

Be extremely careful about the first few strokes you put 268
on your paper: the quality of your drawing is often
decided in these early stages. If they are vital and
expressive, you have started along lines you can develop,
and have some hope of doing a good drawing. If they are
feeble and poor, the chances are greatly against your
getting anything good built upon them. If your start has
been bad, pull yourself together, turn your paper over and
start afresh, trying to seize upon the big, significant lines
and swings in your subject at once. Remember it is much
easier to put down a statement correctly than to correct a
wrong one; so out with the whole part if you are
convinced it is wrong. Train yourself to make direct,
accurate statements in your drawings, and don't waste
time trying to manoeuvre a bad drawing into a good one.
Stop as soon as you feel you have gone wrong and
correct the work in its early stages, instead of rushing on 267
upon a wrong foundation in the vague hope that it will all
come right in the end. When out walking, if you find you
have taken a wrong road you do not, if you are wise, go
on in the hope that the wrong way will lead to the right
one, but you turn round and go back to the point at which
you left the right road. It is very much the same in
drawing and painting. As soon as you become aware that
you have got upon the wrong track, stop and rub out your
work until an earlier stage that was right is reached, and
start along again from this point. As your eye gets trained
you will more quickly perceive when you have done a
wrong stroke, and be able to correct it before having gone
very far along the wrong road.

Do not work too long without giving your eye a little rest;
a few moments will be quite sufficient. If things won't
come, stop a minute; the eye often gets fatigued very
quickly and refuses to see truly, but soon revives if rested
a minute or two.

Do not go labouring at a drawing when your mind is not working; you are not doing any good, and probably are spoiling any good you have already done. Pull yourself together, and ask what it is you are trying to express, and having got this idea firmly fixed in your mind, go for your drawing with the determination that it shall express it.

All this will sound very trite to students of any mettle, but there are large numbers who waste no end of time working in a purely mechanical, lifeless way, and with their minds anywhere but concentrated upon the work before them. And if the mind is not working, the work of the hand will be of no account. My own experience is that one has constantly to be making fresh effort during the procedure of the work. The mind is apt to tire and needs rousing continually, otherwise the work will lack the impulse that shall make it vital. Particularly is this so in the final stages of a drawing or painting, when, in adding details and small refinements, it is doubly necessary for the mind to be on fire with the initial impulse, or the main qualities will be obscured and the result enfeebled by these smaller matters.

Do not rub out, if you can possibly help it, in drawings that aim at artistic expression. In academic work, where artistic feeling is less important than the discipline of your faculties, you may, of course, do so, but even here as little as possible. In beautiful drawing of any facility it has a weakening effect, somewhat similar to that produced by a person stopping in the middle of a witty or brilliant remark to correct a word. If a wrong line is made, it is left in by the side of the right one in the drawing of many of the masters. But the great aim of the draughtsman should be to train himself to draw cleanly and fearlessly, hand and eye going together. But this state of things cannot be expected for some time.