

John Lucas Tupper, 1865-79: The Rise of "Outis"

Tupper spent the last fourteen years of his life at Rugby. During this period he published several essays and articles, and two of his three books, *Hiatus* and *'The True Story' of Mrs. Stowe* were both issued in 1869 (his poems appeared posthumously in 1897.)¹ His chief energies were now devoted to promoting his ideas on art education: ideas which should help young minds to perceive true aesthetic beauty.

He was appointed master of scientific drawing at Rugby School in March 1865. At a time when science and modern studies were getting established in the curriculum of schools and colleges, Tupper, like Ruskin and Thomas Arnold, advocated the need for an accompanying aesthetic training. Rugby was certainly more progressive than the other public schools and Dr. Temple (the then Headmaster) decided to give drawing a status equal to other subjects in the curriculum. But in spite of the intellectually vigorous atmosphere of Rugby, Tupper's early experiences at the school were not very rewarding. His frustrations arose mainly from the fact that in the beginning the students showed little interest in scientific drawing. It took all his zeal to change the situation, and eventually he was able to train his boys to appreciate nature as well as art. The remuneration Tupper received could hardly be said to pay adequately for his labors. But in his desire to achieve his aim, Tupper swept aside all material considerations. He wrote to Holman Hunt on September 10, 1872: "If they would try the full experiment I have recommended, I would do my share of the work for nothing beyond the pay of a day-labourer." Tupper's perseverance paid off eventually; in another letter he reported to Hunt that his boys wanted him to lecture on anatomy and to have a modelling class.

In his autobiography, Hunt provides an account of Tupper's seriousness of purpose and the results of his efforts:

In 1864, having met Dr. Temple at a country house, he inquired if I knew of any ar-

tist qualified to fill the post of drawing-master at Rugby. I named Tupper, explaining that he would not be content to fulfill the ordinary routine of pencil drawing, but would strive to accomplish something much more thorough by his teaching. Immediately he entered into office he made a demand for funds to purchase a small collection of casts from the Pheidian marbles, and for the purchase of a skeleton and anatomical figure, with a hall in which to place them; nothing but the latter could be afforded, but my friend would not be defeated, and bought the objects for serious study himself. It was a protest against the ordinary practice of drawing broken-down cottages and dilapidated five-barred gates and pumps, and I know that in some cases it did good service in the serious training of youths in the knowledge of fundamental principles of form. But unhappily he did not live long. The school authorities bought the collection from his widow, and these examples remain, leaving the hope that even yet they may do some good service for Art, and influence the young who in the future may be a power in the realm to direct public taste in the choice of true architects, sculptors, and painters.²

Under the next headmaster's—Jex Blake's—tenure (1874-87), Rugby expanded its curriculum to pay serious attention to art. Meanwhile, even though not much money could be allocated to purchase the teaching apparatus and the *objets d'art* which Tupper considered necessary, a drawing school was built at his request: "The people here have built me a school exclusively for Drawing, and it is said to be the best school in the new building (by Butterfield)" (ALS to Hunt, February 13, 1870).

After he had got over his initial unease with his environment and his job, Tupper began to enjoy teaching. He even felt sufficiently secure financially to make a trip to Italy. He