CHAPTER II.

THE RUDIMENTS OF DRAWING.

THE HUMAN HEAD.

— If we wish to ascend to the top of an edifice, we must be content to advance step by step, otherwise we shall never be able to attain it — Leonardo da Vinci.

The first impulse of all beginners is to attempt the delineation of the human face, and generally as seen in profile, because it is easier thus to express the actual form of the features; and, there is no object in nature on which the early efforts of the student of design can be more deservedly and profitably bestowed. In nothing else are combined so many elements of beauty and expression, such established and well-defined principles of form, and happy adaptation of that form to purpose — in short, such perfection of Design — and he that can draw the head with accuracy and knowledge, in all its details, is a master of the art. As a general standard of beauty and expression, the conception of man reaches to nothing beyond it. In his dreams of angels and beatified spirits he can go no higher, and the demons of the imaginary world bear its impress, however distorted or debased. Always before us, always subject to our scrutiny and observation, always exciting a deep interest and best remembered of all other objects, possessing
in itself the great and leading principles of design so admirably developed, it should call forth the earliest and most devoted study of the draughtsman. No matter what may be his purpose in the study of design he must learn to draw the human figure.

50. What has been said in reference to drawing curved and eccentric lines is most forcibly applicable to drawing the figure, for there is not to be found one straight line throughout the whole wonderful structure of animated creation. Without some standard by which to form the judgment and direct the hand in the delineation of such forms, which are often so delicately marked as to escape the notice of the student, in his early efforts, he labors in the dark, and more often succeeds by chance than by that knowledge which alone can insure repeated success, and secure that capacity for advanced achievement only thus to be obtained. On chance no reliance should be placed; it may serve once and never again; and a success thus achieved often brings with it more injurious consequences than a failure, by creating a fictitious confidence, from which we are unwilling to descend to the study of the first principles, the grammar of the art. Let the student be reminded of the maxim of Leonardo da Vinci that, “in order to acquire a true notion of the form of things, he must begin by studying the parts which compose them, and not pass to a second till he has well stored his memory, and sufficiently practised the first: otherwise, he loses his time, and will most certainly protract his studies—and let him remember to acquire accuracy before he attempts quickness.”

51. It is not enough that the pupil should be able to draw an object before him, but he should understand and learn to remember its form and character. Let him not deceive himself with the idea that he is doing much when he is filling his portfolio with hasty, unfinished, and unstudied sketches. Sketching is to art what short-hand notes are to writing and equally valuable; but we should no more think of teaching drawing by the one than writing by the other. One single effort executed with care and study is worth all the time and labor bestowed upon it, and will in the end more surely promote his certain advancement. It is for this reason that the pen is so strongly recommended as the best instrument for the beginner. Its use may present difficulties, at first, but he who is earnest in his desire to become a proficient draughtsman, may rest assured that this commonplace instrument can do him more good service than any other. The precision and facility of hand and certainty of touch that he will acquire by its early and single use will enable him to wield the crayon or the brush, the graver or the modelling tool, the chisel or the hammer, hereafter, with a command that will amply repay the labor of his present efforts to become familiar with it. Is his hand tremulous and disobedient to his will, the pen will
make it firm and well-trained; and nerved to its use, he will possess an unlimited command of all other instruments. The pen admits of no indecision. We are compelled to consider well what is to be done, and then to do it with an unerring line or touch—and a failure can only be remedied by retracing our steps and another attempt. That failure is a lesson not soon forgotten, and many such will soon induce a habit of accuracy which is rarely acquired through the tangled confusion of lead pencil and Indian rubber. What is done with the pen can be done again, and there lies one of the great secrets of excellence in design.

52. As the easiest to draw, and that which, probably, will show most clearly to the pupil the principles upon which he must rely for accuracy, let him begin with a full or front view of the Mouth; and before making any attempt at expression he should become familiar with the actual form of the features, and be capable of delineating them knowingly. The first thing to be done is to get the beautiful line produced by the meeting of the lips. On a straight line first indicate the width of the mouth, and then the centre, either by dots or faint lines; (8) then proceed to express these points with due reference to the true form of the object; after which indicate in the same way the thickness of the lips, etc. This done with care and precision, to connect the points and to produce a correct outline according to the form of the object you are imitating (22) will be found comparatively easy; and with a correct outline you have a sure foundation upon which to proceed in the completion of your drawing. Before advancing farther, however, the trial should be repeated, until the pupil is able to dispense with the straight lines and to produce an outline without their assistance, beyond their imaginary existence, by which he will soon learn to preserve the proportions and the relations of the parts as readily as if they were drawn on his paper. This step at off-hand drawing, should be carefully taken, practised, and studied; for the same method and principles are applicable to the correct delineation of all objects. Should the pupil grow weary in his efforts to attain a correct outline in this example and feel discouraged by repeated failures, let him as a relaxation try the outline of any one or more of those that follow, without attempting to express the shadows. With many this page may be remembered as one of
trial, but according with the recollection of it, will be the ease or difficulty of their progress hereafter.

53. Having succeeded in becoming proficient in drawing a correct outline, next proceed to express the shadows that give rotundity, and farther develop the form of the mouth. Begin with the most distinct and prominent markings; they will serve as a basis upon which to elaborate and express more minute detail and finish, as well as to make you familiar with the actual formation of the object of imitation, and induce a systematic habit of study as well as execution, which are both of much importance to beginners. With regard to expressing tints by lines, what has been before said (13 and 19) may be recalled to mind, and the pupil should not attempt to finish up a drawing, until he is in a measure perfect in each progressive step. In the following examples, is shown the method of proceeding gradually with a drawing, and it is advisable that this, as well as each progressive example, should be practised over and over again, until not only facility in its imitation is attained, but the method by which that imitation is produced is thoroughly understood.

54. The directions with regard to this example have been thus fully given, and their importance especially urged, because of their application to those that follow, subject only to such variations as the peculiar form of the different features may require in their delineation. Difficulty may be felt, in the first attempts, in expressing the shadows, as well as in obtaining a correct outline, as the delicacy of hand and precision of touch requisite to their expression, are only to be acquired by care and practice. To become a good draughtsman this difficulty must be mastered, and it must be done now—in the beginning—when it is less formidable. Should the pupil in his anxiety to go forward, find it irksome to devote the time and patience to these rudimental studies that may be required, he may rely upon it, he will soon find himself involved in greater difficulties, from which it may not be easy for him to extricate himself. This injudicious hurrying forward has done much harm to education in design, by bringing disgust rather than delight in its pursuit. Never leave a difficulty behind you that you have not overcome, and those that lie before
will be no longer formidable. Presuming the pupil to be in earnest in the business, and anxious that he should early learn to rely somewhat upon his own judgment as well as intelligence, let us place before him the following examples in delineating the features, which he should carefully study and learn to draw, with some degree of facility, before he attempts to combine them together in the perfect head. To the principles of Design, of Form, of Grace, and Beauty, developed by the human figure, and especially the head and face, frequent reference will be made hereafter; and unless proper care has been bestowed upon the study as well as practice of these examples, the learner will find his progress continually impeded for want of that elementary strength and progressive knowledge necessary to secure success in more advanced studies. The straight lines, given to assist in drawing the outlines, may be drawn with a lead pencil (43), which, after the outline is secured by the pen, may be erased with Indian rubber. Again, let it be impressed upon the pupil, that the sooner he learns to do without these straight lines, drawn on the paper, the better, but their application and use should never be overlooked or forgotten.
55. To enter into the minute detail of the proportions of the head and features, according to the most received standards, would be of little benefit to the student until he is farther advanced. A few leading principles will be sufficient for his present purposes. Nature, although confined by no mathematical precision, and producing the infinite variety of countenance, character, and expression, by enlarging and diminishing as well as varying the form of the features, has supplied, in her most perfect productions, a standard of proportion useful to the draughtsman, not only as assisting in the delineation of correct and beautiful forms, but also in such as are exceptions. A standard of form once impressed on the mind, we soon learn to measure all deviations by it, as we learn to measure the variations of curved or eccentric by straight lines (20, 21). Thus may the eye be educated not only to fix upon the most prominent and characteristic peculiarities of a head, at once, but the impression will be so vividly preserved upon the memory that it may be recalled and delineated at any moment, with a degree of facility as surprising to the uninitiated as serviceable to the possessor. Nor is this principle of design alone applicable to drawing the head. It extends, as a general and practical method, to the delineation and preservation in the memory of all other objects, besides assisting in the cultivation of taste and that keen perception of the beautiful, which not only open to the follower and lover of art such inexhaustible resources of enjoyment, but have a purifying influence in the direction of his efforts to high and noble purposes. As we measure the degree of deformity by beauty, so a high standard of beauty has been attained by avoiding deformity. Thus the great artists of antiquity produced those exquisite and beautiful forms which perhaps were never found combined in any one living individual, and yet these forms were ideal only in their combination. Without the closest study and the keenest perception of the beautiful in nature, only to be acquired by that study, they never could have been produced.

56. To draw the head in profile, the first thing to be done is to fix upon some certain point or line to begin with, and one is most admirably provided by nature, of unerring certainty. On looking at a head in an easy, erect position, the lower points of the nose and ear will be found to be on a level. A line connecting these points, therefore, gives a basis which must necessarily maintain its relations to all the parts and proportions of the head, above the lower extremity of the ear and nose. No matter what may be the position of the head, they must move with and accord with that line—the lower jaw alone possessing the power of independent motion and consequently affecting that portion of the face below it. Draw a line at right angles to this, and on it mark the length of the nose,
which is generally about one fourth the whole height of the head, and you have a standard or scale by which not only the proportions of the head may be ascertained, but those of the whole figure. The head is considered as containing in height four measures of the nose—and, that greater accuracy may be obtained, the nose is subdivided into twelve Parts, usually called Minutes. These minutes are seldom attended to in the delineation of nature, but are found serviceable in minute study of the antique statues, as will be hereafter shown. The received scale of measurement, therefore, for the figure stands thus—Twelve Minutes make one Part (or nose)—Four Parts one Head—etc. However these proportions may be found to vary in nature, some standard by which we may be enabled to define the degree of such variations has been found of much practical utility.

57. The oval has been often recommended as the best given form upon which to delineate the head, and when seen in a full, front view (64), it will be found to serve most admirably, but in the profile it is in a measure of little value. The pupil should early train his eye to the observation of the general forms of objects, and the sooner he begins the better. When that general form assimilates to a well-known and recognised shape, as for instance, the circle, the oval, the square, or the triangle, it is well enough to make use of them, but it will be seen at once by the above outline, how little the oval can assist in drawing the profile. It limits nothing, defines nothing. It gives no fixed point or proportion, nor does it present the slightest general idea of the head. Equally inefficient is the application of the equilateral triangle and the square; and after all, if the learner can not be taught to do without such mechanical aid in drawing, even in his early attempts, he will never attain proficiency in the art. They are necessary more as correctives, as the means by which he may, with the exercise of proper judgment, supply the want of a teacher, to tell him when he is doing wrong, and direct him in correcting his mistakes, maturing his judgment gradually for higher efforts, and clearing from his way all mystery in the pursuit of knowledge in design. It is not to be understood that the various methods and principles that have been long inculcated, in many cases by high authority, should be disregarded; they may be all good and serviceable to a certain extent, but they often tend to confuse rather than assist the learner in his first efforts. He becomes alarmed at the difficulties in which he is involved, finds the pursuit one of toil rather than pleasure, and gives it up in despair.
58. With the line designating the position of the ear and nostril, a general outline of the head and the general proportions marked out, but little more remains than to express by well-defined and decided touches the characteristic features and more minute details.

59. It would seem in place and proper before proceeding farther, to enter into an explanation of the anatomical formation of the head, especially of the bones, and it is almost impossible to proceed far in the delineation of the human figure, without reverting to the wonderful machinery that gives it life and action. But, it is not well, at this stage of the pupil's progress, to enter upon a study that he will pursue with more earnestness and greater profit hereafter, when he has advanced far enough to be more sensible of its absolute necessity. He has now to learn, not only the rudimental principles of design, but to acquire a facility in the use of the pen or pencil that can only be obtained by practice, and an increased and increasing love for the art, which will bear him onward successfully, and sustain him through any difficulty that he may encounter.
60. Many have been deterred from learning to draw, by the formidable array of studies that have been unnecessarily placed before them, which should never be in advance, but always, as far as possible, progressive with a certain degree of capacity both of eye and hand. The judgment and power of execution being thus matured together, their growth is healthful and gives certain assurance of success. Let the pupil, therefore, try his hand in drawing the above profiles or any others more suited to his taste, to which he may have access. Let him practically apply the principles laid down, and if he does not succeed in producing a fair copy, he may rely upon it he has gone too fast, and before proceeding farther should retrace the ground he has passed over. A more finished example in drawing the profile, and on a larger scale, may be now attempted.
61. Let it be remembered that a drawing, incorrect in outline and the just proportions of the parts, can never be said to be finished, however great the labor bestowed upon the elaboration of its details. Care should be taken, therefore, that these important points are well determined first: and thus much lost time and many disappointments will be avoided. First obtain a general idea of the object which you desire to draw. Then arrange its proportions into an harmonious outline—Study it
well;—see that all the prevailing lines correspond to the form, character, and action of the original. That done, you have a sure groundwork upon which you may proceed with safety and all the labor bestowed upon it afterward will be to the purpose. This principle will be found of general application in design, from the minutest object to the most extensive composition; and yet we must possess knowledge of the details to form just ideas of the whole. You cannot begin by drawing a foot and erect on it a perfect figure, although without the capacity to draw and finish that foot, you can not form a just idea of its true position and relation to the whole figure. First make yourself proficient in details and particulars—then learn to connect these particulars into an harmonious whole, to understand the power and propriety of their combinations, and you are prepared to generalize, and to descend from generals to particulars, in the execution of your drawings, pictures, models, or designs.

62. In drawing the outline of the second profile, it should be remembered, that the parts of the face covered by the beard, should be slightly indicated or at least defined, or you can never with accuracy express those that do appear and preserve all the proportions, action, and harmony of the parts. The importance of the application of this method will be more forcibly shown hereafter. In this instance it may seem of trivial importance—but still it is of importance and
should not escape the observation and attention of the learner. He should look not only to the appearance of objects, but also to their actual form. It is thus, and thus only, that he will acquire the eye and hand of a master in the art, and avoid that feebleness and indecision which mark the touch of the uneducated; who may labor and elaborate as they will, yet never reach the truth and expression that seem but the momentary, spontaneous, impulse of a masters’ hand. This should be the high aim of the follower of art, and should he grow weary over the means required in its attainment, let him be encouraged to persevere, in the certainty of success that awaits his exertions. Above all things, let him not attempt too much until he acquires strength. His steps should be slow and sure. The desire of advancement is wholesome in art, as in all other pursuits and studies, but should be restrained within proper limits. Let it be cherished and kept alive as an incentive to that preparation requisite for high achievements. Success in humble efforts gives strength for higher, while continued failures tend to break down and crush the spirit.

63. It may be found more difficult for a beginner to draw in large than small, yet, if the limits of this work would allow, all the examples given would be better if they were of the full size of nature. The profiles which have just been presented to the pupil, demand the exertion of his utmost capacity, and they should be drawn, not only as they are, but also reversed, which is recommended as the proper course of practice with all the examples that have been, or may be given hereafter.
64. However inappropriate the oval may be in drawing a profile, its application to a full or front view will appear by a moment's observation. It strikes at once the prevailing or general outline, whether it be that of a youthful or aged individual. It should be understood that the regular and mathematical ellipse, generally called an oval, is not here meant, but the true oval or egg-like form—one familiar to all, and easily remembered. The same governing lines and general proportions, that are applicable to the profile, apply also to the full or front view of the head and face; and according to the degree of diversion of the lines and proportions in the original from these, can we determine their true position and delineate them. It is easy to decide, in assuming the form of an egg to represent the general outline of the head, whether that form be more or less obtuse or elongated, according to the peculiarity of the original we desire to represent, as well as the proportions occupied by the individual features; and the degree of variation once decided with regard to the original object, the pupil has gone over the instructions already given to very little profit, if he can not express them in his drawing with readiness.

65. The moment the head is thrown backward or forward, and the lower extremity of the nose is thereby thrown above or below the lower extremities of the ears, the base or governing line, drawn
through these points ceases, necessarily, to be a straight line, and according to the degree of elevation or depression of the head, is its degree of variation and curvature. It is still, however, the governing line for the true position of the features, which must harmonize and agree with it upon the principles already inculcated with reference to drawing the profile.

66. Until the pupil has acquired some knowledge of perspective, he can not be made thoroughly to comprehend the delicate variations of these lines in their relation to one another, and although it more properly belongs to that study, a simple principle may be here introduced to his notice. Take an ordinary glass or tumbler, half full of water; hold it up before you, until the line of the water is on a level with the eye—It presents then a straight line. Observe the lines of the brim and bottom of the tumbler—they are both curved. Then bring the brim on a level with the eye—it is a straight line—while that of the water presents a curve and that of the bottom a still greater. The farther the glass is removed from the eye, the more these curves diminish or approach straight lines—until at the distance of six or eight feet, their curvature is scarcely perceptible—Still the actual lines of the brim, the water, and the base, are in fact parallel to each other, although the tumbler can be placed at no distance or in no possible position in
which they will so appear to the eye, or in which it would be allowable so to represent them. All this does not affect the principles which it is now the object to inculcate. Hereafter these nice distinctions will be better understood by the pupil, as he will soon, if he does not already, feel the impossibility of advancing far in the study of Design without a knowledge of perspective, which must shortly occupy his attention.

67. In a three-quarters view of the face and head, the oval is often made use of, but with much less advantage than in a full, front view. A desire to fix upon some one form by which the outline of the head may be generalized, has led to the adoption of the oval, and if it were absolutely necessary that one arbitrary form alone should be used, a better could not be devised.
It should be applied, however, with judgment, or it may lead to error and prove a deceitful guide. When drawn on a flat surface, the moment the view of the head inclines to the right or left, the centre or perpendicular ceases to be a straight line, and increasing in curvature, loses its true position as a middle or central line for the features, while the oval itself is gradually lost in regard to the true outline of the head, until the movement reaches a profile, and it becomes in a measure useless. Were we to follow this central line in its movement, under such circumstances, and assume it as indicating the middle point of the features, distortion would inevitably be the result. The draughtsman should look to something more accurate and unerring. Even in the next outline, although the head is, as it were, forced into the oval, and the curve indicating the middle point of the forehead and mouth adapted to it, the whole seems rather an affectation of method than a practical application.

68. The imaginary central line of the face and head, is of as much importance as any real line presented to the eye, and should be as carefully studied and defined. It will be found not only serviceable in assisting to determine the proper position and balance of the features, when drawing from a picture, print, cast, or other still representation of the living head, but highly important in drawing from nature, especially when we have children or restless subjects for models. The great difficulty and annoyance, so often experienced by artists in this respect, might be avoided, in a great degree, if this central line were more carefully studied. It directs at once to the general character of the head, without which no perfec-
tion of individual parts will ever produce resemblance. It is by a general impression that we know and recognize acquaintances, and see resemblances even at a distance. This,—not the abstracted detail of parts, the precise line of a lip, or the tint of an eye,—is fixed upon the mind and governs its conclusions. It must not be understood that these peculiarities should be neglected, but that they should not be suffered to engross the attention of the draughtsman, to the neglect of more important principles—more important, because without proper attention to them, the labor bestowed upon detail will be to little profit. As evidence how much more strongly general impressions of form are retained upon the memory than minute peculiarities, how often do we hear disagreement between persons as to certain peculiarities in those with whom they are in the habit of daily intercourse. One will contend, that an absent friend’s eye is black, another will insist that it is hazel, a third that it is blue, and when the matter is settled by the presence of the individual, it is found they were all wrong, and yet neither party would fail to recognize their friend as far as they could see him.

69. As a profitable exercise for the study and understanding of this principle of design, as well as of all those urged upon the attention of the pupil in this chapter, let him take a good plaster cast of a head, and on it draw a central line, from the parting of the hair to the extremity of the chin; let him also draw a line touching the lower extremities of the ears and nose, others parallel to it passing through the eyelids, eyebrows, and mouth, and lines from the inner corners of the eyes to the mouth, parallel with the central line. These governing lines defining the positions and proportions of the features will then appear, in a three-quarters view, similar to those indicated in the annexed outline, and there is no better practice for a beginner than to draw from a plaster cast thus marked. He should place it in every possible position, and draw it carefully; making use of these lines as guides by which to define not only the true position and form of the features, but to accustom his eye to the close observation and understanding of the principles that must govern him in the delineation of the head. After some practice in drawing and familiarity with a cast, thus marked, he may make a trial on one without the lines. Drawing from casts is an important exercise, as casts afford greater facility for careful study and observation than
living models, who are constantly changing their positions, and thus embarrassing the unpractised draughtsman. In schools and classes, it is recommended that a small collection of good specimens, not only of heads, but of hands, feet, limbs, etc., should be made, for the use of pupils. Those who pursue the art by themselves, should at least have one or more good copies from the antique, which can be readily procured, and at a very cheap rate, in any of our cities. In drawing from them, they should always be placed or remain in the same light during the progress of a drawing. Whether the subject of imitation be a cast or living head, the same principles and method will be found applicable; as the former presents less difficulty, it is the better to begin with. Before a touch or line is made, you should study well the original before you, and define its position and movement; make yourself familiar with its character and peculiarities, balance all its proportions, and carefully adjust the relation of the parts to one another; and, as all important with the rest, do not lose sight of the value of a correct central point for the features, for it is your surest reliance. Once obtained, it affords a key to the truthful delineation of the head and features, and with proper care and attention secures the utmost certainty in preserving the harmonious agreement of the parts. Many sketches and drawings, by those who have been most distinguished as masters in the art, might be referred to, to show their familiar use and application of this method, which with a little practice and observation, will be soon understood and appreciated by the pupil.
70. It should be understood that the study and practice of pupils should not be confined to the examples given in this work. There are many admirable specimens well worthy of their study and imitation, which may be readily obtained, and all that has been thus far said, has been to little purpose, if they are not already capable of exercising proper judgment in selection. One thing can not be too strongly impressed upon them: It is more important to acquire a knowledge of the principles of art, than a mere facility in the imitation of the manner of another. Many falsely imagine when they can “make a drawing to look like an engraving” to the uneducated eye of partial friends, they are doing great things in the way of art, but it is a sad mistake. Let them learn the first, great principles of design, and then that best of all Drawing-Books, the Book of Nature, is open and intelligible to them, its pages teeming with interest and delight as well as beauty, and exhaustless as the resources of enjoyment and profit they afford.