

The Dundee Advertiser

Bank Street, Dundee.

Cutting from issue dated..... - 8 APR 1924 192

YOUNG DUNDEE AS ART CRITICS

School Children's Clever Essays

NOVEL COMPETITION

The competition held by Dundee Art Society, offering prizes to school children for an essay on the works shown at the annual exhibition in the Victoria Art Galleries, met with a keen and admirable response from young art critics and essayists all over Dundee.

There were two sections, for seniors and juniors, in the competition, and 125 essays were received from 12 schools. The Dundee Art Society Council met last night, and adjudicated upon the essays submitted, the awards being made as follows:—

Seniors—1 Robert Cowan, aged 14, Stobswell Central School, who wrote on Mr Philip de Laszlo's portrait of Mrs John M. Frazer (No. 201); 2 Dorothy Currie, aged 14, Newport Higher Grade School, who wrote on "The Ordination of Elders," by Mr J. H. Lorimer, R.S.A. (No. 195).

Juniors—1 Barbara Helen Glass, aged 12, Harris Academy, who wrote on "The Interior Knock of Clune, Newtonmore," by Mr James Mackie Smith (No. 64).

There were two honourable mentions as follows:—Seniors—James Anderson Crockett (14), Stobswell Central School, who wrote on "Les Roches," by Mr J. MacLachlan Milne (No. 212); and Mary Lafferty, aged 12, St Joseph's Boarding School, who wrote on "The Blue Butterfly," by Miss Helen S. Johnston (No. 224).

The essays submitted showed a very high standard of composition and artistic understanding, combined with "the critical sense."

A Picture of War.

In "The Defence of the Old Steeple" (No. 204) Mr Charles G. L. Phillips has roused the soldier spirit of some of the boy essayists, who give vivid and stirring descriptions. A few girls have also written about this picture, but naturally they dwell less on the savage aspect. There is, indeed, something of the spirit of Florence Nightingale in one girl who sees "A basin of water cruelly tinged, and some strips of, more or less, white linen." She remarks, "It is war, but the part that is not for show," and after another allusion to the wounded and dying adds, "It is war—and a very unpleasant trade."

Unexpectedly, most of the children prefer landscape. "Loch Maree" (No. 150), by Mr J. Calder Smith, is a favourite, though whether sunlight or moonlight is depicted is apparently a difficult question; and whether the sheep are being taken to graze, to the fold, to drink the waters of the loch, or to bathe seems also difficult to decide.

Young folks, of course, like pictures of places that are familiar to them, and it is nice to find the children of Tayport selecting Mr Alex. Grieve's picture of Tentsmuir (No. 200). A girl who has mentioned this work writes, "The picture is good, because the brown for sand looks like sand, and the green for grass like grass." A note of sadness is touched by another child, who states, "No. 155, 'Autumn,' appealed to me very much, probably because I was born and brought up on the outskirts of a forest, and am now residing in a small town."

Here is a boy of 13 to whom the mystery of "Arab Raiders" appealed:—"The sun shed its iridescent rays dimly through the mist. The horsemen's robes seemed to be lost in the haze. A certain sultry feeling pervades the atmosphere, and yet the cold damp air that usually accompanies the dawn, takes hold of the onlooker."

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals surely need not worry in Dundee, for all those who chose No. 224, "The Blue Butterfly," were troubled for the little captive. "I am quite convinced," wrote one child, "by the look on the children's faces, that they could not bear to see such a happy helpless creature perish by their hands, and they must have let it go free."

A Little Girl's Story.

The horses in Mr A. J. Munning's picture, No. 213, are also greatly admired. A little girl of nine makes up a story telling how the gipsy's children who rode about on the horses, "went to sleep to dream that they were the daughters of Kings and were riding side by side on white horses." One boy, seeing no picture of a dog, imagines that the man in No. 160, "Old Jan," "would have a dog, a faithful dog, which would look after him and guard his poor master as if he were a Prince."

Most charming is the essay of a little girl, aged twelve, who, after a page or two of beautifully-expressed admiration for "The Interior of a Cottage" (No. 64), regrets the lack of a cat to complete the picture, or an old woman knitting; and wonders whether the latter's absence is due to the arrival of the provision van, or whether she is having a "crack" with her neighbours.

In nearly all the work there is the same sincerity and the same deep interest. The pictures seem to live for the children, and they look upon them almost as though the frame were a window frame, and they looked into an actual room or on to the actual landscape. There is a great appreciation of their subject expressed admirably by one young essayist in the words, "How grand and mysterious Art is!"