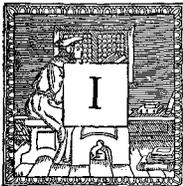


SOME ART SCHOOLS AND ART STUDENTS

BY DOROTHY FURNISS



It has been the writer's good fortune to attend an art school immortalised by the pen of Thackeray, and another where Sargent gave instructions to the students. The former art school is said to be the oldest in London and boasts of a long roll-call of well-known men and women. When Thackeray studied there it was known as Leigh's Academy. A description of it will be found in the first volume of *The Newcomes*. There is a tradition among the students that Thackeray being refused as an illustrator of Dickens showed his generosity of mind by asking his successful rival, Buss, and a few other kindred spirits to an impromptu meal "to celebrate the momentous occasion" at the little inn round the corner. Leigh's probably had no memento other than this charming and characteristic anecdote of the great writer.

Fred Walker studied at Leigh's, a tiny pale-faced little boy in a short jacket and round collar, a precocious youth even for those days, when Millais passed his Royal Academy examinations before he was twelve years old! Charles Keene, another "master" of black and white, and Kate Greenaway of nursery fame are a few of the names recalled at this moment.

Fred Barnard, the celebrated delineator of cockney life, perpetrated a delicious skit on his fellow-students consisting of an alphabet written in doggerel verse and illustrated with graphic caricatures.

Leigh's Academy shifted its quarters several times, and on the last occasion but one the students caused some agitation by carrying the smaller plaster casts through the streets. Imagine the embarrassment of the early Victorian ladies as the little procession wended its way from one side of Oxford Street to the other.

Sir William Richmond, who decorated St. Paul's Cathedral, spent some of his

youthful days at Leigh's, and a few years ago a petition was drawn up protesting against some movement or work of Sir William's, and being presented to the school for the signature and support of the students, was refused on the grounds "that Leigh's signed no protests against the work of a former student." Leigh's prided itself on being able to supply the needs of advanced students as well as beginners. It boasted of an extensive wardrobe, over two hundred costumes containing valuable mediæval, Stuart, and Georgian properties, and one or two fine tapestries. Many a time the writer has seen a portrait being painted, the victim posed on one side of the antique room with the artist hard by and an embarrassing crowd of students gathered around. On one occasion a testy old colonel found himself in a queer predicament. He arrived fully attired in gorgeous regimentals, hat, gloves, and medals all complete. The artist posed the soldier on a platform and commenced his work. Suddenly he stopped, recollected something and fled away with a hurried, "Don't move! I won't be half a second," leaving a petrified colonel glued to his chair. At this moment a number of students drifted in from the "life room" and discovered, as they thought, "Jones's new model."

"Queer old bird Jones has dug out," said one student.

"Not such a bad uniform if it weren't so ill-fitting," said another.

"His sloping forehead suits the military type," said a third.

They criticised his hat, his gloves, and his sword, the colonel getting more apoplectic every second. At last a student remarked, "that he guessed Jones had bought the medals in Ludgate Circus," which brought the enraged colonel to his feet, and wildly spluttering furious exclamations, he swung himself into the centre of the astonished students,—in a whirl of "unwarrantable insolence!" and

"confounded puppies!" left the school, alas! for the poor artist, never to return.

Leigh's attracted a cosmopolitan studentship. There were many Americans, both men and girls; there were Germans and Italians, Scandinavians and Poles, Australians and Swiss; there was an ex-minister of state who arrived every day on an official-looking red-enamelled bicycle, and a "lunatic" doctor of great repute who showed little intelligence by drawing ancient Greek goddesses in a book two inches square. There were a number of quaint old ladies; one spent the greater part of her time wiping away hysterical tears with her paint rag, and lamentable results; and another curiously testified her dislike of "messy paints" by working in white kid gloves.

There was "old Chuffey," a superannuated clerk dressed in shiny broadcloth, who was realising the dream of his life by copying execrable German prints in tremulous water-colours; having spent sixty odd years at a desk he insisted on his easel being placed in a correspondingly oblique angle, with the result of tripping up every passerby. The consequence was that the entire class occupied themselves in picking up "old Chuffey's" easel, "old Chuffey's" paints, and "old Chuffey's" prints, until "old Chuffey" himself was mercifully plucked away.

Are art students appreciated in America? Personally I found strangers generally encouraging. "Stick to it, and you'll get right there," said an old gentleman as the writer stood sketching in the



SKETCHING IN SURREY

National Gallery of Washington. "Don't give it up," was another's somewhat dubious comment. On the other hand, she was studying an intricate doorway in a little Southern English town, which attracts many transatlantic tourists and is haunted by countless artists, and a little regimen of Americans swept round the corner. They had seen five artists in as many yards and their patience was exhausted. Never to be forgotten was their icy glare, and an exceedingly pretty girl exclaimed in withering tones, "Guess *she's* only doing it for e-ffect."

Sketching on the continent is looked

upon as a national and not altogether unpleasing characteristic of the English nation. Little boys certainly press round rather closely, but one generally manages to disperse them by turning round and sketching their faces. This ruse, however, is of little use in Bronx Park, New York City. "Gee! she's sketching you, Charles G. Jefferson. Mind you keep still. Put in his ugly jaw, ma'am, and don't forget the G. when you write his name."

During the writer's brief time in the Royal Academy Schools, the most popular Academician among the stu-



SKETCHING IN THE BRONX

dents was the great Sargent. It is the rule of the Academicians to teach the strung to one side of a long corridor, and tion, a questionable method, as every artist invariably advances different methods and ideas. But imagine the flutter among the students when Sargent's month arrived! It was not so much the dazzling light of the celebrity that won the students' hearts as the infinite patience with which he laboured to explain his ideals to the students. Despite the fluency of his brush, perhaps because of it, Sargent seemed to experience the greatest difficulty in clothing his ideas in words, but once he took the brush in hand, lo, and behold there was the meaning before you. The class-rooms are strung to one side of a long corridor, and on the day Sargent's month expired, his progress could be traced by the cheers of the students as he quitted the various class-rooms.

Alfred Gilbert, our most famous sculptor, and probably best known to American visitors by his delicately poised statue in Piccadilly Circus, has an astonishingly ready flow of language. He will hold forth on the abstract qualities of art and its relation to music for hours; at the

Royal Academy lectures he will take up a piece of chalk in either hand while discoursing in the most picturesque language and draw an exquisite design with both hands at the same moment. Like the great master of still life, William M. Chase, Alfred Gilbert revels in an artistic audience.

"She thinks that is a Whistler," remarked a sneering tourist as he passed a student copying at the Metropolitan Art School in New York. Evidently an art student must stand up to a certain amount of chaff on both sides of the Atlantic. The writer met Solomon J. Solomon, the Royal Academician, in the corridor of the schools one day.

"Hullo," he said, "what are you doing here?"

"Copying one of Rubens's paintings," was the diffident reply.

"Come along, and let's have a look at it," he said in all genial friendliness, and in spite of protestations, he swept into the class-room and up to the easel. He stood for a long time in complete absorption, his keen eyes travelling from Rubens' to the canvas, and back again, then he heaved a big sigh and said:

"O poor, poor Rubens!"



THE OLD LADY WHO WORKS IN WHITE KID GLOVES

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOME RECENT NOVELS

BY FREDERIC TABER COOPER



QUESTION that you may often hear discussed by professional manuscript readers is, why the quality of English novels, even of the second and third class averages so much higher than the corresponding type written by Americans,—higher, that is to say, in the mechanics of its structure, the carefulness of its style, the avoidance of those glaring faults that show at a casual glance that for the purposes of publication the manuscript is frankly impossible. One reader in particular said, not long ago, that he had a grudge against English manuscripts because of the amount of time they made him waste, that even when he knew at the start that he was going to reject a story, its interest often held him so that he read to a finish.

Now, there is a good deal of unfairness about this assumption of British superiority. To begin with, American publishers and editors receive only the better grades from the other side, after the chaff has been carefully winnowed out. In the great majority of cases the books offered to the American market have already found a publisher at home; and because the business dealings are necessarily at long distance, a far larger percentage of them go through the hands of agents familiar with the special needs of certain magazines and certain houses. The question narrows down very largely to a difference of popular taste between the American and English reading public,—and in nine cases out of ten, the trouble with an otherwise well written and readable book is that it is just a little too British in its theme and handling, too local in colour to be interesting, or indeed wholly intelligible to a reader not well versed in the social, political and business world of the British Isles.

Nevertheless, in the long run, a veteran reader comes to realise that there is

something more than a grain of truth in the claim of better workmanship of novels "made in England." It may be that the weeding-out process is carried on with a little more brutal candour, that the preliminary apprenticeship is harsher, that the hopelessness of slovenly and untrained work is more forcibly driven home. At all events, whatever the cause, the net result is that, other things being equal, the English book, while less inspired, less original than the American, is a little better in structure, in style and in the impression it conveys of a certain definite social atmosphere.

There is, of course, a certain danger of kindling resentment, and arousing a patriotic championship of our native writers by a discussion of this sort. Some one is sure to exclaim, "Why, what nonsense! Doesn't Mr. Howells or Mr. James write as correct English as Mr. Kipling or Mr. Galsworthy? Aren't the plots of Meredith Nicholson as cleverly worked out as those of Max Pemberton or Phillips Oppenheim?—and the comparisons, well founded or otherwise, may run on, floodlike, until the speaker is out of breath. But all this is quite beside the real issue. The question is not whether among the authors who have, in their several classes admittedly "arrived," the advantage is with us or with our English cousins, but which of the two has the advantage among the crowd of beginners, the novices who are still, so to speak, on the waiting list. And here, it is respectfully submitted, the English do have slightly the best of it.

This brings us to the point which it is the purpose of the present paper to make: that the English writer of fiction starts with one advantage which is not of his own making, because it is not a matter of training or practice or literary school, but simply of existing social conditions. A much larger part of the daily life of the English man or woman is ordained and