

***FRANCIS  
HOPKINSON  
SMITH***



***OUTDOOR  
SKETCHING***

***FRANCIS  
HOPKINSON  
SMITH***



***OUTDOOR  
SKETCHING***

**Francis Hopkinson Smith**

# **Outdoor Sketching**

**Four Talks Given before the Art Institute of Chicago;  
The Scammon Lectures, 1914**

EAN 8596547128205

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: [DigiCat@okpublishing.info](mailto:DigiCat@okpublishing.info)





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Illustrations](#)

[COMPOSITION](#)

[MASS](#)

[WATER-COLORS](#)

[CHARCOAL](#)

[BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH](#)

[CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS](#)

# Illustrations

## Table of Contents

Part of the Site of the Marshalsea Jail, London	Frontispiece
	FACING PAGE
Under the Willows, Cookham- on-Thames	84
The George and Vulture Inn, London	136
Diagram of Charcoal Technic	142

---

# COMPOSITION

## Table of Contents

My chief reason for confining these four talks to the outdoor sketch is because I have been an outdoor painter since I was sixteen years of age; have never in my whole life painted what is known as a studio picture evolved from memory or from my inner consciousness, or from any one of my outdoor sketches. My pictures are begun and finished often at one sitting, never more than three sittings; and a white umbrella and a three-legged stool are the sum of my studio appointments.

Another reason is that, outside of this ability to paint rapidly out-of-doors, I know so little of the many processes

attendant upon the art of the painter that both my advice and my criticism would be worthless to even the youngest of the painters to-day. Again, I work only in two mediums, water-color and charcoal. Oil I have not touched for many years, and then only for a short time when a student under Swain Gifford (and this, of course, many, many years ago), who taught me the use and value of the opaque pigment, which helped me greatly in my own use of opaque water-color in connection with transparent color and which was my sole reason for seeking the help of his master hand.

A further venture is to kindle in your hearts a greater love for and appreciation of what a superbly felt and exactly rendered outdoor sketch stands for—a greater respect for its vitality, its life-spark; the way it breathes back at you, under a touch made unconsciously, because you saw it, recorded it, and then forgot it—best of all because you let it alone; my fervent wish being to transmit to you some of the enthusiasm that has kept me young all these years of my life; something of the joy of the close intimacy I have held with nature—the intimacy of two old friends who talk their secrets over each with the other; a joy unequalled by any other in my life's experience.

There may be those who go a-fishing and enjoy it. The arranging and selecting of flies, the jointing of rods, the prospective comfort in high water-boots, the creel with the leather strap, every crease in it a reminder of some day without care or fret—all this may bring the flush to the cheek and the eager kindling of the eye, and a certain sort of rest and happiness may come with it; but—they have never gone a-sketching! Hauled up on the wet bank in the

long grass is your boat, with the frayed end of the painter tied around some willow that offers a helping root. Within a stone's throw, under a great branching of gnarled trees, is a nook where the curious sun, peeping at you through the interlaced leaves, will stencil Japanese shadows on your white umbrella. Then the trap is unstrapped, the stool opened, the easel put up, and you set your palette. The critical eye with which you look over your brush case and the care with which you try each feather point upon your thumbnail are but an index of your enjoyment.

Now you are ready. You loosen your cravat, hang your coat to some rustic peg in the creviced bark of the tree behind, seize a bit of charcoal from your bag, sweep your eye around, and dash in a few guiding strokes. Above is a changing sky filled with crisp white clouds; behind you, the great trunks of the many branched willows; and away off, under the hot sun, the yellow-green of the wasted pasture, dotted with patches of rock and weeds, and hemmed in by the low hills that slope to the curving stream.

It is high noon! There is a stillness in the air that impresses you, broken only by the low murmur of the brook behind and the ceaseless song of the grasshopper among the weeds in front. A tired bumblebee hums past, rolls lazily over a clover blossom at your feet, and has his midday lunch. Under the maples near the river's bend stand a group of horses, their heads touching. In the brook below are the patient cattle, with patches of sunlight gilding and bronzing their backs and sides. Every now and then a breath of cool air starts out from some shaded retreat, plays around your forehead, and passes on. All nature rests. It is her noontime.

But you work on: an enthusiasm has taken possession of you; the paints mix too slowly; you use your thumb, smearing and blending with a bit of rag—anything for the effect. One moment you are glued to your seat, your eyes riveted on your canvas; the next, you are up and backing away, taking it in as a whole, then pouncing down upon it quickly, belaboring it with your brush. Soon the trees take shape; the sky forms become definite; the meadow lies flat and loses itself in the fringe of willows.

When all of this begins to grow upon your once blank canvas, and some lucky pat matches the exact tone of blue-gray haze or shimmer of leaf, or some accidental blending of color delights you with its truth, a tingling goes down your backbone, and a rush surges through your veins that stirs you as nothing else in your whole life will ever do. The reaction comes the next day when, in the cold light of your studio, you see how far short you have come and how crude and false is your best touch compared with the glory of the landscape in your mind and heart. But the thrill that it gave you will linger forever!

Or come with me to Constantinople and let us study its palaces and mosques, its marvellous stuffs, its romantic history, its religions—most profound and impressive—its commerce, industries, and customs. Come to revel in color; to sit for hours, following with reverent pencil the details of an architecture unrivalled on the globe; to watch the sun scale the hills of Scutari and shatter its lances against the fairy minarets of Stamboul; to catch the swing and plash of the rowers rounding their *caïques* by the bridge of Galata; to wander through bazaar and market, dotting down splashes