

THE STUDIO

WILLIAM CALLOW,
PAINTER IN WATER-
COLOURS (1812-1908). BY
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CALLOW's water-colours will always stand out from the later water-colour painting of his time because he outlived those who practised the system in which he was educated, and sustained tradition in spite of the incoming tide of the modern style. When Callow himself began to feel the influence of the new ideas as to the handling of the medium it seems only to have confused his aim and brought about a deterioration in his art.

Callow was the most famous drawing-master of his time, and that was a time when the master was more than one who gave a gentle guiding hand to the individual tendencies of the pupil. In those days the master tried to turn over to the pupil a recipe for every possible thing he might be called upon to draw or colour. The student began with exercises with the pencil in which, by its employment in given ways, the effect of oak-tree branches or willows or elm-tree branches could be rendered so that there was no mistaking what they were meant for. In these drawings trees resolved themselves into types of trees, just as buildings into types of architecture, or types of ruin. It was in "composition" that there was most play for feeling. And indeed "composition" in those days was a large part of picture-making—part of the "composition," of course, being the dexterous sweeping wash that relieved a light sky by broad suppression of buildings or trees under one dramatically contrived shadow.

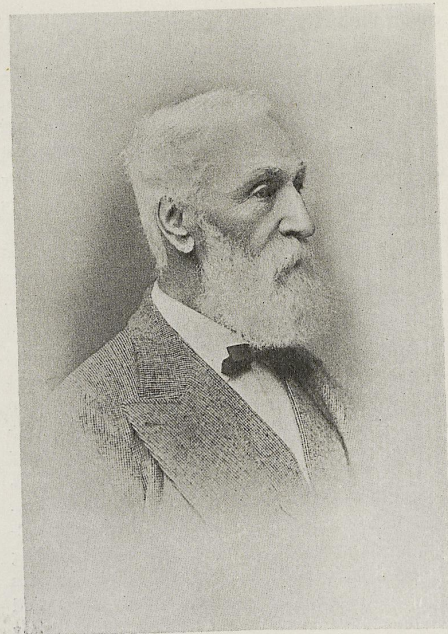
Such a style of drawing (for water-colour in this sense was but an extension of the art of drawing, pure and simple) discounted original and subtle observation, and tended to accept one type of scene as beautiful, to be represented, and another as ugly, to be rejected by the artist.

It is of this School that Callow is a representative master. He possessed great natural facility, and this was increased by his profession of art teaching. The spirit and merit of his water-colour work is best appreciated by the study of his uncoloured drawings. For colour was often something added from memory as an

embellishment, to these drawings. He applied an effect of colour to them which he thought suitable to the main lines of the composition.

He inherited from the age of Girtin and Turner a gift of extreme delicacy and precision in drawing, which perhaps the world will never see so beautifully again. We have Mr. Muirhead Bone, but for all that, the rivalry of photography has rather destroyed the mood of concentration in which sensitive and detailed representation can be performed with enthusiasm.

Upon his drawings Callow made a dramatic subdivision, light and shade. Any further detail was but a modification of this main division, never lost. We may take Mr. Sargent's art in water-colour as the very opposite of this system. In his work every shadow is assailed by clear reflected light, every light owes its vivacity to the economy in that pure whiteness with which Callow would



WILLIAM CALLOW, R.W.S., AT THE AGE OF 86
(From a Photograph)

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