

ART EDUCATION THROUGH THE LIBRARIES.

Recent significant attempts to train the larger public in the appreciation of art have brought out certain principles which any such work must observe. First, it has become apparent that training in art appreciation is best undertaken by institutions which are already frequented by the people. The exhibitions of the societies and of dealers reach a very limited class and one already of considerable training. Free lectures and museum talks—excellent, both, in their way—reach only those whose interest or curiosity has been already aroused. Painting and sculpture in public buildings may and should be most efficacious in creating a civic taste for art, but the difficulty is that, to avoid deplorable error and to secure decoration of a high order, all concerned must already have some instinct for the beautiful and the fitting.

That this preliminary training should have very generally fallen to the great public libraries and to the more popular industrial schools was but natural, for these institutions reach first of all practically every class of the people, and, being usually owned by the people, do not arouse the suspicion which falls upon professedly philanthropic enterprises. It is because of the wise use of such an initial advantage that the art departments of the Public Library, the Cooper Union, the Brooklyn Institute, of this city; the Boston Public Library, that of Worcester, Mass., and the Congressional Library at Washington—to mention only typical instances—are doing a most valuable work, which is capable of wider development.

The method used in all cases is practically the same. A carefully chosen collection of photographic and other reproductions of great works of art is assembled under the care of a responsible curator. In a small room, readily accessible to the casual visitor, exhibitions are presented from time to time through the entire year. Some libraries, like the Congressional and our own Public Library, are fortunate enough to be able to show originals from their valuable collections of prints and engravings. Exhibitions like that of Japanese color printing, recently held at the Lenox Library, or that now on, of Rembrandt's etchings, are of the highest educative value; but in the main the art curator must depend upon photographs. The perfection of modern photography makes it possible to represent sculpture, architecture, and certain kinds of painting admirably, and all forms of art adequately. The most effective use of such a collection, however, will tax the curator's tact and ingenuity, and here due regard must be had to local conditions.

In the city of Worcester there has been for years a society which studies art

systematically. The art curator of the Public Library very properly follows the course of this society's studies in making up the exhibitions. In Boston, similarly, the curator takes advantage of literary anniversaries or current discussion in order to give his exhibitions a certain timeliness; and so the conditions vary in different places. It should be said, however, that in the exhibitions of the year several of the great schools of art, ancient and modern, should always find a place, while for obvious reasons American art should claim one or more exhibitions. The selection of the best pictures would be difficult enough, but the selection of the best pictures to show to a general public, without "showing down" to an untrained taste, requires a finer discrimination. No one who has not undertaken this task can imagine its difficulties. For this reason, and to avoid needless repetition of labor, it is desirable that certain standard exhibits, like the Venetian or the Florentine, the Dutch, German, or Spanish schools, should be substantially framed and exhibited from year to year. This method also opens a further field of usefulness, for such exhibits may be circulated, like the "travelling libraries" which our State Librarian has so successfully introduced. This plan of circulating exhibitions was, we believe, first tried in Chicago, and more recently has proved successful in Massachusetts. It is obvious that, by the coöperation of a group of libraries in the exchange of exhibitions, the cost of the art department would be greatly reduced to each.

It will be seen also that this function of popular education does not interfere with the proper ongoing of a reference library of art. In the Boston Public Library the two needs are harmoniously adjusted. An inner room shows students poring over dusty volumes, and rummaging in portfolios of reproductions which are of great importance to the specialist, but of absolutely no consequence to the average art lover. Outside in the little gallery there is a passing crowd which, as it enjoys the exhibition of great works especially chosen for its needs, is learning the lesson of seemliness and beauty which our rough-and-ready civilization must, sooner or later, heed.

There could be no better field for private liberality than the supplying of art departments to the smaller libraries of the land. The expense would be very moderate, and in fact the only thing really difficult to attain is the skill to make such a department effective. And yet there are few cities in which the services of a person of taste and discrimination could not be secured for small pay, or, often, for the mere "joy of the doing." Particularly we hope that, when the New York Public Library is formally installed in its new building, its print-room will be in a position to offer to the student of art all of the material which his

most recondite study could require; and to all its frequenters an introduction to that finer vision of this world of ours which is art.

AZOREAN ECONOMICS AND THE PEASANTRY.

To the passengers on one of the great German or Italian steamers bound from New York to Naples, the sight of the Azores (or Western Islands, as the British sailors still prefer to call them) offers a delightful prospect in favorable weather. Bold rocky shores, falling steep to the blue water, run up into the mountains behind by stages of exquisite verdure; villages of white houses, with brown or red roofs, trail out at picturesque lengths over the windings of a coast-road, or cluster thick under the protection of a hill; while the vast acreage of elaborate cultivation seems to indicate a distribution of comfort, even of prosperity. That this impression does not always vanish on nearer inspection is shown in the pages of many a traveller's book on the Azores, and in the columns of more than one "special correspondent."

There are excellent reasons why the majority of visitors should persist in this rose-colored view of the conditions of life on the islands. During a stay of a few weeks in a tolerably clean town, with an occasional *fitting to the lovely Furnas valley*, in St. Michael's, or the *Caldeira* of Fayal, it is hardly possible to find time for even glancing at the life of those whose toil is in large measure the source of so much beauty. Besides this, it is obvious that those who, without working themselves, subsist on this labor, will show no great eagerness to reveal the true state of affairs to an outsider—particularly if suspected of the remotest connection with the press. As for foreign residents, official or private, their comfort—may, their very existence—in the islands depends on discretion, from which they never depart. The extreme compression of social life into so small an insular area renders frankness impossible. But beyond this, and the added difficulty of communicating directly with peasants who speak and understand nothing but a debased mother tongue, there exists a singular obstacle which I have never met elsewhere—the apparently absolute indifference of the intelligent Portuguese islander to the projects, the ideas, or the views of his foreign interlocutor. The collecting of simple facts is attended, for this reason, with much loss of time and frequent failure. Statistics are almost out of the question. The Portuguese Government publishes no official returns of general commercial interest or agricultural importance; and the attempts to discover the "statistical clerk" result in showing that his invariable elusiveness comes from his also occupying a situation in private life. In the eight hundred or more pages of the *Bibliotheca Açoriana*, an undigested bibliographical compilation, of which the contents are not classified but alphabetically catalogued, the bewildered inquirer seeks in vain for works bearing on vital economic questions. The following impressions are therefore subject to reserve and correction.

It is hardly necessary to insist that in regard to climate and soil the Azores have been exceptionally favored. As on the slopes of Vesuvius or Etna, so here the

erosion of volcanic hills covers the small plains and valleys with a deposit of extreme fertility, which, with the combined forces of warmth and moisture, produces a wonderful variety and luxuriance of vegetation. Flower and vegetable gardens in the neighborhood of the larger towns are the just pride of their owners. When one penetrates into the interior of the country, a glance from a commanding hill-top proves that the first impressions from the ship's deck were rightly founded; a vast stretch of various harvests is spread out before one in a superb setting of sea, sky, and mountains; midway, on the uplands of the latter, are scattered sheep and cattle in abundance, pasturing the year round on the rich and never-failing supply. And yet the peasantry are miserably, abjectly poor.

Before attempting to explain the chief existing causes of this condition, it is desirable to note the elimination of factors of some importance in times past. To begin with, religious orders no longer exist here, any more than in the Continental domains of the kingdom of Portugal; but the table of contents of any of the older ecclesiastical histories will reveal the enormous extent of estates once held in mortmain. Thus: Chap. i., Foundation of the village of "Holy Grace"; chap. ii., Foundation of the Church of the Trinity; chap. iii., Foundation of the house of the *cure*; chap. iv., Foundation of the Monastery of the Order of the Blessed Rood; chap. v., Foundation of the Convent of the Sisters of Santa Engracia; chap. vi., Foundation of the Chapel of S. Pedro of Alcantara; and so on through a dozen chapters—all these establishments, too, in less than fifty years, for a single small village. The above is no exaggeration; the island coasts are at many points fairly studded with the ruins of what were once flourishing religious houses, in which (to judge from the remains) the inhabitants must have sought to vie with their Continental brethren or sisters, as described by "Vathek" Beckford in his account of Alcobaga and Batalha. Of immediate remaining signs of this occupation, perhaps the only one is the almost obsequious fashion in which the peasant of the less-visited districts greets the passing stranger; in all countries under strict clerical rule this social survival is noticeable. It was so in French Canada till within a very few years. Let it be understood, however, that clerical influence is still socially and politically strong. One example will suffice: on the arrival of the royal party at Ponta-Delegada, during the recent visit of their Portuguese Majesties to the islands, the bishop of the diocese, with the whole chapter, suddenly issued from the Church of the Matriz (where it had been arranged that they should remain) and planted themselves in two lines, directly in front of the ladies of the town, who were waiting to strew the way with flowers. After a brief excited colloquy, the clerical gown triumphed over the secular; but the incident called for no serious comment from the local press on the unwisdom of disappointing the Church's staunchest supporters.

Since the separation of the internal civil administration of the Azores from that of the kingdom of Portugal, it cannot be said that local conditions have been seriously affected by Continental affairs, for the financial connection is on a tolerably stable

footing, and leads to a contribution, mostly indirect, of the islands to the general revenue amounting to about a million dollars a year—a more than creditable showing for a population of much less than three hundred thousand souls, most of them peasants. Consequently, whatever burdens the poorer classes have to bear must be traced to their real origin within the islands themselves.

Prima inter pares, illiteracy. So far as I could ascertain, the ratio of totally illiterate adults in the islands is even higher than in Portugal itself, where it is commonly given as between eighty and eighty-five in a hundred. Definite signs of this appear everywhere. The school-house, so conspicuous in the village of New England, is a rare feature in the Azorean hamlet. Then, too, it is the exception to see the peasant reading even a newspaper, at his cottage door after his day's work is done; though one must admit that the typical *feuille de chou* issued in the nearest town could supply him with neither facts nor ideas of supreme importance. But the absence of the schoolmaster is no matter for astonishment in a country which considers its *lycée* professor adequately paid with seventy-five francs a month (in depreciated island money), a sum which may, in bad years, sink to little more than sixty francs. After getting visible proof of this, one has no difficulty in crediting the story that in a remote inland hamlet a rural schoolmaster was, not long ago appointed at a salary of thirty-five francs a year—even at that rate an expensive investment, for the occupant of the post was already fully employed as the servant of a wealthy proprietor, and was intellectually akin to his prospective pupils in being able neither to read nor to write.

It is precisely this widespread ignorance that renders constitutional government a farce in such countries as this; the only means of information open to the peasant being through the local political agent, who is chosen and directed by the chief owners of property in the district. Ignorance, fostered in former times for the purpose of retaining ecclesiastical supremacy, is equally welcome to-day for the least acceptable of political reasons. How is it possible, under such conditions, that members of the local Juntas should be truly representative of their constituencies? This also helps to explain sweeping legislative acts in favor of the holders of power; such a one, for instance, as the extremely light character of direct land taxation, so that a productive estate of more than twenty-two hundred acres of farm and rich pasture-land may pay directly nothing more than some twenty-five dollars annually to the island revenue. Or again, the travelling stranger who seeks to enter one of the islands with his faithful dog to bear him company may discover the existence of a six-months' quarantine regulation, which, as an illustration of particularism, can hardly be paralleled, for it was passed in the interest of one resident dog who was to be protected from the chances of rabies. Dangerous dogs are nevertheless by no means a scarcity in the islands, as the adventurous solitary pedestrian soon discovers to his cost.

The arbitrary nature of the exaction of customs duties in southern Latin countries is so proverbial that it seems super-

fluous to dwell on the question here. The Azores are in this respect subject to the general customs laws of the kingdom of Portugal; and although the passing traveller meets with nothing but civility and good sense from the officials, it often fares differently with the resident importing for his own use. In one case, a young employee was taxed for an incoming bicycle, not on the cost at the centre of production as shown in the bill of lading, but on the retail price in the town where the machine was to be used; that is, an obvious inclusion of both duty and local dealer's profit. A rigid metal bar for gymnastic purposes was similarly estimated at twice its original shop value. I make no mention of the *tracasseries* which form the inevitable running accompaniment of such transactions. It is, therefore, no ground for wonder that the Azorean peasant (actuated, too, by the incurable spirit of conservative ignorance) still continues to shun modern farming implements, and to do all his work on the soil with the peculiar Azorean hoe, which serves him for plough, spade, rake, and harrow; his versatile skill with this clumsy tool it is simply fascinating to watch—for the Azorean peasant, in the small, humble sphere of his toil, is as deft as he is laborious, and for the most part cheerful in spite of all. Although the distribution of dwellings along the sea-coast compels him to walk weary miles to his work, he has generally a pleasant word for the stranger, and may be seen early and late in friendly chat with his fellows. What a useful, peaceable immigrant he may be is shown in several colonies in our own country, as well as in Bermuda, where his competing power, born of labor and thrift, is not altogether relished by the less practically minded negro. A noteworthy proof of his saving disposition lies in the fact that, in the island of Fayal, which has for generations been in close touch with the United States, American gold is not only highly prized, but procurable with no very great difficulty, because of the pocketful of eagles and double eagles which the home-returning emigrant likes to deposit in the local banks as the solid mark of his possessions. Yet, with this fondness for gain, general honesty is said to be so secure that the banking agent of a small village or town may safely leave his office-door unlocked on going out to his midday meal, though uncounted money is lying on his desk; indeed, the key on the outside of the door is the sign that the owner is away.

The patience and laboriousness of these people are all the more remarkable that they are, almost without exception, underfed. In such a climate meat is, perhaps, not a necessity; but the average diet of the peasants—fish, corn-bread, cabbage, potatoes—is admittedly insufficient in kind and amount for the work that they have to do. It is an easy matter to dispose of this point by saying, with many of the well-to-do islanders, that the peasantry are a contented lot; so much the better for their social superiors. To any one who has visited their cottages and seen the food they eat, it is obvious that for a strong man's day's work the vast majority cannot afford the strong man's food; this, too, in the midst of plenty. Starved-looking faces and stunted growth are unmistakable in their significance. Exceptions may, of course, be found, as, for example, in the island of Pico, which has long been renowned for the robustness of