympathetic rigorism. Education, beyond a doubt, need be no continuously distasteful process : but, if it is to be sound, it cannot, in the nature of things, be all, or mostly, play and pleasantness. The point is, that it can as little be this in matters dealing with Art as in anything else. And yet here is just where we are in danger, pretty fancies and sentimentality seducing us clean astray. Perhaps nowadays, more than ever, we need warning, and to set ourselves on guard.

Certainly Lecoq de Boisbaudran was no uncompromising, steely rigorist. Again and again he insists upon the vital necessity of the character and bent of the pupil being carefully taken into account, and upon the teacher being given a free hand. Nothing is more characteristic in his teaching than his sympathy, his sedulous, wholesome effort not to impose on his pupils a cast-iron system ; he is always for appealing to their various instincts, and trying to develop these. Here, for example, are two of his maxims— such important maxims, as they seem to him, that he detaches and prints them apart from the rest of the text in Roman type : "Art is essentially individual. It is individuality which makes the artist." And again, "All teaching, that is real teaching, based upon reason and good sense, must make it its aim to keep the artist's individual feeling pure and unspoiled, to cultivate it and bring it to perfection." Well, at any rate there is no mistaking this, it could not be put plainer ; and throughout the book it is insisted on perpetually, urgently. To

the imposition of a hard, mechanical uniformity of system, with its monotonous results, however skilful in execution, Lecoq is the sworn foe. He calls it stupid, disastrous, deadly ; he attributes to it much of the failure of modern artistic education, and of modern art. This is so. But as to the one matter of accuracy — here there must be no licence, no shuffling, no easy contentedness. Absolute accuracy may be unattainable ; but reasonable accuracy — the qualifying word reasonable being interpreted pretty stiffly — this is to be required always, in the first stages of instruction as in the last ; and its attainment means great pains.

May I be forgiven if on this point in Lecoq's teaching I seem to dwell perhaps a little over-much? My experience, unfortunately, is that it just now sadly needs emphasising. If fortune is kind, I am in hopes that this book will come into the hands not only of teachers in schools of art, but of teachers, too, in elementary and secondary schools, where amongst other subjects of a sound general education instruction in drawing, and even in what is called design, is now being largely introduced. Lecoq's treatises deal with the teaching of art from its beginning right through to its final stage. To many teachers in our elementary and secondary schools it may, therefore, at first glance not unnaturally seem as if this book had for them small significance. "We have no intention," they will say, " of training our children to be artists." Undoubtedly. But to confine ourselves for the moment to a single matter, to drawing. Now, if drawing is to be taught at all, there is no more fatal mistake than to suppose that it may mean one thing for a pupil who ultimately

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is to become an artist, and another for the pupil to whom it is simply to be part of his general education ; or to fancy that the way of teaching it to the one may be different from the way of teaching it to the other. This, indeed, is hardly less fantastic than to imagine that for an astronomer, say, and an ordinary citizen the science of numbers may stand for different things, and their instruction in it be different. As to this matter of drawing, the only real difference between the case of

the person studying it to become an artist, and that of the person studying it as part of his ordinary education, should be this — that the former goes through all the stages of instruction in the art, and the latter only through the preliminary stages. As Lecoq points out, these stages must be carefully graduated, and no pupil allowed to pass from one stage on to the next until he has mastered the earlier stage. Then, at whatever point he stops, he is at least so far in possession of sound knowledge and accomplishment ; and if, by and by, he desires to proceed further, he has, fortunate creature ! nothing to unlearn. This is the plain truth of the matter, but it needs driving home. Lecoq does drive it home in these treatises. That is why they may be so valuable for every kind of school as well as for schools of art ; and all the more valuable at a time when we are so much at sixes and sevens in our educational ideas and methods, with such a tendency to fantastical notions and towards making everything over-easy and pleasant, for ever on the look-out to hit on short-cuts and royal roads. Vanity of vanities !

I need here say no more. I sincerely hope that this book may be a success, and get into many hands ;

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for all those of us who are concerned about art, and art education, owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Luard for the labour he has been at over it, and for bringing it under our notice. At the same time let us not be over-sanguine or easily disheartened. A good thing does not necessarily tell at once. I think it more than likely that many excellent, enthusiastic persons will call M. Lecoq's counsels old-fashioned, and complain that they do not show sufficient understanding of our modern young people's minds and ways, and are out of touch with our current educational ideas and methods. However, I am entirely sure that in the hands of intelligent and earnest teachers the counsel given in these treatises will be productive incalculably of sound and fruitful, though I do not say of immediately showy, results ; and so to such teachers, and for such results, I commend them, and commend them heartily.

SELWYN IMAGE.

20 Fitzroy Street, W.
11th April 1911.

THE TRAINING OF THE MEMORY

IN ART

"Même la culture de la mémoire, qu'il recommande si particulièrement, n'est au fond de sa pensée qu'une culture plus intense de la personnalité de chacun."

Fantin-Latour's Reminiscences,

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PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1862 OF
"THE TRAINING OF THE MEMORY
IN ART"

Although fifteen years have passed since the first edition of this work, I think it better not to introduce any essential changes, since time and experience have only served to confirm the justness of my principles as originally laid down, and to corroborate my early experiments.

The book was originally published in 1847, and I might perhaps have altered a few phrases here and there which give the impression that this is the first edition. But I have been too much occupied since then with the actual practice of teaching to make any further effort to attract public attention, and what I have done is known only to the few people who have seen me at work ; consequently to most people my method is entirely new.

My object in publishing this second edition is to make known, as I promised, the later developments of my original idea, and by completing my treatise to justify its title, cc *The Training of the Memory in Art.*"

To the original text, which dealt especially with memory of form, I have added a note upon memory of colour. I have also written a third section, which

2 TRAINING OF THE MEMORY IN ART

summarises these two, in which I suggest a series of practical applications of their principles to really-advanced teaching.

I do not ask that these advanced ideas of mine should be put into practice hastily or prematurely. I am content merely to state them, without entering into questions of how or when they could be introduced. In an Appendix I have added a few notes to fill certain gaps, to reply to criticisms, and to add various supplementary explanations.

One of these notes is devoted to a short account of the tests to which my method was submitted by the Fine Art Section of the Institut and the Society for the Encouragement of National Industries. I also give the text of a report from the Academie des Beaux- Arts to the Minister of the Interior.

To these official testimonials I have added the letters in which two very well-known artists express their opinion on my method ; one is from M. Leon Cogniet, the other from M. Horace Vernet.

I have also given the names of many men, eminent in science and in art, who encouraged me in the earliest stages of my experiment, which is always such a difficult moment. My object, in so doing, is to take advantage of their testimony in my favour, as well as to show my appreciation of their kindness. I also wish to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of many among them who are no longer with us.

MEMORY OF FORM

Among all the intellectual faculties that are brought into play in the study and practice of art, there is none which is of such importance as the memory ; and yet, despite its importance, this faculty has, until now, never been the object of special study or of systematic training ; and what little cultivation it has received has been mostly haphazard and left to chance.

It is just this serious gap in artistic education which I hope to fill by my method of memory training.

I am sure that my first need in introducing this idea of mine is to allay the alarm, which is so naturally aroused by all innovations, by saying at once that my system of memory training is not intended in any sense to supplant the ordinary methods of art teaching. For it cannot dispense with the ordinary training, nor without it produce its best results. It is not a question of disturbing or ousting the ordinary curriculum, but simply of adding to it and completing it.

Let me then begin by stating that the meaning in which I use the word memory is that of stored observation ; and that in my method of training there is no intention of letting unthinking memory work take the place of intelligence, for it is my object to cultivate the two side by side.

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These preliminary explanations and the reservations that they naturally imply once made, let me appeal for* support to the methods of teaching universally adopted in science and literature, where the immense importance attached to a memory for words and ideas is sufficiently shown in the assiduous care devoted to its cultivation.

Why then is not the same care devoted to the reasonable cultivation of the memory of visual effects, which is necessarily of such prime importance in an art which has to reproduce them ?

In science and literature the memory is trained by

lessons learnt by heart, by giving a child at the outset only one line to learn, then a whole sentence, and later tasks of increasing difficulty. A memory for form must be trained in exactly the same way by a graduated series of shapes.

In his progress from the simple to the complex, the beginner should learn by heart and reproduce from memory the simplest possible shapes, commencing with mere straight lines to cultivate first of all his memory for length and proportion. Next should come shapes of gradually increasing difficulty. As the exercises become more complex, these drawings of mere shapes should be followed by memory work of shading, modelling, and effect, until finally he attempts full relief from real objects. And while the subjects increase in difficulty, the time during which he is allowed to study them must be gradually reduced, so as to teach him to seize essentials with increasing rapidity.

And just as a schoolboy, to learn his repetition, says it over a certain number of times, either aloud

MEMORY OF FORM 5

or in his head, so the draughtsman must draw and redraw Ms model either upon paper or mentally, as often as he finds it necessary to enable him to reproduce the object from recollection, when it is no longer before him.

In studying the methods in general use in other forms of education, we shall find many useful principles and many examples for us to follow. For instance, it is an accepted fact that persons whose memory has been cultivated early in life, remember without difficulty and over long periods of time things which they have seen or learned ; while those whose memory was neglected when young, manage to remember only a few things, and forget the greater part of what they learn. Further, we have for our encouragement the feats of memory performed by numberless savants, lawyers, actors, and preachers, where natural gift is so immensely fortified by practice.

In art no one can seriously question the advantages, or even the absolute necessity of this power of working from memory. 1

Without it, innumerable subjects are entirely beyond us. How else can animals, clouds, water, rapid movement, expression, or passing effects of colour be recorded ?

Think of the number of artists who find such things

1 The value of memory work in art is indeed widely appreciated, and I hope that my system may be found to supply a general need. Many teachers have made an incomplete attempt to cultivate their pupils' memories by advising them, for instance, to make a sketch of the anatomy of the nude model from knowledge, or to draw him from recollection at the end of the week. But no one has yet attempted to formulate a general and systematic method for the training of a memory for effects ; a method which, by taking this precious faculty at the best possible moment, would put it through a series of graduated exercises, a sort of gymnastic course in fact, to toughen and develop it until it is ready for all the various uses, of which the value is just beginning to be really understood.

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hopelessly beyond them ! For, owing to the lack of its systematic cultivation, they have only what little untrained memory nature gave them, and must necessarily lag far behind the happy few who were born with a really full share of this great gift. The well-known name of M. Horace Vernet 1 will occur at once to prove how much the power of any talent is multiplied by the gift of memory. But besides such exceptional instances of men born with great natural aptitude, there are numbers of people who only need study and wise direction to achieve results no less remarkable.

It should never be forgotten how essential this faculty is, not only in the higher walks of art, but also in the humblest. Any one must see this for himself who will take the trouble to analyse and consider what the complex act of drawing really is. It consists in looking at the object with the eyes, and retaining its image in the memory^ whilst drawing it with the hand. So that even if my method helped the memory only in this, the humblest of its functions, it would still be of real value to the artist of the highest rank and the

merest beginner alike.

It is just because its service is so wide and far-reaching, that I devoted my efforts to the subject and made the experiments of which this book gives a short account.

Before I could determine any principles on which to base my teaching, I had necessarily to make many experiments and observations for myself, for in this particular branch of teaching I had no predecessor to

1 To most of us who have no real interest nowadays in Vernet's work, his name is not a very good example. Turner, Hokusai, or Millet would serve better. —
Translator.

MEMORY OF FORM 7

guide me. Consequently my position as professor at the Ecole Imperiale de Dessin * was particularly fortunate, for I had there some hundreds of pupils of every age and degree of proficiency to experiment on. I was thus enabled to collect innumerable detailed facts, and to arrive at wide generalisations. I learnt to recognise the first indications of memory power and to judge the different degrees of natural gift, which helped me immensely in constructing a rational and progressive course of exercises, and in deciding the best age at which the students should begin.

Even when my original idea had grown into a definite theory, it was still necessary to correct and confirm my theory by putting it to the test of practice.

I was very fortunately situated for the purpose, for I had at the school students who were full of faith and enthusiasm, while the apparatus was all that I could need. And further, my experiment was to take place in a public institution, under conditions which would establish its genuineness, and give it a wider publicity than could ever be the case in a private school.

By the charter of the school, granted to it in 1843 by the Minister of the Interior, the professors were bound to meet regularly in council under the Director

to consider questions affecting the teaching. It was at one of these meetings, on the 1st of February 1847, that I first aired my ideas and submitted my plans to the judgment of my colleagues, and asked them for leave to begin my experiments. My proposal was

1 This was in 1847. The school has since become the Ecole des Arts D6coratifs. — Translator.

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unanimously accepted, the necessary permission was given me, and record of the fact was made in the minutes of the meeting.

I think the clearest and simplest way to make my method understood is to describe it in the order of its development, and so I will begin by giving a few details of my earliest experiments.

My original intention had been to begin with two different classes simultaneously, the one of children of nine to twelve years old, the other of from twelve to fifteen.

I meant with the younger class to begin from the very elements, by setting them to learn by heart the lengths of simple straight lines. I meant to follow these with angles of different degrees, followed by curves varying in difficulty. I should always have been most careful not to weary them with too many abstract forms. For abstract forms, from having no connection with any known objects, are lacking in interest, and, if complex, are exceedingly difficult to remember.

Questions of the moment, however, made me put off this part of my plan till the following year, and I confined myself for the time being to the class of boys ranging from twelve to fifteen years of age.

Between these ages there were ten pupils in the class called "la bosse elementaire " (the elementary class for drawing from the round). The class had been formed only the year before, and students belonged to it simply from their proficiency in other directions.

They had never been tested at all for their memories, and I knew that I should find them endowed with very

MEMORY OF FORM 9

different natural capacities. It was also a great advantage for my purpose that they were fairly well advanced in manual skill, being about half-way up the school.

It was my definite opinion, as I have already stated, that memory work should be added to the ordinary curriculum, and should in no sense take its place, and I took good care that none of the pupils should give up any of their ordinary work.

Further, I wished those who joined the memory class to join of their own free will, feeling sure that in this way I should get better progress and results. I therefore asked them, without using the least pressure, if they would not join my class. I explained the idea of this new study to them, emphasising the fact that it would be very hard work. I told them of its purpose, and the benefit which I believed they would derive from it, while I left them entire liberty of choice, to take it or leave it as they pleased. The eagerness with which they took up the idea was most encouraging, and they expressed great faith in its advantages for the future of their work in general, and particularly in the various special branches of art to which they meant to devote themselves.

The first subject I gave them was one of the simplest details of the human face, a nose drawn in profile, and I allowed them some few days in which to learn it. But first I made them notice those characteristics of its form which should help to fix it in their memories, and explained to them its anatomical construction. And just as they used to learn their poetry and grammar at school, either by repeating it over and over again, or through learning it by the sense, so I bade

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them study the copy either by looking at it attentively

or by drawing it repeatedly, until they could remember its modelling, proportions, outline, and minor forms exactly. I was most careful not to say that they must follow a particular method in doing this, for I wished them to have free scope for their own natural and individual ways of working.

On the appointed day they handed me back the copies and sat down to draw the subject from memory. The results which they produced at this first attempt were very encouraging both to me and to themselves. The next subject that I gave them was a little more difficult. At the end of only three months' practice upon a series of carefully graduated exercises they were able, in drawing simple heads from memory, to get a very satisfactory likeness, even down to such details as the hair.

I had taken immense trouble in arranging my series of exercises, and had every reason to be satisfied with the results I had obtained so far. Yet I kept altering their order over and over again, partly because I was compelled to do so by the unexpected rapidity of my students' progress, and partly because, as I kept reminding myself, a system must never become rigid, or unable to modify itself as experience suggests.

One thing forcibly reimpressed upon me was that oddity and caricature are the easiest things to remember. The human face too is relatively easier than other objects, such as flowers, decorations, animals, for there appears to be an instinctive sympathy between man and his own image, whereby it is the more readily impressed on him. One look at a human face is sufficient to give

MEMORY OF FORM n

even the least practised observer a distinct impression of its individual character, whereas animals of the same species will appear to him to have faces all alike.

I was very careful to be present at every single lesson, both to direct it and to ensure fair play. I examined the papers every time to make sure that not even the slightest mark that could help had been traced upon them. The copies were always carefully put out

of sight and the pupils made to sit sufficiently far apart to prevent their getting any help from each other's drawing.

It was a remarkably interesting sight to watch their young faces, and see a look deep and thoughtful as that of some solitary sage take the place of their naturally light-hearted expressions ; to watch them frowning under a mental effort such as no other of their studies could evoke, and such as no direct exhortation could have brought them to make. But their features soon relaxed, and it was with the greatest eagerness that they came forward to compare their drawings with the original.

They worked steadily through the whole of the course with unfailing intelligence and enthusiasm, and got on very fast. And their teacher must admit that he learned a great deal from them, and found that their work, and their questions and ideas upon it, were of the greatest help to him in testing the value of his theories, and in resolving many knotty points. I determined to question them, while actually at work, upon their methods of procedure, and to lead them on to tell me of themselves how they set about it. And this I did on many different occasions, putting all sorts

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of questions to them, of which I give a few examples with their answers.

Question. — When you have studied the model, and it has been taken away from you, and you are trying to draw it from memory, how do you set about it, and in what order do you proceed ? Answer. — I try to picture my model in my head, but I only see it indistinctly. Another answer. — I see the model in my head. Another answer. — I see it better when I shut my eyes.

Question. — What do you do when the model, or rather its image, is too indistinct, or even disappears entirely ? Answer. — It becomes more visible as I try to recall it ; sometimes it suddenly escapes me altogether, but by making efforts I manage to recover it. Another

answer. — The image appears indistinct as a whole, but if I give my whole attention to a single detail, this part becomes sufficiently distinct for me to draw it, and this first detail helps me to recall another, and so I get from one bit to another until I can manage the whole drawing.

Question. — It is now four months since you began to practice. Do you still find it as great an effort as at first ? Answer. — No, the image is much more distinct to begin with, and if it disappears I recall it almost at will. (This reply was endorsed by almost all the others.)

It would seem then, that the image is transmitted by the eye to the brain, which receives it and retains it, and it seems certain that a regular exercise of these organs can bring them to a state of great perfection.

Question. — Explain to me the means you employ to

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remember the model, and get it well into your head ?

Answer. — I draw it over and over again, very often.

Another answer. — I learn it by noticing its proportions, shape, and colour.

I received this last answer with great satisfaction, for it showed much more intelligence. It is evident then that the endeavour to remember a thing forces one to very close study, by comparison and observation, so that memory work (and it is a fact of far-reaching importance) leads to a habit of concentration and exact observation.

Although it will be readily recognised how valuable this is, any new idea is sure to rouse objections. And I think it wiser to forestall such objections by replying to them in advance, even though they might, when raised, only lead to a more thorough understanding and appreciation of the idea itself.

Some one will say, for instance, that the habit of drawing by heart will injure the precious quality of naivete, and that after such training recollections quite foreign to his subject will come between the artist and what he is drawing, and destroy the fidelity of his imitation. But this danger can only occur if memory drawing is allowed to supplant ordinary drawing entirely, and against this I absolutely set my face. Drawing from the model in the ordinary way will ensure the maintenance of a high standard of accurate imitation, which will be further maintained if the teacher is careful to exact in the memory work not only a general resemblance to the model, but an absolute likeness. And I take this opportunity of insisting upon this essentially important point, that it is this absolute

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fidelity of likeness to the model, this exactness and simplicity, which must be demanded of the beginner ; for it is the only way to cultivate accuracy and na'fvete of memory. It is only later, when the powers of correctness and precision have already been acquired, that he should be allowed to try and render a subject by interpretations, equivalents, and abstractions, in order to express its essential spirit, rather than its literal aspect. For such a way of working, which is so well suited to living and moving things, should be used deliberately, and should not be the outcome of mere inability to be really accurate. It should, in fact, be one faculty the more.

Again, some one will perhaps object, on more general grounds, that one already meets far too many people who, with their overloaded memories, are walking dictionaries of facts, dates, prose, and poetry, and whose second-hand learning appears to have ousted all ideas of their own, so that their talk or writings are merely compilation and quotation. But if we take the trouble to examine the case of these bores, we shall soon discover the causes of their desperate condition. First, there is the want of balance in the education of their different faculties, for it is as ridiculous to cultivate the memory exclusively as it is to neglect it altogether : next, there is the want of wise selection in the subjects they have studied, for instead of filling their heads with

quantities of ready-made ideas and phrases from all sorts of writers, they should have cultivated their own ideas and received their impressions at first hand. But the chief source of failure is the lack of real intelligence, without which the best ideas and widest learning are

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useless. There is not then so much excess of memory, in their case as there is want of judgment, of taste, of tact, of natural parts ; for memory is none of these things, nor is it imagination, still less is it genius. It is indeed a very valuable servant to them all, but it would be ridiculous to pretend that it can create them or do their work.

As regards the fine arts in particular, some one will very likely suggest that there is in such training a danger of injuring individuality of style and expression. But there is really no reason to train the memory always in one way or to study one master's work too much, for the field of study open to us is so wide, that it is very easy to avoid working too exclusively in one direction, the more so that our real object of study is nature. For nature is the living source from which we should always draw. If we could only imitate her style, it would necessarily be a style of the greatest originality.

As a general reply to other objections, let me state that it is precisely when the memory is left entirely to itself that it runs the risk of becoming disastrously overcrowded with masses of incoherent matter ; that is to say, if it does not just die of atrophy. Whereas, under scientific teaching, there is every hope and likelihood of keeping it in a state of efficiency and directing it to the acquisition of useful knowledge.

Among other points it has been proved by experience that students of the memory class lost none of their exactness, but became, in fact, rather more exact and intelligent in their ordinary work from the model. I noticed indeed with great satisfaction, that after look-

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ing at the model, they were able to draw for a longer time, without the least loss of accuracy, before they needed to look at it again, which proves that their impression was better observed and was retained for a longer space of time.

As the end of the school year was approaching, it seemed a good moment to close our four months' experiment with the stimulus and test of an examination. The subject I selected was a rather intricate piece of anatomy, yet despite its difficulty my pupils wound up this their first term's work with great credit by producing results that far exceeded my expectations. On principle, I had determined to say nothing of my idea until it had been very thoroughly tested ; but on the advice of a great many distinguished savants and artists, I agreed to publish such results as I had already obtained, without waiting for the discoveries and modifications which must necessarily occur as my method was more thoroughly tested in practice.

Although the Ecole Imperiale de Dessin offered a very wide and varied field for experiments, such experiments were necessarily influenced and restricted by the fact that it is primarily a school for applied art. There is, however, one fundamental study which should be made the basis of all teaching in all schools, and should come before any specialisation, for it is the parent-stem of all branches of art, however high or low — I mean the study of anatomy. A knowledge of the structure of the human body, which is in itself a resume of all the forms in nature, should be

I published my idea first in a magazine article in 1847, and in 1848 in a pamphlet called *Education de la memoire pittoresque*. (Here follows a list of names, which have been transferred to Appendix III. p. 5 z.— Translator.)

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considered a sort of syntax of the art of drawing, and as such should be learnt by heart ; just as in the study of languages, which by analogy is a very valuable guide to us, we see grammar taught to beginners, both to exercise the memory and to store

it with fundamental principles. It is the master's business to teach the subject so interestingly as to prevent its becoming over dry or difficult.

It is quite clear, that besides the great old masters, such as Raphael, Michael Angelo, or Rubens, those who devoted themselves to applied design, such as Cellini, Palissy, and others, also all possessed by heart an absolute knowledge of artistic anatomy, acquired through their great natural powers, if not through systematic training. It is this very power which gives them the superiority in certain directions, which so clearly separates them from most moderns.

To a worker in applied art a trained memory is evidently as useful as it is to a pictorial artist in such a study as anatomy, which is a necessary part of the education of both of them ; but its service to the former does not cease here, for it is indispensable to him later in a number of special industries, if he is to be able to compose and make use of objects not before his eyes. And decorators and heraldic painters are a class of artists that are rarely able to have a model at hand.

Among the graceful arts in which French taste stands unrivalled, and which are a source of national wealth and renown, are to be found the designing of bronzes, wall-papers, and textiles, and the arts of ornament in general. Such artistic trades require the

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whole of creation to furnish them with ideas of form and colour. Men, animals, plants, fruits, precious stones, etc. are laid under contribution : all the creatures and things which God has clothed with such variety and beauty are elements for imagination, as she roams the fields of fancy, to play with and combine, as the spirit moves her, for the satisfaction of man's insatiable craving for novelty. Except in our memories, how can we ever hope to reconstruct nature's endless happy groupings once they are broken and scattered, especially as seen under the particular

lighting and from the particular point of view upon which their effect entirely depended ?

The introduction into elementary instruction of visual memory training would be the best preparation of a child's brain for almost every study he might take up later. Science, for instance, although it goes deeper than the mere outside appearance, still needs for purposes of comparison to observe and recall the shape and colour of objects. Mechanics, which is at once art, science, and industry, would derive great benefit from memory in the drawing and designing of machines. The natural sciences, namely zoology, botany, mineralogy, would find a memory of characteristic appearances of the greatest service. In fact all classifications and nomenclatures would thus lose their dryness and become easier to remember, because they would call up in the reader's mind an exact image of the objects they dealt with.

I have attempted so far to give an idea of the benefit of visual memory as applied to industry, and of its importance in primary education, together with the first

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principles of its cultivation. Before going on to further considerations I must state that the ideas which follow, though they have a certain connection with those that went before, can yet be entirely dissociated from them. I particularly wish to make this point, to prevent any one supposing that I confuse together industrial, artistic, and general education, any more than I confound elementary and advanced studies.

It is not then as an artist, so much as an observer of life in general, that I am going to call attention to the importance of visual memory in all education.

It is very generally admitted nowadays, that any complete scheme of education should include the "polite" arts, drawing, and even painting as well. But the failure to understand that drawing consists of three faculties, accuracy of eye, skill of hand, and also memory, that is, the retention of one's observations, has caused us to overlook how valuable it is in general

education on account of the last of these faculties alone. For while all three are clearly equally essential to an artist, the first two can be dispensed with in general education, the last never. A dim recognition of this fact is expressed when we say that drawing is eminently helpful in forming taste, but there is no clear perception that it is really observation and memory which fulfil this office. For it is only when we are able to retain in our minds the impressions of such beautiful objects as we have studied, that we can possess a standard of taste and beauty*

Once drawing is definitely included in general education, and "memory-observation" is given the importance that I attach to it, it will be quickly recog-

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nised not merely as a pleasant possession, but as a faculty of the first utility. And all who consider an education incomplete and lopsided which does not cultivate all our faculties, will insist upon the development of this faculty. Without it our brains are deformed and undeveloped, and its neglect is only comparable to the sadly persistent neglect of the left hand.

Moreover, the general teaching of drawing, and the cultivation of observation and memory, would increase the taste for art, and would help to create a public who understood and cared for it, such as artists are always looking for in vain. There would be fewer people so hopelessly at sea in all questions of art, however great their judgment and perception in other subjects, people who fail entirely to see where the real merit lies in a work based upon the artistic observation of nature, because they have no stored observation of such a kind themselves. As they know everything except the essential elements of the art they pretend to judge, they always seek in works of art, not the artistic idea upon which it is essentially based, but some literary, historical, or archaeological ideas, which, though often happily enough associated with art, are not art itself, and are absolutely subordinate to it.

The pity we feel for the blind is very similar to the

pity that artists feel, and with very good reason, for the numberless people who can scarcely tell on which side an object is lighted, learned and well-educated as they often are, because they have never cultivated their observation. Think of all the interesting effects, charming contrasts, and fine harmonies this loses them.

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No doubt nature is so splendid that she can still make some impression even on their dimmed eyes ; but it is only when taught by art to look, to notice, and to remember, that we reach a full appreciation of nature's wonders, and so increase the more our reverence for their Creator. In this sense, as is too often forgotten, art is essentially religious.

Memory and imagination are so closely linked that imagination can only use what memory has to offer her, producing, like chemistry from known elements, results completely new. How much more productive then must the imagination be when nourished by a cultivated memory, for it has at its service a store of material richer both in quantity and in variety, yet absolutely precise. We may be sure then that memory training is a great stimulus to artistic creation by ministering to and reinforcing the imagination.

Let us take an artist, one I mean who has the true spirit within him, and is endowed with the peculiar artistic faculty for which there is no possible substitute, and let us suppose his memory to have been systematically and perfectly trained from the first. Think how his brain would teem with chosen images. Having become quite early in life a master of observation, he would possess the power of retaining not only the actual appearance of places, persons, objects, and effects that he had once seen, but also the colour schemes and compositions which they had suggested to him. A journey, a view, a fine sky, attitudes, monuments, great works of art, instead of leaving only a dim impression upon him, a sort of dream picture in which nothing is clearly seen, would be permanently recorded,

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ready, so to speak, to pose to him at his pleasure, and to fall into schemes and combinations as his fancy or his emotion required.

Kept thus in touch with fact, he could throw himself without hesitation into the pursuit of the ideal with far less danger of lapsing into formless and impossible unrealities.

Art, looking down from the heights to which she soars, is only too content to feel for science the same disdain that science shows for her, science, who still grudges to admit her as her equal ; and yet their alliance upon equal terms is necessary to intellectual fulness, of whose essence they are but opposite manifestations.

Before I end, I have one more brief reflection to make.

Great divergence of opinion is known to exist between philosophers of the highest reputation upon the question of the origin of ideas. The majority consider them to be simply visual impressions retained by the memory. And even those who declare that certain ideas must belong to a different class of deductions, since we receive them by senses other than sight alone, allow that a great number of them are of purely visual origin.

In either case we may reasonably suppose, that the intellect must derive the greatest assistance through cultivated observation and memory, not only in its artistic mental processes, but in its mental processes in general. For once these faculties have been strengthened by systematic training they will furnish the imagination, for its unending creativeness, from a storehouse of

MEMORY OF FORM 23

ideas filled with images that are clearer cut, more lasting, and more responsive to its will. If you do not deny the parallel between artistic and general intelligence you must admit that the science of visual memory training

("mnemotechnie pittoresque ") takes its place of right in any general scheme of education.

I will not pursue the examination of this subject further than to raise one more question. Would not the study of visual memory and its effects be a very simple method to apply in making at least an attempt to resolve some of the doubts, and perhaps even clear up experimentally some of the metaphysical problems involved in the origin and nature of ideas ; and in the relation of memory to imagination, etc ? These are advanced questions, which, for want of any possible proof, have at present led to nothing but interminable and barren altercation.

As I make this hurried survey of the question, its horizons ; widen and give me glimpses of fresh fields of discovery .fulH5f"promise, but I must adhere to my original purpose and confine myself strictly to those questions which belong properly to my subject.

From the study of memory for form, I am led naturally to the study of memory for colour. But this is quite a distinct faculty, entirely neglected up till now, which demands a method of its own, and exercises specially designed for its cultivation. I shall devote the following section to giving an account of my researches and experiments in this direction.

MEMORY FOR COLOUR

The training of the memory consists in general of two parts — memory for form and memory for colour, which must not be confounded.

To begin with, they should be cultivated quite separately, and we must be as careful to remember their differences as their similarities, for as faculties they are quite distinct.

I took memory for colour, therefore, by itself, and tried to discover the proper method of training it.

To this end I followed the same system that I had employed for memory drawing, and formed a series of colour studies of increasing difficulty.

The first of these studies was the simplest combination possible of two flat tints placed side by side, like differently coloured wafers. They were painted upon a piece of paper tinted grey. Paper of the same tint was distributed to the pupils, in order that they should make their first attempts at reproduction under conditions of opposition and contrast exactly similar to those of the copy.

I thought it wisest to insist upon their using oil paint, which is the medium that lends itself best to mixing tints rapidly with absolute accuracy. And to

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accuracy too much importance cannot be attached in the beginning.

I chose for the first subject complementary tints, because they are the most easily grasped, owing to the frankness of their contrasts. They also teach an elementary principle.

The second subject was composed of three tints less definite in themselves, while their relation to each other was less obvious.

The later models were composed of series of tints, increasing in number, becoming gradually more complex and intricate.

As there were no painting classes at the Ecole Imperiale de Dessin, I made my experiments with a certain number of boys at my own house. They were full of enthusiasm, but had never done any painting, and were, in fact, using a paint brush for the first time. I made them take the copies in regular order, just as they had done when drawing from memory.

Some of them simply observed the subjects with the closest attention, others had recourse to copying them over and over again. All succeeded in learning them by heart and reciting them, so to speak, with their

brushes. And this, too, with the most absolute accuracy, although they were mere colour studies, with no form to make the recollection of them easier, and were composed of very subtle and intricate gradations. These exercises further proved that the natural gifts of colour and form memory are two faculties absolutely distinct.

I found very few cases of the possession of an equal degree of power in both directions. I discovered,

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however, during these experiments the fact that special practice will re-establish a true balance between them : and certain natural failings, such as lead an artist to see everything grey or yellow, for instance, were quickly recognised, attacked at their root, and completely corrected.

These exercises, of which the efficacy in correcting and strengthening the judgment of the eye for colour is established, are excellent as a preparation for the study of painting, if it is to be taught with the same order and method that is habitually followed in teaching drawing. For in most art schools a student has to begin by drawing straight lines and curves, followed by a series of features and parts of the face. But it is rarely that anything of the kind is attempted in teaching painting, where he is usually set to make a study from a head straight away.

Would it not be more rational to let the student approach a task of such immense difficulty more gradually ? And would it not be especially useful to make sure first of all that his eye for colour is really accurate ? For no organ is more naturally liable to error, or so capable of being corrected and trained to perfection.

The natural moment to introduce this innovation of mine is the moment so well known to all professors, when a student's keen desire to paint is beginning to distract him from the study of drawing, which is the most important and fundamental part of his education.

By satisfying his impatience to some extent, it would keep him longer at his drawing, and he would thus gradually slip into painting when he was ripe for it.

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These are the lines which I pursued in the following experiment : —

After I had kept my students for a sufficient length of time painting these flat tints in oils from memory, I gave them some bits of still-life, followed by fragments of pictures to be learnt by heart. They finally succeeded in painting from memory, with a quite extraordinary impression of truth, landscapes and effects of moonlight and sunlight, observed very rapidly from nature.

These results alone, even putting aside all possible further developments, are sufficient to prove that the faculty of judging and remembering colour is susceptible of immense development. Under this new method it becomes much more flexible, and can be developed and maintained in a state of all-round efficiency.

Artists, who by their genius have divined certain laws of colour, or savants, who have worked them out by force of reasoning, will find that my method is in no sense in opposition to them, but is a reasonable system of developing the necessary faculties to a state of readiness to receive and profit by their advanced teaching. 1

It is easy to see the great services that a trained sense of colour must render in the numberless trades in which taste and daintiness play so great a part. In the manufacture of carpets, stuffs, wall-papers, or decorative painting a constant appeal is made to the

1 Besides the number of true colourists whose work and counsel are very instructive, there are many fervent admirers of the old Venetian and Flemish schools of painting who are making great efforts to recover their secrets and traditions ; and many men of science who are, from various points of view, making very interesting researches in the study of colour. Among such works I must mention M. Chevreul's important book upon contrasts.

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imagination to provide schemes of colour, upon which the success of such things almost entirely depends.

As regards painting in the full meaning of the word, memory for colour is, in the sense that I attach to it, the absolute condition of its existence.

For through it alone can we reap the full benefit of the splendid lessons of the great masters of colour, or the still more splendid lessons which nature displays before us every day. In the inexhaustible variety of her colour she spreads her harmonies in unending modulations upon the heavens, the woods, the waters, the mists, and the countless thousands of her living creatures, until in man, in his highest type, she gives an echo of them all without repeating any of them ; as if, indeed, it was the purpose of the great Artist that the world should be one vast scheme of decoration tuned to subordinate harmony with his noblest creature, to serve but as a setting for his sovereign beauty. Nature scatters her lovely pageantry of colour far and wide for all men to look upon, but he alone will seize and fix her fleeting beauties who can store them in his memory.

ADVANCED STUDY— PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

After a preliminary degree of memory for form and colour has been acquired, through the exercises described above, it is possible to begin the more advanced course of its application to artistic ends. For this is the way to complete the training of the memory in art, and to make its full range of usefulness really understood.

I might restrict myself to deducing theoretically the consequences which should result from the studies that I have been describing, but I prefer to continue in the course I have hitherto pursued, by basing theory upon the results of practice.

My students had been trained to the proficiency necessary to my experiment, and encouraged by their past successes had gained confidence in their own powers, so that when I sketched to them the programme of the new work they were to undertake, they showed the liveliest interest in the prospects it held out, and hailed it as a pleasure trip with all that splendid "go" of youth from which such fine results can and should be obtained.

I will give a short account of these experiments.

It was agreed that master and pupils should meet

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in a most beautiful spot, a sort of natural park. The deep shadows thrown by the great trees in full leaf contrasted sharply with the blaze of light with which the open glade was flooded. A pond full of reflections lay at their feet. It was a perfect place, offering endless backgrounds for the human figure, with every possible effect and range of light and shade, exactly satisfying the purpose that I had in view. The models I had hired for the occasion had to walk, run, sit, and stand about in natural attitudes, either naked like the fauns of old, or clothed in draperies of different styles and colours.

The sight, odd enough to outsiders, was full of interest and instruction for my pupils, as it must have been for any artist. The poor hirelings of the life-class were transfigured, as it were, by their splendid living setting. Here were no stiff, fagged models perched on the traditional throne, weighing heavily on the conventional stick or string; here was man, the chosen of life's creatures, in all his strength, in all his beauty, moving in his kingdom with all the grace that is born of freedom, and giving birth at every step to beautiful lines of harmony or of contrast.

Often we would stop one of them with a shout, and beg him to stay a moment in some chance attitude that had struck us all. Often as he passed beneath

the sweeping boughs of some great tree he would be bathed in transparent shadow, or mounting some rising ground would stand out boldly against the sky.

Once our admiration rose to the highest enthusiasm. One of our models, a man of splendid stature, with a great sweeping beard, lay at rest upon the bank of the

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pond, close to a group of rushes, in an attitude at once easy and beautiful. The illusion was complete — mythology made true lived before our eyes, for there before us was a river-god of old, ruling in quiet dignity over the course of his waters !

But our real business was not only to look on and enjoy these pictures, but to observe them rapidly, so as to be able to record with pencil or brush, from memory, either the actual appearance at the moment or the ideal picture that it suggested.

And this task was attempted on the following days by all those pupils whose memories were sufficiently trained for it ; and it made them really understand the purpose of this unusual training, for without it all their fine impressions would have faded away rapidly like dreams.

While I allowed none of them to shirk giving some account of their powers, either in colour or black and white, I allowed them entire liberty to choose the impression that had most vividly struck them. In this way I was enabled to discover their differences of artistic bent. I noticed that some of them, though not insensible to the beauty of the human figure, had yet subordinated it to the surrounding landscape, which clearly had made the most impression on them.

We also brought back a sheaf of impressions suitable to applied and decorative art. On the edge of the wood a fine tree caught our eyes. Its trunk was covered with bark grooved as regularly as a fluted column and encircled by ivy leaves, placed by nature with so perfect an art that it was impossible not to think of the graceful ornamented columns left us by

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the Renaissance. I took the opportunity to point out how much the artists of that period, which was so full of naive fancy, had borrowed from the rich storehouse of nature's plant-forms.

This little lesson bore good fruit, and several of my young audience were not long in finding among the plants and foliage decorative and ornamental combinations that suggested charming and original motives for applied art.

It was by quite another class of subject, and in an entirely different setting, that our artistic interest was excited a few days later. The clever architect of one of our public buildings was good-natured enough to put at my disposal several spacious halls of a severe type of architecture before they were thrown open to the public. ¹

It is difficult to imagine the noble effect that was made by figures in fine draperies as they passed through the great doorways, leaned upon the balustrades, or stepped majestically down the monumental stair.

It was with the keenest interest that I watched the impression that these various scenes produced upon my boys. Art study appeared to them under an entirely new aspect full of attractiveness. They marvelled as they discovered the unsuspected stores of beauty hidden in nature ; they longed to seize them, and possess them all.

Many of the drawings and paintings done under such stimulus were most successful, even from the very first ; and the experiment, though only in its

¹ The Palais de Justice. Some of these sketches in colour are in Dr. Rondeau's collection. — Translator.

infancy, may be considered to have been highly suggestive and convincing.

Unfortunately these exercises could not be repeated very often, partly because places for them were so hard to find, partly because the older of my pupils were almost all engaged in various trades, and were unable to give all the time they wished to their artistic studies. Such difficulties would not exist, or at least would hardly exist, in any great school of art which chose to make its teaching more complete in this manner. For it could combine all the conditions most favourable to success, being able to have all the models, draperies, costumes, and apparatus best suited to the purpose. In the name of art it would have no difficulty in getting placed at its disposal parks and public buildings, and that too at regular times. And best of all, it would have first class students, who had been prepared by the right preliminary training to set to work at once upon this new course of " Higher Instruction," as I call it. Such students, with their thoroughly trained powers of observation, would be very responsive to all impressions, while the school would be able to show them subjects worth the remembering, which would form their taste and direct it to the higher walks of art. Also the masterpieces in Exhibitions and Museums to which it directed their attention would leave upon their thoroughly trained minds the most vivid impressions, both lasting and fruitful.

But the valuable lessons to be learnt from the past and from the great masters, are not enough, for nature's lessons are still more necessary.

While the study of the life model, as ordinarily

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understood and practised, should be carefully retained, it should never again be accepted as sufficient in itself. 1

The enforced stillness of the posed model is, of course, inseparable from the ordinary matter-of-fact study without hurry of the life school, but it quickly destroys all the movement and expression of the pose, and causes the muscles to lose their shapeliness. The

lighting and background in the studio are always the same, and produce an effect of stultifying monotony.

Is it not time the school began to understand the study of nature in a larger sense ? The professor could take his advanced pupils, upon certain days, to the parks and public buildings set at the disposal of the school. There he would have all the necessary apparatus, and picked models, and could repeat, upon a much larger scale, the experiments in which I have been a pioneer, varying them as he thought best.

It is only when the school thus joins the study of the model as he moves to that of the posed model, and makes the students look at him, not as a thing isolated and detached, but in his visible relations to the shapes and colours of his surroundings, that it will be able to inscribe with any truth in its prospectus — "Study of Nature."

The introduction into the school course of such

1 There is no question of abandoning the methods of teaching that have stood the test of being employed in all ages. Students must be made to imitate everything that will pose to them, as well as learning to remember fleeting and changing effects. For they needs must depend later upon both of these opposite processes, in executing their own works. I leave this point now, as I have as yet no complete plan to offer for the organisation of an art-school, and return, as I am bound to do, to my special subject. But you must not, therefore, conclude that I underrate the value of existing teaching, or that I fail to see that much of what exists needs perfecting. There is much too which is altogether lacking, more especially courses of lectures, which through history and poetry would help to develop and raise the students' minds, widen their ideas, and rouse their emotions and enthusiasm,

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excursions, with the discussions to which they give rise upon the spot, will be found a great help in all the branches of instruction. For what could be more useful in the study of anatomy, or more in accordance with tradition, than the close observation of nude models at exercise, in imitation of the ancient athletes ?

The play of the muscles and the bone forms, the changes of shape, due to movement, whether gentle or

violent, would be watched and seized upon the spot, and would test and confirm the lessons of the anatomy school.

With living nature before their eyes, there would be no fear of the students falling into the affectations that result from excess of scientific study on the one hand, or into the mistakes which occur from the exclusive study of the slack muscles of dead bodies on the other. For what one may call dead anatomy would be corrected and supplemented by this study of anatomy alive.

Perspective, again, despite its importance, is generally very unattractive to young artists. Its operations seem to them dull and dry, and to belong more properly to mathematics than to art. Such mischievous prejudices are easily removed by observations made, under the professor's direction, to show the truth of its rules, and how helpful they are when applied to natural objects.

First-rate demonstrations of perspective may be given, either in the open country or in the interior of buildings, in a way that makes them most attractive, by placing models at the proper distances. It at once

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ceases to be an abstract study. Its laws, facts, and accidents are then seen actually at work, in the loss of size, which decreases directly as the distance : in the change of appearance due to change of point of view : in the foreshortenings of the human figure, or its relation to surrounding objects.

Aerial perspective, which has always been supposed to be beyond all rules, could be made the subject of experiments, and of exercises, the purpose of which is to leave in the students' memory general notions which are of the greatest utility.

Suppose, for instance, that models were placed in a row like survey poles, a distance of seven or eight yards apart, and that the nearest model was at a like distance from the spectators, they could then gauge the

degrees of loss of colour, from the first model to the last, in its relation to known distances. Suppose the models to be draped, each colour would show its own principle of variation. For instance, if they were all in white, it would be seen that white loses its force only upon the side in shadow, and that the lighted side retains almost all its brilliancy, however far from the observer.

Similar observations can be made upon avenues of trees, or upon arcades, or rows of columns, either inside or outside public buildings. In this way may be studied all the modifications of colour that are produced by distance, or rather by the interposition of air between the spectator and the objects.

By the repetition of this practice the students would very soon acquire, if not the actual principles of an absolute science, at least the results of a series of

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personal observations of the essential phenomena produced by aerial perspective.

A little time should also be set aside for the study of costume, and the best archaeological works of reference should be provided. Ancient costume should be studied in a manner really classic, by explaining to the students the origin of different sorts of drapery. To make their cut the better understood, models should be dressed in them, and should be taught as far as possible how to wear them, in accordance with the habit of the country and the period.

It would hardly be necessary, when working from drapery, to arrange folds laboriously on the lay figure, for the habit of rapid observation would make it possible to work from what we may call "living drapery," as it follows the wearer's attitudes and movements. For it is only after having been worn for a certain time and moulded by the free movements of the wearer to his shape, that drapery really loses the stiff look of all new clothes, and can express his form and action. In this way there spring into view unsuspected motives, often of great beauty, as the model

walks, runs, or rests ; their variety, already infinite, being still further diversified by the action of the wind.

Such object lessons could be simplified or elaborated at will. They might, so far as the setting and properties allowed, even revive a period, by showing monks or cavaliers in a Gothic hall, or personages of the court of Louis XIV. or of Francis I. in the long walks, or on the lawns of some great park. In this way scenes of many times and fashions would pass before the students'

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eyes, needing only the help of their artistic imagination to complete the illusion.

The study of animals demands particularly the employment of the memory. It could be made the occasion of introducing into the school course a form of work as novel as it is valuable, by turning the animals under observation out loose into the school grounds.

The horse, in particular, should be very thoroughly studied, not only anatomically, but in its living forms and paces. Studied by itself or grouped together with man, as in the bas-reliefs of the Parthenon, it would give rise to many picturesque and splendid subjects, which would create deep and lasting impressions on the students' mind, and help towards the development of style.

It is unnecessary to enumerate all the ways in which the school could widen its programme and infuse into it fresh life. But there is one point of paramount importance on which I must insist, that to obtain the most valuable results, every pupil must be obliged to render an account, so to speak, at the end of every such lesson, either in colour or in drawing, of whatever struck him most. For this will accustom him not to rest content with indistinct memories of what he saw, but to express his sensations definitely and accurately.

Personal impressions of this kind, derived directly from nature, immensely favour the development of

individual feeling and the birth of original talent.

After they have been some time in the school, and have gathered a store of observations really of their own, the students will thenceforward possess material

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for their own work, directly borrowed from nature, such as will prevent their being reduced to eternally paraphrasing the same old masters.

It is indeed only then that one can expect from students compositions really their own, in the sense that they arise from their individual conception of the subject.

All these studies tend directly to the development of the power of composition, and prove that the power of retaining the image of absent things develops enormously the power of calling up before the mind's eye not only things actually seen, but also the things that we think of or invent. A distinctness and crispness of definition is thus given to our conceptions, which brings them, in a sense, before our actual eyes, and ready to our service.

This new course of study gives great impetus to the faculty of invention and to the growth of personal outlook. It is, too, very closely connected with tradition, and the students who follow it are struck from the first moment by the resemblance between the beauties which they discover in nature with their own eyes and the works of the great masters. In observing nature in her living beauty, in catching her, so to speak, in the act and at first hand, they are indeed doing exactly what the masters did, are drinking from the same source as they.

It is in fact certain, that artists in all the great periods of art, whether of ancient Greece and Rome, or at the time of the Renaissance, had continually before their eyes, in the habits, costumes, and all the circumstances of the civilisation in which they lived, scenes to inspire

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their genius, as the strong influence of such sights upon their works distinctly shows us.

Without denying the greatness of the times in which we live, it is only too plain that our habits of life are commonplace, and our dress is contemptible, when it is not positively ridiculous or ugly; so that if we mean to revive and raise artistic inspiration, we must let our young men see nature alive and moving under such conditions as make best for visible beauty.

We must create a place apart, a place of serious study outside the commoner realities of life, filled with an atmosphere of charm and poetry, which shall unite all that can help to foster genius and lift it towards the ideal. (

But to be surrounded by life and plastic beauty is not enough, for if we are to express their life and deeper meaning, we must know how to observe and to remember. And consequently this advanced course of higher teaching, with all the practical applications that follow from it, and complete it, must be preceded by systematic cultivation of the artistic memory.

APPENDIX I

Some people hoped that over and above the system of exercises that I gave them in the first edition of this book, they were going to find some aids or cc tips " to memory ; and were surprised that I had not borrowed- from any of the different memory systems that deal with words, ideas, dates, or numbers.

No doubt the different kinds of memory have points of similarity with each other ; yet their points of difference are so marked that one and the same method of procedure could hardly help them all.

Most of the systems in question have, too, the defect of being entirely mechanical in their operation, and make no appeal to the intelligence ; while the fundamental principle in my method is, that memory and intelligence must always be

cultivated side by side, and in such a way that the development of one encourages the development of the other.

Again, while I offer the students my ways of working, I never force them on them, in order to avoid interfering with their individual mental processes, and to allow them full liberty to follow their own natural procedure. My restraint in this matter of advice is largely due to the fear of my hints being taken as rules of thumb, and, if I may put it in this way, applied as a panacea indiscriminately to all temperaments alike. All the same, to satisfy a wish that has been very widely expressed upon this point, I will give a few general ideas to direct and facilitate observation work, and consequently memory work as well.

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In observing a subject there are five principal points to be kept in view. They are : dimensions, position, form, modelling, and colour.

To observe the dimensions or proportions, compare the different parts of the subject one with another, and choose one as a unit of measure.

To appreciate the respective position of the different parts, imagine horizontal and vertical lines passing through the most noticeable points. These lines and their points of intersection once established, will give the memory exact landmarks from which to make definite observation. 1

In calculating a shape, one may imagine it inscribed in a simple elementary figure, such as a square, a circle, a triangle, etc., and decide how far it approaches or recedes from the imaginary figure described about it.

Modelling, which comprises the advancement and retirement of form, is best observed by comparing with each other the different tones that result from the varying quantity of light and shade. Some, part of the subject, either the darkest or the lightest, should be used as a unit of comparison.

For colour observation, it is necessary to judge and compare with each other both the different values of light and shade, and

the different degrees of intensity of colour. And here the memory can fill the very important office of recalling with absolute fidelity the tints chosen as units of comparison. They are the fixed points from which to calculate the intensity of the other colours.

It is especially in the early stages of memory work that my pupils make use of these general methods, together with personal methods of their own invention. But as practice develops the power of seeing the object though no longer present, such conscious methods become gradually less necessary. For then the proportions, points, shapes, modelling, and colour are calculated by what I may call the inner eye of the memory,

1 These principles are those of ordinary drawing 5 it is only a matter of applying them to memory work. Cf. p. 116.

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without recourse to previous calculations and reasoning, much as they are judged by the eye in ordinary vision.

To see the object, when absent, is then the real goal to which all these exercises should lead. Among the various methods of procedure which may help directly to this result, I will mention only one of the most successful. Here, so to speak, is the formula : —

Being suitably placed for studying the object that you wish to commit to memory, draw its forms in your head, and to concentrate your attention the better, follow the forms, at a distance, with the end of your finger or anything pointed. Then shut your eyes, or look away from the object, and draw it again in the air.

These imaginary drawings, being naturally of the easiest possible execution, may be repeated very rapidly, and as often as you think necessary to help you to implant securely in your mind's eye the image of the thing of which you mean to make an actual drawing.

The manner in which this method is employed should depend upon the power of the student's memory. The abler ones may begin with the big lines of the mass, that is, the simplified impression of the whole effect, before attending to details. The weaker ones, being unable to grasp the whole

subject at once, will have to make imaginary drawings of one part only over and over again, and stroke by stroke, in order that the impression may be, so to speak, incrusting on their mind. They will have to deal similarly with each part in turn, and when they finally come to the study of the subject as a whole, must repeat it over and over again in the same manner.

Again, if they cannot grasp both form and colour at once, they should begin by making an abstract of the shadows.

Subject to slight modifications, all these prescriptions apply equally well to the studying of colour by memory. In that case, imagine your finger to be a paint brush, and to better fix the attention, pass it over the subject, from a distance, as if

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you were actually painting the various tints. Then turn your eyes away and repeat this imaginary painting in the air until the coloured image of it appears so distinctly in your mind that you can reproduce it from memory in real paint. 1

These operations, which may perhaps appear at first sight odd and almost fantastic, have been proved to be very simple in practice, and offer advantages very readily appreciated. 1

In the execution of such drawings and paintings in our heads, our ideas and feelings are unhampered by material difficulties and have free play to follow their natural inclination. They need not be slavishly bound by the exact appearances of things, which they may modify at pleasure by selection, by abstraction, by adding to them or taking away from them, by emphasis or embellishment, in short, by grafting, as it were, the ideal upon the real.

Is not that truly an act of assimilation, whereby an artist, once he has made nature his own, is able, so to speak, to infuse her with his own personal sentiment ?

Thus the procedure that I advocate must be admitted to exercise and cultivate simultaneously artistic memory, artistic intelligence, and artistic feeling. It is equally well adapted for advanced as for elementary study. Besides tending to develop the memory and the higher faculties, it will lead to the early formation of the excellent habit, only too rare, of devoting a

few moments of head work to considering the model, before the hand work is allowed to begin.

I commend these ideas and methods of procedure to the consideration of art teachers.

Teachers must recognise that, in the application of any method, its fundamental and characteristic principle must be rigidly observed. The same is not true, however, of its auxiliary means, which should be varied to suit different temperaments, and should be applied in the way that helps them best in the direction of their natural bent. To this end the professor must take the trouble to study his pupils deeply,

1 See Appendix IV. p. 53.

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so as to discover their different dispositions. With this clue he will be able to invent endless fresh ways of helping each pupil forward in his special line of work, and he will thus become in his turn a real originator, even when applying a method which was not of his own invention.

I am convinced that, apart from any question of justice, it would have an immense effect for good if the professor's status were raised. I have always thought it a mistake to minimise the scope and importance of his functions through an excess of regulation that touches the minutest details.

It is on the professor alone that the intelligent and liberal application of any method must depend. For he is the living method in himself, whose place no written method either can take or should attempt to take. 1

APPENDIX II

Several members of different sections of the cc Institut," who had taken great interest in my experiments from the very first, made me promise to submit my theory and its results to the Academie des Beaux-Arts. I did not, however, act on their advice, encouraging as it was, until near the end of 1851, that is, until I considered the results were sufficient to warrant it.

The Academie was quite ready to study the question seriously, and appointed a Commission for the purpose, consisting of Messrs. Couder, Horace Vernet, and Robert Fleury, and summoned me to one of their meetings to explain my theory.

Their reception of my explanation was most encouraging, several members observing, with great good sense, that the Academie could only express a definite opinion after properly organised tests, and that such tests should take place under their own eye.

It is just the great effect of his personal influence that lays such responsibility upon the professor, and at the same time relieves the method that he is applying of all responsibility for failure, in the cases where he fails to apply it with practical good sense, enlightenment, and system.

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The tests were made as follows : —

One of my pupils was taken into the council room of the " Institut," and set to make a drawing of the statue of Poussin by Dumont, which had never been cast or exhibited in public. 1

When the drawing was finished it was handed to the members of the Commission, and the boy taken to another room, where, under strict watch, he had to reproduce the subject from memory. To test the accuracy of the latter drawing, it was compared both with the drawing made from the statue and with the statue itself.

At my suggestion a second test of a more difficult kind took place. Another pupil was chosen to draw a subject from memory, without the help of having made a preliminary drawing of it, after having merely observed it with great attention.

The subject in this case was the bust of Carle Vernet by Dan tan.

In consequence of the complete success with which my pupils passed these two convincing tests, the Academie sent the following report to the "Minister of the Interior," and granted me full permission to publish its contents.

* " Institut de France,

"Academie des Beaux-Arts.

"The permanent Secretary of the Academie declares what follows to be a true extract from the minutes of the meeting of Saturday, January 17, 1852.

"Report upon the Method of teaching Art of M.

r

Lecoq de Boisbaudran, professor at the c Ecole

Speciale de Dessin.'

" Gentlemen — At the suggestion of your Commission, the drawings of M. de Boisbaudran's pupils were submitted for your inspection, and you have been able to appreciate the

1 The pupil in this case was C. Cuisin, who later became a well-known botanical draughtsman. Both drawings are in Dr. Rondeau's collection. One recognises the memory drawing at once as being a portrait of Poussin. It is interesting to notice how the foreshortened foot, which was not well understood in the drawing from the statue, is reproduced " photographically " the same in the drawing from memory. Among the mass of drawings in the collection, one is constantly remarking the difference between such mechanical and really intelligent memory work. — Translator.

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beneficial results of his teaching. It is only necessary therefore to repeat briefly the explanations that you have already heard on this subject.

" M. de Boisbaudran being convinced of the great benefits that must result from a memory for form developed by systematic exercise, determined in the year 1847 to make some experiments upon his class.

"Working always from the simple to the more complex, he put his pupils through a series of very carefully graduated exercises. Their success was very encouraging, and they were soon equal to learning by heart statues, bas-reliefs, and heads from the antique, etc. He made them work always in the

same way, that is, by making first a drawing from the subject before reproducing it from memory alone.

"You have had an opportunity of judging of the correctness of general impression, the sense of character, and the accuracy of form which these drawings show. Such achievement is, in truth, worthy of all praise, yet amongst his pupils trained in his method there are some who have achieved still more. For they have actually reproduced, with an astonishing exactness of imitation, subjects of as great difficulty as their fellows without having made any drawing from the subject first. They merely observed their subjects for an hour or two, arranging their observations systematically and carefully in their memory. They then returned to the class-room, and without any help beyond the recollection of their own observations, succeeded in reproducing the antiques selected for this trial with the naïveté and precision that make these drawings so remarkable.

" M. de Boisbaudran is very far from overvaluing the results of his system. He makes no claim to its being employed alone, as a new method that makes unnecessary the ordinary course of study that has been in use for ages. No, M. de Boisbaudran only claims to have discovered a method of systematically cultivating the students' memory so as to make it capable of retaining visual impressions with accuracy, a power of indisputable advantage to all who study art.

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" Consequently, gentlemen, the members of your Commission recommend you to give your support to M. de Boisbaudran's method of training the memory in art.'

" Signed in the minutes by Horace Vernet, Auguste Couder, and Robert Fleury.

"This report was adopted by the Academic

" True copy.

" Raoul Rochette,

" Permanent Secretary"

This explicit approval of my method, expressed by a society of such high authority in matters artistic, was doubly valuable to me. It established the bona fides of my system, and the reality and the practical value of its results in the practice of

the fine arts.

My next business was to establish its efficacy in the matter of applied art. To effect this I naturally turned to the Society for the Encouragement of National Industries, which possessed both the qualifications and wide reputation necessary to my purpose.

I attached the greater importance to gaining their approval, because they had the habit of testing industrial and scientific inventions with absolute thoroughness, and would consequently put my system through tests, all the more conclusive, on account of their severity.

The Society was indeed quite ready to examine the question, for they had lately created a permanent Commission of Inquiry into all questions affecting the application of fine art to industry.

The Commission, which included many specialists and heads of businesses amongst its members, came with their President to the "Ecole Impériale de Dessin" to watch my students at work. In answer to their questions, those of my students who were already employed in various trades testified to the practical help that the power of drawing from memory afforded them.

The Commission appeared completely satisfied with all they

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had seen and heard, and were on the point of withdrawing, when one of their number suddenly raised the following objection : —

While readily admitting that the drawings done in his presence were proofs of very unusual memory power, he yet wondered, whether students with naturally strong memories who had learnt ordinary drawing, could not achieve results as remarkable as these, without having been specially trained by my system. He undertook that the Commission should clear up this important point by making comparative tests.

The Society determined, therefore, to approach the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and request them to select from their students

those who combined to the highest degree trained accomplishment in drawing with naturally strong memories, in order to pit them against my pupils.

The Ecole des Beaux-Arts passed this request on to two of its most eminent professors, one of whom, M. Lion Cogniet, replied in the following letter, as remarkable for its goodwill and fairness as for its clear appreciation of the point at issue : —

« Paris, 12th Nov. 1853.

a I look upon the proposed competition as entirely superfluous. There is not one of my pupils that I know of, who could enter with any show of reason into a competition in memory drawing (c imitation de memoire') with M. de Boisbaudran's ablest and most practised pupils. I cannot, therefore, ask any of them to take part in such an unequal contest, of which the issue is quite certain, for it is a challenge which I personally should not think of taking up.

" I have cultivated my memory a great deal, and perhaps with some profit. I have often got my pupils to do so. But neither they nor I have done it so consecutively or methodically as to imagine that we could produce results, when the model is no longer present, to compare in mathematical

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exactness with achievements such as M. de Boisbaudran submitted to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, as is recorded in their minutes.

" M. de Boisbaudran has my authority to make any use of this letter that he thinks fit. Lion Cogniet ."

The other professor of the Beaux- Arts, to whom the request had been passed on, replied in substance that he thought his pupils were not qualified for the proposed test, but that it would be so interesting and instructive to make the trial, that he would send such of his pupils as best fulfilled the requirements of the Society.

Nothing now remained but to choose the subject for the competition.

A little antique figure was chosen, which had been but lately found in making excavations, and had been given by the King of Naples to the Marquis de Pastoret. Consequently it was absolutely unknown in France.

The competitors, after being allowed an equal length of time in which to study it, had to draw it from memory.

A second competition of the same nature, and under similar conditions, was arranged between my pupils and those of one of the principal municipal schools of Paris.

I had great hopes of these two tests, which were calculated to settle, once for all, a question likely to be only too frequently raised.

My pupils clearly and conclusively established the superiority of our theory and practice. Many of their opponents were reduced to a state of complete inability to produce anything ; while even the most successful of them only managed to make vague drawings, without definite shape, which were like dreams already half-effaced.

I had given an account to the Commission of my first experiments on memory for colour ; and though there was only one of my pupils sufficiently advanced in this direction, they begged him to show what he could do. He had to paint

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from memory a carpet, of very varied hues, which faded into one another in extremely delicate gradations.

All these subtle changes were, despite their difficulty, rendered in paint from memory with a truth and accuracy approaching illusion.

All these facts were set out in the report of the Commission of the Society for the Encouragement of National Industries, which decided to grant me a medal in recognition of the practical value of my method as applied to industry.

I should prefer to suppress all reference to the successes achieved by my own method, but it is absolutely necessary that I should support my claims and statements with the testimony of genuine official tests. Amongst a great number of other

important testimonials I will quote only one, that of a distinguished artist, whose reputation is more than popular, for it is world-wide. Gifted with a marvellous memory, he has given proof in his work of the service and power of this precious faculty. The reader has guessed already that I mean M. Horace Vernet. Every one must admit his competence, or rather his absolute authority upon the question of the memory in art.

I cannot perhaps end better, than by printing the letter which M. Horace Vernet did me the honour of writing to me when on one of his last journeys. In it he sets forth in a few words his opinion upon the part that memory can play in art, and declares it to be high time that my book was published.

"Chateau de Champagnete,
this 2th of September 1860.

" Dear Sir — It is with great pleasure that I learn upon my return from a tour in Brittany, that you intend to publish a second edition of your book, *Memory in Art** I cannot wait till I get to Paris to beg you to push forward your enterprise, which deserves every encouragement. To formulate in writing the principles which you have employed with such success in your classes, is the surest way of making your

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method more widely known. It is as a method completely new, for its purpose is to cultivate the power of retaining in the memory, what is fugitive in nature, such as expression, rapid movement, passing effects, etc., things which it is quite hopeless to attempt to get from a model in the studio. Memory then is clearly of the greatest service.

" The ' Institut ' has already shown by its appreciation of what you have done how valuable it considers the education you are giving your pupils in this direction.

"^Personally I have the best of reasons for being one of your most enthusiastic supporters, for I have made use of my memory all through my artistic career. I pledge you, therefore, to continue to make your ideas better known, for they are on the road to true progress, and open up new and far-reaching prospects in the teaching of art. — Believe me, yours affectionately, Horace Vernet."

APPENDIX III

Among the distinguished people who gave this effort of mine their approval and encouragement, I must mention, in the fine arts, Messrs. Paul Delaroche, at that time Member of the Institut, Professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts ; Merime'e, Senator, Member of the Academie Francaise, of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres ; Leon Cogniet, Member of the Institut, Professor at the Ecole Polytechnique ; Viollet-le-Duc, Inspector-General of Historical Monuments - y Eugene Delacroix, Member of the Institut ; Baron Taylor, Member of the Institut ; Horace Vernet, Member of the Institut, Professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts ; Pradier, at the time Member of the Institut. In science the following : Francois Arago, then permanent Secretary of the Academy of Science ; Dumas, Senator, Senior Member of the Faculty of Science ; Chevreul, Member of the Academy of Science ; Gaudichaud,

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Member of the Academy of Science ; Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Member of the Academy of Science, Professor at the Natural History Museum.

From want of space I am unable to mention all the other support, equally distinguished, which my efforts have since received, for which I am extremely grateful.

APPENDIX IV

Mr. T. R. Way, an intimate friend of Whistler, once described in a lecture at the Art Workers' Guild Whistler's method of committing his Nocturnes to memory. When observing the scene he wished to remember, he would study the essential points upon which the effect depended, then turn his back upon it and recapitulate these points, turning round again to see if he had got his lesson perfect. This he did aloud to Mr. Way, who was looking at the subject, and was thus able to judge of the correctness with which the lesson had been learned.

Mr. Way also said that when he called Whistler's attention to a second effect on the same evening, equally worth remembering, his reply was, " No, no ; one thing is enough at a time."

This account is a very interesting contribution to the subject, and is very strong evidence that de Boisbaudran's methods are not fantastic, but of serious use in practice. And, further, the inference is that Whistler got his method from de Boisbaudran himself, for in Pennell's Life of Whistler we are told that he came under his influence in his early days in Paris, through his close association with Fantin, Legros, and other of his pupils. — Translator.

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In the last few years great interest has been taken in the question of how to infuse new life into art, of how to raise it to a higher level, and to enlarge its outlook. At least there has been a great deal of talk upon this interesting subject, and the air has been full of tentative schemes for recasting our old art schools. Why, such ideas even invaded the sanctuaries of officialdom ! Nevertheless, these attempts at regeneration do not seem to have achieved any very notable results. 1

Does not the cause of this lack of real success lie in the fact that State protection, like the encouragement of private societies, has little or no influence upon art itself, useful as it is in promoting the interests and the association of artists ?

The distribution of fine prizes in money and honours may do much to stimulate and encourage artistic output : it can do nothing to raise its quality.

It is in the education of the artist that we must look for the true means of progress, and of infusing fresh

life into art. And this can be achieved only through

1 This treatise, it must be remembered, was written in 1872, with the exception of the notes at the end. [The above original foot-note was intended for the reader of 1879. Perhaps it is right to call the attention of the reader of this translation to the fact that not only seven but thirty-nine years have passed since 1872. Is the art teaching of to-day yet up to Lecoq's standard ? — Translator.]

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the perfecting of art teaching, which must not be confused with routine and regulation.

Foreign nations seem to be realising this truth. At the Universal Exhibition of 1867 we had an opportunity of appreciating the efforts which their schools were making. Yet, sad to relate, the most advanced productions, notably those of the school of Bavaria, were almost without exception dull and monotonous in effect. For all the drawings exhibited, and they were many, seemed to be the product of the same mind and hand. Despite the variety of signature, individuality was completely lacking. And this lack reveals the defect of their system — a defect against which we should be particularly on our guard. 1

Instead of congratulating ourselves upon the mistakes in artistic education made by our competitors, let us rather take our own case severely in hand ; and in order to cure our own failings, let us make a serious examination of the procedure in our schools.

In France, the schools in which drawing, painting, and sculpture are taught are either in private hands, or under the control of municipalities, or the State.

I will rapidly survey these different classes of teaching, calling attention to the essential modifications which I consider could be made in them, and setting forth the principles on which they should, in my opinion, be directed.

Private Teaching

The opening of the studios of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, though hardly seven years old, has already caused

1 See Note A, p. 92.

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great injury to private schools of art. For, by admitting young men in every stage of advancement without any entrance examination, it attracts almost all the pupils from the other schools. The bait of its prizes, and the weight that official institutions always carry, have an irresistible attraction for them. No professor would venture to open a school of painting against so crushing a competitor as the State. It would be impossible to revive nowadays studios such as those of David, Gros, Ingres, or Leon Cogniet. 1

Effective competition can only be maintained by societies and combination. Of such societies, that of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine is by far the most influential. It has numerous schools not only in Paris, but scattered all over France. I will postpone the discussion of the influence which they exercise.

Through the devotion of certain distinguished people there was formed some years ago an institution of considerable importance, called the Central Union of Fine Art as applied to Industry. To-day it is the chief, if not the only, example of private enterprise, and on this account deserves especial notice.

The purpose of this useful society is, as its name suggests, to introduce into industry good taste, grace, and daintiness, with a finer sense of style, by bringing the influence of fine art to bear upon it. It has done good service with its exhibitions by publicly showing there the work of almost all the French schools of drawing ; for it is essential in studying the question of

1 This is no longer the case, as Paris teems with every sort of school, many kept by foreigners even. But this was written before Paris had the vogue it has had lately, and before art became the craze it is at present with amateurs of both sexes. — Translator.

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teaching that it should be possible to judge from actual results the influence of the teacher, the value of the methods employed, and of the models and copies which are used in the teaching. ¹

To be perfectly frank, the greater part of the work shown was not satisfactory. -If the general impression had been merely one of want of progress, or want of strength, there would not be much reason to distress ourselves. For the cure for this is simply to encourage industry and application. But the evil lies deeper, and we must make haste to determine its cause.

One and the same radical defect is noticeable in almost all the drawings exhibited, whatever their proficiency or the difficulty of their subject. This defect, and it is a very serious one, is the complete lack of truth, sincerity, and naturalness.

A student's first attempts may be interesting enough, despite their feebleness, if only they show signs of conscientious and simple-minded research ; for artlessness often lends a charm to ignorance itself. Unfortunately, among all the innumerable drawings exhibited there was no such interest to be found. Instead, the drawings of children are displayed by their self-satisfied professors as the achievements of prodigies of twelve and thirteen, and show, alas ! that they have merely lost the freshness of their natural simplicity, and have suffered deformity in the most essential of their artistic faculties.

Instead of showing in their first attempts the modest diffidence which is a sign of conscientious and painstaking work, they set down forms that are entirely

¹ See Note B, p. 94.

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false, and violently exaggerated effects, with an assurance that almost eclipses that of their elders.

The causes of such widespread corruption are not difficult to determine. In a majority of the schools one sees the most fatal methods still held in honour, which betray themselves invariably in the disastrous results which they inevitably produce.

Breaking up all the forms of nature, including those of the human figure, into squares, angles, and triangles, cannot fail to affect a child's notion of real form : for children are highly impressionable. By thus destroying all grace, suppleness, and delicacy, and forcing on their young attention shapeless masses, exaggerated into squares and angles, the delicate growth of a true feeling for beauty and harmony is destroyed in the bud.

The origin of this sorry procedure dates back about thirty years. At that time there appeared a strange system, happily since consigned to oblivion, which consisted in making the students copy from a series of plaster blocks, working the shadows with a stump. The first block gave the mass of a head, without any indication of detail. In the second block rectangular projections stood for the more prominent features. In each succeeding block the forms were gradually refined, until the last became a recognisable human head. When this last model had been drawn and shaded with a stump the series of studies was finished.

This fine discovery, praised and pushed by a friendly Press, as warranted to give the most wonderful results in no time, was welcomed with open arms and put into practice even in the most out-of-the-way parts of the country.

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A minister of the day adopted it as a system so sound and full of promise, that he gave orders that it should be employed in every school in Paris. But when put to the test it had to be withdrawn almost at once, and with it went all hopes of the success so loudly trumpeted. 1

Though this strange idea has been greatly modified since then, it is still easy to see that it is the origin and contains the principle of an extreme system of

masses, angles, and squares, which yet flourishes only too widely.

A pupil of sufficient proficiency ought assuredly, like a fully trained artist, to begin a drawing by establishing the masses. This may be called the first stage in execution. But it is by no means the first stage in a student's education. For the first stage in education is the preparation of the faculties, on which drawing essentially depends, that is the eye and hand, by exercises calculated to give them the nicety and dexterity which must be acquired before drawing can really begin. And this result is entirely missed by exercises that deliberately misdirect the artistic faculties. It can, however, be attained, as it often has been, through the sincere imitation of graduated copies representing natural forms as they really appear, primarily those of the human figure. These are the principles laid down by Leonardo da Vinci, that great man, whose genius was only equalled by his good sense.

When an artist first begins to teach, he often makes what is only the most natural of mistakes, that of thinking that the methods of execution which he

1 See Note C, p. 96.

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prefers for his own work, are for that very reason the best methods to teach to others. For instance, many-painters find it a good plan, in getting an object placed upon their canvas, to draw neither its real shape nor its outline, but rather the shapes of the masses of light and shade upon it. In this way they suppress all use of outline and put in the lights and darks at once. In so doing the artist is unconsciously employing abstractions and making calculations which have become easy to him through habit, the purpose and good sense of which he well understands. But a beginner cannot properly follow such a complicated process, and it is very important to show him the simplest, most direct, and most natural way of working. For we must inevitably confuse and unsettle him if we make him use processes he cannot understand.

It is always risky to proceed from the complex to the simple and thus upset the most elementary and well established principle of all rational education. Rigid insistence upon extreme systems, enforced without restraint, without any explanation of their principles, is the chief cause of the evils that stare us in the face.

As to the copies, they must of course be in harmony with the method they are intended to illustrate, for they are the means by which it is to be taught, and should be the outcome of its needs. Among those exhibited by the Central Union a few were well executed, and really praiseworthy, but the greater number were extremely faulty, displaying extraordinary ignorance of the principles of teaching. ¹

Not only had beauty of form been completely lost

¹ See Note D, p. 96.

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in most of them, but truth of form into the bargain. The pure delicate curves of antique figures were represented by angles, sharp points, and broken lines. All curves, or suppleness, they seemed to say, is licence hardly to be borne. Such is fashion !

Is it not strange that, at the very moment when we are invoking the example and authority of Raphael and other great master draughtsmen, the copies used as models for training young artists should be the deliberate contradiction of the principle of their drawings. For their drawings are so full of life and movement, so flexible and free in outline — are seen as a united whole, and emphasise with such knowledge the foreshortening and construction.

The same contradiction is just as striking in the matter of values and general effect, for here, instead of the delicate and restrained harmonies of the great colourists, the copies are full of the harshest contrasts of dark and light.

Could one set about it better, if it was one's deliberate purpose to destroy all delicacy of the eye ?

As for the actual way in which the copies are drawn, it is in most cases stupidity itself ; for they are either drawn in flat tints, without any suggestion of modelling, or in elaborate cross-hatching of lines so conspicuous in themselves, that the pupil's whole time and attention is occupied in copying these lines alone.

After the question of the copies, comes that of the teachers. There are undoubtedly among country professors many skilled draughtsmen and experienced teachers who would have produced good results, with better models and better methods, and longed to throw

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off the yoke, and follow their own instincts. But if you know the state of intellectual stagnation and bondage to which whole districts are reduced by the over centralisation of the control, you will understand how impossible it is for such men to put their good intentions into practice. For they are isolated and unsupported, and are surrounded by ignorance, prejudice, jealousy, and even hostility. To have rejected the methods and models that came from Paris, and were officially employed in every public school there, would have been something more than a mere act of daring. To these men, capable of rendering such valuable service to the cause of teaching, the Central Union could give just the effective support, which they so badly need and so richly deserve.

Other teachers, and they are the vast majority, have let themselves drift with the stream, either from conviction or mere indifference. The exhibitions have given only too well the measure of their understanding and their efforts. But zealous, or not zealous, they were at best only capable of teaching what they had themselves been taught, of passing on to others the doctrines which they saw were generally accepted.

Still it is very clear what a hearty welcome would be given to any sane ideas and wide-minded counsels that the Central Union chose to offer, from the readiness with which many teachers come to it even now for information and advice.

Next let us turn our attention to the schools of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine. These schools one would expect to be far in advance of all others, thanks to the funds at their command, to the close

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ties which unite them as a brotherhood, and to their admirable organisation. And one would expect to see them busily perfecting their methods of instruction and creating new models and copies, in fact full of healthy stimulus. But so far they have been quite content to accept the ordinary routine ideas, and imitate the other schools.

There is no denying the enthusiasm and devotion of the professors of the brotherhood, but they seem to be wanting in invention and imagination and do not appear to be real artists. The creative faculty seems lacking.

And so the Central Union seems really destined to become a centre of information, instruction, and good counsel to provincial schools. It is a noble mission to serve such a purpose — up till now, indeed, the State has shown no inclination to dispute any one's right to serve it — and in fulfilling its mission the Union will deservedly gain great influence.

Still the responsibility is in proportion to the importance of the task, and the power likely to be thus put into the Union's hands, because of the confidence it inspires, will be a great power for good or for evil, according to the direction in which its counsels tend.

Good intentions, enthusiasm, and perseverance are not enough ; for it is specialised and expert knowledge that is needed. So that it will be necessary for the Union to study and learn all that bears upon the teaching of drawing, and elucidate its principles before it is possible truly to enlighten others. To render its influence really beneficial it must go still further, and

besides showing itself to be wide-minded and liberal in its point of view, must show that it is entirely disinterested, and could never be suspected of a wish to dominate those whom it advises and helps. Being the Central Union in fact, and not in name alone, should make it the easier for it to resist any tendency to over-centralise the control and teaching of art or reduce the teacher's independence.

There is only too great an inclination just now to narrow the routine of teaching by imposing one uniform system upon every one, which is cramping to professor and pupils alike. Instead of recommending the use of one particular method, even though it were the best of all, it is far better to lay down the large essential principles of teaching, to which all systems should conform, so broadly as not to entrench upon the teacher's liberty. For it is important that he should have the power of making such modifications upon the system he has to use as will make him feel it to be really his own method that he is teaching ; as only in this way can he keep the spring and enthusiasm sufficient to carry him through his onerous task.

Nor must the Union ever forget that it is essential to preserve all the variety and independence of action that properly belongs to private teaching, lest it destroy those very opportunities for personal enterprise that hardly ever occur under official direction. When the State thinks fit to undertake the organisation of art teaching, it is naturally inclined to employ its usual methods of administration — regulation, centralisation, unification. Such measures, unless they are kept very well in hand, quickly fall into opposition to the

whole spirit of art, which is based upon independence and spontaneity.

For a long time the City of Paris had only two schools of drawing. This number was clearly insufficient for its needs, but it has suddenly been increased out of all reason. It would have been wiser to have taken time first to enquire into methods of teaching, and to select or train teachers. It would have been wiser to have opened the new schools one by one, as the need for more training of this kind in industrial occupations became apparent. For it is to be feared that, through want of forethought and of real understanding of industrial conditions, many professions have become distressingly over-stocked, especially those for girls.

China painting, for instance, a few years ago offered women a secure livelihood and relatively good pay ; but these advantages attracted so many workers that soon there was not work enough for all, and the pay fell below the level of a living wage.

If things were left to their natural course, the distress would never become so acute as when aggravated by some powerful accidental influence. What, pray ! will happen now that twenty new schools * for girls have been opened at once, which are educating a stream of pupils for the so-called prosperous professions of fan-painting, china-painting, and the like ?

1 It should be remembered that this was written in 1872, and is of little interest to the English reader. — Translator.

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Come what may, the new schools are already established and provided with complete staffs of teachers, and before giving judgment upon their methods of teaching it is only fair to let them have time to get into working order and show what they can do.

So there can be no question at the moment of any modification in the municipal schools of Paris. The most that can be done is to experiment in some of the primary schools to see if it is not possible, without actually teaching them drawing, to give the children such a training as will make drawing come more easily

to them later on.

Primary education, while not forgetting to teach children the things th[^]y must know, ought, in my opinion, to pay particular attention to the cultivation of their senses and their all-round development, so that they may be the better prepared to face the difficulties of secondary education. And this is but to follow the example of the good workman who sharpens the tools before setting to work.

This question, which is a very wide one, becomes much simpler if I confine myself to that branch of teaching which is my special province ; and if among all the senses which are capable of cultivation I treat only of the sense of sight, and for the moment of that sense only as regards the power of judging size and proportion by the eye.

Every one who has devoted himself to teaching drawing knows what persistent difficulty the beginner finds in judging proportion ; and it is so real a difficulty as never to be entirely overcome, so that not only students, but even the most accomplished artists

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never succeed in what they call the placing or establishing of the subject on the canvas without an effort* And this is just because it depends chiefly upon judging relations of size and distance.

The refractoriness of the faculty here brought into play is probably only due to neglect in its earliest stages. Personally I consider that this faculty should be subjected as early as possible to a gymnastic course of graduated exercises, to harden it and to check the growth of such natural failing.

And to this end I would suggest introducing into primary instruction, even perhaps into infant schools, certain exercises designed to cultivate the children's accuracy of eye.

These exercises should be of the simplest possible kind, of which the following is a specimen : —

On a sheet of paper, or a blackboard, let a straight line be drawn and on it let some unit of measurement such as a centimetre be marked off with two dots. Then let the children be given a pencil and try in turn to mark off this same length upon another straight line drawn ready for them. As soon as they have acquired the habit of doing this easily, they must repeat it from memory without having the copy before their eyes.

In this way it would not take very long, I hope, to fix in the children's minds the exact impression of a centimetre, several centimetres, a whole metre, and even several metres, and so on.

It is impossible to give any idea of all the conceivable developments and varieties of exercise that could be invented, for every object within sight can be made of service.

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The children could be asked, for instance, to tell the dimensions of one pane or of the entire window, the relation of the breadth to the height of the door, the distance between two trees in the garden. Such lessons are very easily made entertaining, and would quickly become a source of amusement during playtime or walks. 1

The habit thus acquired of judging size, by having a standard unit of measure indelibly engraved on the memory, would provide the eye with a real system of measurement, giving extraordinary accuracy in appreciating relation and proportion, and would be a very valuable apprenticeship to the many trades and professions for which the children are destined.

As regards drawing in the strict sense of the word, every one must see the helpfulness of such preparation. For it would remove, at least partially, one of the first difficulties encountered in teaching drawing, and as we may fairly hope, would in consequence make progress in the future more certain and more rapid.

As I have never taught children as young as those in the primary and infant schools, I have not been able

to put the exercises that I suggest into practice. Still I recommend the idea to all men of open mind, who are sufficiently interested in the cause of progress to make a real effort for the coming generation.

State Instruction

The Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Ecole Nationale de Dessin ² are the two channels through which the State gives instruction in Art.

x [^]See Appendix, p. 100.

2 Now called the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs. — Translator.

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The Ecole des Beaux-Arts is for teaching the Fine Arts of painting, sculpture, engraving, and architecture.

The Ecole Nationale de Dessin is for the teaching, as applied to industry, of sculpture, and the rudiments of architecture and mathematics.

Every time that the authorities have undertaken the reorganisation of the two schools they have taken one or the other alone, without apparently ever thinking of organising them under one head, and in relation to each other.

The result of such narrowness has, of course, been that two establishments, which have so many points of contact, often overlap, and even clash, and although administered by one authority more often obstruct than help one another.

Latterly, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts has filled its studios with students drawn almost exclusively from the Ecole de Dessin, taking them even before they have finished their elementary course. In so doing it has done sad injury to the latter school, and has injured itself very seriously by destroying the nursery, that provided it with most of its best material.

One is constantly being reminded that it is not the business of the Ecole de Dessin to train young pupils for the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, its exclusive purpose

being to educate artisans and workers in the applied arts and industries. Yet all students, whatever branch of art they intend ultimately to take up, need the same teaching as beginners, and they have come, from the moment of its foundation, with scarcely an exception, to seek it at the Ecole de Dessin in the face of all statutes and all rules. Would it not be more reason-

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able to take such a persistent fact into account and accept it frankly, instead of attempting to check the natural course of things with such ineffectual restrictions ?

The reorganisation of the two schools could be best effected, in my opinion, by simply combining them, thus making them work together to a higher purpose, being careful, of course, strictly to ascribe to each its proper functions.

If the State is to continue to undertake the teaching of art, its machinery for the purpose may well continue to consist of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Ecole de Dessin, The latter should, however, have added to it a new section devoted to the actual practice of industrial and decorative art.

The Ecole de Dessin might then take the title of Central, for its teaching being ground-work would lead up to all applications of drawing in general, both fine-art and trade work, and it would be training pupils for all schools, public and private alike. It would thus meet a want and fulfil a purpose really central and necessary in art education. 1

Once it had become central, the Ecole de Dessin should clearly state that it did not, in principle, admit two methods of teaching drawing, a superior method for artistic, an inferior one for industrial work. To every student alike it would give one and the same teaching, from the first elementary grounding up to the highest possible developments, which each could follow to the particular stage of advancement best suited to his capacities, or to the branch of art he had decided to take up.

1 See Note E, p. 97.

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So keen is the attraction of art for young people that no encouragement is needed to lead them to take it up as a profession. Rather is it necessary to thwart them and prevent their yielding to its seductions without sufficient consideration, or sufficient talent, for this leads to cruel disappointments. Very stiff and thorough tests should, therefore, be in force at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts to prevent the entry of all students, who cannot show real training as well as real natural gifts.

A school of the high position of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts should admit only students of mark, really capable of following its higher teaching with profit. And it ought, both in its own interest and in the interest of art in general, to refuse to encourage a crowd of second-rate artists by the ease with which it accepts them as students.

The applied arts, on the other hand, lack dignity and fascination in young people's eyes, and must be made as attractive and easy of access as possible. And to this the creation of the practical section of which I spoke would contribute immensely. For it would rouse the students' interest and stimulate them to keener effort, by showing them the practical application of the various kinds of drawing which they were learning in the school.

In such a section many students would discover their true vocations, and would choose of their own free will professions of which they would otherwise very likely never have heard, either because they had special aptitude for them or found them easier to enter.

So convinced am I of the benefits that would result from the addition to the Ecole de Dessin of this special

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section for practical work, that I intend to develop the

idea in a special pamphlet and discuss the best way of organising it. ¹ It is, in fact, a subject closely connected with much of my work, and many of the experiments that I have been making for years. Meanwhile I will give a few reflections upon artistic education in general and upon the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in particular.

Ecole des Beaux-Arts

I am not going to discuss either the probable changes, which the authorities may in the future introduce into the organisation of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, or the benefits that might arise from them. They may perhaps take the form of suppressing the existing studios, and allowing the present professors to take them over as their own private classes. It may be that in order to educate the public as well as artists they will turn the Ecole into a sort of artistic College de France, with courses of lectures and discussions open to artists and public alike. Nor will I discuss the existing organisation of the Ecole. I think it is better merely to lay down those general principles which, in my opinion, ought to be the basis of all artistic education. This will leave it open to every one to judge of their value for himself, and those who approve of my principles will be able to draw their own conclusions as to the present condition of the Ecole and the different improvements that could be made.

Here then are the principles, together with certain formulas which follow as their corollaries.

¹ See Note F, p. 98.

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Art, in the sense in which we are discussing it, is the expression by form and colour of the artist's feeling*

An artist, in the highest sense of the word, is inspired with a passionate love of beauty ; he is a true lover of nature, and does not see her imperfections, but discovers beauties which escape the eye of the ordinary observer. These he combines and idealises in his work, impressing them with the stamp of his own personality.

Artistic feeling, like any other true feeling, is essentially personal. It varies as the nature of the man that feels it. Hence the immense variety of styles in, art, ranging from the lofty conceptions of a Pheidias, a Raphael, or a Titian, to the light fancies of a Watteau, the wild fury of a Salvator, or the grotesques of a Callot.

Unlike as they are, all these men are true artists, however different in degree. All have observed nature with the same sincerity, according to their instinctive preferences. Each of them, too, has learnt how to execute his works so as to affect us powerfully with the impression that it was given to him alone to receive. By showing us some personal view of nature, by giving us some fresh interpretation of her, or some idealised conception that she has inspired, by showing her as strong and terrible or gentle and sublime, these masters raise us to a higher plane of thought, or charm and refresh us, increasing in number and variety our store of exquisite and nobler enjoyments. The least among them has his use and takes his place of right in the chain of art, for his absence would mean the loss of a link.

Art, then, when understood in its widest sense,

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consists not only of higher manifestations, but of all manifestations that bear the mark of passionate and individual conviction. And innumerable and magnificent as such manifestations have been in the past, there is yet an inexhaustible store of them for the future, for the shades and variety of human feeling from which they spring are infinite in number and always fresh and new.

From this we may, I think, logically deduce the following maxims : —

ART IS ESSENTIALLY INDIVIDUAL. IT IS INDIVIDUALITY

WHICH MAKES THE ARTIST.

From which consequently results a second formula : —

ALL TEACHING, THAT IS REAL TEACHING, BASED UPON REASON AND GOOD SENSE, MUST MAKE IT ITS AIM TO KEEP THE ARTIST'S INDIVIDUAL FEELING PURE AND UNSPOILED, TO CULTIVATE IT AND BRING IT TO PERFECTION.

With these principles to guide us, it is easy to judge calmly and impartially the different systems of art teaching which have succeeded each other until now, and also any that may be suggested in the future.

Let us apply the test first to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

The Ecole des Beaux-Arts has made it its mission to preserve and hand down the fine traditions of antiquity and the great masters. But its doctrines, although truly classical in principle, very soon deteriorated in the hands of the academicians, who took their place in turn as the leaders of the French school, and controlled art teaching at the end of the last century. So much so, indeed, that David repudiated

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the doctrines of the Ecole at the time, declaring, in the name of the true antique tradition, that it was not maintaining tradition as it professed to do. He dared to assert openly that the official teaching was both false and injurious ; and went so far as to forbid his pupils to try for the prizes. The competitions appeared to him as a sort of spider's web, which the students could not touch unharmed, and without losing something of their own original sentiment and naïveté.

We will not inquire too closely if David never allowed himself to tamper with the personal sentiment, to which he attached such value ; let us only bear witness to the fact that the alarm he felt at these competitions is largely justified, for we see that they have invariably produced exactly the disastrous consequences which that great artist foresaw and, feared.

The young people who enter for these competi-

tions naturally devote all their efforts to gaining the prizes. Unfortunately they usually consider that the surest and easiest means to this end is to imitate the prize works of previous competitions, which, to be sure, are carefully exhibited as examples that point the true road to success.

Is the full effect of such misdirection understood even yet? Do people really see how it leads most of the competitors to reject all ideas and inspiration of their own, and servilely to copy such work as the school holds up to honour and consecrates by success?

I ask all who have been at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Is not this what generally happens? And

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sadder still, are not the students often heard to say that if they are trying to imitate the manner and style of such and such a prize work, it is not because they admire it? They admit that they are perfectly aware that they are taking a direction quite opposed to their own taste and real artistic feeling; but mean later to become themselves again, once the prize is won. But an artist's conviction is a religious faith, which cannot stoop without a sort of apostasy to such sordid calculations.

Like honour, the artist's faith,

Est comme une île escarpée et sans bords ;
On n'y saurait rentrer des qu'on en est dehors. 1

The harm would not be beyond all cure if the young competitor only carried off the " grand prix " at his first attempt. But who can hope for such good luck? And the pursuit of the " Grand Prix de Rome " always absorbs many years, if not the whole of an artist's youth. 2 With scarcely an exception, no student succeeds in being even admitted. To compete for this prize, that is he does not reach what is called the " entrée en loge," till he has spent some years working exclusively to this end. It is the length of time spent in this way working against his natural instincts that is so dangerous to his chance of retaining

his originality.

Pupils who spend all their time at this competition

1 Is like an island steep-cliffed without a beach ; once one has left it, one can never land on it again.

2 Students may compete for the " Prix de Rome " who have not attained thirty-one years of age. The competitions referred to further on are for the purpose of selecting out of the thirty, or thirty-five students, who pass the preliminary trials, the ten who actually compete. These have to execute a picture in the "loge," or little studio in the school set apart for each competitor. — Translator.

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end like certain students trying for a degree, by caring much more for getting their diploma than for acquiring a knowledge of their subject.

Two tests must be passed before one is admitted "en loge", : a sketch or composition of a given subject, and a figure painted from nature. To practice, then, for these tests becomes the student's whole pre-occupation. Every day he devotes himself exclusively to making routine compositions and studies of the figure, always on the scale, and within the time limits prescribed, carefully copying the examination style.

After whole years devoted to such practice, what can be left of the student's most precious qualities ? Of his naivete, his sincerity, his naturalness ? The exhibitions of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts give us only too clear an answer.

Some of the competitors imitate the style of their master or some other well-known artist, others try to copy the work of recent prize-winners, the last exhibition hit, or any picture that has greatly struck them.

Such different influences may give an exhibition a certain apparent variety, but it is very different from the real variety and impression of originality that comes from personal inspiration.

Let us admit at once that often much of the work shows real talent and skill : but what one does not

often find are just the qualities one would expect to find most in young people's work — and they are the most interesting qualities, too, and those that show the greatest promise for the future — namely, spontaneity, go, naivete, freshness of impression ; in a word, the qualities of youth !

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What can be the reason of a state of things so general and so unnatural, if it is not a system opposed to the free development of individuality ? 1

I have pointed out some of the evils that belong to competitions, but there are others no less serious ; for competitions accustom the students to overlook the nobler and purer pleasure that is found in the pursuit of beauty in a search for praise and self-advancement.

How can I reproach this generation for such faults as these ? How can I accuse the artists of to-day of turning art into a business, into a mere means to obtain fortune and honour ? How can I accuse them of the want of real conviction which separates our age so completely from the times of true artistic faith ?

Is it not the training which, apparendy without the least suspicion of what it was doing, corrupted their artistic conscience in their youth, and turned it into evil courses ?

I am perfectly aware of the general belief in the great advantages of competitions ; and for that very reason feel that I must lay stress upon the dangers that they cause when employed without judgment and moderation.

In primary schools, public schools, and at college prizes have the undeniable merit of exciting emulation, and stimulating less gifted and more indolent natures. Now, in all these instances we have to deal with crowds, and must teach effectively the greatest number of people that we can, for the State can never have too

1 All this is true, not only of the work done for the " Prix de Rome," but of all

the work exhibited from the different classes in the school.

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many well-educated citizens. But in a school of art it is a very different matter. There a crowd is the last thing that is wanted. Only those should be admitted to whom art is a calling, and who have unusual talent. The best students, those who have come through the severest tests, need no artificial stimulus to work. For if they really have the artistic temperament, which was the ground of their admission to the class, they have the true motive force in themselves, in the essential elements of love for nature and for art, in enthusiasm, and in intense convictions.

For such students competitions are not only unnecessary but dangerous ; they distract young talent from the course of its natural development into wasteful struggles and rivalries. A young artist should never aim at getting the better of his rivals, but should endeavour to excel his own past achievements by making continual progress in the development of his natural gifts.

Must we conclude, then, that all prize competitions should be suppressed ? In my opinion, we should be careful not to be too precipitate. Full time should always be allowed for thinking out any alteration, however badly reform is needed.

So, for the moment, as the prizes have become the students' only stimulus, they must continue to be given, until we succeed in finding stronger and nobler attractions to take their place.

In elementary schools of drawing, prizes will always be of the greatest use. What else can really influence the very young pupils who follow such preliminary courses ? At their age ideas and feelings of a higher

order are still too undeveloped to respond to any other appeal that we can make to them.

Even if the "Prix de Rome" is not suppressed, and I do not suppose it will be for many years to come, it is at least possible to reduce its evils very considerably.

First, the reign of the old competitions must be publicly declared at an end, and the competitors must be persuaded that they need no longer be the slaves of convention, but are free to express with absolute sincerity whatever impressions they receive from nature.

Further, the competitions must be so arranged that no one can tell in advance either the class or style of subject selected, or the scale or length of time arranged for its execution. The subjects ought to be made a complete surprise by being widely varied from year to year, and impossible to predict.

Sculptors should be asked without warning for sculpture in low- or full-relief; painters for pictures one year, the next for decorative paintings or cartoons of any kind of unexpected shape and size.

An even more radical change might be made by giving the big prize to the pupil who had, of his own initiative, produced the most remarkable and promising work of the year, executed in the school itself.

It would be a very good thing, too, if prizes could be given in the same competition for two works of equal merit, however dissimilar in style, in order to establish the fact that a prize can be won in many different ways.

By some such methods as these the Ecole des

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Beaux-Arts could perhaps free its competitions of the serious evils to which they give rise so readily.

A few years ago there was still a " Prix de Rome " for landscape. The prize was much sought after, and the competitors all strove to acquire the style demanded for it, in those days called "historical landscape."

In making studies from nature they only looked about for views that reminded them of Poussin's compositions, and picked out only such of nature's skies, rocks, and trees as were "historical." But as nature does not often satisfy such requirements, they were forced to " arrange," or rather mutilate her, in order to give her the necessary "historical" character. The result was such an entire lack of truth, such a complete absence of all observation of nature, such a tedious repetition of the same forms ; in fine, such a wearisome combination of conventionality and pretension, that prize and competition alike were abolished. ¹

This bold step once taken, students were no longer distracted by thinking continually of the wretched prize, and set to work to study nature simply and without prejudice, with the sole purpose of recording the impressions received direct from her. A lead had already been given them in this direction by many landscape painters of distinction, who had broken fresh ground for themselves outside the influence of all prize competitions or routine. And it is through their action that we have to-day a school of landscape painting full of life and variety of which the country is so justly proud.

We must do the old Ecole des Beaux- Arts the

¹ In 1857.

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justice of admitting that it was always its intention to raise the level of its teaching by basing it upon great tradition. But it forgot that the great masters, whose example it was continually quoting, were not satisfied merely to accept tradition as handed down to them by their predecessors, but sought how to combine it with the living elements of their own age, and thus become creators in their turn.

Pheidias found traditions already established, which though splendid in principle were worn out and fettered by convention. He gave life to their dry bones, fusing in his works, at once so true to nature and sublime, fine tradition with fine realism, drawn from the splendid life of Greece around him.

As one admires the cavalry of the Parthenon frieze one feels sure that Pheidias watched them passing through the streets of Athens. At the time of the Renaissance, did not Raphael, fired with enthusiasm for the antique masterpieces that had only recently been discovered, infuse his style with the types and life of his own time, as well as with the grandeur and beauty that he borrowed from the ancients ?

Great artists such as Titian and Veronese, surrounded by the luxury, the pomp of ceremonies, the flash of silk and brocade of the Venice of their day, joined, in their sumptuous canvases, the glowing impressions of all these gorgeous effects of colour to the tradition of the great works which were produced before their day, so that on every hand we see in the work of great masters the alliance of tradition and of living nature.

The incompleteness of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts

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has been due to its exclusive pre-occupation with tradition. No doubt it believed its teaching to be sufficiently closely in touch with nature through the life class for drawing from the figure, an error shared by every other school of the day.

Drawing from the life is undeniably of the greatest use, but it can hardly be considered to constitute the complete study of nature. How can a model, fagged with the strain of posing, and lighted by the monotonous north light of the studio, give even the faintest idea of man when free in his natural movements, out in the fresh air and the open country, and lighted by the sky ?

It is incontestable that the pictorial moments of nature, as she lives and moves, can only be seized by

very rapid observation. And such impressions as young artists receive are generally too fleeting to be of much practical use to them unless they have been properly trained. Consequently, to make the study of living nature really possible, it is necessary that the faculties of observation and memory should be previously developed by practice.

I have made a very close study of the subject, and have shown that these faculties can be developed to such a remarkable degree as to permit henceforth the introduction into every school of a study of nature completer than was ever possible before. For it throws open to the students the immense field, almost unexplored, of living action, and changing, fugitive effects.

A few years ago I published, under the title of " The Training of the Memory in Art," a special study of this question. And I wish to refer the reader particularly

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to the section called "Advanced Study." 1 It" opens with an account of some of my experiments, in which I made my pupils first observe, and then draw or paint from memory nude and draped models, not posing on a stand, but moving freely at their pleasure, in the open air, in the midst of a fine park. In this way they got what they could never get in the school, the study of the human figure developed and ennobled in the fulness of the beauty that belongs to it in action among the endless variety of nature's effects of form and colour.

Living and picturesque scenes like these furnish the observation and the imagination with material for the higher walks of art, such as modern civilisation rarely offers. For through them the students, instead of absorbing a "grand style " ready-made beforehand, are inspired to a granci style that is really their own.

Before closing this short summary of my views and opinions upon teaching, I wish to make it quite clear that the last thing that I propose is that my ideas should be applied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, or any

of the other schools, in their present condition. For if they are to bear good fruit it is not sufficient in itself that the students should have been trained in memory work. They must also never have had their real natures, their own originality of feeling, distorted or corrupted by false teaching, by the temptations of prize competitions, or other bad influences.

There are, no doubt, here and there in the schools a few rare natures that have escaped the contagion. But to make simple and naive again those who have

1 See p. 29.

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long lost these qualities is a task of surpassing difficulty, for it is to restore to them, so to speak, their lost artistic virginity.

So convinced am I that my method would be unlikely at present to meet with the conditions necessary to its success, that I would rather defer its introduction into the official schools. I think it is much better merely to call attention in a general way to art teaching, contenting myself by laying before such men of judgment as take a serious interest in this important question the observations, ideas, and principles which I have had occasion to collect during many years' practice as a teacher.

EPILOGUE

For some time past new systems of drawing have been appearing in great numbers, each in turn declaring itself superior to all others both in method and results, and clamouring to be adopted exclusively by the State or the town.

If we are to choose amongst these diverse rival theories with any certainty, we must do exactly the opposite of what has been done up till now, and before adopting any must examine them in a systematic and rational way, so as to avoid the false conclusions so

common in such matters.

Mistakes such as have been made in the past would be doubly disastrous now, when there is an idea of founding a training college for forming art masters. The idea of such a foundation is excellent, but only upon the condition of its being thoroughly thought out and understood beforehand ; for it could lead as readily to the spreading of darkness as of light, not only among the youth of our day, but of the next generation as well.

In training art teachers the first thing to be decided is exactly the doctrine you wish to teach them ; and to have an opinion of real value on the question, it is indispensable to make experiment and comparison of

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different methods, which, as a rule, is exactly what is not done. A new method is usually taken up without having been subjected to the test of practice, and through being adopted officially and imposed on all public schools, becomes a monopoly which prevents the appearance of any rival. As a consequence all comparison of different ways of teaching is rendered impossible, for the only sure means of gauging and recognising the value of even the best and most practical innovations has been lost. Is it not time that such stagnation in art teaching should be ended ? And if teaching is to be revived and enter the path of progress, we must decide at once to allow all new methods, which seem worthy of consideration, to show their value through comparative tests. The numerous schools belonging to the town and the State offer a wide field for such highly interesting experiments. The inspectors, who overlook the work done in these establishments, would then have a very simple and useful duty to perform. It would become their business not to interfere with the methods of teaching which were on trial, but only to guarantee that the professors were faithfully carrying out the method they were applying.

And the programme of each method should be very carefully drawn up, precisely setting forth every element considered indispensable to its success, such as its special principles and aim, the nature of its exercises, with the order in which they should be taken, and all other necessary conditions. By clearly defining the method in this way all uncertainty as to its purpose would be removed, and the absolute honesty which is so neces-

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sary to the proper appreciation of new theories would be guaranteed. All changes and improvements in the course of experiment would be permitted, but an exact record would be kept of them. And thus all fraud would become impossible, and there could be no borrowing from other methods to cover up some failure in the system upon trial. The tests could no longer be falsified, and would consequently become truly instructive and conclusive. It is only after subjection to trial under perfectly honest conditions that methods can be judged and adopted with any real certainty. For then their adoption results from positive and regular proofs of their merit, and ceases to depend, as is too often the case now, upon self-advertisement, obstruction, or favouritism.

NOTES TO THE EDITION OF 1879

Although the publication of the present edition has been advertised for some time, I thought it right to postpone it until after the opening of the universal exhibition of 1878. It seemed absolutely essential that I should see what this great exhibition of the world's progress had to show in the way of new discoveries in the teaching of fine art, that I might take them into account before publication. After a close examination of the work shown by the art schools, it did not take me long to decide that there were no changes of any real importance.

What are the obstacles to progress in art teaching ? What are the means by which it could be given a fresh impulse ? These are the questions treated of in the pamphlet which I was begged to republish, and the state of teaching at the moment

seems to me to confirm the need of such republication.

I have therefore decided to publish a fresh edition of it as it stands, only adding the notes that follow.

Note A (from p. 58)

The foreign schools of art sent so few specimens of their work to our great exhibition of 1878 that it is impossible to judge their relative merit. It is much to be regretted, for one would have liked to have seen exhibits from all the schools that took part in the exhibition of 1867, especially from that of Bavaria, which then gained the first prize, although its work was so lacking in variety.

Our national system of teaching was open to this same reproach of uniformity, and at the time I called attention to

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it, pointing out the danger that might result. Were my fears well-founded ? We can judge of that to-day.

The first thing that strikes a visitor to the work of the French art schools in the exhibition of 1878 is their evident monotony. No doubt if one were to compare the drawings very carefully, one would discover slight differences in their degrees of strength and accomplishment ; but it is impossible to find any appreciable difference in manner of execution or in feeling. Everywhere we find the same effect, the same uniform process of execution, the same complete absence of personal initiative, or ingenuity, or independent invention. When one reflects how students differ from each other in natural characteristics, in all the delicate variations of mind and body, one asks what is this method that results in making them all so much alike ? Where can this early effacement of individuality lead to later, unless it be to the reduction of all talent to the same level of commonplace ? Many right-thinking people, while

seeing clearly enough how odd and evil such a system of teaching is, do not seem to be properly alarmed at it. Truly they say modern teaching often chokes the germs of natural talent, represses all true and spontaneous enthusiasm, and reduces all intelligence to the same level ; but once school-work is over the real artists revolt against these early bad influences, and set to work to remake their originality.

Unfortunately young people, whose artistic faculties have not suffered irreparable injury through an education which is at once commonplace and repressive, are very rare. The more intelligent ones recognise, but often very late, the false path which they are pursuing. By sheer force of will and energy they sometimes succeed in forgetting what they have learnt, and arrive at creating a manner of their own, both independent and original. But such manufactured originality can never have quite the sincerity or the simplicity which their natural originality would have retained, if it had been kept pure and uninjured while being properly developed.

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Note B (from p. 60)

I must call attention to a grave oversight in the exhibitions of the work of our schools, which has deprived them of a great deal of their interest and value.

From the very first of the exhibitions, organised by the Central Union for making the conditions of art teaching in France better known, regret has been constantly expressed that there was no proof that the results shown by the schools were really bona fide. It is evident that in such a matter the honesty must not be left to be taken for granted, but must be established by proof beyond all question. For instance, there must be an absolute guarantee that the pupils are really of the age, and have only worked for the time stated, and that their drawings have not been retouched by masters or old students, who have left the school long ago and finished their education elsewhere. Without such definite guarantees upon these essential

points, the real use of school exhibitions is entirely thrown away, for it becomes quite impossible to judge with any certainty the merit of the drawings, the value of the system employed, or the worth of the teachers. And, further, it is very important that the exhibitors who play fair— and happily they are the great majority— should not suffer for their honesty.

It is no doubt for reasons such as these that the Central Union has decided not to exhibit the work done in any competitions, except such as are held upon lines laid down by themselves and under their own eye.

Schools might follow their example, or, if they prefer it, could follow the practice that I adopted at the time of the exhibition of 1867.

As head of the National School of Drawing, and in accordance with the wishes of the Council, it was my duty to exhibit the memory drawings made by my pupils under my method. It is clear that it was of the first importance to me to establish beyond all question that the drawings had really been done from memory. I hoped also to introduce, through my initiative,

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into all art schools the practice of holding genuinely honest exhibitions.

My views upon this subject having been highly approved by the Education Committee for the Universal Exhibition, of which I was a member, as well as by the committee of the Section of Fine Art, a commission was formed to carry out the tests I had suggested, composed of men of distinction qualified for the purpose.

To show the interest taken at this time in everything concerning the teaching of art, I will give the names of a few of the members of the commission : The Count of Niewerkerque, director of Fine Arts ; Eugene Guillaume, member of the Institute, director of the Ecole des Beaux -Arts -, Auguste Couder, member of the Institute & Philibert Pompee, Mayor of Ivry, Inspector of Public Instruction.

It was arranged that my pupils should execute their drawings from memory in one of the rooms at the Ecole des Beaux-

Arts, 1 in the presence of examiners who never left the room. The director, Monsieur Guillaume, handed to each of the pupils as they came in a sheet of paper bearing the stamp of the school, which consequently could not be changed for another sheet, and was the one that had to be used for the drawing. At the end of each sitting the sheet was returned to the director, by whom it was given back to the pupil at the beginning of the next sitting, so that he might go on with the drawing that he had begun. Further, to add to the completeness of the guarantee, members of the commission came in turn, and without warning[^] to visit the pupils and to watch them actually at work, so as to be able to testify that the drawings were' done truly from memory, and that all was honest and above-board.

I cannot see why there should be any difficulty, even in quite small places, in arranging similar safeguards in any examination in which schools take part. Well-known people, or even public authorities, would not refuse to lend their help

1 See the drawings by Bellenger, Lhermitte, etc., reproduced at the end of the book.

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during a few days, or even a week or two, in the cause of honesty and to serve so useful an end.

Finally, the question of a school's taking part in big public exhibitions should be left, as far as possible, to the decision ? of the professors ; for, though competitions may be very useful as a spur, they can also be very vexatious if allowed to interrupt a course of teaching at a moment which should be devoted to study and preparation.

Note C (from p. 62)

Under the name of "Methods of Drawing" there have been produced in all ages capricious systems destined by their entire lack of reason and good sense to come rapidly to grief ; but as often as not they are none the less welcomed for that, either through favouritism or infatuation. And the reason of it is that these so-called methods never fail to promise that they will shorten the period of study, or even do away with it almost altogether ! Such claims, instead of being a recom-

mendation, should at once lay them open to suspicion. In all education, time is one of the absolutely necessary factors to be reckoned with. An idea planted in the mind must, like seed sown in the earth, have its proper time to germinate. In the case of drawing it is not only a question of understanding, it is a matter of actual performance. And, however clear the teaching is, and however well it is assimilated, execution can only be acquired by persistent exercise and after long practice.

Note D (from p. 63)

The first copies should be of such a kind that beginners can imitate them with absolute exactness ; for close attention and fidelity of imitation are the only means by which they can attain to the correctness which is the first faculty to be acquired. Interpretation must only begin with drawing from the round and from nature. Later, when the students have developed

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their own really personal way of seeing, they will naturally and legitimately slip away from exact imitation.

Truth in art is not photographic truth, as many people seem to think nowadays. Numbers of painters seem, under the influence of this idea, to be entering into a rivalry with the camera, as laborious as it is futile. I grant that in the direction of detail and illusion they have achieved results such as the great old masters neither dreamt of nor tried for. Yet to appreciate this triumph of the moderns at its proper value, let us suppose for a moment that photography were to succeed one day in reproducing and fixing colour. In that case where would the most detailed and most successful imitation be in comparison with pictures of nature that were similar to a reflection in a looking-glass ? While the works of great masters, such as Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, and others, would not only not lose by comparison with the mechanical pictures of photography, but would appear all the finer. What makes real art would then be far better understood, and it would be admitted beyond question that art is not just nature, but is the interpretation of nature through human feeling and human genius.

Note E (from p. 73)

Many new names have been proposed at one time or another for the National School of Drawing, notably that of the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs. ¹ Such a title calls attention, it is true, to its special purpose, and marks its independence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. But it makes no mention of the most important function that it ought to be made to serve, that of being the "Central School," which it would become through organising its teaching of drawing on lines so thorough and so wide as to satisfy the requirements of all the different purposes to which drawing is applied.

If the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs is to be protected in its

¹ This was written in 1873, after de Boisbaudran had retired from being its head in 1869. The school now bears this name. — Translator.

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early stages from losing its advanced students, and if the distressing overcrowding of the profession of fine as distinguished from applied art is not to be aggravated, all students wishing to enter the Ecole des Beaux-Arts must be refused admission unless they can pass the test of really stiff examinations.

Finally, it is clear how important it is that the two schools should be reorganised together, whenever either of them requires reformation or even modification ; for the lack of such combined organisation must lead to overlapping and to a confusion of their functions and character which puts them at cross-purposes, and can only result in antagonism and waste of power.

Note F (from p. 75)

A serious obstacle to the proper teaching of decorative art is the custom which has grown up lately in manufacture of designating the precise style in which work is to be done, without allowing the artist any opportunity of using his own ideas. For instance, a Gothic coffer is asked for, or a Renaissance vase, or a piece of Louis XV. furniture. It is perfectly plain that none of these styles could ever have originated or developed under such conditions. The exclusive admiration for old work is an obstacle so difficult to overcome, that in ornamentation our age runs the risk of

leaving no trace of its existence, nor any style with a character of its own. One can hardly give the name of style to mere arrangements and combinations, however great the taste and ingenuity they show. 1

Most professors, so far from resisting this tendency, try rather to fall in with it, their chief aim being that their students should know every style that has been created in the past. The irresistible demands of manufacture and commerce make the continuance of such routine teaching inevitable, but it must be strictly excluded from all earlier studies, else it will kill invention at its birth and prevent the young decorator

1 This was written, the reader should remember, in 1873. — Translator.

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from ever developing ideas of his own. Instead, then, of putting young students too soon to the study and imitation of the past, would it not be far better to set them, as soon as possible, face to face with nature, so that they might study her sincerely for themselves, in the freshness and independence of their own ideas, and find in her material of their own for personal conceptions? In this way we might, perhaps, succeed in breaking through the endless round in which modern decorative art turns unceasingly a prisoner.

This does not mean that our age is to fail in appreciation of, or reject the different styles of other times, but it is only right that it should add some riches of its own creation to the store of treasure left us from the past.

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APPENDIX (from p. 71)

As an instance of how closely de Boisbaudran is supported by authority, I give a passage from Leonardo da Vinci's Note-books, translated by M'Curdy (Duckworth & Co., 1906) : — "On games in which draughtsmen should indulge.— When you draughtsmen wish to find some profitable recreation in games, you should always practise things which may be of use

in your profession, that is, by giving your eye accuracy of judgment, so that it may know how to estimate the truth as to the length and breadth of objects. So in order to accustom the mind to such things, let one of you draw a straight line anywhere on a wall, and then let each of you take a light rush or straw in his hand, and let each cut his own to the length which the first line appears to him when he is distant from it a space of ten braccio, and then let each go up to the copy in order to measure it against the length which he has judged it to be, and he whose measure comes nearest to the length of the copy has done best and is the winner, and he should receive from all the prize which was previously agreed upon by you. Furthermore, you should take measurements foreshortened, that is, you should take a spear or some other stick and look before you to a certain point of distance, and then let each set himself to reckon how many times this measure is contained in the said distance. Another thing is to see who can draw the best line one braccio in length, and this may be tested by tightly-drawn thread. Diversions such as these enable the eye to acquire accuracy of judgment, and this is the primary essential of painting." — Translator.

LETTERS TO A YOUNG PROFESSOR

SUMMARY OF A METHOD OF TEACHING DRAWING AND PAINTING

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INTRODUCTION

The publication of my last pamphlet, " A Survey of Art Teaching," has caused a number of artists who find themselves in agreement with my ideas to ask me to publish a " Method." They consider that I can do no less, after my severe criticisms of the various methods of teaching actually in use. My judgment of the others, they declare, can only have been formed by comparing them with some method that I think better, and I ought therefore to submit this true method of mine to criticism.

The true one ! That is far too exclusive a word.
There is not, and can never be, only one method.
Every sensible teacher should have full liberty to
construct his own method, provided always that he
bases it upon true principles and rational deductions.

My friends, however, insisted. The poorness of
contemporary teaching seemed to them to be due to a
general ignorance of true principles. If you believe
yourself to possess such principles, they argued, it is
your duty to make them known, and to spread them
abroad. And further, even when your principles are
once accepted, you have surely a way of your own of
teaching them, which seems to you the best after your
long practice and constant experiment. Could you not
let that also be put to the test of criticism ?

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I was, I confess, rather scared at the idea, and was
disinclined to follow their suggestion, well meant as it
was, when there appeared quite another motive for
doing so. An old pupil of mine, a young artist of
talent, 1 who had just been appointed art master of one
of our provincial art schools, begged me to help him by
recapitulating to him the chief points of my method of
teaching. And so I decided to publish these letters,
written to my friend, under the title of " Letters to a
Young Professor." They contain the exposition of my
method asked for, and will, I hope, while satisfying my
friends and well-wishers, be of some public value.

These few letters contain a rapid survey of my
methods, the essential gist of my teaching. They form
indeed but a short summary, a sort of guide, that gives
the more important directions, while it leaves the
teacher full liberty of action, within the limits of its
fundamental principles.

I have already treated in the two previous pamphlets
some of the subjects to which I shall call attention here.
If the reader likes to refer to them, he will find that
they contain explanations and amplification of certain
points, which will help him to complete this very short

statement. I shall give references back to the more important passages which he should consult, and shall further complete the instruction given in these letters by some additional notes.

Before I actually begin, I should like to set forth certain reflections suggested to me by the wide divergence of contemporary opinion upon questions of art teaching.

1 J. C. Cazin, at Tours.

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For instance, I am perfectly aware of the strong objection that is felt against all copies, either drawn or engraved, especially those that represent figures or parts of figures. We are still suffering from the perfectly legitimate irritation caused by the dreadful copies of Reverdin and Julien, so full of complicated and pretentious cross-hatchings. Experience has indeed condemned them once for all. Their faultiness and the excessive employment of them sufficiently explain the present strong reaction against all copies. But we must be upon our guard against its becoming too violent, or it will result in its turn in a counter-reaction, such as all exaggeration brings. 1

The thing then for us to do to-day, is to simplify- both outlines and shadows as much as we possibly can. For copies can only be a useful step in a student's education upon the condition of their never losing such simplicity. For then the professor can insist upon their being copied absolutely perfectly, since they never vary, and do not permit of interpretation or mere approximation.

Copies are indeed especially fitted to exercise and develop the primary faculties of correctness and precision, essential faculties, which, like tools, must be sharpened before work, or the result will be sure to show signs of bad workmanship. Copying drawings is a very useful transition from the study of geometrical figures to drawing from casts. I shall examine this particular point very thoroughly when I return to it later on.

After years of neglect, the question of how to

1 See Note A, p. 168.

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teach drawing has been taken up again with the most laudable enthusiasm. Numberless people, all apparently equally convinced of the merit of their own theories, bring forward a system, and ask that it should be adopted.

It is much to be wished that the State, instead of adopting only one particular method at a time, should adopt several, and should thus encourage private enterprise. For then we should see teaching gain new life from the healthy rivalry excited between the pupils and masters, working with different methods.

Nothing is more favourable to art and the teaching of art at every stage, than liberty and spontaneity ; nothing is more obstructive than excessive centralisation, narrow rules, and uniformity.

FIRST LETTER

My dear Friend — You ask me to help you in your new profession of art teacher by describing to you the essential principles that I employed or discovered in my own teaching. I will do my very best to help you, but I am afraid that I shall be of very little use to you, and shall forfeit your good opinion of me as a teacher if I keep too strictly within the terms of your request.

Methods of teaching have no inherent virtue in themselves, for, like medicines or processes of cultivation, they are useful or injurious according to the moment of their application, and the degree in which they are employed. To have a good effect they must be applied in their proper order, and the proper order cannot be determined until we know exactly the end for which we are making, and really understand the

principles upon which the means to attain this end must be based.

In my last pamphlet, in which I treated this important question of the aim and principles of teaching from many points of view, I enunciated the formulas which follow : —

"Art is essentially individual. It is individuality which makes the artist.

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"From which consequently results a second formula : —

"All teaching, that is, real teaching, based upon reason and good sense, must make it its aim to keep the artist's individual feeling pure and unspoiled, to cultivate it, and bring it to perfection." 1

Therefore it should be the aim of every teacher, of whatever grade, to develop the natural gifts of every pupil. And so I conclude that of all exercises, processes, and principles of teaching, the best are those which lead most surely and directly to this end.

There is one fundamental and absolute principle which must control their choice and the order of their arrangement. It is the principle of the progressive development of the artistic faculties, that is, the gradation of the difficulty of the exercises used?

Now that I have laid down these first principles, the fundamental basis of my teaching, which I take as universally accepted, for they have never been seriously challenged, I will begin by dividing my subject into five parts or stages of education.

It is in no sense an arbitrary division. For it is as the result of long study and experiment that I consider it to be the best order in which to arrange the different studies. These five stages in the entire journey of complete artistic education, by being thus kept distinct,

make it easier for masters and for schools, whose teaching is restricted or directed to special purposes, to choose the point in the complete course where they should stop, for it gives them clear grounds on which to base their decision.

1 From " A Survey of Art Teaching," p. yj. 2 See Note B, p. 168.

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The First Stage 1

Drawing is the essential base of all those arts which are called, and indeed for this very reason, The Graphic Arts.

Outline is the simplest method of graphic expression. Therefore I begin my teaching with outline-drawing. 2

To make these first steps, which have such an influence upon all subsequent studies, the better understood, I will give specimens of a few of the elementary lessons.

First Lesson

Provide the pupil with a sheet of white paper, a black pencil, and some bread to rub out with, and seat him at a sloping table or desk. Place the copy vertically in front of him. The first copy is a straight line. 3

The following words contain the general sense of the directions which the professor should give the pupil : —

" You must imitate the line AB upon your paper exactly as you see it in the copy. You must reproduce it exactly in size and precision. You must needs begin with one or other of the extremities of the line. Suppose you begin with the point A. Place it as you like upon your paper as a point of departure. Now if you had the point B placed on your paper in the same relation to the point A as it bears to it in the copy, you would only have to draw the line that joins the two points. FiEst Figure

Try then to find the position of the point B by

1 See Note C, p. 170. 2 See Note D, p. 170. 3 See Note E, p. 171.

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gauging the distance which separates it from the point A, measuring this only by eye, for any measuring with instruments does away with the very exercise through which alone accuracy of eye can be cultivated."

The point being found by the pupil with sufficient accuracy, * after more or less correction, the professor goes on :—

" Now you must draw the line which joins the point of departure to the second point. Do not try and do it at a stroke. 1 It is better to prepare it first, with a series of dots at a little distance from each other. Rub out these dots lightly with bread, so that there remain only the palest marks, over which you must draw the definitive line of the exact size and precision of the copy."

Simple as this first exercise is, it will almost invariably be found difficult, and it will generally be necessary to begin it several times over.

The professor must be very exacting as to the result of this first lesson. It is a principle of the greatest importance that the pupil should never pass on to a greater difficulty before he has mastered the difficulty that precedes it. For this is the only way of making him surely and successfully pass through all the progressive stages of his education.

Children, ever eager for change, readily clamour for new copies. Certain teachers believe that it increases their interest and enthusiasm if they give in to their whims, but this is a serious and lamentable mistake. For, as his impertunity has won him one new copy, the child soon clamours for another. And so, recoiling

1 See Note F, p. 171.

FIRST LETTER in

from the slightest difficulty, he never really masters any of his tasks, and will always remain in his original state of ignorance. The more often the copies are changed, the more complicated and difficult they become, until at last they are too great to conquer, and the pupil, recognising his inability to overcome them, relapses into disgust and incurable discouragement.

If, on the contrary, the teacher remains strictly faithful to the method, and compels the beginner, even in his very first drawing, to persist until the result is satisfactory, by making him clearly understand that this is the only way in which he can reach a new copy, he will exert himself and will end by succeeding. And his success, when it comes, will be all the sweeter to him for the very efforts he has had to make, painful as they often are. He will also have a satisfaction in his work, if only the drawing of a straight line, once he has become capable of executing it cleanly and with precision. And, pleased with his first success, he will be ready for a new struggle, and will thus acquire from the very outset the healthy and rewarding habit of perseverance.

Second Lesson

After this preliminary lesson we pass on to a second copy, for instance a square, which has the advantage of compelling the pupil to repeat his previous exercise four times over, while it familiarises his eye and hand with lines, horizontal, vertical, and parallel.

Although in the study of geometry and mechanical drawing with instruments the students learn the

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Second Figure-

principle of a square, and the definitions of horizontal, vertical, and parallel lines, such ideas are well worth

repeating. Moreover, they make for good execution, which ought in this case to resemble, as nearly as possible, execution with ruler and compass. ¹

The professor then must insist upon absolute exactness of size, with accuracy and purity of line, before allowing the study of even such an elementary curve as is given in the third copy, which represents a circle inscribed in a square.

Third Lesson

The pupil, after having drawn a square as before, must add the diagonals AD and BC ; then he must divide each of the four sides A H D

of the square in half, without the help of any instrument, and mark the points of division, H, E, G, F ; next he must draw the lines HG, EF. The professor will now call the pupils' attention to the fact, that in the copy the quarter of the circle with which he is dealing touches the straight lines at three points, viz.

¹ See Note G, p. 172.

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Third Figure

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E, I, H, of which the two points E, H are already established in his drawing. If in his drawing he now marks off on the diagonal AD the point I, judging its distance from the point A by eye, he will have established the three guiding points E, I, H, through which the first quarter of the circle must pass. Repeating the same operation three times over for the other three quarters, he will have his points for the whole circle.

The professor should be careful to remind the pupil, naturally disposed to act without reflection or method, that he must not draw gaily away with a free hand, but that, whether drawing the straight lines or the arcs of the circle, he should always proceed tentatively, by first setting out dots to assist him in achieving rightness of lines and accuracy of form. He will be helped in drawing his curve by the proximity of the straight lines AE, AH ? with which he should compare it, observing how different points on the curve approach or recede from these straight lines, which are its tangents. The use of the straight lines in judging the degree of curvature will become still clearer when the chord EH is drawn, which will make the appreciation of the arc of the circle EIH still easier.

The pupil will quickly appreciate for himself how helpful the horizontal and vertical lines in the copy are, both in deciding the guiding points, and in judging the shape of the curves through comparison with straight lines. This is the moment to remind him that these lines, so kindly drawn to help him here, will not exist in the next copies that he is given, nor perforce will they be found upon natural objects when the time comes

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for him to draw them. Ought we then to refuse their help ? Far from it. But we must learn to draw them imaginarily, either by tracing them in the air or by

holding up the pencil to represent them. This is the lesson taught by the fourth copy. It is an exercise of great importance for beginners, and particular attention should be paid to it.

Fourth Lesson

To make the explanation of this the clearer, I have shown on the one side the copy without the working

lines, and on the other side the student's drawing from it as it would appear with the working lines dotted

in.

Let us take the point A as our point of departure, and place Fourth Figure it where we like upon

our paper. Then from the point A in the copy let fall a vertical line of indefinite length, an imaginary line, that is drawn only in space or represented by holding up the pencil. We shall see this imaginary line pass through the point B in the copy. From the point A in our drawing let fall similarly a vertical line of indefinite length, but this time actually drawn upon the paper ; on it mark off the distance AB, after judging its length by eye without the help of any measurement. Having thus established the length of the drawing, let us now determine its breadth.

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After observing that in the copy the point C is the most prominent point, and that consequently the figure is widest here, let us draw from this point an imaginary

horizontal line of indefinite length, which will cut the imaginary vertical line AB in an imaginary point E, at a distance from the point A which we must judge by eye, retain in our memory, and mark off in our drawing at E. Through this point E let us draw upon our paper a horizontal line of indefinite length. Returning now to the imaginary point E in the copy, we have only to judge the distance EC and mark off a similar length at C upon the horizontal line EC in our drawing. Thus we have three points of departure, A, B, C, for drawing the required curve.

This method for determining the different points, by which the placing and shape of the figure were so readily established, is only the fundamental method of all drawing ; and in contradistinction to all methods based upon false principles, will need no modification later. It is a method as applicable to drawing from natural objects as it is to drawing from flat copies, that is, to drawing the most elementary and the most advanced.

It is a method employed daily by most artists, although numbers of them are quite unconscious of it, having only arrived at it after much groping and loss of time.

It is in no sense a case of teaching new and arbitrary ideas to children, but of initiating them from the first into the practice of a method to which they must surely come, though often only by steps both slow and indirect. To reach it more directly and more

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perfectly, it is necessary to proceed methodically and with an understanding of cause and effect, in fact to replace empiricism by method.

Once the pupil has grasped the fact that the first thing in placing a drawing and establishing the masses is to judge the relative position of points, he will soon learn to pick out such of the salient points as are most helpful for this purpose, and to neglect the less important.

In this way he will be led quite naturally to a living and intelligent understanding of masses, and will appreciate that he should begin by determining them rapidly by certain of their principal points, instead of falling into the common error of scribbling them in anyhow. For the determination of such points there are indeed many other means that the student might employ, such as sloping lines, angles of different degrees and the like ; but when the matter is carefully considered, it becomes clear that it is horizontal and vertical lines alone that form a really positive basis of comparison. For they alone have exact and constant positions, and should therefore be exclusively employed by beginners.

I think it is unnecessary to insist further upon the service of horizontal and vertical lines. The examples I have just given of their use in the elementary lessons should suffice to make the teacher understand the principle of the method, and how it is applied at the start. It is his business to explain it thoroughly by amplification, and by contriving various occasions for its use, in a series of five or six copies, which should consist of curves of gradually increasing difficulty.

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These copies must never exceed the degree of simplicity, which essentially belongs to the first stage of our teaching, and must always be within the student's capabilities, so that a high standard of execution can be maintained.

The teacher must overlook the pupil in his first attempts with the greatest care, to make sure of his using these principles properly, and of his really understanding what he is doing ; for the object is to make him contract so firm a habit that he will arrive at using them without thinking of them, and so to speak, instinctively. Drawing should iii this resemble reading, where the mind must be quite unconscious of the complicated processes involved in the act of reading, if it is to appreciate the sense to the full.

If the pupil has regularly followed* under the care of a watchful teacher, the course I have sketched but,

he will soon possess considerable accuracy of eye through the practice of judging distances, and will have acquired a primary development of skill of hand, through imitating the lines of the copies with the help of the tentative points. His employment of horizontal and vertical lines will have given him a regular and positive method of observation and study* and he will have begun to contract very valuable habits of orderliness and sequence, both in thinking and working. After he has received this indispensable grounding, which is the first stage of his education, his faculties will be sufficiently trained to allow him to enter upon his second stage in the way he should, with every chance in his favour.

SECOND LETTER

The Second Stage

Great care must be given to the choice of copies to follow those of the first stage. In making his collection of copies for the second stage, the teacher must pay particular attention to their forming a regular series. If he likes to follow the advice of Leonardo da Vinci, he may begin the series with parts of human heads, to be followed by complete heads under various effects. He is at liberty to choose as copies other subjects besides figures. The only condition, that he must never, upon any consideration whatever, fail to observe, is to gradate the difficulties. Whatever the subjects of the copies, the first of them should be in simple outline, the next drawn with very simple shading, leading on to those in which a little more real modelling is introduced. They should be either drawn, engraved, or lithographed. Drawn and engraved copies should, in general, be considered as only preparatory exercises, and their use should not be too prolonged. It is important that they should be accurate and that they should help in the formation of taste from the first. Especial care should be taken to employ them judiciously in relation to the knowledge possessed by

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the pupils, in order that the teacher may always be able to insist upon the execution being really good and thorough.

As soon as a certain skill has been acquired in outline and shading, the students should be given some solid figures, made of wood or plaster, and painted white, arranged in the following order : a cube, a prism, a pyramid, a cylinder, a cone, a sphere.

A beginner's intelligence cannot be completely developed without the study of full-relief to make him observe on real objects the apparent alterations of size and shape due to the point of view from which they are seen — in other words, the effects of perspective and foreshortening, which he made no effort to understand when imitating the first copies.

Nor without the study of full relief can he really understand the shadows, lights, and half-tones, cast-shadows, and reflections that he has been copying ; for it shows him, on actual objects, the contrast of the different planes, the loss of light due to the modelling of the forms, in fact the relations of the different values.

The first observation of real objects is always interesting to students, because it truly opens their eyes. Nor is it long before they begin to understand the meaning of the drawn or engraved copies, which had been up till then a closed book to them, and which they had copied almost mechanically. As they have now become more full of meaning, the copies, so far from being discarded, as is often suggested, should be used alternately with the models in full relief; for they possess certain real advantages over the latter for

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absolute beginners, which had better be explained. For instance, they are better as an exercise in exact imitation than the models in relief, which always admit of some personal interpretation. They are also better fitted for making the hand flexible and dexterous,

because the imitation of them exacts more self-control and more decision from it.

The reasons for employing as copies drawings of the human face, especially in teaching beginners, are very strong. They are much more vividly impressed by the particular character of a face than by the character of any other object. The resemblance of the drawing to the copy is much more easily judged, and consequently the students appreciate without difficulty exactly what to aim at.

Also every variety of shape and colour too is found in the human form, and consequently every possible variety and difficulty of drawing.

It is a matter of experience that students who have been trained on the study of the human figure are apt at any other kind of drawing, and after they have had a little time to specialise in it, generally show their superiority as draughtsmen. But this is not at all the case with those who have begun by studying some particular line, such as flowers, ornaments, animals[^] or landscapes, especially landscape, for landscape should be entirely excluded from the first lessons in imitation. It cannot fail to be injurious, for of its very nature it does not admit of strict accuracy of imitation, but only of approximation, interpretation, and equivalents.

We come now to an important question, that of the medium to be employed. After much experiment I

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consider the pencil as the only proper instrument to be used in elementary drawing. The stump ought to be forbidden, at least in the first stages, for it leads the beginner into smudginess, excessive blackness, over-modelling, and softness. Many systems recommend its exclusive employment, in spite of these objections, as being easy to use and covering the paper rapidly. But this is entirely to misunderstand the special needs of teaching, and to confuse disastrously the methods of execution that commend themselves to particular artists with the methods that are best for training students. The stump, because of the very ease with which it

covers large surfaces, diminishes and almost does away with all the gymnastics of the hand, and so prevents the development of delicacy of touch. The pencil, because it is firmer and more precise than the stump, renders the artist's impressions better. It is capable of the most delicate shades of expression. It is an instrument that responds to the artist's intelligence, to his wit, and, above all, to his strength. The great masters of drawing have always had a predilection for it. 1

During the second stage of teaching the professor must watch his pupils' work unceasingly and with the greatest care, and be ready whenever necessary to remind them of the fundamental principles. He must explain to them again and again, if need be, the use of the points and lines. He should show them, in actual practice, the advantage of invariably beginning a drawing that is at all intricate by first establishing the masses ; and that not roughly and only approximately, but accurately, by setting down with great exactness a

1 See Note H, p. 173.

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few well -chosen points, as the ground -plan of this suggestion of the whole. To such accepted methods he will add fresh ones as fresh difficulties require them.

He must teach his students, above all, that whether judging proportions or colours, details or the effect of the whole, they must proceed invariably by comparison, by relations, by using a unit of measurement. And to make the importance of this practice the better understood, he must constantly apply it in his lessons. Let him remember to put himself and the pupil at a certain distance from the drawing which he is correcting, which should be set up against the subject. In order to make his meaning the clearer he should provide himself with one of those long sticks, called by painters mahlsticks, so as to be able to touch any part of the drawing to which he wishes to call attention. The relation of the drawing to the model, or of the parts to the whole, which he thus points out will be perfectly clear to the pupil, and in consequence his various remarks and observations will interest him and strike

home. Being quickly convinced by such demonstrations of the value of the above method, the pupil will adopt it, and make use of it for himself. As soon as he has begun to make a habit of this, a sort of new conception will be seen to develop in him. His drawings, without ceasing to be just as faithful and naive as before, will be better understood, and the budding of his artistic intelligence and feeling will very soon appear.

This brings us to the goal of the second stage, and in the period that follows we shall be able to attack new difficulties of a higher kind.

THIRD LETTER

The Third Stage

We have brought the students at present as far as drawing shaded heads from copies. They can now pass on to copies of hands and feet, as a step towards copies from the nude, which should be useful in giving them a knowledge of the figure as a whole.

We must take care¹ to avoid the excessive use that was made of flat copies not long ago. Still we should continue to use them, within reason, alternately with models in full relief, increasing the importance of the latter according to the progress that the student makes, for they ought very soon to occupy most of his time.

In the second stage we introduced the student to the study of full relief by setting him to draw from solids : we shall now carry on his study of full relief with z) graduated series of casts of features and parts of faces, varied if the teacher wishes it with casts of ornamental details. This is essential as a stepping-stone, the value of which has been proved in practice, in approaching, with more certainty, the ever-increasing difficulties of complete heads, hands and feet, sculptured ornaments, and whole figures from casts.

¹ See Note I, p. 173.

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It would do no harm just at first to copy a few masks cast from nature, but in the casts from the Antique we have an infinite choice of models of all variety and excellence.

Unfortunately, as regards excellent copies, we have nothing like the same choice, for there are very few that can be considered even passable. The artists responsible for the majority of them do not seem to have ever considered what qualities are needed in a copy. They are many, and are consequently difficult to combine. A good copy ought to be accurate, in good taste, simple and natural, that is without the affectations either of square or other kind of conventional form. It ought to look easy, free, and attractive to the student. It should contain great knowledge without pedantry, truth with style, and broad and simple effects without monotony. The almost complete want of good copies has very naturally made people think of the fine drawings by great masters to be found in our museums, and has made them imagine, with apparently the best of sense, that there could not be better copies than photographs exactly reproducing such masterpieces. But this is to confuse the point of view of art with the point of view of teaching, and to forget that these drawings were generally made by the masters as a preparation for their pictures. They are almost always very difficult, if not impossible, for even highly skilled artists to copy, and are therefore still less suited to any of the stages in a student's education. And further, apart from the frequent stains and spots on them, and the effacements here and there, they are full of alterations and of different trial outlines, which are of the

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greatest interest as allowing us to follow their author's experiments and the development of his ideas, but are to young students quite incomprehensible and of insurmountable difficulty.

It is no doubt the apparent simplicity of Holbein's original drawings that suggested the idea of using

them as elementary copies. But his outlines, so simple at first sight, are really refined with such delicacy and to so exquisite a point that the least deviation by the copyist destroys the character entirely. As for copying the wonderful modelling of the faces, nothing could be more difficult than to give its exquisite delicacy and simplification, so profoundly full of knowledge. Rather let these inimitable drawings be kept for their proper moment in advanced art education, being reproduced by photography for the study and admiration of young artists when they have become capable of really understanding the great lessons they contain. Every school should possess a collection of photographs after great masters, which the teacher should use to illustrate and corroborate his teaching.

As the result of many trials it has been proved that photographs are of no practical use as copies. Such trials are none the less praiseworthy or useful for that. For it is only through the knowledge and enterprise of those who conducted them that this interesting point has been cleared up. They are now, it appears, trying to make certain of the masters' drawings more intelligible to students by translating them into lithography; and we may hope for good results in this direction, if the particular conditions required by teaching are thoroughly understood and kept in mind[^]

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Until the ideal and perfect copy is realised, the teacher must take great trouble to collect out of the best of existing copies those that he thinks the most suited to the third grade of teaching. But it is to the work done from the round that he must now attach the most importance, maintaining a very strict standard in accepting any drawing, before he allows its author to pass on to a subject that is more difficult in degree or character than the last. He must in the third stage adhere more than ever to the method of correction already adopted. That is to say, after he has examined a drawing at close quarters for its delicacy of form and workmanship, he must never neglect to compare it with the subject from a distance, placing them side by side, and pointing to them with a mahlstick.

Nothing awakens the pupil's own faculty of observation quicker than teaching him entirely through comparison and reasoning, and when his observation is aroused it should be further stimulated by the practice of drawing from memory. 1

It can hardly be necessary for me to repeat once more that memory-work is not in itself a method of teaching drawing. It is only one of the auxiliary means, and should like all the other means play its proper part in the whole group of studies, of which a complete method of teaching drawing is composed.

Learning to draw exclusively from memory was never even suggested. All that I propose is a reasoned method of teaching memory drawing ; but to confound this special study with the general system is to mistake the part for the whole.

1 See "The Training of the Memory in Art. Memory for Form. 1 "

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Nor is this study in any sense founded on separate principles, for it proceeds regularly from the simple to the complex through a graduated sequence of difficulties* The copies used for it are preferably taken from the human face, because it is important to practise the memory at first upon objects whose appearance is easily seized.

As an easy object to begin with, take an outline drawing of a nose in profile. Let every pupil take this first copy home with him, and learn it as one learns a lesson by heart. He can either draw it several times over, or content himself with merely observing it attentively, taking special note of everything that might help his memory. The time allowed him on the first occasion should be fairly long.

On the appointed day, after giving back the copies, the pupils must go to their places and draw it entirely from memory. Having done his best, each pupil must in turn submit his work to the professor for criticism. After having taken very careful note of the differences pointed out to him, which he must confirm with his

own eyes, let him return to his place to make the necessary alterations upon his drawing, correcting it of course from memory alone. And such corrections he must repeat until the result is satisfactory. The professor must insist upon very close approximation to the copy, if not upon quite as absolute an exactness as in the case of an ordinary copy. He cannot make use of too much tact and experience in judging just how much a pupil's memory can do, for all its real development depends upon his demanding of it an effort exactly equal to, but never beyond its strength.

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Most of the means that are helpful in ordinary drawing are helpful in memory work : for instance horizontal and vertical lines, drawn in imagination across the subject, which make at their intersections with its forms many points to assist the memory ; or again the comparison of the sizes, shapes, and colours with one another, or the use of units of measurement, scales of proportion, etc.

All such means should be suggested to the students, but should not be forced upon them. The working of the memory is too intimate in its nature, and to tell the truth is still too much shrouded in mystery for us to interfere with it lightly.

It is undeniable that processes which suit certain students are quite useless to others ; but every one very soon finds out methods for himself.

Moreover, there comes a time when all such processes, once so useful and so much relied on, are gradually discarded, because they become less and less necessary.

Methodical exercise of the memory develops so extraordinarily the power of being able to see in the imagination objects which have been carefully observed, but are no longer present, that it becomes possible to draw them almost as if they were before the eyes.

The degree to which a student can attain such power is, I need hardly say, dependent on his application and his natural gift. Some can see an object as a whole

with great clearness, others only indistinctly : often some detail which struck them particularly stands out very clear in their minds, and leads them on successively to other details next to it.

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The teacher should make his own collection of copies for memory work by drawing them for himself. For it is indispensable that they should be carefully graduated in proper series, and this requires experience of a special kind. As a teacher he will understand, that it is not the class of subject that makes a copy difficult to remember — one subject is in this sense very like another — but that it is on its complexity, and the absence of striking characteristics in the particular copy that the difficulty depends. Thus ugly forms, grotesque or strange, are the most easily remembered of all, at least by beginners ; later students, in whom the feeling for beauty has begun to develop, often find it easier to remember beautiful shapes because they are more struck by them.

But we must not anticipate advanced memory teaching in this way. Let us think at present only of the things that belong properly to the third stage, that is, to a series of studies, which beginning, let us say, with a nose in profile drawn in outline, will pass through successive steps until it arrives in due course at simple heads drawn in outline, to be followed by heads with a little shading.

Memory lessons must never be allowed to oust the ordinary work. The two must go on side by side and help each other.

The time allowed the students for learning the copies they take home may be gradually reduced, always of course in relation to their progress. Memory practice, or what we may call the " drawing-repetition" lessons ("la recitation dessinée"), may take place once or twice a week in the third stage,

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that is, one or two memory lessons for six lessons in ordinary drawing.

At the end of the third stage of our course, the students have become capable of copying heads and nude figures, either from copies or from the antique.

And besides this, their powers of observation and memory have received such a first degree of education as enables them to reproduce by memory simple heads from copies.

Modest enough achievements it is true, but invaluable all the same, if only they are sincere, free from bad habits, and are the result of working on sound principles rich in promise for the future.

As soon as this indispensable elementary knowledge has been gained and these essential preliminary studies finished, we enter upon the fourth stage of our teaching, in which the artistic character of the study becomes definitely pronounced. ¹

¹ See Note K, p. 173.

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The Fourth Stage

Now that all preliminary difficulties are overcome for good, we are free to develop our teaching and to bring it to its full completion, elaborating it as we please. To avoid confusion, and to make my explanations at once orderly and clear, I will explain the principal branches of study of which the fourth stage is composed, taking them one at a time. They are seven : study of the Antique and the old masters ; study of the living model ; anatomy ; perspective and the drawing of architecture ; painting ; memory training for form and colour ; and lastly composition, which is the revision and practical application of all the foregoing subjects.

The Study of the Antique and the

Up to this point good reductions from the Antique will have been quite enough as models ; but from the moment we enter upon the fourth stage, nothing can be too good to put before the students.

As far as is possible, they should be given casts moulded on the original itself, or still better, though

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this only towards the end of the fourth stage, they should be sent to study the originals themselves in the museums. To the study of the Antique might be added the study of some of the sculpture of Michael Angelo and certain other great masters, to show that it is possible to produce new conceptions of beauty, quite unlike the wonderful types created by the Greeks. There are in the museums and libraries innumerable other objects just as precious, which it is well worth while to study by sketching or copying them.

Towards the end of the fourth stage the professor must decide the moment from which the student is to be gradually emancipated from the rigid discipline of regular school work. He should then take him in person round the picture galleries and decide for him what he is to copy, going regularly to overlook his work.

It is at this point that the teacher's calling enters definitely upon a wider and a higher plane. To possess knowledge, taste, and real artistic feeling is not enough. For when he is in front of the masterpieces, which it is his business to help the student to understand, he must be able to appreciate them in his capacity of teacher, putting away his own personal predilections and looking at them with a width of mind that understands the artistic expression of beauty in all its forms. However great his own admiration for the old masters, he must remember that, though it is quite right that young students should study and copy them with

passion, they must never become so over-absorbed in the imitation of their work as to injure the most

^TAPESTRY; REPRESENTING PARIS
∩/ IN THE 1 5TH CENTURY

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precious part of their artistic equipment, their own personal sentiment and originality. 1

Study of the Life Model

The study of the life model is of the highest importance, and a great deal of time must be given up to it during the fourth stage.

The student will be a little worried when first confronted with a model that lacks the absolute stillness and unity of tint of the casts, which he has been studying up till this moment. The professor should assure him that this is a difficulty which does not as a rule last very long* He should tell him to begin by making several sketches of the whole figure without shadows, in order to learn to seize movement with rapidity, 2 and should set him especially on his guard against putting in too many details, or making them too apparent ; for if they are not subordinate to the mass the forms will be mean, and there will be no simplicity or breadth of effect.

It is in drawing the figure from life that the students should begin to show decisively their own personal feelings and methods of expression. Such is the evident perfection of the Antique that it is impossible to think of altering it or improving it. In the living model, on the contrary, however relatively great its beauty, we can always find defects to lessen or correct. Its appearance, even in the most motionless attitude, never quite loses that variable and indeterminate something which is the mobility that belongs

1 See Note L, p. 174. 2 See Note M, p. 176.

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to every living thing. Every one sees it in a different way, and would, by natural consequence, express it differently, if there were not so often disastrous causes at work which prevent his doing so.

Sometimes in studios and schools one sees that all the work from the life has the same character, the same technique, the same colour, a state of things often praised without stint. The great advantage of studio-work, it is said, is that it is a kind of mutual instruction, the stronger students showing the others by their example how to feel and execute their studies.

A teacher imbued with the principles of our method will, on the contrary, see in the similarity of such results one of the dangers of teaching art in common. Without failing to appreciate the advantages of the system he will make every effort to combat its more serious evils. If he notices the least tendency in a pupil to imitate one of his more advanced fellows, or to counterfeit the work of some artist, ancient or modern, be he never so distinguished, he will check him at once in his evil course. He will make him understand that, before everything, he must be himself, or he will lose some of his power as an artist. The masters whose names remain famous are those whose individuality was the most vigorous and marked in character.

Study of the Antique, combined with study of the living model, is the necessary corrective for this. It raises the student's taste, and prevents its being influenced by the uglinesses and poorness of form from which even the finest models are not always free.

An important reservation must, however, be made

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on this subject. The forms of the Antique must never be substituted for those of the model upon the pretext of correcting them and making them finer, as was the

practice of most of the painters at the beginning of this century, who were carried away with a passion for the beauty of Greek sculpture. Assuredly an artist may make it his ideal to produce beauty equal to the Antique, but it must be in a different manner.

In the Antique we find beauty, simplicity, nobility, and truth united, great qualities which the student should be eager to acquire. They are the creative qualities in art, and the forms in which they have been manifested so far are not the only forms that they can take, for their power of creation is as unexhausted as it ever was, and is in fact inexhaustible.

Let young artists, then, study living nature in all sincerity and without prejudice, according to their personal vision. But let them train and perfect their vision and raise it, if they can, to the level of that of the masters of antiquity and other great periods. For thus they will be able, in their turn, to create, according to their different talents, forms true, beautiful, and noble, yet withal new. 1

Anatomy

Anatomy is the inevitable corollary of the study of the living model, the indispensable key to the forms of men and animals. 2

Yet necessary as the knowledge of anatomy is to a student, he should not be taught it before he has drawn

1 See Note N, p. 176. 2 See Note O, p. 177.

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a certain number of figures from nature, for then he will be keen to understand the causes that produce the surface forms and their changes under different movements.

There is another very serious reason for not allowing the study of anatomy to begin too soon, which is the fear lest young students should let their anatomical knowledge take the place of naive imitation of the model. It is doubtless this idea that led Ingres to

forbid the study of anatomy in his school. But the danger which this famous artist feared, and with reason, may be avoided by teaching anatomy at the right moment, that is, when the students have given proof of their sincerity and na'iveté in a considerable number of drawings from nature. For then the teacher will easily make them understand the importance and the possibility of reconciling na'iveté with knowledge, once they appreciate the part that each should play.

Anatomy teaches the laws of human forms in general, of which the living model gives particular instances peculiar to the individual ; for all models, whatever their race, sex, or age, have the same muscles. For instance, they all have a deltoid with definite points of attachment. Here, then, is a general fact laid down by anatomy, the knowledge of which will give the student a positive and definite idea to grasp ; yet the deltoid of every model is somewhat different in appearance, and it is the infinite variations of this individual character which the student must always be ready and able to express.

There are a great many treatises on anatomy specially

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intended for the use of sculptors and painters ; but the learned doctors who are responsible for them, have not always succeeded, despite the best of intentions, in placing themselves quite at the artist's point of view, and while giving superfluous details have often left out the most necessary explanations.

It is the teacher's business, therefore, to make an abstract of such different books, and supply what is missing. His little manual, which he should make as short as possible, must be learnt by heart, and so completely mastered by the students that they are able to reply without a moment's hesitation when questioned upon a living model, an anatomical figure, or a skeleton.

Here are some examples of such questions.

Name this bone and its prominences. Name this muscle. Tell me its points of attachment. Point out its tendons and attachments. Explain its functions. What is the cause of this prominence? Is it muscular or bony? Explain the anatomical reasons for the changes of form resulting from this movement. Account for the considerable change of appearance in the knee, according as it is straight or bent. Give the reason for the difference of curve that is noticeable in the outline of the inside and outside of the upper and lower limbs, as for instance in the forearm.

Such questions should be varied and multiplied ad lib. and rapid answers insisted upon, for when the artist is working from nature or making compositions he has no time to hunt through his book* He must, as it were, be able to read and write his anatomy fluently. This will be attained much more readily if

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the advanced students are present at actual dissections. There is, too, another exercise which cannot be too highly recommended as a means of inculcating a thorough knowledge of the construction of the human body.

First make one of the students draw a figure from nature, in which he must emphasise very markedly, even exaggeratedly, all the prominences produced by the bones. Next, on a tracing made from this drawing, he must fill in the bones, either by looking at a skeleton, or from the knowledge he has of it in his head, taking as his guiding points the bony prominences on the living model which are emphasised in the tracing from his drawing. He will thus have a drawing of the skeleton, not in the ordinary stiff pose without movement, but in the actual movement of the living model.

The bony structure once established in a true and definite movement, it only remains to cover it again with the muscles. The tracing gives the outline of the muscles, and all that there remains to do is to take the outline as a guide and follow the muscles to their insertions on the bones. He will then have produced

in his drawing the fiction of a living skeleton and a living anatomical figure.

Drawings such as this are so instructive that they should be learnt by heart, and drawn from memory, whenever the teacher asks for it. This indeed is one of the important applications of memory drawing ; for an artist should have his anatomy always present in his mind in images of absolute precision. 1 ^ v

1 In u Aims and Ideals in Art," Mr. Clausen quotes the advice that he received

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Strong draughtsmen such as Raphael, and especially Michael Angelo, evidently proceeded by working from the skeleton overlaid with muscles.

It is only through a profound and practical knowledge of the human body, and by extracting in a sense the laws of its construction that an artist can become in a real sense creative, and able to free himself at will from that servitude to the model from which the modern school can so rarely escape.

Drawing from Memory

In the previous stage the students have been reproducing from memory simple heads, after drawings or engravings. They will now begin to draw heads of greater difficulty, next whole figures, and so pass on to groups and motives from the great masters. Next will come memory drawing from the round, and from parts of antique heads up to complete figures and bas-reliefs.

Drawing the living model from memory is a thing to allow with great discretion, and only when the character or beauty of the forms are really remarkable. For it would be a great pity to fill young students' memories with images of ugliness, or of what is commonplace or simply insignificant. It must never be forgotten that cultivation of memory is at the same time cultivation of taste.

from Watts. " I was speaking of the difficulty of doing something I was trying to do, because I could not get a model to pose, and I said, ' Of course one has to*rely on memory.' 4 Yes,' he said, ' memory is a good thing, but there's a better.' I asked him what that was. ' Knowledge,' said he, and he took a piece of chalk and made a drawing of the bones of the knee. 4 There,' he said, * when you really know the shape of these bones, it doesn't matter what position you draw the knee in, you'll understand it.' " — Translator.

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It is with this idea that I will sketch here an exercise very useful in cultivating what feeling for beauty a pupil may possess.

At the end of the week's drawing from the life, the professor should ask the students to reproduce from memory the model from whom they have been working, idealising his figure as is explained below.

While actually working from the life the students should aim, above all, at faithful imitation. If they notice defects in the model, they should alter them only with the greatest reserve for fear of losing truth and accuracy. Besides, when in front of nature, they are sure to be attracted and dominated by her ; whereas when once away, with nothing but their recollection, they recover their own personal point of view. They become free to correct the faults that distressed them, and having already faithfully expressed the exact appearance of the model, can now add what embellishments and accents they please. In this way they can accomplish their task of drawing the model from memory, correcting and perfecting it the while, not conventionally in accordance with canons imposed upon them from without, but according to their own conceptions and ideals.

When the memory has been made capable by progressive exercise of retaining the image of the unalterable forms of drawings and casts and the less rigid forms of the life model, and is thoroughly trained and flexible, it is the moment to turn it to its real artistic use, which is that of retaining fugitive effects, and rapid and spontaneous movements.

To attain this result the first step is really to impress

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the pupils with its importance, and the next to get them to observe attentively such sights and scenes from real life as they meet with when they are out. For early practice the simplest subjects should be preferred, such, for instance, as a soldier on sentry-duty, a beggar at the door of a church, a peasant carrying a load, and so on. All such observations must be drawn from memory and shown to the professor on a given day. In such cases, of course, the absolute accuracy can no longer be tested as it has been previously. But the students have already given proof of their exactness of observation in studies where it could be put to the test, and the teacher by going out with his pupils, at least the first few times, will have the opportunity of noticing the subjects chosen. Besides, real impressions direct from nature have certain characteristics of ingenuousness and truth which are unmistakable.

Little by little the memory gains certainty and power, and is equal to reproducing more complicated actions, such as a religious ceremony, a review, a street accident, or what will interest certain students more, interiors, animals, or landscape. Here the student's individual bent begins to try its wings and becomes recognisable, which it cannot do in the ordinary classes. For here every one is allowed complete liberty, and by looking at nature in his own way will feel emotions different from his neighbours', and must, in consequence, find out his own particular method of expressing them. Nothing is better fitted than such exercises to cultivate truly personal feeling and to develop individuality, in other words, true originality. Such practice has the further advantage of creating a

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habit of and a taste for observation, which makes the memory an inexhaustible treasury from which the artist may draw freely for his work ; for he is always adding to it fresh material which he has made his own by this intimate process of assimilation. 1

Perspective and the Drawing of Architecture

Perspective and the drawing of architecture can be taught in special classes by special teachers ; still the professor who directs the teaching as a whole ought to have a general knowledge of architectural drawing.

As regards perspective, he ought to understand its principles thoroughly, and really have the sense of it, so as to impress it upon the students more than is generally done nowadays.

Since the time when Jean Cousin published his very ingenious, but hardly practical, method for determining with strict accuracy the foreshortenings of the human figure, all application of perspective to figure drawing seems to have been given up, and these two branches of art have been taught in complete detachment from each other. Here lies the cause of the indifference that students of painting feel for perspective, the advantage of which they fail to understand.

Of course no one would think of submitting figure drawing to the geometrical operations of perspective. But it is a mistake not to apply the essential principles of the science to this branch of art, as to all others, as far as is reasonably possible, so as to avoid at least the more outrageous of the errors so commonly made.

1 See Note P, p. 177.

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For instance, retiring lines often do not converge towards the point of sight ; sometimes the height of the horizon seems to have been completely forgotten, and parts of the drawing, which should have been seen from above, have been seen from below, or vice versa.

The professor should, therefore, tell his students to pay great attention to the point of sight on the horizon line and to the distance point marked off upon it. They should also bear in mind the geometrical plane, and the perspective plane, etc.

Such elementary notions of perspective will, when

applied to ordinary drawing, make the students perceive its practical utility. There should be a special class for the complete study of the science of perspective, and there the students will be roused to the keen interest in it which the subject deserves once they have seen the beauty of its applications to art.

Painting

In old days processes of painting were the secrets of different masters and their schools. Indeed, we know very little of the methods of execution employed by the great Dutch and Italian colourists. What little precious tradition still lingered among a few of the French painters at the end of the last century has been almost entirely lost in the artistic revolution brought about by David. This narrow and fanatical reformer professed the most profound contempt for the age that preceded his own. He not only repudiated their

Lecoq's faith in the value of tradition, and the necessity for recovering tradition, is clearly shown in the phrase in which Monsieur Rodin described his school to me, as " un petit atelier, XVIII^e siecle." — Translator.

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taste and their doctrines, but even their teaching of the material side of painting, and forbade it to his pupils. This is the reason why his school, from which sprang, almost exclusively, the artistic generation before our own, has only been able to hand on to us defective technical processes with no authority behind them.

It is with all reservation, therefore, that I give these methods to my students ; and I give them, not as definite methods for the execution of their work as artists, but only so as to make it possible for them to begin painting. They will have to modify, perfect, and complete them for themselves, through practice, experience, and observation of the character of the work of great colourists.

First of all, here is the composition of the palette for the beginner, the colours being placed from right to left in the following order : —

Flake white, Naples yellow, yellow ochre, raw sienna, burnt sienna, vermilion, light red, rose madder, bitumen, 1 burnt umber, ivory black, Prussian-blue.

This very simple palette may seem even a little poor, but it has, at least, the advantage of forcing beginners to hunt out their tints for themselves, without the help of the numerous colours employed nowadays, with which it will be perfectly legitimate to enrich their palette later on.

The right moment to begin painting is towards the middle of the fourth stage, when the student possesses sufficient facility in drawing. For not only is it necessary to be able to place the subject on the canvas

1 Exception may be taken, to some of these colours on the ground of permanence, bitumen for one being finally condemned.— Translator.

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and draw it in before beginning to paint, but it is also most important all the time one is painting to lay on and handle the colour with a feeling for the modelling and form.

Still, in order not to put off the practice of handling paint too long, which is so difficult in itself, it would be excellent practice to make the student begin the study of colour 1 from memory while he is still working up his drawing to the required standard. It would enable the teacher to test his natural eye for colour from the first, to correct it, if need be, and gradually develop it. At the same time it would give the student a preliminary habit of using his tools, his palette, his mahlstick, his brushes, etc., and he would thus get over their strangeness, before beginning real painting. But the most important object of all is to cultivate the faculty of remembering colour, for there is no limit to its utility and application in art.

The tints must be learnt by heart, just as the forms were, and then painted from memory. 2

After such preliminary practice, which will be longer or shorter as the professor thinks best, the student

should begin painting by copying some painted heads, to be followed by still life from nature, such as fruit, flowers, pots and pans, and the like. In the course of such practice, which by the way he will find very attractive, he will have to judge and compare a great variety of colours, and will learn how to harmonise them.

The imitation of motionless objects is an excellent step towards painting the figure from life.

1 See "The Training of the Memory in Art. Memory for Colour."

2 See Note g, p. 178.

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The latter study, which is quite indispensable, is often made unnecessarily dull and monotonous. It would be a good plan to vary the background of the life-school occasionally, enlivening it with draperies of harmonious colour, which would heighten the effect of the model.

As to how to set about painting, the professor may make the following suggestions, at least to beginners : first mix with the palette-knife a few of the tints of the subject ; next, after drawing the outline of the model on the white canvas, begin with the shadows, either painting them, as right as possible, straight off, or putting down only their values with a single colour, such as burnt umber or ivory black, etc. It is very important to have some distinct contrasts, as terms of comparison, by which to judge the half-tints and the lights, which, if placed in the middle of the white canvas, it is practically impossible to gauge. 1 For the same reason one should indicate from the outset the colour or value of the background. No attempt should be made to reproduce at once all the variations which are visible on the model ; on the contrary, the student should look for the general effect produced by several tints by half closing the eyes. Later, upon this general local tint will be placed other touches, to modify and complete the colour.

If this is done rapidly, and before the colours are

dry, it is called painting au premier coup. The usual way to begin is with a general "rub in" of the form

1 Corot, in a letter to his pupil, recommends him, when working on a white canvas, to begin with his strongest dark, so as to establish the extremes of light and dark, between which he has to work, and as a key to the intermediate tones, adding "c'est plus logique." — Translator.

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and tones. When this "rub in" is dry, and its surface has been cleaned, or, if one wishes, rubbed down, it serves as a preparation for new work, either in solid colour, or with thin opaque colour and glazings.

There are a great number of different manners of painting. Every artist adopts his own, and naturally enough declares it superior to all others. I make no pretence of judging these personal methods, considering them all legitimate, if their results are good. We are at present on the question of teaching, and owing to the lack of direct instruction transmitted by the old master colourists, I have chosen the method which seems to me most favourable to practice and learning, which are conditions that the professor must necessarily observe. Within these conditions he should be allowed the fullest possible liberty, and it could only do harm to lay down, in writing, such details of the teaching as are best left to the spontaneous judgment, tact, and knowledge of the artist who is actually directing it. Besides, in painting, more even than in drawing, the way of working, the handling of the actual "paint" of the picture counts for a great deal in the artist's talent. Again, as soon as the student has overcome the first difficulties of painting, through such practice as I have described, he should no longer be told to employ any one particular method, but should, on the contrary, be advised to try several, so that he may be able through selection and comparison to form for himself a method of expression in paint which really fits his thoughts and feelings. But what the professor can properly say to his pupils, and say with insistence

too, is that they should try for the essential qualities of painting, such as solidity, transparency, light, harmony, etc. But to attain these qualities he should allow each student to choose such different means as suit him best, however extraordinary or rarely employed.

Pictures by masters are a great assistance here. Suppose, for instance, a beginner to have some failing, of which he is perhaps quite unconscious, such as excessive heaviness in painting shadows, of the transparency of which he has no conception, it would be an excellent lesson to send him to the galleries to look at some master who knew very well how to give his shadows a beautiful transparency. He ought even to copy parts of the pictures in which the quality he is studying is most clearly shown. This way of studying the masters would be more profitable than the practice of making copies without the definite purpose of studying something in particular, or of getting a lesson upon some special point.

To sum up then, the painting lessons, apart from the actual painting which they teach, should always lead a student in the direction of his natural bent, so as to help in the formation of his individuality as painter and colourist.

Composition

The most favourable moment for beginning exercises in composition is in the middle of the fourth stage, when the students have drawn a good deal from the life, and have made some memory drawings from nature. For there can be no composition in any

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true sense unless they have previously made observations of their own.

One sometimes meets with young people, even mere children, endowed with very precocious gifts of invention, who are tormented unless they can give birth to the creations of their imaginations. It would be a great

pity to undervalue dispositions so interesting, and to let them die for want of proper food and exercise. Any real scheme of education must take account of them therefore, and must foster them, but under particular conditions, which I will explain.

Almost all children, long before they begin really to draw, make what they call pictures of people. These are mostly confused scribbles, to which no one attaches any importance ; Leonardo da Vinci, however, with his wide perceptions and his great good sense, did not think the subject unworthy of his attention. He made a great distinction between the gifts of a child that always draws the same profiles and one that also draws figures full face and three-quarters, for this shows much more observation.

From the very commencement then of the first stage the teacher should encourage the beginners to show him any scribbles they have made in their leisure moments. He should help them with criticism, which means chiefly the encouragement of their observation. To make this clearer I will take an instance. Let us suppose that one of these childish drawings represents a horseman out of all proportion to his mount ; the teacher will urge the student to observe the relations of the size of a man to a horse upon the first rider he may see in the street. In all probability the result will

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be that the proportions are better observed in the next attempt. It is much better to lead the children to make their own observations upon real objects rather than upon representations of such objects in pictures and engravings.

The teacher should go on with this little study, alongside the regular work, without appearing to consider it of importance, or making it compulsory. These little preludes to real composition should always remain merely a pleasure, and a voluntary distraction to the younger students. Those of them who, of their own free will, keep it up with enthusiasm and perseverance from the first, may by the fourth stage produce results of real interest, very favourable to beginning the study

of composition seriously.

This branch of study requires very nice handling by the teacher, for its purpose is the development of one of the most intimate and delicate of all the faculties, namely, invention. One must be careful not to confuse invention with mere compilation, more or less perfectly disguised.

Invention is essentially personal, or it is not invention at all : which is the reason why our chief pre-occupation should be the safeguarding of individuality. It is self-evident how dangerous it must be to ask students for compositions beyond their ideas, or the observations they have been able to make directly for themselves, for it can only lead them to borrowing from well-known pictures instead of forming the habit of gathering observations from their proper source. Therefore we will begin with subjects of which the material is to be easily had ; and set them, for instance,

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to make a crown, a garland, or a " rose " from living plants and flowers put at their disposal.

When we gradually reach more difficult subjects, in which the human figure appears or takes the chief part, we must still choose subjects within the students' range, for which the scenes and natural effects they have had the opportunity of seeing and observing will form proper settings. If they have been away in the country, such subjects may be set as vintage or harvest scenes, or any other subject connected with country life.

The teacher might say to the students, at the beginning of spring, for instance, you will have to produce a picture in which you must give the character of Spring. I leave you absolute liberty of choice of the material you select, flowers, landscape, animals, figures. Make yourselves ready, by observing nature, when you are out walking ; try to seize and express the impressions that Spring will make upon you in such a way as to communicate them to those who see your picture.

We often hear people speak of the rules of composi-

tion. Properly speaking, there are no such rules, 1 there are only certain effective practices ("convenances") which the pupils will accept readily enough, without their being set up as absolute rules and imposed as such. Common sense admits at once the necessity for the unities of time and place, the importance^of clearness in setting forth the subject, and the need for every drawing and painting to express itself spontaneously

1 The following quotation from a letter of J. F. Millet's is interesting in support of this statement : *' . . . You can imagine the hole into which such people put me when they say, * This at least you must admit, that there are rules for composition ' ! . . . Now for years I have held the conviction that composition is purely a means of conveying to others our own feelings and impressions as forcibly as possible, and, furthermore, that an idea will discover of itself the best means for its expression."

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through its own proper medium without being helped out with explanations in writing.

As for the so-called " principle of pyramidal composition," which is given as a general rule, and as inseparable from every composition possessing style, nothing can be more certain to paralyse originality and reduce all ideas to a stereotyped uniformity.

I have already spoken of the difficulties that beset art teaching when given to many pupils in common. They are particularly serious in the case of the composition class, where it is most important that students should not borrow each others' ideas, even involuntarily.

To avoid this danger the professor will take care not to set the same subject to several pupils at once, unless, at least, he imposes different conditions of shape and scale for each student's sketch ; which, indeed, is very excellent as training for decorative designing, for in actual practice decorative compositions must almost always conform to shapes and scales decided in advance. It provides excellent opportunities for the practice of what is called arrangement ; and these conditions of shape and size imposed upon the designer, which at first sight appear to create needless difficulties, that demand a wasteful expenditure of force to overcome them, often stimulate him to greater effort, resulting

in a more perfect achievement. It may be compared in a sense to the practice of making verses, which has much the same effect in the teaching of literature.

There are various other means that one can think of for training students in composition, but I will only mention one example here.

Let us suppose the subject chosen is a faun playing

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with a goat. The student should be given the use of a model of the right type for an hour or two, so that he may be able to make a thorough study of living nature from the particular point of view of his composition. He should test the movement he has imagined, to see if it is possible, and should pay particular attention to observing foreshortening and the more difficult parts of the figure, such as the extremities and the attachments, making any notes and sketches he thinks necessary. It is on his memory, above all, that he should impress his observations. He needs next to study a live goat by observation in the same way. Then, equipped with his recollections of them both, alone with his own ideas, his own feelings and methods of expression, he should work out his composition, which must of necessity be original, because it comes entirely out of himself.

From subjects composed exclusively of natural objects, which he can have before his very eyes, the student may pass gradually and methodically to compositions which make a greater call upon his inventive powers.

And here imagination will find all the exercise it needs for its development. It will become more and more capable of performing its real task, which is to infer the unknown from the known, the ideal from the real, in a word, to invent through the force of induction and artistic feeling.

As to what is called "historical" composition, it will be deferred until the end of the last stage of teaching, for it is only then the students will be

properly trained for it.

FIFTH LETTER

The Fifth Stage

I might perhaps refrain from carrying the explanation of my method any farther, for I consider the instruction already given sufficient to enable students, who have worked at it in real earnest, to embark professionally upon the different branches of drawing and painting, to which their preferences and their natural gifts lead them. When I say that I think the instruction already given is sufficient, I mean, of course, when the hints and directions given in these chapters have been properly developed and completed through the initiative of the professor.

The teaching contained in the fourth stage is already more than is required for many artistic trades, and is fully sufficient for all the specialisations of ordinary fine art. Thus a young man who feels himself drawn to paint everyday scenes from contemporary life, will have received in the work of the fourth stage all the training necessary for the purpose ; for he will have mastered the methods of execution which he feels suit him best. His taste, his sincerity, and his own natural originality have been carefully kept intact while being cultivated ; and lastly, he has learnt to observe and

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retain his observations. He need then only look about him in his walks and on his travels to find endless subjects and materials for his compositions.

But the case of the student who, after following the same course of study, feels himself drawn towards the still higher branches of art, is not at all the same. Undoubtedly, he too possesses the means of execution necessary for expressing his ideas, but the ideas themselves are out of tune with the sights which daily meet

his eyes. There is very little in his surroundings to satisfy his taste and help him in the quest of beauty. The types he meets with are generally commonplace, the costumes ugly and often ridiculous, besides being subject to the caprice of fashion. Our manners admit less and less liberty, less fulness of gesture, less natural play of expression, while the nude, the chief element of great art, is completely banished from our daily life.

Thus the young artist who is in pursuit of the ideal sees nothing that responds to his aspirations except the works of Antiquity, and the old masters. What is he to do ? What can he do when he wishes to treat subjects of the highest style ? He must be reduced to borrowing and reproducing incessantly the forms, the draperies, the arrangements of the masterpieces, which are the only things which impress him.

Is this really to understand or follow in the steps of the great masters ? Assuredly not : for the great masters were not content to copy their predecessors, but brought each in turn his own style, different in character from all others, thus imposing a new and wider acceptance of the meaning and range of art. Among the splendid gifts given them at birth, they

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certainly received an instinct for what is great and beautiful. But this innate feeling for what is great and beautiful was developed and continually rekindled in their day by the beauty of the human form, by the splendid costumes, the nobility of manners and draperies, the fêtes, the ceremonials, in short by the life of the civilisations in which they moved ; so that in Greece, Rome, Venice, the artists were able, without losing hold of the great traditions from which they were sprung, continually to refresh themselves by drawing live and noble inspiration from their surroundings.

There is no denying that the youth of our day, far from possessing like advantages, are placed under very unfavourable conditions. Works of the highest order are expected of them, without reflecting that they entirely lack what even the most famous masters could not do without, that is, the living material suited to

great art. It is a very lamentable state of things, for which we must seek a remedy, so far as it is at all possible.

And this is why I have added to the four stages of teaching a fifth stage, for wh[^]t I call advanced study, of which the purpose is to create a kind of artistic atmosphere, in which young artists will be able to find to a certain extent, litde though it be, some of the sights which inspired the masters of old. 1

All my teaching has been leading to this climax. And every branch of it, taken up again from the point to which it was brought at the conclusion of the fourth stage, will reach its fulfilment here in the picturesque and animated scenes that are offered to the young

1 See " The Training of the Memory in Art. Advanced Study."

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artist's observation. Anatomy, for instance, will be demonstrated upon living models in action before their eyes, so as to let them see in actual life all that they had been previously taught upon the skeleton, and the dead body, and to make them understand, above all, the plastic beauty of human structure.

Perspective, already thoroughly studied upon paper, will be demonstrated practically in nature,, in the interior of buildings or in the open country. Models placed at determined distances, while adding animation to the scene, will provide a perspective lesson of the highest interest, whether they are subordinated to the picture, as a whole, or treated as the principal subject.

Through various experiments undertaken by themselves, the students will confirm their theoretical studies, and provide themselves with definite ideaSj upon the loss of size due to distance, for example, upon the foreshortening of the human figure, and the relation of its scale to its surroundings, — lessons that will be of practical service to them all their days. Observation will make clear a number of facts relative to perspective, which must be seen in nature to be properly understood, such

as the importance of the point of distance, and of its being sufficiently far off, to avoid causing distortion in the appearance of objects.

The students will then discover the reason for certain intentional inaccuracies employed by skilful artists ; and in their turn can essay this compromise between taste and the strict observance of principles, a compromise which may be called the perspective of feeling, and which is only possible through a thorough knowledge

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of the rules, and after the actual observation of their instances in nature.

Aerial perspective cannot be taught so rigidly, but may still be studied in a series of special observations. Experiments should be made before the pupils upon the modifications that take place in a colour according to its distance from the spectator. Here are instances of such experiments : models nude, or all draped in the same colour, should be placed like survey poles at regular distances, when they will give rise to very instructive observations upon the effect that different degrees of distance have upon colour, light, and shadow. If the models are drfused in drapery of the same colour and placed at distances measured in advance, the spectators will be able to appreciate the modifications that the colour undergoes in relation to known distances. A row of columns, or an avenue of trees, will give occasion for similar experiments.

Such observations upon aerial perspective, capable of infinite variation, should be stored in the memory, and will thus become a fund of knowledge of invaluable help to the artist.

The life model posing in the school was one of the most important subjects of study in the fourth stage of teaching, but the advanced stage has nothing to do with academic poses. Its object is to show man in action in all freedom and naturalness. Instead of saying to a model, for instance, Take the pose of a man carrying a stone, we shall say, Carry this stone from here to here. The students who are observing

him, as he crosses the room, will be watching a series of movements always real, and because they are natural

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and right, almost always beautiful. In fact the model will lift the stone with exactly the effort it demands, will walk as a person walks when carrying a burden of that size and weight, and his action will necessarily be true again when he puts the stone down at the required point. When it is remembered that the students of the fifth stage are practised in rapid observation, it will be evident how great is the benefit which they are likely to draw from the frequent repetition of such exercises.

A number of models together will allow of more complicated movements. Let them wear garments of different styles and periods, so as to serve in the study of old costume. The attention and interest aroused by antique draperies will be keenest when the models are in action. For then the young artists looking on will see how the absence of restraint, and the naturalness of the movements, cause the folds to fall into happy lines that give rise to admirable motives at every moment.

The beauty of such living scenes, and their interest as study, can be further increased by the effects under which they occur. First the groups of figures, whether nude or draped, will no longer be lighted by the unchanging light of the studio, but by the ever-varying light of the sky. They will have as background trees, clouds, and misty distances, and will detach themselves against their background in light or shadow.

Other impressions just as striking will occur to help the students towards a finer style ; as, for instance, when they see in the interior of some fine building how figures clothed in noble draperies, as they pass under the great porticoes, ascend and descend the spacious staircases, or look down from the galleries,

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fall everywhere into harmony with the lines and forms

of the architecture. 1

What precious lessons, what subjects for their admiration, will such living and splendid scenes afford to those who live amongst them ! And as they find on every side of them effects which recall the works of the great masters of form and colour, they will come to see how much these various geniuses drew their inspiration from the living source of nature, each through his own feeling and his own character, and will thus perceive the true example to be followed, if one would do as they did.

Holding such convictions, the students will be only too eager, when under the emotion of scenes that rouse their enthusiasm, to try in their turn to express their own ideas. And when the professor asks them to give an account, in drawings and paintings from memory, of what impressed them most, they will eagerly respond to his appeal. They will then appreciate more than ever the precious advantages of possessing a memory which enables them to seize effects so changing and actions so rapid, in a word, impressions of nature and of life.

In thus giving an account of their impressions the students show their different characters and all the natural aptitudes, which their education was so careful to preserve and keep inviolate, while cultivating and perfecting them.

Moreover, such impressions will not always be exact reproductions of things that struck them, but will often be the expression of the ideas to which the sights of nature gave birth.

1 See " The Training of the Memory in Art. Advanced Study."

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After they have had a sufficiency of such practice in the advanced classes, they may be set to work for themselves upon compositions of the highest style. 1

They have, in a sense, lived in poetic times and lands where their ideas have been raised and ennobled. They carry in their memories a store of precious

material, a crowd of picturesque facts, unused by any one before them* These their imaginations will know how to idealise and combine in a thousand ways in the compositions, which are the fruit of the exercises with which the fifth and last stage of education closes.

And here ends the part played by teaching, of which I have tried to sketch the plan from its first principles and their elementary deductions up to their most advanced application.

The students, henceforth full-fledged artists, must now be left to themselves in the execution of their work. If the method has succeeded in its mission, which is to implant in them the seeds of the great qualities in art, they can, as they enter upon its practice, cry, " Anch' io son pittore."

They, too, are ready to burst into flower, possessing faculties of observation and memory, possessed of a love both for art and for nature, and imbued with a feeling for fine tradition. Their individual talent is unspoiled, while strengthened and developed in the natural direction of its own originality, and finding its fulfilment in the knowledge which is now at its service.

1 See Note R, p. 178.

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EPILOGUE

The reader may possibly be surprised that the foregoing letters should insist so much upon the educational advantages that are to be found in the galleries and museums of Paris, since they were written originally to the professor of a provincial school. I think I ought to explain this point.

To make the play and development of the method the better understood, I imagined its being applied first in Paris, that is, in the surroundings most favourable

to artistic education, on account of the museums, picture-galleries, libraries, and rich collections of the decorative arts that exist there. The principal provincial towns are also in a position to carry out, though on a more modest scale, the suggestions given in my method, for they also possess museums, picture-galleries, libraries, and numbers of casts from the Antique.

Still, there are schools far removed from any artistic centre, which are in consequence without such resources, and most of the professors who are in charge of them complain bitterly of the disadvantages of their position, and lose all heart.

But before considering their task impossible, are they sure that they have fully examined and understand their own position ? May not the fact that they are

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buried in the country carry certain compensations with it, certain advantages, which result from their very isolation ? In my opinion there is in this connection an experiment very well worth trying, and worthy of a teacher of real merit, who is banished to the depths of the country, as does sometimes happen to such a teacher.

To make success possible in this proposed experiment, the first thing he must do is to forget Paris, and give up all idea of preparing his students for its competitions. Next, having thoroughly mastered the principles of our method, he must apply them resolutely and conscientiously. It is plain that the work in the first, second, and third stages is as well suited to the country as to Paris. The difficulties of completely carrying out the teaching in the country only begin with the fourth stage, in which the study of the great masters is recommended. In truth, such study is very valuable and very often bears good fruit. Still, the habit of going to picture-galleries too soon, a habit impossible to prevent in Paris y has its dangers for very young students. It may encourage them to take their ideas from the old masters instead of finding them in them-

selves, and learning how to bring them forth. And the faculty of invention, if it is not exercised and cultivated early, wanes and quickly dies.

The teacher in the country need fear no such dangers. Freed from our competitions, which are often unfair, alone, and consequently able to do as he pleases, he can insist upon hard work and the strict observance of his method. Undoubtedly he will be forced to reduce in his teaching the part played

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ordinarily by tradition, but then the part played by nature will be all the larger ; and in truth, drawing from the life model, with anatomy and perspective, must always remain the essential basis of education. Again, through the training of their memory and observation, his students will make all the finest landscape of the country-side their own, and every country-side has subjects worthy of an artist's interest, and capable of inspiring works of art.

As for painting, instructive object lessons and Subjects can never be lacking, wherever there is a sky to spread light and colour ; and to crown his teaching the professor can apply the exercises of the fifth stage, so far as possibility allows, and thus nourish the aspirations of the few among his pupils who have natures finer or more poetical than their fellows.

If one compares such teaching with the teaching that is possible in towns of real importance, one finds, of course, many gaps : but all the same one must not underrate the advantages that lie in peaceful, undisturbed surroundings, and in isolation, for developing the intimate personal feeling and natural qualities of each pupil, in all their purity and freshness. In such surroundings, if protected with proper care and foresight, there might arise and even reach its full development a talent really new, naive, and spontaneous, developing such fulness of knowledge and strength of conviction as would ensure it against the danger of all outside influences. There would still be time to complete its education by travel, and by the study and observation of the great masters.

Many of the famous artists have followed such a

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course. Rubens undertook his first voyage to Italy after he had reached the fulness of his talent and his powerful individuality was fully developed ; and so the deep impression made upon his mind by the masterpieces that he then saw for the first time, did no injury to his own personal point of view. In his fine drawings after Leonardo da Vinci we see how entirely he remained himself, while copying and drawing inspiration from these great masterpieces.

If Rubens, instead of visiting Rome at the right moment, had been brought up there as a pupil of one of the famous masters of the day, the Roman school would assuredly have numbered another great artist in its ranks. The splendid genius of Flemish art, however, would not have been revealed to the world : we should never have known Rubens !

In olden times there existed political and economic conditions, and difficulties of communication, which kept the different schools of art separated from one another, and compelled them to develop apart. To this, indeed, the distinctive character of each school is largely due. What can be more dissimilar than the Flemish, Dutch, and Spanish schools, or the different schools of Italy ? The latter, though flourishing in towns often very close together, were, in fact, as completely separated by feuds, rivalry, and continual warfare, as they could ever be by immense distances.

The progress of civilisation has created an entirely different state of things in the arts. The facility and rapidity of communication, the frequency of exhibitions, local, national, and universal, bring artists of all countries and all doctrines constantly in contact. They

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are incessantly exchanging and borrowing ideas, pro-

cesses, and styles. And further, in these exhibitions the question of sales and orders becomes of immense importance.

From the combination of all these essentially modern circumstances art finds itself to-day in an entirely new position. Without entering into it at too great length, the following chief characteristics are worth noting. There is a tendency towards a general level, with a certain raising of the average talent, and a continual increase in the number of artists. Also, it is impossible to overlook the sorry preoccupation with commerce, the far too frequent abandonment of disinterested art, which is the outcome of real conviction, for the eager pursuit of monetary success. And lastly, it is noticeable that in the ever - increasing mass of production, often highly skilful, works of really great distinction and power become rarer and rarer.

Every day the differences between the times in which we live and those of the old masters are increasing. Then, there were numbers of different schools, now it may be said that there is only one in Europe ; for the slight differences which still distinguish certain countries will soon have disappeared.

There is no reason to regret, in the name of art, the old days of isolation and violence, or to condemn the progress of modern societies. On the contrary, it is in the continuation of the march of progress that we must look for the remedy.

Civilisation, more powerful even than Achilles' spear, will be well able to heal the passing harm that it may cause. Then let the friends of artistic progress have

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confidence in the future, and henceforward lend all the help they can : and may they realise that, first and foremost of all the many difficult questions in art that wait to be solved, one of the most urgent and most vital is, that of its teaching.

Surely it is full time to introduce in art really methodical study, and even hard grind, in such a way,

of course, as not to interfere in the least with the fullest liberty for spontaneous and natural development. It is education alone that, by developing when young the artist's deepest personal convictions, can create in him the passion, the compelling need to express them, and so absorb all meaner feelings and self-interest in the noble and generous passion for art.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Note A (from p. 105)

The majority of old copies produced such deplorable results, not, as some people seem to think, because their subjects were taken from human forms, but because they were essentially faulty, being elaborate and complicated, out of all relation to the previous studies that they were made to follow. From not being arranged in any sane order, or really graduated sequence, one copy could not lead on to the next, or help to any understanding of its purpose. Put before the students in this way, without method, they were quite unintelligible to them, and became mere tours de force of calligraphy, impossible to execute, resulting in fruitless struggles, discouragement, and despair.

It is evident that such procedure must invariably produce disaster, whatever the subjects selected for the copies.

By all means, let us learn from the failures of recent teaching - y but we must not suppose that because it failed, its failures undermine in any sense the authority of teachers such as Cennino Cennini, Leonardo da Vinci, Benvenuto Cellini, Vasari, Lomazzo, Armenini, Jean Cousin, and others, who all counselled the use of copies drawn or engraved from figures or parts of figures.

Note B (from p. 108)

In a great number of systems of teaching drawing, the perfectly natural and logical principle of arranging difficulties

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in a gradual sequence is entirely misunderstood. Exercises of great difficulty are often taken before others much easier, without any attention being paid to arranging them in a rational order.

Such errors, and very serious errors they are in education, are almost always supported by appealing to the authority of nature. For instance, we are told that objects, as shown us by nature, strike us by their masses and not by their details, and that consequently all students of drawing should begin by establishing the masses.

As a working rule — although I cannot admit the logic of the reasoning — it is certainly excellent for advanced students, but it can be extremely injurious to absolute beginners. To set them a task so difficult and complicated, which is at once beyond their powers and their understanding, is merely to plunge them into the greatest distress. Can this drawing by masses, without any preliminary training, be an exercise favourable to the development of the primary qualities of correctness and precision ? Far from it — since a mass can, of its very nature, never be more than an approximation.

Nothing in truth is more to be commended than taking nature as our example, but we should make sure that we are following her lead upon the particular point with which we are concerned. If it is education we are concerned with, we must observe nature at work as a teacher, and not in her other moods. So let us see how she sets about such work.

Young birds, for example, begin by exercising their wings under the direction of their parents, attempting at first only very gentle movements, proportioned to their growing strength. As their powers increase with exercise the movements become more vigorous and more complex. And it is only after they have sufficiently developed the organs necessary for flight, that they practice first upon the edge of the nest, and finally launch themselves into space. If, therefore, we really want to follow nature's example in education we must proceed, as she does, from the simple to the complex, and begin, before anything

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else, by developing the faculties and organs essential to the subject we propose to learn. If it is drawing, it is plain we

must first practise accuracy of eye and skill of hand.

Note C (from p. 109)

It would undoubtedly be possible to make the first stages of learning to draw easier and shorter in a marked degree by employing such preparatory exercises as I have already suggested should be tried in primary schools. I should like to refer the reader to the passage in which I expressed my views upon the point in 1872, which is to be found upon pages 70 and 71 of a A Survey of Art Teaching."

I originally published the idea in the Journal de V instruction publique^ in 1867. It was not at all well received, however, when it first appeared in all its novelty. But this, after all, is only what generally happens. It will probably be put into practice sooner or later.

Note D (from p. 109)

So incoherent are the ideas upon drawing and the teaching of drawing, that there has recently been given to the world a very strange theory. This is the gist of it.

Outline does not exist in nature, consequently it is absurd to compel the student to surround his forms with a black outline. He ought to express the forms as he perceives them, that is, by their lights and shadows, and should determine their shape by the colours against which they come.

That we see no black line round natural objects is a fact. But, O precise observers of nature ! there are not any lines drawn upon the earth, or the sky — no meridians, no ecliptic, no tropics, no equator — and yet what a help these imaginary lines are in studying the positions, size, and movements of the heavenly bodies !

If one studies most branches of human knowledge at their

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root, one finds almost always some hypothesis, some convention, as their starting-point and means of development. As to drawing, outline is the fiction of genius ; and it alone has made

this art possible from its first gropings up to its finest manifestations.

Certainly we meet with skilled artists and clever students who see objects by their external shape and their modelling, and make use of tones before they have done much work in outline. Still, they can only work in this way through a very advanced development of their artistic perception, which is in fact largely the result of their education, in which the first indispensable step must always have been outline.

Note E (from p. 109)

I have come to no decision upon the size that the copies should be. The teacher is free, therefore, to do exactly as he likes in the matter. Still, he should not forget that for beginners big distances are more difficult to judge. He must always be careful to keep to the principle of gradation of difficulties, and should begin by insisting on the students making their drawings of exactly the same size as the copy, before he allows them to copy them on a different scale.

Note F (from p. no)

Certain systems of drawing recommend the teacher to make the students, from the very first, execute straight lines and curves, at one decided stroke, free hand, or rather with their arms held out straight. Many people in high places very much approve such a procedure, which appears to them eminently fitted to give a beginner a masterly style. But what is it that really happens in practice? As to drawing the straight line at one fell swoop, as he is expected to do, even the most gifted student can only manage to do it very imperfectly. And at best it is rather an act of calligraphy than of real

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drawing. And when he has made his effort, what is the teacher to do? Is he to accept it, imperfect as it is, or ought he to ask for it to be done over again? But really there is no reason why the new tour de force should be any more successful than the last, except by some fortunate chance. For the student has already done all he can or knows, and has not learnt anything, nor can learn anything, in the process. The only way for the professor to obtain any improvement, or progress, is to mark, or better still make the student mark, with

dots the places where the straight line or curve is faulty, so as to correct it by the help of these dots. But is not this a return to the very method which I propose ?

Real assurance, such as one admires in the work of great draughtsmen, can only come from feeling developed by study. Sham assurance, that is, " the cocksureness of ignorance," is the most regrettable and dangerous of vices. It destroys all development and progress at the root. Modesty, and an inclination to naive investigation are, on the other hand, the most precious of all qualities in a beginner. He will gain assurance as he increases in understanding and in vividness of impression, and such assurance will never degenerate into presumption.

Note G (from p. 112)

In this very short statement, to which I am limited, there is no room to treat in detail of the teaching of linear and geometrical drawing, the methods of teaching which are generally satisfactory. Still, it is necessary to say a word upon its utility in artistic education, and the place which should be given it.

This exact and correct kind of drawing tends to develop the feeling for accuracy and symmetry ; it also gives the student, through the use of instruments, a kind of skill that is very valuable in the study of architecture and perspective. But it must not be looked upon, as is too often done, as a preparation for drawing proper. For the use of instruments, such as ruler,

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compass, square:, etc. arrests the development of judgment by eye and skill of hand, through suppressing the practice of these very faculties. Linear and geometrical drawing should be studied simultaneously with ordinary drawing, but as a by-study, and no more than the proper proportion of time should be allotted to it ; say, one or two lessons of linear drawing for four or five of drawing by eye.

Among other studies that a draughtsman should not neglect is modelling, which is as interesting as it is instructive.

Later, the students should acquire some elementary knowledge of chemistry, of which painters of our day are only too

often quite ignorant.

Note H (from p. 121)

The beginner should be forbidden to use the stump. Later on students should be free to choose their own tools, since they are bound to create their own personal method of execution for themselves.

Note I (from p. 123)

To add a little variety to the students' work the professor may give them, with discretion, some copies of animals, ornaments, and flowers to draw from ; but he must take care to tell them that these different subjects can only be really mastered by making a special study of them direct from nature. As for landscape, copying engravings or drawings of it is not only useless, but actually injurious, for they are the personal interpretations of the artist who made them, and necessarily interfere with the interpretations which every artist should find spontaneously for himself.

Note K (from p. 130)

Many young people become artists without any previous literary instruction. The professor should use all his powers

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to induce them to repair this want, while there is still time. Otherwise they will be prevented from ever reaching the height they might have reached.

Note L (from p. 133)

Very few people appreciate properly all the qualities which go to make a real teacher. They are many, and often of a very high order. To his care and influence young students are entirely confided, and yet the estimation in which he is held, and the recompense that he receives, bear, as a rule, no relation to his duties or his merits.

Surprise is sometimes expressed that there should be so few good teachers, particularly art teachers. The astonishment should rather be, that men of real merit should ever allow themselves to be drawn, by the sheer force of vocation, into a career

so ungrateful and so little appreciated. A teacher of drawing, indeed, if he devotes himself entirely to his teaching, and even goes so far as to sacrifice his own production to it, is almost always looked upon as an artist who has miscarried, a sort of artistic dead fruit. A teacher is valued on his success outside his teaching. A young teacher is always asked if he can draw a figure himself, not if he can show others how to do so.

Opinions so mistaken and unfair are well calculated to repel the very men who are best fitted to be teachers. And such opinions spring, as is so usual in errors of judgment, from a confusion of language, which results in a confusion of ideas. In fact, the words master and professor are almost always confounded, as are the ideas which they express ; and yet the distinction is of the simplest.

Masters in art teach by their works, professors teach by word of mouth, and through their method of instruction.

Raphael, a master great in any company, exercises, and will doubtless always continue to exercise an authoritative influence through his work. His masterpieces will always be consulted and studied, and will provide every one with the highest lessons.

NOTES 175

But was Raphael a teacher in the ordinary sense of the word ? Did he take any interest in teaching, or make any effort to form pupils upon carefully thought-out principles ? It seems impossible, when one thinks of all the preoccupations by which his great mind must have been absorbed, and of the shortness of his life in relation to his marvellous output.

Raphael gave a hearty welcome, no doubt, to the young men who were attracted by his fame and the renown of his works. And placed securely by his genius at a height inaccessible to others, he had no need to make any mystery about his work, and never thought of doing so, but allowed every one to look on and follow him in all the stages of his splendid production, many even taking part in it.

In truth, there was teaching there of a kind, such as most people long for ; and yet the " School of Raphael," like those of most illustrious artists, lacked initiative and power of its own. Even Giulio Romano himself, despite his brilliant gifts, was only an echo.

There is a fundamental difference between the teacher and the artist who produces. The latter may be narrow, and unjust in his opinions ; he may think that he alone possesses the truth in art, for it is often in this that the passionate conviction lies which gives him his power. But imagine the teacher to be possessed of the same kind of force and passion, and it is at once evident that the student must lose under such domination and coercion all his own natural character and sensibility. He may, perhaps, have talent, but it will be his master's talent.

The real teacher must free his criticism of all judgment by rule. He must not be seen to be attached exclusively to one conception of art, but must understand all the conceptions of art that have already been produced, and must welcome all possible new methods of expression in his pupils. Above all, he should never set up his own practice as an example to them,

for THE MORE IMPERSONAL HE APPEARS, THE MORE CERTAINLY WILL HE ENSURE AND CONFIRM THEIR PERSONALITY.

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Let it be understood, then, that the profession of teaching demands self-denial, devotion, learning, high ideals, and breadth of mind, and let it therefore be held in the estimation which it deserves. For these qualities are indispensable to the regeneration of art teaching, and through it to the regeneration of art itself.

Note M (from p. 133)

It may be useful at this point to teach the students something of the divisions and proportions of the human body, such as the measurements of Jean Cousin or GeYard Andran, made upon the finest examples of the Antique. Not that we must expect to see any very immediate advantages result from this. Sculptors indeed will find such conventional measurements of real use — they must be careful, of course, not to employ them to excess, or they will result in monotony — for sculptors conceive in three dimensions, and study mostly the profile of the forms, which admits of exact measurement. To draughtsmen, however, all form and proportion show themselves in perspective, and measuring is consequently absolutely impossible. Still they may fix the typical proportions in their mind, and use them in a general and approximate way, making allowance as far as

they can for the effect of foreshortening.

Note N (from p. 135)

The classical school, which unceasingly extols beauty and the pursuit of beauty, always speaks of it as having already attained its climax of absolute and final expression in the works of the past. Now beauty is not exclusively Greek or Roman. All aspects of nature, even the most ordinary, possess a certain beauty of their own. The artist's business is to discover and make plain to others the finer point of view of scenes of every kind, to disentangle their dominant characteristics, and to express with emphasis the artistic sentiment that underlies them.

NOTES 177

Such an interpretation being essentially personal must necessarily be different from every one else's. This indeed is the real characteristic of true originality. Therefore an artist must emphasise and establish definitely this personal interpretation without being afraid of repeating himself. The deliberate search for oddity or ugliness is in no sense originality. Artists sometimes think that in this way they are asserting their personal freedom and independence of all tradition : but let them know that, when they are not acting naturally and spontaneously, they are in fact submitting to the domination of some outside influence, often merely a passing fashion, often the sterile ambition of attaining success at any price.

Note O (from p. 135)

After studying the anatomy of man the students should go on to the anatomy of animals, especially that of the horse, which they should learn to draw from nature with a knowledge of its construction.

Note P (from p. 142)

The reproduction from memory of his impressions is an excellent and conclusive test of a pupil's artistic bent. Under the ordinary course of study it is very difficult to arrive at any real opinion on the subject. What conclusion can be drawn in most cases from even a really well executed figure, or a good

sketch from the life model ? For such results can be achieved by quite mediocre talent through the persistent imitation of abler students or of conventional types. Over and over again one sees the most brilliant beginnings of this kind end in quite insignificant and commonplace production.

But in the reproduction from memory of observations which are purely personal the student necessarily lays himself bare. He shows what are the subjects with which nature inspires him, what he selects by preference, and the degree of distinction

N

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and skill with which he interprets her. He shows what feelings are aroused in him, and whether he knows how to communicate them to others. In fact the artist that is in him is really put to the proof.

Note Q (from p. 145)

Both professor and students could consult M. ChevreuPs book upon the contrasts and harmony of colour with great advantage. In it they will find many observations, both interesting and instructive, which it would be well worth while to learn by heart.

Note R (from p. 161)

I have intentionally refrained from entering into any detail as regards "Historical Composition" or the " Grand Style " with which the teaching of the fifth stage ends. If I were to suggest, as is generally done, that the students should imitate the compositions of the great masters, I should be compelled to deduce from typical masterpieces rules and principles such as the professor could hand on to them. But the whole purpose of my teaching is to evoke really individual conceptions, of which the results must often be quite new and unforeseen. Consequently it follows, that it is the professor alone who can judge what teaching and what counsel should be given, according to the varying needs and circumstances, which are never twice alike.

NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The drawings reproduced in this book are taken by the kind permission of Dr. Rondeau from the portfolios full of the pupils' work, left him by his uncle. They are selected from among those marked by de Boisbaudran himself as done from memory. The drawings from nature, and the drawing from the Titian by Bellenger, were made before the Commission of the Ecole des Beaux -Arts, which thus establishes their bona fides beyond all question ;¹ while Professor Legros has given us his own account of his drawing of Holbein's " Erasmus," which I quote later.

Between them, these drawings illustrate both the power that can be acquired by young students of memorising impressions direct from nature, and the manner in which such power was cultivated.

Objection is sometimes raised to memory work, on the ground that it teaches students to draw out of their heads, or from *u chic*." Of this danger de Boisbaudran was well aware, and his teaching is carefully designed to combat it.

In memory work, as in ordinary work, he tells us, the first step in training is the practice of literal imitation. For upon this alone is built up the power of expressing exactly and completely the profounder and less literal impressions, which an artist receives from nature later on, as his personality develops and matures.

The, reader will remember how he insists upon exactness and thoroughness as the condition of all real progress, and how, v

¹ See p. 95 of " A Survey of Art Teaching."

179 N 2

180 NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

to check all tendency to drawing from " *chic*," instead of from real observation, he declares that memory work must not be content to be " something like " the subject, but should be as accurate as a drawing done from the subject itself. This was one of his reasons for making the students memorise pictures,

statues, and drawings, as it is possible in such work to test the absolute fidelity of the imitation.

Drawings Nos. 5, 7, 9, 11, 12 show clearly enough the standard of accuracy that he demanded. Reproductions from the original pictures are given for the- sake of comparison.

In memory work from nature, it is, of course, impossible to prove the absolute fidelity of imitation, although real impressions from nature have certain " characteristics of naivete and truth which are almost unmistakable." Such characteristics are convincingly present in these drawings. Done from memory by young students, without the help of note or sketch of any kind, they show a power of grasping a scene as a whole, of seizing its essential character and movement, rarely possessed even by mature artists. The weaknesses and faults in proportion or construction are just the things which are easily corrected from the model.

Do not, in fact, all these drawings from nature and from pictures alike, show the quality which de Boisbaudran declared to be the real object of his training, that is, the power of " seeing " vividly objects no longer present ?

In an article that appeared in M.A.P. in 1903, Professor Legros gave the following account of his memory drawing from Holbein's cc Erasmus."

" Lecoq's methods of teaching were his own, and their effect may be seen in the work of all his pupils. He set himself to developing in us a memory for pictures ; to this end he made us use our powers of observation to the utmost, by accustoming us to seize upon the essential points of everything. Often he sent us to Nature, but still more frequently to the Louvre, where we had to make drawings, which in turn had to be reproduced from memory in the school.

NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS 181

" One day I was sent to copy the portrait of 'Erasmus,' but my c carton/ or drawing - board, was so enormous and so cumbersome that I could not succeed in setting it up, and had to renounce my project. However, I did not excite myself about it, but resolved to learn my subject by heart, and see if I could not draw it on my return to the school.

" I calculated the exact distances between the various points, fixed the characteristic traits firmly in my mind, and then the secondary ones, easy enough once I was sure of the principal ones. And thus I learned slowly to dissect and reconstruct this masterpiece. When I returned Lecoq asked me for my drawing. c I have not done it,' I replied, and then, seeing his perplexed look, I added quickly, c but I am going to do it now.' The professor went off", displeased and incredulous, and I set myself patiently to the task, recalling and arranging my mental notes, and conjuring up in my mind all the features of this great and moving picture.

"When Lecoq came by again the drawing was well advanced. He seemed well pleased, sat down beside me, and watched me continue. From that day Lecoq showed a particular interest in me, and took me from the general room into his own studio, so this portrait of 'Erasmus' had a marked influence on my future."

Professor Legros once said to me, when speaking of this drawing, cc I can to this day reconstruct it from memory," and further added that "from it he learnt all his art." —
Translator.

/ " ^

No. 1-MEMORY DRAWING FROM NATURE.
By G. Bellenger.

Drawn before the Commission of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

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No. 5.— MEMORY DRAWING FROM HOLBEIN'S "ERASMUS."
By A. Legros.

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No. 6.— HOLBEIN'S "ERASMUS."
From the Picture in the Louvre.

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No. 7.— MEMORY DRAWING FROM TITIAN'S u LAURA DI DIANTI.'

By G. Bellkngkr.

Drawn before the Commission of the Ecofe des Beaux-Arts.

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No. 8.— TITIAN'S "LAURA DI DIANTL'
From the Picture in the Louvre,

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No. g.—MEMORY DRAWING FROM THE PORTRAIT OF
GUILLAUME M MONTMORENCY.

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No. to.— GUILLAUME DE MONTMORENCY.
From the Picture in the Louvre.

No. 1 1.— MEMORY DRAWING FROM THE ANTIQUE.
By Chapron.

No, 12.— MEMORY DRAWING FROM THE ANTIQUE.
By A. Lugros.

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