

**THE AMERICAN DRAWING-
BOOK: A MANUAL FOR THE
AMATEUR, AND BASIS OF STUDY
FOR THE PROFESSIONAL ARTIST**

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The American Drawing-book: A Manual for the Amateur, and Basis of Study for the Professional Artist by J. G. Chapman

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J. G. CHAPMAN

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AMERICAN DRAWING-BOOK:
A
MANUAL FOR THE AMATEUR,
AND
BASIS OF STUDY FOR THE PROFESSIONAL ARTIST:

ESPECIALLY ADAPTED

TO THE USE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS HOME INSTRUCTION.

J. G. Chapman BY
J. G. CHAPMAN, N. A.

"Any one who can learn to write, can learn to draw."

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ANYONE WHO CAN LEARN TO WRITE CAN LEARN TO DRAW

and, as writing is not taught to those only who are destined to become authors, but as forming an essential part of general education, so is drawing equally important to others besides professional artists. To write—to draw a form or figure that shall be recognised as the representative of a letter or word, is one thing; and to be able to design, draw, or write such forms, upon principles of grace and accuracy—to understand the Art of writing—is another. Thus it is also with Drawing, another mode of expressing ourselves, not less useful or necessary than that by letters

or words. To draw a horse, that shall not be mistaken for a man, is one step; but to draw a horse, with all his just proportions and developments, movement and expression, is an Art to be acquired. Any one can make something on paper to look like a tree, a cottage, a road, a brook, or a mountain; but Art goes farther, and, as if to compensate for what it falls short of, invests the whole with a charm more impressive than the reality, even to the most simple-minded cow-boy, who may have gone that road or waded that brook a thousand times, unconscious of the beauty that surrounded him, until it was developed by the hand of Art.

Who has ever hesitated to teach a child to write, because it was not intended that he should be an author? How many regard the art of Drawing as being of no practical importance, as a branch of education, to any but professional artists; and consider it, in its most favorable light, as a mere accomplishment — a pursuit only for the man of leisure? The resources of our schools are often exhausted in “finishing” our youth with “every accomplishment;” laid on so lightly, that, for all real and practical purposes, they are as ephemeral as the gay tints of the painted butterfly. Smatterings of languages, living and dead, are heaped upon them, while the great, universal language, the language of Design, is forgotten; or only thought of in the production of some huge “castle and ruins, with a man and a boy with a stick; and a dog”—painted by the teacher, under the scholar’s direction, to hang in the parlor, as the veritable, first, and last, and only production, of the latter: who at once assumes, therefrom, an oracular authority in all matters connected with the Fine Arts, and leaves admiring friends in wonder, at what “he might have done, had he not given it up.” To such, it may be said, “You have never begun.”

It is not only as a beautiful accomplishment, or a source of amusement for leisure moments, that the art of Drawing should be cultivated. It has its practical uses, in every occupation of life. It opens to all inexhaustible sources of utility, as well as pleasure; practises the eye to observe, and the hand to record, the ever-varying beauty with which nature abounds, and spreads a charm around every object of God’s beautiful creation, unfelt and unknown to those who have failed or neglected its cultivation. It does more: it gives strength to the arm of the mechanic, and taste and skill to the producer, not only of the embellishments, but actual necessities of life. From the anvil of the smith and the workbench of the joiner, to the manufacturer of the most costly productions of ornamental art, it is ever at hand with its powerful aid, in strengthening invention and execution, and qualifying the mind and hand to design and produce whatever the wants or the tastes of society may require.

Many are deterred from attempting the art of Drawing, from an idea that they lack capacity, or, what the world calls genius. But have they ever made the attempt? Let them recall to mind their first steps in knowledge of every kind, and judge not unfairly of their capacity, until they have tried this also. Before they knew their A, B, C, they could tell a man from a dog, by the picture. The impressions of form are the first made on the infant mind; and were it taught, betimes, to trace these impressions on a slate, there would be few in the world incapable of speaking the language of Design. The untaught savage thus records the story of his battles; as the traditions of his fathers have come down to him from generation to generation. He directs the traveller on his way, by marks in the sand; tells him, by his rude outline, of mountains and rivers to be passed; and no one can mistake his meaning. Who is there, in civilized life, that may have been familiar with works of art from childhood, that can not do this? If he can, he can do more. He possesses the germ within him, and needs only proper cultivation, to bring it forth.

As in other arts and studies, all can not expect to be equally perfect, so all can not expect to rival the master-spirits in the arts of Design. The work of an artist is that of a lifetime of arduous toil and study. Of the thousands who delight themselves and their friends in music, how few have composed an opera, or even achieved the composition of a single air? Yet, what would the world lose, were none to attempt the cultivation of this refined and charming accomplishment, but those who devoted themselves, exclusively, to its pursuit! Were music neglected as a study by all except those who make it the business of their lives, even they would find few to admire and sympathize with them, in their greatest productions, for want of taste and understanding.

In the elementary portions of this work, the smile of the professional artist may be moved, when he finds the author dwelling on what some may think trifles, and giving instruction in the methods of sharpening a pencil and making a pen. But let him remember the day that that instruction might have helped even him. When the pupil in Drawing has attained a proficiency to place him in the position of an artist, his course of study will require a direction beyond the means of these pages to afford him. This he must obtain elsewhere, and pursue, with that fixed determination and singleness of purpose, by which excellence is only to be achieved; and he will find that, could all that he requires be placed at once within his reach, it would be, in a measure, valueless, for want of that strength to appreciate and appropriate such advantages, which is best acquired by patient search and progressive attainment. Short-cuts and easy roads to

knowledge give but little real aid to him who has a long and arduous journey to pursue; though it is scarcely worth while to hazard an experiment, by which the spirit may be broken down with toil, in a path into which we occasionally diverge, as a recreation, or an accessory to other pursuits.

From the delight, as well as profit, that awaits them, all may be safely invited and tempted to the study of Drawing. They may find difficulties; but they will find pleasures, also, of the richest kind. They will find flowers blooming along their way, and wonders opening before them at every step: nature unfolding her ample volumes, and displaying combinations of beauty and delight, beyond the power of words to tell them of. It will be theirs, to record the ever-changing pictures of earth and heaven; to give them body and form, in which others, less favored than themselves, may participate through them: theirs, to preserve the image of some cherished object long after it has ceased, in its reality, to exist—or, perhaps, to call forth some priceless treasure from the world of poetry and thought.

To those who have in view more than mere pleasure and amusement in the pursuit of the art of Drawing, may be fairly promised advantages that they will surely realize; and a portion of this work will be devoted especially to those who look to the application of the art to its most practical purposes. Most of the difficulties constantly felt by artificers in the execution of their handiwork, will be obviated, when the same hand that executes can design. Let our mechanics have their apprentices instructed in Drawing, and the effects will be soon evident in their workshops. They will no longer depend upon foreign inventions, that are, after all, little adapted to the wants, tastes, and habits of our people. Let these wants be supplied by articles, at once more useful and equally ornamental, of home production. Let them learn to use their own strength, and their reward will follow.

The manufacturers of Europe are drawing closer and closer the connexion between the artist and the workman. At first, they borrowed aid; now they are acquiring knowledge for themselves. For the promotion of this object, schools have been long established on the continent, under government protection and support; so much importance is attached to their existence, as a measure of national policy. The influence of these schools was so strongly felt in England, to the detriment of English industrial art, that it became a subject of alarm to her statesmen. All the capital, energy, and strength, the superiority in material and mechanical facilities of England, could not contend against the higher excellence of her foreign rivals. As the voice of one man, her mechanics and manufacturers confessed the truth, and demanded

protection from the government—not by tariffs, but by education. Her legislators saw the evil, and at once applied the remedy, by the establishment of Government Schools of Design. These have been attended with such beneficial results, that there is now scarcely a manufacturing town in England that has not claimed, and shared, the advantages of provincial branches. Our mechanics can, and must, do for themselves what our own state and general governments have, hitherto, shown such indifference in undertaking for them. To no other cause than ignorance can this indifference be attributed. Were the rulers of our land, themselves, properly educated, they would not only feel the necessity of teaching Drawing in our public schools, but would be capable advisers and promoters of efficient means of carrying it into effect. He who writes himself, and has been endorsed, "Master of Arts," by our colleges, should at least know something about them; whereas, in most cases, the arts are subjects on which, above all others, he is utterly ignorant.

While foreign arts and manufactures have inundated our markets, to the detriment of our own enterprising mechanics, and politicians have convulsed the land with schemes, and plans, and measures of protection, all seem to have lost sight of one of the great and primary causes of the evil—the want of artistical education among our workmen. They are taught to read and write, to hammer and to saw; but to design—the first motive, the very genius of all arts—is utterly neglected. While it is so, we must compete with the old world, especially in the production of articles of taste, on most unfavorable grounds. The spirit of independence, that will one day cover the western continent, seems not, as yet, to have entered our workshops. We are, in this respect, comparatively, still a colony of Europe; borrowing and adapting, but doing nothing for ourselves; waiting for every novelty to cross the seas, to imitate it—creating wants by reproduction, and burdening society with anti-American tastes and caprices, instead of supplying them with objects no less useful for being beautiful. A few imported pattern-books, of little value, because not adapted to our purposes, constitute the resources in design, of most of our mechanics. Require them to make something to suit a given purpose, that shall be at the same time ornamental, and you ask an impossibility. Even if the workman may have a vague idea in his mind of what is wanted, he can not give it form: perhaps he may have the spirit to make the attempt, but he can not satisfy himself—all goes wrong—his pattern-books fail him; he looks around for something to begin from, and gives it up in despair; or, what is worse, produces some deformity that disgusts his employer, who will not venture on a second experiment, but sends abroad, and gets what he desires. Can the mechanic complain that home manufactures are not encouraged? Had he possessed even an elementary knowledge of