

Drawings by Arthur J. Gaskin

THE DRAWINGS OF ARTHUR J. GASKIN. BY JOSEPH E. SOUTHALL.

THE drawings of Arthur J. Gaskin are chiefly notable for the extraordinary refinement in the quality of their line, and, where they are more complete, for a rare sense of tone and colour. That is not to say that Mr. Gaskin lacks the power of completing his modelling, or of dealing with the problems of light and shade. It results rather from that pure delight in line and colour, so beautifully displayed in the art of Asiatic countries and in the painting of mediæval Europe. Now these qualities are inevitably obscured when strong effects of light and shade are introduced. Moreover the expression of relief and shadow belongs rather to the province of sculpture than to that of painting and drawing.

It is obvious that an artist who works in such a method as that of Mr. Gaskin can appeal only to those who have the faculty of attentive and penetrative vision. To those who expect to see startling effects of light and shade or figures which stand out from their background, such design is incomprehensible and, indeed, almost invisible. Yet it is not, in the deepest significance of the term, less real or less true, but rather is more so. The business of an artist is not to produce work "like nature"; this is alike impossible and needless, for nature is prolific enough. His business is to describe what he sees, whether with his outward eyes or with the inward vision of his soul, that others may partake of his revelation. For this purpose it is necessary to select, to design, and to compose, so as to secure beauty and rhythm with intelligibility. A great truth is enunciated by

Browning in his "Fra Lippo Lippi," when he says :

For don't you mark? We're made so that we
love
First when we see them painted, things we have
passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see,
And so they are better painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing.

Now look at the two drawings, *A Country Boy* and *A Village Lad* (p. 30), and note how in these apparently unpromising subjects Mr. Gaskin has discovered for us not only a great fund of character but also classic folds of drapery, not unworthy to be set beside the monumental drawings of the great Albert Dürer. Look again at the delicate drawing of the ear and the living growth of hair in *Derek*. These drawings and the drawing of a baby six weeks old are reduced almost, though not



"JOSCELYNE WITH THE BIRDCAGE"

BY ARTHUR J. GASKIN