

The Children of the Studio.

I began my work by teaching an old lady. I had many middle aged pupils, I had young men and women and I had children. I had two babies who started to learn to draw - and who joined a class - at four years old ! One of these/<sup>two</sup>made her first essay in drawing in St. Benet's Church. I was having my afternoon class there when she was brought to me. I did feel rather uncertain at first as to what to give her to work at but I gave her a collecting box and she found the slit for the money by no means uninteresting. I have learned to have a deep respect for very young children. They do not think in the same way as grown up people but they think. I took my youngest class one summer to Little St. Mary's churchyard to draw some of the many subjects to be seen from it. A little girl, apparently not attracted by any of them, ran up to me and, in her breathless way she asked : - "Oh Miss Greene ! Oh Miss Greene ! May I draw 'Sacred to the memory of ?'. I asked another to draw a picturesque doorway of a cottage that looked on to the churchyard, I came back to her to find only an enormous knocker almost filling the paper. I had not myself seen the knocker on the door but to her it was everything. "Where is your doorway ?" I asked. "That is the doorway" she

replied putting her fingers round the edges of her paper.

"I had'nt to draw that".

Even my youngest pupils had to do compositions for homework which they alway enjoyed doing. I once gave them the subject of "The Fairy Queen". A little girl named Mary Duff brought a drawing of an enormous, primitive looking tree with no Fairy Queen to be seen. I inquired where she was. I was shown a dot made by the point of a pencil at the foot of the tree. "Could'nt you draw her?" I asked a little puzzled. "Yes" she said, "but you see fairies are so very, very tiny. I could'nt make her tiny enough". I felt that that child had a very unusual sense of proportion. One day I gave out to my small pupils as a subject anything that they had really seen that would go well as a black and white study. Little Margaret Darwin presented a boldly conceived figure. She said as she gave it "I looked out of the window and I saw a clergyman blowing his nose". When they had to draw King Arthur's Castle Charles Darwin brought a good conception of a strong medieval fortress but he spoilt the romance of it by making by the side of the portal a round with a dot in the middle of it and printing over it the word "press".

I took my pupils annually to the Fitzwilliam Museum. I asked those from 6 to 10 years old which pictures in each gallery they liked best. The answers were always a choice of the gay coloured ones. When I asked those from about 10 to

12 to 16 the choice was nearly always for those pictures that depended on tone. After 16 the taste had begun to swing back to those showing more colour. This did not vary.

For one term in winter the children worked from the living model. I often got little boys to sit for them. In those days boys and girls of the Elementary Schools left school at a very early age and then the boys would hover about the Market Place hoping for a job. I had only to appear there and they would cluster round me each wishing to be chosen. On a certain afternoon I picked from among them a jolly looking little fellow. I posed him on the platform seated on a stool. Greta Thornely was in the class and happened to choose her place so that the boy was looking her way. Greta was very pretty with golden hair that seemed to give out sunshine. When the afternoon work was over I told the children to put up their painting things and the boy to get down from ~~his~~ platform. I gave him his fee. He turned from me quickly and before I could guess what he was going to do he had given Greta a hearty and sounding kiss. Then he fled through the door. Greta merely drew the back of her hand rapidly across her lips as if to wipe out the kiss and went on putting away her paints and brushes as if nothing had happened. She was quite unconcerned but not so my helper who gave a cry of anger and dashed after the boy. She caught him in the passage. He managed to wriggle out of her grasp and to avoid the lifted hand. He turned as he escaped

and, with a twinkle of delight, he cried out "Oh the phizz of it"! and disappeared.

One spring I took my children to St. Sepulchre's Church, one of the five round churches of England. When I got to it with my little crowd I found that the door was open but a gentleman was just coming out and about to lock it. He told me that he had adjusted a camera in front of the East window in the more modern part of the church and this camera was to remain there for two hours. I promised him that it should not be disturbed and said that we were not sketching at that end. He gave me the key, asked me to lock myself in and said that he would tell Mr. Flack, the caretaker, that I was in charge. I locked the door behind him and put the key in my pocket.

I had boys as well as girls in my class. The children knew their places and settled to work at once on the heavy Norman pillars. Soon I heard a surprised, boyish laugh. I turned from the pupil's drawing that I was correcting and saw a face peering between the curtains of the organ loft. It was a man's face and it had a strange, unpleasant, drawn look. The man was staring at the boy who was still laughing and he was evidently excited by the boy's amusement for, instead of coming down at the side of the platform by the few steps, he climbed over the rail, jumped down among the pews and danced along the seats and over the backs. Now all the children laughed. I saw that the man was mad. He did not stop his antics except

to make a noise on the organ and again dance among the seats. I told the children to put up their things and we would see if it were warm enough to draw outside. I gathered my pupils on to the pathway that runs round the pillars and told them to walk to the door. I followed them. The children tittered as they went looking back at the man who came to my side and made faces at them. The church is small but I found that path very long for the madman not only walked with me but walked so close to me that I could feel his breath on my neck and cheek. I was nervous for I felt that he might snatch the key out of my hand the moment I had drawn it from my pocket to fit it in the lock. The children stood tittering on one side of the door while my hand felt for the key. ~~that they had run~~

As luck would have it at that moment there came a thundering knock. My man started back and in a twinkling the door was open. I found a gentleman and two ladies outside. They had been told to knock hard as I might be at the other side of the church. The poor demented man had crept back into the gloom but the situation was soon understood, Mr. Flack was told, he man's guardian was sent for and very soon he was led away looking thoroughly downhearted. He had most likely crept unnoticed into the dark building, gone to sleep in the sheltered organ loft and had then had the time of his life amusing the children. His excitement had been very painful to me. I might not have felt it so much if, not long before, I had not had, by a curious coincidence, an adventure with a mad man on

the top of the tower of the Cathedral of the Hague. Then however I had a friend with me. Perhaps now poor men, such as these, would not be allowed to have so much freedom.

I had four little girls as pupils from a family of six girls. They were the daughters of a young widow → Mrs. Hopkinson - who looked almost a girl herself. She dressed always in light, bright blue and the children were always dressed in light, bright blue. She took them about in a governess cart, baby and all, and it looked as if it were a pot boiling over with blue foam. The two eldest were Alice and Fanny and they were about eleven and nine years old. One morning a maid much agitated, came to my studio to ask if Alice and Fanny were by any chance with me. It appeared that they had run away. At all events they were lost. When the nurse had gone to call them in the morning she had found their beds empty. They had gone from the house, - some jam tarts also had gone from the larder. Enquiries were being made but no one apparently had seen these two fair little girls in blue and yet they were very well known. I was puzzling because the police of Cambridge are observant men. The maid was indeed sad when I said that I had seen nothing of them. Their mother was to return this evening from a visit. She had left the seven children in charge of the nurse who would have to tell her on her return - if she could'nt find them before then - that two of her children were lost leaving no trace behind. It was indeed a

problem. Where could they be? But the loss of the jam tarts was comforting.

The mother arrived back from her visit in the early evening to hear the dreadful news. It might have horrified her still more if she had not had an instinctive trust in the acuteness of her little daughters. The tearful nurse had just finished her tale when Alice and Fanny walked in, having timed their return exactly.

The two culprits with upright figures and straight eyes told their tale. Nurse had been too strict - unnecessarily strict. It was important that a stand should be made, so they planned their strike. They got up early, took some tarts and sat the livelong day under the hedge behind the butts of the University rifle range field! It was perhaps a dangerous place but secure from searchers. Whether this couple of bold strikers were ever made to be truly repentant I do not know. I do know that they were not allowed to come to my class next day. What happened to nurse I also do not know but I fancy that the punishment for her too-severe dictatorship had already been terrible. The Alices and Fannys of the world are not without their value.