

When Langcliffe School was Famous!

Y. P. "The Innocent Eye" 15. 8. 35

DALES CHILDREN'S PICTURES FOR WORLD CONGRESS EXHIBITION

An exhibition of pictures by children has been arranged in connection with the World Education Congress which is being held at Oxford this week. Below a school master in the Yorkshire Dales describes preparations for it.

The New Art swept in and asked for children's pictures for an exhibition.

How were we to awaken mind-pictures in the children's minds? The vivid flashes of city life do not pass before eyes used to the stillness of grey fells. But let us start with something they know. . . .

We recalled a view from the threshold of a famous cave into which hyenas have dragged the mangled remains of elephant, rhinoceros and hippopotamus. A great glacier has crawled across its mouth, and refugees have found a home there in Roman times. Without saying where we were, we described the nearby rock and limestone cliffs, the field below and its dew-pond, the further wood-darkened slopes of the scar, and far beyond the blue Lake hills in the evening sky.

The children recognised the landscape with glowing self-esteem and set to work in pastel and paint. All the results were "hung," and thereby we tumbled on a vital principle at once. When you visit the Leeds Art Gallery, and when there is room, don't you stand back away from the famous artist's picture? So we treated these young artists as though we were a more up-to-date Selection Committee at the Royal Academy. The result was encouraging. These evening skies began to make a new light dawn upon us.

We tried again. Again, an oral description, but this time a little view of a fruit shop seen from a side street on a wet night—a pleasing memory of our own tucked away until brought to light by classroom and experimental necessity. Ernest's was a jewel of Mediterranean fruits, greens and daffodils and watery reflections. Mary's was not realistic at all, but a sense of pattern shone out across the wet cobbles. Elizabeth's was a blend of colour and dark night shadows and some memory of her own.

Away With the Copy Book

Then began a flood of eagerness in oneself. These first attempts were rolling back the years of stilted school art—ginger jars on books; jam pots (upright) with ink wells (recumbent); cones; cylinders; plaster casts; bowls; vases; two oranges, a banana and a rosy-cheeked apple; perspective and vanishing points. Instead we found ourselves talking enthusiastically of foregrounds, middle distances, backgrounds, and better still, of composition, tones, depth, design, harmony. We brought out copies of the "World's Masterpieces" and criticised and praised and then put them completely out of sight again.

At last the materials we so much wanted came to us and we were transformed into a communal studio. We filled the classroom and the hall with our rickety home-made easels, and some overflowed outside. We all went about looking for subjects, and after a month of our work we can say that we found them—the fells and the wood valley came flowing through the minds

the children down the brush and splashed in colour on our canvases and, above all, we caught the tone-colour and spirit of our environment.

Ernest was sent into the grounds of the Hall, where building was in progress. He painted the sunshine on new rafters and a heap of mortar and piled planks. A blue-overalled man wheeled a barrow through the foreground; another, on the right, lifted timber; others worked on the open roof and at the newly-turned earthworks. Sunshine flickered through the trees above the high wall.

Two children succeeded in getting those rain-washed colours that the dale winds and storms seem to sweep across walls, windows and skies. The girl's was a typical daleland farmhouse with sky-reflecting windows. Robert had caught the barn of the same house and the foreground pattern of the vegetable garden, somewhat geometric, contrasted with the lilac bush at the corner and the two trees that climbed up and out of the picture.

Joys of Creation

A picture of the opening of the new extensions to the Town Hall was bursting with life. Sweeping across the foreground came Guards, on foot, stepping vigorously to the imagined drums; behind were greys and a golden coach. The crowds skirted the route and, most delightful of all, contrasting with the pomp of Whitehall and the Horse Guards Parade was a background of homely Yorkshire cottages and roofs.

The little ones, too, caught the infection of creation and living. In their pictures moving figures ran up the hill in the fell race, ran after rabbits, picked flowers in the long, wind-waving seas of grass. A caravan tolled dustily along the fenced road, a gaily-coloured bus thudded across another, and a blue sports car swept over the lip of the gorge-bordered crest.

There were mistakes—mistakes in perspective and proportion, like the horse that was bigger than the railway engine at the lime works, the horse being in the background. But there were no failures, because no work was compared with its neighbours, nor with the teacher's nor the Great Masters (in the cheap edition reproductions). There were some that needed explaining—explaining because they represented something in the mind of their creator—but are these not pictures accepted and rejected by the Royal Academy which have to be explained?

As work progressed our drab walls were covered with these peeps into young minds, and when all was done and we looked round at our picture gallery—one immense revelation laughed out from the patterned paint. These artists of ours had been deeply and thoroughly happy. They had hugged themselves with secret pleasure as they had worked to create what had lain in their own memories. Like the last man in the story, the man who saw God with the Universe in His arms, they had bowed down to the fells, the trees and Life in awe and had worshipped, and then they had arisen, and in joy had "tried to create another."

H. H. B.

LANGCLIFFE'S JUVENILE

C.H. ARTISTS 1. 11. 35.

Schoolchildren's Corner At Oxford Display

Langcliffe schoolchildren have attained distinction as artists and are to be honoured with a gift from Sir Michael and Lady Sadler. They will receive, shortly, a painting from the private collection of Sir Michael and his wife, and it will be hung in Langcliffe School.

This distinction bestowed upon the school is the sequel to a display of paintings of Yorkshire village schoolchildren at the World Education Conference, held in Oxford in August last. These Ribblesdale scholars were represented at the exhibition by work which, vividly and originally, conveyed their impressions of their natural environs. The paintings aroused considerable interest among distinguished education officials, among them, Lord Halifax, President of the Board of Education, who had a special word of praise for them.

Sir Michael and Lady Sadler were also deeply impressed by the efforts of these Dales' children, and they have asked the headmaster of the Langcliffe Council School to accept a painting from their own collection, and to hang it on one of the walls in the school.

These pictures will be on view, along with others, at Weetwood Hall, Leeds, to-morrow (Saturday).

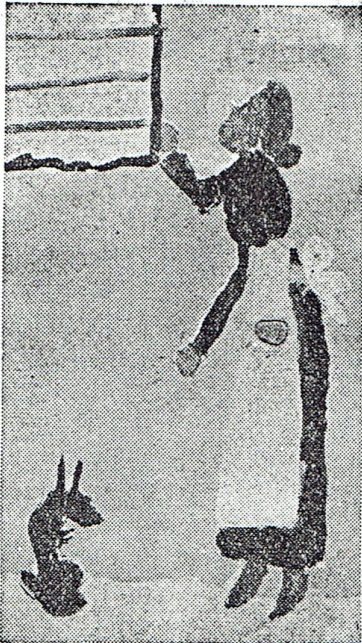
On Saturday, 16 of the Langcliffe Council School, in charge of the headmaster (Mr. H. H. Bland) and Mrs. Bland, visited Leeds. They visited the Town Hall, the Art Gallery and the Museum, their tour closing with an inspection of the printing machinery at the works of the "Yorkshire Post." They witnessed the printing of the early edition of the "Yorkshire Evening Post" on famous high-speed presses, and each child was presented with a copy of the paper, together with a rubber stamp bearing his or her name. The visitors were also provided with tea in the works' canteen.

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Yorkshire Evening News

5-Year-Old Artist

Dec 11. 35.



"Old Mother Hubbard," a painting by Peter Clarke, aged 5 years 11 months, at the exhibition of work by West Riding Children at Weetwood Hall, Leeds.



↑ By Elizabeth Jackson.

AN "ACADEMY" FOR CHILDREN.—Young visitors at an Exhibition of Paintings by West Riding Children at Weetwood Hall, Leeds. (By a "Mercury" photographer.) 4. 11. 35.

West Riding Scenes.

By a "Mercury" Special Correspondent.

NOW is your chance to see what Yorkshire children can do in the way of painting. A collection of paintings by West Riding elementary and nursery school children, ranging from the age of five to 14, is on display this week at Weetwood Hall, West Park, Leeds, by the kindness of Mrs. Redman King.

The paintings are the untouched work of ordinary children, not of children who are going to be artists, or of children whom teacher has helped. In fact, they show what children can achieve in the way of art when left to themselves. Their chief merit is sincerity. Each picture is an individual child's impression of the world about him.

The Bradford children were not asked to paint green fields and shining rivers. They were asked to paint what they saw, to give their impressions of the industrial city in which they live.

PINK AND BLUE TRAFFIC.

They chose their own subjects, and nothing could daunt them—the outside and inside of factories, roofs, chimneys, traffic, railway stations, dawn over dingy pavements, the night lights of city streets, fog, sunrise.

You can see how they have picked out from their surroundings something that has had the germ of a pattern in it—a cart wheel, a little red roof, a row of windows. They then became infatuated with what they have found. They repeat it over and over again, rows of cartwheels, rows of little red roofs, and the result is a pleasing design.

A child of eight, for example, sat down to paint the traffic near his school. He painted rows of pink, blue and purple cars and then, evidently feeling that something was wanted in the middle of his picture, he stuck a black figure right on top of one of his cars. A picture of "Wool Combing" illustrates the same feeling for design.

CAFÉ SCENE.

The picture called "Luncheon Hour" illustrates how observant a child can be. A the women wear high heels, the men low. One man is just in the act of taking his hat off. His companions have already removed theirs. The street can be seen through the café windows, through the glass panel of the door, and even through the chink under the door.

Another child has drawn a picture of a "Knocker up." Where the knocker-up has been, all the curtains are drawn back; where he has yet to go, the curtains are undrawn. Red clouds herald the dawn.

Some of the scenes are imaginary. A Dales child was asked to give her impressions of the Prince of Wales entering her village. Her own village is the background to her picture, but there is quite a touch of Whitehall in the foreground, with the coach and horses and the soldiers in their red jackets.

A QUETTA IMPRESSION.

Another remarkable creation is the "Quetta Disaster" by a boy aged 13. It is a study in sober colour, as befits the tragic subject. The house lies on its side like a brick, and rescuers are removing the wounded on a stretcher to a waiting ambulance. The heavy solid forms and their solid shadows make a marvellous pattern full of feeling.

"The Sack of Wood" is another good piece of work. The child was asked to draw a man about to pass "the first gate" on to the moor, with a sack of wood on his back, and with the sun coming down from the top right-hand corner of the picture.

The technical imperfections, of course, are great, but as one passes from the pictures of the younger to those of the older children, one can see how a sense of perspective has developed naturally.

Miss W. Biggs, Board of Education Inspector for the North-West area of the West Riding, has been to a great extent responsible for this exhibition.

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The "New" Art. 1935.

Working in the yard
June 1935

Note painting of the
boxers. →



In the centre is Sir Michael
Sadler's gift to the school in
appreciation of the children's
fine work. The rest are by
the children:-
"Sack of Wood" & the
"Quetta Earthquake" to
L & R of Sir M. Sadler's gift.
The others are local scenes
& activities:-
Farm, ? Langcliffe from above,
Sports day, & - - ? ?
The ones framed were those
exhibited at Oxford.

My father (H.H.Bland) very much believed in boys and girls having some physical activity every day (as mind-freshener, as well as to use up spare energy!), and got the unanimous agreement of the Parish Council for the use by **all** children in the school (including pupils not resident in the village) to play games on the Green. The Parish Council also gave permission to put permanent sockets for football posts on the Green, provided that the posts were removed at the end of games.

The school held a very well-supported Jumble Sale in September 1934 to raise money for the school fund to buy football jerseys, net-ball posts, ^{and} balls, as well as books for the school library. Football matches were arranged with other schools in the district. At first Langcliffe was not very successful (though they played well even when they were losing) and the larger Settle and Ingleton schools had easy wins, but later Langcliffe began to do very well, as the cuttings on the next page show.

The girls usually played netball, or sometimes stool ball on the ground in front of the school, and they too began to play matches against other school teams. When there was snow the scholars brought their sledges to school, and we sledged usually in the field behind the Church, but sometimes above Cow Close towards Winskill. There were several very snowy winters in the 1930s and 1940s - December 1937, and more particularly 1940-41 and 1947. In both those years there were very deep drifts which re-formed as soon as they were cleared and the road to Malham Tarn was closed often. You could walk over the tops of five-foot-high walls on top of the snow, and mothers had to deal with constantly wet wellingtons, socks and gloves from their sledging, snow-balling, and snow-house-making children! And I remember some splendid ice slides on the school yard, which we queued up to go down in turn. Treacherous for unaware visitors, but it wasn't forbidden!

In summer there was cricket, usually played by the boys, occasionally also by the girls, who more usually played rounders. There were numerous outings to look at something in the locality, and nature walks (some of which were- **very** unofficially - swimming in the Ribble near the Paper Mill).



Langcliffe School
Football Team 1935

Back row:-

J.R. Middleton, John Cokell,
Ronnie Newhouse, John Parrington,
Ernest Wilcock, Ernest Kitchener.

Front row:-

Joe Brown, Bobbie Monk,
Dennis Newhouse (captain)
John Towler, James Middleton

Craven Herald photograph 8.2.35. "Keen enthusiasm and excellent football was seen in the match" (versus Settle school)