CHAPTER VII.

God has diffused beauty—and art has combined it.”—Houssaye.

A STUDY and
A SKETCH
are far from being identical in character or purpose. A Sketch

is but a graphic memorandum—an expedient; a Study, the more faithful record of well-digested investigation. However well a sketch may serve to retain a transitory impression, and, to some
extent, give it intelligible expression, its practical value and service rest in the reserve of higher capacity, only attainable by severer study. The one, therefore, leading more directly to that great highway of art, by which excellence is most surely reached, and capacity in the other more certainly, advantageously, and naturally, following as a result, leave little doubt upon which the greater reliance should be placed as a beginning.

2. However true it is, that a certain degree of aptness in sketching may be often found preceding more substantial acquirements, especially in cases of active sensibility to artistic impulse (not unfrequently thus first developing the inclination of genius), it can lead of itself but a very little way to excellence. This faculty, therefore, should never be overrated as a reliance, nor suffered to mislead to habits of superficial observation, or carelessness of manner, to which it has a tendency, unless restrained and directed by judicious cultivation.

3. The value of careful study, and drawing from nature, consists, not so much in the production of an elaborate work, as in the familiarity thereby obtained with the object of imitation. It is this familiarity with the truths of nature, stored upon the memory in continued accessions, that forms in time the reliable capital of the artist, upon which he may draw with confidence in all emergencies. It is this strength that fortifies him, not only in the truthful imitation of realities before him, and in their absence directs to available expedients; but, quickening and sustaining the imagination, embolds its flight—secures it against the errors of inconsistency, and renders the language of art as easy and fluent as if traced by a poetic or historic pen. Herein lies the commonly-considered mysterious power which guides a master’s hand, impressed upon all that emanates from it—from the faintest impromptu sketch to the most finished work; while he, who holds no such reserve, may attempt in vain to disguise the doubt and feebleness which embarrass all his efforts.

4. It should not be imagined, however, that in the importance attached to the closer and more minute study of nature, the practice of sketching should be disregarded or neglected. Capacity in each may be most happily cultivated together. It is by the habit of sketching that the eye and mind are made sensitive, while more careful study secures such advantages to available results. Both should be trained together, in quickness of perception, in aptness to the discovery of beauty and effectiveness in nature, and in forming conclusions with rapidity and decision: while the hand receives an equal training in obedience to their direction, following and recording their impulse almost instinctively; wasting no time or effort in trembling indecision, but aiming so directly at
truth, although often by lines, strangely few, and dashed off apparently at random, yet leaving little doubt or uncertainty in their meaning.

5. It is a common error with beginners to imagine that facility in sketching may be gained by the imitation or copying of sketches. Many are the injurious influences of this delusion. The apparent ease with which a seeming carelessness of line or hand may be imitated, may be tempting to the gratification of a small measure of ambition, but should not divert from higher purposes than the mere counterfeiting of even a master’s hand. If it were possible to gain, by such successful imitation, the impulse, knowledge, and certainty, by which it was guided, the effort would be worthy of the utmost pains that could be bestowed; but emulation of the power by which such masterly works have been produced must be sought in capacity beyond the imitation of individual manner or peculiarity, however excellent, and least of all in such as are developed in sketches. This comes with the strength acquired by earnest study and familiarity with nature, in readiness of hand in the expression of truth, thus gradually but certainly secured, and in independence of method or material to which it may be restricted.

6. However severe may appear the ordeal to the attainment of this desirable end, it will prove the surest as well as the easiest. The learner, therefore, should start and persevere in the determination of pursuing his way with steady devotion of purpose, leaving as little as possible unsecured as he advances. The work before him is no business of an hour, and there is no time to spare for insignificant trifling. The field of labor is the wide world of Nature—her beautiful truths the lessons to be learned by heart. Once fairly within her school, Art awakens to a life of sympathy with its teacher that lasts for ever. It should be ever borne in mind, that there is no object upon which the learner can direct his study, or practise his hand, whence may not be derived wholesome lessons, worth remembering, and that it is far better to accomplish one careful, well-studied, and accurately-finished drawing a month, than a hundred loose sketches a day. Let it be clearly understood that we do not mean, by “finished drawings,” mere perfection of mechanical elaboration, minute idling with textures, or ostentatious display of labor, but accuracy of line and truthfulness of expression, be the means or method employed what they may. In the presence and palpability of error in these important points, no drawing, especially in the implied consideration of its being a study, can be said to be finished. Even when we may imagine our efforts to have reached their utmost in the attainment of this degree of perfection, careful revival and comparison of our work with the model may lead to the detection of faults, the correction of which it can never be too late to effect; nor should the fear of “spoiling our work” ever deter from the
attempt. Such records of error, and evidences of research for truth, may, indeed, be worth as much as the results of more successful labor. Teachings of experience, thus brought home, are, of all others, the most wholesome in their influence, longest and most profitably remembered; and the master, which the learner may thus secure to himself, by severe self-investigation and trial, will ever prove the most reliable.

7. Brief as may have been the hints which have been given, in former chapters, with regard to drawing the figure, as well as more simple objects—if they have been practically applied, with that care and thought so often and earnestly urged, there remains but little more to add, beyond offering such assistance as may appear best calculated to render that knowledge effective in bolder attempts. Although he who can draw the most simple object perfectly, possesses all the secret, worth knowing, of drawing anything; to combine and arrange—to reduce to harmonious unity the various parts and elements of a work of art—is yet to be acquired, and only by study, trial, and practice. Not that sort of hand-mill practice which is satisfied with mere mechanical employment; but that which carries with it a constant spirit of investigation, overcomes all difficulty, and by which the eye and mind are enlivened to the perception of truth, and the hand trained to instinctive readiness and decision in its expression.

8. It might appear that in drawing from nature, with the object before us, no more could be required than to copy what we see. This would be true, if all really exhibited in the model were sufficiently evident to unassisted observation for its faithful delineation. The eye may be a safe and faithful guide, as well as critic, to a certain extent; but, like too many critics, however apt in the detection of error, it is not always equally ready and reliable in supplying the means of discovering causes, or directing to available remedy. The most unlearned in art may be able to discover that there is something wrong in its representations, but it is rarely that other than the educated can identify that something, detect its cause, and suggest means of correction. Every one is familiar with the divisions and markings of the face of a watch; but it requires at least some knowledge of the principles by which the circumference of the circle may be accurately divided, to delineate it with precision. Every one knows that a hand has four fingers and a thumb; but, to draw the hand with anatomical accuracy, to express its outward appearance correctly, requires a knowledge of the general principles of its internal structure—of the bones that form its framework, and define its proportions—of the muscles and tendons that direct its action, and of the effect produced upon its exterior by such internal arrangement. A similar knowledge of the whole human figure, extending to all animated nature, and descending to the most insignificant
work of creation, is equally important, whenever their faithful representation is attempted. To
draw the humblest weed or flower with care and fidelity, at least some knowledge of its qualities
and conformation must be possessed, beyond that presented to unenlightened observation. This
comes as no insignificant part of the business, purpose, and meaning, in an artistic sense, of study
of nature, and marks the distinction between the tame and spiritless attempt at merely copying
all that the eye, unaided by superior intelligence, discovers, and the more decided and truthful
expression which alone can satisfy it, when thus sustained. It is a familiar truth to every one,
that in all pictorial representations, as objects are intended to be expressed in more or less remote
positions from the point of observation, they should be reduced more or less in size. The eye of
the most common observer readily receives and acknowledges the truthfulness of a happy adjust-
ment of these proportions, and is impressed as readily with error therein; but it is only by the
laws and principles of perspective that they can be justly regulated. Hence, it is evident that, to
judge correctly of objects in nature, as they really appear, the eye requires assistance; and, there-
fore, such assistance should be sought early, assiduously, and continually. If the learner starts
rightly, he will go on safely. Every investigating look bestowed on nature, every line he traces,
will bear him onward. Happily, it is not requisite, in doing this, that his progress, in perhaps more
pleasing and less laborious ways of art, should be interrupted or impeded. He may, and should,
learn and gather as he goes—ever mindful that the gathering of knowledge in the pursuit of
artistic excellence is endless, and neither weary of the way nor recoil from the pains or labor by
which it may be gained.

9. It should not be understood, by what has been said, that no one should venture to draw the
dial-face of a watch without having previously secured the thorough qualifications of a geomet-
rician; that, to delineate a hand, the anatomical knowledge of a surgeon is prerequisite—a
plant, a perfect comprehension of its botanical characteristics; or that every line and portion
of a picture should be laid down and measured by perspective calculations. Were such the
extent of requirements by which truth in artistic imitation could alone be attainable, no measure
of a single life, nor amount of capacity of endurance, would be sufficient to accomplish more
than a beginning. Our purpose is to impress the student with the importance of starting in the
surest, and therefore, as will be found by trial, the easiest way; to show the value of study and
investigation; to point to the only reliable resources for discovery and correction of error, and the
means by which it may be avoided; to disabuse his mind of every idea that “well enough”
should ever do in art; and that every effort should command his utmost exertion. Thus every
attempt and every achievement will be advanced, nearer and nearer a degree of perfection,
which, although it may not be reached, is nevertheless approachable, and that by a sure and well-tried course, the study of nature.

10. Many are the pernicious consequences to be dreaded by injudiciously overburdening the Art-Student with preparatory studies; and, not least among them, the diversion of a pursuit, that should ever bear with it lasting love and willing devotion, into one of toil, and perhaps fatal disgust. In all cases where excellence has ever been attained in art, love for it has been the first, continued, and abiding impulse. To cherish this love, therefore, should be ever an important consideration, whether its impulse lead to the devotion of life to its indulgence, or we seek its consolations as relaxation from more toilsome ways of life, or its purifying influence on our hearts and thoughts by the cultivation of that privileged intimacy with nature to which it leads. The progressive attainments of the Art-Student, nevertheless, require a certain degree of practical preparation for their advantageous acquirement. Where a want is felt, its supply becomes at once an enduring benefit. When we are sensible of the nature and amount of our deficiencies, we seek more earnestly and profitably their supply than if made in anticipation. Were art worthier of no higher consideration than a mere trade; were there not so much better and more profitable work to be done; could labor expended in preparatory studies be secured as a safe investment, to produce return in figures against figures—all this might appear but provident and proper. But, as this can not be; as no one, in the beginning, can either comprehend the amount or nature of the knowledge he may require; as there is no cool-headed calculation to be made in the matter, beyond the certainty of encounter with difficulties; as these difficulties will be found rarely, if ever, beyond the ready strength of the learner to meet and overcome as encountered; as thus the way is made one of delightful progression, for ever hopeful, and onward, and sure—one well tried and verified by results—it may be pursued with confidence, at least until a better is discovered.

11. There have been many "who, by their genius, grasping in its might its aims with a seeming independence of will over all ways and means of art, have produced wonders in their way, which seem to defy all trace of the means by which they were produced;" but let us rather profit by the fate of those who have vainly and often fatally endeavored to follow such eagle-flights, and place our confidence on surer guidance. It is very certain that no one was ever born with genius that could grasp instinctively, and at once, the first principles of art. All have learned, and all must learn, to draw. In this is involved all of art that teaching can impart. It is the letter and grammar of its language, without which genius is but an ignited exhalation, that may excite
momentary wonder, but soon burns out for want of that cherishings which education alone can supply.

12. There may be something incomprehensible to the uninitiated in the freedom and certainty with which an experienced artist expresses himself—whether it be the imitation of a model before him, or a creation of the imagination; but the mystery ceases when we know the methodical process by which it is effected. Guided by secured knowledge; practically familiar with all the expedients of his art; seeing clearly what he has to do, and knowing well how to do it; losing no time in hesitation, or feeling, as it were, his way—his work, from first to last, from a few apparently random lines to the utmost degree of finish, is always masterly. Those who would emulate such skill, must learn as he has learned.

13. It matters not what may be the limits of excellence which the aspirant to knowledge and practical skill in design may prescribe to himself. That which is available to the more restrained and less ambitious pretensions of the amateur, is equally and indeed absolutely necessary to the professional Artist. The one great purpose, paramount to all others, in the beginning, should be, to learn to draw. Hence is derived the faculty of just observation and appreciation of Nature, as a faithful teacher and reliable resource, leading to an uncompromising love of her truths that constitutes the soul of art, thereby maturing to our possession a standard of excellence upon which we may safely rely, in profiting by the productions of others, as well as the experience of our own failures or successes.

14. In insisting upon the importance of learning to draw, more may be meant than may appear in the common acceptation of the term. Capacity for drawing means more than the power of producing a linear representation. The sculptor draws, when he models the plastic clay into imitative or ideal creations. The painter draws, when he disposes his pigments with like impulse. Still further, the stalwart smith draws, when he shapes the heated metal into a given or required form. Thus upward might we trace the application of the word, in its true sense, until we reached the brightest creation of poetry or thought that art ever yet embodied, or ever will—all resting and governed in their practical application by either mental or palpable linear operations. It is by lines that the sculptor preserves his proportions, disposes his masses, and assimilates his accessories into harmonious unity. Equally so does the painter, in the disposition of light and shadow, in the regulation of his masses of color, even in the adjustment of their balances, reliefs, and effects; which should be as subservient to the preservation of accuracy of
form, and consistency of action and expression, in a picture, as in a statue or linear representation. The rudest cross-road smith never shaped or fitted a horse-shoe without the aid of governing lines of direction and comparison, and without being as much a draughtsman, in his way, to do so successfully, as ever sculptor or painter in theirs — however applied in an art that, if admitted among the Fine-Arts, might extend the family connexion to a limit alarming to the unnecessary if not reprehensible fastidiousness of the sisters. If the connecting links could be brought only a little closer together, and knowledge of the rudiments of design could be more generally and generously diffused among the inferior arts, they, with mankind, would be all the better for it, and the more dainty-fingered community of the muses the gainers thereby — if in no other respect, in a more general appreciation and acceptance of their real and practical value.

15. Among the many errors of beginners, there is none more common than a disposition to find fault with anything rather than themselves — especially with their materials. Chalks, pencils, paper, colors, canvas, bear in their turn its brunt; and even their models, be they the best in the world, are never what they should be. If they go into an artist’s studio, they shower their questions upon him without mercy: “Where did you get it?”—“Can I get some like it?”—“If I only had it, I should require no more!”—when they may have the same in use, if not abuse, every day. Then, “Where did you get the model of that head? that hand? that foot?” Give them the same, and most probably as deplorably deficient will be their work with it. He who has his perceptions of truth keenly alive, his mind and capacity properly trained, can find good materials and models anywhere. It is this that constitutes, in an important point, the independence of the educated artist. It is this that expands his mind to look beyond the personal and temporary in Nature to her permanent and universal characteristics; which brings him to feel rightly, to reason clearly; which fortifies him in analyzing and deciding upon possibilities, in distinguishing degrees, resemblances, and differences; which imbues his mind with a sensibility to the perception of beauty, a judgment refining all that passes within its range, and a love for truth, in all and every thing, which to art is its religion. It matters not what means he may select for the expression of an idea: an humble bit of charcoal and a scrap of wrapping-paper may be thus employed, in exhibiting the higher attributes of true art, more effectually than the choicest materials of a London or Parisian magazine would ever help an inferior and uneducated hand to achieve.

16. Another and still more common mistake with beginners is to be in too great a hurry, and not to bestow sufficient consideration and study upon their subject previous to a commencement of their work. Instead of first making themselves familiar with its motive, or action, mentally,
and then slightly indicating its leading points and lines, they dash headlong to work, and most probably in a very few minutes get their drawing into a hopeless tangle of confusion and inaccuracy. Then comes the vexations work of erasure and correction; and, worse still, error is added to error, until failure and self-disgust end the effort, with that consequent dread of a repetition of the trial so fatal in its consequences. Thus have we seen, for want of proper forethought, and the practical knowledge obtainable by a well-regulated course of training, many, possessing in other respects most substantial artistic qualifications, driven almost to hopeless desperation, profitlessly groping in darkness, when the light that might be had so easily would have insured success. For want of method, this little knowledge, and practical experience, it has been with pain that we have often observed them labor in error. Thus have we seen a figure, started in the middle of a sheet, run off, through every variety of distortion, into a corner: another, thus cut off and crowded into its limits at bottom, while the head had abundant space to spare at top for its due proportions: a landscape with no room for its foreground—a foreground with no room for the landscape, and, if brought in at all, out of all proportion, and in violation of every law of truth and nature: streams running up hill: and any number of false vanishing-points, governed by equally false horizons and points of distance. A tenth part of the time wasted in vexatious attempts to amend and correct errors thus committed, devoted to careful consideration of the subject, aided by proper intelligence, would not only save all such misapplied labor, but insure the most easy and gratifying results. Even in sketches, where rapidity of execution may be unavoidable, in order to secure as rapidly as possible some transient effect or impression, or where the artist may be restricted, as to time, in producing a memorandum, such errors will rarely occur with one trained to habits of accuracy. In everything that takes the higher rank of a study, they are inexcusable.

17. The errors to which we have particularly alluded lie at the root of many others, which are the prevailing causes of difficulty almost universally experienced by beginners in sketching, drawing, and painting, from nature. We constantly hear the complaint from them that “their models will not hold still.” The gentlest breeze that stirs the leaves of a tree or plant, or drives too rapidly the flying mists over a morning sky, or that rolls the storm-clouds in piles of grandeur, annoys and puts them out. For them the glowing tints of evening pass away unrecorded and unappropriated, save perhaps by a faint and profitless momentary impression. The playful loveliness of infancy, the riper flush and elastic gracefulness of beauty, the breathing life and animation of Nature, are all to them forbidden themes. It is not so with him who encounters Nature prepared, in the strength of his art, to receive and appropriate her suggestions. He requires her not
to sit to him as a hired model, but takes her as he finds her, in her own freedom, and brings her home with him, as it were, to his studio, to come forth reproduced and perpetuated by his art.

18. The purposes of a study in design, involving so much more than the mere production of a recognisable drawing or representation—as the advantages to be derived therefrom are in proportion to the knowledge, theoretical as well as practical, to be gained thereby—neither time nor pains thus bestowed can ever be misapplied, nor will they be regretted. The utmost effort should always be exerted to secure the greatest accuracy in all respects, even to the elaboration of the minutest details.

19. It is false to suppose that the study and imitation of minutiae in nature, in the beginning, has by any means a tendency to warp the mind, or to contract the hand into habits of littleness. The history of the career of most, if not of all, who have reached high attainment in Art, bears evidence to the contrary; and their progress, from laborious minuteness to grandeur, may be traced with edifying interest. Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and many others, might be named as instances. The drawings and studies, still in existence, of these men, as well as their greater works, are, many of them, marvels of elaboration in their way. The early pictures of Titian and the founders of the Venetian school are equally marked by the most careful regard to details; and the evidences of perfect knowledge of their value and masterly command of them as expedients, thus gained, are as clearly discoverable in their bolder and later works. Thus reviewing the whole field of excellence in artistic achievement, the happy influence of a close and scrutinizing study of nature may be traced.

20. "It would appear almost incomprehensible," to use the words of a great historian of art, "that the excellence of the great masters of art should have been so rarely rivalled, with all the superior means and resources of intelligence that we possess, and the examples they have left to us; and that a knowledge of the path has not been sufficient in itself to enable enlightened spirits to run the same career with success." The question suggests itself, how far we may have looked too earnestly to the end rather than considered the means of its attainment; and, in seeking by-roads and shorter paths, may have lost more ground than we have gained by leaving the well-tried highway. That too much theoretical quackery in teaching may have had much to do with it can scarcely be doubted. It is true that these men, in almost all cases, received instruction from masters; but it was of the simplest kind, and always directed to the acquirement of practical skill, rather than to the discovery of contrivance. The pupil was the companion and,
generally, assistant of the master from the beginning. There were no long and wearying preparatory studies exacted of him. He was led at once to results measured to his capacity. His strength was tried, his weakness assisted. The aid he received was derived from the experience of the master. All that was to be done, he did himself. Artists were the leaders and exemplifiers of the capacity of their art. The student was set to work—as, in the honest sincerity of our convictions, he should be now—to learn to draw. He that can not draw a straight line, the simplest, easiest, and most comprehensible, has certainly much to learn, and should begin with it. He that can, has already made no inconsiderable advancement. The mystery is developed; the next step must be onward, and onward safely, surely, and successfully. Books and theories are all well enough in good time. There has scarcely ever been anything said or written in relation to art that may not be listened to or read to advantage, when sufficient practical knowledge has been secured to strengthen the judgment in forming just conclusions; but, to the inexperienced, they are often not only embarrassing, but in a measure profitless.

21. The materials commonly employed in drawing, and studying from nature, are so numerous and varied, and so well known, that it would seem scarcely necessary to say more than that the learner should select such as may be best adapted to his purpose. To this end, that which will most perfectly realize the faithful representation of his subject, rather than that which offers the temptation of expedition, should be considered. Our decided preference for the Pen, over all other instruments, would incline us to recommend its employment on all occasions, when practicable. There is nothing within the requirement of a study, with the exception of color, that may not be realized by it. The uncompromising character of its lines is the surest safeguard against the numerous vices and errors common to learners, as well as correction of habits of carelessness, and looseness of manner, which the pencil and Indian-rubber are apt to induce. True it may be, that a pen-and-ink drawing may not look quite so fair to ordinary judgments as if it were done in crayon or pencil, stumped and tortured until “you can’t see the marks.” But it is very certain that he who can produce one such, to the degree of perfection of which the pen is capable, has learned more in its execution, and more fully realized the advantages of a study, in all respects, than could be obtained by any other more rapid process with which we are acquainted. He who is habituated to the use of the pen, and in whose hand it is obedient, will never be at a loss with any instrument he may employ. Faithful, however, as a servant, it is an exacting master, and no ordinary degree of trial, or amount of perseverance and courage, may be required to meet its exactions. It is just the kind of master that the Art-Student should secure to himself. Uncompromising in error, severe in its requirements, it neither flatters nor deceives, and repays in tenfold measure all the pains and labor it enjoins.
We would not, however, by any means insist that those who lack the courage and perseverance which the use of the pen may require, should be denied indulgence with less-exacting instruments. We have only to say, take the pen, as the best calculated, in our opinion, to make you a good draughtsman. Sooner than you should take nothing, take anything you please. The variety of instruments, methods, and materials, from which to choose, is sufficiently ample to meet the most fastidious or even capricious requirement. First, there is the Black-lead Pencil, of different degrees of hardness and depth of tint. Then, there is the long-established Conte, or French crayon, which may be employed as a pencil, or applied with a stump, made of leather, paper, or cork; Tinted crayons, covered with paper, reed, or wood, which serve with much effect for memoranda of color, light and shadow, etc. Japanned boxes of Water-Colors, either in dry or moist cakes, are much esteemed by sketchers, and are found very convenient. They may be held on the thumb of the left hand, as a palette; while in the same hand may be also held, on an emergency, a card of Bristol-board, or stout paper, to receive the sketch, leaving the right free. Of Paper, we may have every variety of tint and texture, either mounted in blocks, or, better still for the sketcher, if cut into cards of a convenient size. There are, also, the French Sketching-boards, prepared of various tints, even with skies and suggestive effects ready laid in. They are so prepared as to present an agreeable working surface for either pencil, crayon, or stump; and, at the same time, sharp lights and touches may be recovered, by scraping or rubbing up the under preparation. On these, colored crayons may be employed with much effect.

Paper is generally in a condition to work on when purchased. A little practical experience will direct in selection. For the studio, and careful out-door drawings, it is better that it should be stretched on light drawing-boards.

To stretch paper on an ordinary drawing-board, it should be damped with a wet cloth or sponge, on both sides, with as little friction as possible. Let it remain for a few minutes, that the water may be thoroughly absorbed; which may be assisted, by rolling it up, and laying it aside, for a short time, in a situation not exposed to heat or air. Have ready some strong paste, glue, or gum-arabic, thoroughly dissolved in water; the last is most convenient, as it may be kept, always at hand, in powder, and prepared in a few moments. Lay the damp paper on the board, and run a border of either of these adhesives evenly around it, with a brush, to the width of a quarter to half an inch, more or less, according to the size of the sheet. Carefully turn the paper over, and lay it evenly on the board, taking care that it adheres firmly on the edges; place it, face
to the wall, to dry slowly, and you will have, to repay the little trouble it has cost, a tempting surface for your best effort. Several sheets may be thus mounted on one board at the same time, by cutting each one a little larger than another, so as to leave a margin for the glue on each, say, of one third of an inch all around. After being damped, as directed, lay them down evenly, one over the other, so that each sheet may have a sufficient margin exposed to receive the glue, over all of which it may be passed at once. Be particularly careful that all the sheets are of an equal degree of dampness, and that their adhesion to the board is certain. Over all place a damp, not wet, cloth; and, when the whole becomes thoroughly dry, they will be found as serviceable as if mounted singly.

Drawing-boards may be bought of every variety of contrivance; but, after all, there has been little improvement, as far as practical value is to be considered, from the simple, well seasoned, old-fashioned board.

Paper, put up in what are called "Solid Sketching-blocks," containing a number of sheets secured together by the edges, and bound up as a portfolio, will be found convenient for pen, pencil, and crayon sketches and drawings: they are not, however, always reliable for water-tints.

For charcoal, crayon, and washed drawings, particularly those on a large scale, commonly called "Cartoons," the paper may be stretched in the manner directed by substituting a straining-frame and canvas cloth for the drawing-board. Paper of a delicate gray, or drab half-tint, is generally preferred in such cases. Formerly it was necessary to paste several sheets of paper together for large cartoons; but we can now procure it of any required length, and five or six feet wide. Although tinted paper in many cases may be the best to employ, white may be often used with great advantage, by rubbing it over carefully with a preparation of scraped crayon and pumice-powder, both very fine, with a pellet of cotton-wool, or some such substance, until a flat and even tint, of the desired depth, is obtained. On this the crayon will be found to take readily, and the fullest amount of force of which it is capable may be obtained, while by a judicious employment of points, or pencils, of stale bread, or, still better, of the recently-invented combination of Indian-rubber and pumace, the white paper may be either entirely recovered for the highest lights, or in gradations, with admirable effect. This method will be found to work better, if a faint but careful outline has been secured, by the pen, on the white paper, previous to the application of the half-tint.

To suit the convenience of the amateur, more than to supply any absolute necessity of the artist—who soon learns, in the more absorbing impulses of his art, to hold such matters in very partial estimation—the shops afford every variety of artists' fixtures that can be well imagined.
The readiness of the age, in the invention of labor-saving contrivances, has surfeited art with gimcrackeries in many ways far more injurious to its interests than by supplying it liberally, as it has done, with tools and materials. These may have often the good effect of inciting trial, and in the end leading to the surer means of reliance. Thus, the drawing which may have been produced upon the most nicely-contrived board and desk, folding up so cunningly and conveniently, capable of being elevated or depressed at will—an ornament even to the parlor-table—compared against the one that a bit of plank and a couple of books have served as well, may develop a secret, worth knowing, to more than two rivals in the art.

22. After all that has been said upon the subject, and earnestly as we have endeavored to impress the learner with an understanding of the nature, requirement, and value, of Studies, many may feel disappointed that more definite and practical directions have not been given; that no novelties, in the way of easy methods, have been suggested, to relieve the exaction of exertion on their part; that still, as ever, such exertion has been insisted upon, as the only means by which excellence is attainable. To expect to learn the ways of art by the mere reading of a book, is to reckon upon an illusion. All that verbal instruction can do is to indicate a course to be pursued; to afford the learner the benefit of the experience of others: the rest must be achieved by the exertion of his own intelligence and hand. There is scarcely a page, preceding this, that does not bear in some way upon the subject of study of nature. To repeat what has been already said would be paying a poor compliment to those who have given proper attention thereto; and such as have not, could scarcely be expected to derive benefit therefrom, at a period when, it is to be presumed, the learner has passed the ordeal of elementary study, and is qualified to assume the position of an artist, and fully prepared for the comprehension of all that has been said with regard to Studies, as well as that which may follow in relation to Sketches.

23. The leading requisite in sketching is to produce the nearest approach to intelligible expression by the most simple and direct means—to strike at once the motive and most prominent features of a subject, and to express them with certainty and decision. How little will suffice to do this is often surprising.

It will be seen, that, in the expression of action in figures, the skeleton gives, at once, the most marked and simple lines that can possibly be employed. Cover it with muscles, or drapery,
as we may, the key to the expression of its motive lies there, however faintly it may be indicated.

These examples, simple as they may be, will be sufficient to explain our meaning, which the learner can further and profitably exemplify for himself; observing, that the skeleton gives but general action, and proportions, or rather divisions. For individuality of character and expression he must be aided by the model, or the store of observation and study, which the memory, or, to use another term, the imagination, may supply. Among the many advantages of designing upon the basis of the skeleton, there is one of much practical value. The parts of a figure, which may be covered by the general outline, or out of sight, by reason of its intervention, or by
that of other figures, or objects, falling in their just positions, and according with its action and proportions, leaves no uncertainty in defining the position of as much of such parts as may be seen. This, some of the examples just given, small as they are, will sufficiently show. There never should be a doubt as to the disposition of any part of a figure, whether seen or not.

24. It is a profitable exercise, after having drawn a figure in one view, to reverse it, as if seen from the other side, without changing either its action or general character; and even to endeavor to make views of it from various points. How much more easily this may be done than may be at first imagined, a few careful practical experiments will prove. He who can, from an impression on his mind, or slight suggestion of the action of a figure, express it in any point of view, without a model, has certainly passed no insignificant period of advancement toward the highest privilege and capacity of an artist. It is by no means to be understood that we would convey an idea that there are no other means by which the action or motive of a figure may be expressed; nor that, in all cases, a preliminary indication of the skeleton is absolutely necessary. It is, nevertheless, very certain that, whatever be the visible lines employed, they should in all respects accord with it. Unless the artist have a distinct comprehension of its general and governing action and bearing on the outline, as well in regulating its proportions as in directing its action—unless he can distinctly recognise and be able to define it, both in the model and in his design—his efforts must be always feeble and experimental. He may make occasional lucky hits; but he who trusts to chance for success in art, plays but an uncertain game, creditless at best, even though he may sometimes win.

25. As the skeleton is to the living figure, so in their practical application, in an artistic sense, are their skeletons to inanimate objects. A landscape may have its skeleton, so far as such may be available to the sketcher—a tree—a building—anything. For, although correctness of outline may be the ultimate object, the surest way to secure it is by means of its skeleton, or main lines of construction.
26. Whatever degree of reliance, however, may be placed upon their skeletons, as the basis of delineating the proportions and action of objects, individuality of character and sentiment are more effectively and intelligibly expressed by outline. In the sketches of skilful artists, the power of a few apparently unstudied lines and touches seems sometimes almost magical; and the student may profitably trace therein the evidences of superior knowledge, whence such simple means derive their efficiency.
FROM NATURE.

(Copied by permission of S. E. Perkins, Esq. from the collection of Mr. Alston's sketches, published by that gentleman. Boston 1831.)
27. Not only the general effect of a subject, but much of its character and action, may be often rapidly and happily expressed by simple indications of its masses of light and shadow—and this, too, with an apparent disregard to precision of outline or detail, which, in the evidence of masterly and successful direction of purpose, and unaffected simplicity of means employed, leave no requirement of apology for deficiency in these respects. An effort of art which accomplishes all that it evidently attempts, may well deserve exemption from critical censure.
28. In the application of this method of sketching by masses, tinted paper will be generally found to be most serviceable. On such, not only the pen, crayon, and black-lead pencil, may be employed, but a further advantage may be gained, not only in the way of expedition of execution, but also in effectiveness, by the additional use of white, either chalk or liquid white (called Chinese, or constant white), which will flow from the pen, or may be touched, or washed on, with a camel's-hair pencil.

29. In drawing on tinted paper, if the original tint of the paper be sufficient to bear out effectively touches or gradations of light, white chalk, or constant white, may be advantageously employed. Or, in either case, whether the paper be white or tinted, the general tint may be increased over the whole, or in parts, by means of a stump, a bit of rag or soft paper, a pellet of cotton, or even the finger, charged with pencil or crayon dust, and the lights may be recovered with Indian-rubber, etc., or by the application of liquid white. This may be done, either upon the basis of a pen-and-ink or other firm indication of the composition of the subject; or, the general effect of light and shade may be first secured, and thereon the required force and finish may be given. Or, all the various expedients which practice may suggest may be advantageously employed together in securing the nearest possible approach to truth of which the circumstances of the slightest memorandum, sketch, or more finished work, may allow.

30. The advantageous employment of tinted papers is not only available in sketching, but also in the most finished drawings and studies. For many considerations they may be preferable in all cases, where color is not a principal object. In drawing from plaster-casts, and in academic studies, they are almost universally adopted. The prevailing tint should correspond as nearly as possible to the half-tint of the subject, leaving the gradations of the shadows to be expressed by the pencil, crayon, pen, etc., and the lighter parts to be worked out with white; the latter to be used sparingly, and generally to be applied as a completing operation.
31. It not unfrequently may occur that the sketcher, with all his forethought, may not be prepared, with even the most simple conveniences, at the moment of their requirement. Still he should suffer nothing to escape him; and, for his purpose, the rudest slip of paper, the back of a letter, may be made to serve—anything that will receive a mark. We have known artists, on an emergency, sketch on their thumb-nail.

Recourse may be frequently had even to written notes and short-hand observations, which, although unintelligible to others, may be of invaluable assistance to the artist's memory in recalling impressions; however insignificant such rude sketches may appear, they often prove suggestive of the most finished and successful productions.

32. No means that can be efficiently employed, in availing ourselves of the suggestions of Nature or the imagination, should be disregarded. A memorandum of an effect of light may be secured, so as to be perfectly intelligible to the sketcher himself—and available for practical purposes, by expressing touches or masses of light by bold and decided indications thereof—if colored chalk or some such expedient is not at hand—even in black, where no more ready materials than white paper and pen and pencil are at our disposal, and time or circumstances may not allow recourse to more obviously effective means.

33. It should not be imagined that, in suggesting means, methods, or materials, for drawing or sketching, we desire to bias the learner's inclination by arbitrary directions. All practical artists have their own peculiar methods of expressing themselves, and that which is most ready and manageable in meeting individual or circumstantial requirements will be found always to be the best.

The perfect freedom and efficiency with which the masters of art employed any available means of graphic expression, which chance or occasion presented, would be more wonderful if the secret of their excellence could not be distinctly traced to higher qualifications than dexterous management of any one or more materials. Their sketches and drawings bear evidence how little reliance they placed upon mere method. Many defy the closest investigation to discover how, or with what materials, they have been executed. The black-lead pencil, chalks of every variety of tint and character, charcoal, dry colors, and even clay, may be detected, rubbed on with the finger or applied—it is hard to say in what manner—pencilling and stumping over pen-lines, and pen-lines and even washed tints over pencilling—all accidental combinations and suggestions made available with inimitable effectiveness, and the whole brought into subservience to the leading purpose of all art—truth and intelligibility. We may almost read, in the materials of many sketches and studies, the very circumstances under which they were produced.
34. The most faintly-expressed memoranda, often done in a moment, and under circumstances that would preclude the possibility of effecting more, not unfrequently secure the happiest suggestions. Impressions thus recorded may be recalled upon the memory, with a degree of distinctness almost incredible, which in all probability would be forgotten, and lost for ever, if something had not been thus secured, upon which to base their recovery. The facility with which we may acquire, by practice, a habit of thus striking at once upon the motive of a subject, will scarcely surprise us; and the best part of the advantage of a reliable method consists in knowing how we do it, and in being able to repeat a success.

35. To render such memoranda practically available to the artist, come the results of study and familiarity with nature, the knowledge held in store for the occasion. If more is required than he has at command, he refers back to Nature, seeks in her individualities assimilating inferences, or verifications of conclusions. The strength of the student and the sketcher are thus most happily combined. If every impression presented to the mind, or vision, could be even thus faintly recorded; if the many precious records, thus secured, could be elaborated into more perfect works; if Art could thus be brought in closer connexion, in stronger sympathy with nature—it would be far more generally acknowledged and appreciated in its refining influences on the heart and mind.

36. Looking to results rather than to theories, and deriving our conclusions from knowledge of the course pursued by those who have attained excellence in the various departments of art rather than attempting the discovery of newer and better plans, we are led to believe that the advantages to be derived from the study of nature are best secured, after a certain degree of elementary training is insured, by directing such study to a definite purpose. In other words, the teachings of Nature serve us more effectually when the absolute necessity of her aid is forced upon us, and we go to her sensible of our wants, of her power to supply them, and knowing where and how to seek, and as well to appropriate them. Much valuable time is often wasted in ill-directed and comparatively profitless preparations, in making collections of what are miscalled studies. Portfolios on portfolios may be piled of gnarled stumps, rocks, and trees—of heads, limbs, and figures—bits of skies, and effects of light and shadow—all to little account. The thing, from practice, becoming comparatively easy, there is a tempting fascination in the occupation, an indulgence in a sort of agreeable idleness, a superficial trifling with nature, which, passing for industry, is apt to mislead from the higher aims of study. When studies are made with a view to definite appropriation, either as accessory, or suggestive, of more finished productions—when scattered fragments of the beautiful in Nature are made component parts of harmonious works of art, or sought for to
aid in their production—then do they become of real value, not only in themselves, as records of her truths, but in the knowledge and familiarity with her varied aspects and characteristics obtained in their research and gathering. Thus, also, are the inventive faculties most healthfully excited and strengthened; and more than this. It is only when our capacity is tested by at least an attempt at original production, when we venture on the great purpose of our art, and when our utmost ability is brought into action, that our real requirements become evident.

37. After all that may be said, as to method, in sketching or drawing from nature, there is one point which can not be too earnestly enforced, as absolutely necessary—not only to the artist in his more perfect works, but to the sketcher and student under all circumstances—and that is, a knowledge of the laws and practical application of Perspective.

Of all the sciences directly applicable to art, it is the only one which has been reduced to a certain and arbitrary system. Its service is so constantly in requisition by the artist, that the neglect of its acquirement would appear to be a degree of folly scarcely possible, did we not find many persisting in the experiment of doing without it, or satisfied with vague and general expressions of its principles.

The benefits of a knowledge of perspective extend beyond the certainty which it insures in linear accuracy of pictorial representations. Theoretically, as well as practically, it bears, more or less, upon all the great requisites of perfection in art.

38. In drawing a simple figure, it may appear not only difficult, but unnecessary, that all its lines should be brought to the test of strict perspective calculations; but, to do so with precision, or to place such figures in a group, or in proper relation to other objects, in perfect harmony therewith, would be still more difficult, if not impossible, without a knowledge of its general principles. Even in drawing or sketching a head, its rules must be borne in mind; for, however slightly the drawing of the features may be effected thereby, that they are so is sufficient to render its aid important.

There is nothing upon which the eye can rest, whose image is not impressed upon that organ in accordance with the laws of perspective; therefore, nothing that art may attempt, which should not be in conformity thereto. Instead of restraining, its laws enlarge the privileges of the artist.

It matters not under what circumstances objects may be presented, we can, by the aid of perspective, select our own points of observation, even although they be imaginary. Thus violent and offensive exaggerations are brought by it to agreeable harmony, and the artist in a measure balances his account with Nature by presenting her under aspects and combinations which are to
39. It will frequently occur, in sketching and drawing from nature, that the artist can not place himself at the exact point for viewing his subject under the perspective influences in which it may be desirable to represent it. For example, let us suppose such an object upon a bold, upright cliff. On the side where it may be most desirable to make the drawing, there are but a few paces to the very edge of the cliff. Here the draughtsman may be able to examine, and draw, and make memoranda of the whole, with its details and minutiae; but, if he were to attempt to draw it in the perspective in which he is compelled to see it, no one would recognise or accept it as a veritable representation. But, he imagines himself at a proper distance, as though he were on the deck of a vessel, or some rock placed there expressly for his convenience. He satisfies himself with regard to all the points, bearings, and proportions, of the objects, as though he saw them under such circumstances. He regulates the whole by his knowledge of the laws of perspective, as accurately as if he stood upon the very spot from which he desires it to be understood that the view is taken.

40. We know a vine-shaded convent-walk, to which it is almost impossible to have access, for the purpose of drawing it, from a point more distant than about ten feet. If we remove farther off, the greater part of it is shut out, or interrupted, by trees and shrubbery. To make a sketch, or drawing, at this limited distance, precisely as it is seen, would not only strain the rules of perspective beyond all justifiable exaction, but would present false and misleading impressions of the reality. Still, for the sake of exemplification, let us make the attempt.
To show the nature of the violations of propriety in attempting perspective operations upon the premises of so short a distance, we give the perspective plan upon which the sketch is based, which will sufficiently direct the student to their discovery.

As ten feet is the distance to the first two square pillars, or stone supporters of the vine, it is evident that we can introduce nothing which is nearer, within the limits of the picture. These pillars are all twelve feet high, twelve feet apart (measured from their centres), and the space between the walls on each side of the walk is twelve feet. The top of the wall running with the base of the pillars is perfectly horizontal. The ground is irregular, and slopes downward toward the gate; after which it is level. We have, for the sake of clearer illustration, placed a monk occupying a position even with the first two pillars, and consequently just within the picture; and another, in shadow, immediately under the gateway. The real distance, therefore, between these two figures (as well as between the nearest side of the first two pillars and the gateway), is about thirty-six feet. How far from a correct impression of such distance, and consequently of the relative proportions of all intervening objects, the sketch presents, is evident.

Let us make another trial. Let us assume a more remote point of distance, and regulate the positions and proportions of the objects, perspectively, in accordance therewith; although we may not be able to see the objects in our picture as they would appear at such a distance. Let us give the distance we had in the first instance to the picture, and make up a foreground from the very shrubs at our feet. To this point we thus extend the picture, and on it establish our base line EF. (This gives us a scale of proportions on such base line of four feet to the inch.) We now imagine ourselves twelve feet farther back, from the spot where we actually stand—and take that as a distance for our picture, nearly equal to its whole width.
We have evidently still not enough distance to meet the requisition of the eye. The perspective is still inconsistent with the size of the sketch, and the eye refuses to admit any impression of it at the limited distance of scarcely two and a half inches, at which it requires to be viewed to bring it within its range. In the case of the first sketch, it is utterly impossible that the eye could have received it as a whole, and scarcely less so in the second. It would naturally have sought relief by seeking various points of sight, and have satisfied itself by a number of perspective pictures. Art, therefore, which can only present one picture, and one point of sight, at the same time, must select a point of distance in its representations, to meet the natural and easy range of vision (chapter v., 65). Let us assume such a point, and that at a distance of nine inches for the sketch, which, according to its scale, would be equivalent to thirty-six feet in nature, and which, although somewhat less than three times the width of the sketch, may be allowable, in consideration of the unimportant character of the objects in the foreground and at the sides.

To preserve the height of the two nearest pillars, and that of the nearer monk, the same in the three sketches, we have a space in the third sketch, from the positions they occupy to the base line, nearly equal to that between the two monks. It should be further observed, that, from the irregularity of the ground, very little if any of the shrubbery, indicated in the foreground, extends as far forward, in the picture, as the perspective base line.

With the three sketches, and the actual proportions of the distances and relations of the objects to one another, we leave the student to form his own conclusions, as well as to decide how far truth has been violated therein, by perspectively representing objects, not exactly as we are compelled to see them in nature, but as they might be seen, and as they may be allowably appropriated to the purposes of art.
41. We have given the perspective calculations, or diagrams, of each of these sketches, precisely as they were made for our own immediate purposes, and not as elaborated geometrical drawings. They show how little is really required, as premises for drawing or sketching, upon a defined perspective arrangement of a subject.

In most cases where elaborate perspective calculations and drawings are required, either as premises for pictures, or verification of their perspective accuracy, it may be often advisable to make them on transparent, or tracing paper, rather than directly on the paper or canvas, etc., destined to receive the finished work. Such geometrical drawings, whether required for direction in the arrangement of the picture, or at any time during its progress, may be readily adjusted to a proper position; and either the whole design, or any portion, drawn thereon with a pencil, may be at the same time repeated, or ulated, in its proper place, by means of a sheet or piece of tissue-paper placed between the tracing-paper and that of the picture—the tissue-paper being previously rubbed over, on the side next the picture, with powdered plumbago, or the scrapings of a soft pencil or crayon. Thus we have, for future reference and corrections, which may frequently be found necessary in the progress of our work, both a perspective and an outline drawing, and, by laying either one or both over our picture, we can at any moment test a suspected deviation from propriety. In adjusting these tracings, drawing-pins or bits of wax may be employed. Thus many inconveniences may be obviated, and a necessity of scoring our picture with lines avoided.

42. One of the greatest difficulties experienced in the management of perspective drawings arises from working-distances and vanishing-points extending beyond the limits of a picture. A very efficient rule has been given (chapter vi., 68), to obviate this difficulty; but even that may not be always practicable. The exercise of a little ingenuity, however, will rarely leave the artist at a loss for an expedient.

In the first place, we know to a certainty the position of the horizon of our subject: that, of course, must be within the limits of the picture. So must be the point of sight. For our point of distance, therefore, we have but to extend our line of the horizon from the point of sight to the limits of such distance. This may be readily done, for example, if we are in our studio, by attaching a thread to any object—say a chair—by a tack or pin, at a point corresponding to the line of the horizon of our picture (as it stands upon the easel), and removing the chair to the distance required—carefully observing that, when the thread is stretched against the picture, it falls exactly over the horizon-line. A thread, thus adjusted, will be found to answer every purpose of lines seeking the point of distance. If we desire to indicate any such lines on the picture, we can do
so very readily by chalking the thread, and rapping it against the picture, precisely as a carpenter uses his chalk-line. Vanishing-points which may fall out of the limits of the picture may be managed in the same manner.

It is frequently desirable, in the progress of a work, to recover certain perspective lines and points which may have become obliterated, or worked out of place; and, to this end, a thread will be generally found most serviceable, as it can be applied even over moist oil-colors, without injury. Where we merely require the guidance of a horizontal line, a fine thread, stretched in its place, obviates all necessity for erasures, and can at any time be renewed. For this purpose, the points on the edge of the picture, where such line falls, should always be preserved. If a necessity for the recovery of a vanishing-point is likely to be of frequent recurrence—as, for instance, in a landscape with buildings, or in architectural subjects—the picture, if on canvas, may be even pierced at such point with a fine needle, and a thread passed through, for the purpose, without injury—a touch of color, when it is no longer required, being sufficient to obliterate every trace of it.

In making out perspective drawings, on paper stretched on a board or table, much time may be saved, and accuracy insured, by fixing fine needles at the points of sight, principal vanishing-points, distance, etc.

These few, of many other expedients which might be suggested, have been given in the hope that they may tend to do away with the dread, which too many have, of encountering "the worry of perspective"—without which they may rest assured that no one ever yet went far successfully in art, and that no one ever will.

43. There are many cases in which it may be required that the sketcher should employ a sort of short-hand method of securing memoranda, which may be afterward elaborated quite as well, if not better, under more convenient circumstances. Thus, in sketching buildings, it may be enough to indicate the general forms and proportions, and, instead of laboring over details, which may be often repeated in the same subject, to elaborate such details in bits here and there—or perhaps on a larger scale, at the foot of the sketch, or on another piece of paper. Instead of drawing in with equal care and precision all the windows, doors, cornices, etc., of a building, it may be sufficient to mark their position and number, and to finish carefully one of each.

44. In sketching views, it very frequently occurs that we are obliged to get in the general effect and composition on a scale so small that, when we come to its details, it is almost impossible to express them with the distinctness which may be desirable. In such cases, it is always better
to secure a generalized indication of the whole, and then to make separate memoranda of the most marked individual parts which we may desire as assistants in afterward making out a more complete work.

45. There are many expedients to which the sketcher is compelled to have recourse in order to secure the greatest amount of material or memoranda, which to a certain extent may be even allowable in a study. Thus in the following, which we give as nearly as possible in fac-simile from a working study and sketch by a practical artist. It is certainly in parts something more than a mere sketch; it is far from being perfect as a study; neither can it be considered a picture. In answer to the question of its character, we can not give a better explanation than in the words of the artist: "I had not time to make a study of the whole. If it had been at my disposal, there were other objects at hand upon which I could have bestowed it to more profit. I wanted a study of the overhanging tree, and some bits here and there. For the rest, a sketch served my purposes."

46. It is advisable that all sketches, studies, or memoranda, made in the presence of our model, however unfinished they may be, should be as little as possible worked over afterward—as much
that is valuable and suggestive in them may be thus lost. They should be considered as materials for the production of pictures—not in themselves pictures.

47. Sketches and studies are more or less intrinsically valuable, apart from the profit derived from their production, as they are more or less reliable records and available material by which more
complete works may be suggested, combined, and perfected. Hence, the more faithful they are, the better; not only in the preservation of the general characteristics of their subject, but also, as far as possible, of their individual peculiarities. The student should be diffident of premature assumption of capacity to correct Nature. It is no beginner’s prerogative. The first essays of his strength in this particular should not be ventured upon too confidently. There will be found much to learn before he can form for himself a standard of ideal beauty and perfection. He must “learn to correct Nature by herself—her imperfect by her more perfect.” By knowledge thus gained of what is general and what is individual—what are accidental differences, and what are prevailing characteristics—his mind will gradually expand to a just comprehension of the attributes of beauty. He will then know how to discriminate—how to separate that which is particular and uncommon, deviations from the prevailing perfection of Nature which constitute deformity—and how to combine his conclusions to a safe standard.

48. Sir Joshua Reynolds, alluding to the error too commonly prevalent among students, of not drawing exactly from the living models which they have before them, and of endeavors to make a drawing rather of what they think the figure ought to be, than of what it appears, justly remarks: “I have thought this the obstacle that has stopped the progress of many young men of real genius; and I very much doubt whether a habit of drawing correctly what we see will not give a proportionable power of drawing correctly what we imagine. He who endeavors to copy nicely the figure before him, not only acquires a habit of exactness and precision, but is continually advancing in his knowledge of the human figure; and though he seems, to superficial observers, to make a slower progress, he will be found at last capable of adding (without running into capricious wildness) that grace and beauty which is necessary to be given to his more finished works, and which can not be got by the moderns, as it was not acquired by the ancients, but by an attentive and well-compared study of the human form.” These remarks apply with equal force to every object of study in Nature, as well as to that of the human figure.

49. It can scarcely be expected of us to supply the many and various progressive requirements of the art-student, in branches of knowledge of which he may feel the necessity, or the subject of Anatomy, especially that of the human figure, would have been earlier presented to consideration. However important, indeed absolutely necessary, a certain amount of anatomical knowledge may be to the artist, there can be no question that its acquirement may be more profitably secured by progressive study, based upon that of the living model, than by reliance upon books. Even the advantages of dissection may be very questionable, unless practised at a period of advancement by
which we are qualified to seek with definite purpose, fully conscious of the nature of our requirements, and capable of rightly appropriating such advantages.

50. There are few, even among most indifferent observers, who can not detect imperfection in a limb or figure in Nature, and as few comparatively who know that a man's skull is not all in one piece, and that his great-toe has one bone less than the others. If, therefore, those who make it no special business to observe or investigate, so readily reach conclusions, why may not the artist venture upon the delineation of the human, or any other living form, without the profound knowledge of the surgeon or naturalist? A smattering of anatomical knowledge prematurely acquired may even lead to injurious tendencies, as we have often had occasion to remark by the vain attempts of young aspirants to build a figure instead of drawing it. The reproof of Fuseli to a youth whom he detected in trying to make out the beautiful and delicate markings on the side of the Apollo, by counting the ribs, is worth remembering: "You need not count them, young man: they don’t cost anything."

Let none imagine that proficiency in anatomical science, as required by the artist, is to be gained by learning by rote its technicalities. It may sound very learned to talk like a surgeon, but it helps very little to capacity in drawing the figure, unless based upon a knowledge of the effect of its internal structure upon its outward form, which can only be acquired by the study of living nature.

All that we could possibly say on the subject of Anatomy, or present in illustration, may be so readily obtained from other works, in many amplified to an extent meeting the utmost requirement which books are capable of affording, that we consider it scarcely necessary to engross the pages to which we are limited by matter which may be found elsewhere quite as well if not better supplied.

We would desire, however, earnestly to impress upon the student the importance of a familiarity and knowledge of the structure, proportions, and action, of the skeleton (23), not only in its general characteristics, but as well in all its details. Comparatively few, to meet whose requirements of practical direction in the elementary principles of art our work is intended, may require to extend their anatomical studies to the degree necessary to the more aspiring artist; yet all, to be able to draw the figure with any degree of truth and readiness, must make themselves familiar with the skeleton, and learn to recognise and understand its influence on exterior forms.

51. Where access can be obtained to a well-arranged natural skeleton carefully put together by means of artificial hinges, springs, etc., thus uniting all the parts in their proper places, and allowing each its just movement, great advantages may be derived from its study. No school
where drawing is properly taught should be without one, as well as approved plaster casts of complete anatomical figures and detailed parts in various actions.

Repulsive as it may be to be thus brought into familiar contact with the evidences of "what we are, and must be," we can not be made the worse for it. Indeed, it is a subject worthy of serious consideration if a certain amount of knowledge of the structure of the human frame should not constitute a part of popular education. He who at least understands the general principles upon which the watch he carries is constructed, knows how to guard it better from accident or injury; and many a broken bone, or dislocated joint, might be avoided, as well as the precious gift of health and vigor preserved, if men were more familiar with the machinery of their own wonderful structure.

52. To attempt to analyze the means and exemplify the process by which ideal creations become as it were tangible to the imitative privileges of the artist, would lead to a more extended discussion than we can spare from more important practical matter. Were it at our disposal, it could be shown that the linear delineation of a subject, or idea, impressed upon the imagination, differs far less than is generally supposed from that suggested by a material model. As far back as the first chapter it has been said that "he who can draw nothing but what he has before him loses the best half of the art." Before the learner had been presumed to have exceeded a very moderate proficiency in drawing the most simple straight lines, and objects formed thereby, the cultivation of capacity to this end was in view. However it may even offend the pride of the aspirant to the high privilege of testing his genius in the ideal to tell him that he must learn to draw—first a straight line by memory, and then a curved one—a block—a box—a table—and such like—he will find it to be true. If he can do so already, he has secured a safe beginning; if he can not—if his memory and hand will not sustain him in such simple requirement—how little can they be relied upon to meet with promptness the endless demands for more complicated forms which invention in design requires?

The mind must be indeed barren that does not follow a narration of an event or the expression of an idea with a pictured conception. The artist at least identifies his very presence with it, feels that he is there, if not a participator in its action. To give expression, by means of design, to such impressions, may be called invention, but it is in truth little more than the producing of new combinations, available in the degree to which memory may supply from the material world means and power of giving expression to the ideal.

Rarely, if ever, does the imagination act without impulse or suggestion—"nothing can come of nothing"—and we hail as genius the ability of seizing at once upon such suggestions, expanding
them to perfection, and giving them intelligible expression. Thus may the germ be often lost in the matured fruit, but without it it would have no existence. Equally stamped with the peculiarities of its own nature, marked with what we recognise as originality, may be the productions of genius; but that originality consists more in the peculiar action or direction of already-acquired ideas in new combinations, than in any spontaneous exercise of a mysterious and peculiar gift.

53. That from such resources, and by such means, as we have endeavored to point out, the most successful artists, whose career we can trace, achieved their excellence, there can be little doubt. They used no dead language to express their ideas. They sought its very alphabet in the book of Nature; the living, breathing Nature with which they were surrounded; the Nature that those to whom they addressed themselves could understand. The art of others they tried by her standard, and appropriated, so far as they considered it consistent therewith. Hence have originated the national characteristics of schools of art. Hence their success at home—their failure as exotics, when forced against national sympathies. Hence may we look with hope for the establishment and success of an American school of art—a school harmonizing with the Nature whence it must derive suggestion and material, as well as one that will meet the national sympathy and requirement to which it equally gives impulse.