

Children's Art.

THE Art Teacher of to-day has one of the most highly specialised, responsible and difficult tasks in modern education, and certainly one of the more interesting posts in the teaching profession. Not only must the art teacher be a good teacher, he must also be something of a psychologist. An understanding of the temperament of each child is necessary, and work set should be in harmony with the child's individual needs.

It is doubtful if there could be anything so far apart as the methods of the art teacher of the past and one of the present. They seldom if ever agree on their aims. The aim of the present-day art teacher is to inspire and develop the creative faculties of the child. In the past, the boy or girl was set some odd vase or bucket of symmetrical shape and doubtful proportions, and asked to spend anything up to 60 minutes making an exact copy of the object. The child would spend one minute getting one side of the object correct and the remaining 59 minutes getting the other side symmetrical. This type of task did nothing to encourage creativeness, and the lesson usually ended in boredom. Consequently a dislike for the subject grew in great proportions.

The photographic, representational effort is now left, quite rightly, to the photographer, and the child is encouraged to express itself quite freely.

To-day the child is told an interesting story, very often composed on the spot by the teacher, on which the picture is based, or the child may be asked to paint a picture of a pet, the dog, the cat or his favourite toy. The result will not look much like the cat, if looked at from a purely representational point of view, but will express the kindness, happiness and friendship the child and the pet share together.

How vastly different the methods of to-day are when compared with the very dull uninteresting art lessons of the past. Construction and good pictorial composition are not forgotten, as so many people seem to think; the art teacher will raise the points gradually during the child's development in a seemingly unimportant manner, lest the child might overemphasise the importance of rules rather than self-expression.

From the teacher's point of view the child is much more interesting to work with than the adult. Ask an adult to compose a picture based on the subject "Under the Sea"



THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

The rose is Beauty, the pyramid, Faith. Together they become Love. Separated Beauty perishes, Faith deteriorates.

and the usual answer will be "How can I draw such a scene when I have never been under the sea?" But the child will immediately set to work and produce the picture, which will show all sorts of sea vegetation, treasure half buried in the sand complete with padlocks and barnacles, etc., old wreckage of boats, skeletons, anchors and a host of unusual fish and monsters.

Experience gained through working with adults and children reveals that the child's imagination is much more active, vivid and stimulating than that of the adult. The adult finds the greatest difficulty when confronted with a problem where imagination is required. One could conclude from this experience that creative imagination is practically non-existent in the average adult.

It is now suggested that with properly trained art teachers giving art instruction, the imagination will survive much longer than hitherto and that people in general would probably live a much happier life and a much longer life if given more favourable opportunities to create works of art in any field, such as model making, painting, sculpture, pottery, music, poetry, rug-making, etc.

Amongst the under fives, paint brushes, paper, water and colour are all that are needed; the child will make shapes, lines and curves sometimes in a mixture of colour blobs. The shape and form of a blob soon become familiar, and an assortment of coloured forms results. The use of the pencil is not encouraged.

Around the age of eight, the children are often left to decide what subject they wish to draw and paint: at this stage in their development boys and girls differ greatly. The boys have little interest in pretty things or people, except for their favourite speedway rider or footballer; they prefer to make pictures of aeroplanes, sea battles, bicycles, trains, cars, almost anything that is physically exciting. The girls prefer people and pretty things such as dolls' prams, old ladies in crinolines, flowers, houses and homely things.

From the age of ten or eleven onwards the story-telling begins. Illustrations from set subjects give children great pleasure and delight; there is never a dull moment in the Art lesson. It is from this stage that the teacher displays great tact and skill in introducing some rules regarding perspective, composition, etc. As the children grow older their manipulative skill develops side by side with their creative ability.

Children of the top age groups can set music to colour



THE CREATION OF LIGHT.

The picture is the Creation of Light. The figure is God, the source of all Light, and the fire and smoke—the chaos that was, before the Creation.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)