

On the walls of an artist's studio in Grand Rapids, Michigan, there hangs a portrait of a man; a man stern of face and strong of body. The man who posed for the picture was Charles J. B. Larson, truant officer. Mr. Larson is dead now, but Armand Merizon, the 21 year old artist who made the painting looks fondly at his handiwork. It means something important to him. You see, Mr. Larson was a truant officer with brains and a heart. Five years ago he caught Armand playing hooky from school. But Mr. Larson had learned much about boys, during his 42 years as a truant officer in Grand Rapids. When he found the youthful artist not at school but working over a drawing, he said kindly "It's alright to draw, but you've still got to finish school." Then he sat down and in the next half hour, he made the young artist realize that he could attend these classes and still not forget his interest in art. This was the beginning of a friendship. Today, after taking a course at the Boston Art College, and studying with a teacher from Amsterdam Art School, Armand Merizon is one of Grand Rapids' most promising young painters. He did Mr. Larson's portrait last year, just before the truant officer's death. Mr. Larson's friends say it is a perfect likeness. It is they say, a fitting monument to the man who had so much sympathy and understanding with young people. There's a lesson for all of us in this little story... a lesson which points out what patience and understanding will do... and how youth responds, to patience and understanding.