

### *Artistic Copyright*

developed into a member who is heartily welcomed within its ranks. The sequence of events is natural enough, but the brevity of his term of waiting outside is sufficiently unusual to be worthy of special note. For a man to gain the gold medal and to be chosen to the Associateship within a period of less than ten years is something more than a piece of rare good luck; it is an avowal of a very strong conviction on the part of the Academy concerning his powers, and it is a fact the significance of which can scarcely be over-estimated. But every one who has studied Mr. Goscombe John's work will feel that there has been no undue haste, and that the selection is entirely appropriate.

#### A FEW WORDS TO FELLOW ART-WORKERS UPON THE PROPOSED ARTISTIC COPYRIGHT BILL. BY W. REYNOLDS-STEPHENS.

As long ago as 1875 the unsatisfactory condition of the artistic copyright laws was generally acknowledged, and a Royal Commission was then appointed to go into all copyright matters. It was in 1878 that those gentlemen issued their Report, but no practical result has followed.

Some three years ago a body of artists in London, feeling that something should be done *re* artistic rights, appointed a committee representing painting, drawing (architectural and design), sculpture, and engraving, to investigate the artist's position, and suggest remedies for some of the many defects. That our committee arrived at their conclusions, which form the basis of the new Bill, in no hasty or ill-considered manner, you will understand when I tell you that we devoted some seventy meetings of four hours each to the matter, during which every artistic point we could think of was discussed and re-discussed, with the assistance throughout of a most painstaking lawyer, Mr. H. A. Voysey; the results of our labours being drafted into Bill form by and under the advice of Mr. T. E. Scrutton, whose high reputation as a leading authority on copyright law gives us a feeling of confidence on that score.

As far as possible we have adopted the suggestions of the Royal Commission of 1878 except where we felt them to be seriously opposed to artists' interests; the twenty years which have elapsed since then, alone makes differences. Further, we have endeavoured to consider the matter from the public standpoint, and to see that no important rights are interfered with.

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I find it very difficult without unduly lengthening this article to foresee and reply to each point any art-worker might ask information upon with regard to his own particular case. Alas! I find that few artists know anything at all correctly of their copyrights. It has long been a pet idea of mine that the instillation of a practical working knowledge of the rights attaching to his works should be a part of every art-student's training, and I trust when the amended state of affairs is an accomplished fact that the Royal Academy and other great art schools of the country will take the matter up, have it reduced to the simplest form of a digest, and issued to every student, who should be required to know it; thus each would have an additional weapon with which to enter the great struggle of life.

Now, of course, in legal matters it is impossible for an artist to state that such and such is the law; one has to allow for what one judge or another may deem to be its true interpretation; I can but endeavour to place before you what I believe to be a true outline of the Acts under which we artists obtain such rights as we now enjoy, and then to show you in what manner the new Artists' Copyright Bill proposes to amend our chief grievances.

The laws now in force:

The oldest of these, known as the Engraving Acts, are three in number, dated 1734, 1761, 1774. They may be claimed to accord protection to all prints produced by engraving and by all processes allied to engraving. By these three bills all such works obtain protection for twenty-eight years; but it is compulsory to sign and date them in order to establish the commencement of the term.

In the case of a commission given for the execution of any such work, the copyright thereof passes to the giver of commission.

Transfers of copyright and of licenses have to be in writing, signed in presence of two or more witnesses. I had better at once and for all explain the words "transfer of copyright and licenses."

If an artist sells or assigns his copyright in a work, all his rights over reproductions and copies of it whatsoever cease; but he can, instead of so doing, sell or grant a license to use his copyright, specifying therein any agreed conditions as to what it shall be limited to; meanwhile he retains control of his copyright: thus "a license" is only part of "a copyright."

Engravings which are reproductions of pictures, drawings, &c., protected by the 1862 Act (explained later) come under the operation of that law, being pendent upon the copyright of the originals from which they are made.