

ART EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

(BY MR. RICHARD LEWIS.)

The system of art education now fully organized and established in England is so complete in its fitness for the great end in view, the national culture of art and science, and so characteristic and worthy of a practical people in the economy and liberality of its arrangements, that it may safely serve as a model for this country. It is essentially popular, that is to say, it is not a luxury for the advantage of a class or the special cultivation of artistic genius. On the contrary, it starts on the principle that art education is just as necessary and as profitable in every point of view, moral or commercial, as reading and writing or arithmetic. If it be the duty of the government to secure to every child the power to read, it is equally its duty to give every child in the realm the power to draw. This is the avowed doctrine of the educational authorities. In the spirit of this doctrine is art education being established throughout the kingdom—not as a luxury, but as an imperative obligation essential to the moral and commercial greatness of the people.

Hence the first and leading object has been to prepare qualified teachers for giving art instruction to every elementary school, and to every mechanic who may desire such instruction. The training school established at Kensington is the centre of operation. It originates the art instruction which is carried into every school of the kingdom. It establishes a high standard and a systematic programme, in strict harmony with correct principles—with the science of art. Thus in all schools claiming aid from the central department, whether for the children of the rich or the poor, whether for mechanics or artists, the studies are based on Practical Geometry, and, to a certain extent, on ornamental forms. The pupils are practised to acquire facility in drawing straight lines in all their geometrical combinations, and curve lines with all their graceful and symmetrical proportions, until the hand acquires freedom and power, and the eye correctness in its calculations. Then the central department sustains the high character of the education it has inaugurated; it keeps it up to the highest point of advanced knowledge by making the teachers of art in every part of the country responsible to its authority for the progress of their scholars, while, at the same time, it gives to local government all the power necessary to secure a faithful fulfilment of contracts. Thus the central school is the focus of action—the soul of the whole system. "The courses of instruction," it is announced in the Prospectus of the Normal Central

School, "pursued in the School have for their object the systematic training of teachers, male and female, in the practice of art and in the knowledge of its scientific principles, with the view of qualifying them to impart to others a careful art education, to develop its relation to the requirements of trade and manufactures, and its application to the common uses of life. Special courses are arranged to qualify schoolmasters of parochial and other schools to teach elementary drawing as a part of general education, concurrently with writing." Consistently with this preamble, the programme of instruction is comprehensive and thorough. Fifteen teachers—or professors as they would from their high qualifications doubtlessly be called anywhere but in England—have the duty of giving instruction in every department of art. Thus there are teachers of Freehand Drawing of Ornament, Geometry and Perspective, Mechanical Drawing, Architectural Drawing, Painting, Modelling, Moulding and Casting, Ornamental Design, and special lecturers on Ornament, Anatomy and Botany. The School is opened for ten months in the year, divided into two sessions of five months each. Students are permitted to attend half a day or the whole day, or in the evening; the fees per session being £4 for the whole day, and £2 for the half day or the evening classes. But special encouragement is given to students proposing to qualify themselves as teachers of art schools, and in this spirit, when they have passed examinations in Geometry and Perspective and given evidence of their skill in Freehand Drawing and Drawing from nature, of plants, from models, &c., they are admitted free, and are also eligible to receive weekly allowance varying from 5s. to 25s. Equally liberal arrangements are made in behalf of the lady-teachers. The course of instruction comprises twenty-four stages, divided into six groups, embracing elementary Drawing, Colouring, Painting, Figure Drawing, Modelling, Ornament, &c. Art certificates are granted to all who pass the prescribed examination in each group, and every recipient of certificates receives a grant of £10 per annum for each certificate held in each group. The examinations, in the liberal spirit which should govern all public institutions, are open to all persons, whether educated in the Normal School or not; and as capacity for teaching is as necessary a qualification to the instructor as attainments, the candidates are required to teach a class in the presence of the examiners.

In connection with the school of art there is established the splendid museum of ornamental art, open as well to the general public as to the students. The collection was commenced in 1851 by a grant from the Board of Trade of £5,300, but