

ON DRAWING AND PAINTING

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On Drawing and Painting by Denman Waldo Ross

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DENMAN WALDO ROSS

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AND PAINTING**

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BY
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PREFACE

In presenting this book to the public I want to say, at once, that it is not the book I hoped to write. As I thought of it and imagined it before writing it, it was much more interesting and much better written than it is. It is better written than I wrote it, however; thanks to Dean Briggs who has been reading and correcting my proof sheets. He has devoted many hours of a summer vacation to this labor of love, for which I am deeply grateful. I have had many helpful suggestions, also, from John Briggs Potter, a friend who does not always agree with me but nevertheless believes in me. He has been interested for many years, as I have been, in the study of the Set-Palette and its possibilities and we have exchanged ideas constantly. He has a profound knowledge of Italian Painting which he has given to me without reserve. I am indebted, also, to my devoted secretary, Edgar Oscar Parker, who has helped me at all times and in every possible way, with unflinching patience and intelligence.

In expressing my appreciation of assistance so generously given, I am in no sense shifting over to my friends any responsibility for this book. It is in every sense my book. Thinking of it at this moment, when it is passing out of my hands into those of the reader, I am alarmed to realize how much of myself I have put into it and to what extent I am giving myself away in publishing it. I have presumed to give the reader my views of Righteousness, Truth and Beauty, and I have not hesitated to make quotations from Plato and Aristotle: thereby suggesting that the reader is neither a gentleman nor a scholar. I have not only insulted the reader, in this way, but in another way:— I have said certain things, not once, but repeatedly; suggesting that the reader is like the undergraduate in college who forgets everything that is

not hammered in. The reiterations of this book, however, represent a deliberate though possibly mistaken attempt to give the book the tonality of a certain ideal, which I wanted felt, if not expressed, in every page of it. There are many digressions, too. For these I must apologize. They mean a want of skill on my part which would be taken for granted, no doubt, if I did not say so much about the importance of skill. I must ask the reader to forgive me for not living up to my ideal. In declaring it, I know that it is coming back upon me like a boomerang. I have sacrificed a good many things in order to write this book. Among other things I have sacrificed myself.

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INTRODUCTION

IN beginning the study of any art we must learn what materials and terms are properly used in it and what modes of expression. Then we ought to have some practice in using the materials and terms and exercises in the different modes, following the example of the masters. This is equally true, whether we propose to practice the art as a profession or wish merely to understand and appreciate. Without some experience, without some technical knowledge and practice, our understanding is sure to be superficial and our appreciation limited. It is interesting to remember the passage of Aristotle in the "Politics,"¹ where he says: "It is difficult, if not impossible, for those who do not perform to be good judges of the performances of others. . . . They who are to be judges should also be performers." If we have never been performers we deny this proposition, in self-defence, but if we have ever practiced any art we know that we are better critics and better judges, just for that reason. Aristotle does not say that it is impossible for any one to be a good judge who is not also a performer. It is difficult, he says, if not impossible. Nor does he say that the performer is sure to understand; he is simply more likely to understand than any one who has never been a performer. We know, very well, how many performers there are who do not understand, who have neither appreciation nor judgment, and we are willing to admit that certain persons, not many, are good judges though they have had no technical training. We may be sure, however, that they would be better judges if they had had some training.

Applying these general considerations to the particular art of Drawing and Painting, it will be argued that a great many people enjoy pictures who have had no practice in painting. That is true, but the appreciation and enjoyment of pictures

¹ *Politics*, VIII, 6. Jowett's Translation, p. 254.